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Table of Contents

Page No

01. Influence of Celebrity Worship Motives on Perceived Brand Evaluation of Endorsed-Brand 1 - 10

*Dissanayake D. M. R, Ismail N. & Sharif S. P.*

02. The Impact of Public Relations on News Coverage 10 - 15

*Arora P., Mahesh P. & Sreedher R.*

# Influence of Celebrity Worship Motives on Perceived Brand Evaluation of Endorsed-Brand

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**Abstract:** The concept of Effectiveness of Celebrity Endorsement has been explained in different models and theories as a notion related to the characteristics of the celebrity and the management – related perspectives of its use. The impact generated through the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement on endorsed brand is referred as brand evaluation. In addition, Absorption–Addiction Model (McCutcheon, Lynn, Lange, & Houran, 2002) explains how psychological bond between respondents and the respective celebrity is determined via “Celebrity Worship Motives” influences brand evaluation. Accordingly, this paper reviews how celebrity worship motives operate as a mechanism to moderate the relationship between perceived effectiveness of celebrity endorsement and perceived brand evaluation contexts. An extended literature review was followed as the main research instrument by highlighting empirical research gaps postulated by recently held studies. Accordingly, this study aims to propose research propositions to services sector brands in line with the empirical research gaps postulated by recently held studies. Finally, researchers suggest research hypotheses based on the literature reviews and discussions connected to the notion of celebrity worship motives. Paper concluded claiming empirical gaps found in services sector to examine how celebrity worship motives moderates the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement on perceived brand evaluation.

**Keywords:** Absorption–Addiction Model, Celebrity Worship Motives, Effectiveness of Celebrity Endorsement, Perceived Brand Evaluation, Services Sector

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## Introduction

### Background of the Study: Notion of Effectiveness of Celebrity Endorsement

Celebrity endorsement has been reported as a significant commercial practice across the world depending on its commercial impact in terms of practice intensity, cost and the strategic effect made on endorsed brands (Ding, Molchanov & Stork, 2010; Dissanayake & Ismail, 2015; Elberse & Verleun, 2012; Hung, 2014; Shimp, 2003; Tzoumaka, Tsiotsou, & Siomkos, 2014). The economic impact of celebrity endorsement practices has been justified with media branding contexts (Elberse & Verleun, 2012) whilst the nature of celebrity endorsement has been claimed as a fastest growing advertising method as a popular branding strategy across different markets, including China (Hung, Tse & Cheng, 2011). Meanwhile, India is noted an economy that practices wider range of celebrity endorsement strategies for branding (Suprio & Kumar, 2012), and USA is also a significant context in this regard (Plank, 2012). Sri Lanka is claimed a significant context of using celebrities to endorse services brands (Dissanayake, 2015; Sri Lanka Celebrity Index Report, 2015) whilst Japan has been noted as an intensive case of using celebrities in marketing promotions (Temperley & Tangen, 2006). Further, the impact of celebrity endorsement practices on branding has been claimed as wider impacts in the managerial practices as a popular branding tool connected with media strategy, community and promotional methods (Alsmadi 2006; Belch & Belch, 2011; Choi & Berger, 2010). Meanwhile, the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement practices in different industries and product contexts had been examined to build empirical argument on brand-related behaviors and brand evaluation contexts (Okorie, 2010; Okorie & Aderogba, 2011; Dissanayake & Ismail, 2015, Hung 2014).

