

The Role of Celebrity Endorsements in Intensifying Parent-child Conflicts: A Sri Lankan Study

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Abstract

Scholarly attention is been paid to the impact of marketing on young children where literature has identified the influence of advertising as a potential means of creating conflicts between parents and children when parents refuse to purchase products that children demand. Among different techniques of advertising, celebrity endorsement is effective method in persuading children. However, the literature has hitherto paid no attention to the potential role played by celebrity endorsements in contributing to parent-child conflicts. This is the focus of the current research. The study utilised an interpretive qualitative approach where 18 in-depth interviews were conducted with 9 pairs of parent-child dyads in Colombo. The findings indicate that celebrity endorsements create purchase desires in children through a social learning process and that the resulting purchase demands lead to conflicts between parents and children. In these conflicts, both children and parents attempt to use coercive, reward and referent powers in order to gain the upper hand; however, such attempts rarely lead to resolving the conflicts.

Keywords. *Celebrity endorsements, Parent-child conflicts, Advertising, Young consumers*

1. Introduction

Children are considered as potential customers by marketers due to their growing participation in the family purchase decisions (Saraf, 2013). To exploit this opportunity marketers seek various ways to reach children (Calvert, 2008). One of these is increased advertising; according to the American Academy of Pediatrics (as cited in Television and Children, 2010), on average children watch about four hours of television a day and see more than 20,000 commercials each year. Young children often do not identify the persuasive intent of advertisements (Pecora, 1998) and hence are easily manipulated by advertisers who incorporate attractive associations in advertisements that influence children's purchases intentions more effectively (Calvert, 2008). One such attractive association utilised by advertisers is celebrity endorsement since celebrity endorsements could have significant influence over children (Chan, 2000; Chan & McNeal, 2004; Saraf, 2013; Singh & Aggarwal, 2012).

Research has established that greater exposure to advertising induces children to make more purchase requests to their parents and when children do not receive the requested products, they may become disappointed, dissatisfied, and hence, unhappy (Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2003). As a result, parental denial of children's purchase requests could lead to conflicts between the parents and children (Calvert, 2008). This latter group of research discussing adverse effects of advertising on children, including parent-child conflicts, does not pay special attention to celebrity endorsements. However, the previous discussion on the influence of celebrity endorsements indicates that the use of celebrity endorsements could potentially

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contribute to parent-child conflicts since such endorsements are likely to increase children's desire to purchase advertised products. Therefore, this research examined the role played by celebrity endorsements in intensifying parent-child conflicts. The research utilised two main theoretical lenses, namely, social learning theory (Bandura, 1973) and bases of social power (French & Raven, 1959). The former was used to theorise the celebrity influence over children and the latter to theorise parent-child conflict. Empirically, the study focused on children between the ages of 8-12 years residing in the Colombo district. The study makes a contribution to the body of literature on the impact of marketing activity on children by examining the adverse impacts of celebrity endorsements which has hitherto not been explored.

The next section of the paper covers an overview of the literature relating to the study which discusses literature on celebrity endorsements, children targeted advertisements and parent-children conflicts in terms of purchase decisions. Then it explains the research methodology, namely, an interpretive qualitative approach. This is followed by sections on findings and a discussion related to the theoretical lenses and previous literature. Finally the paper concludes with directions for further research.

2. Literature Review

Literature review would focus on exploring three sub areas of literature: effectiveness of celebrity endorsement in advertisements, advertisements, celebrity endorsement and children, and parent-children relationship and purchases decisions.

2.1 Effectiveness of Celebrity Endorsement in Advertisements

A "celebrity endorser is defined as any individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement" (McCracken, 1989, p.110).

Celebrities play a vital role to influence the attitude and buying behaviour of consumers. Sharma (2006) posited that celebrities could increase consumer awareness of the advertisement by capturing their attention and make the advertisements more memorable. This takes place by generating persistent appeal in the consumers' mind through advertisements, which remain in the brain of TV viewers long (Saraf, 2013). This enables the consumers to recall the information or image that was conveyed through advertisements, when they are taking purchase decisions. It was found that advertisements of products with high psychological and social risk were evaluated more favourably when a celebrity features in those advertisements than an expert or typical customers, and celebrity was more effective in getting consumers to buy the product (H. H. Friedman & Friedman, 1979). Consumers feel secure in purchasing those products, which are promoted by celebrities because they place high trust over the celebrities and their statements (Khatri, 2006). Consumers prefer to buy some products even though those products do not deliver the promised outcome because of their affinity towards the celebrities (Khatri, 2006). In addition, the product being endorsed by a celebrity has been the centre of attraction for many customers because celebrities transfer their goodwill to the brand to make it highest appealing brand among the targeted audience (Khan & Lodhi, 2016) beating other similar brands. Due to these advantages, celebrity endorsement has become a popular technique among advertisers.

