

 New Study From MEC Shows 18-34 Year-Old Shoppers Trust Their Idols

NEW YORK—Young adults are more likely to purchase a product or service based on the recommendation of a celebrity endorser than older shoppers, according to a new study by leading media agency Mediaedge:cia (MEC).

The report revealed that 30 percent of respondents aged 18-34 said they would try a product promoted by an admired celebrity compared to 14 percent of consumers in the 35-54 age group and 11 percent of respondents aged 55-plus.

Additionally, the survey showed that the younger group was also almost 50 percent more likely than their older counterparts to recommend a celebrity-endorsed product to others.

Those were only some of the findings of the wide-ranging report, dubbed MEC's Celebrity Endorsement SENSOR, which was conducted in early 2009 among a nationally representative sample of U.S. consumers aged 18 years and older.

Other survey findings included the following:

The majority of Americans pursue celebrities via news outlets (58 percent), and information on the Internet (31 percent).

Adults ages 18-34 and men are most likely to engage with celebrities via digitally related activities such as posting comments on blogs that cover celebrities, becoming a friend of a celebrity on a social networking site, and forwarding a celebrity link, picture or video to others online.

Interest in celebrities declines significantly as consumers get older.

The report also revealed that 35 percent of respondents believe celebrity endorsements improve a brand's awareness, help define its personality, and generate interest.

But the survey also revealed an important caveat about using celebrity endorsers that advertisers should keep in mind: More than half of those surveyed (53 percent) said they have trouble remembering which celebrities are endorsing which brands and only notice a brand if it's in a category they are interested in.

Although 25 percent of all adults have had their purchase influenced, either positively or negatively, by celebrity endorsers, advertisers have to be selective in their choice of celebrities, said Fran Kennish, Strategic Planning Director for Mediaedge:cia, who reported the study's findings along with MEC MediaLab Supervisor Ed Kavilanz.

A careful match of the celebrity personality, the category and the brand they represent, and the consumer can magnify the value and the effectiveness of celebrities as a communication vehicle.

The survey also showed that not all product and service categories are created equal as far as celebrity endorsements are concerned: fashion, beauty/fragrance, luxury goods and sporting equipment get the most benefit from celebrity endorsement.

For most categories, celebrity endorsers ranked low against 23 other purchase influencers, losing out to other factors and touch points like pricing, TV ads and product reviews. But when viewed against fashion, beauty/fragrance, luxury goods and sporting equipment celebrity endorsements have a stronger influence, ranking in the top 10 purchase influencing factors.

There's no doubt that celebrity endorsement can play a valuable and important role in today's complex marketing environment, said Kennish.

Celebrity endorsement drives brand saliency, can evoke closer consumer engagement with the brand and, under optimal conditions, drives purchase.

But marketers need to remember that it resonates more with specifically defined audiences where an underlying connection between the consumer and the celebrity already exists.

The survey was part of a larger, global study of celebrity endorsements by MEC MediaLab of more than 24,000 consumers across 25 countries.

That study showed

that while celebrity endorsement is still an effective marketing tool, consumer appetite for it is waning. </p><p align="justify">Almost a third of consumers (29 percent) across the globe said that celebrity endorsements influence their purchasing decisions and one in four (25 percent) have bought a product because a celebrity was promoting it. ♦ But the majority (65 percent) of respondents said they believe that too many products are promoted by celebrities in their country. ♦♦ </p><p align="justify">♦ While the impact of celebrity endorsement may be waning, it remains an important and effective marketing tool for many brands, ♦ said Damian Thompson, global head of consumer insight at MEC . ♦ ♦ However, it appears that interest in celebrity culture has peaked in some countries and marketers need to be more strategic in their use of celebrity endorsements. ♦ They must analyze and understand the fit between celebrity, brand, and consumer ♦ along with a celebrity ♦ s relationship with the media ♦ to implement a well thought-through activation plan and measurable return. ♦ </p><p align="justify">♦ </p>