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Unpacking Celebrity Brands Through Unpaid Market Communications

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Author Bios

Fiona Davies recently retired from Cardiff Business School, Cardiff University, where she specialised in research in sports marketing and sponsorship. During her 23-year academic career, she published in a variety of journals, including Journal of Business Research, European Journal of Marketing and International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship.

Dr Stephanie Slater is currently Senior Lecturer in International Marketing, Strategy and Business at Cardiff Business School, Cardiff University. Her research focuses on the role of culture in international marketing, strategy and business, an interest developed from her earlier experience working in industry in Japan. The common themes in her works are the determinants of relationship quality in international business strategy and exploring the effects of culture and trust-based relationships on management style and infrastructure. Dr Slater has published in international journals such as International Business Review, Management Decision, International Marketing Review, Journal of Marketing Management, Asia Pacific Journal of Business Administration and Multinational Business Review amongst others.

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Abstract

This paper explores the role of unpaid communications (newspaper and online reporting, blogs, associated comments and tweets) in informing consumer decisions on celebrity brands. The research tests “the old model of celebrity endorsement” (Chahal, 2013) in a new context using new media. Despite the ample literature (Erdogan, 1999; Keller, 2008) on celebrity appeal, the impact of unpaid messages remains underexplored. The paper addresses this gap, confirming that unpaid messages in relation to celebrity events enhance endorsement potential for associated, but not unrelated, products. We unpack celebrity brands by showing that message communication during and after celebrity events can change media profiles and fans’ perceptions of celebrity brands and we show the transformation effect that new media offer for celebrity endorsement.

Keywords: celebrity, communication, unpaid messages, events

Summary statement of contribution

The research builds on our understanding of celebrity endorsement, exploring how the communication and reporting of sporting events influence celebrity endorsement image and thereby consumer attitudes towards associated and non-associated products. We show that social media platforms using unpaid message communications during competitive events remediate celebrity identity. The findings from our research show that language mobilises endorsement effectiveness in the reporting of sporting events, and confirm that these messages, coupled with media hype, have a pivotal role in influencing the credibility that consumers associate with the

endorser. Success in competitive events leads to positive message generation and strengthens celebrity endorsement.

Introduction

Advertising research has explored whether message frequency is associated with positive responses and has shown how these responses provoke long-lasting positive feelings between endorsers and their consumer admirers (Campbell & Keller, 2003; Feldman, Bearden & Hardesty, 2006). Whilst research in this area confirms the effective role that endorsers play in building brands, these studies assume a degree of control over how the message is presented and communicated to the consumer. However, the effects of the message communication, and the communication environment are underexplored in uncontrolled situations where the context is not predetermined by an organisation or controlled by the product owners. In this research, we test contemporary theory on celebrity endorsement and branding (Erdogan, 1999; Keller, 2008) in a new context by exploring how unpaid marketing communications may act as predictors of endorsement effectiveness. Building on prior studies, this paper unpacks celebrity brands by exploring the effect of unpaid media coverage of celebrity events on brand or product loyalty. We examine the interaction effect between message communication and endorser effectiveness versus the celebrity-product moderating fit to establish whether message communication matters more when fit is good versus when fit is poor.

Literature review

Literature informs us (McCracken, 1989; Martin, 1996; Erdogan, 1999; Lee & Thorson, 2008) that celebrity endorsers serve as brand communicators to prospective buyers. Their endorsement

value is captured by their celebrity status that enables them to act as social mediators portraying positive images of ‘self’ and ‘brand’ to their fan base and to prospective consumers. Individuals who obtain celebrity status become agents of socialisation through their public appearances. For this reason, fans seek social gratification and social status by modelling their *likes* and *dislikes* on those they most admire and aspire to be. Celebrity events build fan loyalty and generate a culture that nurtures a feeling of involvement between consumers and endorsers (Araujo, Finch & Kjellberg, 2010; Hamilton & Hewer, 2010; Kerrigan, Brownlie, Hewer & Daza-Le Touze, 2011). Ownership of endorsed products reflects not only on the status of individuals but socially classifies them according to population groups that best reflect their ambitions on how they want to be perceived by peers and other social groups.

The endorsement effect of celebrity stars can be evaluated by the sales of the endorsed product (Chung, Derdenger and Srinivasan, 2013) as demand for a product increases when appropriately endorsed by a celebrity face. Chung et al. (2013) speak to this argument in the context of sports star endorsement. In their paper, they explain the link between star power, reputation and product differentiation and present a model that shows that endorsers not only increase the loyalty of existing fans but create additional sales for companies by ‘business stealing’ (consumers switching brands through endorsements) (Chung et al., 2013, p. 272). Celebrity endorsement works because consumers believe in the stars they support and consequently support the brands that the endorser markets. Endorsement evaluation suggests that credible advertising messages build consumer loyalty (McCracken 1989; Martin 1996; Kerrigan et al, 2011), while the credibility of the message is largely determined by the celebrity’s social representation or social image (Hsu & McDonald, 2002; La Ferle & Sejung, 2005). Although prior literature (McCracken, 1989; Martin, 1996) acknowledges celebrity endorsement

capability, scarce evidence exists on how the reporting of events in which they are involved increases or decreases endorsement value. Key to the endorsement argument are the stimuli that people associate with a brand. Brand attitude is influenced by *emotional, cognitive, historical* and *social* dimensions (Aaker, 1997), while brand value reflects the relationship between the consumer and the brand symbol. Advancing brand endorsement communication literature (Aaker, Benet-Martinez & Garolera, 2001; Keller & Lehmann, 2006), this two-stage study uses questionnaire surveys to compare perceptions of sporting celebrities in light of contrasting unpaid media reports and social media commentary to unpack the value of celebrity brands.

