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Assessing the Impact of Celebrity Ambassadors on the PR Strategies of Non-Profit Organisations: A Public Relations Perspective

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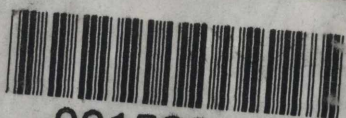
Assessing the Impact of Celebrity Ambassadors on
the PR Strategies of Non-Profit Organisations:
A Public Relations Perspective

ALLISON KELLEHER

M.A. in Public Relations with New Media

Cork Institute of Technology

2012



00159315

**Assessing the Impact of Celebrity Ambassadors on
the PR Strategies of Non-Profit Organisations:
A Public Relations Perspective**

I hereby certify that this material, which I have submitted for assessment in the programme of study for the
Master's Degree (M.A.) in Public Relations with New Media
is entirely my own work and has not been submitted for assessment for any academic purpose
other than in partial fulfillment of that stated above.

Signed
Date

Allison Kelleher

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of
Cork Institute of Technology
For the degree of:

**Master's Degree (M.A.) in
Public Relations with New Media**

Supervised by Emmett Coffey

September 2012

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Cork Institute of Technology

Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of

Master's Degree (M.A.) in Public Relations with New Media

is entirely my own work and has not been submitted for assessment for any academic purpose other than in partial fulfilment for that stated above.

Signed.....

Date.....

Abstract

There has been increased interest from academics, public relations professionals and industry professionals regarding the impact of celebrity ambassadors on the PR strategies of non-profit organisations. This study aims to contribute to the understanding of the non-profit PR sector and the impact of celebrity ambassadors on this section of the PR industry.

A qualitative research design was deemed most suitable by the researcher, and semi-structured interviews were used to collect the necessary primary research data. The researcher interviewed two PR professionals and three non-profit organisation representatives regarding this particular study. Interviewees were chosen due to their knowledge, experience and exposure to the area of non-profit PR and celebrity culture.

The research findings indicate that celebrity ambassadors play a key role in the PR strategies of non-profit organisations. The researcher discovered the immense power celebrities have and how this power can be beneficial to non-profit organisations that are currently operating with limited resources in terms of staff and funding. The researcher also learnt how the celebrity culture in general is affecting the PR industry as a whole.

It can be concluded that there are both advantages and disadvantages regarding non-profit organisations engaging with celebrity ambassadors as part of their PR strategies. In this instance, the advantages outweigh the disadvantages. PR professionals in the non-profit sector are embracing the power of the 'celebrity ambassador' and as a result promoting non-profit organisations in a successful and effective manner.

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Abbreviations

CIPR - Chartered Institute of Public Relations

IC - Integrated Communications

ICT - Information Computer Technology

IMC - Integrated Marketing Communications

PR - Public Relations

PRII - Public Relations Institute of Ireland

Table of Contents

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Abbreviations	v

Chapter 1

1. Introduction	1
1.2 Research Question	3
1.3 Research Objectives	3
1.4 Thesis Structure	4

Chapter 2

2. Literature Review	5
2.1 Public Relations	5
2.1.1 Non-Profit PR	7
2.2 Four Models of Communications	8
2.3 PR and Marketing	9
2.4 PR and New Media	10
2.4.1. Social Media	10
2.4.2. PR 2.0	11
2.5 Reputation Management	11
2.6 Organisational Image and Identity	13
2.7 Celebrity	13

2.7.1 Celebrity PR	15
2.8 Celebrity and the Media	16
2.9 Celebrity Ambassadors and Non-Profit Organisations	17

Chapter 3

3. Research Methodology	19
3.1 Research	19
3.2 Research Design Process	19
3.3 Secondary Research	19
3.4 Primary Research	20
3.5 Qualitative versus Quantitative Research	20
3.6 Qualitative and Quantitative Characteristics	20
3.7 Choice of Research Methodology	21
3.8 The Literature Review	22
3.9 Interviews	22
3.9.1 The Semi-Structured Interview	23
3.9.2 Online Interviews	24
3.9.3 Gaining Access	24
3.10 Interview Guide	24
3.11 After the Interview	24
3.12 Analysis of Data	25
3.13 Possible Limitations to Research	25
3.14 Ethics	26
3.15 Discarding Alternative Research Methods	26

3.16 Conclusion	26
-----------------	----

Chapter 4

4. Research Findings and Analysis	28
4.1 Public Relations	28
4.2 Celebrity Ambassadors	30
4.3 Advantages associated with Celebrity Ambassadors	32
4.4 Celebrity overshadowing message	33
4.5 Disadvantages associated with Celebrity Ambassadors	34
4.6 Effective Celebrity Ambassadors	36

Chapter 5

5. Conclusions and Recommendations	38
5.1 Conclusions	38
5.2 Recommendations	42
List of References	44
Bibliography	50
List of Appendices	53

Chapter One

1. Introduction:

The non-profit sector has a huge impact on Ireland. It provides employment, it shapes public opinion, affects governments policy, and provides vital skills and services to the general Irish public. In recent years there have been significant changes in the non-profit sector in Ireland; demand for services has risen considerably while government and private donations have dropped radically. Non-profit organisations have to survive despite a chronic lack of staff and money.

It is important to note that a non-profit is an organisation that is not a business. A registered charity is a type of non-profit that has exclusively charitable goals. A charity must be non-profit, but that not every non-profit organisation is automatically a charity.

A consultancy company, 2into3, published a report entitled The First Annual Report of Fundraising in Ireland which claimed that fundraising managers of non-profits organisations have various opportunities to raise money, the report states that; 20.4 per cent of income came from events; 2.3 per cent from mail shots; 47.7 per cent from regular donations; 22 per cent from major donors; 10.6 per cent from foundations; 2.6 per cent from selling items; 3.8 per cent legacies; and 0.8 per cent from corporate donations. This report indicates that the majority of non-profit organisations income comes from regular donations from the public. This report paired with other challenges such as a lack of staff justify why public relations activities have become a priority for non-profit organisations.

We live in a celebrity obsessed world where PR professionals have recognised that celebrities have immense power and influence over both the public and media. For these reasons PR professionals, in particular non-profit PR professionals are including celebrities in their strategies in the form of celebrity ambassadors. Celebrities are familiar and charismatic and can help non-profit organisations raise awareness, reach a wider audience, garner media attention and fundraise.

Celebrity endorsements cannot be avoided in magazines, on television, on billboards, and radio. Celebrities are everywhere endorsing everything. The title of 'charity ambassador' has almost become the new accessory for celebrities who have seen the positive results Bono,

Bob Geldof, and Angelina Jolie have received for their work. That is not to say that all celebrities undertake charity work to enhance their reputation.

There are two sides to this debate. Oxfam has a long list of celebrities who have been involved with the charity for many years. Oxfam appreciates the relationship between non-profit organisations and celebrities but is mindful that the celebrity's interest and passion regarding the issue is essential to succeed. Roy Keane is a well-known Irish example of a charity ambassador and his endorsement of the Irish Guide Dogs charity. His relationship with the Irish Guide Dogs has overall been positive, even despite his controversy and negative publicity regarding the 2002 FIFA World Cup in Japan.

A celebrity ambassador's main role is to spread the organisations message and portray the organisation in a positive light. Celebrities are engaged in social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook and intentionally and unintentionally promote ideas, products, causes and services to millions of people all over the world. For non-profit organisations, engaging with a celebrity ambassador who has a high social media profile is an even greater advantage.

Celebrity ambassadors also have the power to promote any cause to a global audience through talk shows, weekly magazines, and ever-growing social media followings. Most non-profit organisations recognize the enormous value a celebrity ambassadors can offer a campaign. But not every celebrity-cause partnership is successful.

Non-profit organisations are generally all looking for the same thing: to bring the Hollywood voice to their cause non-profit organisation. To do this the organisations must think more strategically about product-market fit when considering celebrity ambassadors. According to Justin Forsyth, CEO of Save the Children, the combination of their creativity, tenacity and appeal transformed the Make Poverty History and Drop the Debt campaigns (cited from *The Guardian*, 2011).

According to Joel Goldman, Malaria No More's director of entertainment industry relations, "It's important to reach out to a large number of potential celebrities, but make sure that each one will actually fit into your campaign. "I think press and donors really see when people just sign their name to something as opposed to when they're really committed," (cited from *Mashable*, 2011).

“The idea is to have a group of spokespeople that the charity can call on across several genres. By having a mix of athletes, musicians, actors and personalities, the charities can break into an equally large range of demographics to drum up support” says Goldman.

Goldman says the celebrity ambassadors have helped their cause. “To me, it’s kind of sad — as a personal opinion — that we need someone on [the *Ellen DeGeneres Show*] to say something ... but that’s what our society is. We care about what we care about and what the people we see on TV care about”.

1.2 Research Question:

In acknowledgment of the lack of literature on celebrity culture in relation to non-profit organisations it is clear that there is an opportunity to explore this topic in greater detail. Both the non-profit PR and the topic of celebrity in public relations have received less attention from academics and this has motivated the present study: Assessing the impact of celebrity ambassadors on the PR strategies of non-profit organisations. As a result the following questions were formulated:

- What is non-profit PR?
- Are celebrity ambassadors an advantage to non-profit organisations?
- What makes an effective celebrity ambassador?

1.3 Research Objectives:

The most prominent question of this study is to discover what impact celebrity ambassadors are having on the PR strategies of non-profit organisations from a PR perspective. The researcher’s primary and secondary research will examine how the public relations industry is affected by the phenomenon of celebrity ambassadors; the research focuses on the non-profit PR sector in particular.

- To explore the phenomenon of celebrity ambassadors.
- To assess the impact of celebrity ambassadors on non-profit PR.
- To gain an understanding of the importance of celebrity ambassadors in the PR industry.

It is hoped that information obtained from this research will add to the body of knowledge already available in relation to the topic of the relationship between celebrities and charities.

The findings from the research will also provide if needed further insight for future research on this topic.

1.4 Thesis Structure:

This thesis is divided into various chapters and is organised as follows:

Chapter Two: This chapter will provide a critical review of all available literature regarding this particular topic. This review will include journal articles, working papers, books and reports which form the basis for the aim and objectives of this thesis from the C.I.T. library.

Chapter Three: This chapter will provide a rational reasoning regarding the chosen methodology for this thesis and will answer research questions and objectives. The issues of limitations, ethics and gaining access will also be discussed in this chapter.

Chapter Four: This chapter will contain the research findings and analysis. This chapter will outline the data obtained from interviews as part of primary research. The data will be presented under themed headings. This chapter will also analyse whether these findings have met the objectives of the research project.

Chapter Five: This chapter will outline the researcher's conclusions following the analysis of primary and secondary data. Recommendations will also be offered for future study of the topic.

Chapter Two

2. Literature Review:

This chapter will aim to review all the relevant literature regarding this topic of study. The researcher expects to gain a greater understanding of the topic which focuses on areas such as public relations; non-profit PR; communications theory; PR and marketing; social media; PR 2.0; reputation management; image and identity; celebrity PR; celebrities and the media; and celebrity ambassadors and non-profit organisations.

