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MILLWARD BROWN

# SPOTLIGHT

EXPLORING THE USE OF CELEBRITIES  
TO INCREASE BRAND APPEAL



## Spotlight

Spotlight is a series of occasional think pieces harnessing the power of the Firefly Millward Brown global network. One of the strengths of Firefly is knowledge-sharing – the ability to quickly call on the expertise and skills of practitioners across our network to provide insight into specific issues. This edition of Spotlight contains our collective views across five of our European markets (France, Italy, Poland, Russia & the UK) on the use of celebrities by marketers.

### Celebrities and marketing

Brands often use celebrities to encourage and influence customer perception of their brand; although it can be a risky strategy, signing a celebrity can be a shortcut to brand recognition and association. In this edition of Spotlight about the use of celebrities in marketing, we have identified four trends across our markets that are directly relevant to marketers.

1. Increasing use of celebrities (global icons and the rise of the local celebrity).
2. Demystification of celebrities.
3. Digital is still virgin territory.
4. Affinity marketing and the virtuous circle.

**We also share at the end of this document some examples of celebrity qual research in action.**

### Use of celebrity is on the increase

Despite the saturation of celebrity news and gossip in all markets there was no sign that the public's appetite for celebrity has diminished and certainly marketers appear to be employing them as much as, or even more, than ever.

The perception across markets is that there are more celebrities who are being used more and more and by more brands.

**The markets identified two broad celebrity typologies.**

- Global icons...usually internationally recognised movie stars, models and sports stars.
- Local personalities... TV presenters/hosts, comedians, local sports personalities/heroes, soap stars, chefs.

### The global icon

These two typologies are used in marketing in different ways.

The global icons are used to market global brands (both luxury brands and increasingly FMCG brands such as personal care products and soft drinks).

- Given that the cult of celebrity is a global phenomenon, and that it is a notoriously difficult process to produce global advertising, it is perhaps unsurprising that marketers continue to employ celebrities to market their products.
- These global celebrities are recognised to be the encapsulation of universal values... be it glamour, style, performance, strength, masculinity/femininity etc.. which the brand wants to convey and as such they are a useful cipher for advertising global brands across borders.
- Celebrity is a common currency which has a shared meaning across and within cultures...it's an easy win for a brand if the appropriate celebrity brand (global icons are brands in their own right) is matched with the appropriate product brand.

Although there was evidence that some global icons are now being employed to market local brands.

- In Russia for instance Bruce Willis is being used to advertise Trustbank.
- In Poland various global stars (De Vitto, Banderas, Depardieu) are being used to advertise BZ WBK bank.

### The rise of the local celebrity

The increasing use of local personalities to market local brands was a trend identified across all markets.

Local personalities are recognised to work differently from global icons.

- Where global icons are distant fantasy figures who are highly aspirational, local personalities are more real, down to earth people whom consumers can identify with almost as friends and certainly as someone who shares their cultural values... they are more approachable; 'one of us'.
- As such they appear more appropriate vehicles than global icons to aid in the marketing of local brands.
- They convey the sense that this is a brand that truly understands me and talks my language... as such they can foster a sense of identification which would be difficult for the more distant global icons to achieve.

## Demystification of celebrity

A significant trend identified in some markets is the demystification of global celebrities in particular via:

- The explosion of gossip type celebrity magazines and TV shows.
- Celebrities using social media.

Here the global icon is turned into a fallible human 'like me' rather than some godlike figure to be worshipped from afar.

- And this in turn can put a slightly different spin on the consumer/celebrity dynamic.

'The Italian consumer today expects the celebrities to help him regain confidence and the ability to desire, beyond his immediate needs, to remind him that it is possible to fulfil one's own life potential, to show him that it is useful to know how to combine individual and collective interests'. (Italy)

'The celeb alone is not enough to make the brand aspirational, his attitude and generosity as portrayed in the media are fundamental in order to appeal to a consumer'. (France)

This trend, identified in France and Italy in particular, means that that consumers are becoming increasingly more demanding and critical of celebrity.

.....And that to be a credible endorser or spokesperson for a brand requires the celebrity to be more than just a star but also to be a desirable role model in terms of their private lives or outside activities.

- Participation in money gathering activities for charity such as sports aid and comic relief being examples in the UK.
- Being vocal about international issues, for example: George Clooney and Darfur.

## Digital is still a virgin territory

We could find little evidence of celebrities being used in anything than a more prosaic manner in the digital space/medium.

If a celebrity appeared AOL then they were likely to appear in the brand's website and might be used to enhance the brand experience in some way.

A good example being the use of Peter Crouch for the Mars football club project.

The FA and Mars are aiming to create over 100 FA Mars Just Play centres across England. Each centre will be staffed by FA Mars Just Play Coordinators, delivering casual football sessions that can benefit up to 50 participants at any one time. Mars has already

begun its campaign by creating an advertisement featuring England and Tottenham player Peter Crouch around rejuvenating a football facility in Carperby, Yorkshire that serves as an important centre for local sporting activity. This is part of the Mars commitment to reducing the barriers to adult participation in football.

There were examples from France where digitally born celebrities are now being used in marketing.

- Remi Gaillard became known for placing intriguing videos on the web and has now collaborated with Nike and Schweppes (Orangina).
- Louise Ebel became known for her fashion blog and is now working with fashion brands (Chanel and Compton Cottonniers).

**This is an activity which we believe will increase.**

And the use of social media by celebrities is the norm for many nowadays, although its use by marketers is debatable.

- In the UK Lily Allen caused a furore by mentioning her use of Grey Goose vodka in her tweets.
- Grey Goose was sponsoring her new clothes shop.

