CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF CHAIN TUTORING CENTRES IN THE HONG KONG SHADOW EDUCATION SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

Celebrity Endorsement: A Qualitative Study of Chain Tutoring Centres in the Hong Kong Shadow Education Sector

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Celebrity endorsement plays a key role in modern marketing, which is widely employed by companies and studied by researchers. Past studies in the literature on celebrity endorsement have concentrated on consumer assessment to identify the factors that influence the selection of celebrity endorsers for helping promotion and impacting consumer purchase intention. Studies on celebrity endorsement and the marketisation of education have under-examined the phenomenon of celebrity tutors in the Hong Kong shadow education sector. Through a qualitative approach, this thesis aims to explore how and why the chain tutoring centres in Hong Kong create and maintain celebrity tutors. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a variety of practitioners from the main chain tutoring centres and then thematic data analysis was undertaken. The celebrity tutors are found to be a human brand established through celebrification. The performance of celebrity tutors was associated with a multiplicity of role-practices such as being entertainers, educators, entrepreneurs and specifically idols (Tutor Kings and Queens), and their relationship with the media to fulfil these. Although a hyperbolic emphasis is placed on the tutors' physical attractiveness and credibility as key features for their success, both established and emerging celebrity tutors have been developing autonomous practices and performances in creating and maintaining their celebrity status and symbolic meanings. The performance of celebrity tutors reflects the celebritisation of shadow education as the industry norm through the idolisation of tutoring and fan culture. The participants themselves drew parallels between celebrity tutors and branded goods, showing that they acknowledge shadow education within a market logic. This explains the swift marketisation of shadow, rather than tertiary, education in an Asian context. There are co-branding and endorsement between celebrity tutors, chain tutoring centres and drinks/toiletries, which are worthy of further study. (287 words)

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Finally, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my family for their love and support.

Table of Contents

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Phenomenon of Celebrity Tutors in the Hong Kong Shadow Education Sector

The phenomenon of celebrity is rooted in contemporary societies and culture (Barron, 2015; Rojek, 2001) and has become a ubiquitous part of modern life. Although the relationship between people and celebrities is not based on real intimacy but on the illusion of intimacy, celebrities play to our innate tendencies, deceiving us into believing that they are our intimate daily companies (Ferris and Harris, 2011; Leslie, 2011). The exponential growth of the mass media has transformed celebrities into vehicles of commercialisation and they are heavily embedded within the logic and norms of a spectacular society (Debord, 1994; Evans, 2005; Stevenson, 2005).

Over the last three decades, a dynamic and growing body of work has explored and critically discussed the interface between celebrity endorsement, advertising and branding practices. Researchers in advertising and marketing have attempted to identify the variables that influence consumer responses to advertising campaigns involving celebrity endorsement and understand the associations between celebrities and the endorsed products or brands (e.g. Hollensen and Schimmelpfennig, 2013; Sertoglus *et al.,* 2014; Törn, 2012).

Both researchers in education (Bray, 2013b; Pak and Tse, 2015) and journalists (Ramstad, 2011; Shou, 2015) found that celebrity tutors are prevalent in the Hong Kong shadow education sector, which are dominated by several tutoring chains. There are many tutors, mainly from the main tutoring centres, whose portraits and names are regularly placed in advertisements to promote their tutoring service (Coren, 2009; Shou, 2015). Some of them are also found to be exposed in the media (Poo, 2009; Yan, 2010). Observing the phenomenon of celebrity tutors and their promotion, they are similar in nature to advertisements for consumer goods

that involve celebrity endorsers. However, there is a difference that is the celebrity tutors are found to engage in their advertisements to promote their tutoring service under their name. This type of promotion led by the service providers is unusual in other industries, such as beauty or fashion. This observation stimulated my interest in exploring the phenomena of celebrity tutors and celebrity tutor endorsement through the lens of celebrity and celebrity endorsement.

1.2 Overview of the Thesis

This thesis comprises six chapters. The investigation of the above research objectives commenced with a brief examination of shadow education and the phenomenon of celebrity tutors found in Hong Kong. Chapter One introduces the background to this study. It also addresses the importance of, and justification for this study.

Chapter Two aims to provide a panoramic view of shadow education in Hong Kong based on academic research and journalist reports. It attempts to offer a brief background to the industry and illustrate its unique characteristics in the phenomenon of celebrity tutors and their promotion. This historical location of the shadow education sector in Hong Kong is important to understand the context of this thesis.

Chapter Three reviews the literature on various subjects including celebrity, human branding, celebrity endorsement with specific consideration of shadow education in Hong Kong. I examine and discuss the phenomenon of celebrity in contemporary society and its development. The rapid development of the Internet and social media has altered the presentation and operation of modern celebrities. I also discuss human branding in relation to celebrities. Additionally, I review celebrity as a type of human brand. After that, I review the four main theories regarding celebrity endorsement. This chapter closes by constructing the

theoretical framework and identifying the research gaps and research questions of this study with respect to the celebrity tutors found in the shadow education sector in Hong Kong so as to justify the three research questions.

Chapter Four addresses the research paradigm, and the methodology used in this study. I review in detail the epistemological commitments of the paradigm selected for this study. Besides, I consider the exploratory nature of this study with respect to the unique phenomenon of celebrity tutors and their promotion identified in the shadow education sector in Hong Kong. I justify the selection of a qualitative approach to investigate the phenomenon under study.

To seek an understanding of the managerial construction of celebrity tutors and celebrity endorsement in the Hong Kong shadow education sector, I examine the phenomenon from the perspective of insiders, who are practitioners in the sector. I believe that their engagement in the operation can offer a first-person insight to help address the research questions. The chapter closes with an explanation of the themes built upon the data and the methodological challenges that arose in this study.

Chapter Five addresses the research findings. First, I provide an emic view of the development of shadow education in Hong Kong in the past seven decades based on academic research, journalist reports and my observation. I propose three stages and six milestones to illustrate its development, which illustrates celebritisation of the industry and celebrification of celebrity tutors.

Based on the four themes identified from the thematic analysis to answer the three research questions, it explores the meanings of celebrities and celebrity tutors given by the participants, with the aim of viewing the phenomenon of celebrity tutors from the lens of practitioners. By interpreting the participants' meanings towards celebrity tutors and the rationales behind the practice of developing and maintaining celebrity tutors, it finds that the creation and maintenance of the celebrity tutors are responded to the fierce market competition and its unique market structure of

contracting. The shadow education sector in Hong Kong is found to be dynamic, commercially driven and celebritised.

Additionally, I discuss the motives of the participants in regard to building celebrity tutors rather than hiring existing celebrities from other industries to promote their tutoring and tutoring centres. The historical location of the shadow education sector in Hong Kong offers a bearing with which to map out the development of celebrity tutors in response to the fierce competition in the sector as well as the limited financial resources.

A celebrity tutor is found to be a type of created celebrity initiated by the tutor to promote his or her tutoring. The tutor is interpreted as a human brand in him/herself, rather than an endorser, through the process of celebrification. This finding contrasts my initial perception of the celebrity tutors and their promotion as celebrity tutor endorsement, which are like those celebrity endorsement found in consumer goods.

The meanings shared among the participants regarding the concept of match and the cultural meanings embedded in a celebrity tutor offer insights to help understand the match-up hypothesis in the literature on celebrity endorsement and human branding. The chapter ends with an understanding regarding the use of existing celebrities for endorsement by the chain tutoring centres, which is not seen as effective and does not match with the nature of tutoring.

Chapter Six closes the study. A general overview of the study is presented, followed by a review of the research objectives and research questions, which are discussed to identify the extent to which the aims have been achieved and the contributions of this study. The chapter closes with a reflection on the challenges encountered in this study and recommendations for further research.

2 SHADOW EDUCATION IN HONG KONG

2.1 Introduction

Shadow education is private tutoring conducted by individuals or companies (Bray and Kwok, 2003; Marimuthu *et al*., 1991). Bray (2010a) argues that there are two main categories of tutoring in Hong Kong: tutoring for academic subjects related to the school curriculum, and tutoring for hobbies such as musical instrument playing or painting. In this thesis shadow education refers to the tutoring in academic related subjects offered by chain tutoring centres where celebrity tutors are found. This chapter offers a background on shadow education based on academic research, journalist reports and my observation. It aims to provide a panoramic view of shadow education and the phenomenon of celebrity tutors in Hong Kong under study.

2.2 Emergence of Shadow Education

Private supplementary tutoring is described as shadow education (Buchmann *et al.,* 2010; Lee *et al.*, 2009). It was first discussed by Marimuthu *et al*. (1991), who described the private supplementary tutoring that exists alongside mainstream school education as organised learning opportunities. The phenomenon of shadow education has spread dynamically and globally in the past decades (Bray, 2013a, 2013b; Dawson, 2010; Lee and Shouse, 2011). The rapid growth of shadow education has alerted policy makers and sociologists to issues of school education planning, household spending and equality in society (Baker and LeTendre, 2005; Bray, 2009; Kim and Lee, 2010). It has also attracted much attention from researchers from different disciplines, particularly education (Bray *et al*., 2014; Mori and Baker, 2010) and the media (Ramstad, 2011; Shou, 2015).

Looking across previous studies, it is noticeable that there are debates over whether shadow education should be encouraged alongside formal school education (Bray and Kwo, 2014; Byun, 2014). Research findings show that students receiving shadow education achieve a better academic performance (e.g. Bray and Lykins, 2012; Lee *et al*., 2009). It can also assist children to keep up with their peers and stretch their learning further (Bray, 2013a; Ho, 2010). Other researchers argue that shadow education helps release pressure on teachers and parents because students can receive additional help with their studies outside formal school education (Bray and Lykins, 2012; Simmer *et al.,* 2010).

However, shadow education's emphasis on rote learning and the extremely focused training in examination techniques has received a lot of criticism from scholars (e.g. Sung and Kim, 2010; Runte-Geidel and Marzo, 2015; Valerio, 2013) and the media (e.g. Carmina, 2010; Mak, 2017; *The Standard*, 2012). Besides, Sunderman (2006) argues that shadow education can lead students to rely on private tutors, which results in them paying less attention in their mainstream lessons.

Apart from these debates in the literature in the fields of education and sociology, it is worth extending the research focus to other disciplines such as marketing and business ethics so as to enhance understandings of the phenomenon of shadow education. For example, there are researchers who have investigated the marketisation of higher education (e.g. Molesworth *et al.,* 2011; Newman and Jahdi, 2009; Nordensvard, 2011). Yet, the marketisation of shadow education is under-examined and needs further investigation.

2.3 Shadow Education in Hong Kong

Shadow education and formal school education are found to co-exist in Hong Kong (Kwo and Bray, 2014; Choi and Kee, 2013). Research shows that 72.5% of primary students and 85.5% of secondary students in Hong Kong received private

supplementary tutoring in 2010 (Bray and Lykins, 2012). A recent government report reveals that the average weekly study time of students in Hong Kong was, on average, 46.4 hours in 2015, which was 4.4 hours lower than in Singapore, where the time spent studying was 50.8 hours (Research Office, Legislative Council, The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, 2018). However, a journalist report reveals that students in kindergarten, primary and secondary school spent 49.1 hours, 66.5 hours and 76.5 hours per week respectively on learning in 2014 (Hong Kong Research Association, 2014 cited in *Hong Kong Daily News*, 2014). These statistics demonstrate that shadow education is popular in Hong Kong, and echo Mori and Baker's claim (2010) that shadow education is prominent, particularly in Asia.

As of 2014, there were 906 tutoring centres offering secondary tutoring in Hong Kong, with a sales turnover of approximately USD132 million (Euromonitor, 2015 in Beacon Group Holdings Ltd, 2015). Euromonitor also reveals that among the top 10 tutoring centres offering secondary tutoring in Hong Kong, approximately 74% of the market share were concentrated within three providers whose branches represent 47% of the total number of branches of the top 10 tutoring centres (Euromonitor, 2015 in Beacon Group Holdings Ltd, 2015). Another piece of market research shows that approximately 12.3% of companies in secondary tutoring in Hong Kong operated as chain business in the academic year 2014/15 (Goldway Education Group Ltd, 2015). These statistics reflect the market power of the leading chain tutoring centres in the industry. Both journalists' report (e.g. *The Standard*, 2012; Shou, 2015) and academic research (e.g. Bray and Kwo, 2014; Kwok, 2010) reveal that the phenomenon of the celebrity tutors can be traced back to the 1990s. There are five large scale chain tutoring centres which have branches in various districts of Hong Kong and all employ a marketing strategy of celebrity tutors with extensive promotion.

Shadow education is present in various formats. Zhan *et al.* (2013) attempted to categorise shadow education into four main modes, including one-to-one tutoring,

small-group tutoring, lecture-type tutoring either live or video-recorded and online tutoring. They found that all four types of tutoring can be found in Hong Kong. Shadow education is found to be dominated by five main chain tutoring centres, which, it is estimated, have a market share of over 50% [e.g. 54% in 2011 (Synovate, 2011 cited in Modern Education, 2011) and 52.8% in 2017 (Euromonitor, 2018 cited in Bexcellent Group Holdings Ltd, 2018)].

Although there are research findings that show the market share of shadow education, both academics (e.g. Bray, 2010; Bray *et al.,* 2014) and practitioners (e.g. Bexcellent Group Holdings Ltd, 2018; Modern Education, 2011) argue that reliable data on shadow education in Hong Kong are never easy to acquire. This is because the majority of tutoring is done on an informal basis and enrolment is often irregular. Meanwhile, there are tutors, such as those performing on a one-to-one basis and others that work on a small-scale, who are exempt from the regulation of the Education Ordinance of Hong Kong (Bray *et al,* 2014; Modern Education, 2011).

The phenomenon of shadow education in Hong Kong is unique. The majority of tutors from the main chain tutoring centres is perceived as celebrity or public figure based on their gesture and image (Bray, 2013b; Park and Tse, 2015). They are found to engage in advertisements and promotion in which their photos and names are regularly placed in advertisements to promote their tutoring service (Coren, 2009; Kwo and Bray, 2014). This is in parallel to advertisements involving celebrities in other industries, such as entertainment (Shou, 2015). Hence, the celebrity tutors are celebrified and the shadow education sector is celebritised in nature (Driessens, 2013), which will be further elaborated in the subsequent chapters.

2.4 Summary

Researchers in culture and sociology claim that the phenomenon of celebrity is rooted in contemporary societies and culture. A historical reading of the development of the shadow education sector has guided me to see the characteristics of the industry, which are dynamic, and commercially and technologically driven, together with the needs and wants of society. This historical location of the sector is important to understand the context of this thesis, which aims to explore the phenomenon of celebrity tutors found in the shadow education sector in Hong Kong.

3 LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

The phenomenon of celebrity has been well-charted and discussed in the fields of sociology, media studies, marketing and consumer research, among others. Over the last three decades, a dynamic and growing body of work has explored and critically discussed the interface between celebrity endorsement and advertising/branding practices. The exponential growth of mass media transformed celebrities into vehicles of commercialisation are heavily embedded within the logic and norms of a spectacular society.

The rise and popularity of the Internet and social media enhanced the phenomena of celebrity and celebrity endorsement, which has become more eminent in unexpected realms of economic, spiritual and intellectual endeavours, such as entrepreneurship, religion, the arts, and lately education. This chapter will review the literature in several areas, including the contemporary development of celebrity, human branding and celebrity endorsement in marketing. It aims to identify the research gaps for this study. The research objectives and three research questions will be identified at the end of this chapter.

3.2 The Phenomenon of Celebrity

The phenomenon of celebrity is rooted in contemporary societies and culture. (Barron, 2015; Van Krieken, 2012). The global popularity of celebrities has been identified as the enjoyment of entertainment associated with the fantasy of celebrities to enhance our lives (Houran *et al.,* 2005). Williamson (2016) goes further, claiming that celebrity is a form of fame that has existed in capitalist societies and its rise shows rapid social changes, led by the emergence of capitalism. Other authors note that the popularity of celebrity is linked to, and dependent on the

development and extension of the mass media (e.g. Marshall, 1997; Ponce de Leon, 2002; Pringle, 2004). Giles (2000: 25) summarises these claims, stating that '*the ultimate modern celebrity is the member of the public who becomes famous solely through media involvement*'.

There is a consensus among several researchers that fame is part of the historical process that illuminates the balance of power in any society between different social values and forces (e.g. Bauman, 2005; Marshall, 1997; Williamson, 2016). Researchers in the field of celebrity and sociology propose that the concept of celebrity and its development over time has varied from ancient civilisation (e.g. Barron, 2015; van Krieken, 2012) to modernity (e.g. Leslie, 2011; Williamson, 2016). Braudy (1997), for example, argues that the ideas and practices of fame have been found since ancient times, when Alexander the Great was perceived as the first person in Western history to have the urge to be seen as unique and universally known.

Celebrity has attracted much scholarly attention from different fields, particularly cultural studies (Leslie, 2011; Marshall, 1997), marketing (Rojek, 2001; Turner, 2004), media and sociology (Giles, 2000). A variety of definitions of celebrity can be found in the literature. A celebrity refers to a person whose name is attention-attracting, and interest-fascinating and who has profit-generating value (Rein *et al.*, 2006; Williamson, 2016). Marshall (1997) suggests, from a political and economic perspective, that celebrity is regarded as a generic term that provides distinctions and definitions of success within cultures.

Celebrities are famously recognised by the public or a group of people for their performance or achievement (Rojek, 2001). Celebrity is known as a quality or status characterised by the capacity to attract attention, generating some surplus value or benefit derived from the fact of being well known in itself in at least in one public arena (Van Krieken, 2012: 10). Leslie (2011) describes celebrity as a term applied by the public to individuals who are famous or well-known, with the

characteristic of being regularly exposed in the media for fame and recognition. Wohlfeil and Whelan (2012) have extended Leslie's claim, arguing that celebrities are individuals who achieve widespread recognition from people, not just their fans.

Although there is not an agreed definition across the various fields, these various definitions of celebrity share a common concept, in that they denote well-knownness regardless of the way in which a celebrity achieves his or her status. This well-knownness was located by Boorstin (1961), who describes a celebrity as a person who is famous for being famous. The well-knownness of a celebrity is not limited to a positive perceived image from his or her audiences; some celebrities' status is recognised due to their notoriety, for example, due to a scandal (Lai, 2006; van Krieken, 2012). Among the various definitions, the awareness and the power of attention-attracting are critical for a celebrity regardless of in which field he or she is engaged. Attention generation capacity is the core characteristic of being a celebrity.

Celebrity and fame are found to be closely related in the literature of various disciplines. The concept of fame has limited status, as celebrities are relatively rare due to their extraordinary quality (Barron, 2005; Cashmore, 2006). Researchers have found that celebrities, and particularly the notion of stardom, are traditionally associated with cinema, and originated with the Hollywood star system (deCordova, 2001; Leslie, 2011; McDonald, 2000). Shingler (2012) argues that stars can be famous for possessing a distinctive and singular talent, rare ability, star image, or conducting outstanding performances. Hence, the concepts of fame and celebrity overlap. Fame is associated with individual demonstrations of superior skills or striking deeds as displayed by a select few, and chronicled by contemporary authors and historians (Barnes, 2010: 19). Celebrity is more transient, relying on marketing, timing and instant appeal.

Different studies can be found in the literature on celebrity and society that investigate the nature and multidimensional historical, cultural and social contours

of celebrity (Cashmore, 2006; Gamson, 1994; Marshall, 1997; Rojek, 2001). However, there are a divergence of opinions and views regarding celebrities. For example, Turner (2014) argues that a celebrity does not have to possess a unique skill, talent, appearance or achievement, yet his or her image is critical and contributes to the celebrity's visibility. Marshall (1997) also claims that the success of celebrities can be achieved without a link with their work.

Celebrities can be found in various industries. In some industries, celebrities are only visible internally, and not across sectors (Lawrence, 2009; Rein *et al*., 2006). For example, van Krieken (2012) argues that some scholars have earned prestige status in their territories, yet they are unknown outside their academic circle. The tutors under study are famous among the locals and journalists (Shou, 2015; Yan, 2009), yet academic research on this topic is limited.

Moeran (2003) proposes that celebrity in any one field can often be converted to another field due to the ability to function across fields, which enables and sustains a name economy. Rojek (2001) concurs, observing that sports celebrities can link their prominence in their particular field of endeavour with a variety of other types of concerns, such as health, fitness and youth.

Gamson (2007) claims that name recognition is critical for business. Driessens (2013) goes further, arguing that a celebrity's name represents a value and power, which allows celebrities to use it to earn and reinforce their celebrity status. Companies employ celebrities to endorse their products, aiming to associate their name with celebrities' fame to improve market awareness and create a positive image (Lawrence, 2009; Tuner, 2004). Jeffreys and Edwards (2011) have extended this claim of economic value to a celebrity's image or life story. These claims echo Turner's (2004) claim that a celebrity serves as a marketable commodity. Celebrities use their fame to attract attention and earn in return for enhancing their reputation and value.