2.2 Advertisements, Celebrity Endorsement, and Children

Some companies target children as their target market in selling their products and hence promotional activities of such firms are purely based on attracting children and motivate them to purchase their products (Calvert, 2008). The firms are using various advertising strategies in order to encourage the purchase intention of children. They focus on developing and improving the associations and elements of advertisement to make the advertisements more effective to reach children (Calvert, 2008).

It has been found that children are vulnerable consumers due to their limited cognitive ability and consumer knowledge. The ability of children to recognize the purpose behind marketing messages and distinguish them from other information is usually thought to be low (Pecora, 1998). Young children often do not identify the persuasive intent of advertisement, hence manipulated by the advertisers through attractive associations in their advertisements to make it more effective to influence their purchase intention (Calvert, 2008). According to Martin, Kennedy and Richins (as cited in Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2003) children watch television advertising and compare their own situation with this idealized world in the commercials. This discrepancy between the two worlds might cause unhappiness and advertising would lead to materialistic behaviour among children.

According to Saraf (2013), TV advertising, including celebrity endorsement, plays a dominant role in shaping children's product preference. He stated that using celebrities in advertisement could increase children's preference for that product since they are believing that the celebrity was an expert on its subject. In addition, children consider commercials with famous person endorsements more credible (Chan & McNeal, 2004) and they tend to believe the statements or promises given by the marketers through advertisements. Children are largely influenced by celebrities (Singh & Aggarwal, 2012) and among various types of advertising tactics, children easily identify celebrity commercials as they like commercials with famous characters (Chan, 2000) and hence they are very much interested in purchasing the celebrity endorsed products.

In summary, advertisements can effectively influence children's interest towards buying products and create a desire to purchase advertised products. Various strategies are used by advertisers to communicate commercial messages continuously through their advertisements in order to increase the purchase requests of children, and as a result of this advertised brands catch a place in the children's mind and motivate them for more purchase requests from their parents. In addition, celebrity endorsement can make the advertisement more effective in reaching the children and this has been identified as effective in stimulating purchase intention of children.

2.3 Parent-child Relationship and Purchases Decisions

Today children including young adolescents are being considered as potential consumers, since children can influence their family consumption by persuading and pressurizing parents to buy new products (Saraf, 2013). Parents provide the financial resources that allow their children to purchase products. Further, as previously noted, greater exposure to advertising causes children to make more purchase requests to their parents and when children do not receive the requested products, they may become disappointed, dissatisfied, and hence, unhappy (Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2003).

According to Calvert (2008), certain negative outcomes can arise due to the exposure of children to commercial messages through advertisement. Those negative outcomes are parent-child conflict, cynicism, obesity, and possibly materialistic attitudes. Conflict is typically defined as arguments and disagreements (Hay, 1984) and as parents' and children's resistant and oppositional behaviours toward one another (Huang, Teti, Caughy, Feldstein, & Genevro, 2007).

Parent-children conflict was identified by Calvert (2008) as a negative outcome of advertisements which arises when parents refuse the purchase request of their children. The refusal can be due to the negative feel of parents towards the product as they feel that is not good for children or they cannot afford the price of the product. Buijzen and Valkenburg, (2003) clearly pointed out that advertising exposure directly influences parent-child conflict, and that this relation between exposure to advertising and parent-child conflict is mediated by children's purchase requests and parent's denial of these requests.

According to a study carried out to identify the perception of the advertised products among children, children were told a story about a boy who asked his father for the advertised toy, but did not receive it (Goldberg & Gorn, 1978). Then the children were presented with pictures representing two hypothetical responses of the boy. The first picture showed a child happily hugging his father, while the second showed a child glumly walking away from his father. The children were asked how they thought the boy in the story would react. The results showed that children who had seen the commercial more often choose the picture of the boy walking away from his father (Goldberg & Gorn, 1978). This clearly shows that extent to which television advertisements can influence the happiness and psychological satisfaction of the children and the impact it could have on their relationship with parents.

The above discussion on parent children relationship in relation to purchase situations reveal that there is a possibility of conflicts between parents and children due to the mismatch in the purchase intention and decisions of parents and children and that advertising could contribute to intensify these conflicts. The previous discussion relating to celebrity endorsement and its effectiveness indicate that celebrity endorsement enhances positive perception regarding the brand among audience and it increases purchase intention of target customers, especially children. These advertisements play a vital role in stimulating the purchase intention of children. Therefore, it can be argued that celebrity endorsements could increase the parent-children conflicts and that is an unexplored theoretical problem.

