EFFECTIVENESS OF USING THAI SUPER STARS FOR MULTIPLE BRAND ENDORSEMENT

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Abstract

*I*n Thailand, the advertisements for many leading brands use the same super stars to endorse products in television commercials (TVCs), with many super stars to choose from including Yaya (Urassaya Sperbund, Na Dej (Nadej Kukimiya), Pancake (Khemanit Jamikorn), Ken Teeradej (Theeradeth Wonpuapan), etc. This has led to questioning whether there is brand confusion and weak advertising recall by the majority of people. If many brands use the same super stars to endorse products and causes brand confusion and weak advertising recall, it would be extremely wasteful of the very large advertising budget used by these brands. However, some people have a different view that supports the super stars' brand endorsement since they believe in its effectiveness that the audience being able to recall the advertisements. Moreover, they believe the celebrities help to enhance product credibility and increase the consumers' intention to buy the products.

Hence, this research aims to determine future guidelines, procedures and solutions to help business owners and marketers deal with the issue of using super stars for multiple brand endorsement and whether it is indeed beneficial to the business or rather that it wastes a large amount of the advertising budget. The study involved a quantitative survey of 400 respondents in Bangkok and nearby provinces and used the statistical package for social science research (SPSS) software to analyze the data.

The results show that all respondents could recall TVCs endorsed by Yaya and Na Dej. Moreover, most respondents (92-96%) could remember

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บทความนี้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของวิทยานิพนธ์เรื่อง "EFFECTIVENESS OF USING THAI SUPER STARS FOR MULTIPLE BRAND ENDORSEMENT" ของ Vilai Vitayaveerasuk โดยมี ศาสตราจารย์ ดร.ยุบล เบ็ญรงค์กิจ เป็นอาจารย์ที่ปรึกษาวิทยานิพนธ์

the correct product names. They were also convinced by Yaya and Na Dej about the product being promoted in the TVCs and had formed an intention to buy the products 2 times higher than without the advertising *campaign. Furthermore the brand credibility was almost 3 times higher as a result. Heavy media weight was mentioned in the survey as a significant tool to overcome multiple brand confusion.*

INTRODUCTION

In Thailand, one phenomenon in the advertising industry is that many major brands use the same super star to endorse their products in television commercials, which is the mainstream media used. This phenomenon has attracted many super stars such as Yaya (Urassaya Sperbund)(1), Na Dej (Nadej Kukimiya), Pancake (Khemanit Jamikorn), Ken Teeradej (Theeradeth Wonpuapan) etc. (2) This has created wide controversy

regarding whether there is brand confusion and weak advertising recognition. (3) Moreover, some may recall other brands instead, and this may waste large amounts of the advertising budgets. Those in favor of the tactic argue that people can better recall the advertisements especially those who are the target group—either fans of those celebrities or users of those products. Moreover, they believe the celebrities enhance product credibility and the consumers' intention to buy the products.

Figure 1-1 Yaya (Urassaya Sperbund), one of most popular multiple brand endorsers

Figure 1-2 Na Dej (Nadej Kukimiya), one of most popular multiple brand endorsers

As Danai Deerojwong, Managing Director of Better Way (Thailand) Co., Ltd., the owner of the number one direct sales cosmetic on the Thai market, Mistine, said in positioningmag.com(4), "The Mistine brand strategically uses well known TV super stars and popular singers to endorse the brand. This indeed helps create brand awareness among mass targets in a short time, especially for a newly launched product. Since those super stars have their own large fan base, this group of fans usually follows their activities; therefore, there is high chance the fans will buy products endorsed by those super stars".

Most marketers might have the same view as Danai Deerojwong, which directs them to the same popular super stars without any concern about possible brand confusion that may occur afterwards. This phenomenon facilitates top rank stars to endorse multiple brands. For example, Pancake has presented for 24 brands, Ken Theeradej for 14 brands, Na Dej for 18 brands (5), and Yaya for 12 brands.

Using an endorser who represents many brands at the same time may cause many problems. Viewers may feel bored seeing the same presenter for many brand advertisements every day. It is also harder to manage all the related issues of these super stars. The brands need to wait in long queues until their targeted super star becomes available. Moreover, endorsement contracts need to be worked out in precise detail. The contract also allows TV commercials to be aired periodically due to the constraint of high presenter fees. This differs from general product TV commercials without well known presenters, which need unlimited airing periods. One significant, sensitive issue is the possibility of the super star's image being tarnished by a scandal: especially drugs, a love affair, or behavior and character flaws. Celebrity scandals directly affect the brand image and sales (6).

