

# EFFECTIVE ELEMENTS IN CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT OF SOCIAL CAUSES

Case: Organization X, Republic of Korea

## Abstract

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Title of publication <b>Effective Elements in Celebrity Endorsement of Social Causes</b> Case: Organization X, Republic of Korea		
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Abstract <p>Celebrity culture has exploded in modern times thanks to the rapid evolution of communications and media technologies. Famous personalities are idolized, able to influence media consumers – which means basically everyone, not only in taste but also in morality. Those who recognize that their star powers can be utilized as to encourage social responsibility become celebrity activists. Meanwhile, formal diplomats in the discipline of public diplomacy – also known as people's diplomacy, have been ironically accused of putting state interests above ethical and emotional values. Amidst a growing public distrust in governmental authorities, audiences have turned to organizations and institutions which exercise rhetoric through celebrity diplomats to mobilize public support for the advancement of the causes they champion.</p> <p>The purpose of the study to investigate how celebrity diplomats are effectiveness at mobilizing public interest and support for social and environmental issues through both social and business perspectives. In doing so, it seeks to explain why the case organization should align with a celebrity diplomat to promote its upcoming flagship report. The thesis employs abductive and deductive research approaches, qualitative and quantitative research methods, and primary and secondary data. Whilst the theoretical framework constitutes of established theories on celebrity diplomacy and celebrity endorsement as originally practiced in the private sector, the empirical research includes an interview with the case organization's Head of Communications and an online questionnaire aimed at one its target audience groups – the general public.</p> <p>The findings yielded from the research form the basis of the author's recommendations for the case organization. Their validity is guaranteed but their reliability falls slightly short of absoluteness due to the small sample size.</p>		
Keywords Celebrity diplomats, celebrity endorsement, social issues, source attributes, audience receptivity		

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## ABBREVIATIONS

NSAs	Non-State Actors
IGOs	Inter-Governmental Organizations
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
UN	United Nations
US	United States
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Thesis Background

In August 2018, the author was accepted to undertake an internship with the Communications Unit at Organization X headquartered in Seoul, South Korea. Organization X is an intergovernmental organization (IGO) specializing in aiding developing countries and emerging markets in their transitions towards green patterns of economic growth characterized by social inclusion and environmental sustainability. Subsequently, the author had a chance to learn about an initiative in the works – the 2030 Campaign, which revolves around a Flagship Report designed to showcase the progresses experienced by Organization X's Member Countries, effectively demonstrating to key stakeholders how impactful its programmatic interventions have been. Several promotional activities were discussed to ensure its successful launch in late 2019, and the author's interest was piqued by the one wherein a cohort of spokespersons would be leveraged to widen the appeal of the intended messages and to engage a broader range of audiences.

Particularly, these spokespersons – dubbed the Champions, must all be non-states actors (NSAs), and whilst five would be selected amongst Organization X's own Council Members, the rest were simply envisioned to be eminent persons without yet any further specifications. It is the ambiguity surrounding the latter division of the Champions that inspires the author to propose for Organization X to partner with a celebrity on account of two interlinked phenomena in the contemporary era: the prevalence of celebrity culture and the popularization of celebrity diplomacy by powerful institutions like the United Nations (UN). Moreover, as a business student, the author recognizes a parallel between this suggestion and the practice of endorsement in the private sector. Given that public bodies have begun to tap into marketing's potential for empowering their performances despite its historical association with commercialism (Serrat 2010, 4), the author also wishes to explore how celebrity endorsement may come in handy for Organization X against such a backdrop.

Nowadays, when information is unrestrictedly circulated and rapidly disseminated, celebrity news as a category of contents has proven its unwavering capacity for capturing interests and driving consumption across all mediums (Turner 2010, 11). Artists, entertainers, athletes, and business magnates alike, have opened up about their lives and shown spectators how ordinary they are regardless of their extraordinariness, cultivating a presumed sense of intimacy and assuring those onlookers that they, too, can attain the same status (Crouch 2018). As a result, famous personalities wield enormous influence over media consumers because they are perceived to be arbiters of not only taste but also morality and public

opinion (Euromonitor Research 2014), exalted as the idols who provide incentives for greater aspirations or even as the standards by which people assess themselves and others (Tse, Leung, Cheng, & Chan 2018, 143). Many altruistic celebrities have realized the potential behind their command of the media and the human desire to emulate the behaviours of the perceived ideals, and utilized them to propel humanitarianism into the mainstream.

As celebrities participate in aid campaigns and spread knowledge of global issues, they typically align themselves with established organizations to avoid the suspicion of grandstanding. From the other side's perspective, this linkage is an engagement in celebrity diplomacy – an alternative approach to international relations wherein entities enlist the star powers of household names to raise awareness of their endeavours and to facilitate financial supports for their causes, or sometimes even to influence the decisions of policymakers. Initially considered an unconventional conduct when it was introduced through UNICEF's designation of entertainer Danny Kaye as the first Goodwill Ambassador in 1954, celebrity diplomacy has become favoured by members of the public thanks to a quickening loss of faith in formal politicians coupled with an intensifying demand for more people-centric diplomatic initiatives in modern times. Having not only fulfilling its intended purposes but also reaping undeniable successes, the legitimacy of celebrity diplomacy has eventually been acknowledged by experts. (Siegfried 2013; Wheeler 2016, 530.)

Judging by these objectives and desired outcomes, celebrity diplomacy can be deduced as the public sector's answer to its private counterpart's model of celebrity endorsement, with the key distinction being that, instead of the sales of commodities, what it aims to boost is social responsibility. Being the foremost pioneer in celebrity diplomacy, the UN has since launched a fully-fledged system for the management of its celebrity relations, currently employing a total of 183 distinguished individuals as global representatives, and the roster of those operating on regional and national levels is even more massive. Entities around the world – governmental and otherwise (NGOs), have quickly followed suit and developed similar programs. (Siegfried 2013.) Some of today's most critical problems are attached with superstars – i.e. Leonardo DiCaprio on climate change, Emma Watson on feminism, and Angelina Jolie on humanitarian rights. Subconsciously, audiences permit celebrities to shape not only their stories but also their political and social views, and household names are thus enabled by their statuses to secure a large platform to get the world to pay attention, understand and believe the subject matters. (Khutoretsky 2018.)

## 1.2 Research Objective, Research Questions and Limitations

With the surface understanding of the research topic summarized, a research objective is set forth to convey what the thesis expects to accomplish in general terms, serving as the

controlling idea all other aspects of the study adhere to. It needs to be imbued with clarity, specificity, and informativeness. Then, said purpose statement is refined into specific research questions to be solved by the subsequent data collection, and they are divided into two classes: a central question that embodies the need to examine the key phenomenon, and associated subquestions that narrow the focus of the research yet still leave open the inquiry. (Creswell 2014, 114 & 129.) In conformity with the author's aspiration to contribute to the optimization of Organization X's 2030 Campaign, this thesis' research objective and questions are devised as follows:

**Research Objective:** To discover what benefits and drawbacks – both social-wise and business-wise, Organization X can potentially encounter when having a celebrity ambassador.

**Central Question:** Why should Organization X use a celebrity diplomat to promote its Flagship Report?

**Associated Subquestions (AS):**

1. How are celebrity diplomats effective at publicizing social issues? What are their advantages and disadvantages?
2. From a business perspective, how do the attributes of celebrity diplomats influence audiences' message receptivity?

All studies are subjected to having their findings affected either by certain features of the research design, by the methodology constructed to establish internal and external validity, or by unforeseen obstacles arising during the course of the research. Hence, it is important for a researcher to acknowledge and evaluate the variables a study is constrained by so that readers can understand the ways in which the data analysis and the result assessment can possibly turn out flawed, allowing suggestions to be put forwards for future researches. (USC Libraries 2019.) For this thesis, the author identified the following limitations:

To begin with, as much as the author would like to specifically inspect celebrity involvement in climate change communications as it is where Organization X's interests lie, not much existing literature caters to this selective filtering and the thesis has to resort to discussing celebrity involvement in social causes in general. Note that although the author uses the following terms interchangeably in order to avoid repeating the word celebrities too many times – famous personalities, eminent persons, high-profile figures, distinguished individuals, household names, they all refer to celebrities from the fields of arts, music, cinema, sports only, not business moguls or chartered scientists.

To continue with, the thesis is focused on discovering in what ways employing a celebrity amongst its Champions can benefit Organization X, and is not designed to identify exactly who should be recruited nor to produce a full-fledged guidelines on how to operate and manage a celebrity spokesperson programme. However, the thesis does feature a sub-chapter on which selection models to consult when going through the designation process because each reveals different celebrity attributes transferrable from the endorser onto the endorsed. Moreover, although Organization X has various target audiences, the author can survey only the general public for the empirical research due to the limited authority of a student.

To end with, the author decides to set the geographical scope for the empirical research as worldwide because Organization X is an international organization with culturally diverse stakeholders and audiences, not to mention the fact that the cause it champions affects and should be of interest to everyone. The goal is thereby to collect primary data from people living in various parts of the globe. In addition, although celebrity diplomacy is practiced by a multitude of organizations, the UN has remained the leader in the field and is the most recurrent subject of scholarly inspection. Therefore, the UN is predominantly cited in the thesis as examples to illustrate certain points during the literature review.

### 1.3 Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework is a conceptual model that guides the research by providing a structure to hold the theory which the researcher constructs to explain the research problem, its foundation and analysis. Not only does it dictate the way the researcher apprehends and makes sense of the data, it also identifies a scheme for examining and interpreting the findings. Developing the theoretical framework is essential to the research process because it helps elucidate implicit theories in a definite fashion, allowing the researcher's perspective and the study's context. Ultimately, the purpose is to show that the relationships proposed between the variables involved are developed through a review of relevant scholarly literature instead of based on the researcher's instincts. (Statistics Solutions 2019.)

The theoretical framework of this thesis is made up of two chapters – 2 and 3. They are dedicated to each side of the hybridity that celebrity diplomacy is, respectively attending to AS#1 and AS#2. More precisely, Chapter 2 lays out the major contours of celebrity diplomacy as clearly as possible without dwelling so deeply into the realm of international relations that the thesis strays away from its business core. It defines the concept of celebrity and points out how and why celebrity diplomacy has emerged, as well as how it has persisted and evolved hand-in-hand with global communications. In doing so, the benefits and pitfalls typically associated with the practice are identified. Given how celebrity diplomacy

essentially mirrors celebrity endorsement in the private sector, Chapter 3 examines said practice in said original environment concerning its strengths and obstacles, as well as exploring the models created to explain how celebrity attributes influence the way audiences choose to accept or refuse messages, thus aiding the selection of the right celebrity endorsers for products and services. In addition, because celebrity endorsement is a brand-building tool, Chapter 3 also touches upon its effects on consumer-based brand equity, demonstrating how its benefits extend beyond the product onto the producer in the process.

#### 1.4 Research Methodology and Data Collection

Research methodology refers to a tailor-made set of procedures undertaken by the researcher to systematically decipher the research problem. Encompassing extra dimensions beyond simply listing out what research methods and associated techniques of data collection and analysis are employed by the researcher to perform necessary operations throughout the studying process, it also elaborates on the logic behind their adoptions as in their relevancy and applicability to the subject at hand, their meanings and underlying assumptions, and the indications they would give. This transparency thereby allows the findings to be critically appraised when it comes to validity and credibility. (Kothari 2004, 7-8.) For this thesis, the author has taken into account its objective and limitations to design the research methodology as follows:



Figure 1 The Thesis' Research Methodology

The first component is the author's approach to reasoning, for which abduction and deduction are selected:

- Abductive reasoning involves drawing the most logical conclusion possible from an incomplete set of observations. This is done by using accepted theories to yield a causal explanation in between, risking the transferability of the lack of completeness

from one side of the equation onto the other. It is the preliminary estimate which puts forwards likely hypotheses and helps the researcher decide which is the best inference to start off with amongst an infinite number of possible candidates. Although this approach relies on speculations and sometimes even groundless assumptions as the basis for reasoning, it can provoke creative and intuitive thought experiments as the researcher takes a leap of imagination and visualization.

- Deductive reasoning involves guaranteeing a conclusion to be true because it is drawn from statements that are already asserted to be true, or vice versa. It is a stern syllogism that assumes no other variables are implicated in the equation, which is often wrong. Not to mention, the validity of the inferential process itself is independent of the soundness of the premises. Therefore, results are tautological and must be compared against reality to ensure they are not founded on subtle errors despite looking perfectly solid. This approach is supposed to confront hypotheses with accepted theories for assessment, allowing the researcher to make observations rather than predictions, and expand implications.

All in all, abductive reasoning is solely thought to be capable of generating new ideas, whereas its deductive counterpart serves to evolve necessary consequences of hypotheses. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2012, 144; Cramer-Petersen & Ahmed-Kristensen 2015.) Following deduction's top-down logic, the thesis starts out by reviewing extant theories on the use of celebrity in diplomacy and endorsement, then corroborates these general statements with the specific numbers gathered during the empirical research. Adding in abduction because the sample size can never be large enough to provide a complete set of observations, the author generates the most plausible explanation for the collective attitudes towards celebrity endorsement of environmental causes.

The second component is the author's research methods, for which qualitative and quantitative types are selected:

- Qualitative research procures an in-depth understanding of reasons which are present but not readily noticeable, enabling the researcher to discern the true nature of the phenomenon and develop a sound rationale upon which decisions can be made. Since this method concentrates on investigating what influences people to behave in certain ways under the circumstances of interest and why, its data collection mostly based on semi- or unstructured techniques such as interviewing a small sample taken out of the target audience, either one person at a time or in focus groups. Therefore, outputs cannot forecast future performances but as external feedback, despite their subjectivity and comprehensiveness.

- Quantitative research translates people's attitudes into numbers which are then subjected to mathematical analysis, suitable for when the researcher wants to gauge the target audience's strength of feelings without actually understanding the underlying motivations. It generalizes from a large sample to a broader population with the same characteristics and measures the relative range of opinions, procuring a statistical dataset that can serve as the basis for establishing causal relations and recommending certain courses of actions. Due to this method's nature, data is collected through highly structured and rigid techniques, where respondents choose amongst preformulated answers ranked in orders of preferences. In consequence, its outputs are objectively illustrated with graphs and charts.

(Creswell 2014, 18-21; The Hartford 2019; Sheldon 2019.)

The last component is the author's data collection techniques, for which primary and secondary types are selected. Primary data is obtained from two sources representing the case organization's internal and external stakeholders, in both subjective-contextual and objective-generalized forms that are respectively well-suited with the purposes of qualitative and quantitative research methods as described above. On one hand, Organization X's Head of Communications is interviewed for his opinions on the prospect of his employer's having a celebrity ambassador. On the other, an online questionnaire is distributed to internet users to survey their supportiveness concerning celebrity endorsements of social causes. Meanwhile, secondary data is gathered from existing literature, including research studies, journal articles, newspaper and magazine entries.

## 1.5 Thesis Structure

This thesis is underpinned by two pillars – theoretical base and empirical research. The former is covered in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, whilst the latter spans over Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. Since the contents of the theoretical base is already elaborated in Subchapter 1.3, the author now presents the empirical research, as well as the introduction and conclusion parts of the thesis.

The first chapter – Introduction, provides readers with an overview of the thesis and establishes the significance of the research topic. Firstly, the author's justification for conducting the study is offered along with background information about the target phenomenon. Secondly, the context and the scope of the thesis is clarified through the identification of a research objective, as underpinned by a research question. Thirdly, concepts and theories which will be guiding the study are addressed in the theoretical framework, and thereafter

comes an explanation of the research methods and data collection techniques employed. Lastly, the thesis' overall structure is outlined.

The fourth chapter – Case Organization Review, acquaints readers with Organization X in terms of its mission, business model, thematic areas of work, and target strategic outcomes. It also lists Organization X's reasons for advocating for the replacement of conventional economic development with green growth, and what social, economic, and environmental benefits such a model can bring to developing countries. The purposes of Organization X's 2030 Campaign with the Flagship Report at its centre are then outlined before the concept of the Club of Champions is detailed, including what the Champions are supposed to do, what they are expected to achieve, and who their target audiences are.

The fifth chapter – Empirical Research and Analysis, takes readers through the author's process of conducting the entire study and analysing the data. Firstly, the author explains which data collection techniques are employed in relation to the qualitative and quantitative research methods implemented for this thesis, as described in Subchapter 1.4. Secondly, a timeline of the author's data collection process is laid out, covering all the stages from conceiving the research topic to gathering data and summing up analysis results. Thirdly, the author interprets the information obtained from the interview with Organization X's Head of Communications, and then the statistics drawn from the online questionnaire.

The sixth chapter – Conclusion, is where the author makes recommendations for Organization X's appointment of a celebrity ambassador to be its Champion based on the findings produced by the empirical research. Next, the author presents answers to the research questions, descending from associated ones to the central one where the study's core lies, as detailed in Subchapter 1.2, before reflecting on the research validity and reliability. Lastly, suggestions for future studies are put forwards because this thesis as a student's project is obviously still lacks sufficient coverage of many areas that should be dwelled into more deeply. The seventh chapter – Summary, is self-explanatory by its title.