Spontaneous communication as a way of building endorser impact

McCracken (1989) argues that endorsement effectiveness varies depending on the celebrity's perceived profile, which may be partly shaped by his or her own achievements or actions, but also by how these are reported in the media. This raises interesting questions on how an individual's perceived personality and performance interaction influence their endorsement value and how this is accrued through communications that use traditional media vs. advanced technologies (social media such as Facebook and Twitter). These modern technologies provide new ways of disseminating messages to build and enhance endorsement appeal and impact. Media tools such as Twitter, blogs and Google pages have increased endorsement potential and alert consumers to additional media reports and the opinions of social groups. This may have a positive or negative effect on consumer purchasing behaviour. In modern day marketing, consumers are enticed by products not only through the normative pressure of everyday sales marketing but also through e-testimonials. What remains unclear is the role of traditional and modern media communications in repositioning endorsement value, and whether the

endorsement effect and power of a celebrity reduces or increases over time in response to media coverage and the way the celebrity is portrayed.

When celebrity reports are negative, Bhattacharjee, Berman and Reed (2013) argue that this may not necessarily affect their power as an endorser. Consumers may continue to support a disgraced celebrity through ‘moral decoupling’ to separate their view of the celebrity’s behaviour from their admiration for his/her performance. ‘Moral decoupling’ differs from ‘moral rationalisation’ (where consumers play down the seriousness of the offence in order to feel comfortable in supporting the celebrity), and is easier to achieve when bad behaviour is not directly related to the performance domain.

Negative media communications (White, Goddard & Wilbur, 2009) may affect a company’s desire to be associated with a particular celebrity but the extent to which these affect consumer support for the celebrity can vary and depend on the type of transgression. Understanding the impact of these new media communications on brands is important. A recent study concluded that 46% of purchasing decisions are now informed by online users and messages posted on social media (Gopinath, Thomas and Krishnamurthi, 2014, p. 241), thus emphasising the need to unpack celebrity brands.

Sponsorship fit and the ‘match-up’ hypothesis

In line with the match-up hypothesis, we expect that when celebrity endorsers are directly associated with the product category they endorse, more positive associations between the product and the individual are likely to ensue (Kamins, 1990; Martin, 1996). In this paper, we explore this theory in the context of endorsement effectiveness through sponsorship events.

The ‘match-up’ hypothesis (Kahle & Homer, 1985; Kamins, 1990) applied to sponsorship indicates that a high sponsor-event fit generates a favourable response to sponsorship (Speed & Thompson, 2000; Mazodier & Merunka, 2012). This suggests that celebrity endorsement is enhanced when there is a fit between the endorser and the product being endorsed. If this is the case, a person endorsing products related to his or her area of expertise should serve as an effective endorser. This raises interesting questions on whether the endorsement effect lends itself to non-related brand endorsement spillovers associated with celebrity events. For example, would endorsement effectiveness stretch to non-related products when there are additional associations between the celebrity face and other endorsement event symbols (i.e., social setting)? We know the endorsement appeal can be reinforced by message communication. In line with this thinking, coverage at events should provide additional endorsement value to branded products based on the amount of commentary on the celebrity’s performance and the resulting media and fan coverage. Although frequent reporting increases the feeling of participation between groups that share similar interests, literature is less clear on the way modern social media tools, such as unremunerated media messages, blogs and tweets, propagate brand awareness. Moving the literature forward, we explore whether the differences in messages used to portray the endorser’s achievements through events leads to different brand building outcomes.

We contend, based on the above discussion, that increased positive media coverage of a celebrity’s performance should enhance their appeal to the public, and that this in turn will increase their effectiveness as an endorser, at least where there is a fit between product and celebrity. Thus the hypotheses to be tested in the survey research are:

H1: *Increased positive media coverage of a celebrity's performance will improve public perceptions of the celebrity*

H2: *Enhanced public perceptions of a celebrity will increase his/her endorsement effect where there is a fit between the celebrity and the product being endorsed*

H3: *Enhanced public perceptions of a celebrity will increase his/her endorsement effect for products where there is not a fit between celebrity and product, due to brand spillover effects*

Methodology

A case study method and questionnaire surveys were used to assess endorsement effectiveness in the context of unpaid message communication (i.e. the way individuals use social media to express their opinion of celebrities at sporting events). Here we refer to the new media platforms on which messages can be communicated and delivered by reporters and consumers when expressing opinions about celebrity events. We chose a longitudinal framework based on a case study of a single sporting celebrity to enable us to outline the relationship between celebrity media reporting and endorsement power over time. This is similar to the use of a longitudinal study by Chung, Derdenger & Srinivasan (2013) to examine the economic value of celebrity endorsement over time, comparing endorsed golf ball sales and professional golf rankings. The celebrity chosen for our study is Andy Murray, the British tennis player, and the period examined is from 2007 - when he became prominent as a leading tennis player - until July 2012, when he lost the Wimbledon final in a long and dramatic match against Roger Federer. The rationale behind our choice is Murray's high media profile as one of the UK's top individual sportsperson. He was the most searched for individual sportsperson on Yahoo in the UK and Ireland in 2011

(Yahoo News, 2011). Media reports on his personality and his sporting performance have not always been positive when compared to other sporting personalities in the sector, which allows examination of the effects of a change in media perceptions on endorsement power.