The multiple brand super star endorsement not only creates brand confusion, it also creates difficulty with how to manage the popular super star. The key challenge is how not to overexpose or dominate the brand so that consumers ultimately remember only the presenter, not the brand.

Another aspect of this phenomenon is that it completely dominates the huge advertising expenditures of the whole industry, especially media expenses in

order to ensure that people can remember the product and the brand endorsed by the multiple endorsers.

Moreover, all multiple brand celebrities command high presenter fees; for example, 3-10 million baht per one product per one TV commercial, and 100,000- 150,000 baht per one special event as the main guest (only 2-3 hours) (10). In addition, to optimize the use of these popular super stars, the brands would pay for all print materials which will be in addition to the presenter package fee.

In short, multiple brand super star endorsements need extremely high budgets, and represent a huge investment in the marketing and advertising industry. Meanwhile, the campaign might create confusion among consumers. The worst case scenario may be that the campaign ends up promoting other brands instead. Therefore, this is an interesting issue to explore and to identify future guidelines, procedures, and solutions that will fully benefit business owners and marketers or newcomers in the competition.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter considers theories that support or explain how persuasiveness in TV commercials works or does not work with regard to using multiple brand super star endorsers.

These theories are as follows:

1. Aristotle's Model of Persuasion
2. Von Restorff Effect Model
3. Taylor & Fiske's Focus-of-attention bias Model
4. Recency Effect Theory

1. Aristotle's Model of Persuasion

More than 2000 years ago, the Greek philosopher Aristotle compiled his thoughts and wrote down his views on the secret to being a persuasive speaker(11).

Ethos was originally defined by Aristotle in "On Rhetoric" as **trustworthiness** (12). He stated that an audience is more likely to be persuaded by someone whom they trust. If the audience trusts you, then they expect that what you are telling them is true. This relates to why super stars that have big groups of fans have been invited to endorse products. It is believed that the super stars' fans will definitely be persuaded to use the products automatically due to the belief and the trust they have in the super stars. That means the product will suddenly have a big group of prospective users; hence, the product owners ignore the possibility of brand confusion from multiple brand endorsement. Moreover, they believe the endorsed product will also look more credible and attractive to consumers.

Additionally, the speaker's trustworthiness will be enhanced if the audience believes in the speaker's strong moral character encompassing such virtues as honesty, ethics, and generosity. This is why product owners seek good characteristics in endorsers—it is safe for the image of the brand in the long term.

Aristotle also broadened this definition of ethos to add that we are more likely to be persuaded by someone who is similar to us, whether by their intrinsic characteristics (for example, physical age, gender, race) or by the qualities they adapt (such as youthful language, youthful dress, mannerisms and overall style to match the audience) (12).

One case that can be used to support this concept is the case of True Move, a mobile phone service provider chose Na Dej who has a Northeastern Thai background to play the role of a Northeastern representative to promote True Move's wide signal, which reach the Northeastern area of Thailand. True Move disregarded Na Dej's reputation as one of the most popular multiple brand presenters. True Move believes in the effectiveness of similarity persuasion in both the product and service business(13) (14).

A speaker's or presenter's experience, expertise, achievement, reputation or recognition by others, awards,

testimonials earned, records achieved, and milestones reached can enhance the level of credibility perceived by the audience(12). This is a reason why a popular super star and well known celebrity is often used to endorse products and brands.

2. Von Restorff Effect

One more theory related to this research hypothesis is the Von Restorff Effect (15) or Isolation Effect which says "we remember things that stand out (16)."

The Von Restorff effect was identified by Hedwig von Restorff in 1933. She conducted a set of memory experiments around isolated and distinctive items, concluding that an isolated item, in a list of otherwise similar items, would be better remembered than an item in the same relative position in a list where all items were similar(16). The Von Restorff effect contradicts the multiple brand endorsement phenomenons that viewers can remember most brands which use the same endorser.

