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Celebrities, Culture and a Name Economy

Brian Moeran

Visiting Professor
Department of Intercultural Communication and Management
Copenhagen Business School
Dalgas Have 15
DK-2000 Frederiksberg
Denmark
bdm.ikl@cbs.dk

Abstract

Drawing on previous research, this paper discusses how celebrities act as intermediaries between culture and economy in the promotional industries. By focusing on celebrity endorsements in advertising, it outlines how film actors and actresses, athletes, models, pop singers, sportsmen and women mediate between producers and consumers via the products and services that they endorse. Here celebrities are cultural intermediaries as they give commodities 'cultural personalities' and perform across different media, linking different cultural spheres into an integrated whole. But, given the facts that who they advertise for and what they do or do not do have major financial implications for the corporations whose products they endorse, celebrities can also be said to be economic intermediaries.

Introduction

The relation between culture and economy is, to say the least, tricky. It is one that has been exercising the minds of scholars in management, organisation and consumer studies, on the one hand, and of those in disciplines like sociology, cultural studies and anthropology, on the other. Yet, even though it is now well over two decades since Raymond Williams (1977: 136) noted that 'large scale capitalist economic activity and cultural production are now inseparable', we have not got *that* much further in our understandings of just *how* they are inseparable.

This paper focuses on the activities of celebrities, and in particular of models, as a means of trying to bridge the conceptual gap between culture and economy. My argument here is that celebrities are both cultural and economic intermediaries who help the world of producers enter into and become a part of the world of consumers. Together with the products they endorse and the organisations they work for, celebrities are involved in 'a vast operation of social alchemy' (Bourdieu 1986: 137) that neatly erases the classic divide between production and consumption.

Culture and economy in many ways have different forms of logic (or different logics) that often pull in different directions. Over the years, the balance between the two has been changing. But whether we are now engaging with a 'culturising economy' or with an 'economising culture' (Ray and Sayer 1999: 16) remains unclear. Paul du Gay (1997: 3-6) prefers to conceptualise the relation between the economic and the cultural in terms of meanings conveyed by 'cultural economy'. This term, too, seems too broad to be usefully meaningful. After all, the term 'culture' can refer to virtually anything (especially when the capitalist economy is conflated with cultural production, *pace* Williams). I propose here, therefore, to focus on a specific part of the economy – that occupied by the entertainment or *promotional industries* – and to give it the particular designation of *name economy*. My reason for so doing is because most fields of cultural production – academia, advertising, art, fashion, film, music, publishing, television and other promotional industries – function according to a logic of *names*. Such names are found in three distinct interlocking social spheres (Moeran 1996: 279-280) – of people (celebrities, personalities, stars), products (brands) and organisations (corporations) – each of which strives to 'make its mark' in a struggle for power and so legitimate 'categories of perception and appreciation' (Bourdieu 1993a: 106). As we shall see in this paper, names arise from a long-term accumulation of social and cultural capital that is then converted into economic capital. They are thus 'the crucial element in a mixed economy' (Skov 2000: 158). It is the struggle among names that maintains a *structured difference* in the fields in which they operate, both diachronically from those who have gone before (although, when expedient, links will be made to 'history') and synchronically among others in the field.

Celebrities form a crucial part of the name economy. They are 'household names' whose reputations join together producers and consumers by means of the products (commodities, cultural productions) with which they are associated. Through the diversity of their activities, celebrities help link different economic and cultural spheres in which other cultural intermediaries (advertising creatives, marketing executives, television directors, fashion designers and so on) are active. They also give commodities 'cultural personalities' by means of celebrity endorsements in advertising and PR activities, and operate as brand names for the organisation of production and consumption.[1]

Although ideally they mediate between producers and consumers in this way, in fact an 'exact ideological fit' between the production and consumption of celebrities as cultural icons may be rare. This is because, although celebrities may form a 'terrain of significance' produced by other cultural intermediaries working in organisations of cultural production, their 'meanings' are ultimately constructed by audiences (Marshall 1997: 47).[2] In other words, celebrities – like commodities – are used as a 'channelling' device for the negotiation of space and position within an entire culture by *both* producers *and* consumers (Marshall 1997: 49). At the same time, they often act as more than just 'cultural' intermediaries since what celebrities do has important economic consequences for both consumers and the corporations on whose behalf they are employed. It is this negotiation of cultural and economic space through and by celebrities that I wish to pursue here.

Celebrities

What is a 'celebrity'? C. Wright Mills (1956: 71-2) puts it rather nicely (although in somewhat gendered terms):

> The celebrities are The Names that need no further identification. Those who know them so far exceed those of whom they know as to require no exact computation. Wherever they go, they are recognized, and moreover, recognized with some excitement and awe. Whatever they do has publicity value. More or less continuously, over a period of time, they are the material for the media of communication and entertainment. And, when that time ends – as it must – and the celebrity still lives – as he may – from time to time it may be asked 'Remember him?' That is what celebrity means.

