

“The Pinocchio Factor in Consumer Attitudes Towards Celebrity Endorsement: Celebrity Endorsement, the Reebok Brand, and an Examination of a Recent Campaign”

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THE PINOCCHIO FACTOR IN CONSUMER ATTITUDES TOWARDS CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT: CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT, THE REEBOK BRAND, AND AN EXAMINATION OF A RECENT CAMPAIGN

John Temperley, Daniel Tangen

Abstract

Celebrity endorsement is a widely used tactic in marketing and much research has been done on the selection and effect of celebrity endorsement. This article looks at consumer attitudes and associations towards celebrity endorsement, using the case of Reebok and their latest marketing campaign. An adapted version of metaphor elicitation was undertaken to find major constructs in a sample consisting of University students. Findings from this paper confirm the importance of selection perceived credibility of the spokesperson and image fit, the credibility of the setting, and the dangers of overshadowing and over-endorsement. An interesting finding regards what is referred to as the “Pinocchio factor”, the consumer perceiving the celebrity spokesperson as Pinocchio, where his nose grows when he is not telling the truth. The same “Pinocchio factor” also refers to the problems of controlling a celebrity spokesperson, one of the major flaws in using a celebrity spokesperson in marketing.

Key words: Celebrity endorsement, consumer attitudes, marketing campaigns, Pinocchio factor, celebrity spoke person, sport organisations.

Introduction

Celebrity endorsement is a billion dollar industry today (Kambitsis et al., 2002) with companies signing deals with celebrities hoping that they can help them stand out from the clutter and give them a unique and relevant position in the mind of the consumer. According to Solomon (2002), the reasons for using celebrity endorsement involves its potential to create awareness, positive feelings towards their advertising and brand. Advertisement featuring celebrity endorsement is often also perceived to be entertaining. McCracken (1989) has called the use of celebrity endorsement advertising as “a ubiquitous feature of modern marketing”. In the USA a survey showed that in 1997 almost 25% of all ads featured a celebrity endorser (Stephens and Rice, 1998). In Japan almost 70% of all ads feature some kind of celebrity according to Kilburn (1998).

Research has shown that celebrity endorsement can have an impact on the consumer’s attention, recall, evaluations and purchase intentions (Atkin and Block, 1993; Ohanian, 1991; Sherman, 1985; Belch and Belch, 1995 and 2001; Walker and Dubitsky, 1994; Kaikati, 1987). Although some of these arguments are being questioned by researchers looking into the effect of celebrity endorsement when it comes to actual behavior as well as attitude towards a specific behavior (Mehta, 1994; Ohanian, 1991).

Reebok and their latest marketing campaign

Reebok launched their latest and largest marketing campaign in a decade in 2005 “I am what I am”. According to Reebok press release for the launch of the campaign (Reebok.com, February 7th, 2005) the aim of the campaign is to celebrate individuality and authenticity. The campaign features a variety of celebrities from sports stars Allen Iverson, Kelly Holmes etc. to music and movie stars such as Jay-Z, 50Cent and Lucy Liu. It is a global campaign, but looking at Reebok’s sponsorship of American sports (basketball and American football) and given the celebrities being used it is perhaps quite US biased.

Celebrity endorsement

Celebrity endorsement is today more and more seen as an integral part in an integrated marketing communication strategy. It should therefore be viewed in the context of the communication process as a whole. Hamish Pringle (2004) argues that there are 3 macro factors in the market today that largely influence the reason why celebrity endorsement can be a valid strategy: (1) increasing opportunity for interactivity between brands and their customers; (2) 'era of consent' referring to the situation we have today where the consumer has more control over the messages they receive (digital television, ad filters online etc.); (3) increasing media fragmentation and commercial communication clutter. Put these together and it makes it increasingly difficult for brands to gain the consumers attention and interest.