3. Taylor & Fiske's Focus-of-attention bias Model

The third principle that supports this research hypothesis is the Taylor & Fiske study, (1978) that stipulates a "focus-of-attention bias" model. Taylor & Fiske presented the tendency to overestimate on the tone, content of the conversation, and a greater causal impact of whoever or whatever we focus our attention on (17). This fully supports why marketers are interested in super stars endorsements even though those super stars are endorsing many brands simultaneously. The fact that many Thai consumers love soap operas and watch those super stars on the screen every day creates influence and causal impact. When super stars talk about products, it increases the intention to buy the products among the audience.

4. Recency Effect Theory

The last theory that can be used to support this phenomenon is the Recency Effect(18). The theory was developed by Miller and Campbell in 1959, who argued that we tend to remember the last or recent things more than those that came earlier(19). This also has the most effect in repeated persuasion messages when there is a delay between the messages (20) (21).

This study investigated whether respondents could better recall the brands seen in the last or in a more recent commercial. The result would be used to help maximize the benefit from marketing promotion and TV commercial media planning.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research used a quantitative method of survey to collect data from the users and non-users of products that were promoted by multiple brand endorsers in TV commercials.

Survey Respondents

Since the topic is concerned with super stars with huge numbers of fans in Thailand, the study was required to focus on those super stars doing multiple brand endorsements. Their fans are 15–60 years old, both female and male from various careers and consist of both product users and non-users. Using the Taro Yamane sample size with 95 per cent confidence levels and a 5 per cent error rate for an infinite population size, the sample size was set at 400 respondents.

The study focused on two Thai super stars, one male and one female. In order to avoid gender bias and age bias, the 400 respondents were equally split by gender into 200 males and 200 females, and respondents in each age group were set as follows:

1. 15-17 years old: 70 respondents

2. 18-22 years old: 70 respondents

3. 23-29 years old: 70 respondents

4. 30-39 years old: 70 respondents

5. 40-49 years old: 60 respondents

6. 50-60 years old: 60 respondents

Definition of Users and Non-users

Users were defined as those who currently use, have used, or intend to buy the products, regardless of whether they are admirers of those celebrities.

Non-users were defined as those who do not currently use, have not purchased, or have no intention to buy the products.

Survey Questionnaire

The survey questionnaire was divided into 5 parts as follows:

Respondent's personal information

Respondent's media consumption, mainly focusing on TV and internet use

Yaya endorsed brand's recall, recognition, intention to buy and trust.

Na Dej endorsed brand's recall, recognition, intention to buy and trust.

Summarizing questions on reactions to TVCs with endorser vs. TVCs that use other elements.

Survey Location

The survey was conducted in public places where passersby were relaxed and willing to answer a long questionnaire and share useful information. The public locations were in Bangkok and nearby provinces which included Nonthaburi, Prathumthani, and Samutprakan.

Field Work Process

Field work staff asked an unaided question first. If respondents were not able to recall the advertising, then the interviewer guided them a little more on the product category and asked the same question. If the interviewee still could not recall, the staff would supply the product name.

Data Collected

This research involved only the most popular super stars during the current period who were Na Dej and Yaya. Both were able to target and reach all viewer groups.

The following data were collected from each respondent:

What TVC advertisements could the respondent recall (only TVCs endorsed by Na Dej and Yaya) by unaided and aided questions, among product users and non-users

Why they still can recall the advertisement (what factors?)

How much is product credibility influenced by multiple brand super star endorsement?

How much was the consumers' intention to buy the products influenced by multiple brand super star endorsement?

Data Collection Method

All classified data from filled questionnaires was manually collated into a table (tabulation) using numeric codes (1, 2, 3, 4…) to facilitate data processing.

Data Analysis

Factors which are mentioned more or receive a high score indicate a high advertisement (ad) recall and that multiple brand celebrity endorsement does not affect consumers' brand confusion.

Find out what were the most frequently mentioned factors in recalling the advertisement.

Use statistical package for social science research (SPSS) software to analyze and tabulate the data.

Graph data using bar charts to facilitate analysis and better view the study results.

FINDINGS

It is worth noticing that the results from respondents of the Yaya TVC recall were almost the same as the results obtained from the Na Dej TVC recall. The main findings were:

1. Media Consumption

The media consumption behavior of respondents was studied to determine whether it influenced the ad recall or not.

