If Kate voted Conservative, would you? The role of celebrity endorsements in political party advertising

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Abstract

Purpose – This research has been conducted with the aim of determining if celebrity endorsers in political party advertising have a significant impact on UK voter intentions. The use of celebrity endorsements is commonplace in the USA, but little is known about its effects in the UK. This research also aims to incorporate the use of celebrity endorsements in political party advertising with the political salience construct. Political salience represents how prominent politics and political issues are in the minds of the eligible voter.

Design/methodology/approach – A 2 (endorser: celebrity; non-celebrity)×2 (political salience: high; low) between-subjects factorial design experiment was used. The results show that celebrity endorsements do play a significant role in attitudes towards the political advert, attitudes towards the endorser and voter intention. However, this effect is significantly moderated by political salience.

Findings – The results show that low political salience respondents were significantly more likely to vote for the political party when a celebrity endorser is used. However, the inverse effect is found for high political salience respondents.

Practical implications – The results offer significant insights into the effect that celebrity endorsers could have in future elections and the importance that political salience plays in the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement. If political parties are to target those citizens that do not actively engage with politics then the use of celebrity endorsements would make a significant impact, given the results of this research.

Originality/value – This research would be of particular interest to political party campaigners as well as academics studying the effects of advertising and identity salience.

The question of engaging voters in political elections in the UK has gained an increasing amount of attention (BBC1, 2001). This is to a large extent due to a historical drop in voter turnout at the country's general elections, a fact that was highly documented during the 2001 election by political analyst Tony King, claiming that; "There are certainly absolutely no signs in the voting figures out tonight, that this is a government that has successfully re-connected the people with politics" (BBC1, 2001). In 2001, the excitement at the general election was at its all time low, with turnout going under 60 per cent for the first time since the First World War, the result of a 12 per centage point drop from its 1997 level. Furthermore, the 1997 election was the first time turnout had dipped below 72 per cent since 1935. The elections in May 2005, showed an increase of 1 per cent, rising to just about 61 per cent, signalling continuous voter apathy in the United Kingdom (ESRC Society Today, 2005).

Owing to a gradual decline in the strength of party identification between the political parties and voters, more voters than ever before are subject to the effects of short-term forces operating in the electoral arena at any point in time (Clarke et al., 2005). This development has allowed politicians to "battle it out" during election campaigns. Therefore, particularly in Britain, campaigning systems remain party-oriented events, where parties rely on grass root members and the media, in order to "sell" the leader to the targeted voters (Newman, 1994). It is here that the use of celebrity endorsement has played a prominent role in US elections as a means of engaging with potential voters.

Celebrity endorsement is most commonly associated with the USA (Schickel, 1985), with products, brands, organiizations and political figures capitalising on the public recognition bestowed on them (Erdogan et al., 2001; Lin, 2001). A substantial amount of research (see Erdogan, 1999 for a comprehensive review) concludes that celebrity endorsement is valuable due to its ability to grab consumer attention, create differentiated product images and penetrate through the advertising clutter consumers are surrounded by daily (Erdogan and Kitchen, 1998; Choi et al., 2005). Although a ban exists in the UK on the use of paid advertising using broadcast media; this does not deter the use of non-paid celebrity endorsement through other means, such as publicity, online promotion and print, as studied here (OPSI, 1990).

An important question is whether the increased use of celebrity endorsements in the political marketing arena in the UK does influence the average voter. Traditional claims state that rational voters, voters who have a high degree of political interest, only rely on party-specific information, and are thus not impacted by additional cues such as endorsements by celebrities (Schuessler, 2000). Celebrity endorsement literature, however, proposes that such endorsements could increase interest in the endorsed party, allowing for higher voter turnouts. Henneberg (1995, p. 5) suggests that there is critical need for research which is based "… on both pillars: marketing and political science" (Butler and Collins, 1996, p. 25). The success of political endorsement by various celebrities has been mixed. Most notably, the "Red Wedge" movement led by musician Paul Weller was seen to have little effect in encouraging young voters to support the Labour party in the mid-1980s (Heard, 2004). Similarly, other celebrities have offered support in both the UK and USA and have received little praise from political commentators who claim little effect on their views by the stars of the silver screen (e.g. Summerskill, 2004). However, celebrities continue to turn out to offer support for their chosen cause. It could be the case that those who disapprove of the use of celebrity endorsements make up the per centage of the population for whom politics is a salient and

important issue. The voter turnout during the Red Wedge campaign was significantly higher than in recent years (ESRC Society Today, 2005). This paper proposes that it is the voting population that do not engage with politics that are most susceptible to the use of celebrity endorsements and in times where this population is small, such as in the 1980s, the effect shown is minimal.