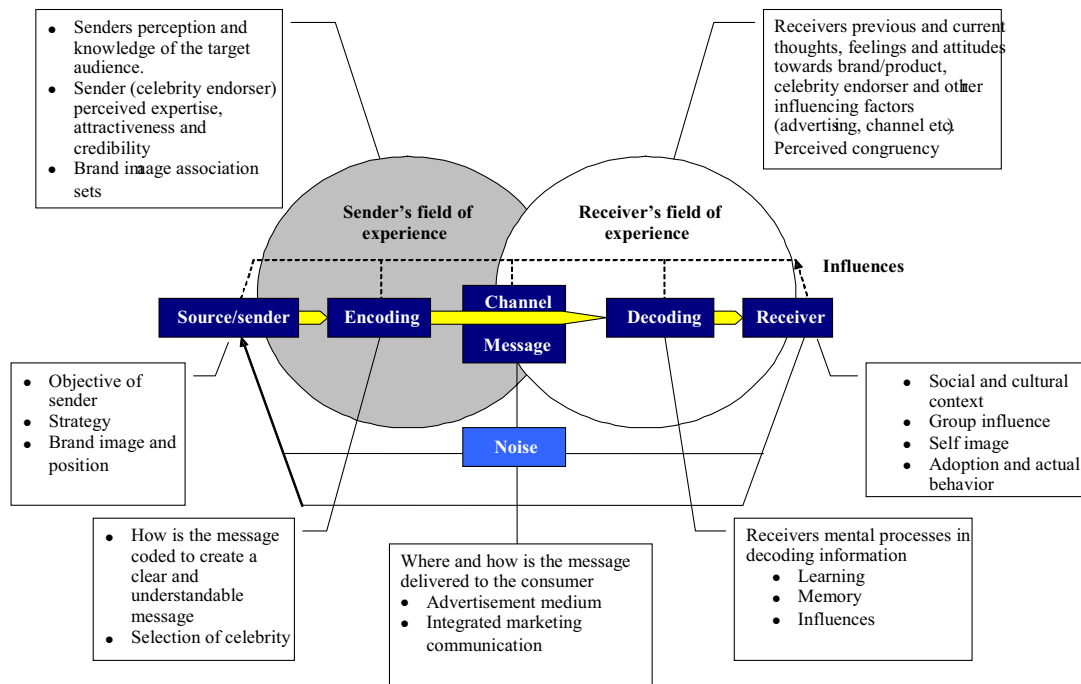


Fig. 1. The communication process based on understanding the consumer and the use of celebrity endorsement (Based on Belch and Belch, 2001, p. 139)

The role of the sender

King (1991) argues that a good strategy to build strong brand equity is to create an "original metaphor for the brands' personality". Zyman and Miller (2001) talk about the factors involved in building a brand such as: Presence, Relevance, Differentiate, Credibility, and Imagery. The credibility factor especially has been looked at by several researchers in celebrity endorsement (Hovland and Weiss, 1951; McGuire, 1969; Hass, 1981). The same has presence (Atkin and Block, 1993; Ohanian, 1991; Sherman, 1985; Belch and Belch, 1995 and 2001; Walker and Dubitsky, 1994; Kaikati, 1987) and also to some extent imagery and differentiate. Relevance in this context can be looked at as a result of success in the other areas, as it concerns being perceived as relevant for the consumer. A study by Walker et al. (1992) demonstrated that pairing different products with different celebrities affected the subjects perceived images of those products with the image of the paired celebrity.

Choice of celebrity and the encoding process

In encoding the message in the context of celebrity endorsement, perhaps the most important decision to be made, besides choosing whether or not to use celebrity endorsers at all, is the choice of celebrity. Much research has been made in this area and several models have been made to explain and assist in the celebrity endorsement selection process (Hovland, 1953; McGuire, 1985; Forkan, 1980; Kamins, 1989; McCracken, 1989). According to Rogers (1983) an important prerequisite is compatibility, meaning that the celebrity should be compatible with the consumer's lifestyle.

The first model looked at the source credibility (Hovland, 1953). The basis of the model is that the effectiveness of the message depends on the consumers perceived level of expertise and trustworthiness of the celebrity endorser (Hovland et al., 1953; Solomon, 1996). The argument is that through a process called internalization, the message from a celebrity endorser can influence opinions, beliefs, attitudes, and behavior. Another well known model looked at source attractiveness (McGuire, 1985). This model argues that consumers generally have a more positive attitude towards attractive people. McGuire (1985) argues that the effectiveness of the message depends on the similarity, familiarity and liking of the endorser. Research has shown that physically attractive endorsers are more successful at changing beliefs (Chaiken, 1979; Debevec and Kernan, 1984) and generating purchase intention (Friedman et al., 1976; Petrosius and Crocker, 1989; Petty and Cacioppo, 1980). Use of models and attractive people is a fairly common phenomenon in the world of celebrity endorsement. The product match-up hypothesis (Forkan, 1980; Kamins, 1989) argues that the celebrity image and the brand/product image should be congruent for effective advertising. One model that is considered to take it a step further is the Meaning Transfer Model (McCracken, 1989). It demonstrates that celebrity endorsers bring their own symbolic meanings into the endorsement process. The cultural meanings that are connected with the celebrity will be transferred to the endorsed brand/product (Brierley, 1995). According to Erdogan (1999) the strengths of this model are that it considers both celebrity status, class, gender, age, lifestyle, and personality.

