REMAKING MILEY

THE EFFECTS OF REBRANDING THE CELEBRITY BRAND, USING MILEY CYRUS AS A CASE STUDY

BY

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ABSTRACT

The present study focuses on examining the effects of rebranding the celebrity, using Miley Cyrus as a case study. The concept of celebrities as brands entails the theories of identity and personal branding. In the case of Miley Cyrus, the celebrity presents a situation where the brand image has noticeably changed. Prior to 2013, Cyrus exhibited an identity that was more in-line with that of the Disney brand image. However, at the 2013 VMAs (Video Music Awards), Cyrus presented a new brand identity that was a complete departure from her previous image and was widely considered to be controversial. The motivation for this paper is to explore the concept of celebrities as brands and how altering or evolving an existing celebrity brand image can affect the public consumption of that brand.

The primary aim of this study is understand the consumer (Generation Y) reactions to the change in the celebrity brand, in order to examine the effects of rebranding the celebrity brand in terms of the consumer. In order to address this research problem two additional questions are addressed through the theory and analysis. The first question explores the issue of identity, how identity is constructed and the motivations behind celebrity attachment. The second question explores the concept of the celebrity and how the celebrity brand is constructed in relation to the consumer. In order to address the research problem this study adopts a mixed method research design, using an integration of both qualitative and quantitative research designs. Field research and non-experimental design are used as a means of data collection methods. Convenience and snowball sampling are used with the following population parameters: participants are between the ages 18-25 and have an existing knowledge of Miley Cyrus. This study makes use of the research instruments of standardised, open-ended interviews and a combination of open-ended surveys and self-completion questionnaires.

The findings presented in the study suggest that our sense of self is constructed using brands as signifiers of who we are to others. It suggests that constructed identities are fluid and under constant revision. It also proposes that in terms of celebrity attachment, consumers align with brands that reflect a shared narrative. In the case of

Miley Cyrus, the findings put forward that there is no complete rejection or acceptance of brand change, but rather consumers are selective in the acceptance, rejection, and adaption of elements of that change. The case study also suggests that changes in a brand run the risk of alienating consumers, however, they could begin to resonate with new consumers. The findings presented in the study suggest that the celebrity brand is constructed by the consumer based on their own identity.

The implications of the findings are that, in terms of consumer reactions to change in celebrity brands, consumers are selective in their identification with celebrity brands and there is no complete acceptance or rejection as identity is a fluid construct. However, as is evident in the case study of Miley Cyrus, extreme brand changes destabilise the brand image and impact on the consumer connection to that identity construct as the very nature of the original relationship has been altered.

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CHAPTER ONE: RESEARCH OVERVIEW

1.1 Introduction and Background to the Study

The focus of this research paper, as well as being the primary research question, is to examine the effects of rebranding the celebrity brand by using Miley Cyrus as a case study. Celebrity branding entails the concept of identity and personal branding, which can be defined as the method of marketing a person and/or their career as a product. In the case of Miley Cyrus, the singer presents a situation where the brand image has noticeably changed. Prior to 2013, Cyrus presented an identity that was inline with the Disney morals from Cyrus' previous Hannah Montana brand. However, at the 2013 VMAs (Video Music Awards) the singer presented a new brand identity that was widely considered to be controversial. Altering an existing celebrity brand and evolving the brand image can have effects on the public consumption of the celebrity image and the perception of the brand. The role of this paper is to identity the consumer reactions and the effects on the public consumption of the altered celebrity brand.

1.2 Research Problem

The primary research problem is to examine the effects of rebranding the celebrity brand using Miley Cyrus as a case study. In order to address this research problem the primary aim and the main research question is to understand the consumer (Generation Y) reactions to the change in the celebrity brand. In line with this primary aim, two additional questions are addressed through the theory discussed in the literature review as well as functioning to inform the structure of the research instruments used in the data analysis section. The first of these questions explores the issue of identity and the reasons that motivate consumers or fans to align themselves to a specific celebrity. This issue also explores how identity is constructed. The second question explores the concept of the celebrity brand and more specifically how the celebrity brand is constructed.

1.3 Rationale

What are the effects of rebranding the celebrity brand? What are the possible consumer reactions to the change in the celebrity brand? It can be argued that a likely response is that changing the celebrity brand and brand image can create change in the public consumption and perception of the celebrity brand. This line of thought presupposes that there are motivations behind consumers' attachments to certain brand images and should those brand images change the image is no longer in line with the motivations. One possible response could be that brands are aspirational and that they represent a certain image or identity and consumers attached to brands that represent an image or identity that is desired. It can be tentatively argued that the altered brand image no longer perpetuates the same identity and consumers may either reject that identity as it is no longer in line with their desired identity or they may embrace the change and adapt their own construct. In the study that follows these issues of identify and branding are unpacked and examined in relation to gathered research in order to understand the consumer reactions to change in the celebrity brand of Miley Cyrus.

1.4 Aims and Objectives of the Study

The primary research problem is to examine the effects of rebranding the celebrity brand using Miley Cyrus as a case study. From the research problem it can be understood that the primary aim of this study is to understand the consumer (Generation Y) reaction to the change in the celebrity brand. The intention of this study is to achieve this aim by meeting the following objectives:

1. To understand how the theories of identity and celebrity branding contribute to the investigation of consumer reactions to change in celebrity brands.
2. To investigate how identity is constructed and how this influences fan identification and attachment to celebrities.
3. To explore how the celebrity brand is constructed.
4. To observe and analyse how the discussed theories manifest themselves in the data collected.

1.5 Delimitations of the Field of Study

In terms of exploring the effects of rebranding the celebrity brand this study will not be exploring the theme of celebrity worship as this lends itself more to the idea of obsessive fandom than fan identification. The theme of endorsements will not be examined, as this study attempts to draw a line between celebrity brand endorsements and the celebrity as a brand. This study will only be looking at consumers who fall between the ages of 18 and 25 (Generation Y), as these are the consumers that have grown up with the Miley Cyrus brand. Additionally, the aim of this study is not to compare celebrity brands, but to focus only on the one celebrity brand of Miley Cyrus, allowing for more focus, in order to address the research question.

1.6 Methodology

In order to address the research problem and to examine the consumer (Generation Y) reaction to the change in the celebrity brand of Miley Cyrus, the research design of this paper utilises a mixed method design. A mixed method design can be defined as the combination or integration of both qualitative and quantitative research designs (Bryman & Bell 2014:62). Due to the nature of the research design both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods are necessary for the research aspect of this paper. These data collection methods include the use of field research and a non-experimental design, which results in the use of qualitative interviews, and a combination of open-ended surveys and self-completion questionnaires. The aim of the research methodology is to attain the consumers' reaction in order to gain insight into how the brand consumption may or may not have changed. For further in-depth discussion and definitions please refer to Chapter Three on the research methodology.

1.7 Ethical Issues

When considering the ethical issues that arise throughout the research process there are two groups of ethical issues and considerations (Bryman & Bell 2014:120). This first group are ethical issues from a research method point of view and the second group are ethical issues from a researcher point of view (Bryman & Bell 2014:120).

In relation to this study, the key ethical concerns deal with the issues of confidentiality and anonymity; informed consent; honesty and disclosure; the influence of research constraints on the presentation of data, such as budget and time; and the collection and sharing of data. For further in-depth discussion of the issue of ethics in terms of the research method please refer to Chapter Three on the research methodology.

1.8 Planned Division of Chapters

Chapter Two of this study serves as the literature review. The purpose of Chapter Two is to examine the theory around identity and personal branding and the relevant sub-themes. This chapter attempts to provide an understanding of these theories in order to create a base on which to attempt to address the research problem. Chapter Three of this study serves to discuss the research methodology. The purpose of this chapter is to outline the structure of the research methodology that will be used to collect and analyse the necessary data. Chapter Four of this study collates the gathered data for analysis and discusses the findings drawn from the data analysis. The purpose of this chapter is to form a correlation between the theory and the research data collected. Chapter Five of this study is the concluding chapter, which serves the purpose of summarising the argument, discussing conclusive findings and answering the research problem, and providing recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction to Literature

The focus of this research paper, as well as being the primary research question, is to examine the effects of rebranding the celebrity brand by using Miley Cyrus as a case study. In order to attempt to answer this question the primary aim of this paper is to understand the consumer reactions to planned change in the celebrity brand. In order to gain an understanding of the relevant literature surrounding this topic there are two main bodies of literature that will be examined in the literature review that follows. Within each of these bodies there are related sub-themes that contribute to building an understanding of the main theme and how it relates to the research question and the primary aim of the research paper.

The first main body of literature focuses on the issue of identity and deals with the sub-themes of fan identification and brand identity. In order to examine the effects of rebranding the celebrity brand and the consumers' reaction to the planned change, it is necessary to gain an understanding of how the consumer consumes and aligns him or herself with the brand. This main body of literature explores the semiotics of identity and how the 'self' is a creation of brand consumption. Within this body, the sub-theme of fan identification situates these concepts of identity within the context of the celebrity brand and the sub-theme of brand identity situates the concepts of identity within the context of branding. The second of these main bodies of literature focuses on the issue of personal branding and deals with the sub-theme of celebrity brands. This literature relates to the research question as the focus of this paper is on the celebrity brand, which falls within the concept of personal brands. This topic of literature follows the literature on identity as much of the arguments surrounding identity, fan identification and brand identity lend themselves to the arguments and concepts examined in the second body of literature.

