

# Celebrity Sells

Hamish Pringle



John Wiley & Sons, Ltd



# Celebrity Sells

## Reviews for *Celebrity Sells*

'Using celebrities to champion a brand can be immensely powerful – if you get it right. *Celebrity Sells* tells you how.'

*Winston Fletcher – Chairman of Advertising Standards Board of Finance and author of Beating the 24/7*

'I'd recommend *Celebrity Sells* and particularly its categorization of celebrity "types" as a useful tool for new marketers.'

*Martin Glenn – President PepsiCo UK*

'At last it has happened! It has been obvious for years that the battery of IPA case studies on advertising effectiveness is the most formidable assembly of such evidence available anywhere in the world. It has also been clear that this database is large enough to yield specific lessons of potentially great operational value, provided that someone takes the trouble to tease them out. Hamish Pringle has now done precisely this with the single important topic of celebrity endorsements in advertising. Extremely valuable conclusions will come out of this study and many analysts devoutly hope that this process will continue as more themes are examined in depth across this large and growing cross-section of robustly documented cases.'

*Professor John Philip Jones – Syracuse University, New York*

'Hamish continues to advance our understanding of marketing communications – what works and what does not. I thoroughly recommend this book to all practitioners and students of marketing communication.'

*Professor Merlin Stone – IBM and Bristol Business School*

'What are celebrities for? They're there to sell things, of course. Things like property in Marylebone (Madonna) or plastic surgery procedures (Brad Pitt) or charge cards (Rowan Atkinson). If you ever wondered what makes the modern world go round Hamish Pringle's forensic analysis will convince you how desperately the country needs them. Keep rowing, darlings.'

*Peter York – Strategic Research Unit*

'Ever since publishing my book on the celebrity industry, *High Visibility*, I have been waiting for someone to show the power, gains and risks of using celebrities in advertising. Hamish Pringle has delivered the goods.'

*Philip Kotler – Distinguished Professor of International Marketing, Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University*

'I knew the dominance of US celebrity-dom was in trouble when Madonna moved to the UK. What's next? J Lo having afternoon tea with the Queen? Hamish proves that *Celebrity Sells* on both sides of the pond and he does so with style and wit.'

*O Burtch Drake – President and CEO of the American Association of Advertising Agencies*

'With celebrity seemingly the new religion, Hamish explains how to harness the zeal of the worshippers in pursuit of the brand.'

*Lorna Tilbian – Media Analyst at Numis Securities*

'Celebrity is a phenomenon of the new age. I am not certain I like it, but I am sure like everyone else in both society and this industry I need to understand it and deal with it. Hamish Pringle offers a rare insight into the new power of celebrity and how we can engage with it.'

*Clive Jones – Director, ITV Plc*

'When advertising a brand, using a celebrity is easy, getting it right is not. Hamish Pringle's book is an essential road map, which shows you how to avoid the potential landmines, while capitalizing on the (usually) sizable investment, with its corresponding risks.'

*Rupert Brendon – President and CEO of Institute of Communications & Advertising, Canada*

'Vogue has always photographed famous people because it understands the interest its readers have in the notion of being famous and being beautiful. Top photographers of the day, whether it is Cecil Beaton or Lord Snowdon or Mario Testino, enhance the appeal of the portrait and add to the celebrity status of the photograph. *Celebrity Sells* is a timely book on this fascinating subject.'

*Stephen Quinn – Publishing Director of Vogue*

'Had a celebrity endorsed this fascinating book, it probably would have been more effective. However, you've just got me.'

*John Hegarty – Creative Director of Bartle Bogle Hegarty Ltd*

'A must read not only for anybody fascinated by the way in which the worlds of commercialism and the celebrity feed off each other, but any agency account person anxious to avoid the pratfalls when signing up a star name.'

*John Tylee – Associate Editor of Campaign magazine*

'As an account director, I once persuaded Sir Robert Mark to say, "I am convinced that the Goodyear Grand Prix S is a major contribution to road safety". Now as Chief Executive of the Marketing Society I am convinced that Hamish Pringle's *Celebrity Sells* will be a major contribution to any advertiser's understanding of this topic.'

*Hugh Burkitt – Chief Executive of The Marketing Society*

'Lineker seemed like a good idea at the time – Hamish tells us why.'

*John Webster – Executive Creative Director of BMP DDB*

'All marketers want their brands to be famous. Hamish Pringle reveals how some brands have achieved instant fame through a link with the already famous. His book is an entertaining read and shows how celebrity endorsement can be incredibly effective – when the fit is right.'