## Evaluation of Endorsed-Brand

Moreover, the impact made by celebrity endorsement has been postulated as the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement which leads to endorsed brand evaluation and brand-related behaviors (Amos, Holmes & Strutton, 2008; Seno & Lukas, 2007; Tzoumaka, et.al.2014). This notion is further verified by the recently held empirical studies found in the scope of celebrity endorsement referring source-based and management-based factors as the content of effectiveness of celebrity endorsements ( Ambroise, Sohier, Florence & Albert ,2014; Fleck, Korchia & Roy,2012; Ibok & Ibok ,2013; Okyere & Asamoah 2015; Rachita, Nirmal & Priya,2013;Spry, Pappu & Cornwell,2011 & Tzoumaka,et.al. 2014). Meanwhile, Shimp (2003; 2008; 2010) mentioned TEARS model as the determinants of the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement that influence to evaluate the endorsed brand. TEARS model refers Trustworthiness, Expertise, Attractiveness, Respect and Similarity as the variables that collectively determine the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement (Shimp, 2003, 2010). However, it finds less empirical studies carried out measuring the holistic impact of TEARS variables to determine the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement.

The notion of effectiveness of celebrity endorsement has been extendedly referred in the empirical studies. The impact generated through the source-based factors which are connected to the celebrity character, and management –based factors which are related to the implementation perspectives of celebrity endorsement, has been referred as the overall determinants of effectiveness of celebrity endorsement (Seno & Lukas, 2007). This argument has been further verified in the empirical studies claiming the impact generated by source-based and management-based as perceived effectiveness of celebrity endorsement (Amos, et.al., 2008; Atkin & Block, 1983; Dissanayake, 2015; Tzoumaka,et.al. 2014).

### **Empirical Review on the Relationship between Effectiveness of Celebrity Endorsement and Perceived Brand Evaluation**

The effectiveness of celebrity endorsement in evaluating endorsed brand has been examined by empirical studies with reference to different products and market contexts. The overall impact of the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement towards the endorsed-brands has been explained as a mode of meaning transferring mechanism that results respondents to evaluate the endorsed brand, said as brand evaluation (Elina & Leila, 2010; Miller & Allen, 2012) . Adding to the same argument, it has claimed that source-based factors related to effectiveness of celebrity endorsement influence brand evaluation (Dissanayake & Ismail, 2015, Kahandawaarachchi, Dissanayake & Maitra, 2016; Spry, Pappu & Cornwell, 2011; Thusyanthy & Tharanikaran, 2015). Further, Keller (2013) built an argument on how celebrity endorsement influences consumers to evaluate brands leaving a wider scope to examine the different contexts of brand evaluations. The argument made by Keller (2013) was associated with the theory called “Associative-Network-Memory-Theory-ANMT” (Anderson, 1983) providing a rationalized mechanism claiming how celebrity endorsement directly affects consumers to evaluate the respective endorsed-brand. The proposition explained in ANMT leaves a mechanism to identify how cognitive psychological process responses to information connected to various nodes, for instance, celebrity endorsement as an informational push that results evaluating endorsed-brand (Anderson, 1983; Janiszewski & Van Osselaer, 2000; Roedder-John, et.al., 2006). Thus, it could postulate that celebrity endorsement as an informational node used in brand building strategies that results consumers to evaluate the endorsed-brand via an associated-network memory. Accordingly, the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement which is determined by source-based and management-based factors (Seno & Lukas, 2007) could be considered as a connected informational node that influences consumers to evaluate the respective brand stimulated with a networked memory. This claim is in par with the argument referred as how particular cognitive sphere sets as a network of associated subjects that subsequently organizes the memory as a networked-model towards the particular subject being evaluated (Anderson, 1983). Therefore, it could postulate that the source-based and management-based factors related to celebrity endorsement as a network of information whilst the endorsed-brand is said to be the subject being evaluated via the respective networked memory. In brief, the influence made by the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement on endorsed brand could be claimed as brand evaluation



