



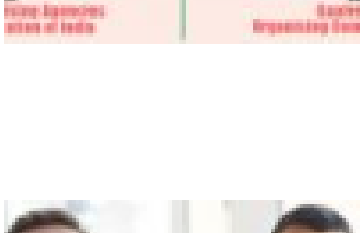
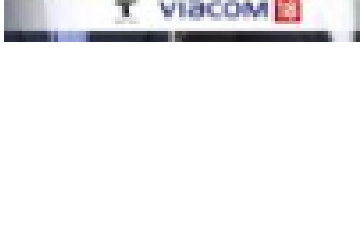


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Actors, being huge influencers, need to be mindful while endorsing brands: Experts

by **Smitha Sapaliga** — April 22, 2022 in Exclusive, Featured 4 min read



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Actors have always been role models for many, especially the younger generation in the country who follow their each and every action minutely. Brands, like celebrities, use celebrity endorsements to reach the masses and increase sales. It is the actor's commitment towards society that should lead him to make the right decision on choosing the endorsements as the impact would be extensive.



Akshay Kumar recently faced a backlash for endorsing a pan masala brand, Vimal Elaichi. His fans and well-wishers countered him on his strong statement made a few years back against endorsing tobacco brands, and now he is going for it. He finally issued an apology statement on his Twitter and Instagram accounts, stating that he will not endorse any tobacco brands in the future and will be cautious in his future decisions.

On the other hand, the Pushpa-famous Allu Arjun rejected an endorsement from a Pan Masala company without a second thought, even after being offered a hefty sum. The actor does not consume tobacco and hence doesn't want his fans to watch the ad and start consuming the product, which is harmful to health and can also lead to addiction.

Many actors, like John Abraham, Anushka Sharma, Kangana Ranaut, Sai Pallavi, Ranbir Kapoor, and Emraan Hashmi, have rejected endorsements for fairness creams, tobacco, liquor brands, etc. in the past on moral grounds. Today, social media demonstrated its power, with Akshay withdrawing from the tobacco ad after being heavily trolled. Such incidents have brought back into discussion whether public figures should be socially responsible.

Ramya Ramachandran, CEO and Founder, Whoppl, believes that "Actors should avoid endorsing tobacco brands because today's younger generation try to emulate what actors/influencers do, and we do know how tobacco is seriously injurious to health and causes cancer."

Ramya Ramachandran "When an actor has a fan following, they're building a cult-right from dressing the same way, to accessorizing the same way, and many a time, even copying the same hairstyle! As a moral responsibility, they should definitely not endorse such products, especially if they don't consume them. In the past, we have seen actors do surrogate advertising to increase brand visibility and retention. One must stay true to their ethos," she added.

Neha Bahri, Director, Bconnect Communications, seems to disagree with Ramya's observation. She remarked, "Endorsing any brand is a personal choice for any celebrity. A celebrity's image is not created by only endorsing brands. They have their own identity as well. As a fan of these celebrities, it depends upon individuals to like or hate them. They might get haters, or they might have those fans themselves. As fans, they are there on the basis of their movie. Not what they are doing personally. Celebrities can fulfill their social obligations in a variety of ways."

"As the comparison is made between the Bollywood stars and Tollywood stars, this demonstrates that each individual is different and has a difference of opinion about endorsing the brand. One is perfectly fine with endorsing, while the other is not. Two different people have two different interests and values. It's a game about perception. As mentioned earlier, it's an individual choice. In a similar way, it will depend on the fans to accept them or hate them. I think it won't have a major impact on the fans. In the end, celebrities make money through endorsements. On the other hand, as fans identify themselves with the celebrity and the brand that the celebrity is endorsing, it might hurt the sentiments of some fans. They might lose some fans as well," Neha added.

Echoing Neha's observations, **Jagdeep Kapoor, Founder, Chairman, and Managing Director of Samsika Marketing Consultants Pvt. Ltd.,** said, "It is a brand choice." It is a personal choice. If selling a product category is legitimate, promoting it should also be. If a product is considered not good for society, it should be stopped. But allowing a product to be sold but not being allowed to be told is hypocritical. If you can sell, you can tell. Whether to endorse or not is a brand choice of the company, and whether to endorse is a personal choice of the celebrity. If sales have a choice, then endorsement should have a voice."

According to **Anjali Rawat, Co-Founder and Chief Creative Officer, Digital Dogs Content and Media,** "Actors with massive influence over the masses are called "social stars," and they, therefore, have a tremendous responsibility indeed."