*Lesley Brydon – Executive Director of the Advertising Federation of Australia*

‘Clearly the use of celebrities in marketing is an important area for attention because so much of it goes on. So there is a real need for a book like this that explores the phenomenon. It is not quite as simple as it looks. It would be a mistake to assume that the use of celebrities is a false use of value. There are many layers of advertising value from attention through to retention, from general aura to specific properties, etc. This book explores in a thorough way this important and growing area.’

*Edward de Bono – author of WHY SO STUPID?: How the Human Race has Never Really Learned to Think (available from Blackhall Publishers, Blackrock, Dublin, Ireland)*

“‘Celebrity is as celebrity does” as J K Rowling’s Professor Lockhart is on record as declaring. And look what happened to him. In another lively critique of conventional wisdom in marketing, the IPA’s Hamish Pringle provides a one-stop shop for those considering celebrities to promote their brands and demonstrates where the best practice – and the worst – is to be found.’

*Dr Jonathan Reynolds – Director, Oxford Institute of Retail Management. Fellow of Templeton College & Lecturer in Management Studies, Saïd Business School University of Oxford*

‘Celebrity is good for you! In business, politics or simply to reinforce your ego – I look, I act and I feel like somebody famous – celebrity has the most dramatic influence on modern life. Why? Hamish Pringle makes a remarkable in-depth analysis of this new and fascinating subject, which is all but superficial; a wonderful book pre-destined to its own celebrity!’

*Stéphane Garelli – Professor at the University of Lausanne and Professor at IMD Business School, Lausanne, Switzerland*

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To Sebastian, Benedict, Tristan and Arabella: all stars in my eyes.



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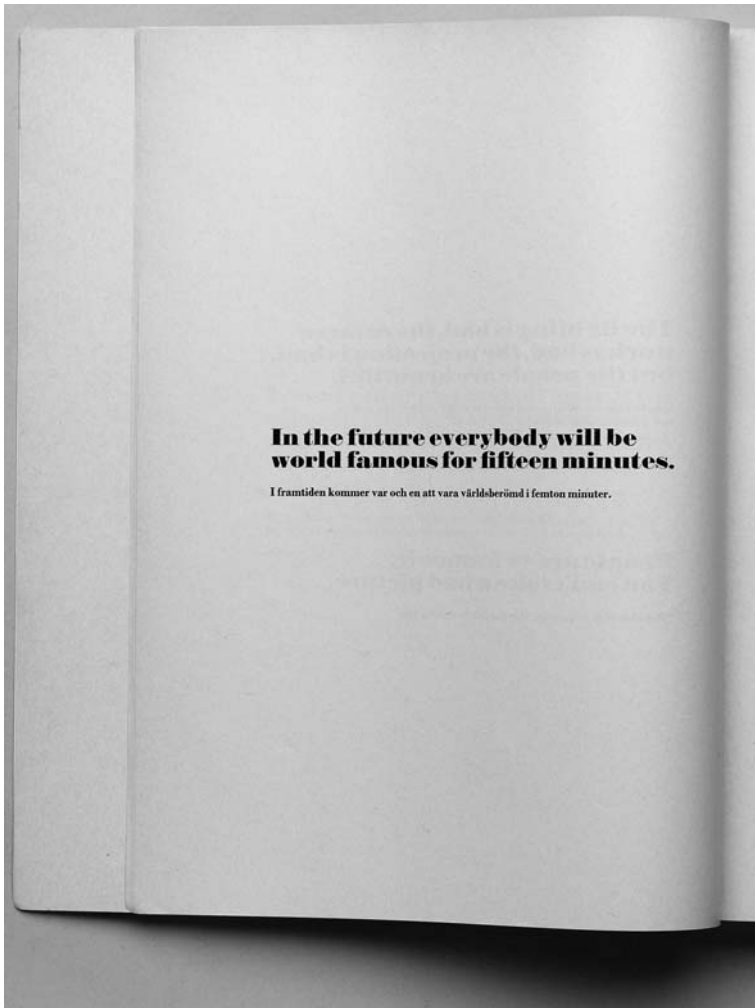
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**Source: Moderna Museet, Stockholm**

This is a reproduction of the frontispiece of the catalogue for the Andy Warhol exhibition held at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm, Sweden, 10 February–17 March in 1968. Andy Warhol attended the opening with Viva Hoffman and 24,633 people came to see the show. This is the earliest known reference for this most famous quote on fame, which has been misquoted almost ever since! As the media and the phenomenon of celebrity globalize, maybe Warhol was right in his original?