The use of multiple celebrities

It is fairly common among sports brands such as Reebok, Nike and Adidas to use an assortment of celebrities in their marketing. This is largely undertaken to connect with the different and diverse target audiences of their products (Wells et al., 1989). One should however be careful in this strategy to take care of the core brand values (Erdogan and Baker, n.d.), especially when using several different celebrities to endorse the core brand (as seems to be the case with Reebok in their campaign). Hsu and McDonald (2002) found that endorsing a product with multiple celebrities can be beneficial in attracting the different target audiences of the product (milk mustache campaign).

Decoding and the role of the receiver

An understanding of the receivers attitudes, self image and behavior in the market place is necessary for effective communication, and thereby also for the selection of the right celebrity endorser or spokesperson. One can always match a celebrity with the wanted image of a brand/product, but it will not be successful if the receiver does not perceive the fit.

Sheth et al. (1999) argue that perception is shaped by the stimulus characteristics (objects, brands, stories etc.), the context in which it is delivered (social, cultural), and the customer characteristics (knowledge, experience, expertise). It is within these stages that a consumer will either recognize a fit between a celebrity and a product/brand, or reject this connection on different grounds. According to Martindale (1991) memory is structured as an associative network. When this happen the brand and the celebrity become parts of each others association set (Meyers-Levy, 1989).

According to Till and Shimp (1998) celebrity endorsement creates an opportunity to project a credible image in terms of expertise, persuasiveness, trustworthiness, and objectiveness. Research done over the last 30 years proves that a source perceived as credible is more persuasive than a low credibility sender (Hovland and Weiss, 1951; McGuire, 1969; Hass, 1981). Solomon et al. (2002) refer to a source's credibility as its perceived expertise, objectivity or trustworthiness. Loudon and Della Bitta (1993) describe as sources credibility of consisting of: Trustworthiness, exper-

tise, status/prestige, likeability, assortment of physical traits, perceived to be doing it for the money. The last one is referred to by Solomon et al. (2002) as the “hired gun” problem, where the spokesperson is perceived as endorsing the product only for the money. A study by King (1989) found that especially among young people the perceived credibility of celebrity endorsers has fallen, with 64% believing that celebrities appeared in the ads only for the money.

Consumer self concept, identity, and involvement

People see themselves as they imagine others see them (Solomon et al., 2002). This type of theory is relevant to the Reebok campaign that works on self image and allowing people to be who they are (I am what I am). Self image congruence models predict that products will be chosen when their attributes match some aspect of the self (Onkvisit and Shaw, 1989).

Solomon et al. (2002) also talk about celebrities being most effective in situations involving high social risk, where the buyer is aware of the impression peers will have of him or her. According to Friedman and Friedman (1979) a celebrity endorser is relatively more effective for products high in psychological or social risk, involving elements as good taste, self-image, and opinion of others, compared to a “normal” spokesperson. Expert opinions were considered most useful when the product endorsed was perceived to involve high, financial, performance, or physical risk. The typical consumer was found to be most useful for low-risk products. Tellis (1998) argues that consumers in a high-involvement situation might actually be offended by the use of celebrity to endorse the brand. Floyd (1999) also suggests that when there seem to be perceived high differences among competing brands, the consumer will perceive it as a high-involvement situation and put extra emphasis on information about the product more than being influenced by celebrity endorsers.

Method

This is a fairly broad look at the use of celebrity endorsement and of Reebok and their use of celebrity endorsement in their latest marketing campaign. The reason behind the choice of Reebok as a case, is that they are trying to differentiate themselves in the highly competitive sportswear market and create a unique position (Kiley, 2005). Not long after the start of this research the news came out that Reebok was being bought by one of their competitors, Adidas. The future of the Reebok brand is therefore uncertain.

An exploratory research method with the use of an adapted version of the Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique (Coulter, Zaltman and Coulter, 2001) was chosen as the preferred method for this research amongst University students in Leeds. The method can be very useful to explore the informants thoughts and feelings more extensively, since the method is largely built on informant-driven information and not researcher-driven. Validation studies of this method (Zaltman, 1997; Zaltman and Coulter, 1995; Thompson, 1997) have shown that information retrieved from 4-5 of these in-depth interviews focused on identifying and understanding the core metaphors can provide up to 90% of the information retrieved from a larger sample of the audience (Coulter, Zaltman and Coulter, 2001). The sample from this research ended up consisting of 6 males and 2 females. A better balance would have been preferable, but was not achievable at the time. The research used personal guided interviews and participants were asked to use a week to collect 6-7 images that represented celebrity endorsement to them. Most of the participants sent the images digitally prior to the scheduled interview. For an explanation of the different steps in the method refer to Appendix A. Looking at the attitudes and associations towards Reebok and their use of celebrity endorsement in their latest campaign, imagery of Reebok advertisement and the celebrities used, were used to explore both the feelings and attitudes towards the brand Reebok as well as towards the celebrities used in this campaign (see Appendix B).