It is becoming popular for the media to invite scholars or professionals as experts to comment and advise for the events that occurred in society. Some of them also engage in various TV programmes as actors or hosts (*Eastweek*, 2016). Their physical appearance and private life are widely reported in the media, leading these endorsers to become a kind of celebrity (*Eastweek*, 2012). This reflects previous studies in the literature on celebrity endorsement regarding leveraging endorsers' unique talents or knowledge to enhance the credibility of advertising messages (Cashmore, 2006; Marshall, 2010).

Leslie (2011) makes the important distinction that a famous person is not automatically a celebrity. He argues that being a celebrity relies on regular media exposure through actively looking to be recognised and honoured for their accomplishments and fame by making themselves available to the public through the media. From this perspective, the media play a role in celebrity status formation and maintenance, echoing Rojek's claim that the media accelerate the awareness of a celebrity (Rojek, 2001). Luhmann (2000) also argues that the media channel people to society and the world.

Meanwhile, technology has changed the traditional path through which celebrities present in front of the public. Digital technology and social media have enhanced audience/fan interaction with celebrities, which has led the images and cultural presence of celebrities to become more ubiquitous (Marshall, 2010). For example, Gordon Ramsey, a celebrity chef, has attracted over 6.8 million people worldwide to follow him on Twitter (Ramsey, 2018).

The phenomenon of celebrity has integrated in the contemporary societies and culture in which celebrities become a part in our daily lives. Previous studies in celebrities focused on a variety of people from inherent celebrities to everyday people who earn their celebrity status via different channels. Yet, study in teachers in education industry such as the celebrity tutors in the Hong Kong shadow education sector is under-examined and is worthy of further investigation.

3.2.1 Types of Contemporary Celebrity

The concept of contemporary celebrity varies from a generic term (e.g. Marshall, 1997) to a specific term (e.g. Leslie, 2011), yet public recognition and awareness are perceived as key features of being a celebrity (e.g. Pringle, 2004; van Krieken, 2012). Charisma is a key concept in regard to celebrities that is shared among researchers. It refers to a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he or she deviates from an ordinary person and is treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman or exceptional powers or qualities (Weber, 1978: 241; Williamson, 2016). Previous studies in the literature on celebrity, mass media and sociology (Driessens, 2013; van Krieken, 2012) have often been influenced by Rojek's (2001) categorisation of celebrities into, ascribed celebrities, achieved celebrities and attributed celebrity (Rojek, 2001).

Ascribed celebrity concerns lineage in which status follows from bloodline (Rojek, 2001). Kings and queens in earlier social formations commanded automatic respect and veneration. The foundation of their ascribed celebrity was pre-determined. The royal family in the UK and Japan are examples of this type of celebrity, where news about them often draws the interest of the public.

Achieved celebrity derives from the perceived accomplishments of the individual in open competition, such as artistic or sporting achievements (Rojek, 2001). The public recognise them as individuals who possess rare talents or skills (Gupta, 2009; Rojek, 2001). Some of these celebrities are famous in their local area, whereas others have earned awareness and recognition internationally, crossing different markets.

Attributed celebrity refers to individuals who become famous by attracting a lot of media attention or by being associated with multiple celebrities. Rojek (2001) also describes this type of celebrity as celetoid, which refers to a media-generated, compressed, concentrated form of attributed celebrity. Celetoids are the

accessories of cultures organised around mass communications and staged authenticity, such as lottery winners and winners of reality TV shows. Their publicity lasts for a relatively short time (Rojek, 2001).

Rojek (2001) argues that the contemporary expansion of attributed celebrities has resulted from the expansion of mass media and sensationalism. The nature of celetoids is that they have a moment of fame and then disappear from public consciousness quite rapidly (Rojek, 2001). This type of celebrity reflects the concept of Andy Warhol's claim in 1960s that in the future everyone will be world famous for 15 minutes (van de Rijt *et al*., 2013; van Krieken, 2012). This phenomenon is used to describe figures in the entertainment industry or other industries of popular culture such as YouTube or TV reality shows.

The media is key to the formation of celebrity (Luhmann, 2000). Traditionally, the awareness of a celebrity relies on media exposure, particularly the printed media, TV programmes and movies. Journalist reports play a key role in a celebrity's fame building and maintenance (Barron, 2015; Pringle, 2004). The popularity and proliferation of reality television formats and contemporary media and culture are found to lead actors to be legitimate celebrities through a process of celebritisation or mediatisation (Bonsu *et al*., 2010; Hearn, 2008). Attributed celebrities reflect the fact that the media play a key role in the creation of celebrity and relevant celebrity status. Celebrities are produced by both the media and the audience (Dyer, 2004). Barbas (2002) claims that the production of celebrity is accelerated by the Hollywood star system together with important influences from fans.

However, becoming a celebrity is easier at present due to the use of technology such as the Internet (Ferris, 2010; van de Rijt *et al.*, 2013; Khamis *et al.,* 2016). Celebrities find it easy to reach, attract and sustain the interest of the public in their lives and activities. People have more opportunities to become celebrities through the media, such as YouTube or TV reality shows like *The Apprentice* in the US.

These shows create some famous, well-known individuals, and public awareness of these individuals is short-lived (Leslie, 2011; Thompson *et al.,* 2015).

The phenomenon of do-it-yourself celebrities and micro-celebrities is not new; there are many examples of people, particularly business executives from different industries, or even historically, who have used similar traditional techniques to establish themselves as celebrities such as CEO celebrities like Steve Jobs of Apple (Khamis *et al.,* 2017; Marshall and Redmond, 2015). The difference of do-it-yourself celebrities and micro-celebrities between these people and among ordinary people through social media (Kowalczyk *et al.,* 2016; Senft, 2008; Turner, 2014) is because social media offers more opportunities at a lower cost for the public to become famous.

The rise of social media such as Facebook and Twitter has offered opportunities at a lower cost to the public to become known or even famous. It has led to a change in how celebrities and their fields are perceived. Social media and marketing have attracted the interest of academic researchers (e.g. Holt, 2016; Marwick, 2013). People can bypass the traditional gatekeepers that, in the past, have limited access to the media. The rapid growth of reality television shows and the gossip media since the 1970s and 1980s has sped up the celebrification process (Rojek, 2012). Hence, social media offers a new path to celebrification because people can have greater control in the production and consumption of celebrity (Driessens, 2013; Marshall, 2010).

Politicians, such as candidates for the US presidential election in 2016, provide an example of how social media such as Facebook and Twitter can be used to build awareness of an individuals and influence other people (Bossetta, 2018). This echoes Giles' (2000) claim that all famous people are now treated like celebrities by the mass media. Rojek's (2001) view, which concentrates on a traditional role of the media in the formation of celebrity, probably underestimates the influence of the Internet and self-made celebrity.

The concept of do-in-yourself celebrity or micro-celebrity reflects the initiative and control of ordinary people in regard to becoming a celebrity, rather than relying on the efforts of the media, as in the original concept of attributed celebrity or celetoid, as suggested by Rojek (2001). Its emergence reflects the fact that becoming a celebrity is easier at present in terms of cost and process. The rich media environment, particularly the Internet and social media, has made it possible for individuals in public life to become celebrities as celetoids or attributed celebrities (Marshall, 2010).

Additionally, researchers argue that there are celebrities, particularly do-in-yourself celebrities, arising from social media, that exist for self-interest rather than profit making (Turner, 2014; Williamson, 2016). These celebrities are not produced by the celebrity industry, as stated by Marshall (1997). Further study is needed to investigate the contemporary change of celebrity formation, the celebrity industry and their relationship with social media. Celebrities in specific contexts or industries such as shadow education, which is widely discussed by the journalists (Chu, 2015; Shou, 2015), are worthy of further investigation.

3.2.2 Celebritisation and Celebrification

Celebrity is becoming a focus in mass media and sociology. Researchers have coined the term celebritisation to qualify the trend towards mediatised societies where celebrity capital or simply being famous has become an asset in addition to social, cultural and economic capital. Debord (1994) describes celebritisation as what happens when the logic of celebrity is exploited as a mode of production in the service of economic calculation and marketing ends in which the cultural logic of celebrity is at the core of the spectacular consumer society. He suggests that *'the spectacle is not a collection of images; it is a social relation between people that is mediated by images'* (Debord, 1994: 7).

Celebritisation is not well-defined in the literature, although it is being used increasingly. Researchers in the fields of the cultural and societal influence of celebrity have used the term 'celebritisation' (e.g. Boykoff and Goodman, 2009; Lewis, 2010). Others call it as celebrification (e.g. Gamson, 1994; Turner, 2006). Celebritisation and celebrification are used interchangeably. It is ever more confusing when these terms are located by other researchers to describe another process, which is the transformation of individuals into celebrities (Driessens, 2013; Thompson *et al*., 2015).

Driessens (2013) has attempted to identify and clearly define these terms in the literature. He suggests that celebritisation occurs at the societal field level regarding the societal and cultural changes implied by celebrity. It refers to a long-term structural development or meta-process (Hepp, 2012; Krotz, 2007) alongside globalisation, individualisation or mediatisation. The meta-process represents the lack of a clear start or end, which is dispersed in space and time with ubiquitous directions.

Celebrification refers to changes at the individual level regarding the process by which everyday people or public figures are transformed into celebrities (Driessens, 2013). It echoes commodification in which celebrities are both labour and the things that labour produces (Dyer, 2004 [1986]: 5). They are produced by the celebrity industry to help sell other commodities (Marshall, 1997).

In addition to consumer goods, Molesworth *et al.* (2009) found that marketing has been adopted in the higher education sector, with the aim of promoting universities or even their teachers so as to attract students. Studies in the marketisation of education is found to concentrate on higher education. Education in other segments, such as primary education and secondary education, are under-examined.

Besides, looking at the Hong Kong shadow education sector, celebrity tutors and chains are found as key players. They employ a variety of marketing tactics to

promote their celebrity tutors and idolised tutoring via the mass media that are widely discussed in journalists' reports (e.g. Chu, 2015; Shou, 2015) and literature on education (e.g. Kwo and Bray, 2014; Zhan *et al.,* 2013). These reflect the concept of celebritisation of shadow education and celebrification of tutors, which are under-examined in the literature on celebrity and are worthy of further study.

The categorisation of celebritisation and celebrification suggested by Driessens (2013) helps clarify the two concepts regarding the phenomenon of celebrity in society and its formation. Celebritisation is found at a macro-level, showing changes associated with celebrities, such as the Hong Kong shadow education sector, whereas celebrification occurs at a micro-level, in regard to the transformation process of celebrity, such as the celebrity tutors. These definitions and meanings will be used in this thesis.

3.3 Celebrities as Human Brands

A brand is defined as a name, term, design, symbol, any other feature or combination of them that identifies one seller's goods or service as distinct from those of other sellers (Kotler and Armstrong, 2015; Moor, 2007). This definition reflects the marketer-controlled differentiation and communication of a product or service in the market.

A brand can be extended to human like celebrities. Human branding is an emergent topic in mainstream marketing (e.g. Malone and Fiske, 2013; Speed *et al.,* 2015). Thomson (2006: 104) argues that '*any well-known persona who is the subject of marketing communications efforts'* can be referred to as human brand. He claims that celebrities are brands because they can be professionally managed with additional associations and the features of a brand. The conceptualisation of human as brands goes beyond the typical marketing interest in celebrities as endorsers for goods or companies (Erdogan, 1999; Keel and Nataraajan, 2012).

The notion of celebrity brands is a popular topic in the mainstream media. Forbes and the Washington Post have defined well-known celebrities, such as Tiger Wood, as more than a celebrity name, but also a brand name (Kowalczyk and Royne, 2013; Lunardo *et al.,* 2015). This claim echoes previous studies (e.g. Aaker, 1996; Thomson, 2006) that humans can be a brand.

The mass mediatisation of individual personality positions celebrities and the public as human brands (Milligan, 2011; Shepherd, 2005). People who are the subject of interpersonal, inter-organisational communications or marketing can be referred to as human brands (Close *et al.,* 2011; Parmentier *et al.,* 2013). Pringle (2004: 76) claims that celebrities are brands in themselves who constantly attempt to enhance their own reputation and perceived value from the perspective of their fan base and the public. Kerrigan *et al.* (2011) argue that celebrity brands are seen not simply for their economic value but as mediatised marketing accomplishments that trade upon allure, charisma and glamour constructed around myths of transformation, belonging and affect. Cashmore and Parker (2003) also argue that the commodification of celebrity brands is the process by which people like celebrities become things. These things are adored, dreamed, followed, idolised, yet mainly produced and consumed by the celebrity culture (Cashmore, 2006).

Celebrities need to mobilise forms of social attraction from followers and fans so as to develop sustained visibility (Malone and Fiske, 2013; Rojek, 2001). Pringle (2004) argues that a celebrity brand is perceived as having more control of his or her relationship with a product; it tends to incorporate the celebrity's name with the product whereas a celebrity endorsement does not (Kowalczyk and Royne, 2013). Celebrities use their fame to build brand equity and name recognition, and then they gain from this fame by attaching their brand names to marketable products as brand extension (Kowalczyk and Royne, 2013; Yeung and Wyer, 2005). Parmentier *et al.* (2013) argue that celebrity brand must fit in with the expectation of the market in which personality of the celebrity is crucial in that it may communicate about the celebrity's values.

Research on anthropomorphism shows that consumers tend to ascribe human-like characteristics to brands (Aggarwal and McGill, 2007). Andy Warhol is perceived as a culture figure who blended the world of art and celebrity with an obvious commercial aim of commodification and distribution (Lury, 2004; Kerrigan *et al.,* 2011). Researchers argue that humans are marketable as brands with a focus on consumers' relationships with all humans as brands, rather than specifically celebrities who use their personal brand image to develop and market products (Rindova *et al.,* 2006; Thomson, 2006). Anyone can be transformed into a brand through a pure selling approach, a product improvement approach or a market fulfilment approach (Rein *et al.*, 2006). Celebrities and celebrity brands have been found to be important elements of society in which the public are interested (e.g. Cocker *et al.,* 2015; Fillis, 2015). Yet, the phenomenon of celebrity tutors and their presentation as tutor brand are under-examined, which are needed further investigation.

Human brands are not limited to celebrities. Employer and employee branding are widely discussed in the literature as a source of competitiveness (Davies, 2008; Mosley, 2007; Rosethorn, 2009). CEO brands are found as a unique type of human brand because the CEO is subject to various stakeholder needs and is influenced by their role and identity as management and the relationship with their corporate brand (Bendisch *et al.,* 2013; Hayward *et al.,* 2004). It reflects a mutual benefits between the CEO brand and the corporate brand (Fleck *et al.,* 2014 Kantola, 2014).

Human brands require authenticity to have value as brands (Moulard *et al.,* 2015; Speed *et al.*, 2015). Employee branding was discussed by combining the traditional view of branding with the internal marketing concept (Alevsson and Willmott, 2002; Miles and Mangold, 2007; Russell, 2011). These organisation's actors will be expected by consumers not only to make promises, but also to have responsibility for delivery (Bendisch *et al.,* 2013; Speed *et al.,* 2015). A key difference between a human brand as an endorser and a human brand as an

organisation's actor is the authority to promise on behalf of the organisation (Kantola, 2014; Keel and Nataraajan, 2012).

Looking across what have been described as human brands in the literature, celebrities are argued among researchers to be professionally managed brands, but there are research gaps in regard to investigating how a celebrity brand is made and maintained. Besides, the celebrity tutors appear not only as endorser for their chain tutoring centres, but also a brand of themselves for the tutoring under their name. This type of human brand in a specific industry and nature is under-examined in the literature on human branding.

Past studies show that celebrities are often hired to endorse brands and/or products due to the public's awareness of them (Marshall, 1997; Pringle, 2004). Researchers have found that there is an emerging trend that celebrities create and brand their own lines of products (Keel and Nataraajan, 2012). Celebrities choose to brand their products in several ways with different degrees of personal involvement. These may include design, production or marketing. Some celebrities select product categories that are close to their original source of fame whereas others engage in completely new categories (Pringle, 2004).

Keel and Nataraajan (2012) argue that a celebrity's involvement in his or her branded product may influence the attitudes, purchasing intention, sales and longevity of the brand of consumers, which are dependent on the functional area in which the celebrity is involved and what is perceived by consumers in relation to the celebrity's involvement. They propose two types of celebrity-brand, mono-branding and co-branding.

Mono-branding refers to a brand that carries the name of the celebrity as a celebrity branded product (Keel and Nataraajan, 2012). This is like the tutoring offered by the celebrity tutors in the Hong Kong shadow education sector I observed. Conversely, co-branding refers to a brand alliance strategy in which two brands are used on a product (Mishra *et al.,* 2017; Riley *et al.,* 2015; Washburn *et al.,* 2004),

such as a line of Nike's golf products branded TW for Tiger Woods (Akturan, 2011). The rising trend of celebrity-branded products reflects Marshall's (1997) claim that celebrities are produced to help sell other commodities. Yet, the details about commodities and how celebrity brand work, such as the tutor brand and tutor branded tutoring under study remain under-examined.

3.4 Celebrity Endorsement

Celebrity endorsement refers to advertisements that use a celebrity or expert, with his or her qualities, as a spokesperson to endorse (O'Guinn *et al.*, 2012; Moriarty *et al.*, 2012). Celebrity endorsement has been used extensively by marketers to promote and enhance a brand's or a company's appeal (Belch and Belch, 2013; Hollensen and Schimmelpfennig, 2013). Marketers have recognised that effective advertising, in particular those employing celebrity endorsers, can break through the clutter and motivate the audience to pay attention and engage with the advertising message (Belch and Belch, 2013; van der Waldt *et al*., 2009).

It has been estimated that 17-25% of advertisements worldwide involve celebrities (Pringle, 2004). Creswell (2008) found that 14-19% of television commercials in the US feature celebrities. Furthermore, it has been estimated that approximately 70% of the content of magazines is devoted to advertising in the US (Belch and Belch, 2013). In Asia, celebrity endorsement in advertising is becoming even more popular. Over 70% of advertisements in Japan and Korea feature one or more celebrity endorsers (Kim, 2006). Galbraith and Karlin (2012) found that celebrity has become an important means of influencing audiences and consumers in the media since the 1980s in Japan. These research findings reflect the popularity of featuring celebrities in advertising. It also shows that celebrity endorsement is well-established, and not a novel or unusual practice, in advertising.

Celebrity endorsement is perceived to improve the effectiveness of marketing communications and enhance a product's or brand's image and recall (Seno and Lukas, 2007). It facilitates advertisements to stand out from the market clutter (Kumar and Krishnan, 2004) and generates purchasing intentions (Spry *et al.*, 2011). The power of celebrities in marketing communications lies in the celebrities' ability to link the audience and the endorsed product or brand through the endorsement process (Tantiseneepong *et al*., 2012).

3.3.1 Celebrity Endorsers

A celebrity endorser is a person who is known for his or her performance or achievements who is contracted to advertise a brand or product (Cashmore, 2006). Celebrity endorsement plays a key role in advertising (Hollensen and Schimmelpfenning, 2013). Although celebrities are one type of endorser, their influences on advertisements they endorse can be big and/or specific due to public awareness of them (Choi and Rifon, 2007).

Researchers in the literature on marketing argue that using celebrity endorsers is more effective than using other types of endorsers (Amos *et al.,* 2008; Silvera and Austad, 2004). Their claim reflects the claim of Choi and Rifon (2007), that celebrities are well-known to the public. Some celebrities, such as actors or athletes, may be admired or idolised by the public (Leslie, 2011; Turner, 2004). Therefore, using celebrities to endorse products and/or brands in advertisements can leverage the awareness of the celebrities to attract the attention of target audiences. This explains why celebrity athletes such as David Beckham are often hired to present as an endorser in advertisements. This echoes the claim of Belch and Belch (2013), that advertisers are willing to spend a huge amount of money on endorsement deals each year to associate their products and/or brands with big names in other industries such as sport or entertainment.

Clow and Baack (2012) argue that a celebrity endorser is easier to identify with than a brand itself because celebrities are more tangible and identifiable. Advertisers use celebrities to help establish the personality of a brand or product. They attempt to link the personality of a product or brand to that of the spokesperson (Arsena *et al*., 2014). After establishing a brand, a celebrity spokesperson helps define the brand personality of the endorsed brand more clearly. A celebrity may appear as an actor, give testimonials, serve as a spokesperson or simply offer his or her endorsement in an advertisement (Choi *et al*., 2005).

Celebrities lend or trade a part of themselves, such as their reputation, to the endorsed products or brands for financial gain (Fleck *et al*., 2014). Dix *et al.* (2010) argue that the popularity of celebrities can add values and create positive associations for a brand. Other researchers concur with this and claim that that celebrities can influence audience reactions to a brand and contribute to brand name recognition (Amos *et al*., 2008; Lee and Thorson, 2008; Till *et al*., 2008).