2.2 Identity

The topic of this research paper explores the theme of identity in order to understand how the audience consumes the brand and how they align themselves to a particular celebrity brand. This is necessary to understand in order to explore the potential consumer reactions to the planned change of the celebrity brand. In order to achieve this Sharon Schrembri, Bill Merrilees and Stine Kristiansen's *Brand Consumption and the Narrative of the Self* (2010) and Arthur Asa Berger's *The Branded Self: On the Semiotics of Identity* (2011) will be examined. The premise of these two articles suggests that the consumption of and the alignment with brands are directly related to how the 'self' or identity is created. Once the foundation of identity has been discussed, the sub-theme of fan identification will be discussed. In order to contextualise the issue of identity within the sphere of fandom Meliisa Click, Hyunji Lee and Holly Wilson Holladay's *Making Monsters: Lady Gaga, Fan Identification, and Social Media* (2013) as well as Gayle Stever's *Fan Behaviour and Lifespan Development Theory: Explaining Para-social and Social Attachment to Celebrities* (2011) will be discussed. The discussion will continue by exploring the sub-theme of brand identity in order to contextualise identity within the sphere of branding. David Aaker and Erich Joachimsthaler's *Brand Leadership* (2009) will be discussed in relation to brand identity with specific reference to Aaker's brand identity model.

In Berger's article he argues that our sense of self is constructed by adopting brands that signify who we are to others (2011:232). He argues that teens in particular construct their developing identity based on the brands that they buy into to the point where they become the brands they "assemble to forge a public identity" (Berger 2011:232). This is relevant to this research as it can be tentatively argued that a portion of Miley Cyrus' audience range from pre-teens to young adults. Berger argues that these constructed identities are fluid and under constant revision as both individual preferences and brands change (2011:232). Schrembri *et al* tie in with this thought by arguing that the narrative of the 'self' is not consistent but rather a collection of interpretations that are combined and adapted to construct the then desired identity (2010:624). This is relevant to this research paper as it explores the idea that the 'self' can be reconstructed and this relates to the idea that changing the celebrity brand is not only a change in the brand identity but will also have an impact

on how consumers will react to the change. It can tentatively be argued that consumers may change with the brand and adapt it into a new identity or they can no longer desire to identify with the brand and reject it completely. This is in line with Schrembri's *et al* argument that in terms of brand consumption, consumers align themselves with brands that reflect a desired identity (2010:625).

Berger argues that construction of the 'self' is done in relation to the 'other' (2011:233). Drawing from the works of Norbert Wiley, Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce, as cited in Berger's *The Branded Self: On the Semiotics of Identity* (2011), Berger argues that the meaning of the 'self' is created through an opposition or acceptance of a separate group or society (2011:243). The implication of this statement is that the issue of identity becomes a social product that must exist within a social sphere (Berger 2011:234). Schrembri *et al* extend this idea by calling brand consumption a "social tool" for constructing self-identity (2010:624). Consumers construct their identity by "interacting within and interpreting the social world" (Schrembri *et al* 2010:626). This is relevant to this paper as it can be argued that the celebrity brand is a social construct in itself. In terms of fan identification and the relevance to this research paper it can be argued that part of the consumers alignment with the brand is informed by the desire to belong to a brand community. It can be argued that the brand can be seen as filling a social role with the consumer that desires that particular para-social bond. The consumer constructs a public identity much like the celebrity brand perpetuates a public identity and image and consumer attachment occurs when both identities are aligned (Berger 2011:235).

A key point that Berger identifies is that disassociation from a brand is not only dependant on the brand changing and no longer living to its promise but rather that it is also a by-product of an internal conversation that the consumer has with themselves when they begin to loose interest in what a brand has to offer (2011:236). This has implications in understanding consumer reactions to planned change as it could highlight a point where the change in the brand can spark renewed interest in individuals who are already waning from the previous brand identity.

While Berger explores the idea that consumers use brands to construct the 'self', Schrembri *et al* examine *how* consumers use brands to construct the 'self' (2010:623).

Schrembri *et al* argue that the types of brands consumed create a narrative on which the 'self' is constructed (2010:623). This ties in with Craig Thompson, Aric Rindfleisch and Zeynep Arsel's idea that both consumers and brands construct a narrative around their public identity and when these narratives are in line with each other or the consumer wishes to emulate the brand narrative, then there is a premise for strong brand attachment (2006:50). This narrative "enables consumers to make sense of who they are (Schrembri *et al* 2010:624). Schrembri *et al* argue that the way the consumers create the 'self' is by using brands as symbolic resources that they combine and adapt to form the desired 'self' (2010:625).

It can be argued that narratives give brand actions meaning and consumer lives structure (Schrembri *et al* 2010:626). The implication that this section has on this research paper is that it provides an understanding of why and how consumers attach themselves to brands. Consumers identify with brands that can contribute to the construction of their identity and a planned change in one of the adopted brands may enhance this identity, it may be disjointed from the desired identity or it may have a non-specific impact on the consumers' narrative of the 'self' as consumers use and consume brands in different ways.

2.2.1 Fan Identification

At the base of understanding fandom and fan identification there is the issue of identity and the creation of the 'self' (Click *et al* 2013:363). Click *et al* have identified that there is a gap in fan studies in that little research has been done to understand how fandom contributes to the fans' construction of the 'self' (2013:363). Click *et al* (2013:362) as well as Gayle Stever (2011:1) have identified that there is little understanding into the relationship between the fan and the object of the adoration. Click *et al* argue that relationships between fans and celebrities exist within a social world and are mediated through media texts that encourage fans to develop para-social relationships with the celebrity in question (2013:362). A para-social relationship can be defined as "the one-way knowing of another person who does not know the fan in return" (Stever 2011:1). This mediation through media texts contributes to the type of relationship formed and the strength of attachment as it creates an illusion of a "face-to-face relationship" with the celebrity (Click *et al*

2013:362). This type of relationship is developed through proximity and familiarity with the celebrity through media texts and it allows the celebrity to step into the space of a role model, particularly in consumers going through the development stages (Stever 2011:1). It is important to note that the strength of attachment differs depending on the stage of development of the fan (Stever 2011:20). This has implications for this research paper as it could mean that the consumer reactions may be dependant on the age of the target market.

This type of relationship impacts how the fan consumes the brand as it steps into a social role in which the fan feels as though they have a personal relationship with the celebrity (Click *et al* 2013:362). Consumers/fans construct their sense of self by aligning with a brand that they feel satisfies a desired relationship or compensates for a real and lacking relationship (Click *et al* 2013:362). It satisfies something lacking in the consumers' life despite not being 'real' (Stever 2011:2). A consumer develops these relationships in a bid to construct the ideal self-image (Click *et al* 2013:362). This has implications for this research paper as it can be argued that if a consumer feels as though the brand is no longer fulfilling this relationship, then it can result in the brand no longer resonating with the consumer. From a brand perspective it can be argued that as a result of being involved in these social relationships, the consumer adopts the emotional, behavioural, and the attitude positions of the celebrity brand (Click *et al* 2013:363). In a sense it can be tentatively argued that if a strong relationship exists between the fan and celebrity then it can be seen that the fan might easily adopt the new behavioural and emotional positions of the changed brand. On the other hand, it can also be argued that a change in the brand might result in the consumer and the brand no longer sharing these values at all and as a result the brand may loose resonance with the consumer.

In terms of constructing the narrative of the 'self', Click *et al* argue that celebrities serve as mirrors of self-reflection that allows fans to fashion their identity (2013:363). However, Click *et al* argue that it is the fan that superimposes the attributes of their 'self' onto the celebrity and therefore it is the fan that creates the meaning through their interactions with the celebrity rather than the meaning being situated in the celebrity brand (2013:363). The implications of this statement for this research paper is that it brings into question how impactful the change in celebrity brand will be on

the consumer if it is the consumer who prescribes and projects the meaning onto the brand. Another point put across by Click *et al* is that fans might not prescribe to what the brand stands for per se but the brand may create an imaginary space in which the fan can deal with their own struggles (2013:362). Based on this point it can be suggested that consumers might not connect as strongly to the attributes of the brand but rather the sense of belonging that the brand produces. The implication that this section has on this research paper is that it provides an understanding into the nature of the relationship between consumers and celebrities.

2.2.2 Brand Identity

Brand identity can be understood to be a set of associations that imply a promise to the consumer (Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2009:43). Aaker and Joachimsthaler argue that it is essential for a brand to establish an identity as it aids in creating a relationship between the brand and the consumer (2009:43). It can be suggested that it is this relationship that encourages consumers to attach to a particular brand. According to Aaker and Joachimsthaler, the elements that make up the identity of a brand create a narrative around who and what that brand is; it develops a brand story (2009:43). It can be argued that this connects with Schrembri *et al*'s argument that brands feed into a narrative that the consumer creates in order to construct the self (2010:623). It can be argued that the brand identity constructs a narrative surrounding the brand and consumers align with brands that reflect a similar narrative to their constructed 'self' (Click *et al* 2013:363). This lends itself to the argued point that the celebrity brand is a social construct. However, it can also be argued that the identity of a brand can be controlled to create a desired outward expression but that that outward expression is absorbed into the consumers constructed 'self'. This is in line with Berger's argument in that the construction of the 'self' is done in relation to the 'other', which in this case is the constructed brand identity and resulting narrative (2011:233).

According to Aaker's brand identity model, the consumer-brand relationship is formed based on the value proposition that is created by the established brand identity (Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2009:49). In the case of the celebrity brand identity, the consumer-brand relationship can arguable be developed through self-expressive

benefits (Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2009:43). Self-expressive benefits refer to "when the brand provides a vehicle by which a person can proclaim a particular image" (Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2009:49). This connects with the argument that consumers attach to brands that emulate a desired identity. In terms of celebrity brands, as Click *et al* argued, this self-expressive benefit allows for celebrities to become mirrors of self-reflection that allow fans to fashion their identity on (2013:363). This encourages consumers to align with a brand that emulates a particulate image that the consumer wishes to express in their own identity.