Findings

Using analytical methods based on the work of Stern (1995) and Stern, Thompson and Arnould (1998) the stories from the interview transcripts were analyzed to explore the thoughts and feelings of the respondents when it comes to celebrity endorsement in sportswear/footwear. According to

Coulter and Zaltman (1994; 2000) and Zaltman (1997) this type of analysis makes us better understand customer thinking.

The credibility factor

A factor that was stated by a large part of the respondents was the “genuine” factor, referring to celebrities that are perceived as genuine the respondents have more positive associations with. *“He is perhaps more genuine and fun. I associate this picture with fun and enjoying life.”* They didn’t just talk about source credibility, but also the credibility of the setting of the advertising, reflecting on the realness of the situation. *“I really like the ads used the famous footballers playing against each other in the same way that they probably did as kids. I hate the advertisements that try to make you identify with a celebrity by bringing them into everyday life.”* The credibility of the setting therefore influences the credibility of the celebrity and the associations the consumer ends up with. Most of the respondents seem to prefer the advertisement where the setting seems natural and real. As one respondent put it: *“The Beckham picture seems more constructed.”* This also goes towards the credibility of the celebrity. If used in a setting related to established association sets, situations that the consumer can associate the celebrity with, situations that are perceived to be real, natural, then the chance of being influenced is better. This supports the research of Del Rio et al. (2001).

Concerning the important point of credibility, another problem is the fairly common perception that most celebrity endorsement is, as one of the respondents put it; *“it basically boils down to money.”* The perception that most celebrity endorsement is about the celebrity using his/her image to make some extra money is fairly common among all respondents, reflecting a perception that the celebrity is more into making money than actually believing in the product being endorsed (Evans, 1988). This is very negative for the perceived credibility of celebrities, and thereby hurts the effect celebrity endorsement has for the brand/product being endorsed (Callcoat and Philips, 1996; Ohanian, 1991; O’Mahony and Meenaghan, 1997).

Several of the respondents also reflect on the view that the use of celebrity endorsement increases the price the companies charge for their products, using a celebrity to be able to charge a premium for an average product. *“I think I might buy a product that is not endorsed by him. That is because I know that Nike pays him a lot of money for this and this money must come from higher prices for me.”* This reflects one of the respondents view of the endorsement between Nike and Tiger Woods. It is interesting to see in the big picture among almost all the respondents that there is a positive overall view of Nike as a brand, although some of them reflect on negative associations with their use of celebrity endorsement. This leads towards the conclusion that the statements that are negative might be more a statement used to reflect what they think I wanted to get out of the research, and that this doesn’t really affect their choice of brands when they are buying. It might actually be that Nike’s use of celebrity endorsement actually helps increase the chance of Nike being the preferred choice in the buying situation.

Mismatch between brand and celebrity can be perceived different by different people, but it is vital in today’s global market that one considers these aspects as well. Mismatch between celebrity and brand has been widely researched (Forkan, 1980; Kamins, 1980; Misra and Beatty, 1990; Kahle and Homer, 1985; Callcoat and Philips, 1996; Ohanian, 1991; O’Mahony and Meenaghan, 1997). As presented by one respondent, the image of David Beckham endorsing what seems to be a Japanese food brand. It might work in Japan, but the respondent said that for him it represented over-endorsing by Beckham, and the view that Beckham is doing it for the money. *“This reinforces my image of him being a commercial person, not sticking to his trade. Going into this world of being a celebrity, popular and seen. I think I would respect him more if he had stuck to football, and not endorsing products like Fran, which seem to have nothing to do with it. He is only doing it for money, which reinforces my image of him as a shallow commercial person.”* As we see from this quote, and this was also stated in other words by several of the other respondents as well, a celebrity endorsing too many products and products that might be perceived outside their field of expertise will hurt their perceived image. This supports findings by Evans amongst others (1988). The question then is to what degree it will also influence the image of the endorsed brand.

Some of the respondents reflected on not having any special feelings and associations towards celebrity endorsement without thinking about it first, and look beyond the conscious mind. As one respondent put it: *“This should be a blank picture, because when I first heard celebrity endorsement that is the first thing that came to mind, nothing. Then I had to consider that is not nothing, there is something in there, but everything else was like a secondary reaction. My first reaction is that I really don’t care in a way.”* However as they started to think more about it the pictures reflected deeper attitudes towards celebrity endorsement, and it reflected both positive and negative associations and attitudes towards the use of celebrity endorsement.