Mills himself (1956: 73-75) attributes the rise of the modern celebrity to the emergence of New York café society around the third decade of the 20th century, when there was a mixing of different classes of people that permitted different hierarchies of wealth, class, descent and publicity to interact. Others, however, including Daniel Boorstin (1963: 160), suggest that the celebrity or star system[3] came into existence earlier, during the first decade of the commercial life of motion pictures, between 1909 and 1914.[4] In this respect, it was connected with the emergence of a system of knowledge predicated upon the circulation of a *name* that itself enabled and contributed to inter-textuality between films and other genres supporting the cinema. This gave rise, first, to 'picture personalities' and then, when their private lives became part of the system of knowledge that was previously based on professional activities, to the 'star' system (de Cordova 1991: 17-21). Stars themselves were then used as part of an emergent 'promotional culture' (Wernick 1991) in which almost anything could, and still can, be linked strategically to anything else, given the imagination, motive and opportunity (see also Moeran 2000).[5]

According to many of those writing about them, it does not matter too much what celebrities are good, or the best, at. All they have to do to become celebrated is to win out in competition over others, so that a celebrity becomes a 'human pseudo-event', known – tautologically – for being well-known (Boorstin 1963: 67).[6] Given that they work in, and are to some extent constructed by, large-scale businesses involving mass communication, publicity and entertainment, celebrities tend not only to breed more celebrities; they also attract to themselves stars already celebrated in other realms of endeavour, so that one champion mingles with other champions to populate the celebrity world (Mills 1956: 74).[7]

This intermingling of celebrities leads to crossover between different frames of reference (cf. McRobbie 1998: 61), and thus to an overall cohesiveness of the entertainment industries in which cultural intermediaries generally work. Thus we find models acting parts in films, film directors and photographers trying their hand at television commercials, actors and actresses modelling the latest fashions on Paris and New York catwalks, fashion designers as interior decorators, photographers, or journalist-writers, and so on and so forth.[8] The aims of such crossovers are for celebrities to extend their renown, as well as for entertainment industries to take advantage of celebrity names to attract attention to, and so create names for, themselves. This is the

cultural and economic logic that permits supermodel Naomi Campbell to make forays into film, music videos, recording,[9] publishing and the Fashion Café, as well as the by now customary crossover between runway performances and fashion magazine spreads.[10] It is what allows photographer Bettina Rheims to work as fashion model, actress and journalist, while also producing advertising films, video clips and the leader for a feature film; and former model Cheryl Tiegs to shift from modelling to designing and marketing sportswear for Sears.

The name economy is reinforced, and distinction further facilitated, by crossover liaisons between men and women celebrities. Whether such liaisons are of a more or less permanent nature is not at issue. What is important is that they be noted and talked about. Thus we find fashion models teaming up with pop singers,[11] actors,[12] and other media,[13] as well as with sports celebrities,[14] and other cultural intermediaries.[15] Sometimes such liaisons initiate recognition.[16] The fashion world, in particular, has become the main supplier of attractive women for men working in the film, music and entertainment industries in general (cf. Brinkworth 1993).

Celebrities and Advertising

Whether doing what they are best at, or shifting into other domains structurally related to the expertise that they have developed to become famous, celebrities are clearly important intermediaries in the channelling of meanings from one sphere of culture to another, as well as – crucially – from the economy to culture and *back again*. Grant McCracken (1989: 318) has argued that 'the celebrity world is one of the most potent sources of cultural meaning at the disposal of the marketing system and the individual consumer'. It is the use of celebrity endorsements in advertising that integrates celebrities as people, the products that they pitch, and the corporate institutions on whose behalves they act, into the name economy.[17]

A celebrity endorser may be defined as 'any individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement' (McCracken 1989: 310). The importance attributed to such advertising may be seen in the estimate that nowadays in the U.S. twenty per cent of all TV commercials feature a famous person and that ten per cent of all advertising dollars are spent on celebrity endorsements (Agrawal and Kamakura 1995: 56). Some of these endorsements – such as Natassia Kinski for L'Oréal, Inés Sastra for Lancôme, Melanie Griffith for Revlon, and Cindy Crawford for Omega – are global in their reach. Others – like Charlie Sheen for *Parliament* and Pierce Bosnan for *Lark* cigarettes; or Jodi Foster for *Cafféе Latte* (*sic*), Stevie Wonder for Suntory *Fire*, and Carl Lewis for *Mr. Pokka* canned coffee drinks – are limited to particular national markets (in this case, Japan). How, then, are celebrities used in advertising, and why? What makes them effective (Atkin and Block 1983)?

The first basic criterion in marketing is that there should be a match between celebrity and *product* (or service) that s/he endorses. John Wayne, for example, was hardly the best choice of celebrity for a pain reliever (Datril), but – on horseback and in full cowboy gear – he worked wonders for Great Western Savings and Loans. Similarly, one recent study shows that, in the eyes of Irish consumers, former England World Cup

winning footballer, Jack Charlton, may endorse sports gear and fishing tackle (his known favourite hobby), but has to stay clear of hair tonics and shampoos, while supermodel Claudia Schiffer can properly endorse the latter products, but not life insurance, pensions or other financial services (O'Mahony and Meenaghan 1997-98). This leads to a mutual structuring of both celebrities and commodities.

Just *how* a celebrity 'fits' a product is more difficult to assess, since various different factors can come into play. Most commonly, the activity or *expertise* for which a celebrity has come to be well known is used to create or maintain a product image. Tiger Woods, for example, will be used to advertise golf-related things (American Golf Corporation, Golf Digest) , Michael Jordan (Nike) athletic shoes, Kiri Te Kanawa her 'performance and staying power' *vis-à-vis* (Rolex) watches, and fashion models any product connected with the fashion, beauty and cosmetics industries. However, as part of the celebrity-product mix, various personal factors – such as appearance, name, background or life situation – may also be brought in. Thus, movie star Farrah Fawcett found herself endorsing hair products because of her thick mane of hair (which she was not allowed to alter in length or styling).[18] Supermodel Elle MacPherson was an obvious choice for a campaign for *Elle* women's magazine, while former Beatle Ringo Starr ended up endorsing canned apple juice in Japan where the word for 'apple' is '*ringo*'. His clearly Scottish background (among other factors) made actor Sean Connery the perfect match for Suntory's *Crest* Scotch whisky, and a young Japanese baseball pitcher, Hideo Nomo, became spokesman for a Japanese telephone company's international services after leaving his home country to join the L.A. Dodgers in the early 1990s.

