

Chapter 9

Impact of Athlete Role Model on the Behavioural Intentions of the Youth in Egypt

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ABSTRACT

This study aims at examining the effect of athlete role models on the young generation including both students at school age and others at the university age purchase intentions and behaviours. Teenagers are currently considered a part of young generation (Generation Y); they have been identified as individuals born between 1977 and 1994. Young adults are major sport consumers; therefore, sport marketers target them. The reasons for this targeting are: (1) their spending power, (2) their ability to be trendsetters, (3) their receptivity to new products, and (4) their tremendous potential for becoming lifetime customers. This research has reached the conclusion that athlete role models have great impact upon teens; which helps to spread positive word of- mouth about the product or the brand and enhances brand loyalty.

INTRODUCTION

Researchers argue that this group is an easier target to market to because they have grown up in a consumer oriented society (Brand, 2000). According to Rob Frankel (2000), “Gen Y is less rooted in traditional social mores and ethics. They are easier targets, because they have grown up in a culture of pure consumerism” (as quoted in Manning-Schaffel, 2002). Because of this, “... they are way more tuned into media because there is so much more media to be tuned into” (as quoted in Manning-Schaffel, 2002).

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Thus, members of Gen Y, and in particular teen members of this generation, represent a viable group to study in terms of media influences (Bush et al., 2004)

Sports figures who display extraordinary personal characteristics were found to be a popular hero choice among young adults (Stevens, Lathrop and Bradish, 2003; Chan and Zhang 2007; Tingchi Liu, Yu-Ying and Minghua 2007). Such characters like athletes are beneficial to advertising and are most effective in influencing the attitudes of this market because they are respected by and are highly identifiable with young people (Atkin and Block 1983; Wolburg and Pokrywczynski 2001). Endorsement by them has a meaningful influence on young people's evaluation of ads and products (Xu 2008).

The importance of celebrity usage in advertisements lies in getting attention, for prolonged association, or for the purpose of recall. Celebrity Endorsements act as a credible means of spending money. This is because this is a world of products for which the value a consumer obtains from purchasing any given variety. This could be for reasons of social standing, People want to wear the "right" clothes, drink the "right" beverages and use the "right" fragrances. Specifically, a consumer that observes messages for two different firms' products, one products' message containing a celebrity endorsed and the other not, believes the celebrity endorsed product will have more purchases and so be of higher value. (Clark & Horstman, 2003) Celebrity endorsement is more likely to be observed for those products having a high price-production cost margin and on a large customer base. In short, celebrity endorsements are more typical for nationally marketed products than for local or niche market products and for products such as running shoes, soft drinks and the like for which the price cost margins are apparently large.

Trippietat, (1994) On the other hand, research has suggested that celebrity endorsed has potential positive effect like transfer of positive brand images and shaping of consumer's response when more than four products are endorsed. The celebrity actually helps in accelerating the brand image formulation process. At the same time advertisement argue that celebrities come with loads of liabilities that are hard to ignore. Advertisers often select endorsers as a promotional strategy to communicate the attributes of their product or brand. Today, this advertising approach appeared to be on the increase across all media types (Sherman, 1985 and Levin, 1988). The study from H. Friedman and L. Friedman (1979) defined that celebrity endorser is an individual who is known to the public (actor, sports figure, entertainer, etc.) for his or her achievements in areas other than that of the product class endorsed.

The study of Perception of Advertising and Celebrity Endorsement (Zabid Abdul Rashid, and Jainthy Nallamuthu 2002) shows that using a well-known celebrity as an endorser could help to improve the subjects' rating of the commercial. Therefore, it is advisable for companies to consider using a well-known celebrity as an endorser rather than nameless spokesperson (Balakrishnan& Kumar, 2011)

However, there are a number of different views on the effectiveness of sports role models advertising. Friedman and Friedman (1979) revealed that regardless of the type of product, a celebrity figure produced better recall of both the advertisement and the brand name than an advertisement using an expert endorser, typical consumer endorser or no endorser. Atkin and Block (1983) support this argument and maintain that advertisements featuring celebrity figures consistently produced more favourable impact than non-celebrity ads. On the other hand, it was reported that only one of five commercials using celebrity endorsers lived up to the sponsor's expectations (Miciak and Shanklin 1994). Moreover, Schaefer and Keillor (1997) argue that, although the use of celebrity endorsers is a good foundation for effective advertisements, it does not significantly influence the attitude and behavioural intentions of the target market.

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