## Acknowledgements



First and most importantly, I must acknowledge the contribution that my primary researcher, Wendy Tanner, has made to this book. She has drafted the summary case histories, conducted all the interviews and has worked tirelessly over an intense four-month period providing me with valuable information. Wendy has also marshalled the resources of the three graduates whose work experience turned out to be sourcing images and information. Of these Roz Kyle ended up working on the project for several months and has done a great job. In short, *Celebrity Sells* could not have been produced without Wendy and I am most grateful to her for all her efforts on my behalf and that of the IPA.

This book has been written as a part of my job, so all the royalties will go the IPA. Given the support the organization and its membership has provided this is only right and proper and many of my IPA colleagues and members have given input to the work, either by taking soundings from our members on particular points, contributing ideas themselves or reading sections of the manuscript and giving helpful feedback. Others have provided technical support or helped in liaising with the publisher, endorsers and agencies to ensure the best possible accuracy and, of course, in proof reading. Specifically I must acknowledge John Drakopoulos, Jill Bentley and Tessa Gooding, who read the manuscript, Chris Hackford, Ketta Murphy, Marina Palomba and Roger Ingam who prepared the Appendix, Geoffrey Russell and Otto Stanton.

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And, of course, I must applaud the authors of the prize-winning IPA Effectiveness Awards case histories which have told us so much about how celebrity advertising and marketing communications work and from which the ten summaries featured in the book are drawn. There are so many authors' names that I've acknowledged them at the beginning of each case and the full details on all the published 'celebrity' papers are in the appendix. We owe it to them, and to ourselves, to read their papers in the original, as this is the accumulated 'case law' of our business and we all need to know it.

I've had invaluable input from some key market research companies and they have been most generous in allowing the use of their findings: David Iddiols and Clive Ellis, HPI Dominic Twose, Millward Brown; Jim Law, mruk Research; Chris Williamson, NTC Research. Having quantitative data of this nature is of great benefit to the industry as it contributes to best practice, increased understanding and professionalism, which enhances the ability of agencies to deliver the return on marcoms investment their client partners require.

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## Foreword



Personally, I blame Publius Syrus. Two thousand and forty-four years ago he said (and I translate): ‘You need not hang up the ivy branch over the wine that will sell.’

Rather later, William Shakespeare, always one to make good use of existing sources, wrote ‘Good wine needs no bush.’ (*As You Like It*.)

And later still (or so it is alleged) Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882) proclaimed: ‘If a man write a better book, preach a better sermon, or make a better mouse-trap than his neighbour, tho’ he build his house in the woods, the world will make a beaten path to his door.’

The question I intend to put to Publius Syrus when I bump into him in a later life is this: ‘After a two-day march, you arrive exhausted in a strange village. How will you find good wine if there is no ivy branch to guide you?’

And the challenge I shall put to Ralph Waldo Emerson is this: ‘Go into deep woods. Make a better mousetrap. And wait. I will gladly pay you a golden sovereign for every citizen who, prompted entirely by extra-sensory perception, beats a path to your door.’

Before a product can be bought by anyone, it has first to find a place on a scale of fame. At the very lowest end of this scale is simple awareness. At the highest end of this scale is global celebrity. Today, many brands are more famous than the most famous of people – a fact the young Victoria Beckham acknowledged in her autobiography when she wrote: ‘Right from the beginning, I said I want to be more famous than Persil Automatic.’

As a generalization, famous brands have greater value to their consumers than obscure brands. Just as famous actors command higher fees, famous brands find it easier to maintain both distribution and margins. The commercial value of brand celebrity is now enthusiastically recognized.

Like all enthusiasms, however, it can be carried to extremes. It is often said of the media that they like nothing better than to build up the fame of politicians or entertainers through excessive publicity and adulation only to knock them down again at least as energetically. But, in fairness to the media, the first stage of this familiar process seldom takes place without the happy collaboration of the individuals themselves. In essence, they willingly collude in the construction of a reputation for themselves which increasingly exceeds their delivery.

The same danger faces brand owners, who, so converted are they to the value of celebrity, forget that celebrity without intrinsic worth is a fragile and deluding commodity.

To be successful, mousetraps need to be known to exist. All other things being equal, a famous mousetrap will make more money than an obscure mousetrap. But a mousetrap that relies entirely on its celebrity and forgets to make sure that it remains at least as efficient at trapping mice as its competitors is doomed to a decline of fearful and unforgiving velocity.

It will have committed that terminal commercial sin. It will have been caught marketing.

There may be other books about brands and celebrities and their close relationship but I'm not aware of them. Hamish Pringle here charts increasingly important waters.