It is clear that credibility and expertise are two driving factors in the celebrity-product marketing process. Together these have been seen to form part of a *source credibility model* that has been used to explain the effectiveness or otherwise of celebrity endorsements. Although McCracken (1989: 312) argues that this model fails to work because it focuses entirely on the celebrity and ignores the product, and that we need to know about kinds, not degrees, of credibility, recent research suggests that consumers *do* regard credibility and expertise as important elements influencing their decisions (not) to purchase particular products endorsed by celebrities (O'Mahony and Meenaghan 1997-98).

A second basic criterion in devising marketing strategy is that there be a match between celebrity and targeted *consumer*. Here such factors as gender, age, class, status, colour,[19] personality and lifestyle are all ideally taken into account. Thus, female celebrities are used to endorse products that are targeted at women consumers (fashion, cosmetics, household, foods, and so on) and, for the most part, male celebrities for masculine products (spirits, family cars, sports, men's fashion, and so forth) – although there is more of a crossover in the latter (beers, automobiles, toiletries) than in the former. Similarly, a middle-aged, 'mature', 'classy' actor, Sean Connery, better appeals to middle-aged male executives who drink an upmarket twelve-year-old whisky than – say – a young(ish), black(ish) singer like Michael Jackson who, functioning in his own sphere of social recognition and acceptance, was (for a while) seen to be an ideal spokesman for a 'young generation' of Pepsi Cola drinkers. In Japan, where some distinctions are made between 'Japanese' and 'non-Japanese' products, western models will usually be used for such items as fashion, lingerie, cars and obviously foreign (fast) foods and drinks, while

Japanese models and celebrities will tend to endorse products connected with the body, health, travel and specifically Japanese foods and drinks.

In the celebrity-consumer mix, three general factors are often brought into consideration: personality, attractiveness, and likeability (see, for example, Kaitaki 1987; Miciak and Shanklin 1994; O'Mahony and Meenaghan 1997-98).[20] Together these are seen to be part of a *source attractiveness model* which suggests that, for a message to be effective, the celebrity spokesperson must be 'familiar', 'likeable' or 'similar' in some way to the targeted consumer (cf. McCracken 1989: 311). That these three attributes are lumped together as part of a single explanatory model, however, is problematic. In the study of Irish consumers cited earlier, for example, Sean Connery was rated highly on his personality, and attractiveness (as well as his trustworthiness), but was not seen to be particularly likeable. Jack Charlton, on the other hand, was perceived as very likeable and personable, but not particularly attractive. Unlike credibility or expertise, neither personality, nor attractiveness, nor likeability has any effect on consumers' purchasing decisions (O'Mahony and Meenaghan 1997-98).

There are, of course, other reasons for using celebrities in advertising campaigns. Celebrities grab *attention*, which is crucially important, given the amount of advertising clutter in the main media of television, newspapers, magazines and radio and the fact that thousands of new products are being (re)introduced and (re)positioned in the market every year. However, there are at least two problems here. Firstly, there is the very real danger that targeted audiences will remember the celebrity, but not the product being endorsed – a perennial problem when a single celebrity is involved in multiple endorsements (for non-competing products).[21] Secondly, there is always the possibility that a celebrity closely identified with a particular product does (or is suspected of doing) something controversial – as when the Japanese 'blind swordsman' actor, Katsu Shintaro, was arrested at Honolulu airport for being in possession of cocaine, just as an advertising campaign for Kirin Lager in which he was appearing was launched in Japan. Other controversial celebrity cases include Michael Jackson's alleged child abuse, Madonna's alleged blasphemy (both involving Pepsi Cola), Eric Cantona's spectator-kicking episode (Nike), and – thanks to boyfriend Hugh Grant's dangerous liaison with a 'divine' prostitute in Los Angeles – Elizabeth Hurley (Estée Lauder). Such controversies can sometimes heighten the association between a celebrity and brand and have been claimed to do the latter some good (Teather 1995).

Another advantage of using celebrities in advertising is that they help *improve images* of companies that have been tarnished in one way or another (as, for example, oil companies tend to be following tanker shipwrecks). However, while the company concerned may be able to take on some of the celebrity's charisma, the celebrity him/herself tends to lose a bit of charisma as a result (Kaitaki 1987).[22] Here we should note that, while the whole system of celebrity endorsement has important image considerations for products, advertisers and celebrities, the latter also rank corporate campaigns in the same way that, within the advertising industry, agencies rank themselves and their clients according to a system of 'blue chip' accounts. Some companies and their products are simply 'better' than others. Thus, there is a prestige hierarchy of fashion magazines (headed by *Vogue*) on whose covers models should appear, as well as of certain photographers with whom they should work (Herb Ritts,

Steven Meisel, and so on), and fashion houses whose products they should advertise (Chanel, Dior, Calvin Klein, and so forth). This leads to awed publicity about a particular model (Amber Smith) being selected for the ad campaign of a particular company (Wolford), photographed by a particular photographer (Helmut Newton).

