

# **I'm a celebrity.... But do you really need me? Says Latest Global Consumer Research**

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London, January 21st 2005 - International celebrity endorsement is big business. Major media and sports stars can earn millions of dollars annually and hundreds of millions over their entire career to support a product or brand. Many minor celebrities and even ordinary people are willing to risk ridicule and worse on reality TV game shows in order to cash in their newly minted image for endorsement deals.

But, celebrity endorsement may not be as effective as many believe and in some major western markets has no effect on increasing a product's value or strong influence on a consumer to make a purchase, according to a recent GMIPoll run by GMI, Inc, the world's leading provider of global online market research services and software.

The effectiveness of celebrity endorsement in promoting brands varies across the globe, reveals the research.

Western nations were most indifferent to the use of celebrities in advertising. In the U.S, 79 per cent of respondents said that celebrity endorsement does not have any effect on how valuable they think a product is and only 13 percent thought that it made a product more valuable.

79 per cent of German and 71 per cent of French and British, also said celebrity endorsement did not work for them.

In China and Japan however there is a stark contrast. In Japan, sixty per cent of respondents think that the use of celebrities in advertising makes a product more valuable and a similar number of respondents in China, 52 per cent, and in Russia, 58 per cent agreed.

The GMIPoll, which sampled 20,000 people in total, also found that celebrity endorsement was rated below other techniques to influence their purchasing decisions. When questioned as to which form of promotion most encouraged consumers to buy a product, word of mouth proved the second most popular response, after

free samples and test runs.

Word of mouth promotion proved most popular in the UK where 41 per cent of respondents said that, after free samples, word of mouth would be the method of promotion that would most encourage them to buy a product. Similarly high numbers were seen in Canada and Japan, 37 per cent and in the U.S. and Germany, 34 per cent.

In China however, 29 per cent of respondents said that after free samples, advertising was the form of promotion that was most likely to influence them in their purchasing decision. Only 12 per cent of Chinese respondents thought that word of mouth would be most likely to influence them after free samples.

The country which most valued celebrity endorsement was Russia with 12 per cent of respondents claiming it influenced their buying decisions making it the third most popular form of promotion there after free samples, 46 per cent and word of mouth promotion, 30 per cent.

Dr Mitch Eggers, COO, GMI said: "Global media can make global stars. But it does not mean they translate into universal marketing assets that can transform any brand's value and market share in any country anywhere. Worldwide, people are becoming more sophisticated consumers who are less ready to accept simple, uniform marketing messages. Very strong indifference to the power of the celebrity in some western markets may even point to how overt celebrity endorsement may be working in reverse, turning us off the very products being endorsed and so having a negative impact".

#### About GMIPoll

GMIPoll quickly and accurately gathers international opinions about topical issues and critical global events, with real-time results available in as little as 24 hours. GMIPoll is the only survey that polls global opinions in real time, on-line, and with statistically accurate results. More information on GMIPoll is available at <http://worldpoll.com>.

#### About GMI

GMI provides integrated e-Business solutions for market research. The company's advanced software, global panels, and service bureau capabilities are built around a deep competence in conducting multi-country research using a Net-centric approach to data collection. With operations on four continents, GMI is the partner of choice for conducting global market research at the speed of the Internet. More information on GMI is available at <http://www.gmi-mr.com>.

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