"If the public discourse is against the use of tobacco and the youth are better off not falling into the tobacco usage habit cycle, it is important for big names to avoid endorsing such products and brands. From a societal standpoint, it is better off to stay away from such endorsements, and from a commercial point of view, it is smart business to not be seen in mass media as an active ambassador for such brands. If the credibility is diluted, the actors will tend to get lower fees for their subsequent endorsements," she added.



Rawat further added, "To be clear, each actor as a commercial product, is free to choose their brands for endorsements. The colas in India have been endorsed by actors like Shah Rukh and Aamir Khan for more than one brand. The real point is public sentiment and social impact. It is indeed ironic, no doubt. However, fans are by definition, illogical. No one becomes a fan by logical evaluation. Logic breeds support, maybe. Fandom comes from emotional and identifier markers. Inasmuch as many Allu Arjun fans will not touch tobacco or eschew it, it can be assumed that many Akshay fans will be adopting it too. Isn't that the intent of the advertising campaign to begin with? But yes, the polarization and opposite actions are quite ironic. Today, irony is a great fodder for memes and I am looking forward to interesting memes conveying this irony."

Chandan Bagwe, Founder- Director, C Com Digital, commented, "Ideally it is a personal choice, but when celebrities endorse, they also influence people and their fans. That is something they must keep in mind. Sometimes the brands they endorse are what they get identified with. Like Deepika said she will never endorse a fairness product. Each celebrity needs to stand for something, and it is their moral responsibility."

"As we saw today Akshay has already issued a statement that he will not endorse Pan masala brands. It is with decisions like this that a celebrity stands out and builds a strong cult around themselves. It is time for celebrities to now stand out and make use of their image for the greater good of society," **Bagwe** concluded.

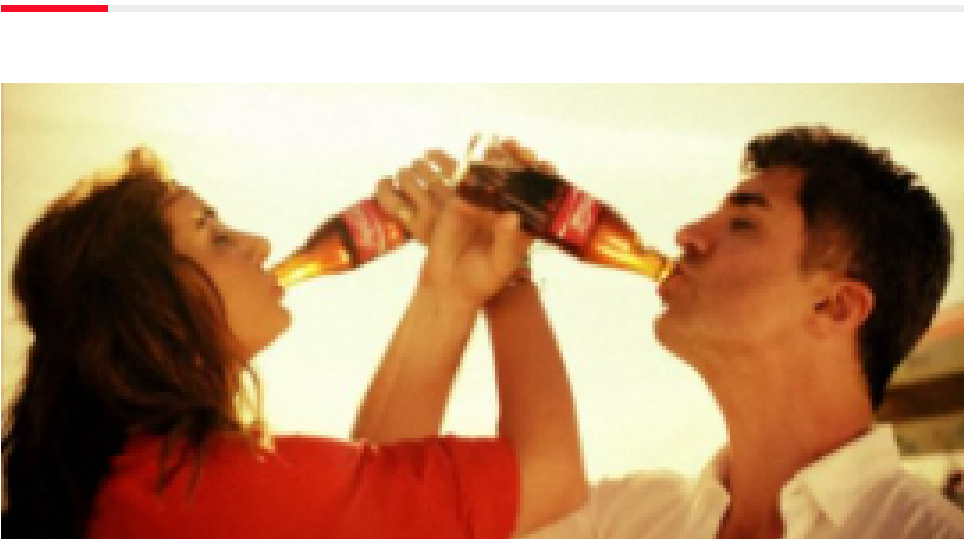
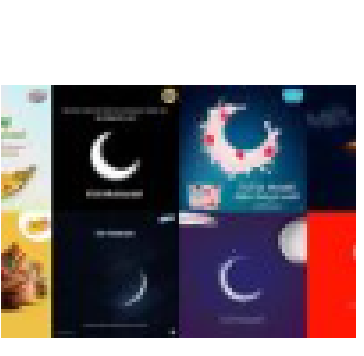
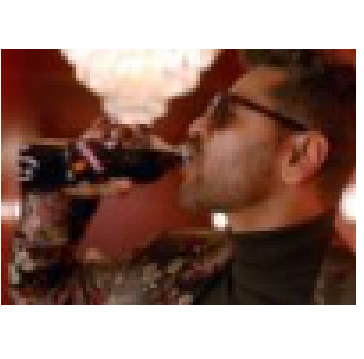


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