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Kate Topshop: Celebrity Endorsement & the Lovemarks Concept in a Fashion Retail Context

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University of Stirling.
Introduction

• Context and motives of the research.
  ...aim and objectives.

• Literature and practical background.
  ...methodology.

• Findings.

• Conclusions and further research.
Context and Motives

Provenance of Celebrity Endorsement:

- Based on assumption that personal attributes of the celebrities may be conveyed onto the brand.
- Implies that brands may possess ‘human qualities’ and ‘personalities’.
- Evidence in literature and practice.

Charles Frederick Worth  
Audrey Hepburn for Chanel  
Jackie Kennedy for Givenchy
• Is ‘the brand’ an obsolete concept?

• Roberts (2005):
  – ‘Emotion ‘is the component determining brand strength and power.
  – Powerful brands become “a loved part of customers’ lives”.
Aim and Objectives

- Explore Lovemarks in context of another marketing concept:
  - What emotions does Topshop evoke – is it a Lovemark?
  - What emotions does Kate Moss evoke – is she a Lovemark?
  - What salience and fit is there between Kate Moss and Topshop?
  - Is the Lovemark concept a useful means of planning celebrity endorsement?
Successful endorsement demands connection of personal attributes of the celebrity with those of the brand:

- Attractiveness
- Credibility
- Expertise
- Lifestyle
- Social success
- Reputation...
Emotion & personality in branding:

- Fournier ’98
- Richins ’97
- Laros & Steenkamp ’05
- Aaker ’04
- Otnes ’97
- Horn & Gurel ’77
- Carroll ‘08

Consumers interpret brands emotionally and attribute personal qualities to them;

Especially the case in consumption of highly symbolic goods;

Contemporary brand management makes tangible differentiation difficult.
# Lovemarks

- Roberts ‘05
- Cooper & Pawle ’06

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRIMARY</th>
<th>SECONDARY</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Joy</td>
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<td>Sorrow</td>
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<td>Envy</td>
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<td>Disgust</td>
<td>Jealousy</td>
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![Graph showing the relationship between brands, products, love, and respect]

- **BRANDS**
  - Low Love
  - High Love
  - High Respect

- **PRODUCTS**
  - Low Love
  - Low Respect

- **FADS**
  - High Love
  - Low Respect
Applied Background

• Flagship brand of Arcadia Group Ltd:
  – £1,898m sales (2009)
• Favourite store of 16-34 y/o UK females:
  – Mintel (2009)
• Most successful and high profile of UK fast-fashion retailers and a powerful influencer of UK high-street trends.
Kate Moss:
• English model born 1974. • 1990s fame evolved to become leading international style icon.
• Associated with over 100 brands. • Launches 'self-designed' collection with Topshop in 2007; collections launched bi-annually since.
Methodology

• Five focus groups:
  – Six 16-34 y/o female participants each.

• Discussion structured according to research aims and key issues in literature:
  – Impressions of Topshop.
  – Feelings toward Kate Moss.
  – Perspectives on branding and celebrity endorsement in fashion industry.
Findings - Topshop

- Majority of respondents identified Topshop as a ‘fad’ or ‘brand’...
  ...only 22% positioned Topshop as a Lovemark!

**Positive emotions:**
- Admiration.
- Reputation.
- (pleasant!) Surprise.
- Joy.
- Pride.

**Negative emotions:**
- Disgust.
- Hatred.
- Envy.
- Disillusionment.
- Guilt.
Findings – Kate Moss

- Vast majority of respondents nominated Kate Moss as a ‘brand’.

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<th></th>
<th>Topshop</th>
<th>Topshop AND Kate Moss</th>
<th>Kate Moss</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guilt</td>
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### Findings

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<th>Theme</th>
<th>Context</th>
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<td>Skinny</td>
<td>Topshop sizes are small; Kate Moss collection even smaller; Moss set ‘waif look’ &amp; skinny-jean trends.</td>
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<td>Price</td>
<td>Topshop is affordable / expensive; Moss collection is too expensive; Moss associated with expensive brands.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fashion</td>
<td>Topshop is fashionable; some clothes are ‘too cool’; Moss has recognisable style but it may be ‘fake’; Topshop &amp; Moss connected to music scene and world of fashion/showbiz celebrities.</td>
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<td>Bad Role Model</td>
<td>Moss (was) a drug-user; Moss contributes to female body-image concerns; Topshop &amp; Moss dictate fashion &amp; cultural agenda.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Good Role Model</td>
<td>Moss is a successful businesswoman; she is a confident single woman; she recovered from a drugs scandal; Topshop makes fashion accessible.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Endorsement</td>
<td>Topshop &amp; Moss mutually beneficial; Moss’s style fits Topshop’s style; supermodel image benefits Topshop.</td>
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Conclusions

• Lovemarks a superficial ‘theory’ and tool...
• ..but emotional response is important in defining consumer perceptions of brands.
• Perceptions of celebrity personalities affect opinion of their collaborations.
• Negative emotions potential outweigh positive emotions in a group setting.
• Secondary emotions and rationality may have more power than anticipated.
• Subjective and personal nature of emotion and branding.
Conclusions

• Topshop is NOT a Lovemark – although it is ‘loved’.
• Kate Moss is NOT a Lovemark – can any person?
• Kate Moss & Topshop evoke similar positive & negative emotions – there appears to be salience.
• Utility of Lovemarks concept may be in identifying salience between emotions felt for brand and celebrity.
Further Research

- Replicate study to other instances of celebrity endorsement.
- Explore comparative power of positive and negative emotions.
- Compare emotional responses to brands across product categories, nationalities and genders.

Thank You, I love you all.