Finally, celebrities help *global marketing*, since those with broad popular appeal can help companies through ‘cultural roadblocks’. Thus we find such well-known figures as Pele, Brazil’s superstar footballer, endorsing Brazil’s state-owned trading company; and Claudia Schiffer (and other ‘household bodies’) modelling Victoria’s Secret lingerie in Hong Kong, Japan and other parts of Asia. At the same time, however, celebrities can use endorsements as part of their own global marketing strategies – witness French film star Alain Delon’s excursions into Japan-related activities such as his starring in *Le Samourai*, endorsing Japanese menswear label *d’Urban*, and appearing with Toshiro Mifune in the film *Red Sun*. This ‘Japanese’ trajectory in the French film star’s work suggests that celebrities are not just ‘manufactured’ and ‘manipulated’, as suggested by Harvey and Strate (2000: 209), but that they actively manufacture and manipulate their careers.

Celebrities as Cultural Intermediaries

It is clear that celebrity endorsement and the marketing system are to a large extent also cultural undertakings in which meanings are constantly being circulated through advertising campaigns, although – as McCracken (1989: 319) points out – we need to know more about how advertising accomplishes the transfer of meaning from celebrity to product. As mentioned earlier, such meanings reside in celebrities because of their activities in other parts of the name economy.[23]

Celebrities are cultural intermediaries, firstly, because they perform across different media and so help link different cultural spheres in which other cultural intermediaries working in the fields of presentation and representation are active.[24] In this respect, they *legitimate* various aspects of culture. For example, in Japan, Nakayama Miho is a popular singer who became a TV personality (as part of the promotion of her songs), before turning to acting, and then being used in a Kosé advertising campaign for its *deux seize* rouge and foundation product lines (with their ‘deep colour lipsticks’, ‘pure white foundation’ and ‘romantic effects’). Nakayama’s endorsement here flows ‘naturally’ from her album titles, *Deep Lip French* and *Pure White*, as well as from her hit songs *Virgin eyes*, *Koi iro (the colour of love)*, *Rosecolor*, and *Spiritual kisses*. Most so-called ‘supermodels’ are adept at such cultural crossovers as, in anticipation of the end of their comparatively short runway careers, they turn to singing, acting, producing films, publishing books, making videos, the running of their own entertainment-related businesses, launching their own lines of cosmetics or fashion clothing, and so on – all spheres of the promotional industry in which other cultural intermediaries are active.

Secondly, celebrities are also cultural intermediaries because they give commodities ‘cultural personalities’ and thereby link producers with consumers by integrating the world of goods with the worlds of consumers using those goods (Marshall 1997: 245). In this respect, they help other promotional industries such as television and magazines to construct and sell audiences to their sponsors. In the above example,

Nakayama Miho's campaign for Kosé has the tagline: *kosei ga ikiru iro ga aru*, 'colours that allow your personality to come alive'. The singer is the personality that consumers ideally strive for through this product – a personality that advertisers and media construct and actively mould by means of related magazine features, television shows, PR, advertorials, and so on.

Thirdly, celebrities are used to 'explain' and support the meanings of commodities that manufacturers wish to convey to consumers. For example, in the Suntory *Crest* ad featuring Sean Connery, mentioned earlier, the tag line used to 'explain' the twelve year maturity of the Scotch whisky, in conjunction with a close-up of the Scottish actor's face, is: *Time does not flow. It accumulates from moment to moment* – which aptly describes the building up of an actor's reputation by means of a series of films released at strategic intervals. Similarly, an advertisement featuring Stevie Wonder, with excerpts from his song *Feel the Fire*, 'explains' the name of the canned coffee marketed by Suntory, *Fire*, which is itself 'explained' by the fact that it is 'directly roasted' (by fire, *chokka* in Japanese). In this process, celebrities usually shed their subjectivity and individuality to become an organising structure for conventional meanings, so that they represent something other than themselves (Marshall 1997: 56-7). Commodities, on the other hand, *take on* their personality and become brands representing something other than their original contents precisely because of their assimilation with celebrities.

Fourthly, celebrities affect the overall aesthetics and design of the advertising campaigns (as well as of other media forms)[25] in which they appear. In one study of a Japanese advertising campaign (Moeran 1996: 116-168), selection of a particular actress led to the adoption of a certain *visual style* that reflected the product being advertised (a serious, soft-hard contact lens); the consumers being targeted (young women aged between 18 and 27 years old who wore contact lenses and who led 'soft-hard' lives of intense work and leisure); and the advertiser concerned (a 'serious' company manufacturing a serious, soft-hard contact lens). This visual style consisted of soft focus print photographs, in which the young woman celebrity posed with an unsmiling, serious face, as well as of black and white tinted, rather than colour, photographs (partly aimed at setting the ad campaign apart from others in the magazines in which it was placed) in order to make the celebrity look even 'softer' in appearance beside the 'hard' red headline by which the photographs were framed. This softness was further reinforced by inclusion of a heart-shaped lens cut, in 'soft' green rather than 'hard' blue, as was then the norm in other contact lens campaigns.[26] In short, by choosing a particular celebrity for a particular campaign for a particular client, the advertising agency concerned tried to match a person's with a product's *character* (softness, potential, talking point); the manufacturer's *image* with that of its product (seriousness, purity); and the whole *expression and style* of the entire campaign.