2.4 The Sri Lankan Context

In the Sri Lankan context, not many studies appear to have been undertaken in relation to impact of advertising on children. However, a study by Samaraweera and Samantha (2010) has identified that advertising contributes to increased demand by children for the food advertised. Another study on advertising unhealthy food products notes that Sri Lankan advertisements use various techniques to influence children, including themes of fun, fantasy and taste (Fernando, Abeykoon, & Ganegoda, 2015). Further, a paper on the content of food advertisements targeting children in Sri Lanka suggests "what was implied in the advertisements could change children's mentality and, thus, could increase the pester power of children for that particular food product" (Prathapan, Wijewardena, & Low, 2015, p. 305). These

studies indicate the influence of television advertisements on Sri Lankan children and also that this influence could lead to increased „peer power“ in demanding unhealthy food products. Thus, Sri Lanka provides a good site to examine the possible role of celebrity endorsements in increasing conflicts between parents and children.

3. Theoretical Lenses

Two theories were used as theoretical lenses in this study and those are, social learning theory of Bandura (1973), and bases of social power of French and Raven (1959).

3.1 Social Learning Theory

The Social learning theory by Bandura (1973) states that children observe the people around them and encode their behaviors and that they try to imitate those behaviors later. In addition, the individuals around those children would respond to such behaviors either positively or negatively. He further posited that children would have number of models with whom they identify and learn behaviors. This identification depends on children's affection towards an individual and the attractiveness and prestige of the model. According to Bandura (1973) individuals do not automatically observe the behavior of a model and imitate it. There is some thought prior to imitation and this consideration is called mediational processes. This occurs between observing the behavior (stimulus) and imitating it or not (response). Four mediational processes have been identified as follows: attention, retention, reproduction and motivation.

Zipporah and Mberia (2014) stated that this social learning could happen through watching celebrity-endorsed advertisement that affects or influences audience consumption intentions. In this case the audience watch, listen observe and would want to consume what the celebrities endorse. Given this, this study utilized the social learning theory to examine the influence of celebrity endorsement on children

3.2 Bases of Social Power

French and Raven (1959) presented five bases of power that could determine the influence one party could have over the other in social relations. These are coercive power, reward power, expert power, legitimate power and reference power. These power bases have been utilised in previous studies in order to examine parent-child conflicts. Palan and Wilks (1997) state that when there is a conflict between children's and parents' view regarding a consumption decision, children might strategically use their power to persuade parents to gain influence in the purchase decision. This influence varies by product, decision stage, parental and family characteristics and child (Flurry & Burns, 2005). Thus, this study used these bases of social power to explore the parent-child conflicts that could result from children's exposure to celebrity endorsements.

4. Methodology

This was an interpretive study utilising a qualitative approach. The sample was purposively selected and comprised 18 participants which included 9 pairs of a child and a parent. Children of both genders were represented in the sample and there was a mix of mothers and fathers among the parents. Among those 9 parent participants, 7 were females and 2 were males while among the 9 children participants, 6 were male and 3 were female. It was noted that among the 9 parent participants 4 were working

in managerial positions and remaining 5 were house wives having GCE A/L or above as educational qualifications.

Data was collected using in-depth interviews, which were transcribed verbatim. The interviews were conducted based on an interview guide which comprised questions that were developed in line with the conceptual themes of the theoretical lenses of the study (Kvale, 2007). Most interviews were conducted in Tamil, which is the native language of the participants as well as the first author, and excerpts included in the paper were translated at the time of writing the paper. The data were analysed using a thematic analysis approach, progressing from codes to themes and overarching themes (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Initially 29 open codes were derived from the interview data. These were then grouped into themes. The themes were, in turn, categorised under three overarching themes: celebrity influence on children's behaviour, celebrity influence on children through advertisements, and purchase intentions leading to parent-child conflicts. The findings presented below are based on the data categorised under these three overarching themes.

5. Findings

The interview findings were summarized under number of themes that would be presented in this part. The themes would be supported by the interview quotes relating to the respective theme.

5.1 Celebrity Influence on Children's Behaviour

Children have their own way in choosing a celebrity and they recognize a celebrity as their favourite. The findings revealed that even though different children consider different attributes in choosing their favourite celebrities, every one of them has a favourite celebrity whom they think is best and they got connected very deeply with them.

I love Dhoni..., he is my all-time favourite ... (Respondent 3 – Child)

Yes my favourite hero... the best Paul Walker... (Respondent 7 – Child)

The above answers were given by different children when they were asked about their favourite star in any field (such as Cinema, Sports, Cartoon, Music, Entertainment etc.). They were spontaneous responses without any hesitation. They have clearly chosen a star as their favourite and he/she was strongly rooted in their mind. All other Respondents were also responded in the same way and all those rejoinders indicate that children especially in the age range of 8 years to 12 years, have favourite stars. The children are highly attracted to these celebrities and take pains to establish that they are special.