Celebrities are perceived as embedded in contemporary society and culture (Barron, 2015; Van Krieken, 2012). Referring to the broad definition of celebrity in the literature (e.g. Leslie, 2011; Rojek, 2001), a celebrity, that is hired as an endorser for an advertisement, should already have earned his or her celebrity status and then uses it to endorse the brand or company. Otherwise, that person will not be perceived as a celebrity, but rather as an everyday person.

However, if a famous brand uses a less famous person or even an everyday person to be an endorser or spokesperson for the brand, can the endorser or spokesperson earn celebrity status through the endorsement process? In the Hong Kong shadow education sector, the tutors are found to engage in advertisements to promote their tutoring and/or chains. These tutors are perceived as celebrity (Bray, 2013b; Park and Tse, 2015). They also present as brand for themselves. They are similar to advertisements for consumer goods such as fashion with celebrity endorsers, which are worthy of further study.

3.3.2 Review of Theoretical Models of Celebrity Endorsement in the Literature

The phenomenon of celebrity endorsement has been well-charted and discussed in the fields of sociology (Van Krieken, 2012; Williamson, 2016), media studies (Giles, 2000; Han, 2015), marketing and consumer research (Erdogan, 1999; Choi and Riffon, 2012), among others. Several studies in the literature on advertising and marketing have examined the effectiveness of using credible and/or attractive celebrity endorsers to enhance the persuasiveness of messages (e.g. Erdogan, 1999; Keel and Nataraajan, 2012). The majority of previous studies focused on investigating consumer responses to celebrity endorsement and identified the factors that yield better advertising endorsement performance and how best to select celebrity endorsers (e.g. Folse *et al*., 2012; Rossiter and Smidts, 2012).

The effectiveness of celebrity endorsers is found to be influenced by several factors, such as the celebrity's attractiveness, the celebrity's credibility, and the celebrity-product match and level of involvement (Keel and Nataraajan, 2012). Over the last three decades, a dynamic and growing body of work has explored and critically discussed the interface between celebrity endorsement and advertising/branding practices. Four main theories can be found in the literature on celebrity endorsement that attempt to explain how celebrity endorsement functions in advertising practices. Researchers have also attempted to use one of these theories to investigate the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement.

3.3.2.1. The Source Credibility Model

The source credibility model originated from the synthesis of Hovland and Weiss (1951) concerning the perceived credibility of the communicator. It suggests that consumers' perception of a celebrity endorser's credibility influences their acceptance of an advertising message (Amos *et al*., 2008; Spry *et al*., 2011). A

celebrity endorser's credibility in an advertising message depends on the perceived fit between the endorser and the endorsed product or brand (Keel and Nataraajan, 2012). Since the endorser is the main source of information in the advertising message, his or her credibility is an important factor for advertisers. A message from a credible source can influence believes, opinions, attitudes and/or behaviours through a process called internalisation, which occurs when receivers embrace the source influence in terms of their personal attitudes and value structures (Erdogan, 1999: 297).

Silvera and Austad (2004) found that consumers assume that celebrities promote or endorse a brand because they genuinely support it, rather than doing it for financial gain. This explains that success in linking a celebrity to a brand is important. The content and definition of credibility varies in the literature. Researchers have debated the dimensions of source credibility over the past decades (see Erdogan, 1999; Ohanian 1991) but most research consistently includes expertise and trustworthiness (Erdogan, 1999; Ohanian, 1991). A celebrity endorser who is perceived as an expert is more persuasive and can generate more purchasing intentions (Pornpitakpan, 2003).

The source credibility model has been examined extensively in the literature on advertising, in which a perceived credible celebrity endorser is predicted to be an effective endorser (Pornpitakpan, 2003; Sertoglu *et al*., 2014). Researchers have attempted to develop several factors such as dependable, expert, experienced, knowledgeable, skilled, reliable, trustworthy to measure the perceived attitudes to each factor in the influencing dimensions, such as expertise and trustworthiness in relation to the perceived attitudes to the source's credibility (Jin and Phua, 2014; Sertoglu *et al*., 2014; Spry *et al*., 2011). The findings of past studies can help researchers and practitioners predict perceived attitudes in terms of source creditability when selecting endorsers.

Although previous studies have attempted to identify the factors that contribute to the two dimensions and their influence on attitude change and product evaluations,

research findings are not conclusive, particularly the perceived level and actual level of the dimensions, such as expertise (see Erdogan, 1999; Keel and Nataraajan, 2012). Given a positive predisposition towards how an advertising message is perceived, a less credible source can be more persuasive than a more credible source (Dekker and van Reijmersdal, 2010; Kumkale *et al*., 2010). These mixed results reflect that the role of credibility of endorsers is contentious in regard to the effectiveness of endorsement, and further investigation is needed.

3.3.2.2. The Source Attractiveness Model

Researchers in the literature on celebrity endorsement regarding the source attractiveness model argue that the attractiveness of a celebrity is critical to the success of endorsement in advertising (Hollensen and Schimmelpfennig, 2013). The physical appearance of a celebrity endorser should be attractive to the target audience so as to influence the effectiveness of the advertising message and stimulates consumers' purchasing intentions (Hakimi *et al*., 2011). An attractive endorser can draw attention to the advert and increase the awareness of the advert and brand (Chao *et al*., 2005). That explains why advertisers prefer to hire attractive celebrities to endorse their advertising.

Similar to the source credibility model, researchers (e.g. Kim and Na, 2007; Liu *et al*., 2010) have attempted to develop several factors such as attractive, beauty, elegant, sexy to measure the perceived attitudes to each factor in the influencing dimensions, such as likeability and attractiveness in relation to the perceived attitudes to the source's attractiveness (Eisend and Langer, 2010; Lien *et al*., 2012). Using physically attractive celebrities as endorsers has been proven to be effective in advertising (e.g. Liu *et al.,* 2007; Pornpitakpan, 2003). The findings of previous studies can help researchers and practitioners predict perceived attitudes to source creditability and attractiveness when selecting endorsers.

In addition to the academic models in the literature, there is a Q-score, which is a commercial tool offered by Marketing Evaluations Inc. in the US (Shimp and Andrews, 2013). It is a measurement of the familiarity and appeal of a brand, company, celebrity or television show in the US (Knott and James, 2004). This tool is commonly adopted by the practitioners in the advertising industry to select celebrity endorsers in the US (Moriarty *et al*., 2012).

However, it has been found that practitioners such as brand managers and advertising agencies prefer to use their own intuition and insight in evaluating source characteristics in selecting celebrity endorsers (Belch and Belch, 2013). Erdogan and Drollinger (2008) found that some advertising agencies in the UK have their own methods and decision-making tools. These serve to evaluate the suitability of celebrities and clients' brands and help in selecting celebrity endorsers.

Although the source credibility model and the source attractiveness model have been examined widely in the academic literature, practitioners in advertising have been found to adopt other measurement such as the Q-score or their owned-constructed methods to measure a celebrity's marketable popularity and recognisability (Moriarty *et al*., 2012). This implies that the academic model of source credibility may not fit well with the requirements and expectations of practitioners. Further investigation is needed to develop a measure of celebrity endorsement effectiveness.

Furthermore, contradictory research findings can be found in the literature. For example, perceived positive attitudes may not generate actual purchasing intentions (Till and Busler, 2000). Other research findings show that an endorser's appeal does not necessarily influence the effectiveness of the endorsement (Bower and Landreth, 2001). Further investigation is needed to study which factors, in relation to an endorser, influence consumers' attitudes towards advertisements in terms of the endorsement and purchase intention.

Marshall (1997) argues that celebrities are produced by the celebrity industry to help sell other commodities, which echoes the process of celebrification, as argued by Driessens (2013). However, research findings on both the source credibility model and the source attractiveness model do not provide a consistent view on how celebrity endorsement works and how best to select celebrities for endorsement.

Ohanian (1990) attempted to combine the source credibility model and the source attractiveness model to measure the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement. She developed a tri-component celebrity endorser credibility scale that contains three constructs including perceived attractiveness, perceived expertise, and perceived trustworthiness (Ohanian, 1990). According to Ohanian (1990; 1991), the construct of perceived attractiveness consists of being attractive, classy, beautiful, elegant and sexy; the construct of perceived expertise consists of being expert, experienced, knowledgeable, qualified and skilled; and the construct of perceived trustworthiness consists of being dependable, honest, reliable, sincere and trustworthy. This tri-component fifteen-item credibility scale has been replicated by other researchers (e.g. La Eerie and Choi, 2005; Pornpitakpan, 2003). However, contradictory research findings have been found from subsequent research using this model (e.g. Eisend and Langner, 2010; Till and Busler, 2000) and therefore further investigation is needed.

In sum, researchers have attempted to use the source models to identify the factors that influence the perceived attitudes of consumers towards endorsement. These factors serve to predict the effectiveness of endorsement in advertising and the selection criteria with regard to endorsers. However, the findings of previous studies cannot provide a clear explanation of how celebrity endorsement functions and best way to select a celebrity endorser. They cannot explain why a particular celebrity can work well with a product but fail when they move to another product.

The source models tend to focus on evaluating celebrity endorsers rather than taking both the celebrity endorser and the endorsed product into account. They also

overlook the cultural and social variables that come into the play. In the history of the Hong Kong shadow education sector, changes in society, the economy and technology have shaped the industry of celebrity endorsement. Further research is needed to clarify the various problems that arise from the previous studies and extend the understanding of celebrity endorsement in the specific context of the Hong Kong shadow education sector.

3.3.2.3. The Meaning Transfer Model

McCracken (1989) argues that the source models ignore the role of the endorser as a medium and what shapes the perceived continuity of messages between advertisements. The source models can be used to explain why a particular celebrity is attractive or credible to given conditions (McCracken, 1989). Yet, what specific meanings the celebrity lends a product that the celebrity is to endorse is unknown (McCracken, 1989; Ohanian, 1990). McCracken (1989) proposes that a celebrity's cultural meaning and the transfer of that meaning drives the endorsement outcomes. He suggests that consumers are constantly moving symbolic properties out of consumer goods into their lives to build aspects of self and the world. Various symbolic meanings residing in a celebrity are transferred to the endorsed product in the endorsement process (Choi and Rifon, 2012). The symbolic meanings are then transferred from the product to the consumer through purchase and consumption. This automatic process illustrates the core of the meaning transfer model.

A celebrity has cultural meanings and the transfer of those meanings drives the endorsement outcomes (McCracken, 1989). These meanings include status, personality, lifestyle, gender, age, etc. A celebrity brings culturally acquired meanings to the endorsement process and adds value to the product he or she is endorsing through this transfer. Advertisers use advertising to draw the attention of their target audience to influence their behaviours, such as their attitudes towards

the product or brand, and their purchasing intention (Miller and Allen, 2012; Pornpitakpan, 2003). Westover and Randle (2009) argue that consumers receiving an advertising message assign meanings and values to it based on their personal experience and values. The meanings the celebrity gives to the product are eventually transferred to the consumer through their own efforts.

The meaning transfer model offers a comprehensive explanation based on meaning transfer in an endorsement process. McCracken's model reflects the concept of celebrity as a marketable commodity (Tuner, 2004), in which celebrities use their perceived values and meanings to endorse and add values and meanings to the endorsed product. Miller and Allen (2012) have attempted to test the model with mature brands. Their findings support McCracken's claim of meaning transfer. Amos *et al*. (2008) explain that celebrities develop personas in society by helping their status and images promoted by the media, and society assigns certain meanings to the personas of celebrities. When celebrities endorse a product, these meanings transfer to the product. Consumers are motivated to purchase the endorsed product by an expectation that some of these meanings will be transferred to their own lives.

The meaning transfer model suggests that advertisers should explore the symbolic meanings that encompass a celebrity. The advertisers should firstly determine the image or symbolic meanings that are important or desirable for the target audience for a particular product or brand. This is because the effectiveness of an endorser is dependent on the meanings that he or she brings to the endorsement process (McCracken, 1989). Then, they should decide which celebrity best represents the meaning or image to be projected. An advertising campaign should be designed to capture that meaning in the product and transfer it to consumers. Erdogan (1999) argues that meanings associated with the endorsed product are dependent on the participant, such as the client, advertising agent, or creative team.

The economic force of the endorsement under the meaning transfer model lies in the consumer's perception of the endorser's credibility and fit with the brand value

(Erdogan, 1999). This logic of celebrity endorsement suggests that a celebrity should be aligned with the brand or product to be endorsed, to achieve a perceived coherence between the two. Celebrity endorsement should support elements in the marketing mix such as branding, pricing, and packaging, etc. to create positive effects in the minds of consumers (Erdogan, 1999: 291).

The meaning transfer model provides a concept of meaning transfer that occurs from an endorser to consumers through the transmission of a message and consumption of the endorsed brand or product. It offers an insight to understand celebrification and the context in which there is not an established celebrity. However, McCracken's model is clearly circular or iterative, that is meaning is never stable but in a state of constant evolution between the various actors in the model. Therefore, it is a relational model more than the previous two source models. Researchers have also criticised the meaning transfer model as a theoretical concept without sufficient empirical examinations (Campbell and Warren, 2012; Tantiseneepong *et al.*, 2012). It does not show clearly how meanings are transferred in the endorsement process. Further investigation is needed to examine the possibility and effectiveness of cultural meanings transfer.

3.3.2.4. The Match-up Hypothesis

The match-up hypothesis suggests that a match-up or fit should exist between the celebrity endorser's image and the endorsed product or brand. This fit can refer to the perceived credibility or attractiveness of the endorser (Goldsmith *et al.*, 2000; Törn, 2012). It influences advertising attitudes, brand attitudes and purchase intention (Liu *et al.*, 2007; Till and Busler, 2000). Various terms can be found in the literature on celebrity endorsement that are used interchangeably to refer to the fit between the celebrity endorser and the endorsed product or brand. These include congruence (Fleck and Quester, 2007), consistency (Walker *et al.*, 1992), match-up (Bower and Landreth, 2001) and match (Kamins and Gupta, 1994).

These terms share a common understanding that the better the perceived fit between the celebrity's image and the endorsed brand or product, the more persuasive the celebrity and the advertising will be (Biswas *et al*., 2006).

The literature on the match up hypothesis has focused on the effects on various measures of persuasion such as attitudes, beliefs and purchasing intention (Lee and Park, 2014; Törn, 2012), together with the type of endorsed brand or product and the characteristics of endorsers (Biswas *et al.*, 2006; Chang *et al.,* 2014). Early researchers argued that the use of celebrity endorsement is not effective for every type of product (Friedman and Friedman, 1979; Kamins and Gupta, 1994).

Subsequent research findings show that the better the perceived fit between the celebrity's image and the endorsed brand or product, the more persuasive the celebrity and the advertising will be (Goldsmith *et al*., 2000; Lee and Park, 2014; Törn, 2012). Such a fit improves the believability and attractiveness of the celebrity endorser (Choi and Rifon, 2012; Liu *et al*., 2010). Conversely, when there is a lack of perceived fit between the celebrity endorser and the endorsed brand or product, a negative evaluation will arise towards the endorsed brand or product and related advertising (Erdogan, 1999; Till and Busler, 2000).

Additionally, researchers have attempted to investigate the match up from the perspective of advertising practitioners and the brand or product owner. Celebrities' image, familiarity to the audience, fit with the endorsed product and trustworthiness were important factors in the selection of celebrity endorsers (Ang and Dubelaar, 2006). Congruence between the celebrity and target audience, and the celebrity and product or brand, and the overall image of the celebrity have been found to be important in the selection of celebrity endorsers (Erdogan *et al.*, 2001).

Previous research on the match-up hypothesis has focused on the physical attractiveness of endorsers (Kim and Na, 2007; Lien *et al.,* 2012). When products are meant to enhance physical appearance, using an attractive celebrity will be more beneficial than using a less attractive one (Liu *et al.,* 2010; Till and Busler, 2000).

Yet, Marshall *et al*. (2008) argue that using highly attractive endorsers may generate greater post-purchase dissonance. Erdogan (1999) found that when the celebrity's image does not match with the brand's image, consumers will doubt the sincerity of the celebrity's endorsement, as he or she appears to have been bought. Inconsistent or negative information related to a celebrity endorser can spill over and affect the image of the endorsed product (Lien *et al.,* 2012; Till and Busler, 2000).

In sum, the match-up hypothesis is found to be a general guide based on congruency or fit for selecting celebrity endorsement. The fit can be seen from a variety of combination, such as the credibility and attractiveness of the endorser, and the endorsed product. However, this theory does not specify how and why match-up works, and further investigation is needed.

3.3.3. Sources of Celebrity Endorsers

The source of celebrity endorsers is a pool of artists, athletes, experts (Barron, 2015; Cashmore, 2006; Turner, 2004) or even TV show contestants but not teachers or tutors. Celebrity endorsement in the educational sector is uncommon in Europe and the US, and its existence in the Hong Kong market represents a novelty and contrasts with other educational markets. Marketers also use business executives, employees, common or everyday people or even anthropomorphic brand characters as endorsers, and their effectiveness has been investigated (Bendisch *et al.*, 2013; Patterson *et al*., 2013). Turner (2004), like others, such as Cashmore (2006) and Leslie, 2011), argues that the celebrity industry is not a single and unified field but appears in several sub-fields that operate to associate the celebrity industry with a wide range of commercial activities.

Apart from exploring the source characteristics of endorsers and the relationship between an endorser and the endorsed product or brand, researchers have

investigated the sources and roles of endorsers in the endorsement process. They have attempted to investigate the effectiveness of different types of endorser in advertising (Thomson, 2006; Pringle, 2004). For example, in the entertainment industry, actors, models and singers are the most popular types of endorsers (Cashmore, 2006; Turner, 2004). A client such as a brand owner may explicitly choose a particular celebrity to endorse its brands or products (Erdogan *et al*., 2008). Research findings also show that advertising agencies or sponsors can have an influence on the selection process (Pringle, 2004; van Krieken, 2012). Experts such as physicians, dentists, athletes and chefs are other popular type of endorsers or spokesperson used by advertisers to endorse products, give testimonials or demonstrate products (Lewis, 2010; Pornpitakpan, 2004; Till and Busler, 2010).

Advertisers use the perceived and/or actual expertise of experts to promote related or unrelated products or brands. Looking across previous studies, it is noticeable that researchers argue that the credibility of an expert endorser can increase the credibility of the advert by reducing the perceived risks (e.g. Biswas *et al.,* 2006; Sertoglu *et al.,* 2014; Spry *et al.,* 2011). Previous research reveals that athletes are popular expert endorsers who are hired to enhance the credibility of an advertisement, reduce perceived risks and improve brand awareness (Chang *et al.,* 2014; Cornwell *et al*., 2001).

Additionally, advertisers choose business executives, employees, everyday people or specific people with the key source characteristics as endorsers (Clow and Baack, 2012; Pringle, 2004; Williamson, 2016). Besides, there are additional variations of individuals who are chosen as endorsers or spokespersons. They include unpaid spokespersons, celebrity voice-overs and dead-celebrity endorsements (Bendisch *et al*., 2013; Clow and Baack, 2012).

Company employees have been found to effectively represent the brand of their company in advertising because they are perceived as more honest and transparent (Cui *et al.,* 2004; Fleck *et al*., 2014). Companies believe that the use of their staff

members particularly their chief executive officer (CEO) or founder is the ultimate expression of the company's commitment to quality (Bendisch *et al*., 2013; Benesra and Gilbert, 2002). Highly visible and personable CEOs can become a key asset for a company and its products. Fleck *et al*. (2014) argue that consumers may admire and respect CEOs, particularly well-known CEOs such as Bill Gates, who have achieved celebrity status. CEOs can create value for their companies (Akturan, 2011; Rein *et al.*, 2006), which can be a key asset for a company. However, research reveals that not every business executive or CEO is suitable to act as a spokesperson or endorser (Balmer and Greyser, 2006; van Krieken, 2012). This is because not every business executive is charismatic, like a celebrity.

An endorser can be created. Marketers can either choose a celebrity or create a spokesperson to present a product. The created spokespersons can be imaginary people or real people. The use of common or everyday people in advertising is one of the created spokesperson options (Fleck *et al.,* 2014; van der Waldt *et al*., 2009). Common people can be paid actors or models who portray or resemble everyday people (Clow and Baack, 2012). Alternatively, they can be actual, typical, everyday people (Bhatt *et al*., 2012). Looking across various research findings, it can be found that more flexibility is seen in the use of created endorsers, yet they inherently lack awareness and recognition. Advertisers need to spend more efforts and risks in cultivating the awareness and acceptance of the created endorsers among target audiences.

Using real people in advertising is becoming popular (Barron, 2015; Jain *et al*., 2011). Researchers have found that the use of common or everyday people in advertising is more persuasive (Fleck *et al.,* 2014; Sertoglu *et al*., 2014). People are perceived genuinely as members of the public, which can be effective in humanising a brand and eliciting empathy (Fleck *et al*., 2014; Turner, 2010). Besides, creating endorsers that are real people is very popular among the chain tutoring centres in Hong Kong, in which celebrity tutors are created by their own

tutors (Bray *et al*., 2014). They serve both as an endorser and a service provider (Coren, 2009; Lau, 2009).