The Puppet Master factor

Some of the respondents brought with them pictures reflecting the companies or celebrities trying to control or manipulate the consumer into buying the endorsed product. Some of them talked about celebrities being “puppets” used by companies, but perhaps the picture brought by one of the respondents summarizes it better, the picture of Pinocchio. Reflecting on the fact that companies are using celebrities to influence the consumers behavior in a certain direction, at the same time as the consumer often perceives the celebrities to be “lying” when endorsing certain products (referring to Pinocchio’s nose growing when he is lying). Another interesting view is that it reflects on the lack of control companies have over the actions of a celebrity, the Pinocchio coming to life.

Influential works

It seems that several of the respondents have a more positive view of celebrity endorsement in the cases where it is used for public information, or to get a message out for a product/brand that either does something positive for mankind or that heals some illness etc. This is in line with amongst others findings by Veldre (2004) on authenticity, and Rogers (1983).

Overshadowing

This is a fairly common problem and one that leads to lack of clarity for the consumer and that will “water out” the image and associations that are between the celebrity and the brand being endorsed (Evans, 1998). The same problem was identified by several of the other respondents as well, talking about for example Beckham being used by brands that they felt there was no clear connection between. This also strengthens the view that most celebrities are using endorsement to increase their net profit, and that from a consumer’s perspective it is all about the money.

Be like Mike factor

Self image has been researched in the context of celebrity endorsement, and established that it is an important factor in marketing (Kahle and Homer, 1985; Fortini-Cambell, 1992). Some of the respondents told stories of how they were influenced by celebrity endorsement when they were younger; *“But I remember when I go back to being kid, I remember Jordan (Michael). I remember the shoes, which I never bought though, but the picture was good. I think I never bought them because it was an opposite reaction to what everyone else was doing. It was something about wanting to differentiate myself you know, I didn’t do the same thing as all others. In the last year of High School I bought these Nike’s with an R on the side. Everyone had them, but I still bought them as well.”* This reflects that self image was important in considering what to buy and what influenced them. It also reflects a need to be different as well as the same time identifying with a group of people. Apparently this can go both ways. If one product gets too popular among a certain group it can actually make others choose another product even though they like it.

Another respondent used a Nike ad showing an open road with nobody on it. The respondent identified with this ad because he could see himself running on it. *“If the runner was there, I would think that this guy is running. When I see it like this, I can see myself running. Sometimes it is good motivation to see someone running, sometimes it is scary because you think that I will never be like that.”* That is another one of the dangers of using celebrity endorsement, it can create an image that this is not achievable for me.

Reebok at the present and the user

“I associate Reebok with this old English tennis player, who sets out to win the Wimbledon every year, but never does.”

The respondents were asked to describe an image or picture that for them represented Reebok as a brand, several of them mentioned a person close to the description used by one of the respondents: *“A picture representing Reebok for me is a young British guy, wearing sneakers or sports clothing, Reebok trainers, short hair, looking kind of tough, but is not. I don’t associate Reebok with sporty guys, sports clothes and sportswear.”* Another one described it the following way; *“A guy between 12-16 years, who doesn’t really care, it is just a shoe for having in the gym. Or maybe a little older people, above 50, shoes to walk in.”* These stories demonstrate that this group of respondents don’t associate themselves with Reebok, and that Reebok most likely haven’t focused or done a good job marketing themselves towards this group.

As we can see most have a less favorable image of Reebok as a brand, and the associations are largely negative. This also reflects at the point of purchase decisions. Some of the respondents told the following story: *“When I’m at a store I might see 10 pairs of Reeboks that I like, but still there will be one pair from Nike or Adidas that I like and end up choosing that one. “When I go buy stuff I notice that Reebok is there, but for some reason I never end up buying it. I always chose Adidas or Nike.”* Earlier in the research I found that almost all of the respondents had positive attitude and associations towards Nike, while most of them have more negative attitude and associations towards Reebok. The above statements more or less reflect this as they might like the shoes, but the image of Reebok crashes with their self image or aspired self image (McCracken, 1989; Batra et al., 1996).

Evolution and change – I am what I am – struggle

According to Reebok themselves their latest marketing campaign, which is the largest one in a decade “encourages young people to embrace their own individuality by celebrating their contemporary heroes including music icons, athletes and entertainers” (Reebok.com, 2005). According to the same press release from Reebok, the goal of the campaign and the choice of celebrities are based on the brand attributes of authenticity and individuality. As part of this research the respondents saw some of the print adverts and one commercial starring different celebrities as used by Reebok in this campaign. Of course some of the celebrities used were perhaps not used in campaigns targeting the type of group researched, but this being a global campaign using several types of media it still seems relevant to see the broader picture and associations it would give the respondents towards this campaign.