The brand identity system, as put across by Aaker, relays the concept of a relationship construct (Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2009:50). This relationship construct is derived from the brand's aim to create a relationship with the consumer that mimics a personal relationship (Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2009:50). This is in line with Click *et al*'s argument that consumers/fans align with a brand that they feel satisfies a desired relationship or compensates for a real and lacking relationship (2013:362). The impact of this idea is that, whilst this relationship can be argued as being para-social, it gives power to the brand to establish the type of relationship role to be filled (Stever 2011:1). It can be argued that the type of relationship that is established informs the consumers' adoption of the emotional, behavioural and attitudinal positions of the celebrity brand (Click *et al* 2013:363). The implications of this idea for this study is that should the consumer feel as though the altered brand identity no longer fulfils the initial established relationship role, they may turn away from the brand.

2.3 Personal Branding

The topic of this research paper explores the theme of personal branding by contextualising it within the sphere of the celebrity brand. A personal brand, also referred to as a human brand, can be defined as a "well-known persona who is the subject of marketing communications efforts" (Thomson 2006:104). In order to examine the effects of rebranding the celebrity brand and the consumers' reaction to the planned change it is necessary to understand what is involved in personal branding and how consumers attach themselves to personal brands. This second body of literature begins by developing an understanding for the concept of personal branding and the consumer attachment to personal brands by exploring Matthew Thomson's

Human Brands: Investigating Antecedents to Consumers' Strong Attachments to Celebrities (2006), as well as Craig Thompson, Aric Rindfleisch and Zeynep Arsel's *Emotional Branding and the Strategic Value of the Doppelgänger Brand Image* (2006). Once the proposed concepts of personal branding and consumer attachment have been discussed, this paper will continue by situating these concepts within the context of the celebrity brand. In order to achieve this Finola Kerrigan, Douglas Brownlie, Paul Hewer, and Claudia Daza-LeTouz's *'Spinning' Warhol: Celebrity brand theoretic and the logic of the celebrity brand* (2011) will be explored as well as Anthony Ferri's *Emergence of the Entertainment Age?* (2010).

Thomson's article *Human Brands: Investigating Antecedents to Consumers' Strong Attachments to Celebrities* brings together the ideas of identity and celebrity by exploring the concept of human brands and the reasons why consumers' develop strong attachments to celebrities (2006:104). This is relevant to the research topic as it provides an understanding of how consumers consume the brand and possible consumer reactions that may result from planned change. Thompson's *et al* article *Emotional Branding and the Strategic Value of the Doppelgänger Brand Image* expands on this by exploring how the brand can foster an environment for attachment as well as offering a tool for measuring when a brand is losing resonance with the consumer (2006:50). This is relevant to this research paper as it provides a platform to explore and identify the consumer reactions to planned change of the celebrity brand.

As explored in the previous section, Schrembri *et al* argue that in terms of brand consumption, or in this case consumer attachment, consumers align themselves with brands that reflect their desired identity (2012:625). This is explored further in Thomson's argument in that he argues that consumers form varying types of relationships with human brands that are able to fill a desired need and are in line with a desired identity. The term for this, as put across by Thomson, is *relationship similarities* where relationships with human brands reflect a hybrid of existing as well as desired relationships experience by the consumer (2006:105). It can be suggested that for consumers to attach to a brand that human brand needs to fill certain relationships (Thomson 2006:105).

These relationships create an emotional investment on the consumers' part (Thomson 2006:106). It can be argued that it is this need for emotional security that drives consumers to attach to brands that satisfy their needs for autonomy, relatedness and competence, all of which factor into a desired identity (Thomson 2006:106). Autonomy is defined as a person's needs to feel that his or her activities and choices are self-expressive (Thomson 2006:106). In the case of Miley Cyrus, it can be argued that from a brand point of view her planned change can be seen as an effort to gain autonomy after belonging to the Disney identity. Relatedness can be defined as the need to belong, and in the case of attachment to celebrities, this need to belong can be satisfied by aligning themselves with the desired brand identity as well as within a homogenous brand community (Thomson 2006:106). The final need of competence refers to the human tendency to strive for achievement (Thomson 2006:106). The relevance of these three needs is that they provide a background of human motivation for the consumption of a brand, which is necessary in exploring the possible consumer reactions to the planned change in the celebrity brand (Thomson 2006:106).

Thompson *et al* argue that a brand can satisfy these three needs through the use of emotional branding whereby a brand creates a narrative that empathises with consumer needs and harnesses the feeling of a like-minded community (2006:50). Unlike Berger's idea of the narrative self that primarily focuses on the consumer, Thompson *et al* propose the idea that the brand can construct its own narrative and it attracts consumers who share or desire that narrative (2006:50). Emotional branding becomes a strategic tool for forging strong attachments to the brand (Thompson *et al* 2006:51). A gap, however, is that neither of these works of literature examine the potential that these points play when the celebrity brand implements planned change.

However, it can be argued that this view of human brands filling relationship roles for the consumer can create strong emotional investment from a consumer point of view and as a result it can be further argued that should the brand change, the type of relationship may change and this may have repercussions on the attachment to the brand (Thomson 2006:105). This is relevant to the research topic in understanding consumers' reaction to planned change, which can affect the points of attachment and the relationship role. It can be argued that should a brand no longer fill the desired relationship role, they can loose resonance with the target audience, however, in line

with this thought, it can also be argued that the altered brand can resonate with a new target audience (Thomson 2006:105).

Thompson *et al* propose that doppelgänger brand images, traditionally seen as being negative, can be a useful tool for measuring brand resonance with its consumer (2006:50). A doppelgänger brand image is a "family of disparaging images and meanings about a brand that circulate throughout popular culture" (Thompson *et al* 2006:50). This is relevant to this research paper as it provides a platform to explore and identify the consumer reaction to planned change. Thompson *et al* define doppelgänger brand images as cultural constructs that can incorporate humorous parody as a response from formerly loyal customers when they feel that a brand is abandoning its emotional promises (2006:52). From this statement it can be seen that the rise of doppelgänger brand images give insight into how the brand is loosing resonance, but in the case of Miley Cyrus, based on her Instagram account, it can be argued that she has absorbed these images into her identity. What distinguishes the Miley Cyrus case study from the examples discussed in this body of literature is that these doppelgänger brand images are responses to an already altered brand that planned its change.

2.3.1 Celebrity Branding

A gap that is evident in the field of personal branding research is that the idea of celebrity and branding is primarily discussed within the context of celebrity-endorsed brands. Finola Kerrigan, Douglas Brownlie, Paul Hewer, and Claudia Daza-LeTouz recognise this gap and attempt to address it by examining celebrity as a brand and the consumption of the celebrity brand in their article *'Spinning' Warhol: Celebrity brand theoretic and the logic of the celebrity brand* (2011). In Anthony J. Ferri's article *Emergence of the Entertainment Age?* (2010), he argues that the relationship between the celebrity and the consumer is mediated through the use of media channels. This article tends to have a biased tone as the author makes use of stereotypes and his argument is slanted to view the consumer as trivial and his stance tends to be nostalgic for the older forms of celebrity engagement. However, his article contributes to understanding the para-social relationship between consumer and celebrity.

Kerrigan *et al* define celebrity as "a cultural agent of social identification and public intimacy which ritualises individuation and modes of operating in mass privatised culture" (2011:1505). This statement positions the celebrity as a transformative agent and it connects with the previously discussed ideas that consumers identify with desired identities and relationships that the celebrity brand perpetuates within the social arena. This construct of the celebrity is mediated through media channels, which construct the celebrity as a spectacle to be consumed (Kerrigan *et al* 2011:1505). According to Kerrigan *et al* a "transgressive celebrity spectacle makes news" (2011:1505). This statement is relevant to this research paper as it can lend itself to the argument that the motivation behind planned change and the controversial manner of Miley Cyrus' change can be a strategic move to gain media presence and to maintain relevance.

Kerrigan *et al* also argue that the celebrity is not something viewed at from a distance but it is an object of social relation between the consumer and the celebrity (2011:1510). Anthony J. Ferri argues in his article *Emergence of the Entertainment Age?* (2010), that the media in the entertainment age allows celebrities and consumers direct access to one another (2010:403). Platforms such as Instagram and Twitter reduce the space and time between the consumer and the desired celebrity (Ferri 2010:403). This 'closeness' with the celebrity creates a para-social interaction where the consumer feels as though they know the celebrity on a personal level (Ferri 2010:407). It can be argued that this creates an illusion of intimacy that is fed through media usage (Ferri 2010:407). This is relevant to this research paper as it provides a means for understanding the mediums through which consumers consume the celebrity and how both the consumer and the celebrity engage with one another.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The focus of this research paper, as well as being the primary research question, is to examine the effects of rebranding the celebrity brand by using Miley Cyrus as a case study. In order to attempt to answer this question the primary aim of this research paper is to understand the consumer (Generation Y) reactions to change in the celebrity brand. The discussed theory and the research that follows aim to attain the consumers' reaction in order to gain insight into how the brand consumption may or may not have changed.

3.2 Background

The aim of this research paper is to understand the consumer reactions to the change in the celebrity brand, using Miley Cyrus as a primary case study. As previously discussed, at the 2013 VMAs (Video Music Awards) the singer presented a new brand identity that was widely considered to be controversial. The use of Miley Cyrus as the primary case study informs the selection and structure of the research methodology used to examine the consumer reactions to the change in the celebrity brand. Up to this point in the research paper, literature concerning the topics of identity and personal branding has been explored in order to create a platform of understanding on which to base the research design in an attempt to address the research problem. The sections that follow attempt to unpack the research methodology used to gather and analyse the data in an attempt to address the research problem.

3.3 Research Design

In order to examine the consumer (Generation Y) reaction to the change in the celebrity brand of Miley Cyrus, the research design of this paper utilises a mixed method design. A mixed method design can be defined as the combination or integration of both qualitative and quantitative research designs (Bryman & Bell

2014:62). Quantitative research can be defined as "a distinctive research approach that entails the collection of numerical data, [and] regards the relationship theory and research as deductive" (Bryman & Bell 2014:31). Qualitative research, on the other hand, can be defined as "the collection and analysis of primarily non-numerical data" (Bryman & Bell 2014:41). The aim of this choice in research design is to collate the analysis and interpretations of the qualitative and quantitative data in order to formulate a solid argument around the consumer (Generation Y) reaction to the change in the Miley Cyrus celebrity brand.

