

The Relationship between the Popularity of Female Celebrities and the Success of Celebrities' Brands by Using Rihanna's Fenty Beauty, Selena Gomez's Rare Beauty, and Kate Hudson's Fabletics as Examples

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Abstract: In recent years, it has been common for celebrities to establish companies. Whether celebrities simply want to rely on short-term popularity, rely on rapid commercial monetization, and transform into businessmen, or rely on commercial development and capital accumulation to boost their celebrity journey, varies from person to person. However, it is undeniable that celebrity companies have more advantages in expanding brand awareness and marketing compared to other categories of companies. Star companies can gain more traffic, topics, and attention by relying on the popularity of celebrities themselves and the influence of social media platforms. And ordinary companies need to spend huge marketing costs to obtain these. While its company is making rapid commercial profits, the brand culture and influence it shapes will also generate additional value recognition from consumers towards the star. This article relies on case analysis to analyze the brand development process of Rihanna's Fenty Beauty, Selena Gomez's Rare Beauty, and Kate Hudson's Fables, in order to analyze the role of celebrity effect in promoting the development of one's own brand throughout the entire brand development process, and how these brands can feed back these stars once they grow.

1. Introduction

Celebrities are impossible to keep their popularity throughout their life. It is not rare to see that certain celebrities who were extremely famous before are forgotten by the present era. Besides, female pop stars find it more difficult to be as popular as male stars due to the higher standards of female stars and stronger competition. Hence, more and more celebrities build their personal brands to have an additional revenue stream or last their popularity longer. Thanks to the convenience of the internet, it is easier for celebrities to do personal branding to market their brands, especially on social media platforms.

This essay explores the relationship between the popularity of celebrities themselves and the success of celebrity brands. In the end, recommendations will be given to celebrities who are running their brands or who want to build their own extended brand in the future. Relationship means the impact between celebrities and celebrity brands and is categorized into three main types: celebrities' popularity helping the success of their brands, the celebrities and their brands helping each other to succeed, and their brands helping the celebrity to succeed. Popularity measures how much attention, approval, or positive regard a celebrity or the brand from the general audience. Celebrities are famous people who can be actresses, singers, models, and so on. Celebrity brands are the personal extended brands made by celebrities. Rihanna and her cosmetics brand Fenty Beauty, Selena Gomez and her cosmetics brand Rare Beauty, and Kate Hudson and her sportswear brand Fabletics are used as examples to further explore the topic.

2. Theory Used

This analysis is based on "The Lifecycle for Female Popular Music Stars" theory, which is concluded by Professor Kristin Lieb at Emerson College; this theory explains "the predictable path

that a female star must follow as she navigates the music industry and works to capture the public's attention.”[1]. There are two phases in the lifecycle, which are the good girl and the temptress, and six choices for female celebrities to extend their career longevity, which are change of focus, diva, whore, exotic, provocateur, and hot mess.

The good girl is the starting point of the lifecycle. A female celebrity is expected to act, dress, and look like an innocent “good girl”. For example, Taylor Swift appeared as a singer in the country genre and dressed like a good girl who did not show her sexuality.

As they grow older, female celebrities would shift from the good girl phase to the temptress phase. In this phase, several things change: “She wears more form-fitting, body-revealing clothing; she begins an active seduction of her audience; she often appears writhing in or on beds in her videos; and she becomes more publicly accessible” . For example, Selena Gomez was a Disney princess at the beginning of her career in Gen Z and shifted to a sexy temptress in Gen Alpha.

After the temptress phase, celebrities get to select their future roles to extend their career longevity. They mainly have six choices. The first choice is the change of focus, which means "no longer wants to play the game and exit the system". The second choice is the diva, meaning to “refine her look and cast herself as best-in-genre”. The third choice is the whore, which means that “sexual assets are her best-selling points, and styles herself accordingly”. The fourth one is exotic; female celebrities “represent [themselves] as something unusual by virtue of her ethnicity, musical influences, or behavior.” The fifth one is provocateur, which means to “gain notoriety by provoking audiences through counter-normative or offensive behavior.” Lastly, hot mess means to “engage in public self-destruction.”

Kristen Lieb claims that female celebrities must consolidate the power of personal narrative to build, maintain, and extend their career lifecycle and have to leverage their core product or assets into as many other entertainment areas, such as television, film, and so on, so they can maximize their short-term financial success and have a higher chance of augmenting their long-term success.