Websites Usually Visited

Figure 4-1 clarifies the website visit behavior of interviewees. The most visited websites were search engines, social networks, free email, and Thai portal websites or variety websites, respectively. The majority of respondents, no matter what websites they visited, could recall Na Dej TV commercials and brands correctly without hints on the product information.
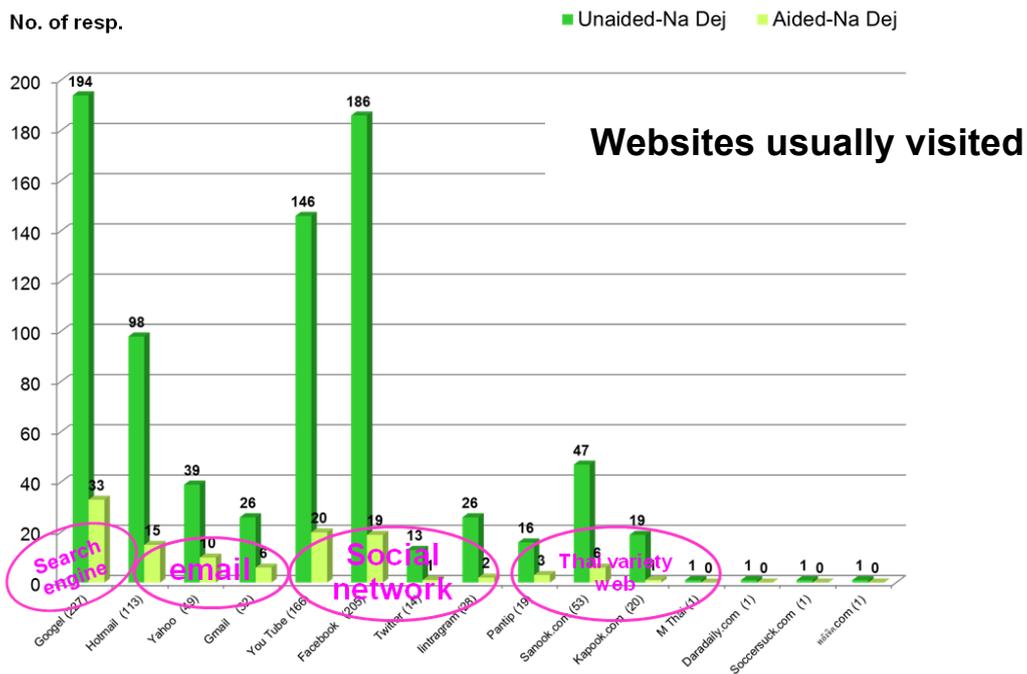
Figure 4-1 Bar chart of survey results based on websites usually visited by respondents who viewed TV commercials endorsed by Na Dej.

2. Yaya and Na Dej TVC Endorsement

This part comprises 3 main questions: firstly, whether each respondent could recall TV commercials endorsed by Yaya and Na Dej who are multiple brand endorsers; secondly, what factors drove them to recall the ads; and lastly, whether they were convinced and willingto buy the product endorsed by Yayaand Na Dej.

TVC or Brand Recall

Figure 4-2 summarizes the main results of this survey and indicates that most of the interviewees could mention only one brand from TV commercials endorsed by Yaya without hints. The recall gradually decreased as the number of brands increased from 1 to 5 with fewer people able to remember more brands. One interesting point was that the number of respondents who were able to recall TV commercials by being aided—either by product category or by product information —have increased.