Fifthly, as noted earlier, celebrities operate as brand names for the organisation of production and consumption of cultural commodities and thus function 'at the interstices between commodities/products and collective patterns of meaning and identity in consumer culture' (Marshall 1997: 246). But they also function at the interstices between corporations (producers) and consumers whose separateness they help overcome. Like

advertising itself, therefore (cf. Jhally 1990: 69), they emphasise exchange over use values and the social relations of consumption over those of production.

But celebrities are also cultural intermediaries in other, less obvious ways that exemplify the three competing principles of legitimacy discussed by Bourdieu (1993a: 50-2). It is probable, for instance, that the more famous a celebrity becomes, the more able s/he is to control the means of cultural production that constructs his or her personality,[27] thereby gaining recognition from those intermediaries who act on behalf of other cultural intermediaries. In other words, they are legitimised by their own self-sufficient world.[28] But celebrities are also legitimised or 'consecrated' by popular taste when they contribute to and sustain the very history of celebrity-hood, together with all the cultural meanings attached to that history, because of their relation to previous celebrities. Thus are current models Amber Smith, Eva Herzigova and Elsa Benitez renowned for their perceived similarity to former film stars Rita Hayworth, Marilyn Monroe, and Sophia Loren.[29] Celebrities are thus fitted into what becomes a 'cultural tradition' of fame and mediate between present and past in the promotional industry, while simultaneously struggling to be *different* (Bourdieu 1993a: 106). Finally, there is the principle of legitimacy according to 'bourgeois' taste applied when celebrities are used for greater national cultural (and thus political) purposes. For instance, in the United States the Museum of Metropolitan Art has decided on Christy Turlington's 'classic beauty' to commission 120 busts of the supermodel to replace its mannequins' heads. In France, the country's mayors – following a custom established 30 years ago – continue to select the faces of beautiful celebrities – Bridgitte Bardot, Catherine Deneuve, Inés de la Fressange, and most recently, Laetitia Casta – to embody Marianne, a symbolic representation of the French Republic, who stands for not just beauty, but Liberty, Fraternity and Equality, France's cherished call to arms.[30]

Celebrities and the Economy

In his discussion of cultural production, Bourdieu (1986: 138) notes how inseparable are the characteristics of the commercial and cultural enterprises, and thus how the opposition between the 'commercial' and the 'non-commercial' reappears everywhere. It is this understanding of the functioning of the name economy that led me to suggest at the beginning of this paper that celebrities do not merely act as cultural intermediaries, but that they also help link culture to the economy and act as intermediaries between different economic spheres. This they do through the accumulation, transmittal and reproduction of social capital, on the one hand, and of cultural capital, on the other. This secures direct profit in the form of distinction, in that celebrities' fame is unequally distributed (Bourdieu 1993b: 1), as well as in the power and authority that such fame bestows. Together these are converted into economic capital and back again, in an apparently infinite rally in which celebrities prove to be champion ping-pong players in the tournament of values that is the name economy.

In such an environment, the value of celebrity endorsements in advertising is much celebrated in the celebrity world, with relevant popular literature and websites full of details about who earns what for how much work. From Linda Evangelista's famous comment on how she refuses to get out of bed for less than $10,000 a day, to Tyra

Banks's catwalk fees of $30,000 a fashion show, we are regaled with the financial rewards of celebrity-hood. Tiger Woods is said to earn US$50 million a year in endorsements (for Buick, American Express and Wheaties among others), as opposed to his $7.8 million in 2000 for playing golf; Christy Turlington has modelled for Maybelline for $3 million; Claudia Schiffer gets $6 million from Revlon (with a 'no nudity' clause in her contract); Niki Taylor's Cover Girl contract is worth $9 million; Kate Moss gets only $4 million from Calvin Klein but for only 100 days work; Cindy Crawford $7 million from Revlon for just 20 days work a year; and so on and so forth. Elle MacPherson, with $40.3 million to her name at the age of 34, is said to be the world's richest supermodel, followed by Claudia Schiffer (aged 32, $37.7 million) and Cindy Crawford (aged 29, $36.0 million). The list continues through a host of names, right down to numbers 18, 19, and 20 – Niki Taylor, Laetitia Casta and Bridget Hall – who have only $6.1, $5.3 and $3.5 millions respectively to their names (www.supermodel.com/newswire).

But the link between celebrities and the economy goes much deeper than these (disputed) figures,[31] for, as we have noted above, celebrities are actively involved in all kinds of different businesses. Pop singer, Madonna, for example, has founded her own record company, *Maverick*, in a $60 million tie-up with Time Warner. Cindy Crawford has her own jewellery and cosmetics lines. Australian-born Elle MacPherson has set up her own company, Elle MacPherson Intimates, whose lingerie line is said to be Australia's best selling and brings in A$30 million a year. Dutch model, Frederique Van Der Wal, has also launched her own collection of bath products, together with a line of lingerie (she also models for Victoria's Secret) backed nation-wide in the United States by J.C. Penney, and a *Frederique* fragrance sold in *H2^{0} Plus* boutiques. Hasbro produced a Karen Mulder doll (at the suggestion of her husband-*cum*-manager), whose success then led to an entire supermodel range of similar products.[32] And Elizabeth Hurley, together with Hugh Grant, set up her own film production company.

