

Publicizing your image

Nothing makes a celebrity like publicity. In fact, without publicity, there would be no celebrities. Yet, we often hear of scuffles between celebrities and the paparazzi or stars taking tabloids to court. Of course there is a not so fine line between publicizing and slandering, and anybody should be careful of crossing that line. Some celebrities are known for being private (quite an oxymoron) and some for being rabble-rousers (Lindsay Lohan anyone?). In both cases, this is part of their carefully crafted public persona. They attempt to control the media's portrayal of them, to suit their purposes.

In today's New York Times, there is an interesting article about Angelina Jolie and her masterful control of the media. Apparently, part of the negotiation involved in giving her twins' pictures to People Magazine included a clause for positive coverage. If this is true, and People denies it, it calls to question whether People can be considered a journalistic endeavour or simply a celebrity publicity outlet. Chances are, it's a bit of both. In any case, People would not exist without celebrities to cover and celebrities would not be celebrities if they were not covered. So, in a sense, People can't afford to alienate celebrities.

I am not sure what I think of Jolie's "carefully crafted" persona. In a sense, what she has done is rehabilitate her image through the use of new imagery (adoptive children from underdeveloped countries, nomadic lifestyle, Brad Pitt). Prior to that, she was a tattooed, blood vial wearing wife of Billy Bob Thornton. In any case, Jolie is a case in point, in that what the media show about you, is what people perceive you as. A lesson that is good for all organizations concerned about image.