Yes... Dhoni is the best in the world. Only he can score runs more quickly because he is very energetic. His batting and his speed in running on the pitch are wonderful to watch. He likes kids like me! (Respondent 3 – Child)

Cinderella is gorgeous and she can dance well and yes she is the best and the most beautiful girl I have ever seen and no other character impressed me like her. I only like Cinderella. I do watch other cartoons but I don't like anyone as Cinderella. (Respondent 5 – Child)

These responses reveal how much children see exclusivity in their stars and how they differentiate their star from others to prove that they are the best. Children observe the explicit characteristics observable of the star in the surface level and connect those with their favourable view on the star. These beliefs are rooted deeply in the mind and strengthen the favourable image about the star.

It was witnessed that after getting any new information about their stars, children try to relate those with the positive attributes they recognized already in their favourite star. In almost all the cases children receive consistent information about their star which continuously enhance the positive perception on their favourite star. The continuous positive information boost children's level of attraction towards the star and this would make them to develop highly positive views of the star in their mind firmly.

Paul Walker's very own style in selecting and driving cars. Since he is an actual car rider his movies are interesting to watch and especially he loves riding cars more than anything. Even he died while he was riding a car. He is that much passionate towards it which he said in an interview too. That is why I like him a lot. (Respondent 7 – Child)

Children believe what they see and hear regarding the star are the real behaviours and nature of the star, without verifying reliability of the information. As previously stated children's perception of the star is highly depends on the information they get about their star which has been indicated by Respondent 7's answer above since the child believe all what he hear about his favourite star and his infatuation towards the celebrity was increased based on his belief. Therefore it is clear that the image of the star would be built strongly in children's mind through consistent and favourable information.

The attractive behaviours of star reach children's mind and strengthen the interest of children on their favourite star as children closely observe the behaviors of their favourite star. Also children would be motivated to share what they know about their favourite star and their behaviours with others since they want others to see them as a fan/follower of their favourite star. Processing positive information enable children to place high attention on the behaviours of celebrities and thus motivate them to reflect those behaviours in themselves. Children like to do things as same as their favourite star once they realize something special in their favourite star's behaviours and when they feel the act would make them look similar to their favourite star.

Yes he is very much interested. The moment he saw Dhoni's matches or advertisements, he will increase the volume of the TV and sometimes do things as same as Dhoni does in those matches or advertisements. (Respondent 4 – Parent)

The above response indicates, children are keen to observe the behaviours of their favourite star and the observation would further stimulate the interest of the children on their favourite star. All these celebrity behaviours are firmly stored in children's mind and easily recallable.

Yes. I always bring a Milo packet whenever I go to cricket practices and once the practices are over I drink it in the ground itself just like Mathews and my

friends say that I'm doing it exactly like Mathews. I have written Mathews' name in my bat just to show others that how much I like him. (Respondent 1 – Child)

Children do not keep their desires with them and they like to show others what they know and what they like. Here in the above response, it was noted that children like to show others that they like a celebrity and copy celebrity behaviours to make others recognize similarities between celebrities and them. This was also noted by parents as shown below.

Yes. He used to run like Dhoni and he tries to imitate some of his mannerisms like holding the bat in a unique way, wearing upturned collar t-shirt etc. (Respondent 4 – Parent)

Sometimes she dances like Cinderella and I even watch her combing hair as same as Cinderella. (Respondent 6 – Parent)

The responses suggest that children try to adopt the behaviours or styles of their favourite star.

After identifying the selection of a celebrity and imitating celebrity's behaviours by children, now the next step is to see how celebrity influence on children is exerted through endorsements in advertisements and commercial messages.

5.2 Celebrity Influence on Children through Advertisements

Children show high interest in watching their favourite star's advertisements and they actively listen to what their favourite star says in those advertisements. This is the foundation to make children follow what their favourite star says in the advertisements.

Children more likely to have various purchase desires as they wish to possess the products that they think the celebrities like and they get this information through advertisements.

Dhoni is appearing in Boost drink advertisement (An energy drink). I have watched it several times on TV. I never missed it anytime it shown in the TV. (Respondent 3 – Child)

Yes. He likes that advertisement very much. I noticed him watching that advertisement several time and I think he watches that advertisement because of Dhoni and it is the interest on Dhoni that increases his curiosity of watching the advisement. (Respondent 4 – Parent)

The above responses indicates the fact that children are very much interested in watching their favourite star's advertisements and they are very curious in watching the content shown in the advertisements. Children watch these advertisements several times without getting bored since their favourite star is starring in it. Hence celebrity endorsed advertisements make children watch them more than once with high level of attention.

I like that soap since Spiderman asking me to buy that soap and I know that he only recommends good things for kids. (Respondent 11 – Child)

Actually I saw an advertisement of a car racing game which has Paul Walker's car collection. A statement of Paul Walker also comes along with the advertisement saying that we can find all his car collection in the game and therefore I was very much interested in it and wanted it very badly. (Respondent 7 – Child)

The attraction of children on celebrities, makes them actively listen the recommendation of star in the advertisement and encourage them adopt those in their real life. In the responses of Respondents 11 and 7 above, we can see that the children emphasize, it is clearly their favourite star who created a positive perception on the relevant products and strong purchase desire was created as a result of it. Therefore we can state that celebrity endorsed advertisements influence the thoughts of children and lead to new desires relating purchases/products. In addition to this, repeated exposure to these advertisements strengthens the purchase desires.