A mix method design is utilised for the purpose of this research paper as the research aspect of this paper draws on both a deductive and an inductive approach to interpreting the research in relation to the theory (Bryman & Bell 2014:51). The data collection methods and the research instruments, which are discussed in the next few sections, utilise both the researcher's viewpoint as well as the participant's viewpoint and are both detached from as well as involved with the participants. The use of a mixed design of both quantitative and qualitative creates triangulation, which refers to the use of more than one tool, thus it can be argued that this adds to the trustworthiness of the qualitative research design.

In terms of the qualitative research design, this research paper utilises both case study research and phenomenological design approaches. Case study research can be defined as "an in-depth study of one or more individuals or phenomena in its existing context" (Bryman & Bell 2014:42). The research aim is to examine the consumer (Generation Y) reaction to the change in the celebrity brand of Miley Cyrus. Based on this it can be understood that the qualitative case study approach examines the celebrity Miley Cyrus. Phenomenological designs can be defined as "researching the world through the eyes of those with direct lived experience to discover how they interpret their experiences and make sense of their world" (Bryman & Bell 2014:42). In this design the interviewer/researcher's participation is limited. This approach is necessary for the purpose of this research paper as the aim is to understand *consumer* reactions to the change in the celebrity brand. As a result, limited participation with the subjects is necessary for the collection of data.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

The research design utilised in this research paper is a mixed method design. As a result both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods are necessary for the research aspect of this paper. The qualitative aspect of the research design uses the data collection method of field research. Field research can be defined as research conducted in a real-life setting (Bryman & Bell 2014:377). The field research methods employed in this research paper are qualitative interviews and open-ended surveys. Qualitative interviews can be defined as an interaction where participants can answer "freely during semi- or unstructured interview settings" (Bryman & Bell 2014:21). Open-ended surveys can be defined as written questionnaires or surveys (Bryman & Bell 2014:42). It is important to note that the surveys in this research paper utilise both qualitative aspects as well as quantitative aspects, hence the mixed method design.

The quantitative aspect of the research design uses the data collection method of non-experimental design. Non-experimental design can be defined as research where the researcher cannot manipulate the variables but has to rely on interpretation and observation to draw a conclusion (Bryman & Bell 2014:383). The non-experimental design method employed in this research paper is a survey in the form of self-completion questionnaire. A self-completion questionnaire can be defined as a "questionnaire that the respondent answers without the aid of an interviewer" (Bryman & Bell 2014:383). As previously mentioned, the survey in this research paper utilises both qualitative and quantitative aspects, as it is a combination of an open-ended survey and a self-completion questionnaire.

3.4.1 Sampling

A sample can be defined as "the segment of the population that is selected for research" (Bryman & Bell 2014:383). Sampling is the "method of selection based on probability sampling or non-probability sampling" (Bryman & Bell 2014:383). The qualitative aspect of this research design uses a non-probability sampling method. A non-probability sampling method can be defined as "the selection of a sample without the use of a random sampling method" (Bryman & Bell 2014:380). Despite the

research design being a mixed method design the sampling of this paper is defined from a qualitative point of view as the quantitative aspect of the research design is a survey that is a combination of both designs.

Prior to discussing the sampling methods implemented in this research paper, it is first necessary to set the population parameters. A population can be defined as the "units from which a sample is to be selected" (Bryman & Bell 2014:381). The group of people that make up the population should share at least one specific characteristic that is relevant to the topic of the research paper. The topic of this paper is to examine the consumer (Generation Y) reaction to the change in the celebrity brand using Miley Cyrus as a case study. In this paper the characteristics that the population share are that they are a common age, 18-25 (Generation Y) and they all have an awareness of Miley Cyrus. Thus the population can be defined as individuals from Generation Y who are aware of and have been exposed to the Miley Cyrus celebrity brand. The target population is every individual who falls within this population parameter, however, due to the nature of this research paper, the accessible population, the section of the population that can be included in this study, are students who can be reached. These students are located on the Vega campus, the University of Johannesburg campus and the University of Pretoria campus. From a quantitative perspective the elements of the sample require a representative sample and thus a sampling frame, which is the list "of all units in the population from which the sample will be selected. A representative sample can be defined as "a sample that reflects the population accurately" (Bryman & Bell 2014:170). In this case the sample is individuals between the ages of 18 and 25, who are aware of the Miley Cyrus brand and are attending a tertiary institution.

The qualitative aspect of this research paper utilises the non-probability sampling methods of convenience sampling and snowball sampling. A convenience sample is "one that is available to the researcher by virtue of its accessibility" (Bryman & Bell 2014:178). This is applicable to this research paper, as the sample is comprised of university/college students that are readily accessible. A snowball sampling is when initial contact with one group leads to establishing contact with others (Bryman & Bell 2014:179). This is similar to convenience sampling and in the case of this

research paper it allows the researcher to identify other individuals who meet the criteria of the population.

3.4.2 Research Instruments

As previously mentioned, the data collection methods that this paper utilises are qualitative interviews, and a combination of open-ended surveys and self-completion questionnaires. A research instrument is the "specific means of carrying out a research method" (Bryman & Bell 2014:382). Aspects from the open-ended survey and the self-completion questionnaires are combined into one questionnaire/survey. The questionnaire/survey is comprised of open-ended questions; closed questions; word choice; questions about attitudes in the form of the Likert scale; and questions about normative standards and values. The purpose of this survey is gain consumer reactions and perceptions in the form of both quantitative and qualitative data.

The use of follow up interviews and questionnaires creates triangulation, which adds to the trustworthiness of the qualitative research design. Additionally, this allows for the identification of themes and for the researcher to follow up on any gaps or issues raised during the compiling of the questionnaire data. Due to the combination of these two data collection methods the follow up interview utilises both an initial standardised, open-ended interview followed by an informal conversation interview. A standardised, open-ended interview involves the use of standard questions throughout the interview process (Bryman & Bell 2014:216). An informal conversation interview involves a more general guide around a list of themes (Bryman & Bell 2014:216). The standardised, open-ended interview allows for comparative data to be collected and the follow up of the informal conversation interview allows the researcher to discuss any points raised during the initial standardised interview. The themes that are discussed in the interview settings deal around the issues of identity, fan identification, personal branding, celebrity branding and how these issues pertain to the consumer reactions to the change in the Miley Cyrus brand. The purpose of the interviews is two-fold. Firstly, to support the findings from the questionnaire and secondly, to fill in any gaps that have not been addressed through the questionnaire instrument.

3.5 Validity and Reliability

In terms of proving validity and reliability in qualitative research design it can prove to be difficult, however, trustworthiness can be determined. Trustworthiness can be defined as a set of criteria "for assessing the quality of qualitative research" (Bryman & Bell 2014:385). The use of both qualitative and quantitative research creates triangulation, which in turn adds to the trustworthiness of the qualitative research.

In terms of proving validity and reliability in the quantitative research design, an initial pilot study on the accessible population will be conducted to identify individuals who meet the population parameters. A pilot study can be defined as a "short, preliminary study to determine how well the research methods work" (Bryman & Bell 2014:381). The use of a pilot study ensures face validity, which refers to whether or not the test appears to measure what it is suppose to measure (Bryman & Bell 2014:38). The use of face validity ensures the validity of the quantitative research and the use of a pilot study ensures both the validity and reliability of the quantitative study. In order to ensure the reliability of the quantitative research internal consistency reliability is employed within the research instruments. Internal consistency assesses "whether or not a finding that incorporates a causal relationship between two or more variables is sound" (Bryman & Bell 2014:378).

3.6 Data Analysis and Findings

In order to analyse the collected data and ensure qualitative trustworthiness, the qualitative data analysis method that is implemented is coding and data displays. Coding implies that "the coded data will not be represented in the original format but will be interpreted and re-presented by the researcher" (Bryman & Bell 2014:336). Data displays refers to how the gathered "data will be displayed and described" in the final research paper (Bryman & Bell 2014:338). The particular method that will be used is thematic analysis, which can be defined as a flexible method with the goal to "identify, analyse and describe patterns, or themes, across the data set" (Bryman & Bell 2014:250). The aim of this particular method is to collate the findings and identity common themes in order to identify the consumer reactions to the change in the celebrity brand.

3.7 Ethics

In terms of identifying the ethical issues from a research method point of view, from a qualitative point of view the issues of confidentiality and anonymity can be applied (Bryman & Bell 2014:123). The research needs to take care that the participants are not victimised. In the case of field research, the researcher needs to ensure that no emotional or physical harm comes to the participants, particular as the study uses phenomenology. The researcher needs to ensure that there is informed consent from the participants and that reciprocity is implemented to avoid deception (Bryman & Bell 2014:129). In terms of the data collection methods and findings, the researcher needs to be aware of the confidentiality and ethical issues surrounding data sharing (Bryman & Bell 2014:128). Additionally, issues such as funding should not be allowed to potentially influence the findings and the manner of data presentation (Bryman & Bell 2014:129).

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The focus of this research paper, as well as being the primary research question, is to examine the effects of rebranding the celebrity brand by using Miley Cyrus as a case study. In order to attempt to answer this primary research question two additional questions need to be addressed. Firstly, how is identity constructed and how does this influence consumer attachment to celebrities? Secondly, how is the celebrity brand constructed, with specific reference to the Miley Cyrus case study? The research findings have been presented according to the themes captured by these specific research questions. The findings presented in the section below represent the accessible population of 78 participants out of a target population of 130. For the purpose of this study and to allow for thematic analysis, the data collected from the interviews and the questionnaires have been represented in combination in certain circumstances.