However, as shown in Figure 4-2, the number in the aided ad recall group was still very small indicating that even though respondents were given more clues, they were still unable to recall the TVC.
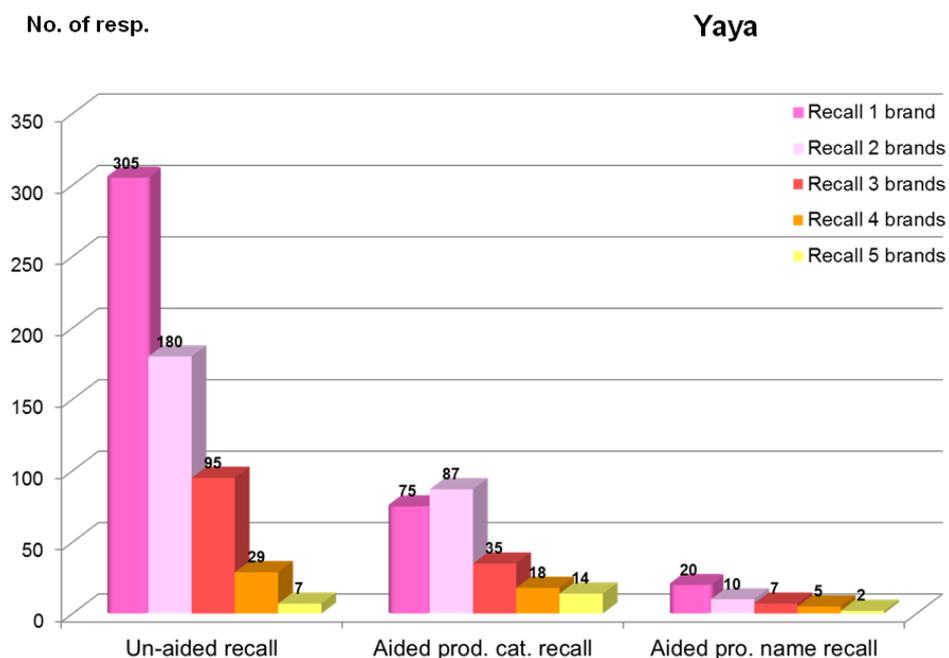

Figure 4-2 Bar chart of survey results based on brands or TVC recall endorsed by Yaya.

Correct/ incorrect Recall

When respondents were asked to name brands or TVC endorsed by Yaya and Na Dej, they could correctly mention brands at a very high rate (95.7% and 92.3%, respectively) as shown in Figure 4-3. This was the case for all 3 groups (unaided, aid by hinting the product category, or aid by hinting the product name).
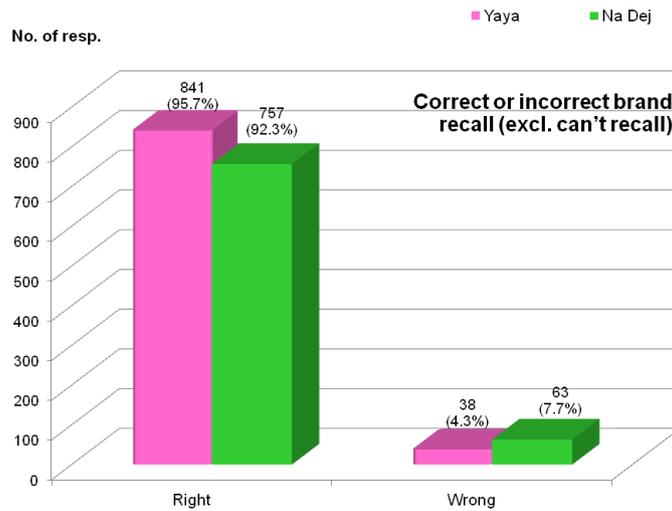

Figure 4-3 Bar chart of survey results based on correct recall of brands or TV commercials by respondents.

User and Non-user on Brand and TVC Recall

Figure 4-4 clearly indicates that product users—either currently use or used to use—had better brand and TVC recall.
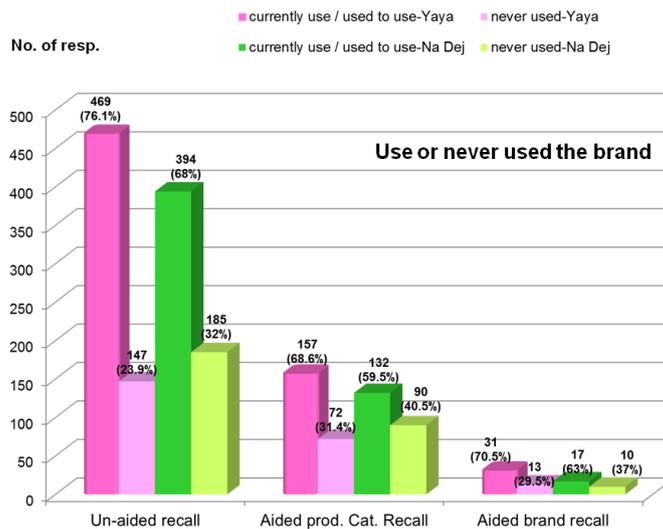
Figure 4-4 Bar chart of survey results on the use of product and TVC recall.