Yes he shows high level of interest. The moment he sees the advertisement he will increase the volume of the TV and sometimes do the same thing as Dhoni does in the advertisement. Also after watching advertisement he would never forget to check the Boost bottle to ensure that it is not empty. In case if it is empty he ask me to buy it. (Respondent 4 – Parent)

Children show high level of enthusiasm in watching their favourite star's advertisement in each and every time it is telecast in the TV and based on the answer of Respondent 4 it can be argued that celebrity endorsed advertisement continuously arouse purchase desires of children and make them think about the product each and every time they see the advertisement.

She only gets to know about the new flavours of Maggie noodles from those advertisements and after watching them she would ask me if I can buy it for her. In every new Maggie advertisement Preity Zinta appears first and at that time her attention automatically turns to the TV. I have tried so many times to change the channel when that advertisement comes but she notices the advertisement before me most of the time. (Respondent 14 – Parent)

The answer of Respondent 14 indicates that by watching advertisements children get updated on the new products introduced to the market. Further, celebrities play a vital role in conveying the availability of those products and details to children. Since children recognize the advertisements of celebrities very quickly and they watch these advertisements with interest. Therefore, altogether celebrities with their endorsement in advertisements effectively educate children on the products available in the market. Overall, both by reminding the children of the previously created desires (e.g. quote of Respondent 4), and providing new information about the brands introduced (e.g. quote of Respondent 15), celebrity endorsements further reinforce the initially created desires.

5.3 Purchase Intentions Leading to Parent-child Conflicts

Children need their parent's support in order to make an actual purchase. Therefore, children ask their parents to purchase the products shown in the advertisements and this is referred to as purchase requests of children. The frequency of purchase requests of children increases along with their level of purchase intention of children.

I like Ben ten and Avengers and therefore I want to have things that have their name or logo in it. I immediately asked my parents to buy Ben ten watches, Avengers T-shirts, Avengers school bags after watching the advertisements of those products in TV. I continuously asked them for a week to buy those for me. (Respondent 9 – Child)

He wants it very badly. He wants Milo every time when he goes for the cricket practice and he never forgets it. Initially he asked us to buy it for him and now he asks us money to buy it himself. Sometimes he takes the money from his father's purse without his knowledge. I believe that he is this much interested in it only because of Mathew's advertisement. (Respondent 2 – Parent)

From Respondent 9's answer it is evident that advertisements play a main role in creating purchase requests of children from their parents. Further, in the Respondent 2's answer we could also understand a point that some parents believe that their child's purchase motives are backed by their favourite celebrities. From the parent's statement we can identify that this is a belief of the parent based on the continuous observation of her child's behaviours. Children would ask or demand several times from their parents to purchase the products and this shows the children are trying to convince or influence their parents to achieve their desires (Respondent 9). Respondent 2's answer indicates that sometimes children would go even further than simply making requests in order to satisfy their desires as the child takes money from his father's purse without the knowledge of his father.

The purchase intention of parents and children should be in the same direction to have an actual purchase. There are situations where parents are against their children's decision based on their own perception regarding the products and the affordability of purchasing those products. In those situations the parents would deny the purchase request of their children and that results in some responsive behaviours by both children and parents with an intention to convince each other to achieve their intended results.

I do not like her eating Maggie noodles since earlier there was a news that Maggie is made with many artificial ingredients that are harmful to human especially children. Because of that I do not encourage her to have an interest in buying Maggie. However, she asks me whenever we go for shopping. Even though initially I bought it for her, I changed my decision after hearing the negative news. Usually, first I will explain it in a polite manner and if she is not convinced and stubborn I need to be very strict in those occasions. (Respondent 14 – Parent)

The answer of the above Respondent clearly reveals that the opinion of parents might differ from children's view and hence parents would take a decision that is against children's wish. Based on their underlined thought regarding the products, they are

against children's request and this creates dissension between parents and children. Further, parents use aggressive mechanisms to stop the continuous request of children that annoy them. Therefore, it can be said that the purchase intention of children and parents are not always in the same direction and parent's would try to convince their children and they go for aggressive measures to control the situation if the expected outcome does not occur in the first step.

Further, children would also keep their demand strong and try to convince parents to fulfil their purchase desires. Children's perception towards parents changes when the parents do not support them in fulfilling their desires and they hardly give up on their requests.

I will ask again and again and I hate my parents when they say no. They would buy if my brothers ask anything. They do not care me since they are not pay attention to what I want. I would not speak to my mom if she rejects my requests.
(Respondent 9 – Child)

The answer of Respondent 9 shows that the children engaged in several attempts to convince his parents through repeatedly asking for the product and after realizing that his wish is not supported by his parent, he started thinking something that damage the positive perception that he holds on his parents. This indicates that children's positive perception regarding their parents gets damage when the parents are against their children's purchase desires.