(Keller, 2013; Roedder-John, et.al. 2006; Spry, et.al. 2011). This argument is further supported by the empirical insights refereed as consumers usually tend to respond to external nodes resulting brand-related associated memory (Keller,1993, 2013). This is in line with the finding of Till & Shimp (1998) that claimed celebrities could stimulate informational nodes towards the memory of consumers as associative links of nodes connected to the endorsed-brand. As it refers in the “Associative-Network-Memory-Theory” (Anderson, 1983; as cited by Keller, 2013), this paper also postulates that consumers tend to evaluate the endorsed-brand via a set-network memory which is generated through the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement. Thus, source-based and management-based factors related to effectiveness of celebrity endorsements (Seno & Lukas, 2007) operate as a set of factors that determine the associated network memory within the respondents who expose to endorsed message resulting evaluate endorsed-brands. The TEARS model proposed by Shimp ( 2003;2008;2010) is an extended explanation to source-based factors whilst multiplicity (Hsu & McDonald, 2002) is found as one of the intensively claimed variables to be examined within management-based context (Hung,et.al.,2011;Oyenyi ,2014; Seno & Lukas,2007). Accordingly, the collective impact of source-based and management-based factors, particularly multiplicity (Hsu & McDonald, 2002) has been emphasized as the overall effectiveness of celebrity endorsement (Dissanayake & Ismail, 2015, Zahaf & Anderson, 2008). Thus, we postulate the importance of measuring multiplicity (Hsu & McDonald, 2002) or over endorsement ( Hung,et.al.2011) as a component to determine the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement.

Moreover, the context of brand evaluation has been emphasized with different faces of cognitive assessments towards the respective subject. The empirical insights related to effectiveness of celebrity endorsement refer that brand attitude as one of the contexts of brand evaluation (Folse, Burton & Netemeyer, 2013; Hung, et.al. 2011; Koernig & Boyd, 2009;Till, Stanley, & Priluck, 2008). Accordingly, brand evaluation is referred as a context of how consumers tend to judge a brand based on the informational clues and stimulations received. The notion of the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement has been examined with different brand evaluation contexts, for instance with brand attitude (Bandura, 2001; Guse, et.al.2011; Hung, 2014; Guse & Nabi, 2010). Adding to the said, Hung (2014) mentioned that playful and aspirational motives operate as observational stimulation to consumers evaluating the brand attitude. Meanwhile, some studies have framed their studies claiming brand trust as a context of brand evaluation (Agrawal & Kamakura ,1995; Folse,et.al. 2013; Zipporah & Mberia, 2014). In addition to the said, empirical studies refer the contexts of cognitive assessment for a brand or any related subject as brand evaluation. For instance, brand love has been stated as one of the contexts of brand evaluation in recently held empirical studies (Carroll & Ahuvia,2006; Dissanayake & Ismail,2015; Joshi & Ahluwalia ,2008). Accordingly, it could suggest brand love, brand trust and brand attitude as some of the mainly referred contexts of brand evaluation found within the scope of brand-related studies. Meanwhile, investigating how those variables behave with different product contexts and consumer contexts has been claimed as empirical gaps to be addressed ( Dissanayake & Ismail,2015;Dwivedi,McDonald & Johnson,2014; Spry et.al.2011). Accordingly, this paper focuses to derive the future research propositions in line with foresaid review and empirical research gaps proposed within.

### **Role of Celebrity Worship Motives as an Influential Mechanism on Brand Evaluation: Postulating an Emirical Argument**

Effectiveness of Celebrity endorsement has been examined with brand-related behaviors and brand evaluation contexts in recently held studies. However, the psychological bond between the celebrity and consumer plays a critical role in determining the impact of the endorsed message in evaluating respective brand (Dissanayake, 2015; Hung, 2014; Hung et.al.2011). The mechanism how celebrity and consumer connect as a socio-psychological content has been explained in Absorption-Addiction Model (McCutcheon, et. al. 2002). According to the said model, consumers tend to have a bonded bridge with the celebrity depending on what extend consumers holistically connect with the endorser. This connection is referred as worship motives which includes entertainment-based motivation, intense attachment, and pathological commitment as the main determinants of it (McCutcheon, et. al. 2002). Accordingly, entertainment – based motives are found as how