2.1 Public Relations:

There is no one single definition of public relations that truly captures the essence of what public relations is. Rex Harlow collected 472 definitions; he then identified similarities in an attempt to assemble one universal definition. According to Tench and Yeoman (2005:5) Harlow's definition "contains overall goals, processes and tasks of public relations". Harlow's finalised definition is as follows;

"Public Relations is the distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between an organisation and its publics; involves the management of problems or issues; helps management to keep informed on and responsive to public opinion; defines and emphasises the responsibility of management to serve the public interest; helps management keep abreast of and effectively utilize change, serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends; and uses research and sound and ethical communication as its principal tools." (Harlow, 1976:36)

Cutlip, Center and Broom (2006:21) refer to public relations as the "management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and the publics on whom its success or failure depends". Grunig and Hunt define public relations in just one simple sentence; "Public relations is the management of communication between and organisation and its publics" (Grunig and Hunt, 1984 cited in Tench and Yeomans, 2006:5).

Planning and managing communication, relationships and reputation are key elements of PR. Carty (1992:2) states that "Public relations is the management of relationships which are important to an organisation...It is also the management of all communications within the

organisation and between the organisation and its outside audiences...Public relations is also the management of the organisation's reputation".

According to Gunning (2003:6) "There are many different perceptions of what public relations is and even with the plethora of definitions for the practice of it in relevant literature, a broad view entails that it is a wide-reaching discipline that encompasses and combines areas of "philosophy, sociology, economics, language, psychology, journalism, communication and other knowledge into a system of human understanding" (Gunning, 2003:6). Public relations may also be used to build awareness of new products, new processes or other changes which will enhance an organisation's ability to serve its customers (McDonald, 2007: 557).

Kitchen (1997:27) summarises public relations as an "interactive management function which covers a broad range of activities and purposes in practice that suggests that publics facing companies are not singular and that relationships are long term". Public relations is defined as a "management function that classically focuses on long-term patterns of interaction between an organisation and all of its various publics, both supportive and nonsupportive. Public relations seeks to enhance these relationships, thus generating mutual understanding, goodwill, and support." (Smith, 2009:5).

PR techniques are often employed in advertising and marketing and for this reason PR can be misunderstood. The goals of advertising, marketing and PR differ greatly. Advertising focuses on generating sales, marketing focuses on promotion of products and services to consumers. The focus of PR is to help organisations develop and preserves the variety of relationships that ensure long-term success. It is more appropriate for organisational management to treat public relations as the umbrella under which other activities including marketing and advertising occur (Austin, E.W. and Pinkleton, B.E., 2006:6).

All definitions state that PR is about managing communication in order to build good relationships and mutual understanding between the organisation and its publics. It is important to note that PR is about communicating with "publics" and not just the general public. PR academics such as Smith (2009) argue that the general public does not exist, but that each public is linked with the organisation in a unique relationship.

"Sociologists studying organisations have developed the useful concept of linkages, which are the patterns of relationships that exist between an organisation and its various publics"

(Esman, 1971; Evan, 1976; and Grunig and Hunt, 1984 cited in Smith, 2009:51). In PR there are many different groups of people such as investors, customers, employees, competitors, local residents, political parties who are known as “publics”.

L’Etang (2008) views public relations as being nothing more than an industry of deceitful propaganda and spin. PR practitioners deny that they would try to persuade anyone about anything. The word “persuasion” haunts the PR profession, with many being accused of using propaganda techniques and masking them as PR tactics. According to the writings of Theaker (2004), bad PR can have a negative effect on a story. PR professionals are often referred to as “spin doctors” but in the words of Cutlip, Center and Broom (2006:102) “to label all PR professionals as dishonest would be to ignore how all-encompassing and important their work has become to people and organisations of all shapes and sizes.”

2.1.1 Non-profit PR:

“Non-profit organisations address a range of issues that affect people’s lives, including health care, homelessness, environmental concerns, youth development, job training, arts and culture, education, and much more.” (Cutlip, Center and Broom, 2009:455).

Non-profit PR aims to establish the ‘brand’ of the charity, outline its mission and develop a positive reputation. Non-profit PR professionals develop channels of communication, through which they inform and motivate key constituents which in turn create a favourable climate for fundraising. (Cutlip, Center and Broom, 2009:460). Non-profit PR “helps create the public policy environment, volunteer participation, and philanthropic support crucial to the survival of charitable organisations” (Cutlip, Center and Broom, 2009:460).

The aims of non-profit PR according to Theaker (2006:223) are public awareness; use of services; creation of educational materials; recruitment of volunteers; and fundraising. Creating awareness and credibility, promoting image of the charity and promoting brand product are three primary areas of charity PR. (Gunning, 2003:254).

According to Gunning, “people will not buy a brand with which they are unfamiliar, and neither will they contribute to a charity about which they know little...they will contribute to a charity with which they are familiar, and whom they trust.” (Gunning, 2003:255).

“Non-profit PR has no basic element or quirk that makes it radically different from other PR efforts. In some ways it is easier because the media is often more responsive... On the other

hand non-profit PR can be more difficult because of the chronic lack of resources – like money and staff.” (Neal, 2001).

2.2 Four Models of Communication:

In 1984 Grunig and Hunt, two of the earliest theorists, defined four typical ways in which public relations evolved, developed and is practised today. There are referred to as Grunig and Hunt’s Four Models of Communication. The four models are called press agency/press model; the public information model; the two-way asymmetrical model; and the two-way symmetrical model. These models are based on Grunig and Hunt’s examination of public relations practice in the United States (Tench and Yeomans, 2006:143).

Press agency is an example of one-way communication, which was the focus of the early models of communications. This is what most people associate with the profession of public relations. According to Theaker (2008) it involves a “press agent or publicist aims to secure coverage for a client, and truth is not an absolute requirement” (Theaker, 2008:12).

”Press agency/publicity “emphasises generation of media coverage of an organisation or individual by any means necessary, including deception and trickery” (Dozier, Grunig, J., Grunig, L., 1995:41). Max Clifford is an example of publicist who engages in press agency. It is publicists like Max Clifford and similar activities that have created an anti-PR feeling amongst journalists (Theaker, 2004:150).

The public information model does not try to persuade an audience or change their attitudes (Theaker, 2009:12). It is also a one-way communication example. Grunig and Hunt refer to this model as similar to that of an in-house journalist (1984), releasing relevant information to those who need it (Theaker, 2008).

Ivy Lee was one of the founding fathers of PR and was also an advocate of the public information model of communications. He believed that businesses should be less secretive about their work and release accurate information (Theaker, 2008). He made the following declaration about his agency;

“This is not a secret press bureau. All our work is done in the open. We aim to supply news. This is not an advertising agency... Our matter is accurate...” (quoted in Grunig and Hunt, 1984:33).

Two-way asymmetric public relations is the more commonly practised option today and is used in an effort to change the behaviour and attitudes of the audience, not the behaviour of the organisation (Theaker, 2008). Grunig however argues that this is unethical. This model refers to PR professionals as mediators as opposed to persuaders. Persuasive communication relies on understanding of the attitudes and behaviour of the targeted publics, so planning and research are important to this kind of public relations” (Theaker, 2008:14).

Two-way symmetric public relations aims to establish mutual understanding between the organisation and its publics. Theaker (2008:31) describes it as the “ideal” of public relations. This model adjusts the relationships between an organisation and it’s publics in order to achieve a balance and to negotiate mutually beneficial outcomes (Dozier, Grunig and Grunig, 1995:41). According to Windahl et al. (1992) the terms ‘sender’ and ‘receiver’ are not applicable in such communication process, where goal is mutual understanding (cited in Theaker, 2008:16).

According to Grunig and Hunt (1984) persuasion stills plays a vital role in the two-way symmetrical model as the organisation and publics attempt to influence each other. L’Etang criticises both the asymmetrical and symmetrical communication models as “idealistic models” which misrepresent the communication process in reality (L’Etang, 1996).

2.3 PR and Marketing:

Marketing is the field which is most commonly confused with PR. The elements that distinguish the two professions are not well recognised, and the interchangeable use of the terms ‘marketing’ and ‘public relations’ “often result from historical precedence and little understanding of their differences” (Cutlip et al., 2000).

Kitchen writes that “Public relations and marketing are two major management functions within an organisation, but how they are organised depends upon managerial perceptions, organisational culture, and historical precedent (1997:247).

Marketing is a function that identifies human needs and wants, offers products and services to satisfy those demands, and causes transactions that deliver products and services (Cutlip *et al*, 2009) and the focus is on exchange relationships (Kitchen, 1997) whereas PR is about the establishment and maintenance of mutually beneficial relationships with all stakeholders.

Lamb, Hair and McDaniel (1996:499) write of PR as “the marketing function that evaluates public attitudes, identifies areas within the organisation that the public may be interested in, and executes a program to earn public understanding and acceptance”. Marketing deals with markets and public relations deals with publics (Jefkins, 1994:19). Each contain essential elements that when combined make up a successful communications strategy and “to ignore one is to risk failure in the other” (Cutlip *et al*, 2009:28).

2.4 PR and New Media:

New media is a broad term that emerged in the latter part of the 20th century which refers to access to content anytime, anywhere, on any digital device, as well as interactive user feedback, creative participation.

New media technology has provided new ways of communicating and networking via mediums such as Facebook, blogs, micro-blogging, video sharing among many others. This new phenomenon has provided public relations professionals with an abundance of new tools to carry out its activities and communicate with their publics.

While for the most part new media tools are an advantage to PR professionals, the ever growing trend facilitates globalisation and ensures that news and information can be made international almost immediately. Philips, (1999) writes that “Online communities use resources such as chat rooms, email lists, news-groups and bulletin boards to discuss topics of interest. The anonymous nature of online resources, where people can assume any identity they choose, may lead users to articulate things they would not mention in ‘real life’” (cited in Theaker, 2004:273). This anonymity factor can have a major impact on an organization’s online reputation and reputation in general.

New media has become an addiction for young people in particular and is having a huge impact on mass media. According to the Joint National Readership Survey in 2009 “over the past century market penetration by daily newspapers dropped from 120 per cent down to 50 per cent”. The report indicated that prospects for growth are extremely low and that most readers have followed the trend and moved online.

2.4.1 Social Media:

The Public Relations Institute of Ireland (PRII) defines social media as “the technology used to enable an individual reach a worldwide audience in an instant. Social media also offers

readers the right to reply.” In addition to this The Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) further defines social media as “the term commonly given to websites, online tools and other interactive communication technologies which allow users to interact with each other by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests. As the name implies, social media involves the building of communities or networks, encouraging participation and engagement.”

According to leading social media commentator and blogger Deirdre Breakenridge social media “breaks the traditional mould and allows communications professionals to think, react and promote in a whole new way” (Solis and Breakenridge, 2010). Andreas Kaplan and Michael Haenlein define social media as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content" (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010).

PR professionals need to be aware of the power of social media and be willing to engage with their publics by such means as online conversations, discovery, creation and sharing of content are key elements of social media. The mass media audience no longer plays a passive role and have been transformed into producers and distributors of media (Young, 2006). Social media has created a shift in terms of broadcast from “one-to-many to many-to-many model, rooted in conversations between authors, people and peers” (Solis, 2008).

Social media is having a huge impact on business and Solis (2008) claims that “Social media is rooted in conversations between peoples and peers, regardless of the technology that facilitates them, and every day they take place across blogs, networks, forums, micro media and online groups. In addition, each day, with every new community and social tool that is introduced, brands, products and services are actively discussed, supported and disassembled. Some companies are listening while many aren’t even paying attention”

2.4.2 PR 2.0:

Brian Solis is responsible for the term PR 2.0. It refers to the use of social media and other new media tools by PR professionals to reach new audiences and better communicate with their already existing publics. He comments that “PR 2.0 was born through the analysis of how the Web and multimedia was redefining PR and marketing communications, while also building the toolkit to reinvent how companies communicate with influencers and directly with people” (Solis, 2008).