4.2 Identity Construction

Table 4.1 displays the most frequently mentioned components and the accompanying features behind the attitudes towards identity fluidity. Table 4.2 displays the most frequently mentioned components and the accompanying features behind the perceived brand contribution towards identity construction. Table 4.3 displays the most frequently mentioned components and the accompanying features behind the questionnaire participants' attachment to celebrity brands.

Table 4.1 Attitude towards identity fluidity

Number of participants who felt their identity was fluid: 65 out of 76	
Component	**Features**
Introspection	• Change in attitude and feeling towards others. • Acquiring new knowledge. • Relevance to morals, beliefs and religion. • Gaining a better understanding of something. • Confrontation with moral issues. • Personal growth and change in preferences. • Change in personal style.

	• Self-criticism - not being happy or proud with oneself or ones actions.
Interpersonal Engagement	• Change in relationship with others. • Critiques and motivations from others for personal betterment. • Acknowledgement of harmful actions towards others. • Influence from positive role models. • Changing personal and social roles. • Dynamics within romantic relationships. • Changes in current role models.
Experiences	• Identity changes based on new experiences. • Extreme circumstances. • Life changes, e.g. New job. • Change in lifestyle. • Experiences that alter perceptions and values.
Environment/External	• Different contexts of engagement. • A change in community. • Changes in physical environment, circumstances or situation. • Life-changing events. • New trends.
Natural Progression	• Growth through life stages changes identity. • Different stages of life impact on interests, relationships and beliefs.

In relation to attitude towards identity fluidity, and as a precursor to identity construction, the responses from the personal interviews convey how the participants construct and express their sense of self. Their responses are shown below:

Participant A: I think very much socially and personally. So from a personal point of view I think asking who I am, I think my studies play a role in the construction of my identity, I think my friendship groups, people that I interact with, so social groups. Through relationships, through going out, even through being by myself, through balancing that home-work integration, maybe even through my personal philosophies in life so my values, my norms, my standards. I think those all shape my personal and social identity.

Participant B: I think through the clothing I wear and through the books I read and the things I choose to do with my time are an expression of my identity and the music I listen to. Your identity is an internal structure so ways that I express my internal

structure is through clothes, music, books so all these different brands and physical entities are a language which most people understand.

4.2.1 Identity Construction and Brand Contribution

Table 4.2 Brand contributions to identity construction

Component	Features
Personal	• Inclination towards individualism and originality. • Do not want to be judged based on brand associations. • Negative associations attached to owning brand names. • Preconceived opinions from others based on brands. • Brands have little relevance on a personal level. • Dependant on likes and tastes.
Social Status	• External judgemental based on brand purchasing preference. • Brands speak to sophistication. • Pressure to live up to certain standards of being. • Brands give confidence to share (community). • Brands ascribe status and display personal taste.
Brand Attributes	• Brands speak to quality. • Identify with a brand based on identification with brand and preference for product and service. • Brands have certain standards. • A certain level of loyalty, a sense of familiarity and trust. • Offers more meaning and connection. • A mark to identify an idea or product. • Brands take more pride and consideration in themselves. • Value is placed on the attributes not the name. • Need fulfilment over name. • Brands have credibility.
Personal Identity	• Builds into an individual's personality. • Builds an identity through unique associations. • Creates associations with certain characteristics. • Creates a sense of aspiration. • Brands feed into a personal/individual's brand. • It communicates and forms an identity. • Not too important – inclination towards individualism. • Is not a contributor to identity construction. • Identifies one with a specific class. • They are appendages to a person's personality. • It is easier to relate to an identity and then allow it to make up a part of one's identity. • Provides a set of beliefs and values that one believes one will receive when associating one with that brand. • Symbol of someone's legacy and what they stand for.

Brand Experience	• Creates a feeling of exclusivity. • Creates a sense of accomplishment. • Allows for more engagement and provides context. • Creates a feeling of a desired experience. • Defines what is current and fashionable. • Hold a sense of identity that can be engaged with.
Sense of Belonging	• Creates identification and grouping. • Creates a sense of community. • Creates a sense of trust and belonging. • Creates a connection between brands and people, builds relationships and adds value.
Brand as Organisation	• Face of an organisation that sets it apart from competition. • Creates a face of association for a product, place or person. • Communicates an essence. • A set of attributes that add value. • Used to sell a product. • Delivery of a promise. • Gives something a unique identity. • Key component for organisation success.

4.2.2 Identity Construction and Celebrity Attachment

When asked in which ways the interview participants would be drawn to follow a celebrity brand the responses were:

Participant A: Maybe looks. Maybe also the way they express who they are. I think if I align something similar with them. If we align in terms of values. Just who they are as a person. Being decent and kind.

Participant B: How good looking they are. Depending on what kind of celebrity. So if I feel that there's that connection where it matches who I am as a person and my lifestyle choices. So it's definitely how they portray themselves, what kind of lifestyle they are promoting, and what kind of vibe they promote that really draws my attention.

Table 4.3 Attachment to celebrity brands

Component	Features
Relevance	• These personalities are constructed by teams of people. • Celebrities are superficial and unrealistic. • Follow celebrity news and reality shows. • Lack of time and interest. • Follow people in line with personal interest.

	• Follow sports heroes. • Viewed as waste of time • Follow fashion and style. • What is currently trending. • Follow on Twitter and Instagram. • Enjoyment in watching awards shows. • Follow gossip. • More interest in fictional characters they portray than actual person.
Social	• Influence surroundings, in turn the surroundings influence the individual. • Sets a standard in which society views trends and shapes how people should look. • Celebs set trends that the masses follow and individuals follow those trends too. • Creates negative feelings about society and what is important to certain people (i.e. high divorce).
Introspective	• Anti-celebrity culture with a focus on personal authenticity. • Inspiration based on abilities. • Motivation in the form of not to replicate that identity. • Aspirational – elevated above one's reality. • Influences one's opinions about oneself (beauty standards). • Celeb culture is a means of comparison - strive to avoid certain elements of celeb culture based on it affects. • Examples of what not to do. • Some motivate to do better. • Everyone can become a celebrity through social media. • Motivates to work harder towards goals.
Fan identification motivations	• If they embodied anti-commercial celebrity culture. • Personality and attitude. • If they differentiated themselves from the crowd. • Drama, talent and style. • If they had high moral standards. • Their talent and lifestyle – could relate and resonate with what they do. • What they 'do' is the most important draw. • If they lead a good cause. • If they positively portray themselves and make positive contributions to the world. • If they embrace real life issues. • How they act in public and towards their fans. • Publicity stunts and attention grabbing is off putting. • Honesty and authenticity. • If one had a personal connection with a celebrity. • If they are in line with personal interests. • If there were shared similar values. • Their human mistakes.

	• The status of the person.
	• Similar lifestyles and positive aspirations.
	• If they are private in their lives and age appropriate.
	• If their values and direction in life were personally aspirational.
	• Would need to be relatable and respectful.
Aesthetic/Appearance	• Influences sense of style.
	• Inclusion of trends into personal identity.
	• Trends affect appearance and that affects sense of self.
	• Create unrealistic standards.

4.2.3 Fan Identification

Table 4.4 displays the most frequently mentioned components and the accompanying features behind the components contributing to fan identification, as identified in the open-ended interviews.

Table 4.4 Components contributing to fan identification

Component	Features
Para-Social Relationships	• An alignment of common interests would in turn lead to individual 'following' the celebrity. • If the celebrity embodies their brand/lives their persona. • Responsive celebrities on social media are more relatable.
Relationship Roles	• Celebrities can be seen as role models. • Follow people that are aspirational and are successful in things that an individual wants to be successful in. • It is a phase related concept, a developmental thing. • Shared values and interests would lead to celebrity attachment. • They fill a role in one's life that might be lacking, like a role model. • Someone to be inspired by.
Media	• Following the celebrity on Instagram and Twitter allows one to see the 'real' person. • Makes celebrities more approachable. • Allows one to get closer to celebrities. • Get to see their personal lives and how they enact their personal identity. • Allows one to connect and reach out to celebs.

4.3 The Celebrity Brand

The second question explores the celebrity brand and how it is constructed. In particular this section will display the findings pertaining particularly to the relevant case study of Miley Cyrus in an attempt to address this research question and to understand the consumer reactions to the change in the celebrity brand. Table 4.5 below displays the most frequently mentioned components and the accompanying features behind the participants' current attitude towards the Miley Cyrus celebrity brand. Table 4.6 displays the most frequently mentioned components and the accompanying features behind comparative perception of the differing Miley Cyrus celebrity image and its relevance to the identity construct. Table 4.7 displays the most frequently mentioned components and the accompanying features behind the perceptions in the change in the celebrity brand.

In terms of the celebrity brand of Miley Cyrus 38% of the 77 participants felt they could identify with the Hannah Montana persona compared to 9% of the 77 participants who felt they could identify with the current Miley Cyrus persona. 71% felt that the Hannah Montana persona is appropriate for the ages of 12-14 and 44% felt that the current Miley Cyrus persona is appropriate for the ages of 18-20. Out of the 77 participants 69% felt an impact on their relationship with the brand as a result of the change in the brand image.

Table 4.5 Current attitudes towards Miley Cyrus celebrity brand

Component	Features
MOST APPEALING ASPECTS OF CELEBRITY BRAND	
Personality/Identity	• She is not afraid.
	• She has differentiated herself by not accepting the norm.
	• Her love for family.
	• Her younger persona.
	• She does not care what people think of her.
	• Her originality and non-conformity.
	• Her confidence and boldness.
	• She is courageous on a very outrageous level.
	• Her strong will to be who she is.
	• Her sense of experimentation.
	• Her support of gay rights.
	• Her courage to do what is least expected of her.
	• Her ability to change perceptions.