## Evaluation of Endorsed-Brand

celebrities generate pleasure experience to respondents when they are being exposed to the respective endorsements. Moreover, McCutcheon, et.al. (2002) explains the manner of how consumers relate to the celebrity through entertainment-based motives like learning about the celebrity, discussing about the celebrity character with different people, and finding a satisfaction by knowing the life-related stories of the respective celebrity character. Meanwhile, Hung (2014) classified entertainment motives under two components namely playful motives and aspirational motives rationalized through Dual Entertainment Path Model. It has discussed how entertainment motives enhance the positive brand endorsement effect in evaluating the respective endorsed-brands. Moreover, playful motives related to celebrity endorsement are found as much connected to both fans and non-fans categories whilst aspirational motives are specially connected with the fans who do have extended psychological follow-up motive with the endorser (Hung, 2014). Further, McCutcheon, Lynn, Ashe, Houran & Maltby. (2003) justified that cognitive deficits lead to establish individual's susceptibility to engage with celebrity worship contents. Meanwhile, empirical evidences prove that consumers shape the behavioral responses in line with how they generate para-social-bond created via worship-motives with the respective celebrity character (McCutcheon, et. al. 2002). Thus, it could argue that the mechanism of celebrity worship motives operates as a notion that shapes how consumers tend to respond for the endorsed-brands. In addition to the said, Voderer, Klimmt & Ritterfeld (2004) also referred how entertainment motive operates with playful and aspiration contents in celebrity endorsement practices. Thus, brand building strategies crafted with celebrity endorsement could template the message with both playful and aspirational content to get the holistic attention in evaluating endorsed-brands. The notion of intense attachment is referring to the scenario of how consumers connect to the celebrity character via imaginations. According to the core of intense attachment, consumers tend to be like him/her in sharing all positive and negative matters faced by the particular celebrity, which is mentioned as "para-social" context (McCutcheon et.al. 2002). However, pathological motive is not referred as widely a viable content in worship motives as it indicates such extreme bond with the celebrity. Thus, usually entrainment and intense motives are noticed as variables that determine consumer behavioral response for the endorsed brands (Hung, et.al.2011). Additionally, Houran, et.al. (2005) emphasizes that consumers develop imaginative para-social bond with celebrities that would lead shaping their brand-related responses. Moreover, it has referred that consumers need substantial connectivity and engagement with the celebrity in terms of time, energy and even physical and emotional investment to develop para-social links with the celebrity to respond for the endorsed message (Holt & Thompson, 2004). Thus, it indicates that worship motives as serious influencers which modify or shape the way how consumers respond to endorsed message in evaluating brands. Moreover, the mechanism of patterning consumer behavior through celebrity worship has been explained as reference group effect. It says reference groups could shape the way how consumers tend to respond for the messages received from celebrities in advertising (Thomson, 2006). This explanation was supported by Choi & Rifon (2012) saying reference group is attributed by significant ability to influence individual's evaluation, behaviors and aspirations. As celebrities being aspirational groups, we argue celebrity worship motives has the power to pattern the way how consumers evaluate endorsed brand.

Meanwhile, Green, Brock & Kaufman (2004) also figured out that para-social bond could minimize the psychological limitation exists between celebrity and consumers that eventually facilitates to shape the fans' responses towards the endorsed-message. Therefore, it is clear to argue that the influence of the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement which is derived through source-based and management-based factors (Seno & Lukas, 2007), could be shaped by "Celebrity-Consumer Bond" which is generated through worship motives. Accordingly, consumers tend to involve in evaluating or responding to the endorsed-brand. Therefore, an argument could be developed referring celebrity worship motives as a mechanism that influences consumers' normal process of responding to the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement in evaluating endorsed brand. Meanwhile, the responses to endorsed-brands had been recognized as brand evaluation contexts as it denotes in the recently held studies (Dissanayake & Ismail 2015, Kahandawaarachchi, et.al.2016, Keller, 2013; Spry, et.al, 2011; Thusyanthy & Tharanikaran, 2015). Moreover, Silvera & Austad (2004) mentioned that consumer-celebrity relationship as a notion of value-transfer and endorser-effect perspectives. Accordingly, worship