Secondary research

When preparing the data for a secondary analysis, we searched for material that enabled interpretation of both the tone and context. We analysed the media reports by carrying out a qualitative content analysis (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p307) on the web archives of four UK newspapers for relevant articles, blogs and associated comments for the period 2007 - 2011. In order to minimise any bias, the selected newspapers comprised a left-wing and right-wing tabloid and a left-wing and right-wing broadsheet (British Newspapers Online, 2014). For the period around Wimbledon 2012, the media search was extended to include BBC online coverage of the event and summaries of social media activities on Twitter throughout Wimbledon (Burns-Murdoch, 2012; Curtis, 2012). Table 1 summarises the material used.

Table 1. Blogs and media reports on Andy Murray

ARCHIVES			
DATES	WEB ADDRESS	DESCRIPTION	
2007-2011	http://www.theguardian.com/sport/tennis	The Guardian online, tennis blogs and associated reader comments	
2007-2011	http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/tennis/andymurray	The Telegraph, online articles and associated reader comments	
2007-2011	http://www.mirror.co.uk/sport/tennis/	Mirror online, archived articles	
2007-2011	http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/tennis	Daily Mail online, articles and associated reader comments	
2012 PRE- AND POST-WIMBLEDON COMMENTARY			
DATE	AUTHOR	SOURCE	TITLE
2012	Addley, E.	The Guardian	Wimbledon gives Fans a Warm Welcome
2012	Anon	The Guardian	Andy Murray's Wimbledon Adventure Provokes Admiration in World Media.
2012	Burn-Murdoch, J.	The Guardian	Who were Wimbledon's Online Crowd Pleasers? Explore the Rankings according to Social Media.
2012	Curtis, B.	Mirror	Have Andy's tears Won the Nation Over? Twitter says Yes!
2012	Gregory, A.	Mirror	We're Right Behind You, Andy: Murraymania Sweeps Britain as Fans get Behind Finalist.
2012	Mitchell, K.	The Guardian	Andy Murray sets up Dream Wimbledon Final with Roger Federer.
2012	Ronay, B.	The Guardian	Andy Murray gets Closer to the Affections of the Wimbledon Crowd.
2012	White, J.	The Telegraph	Wimbledon 2012: Tearful Andy Murray Loses on Court, but Wins the Nation's Heart.
2012	Daily BBC Online Wimbledon coverage at http://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/0/tennis/		

In the content analysis, the first criterion was that the article, blog or comment should mention Andy Murray, and that it should express an opinion of the player rather than being a purely factual report. The key descriptive words or expressions in each extract were sorted into positive and negative lists, while words with similar meanings were grouped together; the researchers subjectively interpreted tone and context to do this. Consideration of these key words and expressed views enabled the researchers to build a picture of Murray's changing media profile, as well as generating a list of words to develop the questionnaire for the second research stage. We considered undertaking a fuller Critical Discourse Analysis, which requires engaging with the social context, power balance, status of writer, etc. However, such analysis was impeded as we were working from archive material and the true identity of the writers (i.e., those posting comments on blogs) was often unknown.

Primary research

We used a survey method for the primary research into the public perceptions of Andy Murray and his power as an endorser to deduce whether the changed perceptions reported in the public sphere were reflected in the general population, and the effects that any change in perceptions may have had on his potential as an endorser. Online questionnaire surveys were administered in October 2011 and July 2012. The first date occurred after a season when Murray had progressed to the final or semi-final stages of all Grand Slam tournaments but failed to win any. The second followed his Wimbledon final against Roger Federer when, despite losing, his performance and demeanour earned him media accolades and the most positive reporting of his career.

As there is no other UK tennis player of Murray's status we selected Lewis Hamilton, the British Formula One racing driver, for the comparative study. Lewis Hamilton was similarly ranked to

Andy Murray in his own sporting domain, and the 3rd most searched for individual British sportsperson on Yahoo in UK and Ireland in 2011 (Yahoo News, 2011). In July 2011, Murray was ranked 4th in the world and Hamilton 3rd, while in October, they were ranked 3rd and 5th respectively, with Hamilton also having had a disappointing season in 2011. The survey questionnaire examined the perceptions and endorsement power of both Murray and Hamilton so that if their fortunes were to diverge in the future, the changes in endorsement effects could be compared.

Although we acknowledge that there are differences between tennis and Formula One, there are also similarities, particularly in terms of press coverage. These are also two of the most recognisable professional sportsmen in the UK, they both compete in a series of high profile televised events throughout the season and are seen as celebrities beyond sport (with press interest in their partners and the events they attend).

The questionnaire

The first section of the questionnaire asked respondents to select the words or phrases from a given list that would make them feel first more positive and second more negative about a celebrity; the question was asked in relation to a celebrity in general and a sportsman. They were then asked to select those they thought described each of the two sportsmen. There was no limit to the number of items they could select.