How intimately connected this conversion between social, cultural and economic capital is can be seen in Laetitia Casta's official website. Set up as a virtual village organised around five 'neighbourhoods', visitors can savour therein a dazzling array of facts, quotations, PR, fan forums, photo galleries, merchandise, e-commerce, and business opportunities. Some of these – her selection as the new Marianne, her latest film, her contributions to charities or the preservation of her native Corsica – are clearly 'cultural'. Others – like her release of a new perfume for Yves Saint Laurent, her 'collaboration' with different organisations (including model agency and website developer), her ad campaigns – are more 'economic'. Yet others invite us to 'display advertising banners in a focused and strategic manner, providing optimum visibility for the desired target audience' of 'young, consumer-oriented cosmopolitans' who visit the site in their thousands every day. Alternatively, we can 'establish a presence in LA CASTA, Laetitia's virtual village, in the form of a building, store, shop or other structure (park, vehicle, tower, etc.) which fits into the motif of a virtual village'. We are even invited to send in 'business proposals which might range beyond a simple presence in LA CASTA, provided that they are serious and compatible with Laetitia's objectives and values'.[33]

As Keith Negus (1998: 359) has pointed out, each industry produces its own culture and culture produces an industry. Thus with celebrities who are both industry and

culture. It is precisely because they have become incorporated enterprises that celebrities also affect the well-being of other, related corporations.[34] This is, perhaps, where they move beyond the play-off between social and cultural capital described above and become *economic* intermediaries.

How, then, is culture transformed into ‘a mass-producing economic sphere in its own right’ (Wernick 1991: 100)? Take celebrity endorsements. As can be seen from figures cited above, celebrity campaigns are extremely expensive for firms that have to make a significant investment in intangible assets when they hire singers, actors, models or whoever to advertise their products or services. Such an investment, therefore, *has* to make economic sense, both to managers and, importantly, to investors. In fact, investors usually react favourably to the announcement of particular celebrity endorsement contracts by companies whose share prices tend to be boosted as a result (Agrawal and Kamakura 1995). This point comes across most clearly in a reported incident in which, in early March 1995, rumours began to circulate on Wall Street that a minor league baseball player (one Michael Jordan) was likely to be joining the Chicago Bulls basketball team. At the time, Jordan was pitching for the products of General Mills (Wheaties), McDonald’s (Quarter Pounders, Value Meals), Nike (Air Jordan), Quaker Oats (Gatorade) and Sara Lee (Hanes Underwear) and earning more than $32 million a year for his services. As a result of the announcement of the star’s re-entry into the world of basketball, the stock prices of Jordan-related firms increased their combined market value by more than $1 billion. Investors in McDonald’s alone reckoned that the company’s future net profits would amount to $25 million – meaning that McDonald’s stood to gain $192 million in additional sales from 64 million additional Value Meals (at $3 each) (Mathur et al. 1997).

Concluding Comments

I have suggested that celebrities are a crucial element linking the promotional industries into a name economy. This economy consists of three interlocking social spheres – people, products and organisations – and differs from a ‘sign economy’ in its focus on *people* (who may also be signs).

For example, we have seen that the celebrity system makes certain people, broadly categorised as ‘entertainers’, into a system of trademarks. During this process, it transforms a *condition* (of being well known) into a *person*, so that a celebrity comes to be tautologically defined as a person who is known for being well-known (Boorstin 1963: 66-7). The same, however, can be said of the products that celebrities endorse and often transform into *brands*. Brands are products that are known for being well-known. In this way, the celebrity system neatly complements advertising itself. By focusing on the personality of a product, rather than on the product itself (in other words, on an image, rather than on use or information), advertising aims to transform a product into a brand. Similarly, the celebrity system is concerned with the *branding of people*. The two are then fused into one and made part of different people’s different social worlds in a system of social and material cultural ‘distinction’ (Bourdieu 1984).

But branding also takes place in institutional relations. Advertisers are concerned with selling their organisations as much as their products, while agencies and media also

have to sell an image of themselves as products to advertisers whom they wish to attract as clients. All are concerned with *institutional or corporate branding*, which they effect through packaging, positioning and promotion, and the creation of 'brand properties', within an overall system of differences nowadays sustained in marketing.

In the name economy, celebrities take up certain positions as part of the systems of difference operating in their own professional fields of film, music, sports, athletics, fashion, and so on. These differences are then made use of by those working as cultural intermediaries in the advertising and media industries (themselves subject to similarly negotiated systems of difference) to establish and maintain an overall system of differences among commodities – in particular, among products within product lines. It is the existence *per se* of differences among celebrities, products, and producers, rather than the content of such differences, which is of crucial importance. In other words, although celebrities, products and organisations come to be imbued with certain meanings, these meanings are negotiated through the relations that exist among the three, rather than through the celebrities, products or organisations themselves (cf. Douglas and Isherwood 1979: 72).

Celebrities – together with the products they endorse and the organisations they work for – are involved in 'a vast operation of social alchemy' (Bourdieu 1986: 137) that functions at both individual and institutional levels among actors (film, theatre, etc.), advertisers, agencies (advertising, model, etc.), consultants, copywriters, designers (art, fashion, etc.), media organisations, musicians, photographers, production companies, studios (film, TV, etc.), and so on. Together they simultaneously produce name products and the need for such products. As part of their trading in the stock exchange of cultural values (Bourdieu 1993a: 137), they also participate in numerous processes of mutual consecration – from the display of *haute couture* and jewellery by actresses attending the 'Oscars' ceremony, to Elton John's *Candle in the Wind* sung at the funeral of Princess Diana in the summer of 1997. This leads to a homology between the space of named products (brands), the field of celebrity position-takings and the space of corporate positions in the field of production (Bourdieu 1993a: 182) that together ultimately enable the name economy to function so effectively.