motives could be justified as the hub of bridging consumers into celebrity character that finally shapes the way how endorsed- message influences consumers to evaluate respective brand. Thus, celebrity worship motives could be postulated as an intermediary mechanism depending on its role of influencing consumers to evaluate the brand endorsed by celebrities. This argument is based on the foresaid review, particularly the process noted in the Absorption-Addiction Model (McCutcheon, et. al. 2002; McCutcheon, et.al. 2003), Dual Entertainment Path-Model (Hung, 2014) and the hypotheses built on value transferring mechanism (Hung, et.al.2011). Accordingly, the mechanism of celebrity worship motives is suggested to examine as a moderating mechanism that shapes the influence of effectiveness of celebrity endorsement in evaluating endorsed-brand.

### **Conclusion: Propositions for the Future Studies**

This paper review the empirical evidences and theoretical contributions to postulate how celebrity worship motives operate as a moderating mechanism to shape the influence of the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement in evaluating endorsed-brand. Entertainment motives and intense attachment motives found in celebrity worship motives are suggested to be examined with deferent contexts of brand evaluation (Dissanayake, 2015; Hung et.al.2011, Hung, 2014, Kahadawarachchi, et.al.2016). The cognitive mechanism of celebrity worship motives has been examined by empirical studies to investigate its influence on endorsed brand evaluation whilst extending more explanations (Green, Brock & Kaufman, 2004; Holt & Thompson, 2004; Houran, Navik & Zerrusen, 2005; Hung, 2014; Keller, 2013). This paper reviews that brand trust, brand love and brand attitude as different contexts to be examined in the purview of perceived brand evaluation influenced by effectiveness of celebrity endorsement. Meanwhile, the notion of brand evaluation contexts is highlighted as empirical research gaps found in relation to different product contexts other than the physical goods including services (Carroll & Ahuvia 2006;Folse,et.al.,2013 Dissanayake & Ismail, 2015;; Hung, et.al. 2011; Kahandawarachchi, et.al.2016;Karasiewicz & Kowalczuk 2014; Koernig & Boyd 2009 ;Till,Stanley & Priluck, 2008 & Thusyanthy & Tharanikaran,2015). According to the foresaid review, the scope of services is extendedly emphasized to be examined with the concept of effectiveness of celebrity endorsement. The intensive industry practices on celebrity endorsement and the lack of post evaluation on brand-related responses were specifically highlighted to claim the empirical gaps in service sector. Alongside, services namely telecommunication, insurance and financial sectors have been noted in the recent studies claiming empirical investigations to examine the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement on perceived brand evaluations leading to brand-related behaviors (Dissanayake & Ismail,2015;Hung,et.al.,2011;Ibok & Ibok ,2013; Karasiewicz & Kowalczuk, 2014;Spry,et.al.,2011).

Having said, this paper reviews the notion of celebrity worship motives as a mechanism connected to the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement and perceived brand evaluation. We postulate the moderating mechanism of celebrity worship motives as the main argument to be addressed in the future studies. Alongside, this study postulates following research hypotheses to be examined with different product contexts including services as mentioned in the review (Dissanayake & Ismail, 2015; Ibok & Ibok, 2013; Karasiewicz & Kowalczuk, 2014; Spry, et.al. 2011).

### **Entertainment Motives found within celebrity worship motives moderate the influence of effectiveness of celebrity endorsement on perceived brand evaluation.**

This proposition could be further extended into playful motives and aspirational motives as it collectively explains the entertainment motives in building hypotheses (Dissanayake, 2015; Hung et.al. 2011; Hung, 2014; McCutcheon et. al., 2002; Vorderer,et.al.,2004; Yeung & Mcinerney, 2005). Thus, future research may follow the undermentioned hypotheses on playful motives and aspirational motives as moderators that shape the influence of the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement on perceived brand evaluation.

Evaluation of Endorsed-Brand

**P1 (a)** Aspirational motives moderate the influence of the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement on perceived brand evaluation.

