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### I'm a celebrity!

[Jenny Eldridge](#)

Celebrities have long been part of British culture, and magazines such *Hello!* and *OK!* provide us with a window to the celebrity world. However, in the last decade we have witnessed a huge increase in the amount of celebrity-related news. TV programmes such as *Big Brother* have unleashed a whole new type of celebrity on us, while magazines such as *Heat* and *Now*, have provided us with celebrity gossip, scandal and photographs. Celebrities can have a huge influence on our behaviour; Jade Goody's tragic battle with cervical cancer is a case in point, as demand for screening has reportedly seen a large increase as a result of her press coverage.

Similarly, celebrity endorsements, when they are done well, can reap huge rewards for the brand, but what do consumers think and feel about them, and what are the implications for advertisers? To find out, MEC MediaLab conducted a global research study to determine the effect of using celebrities in marketing communications. The research was conducted online, and covered aspects such as levels of interest and attitudes towards celebrities, awareness of current brand ambassadors, influence on purchase behaviour and, finally, which attributes celebrities should possess to promote brands in certain product categories. This article details some of the findings from the UK report.

More than half of UK adults have read about celebrities in the last three months, while 27% have used the internet to find information on a celebrity and 11% have visited a celebrity's own website. Unsurprisingly, those who are female and aged 18–44 – the '*Heat* generation' – are the most interested in celebrity news.

Celebrity endorsements need to work harder to win us over in the UK compared to other parts of the world. In the UK, 47% of adults agree that celebrities do not interest them (compared to 33% in Asia and 41% in the US) and they are less likely to agree that celebrities influence their purchase decisions. However, although nearly half of UK adults feel that there are already too many products promoted by celebrities, this score is lower than the global average of 65%, suggesting we don't feel as bombarded as other nations. When it comes to deciding who should be promoting brands in this country, UK adults are more receptive to local, as opposed to international, celebrities.

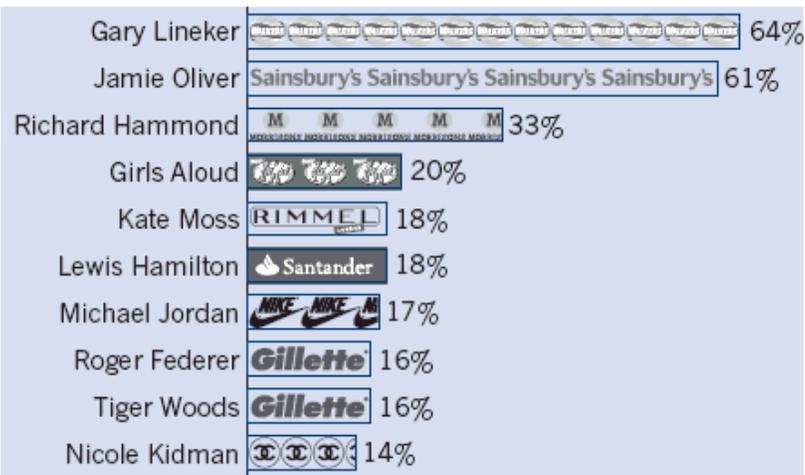
The most recalled celebrity endorsement is that of Gary Lineker for Walkers crisps. When respondents were given a list of celebrities and asked which brands they most associate with them, 64% recalled Walkers and Gary Lineker. The second most recalled was Sainsbury's and Jamie Oliver (61%), followed by Morrisons and Richard Hammond (33%).

Successful collaborations can work well at creating brand awareness, and provide a boost to the brand's personality, particularly among certain audiences. Some 46% of 18–24 year olds agree with the statement '*The celebrity makes the brand stand out*', while 42% of 18–24 year olds agree that '*the celebrity adds to the brand's personality*'. What celebrities are less likely to do, is to build trust or create the impetus to provide a recommendation; only 14% of adults agree that a celebrity '*helps them trust the product more*', while just 12% agree celebrities '*make me want to recommend the brand to other people*'.

One clear finding from the research is that confusion arises from celebrities who endorse more than one brand; 75% of respondents agree that they have difficulty remembering which brands celebrities promote when they endorse more than one. This figure increases among older consumers. Nearly half of respondents also agreed that the endorsement seems less credible if celebrities promote more than one brand. This is certainly something advertisers should take into account when choosing a celebrity to endorse their brand.

So, which celebrities are right for which brands? We wanted to know the characteristics that consumers felt celebrities needed to possess to promote different types of brands. The research examined ten product categories, ranging from fashion to cars, and revealed clear differences in the types of celebrity who should endorse brands from different categories. For example, beauty and fragrance brands need celebrities who are sexy and desirable, while sportswear brands should be endorsed by celebrities who are adventurous and fun, and electronics brands should be trustworthy and straightforward.

In summary, while UK consumers may appear to have a more negative response to celebrities than their global counterparts, there is no doubt that celebrities do have an influence on our awareness and attitudes towards the brands that they endorse. When they are chosen well, celebrities can bring big benefits for advertisers, so the choice of which celebrity to use should be one that's considered with care.



Research conducted amongst 1,011 18+ UK adults

Source: Mediaedge:cia Dec 2008

Which brands do you most associate with these celebrities? (Top 10 mentions shown)

Jenny Eldridge Consumer Insights Manager at Mediaedge:cia, discusses celebrity endorsement

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