To set up the list of words and phrases, both researchers reviewed the list generated by the secondary research described above and by a similar process for material relating to Hamilton. Key words describing Aaker's (1997) Brand Personality Dimensions were also added to the list, this being a framework frequently used by marketers to describe or categorise brand

personality. Prior to the first survey, a small pilot study was carried out with a sample of co-researchers at the authors' institution, using descriptive words and phrases generated by the secondary research, and requesting feedback on the questionnaire. After consideration of this feedback and elimination of words considered close synonyms, the researchers decided upon sixteen words and phrases for the survey questionnaire. To control for bias and given that respondents tend to choose items at the beginning or end of a list (Krosnick & Alwin, 1987), their order was randomised for different respondents as well as the order in which the sportsmen were presented.

The second section of the questionnaire explored the relationship between sporting celebrity endorsement and purchasing intent. Respondents were asked to consider the scenario of shopping for five items for either themselves or a friend (a tennis racquet, an F1 motor racing electronic game, shower gel, fresh orange juice, a mobile phone), and were then asked whether brand endorsement by the named sportsperson would make them more or less likely to purchase (or make no difference to their decision). One item was selected in relation to each sportsman's sport (tennis racquet, F1 racing game), another was selected as slightly more relevant to one sport than the other. For instance, orange juice may be considered more relevant to tennis where players are seen drinking between sets, while a mobile phone may be more closely linked with F1 due to the technology required for both. These links may also be strengthened by the well-known association of Robinsons drinks with tennis (Britvic plc, 2014) and Vodafone's sponsorship of the McLaren F1 team for which Lewis Hamilton raced at the time (Joseph, 2013). The last item, shower gel, was chosen as a credible endorsement for any sportsperson.

Finally, the questionnaire requested demographic data and the respondent's level of interest in tennis, F1, and sport in general (on a scale of 1-5). In the second study (July 2012) respondents were also asked if their opinion of Murray and Hamilton had changed over the last three months.

The data gathering phase for both studies was administered by Qualtrics (www.qualtrics.com) through their UK online panels, with respective independent sample sizes of 207 and 210 UK adults (aged over 16) for the two surveys. This method was chosen as the most efficient way of obtaining a representative sample of the UK population. The questionnaire and administration method satisfied ethical guidelines.

Secondary research findings: Andy Murray

In contrast to sporting personalities such as David Beckham (football), who is more renowned in terms of his celebrity status, Andy Murray has not historically shone as a 'hot face' of his profession. The media analysis showed that during Murray's early career, he was frequently portrayed as moody and lacking in charisma (Ritson, 2009). He appeared to split public opinion, with some posts on guardianonline.co.uk labelling him as 'boorish', 'uncouth' and 'truculent', and others praising his honesty, competitiveness and 'refusal to play the media game'. He did not achieve the same degree of positive profiling or public popularity as other, arguably less successful, UK tennis players such as the traditionally English Tim Henman (Castle, 2007) or opponents such as Roger Federer (Hodgkinson, 2009). Despite not being generally regarded as a hot celebrity, sporting companies such as Adidas invested in Murray for promotional purposes (Forbes, 2011).

As Murray's career progressed, knowledgeable commentary became more positive, e.g., Ferguson (2009) reported that he '*forged through to the fourth round* (of Wimbledon) *with a*

finessed display of curves and swing balls and simple power' and summed up the views of tennis spectators as '*There is no love, but from this oh-so-English crowd there is fast-moving acceptance, and crowding goodwill: and increasingly delight in some simply rock-solid hope*'. However, by 2012, the four years of progressing towards the latter stages of Grand Slam tournaments without a single win induced scepticism of his 2012 Wimbledon hopes. Addley (2012) quoted a typical fan's comment: '*He's just like the England football team in the sense that he's not going to get much beyond the quarter-finals. Maybe he'll make the semi-finals.*' His positioning was largely regarded as 'uncool' and only his ability to play tennis rather than his personality was showcased. However, despite again failing to win the final match, Murray's performance (during and after play) at Wimbledon in July 2012 was perceived as different compared to previous sporting events. Both traditional media reports and social media 'buzz' became increasingly positive toward him over the Wimbledon period.