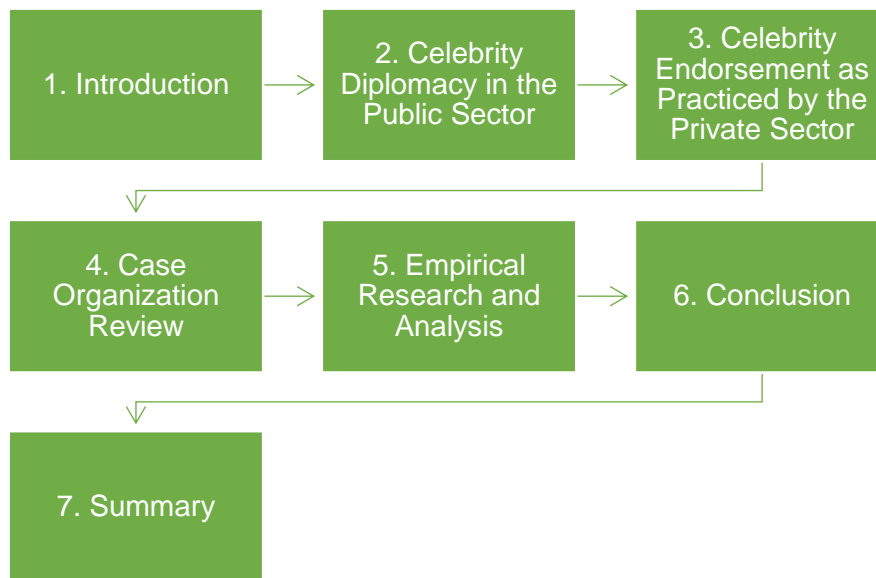


Figure 2 The Thesis Structure

## 2 THE PHENOMENON OF CELEBRITY DIPLOMACY

### 2.1 Origin and Concepts

Diplomacy – formally defined as the “science of foreign relations” and the “art of conducting negotiations” (The Great Soviet Encyclopedia 1979), refers to the means by which state representatives harmonize matters of state concern with broader notions of collective security and economic power, usually in private. In this realm, currencies have been constructed from the instruments of bargaining and cooperation, especially by powerhouses like Great Britain and the United States (US), provoking a lively debate over whether they have downplayed ethical and emotional values in favour of the intricacies of global politics. Encompassed within this multidiscipline is public diplomacy – the means by which one nation communicates with overseas audiences in manners that positively influence their attitudes towards its national image or reputation, thus furthering its foreign policy goals and moulding the broader policy-making landscapes in other nations on the receiving end. Despite being also called people’s diplomacy, its characteristics and incorporation of activities like educational, cultural, and artistic exchange programmes and events, as well as radio and television broadcasting, have all been dominated by state interests and power, serving as integral parts of the public relations strategies that are aimed at shaping agendas within the global media. (Wheeler 2016, 531; USC Centre on Public Diplomacy 2019.)

However, the proliferation of the 24/7 news cycle within the last two decades has evolved the nature of media coverage and helped accelerate the fracture and decentralization of opinion. This, coupled with the explosion of social media which has underscored interactive and person-to-person communications, are defying the traditions described above. Such changes have prompted foreign policy to undergo democratization and give social issues due priority on the international agenda. A new, more transparent dimension of public diplomacy has manifested, wherein the global public opinion is an expanding resource contested by both elite and grassroots NSAs and civil society organizations – including NGOs, in their efforts to galvanize public interest for the advancement of their causes. A new diplomatic currency has correspondingly emerged, and its reliance on emotion and rhetoric as major bargaining chips has introduced the sub-category of informal practitioners that celebrity diplomats belong to, echoing a series of social and political changes within the entire multidiscipline. (Wheeler 2016, 531.) Before proceeding deeper into the research, the author finds it warranted to clarify the meaning behind the term celebrity since this thesis follows a scholarly take on the concept that is more complicated than the basic expression “known for being well-known” (Boorstin 1992, 65).

The essence of the media and the cultural economy having been modified quite rapidly since the 1960s. Resulting impacts on celebrity culture have rendered modern celebrities to be distinguished individuals whose personas as portrayed in the media grow beyond their public roles to envelop also their private lives. The extensive coverage often elevates these individuals above the pursuits they are involved in – i.e. actors/filmmaking, athletes/sports, singers/music, with such promotions accomplished through press releases, and marketing and advertising campaigns. Yet, it is a borderline erroneous oversimplification to deem superstars merely as media products or to ascribe the encroachment of celebrity culture to the commercial firms that exercise endorsement marketing. This is because their very beings occupy the intersection point of both cultural and capital production and consumption. Their wishes and manoeuvrings, together with their audiences' explicative and consumptive customs, are definitely as significant as those forces. (Turner 2004, 36.) As celebrity diplomats, they perform altruistic work that is newsworthy in and of itself, beyond their performances of their public roles. Their decisions are informed by media technologies which underpin the information and capital flows necessary for celebritization, as well as media consumers' own desires to be responsible citizens. (Littler 2009, 6.)

Now, back to the main topic. Celebrity diplomats have since imparted a strong and obvious effect on humanitarian and development initiatives by redirecting attention at universal issues linked to world citizenship and mutual solidarity, rather than state-to-state diplomacy. A dialogue within the global civil society about the efforts of the entities behind them simultaneously gets opened. (Wheeler 2016, 532.) The factors behind their successes are multifaceted. One, household names can channel publicity to connect audiences with distant tragedies, creditably leading them through nonconfrontational rearrangements of political and economic forces for the sake of global goals (Tsaliki, Frangonikolopoulos, & Huliaras 2011, 300). Two, they are accredited as serving as conduits between public and foreign affairs to remedy the estrangement that elected officials have induced thanks to their tendencies to withhold information. As such, they are capable of identifying points where public opinion should be reconfigured in order to ameliorate diplomacy and potentially stipulating worldwide communications agendas. Celebrity diplomats have the credibility of their interventions corroborated by the organizations they ally with, and are positioned as "ideal figures who frame and sell ideas within the international community", which explains their ability to mediate institutional diplomatic powers with their persuasive languages. (Cooper 2008, 113-116.)

Furthermore, an area of mutual and beneficial interest is argued to exist between political leaders and high-profile figures. The former can gain from the positive public impression generated by their associations with the latter as much as the latter can utilize the exclusive

face-to-face meetings granted by the former to push for progress on social causes. In this manner, celebrity diplomacy somewhat overlaps with soft power – another concept in international relations which sees attraction as a greater motivation for change than a reward-and-punishment system (Nye 2004, 5). It is also through the mechanism of attraction – except on a personal scale, that the informal practitioners have consolidated their legitimacy within the international community and earned themselves admission into networks of power. (Cooper 2008, 10.) Equipped with such potential, eminent persons have lent their credence to and sell transnational crusades within a mass media dictated by commercialism, exerting considerable pressure on all sorts of state representatives. (Wheeler 2016, 533.) Last but not least, all these impacts they can deliver for and on behalf of the institutions they are allied with are instrumental to field officers who work towards materializing change through building social and political momentum and mobilizing resources (Darnell 2012, 131).

## 2.2 Historical and Contemporaneous Forms

Celebrity diplomats are separated into two distinctive groups – those backed by IGOs and NGOs, and others who operate as freelancers (Pigman 2010, 6). For the purposes of this thesis, the focus is singly on the former. As briefly mentioned, it was UNICEF's designation of entertainer Danny Kaye as its Goodwill Ambassador in 1954 that laid the foundations for the UN's traditions of employing celebrity spokespersons. He visited UNICEF projects in Myanmar, India, Indonesia, Korea, Thailand and Japan to promote its activities in relieving the sufferings of children. Footages from his trips were made into a short documentary called *Assignment Children* in the same year and shown to approximately 100 million viewers, making a valuable contribution to UNICEF's coffers. The second person to be entrusted with the ambassadorship was filmmaker Sir Peter Ustinov in 1968. Together, these men were perceived as exemplary global citizens capable of upholding the disposition proclaimed in their titles, but it was actress Audrey Hepburn who set the standards for this "glamorous conformity" (Cooper 2008, 18). The actress risked her personal safety to visit war-torn Ethiopia and Somalia, and drew upon her charismatic authority to meet with African political leaders. She not only publicized but also brought UNICEF's humanitarian causes to the attention of US senators, all without having to take a political stance by pinpointing extreme poverty as the challenge crippling the region. (Ling 1984, as cited in Wheeler 2016, 533.)

Engendered by the expanding programmes at UNICEF and other UN agencies, especially UNHCR and the World Health Organization, the proliferation of celebrity diplomacy in the 1980s and 1990s ushered in a transformative era in which the informal practitioners felt

compelled to lay bare social injustices and human rights abuses through their star powers, getting politically conscious in doing so. This movement planted the element of risk into the discipline as evidenced by the controversies around celebrity spokespersons such as actor Richard Gere, actress Mia Farrow, and singer Harry Belafonte, who decidedly went off script and condemned the moral standpoints of their endorsed agencies. Anyhow, it was not until 1997 that celebrity diplomacy peaked in scale as UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan took charge of a public relations revolution, harbouring concrete faith in the ability of famous personalities to leave necessary impacts on global public opinion for the espousal of the UN's ambitions of idealism and universalism. He added a new tier above Goodwill Ambassadors – dubbed Messengers of Peace, to take the perpetuation of the objectives stated in the UN Charter to the next level. (Wheeler 2016, 534.)

One personification of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's belief was actor George Clooney who served as a Messenger of Peace from 2008 to 2014, having been honoured on the basis of his endorsement of NGO projects in conflict-ridden Darfur. He was commended for his effectiveness in heading a humanitarian crusade that was an amalgamation of the likes of political liberals, the African-American community, and the Christian Right. Before his UN tenure, in 2007, he co-executively produced and narrated a documentary named *Sand and Sorrow*, as well as bearing partial responsibility for the founding of Not on Our Watch – an NGO specialized in delivering solutions for the strife in Darfur and shining the spotlight on human rights violations in Burma, Sudan, and Zimbabwe. Another case in point is actress Angelina Jolie – who was named UNHCR's Goodwill Ambassador in 2001, then promoted to the rank of a Special Envoy in 2012. Having metamorphosed her image from a Hollywood wild-child to a credible celebrity diplomat, she is not simply lending her prestige and beauty to publicize the causes she has been associated with, but has proven herself to be genuinely invested in her work through the profoundness of the descriptions contained in the diaries on her mission trips to refugee camps. In 2007, she was at the centre of a story on *Newsweek* in which former US Secretary of State Colin Powell reportedly remarked her as “absolutely serious, absolutely informed”. (Wheeler 2016, 534.)

When it comes to mother nature, celebrity diplomats have moved environmental issues from the realm of science into popular culture using different formats throughout the years. The way they approach audiences has also shifted from knowledgeable and exhortative to affective and emotionally appealing in the process. More precisely, the involvement of high-profile figures has helped climate change communications evolve from dry accounts of the most up-to-date hard data to stories of personal or literal journeys into the climate change agenda and the areas affected by climate impacts. They have taken on more serious responsibilities beyond acting as narrow pseudo-experts and green lifestyle gurus, and

become first-hand witnesses and on-the-ground correspondents who tell stories about how climate change threatens humans and ecologies. For example, actor Leonardo DiCaprio who was appointed as a Messenger of Peace in 2014, has already been vocal environmentalist, having been supporting conservation projects with his own foundation since 1998. In 2007, he produced *The 11<sup>th</sup> Hour* – a documentary designed to educate the public with the latest information on climate change, in which numerous chartered scientists were featured albeit voiced-over by the actor. After his designation, he produced and narrated a heavily resourced and visually stunning documentary titled *Before the Flood* in 2016. The difference here was that he also starred as a serious, earnest, caring, and emotive guide leading viewers on a journey to observe the climate-induced destructions in the Arctic, the island nation of Kiribati, the oil sands of Alberta, and the polluted streets of Shanghai. The film now sits amongst the top most watched of its kind with over 60 million views across various media platforms, proving that the narrative arcs of modern media coverage of environmental issues are defined and carried by none other than the emotional registers of the star communicators, the ordinary message recipients, and the direct victims of the deteriorations. (Doyle, Farrell & Goodman, 2017.)

NGOs have since caught up on celebrity diplomacy as a tool to raise their profiles for humanitarianism as well, and it goes without saying that the compatibility in motivations between the two parties takes priority in the formations of their partnerships. For instance, the American Red Cross has a Celebrity Cabinet with fifty members, amongst whom are actor Jamie Lee Curtis, actress Jane Seymour, singer L.L. Cool J., and actor Jackie Chan. Witness, chaired by singer Peter Gabriel, has collaborated with actress Angelina Jolie independently. In the same vein, singer Annie Lennox has been supporting Amnesty International, Greenpeace, and Burma UK outside her role as a Goodwill Ambassador under UNESCO. There was also the remarkability of Princess Diana's urging for the prohibition of landmines on behalf of the Mines Advisory Group, with which her involvement came about around the time she was speaking for UK Red Cross as part of her royal obligations. Her representation of the landmine issue was so impactful, it remained crucial to the campaign even after her passing. (Wheeler 2016, 534.)

### 2.3 Possibilities and Pitfalls

The amount of scholarly attention directed at the relationship between celebrities and development, and by extension, the correlation between their endorsements of such causes and the worldwide media coverage that follows, has increased exponentially in recent years (Darnell 2012, 123). As a result, celebrity-fronted crusades have been subjected to numerous critical analyses, and like everything else, there are two sides to the debate. The

proposition asserts that the involvement of famous personalities in development, diplomacy, and universalism is instrumental in heightening awareness, mobilizing resources, and warranting change within a somewhat sluggish political system (Cooper 2007). By contrast, the opposition claims that their presences are supposed to depoliticize or oversimplify the issues (Dieter & Kumar 2008, 260), as well as to reinforce “the most traditional colonial narratives of saving distant others” (Magubane 2008, as cited in Darnell 2012, 124).

On one hand, the approval of celebrity diplomats is founded upon the key communicatory values they deliver when serving as a means, by which the public eye can be captured in a world where the nature of media and politics has grown fragmented. Since these household names are perceived as role models, when such an idealization is placed within the context of humanitarianism and development, especially when the underserved youth is at the centre of attention, their statuses are elevated into those of catalysts for change, and their professional successes can be drawn upon to encourage youth engagement and spreading the vital messages of personal action. In this respect, youngsters look up to their idols for some kinds of evidence that change is possible and the hierarchy of powers is not carved in stone, and the resulting inspiration is expected to invoke the change underpinning progresses. Celebrity spokespersons are enchanting to public bodies because they come on board with the programmes almost already sufficiently equipped with the right skills to disseminate the desired information, so said entities do not have to waste a fortune constructing original motivational speakers from the ground up. Not to mention, associations with the former obviously yield a higher level of visibility for the latter, proving helpful in reputation management and momentum maintenance. (Darnell 2012, 131 & 138-139.)

From the affirmative’s standpoint, the negative arrives at the conclusion that celebrity diplomats are superficial and unaccountable (Wheeler 2016, 536) because it has concentrated on examining the presentational advantages they are endowed with, specifically in the form of branding and popular appeal, not the actual efforts they have invested in their endeavours. Therefore, instead of dismissing the discipline entirely, it makes sense to try to understand more nuancedly where the capacities of distinguished individuals can extend to, or what should be the reasonable limits for ordinary citizens’ expectations, given the ever-changing landscape of global governance and policy. (Cooper 2008, 30.) Simply put, this proposition warns against simplifying, generalizing, or mixing up the implications of different celebrities, as well as assuming an understanding of the strategic reasons behind the activities they carry out in the name of advocacy (Darnell 2012, 128).

On the other hand, the disapproval of celebrity diplomats stems from the impressions that they degrade the quality of the global discourse and shift the focus away from worthy causes

to bring attention to sexy ones, and that they do not manage to represent those deprived of rights, either (Wheeler 2016, 536). These criticisms hold that eminent persons within the arena of activist politics on the whole, as backed by the media and corporate fanfare, trivialize the struggles of development and pave the way for the adoption of misguided policies whose shortcomings are justified through their endorsements (West 2007, 1-2). They are blamed for the loss of the nuance needed to materially and politically comprehend the overwhelming intricacies of the challenges and ordeals facing international development. Moreover, as non-elected officials, celebrity diplomats are arguably too poorly positioned to secure change, and their circumnavigation of the governance system may actually end up as an act of sabotage. (Dieter & Kumar 2008, 261.) Such an attempt at painting development as sexy denotes how celebrity culture is morphed into functioning as a medium of popularization for development, and that superstars' sex appeals are literally serving as the source whence public interest in the causes originates, thereby infringing upon the politics of development itself (Cameron & Haanstra 2008, 1476).

Furthermore, despite the media's supposed helpfulness in heightening awareness, in actuality it has turned out to leave a few negative effects upon the programmes and processes aimed at alleviating development inequality (Darnell 2012, 126). The competition for a brand identity between modern public bodies has intensified, and since this occurs through media coverage of their projects, they are spending a remarkable amount of resources on recruiting high-profile figures and staying clear of media-based scandals. Local development initiatives and contributions are eclipsed and possibly impaired in the process, overall subverting the ethics of international humanitarianism those entities vow to uphold. In consequence, it is plausible to regard IGOs and NGOs alike as being dictated by a media logic because their resource mobilization operations rely on the degree of publicity their work receives. This incites their willingness to implement communications strategies that virtually diminish "their principal remit of humanitarian provision and symbolically fragment the historically founded ethic of universal humanitarianism". (Cottle & Nolan 2007, 863-864.)

Meanwhile, the UN's ostensibly benevolent use of Goodwill Ambassadors has been considered to epitomize condescension and ethnocentricity. The integration of public relations techniques into its marketing strategies resembles a desperate attempt at procuring positive media portrayals to obscure the flaws in its values, conducts, and credibility. In particular, its deployment of eminent persons is argued to be a superficial approach to bringing resolution to crises – one which strengthens ethnic stereotypes by holding onto a skewed perspective that victimizes aid recipients. Rather than teaching them to face the challenges of their afflicted lives with confidence and hope for a better future, it builds up a dependency culture by proposing to magically free them from the chains of their societies through

succour in the forms of education, consciousness-raising, and cultural affirmation programmes. (Alleyne 2003, 77.) Goodwill Ambassadors like actress Angelina Jolie are depicted as Western saviours ready to make sacrifices to ease the plight of the decapitated who have yet to enter the era of enlightenment in terms of development, progress, peace, and human security (Repo & Yrjölä 2011, 57). This paradigm thereby breeds the suspicion that instead of humanitarianism, the ideological pillars of celebrity diplomacy have more to do with the naturalization of elite-centred politics and the preservation of a post-democratic political system imbued with neo-liberalism and cultural imperialism. The Third World is ultimately rendered into not only a platform through which the First World can indulge in self-promotion, brand marketing, and hero-worshipping, but also a disposal site for the latter's humanitarian ideals and fantasies. (Kapoor 2012, as cited in Wheeler 2016, 537.)