This research investigates the role that celebrity endorsement can have on voter intention given varying levels of political salience. Issue salience has been covered in the politics literature (Repass, 1971), particularly in relation to voting outcomes and presidential preferences (Pogorelis et al., 2005). Yet, research regarding the effects of political salience and endorsement effectiveness has been comparatively neglected. This paper aims to add literature to this gap by contributing to a theoretical understanding of how consumers with varying levels of political salience react to different types of endorsement, as well as give insight into the processes leading to this result.

An increasing amount of money and resources is being spent on political campaigning (Marks and Fischer, 2002). As such, it is important for political players to fully understand the effect celebrity endorsements have on voters; not only because this is financially crucial in terms of actual impact and election results, but also to enable efficient political marketing campaigns, and understand voter preferences. The following sections will provide a brief overview of the extant literature on celebrity endorsement and political salience.

Theoretical background

Political endorsement

Politics and endorsements have become increasingly intertwined in the past 15 years (Jackson and Darrow, 2005). In the USA, actors, musicians and other influential individuals are making political statements with an overlying goal of influencing opinions and behaviours of members of the public (Wood and Herbst, 2007). "New Labour" attempted to draw on the role that celebrities play in modern culture in the run up to the UK 1997 elections in an attempt to encourage image enhancement from so-called attractive sources (Smith, 2005). However, little is known about the true effectiveness of such endorsements or what types of citizens would be swayed by an endorsement from a popular celebrity.

Political marketers often only use primary research to understand the public's needs and desires in order to shape political offerings to meet elector preferences and to make viable and educated communications decisions in order to better achieve political objectives (Marland, 2003). Such insights are used to increase political campaigning efficiency, and adjust political communication in order to attract voters. In addition, political marketers use this information to structure the actual party or candidate offering, such as design of party policy. Marland (2003) states that the US historically has been in the forefront of such commercial marketing innovations.

Endorsements are, according to Grossman and Helpman (1999), a simple language for communication between interest group leaders and group members. The members of a group may not fully understand what a particular party stands for. Additionally, it may be costly for these individuals to acquire the information needed in order to vote "correctly". Such costs include time, money and cognitive requirements that the respondents might feel exceed the private gains they could achieve by voting (Grossman and Helpman, 1999). In such a situation, political researchers

argue that individuals will look for readily available cues to guide them in the decision-making process (Leroy, 1990; Kuklinski et al., 1982; Lupia, 1992). Grossman and Helpman (1999), argue that an endorsement provides only a "binary comparison" between candidates in a situation where voters need a more detailed report in order to cast votes optimally. They claim that although voters might know positions of the party's ideologies, they do not fully comprehend how these may impact them. McKelvey and Ordeshook (1985) were the first to identify group endorsements as a potential source of information for such imperfectly informed voters. As such, political endorsement literature states that in situations with absence of party cues, endorsements provide a reliable, low-cost information cue.

Political research has particularly found that young people are more susceptible for celebrity endorsement in politics (Kwak et al., 2004; Jackson and Darrow, 2005). Specifically, the research demonstrates that celebrities strengthen support among those young voters who are already predisposed towards a position, while simultaneously making unpopular candidates more accepted (Jackson and Darrow, 2005).