The respondents experienced varied associations with the different celebrities being used. The advertisement featuring Dame Kelly Holmes gave most respondents positive associations in line with Reebok’s goal of individuality and authenticity: *“This shows somebody who has had obstacles, but who has overcome them. Performed well and won Olympic gold medals. It shows truemanhip. This is what I would associate with Reebok (Dame Kelly Holmes).”* The advertisement featuring Allen Iverson (basketball player) and Iker Casillas (footballer) gave mostly negative associations. Several of the respondents had problems identifying it with the theme and did not get any clear associations from it. *“It doesn’t have the feeling of being an individual and being in relation to the wording I am what I am. This contradictory theme going on, it is a bit complicated. Maybe it is because I am not in tune with the brand at all.”* Most of the respondents found the adverts featuring 50Cent, and in part the ones of Allen Iverson and Iker Casillas as well, to crash with the purpose of the campaign. *“He seems to me like a ridiculous person that tries to be genuine (50Cent)”*. *“Saying I am what I am by 50Cent is more like saying, if you are a criminal be a criminal”*. Although some of them could see elements of individuality in the adverts, it did not come out as authentic, except for the one of Dame Kelly Holmes. As one of them said it: *“I guess it all comes down to the 15 minutes of fame, and how you got to make use of that opportunity to make your links and connections.”* Again the problem of celebrities being perceived as bought comes into play (Evans, 1988).

What seems to summarize the feelings and attitudes of the respondents when it comes to the use of celebrities by Reebok in this campaign is one of the common problems of celebrity endorsement; lack of perceived congruency between brand and celebrity (Tom et al., 1992; McCracken, 1989; Forkan, 1980; Kamins, 1980; Callcoat and Philips, 1996; Ohanian, 1991; O'Mahony and Meenaghan, 1997; Ohanian, 1991; Till and Busler, 1998), conflicting images and associations (Misra and Beatty, 1990; Chaiken, 1979; Debevec and Kernan, 1984), the perception of several of the celebrities as not being authentic, but rather in it for the money (Evans, 1988), and celebrity overshadowing (Evans, 1988; Martindale, 1991; Till, 1998). An example of the latest was illustrated by one of the respondents: *"I would have no idea what the ad was all about until I saw the logo. I think I would not remember the logo at all, but I would remember that 50Cent was associated with it."*

Conclusion

Consensus maps based on attitudes towards celebrity endorsement and towards Reebok as a brand were created. Some of the most interesting findings could perhaps be summarized under the title "The Pinocchio factor", as the picture brought of Pinocchio seems to summarize a lot of attitudes and associations when it comes to celebrity endorsement.

The Pinocchio factor

In a lot of ways Pinocchio is representative for the view of the companies using celebrity endorsement, of the celebrities themselves, and of the consumer in the end. The majority of the respondents used words such as "manipulation" to describe what celebrity endorsement represents to them. The companies are like the "puppet masters" controlling the strings, trying to create a certain behavior from the consumer, like one would control a puppet. At the same time they are also trying to control the celebrities used to influence the consumer. However there is often a problem there, as celebrities often are brands themselves, and often represent more than one endorsement or association in the minds of the consumer. In the link between company/brand and celebrity endorser, the celebrity is probably more like Pinocchio when he became a real live boy i.e. uncontrollable. As the respondent that brought the picture to the interview said as well, Pinocchio often did things unconsciously, and that is the view many of the respondents have of celebrities as well when it comes to endorsement. They think about the money and not the consequences of their actions. The perception from the consumer is therefore often resulted in a view that they are liars, that they are not genuine and real. This again will to some degree reflect on the brand being endorsed as well. There is perhaps a lesson to learn from Pinocchio.

Looking at the connection between the constructs in successful use of celebrity endorsement one can see that there are several connections that are needed for the consumer to get a positive association and attitude towards a campaign. First of all the celebrity needs to be perceived as credible. To be perceived as credible one need to be perceived as genuine, attractive/real, and it has to be connected to the consumer's self image or aspired self image. The second area that must be covered concerns the context or situation that the endorsement takes place in. According to the researched group, celebrity endorsement works better when it is perceived as genuine/real, motivational, and enlightening. Several of them reflected on positive associations towards celebrities supporting charity or a public information type of campaign. However few slip-ups are needed for the consumer to get a total different perception of the use of celebrity endorsement being fake and unsuccessful. Tracking the line from celebrity, misused or not behaving correctly will soon lead to a perception that is very negative both for the celebrity and the brand endorsed.

