

Telegraph BRAND MSD

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PIYUSH PANDEY
Executive Chairman & Creative Director South Asia, Ogilvy & Mather

Dhoni's brand value was always sky-high... I don't really know where it is going to skyrocket now! The number of advertisers lining up at his door will now be double or even more. However, he now needs to be very judicious when it comes to endorsing brands. This hasn't struck me just now, but is something that I have been thinking over the last three years! It's obviously a personal choice, but now I feel that Dhoni has reached that stage on the brand map where he needs to cut down on the number of endorsements and charge more for the limited ones he chooses to align with. It's time for him to adopt an elitist, almost unreachable, brand image.



R. BALKI
Chairman & Chief Creative Officer, Lowe Lintas

Dhoni was always a huge brand and now the queue of advertisers will only get longer. After a very long time, we have an icon who cuts across all socio-economic classes and appeals to not only a youngster, but to his parents and grandparents as well. The fact that he comes from the grassroots and has retained his down-to-earth nature and humility even after becoming the phenomenon that he is now, makes him a brand. His life story is aspirational, holding out hope for millions of youth in middle-class India. Dhoni should now concentrate on associating with brands that are not only popular and safe, but also enhance his stature. For me, he may not be the biggest Indian brand now — because every other day this country sees a new newsmaker — but he definitely ranks among the top three.

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ALYQUE PADAMSEE
Ad guru & CEO,
A.P. Advertising

Dhoni is a phenomenon in the advertising world. The fact that not only is he a fantastic batsman and wicket-keeper, but also a cricketer with a brain is what makes him hot property among endorsers. Plus, he is good-looking. This deadly combination makes him the ideal role model for any brand — especially for youth-centric brands. After the World Cup, Dhoni's appeal has gone even beyond the youth. He is a man for those from seven to 70. Within days, his brand value has become much bigger than what it already was. He is now in a position to charge double of what he did before the Cup — and he will get it! However, now he should look at broadening his kitty and going for more top-of-the-line, even international brands.



PRAHLAD KAKKAR
Ad guru & Director,
Genesis Film Productions

Dhoni was always a youth icon and the World Cup triumph has now made him a national icon. If his brand worth was high all these days, it is going to hit the roof now! He is the piper who makes the whole of India dance on the streets, and you got to pay the piper, right?

The number of brands he endorses has never been a problem for Dhoni, but now it's time for him to keep in mind that the brand performance and his on-field performance should match. So far, he has been pretty indiscriminate, but now the product that he is attached to should justify the fact that Mahendra Singh Dhoni is attached to it. I am not saying that he should move away from middle-level brands — because his appeal lies in his humble roots — but he should now look at brands that deliver on their promise. In India, the audience is fickle and you are only as good as your last match. Dhoni is the biggest brand in the country now and he should make the most of it. Something tells me that his brand worth will only get bigger with time. Apart from being a good player and a great captain, he is also a shrewd marketing brain.

DHONISPACE**SANTOSH DESAI****MD & CEO, Future Brands**

Dhoni has been among the top three brands in the country over the last few years and post-World Cup, his brand worth is almost immeasurable. The fact that he represents the values of humility and rootedness, of leading from the front and of survival against all odds, makes him an ideal choice for endorsers. I don't really think he will be able to endorse more brands even if he wants to because his cricketing calendar will not allow him to do so.

However, I would like to see him now move to brands that are leaders in their category, just as Dhoni is in his. Concentrating on established brands that showcase him as aspirational yet identifiable should be the focus. He has been associated with some really dodgy brands in the past and as India's biggest brand story, that's a big no-no for him.

**ANURAG HIRA****Co-owner, One by One Design Pvt Ltd.**

Dhoni has, over the years, grown in sheer brand-value terms and after this World Cup win, his marketability is reaching stratospheric limits. He is not just a great captain who has steered a remarkable team, his leadership qualities are classical. I don't really see him moving away too much from his middle-class brand values, because he is grass-rooted as a person. However,

he should now endorse brands that are true-blue leaders in their categories and not any ceiling fan. He has enough of a fan-following in any case. And no, he is not the biggest yet, but he is in that rarefied space. For me, India's biggest cricket brand is Sachin Tendulkar not only for the iconic status that he has created for himself, but also for the ideal role model that he is, especially for our youth.

At the moment, Dhoni endorses 19 brands, from aerated drinks to mobile phone services and from ceiling fans to health supplements. After the World Cup, his brand worth will escalate further and we have already had a lot of A-list brands wanting to sign him on. Our primary objective at this point of time will be to consolidate and enhance Dhoni's brand image by associating him with names that stand for quality and credibility. The fact that Dhoni signed up a high-end brand like Sony Bravia just days before the World Cup, is a step in this regard. We plan to cut down on the number of brands, especially those that use him merely as wallpaper. He has reached that level on the brand map where under-using him or using him crudely will severely dent his image. Dhoni is now no longer just a cricketer and captain. His brand image has gone much beyond that. He is an icon to stay.

— **PRATIK SEN, MANAGING DIRECTOR, MINDSCAPES MAESTROS**
(The company that manages the Indian skipper's endorsements)

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SONY
believe

BRAVIA
FULL HD • 3D • LED • 1000 TV

We signed up Dhoni two years ago, primarily because he was a perfect fit with our products — Chyawanprash and Dabur Honey. Like our two brands, Dhoni is traditional and rooted and symbolises mental and physical fitness. Our brands cut across all socio-economic and geographical boundaries, just like Dhoni does. The fact that he consumed Chyawanprash himself daily was a bonus and added more credibility to the association.

— **PRAVEEN JAIPURIAR,**
HEAD-HEALTH SUPPLEMENTS,
DABUR INDIA

When it comes to being an icon, few can get bigger than Dhoni. In fact, after the World Cup, he has moved from being just a youth icon to an icon of national status. Dhoni endorses two of our products — Healthy & Tasty cooking oil (with Preity Zinta) and Zandu Pancharisht — and the association has been a productive one for both parties. Pancharisht has seen a good jump in sales ever since Dhoni came on board.

— **MOHAN GOENKA, DIRECTOR,**
EMAMI PVT LTD

(As told to Priyanka Roy)
How much would you be willing to pay Dhoni to endorse your product? Tell t2@abp.in