Research from US Presidential elections show celebrities such as Ben Affleck (Rock the Vote campaign) and P. Diddy (Vote or Die campaign) involve themselves in the quest for raising voter turnout at the American elections (Payne et al., 2007). Subsequent analysis of the elections reported one of the highest voter turnout rates in modern history, with much of this attributed to an increase in young voters going to the polls (Esser and De Vreese, 2007). Even though the number of young people voting in the USA is still lower than that in the UK, the per centage of young US voters is increasing, contrary to the trend shown in recent UK elections (Esser and De Vreese, 2007). It is important, however, to be aware that additional factors such as the war in Iraq could have influenced the young voters and impacted voter turnout, opening for questions of whether the celebrity involvement was the only factor contributing to the large increase in turn-out (Payne et al., 2007).

The research on celebrity endorsement of products, suggests some possible hypothesis of the celebrity endorsements impact in the political sphere. If only considering Ohanian's (1991) source credibility as the most important factor, then celebrity endorsements of political candidates or parties should not be expected to have much impact; as celebrities often lack the necessary competencies and thus credibility regarding politics. One would assume that highly competent, respected and experienced political players, such as Margaret Thatcher's recent meeting with Gordon Brown, would be more suitable as a form of endorsement. Celebrities may be seen as likeable and familiar to the general public, but the general lack of political credibility may not result in any significant improvement in voting intentions. Therefore, the following can be hypothesized:

> H1. Celebrity endorsers of political parties will be seen as more familiar and likeable than non-celebrity endorsers, but may not necessarily impact voter intention.

As discussed previously, celebrity endorsements may not be effective for those who are highly involved with politics and political issues. The following section outlines the role of political salience in the current study.

Political salience

Drawing mainly from social psychology, the concept of salience is most commonly associated with the ability of an item to stand out from its environment (Guido, 1998). As such, salience reflects the quantity and quality of the network of memory structures people hold about various things surrounding them (Romaniuk and Sharp, 2004).

Identity theory (Turner, 1978; Stryker, 1968) and social identity theory (Turner, 1987) are two perspectives on the social basis of the self-concept and on the nature of normative behaviour, which lay the foundation for speculations concerning salience (Hogg et al., 1995). Identity theory is a micro-sociological theory that sets out to explain individual's role-related behaviour, while the social identity theory attempts to explain group processes and inter-group relations. Both theories have major theoretical emphasis on a multifaceted and dynamic "self" that aims to explain group processes and inter-group relations, claiming that the "self" takes on various role-identities (Hogg et al., 1995).

Identity theory posits that people have several identities, for example, one can think of oneself as a footballer, a fan, a student or blood donor (Michalski, 2007). It suggests that the different identities are arranged hierarchically, with regard to the probability that they will be the basis for action. Because of their hierarchical nature, those role-identities placed near the top of the hierarchy, i.e. salient identities are more likely to be invoked in a particular situation (Wiley, 1991). Identity salience is conceptualized (and operationalized) as the likelihood that the particular role-identity will be invoked in diverse situations (Stryker, 1980).

The basic idea of social identity theory is that the social categories (e.g. nationality, political affiliation) a person belongs to provide a definition of who he/she is (Stets and Burke, 2000). This stream of research uses the term salience to indicate the activation of an identity in a situation. Oakes (1987) defined a social identity as one "which is functioning psychologically to increase the influence of one's membership in that group on perception and behaviour" (p. 118). Therefore, salient constructs in one's psyche affect one's behaviour.

Salience research is becoming more evident in marketing, with Reed being one of the most central researcher on the area (Reed, 2002, 2004; Forehand et al., 2002). His studies have emphasized social identity and self-concept and how these concepts are adoptable for the consumer research sphere. Reed (2002) argues that socialiization causes a person to become aware of a number of social categories in the surrounding environment, and that some of these categories serve as potential bases for self-definition, splitting them up in two main groups; permanent (e.g. mother, daughter) and transitory (athlete, Conservative, student). Turner and Oakes (1986) also argue that any potential social-identity based theory of consumption decision making starts with a consumer's perception in terms of these levels of abstraction. This has been supported by Markus and Kunda (1986) and McGuire et al. (1978), proposing that consumers at any given point in time will have available subsets of such social categories that in turn can become a part of their working or spontaneous self-concept.