In conclusion, celebrity diplomats are undeniably effective in utilizing their command of the media to increase knowledge and understanding of global issues, as well as mobilizing resources. However, the amount of media attention they receive indicates how the outcomes of humanitarian and development initiatives are increasingly reliant on the media culture and its connections to the production and consumption of superstars. This further implies the notion of charity as made sexy by the involvement of high-profile figures is more appealing to people than that of struggle is. Doubt is casted on the sustainability of such endeavours and speculations are raised about the fight for coverage between public bodies and the media's influence over the public sector. (Darnell 2012, 141.) As valid as the criticisms are, it remains essential to approach celebrity diplomacy in a more nuanced fashion. Within an exceedingly commercialized mediascape, besides the further recruitment of celebrity spokespersons, there were not many realistic options for promoting the international community's efforts available to either UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan or his successor Ban KiMoon, let alone NGOs (Kellner 2010, 123). These informal practitioners' abilities to attract attention to global campaigns, to sway diplomatic agendas, and to champion transnational principles have been of extraordinary value to the quest for resolution in the age of widespread violence. (Wheeler 2016, 537.)

### 3 CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR

#### 3.1 Concepts, Benefits and Risks

Private enterprises have normalized the incorporation of celebrities into their marketing strategies for the enhancement of their brand images since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century – a case in point being Queen Victoria and Cadbury's Cocoa (Sherman 1985), but this practice would not have achieved the widespread popularity it enjoys nowadays without the proliferation of commercial radio and television broadcasting in the 1930s and 1950s, respectively (McDonough 1995, as cited in Erdogan 1999, 29). Broadly speaking, the implementation of the endorsement process requires famous personalities to lend commodities the public recognition they have amassed via their professions, often by appearing in the accountable brands' advertisements. Other roles celebrities can take on in marketing activities include spokesperson and testimonial. For the purposes of this thesis, endorsement is an umbrella term covering four ways endorsers can exercise rhetoric: explicit – "I endorse this product", implicit – "I use this product", imperative – "You should use this product", and co-present in which the product is simply shown alongside with the spokesperson. (McCracken 1989, 310; Erdogan 1999, 293.) Likewise, the word advertisement lumps together all categories of advertising, from social media, audio-visual and print, to display and transit.

Extant studies show that roughly 25% of Western television commercials feature celebrity endorsers (Doss 2011, 2), whereas in East Asian nations, such a proportion shoots up to around three quarters – for example, 60% in South Korea (Choi, Lee & Kim 2005, 91) and 85% in Japan (McCaughan 2007, 34). On average, marketers allocate at least 10% of their budgets to securing endorsement deals and licensing rights in an attempt to trigger desired emotional responses concerning advertising effectiveness, as well as behavioural ones in terms of brand recognition, brand attitudes, brand recall, product evaluations, and purchase intentions (Spry, Pappu & Cornwell 2011, 882). This approach works because superstars excel at not only generating and sustaining interest, but also helping advertisements rise above surrounding clutter so their messages can cut through excess noise to enhance communicative ability (Sherman 1985). Its mechanism unfolds as illustrated in Figure 3: According to the Associate Learning Theory from cognitive psychology, the human's memory network resembles a spider's web populated by a multitude of nodes – each stores a single piece of knowledge. When audiences witness an act of endorsement, the nodes respectively occupied by the celebrity and the brand are activated and a linkage is established. Next comes repeated exposure whose psychological effect ushers in the cognitive transference of whatever feelings and attitudes they have towards the endorsers onto the endorsed. Thereafter, upon seeing one factor, they are automatically reminded of the other, and vice

versa. (Erdogan 1999, 293; Yang 2018, 392.) It goes without saying that, with respect to quantity and quality, the brand information consumers can retrieve from their memories relies on how strongly they have been enabled to cultivate such mental connections during the second stage (Dwivedi, Johnson & McDonald 2015, 450).

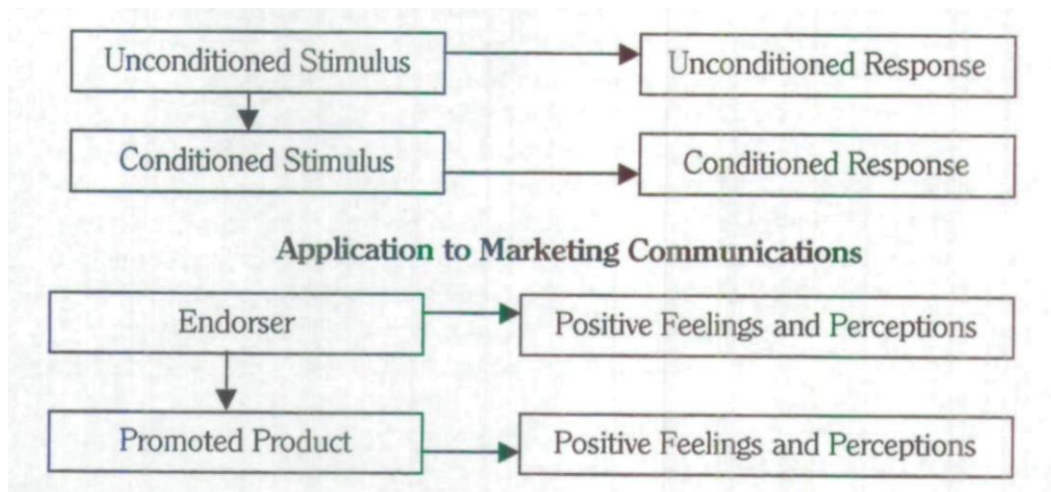


Figure 3 Classical Conditioning Paradigm in Marketing (Erdogan 1999, 294)

However, considering the dynamicity of marketing and that nothing can be devoid of risks, celebrity endorsement is a rather double-edged sword. Beneficial as the partnerships can be, the damages which can occur when consumer preferences change or celebrity relations deteriorate are as weighty. For instance, spokespersons may suffer from dwindling popularity or blemished population due to scandals before their contracts expire, generating negative publicity which in turn affecting the ways the affiliated brands are perceived and assessed for the worse. (Erdogan 1999, 296.) Another hazard is the Vampire Effect – the situation where the household names' mediated personas are inappropriate for or irrelevant to the advertised commodities, and connections thereby cannot be drawn up within the audiences' minds (Evans 1988, 35). The brands end up overshadowed as the focus is stuck on the superstars, their marketing campaigns get sucked dry whilst the consumers forget about the advertisements. Lastly, there is overexposure – as in when famous personalities are compelled by greed to take one too many different deals, weakening their alignments with any particular brands (Mowen & Brown 1981, 438). Their credibility and likeability plummets whilst their values are tarnished to their fans (Graham 1989, as cited in Erdogan 1999, 29) and their motives are questioned by consumers, given the collective realization that the emphasis of the endorsement is on their financial gains, not the attributes of the goods nor the brands (Cooper 1984, as cited in Erdogan 1999, 296).

## 3.2 Models for Effective Selection of Celebrity Endorsers

Much as celebrity endorsement is acknowledged as an effective approach to promoting commodities and influencing consumers' buying decisions when operated appropriately, it remains challenging for brands to employ the right celebrities who can achieve results and not evoke embarrassments. In order to prevent high-cost investments from going down the drain, they must compare the candidates' images against their value propositions to determine the compatibility. The determinant qualities scrutinized here are those characterized by transferability and believed to be crucial to the fruitfulness of their campaigns, namely attractiveness, likeability, and trustworthiness. In conformity with these cornerstones, several theoretical accounts have been constructed by scholars to ease the preparatory and management processes. (Erdogan 1999, 291 & 297; Yang 2018, 394.)

### 3.2.1 Source Credibility and Source Attractiveness Models

To begin with, the Source Credibility Model highlights celebrity endorsers as communications sources upon whose credibility the message receptivity depends, insisting on a correlation between the effectiveness of a brand's message and the positiveness of its spokesperson's reputation amongst message receivers. When high-profile interlocutors possess enough trustworthiness and expertise pertinent to the matters at hand that their opinions are imbued with objectivity, their ordinary counterparts allow themselves to be susceptible to their influence and accordingly alternate their belief and opinions, as well as attitudes and behaviours. This occurs through a process called internalization. (Erdogan 1999, 297; Yang 2018, 395.)

In particular, trustworthiness is defined as "the willingness to make valid assertions" (McCracken 1989, 311), encompassing the dimensions of honesty, integrity, and believability. From the perspective of the listeners, trust reflects the extent to which they are confident in the speakers and by extension, the messages. When positive, its effects are described with terms such as "favourable disposition, acceptance, psychological safety, and perceived supportive climate" (Giffin 1967, as cited in Ohanian 1990, 41). Trustworthiness is argued to be the most critical indicator of source credibility because whatever leaves the lips of eminent persons who suffer from low public confidence get disregarded as dubious, irrespective of their other qualities (Smith 1973, as cited in Erdogan 1999, 297). Not to mention, since likeability turns out to be credibility's most decisive indicator, scholars have encouraged the appointments of trusted and beloved household names as brands' spokespersons. Meanwhile, expertise is defined as "the ability of to make valid assertions" (McCracken 1989, 311), encompassing the dimensions of knowledgeable, experiences,

and skilfulness. The listeners have no problems abiding to the recommendations given by the speakers on the condition that they have a high level of expertise, and vice versa (Crisci & Kassinove 1973, as cited in Ohanian 1990, 42). Yet, sources do not necessarily have to be actual experts, and what matters is simply that they are seen so by target audiences (McGinnies & Ward 1980, as cited in Ohanian 1990, 41). As long as the superstars appear to be valid communication sources in the eyes of the public, they remain capable of persuading consumers to place a higher premium on the brands, leading to favourable reactions like greater purchase intentions. Expertise is usually measured with pairs of contrasting adjectives such as “trained-untrained, informed-uninformed, and educated-uneducated” (Ohanian 1990, 42). (Erdogan 1999, 297-298; Yang 2018, 395.)

To continue with, the Source Attractiveness Model is also centred around celebrity endorsers as communications sources, except its focus is on their physical appeals, tapping into the human preference for beautiful things which renders information spread by attractive sources more acceptable through a process called identification (Cohen & Golden 1972, as cited in Erdogan 1999, 299). More precisely, the effectiveness of a brand's message varies directly with the intensity of the similarity, familiarity, and likability perceived towards its spokesperson by message receivers (McGuire 1985, as cited in Erdogan 1999, 299). In this respect, similarity is defined as an assumed resemblance, familiarity as personal knowledge derived from repeated exposure, and likeability as fondness formed on the basis of outward appearance and mannerisms. In theory, attractiveness extends beyond the aspect of visibility to include those of virtues, lifestyles, intellectuality, or athleticism. (Erdogan 1999, 299; Yang 2018, 395-396.) However, in practice, marketers and advertisers mostly capitalize on looks as augmented by prestigious statuses (Singer 1983, 32).

As the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle once said, “Beauty is a greater recommendation than any letter of introduction” (Ohanian 1991, as cited in Erdogan 1999, 301), good-looking communicators are suggested to wield greater persuasive power over target audiences than average-looking ones do. This is understandably contradictory to the Likes-Attract Hypothesis because people are inclined to exaggerate their own attractiveness. Furthermore, individuals who are distinguished for their gorgeousness are likely to be ranked high on other dimensions like smartness and savviness – a type of cognitive bias called the Halo Effect. This in turn ties into the Consistency Theory which states that people take comfort in having different facets of their evaluations aligned with one another. (Solomon 1996, as cited in Erdogan 1999, 301.) Overall, physical attractiveness is argued to be an informational cue that rises above culture, whose inescapable effects are imbued with subtlety and pervasiveness, producing a clear pattern of attestable distinctions. (Patzner 1985, as cited in Erdogan 1999, 301.)

To conclude with, despite the distinctiveness of personal preferences, unanimity in judgments can still reach a level that allows assessments of source qualities to produce findings generalizable across a consumer base. It is imperative for the measuring instrument to be integrated with a series of items instead of a single dichotomy at a time, as illustrated in Table 1, given how these characteristic dimensions are all highly correlated. In addition, according to the Truth-of-Consensus method, when a spokesperson is graded in terms of attractiveness and credibility, if there exists a high degree of agreement amongst a statistically significant number of respondents, the given score is understood as applicable to the wider demographic. (Ohanian 1990, 42; Erdogan 1999, 298-299.)

Table 1 Source Credibility & Attractiveness Scale (Ohanian 1990, as cited in Erdogan 1999, 299)

Attractiveness	Trustworthiness	Expertise
Attractive-Unattractive	Trustworthy-Untrustworthy	Expert-Not Expert
Classy-Not Classy	Dependable-Undependable	Experienced-Inexperienced
Beautiful-Ugly	Honest-Dishonest	Knowledgeable-
Elegant-Plain	Reliable-Unreliable	Unknowledgeable
Sexy-Not Sexy	Sincere-Insincere	Qualified-Unqualified
		Skilled-Unskilled

It is apparent that credibility and attractiveness are partially credited with determining celebrities' effectiveness as marketing devices, and that the Source Models are the oldest ones of their kind in the multidiscipline of marketing. However, scholars, marketers, and advertisers alike, are conflicted about their capacity for capturing every single fundamental feature of the endorsement approach. By the Source Models' logic, any household name could sell any message so long as the credibility and attractiveness requirements are fulfilled. Source persuasiveness is entirely ascribed to the speakers and not the commodities, thus discussing neither the endorsers' role as a message medium, the message's continuity from ad to ad, nor the audiences' predisposition towards the advertisements. Hence, empirical evidence has, on some occasions, disproved the Models as celebrity trustworthiness, expertise, likability, and attractiveness do not always translate into higher purchase intentions and information recall for endorsed brands, respectively. Furthermore, the Source Models are criticized for failing to dissect superstars' appeals and explain how and why their images interact with different goods and creative themes, overall inhibiting the discovery of matches and mismatches. (McCracken 1989, 311-312; Yang 2018, 396.)

### 3.2.2 Product Match-Up Hypothesis

The Product Match-up Hypothesis asserts that, in addition to source credibility and attractiveness, a congruency must exist between celebrity endorsers and endorsed products (Evans 1988, 35), lest the Vampire Effect occurs. Given how an associative link can only be easily established between two memory nodes as long as they share a resemblance (McSweeney & Bierley 1984, as cited in Yang 2018, 396), whether or not the eminent persons match with the brands depends on how much the former's images and the latter's names and attributes fit together (Misra & Beatty 1990, as cited in Erdogan 1999, 302), and in the case that they do match well, the effectiveness and persuasiveness of the endorsement is considerably boosted. More precisely, empirical evidence shows that high congruency makes the advertisement more believable, thereby eliciting favourable responses towards the commodities in terms of purchase intentions and willingness to pay. (Yang 2018, 397.) On the celebrities' parts, it can improve their own believability and attractiveness as a result of the interactions between the senses of familiarity they evoke and the audiences' identification and internalization processes of social influence (Kamins & Gupta 1994, 572).

Unfortunately, scholars have yet to reach an agreement on which product or brand attributes should be matched with which celebrity characteristics. Prior researches have explored the latter in different aspects, and amongst those focused on physical appeals, opposing outcomes have been inevitable. (Yang 2018, 397.) Whereas some have found superstars to be most effective with beauty-related products since their qualities interact positively with the nature of such commodities (Kamins 1990, 5), others have singled out expertise as a more accurate requirement, claiming the connections between attractive endorsers and such goods to be not readily discernible enough (Till & Busler 2000, 12). Overall, physical attractiveness has remained a questionable match-up factor. There have been instances where average-looking spokespersons end up generating more positive reactions than good-looking ones do thanks to the impression that they are more genuine (Bower & Landreth 2001, 10). A plausible explanation here is that the gorgeousness of the models opens up a divide between consumers' actual self-images and the proposed product images – one that comes to be filled with dissonance in the post-purchase stage of the consumer decision process (Marshall, State, & Deuskar 2008, as cited in Yang 2018, 397).

Whereas it is safe to say that the Product Match-Up Hypothesis has patched up some of the logic holes in the Source Models, it has neither explored the depth of consumers' cognitive responses towards celebrity spokespersons nor acknowledged the fact that communicators must epitomize a bundle of compelling and useful cultural meanings in order to be persuasive (McCracken 1989, 312). In the same vein as the Source Models, it is argued to

be inadequate in presenting a reasonable set of rules for the selection of suitable famous personality figures owing to the following reasons: One, it does not provide measures to deal with the multidimensionality of the source effects. Two, it overlooks the connotations of the interactions between the endorsers and the endorsed. Three, the proposed dimensions lack quantified empirical grounds. In consequence, the real-world applicability of the Hypothesis is subjected to the same restrictions as the relevant dimensions are, because it is barely possible to match a high-profile figure with a commodity without being able to identify and measure which celebrity characteristics are valid for the brand at hand. (DeSarbo & Harshman 1985, as cited in Erdogan 1999, 304.)

### 3.2.3 Meaning Transfer Model

Consumers acquire certain commodities not only for the purposes they serve but also for the symbols they carry (Levy 1959, as cited in Yang 2018, 397). It is contended that products have characteristics like humans do, and that consumers seek out brands with attributes resembling either their own or what they hope to obtain as inspired by high-profile figures, friends, or family members (Fortini-Campbell 1992, as cited in Erdogan 1999, 305). Inclined to utilize belongings as a medium through which they can create, reinforce, and preserve their identities, they use and showcase goods and services in a way that enhances their own self-images, imparting the desired impressions upon the public and upgrading their social statuses (Yang 2018, 397). Therefore, the common rationale behind the practice of celebrity endorsement is that celebrities have their images perceived as objects of consumption so the products linked to them will be subjected to the same treatment (Fowles 1996, as cited in Erdogan 1999, 305).

