






# Celebrity Endorsement: How ‘Rare Beauty’ Capitalizes on Selena Gomez's Emotional Bond with Millennials

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**Abstract.** The influence of celebrity endorsement on consumer behavior is a well-documented phenomenon, but its impact on the positioning and loyalty of a new brand in today's competitive market remains an emerging field of study. This study focuses on how Rare Beauty, a makeup and personal care brand founded by celebrity Selena Gomez, has used her image to create an emotional connection with Peruvian consumers and quickly establish itself in the market. Through a qualitative approach, in-depth interviews were conducted with millennial Peruvian consumers to explore their perceptions of the brand and the influence of Selena Gomez's fame on their purchasing decisions. The results indicate that Rare Beauty has achieved significant positioning by associating with values of empowerment and mental well-being, which resonate with the experiences and aspirations of consumers. The interviews reveal that while the celebrity initiates interest in the brand, it is the values and message of Rare Beauty that maintain consumer loyalty. This study contributes to the existing literature by providing evidence of how brands can use celebrity endorsement not only to gain initial visibility but also to build and maintain a loyal customer base. Further exploration is suggested on how the brand can sustain these emotional ties and transform initial interest into enduring brand preference.

**Keywords:** celebrity endorsement; Consumer Behavior; Emotional Branding; Millennial Engagement; Social Media Marketing

## 1 Introduction

The celebrity endorsement strategy has evolved in the digital era, offering a direct link between public figures and brands to influence consumer behavior. Previous studies such as those by Bergkvist [1] and Gopal [2] have demonstrated that the trust derived from this collaboration can persuade purchases and alter perceptions. As social media facilitates more intimate interactions between celebrities and followers [3], a celebrity's image can significantly affect both the credibility and satisfaction of the consumer [4]. In the personal care market, particularly in skin and hair care products, the presence of

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a celebrity accelerates product recognition [5], and identifying with the brand's values and cause can increase its added value [6].

Rare Beauty, the brand created by artist Selena Gomez, represents a unique case where the celebrity transcends the typical promotional role to embody the brand's values. Unlike other celebrity brands, Rare Beauty has established an authentic focus on empowerment and mental well-being. This resonant commitment seems to play a crucial role in building brand identity and in consumer loyalty, specifically in a sector where millennials seek authenticity and purpose [7].

Despite the growing body of research on celebrity endorsement and brand image formation [8]; [9], there is a significant gap in understanding the emotional and lasting impact of these associations on consumer perceptions. Moreover, existing literature has provided limited exploration of how celebrity-founded brands like Rare Beauty use this strategy to generate and maintain meaningful relationships beyond the initial appeal of the celebrity.

This study arises from the need to better understand how the perception of a brand's personality and values can influence the consumer on an emotional and behavioral level. In this context, it is proposed to investigate how the emotional bonds forged by celebrity endorsement can transcend mere familiarity with the celebrity and become a true commitment to the brand. Thus, the Rare Beauty brand and its marketing strategy are examined to understand if the image and values of Selena Gomez have been successful in creating genuine brand loyalty among millennial consumers.

The guiding question for this research is: To what extent does the celebrity endorsement strategy applied by Rare Beauty transform affinity for Selena Gomez into enduring brand loyalty among millennial consumers?

## **2 Theoretical Framework**

### **2.1 Celebrity endorsement**

The concept of celebrity endorsement reflects a scenario where the public figure becomes the voice of a brand, a practice supported by consumer perceptions of the authenticity and credibility of the endorser [10]. This phenomenon, rooted in the similarity and fit between the celebrity and the brand [11], extends beyond cognitive impact to a deep emotional influence [6]. Public figures infuse their personal attributes their appearance, voice, and charisma into the brand's identity [12], creating a bridge between recognition and consumer loyalty.

The applications of this concept vary globally, with markets like Japan and South Korea showing a high prevalence of this strategy in their advertising campaigns [13]. However, its success is not limited to traditional consumer domains. For instance, the presence of a celebrity can enhance the profile of a country regardless of their field of expertise [2]. This flexibility of the strategy is based on the personality and the perceived authority of the celebrity [5]. However, celebrity endorsement can become counterproductive if the celebrity represents multiple brands, potentially generating skepticism about their credibility [14].