Research into identity salience effects is limited in political research. The standard approach to defining salience within politics is functional, with researches focusing on which political issue voters find the most important facing the nation (Wlezien, 2005). Early studies done on issue salience and its impact on voting behaviour, have concluded that specific issues are not salient elements in voter's electoral decisions, as voters are unfamiliar with most issues, or are unable to differentiate

between the party politics (Repass, 1971). Various public opinion research publications have to some degree supported this, showing that citizens are not routinely attentive with regards to public policy (Bennett, 1995; Hutchings, 2001). Some contradicting research done by Bobo and Gilliam (1990), however, claims that while citizens may be generally uninformed; they are often knowledgeable on issues important to them, suggesting that they are more likely to be attentive to politics when cues in their environment suggest that their attentiveness is warranted.

Duncan (2005) researched the connection between personal political salience (PPS) as a self-schema and consequences for political information processing. PPS can be defined as the propensity to internalize, as central to one's self-definition, engagement with political events, issues or ideologies (Duncan, 2005). This particular type of salience is more than interest in following politics or holding political opinions, and rather implies a deeper emotional investment in issues and events occurring in the greater environment. As such, it describes a more generalized personality disposition to attribute meaning and/or emotional involvement and significance to political issues (Duncan, 2005). The research uncovered a positive relationship between PPS and fast processing of ideological and political position data; indicating that high scorers on PPS, consider political data to be self-relevant and are thus efficient processors of such information. These respondents were also shown to exhibit an overall greater understanding of the connection between political events and their daily life, processing such information at a higher extent. Therefore, it is expected that a similarly high level of processing would impact consumers' attitudes and behavioural intentions when viewing political party advertisements:

> H2. Consumers who report high levels of political salience will report more favourable attitudes towards the advert, attitudes towards the endorser, attitudes towards the party and voter intention when a non-celebrity endorser is used.

> H3. Consumers who report low levels of political salience will report more favourable attitudes towards the advert, attitudes towards the endorser, attitudes towards the party and voter intention when a celebrity endorser is used.

The following sections outline the methodology employed in testing these hypotheses.

Methodology

The study design employed was a 2 (political salience: high; low)×2 (endorser: celebrity; non celebrity) between-subjects factorial design. A total of 316 responses were collected from adults in the English cities of Bath and Bristol. Participants were restricted to only those who are eligible to vote and who had lived in the UK for two or more years. Manipulated questionnaires were randomly ordered with the same coversheet. Researchers were unaware as to which questionnaire was given to each participant allowing for a blind random assignment of treatment conditions. Responses were collected at public libraries, medical centres and on public trains. Although controlled experimentation dictates that all outside interference should be eliminated from the study (Hair et al., 1998) the settings chosen for data collection were often quiet and without major distraction to

ensure full concentration on the task at hand. The total sample was represented by 43 per cent male and 57 per cent female participants. Half of all respondents were under 28 years of age.

In order to choose appropriate endorsers for the research a pretest of 46 postgraduate students from a South-West English university was employed. Participants were first asked to rate photos of 23 different celebrities on their likelihood of appearing in a political campaign advert. All pre-test participants were also asked to name the celebrity being assessed. Ratings for celebrities that were not recognized by participants were removed from the pre-test analysis. Three females (Helen Mirren, Kate Winslet, and Lily Allen) and three males (David Beckham, Anthony Hopkins, and James Blunt) were rated by pre-test participants as being the most likely to appear in a political advertising campaign.

From here photos of three male and three female non-celebrity endorsers were chosen to match the photos of three male and three female celebrity endorsers identified by the participants. Ads were created using the photos with the slogan "I vote Conservative, do you?". The Conservative party was chosen as a suitable test party as it avoids the political bipolarity associated with the current Labour government as well as represents a large enough party to be seen as a credible user of celebrity endorsement. Participants' party affiliation was measured and controlled for in the main study.

Participants were then asked to complete Ohanian's (1990) tri-component model of trustworthiness, knowledgability and persuasiveness. Participants were also asked to rate each endorser based on familiarity and attractiveness. From the pre-test Kate Winslet was chosen to best represent an adequate endorser as she scored significantly higher on all three factors than other shortlisted celebrities ($p < 0.001$). A female non-celebrity endorser was chosen based on participants rating her as being significantly more attractive than the other female non-celebrity endorsers ($p < 0.001$). Again, any participants who failed to recognize the celebrity endorser had their responses removed from subsequent analysis. It should be noted again that these ads have been created by the researchers and that the political affiliations of the endorsers is neither known nor implied in this research.