All the above findings reveal that children's purchase request denial by parents enhance the dissension between children parents as after the denial situation both parties try to achieve their intended results in whatever the way possible. This situation would continuously stimulate the simmering conflict and therefore we can state that advertisements with celebrities gradually leading to disagreements between parents and children which then ends up in a conflict.

The dissension between parents and children starts with the initial denial of children's purchase request by parents. After the denial, children would insist on their demand and use certain measures to influence their parents in order to change parent's decision. Children with their knowledge and experience use some mechanisms to influence their parents to make parents accept their purchase requests. These mechanisms are referred to as powers where children use certain power bases to achieve their intended results. Further, parents also use the same approach to emphasize their intention and change children's purchase intention. The powers are used after the initial dissension between parents and children or before the dissension when they expect a possible dissension.

Both children and parents use threatening as the mechanism to control the opponent in a conflict situation to ensure success in their intention.

I would not talk to anyone and if they ask me to do anything I ask them to buy that soap if they want me to do it. I do not eat or study for the whole day and just lay on the bed. I know that they don't like to see it and then only my mom would come me and listen to me. (Respondent 11 – Child)

The answer of Respondent 11 indicates that children are exposing their frustration with an aggressive behaviour if their purchase requests are denied by their parents. In the case of purchase request denial, the child was trying to threaten his parent that he would not do certain things that are not encouraged by the parents. Even though the child not directly threatening his parents, his counter behaviours and the expected results clearly show that the child is exerting threatening mechanism to achieve the intended results. Similarly, parents also use threatening mechanism.

I do not encourage those stubborn behaviours and I get angry if I notice something like that. In certain situations I had to shout and beat him to control him from asking it repeatedly and aggressively. He knows that I would become very angry if he continues and that fear actually works. (Respondent 10 – Parent)

The response of Respondent 10 shows that the parents use threatening mechanism in order to control a situation where children demanding the products in an irrepressible way. In this situation the parent with no other option had to use threatening measures in order to control the behaviours of her child. By doing this parents try to establish a fear mentality in her child's mind which the parent believe is enough to stop the aggressive behaviours of the child immediately. It is clear that the parent's measures were the responses to her child's behaviours after the denial of purchase request.

Children and parents also use rewards to meet their expected outcome in terms of purchase decision.

Yes. If he ask to buy something in a situation where I cannot afford it. I would promise him, I would buy a bigger one for his birthday in order to convince him in that situation. This happens when he is requesting Ben Ten cake while we go to bakery and the cake is very expensive to buy. He accepts it since he knows I would do if I promise. (Respondent 10 – Parent)

Yes I usually use that kind of things where I promise him to purchase what he wants if he studies every day and do what I ask him. I would say to him that he would receive the product only if I feel that he is following what I ask him. (Respondent 12 – Parent)

The responses of Respondent 10 and 12 show the influence of parents with the use of rewards. Based on the Respondent 10's response, the parent is trying to convince her child by giving promise to buy a bigger cake on his birthday. The parent believe that she can control her kind in a situation where she cannot afford the product by promising the child to buy it in the future. Further, the response of Respondent 12 shows that parents would use reward power in another way too and in this situation the parent ask her child to follow what she says and be nice to her if the child wants her to purchase the product. This is a way of promising the child to give the product he requests as a reward to his adherence to the expectations of the parent. Conversely, children use behaviours desired by parents as rewards for getting the products they desire.

Yes. He would promise me to score more marks in terms exams if I buy what he requests. He would be more kind when he says it and wants me to accept it

and therefore would accept it since it seems reasonable. He knows it very well.
(Respondent 10 – Parent)

The response of Respondent 10 clearly reveal that child providing some promise to score more marks in the term exam which the parents appreciate, if the parent buy the product that he requests. This indicate that the child was promising to give a reward to their parents in the future for the acceptance of purchase request at present. Children know that their parents accept the purchase request if they give such promise and it is referred to as excreting reward power by children.

However when the parent or children use reward power, their expected results would occur only in some situations and in other situations it could lead to negative consequences.

Yes sometimes he would promise me to do everything I want him to do when I say no to his request. But I know he says it to get what he wants at that time and never follow it afterwards. Hence I do not appreciate those claims and it annoys me when he repeatedly says it and makes me angry. I strictly say do not repeat it since I would never accept it. Then of course he would also become angry towards me. (Respondent 17 – Parent)

Based on the response of Respondent 17 it is clear that the reward does not work in favourable way all the time where in this case the parents are aware that the child is making promise just to get the product he wants and will never follow up on the promise. This would make the parent angrier and further worsen the dissension between parent and children.