It seems that twitter in particular is expected to open up the real person rather than their celebrity persona and as a result consumers object to being 'sold to' in this medium.

## The virtuous cycle of celebrity affinity marketing

Certainly we have seen some brands recognising this and using the celebs' personal charitable interests to produce affinity marketing ads.

### Daniel Craig & Omega

- ORBIS Flying Eye Hospital has announced it is working in cooperation with Omega and brand ambassador Daniel Craig – aka Bond - to support the non-profit organisation's fight against preventable blindness.

### Mickail Gorbachev, Catherine Deneuve, Bono, Keith Richard... Angelina Jolie... & Louis Vuitton

- Louis Vuitton has chosen personalities from very different fields to promote its commitment to environmental responsibility. For their campaign Bono and Ali Newson donated their fees to TechnoServe, Conservation Cotton Initiative and Chernobyl Children's project International.

Such activities lend a desirable humanity to global icons who otherwise are merely distant fantasy figures.



## Celebrity qual research in action

Exploring the use of celebrities to increase fund raising for a global children's charity

### Background

A global children's charity wished to explore how it should use celebrities to support its initiatives and raise funds in the UK and France.

### Research objectives

Specifically to understand

- Public's and influencers attitudes towards using celebrities for charities.
- What celebrity endorsement could do for their brand.
- Which celebrities would be right for their brand and for which type of causes.
- Guide the selection and use of celebrities as ambassadors.

### Methodology

Group discussions amongst varied cohorts

- Youth (16-19 yrs), Younger (25-34), Older (35-54).

Depth Interviews with influencers

- TV correspondent, Foreign and commissioning editors of broadsheet newspapers, Editor of glossy magazine, Editor of tabloid weekly magazine.

### Headline findings

They currently have a quite distant relationship with the public, particularly the young cohort.

Celebrities can be the public face of a charity creating interest and helping the public to engage with the issues and aims of an organisation.

For many years they have used celebrities but there is a sense that there is no coherent image or message being delivered via these celebrities.

Moving forward they should present a much warmer and more accessible face and here the use of celebrity can help but needs to be carefully managed to ensure that the chosen ambassadors embody the relevant values.

Key values that all their ambassadors should have were identified with recommendations as to how specific personalities can effectively enhance a range of charity activities/causes.

## Selecting the best celebrity fit against a new communication strategy for a leading white spirits brand

### Background

A drinks manufacturer and their advertising agency had created a new campaign for one of its leading white spirits brands in the UK with the objective of driving brand reappraisal and behaviour change.

### Research objectives

Explore and understand how different celebrities fit with the campaign idea, its executions and the brand.

Recommend from a variety of different celebrities (male and female) which have the potential to meet the advertising objectives of driving reappraisal and change.

### Methodology

Group discussions amongst a variety of attitudinal and behavioural drinker profiles.

- Category lovers.
- Category changers.
- Experimental mixers.

### Headline findings

The research provided guidelines for the characteristics of celebrities which best fit the brand whilst at the same time driving reappraisal.

### Male celeb should

- Have British working class roots.
- Be intelligent with rugged good looks.
- Have a sense of humour.

### Female celeb should

- Be posh but not too posh.
- Be an English rose with a sense of fun.
- Be intelligent.

As a result of the research particular male and female celebrities were chosen for the campaign which is now on air.

## Evaluating the impact of a Hollywood A list celebrity actor on local markets for a global alcohol brand

### Background

A global alcohol brand wished explore how the use of a particular Hollywood A list celebrity actor would impact on their advertising campaign idea.

### Research objectives

Overall to understand how this celebrity aided or otherwise the advertising idea.

Specifically to understand

- Response to the advertising idea...and the potential of the celebrity to enhance the idea.
- Engagement/distinctiveness/appeal of each script.
- The celebrity fit with and impact on brand.

### Methodology

Group discussions in Spain, Germany, Italy and Belgium.

- Men and women aged 25-35.

### Headline findings

The response to the campaign idea was largely positive and based on the response Firefly identified several executions with clear potential and advised on their optimisation.

The celebrity was universally admired and respected by consumers across markets and as such his presence was highly valuable to the campaign.

The character created for the celebrity in the executions was well liked as he reflected similar roles for which he was known for playing - funny, smart and clever individuals.

Importantly this celebrity fitted the brand very well - respecting its essence.

- Adding glamour and a touch of magic.

Ensuring that the executions adequately set up the character was key to the success of the campaign particularly as the character offered the opportunity to fully differentiate the brand from the other endorsements/brands which this was associated with.

The research gave the brand team clear and actionable recommendations in how to best use the celebrity to further develop the campaign.

## Firefly Millward Brown

Firefly was created by Millward Brown, bringing together some of the world's finest qualitative boutiques. We collaborate seamlessly to provide clients with the brightest creative and strategic research possible. Our single-minded objective: to drive brand success.

We use our in-depth understanding of marketing and consumer behaviour to identify true brand opportunities that inspire strategic recommendations to drive brand success.

Brands benefit from Firefly's cultural understanding of the local, regional and global markets we service. We invite you to take advantage of this powerful synergy of specialties and disciplines across the entire Firefly global team.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our network of people who helped to create this report; Alice Deruy & Magali Sinigo (Firefly Paris), Elena Desimoni & Roberto Mauri (Firefly Milano), Malgorzata Polawska & Mariusz Rzanny (Firefly Warsaw), Caroline Bright & David Moir (Firefly London), Olga Gorbunova & Tatyana Burchakova (Firefly Moscow).

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