

**Title: Introducing celebrity corporate brand and corporate brand enhancement**

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**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is first, to explore the concept of celebrity brand at a corporate brand level, known as Celebrity Corporate Brand – CCB; second, to investigate the impact of CCB on corporate brand equity (termed - corporate brand enhancement). In particular, this study will explore CCB at both levels - ‘developed/own’ and ‘endorsed’ corporate brands. The research marshals the nascent literature of celebrity, human and people brand (e.g. Kowalczyk, 2013, 2011; Halonen-Knight & Hurmerinta, 2010; Seno and Lukas, 2007; Thomson, 2006) which marked new ground by drawing on celebrity theories in corporate branding contexts. By combining these concepts together – we hope to propose a new way of how corporate brand can be differentiated and enhanced through celebrity since its introduction in ICIG, 1994. Corporate brand was first introduced through corporate identity concept (van Riel & Balmer, 1997; Balmer, 1995).

**Design/Methodology:** In order to explore the study’s objectives, we focus on celebrity chefs and three studies were carried out: (1) Study 1 - netnography; (2) Study 2 – in-depth interview; and (3) Study 3 - experiment. Study 1 and 2 are carried out to explore and define CCB and corporate brand enhancement. Study 3 consists of five (5) experiments – 4 experimental groups and 1 control group – were conducted at the site (celebrity chefs’ restaurants), aids in developing the conceptual model for the current study where the interrelated concepts are explained. Data was coded using NVivo where thematic analysis and nodes were performed and assigned to define the constructs and produced items for measurement that were later used in the experiment data collection phase (Kozinets, 2014; Boelstorff, 2011; Churchill, 1995, Churchill, 1979).

**Findings** – CCB is defined as ‘an individual who is a public persona and has fame or is popularly known to the public; whom by himself is a brand (celebrity brand); having their own products and/or services and/or companies (or corporate brands); who uses this recognition for the corporate marketing activities and simultaneously endorses other companies’ products, services and corporations (corporate brands)’, (Study 1 &2; Kowalczyk, 2011; Keel & Natarajaan, 2012; Seno and Lukas, 2007). In terms of dimensions representing CCB, the study found five namely: 1) Celebrity Interpersonal Quality/Personality; 2) CCB Enterprising Quality; 3) CCB Technical/Cognitive/Functional Quality; 4) CCB Symbolic Quality/Value; and 5) CCB Authenticity. These dimensions along with endorsed corporate brand values were found to enhance corporate brand of CCB (image) and endorsed. This, in turn, influences corporate brand enhancement (image, reputation identification, and behavioural action).

**Research implications** – We contribute theoretically in three different ways: 1) provide a new way/offer new insights into how to enhance corporate brand equity (image, reputation and behavioural responses) by positioning and differentiating corporate brand through CCB; 2) offer definition of CCB based on the primary data (netnography, interviews) and secondary data (literatures) and 3) develop a conceptual model of how CCB and its interrelated concepts work through interviews and experiments.

**Practical implications** – The managerial implications can be seen from the context of defining strategy within CCB own businesses, endorsed corporate brands, policy change (national and international) in matters pertaining to environmental and health concerns; and

consumer lifestyle change that is geared towards better living standards and healthier lifestyles. In particular, CCB through personification portrays what an organisation stands for, and it does not address consumers alone. CCB addresses all stakeholders of the corporate brand and those corporate brands that it endorses.

**Originality/value** – Responding to call for research on ‘beyond celebrity endorsement’ and ‘co-branded celebrity products’, this study extends the celebrity endorsement and celebrity brand concept to CCB and its effect on corporate brand enhancement. Whilst previous researches were mainly devoted to how celebrity endorser or human/celebrity brands influence consumer purchase intention at a more product/service brand level, this research examines celebrity brands at corporation level (the CCB). In particular, the effect of CCB on enhancing the ‘developed’ and/or ‘endorsed’ corporate brand (such as the image and reputation of the celebrity and corporation) are discussed. Empirical findings of the current study assist into theoretical insight - how relationships between celebrity corporate brand and celebrity equity (celebrity personality and image enhancement) could enhance corporate brand equity (corporate brand enhancement such as image, reputation and actual buying behaviour), with implications for personal fame and company fortune.

**Paper type** Research/Empirical paper

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