Endnotes

[1] Witness, for example, Japanese examples of Rowan Atkinson as Mr Bean endorsing the Nissan *Tino*, Kevin Costner the Subaru *Legacy*, Leonardo DiCaprio Suzuki's *Wagon R*, Brad Pitt the Honda *Integra*, and Scottie Pippen the Mazda *Demio*.

[2] And who knows, outside the advertisers and their agencies concerned, what Japanese audiences have made recently of Whoopie Goldberg chewing gum, Cyndie Lauper delivering pizza, Meg Ryan sipping a dandelion drink, Mariah Carey helping an English language school, Naomi Campbell looking 'aesthetic' for a beauty centre, Kate Moss sporting diamonds, Christie Turlington dieting with Cupie, or Jodi Foster pitching for an employment agency?

[3] Although different promotional industries tend to produce slightly different types of celebrity (Marshall 1997), I will here use the word 'celebrity' to refer to 'stars' and 'personalities' (cf Dyer 1979: 102; Gledhill 1991), as well as to 'celebrities', since *functionally* all three operate in the same way as systems of difference (Lusted 1991: 251). In this respect, advertisers know what they are doing when they refer to *all* kinds of endorsement as 'celebrity endorsement'.

[4] Neither of these explanations is entirely satisfactory. In Japan, an early form of celebrity system involving *ukiyo-e* woodblock artists, popular writers, *kabuki* theatre actors, and *geisha* entertainers developed during

the 17th century in close connection with the emergence of consumerism, as well as of the *ukiyo* 'floating world' *demi-monde* that permitted a crossover between otherwise strictly segregated social classes in the world's largest city, Edo (present day Tokyo).

[5] One splendid example of the commercialisation of Hollywood is found in Charles Eckert's evocation of the Warner-GE Better Times gold and silver train that took the cast of *42nd Street* (together with a horse, GE appliances, and miniaturised Malibu) across America in February 1933 to arrive in New York for the show's opening on the eve of Franklin Roosevelt's inauguration. Eckert (1990: 103) describes this 'event' as 'a stunning synthesis of film, electrical, real estate, and transportation exploitation, partisan patrio-politics, and flecked-at-the-mouth star mania'.

[6] This academic antipathy towards celebrities reaches its culmination, perhaps, in Delicia Harvey and Lance Strate's (2000: 208) discussion of image culture and the supermodel, where the authors suggest gratuitously that the fame of celebrities is 'unearned'.

[7] Consider the following PR for an illustrated book featuring the French supermodel-*cum*-actress, Laetitia Casta:

> She's the hottest French export since Brigitte Bardot. She's graced the runways of Gaultier, Galliano and Yves Saint Laurent and appeared on the cover of hundreds of magazines all over the world … *Rolling Stone* Magazine has called her 'the world's hottest woman', *Paris Match* says she's 'the most beautiful woman in the world' … Perhaps the premier Supermodel of the decade, she has starred in ads for Chanel, L'Oréal, Victoria's Secret, Guess and Ralph Lauren and has been featured in the *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit issue three times. And now she is bringing her glamour to the silver screen, having appeared with Gerald Depardieu in the French film *Asterix and Obelix*.
>
> Featuring the revealing and erotic photography of Scavullo, Ritts, Isserman, and Newton …
>
> www.Laetitia-casta.com

Clearly, Casta is here being integrated into the name economy, as she is linked to *haute couture* designers, fashion photographers, film icons, fashion, music and print media, a celebrated comic book, and prestigious fashion and cosmetics corporations. In the same vein, we find that Helmut Newton's reputation is itself a result of his 'fashion and commercial photography, portraits of the beautiful, the rich and the super rich' (Newton 1990). In the distinguished photographer's next publication in the genre of *Private Property*, therefore, we may expect Casta to join the ranks of such photographed notables as Natassia Kinski, Karl Lagerfeld, David Hockney, Sigourney Weaver, David Bowie, Veruschka, Charlotte Rampling, Raquel Welch, and Andy Warhol.

[8] This situation may arise from the kind of dissatisfaction commented upon ironically by Gottfried Reinhardt: 'The writers want to be directors. The producers want to be writers. The actors want to be producers. The wives want to be painters. Nobody is satisfied' (quoted in Deighton 1974: 246).

[9] Naomi's duet with Japanese singer Toshi, *La-la-la Love*, made the Number One spot in Japan's Top Ten Hit Parade some years ago.

[10] The crossover between runways and magazines started in 1970 when the Japanese designer Kenzo first used models from the fashion pages in his Paris shows, but it only became common practice in the late 1970s (Rudolph 1991: 47).

[11] For example, models Jerry Hall and Mick Jagger; Iman and David Bowie; Paulina Porizkova and Ric Ocasek; Stephanie Seymour and Axl Rose; Christie Brinkley and Billy Joel; Naomi Campbell and Eric Clapton.

[12] For example, models Cindy Crawford and Richard Gere; Linda Evangelista and Kyle MacLachlan; Carré Otis and Mickey Rourke; Naomi Campbell and Robert De Nero (best man at Elle MacPherson's wedding).

[13] For example, Claudia Schiffer and magician David Copperfield.