## 2.2 Emotional bonds

The emotional relationship between brands and consumers is a phenomenon that transcends simple commercial transactions, anchoring in deep perceptions and meaningful experiences. According to Arboleda [14], this connection is established based on the perception of an authentic and sincere commitment by the brand towards the wellbeing of the consumer. This commitment is manifested not only in the quality and benefits of the product but also in how the brand communicates and positions itself regarding social values relevant to its audience. When consumers perceive that a brand truly cares about their interests and needs, a robust emotional bond is formed that decisively influences loyalty and preference for the brand.

This emotional bond intensifies when brands adopt human-like characteristics, such as personality and values, that resonate with those of the consumer, thus facilitating a more intimate and personalized connection. According to research by Bagozzi et al. [16] and Monteiro et al. [17], this process can trigger a feeling of love towards the brand in consumers that resembles interpersonal love. This level of emotional connection can become a powerful market differentiation tool, as suggested by Palazón et al. [18], and Grisaffe & Nguyen [19], allowing brands not only to retain their customers with firm loyalty but also to achieve a dominant market position. Authenticity in interactions and the ability to provide satisfying experiences are, therefore, essential for cultivating and sustaining these deep emotional ties.

## 2.3 Rare Beauty Case

During the month of May, which is Mental Health Awareness Month, the brand Rare Beauty in collaboration with the Mental Health First Aid program launched the educational campaign "Your Words Matter." The campaign aimed to raise awareness about the words people use when discussing mental health and the negative impact of using certain words incorrectly. This is linked to the stigma associated with mental health and how many words have been normalized and accepted over a long period of time. As part of the campaign, Rare Beauty shared advice, resources, and created virtual events in which mental health experts participated to inform and raise awareness about the power of words and how they can increase the stigma associated with mental health, which can prevent people from seeking help when they need it.

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Cada 10 de octubre se celebra el Día Mundial de la Salud Mental, y aunque muchos afirman que el dinero lo es todo para ser feliz, artistas exitosos como Selena Gomez y JBalvin le han apostado a sus propias marcas a la conquista del bienestar emocional, tras superar justamente algunas crisis de ansiedad en medio de su fama y fortuna.

Con más de 400 mil seguidores en Instagram *Wondermind* de Gomez, se ha convertido en uno de los pilares con los que cuentan las nuevas generaciones para acudir por ayuda; la propia artista lo describe en el portal de la compañía como un lugar lleno de herramientas de bienestar para salir a flote.

“Un lugar real, honesto, seguro y cómodo, algo a lo que la gente pueda recurrir. Nada espero más que la gente sienta lo que yo siento cuando pienso en lo que estamos haciendo y cuando pienso en otras personas y hablo con gente de nuestro comité [asesor] de expertos y con gente que tiene el mismo objetivo y la misma visión que nosotros” dice Gomez.

La empresa, que según Forbes recaudo recaudó 5 millones de dólares de la firma de capital riesgo Serena Ventures, propiedad de la campeona mundial del tenis Serena Williams, envía boletines informativos a más de 500 mil personas inscritas a su newsletter según reportan.

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**Fig. 1.** Note shows Selena's commitment to mental health cause. By DIGIDAY 2023 (<https://digiday.com/es/selena-gomez-y-jbalvin-y-sus-marcas-tras-la-conquista-de-la-salud-mental/>)

### 3 Methodology

In this research, an interpretative paradigm was adopted, based on the understanding that social reality is constructed and perceived differently by each individual. This paradigm was chosen for its suitability to explore individual perceptions and the meanings attributed to the Rare Beauty brand in the context of celebrity endorsement. The choice of this approach was justified by the need to deeply understand the subjective experiences and meanings that millennial consumers associated with the brand and the celebrity Selena Gomez.

