

Using Celebrity and New Media to bring Cosmetic and Fragrance brands to life

(Or why your best consumers will never return to your website)

Introduction

Despite the hype, the risk, the let down, the use of celebrity endorsement is still a core strategy in flavour with many of the world's leading cosmetic and fragrance brands. The ongoing public fascination with celebrity offers the brand instant profile - when it works right. 'Getting it right' is proving more difficult in at a time when media saturation is at its highest and many celebrities have multiple brand endorsement commitments.

PSFK argues that the use of new media can leverage the bond created between Celebrity and brand to provide a much more fulfilled partnership and a much deeper level of Celebrity / Brand exploration for the consumer.

The Brand and Celebrity

Celebrity Endorsement is a multi-billion dollar business used to promote everything from fashion, travel and soft drinks. Use of the right celebrity brings immediate and positive values to the brand - whether this is Liz Hurley (Estee Lauder), Liv Tyler (Givenchy) or even Elton John (MAC Glam). The values of the brand have to be represented in the target markets perception of the celebrity. Matching the right celebrity to the brand brings access to and brand awareness in key audiences.

The brand owners challenge to communicate the brand/celebrity partnership in a credible way to the consumer is achieved by most brands through traditional media advertising campaigns. This method is both valid and proven but leaves little budget for continuous tactical marketing activity and experimentation with other mechanisms which could help maximize and deliver return on the brands investment in the partnership.

The explosion of 'Celebrity' per se has led to a dichotomy where the media has begun to be picky about the stars they rate there is also a sense of urgency to achieve 'exclusives' coups about Celebrities. The media are well aware of the endorsements by stars and with indications that 'editorial integrity' is seen to be jeopardized if a celebrity recommends a product in an interview the raison d'être of

the endorsement begins to tarnish. As Jo Elvin of Glamour says¹ "The crux of the issue for me is how big the celebrity is and how desperately I want them. And if I'm honest, for most celebrities, it doesn't seem worth sacrificing our editorial integrity. I would never, for instance, agree to a cover on the condition that a celebrity wears a brand." This attitude is not isolated: Nina Ahmad says "'For Cosmopolitan generally, we could not make whatever a celebrity had to endorse at all prominent in any feature as it ends up looking like an advert and our readers would just not be happy with that."

Of course there are all the well-understood risks with celebrity: many brand managers have opened up the National Enquirer or UK's News of the World and gasped (along with their target market) upon seeing their celebrity caught in a compromising position.

We conclude that Brands are faced with the dilemma: how do they use the ever-powerful tool of Celebrity in an ever crowded and increasingly transparent and cynical media environment?

The Celebrity and Celebrity

Product Endorsement is a welcome opportunity for a celebrity. Alongside the fee is guaranteed, and often elevating, global 'exposure'. Recognizing this 'celebrity access' companies ie. Telstar (Craig David) have established specialized departments to support endorsement campaigns. Dominic Caisley, head of commercial marketing at Telstar Records says,²"The market is so competitive. Companies are looking for any sort of advantage when it comes to breaking new acts or giving established acts exposure in new territories."

New Media has provided celebrity with a new channel to touch their fan base (and buy their records, clothes, beer). While traditional media magazines and newspapers write what is thought about a Celebrity not necessarily what a celebrity may think or do (Liz Hurley and Catherine Zeta-Jones being perfect examples). Some celebrities have been turning to the web to get their message across directly. David Bowie, who has always been seen as an early adopter of web technology, leads the way – if you post a reasonable question on a Bowie Net message board, chances are Mr. Aladdin Sane will provide a personal reply.

¹ Quotes from magazine editors all originate in the article "Media relations: Celeb Power" PR Week 070203

² "Music - Popstar partnerships" Promotions and Incentives 30-01-2003

The Consumer and Celebrity

Consumers buy celebrity endorsed products for many diverse but primarily emotional reasons; to buy into a lifestyle, to feel that they have 'touched' that celebrity etc. The rise of magazines that trade in celebrity lifestyle and gossip is a testament to the public's demand for 'Celebrity'. Industry observers admit³ that much of the demand has been self generated by the magazine publishers themselves: i.e. their magazines have set the tone for society's approach toward celebrities. The celebrity on the front cover can impact magazine sales significantly. Richard Stolley, former managing editor of *People* and now senior editorial advisor at Time Inc. Magazines says⁴ of cover: "Young is better than old. Pretty is better than ugly. Rich is better than poor. TV is better than music. Music is better than movies. Movies are better than sports. Anything is better than politics. And nothing is better than the celebrity dead⁵."