To date there is little literature existing on the impact social media is having on the PR industry but the industry has acknowledged the power and relevance of social media to their work. In recent years the PR industry has taken advantage of Web 2.0 tools available and used them to add buzz and momentum to their strategies and campaigns to increase awareness and overall brand exposure.

A 2007 study found that 57 per cent of PR and marketing communications professionals find social media becoming more important to their programs; 27 per cent said social media are the core of their communication strategy (Gillin, 2007:3), as cited in Smith, 2009:207).

The research of Wright and Hinson (2009) pointed out that a growing number of PR practitioners have accepted that social media is changing the way their organisations communicate. According to the work of Wright and Hinson social media has transformed public relations into a two-way communication effort and made it possible to communicate more effectively with both internal and external audiences.

2.5 Reputation Management:

Reputation is defined as “The beliefs or opinions that are generally held about someone or something” (Compact Oxford English Dictionary, 2009). Reputation was, is, and always will play a vital role in communications of any organisation. Reputation does not occur by chance. It relates to leadership, management and organisational operations; the quality of products and services; and – crucially – relationships with stakeholders. (Kitchen, 2010). Kitchen (2010) also states that is also connected to communication activities and feedback mechanisms. According to Cutlip, Center and Broom “Public relations is the discipline which looks after reputation, with the aim of earning understanding and support and influencing opinion and behaviour” (Cutlip, Center and Broom, 2009:25).

The terms reputation and relationship management can be used interchangeably but according to Fombrun and Van Riel (2004:5) ‘Ultimately a good reputation matters because it is a key source of distinctiveness that produces support for the company and differentiates it from rivals’. (cited in Tench and Yeomans, 2009:542). Organisations should set reputation management goals to deal with the identity and perception of the organisation (Smith, 2009:81). Smith states that reputation management goals should;

1. Improve the organisations reputation within the industry.
2. Enhance the organisation’s prestige as the leader in the industry.

3. Reinforce the organisation's image with potential donors or volunteers.
4. Strengthen the organisation's standing with its publics. (Smith, 2009:82)

According to Dr. Eisenegger, from the University of Zurich reputation is one of a number of linked concepts which form the basis of public relations work and reputation nurturing is a central function of public relations;

“The primary function of public relations is the long-term assurance of the survival of the agents involved. The presupposes that these agents can be positioned as positively as possible in their field of action, and also distinguished from any competitors. This is precisely the function performed by reputation: it is the product of the social process that assigns agents their ranking in society. To this extent, PR can at its core be understood as reputation nurturing.” (Eisenegger, 2005:1).

Reputation management is sometimes considered a marketing activity which involves spin and deceit. PR academics prefer the perspective of ‘relationship building’. Grunig et al. (2002:264) claims that “the concept of relationships with publics is a more fruitful way of understanding the outcome and value of communication programs than is the concept of brand or image or reputation.”

Hutton et al. (2001) summarises the differences between reputation and relationship management;

“Reputation is a concept far more relevant to people who have no direct ties to an organisation, whereas relationships are far more relevant to people who are direct stakeholders or the organisation... In other words, a reputation is generally something an organisation has with strangers, but a relationship is generally something an organisation has with friends and associates” (Hutton et al. 2001:258).

2.6 Organisational Image and Identity:

The word image implies reflection and perception. An organisations image is defined by how the publics' view the personality and reputation of the organisation. Haywood (1991:16) argues that “true public relations is more than just skin deep” and the concept of a corporate personality, developed to reflect the style of top management and the business climate of the times, is preferable.

Harrison (2000:74) suggested that an organisation's image arises from four interconnecting elements: personality, reputation, values and identity and pointed out that "the closer the image is to the reality of the organisation, the more likely it is that the organisation will be seen as trustworthy and honest".

The concept of organisational image is used to create an understanding of the impressions individuals have of organisations or that organisations want to convey to individuals. It helps to establish or position the organisation, its goals, and its views in the minds of its publics.

An organisations image can have a huge impact on the success of an organisation and for this reason the issue of 'identity' arises. By creating an organisational identity an organisation can influence the image and reputation their publics hold of them (Tench and Yeomans, 2009:240). A logo is one of the most significant elements of organisational identity.

Logos allows audiences to recognise the organisation and differentiate it from others. It is a "visual emblem designed by the organisation with the aim of conveying a number of characteristics it wanted its publics to think of in relations to the organisation" (Tench and Yeoman, 2009:240). Colours, symbols, wording and design should be simple, distinctive and meaningful (Carty, 1992:21) and enable audiences to easily recognise the brand.

2.7 Celebrity:

A celebrity is a person who has a prominent profile and commands a great degree of public fascination and influence in day-to-day media. The most widely quoted definition of celebrity was coined by Daniel Boorstin, "the celebrity is a person who is well-known for their well-knownness" (Boorstin, 1961:58). He also comments that celebrities are "fabricated to satisfy our exaggerated expectations of human greatness" and that "celebrity develops their capacity for fame, not by achieving great things, but by differentiating their own personality from those of their competitors in the public arena" (Boorstin, 1961:65 cited in Turner, 2004:5).

Celebrity is achieved through talent, auspicious circumstance, connections, accident, extensive media coverage or ordinary people doing extraordinary things (Rojek, 2001). He believes celebrity is the consequence of the democratization of society, a decline in organized religion and the commodification of everyday life (Rojek, 2001:13 as cited in L'Etang 2008:222).

Rojek developed a classification system of celebrity, there are five types of celebrity; ascribed celebrity; achieved celebrity; attributed celebrity; celestoid; and celestors (L'Etang, 2008:221). The system outlines how people become celebrities whether it's through inheritance, blood, skill, repeated media exposure, scandals or fictional characters that become cultural reference points.

According to Graeme Turner there are three main ideas of what a celebrity is. Firstly, commentary in the popular media by columnists and other public intellectuals tends to regard the modern celebrity as a symptom of a worrying cultural shift: towards a culture that privileges the momentary, the visual and the sensational over the enduring, the written and the rational (Turner, 2004:4).

Secondly, those who consume and invest in the celebrity tend to describe it as an innate or "natural" quality which is only possessed by some extraordinary individuals and "discovered" by industry talent scouts. For the popular press, the fanzines, and the television and movie industries, the defining qualities of the celebrity are both natural and magical; journalists, feature writers and publicists speak of their "presence", their "star quality" and their "charisma" (Turner, 2004:4).

Thirdly and in contrast to this, the academic literature, particularly from within cultural and media studies, has tended to focus on the celebrity as the product of a number of cultural and economic processes. These include the commoditisation of the individual celebrity through promotion, publicity and advertising; the implication of celebrities in the processes through which cultural identity is negotiated and formed; and most importantly, the representational processes employed by the media in their treatment of prominent individuals (ibid.).

According to Andy Warhol "in the future everybody will be world famous for fifteen minutes". It could be said that Andy Warhol predicted the celebrity culture phenomenon the world is experiencing today where each day we are introduced to a new 'celebrity' regardless of who they are and from what walk of life. (Tench and Yeomans, 2009:628).

2.7.1 Celebrity PR:

Some of the main elements of celebrity PR are profile raising, celebrity endorsement, story brokering, crisis and reputation management. It is referred to as the Cinderella specialist area of public relations industry. Cutlip, Center and Broom (2006) state that some of the functions of public relations are publicity, advertising and press agency and that these aspects coincide

with celebrities and from this it is clear that celebrity culture is a part of public relations. Publicist Max Clifford claims to have broken more tabloid front pages in the UK than any journalist with celebrity stories. (Tench and Yeomans, 2009:625).

There is a huge demand for celebrity gossip in the world today and it is visible on all offline and online news forums. Rojek states that no celebrity now gains public recognition without the assistance of cultural intermediaries who operate to stage-manage celebrity presence in the eyes of the public (Rojek, 2001:10). Celebrity PR has increasingly influenced the news content of daily newspapers, as well as providing the material for a proliferation of magazines like Hello!, Now! And OK! (Theaker, 2004:12).

Celebrity PR is often used as the example of the “PR” industry and considered a “dark art” (Tench and Yeomans, 2009:625). The majority of celebrity PR is focused on promotion, publicity and media relations and from this the public relations industry has received bad press with John Hartley referring to it as “the smiling professions” (Cited in Turner, 2004:16).

Between the 1930s and the 1960s in the UK some PR professionals tried to ban ‘publicists’ and ‘press agents’ from membership of the professional body. (L’Etang, 2004:74-75). Some PR academics are uncomfortable with students’ interests in celebrity and its association with PR but publicity is a small part of an every growing public relations industry.

PR author Leichty states that;

“Celebrity PR can be unpredictable and capricious. Publicity becomes an end in itself because it creates a celebrity premium that people are willing to pay for ... ‘high visibility PR’ can be a high-status, zero-sum game. The number of celebrities who can be created and maintained is rather finite and inelastic. ... The fortunes of PR promoters are driven by the fickle hand that determines who is hot and who is not. ... The practitioner also must cope with the caprices of temperamental and neurotic celebrities. Handholding is listed as one of the essential duties of the celebrity promoter.” (Leichty, 2003:282).

2.8 Celebrities and the Media:

A very close relationship exists between the media and celebrities. The media is aware of the celebrity culture addiction that the world has developed in recent years and people who want

fame and celebrity status know that the media needs information, pictures and gossip. According to Shah (2009:360) celebrities offer reassurance to the publics and lend instant awareness and immediate attention.

In the 1990's the celebrity became such an important commodity that it became a greatly expanded area for content development by the media itself. In a highly convergent media environment, where cross-media and cross-platform content promotion has become increasingly the norm, the manufacture of and trade in celebrity has become a commercial strategy for 24 media organisations of all kinds – not just the promotions and publicity sectors. Network and cable television, in particular, has demonstrated its ability to produce celebrity from nothing – without any need to establish the individual's ability, skill or

extraordinariness as the precondition for public attention. The phenomenon of *Big Brother* made that clear." (Turner, 2004:9).

Celebrities are aware of the audience reach of media outlets and are now using the media to drive the public's attention to particular issues or problems. Jade Goody's battle with cancer is an example of this. From the beginning of Jade Goody's battle with cancer until her death the media was rife with cancer related content. It has now come to the stage where "health advice is provided through stories about celebrities' encounters with illness and their recoveries" (Bonner, 2005:87), or in Jade's case, her death.

Celebrity's appearances in the media for worthy causes have increased greatly in recent years. Paula Cummings joined World Vision to help build its celebrity programme as part of the charities fundraising and media activities, "We try to match a celebrity's interest to a problem... if you get a person who can identify with the organisation and feel passion for its work then your campaign can be successful" (Source: Profile, 58 (November/December):14, as cited in L'Etang, 2006:225).

2.9 Celebrity Ambassadors and Non-Profit organisations:

Celebrities are used by charities because they are charismatic and familiar and have the power to raise the charity's profile. Celebrities supporting non-profit organisations attract media attention and therefore capture the attention of the general public. (Smith, 2009:147).

Celebrities are in great demand by charitable causes. Public relations professionals selecting celebrity ambassadors generally look for a connection with their key publics. According to

Gunning (2003:90) we are all interested in anyone with 'celebrity' status and will be drawn to any media attention on them, a photograph can grab a reader's attention and encourage them to read what it is about.