Appearance	• Her body, hair and smile. • Her eyes. • Her look and her outfits. • Her sex appeal.
Ability	• Her voice and her musical ability.
LEAST APPEALING ASPECTS OF CELEBRITY BRAND	
Personality/Identity	• Her immoral behaviour. • Her bad attitude and lack of self-respect.
Appearance	• Her tongue. • Her look and actions. • Her fetishism of black culture. • Her way of dressing.
Public Image	• Her sexual exuberance in public. • Her weird and sexual persona. • Her reputation. • The fact that she is so open about smoking weed, which sets a bad example to younger fans. • Her overt and vulgar sex appeal. • Her mannerisms and ways of standing out. • That she is too sexual especially when so many people look up to her.
Content	• The sexual themes she portrays in her videos and music. • Her music videos portraying women as sex objects.

Table 4.6 Comparative perceptions of the celebrity image and its relevance to the identity construct

Component	Features
HANNAH MONTANA BRAND IMAGE	
Common Persona Descriptors	• Innocent, Moral, Positive role model, Normal, Modest, Age appropriate, Wholesome, Presentable, Safe. • False, Fake. • Trendy, Fashion forward, contemporary.
Brand Image	• Role model to young girls. • Sweet 'girl next door'. • Good girl with stand up morals and a wholesome role model. • Everyday teenage girl. • Friendly, well mannered. • Fun, innocent teen idol. • Normal human-being but also a bit false and pretentious. • She seems boring and annoying. • Social acceptance.
Identification with Brand	• Identified with that persona at that similar age. • Attempting to hold onto one's youthful innocence. • She is portraying a normal girl. • Still sweet at individual's current age and does not succumb to pressures of society. • I like to think of myself as a kind, sweet person who knows

	where I am going in life.
	• I would like people to look to me as a role model or someone they can approach.
	• The moral stance and dignity is the only thing that might be applicable.
	• I am also innocent and friendly.
	• She seems happy, content, and ego-free, which I'm trying to achieve – live my life by.
	• A combination of traits that apply to me and some that don't.
	• Portrays someone normal who will fit into society.
Non-Identification with Brand	• She follows the crowd and is exactly like everyone else.
	• She is part of a tween world that has been and past.
	• She is too false and too innocent.
	• I am more mature and experienced.
	• She is more formal and serious.
	• She is a made-up character.
	• She is too perfect and first-world.
	• I am a male so I don't identify with the girly image.
	• I am no longer that age.
	• I do not know about her only her career.
	• My identity is formed on other relevant role models.
	• I am my own person, I don't identify with this image because I know that this image is no longer "real"/"true".
	• I have grown, I keep the same values but my image has changed.
Aligned Brand Associations	• Innocent, happy, positive, normal.
	• Youthful innocence and natural looks.
	• Modesty and normality.
	• Appropriateness.
	• Nice young girl who is approachable.
	• Identify with letting success do the talking for me.
CURRENT MILEY CYRUS BRAND IMAGE	
Common Persona Descriptors	• Outrageous, Immoral, Sexualised, Rude, Inappropriate, Negative role model, controversial.
	• Attention seeker, Huge ego, False.
	• Trendy, Fashion forward.
	• Disgusting, pathetic.
Brand Image	• Progressive, innovative, being her own person.
	• Someone who doesn't give a thought as to how she might be influencing society.
	• Absolute freedom with no filter.
	• An adult who is confident in her body.
	• A sexual being that is controversial within society.
	• She is young, wild and free to do what she ought to do.
	• A false, attention seeking kind of person.
	• She is making a statement.
	• She doesn't care, she does whatever she wants.

	• Someone who is unafraid of society.
	• She wants to shake the good girl image. It appears as if she want to be controversial.
	• Moral decay, tries to embody everything you were taught not to be.
	• She is trying to create a new identity for herself and get rid of the good girl image.
	• Progressive, highly sexualised artists. Not fearful of social constraints.
	• A rebel who knows who she is and has the courage to go against the mainstream ideological constructions.
	• She may be encouraging people to get out of their comfort zone and be different.
Identification with Brand	• She is unconventional – her persona reflects my own.
	• It is important to see how perceptions are changed as a result of society having these kinds of role models.
	• Growing up with this popular culture surrounding me does affect my identity but I don't associate with the wild sexual nature.
	• I believe she is trying to make a statement and I do agree with what she is trying to say, to an extent.
	• She is being herself, and that is what I'm trying to do.
Non-Identification with Brand	• Her image is too outrageous.
	• I am more about elegance than showing body parts.
	• She might be expressing herself but it comes off as inauthentic.
	• I don't believe this type of rebellion conveys strength of character, she has objectified herself.
	• She is off-putting and inappropriate and I don't want to be associated with her.
	• We have nothing in common. This is against my values and principles.
	• I am more mature than Miley in the way I portray and conduct myself.
	• She has gone from one extreme to another and I can't identify with her behaviour.
	• She is trying too hard to be controversial so it comes off as contrived.
	• She has no self-respect or care for her viewers' minds.
	• It is not normal or morally correct.
	• She is a negative role model and goes against my morals and values.
	• As I become more mature, her persona shocks me.
	• I do not approve of commodifying your body in a sexual way.
	• I think it is too much.
	• I do not like her negativity, I would never identify with this, it is the complete opposite to me.
	• A little because she is relevant.

Aligned Brand Associations	• Trying to be unique and extraordinary. • The idea of wanting to stand out. • Mature and less innocent. • It's not nice to always be seen as the good girl.

Table 4.7 Perceptions of the change in the celebrity brand

Component	Features
Negative Responses to Change	• Completely drastic and unexpected in a negative way. • It was bound to happen. • Initially surprised, now accustomed. • Fake and attention-seeking. • Desire for attention has corrupted her self image. • Do not feel this change will benefit or grow her. • I think she has destroyed her image and ruined her life and alienated a lot of teen viewers. • She is being hypocritical – changing drastically and then speaking about acceptance. • This is not ground-breaking, it is a trend in popular culture.
Positive Responses to Change	• I am proud of her. It takes a lot of courage to be yourself, unique and not care what others think about you. • In a way I felt she grew up and it made sense that a girl who achieved such great fame at an early age would try to keep herself famous whilst growing up. • She's just trying to shed her old image, I can support that. • Shocked but happy at the same time because she is coming out of her shell. • This change has kept her relevant. • It was clever to enhance her presence in the media but it could harm her persona and brand in the long run.
Positive Brand Engagement	• She is more relevant and interesting. Her image has positively influenced my self-confidence. • I began listening to her music. • She is more unique and interesting. • Image was not impressive but music was good. • It made me more interested to see what would come next. • Her music and image is more popular and in line with current pop artists, I interact with her brand a lot more often following the change in her image.
Negative Brand Engagement	• Used to think she was a good and respectful. • No longer interested in her music or lifestyle. • She has not set an example of a quality brand. • Brand altered from one of respect to one of disgust. • Cannot support this, it sends the wrong messages to young girls.
Fan Identification	• No longer feel she cares about what her fans think of her. • The innocence that I enjoyed was destroyed and replaced by an attention-seeking child.

- I cannot align myself with her life choices.
- I was never involved with the brand so it didn't impact me.
- I feel she aged as I did so I followed with same level of interest.
- Used to identify with younger Miley but I feel like I grew up and she didn't.
- Could relate before but now it is outlandish and confusing.
- I do not wish to be identified with the brand.
- I still enjoy the brand regardless of the change.
- Saw her in a new light so new associations are now made.
- Saw her as a new person; being the same age I grew with the brand just not so drastically.
- I am only interested as a viewer not on a personal level.
- Any emotional association has been disregarded.
- I did not see the brand the same way so I disassociated myself from the brand, as it did not appeal to my liking.

4.3.1 The Celebrity Brand Reconstruction and Identity

Table 4.8 displays the most frequently mentioned components and the accompanying features behind the components contributing to the impact that brand change has on the level of attachment to a brand.

Table 4.8 Impact of brand change on the level of attachment

Component	Feature
Level of Attachment	• Response is dependent on loyalty to the brand. • Depends on level of commitment to the brand and how influential it is. • If it were not important to ones sense of self, it would be inconsequential.
Brand Change	• Response depends on the type of brand change. • If it still delivers on important elements, then one would grow with the brand. • If it contradicts one's core identity then one would not change with it and one would move onto another brand. • If it no longer fulfilled it purpose one would find a new brand.
Response to change	• As individuals grow in life identity changes and the context changes so it is natural that one can become more attracted to brands that fall within that sphere. • It might change one's perceptions about who they are. • One can still enjoy what they used to be and what they used to give you and one can choose what aspects of the brand you want to follow but it doesn't mean one has to commit to the entire change.

CHAPTER FIVE: DATA ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction and Theoretical Framework

The focus of this research paper, as well as being the primary research question, is to examine the effects of rebranding the celebrity brand by using Miley Cyrus as a case study. As such this section discusses the research findings in line with the framework of the discussed theories within the structure of the two additional research questions that address the issue of identity construction and the celebrity brand construction. In terms of the framework on which the data is analysed, the first theoretical framework provides a basis on which to discuss the construction of identity, both in regards to personal identity and brand identity. The existing body of literature indicates that the consumption and alignment with brands are directly related to the construction of personal identity. In terms of the fan identity, the literature suggests that the relationship between the fan and the celebrity is para-social in nature and this in turn suggests that the nature of the celebrity brand consumption differs from other forms of brand consumption. In terms of Aaker's brand identity model, this relationship is fostered through the brand identity construction with a focus on developing a narrative that fosters consumer-brand relationships that deliver on self-expressive benefits that the consumer experiences.

The second theoretical framework provides a basis on which to discuss the construction of the personal brand in relation to consumer attachment with a specific focus on the celebrity brand. The existing body of literature indicates that human brands connect with consumers through relationship similarities and by creating emotional investment through the use of emotional branding. In terms of the celebrity brand, the theory questions the nature of celebrity as spectacle through the use of para-social relationships.