Expert power is exerted by children and parents in a dissension state when children's purchase requests are denied by parents.

Yes he would start to argue with me saying that he knows about cars more than me. He used to search about cars in the internet and tell those information to me. This was inspired by his favourite celebrity Paul Walker since he also used to update himself on the information of new cars. Whenever I say no to buy car games for him he would tell that I don't know anything about cars and those games are very useful to him to learn about cars more which could help him in the future. When he argues, I could clearly see that he has a very strong thought that he knows about it better than me. (Respondent 8 – Parent)

The response of the parent clearly indicates that the child is having a strong belief that he has more knowledge about cars and car racing games than his father and when his father refuse to buy new car game CDs for him, he directly use his belief on the knowledge of cars to argue with his father and try to change his father's decision. This is a clear way of using expert power by the child where he exert expert power during a disagreement between parent and him to achieve his intention. Further, the parent stated that his child's behaviour of updating latest information about cars inspired from his child's favourite celebrity. This indicate that the expert power of children was induced by his favourite celebrity.

Most of the time parents deny the requests of children with a belief that they have more knowledge than their children about the markets and products.

Yes. That's the truth. We know what is good for them better than anyone. I strongly believe that we should not bend to their unwanted demands. Unlike them we have enough knowledge to evaluate and take a right decision about purchasing a product. I always think twice before going for a decision. I have seen so many allegation emphasizing Maggie is not good for health. She was attracted by the advertisements due to her favourite star and doesn't have enough ability to understand that the advertisements do not assure the goodness of people who buy the products. Therefore I strongly say "No" when she asks. (Respondent 14 – Parent)

The response of Respondent 14 demonstrates that the parent strongly believes that she is having more ability and knowledge to take a right purchase decision than her child. The parent also states that her child does not have enough ability to understand the reality of the advertisements which indicates that the parents believe that her child is vulnerable to advertisements especially with celebrity endorsements. In this situation the parent was exerting expert power to control the requests of her child.

All the findings reflect a systematic process where one activity leads to another activity to occur. The process starts with selection of a favourite celebrity by children, which makes them want to follow the behaviours the celebrity. These behaviours include the consumption of products the celebrities endorse. Children desire to possess the products endorsed by celebrities and demand that their parents buy them. Conflicts result in the instances that parents deny the purchases, and in these conflicts both parents and children use coercion, promise of rewards, and their relative expertise in order to convince the other party.

6. Discussion

Findings of the study indicate that children have a highly positive view of their favourite celebrities and that they like to imitate the behaviours of these stars. This is in line with the observations of Saraf (2013) who posited that celebrities' behaviours and endorsements play a dominant role in shaping children's preference and thoughts. As noted by Chan and McNeal (2004) the children in this study also consider celebrity endorsements as highly credible and they tend to believe the claims made in advertisements by their favourite celebrity. Thus, the goodwill children hold towards the celebrities spill over to the brands that is recommended in the advertisements (Khan & Lodhi, 2016). Repeated exposure to advertisements with endorsements of their favourite celebrities was identified as strengthening force of the purchase desires of children in the study, lending support to Calvert's (2008) argument that the effects of advertisements depend on how well children remember the behaviours of celebrities in the advertisement.

The findings also indicate that induced by these celebrity endorsements, children often request their parents to purchase the advertised products. Similar to previous research, parents' refusal to accede to these demands make the children unhappy (Kraak & Pelletier, 1998), which sometimes lead to conflicts between the parents and the children (Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2003).

It was also identified that the process through which celebrity endorsements influence children could be theorised using the social learning theory (Bandura, 1973), and the parent-child conflict using the bases of social power (French & Raven, 1959).

6.1 Celebrity Influence and Social Learning Theory

The social learning theory states that children learn from the society around them and adopt the behaviours of the people whom they feel attractive or special; this is referred to as observational learning. According to the concept of observational learning, a „model“, which can be a person, influences children to engage in learning mainly through informative functions and symbolic representation. Therefore, information about the model and its unique symbolic features/characteristic are considered as the key factors in influencing a person’s behaviours (Bandura, 1973). In this study the celebrities function as the models that influence children’s behaviours.

The theory emphasise that the influencing happens in a systematic process comprising four stages. All four components in the observational learning process were identified as relevant to the celebrity influence of children and the resulting inducement of purchase desire.

The theory states that the process of adopting behaviours by children starts with „attention“, which means the model’s behaviours should draw attention of children in order to influence them. Accordingly, the interview findings indicate that children get attracted by celebrities’ unique characteristics that interest them. Each of the interviewed children has a celebrity who is considered as his or her special favourite, each selected based on various attributes that the child finds attractive, be it Paul Walker the television actor, Dhoni the cricketer or Cinderella the fairy tale character. Further Bandura (1973) noted that a televised model could hold the attention of people for extended periods and that this is more effective in capturing attention since viewers learn depicted behaviours without any extra effort. From interviews, it was clear that most of the time the children observe their favourite star through television and that they are interested in watching advertisements depicting their favourite celebrity.