**P1 (b)** Playful motives moderate the influence of the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement on perceived brand evaluation.

We suggest to hypothesize the following proposition to determine how intense attachment moderates the influence of effectiveness of celebrity endorsement on perceived brand evaluation. This proposition is supported by the empirical studies that confirmed influence of celebrity worship motives on brand evaluation, and the studies claim extended studies to validate with different product forms and markets (Dissanayake, 2015; Hung, 2014, Hung, et.al.2011;Karasiewicz & Kowalczyk, 2014).

**P2:** Intense attachment motives found within celebrity worship motives moderate the influence of the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement on perceived brand evaluation.

Additionally, it is suggested to consider the brand trust, brand love and brand attitude as the contexts of brand evaluation to examine with the foresaid research propositions in the future studies. Those contexts were empirically justified in the above mentioned review as areas to be further examined with reference to different product scopes and different market contexts. This paper highlights the context of services as an extended focus for the future researches. For instance, Sri Lanka is referred as such market context to be examined with celebrity endorsement and brand evaluation leading to brand-related behaviors. It has referred telecommunication, insurance and financial service as leading services sectors demand extended empirical studies to evaluate the influence of celebrity endorsement related stimulus on brand related responses and behaviors. (Dissanayake & Ismail, 2015, Kahandawaarachchi, et.al.2016; Sri Lanka Celebrity Index Report, 2015). Likewise, this paper presents the empirical argument to rationalize the future research directions on celebrity worship motives in relation to the concepts of perceived effectiveness of celebrity endorsement and perceived brand evaluation.

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# The Impact of Public Relations on News Coverage

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**Abstract:** With the increasing scope of news from varied sectors especially business and politics, since the last 15 years, the role of Public Relations (PR) practitioners has also augmented as a communication strategist and facilitator of information. Both the journalists and PR practitioners share a symbiotic relationship and help in disseminating information to their target audience. This theoretical paper identifies various PR strategies like news framing and paid PR which play an important role in influencing news coverage.

**Keywords:** Public Relations; journalists; media influencers

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## Introduction

Does a Public Relations campaign hold the power to affect the news content? Are there other factors besides PR that may influence news stories? Well ethically, the answer should be no, but factually the answer is yes. The field of journalism and Public Relations (PR) is centuries old and has been practiced across cultures. The journalists and PR professionals share a synergetic relationship making each one of them dependent on each other. From writing the traditional form of press releases to creating speeches and quotes for the spokespersons, to managing corporate pseudo-events, PR practitioners have become the communication facilitators for the media. While the practice of PR is considered to be inclusive of persuasion, information, communication management, etc; journalism is about ethically reporting the piece of news. Though it is more in theory than in practice and the business of Public Relations continues to evolve with time.

## Role of PR in framing news

PR practitioners have been known as image-makers as well as spin doctors of news. Studies have identified the importance of sources in shaping the content of the news and PR practitioners play an important role as one of the sources. PR has been associated with structured messaging and framing is an extension to this. Thurlow (2009) in a study using in-depth semi-structured interviews asked PR practitioners to examine their own perception of their professional identity along with the negative societal perception of the profession. The results indicate that PR practitioners are trying to construct a good image of themselves and their profession. However, they mentioned that their commitment lied with the organisations they represented and if their practices were unethical, it was a challenge for them too. Hence, the study indicated that the perception of PR being a spin doctor can actually be turned-around once the practitioners demonstrate ethical practice. However, alignment between the organisation's messages and the communication role of PR practitioners may create a situation of conflict. The study identified that it is organisation that promote and allow the concept of spin of information.

In a study, De Vreese and Elenbaas (2009) found that in politics specifically, journalists tend to apply a strategic frame when covering press and publicity processes. Even the initial pitch that a PR shares with the media, helps in framing the agenda of the media house (Athal, 2014). In fact the mis-interpretation or inaccuracy in the news



stories can be a result of an inaccurate frame.