Within this paradigm, a qualitative approach was selected, given its potential to capture the richness of human perceptions and lived experiences. This approach facilitated a deep immersion into the complexities of consumer interactions with the brand and celebrity, an aspect that would likely remain hidden through quantitative methods. The research was framed in a case study design, focusing on Rare Beauty as a unique instance that illustrated the phenomenon under study, offering a concentrated perspective of the influence of a particular celebrity on attitudes and purchasing decisions.

The study population consisted of Peruvian women aged 20 to 30 years, members of the millennial generation, a critical segment for the target market of makeup and personal care. This group was selected for its cultural and economic importance, as well as for its intense interaction with celebrities through social media. The choice of this group allowed for a rich and contextual exploration of the celebrity endorsement phenomenon.

Unstructured in-depth interviews were conducted with participants selected intentionally. This technique was chosen for its flexibility to adapt to the diversity of the

interviewees' discourse and its effectiveness in revealing the depth of thought and feeling. To ensure methodological rigor, the interviews were guided by a series of open-ended questions based on the reviewed literature and the objectives of the study.

The selection of the interviewees was based on intentional sampling, focusing on those consumers who expressed a particular interest in Selena Gomez and Rare Beauty. This method provided access to experiences directly relevant to the case study, enabling a detailed investigation of the celebrity's influence on brand loyalty.

Ethical considerations were governed by the Code of Ethics in Scientific Research of the Peruvian University of Applied Sciences (UPC, 2017). Anonymity and confidentiality of each informant were maintained, applying alphanumeric coding for the transcriptions of the interviews.

Data were analyzed through the organization and meticulous analysis of the qualitative information collected through open and axial coding. This technique was consistent with the interpretative paradigm and complemented the phenomenological approach, allowing for emerging categorization based on the narratives of the participants.

**Table 1.** Interview questionnaire

Questions about celebrities and advertising
1. Why do you admire them?
2. Would you follow the advice given by these celebrities and why?
3. Have you ever followed a celebrity's advice/recommendations about a topic or category that is not related to what you know about the celebrity? Example: It is logical to think that Gastón Acurio's cooking recommendations are reliable and useful, but if your favorite singer were to recommend or provide any cooking recommendations, would you follow them or purchase them? Why?
4. Do you think that the more you know about a celebrity's life/history/trajec-tory, the more influence and credibility he/she will have on you if he/she en-dorses a product? Why?
5. Do you consider celebrities to be opinion leaders?
6. Do you think that many people buy products because they are promoted by celebrities? Why do you think they believe celebrities?
7. If you see or perceive a celebrity endorsing multiple similar brands/prod-ucts, do you begin to doubt the celebrity's credibility?
8. Do you consider yourself to have a favorite brand, what is it?
9. What do you value most about that brand?
10. With that brand in mind, do you identify any human characteristics in it?
11. Do you consider that this brand generates emotions in you? Which ones?
Perception of the celebrity and the emotional ties with their followers
1. How long have you been following Selena Gomez?

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2. How much do you think you know about Selena Gomez's public life and projects?
  3. What emotions does the celebrity generate in you, and why?
  4. What words come to your mind when I mention Selena Gomez's name?
  5. What aspect of Selena Gomez's life do you think makes her special to you?
  6. Considering what you know about the celebrity's life, what social causes do you think or know that she supports?
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#### Perception towards the Rare Beauty brand

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1. What do you think about the message that Rare Beauty projects?
  2. What values do you associate the Rare Beauty brand with and why? (E: go deeper into each value the interviewee answers).
  3. Do you value the brand's involvement with mental health issues?
  4. Do you consider that supporting a problem of this type gives added value to the brand?
  5. If you were to personify the brand, what would it look like?
  6. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being not at all willing and 10 being very willing, how willing would you be to buy a product from the brand? Why?
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#### Selena Gomez's Relationship with Rare Beauty

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1. On a scale of 1 to 10, being 1 not very related and 10 very related, how much do you consider that Rare Beauty reflects Selena's personality? (E: deepen in the interviewee's answer)
  2. Did you have the opportunity to try any of the brand's products?
  3. If yes, why were you predisposed to do so?
  4. If no, are you predisposed to do so? Why?
  5. How willing would you be to buy a product of the brand founded by the actress and buy a similar product that is sponsored by the celebrity but belongs to a brand in the makeup industry with many years of experience? Why?
- 