Celebrity endorsers imbue the endorsement process with their symbolic meanings by passing such meanings onto the endorsed products, thus rendering them available to audiences in material forms. Those properties originate from the cultural elements they have been given for the cultivation of some practicable selves as per the requirements of their occupational roles. (McCracken 1989, 317.) As such, household names embody meanings substantial in both quantity and diversity, especially in terms of statuses, classes, genders, ages, as well as demeanours and lifestyle types, which all have the potential to be leveraged in marketing strategies (Erdogan 1999, 305). All things considered, celebrity endorsement represents a unique instance of a meaning transfer process made more general. This process is presented as a conventional circulation path along which cultural meanings move within consumer societies. It is divided into three stages: the development of celebrity images plus the two-stage transference of meanings – from celebrities, to commodities, then to consumers. Meanings starts out as something resident in a world long since culturally

established – one whose physical and social aspects are constituted by the principal culture's classifications and doctrines. Its movement is facilitated first by advertising and the fashion system, and second by the consumers' efforts. (McCracken 1989, 313.)

For the first stage of the transference, advertising is pinpointed as an essential vehicle for meanings because it is already an integral part of social system in the beginning. The process is initiated once the advertisers identify the cultural meanings intended for the commodities – in other words, they determine what messages the goods are supposed to convey. Next, they search the culturally constituted world for tangible representations – be them objects, persons or contexts, which are similar to one another and can be brought together with consumer needs within the adverts' boundaries, ultimately communicated to the audiences. These product definitions as implied in the promotional contents are then picked up and deciphered back into symbolic meanings by consumers during the last stage of the transference. (Domzal & Keman 1992, 49.) Through the second stage of the transference – from celebrities to products, the products' characteristics are shaped. This is achieved by audiences who see a fundamental similarity between the portrayed elements and the commodities. It transpires across their getting exposed to the advertisements and recognizing how the cultural properties contained within the former are also contained with the latter on the spur of the moment. Once the meanings have been moved onto the goods, the consumers proceed to move them onto themselves. Hence, the last stage of the transference is said to be performed with their own efforts as they are required to assume ownership of those meanings and put them to work in the construction of their concepts of the selves and the worlds. (McCracken 1989, 314.)

As illustrated in Figure 4, meanings drawn by celebrities from the roles they intensely and repeatedly play throughout their careers in entertainment, military, sports, etc., accumulate within them in Stage 1 and are transferred onto commodities when they become the brands' spokespersons in Stage 2. More precisely, in Stage 1, endorsement provides the adverts with access to a unique category of distinguished individuals who are both charged with and equipped to deliver subtle, comprehensive, and powerful meanings. This is something anonymous models are incapable of. In Stage 2, advertisers begin by detecting what symbolic properties are coveted by the consumers and singling out high-profile figures who epitomize them, either completely or almost so. Then, they set up advertising campaigns that identify and apply the determined meanings onto the goods by populating the advertisements with elemental cues like objects, persons, and contexts, that share the same meanings with the celebrities. Finally, the adverts must be designed to hints at a crucial similarity between the endorsers and the products in order to enable the audiences to take the last step in the meaning transfer process. In Stage 3, the consumers are required to not

only consume but also claim, exchange, and attend to the goods to take possession of their meanings. Although these meanings must be chosen and combined in a process of experimentation which has unfortunately remained largely uncharted waters for scholars, further illumination can be had from celebrity endorsement. Since eminent persons have openly built their attractive and successful selves out of bits and pieces of their public roles in Stage 1, they are living evidence that the process works, and it only makes sense for the audiences – who are now attempting to craft their own selves in Stage 3 by constantly moving the symbolic properties accessible to them into their lives, to look up to and wish to emulate the likes of household names. (McCracken 1989, 315-317.)

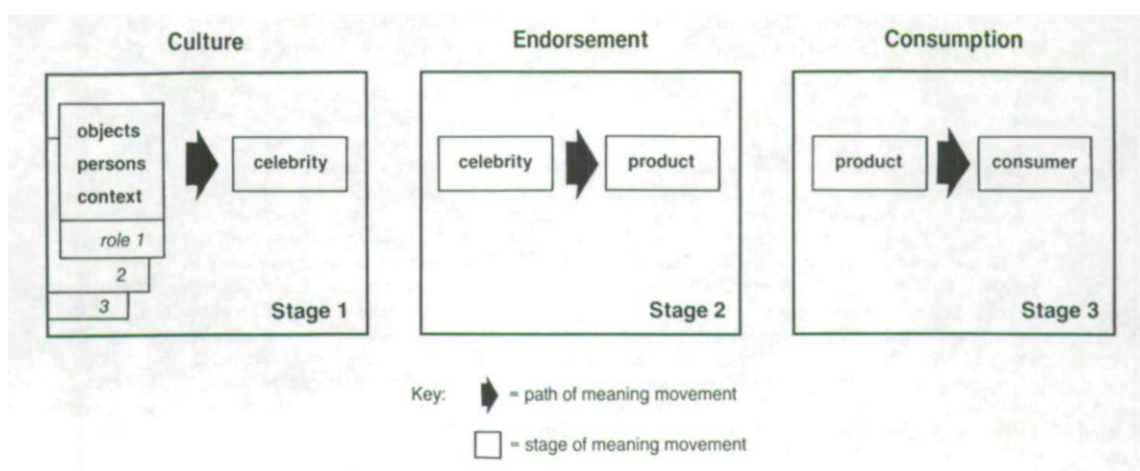


Figure 4 Meaning Movement and the Endorsement Process (McCracken 1989, 315)

### 3.3 Impacts on Brand Equity

Brand equity refers to the incremental value generated by commercial firms when the brand names of their goods and services are more recognizable than those of generic equivalents (Hayes 2019). Amongst available marketing activities, advertising has proven to be useful in developing brand equity (Keller 2005, as cited in Spry et al. 2011, 883), so celebrity endorsement has been inferred to have the potential to do the same through the Associative Learning Theory (Spry et al. 2011, 883). It is already backed by empirical evidence to be helpful in heightening recall rates for both the accountable brands and their adverts, as well as influencing perceived product quality and uniqueness (Dean 1999, 2). Particularly, celebrity endorsers can either provide an alternative means of strengthening brand equity by serving as secondary associations of endorsed brands (Keller 2013, as cited in Dwivedi et al. 2015, 450), or as co-brands in which case they will simultaneously create equity for themselves as well (Seno & Lukas 2007, 125). Moreover, in line with the Meaning Transfer Model which insists on consumers' taking possession of the cultural meanings epitomized by famous personalities to address their self-constructural needs (McCracken 1989, 314),

a new concept has emerged to reflect how significantly consumers come to tie their personal identities to the endorsed brands during the movement process (Escalas 2004, 170). Such emotive ties are called self-brand connections, and they are believed to provide an additional way of boosting brand equity (Dwivedi et al. 2015, 450).

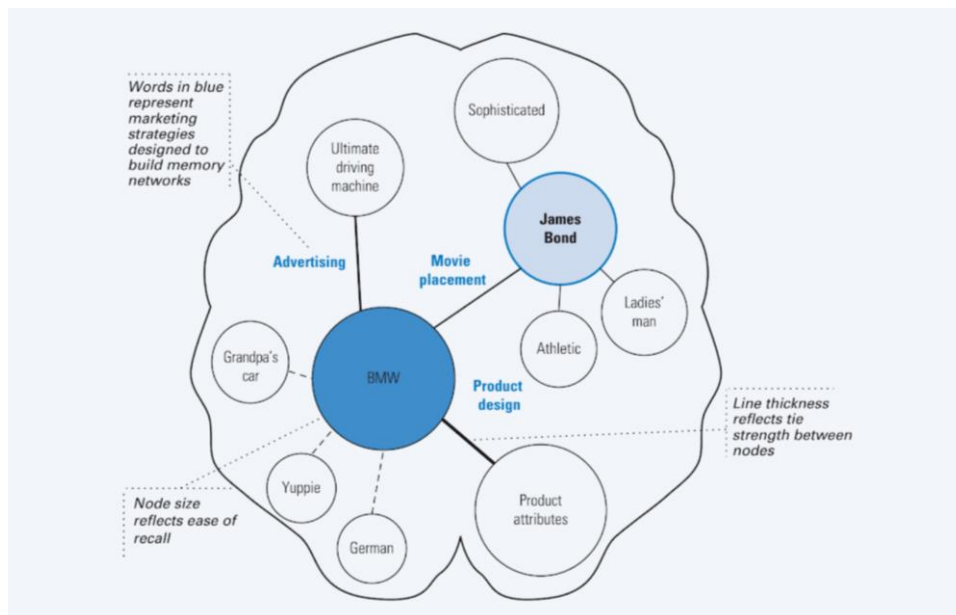


Figure 5 Example of Associative Network Memory Model of Brand Equity (Palmatier & Sri-dhar 2017, 154)

Although scholars have not agreed unanimously on a single conceptualization which captures consumers' interpretation of brand equity, there exists several prominent versions, and the one this thesis follows operationalizes brand equity as a set of proprietary assets or liabilities which comprises, amongst others, brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty, as separate dimensions (Aaker 1991, as cited in as cited in Spry et al. 2011, 885). These reflect the values consumers mentally assign to brands, together making up consumer-based brand equity (Pappu, Quester & Cooksey 2006, 698). Firstly, brand awareness describes how solidly brands have built their presences inside consumers' minds (Aaker 1992, as cited in Spry et al. 2011, 885). Constituting brand recall and brand recognition, it is an indispensable prerequisite for brand equity since unknowing consumers obviously cannot develop any brand associations, quality perceptions, and brand loyalty (Pappu & Quester 2006, as cited in Spry et al. 2011, 885). Secondly, brand associations are formed from the variety of symbolic meanings brands are surrounded with (Keller 1993, 3), whilst perceived quality equals consumers' subjective appraisals of said brands (Zeithaml 1988, 3). Thirdly, brand loyalty refers to consumers' innate inclination to stay loyal to focal brands which is signalled through their prioritization of said brands when making purchases – innate because consumer-based brand equity as grounded in

consumer perceptions is concerned with attitudes not behaviours (Yoo & Donthu 2001, as cited in Spry et al. 2011, 885).

### 3.3.1 Endorser Credibility and Brand Equity

The dimensions encompassed within and the pillars supporting consumer-based brand equity are dissimilar. One of these pillars is considered to be brand credibility – a concept originating from the Brand Signalling Theory from information economics, wherein private enterprises utilize brands “as signals for conveying information in a marketplace characterized by imperfect and asymmetric information” (Erdem & Swait 2004, 191). More precisely, such brand signals are the epitome of all past and current marketing mix strategies (Meyer & Sathi 1985, as cited in Spry et al. 2011, 884), and their contents can be evaluated in terms of clarity and credibility. Therefore, brand credibility is defined as the truthfulness of the information brands effectively convey about their product positioning decisions via their brand signals, which is affected by how willing and able they are concerning the delivery of their promises (Erdem, Swait & Valenzuela 2006, 34).

Brand credibility relies on the quality of the information that commercial firms communicate via their marketing strategies. Since the endorsement process triggers the transference of qualities from the endorsers onto the endorsed, credible endorsers serve not only as persuasive communications sources but also as augmenters of the endorsed brands' credibility. Existing brand credibility is a most essential variable because even the most credible endorsers cannot build brand equity up from scratch, like how a commodity with low quality cannot be saved no matter how good the advertising is. As per the Associative Learning Theory, when the nodes occupied by spokespersons are linked with those occupied by brands, they become additional alternative routes leading to said brand nodes, makes it easier for them to be located within consumers' memory networks (Fiske & Taylor 1991, as cited in Spry et al. 2011, 886). This suggests that celebrity endorsement can support brand recall and brand recognition, and with the strength of the associations between spokespersons and brands dependent on the former's credibility, highly credible ones are expected to be more fruitful at boosting brand awareness as a whole. (Spry et al. 2011, 885-886.)

Consumer-based brand equity can be managed once the associations between meanings and brands inside consumers' memories are controlled (Keller 1993, 9). Scholars encourage the augmentation of brand equity through secondary associations because consumers may not only connect themselves with the endorsers but also transfer the celebrity associations to the endorsed brands (Petty 2006, 44), ultimately broadening the network of associations. Specifically, favourable ones would only start moving upon repeated exposure, hence the argument that the impacts celebrity endorsement have on brand equity grow

powerful over time and that the absolute concentration of all marketing mix elements on the pairings further strengthens brand equity (Till 1998, 405). Not to mention, household names can operate as external cues which decreases consumer uncertainty and drives product preference by inferring information on product attributes and quality (Dean 1999, 2).

Last but not least, classical conditioning as illustrated in Figure 3 can be crucial to the transference of long-lasting attitudes towards brands, and in turn, the growth of brand loyalty. It states that brand loyalty can be influenced by celebrity endorsement through two approaches: affect transfer which refers to when factors are assessed positively merely thanks to their connections with other counterparts inside consumers' minds, and inferential belief formation which refers to when consumers modify their attitudes towards brands upon the setup of connections between said brands and other factors (Till & Nowak 2000, 475). In the same vein as brand recall and brand recognition, highly credible spokespersons are expected to generate higher levels of brand loyalty. By contrast, established brands have their own credibility, rendering spokespersons' impacts on their consumer-based brand equity relative to their existing brand credibility. It is safe to say the relationship between endorser credibility and brand equity as mediated by brand credibility. (Spry et al. 2011, 887 & 898.)

### 3.3.2 Self-Brand Connection and Brand Equity

When inspecting the Meaning Transfer Model through the lens of the Associative Learning Theory, audiences classify celebrity spokespersons under symbolic aspirational reference groups with value-expressive appeals – social groups that they compare themselves against, and at the same time, aspire to belong to. They desire to identify with the positive qualities high-profile figures supposedly have – i.e. trustworthiness, expertise, likability, attractiveness. This, together with the fact that consumers put brands to work in the construction and maintenance of their self-identities, are the reasons behind the development of self-brand connections when consumers absorb into their self-concepts the symbolic meanings vested in endorsed brands by those endorsers. During such a process, the attainment of added benefits like heightened self-esteem, social approval, and expression of individuality, etc. are unlocked. (Escalas & Bettman 2003, 340-341.) Consumers are then enabled to strengthen relevant brand associations and favourable brand attitudes in their memory networks, overall expanding their knowledge of the brands (Keller 1993, 2).

From the perspective of the Match-Up Hypothesis, the Meaning Transfer Model also depends on the degree of congruency audiences perceive to exist between the endorsers and the endorsed (Misra & Beatty 1990, as cited in Dwivedi et al. 2015, 452). The more relevant the cultural meanings carried by the superstars are to the brands, the more sensible and

logical the pairings seem to be, and thus the more favourable consumer responses towards the meanings and the brands become (Keller 2013, as cited in Dwivedi et al. 2015, 452). Hence, congruency reinforces all relationships between endorser credibility, self-brand connections, and brand equity. Extant studies have credited consumers' mechanisms for assessing the degree of match-up amongst factors to their naïve theories about the workings of the world – or in other words, mental explanations which only make sense to themselves, obviously lacking in scientific merits (Murphy & Medin 1985, as cited in Dwivedi et al. 2015, 452). This notion underlines how pivotal the audiences' judgements of matches and mismatches are to their brand evaluations on the whole. Moreover, congruity estimations are involved in the formation of self-brand connections because they, as cognitive performances, facilitate the meaning movements. (Dwivedi et al. 2015, 458.)

Consumer-based brand equity is impacted by none other than these outcomes. Not only do celebrity endorsers imbue brands with valuable meanings, their credibility and attractiveness also facilitate audiences' willingness to accept and incorporate relevant brand associations into their self-images. Consumers who do so are likely to pardon the accountable brands for their marketing blunders – anything along the lines of poor advertising campaigns or temporary product quality issues. They are also likely to remain loyal and refrain from switching to competitors' brands even when tempted with discounts, special displays, bundling pricing, and coupons, etc. In short, celebrity endorsement can be strategically implemented to scale up consumer engagement (Escalas & Bettman 2003, 347; Dwivedi et al. 2015, 458.)

## 4 REVIEW OF THE CASE ORGANIZATION

### 4.1 Background and Business Model

Organization X was originally founded as an NGO in South Korea in 2010, but was then re-established as an interdisciplinary IGO at the Rio+20 UN Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012. Given its belief that not only can economic growth and environmental sustainability go hand-in-hand but they must also be integrated for the sake of humankind's future, Organization X pushes for the implementation of the green growth paradigm – a coordinated advancement of economic growth, environmental sustainability, and social inclusion driven by sustainable development and consumption of natural resources. The benefits green growth can bring about include job creation and poverty reduction, sustained natural environment, reduced vulnerability to climate change and natural disasters, greater access to clean water, increased resource productivity, and enhanced energy security. As such, Organization X's mission is to support developing countries and emerging economies in their transitions towards climate resilient and pro-poor growth where impoverished people are benefitted, demonstrating how the green pathways towards development can target all transformational aspects of economic performance, social inclusion and environmental sustainability at the same time.

Organization X collaborates with nations, multilateral institutions, administrative organs, and the private sector to change the lives of millions for the better. It currently has 28 Member Countries across Latin America, Europe, Africa, and Asia-Pacific. In order to help them uphold their commitments to the Paris Climate Agreement and reach their Sustainable Development Goals, Organization X operates on a service delivery model that is a combination between providing rigorous technical assistance in policy adoption, knowledge sharing, and capacity building and accelerating the mobilization of green finance into relevant projects. The former is achieved through on-the-ground teams embedded within governmental authorities, whilst the latter happens across four priority thematic areas – Sustainable Energy, Green Cities, Sustainable Landscapes, and Water and Sanitation. With such products and services, Organization X seeks to deliver impacts through the following strategic outcomes: greenhouse gas emission reduction, creation of green jobs, increased access to sustainable services, such as, clean affordable energy, sustainable public transport, improved sanitation and sustainable waste management, improved air quality, adequate supply of ecosystem services, and enhanced adaptation to climate change. Note that Organization X's programme interventions are demand-driven and tailored to Member Countries' specific needs in the context of their national circumstances.