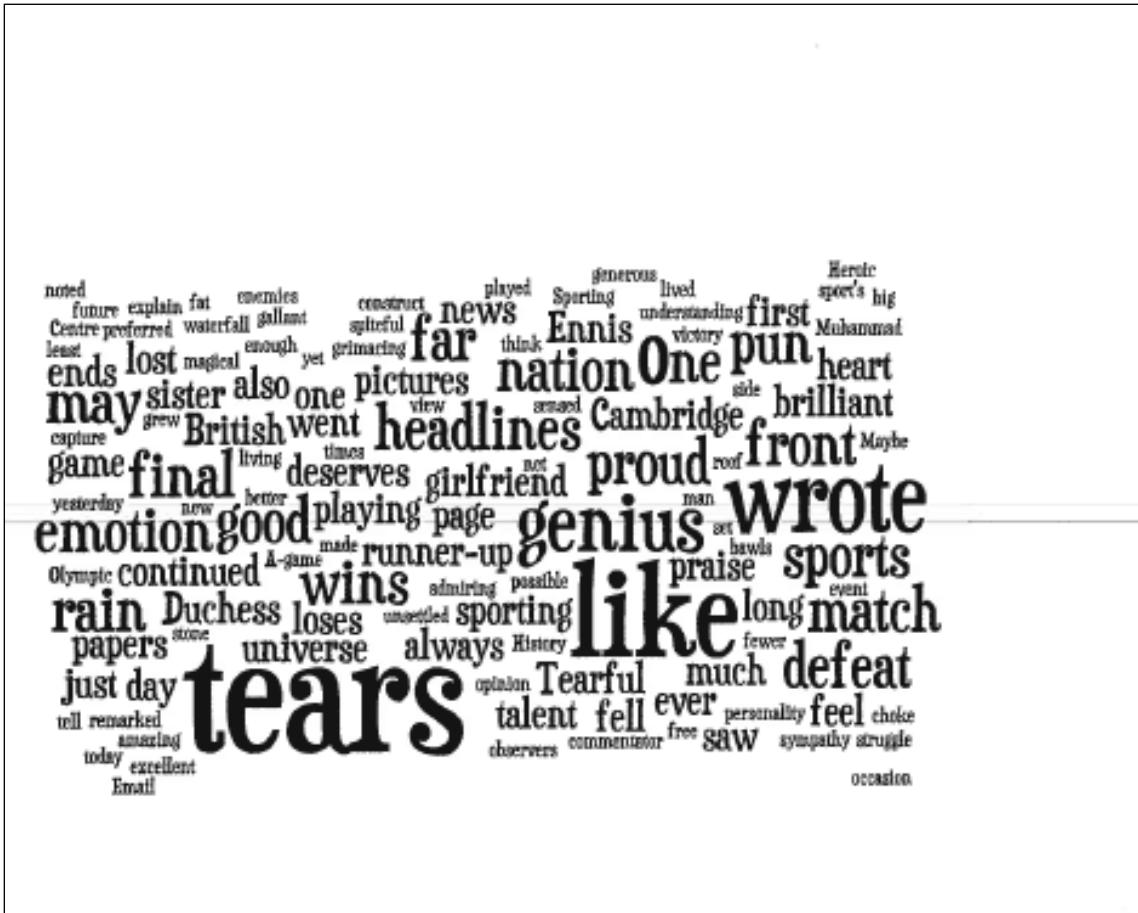
As Murray progressed through the rounds, media reporting became more upbeat and emotional, indicating a change in perceptions and presenting Murray as a newly popular celebrity, '*We're right behind you, Andy: Murraymania sweeps Britain as fans get behind finalist*' (Gregory, 2012). Mitchell (2012), reporting Murray's success in reaching the final, summarised how his stirring performance and the hope of future glory led his detractors to overlook previous criticisms, '*What a fickle lot we are. No more talk now of his Britishness. No more whinging, either, about his imagined sulking*'. Murray's performance, in what was regarded as a thrilling encounter with Federer in the final, earned him worldwide media accolades, for instance referring to him as a '*magnificent athlete*' playing '*sublime*' tennis (The Guardian, 2012).

In terms of social media, Burn-Murdoch (2012) presented an analysis of tweets throughout Wimbledon and showed that Murray scored highest of all players for overall sentiment (positive tweets minus negative tweets). His score positively increased throughout the event and then decreased prior to the final, reflecting doubts on his ability to beat Federer. Despite losing, this score improved by 30% after the final, reflecting appreciation of both his performance and his demeanour following the match. Numerous positive tweets from celebrities (many not related to sport) were quoted by Curtis (2012).

Ronay (2012) mentioned Murray's excellent play in the final, but focused more on his emotional runner-up speech following the match. This was said to have won him 'the nation's heart', winning over even those members of the public who had previously been negative towards him (White, 2012). Curtis (2012) stated, '*his tears ... may have altered his dour and dispassionate public image for good*'. A Guardian (2012) survey carried out directly after the final reported that 53% of respondents stated that Murray's performance had changed their minds about the player, while many pointed out that they did not need to change their minds as they had always felt positive about him. As commentators began to look forward to the Olympics, some headlines were as much about Murray's new popularity as his gold medal chances, e.g., '*Andy Murray will feel the love against Roger Federer in London 2012: Scot hopes to seal new-found public affection in London 2012 by beating the Swiss in the Olympic final*' (Mitchell, 2012). Murray of course went on to beat Federer only a month later, to win the gold medal at the London Olympics.

A word cloud picture was created to capture and build a picture of word usage and to reflect the sentiments portrayed in media reporting of Murray in the Wimbledon final.

Figure I. Murray Word Cloud



(Note: Names of sporting participants, writers, events and the words ‘tennis’ and ‘set’ were removed before creating the word cloud)

Source: Word clouds prepared by authors using Wordle (www.wordle.net) from Curtis (2012), The Guardian (2012), Ornstein (2012), Ronay (2012), White (2012).

Secondary research findings: Lewis Hamilton

Lewis Hamilton, prior to the survey in 2012, had completed nine races and was in fourth position in the world rankings. This was only one place higher than at the time of the first survey.

On the same day as Murray competed in the Wimbledon final, Hamilton competed in the British F1 Grand Prix where he finished eighth. A word cloud picture was also created of reporting on Hamilton's performance in this race, shown in Figure II. Words such as 'disappointing' 'disappointed' and 'failed' (for Hamilton) evidence the contrast between the performances of the two sportsmen at this date.

The analysis of the survey results, with comparisons between the two sportsmen and the 2011 and 2012 surveys, enables us to examine how much the sentiments conveyed by media reporting are reflected in the perceptions of the general public, and any effect on endorsement power. The survey could be regarded as a quasi-experiment (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.50), taking advantage of a naturally occurring situation, with Murray as the variable of interest and Hamilton as the control.

