

Use of celebrity endorsements for non-profit advertising



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1. Introduction

In the grand scheme of marketing and advertising, celebrity endorsements are fairly new as the fascination with celebrities has increased in recent times (Keel and Nataraajan, 2012). As a result of this, non-profit organisations and celebrity endorsements have only just begun to show up in popular advertising. Therefore, there is restricted academic literature which brings the two topics together, which means that although this review focuses on celebrity endorsements within the non-profit sector a large majority of the literature is focused on the for-profit sector. To combat this issue, for-profit theories will be amended so ensure they are suitable for non-profit organisations and the very few theories which have been created for non-profit organisations will be reviewed and assessed.

2. Non-Profit Organisations

Non-profit organisations (NPOs) can be found in the non-profit sector, sometimes referred to as the third sector (Anheier, 2014). In recent decades, the increasing importance of the non-profit sector for society can be seen through its rapid growth in scope and scale (Salamon and Anheier, 1999). Non-profit organisations have started to incorporate business-like techniques (Goerke, 2003) used in the for-profit sector as they are increasingly encountering market pressures which are typical for for-profit organisations, such as competition for funding and the need to earn money to fulfil their mission (Andreasen and Kotler, 2003; Dolnicar *et al*, 2008). In addition to operating in a competitive environment (Blery *et al* , 2010), NPOs have to operate within limited constraints of finance and manpower resources (Yorke, 2007). As a result of their limitations, the marketing process for non-

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profit organisations is different to the traditional marketing used within for-profit organisations. Clarke and Mount (2000) pointed out that marketing's 'dominant exchange paradigm... is currently ill equipped for use in the non-profit sector', this is due to the nature of the desired marketing outcomes for NPOs being non-monetary (MacMillian *et al*, 2005), which, as a result, is harder to communicate effectively. Therefore, non-profit organisations need to take this into consideration when they are planning their advertisements.

NPOs are becoming more financially concerned with drawing in revenue (Macedo and Pinho, 2004), therefore to achieve higher revenues they are having to advertise in a way that is effective for their purpose. Most non-profit organisations are not selling products; they are selling their mission, their ideas, their programs and their services (Blery *et al* , 2010). To achieve this, multiple marketing strategies which target different markets need to be developed (Pope *et al* , 2009). In recent years, the development of celebrity endorsements has meant they have become a huge advertising tool, with 25% of all advertisements featuring a celebrity (Shimp, 2003). The non-profit sector has also found a way of including celebrity endorsements into their marketing mix.

3. Celebrity Endorsements

To endorse something means to show support or approval and nowadays celebrities are often used to endorse products. McCracken (1989) defined a celebrity endorser as a person who boasts public recognition and uses this trait on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement. As being a celebrity is now a commercial strategy for many types of media

organisations, there has been a significant increase in celebrity content across all platforms (Turner, 2004). The non-profit sector is becoming an increasingly competitive and fast-growing advertising area (Wheeler, 2009), therefore many third sector organisations have unlocked the power of celebrity and recruited the support of famous personalities to raise their brand awareness and generate additional income (Kelly *et al* , 2014). Non-profit organisations rely on celebrities because they are efficient fundraisers; they have skills in mass communication, so they reach an extensive audience, captivate people's attention, bring light to social issues and even access the upper echelons of political power (Samman *et al* . 2009; Wheeler 2009; Dominguez, 2010). Non-profits carry out celebrity endorsement strategies to make their brand or campaigns more engaging to certain demographics (Kelly *et al* , 2014). Van den Bulck *et al* (2010) observed that celebrity-based campaigns seemed more successful in creating support and as NPOs try to influence consumers through their emotions, using celebrities as endorses can be very effective due to their power of attraction, and their ability to generate feelings and emotional responses (Assael, 1984).

Celebrities also have the power of reaching millions of possible consumers with one picture or comment, depending on their social media following, this is something that both non-profit and for-profit organisations have recently started to utilise.

It is important for NPOs to find a celebrity who is a perfect fit for the advertisement as this will increase support from the public. Often celebrities seek to join an NPO to promote their own personal brand (Dominguez, 2010), with this collaboration it seems both celebrities and organisations win

(Garcia de los Salmones *et al* , 2013). However, the alliance may cause resistance and scepticism from the consumers in regard to the real motives of the celebrity (Petty *et al* , 1983). Samman *et al* (2009) supported this theory but also found that most people consider celebrity involvement in charities to be beneficial.