## 4.2 2030 Campaign

The 2030 Campaign is a high-profile initiative Organization X will be executing in late 2019. At its center lies the Flagship Report based on the annually updated findings from Organization X's Green Growth Index, designed to facilitate progress towards worldwide implementation of green growth by the year 2030. The Report will have been peer-reviewed by an advisory group constituting international partners such as the OECD, World Bank, UNDP, UNEP, UNIDO, Institute for Global Environmental Strategies, the Green Growth Knowledge Platform Metrics, and Indicators Expert Working Group, as well as university partners, and others.

The 2030 Campaign comprises of a series of promotional engagements for the publication's official launch, but for the purposes of this thesis, the only component worth discussing here is the Club of Champions – a group of eminent persons and NSAs serving as a high-level vehicle for explaining the Report's contents and amplifying its communicational impacts, ultimately advancing the green growth model. Particularly, by leveraging well-attended events and roundtable discussions on regional, sub-regional, and national levels to achieve extensive media coverage, the Champions will help ensure that the Campaign as a whole will showcase Organization X's capacity to drive the green growth agenda with timely insights and innovative recommendations, and inspire Organization X's Member Countries and partners to take action and strive to achieve greater success in green growth. Whilst the NSAs will be selected amongst members of Organization X's Council, the eminent persons will be recruited externally.

Key principles underlying membership in the Club include commitment, recognition, reach, and substantive relevance. Entrusted with effectively advocating for the paradigm shift towards green growth to a much broader audience outside the Report's typical reach, the Champions will be equipped with messaging and supporting materials derived directly from, and aligned with, the publication's outputs, conclusions, and recommendations. These findings are of course based on formally recognized, accepted, and available data sources, as well as concrete experience and peer-reviewed researches and analyses. The Champions will be introduced at Organization X's annual multi-day conference, where their existing endorsements of environmentally sustainable economic development will be highlighted and their planned advocacy activities throughout the coming years announced. Afterwards, the Champions, alongside with Organization X's programmatic teams, will continue to promote the Report's messages through relevant international forums and events such as, amongst others, the UN General Assembly, World Economic Forum, G77, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change's Conference of the Parties.

The Champions are expected to convince their listeners and viewers to believe that governments' adoption of green-growth policies have resulted in positive sustainable economic growth as corroborated by credible evidence, and that Organization X is one of the top-tier green-growth service providers in the world. In addition, those who are interested in learning more about the current status of green growth will be persuaded to read the Report. Speaking of which, target audiences for the Champions include:

- Ministers and ministerial-level stakeholders
- C-Suite stakeholders from private enterprises
- Donors and potential donors
- Partners of Organization X's country programs and their first-degree stakeholders
- Communities of practice from leading global think tanks, international organizations, and academic institutions
- World-class journalists
- Civil society and the general public.

## 5 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH AND DATA ANALYSIS

### 5.1 Research Design

Empirical research is based on the researcher's direct observation and measurement of the target phenomenon, thus deriving knowledge from real-life experiences that can be compared against theories. As opposed to the secondary data that is gathered from literature review to form the theoretical background, this stage processes the primary kind which can be collected with qualitative and quantitative techniques. Whereas the former uses prose to render a phenomenon fathomable in its social and economic context, the latter yields statistic to explain the relationship between a cause and an effect. (Emerald Publishing 2019.) As described in Subchapter 1.4, both research methods are used in this thesis.

For the qualitative research, an interview was conducted. Interviewing allows the researcher to procure and follow up on answers from participants, overall capturing their perspectives of the phenomenon under study. This technique is appropriate for when the research emphasizes on interpersonal contact and can be carried out in two styles: unstructured where the questions are open-ended and conversational, or structured where the questions are formulated in advance. The former encourages freedom of expression but its results are either many generalities or a few specificities, whereas the latter maintains the interview's uniformity throughout its process. (Frechtling, Sharp, & Westat 1997.) The author interviewed Organization X's Head of Communications with three structured questions. The session was audio-recorded and lasted 20 minutes. The questions are attached in Appendix 1. For readers' information, the Communications Unit is in charge of raising Organization X's profile to be recognized as one of the world's top-tier green growth solutions providers through implementations of communications strategies and activities. The maintenance and coordination of the Club of Champions therefore falls under its jurisdiction.

For the quantitative research, a self-administered survey was conducted. Surveying allows the researcher to gain insights into a large population in terms of relative incidence, distribution, and interrelations by studying its representative subset. In this technique, the researcher presents a list of questions to respondents, then summarizes their answers using such statistical forms as percentages and frequency distribution. There are two types of survey: cross-sectional for when the researcher requires a pool of opinions and practices at one point of time, or longitudinal for when the researcher needs to compare differences in opinions and practices over a period of time. (Perumal 2014, 92-93.) For this thesis, the author employed the cross-sectional type and drew a random sample of the general public through the Internet – the only target audience that the author could realistically approach

out of those identified, as admitted under the section of limitations in Subchapter 1.2. The questionnaire was written in English and consisted of 16 questions, of which 6 were closed, 9 to be rated on a scale from 1 to 5, and 1 to be filled with a short answer. Responses were kept entirely anonymous. The questions are attached in Appendix 2.

## 5.2 Data Collection Process

Figure 7 illustrates the author's data collection process in a chronological manner.

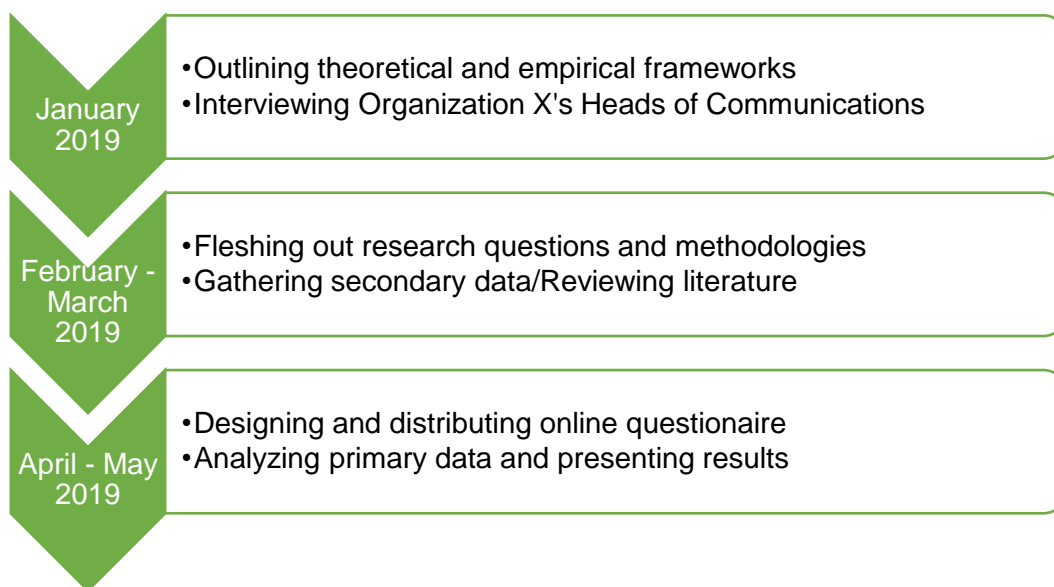


Figure 7 Timeline of the Thesis' Data Collection Process

Although the research topic was conceived in late 2018, the author was too occupied with the internship and could not officially begin working on it until February 2019. As January 2019 was the author's last month at the case organization, the author outlined the thesis and formulate the interview questions. The author needed to conduct the session in person with the Head of Communications because it would be easier to ask for clarifications when the author failed to understand something, and that it would be extremely inconvenient for both parties to correspond through emails.

After completing the literature review and secondary data collection, the author prepared to survey which factors affects the general attitudes people around the globe have towards celebrity endorsements of environmental causes. In order to obtain a large and culturally diverse enough sample size, the online questionnaire was distributed in four ways: on Facebook in groups filled with heterogeneous foreigners, on Twitter, on a cross-platform messaging application called Discord, and through personal networks of the author's friends in the US, Finland, South Korea, Australia, and Vietnam.

## 5.3 Data Analysis

### 5.3.1 Analysis of the Interview with the Head of Communications

The Head stated that he envisioned the eminent persons to be business leaders who double as inspirational speakers – the types qualified to front TED talk conferences with their extensive knowledge and dynamic presentation/storytelling skills. Shortlisted candidates must be outspoken about decarbonization and transforming economic systems in ways that lead to a sustainable climate-resilient future. This criterion is obviously to ensure the Champions' representations of Organization X will appear logical in the public eye since they already understand the inner workings of the green growth model and are genuinely motivated to align themselves with Organization X. It also means that they will have little to no difficulty in comprehending the contents of the Flagship Report and relaying them to audiences, and that they have a history of engaging policy makers in designing the right framework to generate market conditions and incentives that scale up investments in the low-carbon economy. By extension, they must be known for implementing and encouraging green practices within their commercial firms to foster a corporate culture of social responsibility, because any inconsistencies between internal identities and external images are perceived as hypocrisy and will reflect badly on Organization X and be in conflict with their duties as the Champions. This is how the principles of commitment and substantive relevance which underly memberships of the Club are supposed to be satisfied.

In addition, it is strongly desired that the Champions have a decent organic reach and a likewise decent engagement rate on social media. This way, in this age of global connectivity, they will be able to circulate messages from the Report beyond their direct followers for free as those accounts will share the contents onto their own feeds, multiplying exposure and adding values to their promotional efforts at offline events and conferences where they speak on behalf of Organization X. Taking a quick look at Organization X's social media accounts on Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn, one can tell that its audience engagement rate is disproportionately low to its number of followers. This is because Organization X uses social media simply to showcase to its higher-up stakeholders – i.e. donors, governments, businesses, and fellow organizations in the sustainable development sector, that their investments are being used wisely and that its programmatic interventions are delivering impacts. Of course, these stakeholders only retweet and share onto their feeds contents which directly involve them such as event announcements or product launches. Big institutions like the UN and the World Bank are in the same situation with millions of followers but only up to a few dozen interactions. If Organization X wants target audiences, especially the general public who vote for the governments Organization X works with, to be

convinced that green growth policy adoption has reaped positive sustainable benefits and that it is a top-tier green growth provider, it needs the Champions to change this reality. This is a component which partially reflect the principles of recognition and reach.

The Head put a premium on the ability to vulgarize scientific languages and emotionally captivate audiences because humans are inherently emotional beings, and they let emotions instead of intellectual proofs drive their actions most of the time. This is what anyone involved in the multidiscipline of marketing is ought to know. Truth be told, hard evidence is boring, especially when it comes to a topic like climate change and sustainable development. Upon reading about or listening to scientific information which is distinctively phrased to the point it sounds like alien, audiences can hardly bring themselves to care about it, let alone to absolutely believe it. This applies to both the public at large and specialized constituents of society because different professions use different terminologies and people are likely to misunderstand words used in areas of expertise beyond theirs. Here, apathy is as dangerous as mediated denial. Therefore, in order to promote the Report and the green growth model as a whole, it is imperative for Organization X to have effective public speakers who can speak the audiences' languages and convert facts and statistics into emotionally powerful contents – who can amuse, inspire, and delight, overall making listeners feel so drawn to them that they become predisposed to accept the messages they convey.

When asked if recruiting a celebrity from the entertainment industry to be a Champion would be a feasible option, the Head nodded in agreement. He himself was a fan of actor Leonardo DiCaprio's environmentalist advocacy, and acknowledged that the topic of celebrity is extremely effective at instigating and fuelling conversations, both directly and otherwise. A case in point is that the video of said actor speaking at the opening of the Climate Summit in 2014 has accumulated almost 3 million views whereas a typical UN video receives only a few hundreds. Given that Organization X's current President of the Assembly and Chair of its Council was the eighth UN Secretary-General, the Head hoped the Chairman could leverage his contacts from his UN tenure to approach a suitable celebrity and offer him or her to sign up for a membership with the Club. Of course, the celebrity would have to go through the screening process like other candidates to ensure he or she meets the requirements of commitment and substantive relevancy – not so much for reach and recognition as these qualities are obvious by-products of fame. However, the problem is that many Organization X's researchers and analysts would not like the idea of being represented by a celebrity because they would consider it a trivialization of Organization X's works, that the audiences would be focused on image over education. Not to mention, the Head admitted that Organization X is not well-known enough to attract the likes of actor Leonardo DiCaprio. Business leaders would more likely agree to be Organization X's Champions because they

can have specific financial interests in Organization X's Member Countries and utilize Organization X's programmes as investment opportunities, but for a celebrity, there is nothing in return for his or her speaking on behalf of Organization X except good publicity and moral satisfaction – something that almost every other organization can offer, even on a bigger scale.

### 5.3.2 Analysis of the Online Questionnaire

The survey attends to AS#2 as it seeks to discover how celebrity attributes can influence audiences' decisions to consume educational materials promoted by celebrity diplomats. Of course, the materials hypothetically in question were specified to be related to the topic of green growth to participants. The concept of green growth was concisely explained using Organization X's definition in case it might have been unfamiliar, and so was the concept of celebrity endorsements of social causes with the term Goodwill Ambassadors. The questions were devised based on the private sector's models for effective celebrity endorsers selection reviewed in Subchapter 3.2. The survey was opened on 24 April 2019 and closed on 1 May 2019. During this one week, 115 responses were received in total, none of which were invalid as the questions were simple and the author marked everything as required so they could not be skipped. For the analysis, percentages are rounded up since the units are people.

To begin with, the author looks into the demographic profile of the respondents. The first four questions are concerned with their background information, meaning to gauge the diversity of the sample in order to increase the generalizability of the findings across generations, nationalities, and genders.

Firstly, as illustrated in Figure 8, most of the participants are quite young. At 60% (69 persons), the proportion of those between 23-38 years old doubles that of those below 22 years old which is 28% (32 persons). Middle-aged people between 39-54 years old account for 10% (12 persons) whilst the number of seniors between 55-73 years old is extremely insignificant (2 persons). Therefore, the findings produced by the primary questions are most applicable to the first age range – Millennial, then to a lesser extent, the second – Generation Z, and the third – Generation X. It is safe to not take into consideration the last one – Baby Boomers. In addition, across these age groups, females are dominantly present, taking up 72% (83 persons) of the total amount of respondents – roughly 2.5 times bigger than the males at 28% (32 persons). Millennials came of age during the internet explosion and Generation Zers were born into it, both brought up in an age of rapid technological expansion. Hence, their behaviours, attitudes and lifestyles are shaped by the constant availability of on-demand entertainment and the global connectivity of communications. (Dimock 2018.)

The author feels the need to stress this foundation because these cohorts have been experiencing an unprecedentedly expanded celebrity culture, which may explain their opinions towards the celebrity attributes examined later on.

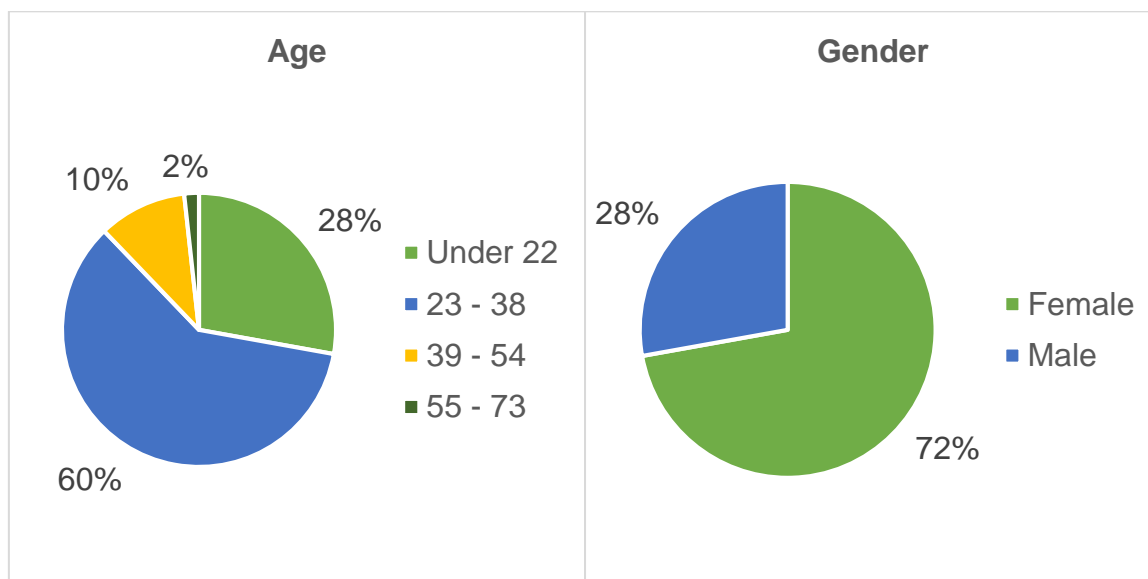


Figure 8 Distribution of Respondents by Age and Gender

Secondly, Figure 9 shows how diverse the survey sample was. 115 respondents originated from 18 different countries, equalling more or less 18 different cultures because those which are geographically situated close to one another are bound to share some similarities on the grounds of cultural interchanges. Since the questionnaire was also personally distributed by the author's friends in certain countries as described in Subchapter 5.2, it is unsurprising that the proportions of respondents coming from these nations are a bit bigger than the rest who randomly participated via the Internet. Particularly, 16% (18 persons) are Vietnamese, 12% (14 persons) are Finnish, 10% (11 persons) are Australian, 9% (10 persons) are South Korean, Chinese and American and Canadian each accounts for 7% (8 persons), 6% (7 persons) are Russian, and German and Nepali each takes up 5% (6 persons). In order to avoid clustering the pie chart, the author groups the nationalities wielded by less than 5 respondents into the category Others at 17% (19 persons). They include Singaporean, Dutch, Japanese, Ecuadorian, Indian, Serbian, Pakistani, and Filipino. All this indicates the eventual results of the survey to be a nice mixture of opinions between Western and Eastern regions, and between developing and developed countries.

