



A full-page advertisement for Ranbir Kapoor's Pepsi campaign. The background is a dark, moody photograph of Ranbir Kapoor in a blue and black striped shirt and black leather pants, pointing towards the camera. On the left side, the text "RK CRACKS COLA CRORES!" is written in large, bold, yellow letters. Below this, a paragraph of text in white reads: "The Game kick-started with Ranbir Kapoor on Wednesday. Said to be Pepsi's most expensive campaign ever in India, it cost the cola company Rs 35 crore. Ranbir talks about taking the brand further".



Hiren Kotwani

■ hiren.kotwani@hindustantimes.com

Within two-and-a-half years of being in the industry, he has emerged on the top with the sheer strength of his performance, charisma and sex appeal.

To add to that, he's also a hit with brands that are queuing up to sign him on as their ambassador. But recently, Ranbir Kapoor turned down two endorsements. While one is a denim company, the other is a big name in suiting and shirting.

Apparently, the money for the suiting endorsement wasn't good enough. And the other brand was a not-too-expensive low-end label in denim.

"Akshay Kumar is the ambassador for the high-end range and his contract with the company is still going good. Not pleased with the deal, Ranbir preferred to walk out.

Considering that he's getting good positioning with other brands, why should he opt for less?" says a source in the advertising circuit.

The price 'Game'

It is believed that Kapoor charges six to eight crore, per brand, per year. The latest news is that Pepsi, the brand that he has signed on after it parted ways with Shah Rukh Khan, has spent an unprecedented Rs 35 crore on their newest campaign, *The Game*. At a conference to announce *The Game*, Punita Lal, executive director, Marketing, PepsiCo India, admitted, "We've spent the highest amount of money on this campaign, something that we haven't spent on any star's campaign before."

Ask the Youngistan ambassador if he's flattered to have replaced SRK who endorsed the brand for over a decade and he says, "Not at all. I don't think I've replaced anyone. I grew up watching Shah Rukh Khan's films and ads. That's when I started loving the brand. He is a huge superstar. I'm just taking his legacy forward. Seeing all that he's done for the brand and all that the brand has done for him, I'm just making whatever contribution I can."

Prep talk

Though the the campaign's budget could easily produce a film, Kapoor says that he doesn't think the money is riding on him. "The *Game* is a concept that is entertaining and engaging. It involves gaming something I haven't seen in any ad. They are taking a risk and pushing boundaries," he says, adding that he feels the responsibility of the campaign on his shoulders.

Known to prepare for every role, Kapoor reveals that he did his homework for this one too: "Apart from working on the look of the character, I also had to ensure that my movements were swift despite the harness. It's also the first time that I've used it and it's not easy making body movements smoothly. One shouldn't say, 'Oh, he's taken the support of the harness.' We did a lot of rehearsals and I'm glad we got the desired results."

Action role play

Point out to him that he seems to be doing more action in the campaign than in his movies so far and he agrees. "Yes, I've only romanced heroines so far. This is the first time I'm doing some slick action. I also see it as a preparation to do some good action films in the future. Since the commercials are about 20-odd seconds each, the action is not as extensive as it would be in a film," he exults. When asked whether we'll hear of him being flooded with action roles after his campaign, Kapoor says he's hopeful. "As an actor, I must dabble in every genre. Since I haven't got an action film yet, I look forward to doing one," he enthuses.



Your trend of doing a mixed bag of films continues this year too...

Yes. My next release is Prakash Jha's *Rajneeti*, a political thriller with an ensemble cast. Then, there's *Anjana Anjani*, directed by Siddharth Raj Anand with Priyanka Chopra. I'll soon be starting Imtiaz Ali's film, tentatively titled, *Rock Star*. Then I have a movie with Anurag Basu, where I'm playing a deaf and mute character.

You must have learnt a lot about the deaf and the mute while working as Sanjay Leela Bhansali's assistant for *Black*...

Absolutely. We visited the Helen Keller institute in Vashi, got some exposure on how they live. The character is a normal guy with this disability.

I'm putting the same amount of preparation and hard work for Imtiaz's film, for which

I'm getting the nuances right to play a Delhi 'Jaath' boy and also learning to play the guitar. I have to get the body language and the flavour of the character right as well. Every film requires a certain amount of prep work. That makes the character believable and relatable for the audience. They can connect with you because they have seen such characters in their lives, so they enjoy watching the story even more.

You're also very selective and careful about the kind of movies you do...

That's my right as an actor. I don't think I can multi-task on many films at the same time. When I'm working on one film at a time, I can give it my all, which is needed since cinema is changing and progressing continuously. Besides, I can't think two characters at a time.

Talk was that your father, Rishi Kapoor, was planning to direct a movie with you under the family banner, RK Films.

That was just a rumour. Whenever my dad wants to direct, it will be under the RK banner, no doubt. And of course, I'd love to act in it.

Your romantic films have done better than others. Your father too had a romantic hero's image?

Frankly, I don't want to get typecast. I'm 27. I want to do roles that I think I can carry off convincingly. *Wake Up Sid* was a coming-of-age film and I don't think *Rocket Singh* was a romantic film either. *Saawariya* was, to a certain extent, while *Ajab Prem Ki Ghajab*

Kahaani was more of a comedy. Yes, romance is something I've grown up watching and something I'm interested in doing.

You started as an assistant director, so it's understood that you will direct a movie too...

I do aspire to be a director some day. I'm very passionate about film-making. But first, I have to consolidate myself as an actor, before my family lets me step behind the camera.

On the celebrity quotient

Agreed that attention comes with the job and people are interested in knowing everything about you. But I also feel that it's like that because we give them that information. If we don't, then people may be more interested in knowing about the kind of work we're doing. That makes more sense, instead of wanting to know where and with whom I ate dinner last night. I also don't understand

labels people give me - youth icon and heartthrob etc. I'm a very young actor, and it's been only two and a half years since I started my career. That's how I see it. I go to work in the morning, pack up, come home, have dinner with my parents, meet my friends and go to sleep. There are no different facets that add to my image or subtract from it. I just do my work and I'm passionate about it. That's it.



For John Players