Animated spokes-characters were originally developed for brand identification and differentiation (Hart *et al*., 2013; Kyung *et al.,* 2010). They are used to promote a product, brand or idea, and they must be used consistently over time. For example, the animated brand characters of Disney, such as Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck, served Disney as a product and representative over a long period of time (Hosany *et al*., 2013; Lloyd and Woodside, 2013).

Van der Waldt *et al.* (2009) argue that created endorsers, particularly created animated characters, provide companies with greater control. They can be adjusted to fit better with companies' marketing and advertising (Bhatt *et al*., 2012), and are relatively cheaper than hiring celebrities (Tom *et al*., 1992). Researchers argue that using created spokespersons can help build a long-lasting relationship between the spokesperson and the product. The created spokesperson's fame can last longer than that of a celebrity spokesperson (Tom *et al*., 1992; van der Waldt *et al*., 2009).

Looking at the phenomenon of celebrity tutors that is under study in this thesis, both journalist reports (e.g. Sharma, 2012; Wong, 2015) and academic research (e.g. Zhan *et al.,* 2013; Kwo and Bray, 2011) have found that the celebrity tutors created in the shadow education sector in Hong Kong are originally tutors working for the tutoring centres. However, this specific context is under-examined in the literature on celebrity endorsement and celebrity and therefore further studies are needed.

3.3.4. Risks of Celebrity Endorsement

Celebrity endorsement is vulnerable to scandals or negative behaviours, which poses a risk to the company. This is because the personal lives of celebrity

endorsers are outside of the control of advertisers (Campbell and Warren, 2012; Um, 2013). Negative information associated with a celebrity has been found to affect the perceived value and credibility of the celebrity and his or her endorsed products (Thwaites *et al.*, 2012; Till and Busler, 2000). It can also influence brand evaluation and purchasing intention negatively (Edwards and La Ferle, 2009; Zhou and Whitla, 2009).

For example, journalist reports (e.g. Ming Pao, 2009b, York, 2009) revealed celebrity artists and athletes, who involved in activities that embarrass the companies they endorse, were soon terminated as endorser. Nevertheless, the popularity of social media has made negative associations even more difficult for practitioners to control (Solomon *et al*, 2013; Thwaites *et al.*, 2012). There is a dilemma that advertisers face in selecting celebrity endorsers and the potential risks of using them, particularly scandals cannot be prevented from happening.

Celebrity endorsement can be costly, and it often costs millions to secure famous celebrities for endorsements. Seitz *et al*. (2007) show that Pepsi paid US$25 million to Shaquille O'Neal to endorse its softdrink. Advertisers use celebrities to increase awareness of their brands, products and/or advertisements, and to develop stronger associations with the celebrity endorser. The final aim is to generate a higher purchasing intention that will translate into higher sales and a positive return on investment. However, Belch and Belch (2012) argue that there is lack of investigation and disclosure by companies that use celebrity endorsement regarding the return on investment from celebrity endorsement.

Although advertisers continue to use celebrity endorsement in advertising and promotion, its effectiveness in advertising and impacts on consumers' attitudes towards brands or products are declining. Cashmore (2006) found that 20% of shoppers are celebrity resistant, 60% are bored with celebrities and only 8% will buy a celebrity-endorsed product. In some situations, an endorser may overshadow the endorsed product or brand to the extent that consumers may have

trouble recalling the brand (Loveless, 2007). That means that consumers may focus on the celebrity and fail to notice the endorsed brand. The situation may become serious when the endorser is an actor. When an endorser is performing in a popular movie or TV series and appears in a commercial simultaneously, the audience may be confused about the role of that endorser in different scenes, which may influence the effectiveness of the endorsement (Yilmaz and Ersavas, 2005).

Furthermore, there is a risk of over-exposure. Consumers are aware of celebrities being paid (Belch and Belch, 2012). When a celebrity endorses too many products or brands simultaneously, over-exposure occurs (Leslie, 2011; Pringle, 2004). Over-shadowing and over-exposure have negative impacts on both the endorser and the endorsed products and brands. Moreover, Zwilling and Fruchter (2013) argue that companies use a particular celebrity as endorser over a long period of time may lead consumers to remember the endorser, rather than the endorsed products.

The use of staff members, particularly a CEO or founder, is perceived as part of the company's commitment to quality (Bendisch *et al*., 2013; Benesra and Gilbert, 2002). However, many marketing and advertising experts have questioned whether the rationale behind this type of endorsement is ego rather than logic (Bendisch *et al*., 2013; Fleck *et al.,* 2014). For example, Belch and Belch (2012) argue that some CEOs who appear in TV commercials, such as Bill Gates, aim to beat their rivals rather than promote their products or promise their quality.

Celebrity endorsement has been widely discussed in the literature of different disciplines (e.g. Choi and Riffon, 2012; Van Krieken, 2012). The popularity of celebrity endorsement in advertising (e.g. Barron, 2015; Keel and Nataraajan, 2012) reflects its effectiveness. However, researchers have long debated the risks associated with celebrity endorsers (e.g. Solomon *et al*, 2013; Um, 2013), and there is a lack of consensus in terms of the findings with respect to celebrity endorsement in advertising so further investigation is needed. Besides, previous research

focused on consumer goods. Education and educational products like shadow education and the phenomenon of celebrity tutors under study are under-examined.

3.5 Theoretical Framework, Research Gaps and Research Questions

The phenomenon of celebrity has integrated in the contemporary societies and culture in which celebrities become a part in our daily lives. Technology, particularly social media, makes people easier to become famous which extends the variety of celebrity. Yet, limited research is found in studying celebrities in education industry, such as the celebrity tutors found in the Hong Kong shadow education sector.

Human branding is becoming an emergent topic in marketing, and celebrities and celebrity brands are found to be important elements of society in which the public are interested. Any people who have well-known persona can be referred to be a celebrity and even a human brand of themselves. Yet, the phenomenon of celebrity tutors and their presentation as tutor brand for their branded tutoring are under-examined in the literature on human branding.

It can be seen that the majority of the previous studies on celebrity endorsement focus on a consumer-based quantitative assessment framework. Through statistical measurements, researchers have attempted to identify the variables that influence consumers' responses to advertising campaigns with celebrity endorsement so as to understand the associations between celebrities and the endorsed products or brands. They also attempt to identify and measure the factors that influence the endorsement process and the causal relationships between the factors to guide the selection of endorsers for endorsement and the measurement of endorsement effectiveness. These factors are related to the perceived

characteristics of celebrity endorsers such as their expertise or physical appeal, which are important in explaining purchase intention.

The theoretical expansion of celebrity endorsement theories from the four main models with these terms in the literature reflects its dynamic nature, in which researchers keep adding more updated variables, contributing to the source and the match. However, previous studies using these models do not provide a clear explanation of how celebrity endorsement performs and the best way to select a celebrity endorser. They do not capture the social and cultural complexity of the phenomenon of celebrity endorsement. There is little agreement on the process of the selection of celebrity endorsers, such as what types and numbers of dimensions are proper to select celebrity endorsers.

The research findings in the literature on celebrity endorsement also show results that are inconsistent with the theories. The four main models of celebrity endorsement identified in the literature cannot explain why a particular celebrity endorser can work well with a product but will fail when moved to another product. Besides, these models tend to focus on evaluating celebrity endorsers rather than taking both the celebrity endorser and the endorsed product into account. Researchers argue that the meaning transfer model tends to be conceptual without sufficient empirical examination (e.g. Campbell and Warren, 2012; Tantiseneepong *et al.,* 2012). It is also unclear why a particular type of endorsement such as the creation of a celebrity endorser is preferable for a particular type of product, brand or even industry, such as the celebrity tutors in the Hong Kong shadow education sector.

Furthermore, studies on celebrity endorsement, from the perspective of practitioners, such as marketing managers or advertising managers, are limited. Previous studies on the creation and maintenance of celebrity are limited in the literature on advertising and marketing. It has also been found that practitioners in advertising prefer to use their industry measurements, such as the Q-score, rather

than the four main academic models of celebrity endorsement in the literature, in the selection of celebrity endorsement. This shows rooms for further investigation.

As discussed in Chapter Two, shadow education is expanding rapidly on a global scale, particularly in Asia. The phenomenon of shadow education in Hong Kong is unique and celebritised that is under-examined in the literature on celebrity. The chain tutoring centres in Hong Kong create celebrity tutors among their tutors, who are common or everyday people, to endorse and deliver their tutoring service. These reflect the presentation of tutors as brand of themselves and endorser for their tutoring and/or the chain they serve. The chains launch numerous advertising campaigns with their celebrity tutors throughout the year. This type of human branding, celebrity tutor endorsement and/or promotion is not usually found in other industries and the phenomenon remains under-examined in the literature.

The theoretical framework of this study is constructed on the basis of a variety of theories including celebritisation, celebrification, celebrity, human brands and celebrity endorsement. The existing theories in the literature on celebrity and human branding under-examine the phenomenon of celebrity tutors in the Hong Kong shadow education sector, who present as celebrity and tutor brand engaging in promotion and advertisement directly in the media.

Previous studies in celebrity endorsement do not explain clearly why marketers select a particular endorsement option and why they create endorsers from company staff members rather than hiring celebrities from existing sources. There is no study around this phenomenon in the particular context of the shadow education sector in Hong Kong. Moreover, none of theories in these disciplines has considered the particular endorsement context of the shadow education sector in Hong Kong. Specifically, the celebrities are not chosen from a list of pre-existing celebrities within the cultural world, but rather are produced from common or everyday people within the sector.

This study does not attempt to examine the existing models in the shadow education sector. Conversely, it aims to investigate two unexplored aspects, which are, first, the phenomenon of celebrity tutor and their promotion in the shadow education sector in Hong Kong and, second, how and why celebrity tutors perform. Using a qualitative investigation may help explore these uncertainties and contradictions. A close exploratory study in the specific context of the Hong Kong shadow education sector may provide insights for further study of celebrity, human branding and celebrity endorsement.

Celebrity tutor and their direct engagement in promotion are prevalent in the Hong Kong shadow education sector, which are dominated by chain tutoring centres (Bray, 2013b). The chains create celebrity tutors to promote and deliver their tutoring. The literature on shadow education has focused on the phenomenon of shadow education, the reasons behind it and its impacts on mainstream school education and society (e.g. Baker and LeTendre, 2005; Lee *et al.*, 2009). There is a lack of research on this unique phenomenon regarding celebrity tutors.

Furthermore, researchers have examined the phenomenon of marketisation and the privatisation of education, mainly in tertiary education (Brown, 2011; Molesworth *et al.,* 2011). Consumerism in education has led education to be perceived as a commodity that is chosen and consumed by consumers (Nordensvard, 2011). Other researchers, like Karpov (2013) and Zammit (2011) argue that the commodification of education has led schools and universities to treat education as a commodity, and run like a profit-seeking companies that are focused on the budgetary cost-effect; they seek resources, product evaluation and corresponding adjustments as well as a new relationship between teachers and students.

An ongoing debate is found in the literature on education regarding whether the commodification of education results in encouraging catering for the students and pleasing them through minimising challenges, rather than equipping them to persevere in solving complex problems (e.g. Plante, 2015; Schwartzman, 2013).

Yet, Karpov (2013) and McChesney (2013) argue that the market-based value is incompatible with education because education is deemed a cooperative public service rather than a profit-seeking sector. Universities in different countries are accelerating their use of marketing concepts such as branding and promotion to differentiate themselves from their rivals, and attract potential students and sponsors (Molesworth *et al.*, 2009). Nevertheless, research on marketing and marketisation of education regarding the phenomena of celebrity tutor brand and tutor endorsement in shadow education are limited. The existing theories regarding these phenomena and the marketisation of shadow education remain under-examined.

It has become a growing concern that young people value fame in and of itself, rather than pursuing achievement through hard work or skill (Woolcock, 2008). Researchers have also examined how celebrity operates in young people's everyday lives in England and how young people draw upon the class and gender distinctions that circulate within celebrity discourses (Allen and Mendick, 2012).

Another piece of research shows that young people aged 15 to 24 in Hong Kong are found to have a strong motivation to view advertisements with celebrity endorsers and are more likely to adopt celebrities as role models or idols and to imitate them (Chan and Prendergast, 2008). The target customers in the Hong Kong shadow education sector are mainly primary and secondary students (Bray, 2010a; Bexcellent Group Holding Ltd, 2018). This reflects why the chain tutoring centres use celebrity tutors in a specific format to promote their services.

The chain tutoring centres in Hong Kong use celebrity tutors to promote and deliver tutoring, rather than hiring celebrities from different fields to endorse them. Their promotion and business practice reflect different marketing tactics, such as human branding, endorsement and celebritisation. More importantly, they demonstrate the marketisation and commodification in shadow education. Given such a context, it would be useful and interesting to understand how and why the chain

tutoring centres create and maintain their own celebrity tutors. The purposes of this research are to explore the phenomenon of celebrity tutors and their promotion/endorsement in the Hong Kong shadow education sector, and examine whether the existing models in the literature on celebrity endorsement, celebrity, human branding and marketisation of education can explain the phenomenon under study. This research will address the following questions:

1. To explore *how* the chain tutoring centres in Hong Kong create and maintain their celebrity tutors?

2. To explore what are the motivations behind Hong Kong's chain tutoring centres' use of celebrity tutors?

3. To understand *why* the chain tutoring centres in Hong Kong do not choose celebrities from other industries to endorse them?

4 METHODOLOGY AND DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the research paradigm, methodology and methods used in this study to explore the motives and practices of management teams of chain tutoring centres in Hong Kong for the creation and maintenance of celebrity tutors. A section on research ethics is included in this chapter, which considers the ethical risks identified before the field work and how these were effectively managed to ensure minimal ethical risk in this study.

The qualitative approach using in-depth interviews is justified alongside a discussion of how this approach departs from the majority of the literature on celebrity endorsement. The second part of this chapter describes the data analysis, which took a thematical analysis approach, appropriate for interpretivism, with respect to exploratory research. The description explains the processes and actions involved in how the data were interpreted, analysed, coded and eventually compiled to respond to the research questions.

4.2 Consideration of Research Philosophy, Ontology and Epistemology and Methodology

A research philosophy is a set of basic beliefs about ontology and epistemology (Bryman, 2012; Neuman, 2011). The epistemological perspective of a study is related to the assumed nature of truth and the approach employed to understand and explain reality, which shapes the research design. The choice of research approach depends on a researcher's ontological and epistemological assumptions

underlying their research philosophy, and the nature of research questions (Collis and Hussey, 2014; Punch, 2014).

Looking across an ongoing debate on the variety of research approaches and methods in social science research (e.g. Collis and Hussey, 2014; Easterby-Smith *et al.,* 2012; Hallebone and Priest, 2009), I agree with the claims of scholars such as Neuman (2001) and Bryman (2012) that the choice of research approach should be consistent with a researcher's research philosophy and his or her research objectives and question.

Literature on celebrity endorsement focuses on assessing the effectiveness of endorsements, the appropriateness of the selection of endorsers and products or the variables influencing the endorsement process. It can be seen that the majority of previous studies on celebrity endorsement focus on a quantitative framework (e.g. D'Alessandro and Chitty, 2011; Miller and Allen, 2012; Sertoglu *et al.*, 2014). Statistical measurement was used in these studies to identify and measure the factors influencing an endorsement process and the causal relationship between the factors. Researchers have attempted to investigate the factors contributing to effective endorsement and those that guide the selection of endorsers, rather than explaining why and how marketers choose particular endorsement approaches. These factors may relate to the perceived expertise or physical appeal of celebrity endorsers, which are important in explaining purchase intention.

Table 4.1 illustrates a summary of selected studies on celebrity endorsement that employed relevant quantitative methods employed. It reveals that the existing literature on celebrity endorsement does not answer clearly why marketers select a particular endorsement option, such as creating an endorser rather than hiring celebrities from the existing pool of celebrities. Past studies have tended to provide generalised knowledge of celebrity endorsement to offer generalised models that are relevant across settings, but this fails to recognise the particular contexts.

Model	Selected literature	Key constructs	Data collection method	Key data analysis methods
Source Credibility Model	Spry *et al*. (2011)	· Endorser credibility · Brand credibility · Consumer-based brand equity · Endorser familiarity · Brand familiarity · Endorser-brand congruence · Product knowledge	Questionnaire	· Exploratory factor analysis · Structural equation modelling
	Sertoglu *et al*. (2014)	· Attractiveness · Trustworthiness · Expertise · Credibility · Purchase intention	Questionnaire	· Kolmogorov–Smirnov test · Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test
Source Attractiveness Model	D'Alessandro and Chitty (2011)	· Source attractiveness · Positive body image · Negative body image · Body mass index	Questionnaire	· Factor Analysis
	Liu *et al*. (2010)	· Endorser attractiveness levels · Endorser-product match-up · Product type	Experiment	· Cronbach's alpha · ANOVA
Meaning Transfer Model	Campbell and Warren (2012)	· Endorser personality traits · Brand personality traits · Perceived sincerity of a celebrity · congruence/Incongruence	Experiment	· ANOVA
	Miller and Allen (2012)	· Brand attitudes · Celebrity attractiveness · Celebrity expertise · Celebrity effect	Experiment	· Cronbach's alpha
Match-up Hypothesis	Fleck and Quester (2007)	· Expected dyad · Non-expected dyad · Relevant dyad · Non-relevant dyad	Questionnaire	· Confirmatory Factor Analysis · Structural equation modelling
	Lien *et al*. (2012)	· Endorser's attractiveness type · Product image · Endorser gender	Questionnaire	· Exploratory factor analysis · Partial Eta Square

Table 4.1 Selected studies in the literature on celebrity endorsement models with relevant research methods.

This table is for illustrative purposes. It is not a comprehensive listing or analysis of the *previous research.*

For example, the practice of celebrity endorsement found in the shadow education sector in Hong Kong seems to be specific to this context, and worthy of detailed exploration. As established in Chapter 2, the chain tutoring centres create celebrity tutors from among their existing tutors to endorse/promote them and their tutoring, rather than hiring celebrities from a different field, and this is under-examined in the literature. It is this phenomenon that was chosen as the research focus with the aim of exploring this context specific situation of celebrity and celebrity endorsement, so as to understand how insights from this context sit, illuminate, add to or contradict the models of celebrity endorsement in the literature.

The research objectives of this study were to explore the phenomena of celebrity tutors and celebrity tutor endorsement and promotion in the Hong Kong shadow education sector and examine whether the existing models in the literature on celebrity endorsement can explain the phenomena under study. It aimed to investigate how practitioners in the shadow education sector give meanings to the phenomenon. The nature of this research was exploratory; it aimed to explore the phenomenon of celebrity tutors in the Hong Kong shadow education sector. The main aim was to understand the perceptions and beliefs of the participants in regard to the phenomenon and a qualitative framework was appropriate and used to achieve this goal. The research questions in this study were open-ended. To obtain in-depth knowledge through open-ended questions, I considered that language-based data through an interpretivist paradigm would be appropriate to the social constructivist approach to statistical measurement under the positivist paradigm (Hallebone and Priest, 2009; Neuman, 2011).

This in some ways represents a departure from the majority of the literature on celebrity endorsement, but given the focus of the literature discussed already in this chapter, it is clear that a quantitative and positivist approach has missed, avoided or cannot see important research questions, and therefore these have not been addressed. The aim of this study was to fill this gap. Moreover, to take a meaning based, or social constructivist approach, is a departure – except for the

work of McCracken (1989) – but it also a way to view the social formulation of celebrity that is well recognised in sociology and cultural studies but has been much less recognised in marketing and advertising.

Interpretivist researchers and research participants co-develop the meanings of research problems during the investigation process, so findings are subjective in nature (Hallebone and Priest, 2009; Silverman, 2013). In this study, I expected the qualitative data to provide in-depth descriptive insights into how educational managers, staff and celebrity tutors narrate their understandings of the shadow education market and locate themselves within the shadow education market; and how they narrate the processes and activities that they undertake to secure celebrity endorsement in their chain tutoring centre.

Conversely, these research questions could not have been answered through statistical measurement under the positivist paradigm that is mainly employed in the literature on celebrity endorsement and advertising. This is because the meanings, perceptions and beliefs of the participants involved in the study with respect to the research questions are open-ended, and are therefore not easy to measure.

I looked at studies outside celebrity endorsement in branding and advertising, which as related subjects allowed me to assess the utility of using different qualitative techniques to build on empirical insights into celebrity endorsement and creating celebrities. For example, it was interesting to look at researchers in anthropomorphic marketing who have attempted to build and sustain the animated brand character of Hello Kitty through a bundle of methods including documents, interviews and observations (Hosany *et al.*, 2013). Besides, Hollensen and Schimmelpfennig (2013) used in-depth interviews to explore how companies select celebrity endorsers. These studies were exploratory like this study. Researchers have attempted to uncover in-depth meanings given by informants in regard to the

phenomena under study through open-ended questions. These meanings are difficult to interpret through measurements.