4. Celebrity Endorsements Motives

What motivates celebrities to volunteer to endorse various charitable organisations is still unknown to most consumers, this section aims to analyse some of the current theories surrounding celebrity endorsement theories. NPOs potentially have more to benefit from the use of celebrity endorsers as their engagement can, in many ways, help promote awareness, enlist new supporters and obtain additional funds (Samman *et al*, 2009). Some celebrities choose to associate themselves with particular organisations that are ‘ of the moment’ or of extreme appeal (Kelly *et al* , 2014). This often means that charities relating to taboo issues are under endorsed, such as domestic violence and mental health. Similarly, Anderson (2007) suggests that celebrities support charities based on their popularity because they want to be included in the goodwill that certain issues invoke. This shows that the motive behind the endorsement is egoistic and supports Moran’s (2011) theory that celebrities are ‘ cynically trying to improve their own public image’ through endorsing organisations they know will allow them to gain media attention. West (2004) believes that many celebrities take part in charitable activities because they are ‘ shallow and insecure and will go to any lengths to be noticed and loved’. Contrastingly, Poniewozik (2005) suggested that some of the motivating factors for celebrities include;

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guilt, faith, personal suffering, ratings and PR, these factors are a combination of egoistic and altruistic motivators. Harris (2003) elaborates on Anderson's theme by suggesting that celebrities frequently 'jump ship', depending on what issue is generating public attention.

Motive is also questioned when celebrities choose to publically support more than one charity. Thrall *et al* (2008) found that in a study of 247 celebrities each celebrity supports 4.16 organisations, on average. This can raise a major issue as research has shown that being a part of multiple endorsements can have adverse effects on consumer perceptions of the celebrity and the organisation which is being endorsed (Tripp, Jensen, & Carlson, 1994). As when a celebrity chooses to endorse more than one charity it supports the theory that celebrities are only trying to improve their own image and the public's opinion of them. When celebrities seem to overexpose themselves through multiple endorsements their personal greed begins to be questioned by the public (Erdogan, 1999). Therefore, it is important for each organisation to recruit suitable endorsers. This should also result in a reduction of inappropriate engagements.

In the non-profit sector, adopting a strategy of achieving the commitment of the celebrity to the cause off-camera may be successful (Samman *et al* , 2009), as this shows genuine support (Magnini *et al* , 2008) and people tend to show admiration to celebrities that they feel are sincerely committed to the organisations that they choose to support. This type of support also allows consumers to get used to linking a certain celebrity to the organisation and the social cause (Garcia de los Salmones *et al*, 2013).

Allowing consumers to adjust to an endorsement over a period of time allows

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the support to develop in a natural way and reduce the severity of the advertising.

5. Celebrity Credibility

A key variable in the success of an endorsement is the credibility of the celebrity, credible endorses improve advertising effectiveness (Eisend & Langner, 2010). Source credibility is crucial when securing celebrity endorsers (Silvera & Austad, 2004), as when a celebrity's credibility is high, consumers are more likely to accept their arguments presented in the advertisement (Grewal *et al* , 1994). In this instance credibility is a combination of two dimensions: expertise and trustworthiness (Hovland *et al* , 1953). Eisend & Langner (2010) defined expertise as a ' cognition-based attribute, derived from knowledge of the subject and it refers to the skill and competence in communicating the topic'. Whereas trustworthiness refers to the honesty and plausibility of the celebrity when articulating an objective opinion on the product or organisation (McGinnies & Ward, 1980). This model of source credibility is the most widely used in this research topic, however most of the studies are based on the profit sector and not in the NPO area.

Garcia de los Salmones *et al* (2013) hypothesised that within the non-profit sector, celebrity credibility is directly and positively related to the reaction towards the advertisement. This theory is supported by Park and Cho (2010) who found that when consumers believe that a celebrity endorser genuinely cares about the advocated cause the celebrity effect can be magnified. They also found that celebrity endorsers yield more positive attitudinal results when consumers associate altruistic motives to the endorsers. This can be

reversed, if consumers feel manipulated or deceived by an endorsement the organisation will be less credible (Moore *et al* , 1994).

6. Organisation-Celebrity Match

Before finalising on a celebrity endorsement, it is crucial that the intention of the endorsement and the celebrity chosen for the endorsement align. This often begins with the 'attractiveness' of the celebrity in the endorsement. Attractiveness tends to be measured with items such as 'sexy', 'elegant', 'classy', or 'beautiful' (Ohanian, 1990), this is not necessarily appropriate for NPOs. However, Kahle & Homer (1985) defined attractiveness more deeply as including non-physical variables, such as similarity, familiarity and likeability. Charisma or grace and positive attitude have also been added to this non-physical description (Langmeyer & Shank, 1994; Silvera & Austad, 2004). Focusing on these non-physical attributes allows NPOs to establish their initial opinion of a celebrity and then decide whether they would be a suitable fit for an endorsement. Using these attributes also reduces the chance of consumers having negative pre-established knowledge and attitudes towards the celebrity (Choi & Rifon, 2007) as the perception of the celebrity can influence the response to endorsements (Samman *et al* , 2009). If Kahle and Homer's (1985) theory is correct, basing a suitable celebrity off their likeability should increase the performance of the endorsement. Consumers consider any behaviour both professionally and in their personal life when deciding their attitudes and feelings towards celebrities (Garcia de los Salmones *et al* , 2013). Therefore, to ensure the celebrity matches with the NPOs purpose and beliefs these aspects need to be considered. When an organisation utilises a celebrity's public persona that matches with the

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campaign and target audience the endorsement is more effective than using a non-celebrity or a celebrity that doesn't match the campaign (Erdogan, 1999). I believe this is still true 20 years on, as celebrity endorsements now take many forms, not just television advertisements, endorsements are more commonly focused on social media posts as they reach a wider audience.