## 4 Results

### 4.1 Credibility and Confidence in Celebrities

The credibility attributed to celebrities and the trust placed in them are deeply rooted in an emotional connection with their art and the perception of their genuineness. Fans appreciate when celebrities are involved in social causes and disseminate motivational messages, as these actions enhance their authenticity. This authenticity fosters a deeper connection by allowing fans to perceive celebrities not merely as public figures, but as real individuals. One participant expressed this sentiment, stating, "The authenticity of celebrities fosters a deeper connection by not perceiving them merely as public figures but as real individuals" (E11). This connection is strengthened when celebrities are seen engaging with issues that resonate personally with their audience, thereby bridging the gap between their public persona and their private selves.

Additionally, humanizing celebrities and making them feel real transcends mere idolatry, creating a more profound and lasting bond. Fans are drawn to celebrities who display vulnerability and share their personal struggles and triumphs. This openness and relatability make celebrities more approachable and trustworthy. As another participant noted, "Humanizing celebrities, making them feel real, transcends mere idolatry" (E09). This shift from idolization to genuine connection reflects a growing desire for authenticity in celebrity culture, where the emotional bonds formed are based on shared values and experiences rather than distant admiration.

## **4.2 Celebrity Tip Tracking**

Regarding following advice from celebrities, mixed positions were identified among the participants. Some participants indicated a tendency to accept recommendations based on trust and admiration. This trust can lead to a belief in the effectiveness of the endorsed products or advice, as one participant noted: "The trust that celebrities generate can convince us of the effectiveness of their recommendations" (E11). This perspective suggests that the emotional bond and perceived authenticity of celebrities can significantly influence consumer behavior, leading individuals to place confidence in their endorsements.

In contrast, other participants emphasized the importance of critically evaluating such advice, recognizing the limitations in the expertise of celebrities. One participant expressed this view, stating: "Before following advice, I would evaluate it, given that the celebrity does not necessarily have expertise in the area" (E17). This cautious approach highlights the need for discernment, acknowledging that celebrities, despite their influence, may not always provide reliable or informed recommendations. Additionally, the effectiveness of the promoted products plays a crucial role in maintaining this trust. As one interviewee mentioned, "If a promoted product is not effective, I might reconsider following the celebrity or accepting future recommendations" (E06). This underscores the potential for loss of credibility if endorsements do not meet expectations, indicating that while celebrity influence is powerful, it is not immune to scrutiny and the need for genuine efficacy.

## **4.3 Emotional Connections and Brand Perceptions**

Loyalty to brands and the perception of their quality are significantly influenced by companies' commitment to social responsibility and ethics. This commitment is increasingly becoming a crucial factor in consumer decision-making processes. For instance, participants expressed a preference for brands that actively contribute to societal well-being, indicating that their personal consumption choices are aligned with broader ethical considerations. As one interviewee noted, "I support brands that contribute positively to society, feeling that my consumption also supports that cause" (E11). This sentiment reflects a growing trend where consumers are more inclined to invest in brands that demonstrate a genuine commitment to social and environmental causes.

Moreover, transparency and corporate responsibility play pivotal roles in building and maintaining consumer trust. When brands are clear and forthcoming about their practices, ingredients, and the impact of their products, they are more likely to foster a loyal customer base. This transparency reassures consumers that the brand is not only focused on profit but also prioritizes ethical standards and accountability. As another participant highlighted, "A brand's clarity and transparency about its products increase my trust in it" (E19). This indicates that consumers value honesty and openness, and these qualities can significantly enhance a brand's reputation and customer loyalty.

#### **4.4 Perception of the Celebrity and Emotional Bonds with Followers**

The interview responses reveal a deep emotional connection with Selena Gomez, rooted in feelings of nostalgia from her presence during their childhood and evolving into admiration, courage, and empathy. Participants see her as a role model who has successfully overcome life's adversities, which enhances their emotional bond with her. This strong connection is mirrored in their perception of her brand, Rare Beauty, which they associate with values such as responsibility, empathy, and commitment.