In order to manipulate political salience two articles were created of equal length and readability. Ten experimental participants received an article outlining the importance of voting and poor voter turnout at the 2001 elections. Ten control participants received an article about the history of Bath city. As no measure of political salience is available participants were asked to complete two measures of identity salience which had been adapted to focus on political issues. All responses were measured on a five-point Likert scale (1=Strongly disagree, 5=Strongly agree). First, participants completed Fenigstein et al.'s (1975) private self-consciousness scale which included the measures of "I reflect about politics a lot", "I am always trying to figure politics out", "Generally, I'm not very aware of politics", "I am generally attentive to politics", "I'm constantly examining my political motives" and "I'm alert to changes in the political scene". The second measure was based on Callero's (1985) study and included the following measures: "I would feel a loss if I were forced to give up voting at political elections", "I really don't have any clear feelings about politics", "Politics is something I rarely even think about", "For me, being a voter means more than just ticking a box" and "Voting is an important part of who I am". These scales were also used in the main study as manipulation checks for the two articles. The results from the pre-test show that experimental

participants reported significantly higher levels of political salience than control participants (p <0.001).

Procedure

Participants were told that the purpose of the study was to find out how people evaluate political endorsements. Participants were asked to read through the randomly assigned article before being presented with either the celebrity or non-celebrity advertisement. From here participants completed the questions relating to attitudes and behavioural intentions. The entire procedure took between 10-15 minutes to complete.

Dependent variables

Attitudes and voting intentions

Attitudes towards the ad (A Ad) was rated using four, five-point semantic differential items anchored by: "bad-good", "unpleasant-pleasant", unagreeable-agreeable" and "unsatisfactory-satisfactory" (Gardner, 1985; Kamins et al., 1991). Attitude towards the endorser (A En) was rated using five, five-point semantic differential items anchored by: "not believable-very believable", "not attractive-very attractive", "not competent-very competent" "not persuasive-very persuasive" and "not likeable-very likeable" (Williams and Qualls, 1989). Attitude towards the party (A P) was rated using three, five-point semantic differential items anchored by: "bad-good", "unpleasant-pleasant" and "dislike-like". These items were originally designed to measure brand attitude (Yi, 1990) but were deemed suitable for a political party given the party name acts as brand for the policies the party espouses. Finally, voter intention (VI) was measured using a single item five-point likert scale asking participants "I would vote for the endorsed party after viewing this ad?" (1=Strongly disagree; 5=Strongly agree). The use of previously published scales was preferred over the development of new scales as it offers a precedent of effectiveness as well as overcoming many of the pitfalls associated with poorly designed semantic differential measures (Osgood et al., 1957). The internal reliabilities for the multi-item scales were sufficiently high (Cronbach's alpha=0.81, 0.82, 0.85 for A Ad, A En and VI respectively (Cronbach, 1951)).

Results

Manipulation checks

Two manipulation checks were included in the study. First, the effect of the political salience manipulation was tested. Participants were measured using the political salience scales adapted from Fenigstein et al. (1975) and Callero (1985), as outlined in the methodology section. The manipulation of political salience proved to be significant ($F_{(1,315)}=96.25$, $p < 0.001$, $\omega^2=0.23$), with descriptive statistics showing the effect is in the desired direction with political salience scores significantly higher for experimental participants (Mean=3.26, SD=0.97) than control participants (Mean=2.24, SD=0.88). For the endorser a check was made for endorser familiarity to ensure that the celebrity endorser was significantly more familiar than the non-celebrity endorser. This check also proved to be significant ($F_{(1,294)}=21.26$, $p < 0.001$, $\omega^2=0.06$) with descriptive statistics showing the effect is in the desired direction, with Familiarity scores significantly higher for Kate Winslet (Mean=3.47, SD=0.95) than the non-celebrity endorser (Mean=2.99, SD=0.83).