4.3 Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis refers to what is to be studied (Miles *et al*. 2014; Savin-Baden and Major, 2013). Given the leading role of the top few chain tutoring centres in the Hong Kong shadow education sector in terms of market share and the practice of using celebrity tutors as I mentioned in section 2.3, the view of the chains is important to this research. To explore the phenomenon of celebrity tutors and their endorsement/promotion in Hong Kong shadow education sector and how practitioners in the sector give meanings to the phenomenon, I decided to aim to approach the top five chains for data collection.

From a practical perspective, it was not possible to collect data from every stakeholder in each chains. It was only feasible to target selected staff of the chains as the unit of analysis in this study, so as to collect the voice of these people in response to the research questions. Through my engagement in the data collection and data interpretation, I aimed to elicit from an emic perspective the meanings related to the phenomena of celebrity tutors and celebrity endorsement in the shadow education sector under study.

The composition of the chains' staff includes founders, senior managerial staff, administration staff, marketing staff, customer service staff, tutors, tutors' personal assistants and teaching assistants. In the sampling approach adopted, it was important to capture the variety of the staff in the chains who are involved in the different functions and are at different levels of the hierarchy of management in the chain. This approach enabled in-depth meanings to be found in regard to the research questions and in order to understand the phenomenon of celebrity tutor endorsement.

4.4 Research Design

The research design provides all of the detailed operational guides in a study's empirical work (Bryman, 2012; O'Leary, 2010). It contains the content of the research project, which includes the philosophical assumptions, research methods, approaches and techniques for data collection and analysis, and presentation of the research findings (Collis and Hussey, 2014; Hallebond and Priest, 2009). The research design also reflects my research philosophical stance of social constructionism, my research questions and the research methods in the study.

The purpose of this study was to provide an in-depth investigation regarding actual behavioural events and the contemporary phenomenon of celebrity tutors and their promotion in the Hong Kong shadow education sector. The research questions in this research were concerned with why and how the chain tutoring centres in Hong Kong create and maintain celebrity tutors. The nature of the research questions was exploratory and open-ended. They aimed to uncover the processes and dynamics of celebrity making and management in Hong Kong chain tutoring centres.

To answer the research questions, I considered that the interview conversation with the participants would be an in-depth discussion about celebrity tutors and celebrity endorsement of the chain tutoring centres. In-depth interviewing is one of main sources of information and research methods for qualitative researchers (Punch, 2014; Warren and Karner, 2010). Its purpose comes from an emic perspective and is to get inside the interviewees' minds and explore their perspective to find out things such as their feelings, memories and interpretations, which researchers cannot observe or discover in other ways (Carson *et al.,* 2001; Patton, 2015), such as statistical measurement. I believe that the in-depth interviewing was appropriate to my research objectives of exploring the phenomenon of celebrity tutors and their promotion.

4.5 Data Collection

In this research, I decided to use in-depth interviews as the primary data collection method. I aimed to collect the voices of my target samples who are involved in decision making and the operation of the creation and use of celebrity tutors in the shadow education sector. Looking across previous research and different data collection methods, it was found that in-depth interviews are appropriate to collect data from research participants when open-ended research questions are being asked, particularly in exploratory research such as this study (Hallebone and Priest, 2009; Neuman, 2011).

4.5.1 Interviews

Interviews are a common method in qualitative research for collecting primary data from interviewees (Guest *et al.,* 2013; Silverman, 2013). Researchers collect data from specific participants, focus the participants' attention on specific items of interest and obtain the participants' views on the topic (Collis and Hussey, 2014; Myers, 2013). Through carrying out interviews, the researcher learns about the experiences, perceptions and feelings of the interviewees.

There are three common types of interviews that can be found in the social science literature: structured interviews, semi-structured interviews and unstructured interviews (Bryman, 2012; King and Horrocks, 2010). I considered that semi-structured interviews would be appropriate to collect the voices of my target practitioners regarding their experience of the phenomenon of celebrity tutor and their promotion.

The semi-structured interview is a commonly used type of interview in qualitative research (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009; Stake, 2010). It is a formal interview and a qualitative method of inquiry that combines a pre-determined set of open-ended

questions (Belk *et al.,* 2013; Myers, 2013). Several scholars have argued that semi-structured interviews allow researchers to follow particular paths in their conversations with interviewees, who can express beyond any pre-determined boundary the topics set out in advance (Bryman, 2012; Patton, 2015; Silverman, 2013). An interviewer can ensure that certain elements are covered while allowing flexibility. As a novice researcher, I believed that this interview method could guide me in conducting the interviews and collecting in-depth data relevant to the research problems.

To facilitate the interview process, I prepared an interview guide with approximately 30 open-ended questions, which outlined the main research topics to cover for probing (Appendix A). Looking across different literature on qualitative interviewing (e.g. Berg and Lune, 2012; O'Leary, 2000), probing questions during the interview can provide interview participants with a way to elaborate more complete stories about the subjects being researched. I used the guide to stimulate and encourage participants to elaborate further on the questions being asked and the opinions they had.

4.5.2 Interview Settings

A total of 27 interviews were carried out between July 2015 and December 2015, which was within the approved data collection period of 1 July 2015 and 31 January 2016 granted by the School of Business Research Ethics Committee of the university. A summary of the interviews is shown in Tables 4.2 and 4.3. The interviews were held on a one-to-one basis in cafes and restaurants, except for one interview. The exception was one participant who requested that the interview be conducted in her workplace in a classroom after her tutorial.

The interviews were conducted in Cantonese, which is a type of Chinese and the local dialect in Hong Kong, as well as English to express certain words. As a

Hongkonger, I recognised that this is a common type of daily conversation among locals. Both Chinese and English are the formal languages in Hong Kong (Civil Service Bureau, The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, 2017). Using the same language as the interviewees allows researchers to communicate and prompt interviewees for responses (Temple and Young, 2004). This can encourage the interviewees to express themselves while interviewing and avoid misunderstandings due to the use of a foreign language.

All of the interviews were audio-recorded using a digital recorder for transcription and analysis. I also prepared a backup recorder, but I did not need to use it in the interviews. All of the participants were informed and agreed to the arrangement of the audio recording. Besides, I made field notes, as discussed by Silverman (2013) and Stake (2010), during and after the interviews to ensure recording my thoughts, which came from conducting the interviews. This is because qualitative interviewing is not a standardised mechanism that a researcher conducts interviews repeatedly based on an identical method. I found that making field notes was helpful to reflect my thoughts in response to new things being seen in the field, as it has been argued by researchers (e.g. Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009; King and Horrocks, 2010). This reflection guided me in conducting the subsequent interviews.

Before starting the interview, I presented an informed consent form for the study (Appendix B) to each participant and explained it verbally. The informed consent form contained an information sheet with a brief of the project, the methods of data handling, protection of the participants' confidentiality and anonymity and participants' right to withdraw at any time. The second part of the informed consent form listed key points regarding the rights of participants in the interview process, the requirement of audio-recording, the data collection and management and the confidentiality and anonymity of the participant's identity.

I explained to the participants this study's ethical obligations to assure them that their identity and their tutoring centre's identity would not be identified in the thesis and publication. Each participant was asked to confirm his or her understanding of the informed consent and the right of withdrawal at any time during the interview without any consequence. The participants were asked to sign the informed consent form to ensure their awareness and consent to the interview process and data collection and management. All participants agreed to sign the informed consent form; they signed it before starting the interviewing. A copy of the informed consent form was given to the participants for their own records.

To start the interview, I firstly asked introductory questions such as background information, like the participant's position and/or teaching areas as a warm-up and to build-up trust and a rapport. After that, I shifted to asking specific questions related to the research questions. The sequence of the questioning in subsequent parts of the interview varied based on the feedback of the participants.

For example, I found that the participants engaged in administration and marketing were relatively out-spoken and willing to discuss it. It was relatively easier to shift my questions from the introductory questions to specific questions. Conversely, there were participants including tutors and teaching assistants who were protective at the beginning of the interview. They hesitated to respond and their answers were short and simple such as yes, or no answer. In this case, I tried to encourage the participants to discuss their rivals and the industry rather than their own job or chain. I aimed to release their anxiety and build up a rapport through the probing. I found that this information was useful because it reflected the participants' thoughts directly or indirectly towards the research questions and offered some insights into the shadow education sector. Hence, I recognised that probing could add depth to the interview data. This is difficult to achieve through the statistical measurements that are commonly used in quantitative research (Bryman, 2012; Easterby-Smith *et al.,* 2012).

4.5.3 Visual Aids for Interviewing

The literature on anthropology and ethnography shows that researchers use visual aids such as photographs or films in interviewing to understand social and cultural phenomena (e.g. Banks, 2007; Stanczak, 2007). These visual aids have also been adapted to social science and marketing research (Guest *et al.,* 2013; Soley and Smith, 2008).

In this study, I used visual elicitation to assist in the interviewing. This is a stimulation technique in the interviewing method which uses visual stimuli such as photos or videos to derive interpretations and stories from the interview participants (Belk *et al.,* 2013; Frith *et al.,* 2005). There are many advertisements, mainly printed advertisements, that appear in newspapers throughout the year in Hong Kong for main chain tutoring centres. Moreover, the chains often use giant billboards on building walls and, train or underground train stations, as well as advertisements on buses' exteriors to promote their businesses. These advertisements reflect the chains' messages to the public and the promotion methods.

I selected a total of 20 advertisements as my interview visual aids, which were displayed in a transparent folder one by one. I considered that the 20 pieces of advertisements were probably sufficient and comprehensive to cover key dynamics of the shadow education sector and the celebrity tutors to assist in interviewing. The advertisements were based on a variety of sources from the past ten years, 2005 to 2015. I considered that the chosen advertisements, from this time frame, reflected the development of the shadow education sector and the change in its promotion focus over that time. The chosen advertisements included my collection of advertisements related to celebrity tutors and chain tutoring centres from local newspapers.

Additionally, I selected photos I have taken with respect to the advertisements of celebrity tutors and chain tutoring centres shown in public areas such as public transport locations (e.g. buses, mini-buses, trains, underground trains), billboards on trains and underground train stations and buildings. I also used the advertisements shown on social media such as the Facebook pages of the celebrity tutors and the chain tutoring centres. Besides, I chose the book covers of books published by the celebrity tutors. I considered that these various sources of advertisements reflected the dynamics of promotion found in the shadow education sector. In the field work, I found that there were participants who perceived my visual aids as a sign of my preparation for the study and my understanding of the shadow education sector. This helped me to build a rapport.

The criterion for the selection of the advertisement was based on convenience. However, reflective consideration of the advertisements from my own observation led to three categories of advertisements being selected: advertisements in which a tutor was shown, advertisements in which more than one tutor was shown, and advertisements for a chain tutoring centre with or without tutor(s). These three categories are observed as the main streams of advertisement for the chains in the industry. I considered that my understanding of these categories of advertisements reflected my role as a researcher in structuring the stimuli that were used in the interviews. It demonstrates clearly that in an interpretive approach the role and voice of the researcher is never a neutral instrument. These categories were developed through researcher observation and understanding, and was later confirmed by the participants interviewed.

I used the advertisement stimuli to probe during the interview. I found this helpful when the participants hesitated to talk or when there were concepts where I could use the stimuli to clarify things and encourage the participants to share their thoughts. The advertisement stimuli were also found to be useful for ice-breaking at the beginning of an interview.

Although I have found that the nickname of Tutor Kings and Queens is understood by the public at large, using the stimuli could motivate the participants to comment on the phenomenon of celebrity tutors and share their thoughts and experiences about the promotion methods used in the shadow education sector. I also found that using the advertisement stimuli was helpful to warm up the participants and build up a rapport with them. In sum, I concur with other researchers in the literature (e.g. Guest *et al.,* 2013; Tantiseneepong *et al.,* 2012) that it is useful to use visual aids to assist in conducting interviews.

4.5.4 Sampling for the Interviews

Sampling refers to the method of selection of the segment of the population to be recruited for a research study (Bryman, 2012; Silverman, 2013). I used both gatekeepers and snowball sampling as methods to recruit research participants. However, snowball sampling was the primary recruitment method used, through which participants were recommended by the initial interviewees based on their relevance to the research topics (Creswell, 2014; Morrison *et al.,* 2012). The sampling was done through my social networks including my personal network and my network at work.

There are two directors and founders of chain tutoring centres in Hong Kong who were willing to support this study and gave the overall permission for access. They agreed to provide me with a list of contacts (mainly tutors) for interviewing after their initial approach to the tutors to break the ice. I considered their position as senior management and accordingly their role as gatekeepers was very helpful for participant recruitment.

These two contacts were the interviewees in this study based on their roles as manager and tutor in the chain tutoring centres. I considered that their job functions fitted well with my criteria of finding candidates who are responsible for

creating and maintaining celebrity tutors. The two directors and founders served as seeds for the snowball sampling by referring potential candidates for interviewing. Furthermore, I tried to sow seeds for snowball sampling with every interviewee.

I asked the initial interviewees to recommend potential candidates who fitted the inclusion criteria for the study through snowball sampling. Yet, I did not approach every recommended candidate for interview to ensure that the interviewees who provided recommendations did not know whether I had approached the recommended candidates or not. This also applied to the referrals suggested by the two gatekeepers. I aimed to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. Besides, I filtered and justified the qualifications of the recommended candidates by evaluating their job position and job nature. I aimed to ensure that I approached the right candidates for the interviews.

However, I encountered some challenges in sampling in the study. Originally, I secured the sampling through the two gatekeepers, as I have mentioned. However, the plan did not run smoothly. Although the gatekeepers tried to assist me in recommending potential candidates for the interviews, the result was poor. I found that the number of referrals was much less than I had expected in the first few weeks. The referral's responses to my interview invitations were slow too.

Additionally, there were recommended tutors and management staff who rejected the offer of an interview, although they had originally agreed with the gatekeeper to participate. I tried to encourage them to undertake the interview and explained to them clearly about confidentiality and anonymity. Some of them told me that they did not want to disclose their business secrets, while other did not reply. I failed to fix the interviews after several attempts.

As the interviews were on voluntary basis, I, nor the two gatekeepers could force them to engage. Moreover, I needed to manage my relationship between my

contacts and potential candidates so as to avoid any problems arising from the interview arrangement. I considered that respecting participants and potential participants was a fundamental and appropriate attitude for every researcher.

To continue my sampling, I tried to make cold calls to potential candidates through emails and messaging them via Facebook. However, I got no response. Then, I tried to use my personal network and network at work to approach potential candidates who met my criteria. I succeeded in recruiting about ten participants for the interviews eventually.

I also used my friends' and relatives' networks to approach potential candidates for interviewing. For example, one of my friends engages in television programme production. He knows a celebrity tutor at work who has presented on a local TV programme related to education. He recommended that I approach that tutor and gave me the tutor's contact number. I conducted an interview with that tutor eventually.

Furthermore, I secured some participants for the interviews through friends of friends and relatives who work for chains in different jobs, including as teaching assistants, and in marketing, administration and customer service. I did not mentioned the interview arrangement status to my friends in order to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants.

In this study, I found that the concept of confidentiality and anonymity mentioned in textbooks (e.g. Belk *et al.,* 2013; Mason, 2002; Savin-Baden and Major, 2013) was straight-forward and ideal, yet it was very challenging in practice. For example, I experienced that referrers were eager to know the interview arrangement status and give help. Meanwhile, I tried to seek referrers' help to arrange interviews with potential candidates, especially when I had difficulties arranging the interviews myself.

I believe that a researcher should learn how to manage a harmonious relationship with (potential) interviewees and any parties involved in the snowball sampling in research. In sum, it is noticeable that unexpected things can occur at any time during a research process including during the data collection. A researcher, particularly a greenhorn like me, should prepare well for facing and managing frustration and failure while conducting research.

4.5.5 Criteria of Participant Recruitment

A variety of stakeholders such as students, parents, competitors, like small scale tutoring centres, and even the government may be involved directly or indirectly in the creation and maintenance of celebrity tutors. Yet it was necessary to balance the depth and width of the data collection. It was considered unrealistic to try and cover every single stakeholder in the research; this could have caused the research to lose its focus and make it difficult to complete.

Meanwhile, it was still possible to acquire opinions or influences by stakeholders indirectly from assessing the target potential participants. This is because the target potential participants' operation and decision-making may be influenced by their stakeholders, which may reflect the participants' opinions given in the interview. Besides, this research aimed to explore the phenomenon under study from the perspective of practitioners. Hence, I decided to select staff including management and staff at the operational level of the five main chain tutoring centres, as mentioned in section 2.3.

I decided that the criteria for the recruitment of the participants would be people who were working, or had worked for any chain tutoring centres in Hong Kong and had experience in the participation of creation and maintenance of celebrity tutors. That means that potential participants are/were responsible for decision making for

their chain, participation in terms of tutoring directly or indirectly and/or participation in marketing communication, directly or indirectly.

I considered that the participants' engagement in the sector was appropriate to reflect their experience of the phenomena of celebrity tutors and celebrity tutor endorsement, under study. These people were assumed to have the best ability to provide meanings to the research questions. They comprised a range of people in different functions such as tutoring, administration, management, marketing, customer service, etc. I considered that their expertise could offer insights into the research questions in the study. I also considered that their expertise could provide a comprehensive view in relation to the phenomenon under study. Preference was given to those candidates who were working for the five main chain tutoring centres. The five chains are defined as follows:

i. Their business covers both core and elective academic subjects for secondary school students;
ii. They have branches in the three main districts in Hong Kong, namely Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and New Territories;
iii. They offer both live and video tutorials for a subject;
iv. They have had advertisements in newspapers, and/or billboards or posters on building walls, and/or at train/underground train stations, and/or on the exterior of public transport such as buses, trains and/or underground trains in the past 12 months.

4.5.6 Interview Arrangement

The initial recruitment was assisted by my contacts. My contacts provided me with the name and telephone number of potential candidates who fitted the

inclusion criteria for the study and had agreed to participate in the interviews. I approached the potential participants for interviews mainly through the instant mobile messaging apps WhatsApp. WhatsApp has become one of most popular mobile communication applications in Hong Kong and 93% of Hongkongers use it in 2015 (Woodhouse, 2015). It allows instant communication free of charge, while leaving the receiver the right to respond. I also made a telephone call to the potential candidates when there were any sudden changes, such as traffic or the need to change the interview time and/or place. I believe that a direct dialogue over the phone can avoid any delay or misunderstanding from the use of instant messaging in urgent or sudden cases.

I prepared a brief introduction in my initial WhatsApp message regarding the purpose of this study, the interview settings and protection for the interviewees in the interview arrangement. Two interview dates and times were proposed. The two choices were over the next few days after the initial contact to avoid potential problems occurring in between the contact date and the proposed date. This is because people may know more clearly their current availability rather than that far away from the present. Furthermore, the potential candidates were asked to propose their best alternative if the two suggested dates did not fit their availability. This was done to minimise the correspondence for the interview arrangement and avoid potential challenges such as deferment or rejection.

Certain participants wanted to clarify the nature of the study, the purpose of the interview and/or identity protection and nature of this research. Although the introductory message stated the purpose of the interview, I found that by having a direct conversation I built a rapport with participants and this sped up the interview arrangement. Besides, there was a case that I experienced where the café chosen for the interview was crowded and very noisy I searched for an alternative nearby immediately. I called the participant about the change, directed him to the new venue and explained the reasons for the change; eventually the interview was held on time. I considered that in handling sudden cases like this, a direct conversation

with the participant would be more effective than using other correspondence methods such as instant messaging.

The result of the interview arrangement varied. Approximately half of the interviewees were not available on the suggested dates and/or times. As a result, I followed the candidates' counter-offer for their best alternative. The majority of the interviews were conducted in the afternoon. This was because initially I considered that the chain tutoring centres start business after school hours, which is around 1600 hours. I tried to arrange the interviews in the morning, assuming that the potential candidates would be free to meet in the morning and would have more time for the interview.

However, during these interview arrangements, I found that an interview time of around noon or early afternoon suited the participants better. Therefore, I shifted the proposed interview times to early afternoon in subsequent arrangements, which made them smoother. This experience reflects that a researcher should be sensitive in interview settings and flexible to adjust interview arrangements because of any deviation between expected and in the actual situation found in the interviewing process (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009; King and Horrocks, 2010).

I also learnt from the interview arrangements that the availability of participants and their preferred interview time reflects their business formats, such as their business hours and convenience. For example, some participants told me that they had to work until late at night so they preferred not to work in the morning. This matches with their business hours, which start in the late afternoon. And if the interview could be done prior to their work that could save their time and/or minimise any impact on their time management.