Some charities simply cannot afford the price tag that comes with celebrity ambassadors and refuse to redesign their campaign to fit the publicity needs of celebrities and their agents. (Smith, 2009:147) but not all celebrity ambassadors are paid. The Entertainment Industry Foundation, a clearinghouse for many celebrities who become involved with charity work, insists that celebrity ambassadors work for free. (Smith, 2009:147).

There are many examples of "how celebrities' power and influence spreads beyond their field of expertise. At the selfless end of the scale we have celebrities influencing world leaders and the public on the environment, politics, world debt, and world peace. And at the more self-serving end of the scale we have celebrities creating their own mini empires" (Lawrence, 2009:146). An example of the positive is how George Clooney addressed United Nations' Security Council about the Darfur crisis in 2006.

A great example of an effective celebrity ambassador is Kathryn Thomas and her work with Self Help Africa. Kathryn is known for her travelling and association with 'No Frontiers' and her connection with Africa goes back ten years. Kathryn is also a TV presenter so she has a charismatic, familiar, easy-going and passionate personality. She has all the makings of an effective celebrity ambassador and there have been nothing but glowing reports regarding her involvement (Thomas, 2011).

Chapter 3

3. Research Methodology:

This chapter will discuss and justify the research methods undertaken during this study. The chapter begins by defining what research is and examining the two main approaches and their characteristics. This chapter will provide the reader with an understanding regarding the chosen method for this study and will justify its selection.

3.1 Research:

Oxford Dictionary defines 'research' as "the systematic investigation into and study of materials and sources in order to establish facts and reach new conclusions". Research involves defining the problem; using scientific methods; representative evidence; logical reasoning; the absence of bias; evidence of validity; confidence that the principles uncovered can be applied in the future according to Buckley, Buckley and Ching (1975). "Research is seeking through methodical processes to add to one's own body of knowledge and to that of others, by discovery of nontrivial facts and insights" (Sharp, Peters and Howard, 2002:7).

3.2 Research Design Process:

According to Philliber, Schwab, & Samsloss, (1980) 'research design' is considered as a "blueprint" for research, dealing with at least four problems: which questions to study, which data is relevant, what data to collect, and how to analyse the results. As already noted there is a lack of previous studies exploring the effectiveness of celebrity ambassadors as part of a non-profit PR strategy. This study will assess the impact that celebrity ambassadors are having on the non-profit sector and on the PR industry as a whole.

3.3 Secondary Research:

According to Saunders et al. (2009), a combination of both primary and secondary data is required for my research projects in order to answer research questions and complete research objectives. The researcher started with secondary research following the advice of Malhotra and Birks, (2000) who state that a researcher should start off with secondary data and then proceed to primary data only when the secondary data resources have been exhausted. The researcher examined the available secondary data at the C.I.T. library. This included WilsonWeb and EBSCOhost, journal articles, websites, and other internet sources. Internet

sources proved to be very valuable as there is a lack of literature on the topic of celebrity ambassadors and non-profit PR. The researcher however ensured that all sources were reliable and relevant to the area of study.

3.4 Primary Research:

Primary research is the study of a topic by a researcher through first hand observation and investigation. Primary research is information that is collected for the first time (Chisnall, 1992).

The researcher chose semi-structured interviews and online interviews as the most suitable methods of primary research due to the nature of the study. This study is an exploratory study and the chosen method would allow the researcher to collect and analyse people's opinions and attitudes on the topic. These original opinions and attitudes would ensure that rich and adequate qualitative data was obtained. As previously stated, the researcher carried out secondary research first in order to gain greater insight into the topic. This allowed the researcher to narrow down themes and questions and to improve the credibility of the interviewer as well as establish trust with the interviewees (Saunders et al., 2003).

3.5 Qualitative versus Quantitative Research:

There are two main approaches to research – qualitative and quantitative. Choosing between qualitative and quantitative comes down to the nature of the data being analysed. Qualitative research is defined by the Oxford Dictionary as “relating to, measuring, or measured by the quality of something rather than its quantity”. Qualitative research methods provides information about the ‘human’ side of an issue – that is, the often contradictory behaviours, beliefs, opinions, emotions, and relationships of individuals (Mack et. al., 2005:3). Qualitative methods are also effective in identifying intangible factors, such as social norms, socioeconomic status, gender roles, ethnicity, and religion, whose role in the research issue may not be obvious (Mack and Woodsong, 2005).

“A quantitative approach is used to deliver comparable, general results, expressed in numbers.” (Tench and Yeoman, 2009:204).

3.6 Qualitative and Quantitative Characteristics:

Qualitative research is concerned with testing hypotheses and theories whereas quantitative is concerned with exploring a topic and generating hypotheses and theories. (Punch, 2005:235)

Qualitative research is carried out when we wish to understand definitions, analyse, describe and understand experiences, ideas and beliefs. “Researchers... employ qualitative methods to examine communication as experienced by people not as something linear and logical but as typically open, complex and human” (Daymon and Holloway, 2011:6).

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2002: ix) “properly understood, qualitative enquiry becomes a civic, participatory, collaborative project... that joins the researcher with the researched in an on-going moral dialogue”. An area of study that would benefit from qualitative research would be that of students’ learning styles of and approaches to study. In quantitative research data is used to generate new hypotheses based on the results of data collected about different variables.

Cork Institute of Technology

Qualitative research is about people’s lives, lived experiences, behaviours, emotions, feelings, social movements and cultural phenomena. Qualitative research, broadly defined, means "any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990:17). The strength of qualitative research is its ability to provide complex descriptions of how people experience a particular research issue or topic. However there are weaknesses associated with this research approach; its labour intensive nature; possible difficulties with analysis and interpretation of data; and in the past, policy makers gave low credibility to studies based on a qualitative approach (Baur et al., 200; Easterby-Smith et al., 1991).

The quantitative approach refers to the “systematic empirical investigation of social phenomena via statistical, mathematical or computational techniques” according to Given, (2008). Given (2008) also states that the process of measurement is central to quantitative research because it provides the fundamental connection between empirical observation and mathematical expressions of quantitative relationships. Quantitative data is any data that is in numerical form such as statistics, percentages, etc.

3.7 Choice of Research Methodology:

Following careful consideration of both the qualitative and quantitative research approaches, a qualitative research approach is deemed most suitable for this area of study for several reasons. Interviews were chosen as the main method of research for this topic. In this instance, PR professionals and non-profit organisation representatives will be interviewed using a qualitative research approach to determine the impact of celebrity ambassadors on the

PR strategies of non-profit organisations and in particular charities. According to Easterby-Smith et al., (1991:74) interview semi-structured or structured are appropriate methods when;

- It is necessary to understand the constructs that interviewees use as a basis for their opinions and beliefs about a particular matter or situation;
- The step-by-step logic of a situation is not clear;
- The subject matter is highly confidential;
- The interviewee may be reluctant to be truthful about issues other than confidentially in a one-to-one situation.

3.8 The Literature Review:

A literature review is a body of text that outlines the critical points of current knowledge including substantive findings as well as theoretical and methodological contributions to a particular subject. Literature reviews are secondary sources of research and also a form of qualitative research. According to McCracken, 1988 “a good literature review is a critical process that makes the researcher the master, not the captive, of previous scholarship”. A Literature review enables the researcher to work at a high conceptual level with other people’s work, and to see how their own work contributes to knowledge and meaning. (Wisker, 2008:171). Therefore the researcher carried out secondary research first to acquire a basic knowledge and understanding of the topic. This secondary research gave the researcher insight into the different opinions and outlooks on the topic and prepared the researcher for conducting interviews on the topic.

The secondary sources were obtained from the CIT Library such as books and research published in academic journals on databases such as WilsonWeb and EBSCOhost. Websites, journal articles and the internet proved to be very useful as there is not much published regarding the topic of celebrity ambassadors and non-profit organisations. As a result of this lack of published literature the researcher had to ensure that all sources were reliable and relevant to the topic.

3.9 Interviews:

The qualitative research interview seeks to describe the meanings of central themes in the life of the subjects. The main task in interviewing is to understand the meaning of what the interviewees say (Kvale, 1996). Interviewing allows the researcher to explore views and

opinions in depth, as well as the reasons why those views are held (Gregory, 2000). Interviews allow researchers to capture emotions, feelings, experiences, information based on sensitive subjects, insider experience and privileged insights. (Wisker, 2008:192).

Interviews enable the researcher to meet the subjects of the study and for those subjects to convey their opinions and beliefs on the particular topic. Qualitative interviewing utilizes open-ended questions that allow for the interviewees variation. Interviews yield rich insights into people's biographies, experiences, opinions, values, aspirations, attitudes and feelings. In order to achieve this, however, researchers need to understand the dynamics of interviewing, sharpen their own use of the method and understand the different methods of conducting and analysing the data, together with an awareness of their strengths and limitations (May, 2001).

Following consideration of a number of texts (Burns and Grove 2005, Fontana and Frey 2005, Polit and Beck 2005) a distinction was made between structured and semi-structured interviews. As a result the researcher deemed it was best to conduct semi-structured interviews. The structured interview approach was discarded because it tends to result in quantitative data rather than qualitative data as a result of closed questions in a questionnaire format.

3.9.1 The Semi-Structured Interview:

Semi-structured interviews have a flexible structure whereby questions are organised so that certain themes or areas of a topic are covered throughout the interview. Semi-structured interviews allow the interviewees to be asked the same open-ended questions so that the interviewees are encouraged to speak freely regarding the topic and develop their own ideas. Semi-structured interviews are interviews that focus on a specific list of topics, while allowing the exploration of unexpected facts and attitudes through its open structure (Aaker et al., 1998, p.191).

“The choice of semi-structured interviews could reflect the researcher's need to gain an in-depth understanding of the motivations of a particular group of people...The choice of semi-structured interviews might seem appropriate because this method is particularly good at allowing the researcher to explore in depth the thoughts, feelings and reasoning” of a particular group of people (Densecombe, 2007).

The advantage of this method is that large volumes of data can be collected quickly and the researcher can provide immediate feedback on the topic and interviewees responses. A

disadvantage of this method is that the interviewee must be very familiar with the topic, be willing to participate in an honest and open manner.

3.9.2 Online Interviews:

The researcher conducted some online interviews at the request of the interviewee due to schedule and time constraints. According to Denscombe (2007) online interviews consist of an exchange of email correspondence. He also noted that online interviews allow the interviewee's time to reflect on what the question is asking and to establish their true opinion on a particular subject. Questions are answered more thoroughly as interviewees are not put on the spot. Researchers can acquire, explain and understand their participants' experiences through a dialogic and reflexive encounter (James and Busher, 2009:10).

3.9.3 Gaining Access:

The researcher approached possible interviewees, a mixture of both PR professionals and non-profit representatives by email, identifying the purpose of the study and seeking their involvement in terms of a either structured or semi-structured interview. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with two PR professionals and three non-profit organisation representatives within a two week period. According to Hart (1991) it is unwise to arrange appointments shortly before lunch or at the end of the day unless the interview can be completed with certainty. Arriving about a quarter of an hour early compensates for this, and allows extra time for gleaning valuable information at the reception. (Hart, 1991). The researcher considered and adopted this advice.

3.10 Interview Guide:

When engaging in semi-structured interviews it is important for the researcher to avoid confusing, biased or double-barrelled questions. According to Bryman and Bell, (2003) an interview guide provides topics or subject areas about which the interviewer is free to explore, probe and ask questions that will elucidate and illuminate that particular subject, allowing for flexibility in conducting the interview. For the purpose of this study the researcher designed an interview guide that would ensure similar information would be collected from each of the interviewees. It also ensured that the interviewees were asked relevant questions and that all data collected was useful towards the study.