3. Main Body

3.1 Rihanna and Fenty Beauty

Launched on September 8th, 2017, Fenty Beauty is a cosmetic brand by Rihanna. “Fenty” comes from Rihanna’s middle name. Fenty Beauty is a brand under one of the biggest luxury brand conglomerates LVMH and is sold under Sephora, its official website, Ulta Beauty, Harvey Nichols, and some Asia duty-free shops. “Beauty for all” is Fenty’s slogan. “Diversity” “Equality” and “Inclusion” are its core values. For example, in the foundations of Fenty Beauty, there are 40 different shades to serve customers with all skin tones, from the lightest to the darkest. No matter what skin color you have, you can always find the right shade that fits you. This is Fenty Beauty’s Unique Selling Point. Rihanna’s fame and popularity helped the growth of Fenty Beauty.

When Fenty Beauty was launched in 2017, it gained immediate attention due to Rihanna's massive fan following and her reputation for setting fashion and beauty trends. In 2017, Rihanna had approximately 57.3 million Instagram followers[2]. Hence, when she announced her brand, 57.3 million people would be notified. Since Rihanna is a famous singer globally, her international stardom has helped Fenty Beauty gain a global following. Her fan base spans continents, which has translated into international sales and recognition for the brand. Besides, Rihanna's active presence on social media platforms like Instagram, where she showcases her personal use of Fenty Beauty products, has further boosted the brand's visibility. Her posts often garner millions of likes and comments, increasing brand engagement and recognition. Her involvement brought instant credibility and a sense of excitement to the brand. Rihanna's status as a cultural icon and trendsetter extends beyond the beauty industry. Her influence in music, fashion, and activism also contributes to the overall appeal and relevance of the brand.

Furthermore, Rihanna's personal involvement in the development and promotion of Fenty Beauty lends an authenticity that many celebrity-endorsed brands lack. She is seen as genuinely passionate about cosmetics and is known to be hands-on with product development. Rihanna shows

a high degree of authenticity on her and her brand's social media accounts. For example, Rihanna records tutorial videos by herself, and she records the videos from an authentic user rather than from a professional businesswoman angle. Customers can see that the camera shakes and has no filter, just like we record a video for ourselves without any special effects and cutting techniques. To some extent, Rihanna is part of the users whose post is shared on Fenty's account. Rihanna, the founder of Fenty Beauty, is shown as a Fenty user just like her fans or customers. This extremely shortens the distance between Rihanna and its customers.

Fenty Beauty not only has Rihanna to boost its brand awareness but also finds a unique position and ensures the quality that makes it stand out from the extremely competitive \$532 billion cosmetics market. Fenty Beauty's inclusiveness, diversity, and equality are deeply emphasized in all marketing strategies. One of the standout features of Fenty Beauty is its commitment to inclusivity. Rihanna addressed a long-standing issue in the beauty industry by launching a wide range of foundation shades to cater to all skin tones. This move was not only socially responsible but also highly profitable, as it attracted a diverse customer base that had been underserved for years. Fenty Beauty disrupted the beauty industry by challenging traditional beauty standards and offering a diverse range of products. Rihanna's involvement in this change further solidified the brand's position as a leader in the industry.

In the first 40 days of debut, Fenty Beauty's sales reached \$100 million dollars, showing a huge success[3]. Since most makeup brands had not designed products for marginalized skin tones, such as the lightest or the deepest, people who had these skin tones were underserved by bigger brands. Fenty Beauty caught this marketing opportunity and included marginalized groups of people as part of the target customers. Over the years, Fenty Beauty has expanded its product line, including eyeshadows, lipsticks, and skincare. Rihanna's involvement in these product launches generates substantial buzz and anticipation.

In the meantime, a single behavior from Rihanna adds extreme value to the brand, thanks to her celebrity identity. In 2023, after Rihanna performed on the Super Bowl halftime show, Fenty Beauty's media value increased by 4.5 million European[4]. The Super Bowl is a significant event that has gained attention around the globe. During the halftime show, Rihanna paused for a make-up touch-up and showcased the Invisimatte Blotting Powder from Fenty Beauty. This action makes Rihanna's show become the "biggest commercial of the sporting event". "According to WWD, the performance garnered £4.6 million (\$5.6 million) in Media Impact Value (MIV) for her brand in the first 12 hours after the performance. Overall, Launchmetrics found that £72.3 million (\$88.3 million) in MIV was generated by the performance."(Burney, 2023).