Hallahan (1999) argued that PR practitioners play a central role in constructing frames to influence media and public perceptions. Organisations should hence create their own frames in order to establish effective relationship with their respective stakeholders. Calabrese (2016) identified that a media campaign without a frame will not be successful. For PR practitioners, framing of messages is intended for the target audience of the organisation they represent. The media relations experts, direct the framed message in the form of a press release, statement to the journalist.

As per Holody (2006), the press releases sent out by PR practitioners place the most important information in the beginning and the least one near the end. Information shared in the form of statements or press releases from the PR department challenge the objectivity of journalism and the audience eventually is not able to understand the message as the majority of the news will be around the initial sender of information (Romy, 1994). Many studies have also highlighted that for many years that information in American newspapers was driven by PR.

The ultimate objective of two professionals like PR and journalism is to get a news published whether it is on a particular corporate, politician, non-profit organisation or an individual and so on. And some of the main factors affecting news coverage lie in its intrinsic process which is presented under the following four headings: simplification, identification, sensationalism and the news barrier. It is an editor of the publication who decides if the news is worthy or is quality news. Sometimes a good rapport with the journalists also helps in getting a mention or two in the paper.

Grunig, J, etal (1992) identified four models of PR which focus on the role of PR representatives in disseminating information to the media. These models are as follows:

- **Press agency model** includes a one-way communication format for disseminating information from the sender to the receiver. It does not include a feedback mechanism, for instance a PR representatives in the 19<sup>th</sup> century shared one-way information on the organisation's story, USP, products and so on with their target audiences. This practice was more like imposing the information on the user and in the absence of a feedback mechanism, the information could be incomplete as well as distorted. This has been especially used for reputation management as it also involves manipulation with positive information only. This practice is commonly used by PR practitioners who represent high profile clients or organisations to influence their respective publics with media coverage (Beke, 2014), somewhat like exclusive celebrity stories, fake rallies and photographs circulated in a magazine, TV or online who attract unwanted media attention – good or bad (Powell, 2013) rather than any understanding on the reason behind the news coverage. Even few educational and non-profit organisations also practiced this form as it would not just include reaching out to the stakeholders through press releases, but also through other communication tools like a website (Butterick, 2011). It is hence unquestionable to say that this model is being practiced till date, not just because of the corruption it has brought in the system with freebies and gifts but it is also because of the curiosity of the target audience on the nature of event or the individual or organisation; however, it is difficult to comment on its ethical aspect.
- **Public information model** emphasises on circulating relevant and meaningful information related to an individual or an organisation through the various publics of the same. It is contrary to the press agency model which only focused on unwanted media coverage which was not of much relevance

except being entertaining for the target audience. The communication agents following this model need to have a flair for writing and should be good at compiling their thoughts in a strategic manner and communicating either through a press release, video release, newsletters, brochures, magazines, online blogs and so on. Such PR tools usually help to convey the relevance of a product or service or development by an organisation to its target audience. According to Theaker (2004), this model does not aim at persuasion and it only focusses on sharing accurate information. Morris (2014) highlighted that Ivy Lee recommended his clients to be truthful with their approach even in crisis situations through a press statement or press release. Lee was both appreciated by clients for good and honest media coverage, but was also criticised by many. This model can be correlated with the current scenario but in an exaggerated form, that is PR representatives are highly criticised by journalists for spamming their inboxes with the information in the form of a press release which may not always be news-worthy.

