

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In today's dynamic and competitive marketplace, brands are constantly seeking innovative strategies to influence consumer behavior and strengthen brand recall. One such powerful marketing tool is celebrity endorsement, where popular personalities are used to promote products and services. Celebrities, by virtue of their fame, credibility, and aspirational appeal, can significantly impact how consumers perceive a brand. Their association with a product often builds trust, enhances visibility, and creates an emotional connection with the audience. This strategy is especially prevalent in the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector, including the ice cream industry, where purchasing decisions are often impulsive and emotionally driven.

This study focuses on Mercely's Ice Cream, a brand that has gained popularity in Kerala for its unique flavors and quality. As the brand explores celebrity endorsements to expand its reach and attract younger demographics, it becomes essential to understand how such marketing efforts influence consumer buying behavior. The study aims to analyze consumer perceptions, the effectiveness of celebrity endorsers in creating brand recall, and the impact of these endorsements on actual purchasing decisions. By doing so, it seeks to provide actionable insights for Mercely's Ice Cream to enhance its marketing strategy and strengthen its presence in a competitive market.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Celebrity endorsement has long been recognized as a powerful marketing tool, particularly in the FMCG sector, where consumer choices are often influenced by emotional appeal and brand recognition. In recent years, the ice cream industry has witnessed increased competition, with brands striving to differentiate themselves through innovative marketing strategies. Mercely's Ice Cream, known for its high-quality products and unique flavors, is no exception. The company has begun leveraging celebrity endorsements to enhance its visibility and consumer appeal, particularly among younger audiences. The role of celebrities in shaping consumer behavior, creating trust, and driving purchasing decisions has been widely studied, yet the specific impact of such endorsements on Mercely's Ice Cream remains underexplored. This study aims to bridge that gap by analyzing how celebrity

endorsements influence the buying behavior of consumers and contribute to the brand's overall success.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the growing use of celebrity endorsements in marketing, there remains a lack of detailed research on how these endorsements specifically impact consumer buying behavior in the ice cream industry. While celebrity endorsements have been shown to increase brand awareness and influence consumer decisions in various sectors, it is unclear how such strategies affect consumer attitudes, brand loyalty, and purchasing intentions for Mercely's Ice Cream. As the brand continues to expand its market presence, understanding the effectiveness of these endorsements is crucial. This study seeks to address the gap by examining how celebrity endorsements shape consumer perceptions and drive purchase behavior, ultimately helping Mercely's Ice Cream refine its marketing strategy and improve consumer engagement.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study holds significant value for both academic research and practical marketing strategy. By investigating the impact of celebrity endorsements on consumer buying behavior with respect to Mercely's Ice Cream, it contributes to the broader understanding of how celebrity influence can drive purchasing decisions in the competitive ice cream market. The findings will offer valuable insights for marketers, brand managers, and businesses looking to leverage celebrity endorsements to enhance brand visibility and consumer loyalty. Furthermore, this research will provide Mercely's Ice Cream with actionable data on consumer preferences, allowing the company to optimize its marketing efforts and align its strategies with the desires and behaviors of its target audience. Ultimately, the study will help bridge the gap between theory and practice, offering practical recommendations for effectively utilizing celebrity endorsements in a rapidly evolving marketplace.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study focuses on the impact of celebrity endorsement on consumer buying behavior specifically concerning Mercely's Ice Cream. It aims to analyze how celebrity associations with the brand influence consumer perceptions, purchasing intentions, and overall brand loyalty. The study will be limited to a specific demographic, primarily targeting consumers within Kerala, where Mercely's Ice Cream has a notable presence. The research will explore various factors such as consumer awareness of celebrity endorsements, emotional connections with the endorsers, and the effectiveness of these endorsements in shaping purchasing decisions. The findings will provide insights into how celebrity endorsements can be strategically used to enhance the brand's positioning in the competitive ice cream market, with recommendations for improving future marketing campaigns.

1.6 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To examine the influence of celebrity endorsements on consumer awareness and brand recall for Mercely's Ice Cream.
- To assess the impact of celebrity endorsements on consumer attitudes towards Mercely's Ice Cream.
- To analyze the relationship between celebrity endorsements and consumer purchasing intentions.
- To explore how celebrity endorsements affect brand loyalty among consumers of Mercely's Ice Cream.
- To provide recommendations on improving marketing strategies for Mercely's Ice Cream through effective celebrity endorsements.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.7.1 Research Design

This study will adopt a **descriptive research design** to examine the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement and its impact on consumer buying behavior, specifically with respect to **Mercely's Ice Cream**. A descriptive approach is appropriate as it facilitates

a detailed exploration of consumer attitudes, perception of celebrity endorsements, and actual purchasing patterns. The study aims to uncover trends and associations between variables such as consumer trust, recall value of endorsements, perceived product quality, and purchase intention—ultimately providing insights into how celebrity endorsements influence consumer behavior toward Mercely's Ice Cream.

1.7.2 Data Collection

The study will gather data using both **primary and secondary sources** to provide a comprehensive analysis of the effect of celebrity endorsements:

- **Primary Data:** Primary data will be collected through **structured questionnaires and interviews** with customers of Mercely's Ice Cream. The questionnaire will focus on factors such as consumer awareness of celebrity endorsements, their perception of the endorsed brand, level of influence on purchase decisions, and brand loyalty. In-depth interviews will also be conducted with **marketing executives, advertising professionals, and selected consumers** to gain insight into the strategic use of celebrity endorsements and consumer reactions.
- **Secondary Data:** Secondary data will be sourced from **existing marketing reports, advertising campaign analyses, brand performance statistics, and academic literature** on celebrity endorsements. This will help contextualize primary findings within broader marketing trends and support comparison with other brands in the FMCG or ice cream sector.

1.7.3 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

The study will use a **non-probability sampling method**, specifically **convenience sampling**, due to time and accessibility constraints. This technique will help the researcher collect data from readily available consumers of Mercely's Ice Cream. The sample will include a diverse group of respondents across age, gender, and income segments to ensure varied consumer perspectives are captured. The **target sample size**

will be approximately 100 participants, which will help ensure sufficient data for both quantitative and qualitative analysis.

1.7.4 Data Analysis Tools and Techniques

Both **quantitative and qualitative analysis methods** will be used to derive meaningful insights from the collected data:

- **Quantitative Analysis:** Survey responses will be analyzed using tools like **Percentage Analysis and Descriptive Statistics** to identify consumer preferences, attitudes towards celebrity endorsers, brand recall, and purchase frequency. These tools will help quantify the impact of celebrity endorsements on consumer buying behavior.
- **Qualitative Analysis:** Thematic analysis will be employed to evaluate responses from interviews. This will help identify recurring themes such as emotional connection with the celebrity, perceived authenticity, and how these endorsements shape buying behavior. This qualitative insight will provide depth to the numerical data and offer recommendations on optimizing endorsement strategies for Mercely's Ice Cream.

1.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- The study is limited to consumers in Kerala, which may not reflect the purchasing behavior of consumers in other regions.
- The sample size of 100 participants may not fully represent the entire consumer base of Mercely's Ice Cream.
- The use of convenience sampling might introduce bias, as it only includes participants who are readily available and willing to participate.
- The study focuses on short-term effects of celebrity endorsements, without considering long-term impacts on brand loyalty and consumer behavior.
- Data collection will rely on self-reported surveys and interviews, which may be influenced by social desirability bias or inaccurate responses.
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