On the other hand, Fenty Beauty extends the career longevity for Rihanna. Based on Kristin Lieb's lifecycle theory, Rihanna applies the "change of focus" method to elongate her popularity. Not only a singer, but Rihanna also gradually shifts to her role as a businesswoman, which brings surprises to her fans and gives her an additional revenue stream. Hence, building a cosmetic brand benefits Rihanna as well.

Overall, Fenty Beauty gets more benefits from Rihanna's popularity. The celebrity effect, as exemplified by Rihanna and Fenty Beauty, demonstrates the substantial impact that a well-known personality can have on a brand, especially in the beauty industry. Rihanna's authenticity, commitment to inclusivity, and her ability to connect with a global audience have contributed significantly to Fenty Beauty's success, making it a prime example of how a celebrity can shape and elevate a brand's image and profitability.

3.2 Selena Gomez and Rare Beauty

Rare Beauty is a cosmetics brand that was founded by the multi-talented American singer, actress, and producer, Selena Gomez. Launched in September 2020, Rare Beauty quickly gained attention and acclaim in the beauty industry for its unique approach to makeup and skincare.

Rare Beauty is built on the mission of celebrating individuality and redefining beauty standards. The brand aims to empower individuals to embrace their uniqueness and express themselves through makeup and skincare. Beyond its beauty products, Rare Beauty strives to make a positive

impact on society. The brand has been involved in various charitable initiatives and advocacy efforts, including supporting mental health awareness. At the same time, Selena Gomez, the founder of Rare Beauty, is deeply involved in the brand's creative process. Her personal touch and input can be seen in product development, marketing campaigns, and overall brand image. Different from Fenty Beauty which gets support from LVMH Conglomerate, Selena Gomez's Rare Beauty has grown from a start-up company without strong financial support from externalities.

From personal experience, Selena Gomez has come to realize that the impossibility of being "perfect" and the heavy physical and mental stress of being "perfect" is far less important and healthier than accepting and appreciating yourself. She redefines "beauty" with Rare Beauty, encouraging more people to embrace their unique personalities. Emphasizing an individual's rareness is not uncommon in the age of personalization, but flagging feedback on standard aesthetics is a rarity in the beauty space.

The founder's celebrity effect is an important fan-favorite skill for Rare Beauty in several ways.

First, Selena Gomez's celebrity status brings immediate recognition to Rare Beauty. Not only her name and face are synonymous with the brand, but also her stories and experiences are put into her brand, attracting attention from consumers and the media. Besides, thanks to her mental and physical disorder experiences, Selena Gomez lends credibility and trustworthiness to her brand concept. Consumers often feel more confident purchasing products associated with a well-known and respected celebrity. Selena Gomez's personal experience is enough to ground Rare Beauty's ESG philosophy, empathize, and gain trust as the best brand spokesperson. She says, "Whether you prefer a bold makeup look or no makeup at all, you can be your truest self. Makeup is a pleasure, not a necessity." Selena Gomez has been actively involved in various initiatives to promote mental health since around 2017, and at the beginning of Rare Beauty's existence, she also released a personal documentary on World Mental Health Day, "Selena Gomez: My Mind and Me," to give a personal account of her journey to reconcile with herself, allowing the brand's philosophy to deepen broadly. She connects well with her brand. Rare Beauty seems like an extension of Selena Gomez. Hence, once her followers buy from Rare Beauty, they would think they become closer to Selena Gomez and resonate with her more.

Second, Selena Gomez interacts with consumers to promote her brand. Selena Gomez has a massive following on social media platforms like Instagram, where she regularly showcases Rare Beauty products. Her posts and updates reach millions of fans, creating buzz and generating interest in the brand. In her daily social media tweets, Selena Gomez often shares her own makeup creations or makeup tutorials to show her most genuine self and confident attitude of self-appreciation. The tweets also feature Rare Beauty products used to increase brand awareness and product conversions. Additionally, Selena Gomez's global appeal extends Rare Beauty's reach to international markets. Her fan base spans various demographics and regions, which has contributed to the brand's expansion beyond the United States. Rare Beauty often receives extensive media coverage due to Selena Gomez's involvement. Her interviews, appearances, and red-carpet events provide opportunities to showcase the brand, creating further awareness. Selena Gomez's active involvement in the development and promotion of Rare Beauty products creates a personal connection with consumers. Her fans and followers are more likely to engage with and support a brand that she personally endorses.