Figure II. Hamilton Word Cloud



(Note: Names of sporting participants, writers and events were removed before creating the word cloud)

Source: Word clouds prepared by authors using Wordle (www.wordle.net) from Benson (2012), Telegraph Sport (2012), Weaver (2012).

Primary research findings

Respondents were asked which aspects of a celebrity's personality would make them feel more positive or negative towards the celebrity. For each aspect, to arrive at an overall rating score, the percentage of respondents viewing that particular aspect as negative was subtracted from the percentage viewing it as positive. The question was asked for a celebrity in general and a sportsperson. The aspects that showed large differences in ratings were:

World class: more positive effect for a sportsperson than a celebrity.

Tough: seen overall as positive for a sportsperson but slightly negative for a celebrity.

Sophisticated: more positive effect for a celebrity than for a sportsperson.

Aggressive: less negative effect for a sportsperson than for a celebrity.

Respondents were then asked to rate both Andy Murray and Lewis Hamilton on the sixteen aspects. The results in Table 2 show that Murray's profile significantly improved in the second phase of the study, with more people perceiving him as world class, passionate, sincere and competent, and fewer perceiving him as arrogant following his Wimbledon 2012 performance and runner-up speech – in accordance with the media reports discussed earlier. The differences in proportions between the first and second surveys for these aspects are statistically significant (Z test for difference in proportions: $\alpha = 0.05$, 2-tailed test, critical value of $Z = 1.96$). Increases were also observed in those perceiving him as a good role model, friendly and tough; fewer people regarded him as boring, but the number who saw him as moody also increased. The results confirm the relationship between media, social networks and word of mouth (Smith, Coyle, Lightfoot & Scott, 2007) in endorsing celebrity effectiveness. Conversely, Hamilton had

only one significant change to his profile: more people viewed him as moody, while the increase in those seeing him as world class was just short of significant.

Also, in the second survey, 54% of respondents stated that their opinion of Murray had become more positive over the previous three months survey (this fits well with the post-Wimbledon Guardian survey cited earlier), while only 15% stated that they felt more positive about Hamilton. This is a significant difference (Z test for difference in proportions: $\alpha = 0.05$, 2-tailed test, critical value of $Z = 1.96$, actual Z value = 8.43). Only 5% stated that their opinion of Murray had become more negative, as opposed to 17% for Hamilton – again a significant difference (Z test for difference in proportions: $\alpha = 0.05$, 2-tailed test, critical value of $Z = 1.96$, actual Z value = 3.87). Thus H1 (*Increased positive media coverage of a celebrity's performance will improve public perceptions of the celebrity*) is supported by the significant positive changes seen in perceptions of Murray.

Table 2. Personality profiles for Andy Murray and Lewis Hamilton

Personality aspect	Rating of aspect (for celebrity)	Rating of aspect (for sportsman)	Andy Murray Survey 1 Oct 2011 (t1)	Andy Murray Survey 2 July 2012 (t2)	Z value for difference in proportions between t1 and t2 (Murray)	Lewis Hamilton Survey 1 Oct 2011 (t1)	Lewis Hamilton Survey 2 July 2012 (t2)	Z value for difference in proportions between t1 and t2 (Hamilton)
	% of respondents rating aspect as positive - % of respondents rating aspect as negative			% of respondents selecting this word/phrase to describe Murray			% of respondents selecting this word/phrase to describe Hamilton	
Good role model	83	80	34	43	1.89	29	29	0.00
Trustworthy	80	79	20	21	0.25	15	16	0.28
Friendly	82	73	20	26	1.46	30	27	-0.68
World class	45	70	44	54	2.04*	55	64	1.87
Passionate	64	67	38	50	2.47*	36	38	0.42
Sincere	75	64	21	36	3.39*	19	22	0.76
Competent	62	59	35	45	2.08*	41	43	0.41
Mature	57	47	17	19	0.53	15	13	-0.59
Cool	39	27	13	19	1.67	29	33	0.88
Tough	-10	25	20	28	1.91	18	19	0.26
Sophisticated	39	16	5	10	1.94	8	7	-0.39
Celebrity	-10	-17	19	24	1.24	36	41	1.05
Aggressive	-80	-41	22	20	-0.50	23	22	-0.24
Boring	-79	-62	28	22	-1.42	13	18	1.41
Moody	-73	-68	38	47	1.86	14	23	2.36*
Arrogant	-85	-77	23	14	-2.37*	27	34	1.55

*Indicates a statistically significant difference: Z value greater than the critical Z value of 1.96 (0.05 significance level, 2-tailed test)

Murray's appeal, in terms of Aaker's (1997) dimensions, lies primarily in the areas of competence and sincerity, both of which significantly increased by the second survey. High scores on passion and moodiness also indicate emotional appeal, which could be associated with the dimension of excitement; however, 22% of respondents still regarded him as boring.

Endorsement effects

Table 3 shows the endorsement effects of both sportsmen on products related to their own and to a contrasting sport. As expected, Murray's endorsement effect was highest for a tennis racquet, and Hamilton's for an F1 racing game, confirming that endorsement is more effective if there is a 'fit' between the product and the endorser (Kamins, 1990).

However, the only significant change (Z test for difference in proportions: $\alpha = 0.05$, 2-tailed test, critical value of $Z = 1.96$) between the two surveys is in Andy Murray's effect as an endorser of a tennis racquet, a product highly associated with his own sport. This is consistent with the increase in those who perceive him as world class and competent, which would increase confidence in his endorsement. H2 (*Enhanced public perceptions of a celebrity will increase his/her endorsement effect where there is a fit between the celebrity and the product being endorsed*) is therefore supported.