3.11 After the Interview:

According to Bryman and Bell, (2003) the first thing to be done after a tape-recorded interview is completed is to check the recording to make sure it was carried out properly. Following this advice, after each interview the researcher took time to examine the quality of the data recorded during the interview. By doing so the researcher ensured that the data was valid and useful. The quality of the original interview is decisive for the quality of the later analysis, verification, and reporting of the interviews (Kvale, 1996). This period after the interview is a critical time for reflection and elaboration: "it is a time of quality control to guarantee that the data obtained will be useful, reliable and valid" (Patton, 1990:140).

3.12 Analysis of Data:

Data analysis is the process whereby the researcher inspects, cleans, transforms and models data with the goal of highlighting information that will prove useful in establishing conclusions and supporting decision making. The researcher chose the grounded theory method as the most suitable method of qualitative data analysis for this study. The grounded theory method "procedures are designed to build an explanation or to generate a theory around the core or central theme that emerges from the data collected" (Saunders et al., 2007).

Patton (1987) claims that direct quotes are a basic source of raw data in qualitative evaluation. Patton also noted that direct quotations can help to reveal the respondents' levels of emotion; the way in which they have organised their worlds; their thoughts about what is happening; their experiences; and their basic perceptions. (1987). The data analysis process of this study involved analysing the interview transcripts. The transcript was changed from an audio to literate format. The data was then organised by the researcher according to similar/common opinions and answers.

3.13 Possible Limitations to Research:

There is very little written about the impact of celebrity ambassadors on the PR strategies of non-profit organisations. The researcher intended to carry out primary research that would correct this imbalance. The researcher intended to interview as many PR professionals and non-profit organisation representatives as possible to provide a wide scope of opinions, attitudes, and beliefs on the topic. Despite cost, time and geographical restrictions the researcher interviewed two PR professionals and three non-profit organisation

representatives. The researcher acknowledges that had the number of interviewees been larger a wider spectrum of opinions, attitudes and beliefs would have been collected.

During each of the interviews the researcher was conscious that the interviewee may be prone to bias and not be entirely honest. This possible limitation is referred to as validity and reliability. Validity determines whether the research truly measures that which it was intended measure or how truthful the results are (Joppe, 2000). Reliability refers to “the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions.”(Hammersley 1992:67) To eradicate this possible limitation the researcher let the interviewees speak without interruption until the interviewee was satisfied he/she had answered the question. The researcher also ensured that their tone of voice, body language and responses reflected a non-judgemental reaction.

3.14 Ethics:

Ethical research should be the goal of all social researchers (Blaxter et al., 2008). The researcher ensured that informed consent and confidentiality was sought for this study. All participants were entitled to anonymity and the right to withdraw from the study at any given time. According to Wisker (2008:195) “It is assumed that what is said in an interview is ‘on the record’, but some participants may choose to remain anonymous or to vet the script of the interview before you use it”. The researcher identified and contacted replacement interviewees should any interviewee withdraw or not be able to participate in the interview. Ensuring ethical research allowed the researcher to be prepared for unexpected circumstances.

3.15 Discarding Alternative Research Methods:

The researcher was aware of other methods of both qualitative and quantitative research which were at their disposal during this study such as focus groups, case studies and questionnaires. The researcher discarded these methods due to the nature of the study. The researcher did not want to use both qualitative and quantitative research. The researcher carefully considered all methods of both qualitative and quantitative research and deemed structured and semi- structured interviews as the most suitable approach to assess the impact of celebrity ambassadors on the PR strategies of non-profit organisations.

3.16 Conclusion:

The qualitative research method of interviewing is appropriate for assessing the impact of celebrity ambassadors on the PR strategies of non-profit organisations for several reasons. The interview method allows the researcher to gain access to in-depth opinions, attitudes and beliefs on the particular topic. Semi-structured interviews allow the interviewee to develop their own ideas as they speak and reduce the possibility of bias. Interviewing is a time consuming research method which includes travelling to and from the interviews, actual interview time, and data analysis (Miller, 1991). Despite this weakness, interviewing is a reliable and useful method of obtaining primary research on the impact of celebrity ambassadors on the PR strategies of non-profit organisations.

Chapter Four

4. Research findings and analysis:

This chapter presents the findings and analysis from the primary research data collected by the researcher by means of interview. The findings outlined in this chapter are supported by quotations taken from the transcribed interview material. Analysis of the data collected by the researcher presents common themes and similar attitudes and beliefs amongst interviewees. Data will be discussed in relation to theoretical constructs outlined in the literature review and organised according to each primary research objective. The primary research objectives are:

- To explore the phenomenon of celebrity ambassadors.
- To assess the impact of celebrity ambassadors on non-profit PR.
- To gain an understanding of the importance of celebrity ambassadors in the PR industry.

The following headings outline the general themes extracted from interviews to develop the research findings. The following is a list of the interviewees who contributed to the primary research of this thesis;

Renate Murphy, PR Consultant, CAMEO Communications.

Doreen O Mahony, PR Consultant, Media Manager.

Eoghan O Sullivan, Campaign Manager, Breakthrough Cancer Research.

JP O Sullivan, Donor and Programmes Officer, Hope Foundation.

Caroline Kingston, Communications Coordinator, ISPCC.

Julie Stafford, Direct Marketing Manager, ISPCC.

4.1 Public Relations:

To begin with the researcher asked each of the interviewees to outline their own personal understanding of public relations. This question was crucial considering the nature of the study and because not all of the interviewees were from a public relations background. Despite this all interviewees agreed that public relations is the building and maintaining of positive relationships and communication between different publics and a particular brand.

According to Eoghan O Sullivan, "It's the interaction between the brand and the actual charity itself, the full interaction is between that and the public and it's trying to maintain that relationship in a positive way, whether that's attracting new people or maintaining that relationship with others."

JP O Sullivan added that "Hope is an international organisation here in Ireland, PR drives the work we do in India...PR is the necessary tool to generate number one awareness for us and number two to help generate the funds that are necessary to keep us going on the ground overseas."

Caroline Kingston and Julie Stafford agreed that "PR allows us to speak to our stakeholders about the work of our organisation, and issues relating to children. PR is also very effective in terms of brand building and keeping our charity front of mind by using media and PR tools available to us."

Renate Murphy defined PR as "a way of generating positive publicity for a company, organisation, charity, individual in various forms of the media and to present them positively in that way...on-going positive messaging in a very believable and credible way and to give weight to a charity or any organisation that is where PR really comes in".

Doreen O Mahoney added that "Public relations is about getting a particular message out to a particular audience about a product or service at a particular time. It's about defining the message and keeping that message in the minds of people in a positive way. It's about making people aware and keeping them aware of the core message".

The literature written on the subject of public relations presents similar definitions of PR to those collected as part of the researcher's primary research. Gregory, (2000) refers to PR as the "task of guarding and managing reputation and relationships" this is similar to the definition of PR put forward by the IPR that "Public relations practice is the discipline which looks after reputation with the aim of earning understanding and support and influencing opinion and behaviour".

Similarly Cutlip Centre and Broom define PR as a means of building relationships and communicating with the public. Kitchen (1997); Wilson et al.(2003) put emphasis on PR as a management function, developing and executing strategic issues involving two way relationships and communication.

L'Etang (2008) however is of the opinion that public relations is an industry of propaganda and spin that trades on lies and deceit. The word "persuasion" has stuck with the PR profession, with many being accused of being "spin doctors". Breakenridge (2008) believes that the PR industry has become caught up in the hype and spin, forgetting that PR is about public relations. She argues that "public relations is no longer just about audiences" and that new PR is about people and relationships.

4.2 Celebrity Ambassadors:

Secondly, interviewees were asked for their opinions on the phenomenon of celebrity ambassadors. This was another crucial question considering the nature of the research as it was necessary to identify if the participants were in support of or against the use of celebrity ambassadors by charities. All interviewees had a similar positive opinion of celebrity ambassadors.

Doreen O Mahony, stated that "I think celebrity ambassadors are mostly a good thing. It depends on how much they buy into the charity themselves and how passionate they are about the charity."

Eoghan O Sullivan said that celebrity ambassadors allow charities "to interact with the media in a cost effective way. If you are trying to get your event or campaign in the newspapers a lot of the time you are running with hundreds of other worthy causes and I suppose to differentiate yourself from all the other things that are going on I think definitely having a celebrity slant on things gives you an added advantage.". Eoghan added that ". It's using different things for different reasons and obviously its trying to have people who may have a connection with cancer research as well who maybe have their own reasons for wanting to support it and the more they get behind it and want to really want to push it, the more they do for you the more you'll get outta it in the long run too".

Eoghan also mentioned regarding Breakthrough Cancer Research's celebrity ambassador, Michael Flatley that "He was a celebrity ambassador that we used for a specific campaign that was the Drive for Dads campaign. He was a perfect fit for that because he's an avid golfer himself, he built his own golf course down in his estate outside Fermoy and he's a father himself".

JP O Sullivan added that "To be honest I think with the way the charity sector is moving they are a necessary part. It's only when you look at the world of communications it is all about

celebrity. It's about brands and there is competition between charities for want of a better phrase it's a business, in terms of you have to fundraise to keep your work going".

JP also added regarding Hope's work with celebrity ambassadors that "levels of engagement vary from somebody who can be very involved with us, attending events with us and helping to promote the organisation to somebody just being present for one photo call in the lifetime of their time with the organisation."

ISPCC representatives Caroline Kingston and Julie Stafford agreed that celebrity ambassadors do make a difference and added that

"The ISPCC receives less than 10% government funding and our Childline service receives zero. We are wholly dependent on public support and donations. We therefore felt that celebrity ambassadors could boost the success of our fundraising campaigns, increase awareness of our charity, generate more support, and ultimately help us help more children in Ireland... In our experience a campaign endorsed by a celebrity generates far more media attention and publicity than one without... In an ideal world we wouldn't need celebrity endorsement to reinforce our messages but we are so fortunate to have them to call upon".

Caroline and Julie also added that "We had to be specific in choosing the right celebrity for our organisation though considering we are a children's charity. The likes of Miriam O'Callaghan; successful working mother of eight children, is someone who appeals to adults, parents and the general public alike. And Jedward; young, enthusiastic, hard-working duo are great role models for children and young people".

Renate Murphy added that "they have a cost implication. Some celebrities like Miriam O'Callaghan would do it free of charge pro-bono, Roy Keane with the Irish Guide Dogs, Tommy Bowe and Bothár, Angelina Jolie and UNICEF... you can pick them in for interviews, journalists want to talk to them on radio, on print media, people want to do photo calls with them and it's great that they can be leveraged for the benefit of the charity".

The interviewee's opinions of celebrity ambassadors mirror the writings of Smith (2009) who put forward the notion that celebrities supporting non-profit organisations attracts media attention and therefore captures the attention of the general public encouraging them to read brochures, look at websites and take interest in the charity, something they previously may have ignored. (Smith, 2009:147).

4.3 Advantages associated with celebrity ambassadors:

Interviewees were asked what they considered are the advantages of non-profit organisations engaging with celebrity ambassadors as part of PR strategies. The interviewees identified similar advantages, in particular that a celebrity's name alone can add weight to a campaign or organisation, provide access to a global market and garner media attention.