Convincing Power of Endorsers

Figure 4-5 shows that both endorsers (Yaya and Na Dej) could convince respondents to buy the endorsed brands almost 2 times more than the group who did not think that the endorsers could convince them to buy the products.
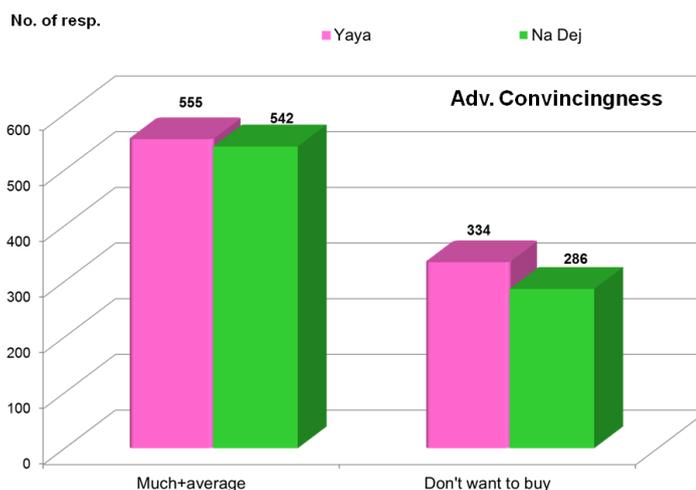
Figure 4-5 Bar chart of survey results based on whether TVC endorsed by Yaya and Na Dej could convince respondents to buy product.

Factors Promoting TV ad Recall

Another result that was very important in this study is shown in Figure 4-6. The most influential factors assisting recall of the ad better were media weight, the endorser herself (Yaya), and the endorser's personality relevant to the endorsed brand personality, respectively.
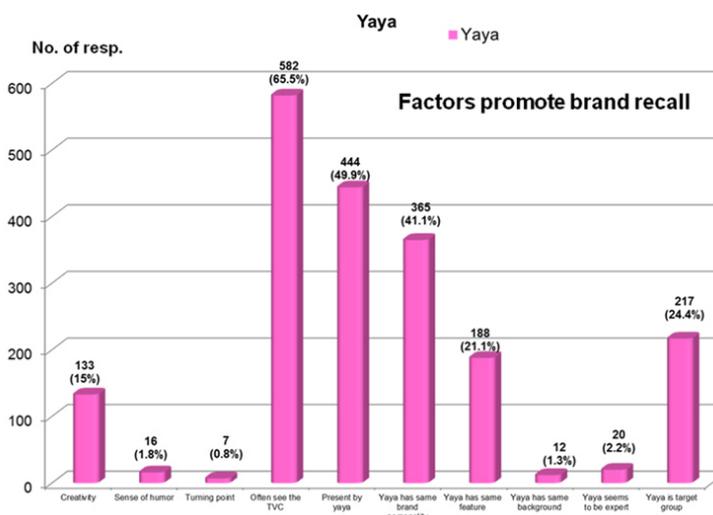
Figure 4-6 Bar chart of survey results based on factors promoting TVC recall endorsed by Yaya.

Multiple-Brand Endorser vs. Brand Credibility

Figure 4-7 shows that respondents believed that Yaya could create credibility for the endorsed brands.
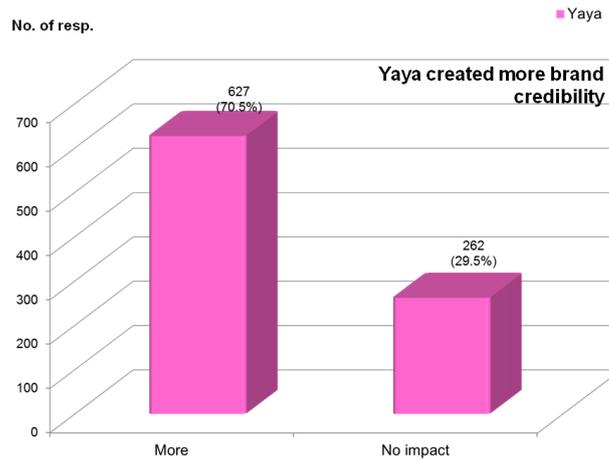
Figure 4-7 Bar chart of survey results based on credibility of brands endorsed by Yaya.