Jeremy Bullmore  
Non-Executive Director, WPP plc

# Introduction



## Celebrity in advertising defined

If you search on Amazon for books that contain the word ‘celebrity’ in their title, nearly 500 items come up, but none of them is primarily about the proven effectiveness of the use of celebrities in advertising.

So this book is intended for two main audiences. First, people who are involved in marketing, advertising, media and all sorts of commercial communications who want to understand how best to use celebrities in support of their brands and, second, the general reader who is fascinated by celebrity and wants to gain additional insights into a phenomenon that seems to have no bounds.

Three things in particular spurred me into writing *Celebrity Sells*.

First, the unprecedented publicity that the IPA Effectiveness Awards received in the national press in December 2002, which was almost entirely focused on the Sainsbury’s campaign starring Jamie Oliver.

Second, the sense that ‘celebrity’ is becoming all pervasive with the media dominated by editorial featuring celebrities, fronted by celebrities and about celebrities.

Third, the unavoidable buzz that I get when I see someone famous. A glimpse of Bridget Bardot at Club 55 in St Tropez in 2002 created a frisson of excitement that simply had to be shared with other people.

Writing this book has enabled me to think more deeply about these things and to set a context in which the specific role of celebrity in building and promoting brands can be assessed and some of the outstanding work by the agencies that create these asset-building ideas can be showcased.

So the media are awash with commentary on celebrity and while there is obviously a simple entertainment factor at work, which makes it so

pleasurable to read about famous people, it seems likely that this fascination with famous people is also purposeful. Celebrity endorsement acts as a signpost to quality and can significantly enhance the reputation of a brand. In using products which have a celebrity association, consumers get a little bit extra in terms of imagery, aspiration and entertainment and this is often just enough to tip the balance in favour of one brand instead of its competitors on the supermarket shelf or in an internet search engine return.

But I do not think that these relatively straightforward and functional utilities of celebrity are enough of an explanation for this extraordinary phenomenon. One of the most powerful drivers of human behaviour is the desire to reproduce and to reproduce 'successfully'. In pursuing this end I believe that, whether consciously or not, many men and women seek to mate with the most successful, desirable or powerful person they can within their peer group and ideally beyond it. They do this in self-reaffirmation and also to endow their children with the benefits of a gene pool that can take them further up the social and economic ladder.

'Successful' is a highly subjective measure when applied to members of the opposite sex and opinions change as fashions change in what is deemed to be beautiful or desirable in terms of personal appearance, behaviour or chosen lifestyle. If beauty is in the eye of the beholder it is clear that the lens through which we look at the world is heavily conditioned by what is deemed by opinion leaders, and thus eventually the general populace, to be desirable.

Therefore my own belief is that the role celebrities play in people's lives goes beyond a voyeuristic form of entertainment, but actually fulfils an extremely important research and development function for them as individuals and for society at large. People use celebrities as role models and guides. Our informal survey of IPA members revealed that 84% of them had, at some time or other, been told that they resemble someone famous. It seems highly likely that people empathize with particular sorts of celebrities, perhaps ones who do look a bit like them or whom they aspire to resemble. As these celebrities change their hairstyle, their mode of dress, their partners, their houses and have their children, they are in a sense acting out a parallel life to which people can relate, aspire and imitate.

Celebrity as 'personal R&D' also gives an explanation for the inexorable process by which the media build up people and then knock them down. The 'Wheel of Fortune' most certainly turns for celebrities and there are very few which survive in the long run. On the way up the media lionize them, discover everything about them and present it to the public for their scrutiny and approbation. On the way down the same relentless process is at



work, but this time all the foibles, weaknesses, indiscretions and even illegal acts are produced on a plate and spotlighted for the same public to devour.

However, while there is some philosophizing, the main purpose of this work is a practical one: to help practitioners when they are developing a celebrity campaign for the brand of which they are the custodians. It's worth saying at the outset that throughout this book the word 'advertising' has the sense that the general public gives it, that is 'anything that has a name on it is advertising'. This consumer definition is from extensive qualitative research conducted in the year 2002 by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA), the UK advertising self-regulatory body. Its simplicity and directness reminds us that, while the industry sees itself promoting brands in a whole host of different ways, it's all 'advertising' from the customer's point of view.

Within the marcoms industry, practitioners tend to segment these activities into particular niches and refer to the agencies that specialize in them as being in the creative, media, direct marketing, self-promotion, public relations, sponsorship, digital, new media and outdoor sectors, to name just a few. It would be very longwinded to list all these specialisms every time and so the word 'advertising' will be used instead. Occasionally, and for variety, the words 'marcoms', 'marketing communications' or 'commercial communications' are employed instead of 'advertising'. These terms are used interchangeably to signify all the means by which brands are promoted by agencies on behalf of their client companies and, in this book in particular, by using celebrities.