Additionally, although I explained to the participants the protection of their privacy and the confidentiality nature of the study, I found that the participants preferred meeting in a venue that was not close to their chain tutoring centre, or even in

another district. This reflects that the participants were hesitant to be seen by other people such as their colleagues or students. Hence, I recognised that more attention should be paid to the interview arrangement and that a balance was needed between choosing a venue for the interview and the potential threat of being seen accidentally by pedestrians, which may have harmed the confidentiality and privacy of the participants.

Researchers in different disciplines (e.g. Easterby-Smith *et al.,* 2012; Kvale and Aarhus, 2009; Nicholl, 2010) suggest how to collect data, including through interviewing, for research purposes; yet it should be recognised that researchers may encounter unforeseen difficulties while collecting data (Dearnley, 2005; Rimando *et al.,* 2015). Different scholars have a common understanding that the arrangement of interviews can be challenging (Brayda and Boyce, 2014; King and Horrocks, 2010; Roulston, 2011).

There are time issues, in regard to rescheduling when participants' dairies change, and also in terms of getting to the interviews, that I encountered in the study, which are rarely discussed in the textbooks under methods or explanations. However, on reflection I feel that these are important to know about in planning research. This was something I experienced and have reflected upon.

It is commonly agreed in the literature on qualitative research that interviewing is a time-consuming process (Bryman, 2012; Rossman and Rallis, 2017). The interviews themselves in this study lasted between 32 to 265 minutes, with an average time of 82 minutes. I found that it was very challenging to maintain the interviewees' motivation. This experience echoes the claim of Berg (2007: 210) that it is important for interviewers to maintain their *'interviewee's motivation by keeping boredom at bay'*.

I treasured every interview opportunity to collect the participant's voice about the research questions. In the fifth interview, the participant was my friend and was

also a gatekeeper for the study. We spent almost a whole afternoon together. I tried to sow a seed for snowball sampling during the interview process. However, I recognised that a research interview is not a social meeting and it was difficult to maintain my focus and the interviewee's motivation over a long period of time. Therefore, I found that a researcher should concentrate on collecting data related to the research in the interview and should know when to finish the interview smoothly, as argued by Berg and Lune (2012). This may also be helpful to keep the interviewee's motivation during and after the interview.

Additionally, I experienced another case in which I found that the participant was impatient and hesitated to talk. The establishment of empathy and a rapport is essential in an interview process (Manning and Kunkel, 2014; Partington, 2001). Interviewing is situation-based so each interview is unique (Brinkmann, 2013; King and Horrocks, 2010). When I realised that it was not possible to acquire a rapport with the participant and that the situation was becoming poor, I decided to finish the interview earlier than expected, so as to maintain a friendly atmosphere. Hence, I learnt that a researcher should be sensitive to the interview process and respect the participant in any circumstances including losing a rapport or having an awareness of when to finish an interview.

4.5.7 Summary of Interviews

A total of 27 interviews were carried out between July 2015 and December 2015. Tables 4.2 and 4.3 show a summary of the interview process. The composition of the interviewees includes chain founders, directors, administration staff, customer service staff, marketing staff, tutors, and teaching assistants. They came from four chain tutoring centres in Hong Kong, out of the five targeted main chains. There were 16 females and 11 males. One of the interviewees had retired approximately three years prior to the date of the interview, and the rest were still active in the industry. 26 interviews were conducted in cafés or restaurants. One interview

was conducted in the late evening in the tutor's chain tutoring centre after the end of the interviewee's tutorial, on her request.

The average interview time was 82 minutes, with a few exceptions. In general, I spent around five to ten minutes warming up with the participants and elaborating the informed consent and related protection of their confidentiality and anonymity. 70% of the participants were tutors and four were also management. The average work experience of the participants was 9.7 years, but it varied from one year to 32 years.

Total number of interviews	27	
Gender - Total number of male interviewees - Total number of female interviewees	 11 16	 41% 59%
Total number of teaching personnel Total number of non-teaching personnel	19 8	70% 30%
Average interview time	82 minutes	
Average work experience in shadow education	9.7 years	
Total number of interviewees working for Chain A Total number of interviewees working for Chain B Total number of interviewees working for Chain C Total number of interviewees working for Chain D Total number of interviewees working for Chain E	7 8 10 2 0	26% 30% 37% 7% 0%
Active in the industry as of 31 Dec 2015 Inactive in the industry as of 31 Dec 2015	26 1	96% 4%

Table 4.2 Statistics of Interviews

#	Date	Pseudonym	Gender	Chain	Job Title	Years of experience in shadow education	Active in the sector	Interview Start time	Interview End time	Duration (Min)	Interview Venue
1	24-07-2015	Alice	F	D	Tutor, English	3	Y	1440	1542	62	Café
2	30-07-2015	Albert	M	A	Customer Service Manager	6	Y	1445	1640	115	Café
3	31-07-2015	Andy	M	C	Tutor, English, Director	12	Y	0855	1100	125	Café
4	31-07-2015	Amy	F	B	Administration Manager	1	Y	1855	1938	43	Café
5	19-08-2015	Brenda	F	D	Tutor, English, Founder, CEO	18	Y	1250	1715	265	Café
6	15-09-2015	Cindy	F	B	Tutor, English	4	Y	1117	1206	49	Café
7	17-09-2015	Cynthia	F	B	Marketing Manager	5	Y	1729	1830	61	Café
8	22-09-2015	Charles	M	A	Tutor, Chemistry	16	Y	1600	1650	50	Café
9	02-10-2015	Doris	F	C	Teaching Assistant, Chinese	8	Y	1030	1128	58	Café
10	05-10-2015	Elisa	F	C	Tutor, Economics	21	Y	1510	1557	47	Café
11	06-10-2015	David	M	B	Customer Service Manager	6	Y	1530	1633	63	Café
12	07-10-2015	Florence	F	A	Teaching Assistant, Chinese	6	Y	1616	1716	66	Café
13	09-10-2015	Eric	M	A	Teaching Assistant, Chinese	8	Y	0925	1110	105	Café
14	09-10-2015	Flora	F	C	Senior Customer Service Executive	1	Y	1240	1335	55	Café
15	09-10-2015	Frank	M	A	Teaching Assistant, Chinese	8	Y	1945	2120	95	Café
16	15-10-2015	Helen	F	B	Assistant Operation Manager	2	Y	1312	1400	48	Café
17	26-10-2015	Joyce	F	A	Tutor, Chinese	5	Y	1645	1857	132	Café
18	27-10-2015	Henry	M	B	Teaching Assistant, English	3	Y	1010	1139	89	Café

#	Date	Pseudonym	Gender	Chain	Job Title	Years of experience in shadow education	Active in the sector	Interview Start time	Interview End time	Duration (Min)	Interview Venue
19	02-11-2015	Jack	M	C	Tutor, Economics	11	Y	2058	2213	75	Café
20	03-11-2015	John	M	A	Chief Marketing Officer	22	Y	1310	1417	67	Café
21	06-11-2015	Michael	M	B	Tutor, English, founder, director	32	Y	1302	1440	98	Café
22	09-11-2015	Mary	F	C	Teaching Assistant, Chinese	5	Y	1303	1415	72	Café
23	17-11-2015	Nancy	F	B	Tutor, English, Executive Director, Founder, ex-CEO	28	Y	1700	1815	75	Café
24	19-11-2015	Paula	F	C	Teaching Assistant	2	Y	1458	1620	82	Café
25	25-11-2015	Peter	M	C	Tutor, Economics	6	N	1037	1210	93	Café
26	01-12-2015	Rebecca	F	B	Tutor, English	12	Y	2050	2122	32	Chain's classroom
27	03-12-2015	Susan	F	B	Course Administration Manager	10	Y	1902	2025	83	Café

Table 4.3 Summary of Interviews

4.5.8 Saturation

Myers and Newman (2007), like other researchers (e.g. Bernard *et al.,* 2016; Grbich, 2013; Richards and Morse, 2013), are clear that the idea of having a certain sample size is inappropriate in qualitative research. Researchers should ensure that the interviewed participants represent the variety and diversity, rather than a count of the interview. In this study, I recognised that idea. I accessed every potential candidate for the interviews through snowball sampling and sorted out the ones who were most likely to offer insights into the research questions, rather than interviewing all of the potential candidates for data collection. In terms of the meanings given by the participants to the research questions, I interpreted these with my own thoughts to construct an answer to the questions, following my research paradigm of interpretivism.

In qualitative interviewing, it is known that the point of reaching saturation in the interview data is more important than the number of interviewees (Collis and Hussey, 2014; Myers, 2013). Saturation refers to the point at which the information collected begins to repeat itself, indicating that further data collection is redundant (Hennink *et al.,* 2011). This was achieved gradually when participants kept referring to the same themes, which created the context for analysis.

In the fieldwork, saturation is a concept that is not a clear-cut but it emerges from time to time from a researcher's or interviewer's instant perception and interpretation during the data collection process (Bernard *et al.,* 2016; Neuman, 2011). I argue that saturation can be easily theoretically defined and described. Yet, in practice it is less clear-cut, and can only be understood in the field as something that is emergent and becomes apparent over time, rather than being a fixed point that can be clearly identified before the fieldwork begins. It is a rather subjective topic, considering the variety of professional backgrounds in the

collected sample, with the interviews encapsulated different viewpoints from different perspectives.

The concept of saturation is related to the potential codes and themes in the data analysis (Hennink *et al.,* 2011; Myers and Newman, 2007). I found that in this study, saturation was more quickly noticeable for themes that were commonly expressed, but for some themes where there were nuanced expressions saturation was less immediately confirmed. As a researcher, I needed to spend more time considering whether saturation had been achieved.

For example, I found that some participants who are tutor denied that physical attractiveness was important to their reputation and service quality. Yet, their subsequent dialogues revealed, directly or indirectly, that students do pay attention to their image when enrolling and consuming. I also acquired similar meanings in regard to the physical attractiveness of a tutor from participants in other job types. Therefore, I found that saturation emerged in term of the physical attractiveness of the celebrity tutors.

Furthermore, I found that the majority of participants agreed that a tutor's awareness and fame are critical success factors for being a celebrity tutor. That awareness is centred on a variety of elements, as discussed by the participants, including the reputation, the media exposure, the number of students enrolled in the tutor's classes and even the position of the tutor among others in an advertisement. A celebrity tutor needs to have sound awareness, which can be found from different channels. Hence, the concept of saturation may contain several layers so it is important to continue to explore underlying meanings of a likely saturated concept given by participants.

In sum, qualitative researchers like me should ensure that they acquire various voices regarding the phenomenon under study from the interviewed participants. Saturation can be easily be theoretically defined and described, but this is not a

crystal concept. It is more likely a rough direction in which data appears to be repeated. Saturation appears and varies according to the researcher's interpretation of the data. In the fieldwork, I found that it is still worth exploring further to uncover any potential meanings of the likely saturated themes given by the participants, and to confirm whether the initial interpretation of saturation is supported if participants keep referring to the same themes which created the context for analysis.

4.5.9 Reflection on Interviewing

It is generally agreed that data collection and analysis in qualitative research occur simultaneously (Marshall and Rossman, 2011; Miles *et al.,* 2014; O'Leary, 2010). The amount of information collected from the interviews is huge, less systematic and comprehensive. I concur with the claim of other researchers (e.g. Gibson and Brown, 2009; Patton, 2015; Silverman, 2013) that it is time-consuming and demanding in organising and analysing the interview data.

However, I found that only limited analysis could be done during the interviews, which is similar to arguments found in the literature (e.g. Neuman, 2011; Orvik *et al.,* 2013). This is because I needed to pay attention and to listen, think and respond. I tried to have an immediate review right after an interview and jotted down interview notes to record my thoughts. I found it helpful to refresh my memory of the interview and record any information that I may have missed during the interview. Besides, the review helped my interview arrangement such as the selection of the interview time and place, and the interview setting, such as the sequence of questioning and the composition of questions in the subsequent interviews.

Additionally, I prepared an interview guide to guide the interviews, but I found that the guide was only a reference and not a rule to follow. It was not intended to be

a standardisation mechanism that would make the interviews identical. Rather, the interview guide operated to ensure some basic lines of consistency in the subjects discussed. I used it to lead the conversation and stories of the participants to ask further questions, some of which were not the same for each interview. It needed to respond to the participants' responses, and I needed to adjust the language or conversation style so as to build a rapport and encourage the participants to talk, as discussed in the literature (Belk *et al.,* 2013; Carson *et al.,* 2001).

Although each potential interviewee was informed by the referrers or me of the objective of this research, the interview settings, the confidentiality of the interviewees and the estimated interview duration (60 to 90 minutes), nearly half of the potential interviewees and actual interviewees asked again about these concerns when we met. I found that suggesting an estimated interview duration prior to interviewing was good for both the interviewee and me. This is because they could have an expected period of time reserved for the interview. Besides, there were six participants who requested a telephone interview. Eventually, they were encouraged over the phone or by instant messaging to meet directly for the interviewing.

There were cases in which the potential interviewees were not available to meet. After a week or two, the interviewees were still not available or simply rejected the interview offer. Hence, I learnt that there was a risk of failing to arrange the interview that could increase if the interview date was set for a week from the date of the arrangement.

I had another experience regarding interview arrangement. There was a potential interviewee who had confirmed the interview initially, yet he requested to read the interview questions in advance. I emailed him the interview questions and followed up. He then refused the interview and did not respond after that. Because the interviews were voluntary and the recruitment was done by snowball sampling, I considered that pushing the potential interviewees for an interview was

improper. It could also have created tension between the referrer and the potential interviewee (referee).

There were problems when several interviews were set within a short period of time. A tight interview schedule and arranging several interviews within a short period of time influenced my concentration and interpretation. It also affected the interviewing quality such as my memory and understanding of the interview contents. For example, there were three interviews scheduled for one day, which were in the morning, during the lunch break and in the evening at different venues, due to the availability of the interviewees. The time constraint meant that I was unable to review each interview straight after it had taken place and it was also very energy demanding. Hence, I concur with Dickson-Swift *et al.* (2007) that a researcher's tiredness is one of the hindrances to data collection and can reduce the quality of the data.

The duration of the interviews was another challenge for the study. The majority of interviewees preferred to meet between their lunch break (approx. 1300 to 1400 hours) and 1600 hours, prior to the first tutorial held on weekdays, which starts from around 1630 or 1645 hours. There were non-teaching interviewees who preferred a lunch meeting or to meet in the late afternoon/evening on weekdays. None of the interviews was conducted at the weekend, which deviated from my expectation.

During the interviews, I found that weekends were busy periods for every tutor because their tutorials start in the morning and continue until the evening. This explains why the tutors preferred to meet on weekdays. However, I found that conducting interviews on weekdays was problematic because of my availability, as I have teaching work in the daytime. Therefore, I believe that more consideration of the time for the data collection should be made for research in the future.

To prevent the interviews from being held in the chain tutoring centres where the participants may have been visible to a range of stakeholders, which could have

destroyed the confidential nature of the interview and led to the risk of coercion or negative impacts on the participant's employment, I decided to arrange the interviews to be held in a third place such as a café or restaurant. The environment of a third place is less formal compared to a meeting room, office or classroom in a school. This may have helped release the tension and nervousness of both the interviewee and me (Guest *et al.,* 2013; Rimando *et al.,* 2015).

Although there are many cafés or restaurants everywhere in Hong Kong, picking ones that were appropriate to conduct an interview was challenging. First, the location of the café or restaurant had to be convenient and easily accessible, such as in a shopping mall or next to a train or underground train station. Second, the café or restaurant had to not be too crowded or noisy to avoid affecting the interview process and recording.

I encountered several problems with doing interviews during the time slots between 1200 and 1600 hours. First, I found that a lunch meeting was not appropriate to conduct the interviews because the venues, such as restaurants, were crowded and noisy so that both the interviewee and me were distracted by the environment. My reflection echoes the argument found in the literature that interviewees may hesitate to release information if they have a negative perception about the venue of the interview, or even provide erroneous responses to the interview questions for fear that the data will be used to victimise them (Legard *et al.,* 2003; Rimando *et al.,* 2015).

Second, I found that meeting for lunch was not a good option, because the interview could be disturbed while having lunch. Conducting an interview needs a researcher's concentration to listen and respond to the interviewee, yet it can be stressful for the researcher (Dickson-Swift *et al.,* 2007; King and Horrocks, 2010). I found that in addition to the dining environment, eating can disturb the interview process for both the interviewer and interviewee. As a Hongkonger, I recognised that the lunch break in Hong Kong is usually an hour. I found this to be a time

constraint to the interview because people, including the participants, are used to being in a rush to have lunch and may leave for the workplace quickly, which reduced the time available for the interview.

Third, I found another time constraint to the participants, particularly tutors, was that they needed to rush to conduct tutorials straight after the interview. As I have mentioned, some tutors were hesitant to meet in a venue close to their chain tutoring centre for fear of being seen. As a result, the interview time was influenced (shorten) because the participants needed to consider their travelling time after the interview.

Given the time limit of the approved data collection period, plus the availability of the interviewees, I realised that the interview arrangement was not going to be a straight-forward task. Overall, I felt that some of the interviews ended prematurely, such as those held in a lunch break, although most of the interviews came to a natural end, within the 90-minute time limit.

Another challenge I found in the study was the language used in the interviews. I tried to use plain English and Chinese (Cantonese), together with slang such as Tutor Kings and Tutor Queen, which are commonly found in the local media (e.g. Sharma, 2012; Tsang, 2015). I tried not to use academic terms such as celebrity, endorsement, shadow education and so forth. This was because I aimed to minimise the distance between the interviewees and me and avoid misunderstandings.

However, I found that some of the participants made efforts to speak my language, as argued by Mazeland and Have (1996), by using terms including above-the-line promotion, advertising and celebrity endorsement. There were participants who described their stories by employing marketing terms and concepts such as human branding, positioning, intangible and service quality. Hence, extra efforts were

made in the data analysis to ensure that the interpretation of the academic terms used by the interviewees could be understood properly.

Technical problems such as failure in recording or inferior recording quality may affect the transcribing and interpreting process (Guest *et al.,* 2012). In this study, I did not have any technical problems in operating my voice recorders or need to use my backup recorder in the data collection. This is because I checked my recorder and used new batteries prior to every interview to minimise any risk of malfunctioning.

I also found that it is worth investing in buying a digital voice recorder and getting familiar with its operation rather than borrowing a recorder from a third party such as the university. This is because a researcher should be very familiar with how to operate any equipment such as a voice recorder while collecting data (Bryman, 2012; Braun and Clarke, 2013). This can avoid any problems that may disturb the interview process. I found that these experiences are less mentioned in textbooks but are worth knowing and sharing with other researchers.

Besides, I visited the interview venues before conducting the interviews and tried to record in them to ensure that the quality of the recording was good. I found this to be a good exercise for a researcher to prepare for doing interviews if time and financial capacity allow it. Furthermore, in doing the transcription, I found that using headphones was better and clearer than a speaker in playing the recordings. This method allowed me to listen to the detail of the recordings, including any silences, coughs or laughs in a conversation, even though I adopted verbatim transcription and focused on transcribing the spoken words.

4.6 Ethical Consideration

It is generally agreed that every researcher should pay attention to research ethics (e.g. Christian, 2005; Hopf, 2004; Savin-Baden and Major, 2013). Hennink *et al.* (2011) argue that ethical issues related to research occur at every stage of a research process. Ethical issues are stated by the university department and professional institutes and may emerge in the research process. Research ethics is also concerned with identifying stakeholders and any corresponding ethical problems, risks, potential harm and consequent mitigation and/or response arrangements (Hallebone and Priest, 2009; Bloomberg and Volpe, 2012).

Looking across the literature, it was found that researchers should consider whether a research study will harm the participants, lack of informed consent, invasion of privacy and deception (Bryman and Bell, 2007; Neuman, 2011). Christian (2005), like Grbich (2013) and Silverman (2011), argues that data interpretation should be the leading principle and that no omission or fraud with the collection and analysis of data should occur. The ethical considerations in this research were based on the above principles and the guidance of the university.

Furthermore, I considered the data management and storage because poor management of the data can cause the risk of data leakage or loss of data. I prepared a master file, which contained the real name and pseudonym of each participant. The master file, all of the audio-recordings, and the related transcripts were password-protected and stored in a secured location. Besides, a backup of the data and the master file with the same level of password protection was made and stored in a separate and secured location.

I understood that any data leakage could harm the participants and their stakeholders and damage the confidentiality and anonymity. Loss of the data could have influenced my study's progress and created additional costs such as time for data re-collection. Re-collation could have been very difficult or even

impossible because the participants may have refused to redo the interviews and confusion would have arisen due to breaking my promises regarding my data management and integrity.

In sum, I recognised that there were certain ethical risks involved in this research. Meanwhile, I considered appropriate ways to manage those ethical risks. Details of these issues were filed in the application for research ethics approval, which was granted by the School of Business Research Ethics Committee of the university.