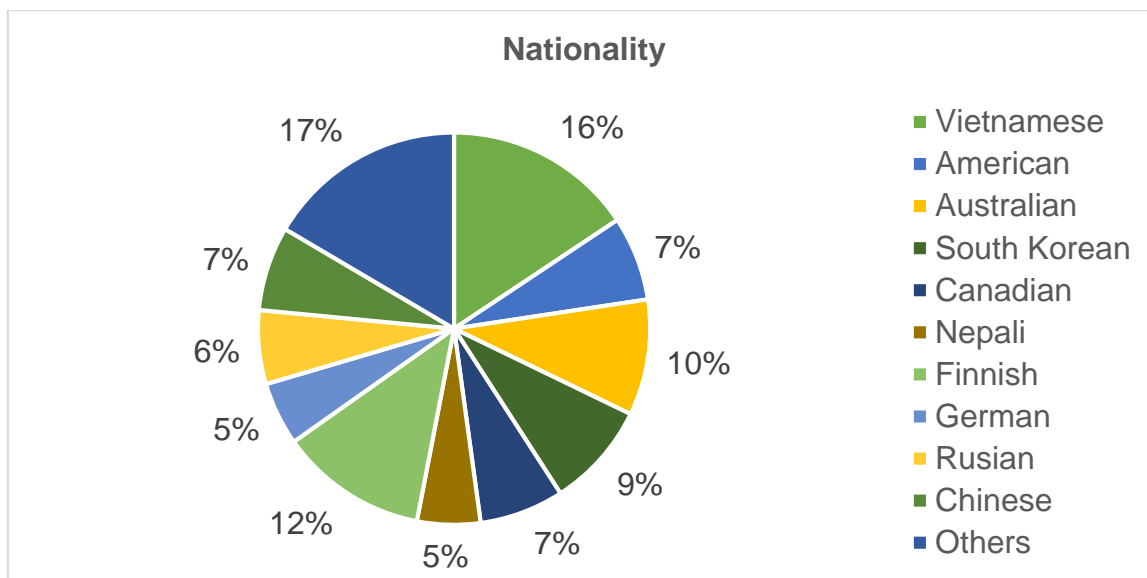


Figure 9 Distribution of Respondents by Nationality

Thirdly, as seen in Figure 10, an overwhelming majority of the respondents – 90% (104 persons), are interested in the green growth model and environmental issues as a whole. The author interprets these people as willing and actively seeking to learn about said topics. Meanwhile, 9% (10 persons) are on the fence, meaning that they can be unbothered to check out related contents at times, depending on how much motivations they are given by the circumstances to do so. Only 1% (1 person) absolutely refuses to engage with such subjects. Tying this together with the above identifications, it is a heart-warming sign that so many young adults who grew up in literally different environments are paying more attention to mother nature.

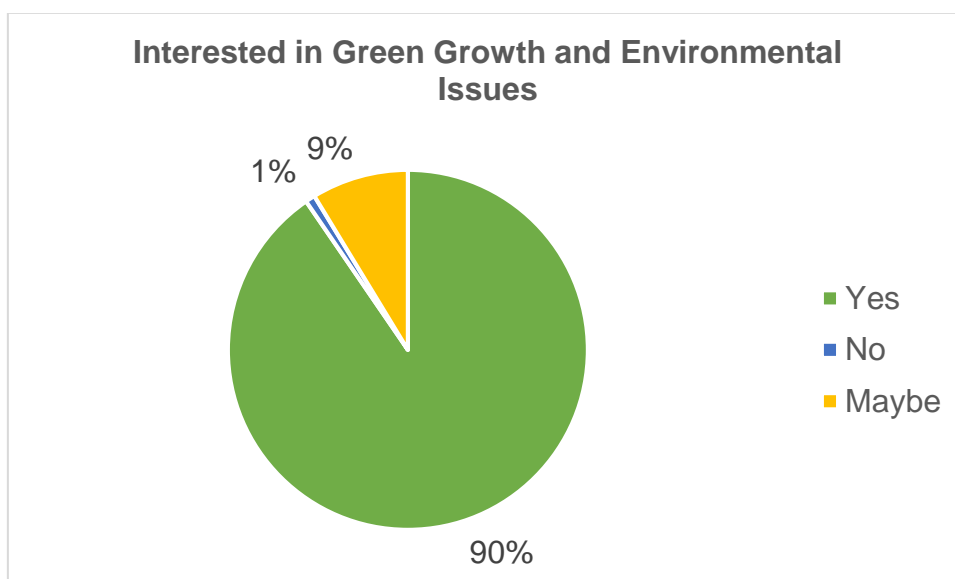


Figure 10 Distribution of Respondents by Their Interest in the Theme in Question

To continue with, the author gauges which celebrity attributes are more effective at appealing to audiences to consume educational contents about green growth and environmental sustainability. In this part of the survey, the author supplied preformulated statements and asked respondents to rank how relatable they are on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being Strongly Disagree and 5 being Strongly Agree. The answered were constructed based on the celebrity attributes emphasized in the Source Models – Subchapter 3.2.1, the Product Match-Up Hypothesis – Subchapter 3.2.2, and the Meaning Transfer Model – Subchapter 3.2.3. The theories are recapped to help readers comprehend the data analyses easily.

**a. Source Credibility and Attractiveness:**

On one hand, according to the Source Credibility Model, the persuasiveness of superstars as communications sources is asserted to be contingent upon how credible audiences perceive them to be, as well as how much they like them. Likability is a decisive variable for credibility because people are inclined to distrust those they dislike, whilst credibility encompasses the dimensions of trustworthiness and expertise. As captured in Figure 11, the majority of survey participants rank both attributes as important or highly important when considering the contents promoted by a celebrity endorser.

However, within credibility alone, trustworthiness is held in higher regard than expertise is. Particularly, 38% (44 persons) agree and 31% (36 persons) strongly agree that they are more likely to pick up on materials endorsed by a celebrity who appear to be reliable to them, whereas 23% (23 persons) agree and 25% (29 persons) strongly agree that they are motivated to do so when they perceive the endorser to be experienced enough to discuss environmental issues. Altogether, trustworthiness provides a push for 69% (80 persons), but expertise serves in this capacity to 48% (56 persons). In the same vein, trustworthiness prevails over expertise when it comes to uncertainty and rejection. 21% (24 persons) have no idea whether the communicator's sincerity affects their willingness to receive the conveyed messages, which is lower than the 27% (31 persons) cannot tell if getting presented with a knowledgeable communicator means that much to them. Only 3% (4 persons) strongly disagree and 6% (7 persons) disagree that their confidence in the celebrity shapes their decision-making processes. The celebrity's proficiency with the topics at hand receives a worse treatment as 10% (12 persons) strongly disagree and 14% (16 persons) disagree with taking it into consideration. As such, there exists a stark contrast between the 9% (11 persons) who disregard source trustworthiness and the whopping 24% (28 persons) who overlook source expertise.

As for likability, 37% (42 persons) agree and 23% (27 persons) strongly agree that they are more compelled to check out the promoted contents if they are fond of the celebrity. Thus,

a total of 60% (65 persons) have their judgements susceptible to their biases towards the endorser. 22% (33 persons) take a neutral stance, meaning there are equal chances that they get swayed or not by their feelings towards the source. Only 11% (13 persons) explicitly denies that the fact they like the communicator has anything to do with their acceptance of the conveyed messages at all.

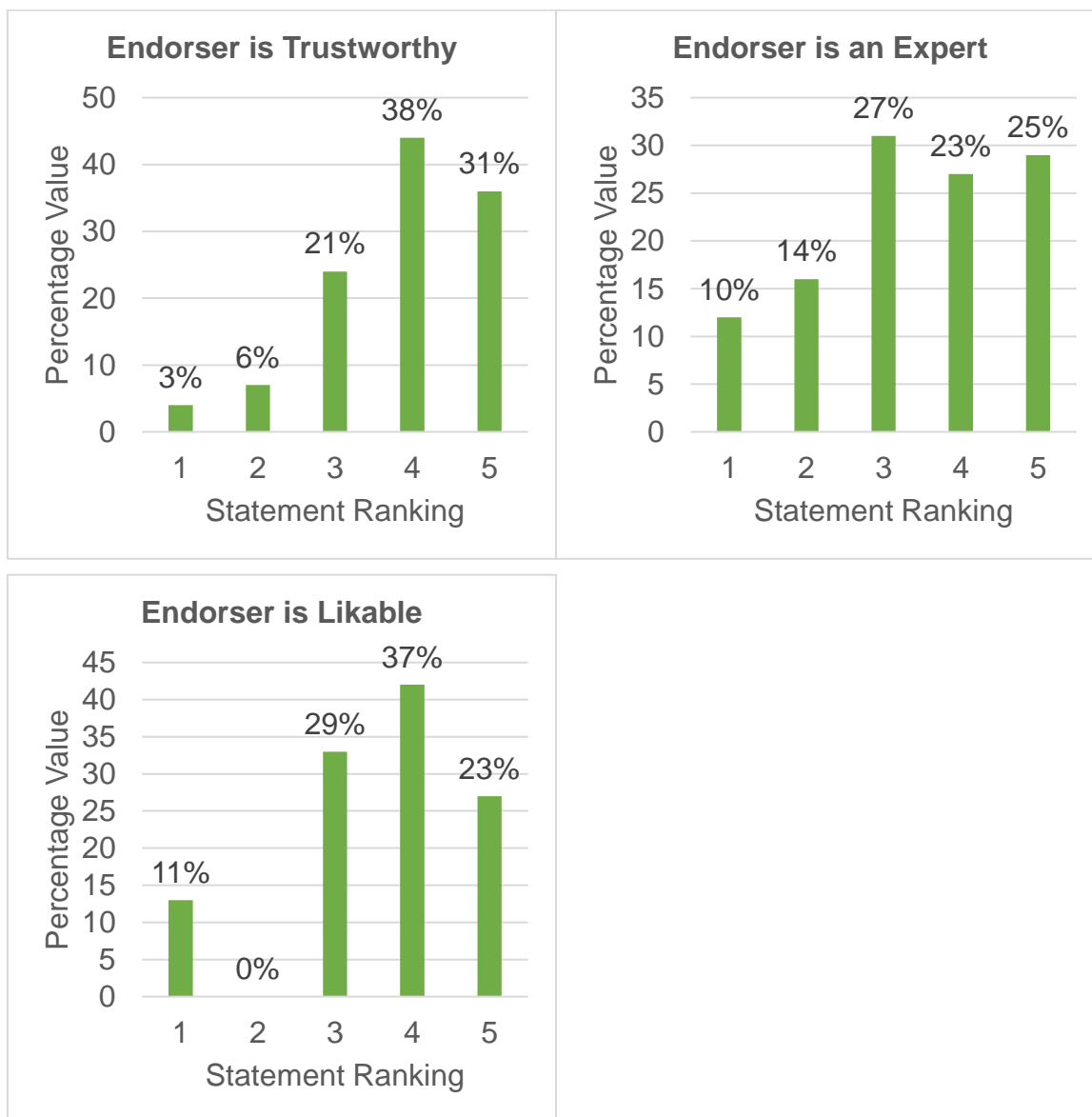


Figure 11 Respondents' Determination of how Influential Source Credibility is to Their Message Receptivity

On the other hand, the Source Attractiveness Model states that household names as communications sources can persuade audiences more effectively when they are perceived to be beautiful. This attribute is supported by three variables: similarity which is when audiences see themselves in the endorser, familiarity – when audiences are personally aware of the endorser thanks to repeated exposure, and once again, likeability because people

are drawn to those whose physical appeals entice them. As visualized in Figure 12, except for familiarity and likability, participants do not prioritize a celebrity endorser's attractiveness and similarity when choosing to consume the promoted contents, given how such contents are educational in nature. Since the author already analyses likability above, it is not going to be redundantly looked into here.

Firstly, when hypothetically faced with a physically attractive communicator, the sample's individual attitudes are not polarized enough for the author to draw a concrete conclusion. Whereas 17% (19 persons) strongly disagree and 20% (23 persons) disagree that they are more likely to consume the endorsed materials when the endorser is good-looking, 9% (10 persons) strongly agree and 25% (29 persons) agree that the endorser's appearance is indeed a legitimate motivation to them. This translates into 37% (42 persons) for rejection versus 34% (39 persons) for admission, and with the difference being merely 3 persons out of 115, it is safe to view this as a tie in opinions. Not to mention, 30% (34 persons) are on the fence, which is not too far behind those two definitive proportions.

Secondly, over half of the respondents – 53% (62 persons), confirm that they are more likely to tune into the messages being circulated if they know who the communicator is. More precisely, 32% (37 persons) agree and 21% (24 persons) strongly agree that they have the tendency to behave in said way under the given circumstances. 26% (30 persons) are unsure whether their familiarity with the celebrity boosts their willingness in checking out the promoted materials. At the same time, 8% (9 persons) strongly disagree and 13% (15 persons) disagree that they read or listen to something for educational purposes simply because they have repeatedly encountered the endorser elsewhere before, adding up to 21% (24 persons) who are against basing their decisions on source familiarity.

Thirdly, the dominant attitudes towards the significance of a perceived resemblance between the endorser and the participants' selves range from neutral to negative. 19% (22 persons) strongly disagree and 22% (25 persons) disagree that they are predisposed to pick up on promoted contents because they see parts of themselves reflected in the celebrity. 33% (38 persons) have no comments. 17% (19 persons) agree and 10% (11 persons) strongly agree that they are cognitively obliged to follow the recommendations of an endorser with whom they identify. In short, 41% (47 persons) keep source similarity away from their judgements, whilst 27% (30 persons) acknowledge being under its influence.



Figure 12 Respondents' Determination of how Influential Source Attractiveness is to Their Message Receptivity

#### b. Product Match-Up:

It is maintained in the Product Match-Up Hypothesis that the effectiveness of high-profile figures as communications sources is boosted when a congruency between the endorsers and the endorsed is tangible to audiences – or in other words, when the celebrity attributes suit the product attributes, because otherwise, the superstars will be at the centre of attention instead of the commodities. Given that the product under discussion in this thesis is Organization X's Flagship Report and the green growth model as a whole, the author asks the survey participants whether they would be more interested in the promoted contents if the celebrity has been living in accordance with the messages preached – i.e. in

environmentally sustainable manners. As shown in Figure 13, 29% (33 persons) agree and 30% (34 persons) strongly agree that such a demonstration would earn their favour, making it over half of the respondents in total at 59% (67 persons). 25% (29 persons) lean neither left or right, meaning that seeing a congruency would be nice but they do not mind if there is not any, either. 10% (12 persons) disagree and 6% (7 persons) strongly disagree that the appropriateness of the endorsement is compelling enough for them to make their decisions, adding up only 16% (19 persons) who take no notice of cause match-up.

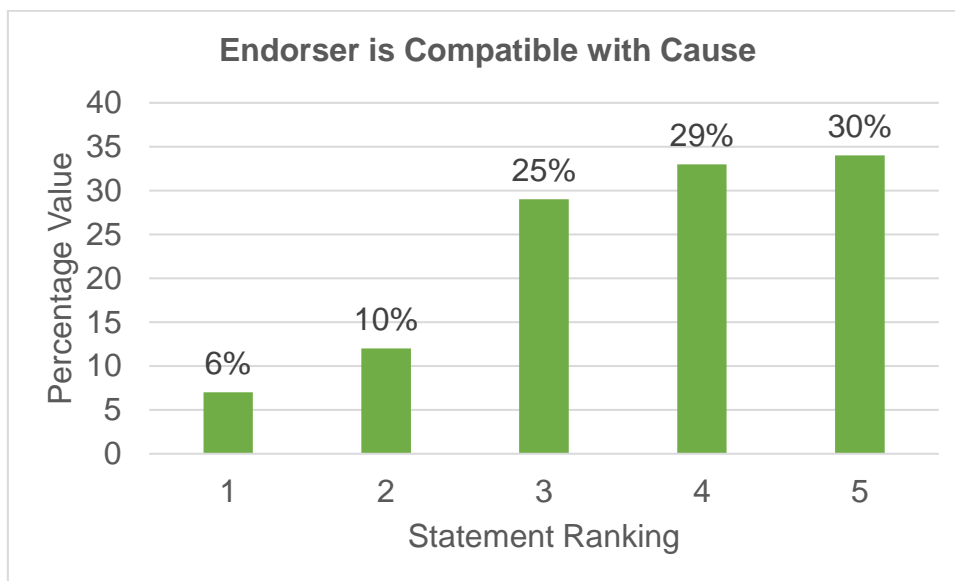


Figure 13 Respondents' Determination of how Influential Celebrity-Cause Fit is to Their Message Receptivity

### c. Meaning Transfer:

Since famous personalities are media products themselves, the Meaning Transfer Model argues that audiences consume celebrity images which contain characteristics they aspire to have. These symbolic meanings move onto the commodities through the endorsement process, and consumers are thereby driven to seek out products which are endorsed by their idols. This is because people wish to feel better about themselves in terms of status, class, personality, and lifestyle with such consumptions. As illustrated in Figure 14, there is a 15% (17 persons) tie between the respondents who strongly disagree and those who strongly agree that they would pick up on the endorsed materials to emulate the endorser's personality and environmentally sustainable lifestyle, as well as to become educated about environmental issues like he or she does. Yet, on the normal intensity, 31% (36 persons) also agree to do the same, and they are opposed by only 12% (14 persons). Altogether, 46% (53 persons) put a premium on the endorsed messages as long as the communicator possesses virtuous traits, whereas 27% (31 persons) do not see themselves getting

convinced simply because they want to emulate the endorser's characteristics. Meanwhile, 27% (31 persons) prefer to act impartially in this hypothetical situation.