It's also important to be clear at the outset what is meant by 'celebrities' because there are many famously successful brand campaigns, which feature people (real or created), animals, cartoons, animatronics and puppets who start off as anonymous characters, but through media exposure and their likeability become extremely well-known brand ambassadors and even quasi-celebrities in their own right.

The Jolly Green Giant who personifies Green Giant foods, Howard, the staff member who became a singing star in the Halifax campaign, the adorable Labrador puppy in the Andrex commercials and the red telephone on wheels sounding off for Direct Line insurance are all examples of successful brand representatives which have become famous. Indeed, there are a large number of case histories in the IPA Effectiveness Awards Databank that feature these sorts of brand character or icon and demonstrate how powerful they can be in building brands.

But their celebrity is entirely a function of what they do for their particular brand and they have no values beyond those bestowed on them by the advertising and marketing communications in which they feature. With relatively

few exceptions these brand characters or icons rarely move on beyond the world of the brand that created them and thus, unlike true celebrities, they do not have a life of their own. Despite the rather exceptional case of Rowan Atkinson's character from the Barclaycard ads reappearing as the star of the *Johnny English* movie, we don't generally see the Dulux dog winning Crufts or Ask Jeeves' butler appearing in period dramas by Merchant Ivory!

Contrariwise a genuine celebrity has a clearly defined personality and reputation: he or she is known to be extremely good at something beyond appearing in advertising and it is their outstanding skill in their chosen field of endeavour which has brought them into the public eye and made them an object of veneration and respect. Even the ersatz stars of reality TV shows who have a talent for 'surviving' or 'It Girls' who are simply famous for being famous can acquire a temporary notoriety which can be harnessed for a brand in a celebrity campaign if the timing is right. Thus for the purposes of this book, a 'celebrity' is anyone who is familiar enough to the people a brand wishes to communicate with to add values to that communication by association with their image and reputation.

As we watch movie stars on the screen or great sportsmen on the pitch we are in awe of them but we also get to know them. We learn about their capabilities and their characters and it is this appreciation of them that leads people to be somewhere on the spectrum of involvement with a particular celebrity, which ranges from 'mildly interested', to 'genuine fan', to 'groupie' and, in extreme cases, to 'stalker'.

In choosing a star to be associated with, the advertiser is attempting to gain instant fame, for some of the glitz and glamour to rub off on their brand and to acquire by association some of the characteristics and values of the celebrity with whom they're partnered.

This book sets out to show how best to do this and is divided into six main parts.

The first of these looks at the impact of celebrities on everyday life. The purpose here is to set out the social context in which brands are operating and to remind the reader, as if it were necessary, how all pervasive the phenomenon of celebrity is nowadays.

The second part looks at the media and marketing environment in which celebrity campaigns appear and discusses how they work in the context of some current theories of branding.

Part III examines how advertisers and their agencies should go about the process of choosing the right celebrity for their brand. It also puts forward some ideas on how people relate to celebrities in advertising and how market research can be used to analyze their effectiveness.

Part IV deals with the many ways in which celebrities can be used to promote brands and is intended to open up the whole range of possibilities that advertisers and their agencies should consider.

Part V is concerned with the practicalities of managing the relationship with celebrities and discusses approaches to negotiation, contracts and costs and also sets out the pitfalls awaiting the unwary agency or advertiser.

Part VI looks at ten examples, drawn from the IPA Effectiveness Awards Databank, on how celebrities have helped build brands. Accompanying these summary cases there are interviews with some of the key people involved in the creation of the campaigns. Among others, leading figures such as David Abbott, John Hegarty and John Webster have given their insights.

The proven results in these papers are truly impressive: for example, between 1995 and 2002, Walkers' market share rose 6% in grocery and 3% in impulse purchase outlets, while that of their competitors' actually declined. Their ROI was £1.70 per £1 spent. The advertising-generated income delivered by the Bob Hoskins campaign for BT was £297 million, representing an ROI of 6:1 over the period. The Jamie Oliver campaign for Sainsbury's added an incremental £1.12 billion in revenue and achieved an ROI of £27.25 for every advertising pound spent.

The final part of the book looks ahead at the future of celebrity and how it might evolve, thus giving brand custodians some new ideas on how to engage with the stars.



# PART I

## The Impact of Celebrities on Everyday Life