The first theoretical framework explores both the construction of the consumer identity and the brand identity by drawing on the theory proposed by Berger, Schrembri *et al*, Click *et al*, and Aaker and Joachimsthaler. The second theoretical

framework explores the celerity brand and its relationship with the consumer by drawing on the theory proposed by Thomson, Thompson *et al*, and Kerrigan *et al*.

5.2 Identity Construction

In terms of the construction and expression of the self, it can be seen from the interview findings that internal identity is constructed through a set of associations with introspective qualities, such as personal philosophies and morals, as well as in relation to the social 'other' through interactions with and defined roles within social groups. The construction of the identity in relation to the 'other' connects with Berger's theory in that identity is a social product that exists within a social sphere and is created in acceptance or opposition of a separate group (2011:243). Based on the findings it can be argued that the internal structure of the identity is expressed through the use of brands as a physical language to outwardly express the 'self'. This connects with Berger's argument of the 'self' in that the sense of self is constructed by adopting brands that signify who we are to others (2011:232).

According to Schrembri's *et al* argument, when constructing the self, consumers align with brands that reflect a desired identity (2010:625). However, the findings would suggest that consumers align with brands that match their current identity rather than a desired identity. This result is better accounted for by Click's *et al* theory that consumers align with bands that reflect similar narratives to their own constructed 'self' (2013:363). It could also be argued, that there is a correlation to Thomson's theory of *relationship similarities* in that the relationship with human brands is a hybrid of existing as well as desired relationship (2006:105). However, this is a concept that will be further explored later on in this chapter. By aligning with a brand that matches one's current identity, it can be argued that this would allow consumers to act out their internal identity structure within the public sphere. This enables brands – particularly celebrity brands– to become mirrors of self-reflection, thus expressing the self-expressive benefit promised by brands (Click *et al* 2013:363). However, this data observation could be influenced by the age of the population sample as it can be argued that individuals between the ages of 18-25 have a more fixed sense of self.

However, that being said, 86% of the population sample felt that their identity was fluid, which suggests that identity is not fixed but under constant revision. This connects with Berger's theory that identity constructs are fluid and are revised with individual preference and brand change (2011:232). From the findings in Table 4.1, it can be seen that the five most common factors that influence identity fluidity are introspection, interpersonal engagement, experiences, the environment, and natural progression. In terms of the introspection it can be seen that there is a strong correlation between the sense of self and the issues of morality, belief, attitude and ideology. It can be argued that these elements sit within a personal identity orientation and speak to individualistic traits and aspirations. A limitation to the literature of this research paper is that it has not delved into the construction of the personal identity but rather the social identity in terms of brands. In terms of introspection the findings reveal that the sense of self exists in relation to others in the form of social dynamics, relationship roles and the influence of role models. This again ties in with Berger's argument that the 'self' is constructed in relation to others and that it becomes a social product (2011:243). The experiences and environment can be examined in conjunction with one another as they both speak to external forces acting out on the internal identity. From these findings it can be argued that the sense of 'self' exists within a certain context and that changes to that context alter the space in which the identity exists and as such it can be argued that it in turn impacts on the construction of the identity. This connects with Schrembri's *et al* argument that consumers construct their identity by 'interacting within and interpreting the social world" (2010:626).

5.2.1 Identity Construction and Brand Contribution

From an overview of the findings in Table 4.2, it can be argued that brands are signifiers and offer a multitude of varying associations that contribute to the construction of identity at different levels and interpretations. This connects with the theory put across by Schrembri *et al* that argues that consumers use brands as symbolic resources that they combine and adapt to construct the 'self' (2010:625). From the findings presented in Table 4.2, it can be argued that brands contribute to the construction of identity by creating a sense of belonging through the construction of brand communities. From the findings it can be seen that this sense of community

is fostered through the brand experience, which could arguably be seen as a manifestation of the brand narrative. According to Berger, these brand communities inform brand attachment because the brands can be seen to be filling certain social roles (2011:235). Based on the findings, one can argue that by attaching to brands that express ones identity, it creates a sense of belonging with like-minded individuals who also express that identity. Thus it not only establishes para-social relationships with the brand but also connects people, which one could posit further solidifies the identity construct through real communities and social relationships. Thomson's theory of relatedness supports this finding, as it speaks to the need to belong being satisfied through the alignment with a brand identity as well as a brand community (2006:106).

The findings in Table 4.2 suggest that consumers attach to brands based on its promise to fulfil a certain need or desire that is lacking in the consumer. It can be argued that these needs may not necessarily be directly connected to construction of the self but rather a consumption based on brand attributes and offering. However, it can be observed and argued that there is a strong connection between the brand attributes and the social status that is ascribe to it. It can also be observed that the type of brand and the associations attached to that brand are important factors that influence the expression of an outward image for social consumption. This relates to the theory put across by Schrembri *et al*, which postulates that the types of brands consumed play a role in creating a narrative on which the 'self' is constructed (2010:623). In the findings it can be observed that there is an acknowledgement that brands inform personal identity through unique association and become appendages and tools for relating and communicating that personality/identity. This connects with Berger's theory that brands become tools for assembling a public identity (2011:232). Furthermore, as argued by Schrembri *et al,* brands as symbolic resources aid in not only forming and expressing identity but also in making sense of the 'self' (2010:625). In the findings it can be noted that there are number of outliers that believe there is no correlation between brands and the construction of identity. Whilst this may be a valid opinion for a consumer to hold, it is also possible that the consumption of brands could occur as an unconscious decision for these individuals, and thus they might lack true insight into the extent to which their identity is influenced by brands.

5.2.2 Identity Construction and Celebrity Attachment

In terms of the attachment to celebrities it can be seen that within the age demographic of 18-25 there is an inclination towards individualism and celebrity culture is not a strong influencer in terms of relevance within this age group. Again, as previously mentioned, this could be a limitation to this paper in that the age group of the sample was too old and perhaps should have included a younger audience.

Based on both the interview findings and the findings presented in Table 4.3 it can be seen that the aesthetics of the celebrity offering is influential in the construction of the personal identity in terms of the outward expression of personal style as they provide a base of fashion trends on which the individuals can outwardly enact their personalities. There is an acknowledgement within the findings in Table 4.3 that celebrities influence culture/society by setting particular trends and messages, and that these 'influenced' surroundings impact on the individual regardless of their active participation. This connects with Berger's theory that the issue of identity becomes a social product that must exist within a social sphere (2011:234). The celebrity brand can be seen as filling a social role that performs within a social arena and this impacts on the consumers construction of the public self within that social world as they interact and interpret that space, thus connecting with the idea of brand consumption being a "social tool", as put across by Schrembri *et al* (2010:626).

A large portion of the findings presented in Table 4.3, as well as the interviews, would suggestion that the celebrity contribution to identity construction and the fan identification with celebrity brands within this age group can be attributed to identification with perceived commonalities in introspective and personal orientated qualities within the personal identity. It would suggest that the consumers identify with and attach to celebrities that share or express similar identity narratives in terms of personality, values, lifestyle and actions. This correlates with Thompson's *et al* theory that when a celebrity narrative and a consumer narrative are aligned, then there is a premise for strong brand attachment (2006:50). In relation to fan identification, the findings suggest that consumers attach to celebrities that reflect narratives that the consumer deems to be appropriate to them as well as celebrities that appear more

human and relatable. This again connects to Click's *et al* theory that consumers align with brands that reflect similar narratives to their own constructed 'self' (2013:363). The human element to the attachment to celebrities, as shown in the findings, allows for consumers to feel as though they know the celebrity on a personal level, and according to Click *et al*, this allows for para-social relationships to form, which further allows for strong celebrity attachment (2013:362).

From the findings it can be noted that there is a strong aspirational element to the attachment to celebrities. The research participants identified that celebrities offer points of motivation through comparisons to their achievements, they are inspirational in terms of perceived ability and behaviour, and there is a noted influence on their self-opinion. This connects with Thomson's theory of the human tendency to strive for achievement (2006:106). It can be argued that this would suggest that, despite arguing to this point that consumers attach to celebrities that reflect their existing identity, consumers also attach to celebrities that exhibit desired identities. This is more in line with Schrembri's *et al* argument that theorises that when constructing the self, consumers align with brands that reflect a desired identity (2010:625). This also correlates with Aaker's brand identity model in that it can be argued that by aligning with a celebrity brand identity that reflects a desired brand narrative, consumers develop a relationship based on the self-expressive benefits that they are able to experience through that alignment (Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2009:43). Aaker's theory of self-expressive benefits connects with Schrembri's *et al* theory that celebrity identities become mirrors on which fans can fashion their own identities (2013:363). At this point it can be argued that consumers attached to different celebrity brands for different reasons as not all celebrities can satisfy the same needs.

5.2.3 Fan Identification

In terms of developing a fan-based relationship with a celebrity it can be seen from the interview findings in Table 4.4 that one aspect for the basis of a fan-based relationship is whether or not the celebrity in question exhibits a brand that aligns with the interests of the consumer. Again this relates to Click's *et al* theory that consumers align with brands that reflect similar narratives to their own constructed 'self' (2013:363). An important aspect of this alignment, as seen in the findings, is

that the celebrity fully embodies the identity they are perpetuating, which makes the celebrity more personable and relatable, and it can be argued that it makes the celebrity identity more tangible, thereby allowing for a strong premise for brand attachment. An important element to the research findings that connects with the theory of the research is that this feeling of celebrities being more attainable is fostered through media texts, which contributes to developing para-social relationships with consumers (Click *et al* 2013:362). By following celebrities on social media the participants felt as though they could see the private person behind the celebrity and so attachment occurs because fans feel that they are gaining access to the private person and therefore feel as though they can develop a personal relationship with them. This arguably brings the celebrity down to a relatable and attainable level. This notion of the formation of personal relationships between fans and celebrities through social media relates to Stever's theory – he argues that media allows consumers to feel a level of proximity and familiarity with a celebrity, and this creates the illusion of a meaningful relationship (2011:1). Based on the findings, the two most common media platforms that allow for this kind of interaction are Twitter and Instagram. According to Ferri, it is these two platforms that reduce the space and time between the consumer and the desired celebrity (2010:403). This is prevalent within the findings as the participants felt that it placed the celebrities within reach.