Meanwhile, consumer's have also become both media and advertising savvy and hate feeling that they are being sold to in a clumsy way – e.g. magazines running product endorsement stories for the sake of the endorsement. Jane Johnson of *Closer* says, "Why would you want to talk to Liz Hurley about her favorite shampoo, when what readers really want to know is the latest on her love life?" While we may argue that a consumer seeing Liz on the cover of *closer* may think "Nice hair Liz, you use brand X don't you" we would question the longevity of these associations.

Our point is that cosmetic and fragrance customers confident with gossiping on Instant Messenger, Email, Text etc and that the consumers "Nice hair" thought if managed correctly could be turned into increased sales through awareness and referral.

³ For moreread: "Magazines and the Celebrity Culture: Oprah and Rosie and Martha, Oh My!" Sammie Johnson, professor of Journalism

⁴ "Folio: Roundtable — The Editor as Market Authority," *Mediacentral.com* (January 1, 1998),

⁵ Please note PSFK does not endorse the assassination of celebrities in order to increase the sales of media titles

Bringing your brand to life

So where does this take us? Consider the two key facts:

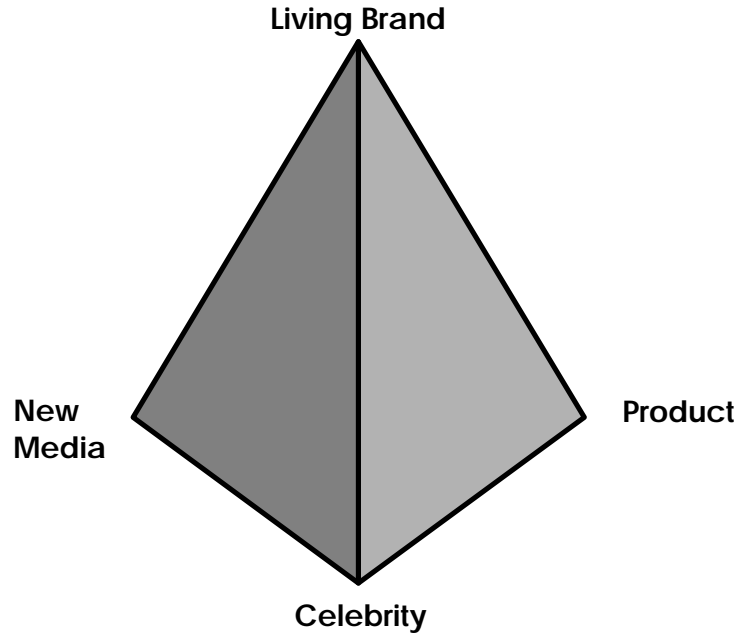
THE PUBLIC LOVE CELEBRITY

and

THE MEDIA DOES NOT WANT TO SELL YOUR PRODUCT⁶

If you agree with these facts, perhaps it's time to look to new media to support your celebrity endorsement strategy.

*The cornerstones
to bringing your
brand to life*

**New Media and Celebrity**

Traditional PR is art – it is unaccountable, a huge risk and has little to do with customer dialogue and loyalty. PSFK agree that use of celebrity as a key mechanism to communicate a fragrance or cosmetic brand is as important today as it ever was but we also recognize that brands must consider how to use new and more effective interactive channels that are available today.

New Media brings a previously unused range of tools: email, SMS, instant chat, websites, blogging, community, peer-to-peer software the

⁶ Especially for free!

list is nearly endless. So brands have recognized this and are already using new media too effectively trial and sample ie. Ralph Lauren celebrated the first anniversary of youth fragrance Ralph with an online campaign that generated 20,000 sample requests. PSFK believes that whilst new media provides opportunities for Ralph style acquisition campaigns, a cohesive new media strategy should focus on reward and stimulation of a segmented customer base with premium customers (portfolio users) as the prime target.

While the acquisition campaign can generate email addresses you have to build a strategy that enables the brand to make best use of your database. Understanding how to intelligently use new media communication is knowing the real value of those email addresses, knowing how to segment them and understanding the permission the consumer has given the brand to start a dialogue with them. Not having this understanding represents lost communication and sales opportunities.

Consider this further, PSFK asks you to take a couple of minutes to imagine a programme where a customer can access a celebrity through new media dialogue. Imagine a programme initiated through product purchase; a programme that allows a celebrity to speak directly to the people who matter most to their continued success (i.e. potential readers of her next book, viewers of her next film, addicts to her next TV series); and a programme where this dialogue takes place with consumers in an environment controlled by the brand. Now do you begin to see the value of integrating new media into your endorsement strategy?

If you are interested to know how new media and celebrity can be mixed to create better dialogue with your customers and therefore increased sales, please contact Simon King or Piers Fawkes on +44 (0)20 7053 2040 or via info@psfk.com.