On the opposite, Rare Beauty helps Selena Gomez move to the next level. Selena Gomez is all set to join the Hollywood billionaire's club soon. Her massively successful makeup and skincare line Rare Beauty has amassed big wealth for the singer. Projections indicate that Rare Beauty is set to achieve a staggering revenue of at least \$300 million in 2023. Besides the cosmetic brand, Selena Gomez has other revenue streams, such as shows from Hulu. All of these make Selena Gomez's net worth shoot up to \$800 million[5]. It is worth noting that although Rare Beauty is one part of Selena Gomez's business, it still contributes to Selena Gomez's billionaire status.

Furthermore, founding Rare Beauty helped Selena Gomez extend her popularity. Selena Gomez, after the phase of being a temptress, chose the path of being exotic. According to Kristin Lieb, an exotic refers to the "pop stars who fall outside the traditional pop star mold for some reason,

including race or ethnicity, can sometimes trade on their image as *exotic* creatures. For the purposes of this model, *exotic* has been operationalized to mean a little different, hard to classify, and somewhat unusual or mysterious.”(Lieb). Selena Gomez’s father is of Mexican descent, and her mother is an Italian ancestry. Not a traditional white, Selena Gomez’s race makes her exotic. Besides, Rare Beauty is also an exotic brand as it is a combination of cosmetics and mental health, which breaks the traditional cosmetics brands. Hence, Rare Beauty solidifies Selena Gomez’s exotic role from a different angle.

In conclusion, Selena Gomez and Rare Beauty help each other to be more popular and gain stronger success. Selena Gomez's celebrity effect in Rare Beauty is a key driver of the brand's recognition, trustworthiness, and appeal. Her personal connection with consumers, along with her commitment to inclusivity and advocacy, contributes to the brand's impact in the beauty industry and its ability to resonate with a wide and diverse audience. Rare Beauty consolidates Selena Gomez’s exotic role and extends her popularity.

3.3 Kate Hudson and Fabletics

Fabletics is an activewear and athleisure brand co-founded by actress and entrepreneur Kate Hudson, who was born in 1979. Launched in 2013, Fabletics offers a wide range of stylish and affordable activewear, including workout attire, athleisure wear, and accessories[6]. The brand is known for its commitment to inclusivity, quality, and the convenience of its subscription model, which allows customers to receive personalized activewear selections each month. Fabletics has gained popularity for its fashion-forward designs and Kate Hudson's active involvement as both a co-founder and a brand ambassador[7].

Kate Hudson has had various peaks throughout her career. First of all, in the early 2000s, Kate Hudson gained widespread recognition and popularity, primarily due to her breakout role in the film "Almost Famous" (2000), for which she won a Golden Globe Award. This period marked the beginning of her successful acting career and solidified her status as a rising star.

Then, in the Romantic Comedies Era, Kate Hudson became a prominent figure in romantic comedies during the mid-2000s, starring in films like "How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days" (2003), "Raising Helen" (2004), and "Bride Wars" (2009). These films contributed to her popularity and made her a recognizable face in the genre.

While her career has experienced ups and downs, Kate Hudson has maintained a level of popularity and relevance in the entertainment industry. Her versatility as an actress and her involvement in various film and television projects have kept her in the public eye.

In recent years, Kate Hudson in the entertainment industry has not been as popular as before, but she has gained recognition as an entrepreneur and co-founder of the activewear brand Fabletics. Her active involvement in the brand's marketing and promotion has contributed to her popularity in the business world. Hence, in the present, an extended brand of her helps her financial success and keeps her in the public eye after she no longer succeeds as an actress.

When Fabletics was just founded, Kate Hudson utilized her role as a celebrity to advertise for the brand. She was the ambassador and the model of her product images. Fabletics’ early marketing strategies used Kate Hudson’s face widely. However, in 2021, Kate Hudson transitioned from her role as the principal face of Fabletics to an advisory function. Nowadays, it is easier to consider Fabletics as an athleisure brand rather than a celebrity brand. Now, Fabletics remains privately owned, but “floated a reputed valuation of \$5 billion and has more than 2 million VIP members[8].

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the celebrity effect helps a celebrity brand when the celebrity is popular, but to make the brand grow bigger and last longer, the brand needs to gradually move away from the celebrity and become a qualified brand, so the brand can still profit when the celebrity no longer stays in her career peak. Hence, not only a celebrity’s popularity can help the growth of a brand, but the brand and the celebrity can help each other to grow better. After the popularity of a celebrity fades, a successful brand supports the celebrity’s financial success.

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