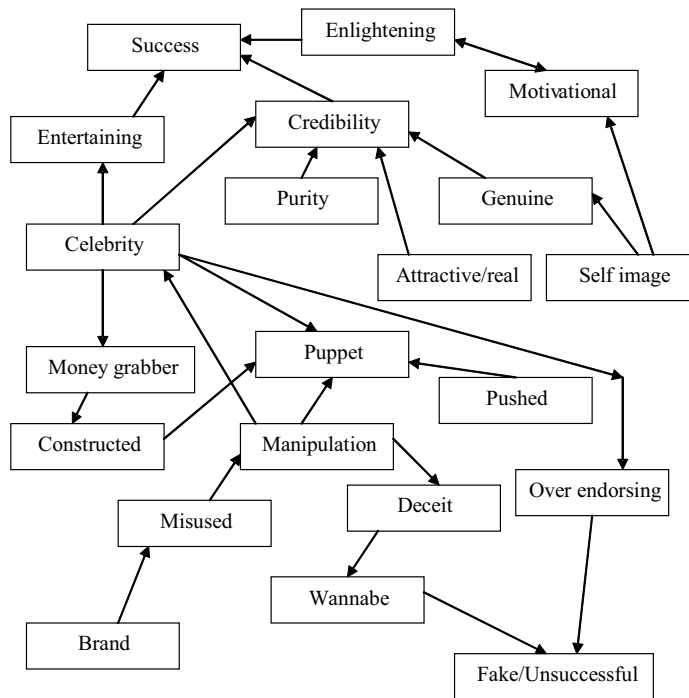


Fig. 2. Partial consensus map for associations and attitudes towards celebrity endorsement

The view of Reebok and their latest campaign

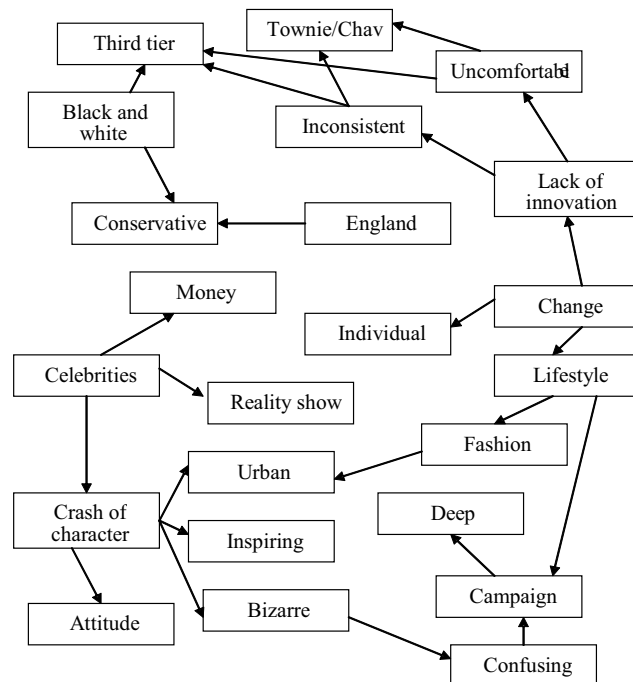


Fig. 3. Partial consensus map for associations and attitudes towards Reebok and their use of celebrity endorsement

There are three major constructs that come to mind when looking at Reebok; change, confusion, and third tier. Starting with the last one, Reebok has for long been drifting in the water behind brands like Nike and Adidas, and this was clearly reflected by the group as well, as almost all of them put Nike and Adidas in front of Reebok, both on attitude and stated behavior. They also reflected on conflicts between the brand and their own self image, as most of them associated Reebok with a tougher, urban image, and also connected it to what is popularly known as townies or chavs. Other major associations that came up concerned Reebok as being conservative and black and white, with lack of innovation.

After going through the interview part concerning Reebok, most of them reflected on a change of image from Reebok, away from sports and more towards fashion and lifestyle. However they also found the campaign confusing as it clashed with their present association sets of Reebok. To make the confusion even worse, looking at the selection of celebrities and advertisements shown to them in the interview, they got even more confused as they received conflicting messages from each individual advertisement. Although some of them picked up on the individuality that Reebok has stated is a key part of their campaign, most of them did not connect on the authenticity. Except from the advert featuring Kelly Holmes, almost all the other ones got the association of not being what they thought of Reebok. However they found that the celebrities had some attitude, but overall they found some of the adverts to be too deep and overall confusing. One should though bear in mind that the selection of adverts used probably represented different target markets for Reebok. In that context one also has to think about the fact that this is a global campaign and that they are using mainstream media, so most likely the campaign will have impact with more than just the target market.

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Appendix A: Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique (Coulter, Zaltman and Coulter, 2001)

This is an outline of the major steps involved in the Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique, and the research undertaken has largely followed the same steps.