Attitudes and intentions

Consumer responses to the ads were investigated with a MANCOVA model. The results show a significant main effect from the celebrity endorser on A_{En} (F (1,290)=11.39, p < 0.001, ω 2=0.03), but no significant effect on VI (F (1,290)=2.58, p=0.109, ω 2 < 0.001), as predicted in H1. Descriptive statistics subsequently show that the celebrity endorser received higher A_{En} (Mean=3.67) than the non-celebrity endorser (Mean=3.45). Given these results and the moderate effect size it can be concluded that H1 has been supported.

The results also showed a two-way interaction for political salience×endorser for A Ad (F (1,290)=0.7.23, p=0.008, ω 2=0.02); A_{En} (F (1,290)=9.19, p=0.003, ω 2=0.03); and VI (F (1,290)=13.93, p < 0.001, ω 2=0.04). These effects were corroborated by significant multivariate tests (Pillai's Trace=0.058, F (4,279)=4.28, p =0.002; Wilks' Lambda=0.942, F (4,279)=4.28, p=0.002). The interaction for the key dependent variable of VI is shown in Figure 1. From Figure 1 it can be seen that under high levels of political salience there is no significant difference between either endorser. However, under low levels of political salience the celebrity endorser leads to a significant increase in voter intention.

With regards to the interaction effect, the results illustrate that when low levels of political salience are present the celebrity endorser leads to a significantly higher voter intention (Mean=3.33), whereas when high levels of political salience are present the non-celebrity endorser leads to significantly higher voter intention (Mean=2.65). Similar effects were present for A Ad and A_{En} (see Table I for means and standard deviations). Again, given the significant results and the moderate effect sizes seen from the model we can say that H2 and H3 have been supported.

Interestingly, there was no significant effect on attitudes towards the party. This could suggest that although A Ad, A_{En} and VI can be altered through the use of celebrities and levels of political salience, the feelings towards the party remain constant.

Covariates

A number of covariates were incorporated into the MANCOVA model in order to control for statistical error. These covariates included demographic information (age, gender) and psychographic information (political affiliation (if any), interest in politics). As expected, political affiliation had a significant effect on A P (*F* (1,290)=25.56, p < 0.001, ω 2=0.07) with Conservative affiliates liking the party more than Liberal or Labour affiliates. Of the participants, 104 reported no political affiliation in the study. These voters reported the second highest A P after Conservative affiliates. Age also showed a significant effect on A P (F (1,290)=16.55, p < 0.001, ω 2=0.05) with older respondents reporting significantly higher A P towards the Conservative party. None of the covariates showed any significant effect on the key dependent variable of VI, showing the experiment was adequately able to control for outside effects.

Discussion

The results show that celebrity endorsements can be effective in driving voter intention if politics is not salient for the eligible voter. However, if the voter is engaged with politics and is actively thinking of politics and political issues then the effect of the celebrity endorsement is negated. Identity salience has been shown to impact consumer decision making and attitudes in the past

(Reed, 2002, 2004). However, this research shows that salience about political issues, not necessarily aspects of one's personal self, has a powerful effect on determining attitudes and voter intention. Similarly, the effect of celebrity endorsements has been shown to be effective in driving favourable product and brand attitudes (Ohanian, 1991; Erdogan, 1999) and political issues in the USA (Payne et al., 2007; Jackson and Darrow, 2005). However, this research has shown that celebrities could be used to encourage votes for a British political party for people who are not interested in politics. The results do concur with previous research in that the celebrity endorser was seen as being more likeable and more familiar than the non-celebrity endorser. However, using the celebrity did not show a significant increase in voter intention.

This research offers significant insight for political campaigners looking to use celebrity endorsers to promote a political party and drive votes. The use of celebrities in isolation of other factors has been shown to be an ineffective way of encouraging eligible voters to vote for a political party. It is only when the target population is represented by low levels of political salience and low interest in political issues that celebrity endorsers would be able to encourage votes. This could be a reason for the high impact of celebrity endorsers in the USA with only 26 per cent of young Americans believing that keeping up with political affairs was important (Sax et al., 1998). A similar trend is seen in the UK with only 10 per cent of young eligible voters turning out at local elections and only 40 per cent at the 2005 General Election (Stoker, 2006). It is these groups in particular that would most likely respond to celebrity endorsers.