Doreen O Mahony commented “. I have worked with a few celebrity ambassadors, Blainead Ni Choffaig for Plan Ireland, Adi Roche, for work on a campaign called Tour de Munster and of course Roy Keane for Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind. They make a difference if you can get the ambassador to stay "on message" and get the coverage afterwards”.

ISPCC representatives Caroline Kingston and Julie Stafford stated that “Their name alone can add far more weight to a campaign than you might otherwise get without them. But the celebrity has to be the right fit for the organisation.” Caroline and Julie also added that “Another big contribution of celebrity Ambassadors is that it allows a charity to tap into the ambassadors social media profiles which helps spread the message and raise more awareness for the charity. Some of our ambassadors are frequent tweeters and when they tweet on our behalf it has a much bigger reach than when we tweet ourselves”.

JP O Sullivan said “If somebody is out there in the public domain and their name can add weight to your organisation or can carry your story across the globe then that's why we would use them. We have absolutely amazing support just here at home in Ireland, we've thousands people in the community and they would be great agents for information exchange and for getting our story out there but then again as I say it's the international name that can carry the story around the world and help the project in India...”

Renate Murphy said that engaging with celebrity ambassadors is “a fantastic way for charities to get some positive PR because obviously if you have a photo call and you have a celebrity in it, it's going to have much higher recall in the media, if you put it out further, its bigger news... Well I would say they are fantastic and enormous benefits for the charity if the celebrity ambassador is aligned to their brand is working with them to give them positive benefits...”

Eoghan O Sullivan added “Social media has changed everything. We had a specific breakthrough...And when the story broke in the media, the story was picked up by Stephen Fry who tweeted it and just the fact he tweeted it was then picked by other media outlets

around the world. So it's that kind of power by celebrity endorsement as well that generally you're out to get a celebrity to endorse your product. But the way social media has changed now sometimes just putting yourself out there you might get an endorsement without even realising it and social media has that power now to change it".

The researchers findings are similar to literature written on the topic such as Turner (2004:9) who explains that in the 1990's celebrities became important commodities for the media. The media became obsessed with celebrities, the phenomenon of *Big Brother* made that clear (Turner, 2004:9). It also confirms Okonkwo's view that "celebrities make the brands message stand out among the clutter of advertising" (2007:157). The interviewees' responses are backed also by Okonkwo's claim that celebrity ambassadors generate extensive PR leverage and opportunities and help the organisation reach a global audience. (2007:158). The findings of this study are also backed by the writings of Shah who states that celebrities deliver the message quickly and offer reassurance to publics, they also lend instant awareness and warrant immediate attention (Okonkwo, 2009:360).

4.4 Celebrity overshadowing message of charity:

The researcher asked all interviewees for their response to the idea that sometimes celebrity ambassadors can overshadow a charity's message or the work of the charity. All interviewees were of the opinion that choosing the right person for the job is vital and that if the right person isn't chosen this may become an issue.

JP O Sullivan indicated that Hope are very conscious of this issue and that "We would come across a lot of celebrities regularly in our line of work, in events and networking opportunities, and we would make the call not to maybe engage with them, to become ambassadors. I suppose we have a very direct and strong mission aim and vision and we need to make sure that the people we attach ourselves to or ask to become affiliated with the charity uphold those as well."

Doreen O Mahony, explained that "That can happen if the media just wants the story of the celebrity and not the charity. It's important to try to negotiate the message of the charity with the journalists so that this does not happen. In Ireland, I think that journalists are fair and there is not as much of a celebrity culture as there are in other countries, so they tend to keep the message of the charity."

Renate Murphy was of the opinion that “It will all go pear shaped though if your brand ambassador isn’t a perfect fit for your charity. E.g. aligning Rihanna with the Irish Heart Foundation or a health charity and then there are pictures of her with cigarettes or smoking. There has to be a deep engagement and sympathy for the charity with the ambassador. There has to be some sort of connection and if you’re missing that connection I don’t think it’s worth it.”

Eoghan O Sullivan stated that “a lot of media outlets can pick up the story and want to run with it but only on the basis if they can speak to the celebrity themselves.”

Caroline Kingston and Julie Stafford are of the opinion that “This has not been our experience but we can certainly see how this can happen. The key for us is to choose the right ambassador for the campaign. For example; our recent Anti-Bullying Campaign (April 2012) was a huge success with Mark Feehily from Westlife being the face of the campaign. Mark spoke very openly and honestly about his own personal experience of bullying which gave weight to the campaign. Sometimes celebrities might endorse something and just turn up for a photo-shoot and leave and this can sometimes overshadow the charities message.”

The interviewees’ responses are conform with the writings of Gunning who insists that “the celebrity must be relevant to the audience” (Gunning, 2003:135) and Shah who states that “the celebrity can become bigger than the brand” (Shah, 2009:364). The findings also confirm Okonkwo’s view that celebrity endorsements do not begin and end with a photo-shoot of a beautiful star...There are several factors and dimensions involved in choosing a celebrity ambassador (Okonkwo, 2007:157).

4.5 Disadvantages associated with celebrity ambassadors:

The researcher then asked all interviewees if they recognised or experienced any disadvantages with engaging with celebrity ambassadors. All participants recognised that celebrities usually have busy schedules and this can influence their role as celebrity ambassador for the charity. It was also recognised that celebrities with a bad reputation or who don’t actually care about the charity are a major disadvantage.

ISPCG representatives Caroline Kingston and Julie Stafford agreed that one disadvantage of working with a celebrity ambassador is “The logistics of planning a campaign that involves a celebrity ambassador can be quite difficult as you have to fit around their schedule which is

constantly changing. You can plan as much as you are able but at the end of the day it could all change at the last minute – you have to be able to ‘go with the flow.’”

Doreen O Mahony added that “If the celebrity does not have a good reputation or if they don't care about the charity and are just involved for their own profile that can be a disadvantage”.

JP O Sullivan agreed by stating that “The Hope Foundation are about children and we need to make sure that the person representing us out there has a reputation that’s not wholly negative and that wouldn’t be outside of the remit of a children’s environment either”. On the subject of disadvantages of celebrity ambassadors JP put forward a personal comment on the topic

“As I say this is very much my own opinion, it was a picture of Angelina Jolie. She was on a walk-about in some village in Africa and I was absolutely appalled by the picture.... It was a picture of a child who was tied to a tree, with a piece of string or rope and there was a picture of Angelina Jolie with this child. But I’m coming from a human rights perspective and the picture was of her holding the child but the child was still tied to the tree. I suppose from my background... my immediate reaction would be to untie the child before you get your PR opportunity. It is interesting from a PR perspective to look at the reactions to the picture. A lot of people saying “Amazing woman, absolutely outstanding, great things for kids” which she does obviously, but I suppose it was just the other side of where PR can go wrong”.

Eoghan O Sullivan commented that “The print media are happy to run with the story but the radio stations or TV generally are more interested in it only if they can have that celebrity come and further endorse it... it can be a bit of an obstacle where we say we are willing to do it ourselves but due to their commitments they can’t be going on every TV or radio show to promote our event/charity”

Renate Murphy, added “I think it’s always very important that u ensure u have the brand/celebrity ambassador well thought out to make sure there’s not going to be a big management issue down the line. You have to choose a safe bet; someone who is solid and safe. If you look at Adi Roche, she sprung immediately to mind when you mentioned it. She is the CEO of her charity but she has actually become a celebrity ambassador for the charity as well as a result...”

Renate also added that “One negative thing about celebrity ambassadors is that they’re getting a bit old hat now. The industry needs to come up with new ways to catch the media.

There is lots of different mechanisms, surveys, generating statistics, generating interest stories around charity would be very important. Charities using celebrities, its about stepping up to the next level now, they need to go deeper by either using the celebrity to help you go deeper or coming up with news and news angles”.

The researcher’s findings regarding this study are similar to the literature written on the topic. Shah says that “Celebrities are like double-edged swords”. Scams, scandals or negative press about the celebrity in question can damage the reputation of brands they support (Shah, 2009:362). Shah also comments that celebrities are likely to arrive late, change dates and make unreasonable demands” (Shah, 2009:363).

4.6 Effective celebrity ambassadors:

Finally the interviewees were then asked if there were any celebrity ambassadors they admired or found particularly effective. Participants had no shortage of examples of effective celebrity ambassadors with some interviewees citing the same reasoning for their choice. Interviewees claimed that a celebrity ambassador with a real connection and passion to the cause is likely to be most effective.

Renate Murphy, stated that she admired “Adi Roche of Chernobyl, she definitely stepped it up a gear from leverage her profile to generating more money for her charity. Bono’s wife is now on the board of Adi Roche’s Chernobyl charity because she met Ade at events when Adi was out networking, representing her brand and her charity... she was able to engage people that can bring huge weight and finances to her organisation.”

Renate also added that “Adi Roche is an example of where it clearly worked and going from an ambassador for the charity to actually delivering goods for the charity because that actually would bring in revenue and would bring a profile again.” With regard to Bono’s wife’s involvement with the organisation Renate commented on how “One of the royalties from one of the U2 songs goes to that charity” and that this was a great example of the merits of pairing celebrities and non-profit organisations.

JP O Sullivan, put forward the example of Alyssa Milano. “She’s an amazing champion for charities out there. She does it very quietly and discreetly I think last year she raised \$1.5million on her birthday by asking her Twitter followers to donate \$10. With ourselves we would have a patron in the UK branch, he wouldn’t be that well known in Ireland, Christopher Biggins, he won I’m A Celebrity Get Me Outta Here a few years ago, and I think

as a patron for us he does get our message out there but he also spends a lot of time out in Calcutta with us. He gets to know the programmes, the partners and the staff rather than just lend his face to a campaign.”

Regarding Jonathan Rhys Meyers role as a celebrity ambassador for Hope, JP stated that “I know that Jonathon Rhys Meyers was chosen I suppose because he’s a local lad, he’s from Cork and he was beginning to get his name out there when he joined with Hope, he was going to the States and stuff like that. Again a very strong name, up and coming and I suppose the main link was he was from Cork”.

ISPCC representatives Caroline Kingston and Julie Stafford mentioned Ray D’Arcy, (Irish Cancer Society) and Liam Neeson, (UNICEF) as celebrity ambassadors they found effective for non-profit organisations. Doreen O Mahony claimed “Roy Keane has been particularly good to Irish Guide Dogs. He has been doing the SHADES campaign for ten years now. It helps that he is very passionate about dogs”. They need to have an interest in the work of the charity, this will mean that they are much more open to interviews and photocalls. You want someone who will be interested in the charity all the time, not just for one day a year. You need someone who is charismatic and who will generate coverage for the charity as well.

Eoghan added “Roy Keane is one I’ve noticed myself in the past it’s the sheer media coverage and I think definitely there is a public interest in it no matter what the story is people want to read more about it. From our own point of view the ones we have used in the past such as Michael Flatley, he hasn’t necessarily been in the media a lot, but we got a lot of coverage out of it... sometimes people who are at the opening of every envelope and are spreading themselves across lots of different causes, I think some people question does it give an sense of belonging to that charity or the event...”

Literature on the topic of effective celebrity ambassadors is similar to the findings of this primary research. Shah insists that it is vital to “choose the right celebrity and wisely”, he adds that not only should the celebrity be suitable for the brand but that the campaign should suit the personality of the celebrity. (Shah, 2009:365).