4.7 Data Analysis

This section addresses the research findings and data analysis regarding the phenomena of celebrity tutors and celebrity tutor endorsement in the Hong Kong shadow education sector. It is commonly agreed that data collection and data analysis are conducted concurrently (Guest *et al.,* 2012; Miles *et al.,* 2014; Savin-Baden and Major, 2013). Looking across the literature (e.g. Bryman, 2012; Myers, 2013; O'Leary, 2010), no single qualitative data analysis method was found that is widely accepted by all researchers. Collis and Hussey (2014) argue that the data collection in qualitative research can incorporate the basis of analysis, which makes it difficult to distinguish methods by purpose. The flexible nature of qualitative research allows researchers to blend a variety of methods to collect and/or analyse data that match with their research objectives and research questions.

4.7.1 Thematic Analysis

Looking across different methods of data analysis in qualitative research such as hermeneutics, semiotics and narrative analysis in the literature (e.g. Berg and Lune, 2012; Grbich, 2013; Myers, 2013), Braun and Clarke (2013) argue that thematic analysis is a qualitative method of analysing data that is suitable for most types of

research questions and qualitative research methods. It is widely used across different disciplines in social science such as education, psychology and business, yet there is a lack of a clear and agreed definition about what thematic analysis is (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Guest *et al.,* 2012). This is because several qualitative approaches use a similar approach with different names by identifying patterns and selecting interested patterns to report on research reports (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The flexible nature of thematic analysis is suitable for an inductive analysis of exploratory research that is not shaped by existing theories, such as this study, in which meanings related to the research questions emerged from the data (Hennink *et al.,* 2011; Myers, 2013).

Thematic analysis is a method of data analysis in which themes are data-driven in an inductive and bottom-up approach (Braun and Clarke, 2006). It uses a systematic approach to identify, analyse and report common themes across a dataset in relation to the research questions through data coding for inductive studies (Guest *et al.,* 2012; Patton, 2015). I considered that this approach fitted the nature of this inductive study.

An inductive approach refers to the fact that the themes identified are strongly linked to the data itself (Hallebone and Priest, 2009; Patton, 2015). It provides a flexible and useful research tool that can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex account of the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 16). I considered that the exploratory nature of this study made thematic analysis appropriate for my data analysis. This was because I can use it to examine the ways in which experiences and meanings are effects of discourses operating within the phenomena of the celebrity tutors and celebrity tutor endorsement under study. Therefore, I selected thematic analysis as my data analysis method in this study.

It is commonly agreed that analysing interview data involves a series of steps including transcription, coding, theme searching and naming (Creswell, 2013; King and Horrocks, 2010; Punch, 2014). In an interview like the interviews I conducted

for this study, the interviewer has a discussion with the interviewee(s) centred on the research questions. The interview is often recorded via audio recording (Braun and Clarke, 2013; Bryman, 2012) for recall and analysis later. This was what I did in this study.

After the interviews, I transcribed the interview conversation records, which is described as one of steps in conversation analysis (Swanborn, 2010; Mason, 2002). King and Horrocks (2010), like other researchers (e.g. Berg and Lune, 2012; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009; Langdridge, 2004), state that transcription is the process of transforming recorded voice interview data into text as the first step of analysis. Through the transcription process and subsequent analysis, I became familiar with the data. I found that analysing the transcriptions of the interviews was more appropriate to interpret the voices of the participants towards the research questions, rather than a simultaneously analysis while collecting data in the interviews, as stated in the literature (Neuman, 2011; Myers, 2013).

The interview transcription and analysis in this study were carried out in the language in which the data had been collected in order to preserve the nuances of meaning that can often be lost in translation. Selected quotes were translated into English by me. As a qualitative researcher, my stance is emic, in that I view the phenomenon under study from the perspective of insiders (Easterby-Smith *et al.,* 2012; Rossman and Rallis, 2017). Adopting an emic orientation, I operated as an engaged co-participant working in the field with other participants, who continually generate and interpret data into meanings that address the research questions.

It is generally agreed that doing transcription is a process of data analysis (Bernard *et al.,* 2016; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). I made the transcripts myself as a part of the data analysis on the same day as the interview or within weeks of the interview. This was to avoid missing data from the interview, particularly my understanding of the meanings given by the participants, and to avoid the risk of mixing up different interview contents. I adopted a verbatim transcription

approach, which focuses on transcribing spoken words in the recorded data. Braun and Clarke (2013) suggest that the verbatim transcription method reflects interview dialogues in a dynamic way that is suitable for doing thematic analysis.

Doing the transcription also helped me to understand the meanings given by the participants and allowed me to adjust questions and ways of questioning in subsequent interviews. Besides, I considered that by doing the transcription myself, I could maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of the data and the participants, and prevent the risk of data leakage that may occur when using an external transcription service.

Looking across the literature (e.g. Lampert and Edwards, 1993; Lapadat and Lindsay, 1999), it can be seen that there are different ways of transforming spoken conversations into written texts. Several methods of transcription have been developed for specific forms of analysis, such as the Jefferson system for conversation analysis (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1988). Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that thematic analysis does not require the same level of detail in the transcription as conversation analysis due to its flexible nature. On the methodological level it is important that '*the transcription convention is practically suited to the purpose of analysis*' (Edwards, 1993: 19). The literature does not show a single way to perform thematic analysis and there is no one agreed set of guidelines to follow when producing a transcript (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Guest *et al.*, 2012).

However, Mason (2002), like other researchers (e.g. Braun and Clarke, 2006; Lampert and Edwards, 1993) argue that it is important to have a rigorous and thorough orthographic transcript that is a verbatim account of all verbal utterances. I agree with this claim that a transcript should retain the data required from the verbal accounts in the nearest way possible to the original nature of a conversation. In this study, I followed this tradition and I believe that a very detailed approach is not required and not the convention in consumer interpretive research. What I

focused on in the transcription was on the words and stories, in looking to capture the expressed narrative of the lived experience by the participants. I believed that these narratives could help me understand and interpret the participants' shared experiences and meanings with regard to the research questions.

After finishing the interviews for the data collection, I began transcribing the data into written form. This is an imperative step for a researcher to familiarise themselves with the data. Different conventions exist for transforming spoken texts into written texts (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Lapadat and Lindsay, 1999). Thematic analysis, even constructionist thematic analysis, does not require the same level of detail in the transcript as conversation, or even narrative analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

The process of transcription was a good opportunity to start familiarising myself with the data, as argued by Riessman (1993). I concur with the claim of Lapadat and Lindsay (1999) that this process is beyond a mechanical act of putting spoken sounds on papers, but a process of creating meanings from the data in relation to the research questions. To transcribe the data, I firstly listened to the audio recordings of the interviews to familiarise myself and refresh my memory of them. Then, I replayed the audio recording and paused it repeatedly to write the conservation on a word file. This process was repeated until the transcription of the interviews was complete. It took me approximately 10 months to complete all 27 interview transcriptions. Furthermore, I labelled several time marks throughout the transcript to facilitate retrieving the relevant recording section. I found this practice useful and efficient to access the recordings.

4.8 Reflection on Transcribing Process

Transcribing interviews is a time-consuming and complicated process (King, 2004; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009) and researchers can be faced with the challenges of

bias or omission occurring during the transcript recalling and transcribing process (Bryman, 2012; King and Horrocks, 2010). Meanwhile, there is a time constraint in research, which should be completed within the time frame of the PhD programme.

Additionally, I found that language was another challenge in the transcription process. The Cantonese that the participants and I used in the interviews is a dialect of the Chinese language that cannot be written completely. I needed to label a time mark on the conversation written in the transcript to indicate parts that could not be transcribed directly. This was done to facilitate the data analysis and retrieval of the audio recordings during the analysis. This was to ensure that no missing or no misunderstanding of the voices of the participants occurred. However, this practice caused additional work in the transcription and data analysis. Although there is computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software such as NVivo and ATLAS for qualitative researchers (Braun and Clarke, 2013; Bryman, 2012), my experience of the language challenge was noticeable to other researchers in considering the use of software to analyse qualitative data. Particularly, those software may not be applicable or fit well to a particular dialect of language like the Cantonese I used in the study.

4.9 Coding

Coding is a process of identifying data in the transcripts and developing abstractions from the data related to the research questions (Braun and Clarke, 2013; Gibbs, 2007). It is a formal representation of analytical thinking in the process of data analysis (Guest *et al.,* 2012; Marshall and Rossman, 2011). It is commonly agreed that coding is a primary process for developing themes within data, which recognises important moments in the dataset and encodes them before interpretation (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2012; Richards and Morse, 2013).

Braun and Clarke (2013) suggest two main approaches to coding in pattern-based forms of qualitative analysis: selective coding and complete coding. Selective coding means identifying a corpus of instances of the phenomenon that a researcher is interested in and selecting those through data reduction, whereas complete coding refers to identifying anything and everything of interest or relevance to answering the research questions within the entire dataset (Braun and Clarke, 2013). I considered these two approaches and found that complete coding was appropriate for the study. This is because the study is exploratory in nature, and aims to explore the unknown regarding the phenomena of celebrity tutors and celebrity tutor endorsement. And given the limitation of Cantonese in doing the transcription, using complete coding could avoid missing any voices from each transcript.

After completing the transcripts and reading them all repeatedly, I had familiarised myself with the data and had generated an initial list of ideas about what was in the data and what was interesting about them. This refers to the basic element of the raw data that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon (Boyatzis, 1998: 63).

Braun and Clark (2006) argue that the core of the coding was to identify potential patterns in the data so as to form themes to address the research questions. I initially identified the codes and then matched them with data extracts that referred to that code, to ensure that all of the actual data extracts had been coded and collated together within each code. Throughout the entire data set, I identified interesting aspects of the data, which formed the basis of the repeated patterns. I copied the codes from the individual transcripts and collated them together in separate computer files.

The process of coding in the extracts involved the use of notes on the texts and marking of the texts to indicate potential patterns and to identify relevant segments of the data. In this stage, I started generating initial codes from the data, which

appeared the most basic segment of the raw data that may be used in a useful way regarding the phenomenon under study, as claimed by Braun and Clark (2006).

Coding can be done either manually or through qualitative data analysis software (Kelle, 2004; Seale, 2013). Qualitative researchers use software such as NVivo and CAQDAS to help analyse qualitative data (Bryman, 2011; Silverman, 2013). The software is commonly used to code segments of data according to some conceptual scheme. However, I concur with some researchers (e.g. Braun and Clarke, 2006; Savin-Baden and Major, 2013; Myers, 2013) that this software is only a tool and in qualitative research the researchers are core to co-developing the meanings to the research questions so I did the coding by hand. I found that this practice also helped me to understand the data for analysis.

Furthermore, I considered the availability of the qualitative software and the characteristics of Cantonese such as the involvement of metaphors and sentence structure. I chose to do the coding manually by firstly printing out the transcripts and using markers to mark potential patterns. I coded the extracts of the data extensively and inclusively so as to keep a little of the surrounding data. Individual extracts from the data were coded into various themes as they fitted so an extract could be coded as many times as relevant, as described by Braun and Clarke (2013).

I encountered contradictions and duplications in the coded data. For example, several participants' voices showed that the physical appearance of a tutor is important to his or her celebrity status for attracting the attention of students or even the public. Meanwhile, the participants claimed that they paid less attention to their physical appearance because their competitiveness was linked to their expertise in their tutoring subjects and their tutoring skills. They argued that highlighting their physical appearance in promotions seems not to be professional. Hence, I coded these conversations across different categories, including physical appearance, expertise and perceived credibility. My thematic map did not attempt

to smooth out or ignore the tensions and inconsistences within and across the data items but to explore them further.

4.10 Themes

A theme refers to a phrase or sentence that identifies what a unit of data is about and what it means (Guest *et al.,* 2012; Saldana, 2009) as an outcome of coding (Gibbs, 2007). Bernard *et al.* (2016) suggest that themes are abstract constructs that link expressions found in texts, images and sounds induced from the data. A theme refers to a level of patterned response or meaning from the data relating to the research questions (Bernard *et al.,* 2016; Braun and Clarke, 2013). It captures a common and recurring pattern across a dataset that is clustered around a central organising concept. A theme describes different facets of that singular idea and demonstrates the theme's patterning in the dataset.

Braun and Clarke (2006), like other researchers (e.g. Bernard *et al.,* 2016; Savin-Baden and Major, 2013) argue that good themes should be distinctive and reflect the most meaningful meanings to answer the research questions. In the data analysis and coding process, I found that data analysis started with description where the data were simply organised and coded to show patterns in the semantic contents towards my research questions. This is consistent with my philosophical and paradigmatic approach of interpretivist research, in which the meanings to my research questions were constructed by the efforts of the informants and me.

4.10.1 Searching for Themes

Searching for themes starts when all the data have been initially coded and collated (Bernard *et al.,* 2016; Silverman, 2011). It involves generating a long list of different codes that have been identified across the data. Then, the different codes

are sorted into potential themes and all of the relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes are collated (Braun and Clarke, 2013; Savin-Baden and Major, 2013). At this stage, I began considering how different codes may be combined to form an overarching theme and ended with a collection of possible themes and sub-themes.

After coding and collating the data, I started sorting and mapping the different codes into potential themes and collating all of the relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes. I analysed the relationship between codes, between themes and between different levels of themes and sub-themes. After that, I found that a clearer picture, which was an overarching theme, emerged from the themes related to the research questions. Hence, I agree with Braun and Clarke (2013) that each theme has a clear focus and purpose and is relatively discrete.

4.10.2 Reviewing Themes

This stage begins when a set of possible themes is ready and involves the refinement of those themes. It becomes evident that some candidate themes are not really independent themes, while other might collapse into each other. Other themes are divided into sub-themes. I started to refine those themes by reading all of the collated extracts for each theme and analysing whether they appeared to generate a coherent pattern. I referred to Patton's (2015) suggestion for dual criteria judging categories, which are internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity, for the analysis. I aimed to analyse the data within themes that cohered together meaningfully, yet there were clear and identifiable difference between the themes.

In reviewing the themes, when the candidate themes appeared to form a coherent pattern, I moved on to the second level of this phase. When a possible theme did not fit, I considered whether I needed to change the theme itself, or whether I should

find another theme for this particular segment. Once I had found that the theme could outline the case that came up from the data, I moved on to the next stage.

The next stage involves an analysis of the entire data set. I considered the validity of individual themes regarding the data set. I tried to read the entire data set repeatedly to pursue whether the themes represented it. I also tried to identify any additional data within themes that I had missed at the earlier stages.

I tried to create a thematic map, as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), to analyse the relationship between the candidate themes and sub-themes. This is a visual map that offers a mode to visually explore and refine the connections between these themes. I found that the map was like a puzzle or a net, which was helpful for associating candidate themes into specific topics or themes. In the study, I analysed the transcripts on paper, used markers to mark the conversations as a coding process and cut the marked conversations into pieces for mapping. Among the whole set of candidate themes, I had a clear understanding of what the different themes meant and how they fitted together and the overall picture they illustrated about the data.

4.10.3 Defining and Naming Themes

After reviewing the themes, I moved on to define and further refine the themes and analysed the data within them that would be presented for the analysis. I tried to organise the themes into a coherent and internally consistent order with an accompanying narrative. The themes illustrated their meanings and how they fitted into the overall picture that represented the data in relation to my three research questions. In this stage of the refinement, I decided which themes were appropriate to answer the research questions and which could be excluded.

Four themes were constructed from the analysis to address the three research questions from two perspectives. The themes of *identity* and *media coverage* concern the creation and maintenance of celebrity tutors from a micro perspective. The themes of *match* and *risk reduction* concern the motives for creating celebrity tutors rather than hiring existing celebrities from other industries for endorsement.

4.11 Summary

In this chapter, I have critically evaluated the different research philosophies and methodologies in regard to my research objectives and research question. Given that the study is exploratory and the research questions are open-ended, I found that the interpretivist approach was appropriate for the study and my philosophical stance.

I have described the process of data collection and analysis and also reflected on the challenges and the way that these were managed, providing critical reflective comments on the gap between how research practice is presented in textbooks and the literature and the lived experience of doing research. Particular attention has been paid to the issue of language in the interviewing, which influenced the transcription and analysis, and may be worth noting for other researchers.

Between July 2015 and December 2015, I conducted a total of 27 semi-structured in-depth interviews through snowball sampling. I collected insights from the practitioners who had different job functions and were engaged in the four main chain tutoring centres in Hong Kong. I considered that thematic analysis was appropriate for the interpretivist paradigm of this exploratory research. Upon analysing the data using the thematic analysis method, I identified four themes to answer the three research questions.

I believe that there is no right or wrong research approach; the researcher must just choose one that is suitable to investigate the research phenomenon and research questions. Mason (2002: 188) suggests that qualitative researchers should be *'ensuring – and demonstrating to others – that your data generation and analysis have not only been appropriate to the research questions, but also thorough, careful, honest and accurate'*. I hope that I have achieved this, although there are other research methods that could be used to investigate the phenomenon under study.

5 FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the research findings aiming to uncover the phenomenon of celebrity tutors and their promotion in the Hong Kong shadow education sector. It is organised into four sections. I firstly provide a historical review of the sector in the past seven decades to illustrate the development of shadow education and the influence of celebrity tutors in it. Then, the four themes identified from the thematic analysis in respect to the three research questions are addressed within section 5.3 to 5.5.

The first section will examine the development of shadow education in Hong Kong in the past seven decades based on my observation and journalist reports, following the growth of Hong Kong after World War II. I propose three stages and six milestones to illustrate the dynamic characteristics of the shadow education sector and its change over time, which is influenced by the needs and wants of society.

The second section will explore the meanings of celebrities and celebrity tutors given by the participants. It aims to view the phenomenon of celebrity tutors through the lens of practitioners, which is related to the first research question regarding how the celebrity tutors are created and maintained.

The third section will further address the first research question by elaborating the multiplicity of role-practices of the celebrity tutors. It aims to understand how the celebrity tutors are created and maintained via the multiple roles as human brand rather than endorser via celebrification. The sources and traits of the celebrity tutors will also be discussed in this section.

The fourth section will address the celebritisation of shadow education in Hong Kong, which is related to the second and third research questions. It aims to

explore the motives of the practitioners in regard to using celebrity tutors to participate in advertising and promotion, rather than hiring celebrities from the existing pool of celebrities to promote their tutoring business. Exceptional cases were identified, however, and their effectiveness and the reasons behinds them will be discussed.

5.2 Development of Shadow Education in Hong Kong

Demand for education in Hong Kong rose sharply after World War II, due to refugees coming from China after the establishment of the new regime in China led by the communist party in 1949 (Law, 2014). Meanwhile, private tutoring emerged in Hong Kong after the war. Journalists argue that the rise of private tutoring that time can be explained by a lack of sufficient schools and a proper school education policy in respect to the sudden increase in demand (Pak and Tse, 2015; Wong and Cho, 2007).

I have attempted to provide a background to shadow education in Hong Kong in the past seven decades, between the 1950s and 2018. It aims to illustrate the development of the sector and the emergence of celebrity tutors led by the leading chain tutoring centres. I have classified the history of shadow education in Hong Kong into three stages: the post-war stage, the growth stage and the mature stage. This classification of the stages aims to illustrate the development of shadow education regarding its different characteristics and innovation over the past seven decades.

5.2.1 The Post-war Stage

I propose that the post-war stage of shadow education in Hong Kong was the period between the 1950s and 1980s. In this stage, opportunities for school education were limited and it was perceived to be expensive by the public (Shou, 2015). Competition for secondary school education among children was keen due to an insufficient supply of school education vacancies (Wong and Cho, 2007). The media reveal that tutoring in Hong Kong was not popular in the 1950s/60s on when tutoring was served by individuals such as school teachers or senior students for junior students on one-to-one basis for extra earning (Shou, 2015; Wong and Cho, 2007). In the 1970s, tutoring still operated mainly on a one-to-one basis, yet tutoring centres emerged that operated on a small scale, serving the neighbourhood, and pairs of students were tutored by a tutor who had originally been a school teacher (Pak and Tse, 2015; Shou, 2015).

The media reveal that English language was the main tutoring subject in the post-war stage because of the relatively poor standard of English among locals at that time (*Apple Daily*, 2006a; Yau and Au-Yeung, 2006). Wong and Cho (2007) reveal that under the British colonial government, western people and people who could speak English were perceived as superior to the local Chinese in general in Hong Kong. They argue that Hongkongers considered that the English language was a key to success in society regarding pursuing tertiary education and career development in the job market. I have observed that at present, English is still perceived to be important in Hong Kong due to its recognition in business worldwide, despite the transfer of sovereignty to the Chinese government in 1997.