[14] For example, model Niki Taylor and pro-hockey player, Rob Niedermeyer; (black) model Tyra Banks

and (black) golfer Tiger Woods; singer Posh Spice and soccer player David Beckham; and, in Japan – where advertising agencies have been known to 'arrange' celebrity marriages – starlet Miyazawa Rie and *sumo* champion wrestler Takanohana (see Stefánsson 1998).

[15] For example, models Lisa Butcher and chef Marco Pierre White; Claudia Schiffer's more recent attachment to art dealer Tim Jeffries (Elle MacPherson's former fiancé); Heidi Klum's marriage to a hair stylist; Linda Evangelista's former marriage to the president of the model agency to which she was affiliate; and, decades ago, Jean Shrimpton's affair with David Bailey.

[16] For example, Amber Valetta became a 'name' (as a model) *after* dating actor Leonardo DiCaprio. Similarly, 60s model Verushka finally made fame through her association with photographer Franco Rubartelli.

[17] Celebrity endorsements have been traced back to the second half of the 19th century in the U.S. with one early example being dated at 1864 (Kaitaki 1987: 93). The technique of claiming that a member of royalty uses a particular product goes back at least to the 18th century in England (McKenderick et al. 1982, quoted in Petty 1995). In Japan, Echigoya Dry Goods Store (the precursor of present-day Mitsukoshi Department Store) hired *kabuki* theatre actors to successfully promote its cloths, textiles, teas and cosmetics from as early as 1715.

What kind of celebrity is chosen to endorse products changes over the years. Although nowadays fashion magazine advertising uses fashion models and filmstars, this has not always been the case. In June 1953, for example, Coronation issues of *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* made use of society women such as 'The Lady Bridgett de Robledo' (Pond's Dry Skin Cream), and 'Lady Crosfield, famous for her wonderful pre-Wimbledon tennis party in aid of a well-known charity' (Ronson Diane Lighter).

[18] Fawcett modelled for Fabergé which in fact designed its hair products around the movie star.

[19] Their colour has reputedly prevented black models like Iman or Naomi Campbell from landing major cosmetics or hair endorsement contracts (Rudolph 1991: 50). Iman has now tapped into the ethnic market and sells her own line of 'ethnic cosmetics' through J.C. Penney stores (Gite 1994).

[20] Sexuality can also be part of this mix. Former tennis star Martina Navratilova is said to have lost out on many endorsements during her career because of her known homosexuality. When her retirement coincided with the explosion of the gay market, however, she started endorsing various companies' products – including the Subaru, which is now rapidly becoming lesbians' unofficial car of their choice (Wildman 2000).

[21] Roland Marchand (1985: 98) quotes a 1927 edition of *Liberty* which carried eleven different ads for eleven different products all endorsed by a single movie star, Constance Talmadge.

[22] This is a general issue *vis-à-vis* commercial endorsements involving western celebrities in Japan, where they are shielded from European and American scrutiny (often by specific clauses in their contracts) and so maintain their charisma back home.

[23] The fact that celebrities are 'typecast' in the worlds in which they operate makes them extremely useful to the endorsement process, since they can more easily be used to 'anchor' specific meanings to products, services, and corporations. The desired similarity between product and celebrity must be made obvious so that targeted consumers will be able to take these meanings into their own lives (McCracken 1989: 315-6).

[24] Two examples of such crossover processes that come to mind may be found in the appearance of supermodels such as Stephanie Seymour, Amber Smith and Elle MacPherson in the pages of *Playboy* magazine, and in the Rolling Stones writing a song about model Angie Everhart (whose legs, for the record, are insured for $1 million).

That such cultural crossovers also have major economic implications for the media concerned should go without saying.

[25] For example, film scripts will be adapted to conform to an audience's expectations of a particular star, once s/he agrees to be involved in a particular picture (Marshall 1997: 85).

[26] There was also an ecological slant to the creative team's choice of green since ecology was an issue

among young women at that time and was thus used as an additional marketing tactic.

[27] Some actors, like Robert Redford and Clint Eastwood, for example, direct themselves in films. Some supermodels, too, have a hand in directing the technical details of a photo shoot – lighting, make-up, poses, and so on (Rudolph 1991: 46).

[28] Typical consecrating events here include the Academy Awards for the film, and Grammy Awards for the music, industries.

[29] Amber Smith's so-called 'Rita Hayworth look' appears to be fortuitous – the result of her hairdresser's dyeing her hair the wrong shade of red (www.ambersmith.net).

[30] Laetitia Casta's bust now graces town halls across the country.

[31] In 1995, three years earlier than the 1998 figures cited here, *Forbes* magazine calculated that Cindy Crawford was the world's highest paid model and was worth only $6.5 million. Claudia Schiffer was second, with $5.3 million.

[32] Naomi Campbell has had a Barbie doll made in her likeness, as did Twiggy have a number of different dolls fashioned after her in the 1960s. Visitors to Amber Smith's official website can 'dress her up, dress her down! It's your fantasy and Amber's your Barbie doll in the Dressing Room' (www.ambersmith.net).

[33] Visitors to Amber Smith's official website may put in bids for 'modeling memorabilia, movie collectibles, and personal items' (such as a 'sexy fur bikini') belonging to the celebrity.

[34] It is, perhaps, this connection between celebrity-and-corporation and celebrity-as-corporation that has led to the rise of CEO celebrities like Bill Gates and Richard Branson (cf. *Investor Relations Business* 2000) – a trend that partially reverses Lowenthal's (1961) discussion of the shift from 'idols of production' to 'idols of consumption' during the second quarter of the 20th century.

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