The second component of observational learning is „retention“ and this states that the long term retention of any activities or behaviours in the mind of a person is important to influence that person’s behaviours. The theory also states that the retention of behaviours effectively happens when the person observes the model’s behaviours in both visual and verbal form and through repetitive exposure to the observed behaviours. Research findings indicate that children receive information about celebrities and carefully observe their behaviours mainly through television due to their interests towards celebrity, which enables verbal and visual encoding. Further, it was evident that repeated exposure to advertisements enhances the children’s desire to purchase the endorsed products.

The third component of the theory is „reproduction“ which concerns with the overt action of a person backed by his/her observational learning. According to Bandura (1973) the behavioural reproduction occurs when a person puts together a set of responses similar to the observed behaviours of the model. The interview findings indicate that children attempt to imitate the behaviours of their favourite celebrity

with high interest. It is for this reason that they request parents to purchase products endorsed by the celebrity.

The final component of the theory is „reinforcement and motivation“ which states that to activate a model’s behaviour into a person’s overt performance or action, the learning should be positively sanctioned or favourably received. In other words, there should be a positive incentive for a person to imitate a model’s behaviour (Bandura, 1973). For the children in this study the primary incentive for imitating the celebrities’ behaviours and purchasing products endorsed by them is „to be like“ their favourite star. In addition, possessing various paraphernalia related to the celebrity also enables them to get recognition among their peers.

In summary, the findings indicate that celebrity endorsements induce purchase desire in children through a social learning process.

6.2 Parent-child Conflicts and Social Power

Of the five bases of social power proposed by French and Raven (1959), expert power, coercive power and reward power were identified in the dynamics of parent-child conflicts.

French and Raven (1959) stated that expert power would be exerted by a person with a belief that he/she is having more expert knowledge in the subject matter; however the other person has to believe it for the expected outcome to occur. In the case of celebrity endorsements, children believe that they have expert power regarding the purchase decisions because they believe the celebrities who endorse the products have expert knowledge. On the other hand, parents are not willing to accept this since they believe that they know what is best for the children. This leads to dissension between the parties and to conflict.

The execution of coercive power is based on threatened punishment by one person for the non-conformity to the expected results of another person (French & Raven, 1959). The findings show that children use coercive power to influence their parents by threatening negative behaviour for not complying with their requests. In these situations, parents sometimes accede to the requests in order to avoid negative consequences. However, it was evident that in most of cases parents are not influenced by children’s coercive power and instead they themselves use coercive power to control the aggressive behaviours of children. This in line with the argument of French and Raven (1959) that in order to achieve the intended results using coercive power, the opponent should be within the range of the person’s coercive power and if the opponent is not within the range of coercive power the expected results cannot be achieved. The coercive power of parents over children is far greater than vice-versa.

It should be noted that as stated by Flurry and Burns (2005), even in the instances when coercive power is successful, it ultimately leads to negative outcomes in the long term. The findings of this study also revealed that the requests of children do not end permanently with the usage of coercive power by parents and continuous use of this power creates some negative feelings in children regarding their parents. This could further intensify the conflicts between parents and children in the long run.

The concept of reward power states that a person can be influenced by another person through providing rewards for the conformity of an expected behaviour (French & Raven, 1959). Children use this power base when they promise good behaviour as a reward for the requested purchase. However, parents are often not persuaded by such promises; this creates conflict since the children realise that they have failed in influencing their parents. On the other hand, parents have better success in denying the children's purchase requests by promising other rewards or a delaying purchase as a reward for good behaviour.

7. Conclusion

This study established that celebrity endorsements influence children's purchase desires through a social learning process and that they use various social power bases in attempting to persuade their parents to purchase the advertised products. However, these attempts often fail, resulting in conflicts between the parent and child. These findings contribute to knowledge in relation to the influence advertising and marketing has on children. The study also has implications for ethically minded marketers, indicating the necessity of being prudent when using celebrities in advertisements that could have adverse impacts on children. The findings of the study also provide information to policy makers who are intent on regulating advertising practices.

A limitation of the study was that much of the data regarding parent-child conflicts had to be obtained from the parents. Although children were interviewed, they were not probed on the subject of conflict since it is a sensitive area and they could have become uncomfortable if they were pressed to provide details. This was an unavoidable limitation since it would have been an unethical research practice to subject children to questions that would have made them uncomfortable.

In terms of further research, although this study broadly established the celebrity endorsement influence of children through the social learning process and the resulting parent-child conflicts, a more detailed study of the dynamics of the social learning process could enrich this area of investigation. In particular, further research could pay greater attention to the role played by advertising and media hype in making these celebrities and their endorsements attractive to the children, and in enhancing the retention of learned observations.

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