Table 3. Endorsement effects for products directly related to the sport

Product	Endorsed by Murray			Endorsed by Hamilton		
	More likely to buy (% in survey 1)	More likely to buy (% in survey 2)	Z value for difference in proportions between Survey 1 and Survey 2 (Murray)	More likely to buy (% in survey 1)	More likely to buy (% in survey 2)	Z value for difference in proportions between Survey 1 and Survey 2 (Hamilton)
Tennis racquet	41	55	2.86*	6	7	0.41
Motor racing game	6	10	1.50	44	47	0.62

*Indicates a statistically significant difference: Z value greater than the critical Z value of 1.96 (0.05 significance level, 2-tailed test)

Table 4. Endorsement effects for products not directly related to the sport

Product	Endorsed by Murray			Endorsed by Hamilton		
	More likely to buy (% in survey 1)	More likely to buy (% in survey 2)	Z value for difference in proportions between Survey 1 and Survey 2 (Murray)	More likely to buy (% in survey 1)	More likely to buy (% in survey 2)	Z value for difference in proportions between Survey 1 and Survey 2 (Hamilton)
Shower gel	16	19	0.81	16	14	-0.57
Fresh orange juice	17	19	0.53	12	9	-1.00
Mobile phone	9	13	1.30	16	14	-0.57

Table 4 shows the endorsement effects of both sportsmen on products not directly related to sport. As expected, Murray is seen as a marginally better endorser of juice, and Hamilton as a slightly better endorser of a mobile phone, reflecting the possible greater associations of these products with the respective sports. Here we find small but statistically non-significant changes (Z less than critical value of 1.96, 0.05 significance level, 2-tailed test) in the endorsement effects, indicating that the changed perceptions of Murray had done little to increase his influence on the general public as an endorser of products outside tennis. Splitting the sample between tennis and non-tennis fans did not yield significant changes for any of these products.

H3 (Enhanced public perceptions of a celebrity will increase his/her endorsement effect for products where there is not a fit between celebrity and product, due to brand spillover effects) is therefore not supported; the positive changes in Murray's endorsement effect are too small for us to have confidence that they are due to brand spillover effects from enhanced perceptions of Murray, rather than due to chance.

Effectiveness of message communication through social media and newspaper/television reporting

The first stage data reported previously suggests that the number of media reports and the amount of social media interaction relating to Andy Murray increased throughout the Wimbledon 2012 period and were largely positive. Our findings confirm that communication of message matters. The positive media and social media reporting increased Murray's endorsement effect. Campbell and Keller (2003) suggest that the repetition effect is stronger when the endorsement effect is related to associated products as opposed to non-associated products; this is again corroborated by the survey findings. Conversely, Hamilton's eighth position in the

British F1 Grand Prix on the same day was acknowledged as disappointing, and media coverage was sparse in comparison to Murray; thus, no significant changes in Hamilton's endorsement effect were found.

Discussion

The media portrait of a celebrity has in the past been widely influential in determining celebrity appeal. However, the effect that unpaid communications (newspaper and online reporting, blogs and associated comments, tweets) play in building celebrity face and transformational appeal is less understood, since social media are a relatively new area of study. Our research contributes to the field by testing the theory of celebrity endorsement in a new context (i.e. using new media), thus unpacking the transformation effect of celebrity brands through unpaid methods of communication. The study offers a variety of contributions. First, the more positive public perceptions of Murray resulting from unpaid communications (H1) show that modern methods of marketing communication are important for celebrity endorsers and that language usage is important in invoking positive behaviours in individuals even in unpaid communications, confirming the link between message communication and endorser value in unremunerated advertising postings. A second contribution of the research is that the results show how media hype and uncontrolled settings affect product endorsement in sporting celebrities. The analysis of data on message communication illustrates that the amount of messages matters as does the related positive association, suggesting the relevance of exercising voice in marketing communications. This is evidenced by the fact that, following Wimbledon 2012, media reports of Andy Murray became more positive, as did his ability to effectively endorse tennis-related products (H2). This was not the case for non-tennis-related products where consumer attitudes

remained the same. The latter findings support the match-up hypothesis: when the strategic fit between product and endorser is high, the endorsement effect is greater. A third contribution of the study is that, the findings confirm the importance, for a sports-related product, of fit between product and endorser, suggesting a high level of association between celebrity profile, product and brand choice (Prendergast, Poon & West, 2010). The endorsement of a product related to the sportsperson's own sport was effective, while the endorsement of a product relating to a different sport was not, as H3 was not supported. Furthermore, when media exposure was positive, the endorsement effect increased, but only for sports-related products. Despite the notably more positive perception of the sportsman, this had little effect on his power as an endorser for products unrelated to his sport. This suggests that celebrity endorsers are not effective at endorsing unrelated products even when these products are positively associated with the event being sponsored. A key lesson for management based on these findings is that they need to think carefully about product and fit when using celebrity events as endorsers of their products, given that our study suggests that only those companies whose products have a strong link to a celebrity sportsperson will benefit from engaging that sportsperson as an endorser.