- **Two-way asymmetrical model** involves the two-way communication between the sender and receiver. According to Theaker (2004), the model is different from the earlier two as it introduces the concept of feedback mechanism along with persuasion and manipulation, in an unbalanced nature. In this the aim is to understand the attitude and requirements of the target audience and accordingly implement the communication PR campaign. It however does not impact the working of the organisation.
- **Two-way symmetrical model** amongst the other three PR models, is the most ideal and relevant approach. This model adopts a two-way approach of the feedback mechanism to enhance organisation's reputation and position the brand among the target audience. The use of social media by organisations in the current scenario is the perfect example to explain this model. Organisations use social media portals to enhance their brand's visibility and reputation using the feedback mechanism. Even in critical situations when a customer uses the medium to complain about a particular product or service, the brand can respond with their side of the story. Cameron (2008) pointed out the example of Starbucks which uses this model to make its brand and products better.
- Buterick (2011) highlighted that it is not necessary that a PR practitioner will only use a particular PR model while devising the communication strategies. It completely depends on the environment in which they are being implemented. Hence, according to Murphy (1991), PR practitioners actually follow a mixed motive model.
- **Excellence model** includes features of both symmetrical and asymmetrical model that is a PR strategy will either focus on altering an organisation's behaviour or of the publics. With this model, the difference between the mixed motive and two-way symmetrical model disappears (Heath 2001).

### **Use of Paid PR route to influence media**

Even though the concept of new age media and digital PR has become extremely prevalent across the globe, India is still growing on its traditional media. Similarly, the demand of the media hungry organizations, sectors, brands is not just fulfilled by the regular traditional PR approach and tools. Hence, there have been some noticeable instances which have almost blurred the lines between PR and marketing and have increasingly

questioned the credibility of the former. This falls under the broad category of 'Paid PR' which includes sponsored content or advertorials, exchange of gifts or exchange of bribes and private treaties. In 2009 assembly elections across Maharashtra, the real political issues took a back-seat and the positive coverage basis paid route became the flavor of the season. (Sainath, P. 2011).

The in-sufficient subscription revenues have given rise to the trend of paid or sponsored content. Advertorials or sponsored content are nothing but paid editorials which are gaining a lot of attention and corporates are showing preference towards it- simply because it ensures a one-sided content and details information about their products, services and top management. In fact, instead of the word 'advertisement', other terms like media marketing initiative, special promotional feature, etc. are being used in the case of advertorials. However, some advertorials mislead the readers as their identities as advertisements are not fully or obviously disclosed. This is in a way against the individual's right to information (Thakurta, P.G., 2012).

Another grey area which has sparked a lot of attention of the organizations is the private treaties scheme which is an exchange of favorable media coverage in return of stakes in the firm. This is why there exists an obvious conflict of interest when the media house who has a private treaty with an organization starts to report on them in positive light.

Exchange of bribes or expensive gifts as part of the press kits during pseudo-events have also crept in as a regular practice now. These have become a common strategic way to influence the media and raise their expectations. PR professionals especially strategize on the innovative and creative gifts they can share with the media during brand launch. This unethical practice was initially noticed by journalists and in the 1980s for a brief time two publications from the Express Group as part of their editorial policy started mentioning at the end of news report what was given to select journalists who attended an organization's press conference-irrespective of the size, shape and quantity of the gift (Thakurta, P.G. 2012). Another practice to ensure positive coverage are the sponsored trips or media junkets or a paid- for- visit by the organizations for the journalists (Haq, R. 2015).

Despite of all the above techniques, the final story which usually gets published is different from that expected by a PR personnel. This is because a journalist connects with both direct as well as indirect sources of information for his or her story. Direct source can be through PR representatives of the organization who share a particular news and indirect source can be people unrelated to the organization (Shoemaker, P.J and Reese, S.D, 1996) and keeps the story balanced. Beyond these the organization's internal editorial, marketing and promotion policy can play a role in affecting the journalist's decision to write on a particular organization. This paper attempts to analyze some of these factors by asking journalists on what according to them affects news story and their perception of the PR industry.

## **Conclusion**

The competition in brands, markets, sectors, and so on, have enlarged the role of PR practitioners in the current scenario. The paper identifies the growing demand of PR practices and multiple strategies adopted by organisations globally to get free editorial news coverage, which in a way has both pros and cons. In a positive way, the PR practitioners understand the concept of newsworthiness and accordingly frame the news or information for the media. On the contrary, the greediness for news coverage or stories have led organisations to follow unethical practices like the paid PR route which include freebies or gifts, private equity, etc which in a way are blurring the lines between PR and marketing.

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