Step 1: Storytelling

The customer describes the content of the pictures they have brought with them. This stage gives the informant a chance to tell his/her story based on the pictures brought to the session. According to Shank (1990), human memory and communication are story based, therefore this is an important technique to use. Given the fact that informants are asked to bring their own pictures and collect them in the week prior to the session, can lead to them coming there with a specific story to tell.

Step 2: Missed images

One asks the informants if there were any pictures they would have liked to bring with them, but that they didn't find, and then ask them to describe that picture. According to Zaltman and Coulter (1995) this is an important step since it gives the informant a chance to address issues that might have come to mind after gathering the pictures or during the session.

Step 3: Sorting task

The informant is asked to sort the pictures into meaningful piles. This is used to help bring the major constructs up to surface, by asking the informant to pile pictures into categories and label them (Zaltman and Coulter, 1995).

Step 4: Construct elicitation

The technique uses a modified version of Kelly Repertory Grid technique and the laddering technique (Kelly, 1963; Gengler and Reynolds, 1995) to find basic constructs and relationships. This technique is based on identifying how any two of three stimuli are similar, but at the same time different from the third stimulus. Thereby this stage can be used to find connections between different constructs, and is therefore valuable for the process of creating the consensus map.

Step 5: Most representative picture

The informant is asked to pick the picture that is most representative, and then to explain why.

Step 6: Opposite images

The informant is asked to describe pictures that represent the opposite of what is discussed (for example, what is not Reebok). According to Brunette and Wills (1989) there is convincing arguments that any construct or concept also has traces of its opposite meaning. It is useful for trying to further elicit the deeper meanings behind a topic.

Step 7: Sensory images

The informant are asked to describe what does and does not describe the taste, smell, touch, sound, color and emotion of the concept being explored. According to Lakoff (1993) and Turner (1994), sensory images and metaphors are key mechanisms for discovering unconscious thought.

Step 8: The mental map

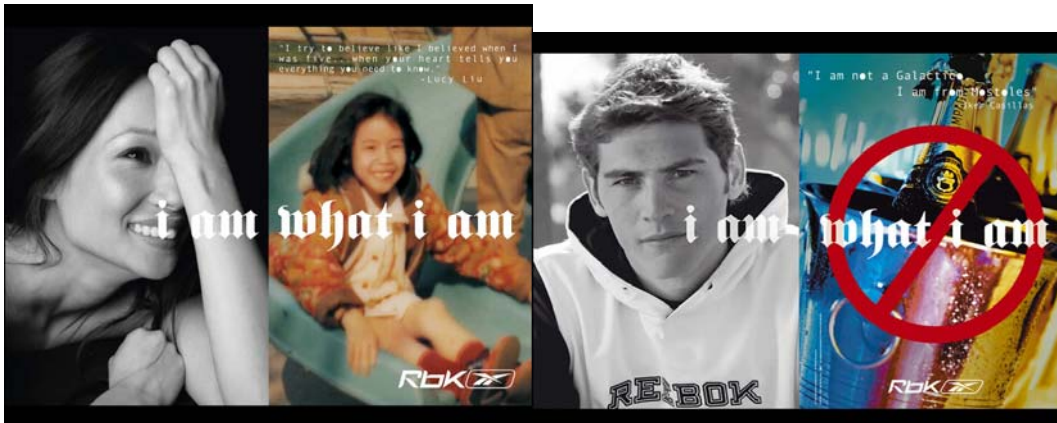
Informant creates a map or model using the constructs that have been elicited. This is to summarize the constructs found and discussed and to get confirmation from the informant that the information retrieved represents the informant's thoughts and feelings about the topic. This stage was more or less altered. The respondents were asked to summarize their attitudes and associations using a few key words instead.

Step 9: Consensus Map

Consensus maps are created based on the constructs identified in the interviews. According to Edelman (1992) and Gergen (1994), a construct by itself does not itself possess much meaning. A construct acquires meaning by its relationship with other constructs, so just identifying the constructs will not give a good enough view of the topic, one must seek to find the relationship between constructs (Zaltman, 1997). According to Zaltman (1997), a rule of thumb in developing a consensus map is that a given construct must be cited by half or more of the informants in a project, and be associated directly with another construct by another one-third of the informants.

In evaluating the research method there are a few factors that should be considered. Being inexperienced with doing this type of research is one factor that could have influenced the outcome of the research. Coulter and Zaltman (1994) state that considerable interviewing practice is needed to conduct the interview in a proper manner. However using the method as a framework, I believe the research was undertaken in a satisfactory way. Another issue concerns the analysis of the primary data. Using the full analytical process recommended by Coulter, Zaltman and Coulter (2001) was beyond my timeframe, resources and skills. I do however believe that using the most vital parts of it still make the outcome from the research satisfactory.

Appendix B: Reebok advertisements used



All adverts are from Reebok website (www.reebok.com)