5.3 The Celebrity Brand

The findings discussed in this section pertain to the case study of Miley Cyrus. In terms of the age appropriateness of the Miley Cyrus brand it can be seen from the findings that majority of the respondents view the appropriateness of Miley Cyrus in terms of her being a role model for younger viewers. It can be seen that there is a general consensus that the current brand image is inappropriate for younger viewers and is more appropriate for an older audience. This connects with Stever's theory that celebrities serve as role models within the varying development stages and that the strength of attachment differs depending on the development stage of the fan (2011:20).

In terms of the respondents' current attitudes towards the Miley Cyrus brand, it can be seen in Table 4.5 that the respondents are still responsive to the perceived internal

personal construct of the celebrity brand, such as her courage, her strong will and her originality. It can be argued that there is still an attachment to these perceived qualities as they are arguably achievable qualities that the respondents' either currently possess or desire to express within their own identity. It can also be tentatively argued that these aspects are normalised and socially acceptable and thus more palatable for the consumer. It can be further argued that they are creating their sense of her identity and their acceptance of that brand identity based on their own identity. In terms of celebrity brand construction and the consumer, this counters Thompson's *et al* theory that the brand constructs the narrative and the attracts consumers who share and desire the narrative (2006:50) In terms of the aspects of the Miley Cyrus brand that are causing disassociation, it can be seen from the findings that the respondents are becoming unresponsive towards the external enactment of the public image, such as her overt sexual appeal and perceived vulgar mannerisms. It can be argued that when the celebrity is expressing an identity that no longer aligns with the self, the individual can assess the situation and decided what aspects are aligning and whether or not to remain attached to the brand. The findings seem to strongly suggest that consumers are selective in what aspects they do or do not identify with in a celebrity brand. This once again connects with Berger's theory that disassociation from a brand is not only dependant on the brand changing but is also a by-product of an internal conversation that the consumer has with themselves (2011:236).

In terms of the comparative perceptions of the celebrity image and its relevance to the identity construct from an overview of the findings presented in Table 4.6, it can be argued that in the case of Miley Cyrus there was a natural detachment from the original brand image due to the natural maturation of the sample group as they outgrew the brand image. This again is supported by Berger's theory of detachment, based on an internal conversation that can occur when a consumer begins to loose interest in what a brand has to offer (2011:236). These consumers, as they have grown in terms of age with the celebrity, should have arguably matured with the brand, however, based on the findings, it can be suggested that the current Miley Cyrus brand has gone too extreme past the point that the audience has matured to and that she has outpaced the audience. For some individuals this change has renewed interest in the brand from a spectator stance, which, one could argue, may have been the intention of the celebrity as a strategy to remain relevant, as brought up in the

responses of the questionnaires. However, this speaks more to the strategy behind planned change, which is not the focus of this research paper. This is also identified in the findings in Table 4.7 in terms of positive brand engagement. This connects with Berger's theory, which postulates that brand change can spark renewed interest in individuals who are already waning from the previous brand identity (2011:236). It also connects with Thomson's theory in that an altered brand could resonate with a new target audience, as could be the case for individuals who had no interest in Hannah Montana but are now intrigued by the current brand image (2006:105).

Much like in Table 4.5 the findings in Table 4.7 strongly suggest that consumers are selective in what aspects they do or do not identify with in a celebrity brand in terms of the perception of the celebrity brand. This again connects with Berger's theory that disassociation from a brand is not only dependant on the brand changing but is also a by-product of an internal conversation that the consumer has with him or herself (2011:236). In terms of positive responses to the brand change, the respondents identified that the change may be due to Miley Cyrus gaining authenticity after Disney and her efforts to remain relevant and interesting. This connects with Thomson's theory that an element to celebrity attachment is based on the need for autonomy (2006:106). In this case, it can be argued that the audience is identifying this need within the celebrity brand rather than within themselves.

In terms of negative brand engagement it can be argued that Miley Cyrus has altered the perceived moral associations attached to the original brand – these elements were previously identified to be points of attachment, which arguably were the foundation of her previous brand image. Thus, it can be argued that she has destabilised the foundation of the brand, which in turn has destabilised the brand image. Based on the findings, it is the alteration of those core elements that people are now reacting adversely to, so it can be argued that it may be the cause of detachment from the brand for people who previously followed the brand. The brand is no longer perceived as a positive role model and thus the relationship has changed and according to Thomson, relationship changes affect attachment to the brand (2006:105). Thus, once again, the findings are supported by the theory.

5.3.1 The Celebrity Brand Reconstruction and Identity

In terms of brand change and the impact on the level of attachment the consumer has to the brand, it can be seen from the findings that the level of attachment is dependant on the type of alteration to the brand. It can also be noted that the reaction to the change in a brand is also dependant on the existing level of attachment to that particular brand. From the findings it can be argued that if the brand changed but still delivered on elements that were deemed important to the consumer, then attachment would not be affect. However, should the brand contradict core aspects of the individual's identity construct, then the two narratives are no longer aligned and disassociation can occur. The findings also speaks to the idea that should a brand go against its promise or no longer deliver on filling a certain desired role, then there are grounds for disassociations from that brand. This connects with the theory put across by Click *et al* that should a brand no longer fulfil a relationship or live up to a promise it can result in the brand no longer resonating with the consumer (2013:363). However, it could also be argued that it goes beyond simply altering the relationship role, but rather it no longer satisfies a need in the consumer that the celebrity brand was serving as a proxy for.

A notable aspect from the findings lends itself to the argument that consumers are selective in the acceptance and rejection of the aspects of the celebrity brand identity. The findings suggest that consumers choose to follow aspects of the entire brand, old and new, based on elements that they can identify with. The findings suggest that consumers might not necessarily want to follow the entire brand change because a brand experience is arguably not a linear encounter by rather one that is fluid and under constant revision. This connects with Berger's theory when discussing the construction of identity, whereby he argues it is a fluid state that is susceptible to revision in individual preferences and brand changes (2011:232). This lends itself to the argument that the consumer uses his or her own identity orientation to construct the celebrity brand.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

6.1 Contribution of the Study

This study has contributed to discussing the effects of rebranding the celebrity brand by using Miley Cyrus as a case study. It has explored the issue of identity and identity construction, as well as the motivations behind consumer/fan attachment and alignment with specific celebrities. This study has also contributed to exploring the concept of the celebrity brand and its construction, a gap in current research as identified by Kerrigan *et al* (2011). This study has contributed to understanding the consumer (Generation Y) reactions to the change in the celebrity brand.

6.2 Limitations of the Study

A limitation of this study, as mentioned throughout Chapter Five, is that the age of the sample may have been too high and perhaps should have been more inclusive of a younger demographic. This can be considered a limitation as individuals who fall within the population parameters of this research paper display more fixed identities and thus some of the theory that dealt with the adoption of brand related identities was not as prevalent within this sample group. An additional limitation of this study is that the psychographics of the sample may influence the results and their correlation to research theory due to certain common societal attitudes and cultural mind-sets, such as the level of conservatism within a nation of people.

6.3 Recommendations

Based on the limitations previously discussed it can be suggested for further research to explore the discussed theory and research questions using the same case study but using a different sample group with different population parameters. A suggestion would be to explore Northern American tween (12-18) consumer reactions to the change in the celebrity brand as it can be argued that these are individuals who are likely to be the most influenced by celebrity culture.

From a theory perspective, a recommendation for future practice and research would be to extend the scope of personal branding by extending the concepts of celebrity and branding beyond only existing with the context of celebrity-endorsed brands, and to rather become inclusive of an understanding of celebrities as brands. A third recommendation would be to extend the scope of brand strategy practice by examining the strategies behind planned change in celebrity brands in conjunction with the consumer reactions to those changes within the brand.

6.4 Concluding Arguments

The focus of this research paper is to examine the effects of rebranding the celebrity brand by using Miley Cyrus as a case study. The primary aim is to understand the consumer (Generation Y) reactions to the change in the celebrity brand. From the theory discussed in Chapter Two, the findings presented in Chapter Four and from the analyses of those findings discussed in Chapter Five it can be argued that consumers are selective in their alignment with and disassociation from celebrity brands. There is no complete rejection or acceptance of a celebrity brand but rather consumers attach to brands that align with elements of their own identity. In the case of celebrity brands, it can be argued that it is not necessarily the person that they are following but rather what the person is offering them – it is a validation of their own identity. This is further extended into the argument that the celebrity brand is constructed by the consumer based on his or her own identity orientation, thus firmly positioning the celebrity as a social tool for public consumption.

In terms of attachment, by attaching to celebrity brands that already exhibit a narrative that the consumer already has and by associating with celebrities that resonate with the existing personal identity, one is able to further express and confirm this identity by mirroring this identity onto someone who is enacting this identity within the public sphere. By associating with a celebrity that exhibits certain behaviours or a certain identity it creates a community of people, thus validating ones identity and allowing for the freedom to express that identity without the judgement of other people who don't express that same identity. It creates an arena for self-exploration and self-expression.

In closing it can be argued that consumers detach from celebrity brands when they are no longer satisfying a need within the consumer, as seen in the case of Miley Cyrus. So when a celebrity is expressing an identity that no longer aligns with the self, the individual can assess the situation and decided what aspects are aligning and whether or not the brand is delivering on expectations, and they can decide to whether or not to remain attached to the brand. They are able to choose to follow aspects of the brand, even aspects of the previous brand that they did identify with, as they might not necessarily want to follow the entire brand change. This ties in with the argument that in terms of consumer reactions to the change in celebrity brands, consumers are selective in their identification and there is no complete acceptance or rejection as identity is a fluid construct.

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