3. Summarized Question

The last part of the study investigated whether the respondents thought that using super star endorsements was a better strategy, or would they rather see other methods than super star endorsement.

Alternatives to using super star endorser.

Respondents were asked if the TV commercials did not use super star endorsement, what should be used instead. Most replies referred to other outstanding elements and creativity as shown in Figure 4-8.
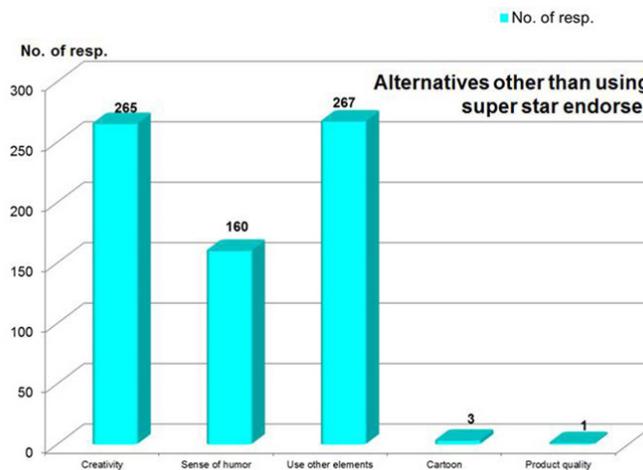
Figure 4-8 Bar chart of survey results based on what respondents prefer rather than using super star endorsement.

Other Elements Instead of Super Star Endorsement

When asked about outstanding elements that could be used instead of super star endorsement, most respondents preferred using catchwords and beautiful locations as shown in Figure 4-9.
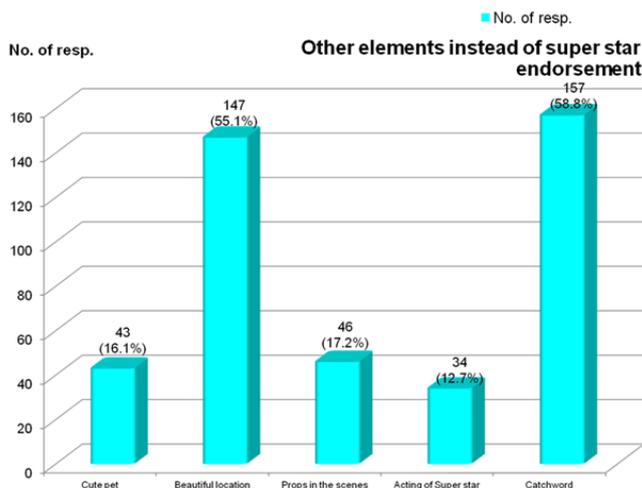

Figure 4-9 Bar chart of survey results based on other elements that respondents prefer if not super star endorsement

Super Star Endorsement vs. Other executions (other elements)

When respondents were asked whether they preferred super star endorsement or some other means, they tended to select super star more than other options, as shown in Figure 4-10.
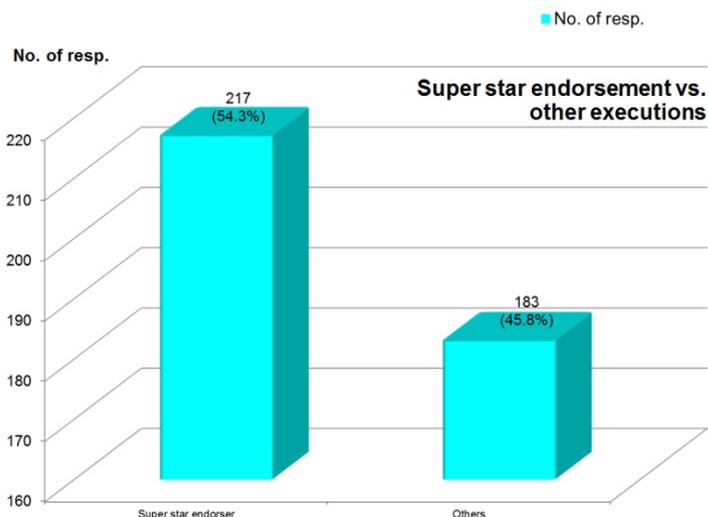

Figure 4-10 Bar chart of survey results based on super star endorsement vs. other executions.