They view the brand's focus on mental health and philanthropy positively, especially its dedication of a portion of profits to these causes. This alignment of the brand's values with Selena Gomez's personal journey and openness about her struggles resonates deeply with the interviewees. As one participant noted, "It's Selena's, and she has always been open about her struggles" (E09). Another added, "I see her as a strong, brave, and empathetic woman" (E11). This perception not only strengthens their loyalty to the brand but also reinforces the importance of authenticity and social responsibility in their purchasing decisions.

#### **4.5 Perception of the Relationship Between the Brand and the Celebrity**

Although the brand shares many values with the celebrity, most interviewees do not directly associate it with her. They personify the brand as an ordinary girl due to its message of self-love, seeing Rare Beauty as reflecting one aspect of Selena Gomez, but not her entire life. This distinction highlights that while the brand and the celebrity are connected, the brand is perceived as having its own identity, characterized by simplicity and authenticity. As one participant expressed, "If Rare Beauty were a person, it would be someone simple and neat" (E19).

Despite the challenges in obtaining the products, there is a strong interest in purchasing them and a preference for Rare Beauty over similar products from prestigious brands like MAC. This preference is driven by the values and purpose that Rare Beauty embodies, such as its focus on mental health and philanthropy. Interviewees appreciate the brand's commitment to these causes, which aligns with their perception of Selena Gomez's personal values. As another participant noted, "I think it conveys her values, but it doesn't fully represent her" (E15). This partial representation underscores the brand's independent appeal while still benefiting from the celebrity's influence.



## 5 Discussion

The discussion focuses on interpreting the influence of celebrities on purchase decisions and how authenticity and personal values play a key role in this process. Thomson [20] and Tiwari and Manral [5] argue that credibility is built through skill and personality, which aligns with findings that fashion influence and trust generated by celebrities are motivating factors for purchases.

The mixed responses on following advice highlight the complexity of celebrity impact in different areas. While brand loyalty seems to derive from a combination of quality perception and shared values, as highlighted in the work of authors such as Arboleda [15] and Hinson et al. [21].

Respondents' perception of the Rare Beauty brand reflects a positive valuation towards social responsibility and business ethics, suggesting that brands that present themselves with human characteristics and engage with social causes may develop stronger emotional bonds with consumers, as mentioned by Bagozzi et al. [16].

## 6 Conclusions

The research addressed how Peruvian millennial consumers who follow Selena Gomez perceive the Rare Beauty brand and whether emotional connections with the celebrity influence their perception of the brand. The findings demonstrate that the credibility consumers grant to celebrities, and by extension to the brands they represent, is complex and multidimensional, based on both the perceived authenticity and transparency as well as the celebrity's knowledge and authority on the topic of interest.

This study concludes that while Selena Gomez provided initial visibility, the Rare Beauty brand has cultivated its own identity. It has been determined that the brand reflects values and purposes aligned with those of the celebrity, which has strengthened its credibility and given it meaning. Consumers expressed a willingness to try products from a brand that not only aligns with their values but also promotes social causes, despite the connection with a celebrity.

The findings reflect that consumers' emotional connections to the brand depend considerably on the quality of its products and its humanization, understood as concern for people. These factors contribute to loyalty towards specific brands, interpreted not only as consumer preferences but also as an endorsement of values. The interviewees ultimately perceive Rare Beauty not just as Selena Gomez's brand but as an entity that provides quality products, seeks to make a positive impact on society, and supports the cause of mental well-being, following the example of its founder.

Regarding implications for future studies, there is fertile ground to explore the durability of emotional bonds with brands and the possibility of them becoming 'lovemarks' in their respective fields. Additionally, there is a need to study how inter-actions on social media platforms like Instagram or TikTok uniquely contribute to brand image building, which could reveal new patterns of engagement and brand loyalty.

In summary, Selena Gomez's image has served as a springboard for the exposure of Rare Beauty, but the brand has managed to establish itself on its own due to the quality

of its products and a consistent message and purpose. The challenges encountered during the research, especially related to the logistics of the interviews, underscore the importance of adaptability and preparation in future qualitative research.

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