The danger therefore, exists that politics begins to focus on the glamour of the endorser and less on the issues being debated. A solution to this would be the use of celebrity endorsers to encourage eligible voters to engage with political issues, to improve their levels of political salience as it were. From here the results from the research show that the high political salience participants are less likely to be swayed by affective cues and will focus far more on processing other information about the party (Petty et al., 1983).

Limitations and avenues for future research

This research was conducted in a geographically restricted area of the UK. True representation of the total eligible voter population would require a far larger examination across the UK as well as across age groups, education levels and gender. However, it should be noted that it is expected that levels of political salience may vary from person to person, but the way in which people with similar levels of political salience react to celebrity endorsers is likely to be similar to that shown in this study. That is, low political salience voters across the UK would most likely favour a celebrity endorser over a non-celebrity endorser. Further examination of levels of political interest across the UK would help researchers and political campaigners to understand which demographics and geographical areas would suit the use of celebrity endorsement best. Replicating this study across different cultures and countries may also offer insight into the role that political salience plays in the effectiveness of celebrity endorsers. One aspect that should also be investigated further are the reasons beyond voter apathy that may cause a person not to vote in general elections. The assumption made here is that non-turnout is due to a lack of interest in the political system; however, it could equally be true that non-turnout be a result of non-belief in the parties or members vying for election.

The current study could be extended by investigating the impact that susceptibility to personal influence and self-concept clarity play in affecting a person's voter intention upon viewing a celebrity

endorsement of a political party. Self-concept clarity (SCC) refers to how clearly defined, stable and internally consistent ones beliefs about oneself are (Cambell et al., 1996). Therefore, a voter with low levels of SCC should be more susceptible to the influence of celebrity endorsements, similar to the effect that persons with high levels of susceptibility to personal influence would have (Cohen, 1967).

Finally, political parties are often unable to choose an ideal celebrity endorser due to both the ban on paid political advertising in the UK as well as the potential risks to a celebrity's career through aligning him or herself with a political movement. However, this research is still able to show that a significant effect is evident with low political salience respondents. Further research should investigate the impact that real celebrity endorsements have had on actual campaigns, such as George Clooney's endorsement of Barak Obama, as well as the effect that making political statements can have on the celebrity's image by the general public.
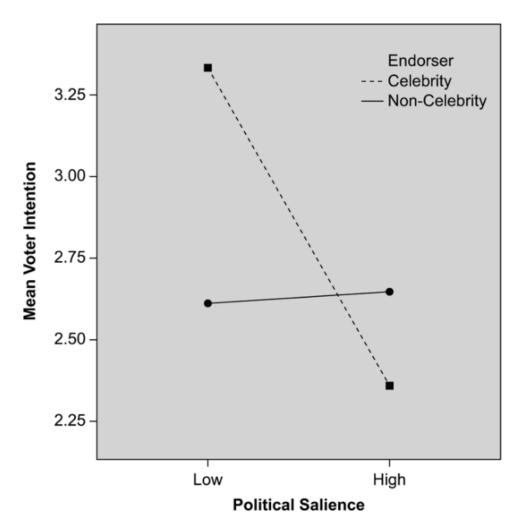

Figure 1 Mean voter intention by participant political salience (low vs high) and endorser type (celebrity vs non-celebrity)

Dependent variable	Endorser	Political salience	Mean	Main effects Endorser (F)	Main effects Political salience (F)	Interaction effect Endorser × political salience (F)
A_{Ad}	Celebrity	High	3.05	NS	2.87*	7.23**
		Low	3.45			
	Non-celebrity	High	3.28			
		Low	3.26			
A_{En}	Celebrity	High	3.65	11.39***	NS	9.19**
		Low	3.79			
	Non-celebrity	High	3.62			
		Low	3.34			
VI	Celebrity	High	2.36	NS	5.69**	13.93***
		Low	3.33			
	Non-celebrity	High	2.65			
		Low	2.61			

Notes: *$p < 0.10$; **$p < 0.05$; ***$p < 0.001$; NS = Not significant

Table I   The effect of endorser type and political salience on AAd, AEn, and VI

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