CONCLUSIONS

The survey results answered the study objectives as follows:

Most respondents could recall TVC ads endorsed by Yaya and Na Dej, who are both multiple brand super star endorsers. They could recall at least 1 TVC and up to 5 TVCs, especially the recent ads. This is relevant to the Recency Effect theory, which is the tendency to remember the last or most recent thing. Moreover, from this study, 92-96% of the respondents could recall the right products or brands.

Respondents with more free time watching television all had higher unaided ad recall without hints at information. This relates to the Taylor & Fiske study which states that people tend to be more influenced by the speaker they hear more often.

One interesting observation was that people received and could recall star news (either gossip news, star endorsers, endorsed product or advertising) from Facebook more than any other website. This media channel has become more and more powerful and is of great benefit to all marketers including business owners with limited marketing budgets.

From this study, people who currently use the products or had used the products could recall the TVCs of the products better than the group who did not use the products. The Von Restorff Effect, which says "we remember things that stand out," indicates the products we currently use or had used are also isolated or outstanding in our minds; therefore, we can better recall these products and their TVC.

Respondents who were fans of Yaya and Na Dej could recall their ads better; they had been convinced by Yaya and Na Dej in the respective TVCs and believed what the endorsers said about the product. They also trusted the brand or the brand credibility almost 3 times more than the group who were not fans of Yaya and Na Dej. They also had twice the intention to buy the products

than non-fans. Based on the concept of Ethos, an audience would be more persuaded by someone whom they trust, as that belief makes them feel the message being told to them is true.

Super stars with the same or close personalities or backgrounds or experience (with the products or the audience) could be more convincing and invoke higher trust in the product or the brand. According to the ethos concept, we would be more easily persuaded by someone who is similar to us. The sample group were convinced and had more faith in as well as acceptance of the products endorsed by Yaya and Na Dej.

In conclusion, multiple brand super star endorsement efficiently creates brand communication success; super stars are able to be convincing and credible in brand promotion among their fans or the majority of consumers. The most important point is that the audienceprefers to use super star endorsement much more than other means since super stars are more attractive visually. Heavy media weight, therefore, play a significant role in overcoming multiple brand confusion. The right timing of media exposure (just prior to the time the consumer makes the decision to buy the product) is needed to promote product recall to produce maximum sales results.

One remarkable result should be noted. For brands with a limited budget to attract consumers instead of using super stars, respondents from this survey stated they would rather prefer the TVC to include a catchword, beautiful location, creativity, or a sense of humor.

Survey Limitation

The survey was undertaken under trying conditions. We controlled the size of each age and gender group for the final analysis comparison. This made the tracking field work harder to manage. Meanwhile, due to this rigid quota limitation, other

respondents' qualifications—educational level, income rate, occupation and marital status—were neglected and fluctuated in the sample, so that in the end, the sizes of these qualification groups were too small to examine meaningfully. The suggested solution is to conduct the study with a bigger sample scope in the future.

As the research formed part of a Master's Degree program, the limited budget meant that it was more difficult to manage this broad mass communication topic. The survey proceeded as best as it could within the available budget.

Discussion

Respondents mostly were able to recall 1 brand or 1 TVC and generally the recall was of TV commercials that were being aired currently or had been shown recently. This highlighted an important media planning strategy to run TVCs at the most suitable time with exposure just prior to the time that consumers make the decision to buy a product or to attend a promoted event.

The use of heavy media weight is also another significant strategy in multiple brand super star endorsement. People who have seen the ads frequently will easily promote ad recall.

Finally, the marketers' must decide whether to adopt a multiple brand endorser strategy and to spend a very large media budget, or to use other low cost options to build the brand and sales.

Recommendations

This study should proceed further with a higher number of respondents to any future quantitative study. This would yield more precise survey results. Each group of each topic studied should be large enough to achieve statistically verifiable results.

Another recommendation is that by showing real mock up commercials on what execution should be used instead of super star endorsements, interviewees might be able to share more information that they might not yet know or think until they see the real TVC.

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