Chapter Five

5. Conclusions and Recommendations:

This chapter presents the researchers final and clear conclusions regarding the impact of celebrity ambassadors on non-profit PR. The following conclusions and recommendations were drawn from the primary and secondary data that was analysed in the previous chapter. The researcher's recommendations will be put forward as part of future research as well as for public relations professionals engaged in non-profit PR.

5.1 Conclusions:

The aim of this thesis was to evaluate the inclusion of of celebrity ambassadors on non-profit PR strategies. The overall conclusion following both primary and secondary research is that due to the prevalence of celebrity culture in the world today, celebrity ambassadors play a vital role in the PR strategies of non-profit organisations. Both public relations professionals and non-profit organisations that fully embrace and respect the power of the celebrity see the benefits of including celebrity ambassadors in their PR strategies.

For the most part public relations professionals and non-profit organisations are cautious regarding which celebrity they engage with and who they assign the role to. Celebrities on the other hand are also aware of their celebrity power and in recent years are seeking to become celebrity ambassadors. Ideally it's when the most suitable celebrity ambassador is chosen for the job, that the brand, reputation and audience reach of celebrities and non-profit organisations are maximised. However there are undoubtedly cases of where a chosen celebrity is not suitable for the ambassador role. An example of this is the choice of Rihanna as the face of Nivea.

This study demonstrates that celebrity ambassadors can have a positive impact on the PR strategies of non-profit organisations when the most suitable celebrity is chosen. Findings conclude that celebrity ambassadors allow non-profit organisation to engage in two-way communication with its publics and confirms that celebrity ambassadors are a natural fit in the PR industry. The researcher's primary and secondary research findings also identify that publicity; press agency; and advertising are important elements of PR.

Research Question 1: What is non-profit PR?

The findings of this study define PR as the activity of;

- Establishing and maintaining the ‘brand’ of a non-profit organisation
- Outlining and promoting the organisation’s mission.
- Developing a positive reputation.
- Create a positive climate for fundraising.
- Recruiting volunteers and encouraging philanthropic support.
- Developing educational materials.
- Motivate employees, volunteers, celebrity ambassadors and trustees and encourage them to work to their full potential for achieve the organisation’s goals.
- Developing two-way channels of communication between a non-profit organisation and its publics.
- Encourage public policy that is in line with the organisation’s mission and goals.

However it must be added that non-profit PR professional work with limited resources in terms of staff and funding. Apart from these two major limitations, non-profit PR is just another section of the PR industry. Non-profit organisations struggle as government and private donations have declined, but studies show that the majority of the organisations income comes from regular donations, events, major donors and foundations.

Cutlip, Center and Broom, (2000:520) identify five distinguishing factors of non-profit organisations. The organisations must be organised, private, non-profit distributing, self-governing and voluntary. The organisation must also be institutionally separate from the government too.

The researcher’s primary research reveals similar findings to that of the academic literature. One interviewee defined non-profit PR as “hugely valuable”. One of the benefits of PR is that the majority of people will believe what they read in newspapers or on blogs as opposed to an advertising campaign. While advertising campaigns are also valuable in their own way, for a non-profit organisation to generate on-going positive messaging in a credible way PR is the solution.

This study justifies the use of PR by non-profit organisations and outlines how building a positive reputation, brand, image and communicating with publics are just as important activities for non-profit organisations as they are for businesses.

Research Question 2: Are celebrity ambassadors an advantage to non-profit organisations?

The findings of both the primary and secondary research of this study conclude that celebrity ambassadors are indeed an advantage to non-profit organisations for the following reasons:

- Celebrities are charismatic and familiar and offer reassurance to the public.
- Celebrities receive immediate public and media attention.
- Celebrities can reach a global audience.
- Celebrities can encourage publics to do things they may have otherwise not e.g. look at website, read brochure, donate money.
- Celebrities add weight and credibility to photographs, articles, and events.

The phenomenon of celebrity ambassadors has erupted in recent years and for the majority they are seen as advantageous. Max Clifford claims celebrity-stories have allowed him to break more tabloid front-page stories in the UK than any other journalist has (Tench and Yeoman, 2009). David and Victoria Beckham are an example of press agentry, as the publicity surrounding the couple has been orchestrated by PR professionals for years.

According to Smith (2009:147) celebrities supporting non-profit organisations attracts media attention and therefore captures the attention of the general public. Gunning (2003:90) states that we are all interested in anyone with ‘celebrity’ status and will be drawn to any media attention on them, a photograph can grab a reader’s attention and encourage them to read what it is about.

As part of the researcher’s primary research all interviewees agreed that celebrity ambassadors were of benefit and greatly enhanced non-profit organisations’ profile in the media. The ISPC interviewee’s said “Their name alone can add far more weight to a campaign than you might otherwise get without them”. Another interviewee added that engaging with a celebrity ambassador allows for “higher recall in the media, if you put it out further, its bigger news”. These opinions are just two of five similar reactions from the researcher’s primary data. The PR professionals and non-profit organisations representatives all seem to have had positive experiences in their engagement with celebrity ambassadors.

Each of the participants acknowledged the advantages of celebrity ambassadors to non-profit PR and the PR industry as a whole. However, the interviewees also outlined their awareness of disadvantages associated with celebrity ambassadors. Disadvantages included; busy

schedules; no connection to the cause; using charity for publicity purposes; bad reputation; and scandals and scams. Participants insisted that when the most suitable ambassadors is chosen, the issues listed above will not arise.

This study shows that there are both advantages and disadvantages of non-profit organisations engaging with celebrity ambassadors but that the advantages clearly outweigh the disadvantages considerably. The study also shows that PR professionals are embracing the use of celebrity ambassadors for non-profit PR.

Research Question 3: What makes an effective celebrity ambassador?

The findings of this study outline that an effective celebrity ambassador;

- Has a connection or real passion for the cause.
- Has a clean and positive reputation with both the public and the media.
- Understands the functions of a celebrity ambassador role.
- Engages with people easily and has a similar personality to the organisation.
- Is aware of the power of social media and utilises his/her accounts to represent the organisation.

The effectiveness of a celebrity ambassador depends on the research and preparatory work of the non-profit organisation. It's abundantly clear that you can't just match up a celebrity ambassador with a non-profit organisation. A thorough investigative thought process is crucial involving the strategic management of the organisation when choosing a celebrity ambassador. There has to be a deep engagement and sympathy for the charity with the ambassador. A great example of this is the pairing of Kathryn Thomas and Self Help Africa.

Primary research indicated that a connection with the organisation is what ultimately makes an effective ambassador. A celebrity with a real connection to the cause makes the campaign more credible and likeable among the organisations publics. This study outlines the elements to be satisfied to ensure the effectiveness of a celebrity ambassador for a non-profit organisation.

To ultimately conclude, the researcher is confident that despite some minor disadvantages, celebrity ambassadors are a positive aspect of non-profit PR. The researcher is also confident that any non-profit organisation that chooses to engage with celebrity ambassadors will see significant improvements in all elements of their campaign and PR efforts. From this study it

is apparent that there is a lack of academic literature on the topic of non-profit organisations and celebrity ambassadors. Celebrity ambassadors will continue to play a key role in the PR of non-profit organisations and celebrity ambassadors will continue to ensure that non-profit PR professionals engage in two-way communication. This two-way communication enables the non-profit organisations to engage with their publics in a more effective manner.

5.2 Recommendations:

According to Tench and Yeomans (2009:424):

To further develop the discipline in a marketing environment, PR practitioners must think creatively from both a strategic and tactical perspective. Grabbing the attention of consumers is increasingly difficult and PR must evolve in a professional and ethical manner to ensure that it continues to enhance its reputation in a commercial context.

Following on logically from the conclusions the following recommendations can be made:

- This study shows that the level of non-profit organisations engaging with celebrity ambassadors is increasing. Therefore all non-profit PR professionals need to be more open to embracing celebrity ambassadors in order to stay up to date with the PR world. Celebrity ambassadors can determine whether or not a person looks at a website, donates money or volunteers their time. Celebrity ambassadors have almost become vital to the world of non-profit PR.
- The researcher recommends that non-profit PR professionals engage in two-way symmetrical communication when embracing celebrity ambassadors as part of the organisations PR strategies. This will enable the organisation to communicate more efficiently with its publics and to truly experience the benefits of engaging with a celebrity ambassador.
- There are several important elements that a non-profit PR professional should look for when choosing a celebrity ambassador. The celebrity should have a charismatic and approachable personality, a positive reputation, a real connection or passion to the cause and understand what is expected of a celebrity ambassador for a non-profit organisation.

- The world of celebrity is constantly changing, with new trends emerging every day. Non-profit PR professional need to keep up to date with the latest celebrity trends and ensure that the celebrity ambassadors representing their clients are on trend too. This will give the perception that both the organisation and celebrity are dedicated to the cause and understand their publics.
- At present, there is a lack of academic literature on the topic of non-profit organisations and celebrity ambassadors. The researcher acknowledges this challenge and recommends further and more in depth academic research into this topic for the use of future student researchers.
- The researcher recommends that non-profit PR professionals are aware of how the growing use of social media can add to the already beneficial relationship between celebrities and non-profit organisations.

Final Words:

This overall study has convinced the researcher that non-profit PR is just as important as the PR of businesses that celebrity ambassadors are an advantage to non-profit organisations and the researcher hopes that this study will contribute to the future exploration of this topic.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Sample Email to Participate:

Dear _____,

My name is Allison Kelleher and I am currently completing my thesis as part of my MA in Public Relations with New Media in Cork Institute of Technology.

The title of my thesis is to assess the impact of celebrity ambassadors on the PR strategies of non-profit organisations.

I would love the opportunity to interview you regarding this topic as part of my primary research. Would you be interested in taking part in this interview?

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind Regards,

Allison Kelleher.

Appendix B

List of Participants:

Below is a list of people who were interviewed by the researcher as part of the primary research of this study;

Renate Murphy, CAMEO Communications.

Doreen O Mahony, Media Manager.

Eoghan O Sullivan, Breakthrough Cancer Research.

JP O Sullivan, Hope Foundation.

Caroline Kingston and Julie Stafford, ISPCC.

Appendix C

Interview Transcripts

The interviewee's responses will be presented in standard text.

The interviewer's questions will be represented in italics.

Interview 1:

Doreen O Mahony

PR Consultant for Media Manager

22nd of August 2012 – Email.

How do you define PR?

For me, public relations is about getting a particular message out to a particular audience about a product or service at a particular time. It's about defining the message and keeping that message in the minds of people in a positive way. It's about making people aware and keeping them aware of the core message.

What is your opinion of celebrity ambassadors? Do you think they make a difference to charity PR?

I think celebrity ambassadors are mostly a good thing. It depends on how much they buy into the charity themselves and how passionate they are about the charity. I have worked with a few celebrity ambassadors, Blainead Ni Choffaig for Plan Ireland, Adi Roche, for work on a campaign called Tour de Munster and of course Roy Keane for Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind. They make a difference if you can get the ambassador to stay "on message" and get the coverage afterwards.

What is your response to the statement that celebrity ambassadors can sometimes overshadow the message of the charity?

I think that can happen if the media just wants the story of the celebrity and not the charity, it's important to try to negotiate the message of the charity with the journalists so that this

does not happen. In Ireland, I think that journalists are fair and there is not as much of a celebrity culture as there are in other countries, so they tend to keep the message of the charity,

Are there any celebrity ambassadors who strike you as particularly effective?