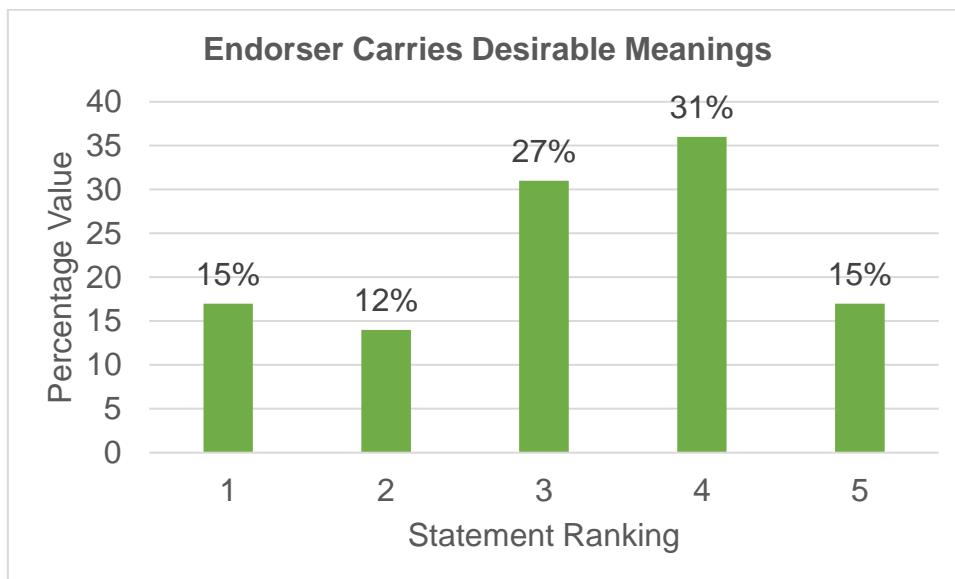


Figure 14 Respondents' Determination of how Influential Celebrity's Symbolic Meanings are to Their Message Receptivity

To end with, the author studies how positive celebrity attributes can impact the organization which is represented by the endorser since the endorsement cannot apply exclusively to the products and audiences always trace the linkage back to the accountable entity. To establish a basis, this part starts off with a statement to be ranked that says the respondents are more interested in the contents promoted by a celebrity endorser if said endorser is backed by a reputable organization in the field of green growth and environmental causes. As seen in Figure 15, 37% (42 persons) agree and 25% (29 persons) strongly agree that they consider organizational reputation to be an important determinant. 24% (28 persons) are indifferent to this variable. 6% (7 persons) strongly disagree and 8% (9 persons) disagree that they would comply with the endorser's telling them to consume some contents due to the institution behind the scene. Thus, in the end, 62% (71 persons) vote in favour of the proposed statement – a proportion 4 times bigger than the 15% who vote against it.

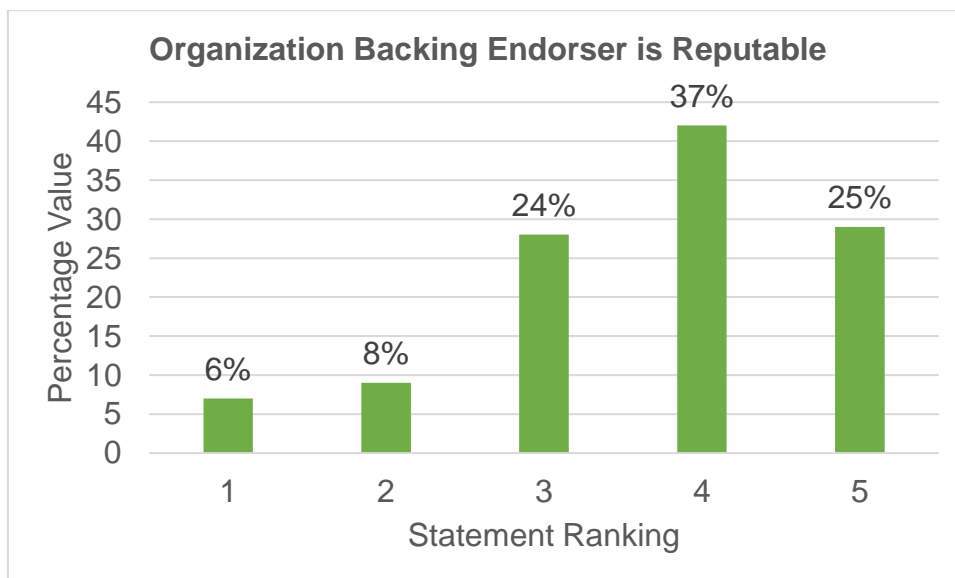


Figure 15 Respondents' Determination of how Influential Organizational Reputation is to Their Message Receptivity

Now that it is confirmed the majority of the participants place a premium on existing organizational reputation, and taking into account the fact that credibility is one of the ingredients in building a solid reputation, the author singles out the attribute of credibility to further determine how much source credibility affects brand credibility through the Associative Learning Theory – where each variable occupies a memory node and they are now linked together thanks to the endorsement. Setting up a hypothetical scenario where the celebrity is already perceived to be credible, the following questions are raised: Do respondents approach the promoted contents already thinking they must be credible? Do respondents think the endorser can vouch for the credibility of the backing organization when it is lesser-known? Figure 16 shows that almost half of the answers are positive – 48% (55 persons) believe in both the materials' credibility and the entity's credibility as an extension of the communicator's credibility. Notwithstanding the proportions who do not feel guaranteed by source credibility to have faith in the materials or the organization – 11% (13 persons) and 15% (14 persons), respectively, the rest of the survey participants – 41% (47 persons) for content credibility and 37% (43 persons) for brand credibility, are doubtful about such associations. This is totally rational because in real life, people need to consider a multitude of factors – other associations that are linked to these two credibility nodes, to make either of these evaluations. Depending on the organization's performances, audience can be swayed to move along the spectrum of approval definitively.

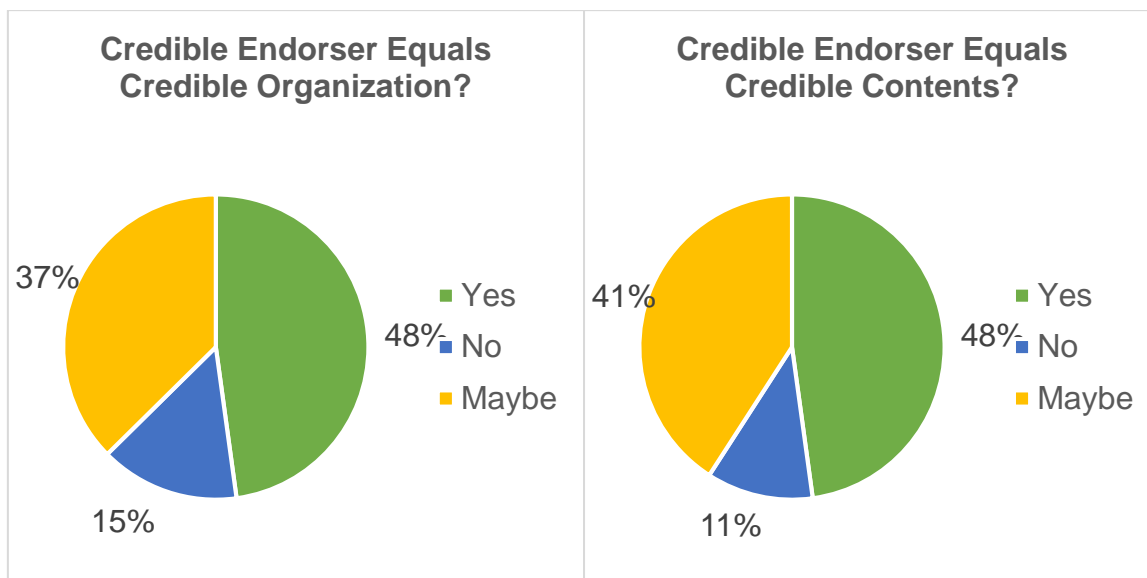


Figure 16 Distribution of Respondents by Whether They Connect Source Credibility with Organizational and Product Credibility

Last but not least, the author wants to find out whether the survey participants justify the partnership between the celebrity and the entity outside the fact that they are championing the same cause by moving the former's meanings to the latter in an attempt to reinforce their congruency. This is to inspect the Meaning Transfer Model through the lens of the Product Match-Up Hypothesis, because audiences do not look at the endorsement as applicable to the product alone, they recognize that there must be underlying reasons why the organization recruits a certain distinguished individual and not someone else, and vice versa. Simply put, the more relevant the meanings carried by the spokesperson are to the institution, the clearer the fit gets, and the more positively audiences behave towards both parties. Thus, the author asks: In the case respondents already perceive the celebrity to hold certain positive values, do they think the organization which appoints said celebrity to be its representative must have shared those values as well? As captured in Figure 17, whilst 51% (58 persons) give an affirmative reply, 37% (43 persons) occupy the middle ground to avoid the extremes on either side, and 12% (14 persons) express the negative of the proposed possibility.

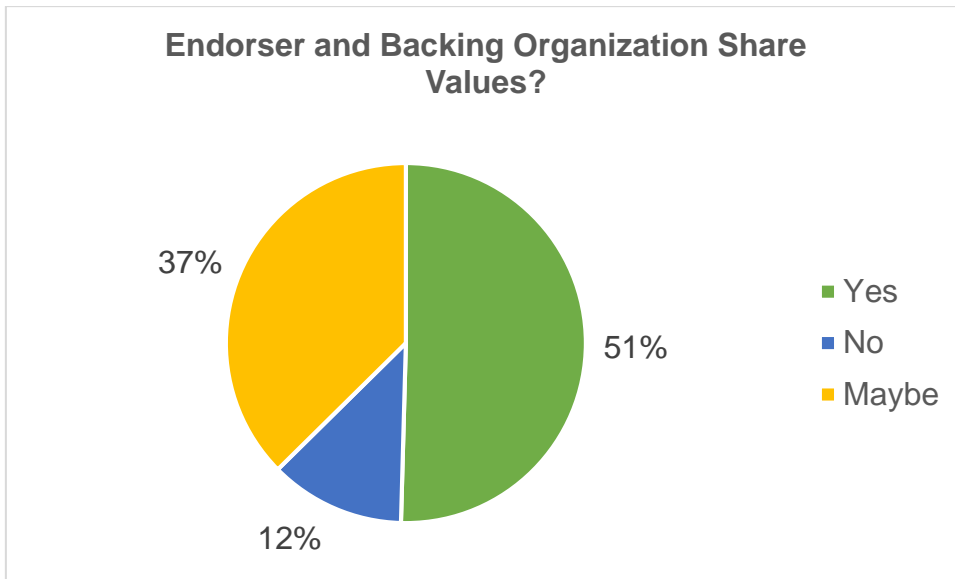


Figure 17 Distribution of Respondents by Whether They Transfer Source Values onto the Endorsed Organization

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

### 6.1 Recommendations for the Case Organization

The author proposes for Organization X to have a celebrity diplomat as one of its Champions. Like its Head of Communications acknowledged, being a celebrity means he or she is already qualified for the principles of recognition and reach underlying memberships in the Club of Champions. Through his or her far-reaching platform, the celebrity spokesperson can appeal to broader audiences who would normally not concern themselves with the likes of Organization X's causes and get them interested. Once they make it past this entry point, it is easier to persuade them to tune into the Flagship Report. Not to mention, famous personalities have large followings on social media and their names are looked up on search engines countless times every day, so when the celebrity diplomat makes a post or a public appearance on behalf of Organization X, that information or that headline can be potentially disseminated to hundreds of thousands of people on their smart phones and their computers. Coming from the entertainment industry which relies on audiences' visceral responses to thrive, the celebrity representative is certainly skilled in storytelling, able to breathe life and personality into dry scientific messages, making up for the lack of emotional depth that Organization X's nitty-gritty statements, press releases, and blog posts suffer from. Not to mention, he or she can draw on his or her talents in the fields of cinema, music, art, or sports to come up with innovative formats to distribute contents on green growth. Thus, the Head's preference of dynamic presentation skills is also fulfilled.

As for the principle of commitment, it can be tested during the screening interview through such aspects as the passion that the celebrity diplomat harbours for issues related to climate change, sustainable development, social inclusion, and poverty reduction, whether he or she has a history of actively engaging in philanthropic activities, and the amount of time, energy, and social capital he or she is willing to voluntarily devote to promoting Organization X's mandate, etc. This principle ties into that of substantive relevance, because those who are genuinely interested in advocating for social and environmental causes will already be utilizing their professional prestige to get the word out to their fanbases even without awaiting offers of institutional linkages. Therefore, whichever celebrity diplomat ends up getting shortlisted by Organization X, he or she should have some existing relevance that can be quickly built up with assistance from Organization X's experts. Like how UN agencies has a 6-to-12-month courtship period to ensure that their missions match well with the interests of their celebrity candidates and to educate those potential ambassadors through private study, expert briefings, and participation in at least one field visit or event (UNICEF 2010), Organization X should do the same with its shortlisted candidates and only award the title

of the Champion to the one who satisfactorily completes the courtship process. Because the 2030 Campaign will last until the year 2030 and the Flagship Report will be annually refreshed, this means Organization X's celebrity representative will have 11 years from now to cement his or her status as a legitimate advocate for green growth in the public eye.

By encouraging social and environmental responsibility, the celebrity diplomat demonstrates to audiences that he or she cares and so can they, that it is not difficult to give back to the communities. Since the Club of Champions will have several members, one Celebrity Champion is reasonable as his or her advocacy activities can cater specifically to the general public and the world-class journalists amongst Organization X's key intended audiences. Furthermore, his or her influence has the potential to extend onto the higher-up target groups of policy-makers and corporate investors, urge them to commit more human and financial resources to creating an environmentally sustainable and socially inclusive world. One, utilizing his or her mainstream popularity to shape public opinion and behaviour, the celebrity diplomat can be granted opportunities to talk with policy makers who want to be perceived more favourably by ordinary citizens through such associations. Two, being a celebrity comes with taking up multiple advertisement and endorsement deals for private goods, so he or she can discover collaboration opportunities between Organization X and the private sector through such business contacts. Whilst Organization X is not big enough to recruit international superstars, the author believes it can start out with a regionally well-known celebrity diplomat – someone from one of its Member Countries so that the representation is authentically in line with Organization X's commitments towards supporting emerging markets and any suspicions of superficiality and colonial narratives are eliminated. This also prevents the Vampire Effect since organizational and celebrity reputations are on the same level.

It goes without saying that Organization X's experts have to closely assist the celebrity representative to ensure he or she thoroughly understands messaging materials from the Report and has enough knowledge about the general subjects involved in any given campaigns. Most possible pitfalls associated with celebrity diplomacy can be avoided if Organization X plans and executes its celebrity spokesperson programme with utmost caution. It should consult colleagues at partner organizations like UNDP and UNEP where the practice is a long-standing tradition.

## 6.2 Answers to Research Questions

- **AS#1: How are celebrity diplomats effective at publicizing social issues? What are their advantages and disadvantages?**

The effectiveness of celebrity diplomats at placing humanitarian and development initiatives on the international agenda is owed to the following factors: One, they can command the media to evoke public discourse on distant suffering and the impacts their institutions are delivering to alleviate such plight. Two, they can reconfigure public opinion and sell ideas within the international community, the credibility of which is guaranteed by their backing entities. Three, politicians like to associate with them to leave positive impressions on the public, and in return, they can leverage exclusive meetings to campaign on behalf of their organizations. Hence, the advantages of celebrity diplomats include raising awareness, mobilizing resources, swaying diplomatic agendas, as well as encouraging youth engagement and stressing the significance of personal action, given their positions as role models.

However, celebrity diplomats are criticized by some experts for oversimplifying the challenges facing international development. They are accused of directing attention away from worthy issues to sexy ones and justifying for the adoption of misguided policies, and that their physical appeals are the sole motivations for audiences to be interested in the causes under discussion. The institutions standing behind them also receive backlash because the integration of public relations techniques like celebrity endorsement into their marketing strategies invites the suspicion that they are procuring positive media portrayals to hide their flawed values and conducts. Furthermore, those hailing from the West are especially frowned upon as maintaining the colonial mentality that it always come down to them to save the distant others. As such, these are the disadvantages of celebrity diplomats.

- **AS#2: From a business perspective, how do the attributes of celebrity diplomats influence audiences' message receptivity?**

Empirical findings demonstrate that audiences are confident in the validity of messages spread by celebrity diplomats who are perceived to be credible and likable. Particularly, credibility is determined through trustworthiness and expertise, but survey participants regard trustworthiness as slightly more important than expertise is. It is also practically confirmed that audiences are motivated to pick up on the endorsed contents when they are familiar with the celebrity spokespersons. One attribute that provokes mixed reactions from survey participants is physical attractiveness as the number of people who consider it a determinant and the number of those who do not is almost equal, plus a high percentage of neutrality. By contrast, the theory which asserts audiences' susceptibility to depend on assumed similarities between themselves and communication sources is disproved.

Audiences are persuaded by celebrity diplomats more easily when a congruency exists between them and the causes, and by extension, between them and the allied organizations. This makes the advocacy more believable, eliciting favourable responses towards the campaigns and the backing entities in terms of donation intentions and willingness to

support. Furthermore, celebrity diplomats, through the endorsement processes, imbue the causes, the campaigns, and their backing organizations with the cultural meanings they have accumulated via their public roles. Audiences are thereby likely to side with institutions whose brand attributes resemble either their own or whose celebrity spokespersons possess the symbolic meanings they hope to obtain – in terms of virtues, lifestyles, intellectual skills, etc., so that they can impart the desired impressions upon their peers.