The findings indicate that celebrity performance and behaviour at events, in this case leading to changes in the perceptions of Andy Murray, affect brand credibility. This is evidenced by the fact that the value of 'Brand Murray' increased following Wimbledon 2012, confirming that credible behaviour and advertising messages build consumer loyalty (McCracken, 1989, Martin, 1996). These unpaid media communications have implications for celebrity convergence and transformation. The unpaid opinion of a celebrity's endorsement appeal is being shaped by social media platforms and the participation that these tournaments generate. Our findings also support the matching pair hypothesis conclusions of prior studies (Kahle & Homer, 1985): both

Murray and Hamilton were substantially more effective as endorsers for products related to their own sports than for any other product. By unpacking celebrity brands in this way we identify the products that are likely to be effectively endorsed and the celebrity attraction. Our findings show that endorsement power is influenced by whether consumers view the perceived attributes of an endorser positively or negatively in the context of similar products, but is not supported for unrelated products. No significant differences were found in Murray's influence as an endorser on tennis fans and non-fans.

That the relationship between endorser credibility and product credibility varies depending on the type of product endorsed is at least partially supported. When products are closely related to the endorser's expertise, consumers are more likely to be attracted to the product. Unrelated products are more likely to be linked to whether or not consumers perceive the celebrity as the 'hot face of the moment'. Our findings show that endorsements do not influence unrelated products.

The research findings from the second survey show the effects of more positive perceptions of Murray following the Wimbledon 2012 reporting. Our study confirms that an increase in positive media communications about a celebrity increases the celebrity's equity value as an endorser.

In summary, positive messages from both traditional and social media associated with the event strengthen the celebrity's overall endorsement appeal while communication of message enhances this effect.

Concluding remarks

Brand credibility can be further strengthened when endorsed by celebrities through high-profile events and message communication. Language articulation and message endorsement are important antecedents for informing endorsement behaviour. Our research suggests the platform on which the message is communicated matters in the context of celebrity endorsements through unpaid messages. We show these positive associations are reinforced through events; the power of the endorser is elevated by positive crowd reaction to the celebrity's performance at the event and for the related products being endorsed. In these cases, we can say that when consumers connect with a sporting celebrity's personal attributes through events, brand loyalty increases towards sports-related products. The higher the profile attached to the message and the greater the hype associated with the message, the more effective the endorser will be in transmitting the image of the product and the brand to consumers. This effectiveness is further endorsed through unpaid media. We attribute this to the way sporting events offer community membership and use celebrity role models to target specific socialisation outcomes. However, as our research has shown, this does not automatically lead to brand spillovers to non-related products.

We contribute to existing studies and construct a theory that the type of message (positive/negative) matters in the way it influences consumer value perception. In addition, our findings demonstrate that media technology is changing the promotional landscape for message communication. We argue that social media provide an enabling platform for the development of novel methods to inform purchasing intent through consumer-to-consumer marketing. If the consumer becomes the marketeer of the future, managers will need to think more carefully about which celebrities they choose and why, taking into account the effect of unsolicited messages on

behaviour and the impact of message repetition in generating positively or negatively shared perspectives on celebrities and products.

The study has a number of limitations amongst which is that the findings currently test the research questions only in the sporting context. Caution is advised in not over-generalising these findings until they have been tested in more than one industrial setting. The study tested the endorsement effect only for UK consumers and a sporting celebrity who is recognised by this consumer group. Furthermore, the endorsement effect relates only to major sporting events. Whether the endorsement value remains consistent over time and how it may be affected by negative publicity should also be considered.

It is also possible that although Lewis Hamilton was the nearest comparable sportsman in terms of world ranking, comparisons may have been biased due to the different F1 and tennis seasons. Murray, competing in overseas matches on a year-round basis, may have had more chance to change his public profile over the period between the two surveys than Hamilton, whose offseason was during that period.

Management implications

Given the increasingly competitive nature of the brand marketing environment, brand portfolio management demands new ways of brand building through understanding the factors that positively or negatively endorse products in the minds of consumers. The study addresses this issue by showing that associated events enhance, or otherwise, celebrity endorsements and that this may translate into purchasing desire. Our findings confirm the link between message amount and endorsement value in both positive and negative scenarios. Through understanding the way

language influences consumer behaviour, managers will be better placed to develop mechanisms to evaluate the effectiveness of their brand strategy.

The findings first suggest that choice of celebrity matters. In the case of Andy Murray, his recent success made him a more effective endorser. The research suggests this was probably a consequence of the role that high-profile celebrity events play in increasing message hype. Second, when appropriate celebrities are chosen, endorsement power increases when the products are related to the field of expertise of the endorser, while our findings suggest that the endorsement value does not extend to unrelated products. Finally, social media represent both an opportunity and a problem for businesses. Our results show that celebrity events increase message scale and illustrate that the platform on which the message is delivered is important for achieving effective endorsement. In this context the frequency of message counts. Further, our research shows that for the events analysed, the overall communication was positive. However, managers should also plan for the scenario in relation to negative reporting and develop risk management strategies accordingly.

Given the global nature of sport, scholars could also consider generating datasets that explore the endorsement effect through a cross-cultural comparison, looking at the phenomenon in different countries and exploring the cross-comparison effects linked to culture and the macro-forces that determine marketing communications within and across different markets. A further suggestion for a future line of enquiry would be to compare not only the endorsement effect across a range of sports, but also the effect on other categories such as music. Finally, studies could also explore the differences between luxury and non-luxury products in the context of media exposure.

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