Roy Keane has been particularly good to Irish Guide Dogs. He has been doing the SHADES campaign for ten years now. It helps that he is very passionate about dogs.

In your opinion are there any disadvantages of a charity having a celebrity ambassador?

If the celebrity does not have a good reputation or if they don't care about the charity and are just involved for their own profile, then that can be a disadvantage.

When choosing a celebrity ambassador what do you feel are vital attributes to look for?

They need to have an interest in the work of the charity; this will mean that they are much more open to interviews and photo calls. You want someone who will be interested in the charity all the time, not just for one day a year. You need someone who is charismatic and who will generate coverage for the charity as well.

Interview 2:

JP O Sullivan.

Donor and Programmes Officer at Hope Foundation.

4th August 2012 – Telephone.

What is your understanding of charity PR?

Well, the way I look at the whole thing is, because Hope is an international organisation, here in Ireland, PR drives the work we do in India. I'm very much of the school of thought that in Ireland we are a charity and in India and Calcutta we are a development organisation. So PR is the necessary tool to generate number one awareness for us and number two to help generate the funds that are necessary to keep us going on the ground overseas.

How do you define the phrase 'celebrity ambassador'?

Well it depends very much on the person that we are approaching. I mean if it's a local Irish person we're asking to be an ambassador we're very much of the opinion and aware that they may have more time to give than somebody like Jonathon Rhys Meyers who's international and is travelling all over the world. So as much levels of engagement vary from somebody who can be very involved with us, attending events with us and helping to promote the organisation to somebody just being present for one photo call in the lifetime of their time with the organisation.

Why did the Hope Foundation choose to nominate an official celebrity ambassador instead of just having celebrity 'supporters' for different campaigns?

It's a PR thing again. If somebody is out there in the public domain and their name can add weight to your organisation or can carry your story across the globe then that's why we would use them. We have absolutely amazing support just here at home in Ireland, we've thousands people in the community and they would be great agents for information exchange and for getting our story out there but then again as I say it's the international name that can carry the story around the world and help the project in India then that's why we lean towards them.

How were Jonathan Rhys Meyers, Miriam O Callaghan and other celebrity ambassadors chosen? Did they have to go through a process or was it something they approached Hope about?

Well I'm only with Hope six years myself and I know that Jonathon Rhys Meyers was chosen I suppose because he's a local lad, he's from Cork and he was beginning to get his name out there when he joined with Hope, he was going to the States and stuff like that. Again a very strong name, up and coming and I suppose the main link was he was from Cork. With Miriam, I suppose we would have met Miriam at a number of events, our Founder and Director Maureen_Forrester would have received awards over the years from Miriam and Miriam would have quietly supported us for a very long time and then the approach was made to see if she would be happy to become an ambassador.

What is your response to the idea that celebrity ambassadors can sometimes overshadow the charity's message?

Yes, we would be quite conscious of this. And for want of a better way of putting this we would come across a lot of celebrities regularly in our line of work in events and networking opportunities and would make the call not to maybe engage with them, to become ambassadors. I suppose we have a very direct and strong mission aim and vision and we need to make sure that the people we attach ourselves to or ask to become affiliated with the charity uphold those as well. We are about children and we need to make sure that the person representing us out there has a reputation that's not wholly negative and that wouldn't be outside of the remit of a children's environment either.

Are there any celebrity ambassadors that would strike you personally as particularly effective for charities?

I suppose there's one person that's not really put out there that much; I would follow her myself on Twitter and on Facebook to see what she's up to, Alyssa Milano. She used to be in Who's The Boss in the 80's, she's an amazing champion for charities out there. She does it very quietly and discreetly I think last year she raised \$1.5million on her birthday by asking her Twitter followers to donate \$10. With ourselves we would have a patron in the UK branch, he wouldn't be that well known in Ireland, Christopher Biggins, he won I'm A Celebrity Get Me Outta Here a few years ago, and I think as a patron for us he does get our message out there but he also spends a lot of time out in Calcutta with us. He gets to know the programmes, the partners and the staff rather than just lend his face to a campaign.

So JP do you think celebrity ambassadors are vital to the non-profit organisations?

To be honest I think with the way the charity sector is moving they are a necessary part. It's only when you look at the world of communications it is all about celebrity. It's about brands and there is competition between charities for want of a better phrase it's a business in terms of you have to fundraise to keep your work going. So to answer your question I do think they are a necessary part.

Do you yourself or Hope recognise any disadvantages or negative aspects of having celebrity ambassador?

I suppose personally, and this is not a Hope line on it at all, just there recently I noticed an article online that was doing the rounds, it was released by the UN. As I say this is very much my own opinion, it was a picture of Angelina Jolie. She was on a walk-about in some village in Africa and I was absolutely appalled by the picture. I think they pulled it off the web shortly after it was released. It was a picture of a child who was tied to a tree, with a piece of string or rope and there was a picture of Angelina Jolie with this child. But I'm coming from a human rights perspective and the picture was of her holding the child but the child was still tied to the tree. I suppose from my background of social work and child protection my immediate reaction would be to untie the child before you get your PR opportunity. It's interesting from a PR perspective to look at the reactions to the picture. A lot of people saying "Amazing woman, absolutely outstanding, great things for kids" which she does obviously, but I suppose it was just the other side of where PR can go wrong.

Great JP, do you have anything else you'd like to add regarding the topic?

Well just I suppose how we've seen the shift over the years from print media, in terms of PR to the online stuff and social media. I manage the social media for the organisation and I was stuck one afternoon for a post so I went back over the ambassadors we've had over the years and decided to maybe update the profiles and maybe say these people are finished with the organisation. And we had direct quotes from Jeremy Irons and Judy Dench, and Jonathon Rhys Meyers; there was about ten people whose pictures I posted that afternoon. We got a lot of feedback from that post as far across as the states where we wouldn't necessarily have an outreach just because Jonathon Rhys Meyers was feature and Jeremy Irons was up there, and people did get in touch asking "Are these people still affiliated with your charity?" now some also wanted to have coffee with Jonathon Rhys Meyers but I suppose it's the use of the ambassadors to get your message out there is what I'm trying to hammer home. They are

hugely involved and important to getting the message out and it boils down to us being able to support the project in India and finding the best mechanism to do that.

Interview 3:

Eoghan O Sullivan.

Campaign Manager at Breakthrough Cancer Research.

9th of August 2012 – Telephone.

What is your understanding of PR?

It's the interaction between the brand and the actual charity itself, the full interaction is between that and the public and it's trying to maintain that relationship in a positive way really, so whether that's attracting new people or maintaining that relationship with others.

Would I be correct in referring to Michael Flatley as the charity's celebrity ambassador? And are there any others?

He'd be one; he was a celebrity ambassador that we used for a specific campaign that was the Drive for Dads campaign. He was a perfect fit for that because he's an avid golfer himself, he built his own golf course down in his estate outside Fermoy and he's a father himself yano?

What other celebrity ambassadors have ye used in the past?

We would have used a number of people, we used Matt Cooper, Dáithi O Shea, Thomas Mulcahy, so I suppose even there we recently had a photo shoot with three of the Cork footballers, you'd have a wide range, it really depends on the event or the campaign or just exactly what it is your trying to promote really because something like the golf event we had recently in the Fota Island Resort in conjunction with the Bons Hospital for that we used three of the Cork footballers along with Colin Murphy the Cork doctor who'd be well known in sporting circles, so at least when that hits the media it gives you a bit more credibility than as well yano? Whereas for other things we were launching such as the Breakthrough Research brand we would have used other people like national broadcasters because that would have hit a whole other target audience. It's using different things for different reasons and obviously it's trying to have people who may have a connection with cancer research as well who maybe have their own reasons for wanting to support it and the more they get behind it and want to really want to push it, the more they do for you the more you'll get outta it in the long run too yano?

Do you think celebrity ambassadors make a difference to the non-profit PR? 9

Definitely, 100%! Because any of the traditional media outlets, and even the new ones, it's that type of an endorsement I suppose, to use the word again it gives a certain amount of credibility to the charity. Hopefully its mutually beneficial, it has been thankfully for most the people who have been involved with us, but it allows you to interact with the media in a cost effective way. More often than not in a free capacity, I mean obviously there is cost involved in photographers and all that, but more ordinarily if you're trying to get your even or campaign in the newspapers a lot of the time you're running with hundreds of other worthy cause and I suppose to differentiate yourself from all the other things that are going on I think definitely have a celebrity slant on things gives you an added advantage. It also satisfies the public's appetite for celebrity culture too.

✎ *What would be your response to the statement that sometimes celebrity ambassadors can overshadow the charity's message and what the charity is trying to do?*

Well I suppose that depends what time you're trying to use their celebrity as such for your own purpose. Our own experience on it is that we haven't really had anybody who's overshadowed us more often than not we'd be trying to get more outta them than they would of us but I can understand why somebody would worry about that, one would wonder if they are doing it for the right reasons.

✎ *And what about if the celebrity was receiving bad press or was involved in a scandal?*

Well the old saying is that any publicity is good publicity, even the example of Roy Keane as a celebrity ambassador for the Irish Guide Dogs, I know that sometimes he is controversial and yet every time he comes into the media for something with the Irish Guide Dogs there is another story running in the media but it gives them added media coverage outta it. You can view it as negative coverage but there is definitely a positive in it too. I suppose people have to careful about who they select for these things. We are always trying to get the right fit for each type of thing we are doing whether it's corporate or sport.

Are there any celebrity ambassadors that strike you as particularly effective and why?

Well Roy Keane is one I've noticed myself in the past it's the sheer media coverage and I think definitely there is a public interest in it no matter what the story is people want to read more about it. From our own point of view the ones we have used in the past such as Michael Flatley, he hasn't necessarily been in the media lately, we got a lot of coverage out of it from that point of view but people who lend their names to things who aren't always in the public

eye, yano sometimes people who are at the opening of an envelope and spreading themselves across lots of difference cause I think some people question does it give an sense of belonging to that charity or the event where as other people then maybe have an added interest in that charity, in our case if somebody wanted to really get behind cancer research and lend their name to that and they ordinarily don't do that kind of thing then that always great for media coverage.

✓ ***One last question Eoghan, are there any disadvantages you would associate with a charity having a celebrity ambassador?***

I think one of the ones that has come up for me in the past, so for example the Michael Flatley one, so a lot of media outlets pick up the story and want to run with it but only on the basis if they can speak to the celebrity themselves, so there interested in using that for their own purposes as well, they might run with the story, the print media are happy to run with the story but say the radio stations or TV generally are more interested in it only if they can have that celebrity come and further endorse it. That's means it can be a bit of an obstacle where we say we are willing to do it ourselves but due to their commitments they can't be going on every TV or radio show to promote our event/charity.

Do you have anything you would like to add on this particular topic?

Well I suppose just how social media has changed everything. We had a specific breakthrough about a specific spice that's used in curries that has cancer fighting capabilities. And when the story broke in the media, the story was picked up by Stephen Fry who tweeted it and just the fact he tweeted it was then picked by other media outlets around the world. So its that kind of power by celebrity endorsement as well that generally you're going out to get a celebrity to endorsement your product but the way social media has changed now sometimes but just putting yourself out there you might get an endorsement without even realising it and social media has that power now to change it. The opposite could be true as well if the subject was negative but it's definitely something that has shown itself and you see it a lot probably on Facebook and Twitter that a lot of people are lending their names to things even just these retweets where somebody has 4million followers that it just gives you a platform to immediately engage with a whole other audience that you may never ordinarily do so.