- **Central Question: Why should Organization X use a celebrity diplomat to promote its Flagship Report?**

The foremost reason Organization X should have a celebrity diplomat amongst its Champions to promote the Flagship Report is because he or she elicits huge amounts of media and public attention and interest thanks to his or her status alone. As showed in AS#2, positive celebrity attributes (credibility, likability, familiarity, cause-fit, meaningfulness) inform audiences' decisions, so an appropriate celebrity diplomat can leverage his or her stardom to educate the general public on the significance of the green growth model and Organization X's programmatic interventions in emerging markets. Following a bottom-up approach, the increased public awareness will then pressurize policy-makers and corporate investors to update their knowledge of green growth and their curiosity in Organization X's works will be ignited. Of course, with the Report being the source of the celebrity diplomat's messages, it should be the first thing these stakeholders examine the transition progresses within Organization X's Member Countries and the strategic approaches and best practices they have implemented to encourage green growth in different sectors of their economies. Thus, the possibility of all target audiences' recognizing Organization X as a top-tier provider of green growth services is enhanced.

Simultaneously, public appearances and endeavours the celebrity diplomat makes on behalf of Organization X will receive free or low-cost coverage by global journalists, reducing the 2030 Campaign's promotional expenses. Given the trend for contemporary politicians to be celebrity-friendly because it makes them likable to the public – for example, the Obama administration, a celebrity diplomat can help Organization X gain access into key circles of power to push for mainstream adoption of green growth policies, as well as to convince donor governments to increase their financial contributions so that Organization X can better cater to the needs of developing countries. There are more incentives for private enterprises to collaborate with Organization X as they will not only adhere to corporate social responsibility but can also gain from the celebrity diplomat's popularity through crossover promotional engagements. Not to mention, because some of green growth's outcomes – namely air quality improvement and greenhouse gas emissions reduction, do not rely

entirely on the implementations of political leaders, the celebrity diplomat can appeal to the general public to develop green habits like using public transportation under the motto that every action counts.

Furthermore, the benefits of the celebrity diplomat can extend beyond the Report onto Organization X. The celebrity diplomat, through his or her endorsement of Organization X's activities, influences audiences to transfer positive quality from him or her onto Organization X. The Associate Learning Theory, which forms the basis for four models of celebrity attributes analysis in AS#2, sees the human's memory network as akin to a spider's web – with a multitude of nodes, each stores a single piece of knowledge. In audiences' minds, the celebrity diplomat occupies one whilst Organization X occupies another, these two are linked together when the former becomes the latter's spokesperson. Upon being repeatedly exposed to this partnership in action, audiences come to be reminded of one part when seeing the other due to spreading activation of the nodes, and whatever perceptions they have towards the endorser are cognitively transferred onto the endorsed. These feelings influence their favourable emotional and behavioural reactions concerning advocacy effectiveness, brand recognition, brand attitudes, brand recall, product and services evaluations, and donation intentions. This linkage can capture differential advantages.

The majority of the survey respondents express that the reputation of the institution backing the celebrity diplomat informs their decisions on whether to pick up on the promoted materials (62%). In the case that the entity is lesser known, almost half of the participants still think the celebrity diplomat can leverage his or her own credibility to vouch for both its credibility and the contents (48%). The remaining are mostly unsure about the validity of such a personal assurance (37% and 41%, respectively) because they lack context. Brand credibility is reflected in the truthfulness of the information communicated via the brand's marketing strategies, and under Organization X's circumstance, since it is young and does not have a big enough reach yet, audiences are simply unaware. So, the celebrity diplomat is essentially an entry point for audiences to get interested and check out Organization X's portfolio to realize that it has always delivered its promises. Once audiences acknowledge Organization X's existing brand credibility, the celebrity diplomat's credibility now comes into play as an enhancement of Organization X's brand credibility. Not to mention, the quality of Organization X's Flagship Report is guaranteed by the fact that it is peer-reviewed by several UN agencies.

Moreover, half of the survey respondents admit to assuming the allied organization to share whatever positive meanings they perceive the celebrity representative to epitomize (51%), whereas most of the rest are again uncertain due to the lack of context (37%). This

assumption is an attempt at justifying the relationship between the celebrity diplomat and the backing entity outside the cause they both champion. Audiences assess the degree of match-up with personal explanations which only make sense to themselves. Therefore, as long as they perceive the symbols carried by the celebrity diplomat to be relevant to Organization X, they are inclined to believe in the representation and behave favourably towards both the parties. Over time, they will move the celebrity attributes onto Organization X. This is how the celebrity diplomat can augment Organization X's brand equity through secondary associations because audiences will transfer his or her positive associations onto Organization X over time, ultimately broadening their mental network of associations surrounding Organization X's memory node and strengthening brand knowledge, brand recall and brand recognition. He or she can also serve as external cues to decrease uncertainty for consumers by inferring information on the Report's attributes and quality.

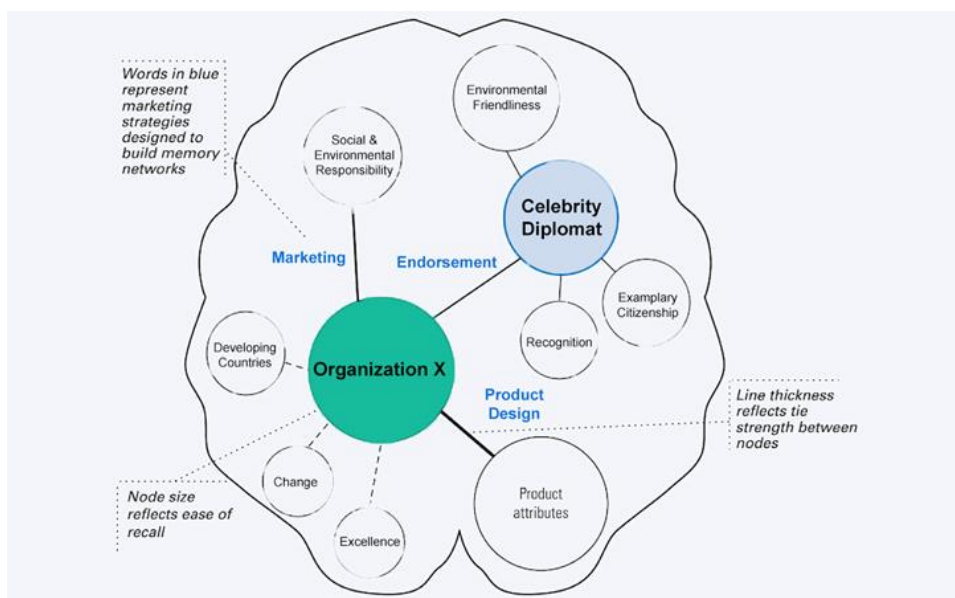


Figure 18 Possible Associative Network Memory between Organization X and the Celebrity Diplomat (Adapted from Palmatier & Sridhar 2017, 154)

### 6.3 Research Validity and Reliability:

Validity is concerned with the accuracy of the results, indicating the level to which the research indeed measures what it is intended for. It can be classified into two categories:

- **Internal Validity:** addresses how truthfully the research's conclusions demonstrate reality and how unaffected they are by dependent variables – whether there exist causal relationships between such results and independent ones. It relies on how profusely detailed the collected data is rather than how abundant, as well as the

opinions of the participants since they are the most important people who can decide if the findings correctly reflect the phenomenon under study.

- **External Validity:** addresses how legitimately the research's demonstrations of reality can be applied across similar contexts in terms of settings, demographics, circumstances, etc. – in short, how generalizable the reflections of the phenomenon are. Especially, this aspect involves the readers and not the researcher, so the latter is advised to carefully elaborate the original context of the research to help the former in properly transferring the conclusions to other cases.

(Brink 1993, 35; Grand Canyon University 2019.)

The author is confident in the thesis' internal validity because methodical and theory triangulations are applied. The former refers to the author's employment of both qualitative and quantitative techniques because they complementarily shed light on the nature of the research problem. Qualitative research was used to uncover detailed insights from the Head of Communications at the case organization, whereas its quantitative counterpart was used to obtain opinions from members of the public in numerical forms. As a result, the author identified not only an acceptable level of consistency between the findings respectively produced but also the areas where they diverged from extant studies. The latter refers to the author's interpretation of data from various theoretical perspective. Empirical findings were analyzed in accordance to reviewed theoretical constructs, and citations of secondary data all originated from scholarly books, academic journals, and news articles. Although some of the literature was quite old – dating back to the 90s, the author double-checked its legitimacy by cross-examining it with up-to-date versions. (Cohen & Crabtree 2006a.)

The author ensured the thesis' external validity by examining of the profundity of the empirical findings based on existing literature from comparable environments, as well as providing of a thick description of them and their associated contexts, presenting down to the smallest details in order to enable readers to perceive their significances and appropriately transfer them to similar situations or people. Not to mention, the author made explicit the sampling strategy employed - purposeful random, which was receiving survey respondents via the Internet without having any advanced knowledge of how the outcomes would turn out. (Cohen & Crabtree 2006b; Cohen & Crabtree 2006c; Frambach 2013, 552.)

Reliability is concerned with the consistency between old and new conclusions every time the research is repeated under similar conditions – if not the same, which is contingent on not only the measure's stability but also its repeatability in the first place. Here, stability addresses the application of the measurement, as well as the random errors it systematically causes. Also subjected to these sub-requirements are the gathered and analyzed data

itself and the researcher's accuracy during the entire process. The former must be carefully handled to eliminate as many errors as possible whilst the latter must not change habits in executing the research approaches and in evaluating the results it yields. (Brink 1993, 35.)

The author considers the thesis to be mostly reliable because except for all other procedures and variables involved in the research, the survey sample was not large enough for the statistics calculated from the survey responses to remain stable throughout repetitions. Obviously, given the time constraint, there was no way for the author to keep relaunching the online questionnaire to procure responses until no new themes or new information related to the research questions could be unearthed. However, the author strove to maximize reliability in other aspects by sticking closely to the research methodology established at the inception of the study, carefully explaining the online questionnaire to prevent participant mistakes, and processing the collected data with utmost seriousness. Not to mention, the survey was entirely anonymous, which made respondents comfortable in sharing their thoughts. (Cohen & Crabtree 2006d; Cohen & Crabtree 2006e; Frambach 2013, 552.)

#### 6.4 Suggestions for Future Studies

The thesis points out that celebrity-cause congruency can influence audiences' message receptivity and that celebrity-brand congruency is necessary for them to perceive the endorsement as legitimate. However, due to shortage of time, the author does not identify which specific attributes can serve as determinants of a match between the celebrity diplomat and the cause, as well as between the celebrity diplomat and the backing entity. Therefore, plenty of room for deeper investigations remains. The same can be said for the movement of meanings from the celebrity diplomat into the cause and the organization as it is easy to comprehend the instilment of symbols into a tangible commodity but not so much for an intangible asset like advocacy messages.

The thesis also touches upon how public bodies that already ally with celebrity diplomats are incorporating those household names into their branding strategies, more researches can be conducted on how important it is for public bodies to have brand identities and how their celebrity spokespersons are shaping their stakeholder-based brand equity, especially since it is a concept heavily associated with commercialism. In addition, since the audience on which this thesis focuses is the general public, it would be interesting to explore the attitudes of corporate investors towards celebrity endorsements of IGOs or NGOs, and whether such endorsements can bring about any creative collaborations between the two parties – i.e. joint promotional campaigns for fundraising purposes.

Lastly, it is necessary to develop separate models for effective selection of celebrity endorsers for environmental causes, as the original constructs are designed for commercialism and having translate them into a social context probably decreases the accuracy of the results. Likewise, another intriguing idea is to specifically inspect the impacts of celebrity diplomats on communications for climate change and sustainable development because the thesis primarily discusses celebrity endorsements of social issues as a whole.

## 7 SUMMARY

This thesis seeks to investigate what social and business benefits a celebrity spokesperson can bring to the case organization and particularly, its upcoming flagship publication. In doing so, the author dissects celebrity diplomacy first as a tool in international relations and second as a branch of celebrity endorsement in marketing. Chapter 1 introduces the thesis background and the research objective, a central question around which the study revolves is devised next, accompanied by two associated questions to ease the process and narrow down the scope more clearly. The hybrid phenomenon is decided to be approached through abductive and inductive reasonings, researched with both qualitative and quantitative methods, using secondary data to build the theoretical base and collecting primary data for the empirical analysis. Before entering the thesis' body part, its entire structure is concisely laid out to provide readers with an idea of each chapter's contents.

Chapter 2 and 3 covers the author's literature review. The former explains why celebrity diplomacy has emerged as a new currency within the realm of international relations out of public mistrust in governmental authorities, illustrates how these unconventional practitioners have evolved their activities over time citing examples of the UN's Goodwill Ambassador, and finally points out the communicatory values for which they are praised by some experts and the threats of making development sexy for which they are criticized by others. The latter starts off by briefly exploring how celebrity endorsement works through the Associative Learning Theory before identifying its risks, three models for effective celebrity endorsers are presented next in order to reveal how audiences treat different celebrity attributes below the conscious level, and lastly the impacts celebrity endorsement can have upon brand equity are touched upon to reinforce the potential of the practice.

Chapter 4 offers a glimpse into the case organization's operational purposes and paints a big picture of its service delivery model, then shifts the focus onto the group of high-profile spokespersons who are purported to engage its target stakeholders' with its new Report, thus providing more context for the. Chapter 5 consists of the empirical research and data analysis. Beginning with a brief elaboration on the research design and why the data collection techniques of interviewing and surveying were employed, it details the author's research timeline and processes of conducting the needed interview and distributing an online questionnaire. The information procured from the interview with the case organization's Head of Communications is transcribed, followed by the analysis of the statistics summing up the survey responses which are visualized in pie and column charts.

Chapter 6 concludes the study. First, the author makes appropriate recommendations for the case organization. To help readers understand the reasons behind them, answers to

the research questions are presented in detail, citing both theoretical and empirical findings for corroboration where applicable. These results highlight that Organization X should have a celebrity diplomat amongst its Champion because stardom is the most effective way at bringing to the attention of the public and decision makers the Flagship Report and its programmatic operations, and positive celebrity attributes can influence not only audiences' message receptivity but also their perceptions of its brand image. Second, the author discusses the study's validity and reliability, identifying which aspects the author is confident and why. Third, suggestions for future researches are put forwards.

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## APPENDICES

### **Appendix 1: Questions for the Interview with Organization X's Head of Communications**

1. What kind of eminent persons is Organization X targeting for its Champions?
2. What are the criteria for an eminent person to become a Champion?
3. Would Organization X consider making a celebrity from the entertainment industry a Champion? Like what the UN does with its Goodwill Ambassadors?

### **Appendix 2: Questions for the Online Survey**

# Public Attitudes towards Celebrity Endorsement of Green Growth

Hello, I am Linh Ngo, a senior student at Lahti University of Applied Sciences in Finland. As part of my undergraduate dissertation, I am conducting this survey to determine what makes celebrity endorsement of green growth effective. It would be greatly appreciated if you could spare about 3 minutes or less of your time to complete the questionnaire.

Participants are kept totally anonymous and their responses will not be used for any other purposes. Excluding this introduction, the survey is divided into 3 parts with 16 questions in total (6 multiple-choice, 9 ranking, and 1 short-answer).

Following is a brief explanation of the main concepts in case you may not be familiar with them.

**Green growth is a coordinated advancement of economic growth, environmental sustainability, poverty reduction and social inclusion driven by the sustainable development and use of natural resources. It is the polar opposite of conventional development models that rely on the depletion and destruction of such assets.**

**Nowadays, there are many celebrities who partner with non-profit organizations (such as the United Nations) to shine a spotlight on important issues affecting our planet and its people. They are called Goodwill Ambassadors. Through their far-reaching platforms, they raise awareness and mobilize support to help address social, economic, human rights or environmental challenges.**

## Part 1: Background information

1. How old are you? \*

- Under 22
- 23 - 38
- 39 - 54
- 55 - 73

2. What is your nationality? \*

Câu trả lời của bạn

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3. What is your gender? \*

- Female
- Male

## Part 2: What would make you interested in contents related to green growth and environmental sustainability that are shared by a Goodwill Ambassador?

Please rank the following answers on a scale from 1 to 5  
(1= Strongly Disagree; 2= Disagree; 3= Neutral; 4= Agree; 5= Strongly Agree)

5. The Goodwill Ambassador is credible (You perceive him/her as trustworthy, reliable, and sincere) \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree

6. You like the Goodwill Ambassador \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree

7. You are familiar with the Goodwill Ambassador \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree

8. You see yourself in the Goodwill Ambassador \*

1    2    3    4    5

Strongly Disagree                        Strongly Agree

9. The Goodwill Ambassador is physically attractive \*

1    2    3    4    5

Strongly Disagree                        Strongly Agree

10. You aspire to have virtuous characteristics like the Goodwill Ambassador does in terms of personality, lifestyle and intellectual skills \*

1    2    3    4    5

Strongly Disagree                        Strongly Agree

11. The Goodwill Ambassador is an expert (He/she is qualified, knowledgeable and experienced enough to talk about the cause)

\*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree

12. It is appropriate for the Goodwill Ambassador to advocate for the cause (He/she has been living his/her life in accordance with the message he/she conveys) \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree

13. The Goodwill Ambassador is backed by a reputable organization in the field of the cause \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree

14. If you perceive the Goodwill Ambassador to be credible, do you think the contents that he/she promotes are also credible? \*

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

15. If you perceive the Goodwill Ambassador to hold certain positive values, do you think the organization that backs him/her also shares the same values? \*

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

16. In the case you perceive the Goodwill Ambassador to be credible but he/she is backed by a lesser known organization, do you think he/she can vouch for its credibility? \*

- Yes
- No
- Maybe