7. Potential Hazards of a Celebrity Endorsement

When endorsing a product/brand/campaign, the product, not the celebrity, must be the star (Cooper, 1984), therefore it is important that organisations consider the potential hazards when selecting a celebrity to be the face of their brand/campaign. This section reviews literature in the area of the potential hazards of using celebrity endorsers.

When it comes to being the face of a product, a sudden change in image can cause issues for the branding (Cooper, 1984). This was an issue for Yardley cosmetics in the 1990's when Helena Bonham Carter was the face of their company and then stated that she doesn't wear makeup. This statement contradicted the purpose of the campaign and ultimately looks bad on the organisation as it shows they have not fully considered who they are using to promote the business.

Another potential hazard is the endorser getting into a situation of moral turpitude (Kaikati, 1987) as this reflects poorly on any organisation that continues to support the celebrity. This has happened many times for various organisations; both Michael Vick and Lance Armstrong for Nike; Kate Moss for H&M, Chanel and Burberry; and Kobe Bryant for Nutella, McDonalds and Sprite. When an organisation decides to stand by a celebrity who has

been included in some negative publicity it can influence consumers' perception of the endorsed product, as well as the celebrity (Klebba and Unger, 1982; Till and Shimp, 1995). Both of these pieces of literature are from over 20 years ago, the beliefs of consumers could be very different now as celebrity endorsements are a lot more popular and with that the failures of endorsements are likely to be more frequent. Similarly, when a negative endorsement does surface, it is only a matter of time before the next negative endorsement is released, by that time it is likely that most consumers would have forgotten about the negativity surrounding the initial endorsement.

Similarly, when a celebrity faces backlash for their endorsement it reflects negatively on the organisation. Kendall Jenner famously received copious amounts of criticism for her 2017 advertisement with Pepsi that sought to recreate an iconic image from a Black Lives Matter rally (Lamberton, 2018). The original image showed a black woman standing up to police but Pepsi used Jenner – a white woman – for the advertisement. Attiah (2017) concluded that the hate was a result of Pepsi seemingly 'erasing' black women as leaders. Despite the hate the advert received online, only 25% of 220 US consumers had a more negative view of Pepsi after the advertisement while 31% reported that their view was unchanged (Taylor, 2017), despite these results not being as bad as social media would make them, they still show that Pepsi were at fault with their advertisement and as a result the ad was pulled from being shown around the world. Moreover, only 220 America consumers were involved in the survey, had it been on a larger scale I believe the results would have been drastically different as the

advert was being shown all over the world and also received a lot of negative publicity on social media which reaches a larger amount of people.

More specific to the non-profit sector, the main potential hazard is strategic philanthropy (Babiak *et al* , 2012), many academics have understood and defined this as being, the synergistic use of a brand's resources to achieve both organisational and social benefits (Waddock & Post, 1995; Saiia, Carroll & Buchholtz, 2003; Porter & Kramer, 2006; Dickinson & Barker, 2007).

Therefore, strategic philanthropy is viewed as having a dual objective that is improvement of brand image and the betterment of society, through supporting a social cause (Ilicic & Baxter, 2014).

8. Conclusion

This paper has identified factors from the academic literature which shows how celebrity endorsements work and the importance of selecting a celebrity that aligns with the mission and ethics of the organisation. Specifically, the benefits of using celebrity endorsements, their attractiveness and credibility and their motives. The potential risks of using celebrities as an advertising tool are also discussed. However, there is a gap in the literature for non-profit organisations, therefore adaptations had to be made for theories that were surrounding for-profit organisations.

In summary, non-profit organisations have a main focus of selling their missions rather than a product, therefore the advertising must highlight their services and ideas rather than the celebrity. To ensure this happens, NPOs must review the motive and credibility of the celebrity they want to endorse the organisation before going ahead with the endorsement. The public also

need to see the match between the organisation and the celebrity and be able to understand why the endorsement has been presented the way it has. If the public can't connect with an advertisement or they don't understand why a certain celebrity has decided to work alongside an organisation the endorsement will not succeed in doing its desired job. There are also considerations that need to be taken into account before a collaboration is finalised, regarding the possible negative outcomes which could come from the endorsement. This minimises the chances of negative feedback and negative outcomes. Overall, celebrity endorsements can be a double-edged sword if not developed and used effectively.

9. References

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