It is noteworthy and important to understand the political-structural development of the tutoring industry and the fact that school teachers in Hong Kong are prohibited by law from undertaking part-time jobs. This means that teachers who work as part-time tutor after work are used to having a low-profile in order to avoid being found out by their colleagues or even the government (*Ming Pao*, 2009a). In 1972,

there were several school teachers from Saint Louis Matriculation Evening School (closed) who were recognised as modern tutors and pioneers of contemporary tutoring centres in Hong Kong (Wong and Cho, 2007). There are tutors who are known as the founders of the current chain tutoring centres who use English names and/or initials such as Simon Chiang or CC Lee, instead of their original Chinese names, to promote the centres (Shou, 2015; Yau and Au-Yeung, 2006). Wong and Cho (2007) reveal that the English language and English names were not common in Hong Kong at that time. Using English names could draw attention from the public and associate the tutors with the English language. Some tutors even changed their names to Western names such as Paul Hill to lead the public to perceive them as English-speaking people (*Apple Daily*, 2006a; Shou, 2015).

In the 1980s, the majority of tutoring centres ran on a regional basis on a small scale, serving students in the neighbourhood (Shou, 2015; Wong and Cho, 2007). Journalists report that some of the centres started employing marketing tactics such as billboards and leaflets to promote themselves; yet the majority got their business through referrals and nearby students (*Ming Pao*, 2009a; Pak and Tse, 2015).

The three current leading chain tutoring centres, namely Beacon College, King's Glory Educational Centre Ltd and Modern Education (HK) Ltd, were established in the 1980s on a small scale, initially to serve students nearby (Lam and Chan, 2016). They did not compete with each other directly because they were located in different districts (*Apple Daily*, 2006a). This contrasts with the current competition that I observed, whereby the chain tutoring centres have a tendency to establishing branches close to their rivals in various locations. I have observed the development of the shadow education sector in Hong Kong over many years and I have summarised the main chain tutoring centres in Table 5.1 to illustrate the sector to date. The data in the table were retrieved from the chains' websites, journalist reports and my observations.

In the post-war stage, public recognition of the English language and the rising demand for learning English triggered opportunities for English tutoring. English language school teachers attempted to seek opportunities for earning. Their practice of using English names and initials to promote themselves was welcomed by students and parents (Wong and Cho, 2007). I have observed that English names and English initials are still used by the majority of celebrity tutors at present, as shown in Figures 5.1 and 5.2. I consider the format of tutors' names to be a milestone in the history of the Hong Kong shadow education sector.

Figure 5.1

Celebrity tutors of different subjects at King's Glory Educational Centre whose names are mainly read in English

Source: Retrieved from King's Glory Educational Centre's website, https://www.kge.hk/tutorial/tutors/tutors.asp (Accessed 6 Apr 2019)

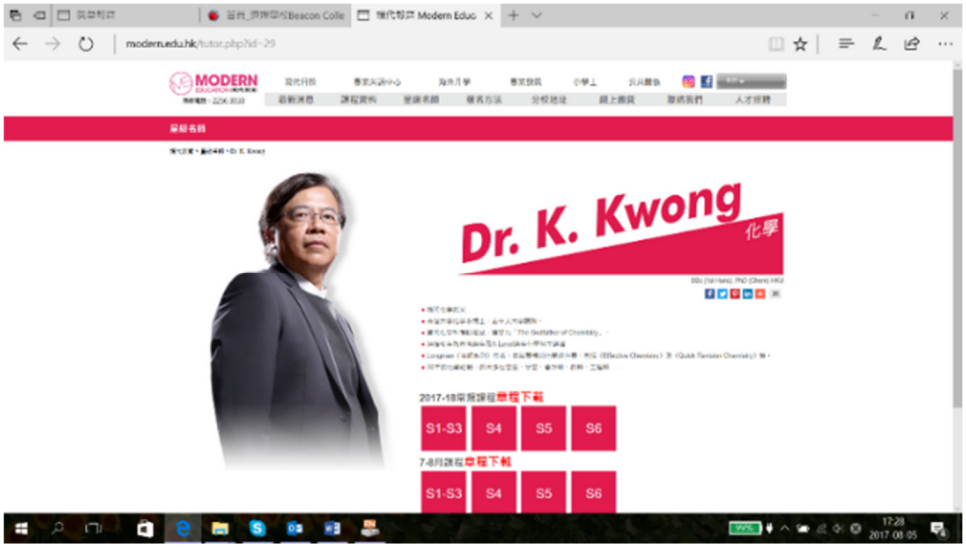


Figure 5.2

A celebrity tutor of Modern Education (HK) Ltd whose name is read in a mix of initials and the family name in English

Source: Retrieved from Modern Education (HK) Ltd's website, https://www.modern.edu.hk/tutor.php?id=29 (Accessed 5 Aug 2017)

Main Chain Tutoring Centre in Hong Kong	**Beacon College Ltd**	**Calvin Sun Education Centre**	**Ever Learning Educational Centre**	**King's Glory Educational Centre Ltd**	**Modern Education (HK) Ltd**
Year of inception and source of data	*1989*	Unknown	*1999*	*1986*	*1988*
	https://www.beacon.com.hk/about_us/intro_eng.php (Accessed: 11 Nov 2018)		Lau (2016)	*https://www.kge.hk/corp/aboutus/about_us.asp (Accessed: 11 Nov 2018)*	*Next Magazine* (2008)
Number of branch as of 11 Nov 2018	*7*	*4*	Merged with Modern Education in 2017	7 + 11 franchises	8
Number of tutor as of 11 Nov 2018	*53*	*3*	*N/A*	*35*	*40*
Number of tutoring subjects offered as of 11 Nov 2018	*15*	*3*	*N/A*	*13*	*14*
Collaboration with rivals	Selective tutors from King's Glory Educational Centre	Selective tutors from Modern Education (HK) Ltd	Merged with Modern Education in 2017	Selective tutors from Beacon College Ltd	Selective tutors from Calvin Sun Education Centre; and merged with Ever Learning Educational Centre in 2017
Website	https://www.beacon.com.hk/2011/index.php	https://www.calvinsun.hk/	https://www.facebook.com/ELCenter/	https://www.kge.hk/tutorial/main/index.asp	https://www.modern.edu.hk/

Table 5.1 Summary of the main chain tutoring centres in Hong Kong as of 11 Nov 2018

5.2.2 The Growth Stage

The shadow education in Hong Kong entered into the growth stage in the period between 1990 and 2009. In the 1990s, the development of tutoring centres accelerated rapidly. This growth has been attributed by several commentators to the money spend on advertising in a highly competitive marketplace (Pak and Tse, 2015; Ng, 2009). Shou (2015) believes that this stimulated an interest from the general public in tutoring and school education that was new and unprecedented. Extensive media coverage of tutoring related news, scandals and journalist reports triggered a series of debates in society around the need for tutoring, the quality and supply of formal school education and the appropriateness of examinations for tertiary education (Bray and Kwo, 2014; The Standard, 2012).

Wai Tsuen Shi (also known as Shi sir), founder of the A1 Institute of Education established in 1990, is recognised as one of the pioneers of the sector (Hong Kong Economic Times, 2006). Shi has made great efforts towards promotion, which has led to his tutoring and his name being known and followed by not only students and parents but also the public (Apple Daily, 2006a). Figure 5.3 shows a magazine advertisement for this tutoring centre in which the name and portrait of the tutor, a series of his record of achievements, tutorial classes and a highlight of limited offers were shown.

Figure 5.3

Magazine advertisement of A1 Institute of Education

In this advertisement, it shows the nickname of the tutor (Shi sir), his portrait, his achievement in helping students to tackle the HKCEE English language examination, and a series of English language tutoring classes with an emphasis on a tense booking status. These create an impression that the tutor is popular and has extra-ordinary power to gear up students' study and examination taking.

Source: Apple Daily of 13 May 2006 issue, retrieved: https://hk.news.appledaily.com/local/daily/article/20060513/5919645 (Accessed 5 Aug 2017)

The public's awareness of Shi and the growth of Shi's business have been attributed by several commentators to his emphasis on his ability to predict the examination questions for the HKCEE (equivalent to the GCE O-level examinations in the UK) and Hong Kong A-level examinations (equivalent to the GCE A-level examinations in the UK). These were commented and recognised by journalists and the wider public as achievements of Shi (Apple Daily, 2006a; Yau and Au-Yeung, 2006).

Although the examination-taking-oriented tutoring approach was used by a few famous tutors in the post-war stage (Wong and Cho, 2007), I consider that Shi's growth and recognition accelerated the public's recognition of tutoring as a short-cut for examination taking, and this has become a business format in the shadow

education sector. Besides, the economic prosperity of Hong Kong in the 1990s (Apple Daily, 2006a; Pak and Tse, 2015) led more families to be able to afford tutoring, which stimulated the growth of the sector. Hence, I consider that the popularity of examination-taking-oriented tutoring in the post-war stage is the second milestone in the history of shadow education in Hong Kong.

Several tutoring centres, including the three chain tutoring centres as mentioned previously, expanded their business rapidly in the early 1990s (Shou, 2015; Wong and Cho, 2007). The media described these tutoring centres focused their promotion in the accuracy of their predictions in terms of the examination questions for the HKCEE and Hong Kong A-level examinations (*Apple Daily*, 2006a; Yau and Au-Yeung, 2006). They also used hyperbolic emphasis to promote their tutors' images. The tutors were cast as successful business executives, idols or public figures, who appeared on television commercials and in advertisements in the 1990s (Pak and Tse, 2015; Wong and Cho, 2007). Zhan *et al.* (2013), like journalists (e.g. Ng, 2009; Shou, 2015), argue that these tutors' presentation tended to be high profile, like celebrities. These celebrity tutors (also known as Tutor Kings and Queens) attracted large audiences and sought to appeal to teenage culture along the lines of popular musicians and fashion stars (Bray *et al*., 2014; Sharma, 2012).

The founders of the three leading chain tutoring centres, namely Richard Eng of Beacon College, F Sham of King's Glory and Kam Lun Ng (also known as Ken sir) of Modern Education, were widely reported by the media regarding their physical appearance, wealth including their luxury houses, sports cars, and designer branded clothes, and upper-class living standards (Luk, 2006; Ng, 2009). This regular media exposure of these tutors led the public to perceive the tutors as a type of celebrity, like those celebrities in the entertainment industry, rather than school teachers (Shou, 2015; Wong and Cho, 2007). It seems that at this stage, the public learnt or were taught that there is a type of tutoring, distinct from school education, which is led by celebrity tutors.

These tutors are celebrities with an image or brand to support, which is reinforced by their practices; they collaborate with journalists to present themselves in the media, mainly newspaper and magazines, through editorials and journalist reports (e.g. Lee, 2015; Nip, 2015). Besides, Eng was reported to proactively associate his brother-and-sister relationship with a celebrity artist, Christine Ng, to expose in the entertainment industry for building awareness and receiving a wide media coverage (Law, 2006). The media also revealed that Eng had changed his surname from Ng to Eng to highlight his expertise in English tutoring, whereby Eng is a short form of English (Yau and Au-Yeung, 2006). Lee (1998) reveals that Eng's practice was not new, but followed another tutor called Paul Hill from the 1980s. Paul Hill was Chinese and altered his surname to Hill in an attempt to be perceived as an English-speaking western person. The attention of the press and media to discussing these comparisons is a marked change from previous periods, and further reinforces the idea that tutoring has moved to a celebrity basis, where the lives, personalities, and similarities and differences between prominent tutors are newsworthy and have become commonplace in the press.

Perhaps a notable example to demonstrate this is when the media revealed that certain tutors, particularly the founders of the three leading chains, attempted to imitate several leading local pop singers. These singers were labelled with the nicknames of the four heavenly kings, which originally referred to metaphoric figures, highlighting their extra-ordinary performance (Chu, 2009; 2013). Remarkably perhaps, the tutors referred to themselves as Tutor Kings and Queens, as shown in Figure 5.4 and Figure 5.5. This title, it has been suggested, reflects their ability to have a high profile and attract the attention of the public and the media (Coren, 2009; Law, 2014).

Figure 5.4

A book with the title of Something about Our Queen Tutor written by a celebrity tutor published in 2009

The contents are about the tutor's daily life and secrets in the shadow education sector.

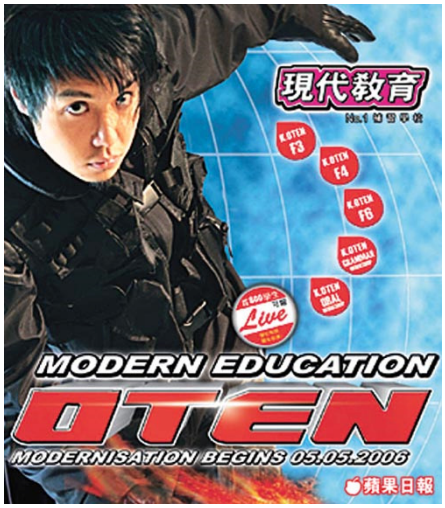


Figure 5.5

An English language tutor imitates the image of a secret agent in a film called Mission Impossible

Source: Retrieved from https://www.flickr.com/photos/raul70810/albums/72157601005056338 (Accessed: 11 May 2015)

The nicknames of Tutor Kings and Queens have been used extensively and are recognised by the media and the public (*Kan, 2008*; Wong, 2015). They are perceived as synonyms for outstanding tutors, due to their expertise and recognition for tutoring and their potential to lead students to excel in examinations (Coren, 2009; Luk, 2006). Furthermore, the media reported that celebrity tutors present as pop stars by dressing in mini-skirts and high heels; or presenting by a black-and-white suit pose giant, glittering billboards across the city (Chan, 2014; Lau, 2009; Yau, 2010), as shown in Figure 5.6. The phenomenon of celebrity tutors emerged

in the 1990s reflects the celebritisation of shadow education, which is considered as the third milestone in the shadow education sector in Hong Kong.

Figure 5.6

Poster of a chain tutoring centre in which the celebrity tutors presenting by a black-and-white suit pose giant

Source: Retrieved from Antonia Cheng's website, http://www.antoniacheng.com/upload/tips/120730.jpg (Accessed: 15 Apr 2019)

Looking across what has been described as the growth stage, it is noticeable that there was also an expansion in the variety of advertisements. Chain tutoring centres in the growth stage launched a variety of types of advertising, such as advertisements on giant billboards and on building walls, as shown in Figure 5.7, on the exteriors of public transport, such as buses as shown in Figure 5.8, and in TV commercials on buses, which attracted the attention of the public in addition to students (Ng, 2009; Carmina, 2010). As of 2018, these types of advertisements can still be found.

Figure 5.7

Giant billboards of two chain tutoring centres with celebrity tutors

Photo taken on 16 Aug 2017
Location: Bank Centre, 638 Nathan Road, Mongkok (similar to Oxford Street in London)

Figure 5.8

Calvin Sun's advertisement on the exterior of a bus, Founder and English tutor of Calvin Sun Education Centre

The advertisement highlights the tutor as a master of English

Photo taken on 13 Jan 2016
Location: Pui Ching Road, Mongkok

In this stage, the media revealed many scandals and criticism, which were centred on the celebrity tutors, mainly the lawsuits arising from the job change, promotion methods and investigation of leaking of examination questions (Man and Yau, 2010; Ming Pao, 2009). What is interesting is some tutors and students perceive these scandals and criticism such as leakage of examination questions of Hong Kong A-level or O-level examination as fame and recognition of the tutors (Kan, 2008; *Wen Wei Po*, 2010, 2011).

For example, in Figure 5.9, a tutor highlights a lawsuit against him regarding a match between his prediction of the examination questions and the actual examination questions in his advertisement. This implies his extra-ordinary power in terms of examination question prediction or accessing the secrets of examinations, which can help students excel in examination taking. This suggests a sign of growth consolidation of the industry.

Figure 5.9

A front-page advertisement for CheerUp English Specialty / Joseph Li

This advertisement lists a variety of events including a lawsuit against the tutor regarding a suspected leaking of examination questions and actual examination questions, journalist interviews and several testimonials from his students to highlight his claim of being an English prophet.

Source: AM 730, front page, 28 Sep 2016

The popularity of tutoring and its extensive promotion have attracted the attention of the public. It reflects the claim of Luhmann (2001) that whatever we know our society is what we know through the mass media. It shows how marketing and consumer culture come into the play in the growth stage. This presents evidence as celebritisation (Driessens, 2013) comes into play in the Hong Kong shadow education sector influenced by celebrity tutors and tutoring chains.

The phenomenon of celebrity tutors and tutoring methods offered by chain tutoring centres has also drawn the attention of not only journalists (Hui and Lee, 2017; Poo, 2009), but also researchers (Kwok, 2004; Bray, 2010a). Bray and his team have studied the shadow education sector, including the phenomenon of celebrity tutors found in Hong Kong in the late 1990s from the perspective of education. They argue that shadow education may negatively influence formal school education and create social inequality and burdens on families (Bray, 1999; Zhan *et al.,* 2013).

The fourth milestone in the shadow education sector in Hong Kong is classroom settings in the late 1990s. The media reveal that the operation of tutoring centres was loosely governed by the government (Coren, 2009; Wong and Cho, 2007), and a problem of over-capacity was often found in tutoring centres. One journalist reports that one hundred students worked with popular tutors in a classroom designed for 40 students (Yau, 2010).

Shi's (founder of A1 Institute of Education) high-profile presentation in the media and emphasis on examination question prediction attracted the interest of the public and the government (Wong and Cho, 2007). Shi was arrested in 1997 for fraud in regard to tuition and a breach of the education regulations, due to exceeding the classroom capacity for students (Yau and Au-Yeung, 2006). After that, the government strengthened its monitoring of the shadow education sector, which had a massive impact on the industry, and caused problems around the feasibility and the current practices of enrolment and classroom management (Coren, 2009; Yau, 2010).

The media reveal that a tutoring centre's business is closely related to its classroom capacity and enrolment (*Apple Daily*, 2004; Wong and Cho, 2007). It is interesting to see that several chain tutoring centres have invented a creative method of partitioning classrooms with glass-walls, making the classrooms virtually transparent and linking several classrooms into a big classroom (Cheng, 2007; *The Sun*, 2002), as shown in Figure 5.10.

Figure 5.10

Classrooms built with glass walls linking several classrooms as a single one

Source:
Upper – Retrieved from Dick Hui's Facebook (maths tutor of Modern Education (HK) Ltd), https://www.facebook.com/DHMP.page/photos/a.76355457327.73213.72885667327/10154951667542328/?type=3&theater (Accessed: 27 Feb 2017)

Lower – Retrieved from: The Sun, 1 Oct 2002, http://the-sun.on.cc/channels/news/20021001/20021001025815_0001.html (Accessed: 14 Apr 2019)

A tutor teaches in one classroom as in normal classroom teaching, but students sitting in not only that classroom, but also a series of classrooms where they can see the tutor through the glass-walls directly and through a television and/or projector screen, participate in the class. Meanwhile, each classroom has a teaching assistant as a symbol to fulfil the legal requirement of having a tutor in each classroom while in service (Chan, 2013; Yau and Ho, 2005). This allows a

tutor to teach several classes at once so as to retain the business volume. A tutor can serve around 200 students simultaneously, far beyond the government regulation, which stipulates an upper limit of 45 students per a teacher in a classroom (Coren, 2009; Yau, 2010). As of 2018, I have observed that this practice is still being used.

The capacity constraint arising from the government policy has been overcome by the innovative classroom settings. Journalists have criticised this, stating that such a classroom setting is tricky because it exploits students' interaction with the tutor such as with regard to questions arising in the tutoring class (Cheng, 2007; *The Sun*, 2002). However, it is noticeable that the classroom setting reflects the business skills and flexibility of the chains in response to the threat arising from the government's intervention. This practice also implies that the significance of the celebrity tutor is at the core of the tutoring industry, supported by teaching assistants whose role is secondary and related to classroom management.

Although the innovative classroom setting can expand the student capacity and business volume, the rapid expansion of chain tutoring centres in different districts since the 1990s has meant that tutors are unable to serve their students in different districts at one time (*The Sun*, 2002). To overcome this demand constraint and avoid draining businesses to rivals, chain tutoring centres have attempted to bring technology into play. They have invented a new tutoring delivery method called video tutoring (Law, 1997; Shou, 2015). This refers to recorded tutoring, whereby students sit in a classroom to watch the video, and are accompanied by a teaching assistant, who helps the students, fulfilling the legal requirement; it is like watching a film at a cinema (Pak and Tse, 2015). As of 2018, I have observed that this practice is still being used. Chain tutoring centres offer several types of video tutoring, from pure video tutoring to a mix of live and video tutoring, available at different prices.

Video tutoring represents an innovation in terms of tutoring format and classroom management. It demonstrates how the chain tutoring centres apply information and communication technology (ICT) to organise and deliver teaching so as to extend their teaching capacity, which in return extends understandings of ICT in the literature on education and shadow education (Pelgrum and Law, 2003; Fu, 2013). I consider this to be the fifth milestone in the shadow education sector in Hong Kong.

5.2.3 The Mature Stage

The mature stage of shadow education in Hong Kong is defined as the period between 2010 and the present (2018). Hong Kong's education system was reformed in 2009 through the introduction of the New Academic Structure (Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority, 2017). This reform has led the shadow education sector to move to the mature stage, which has had a massive impact on schools and the shadow education sector in terms of business volume and business diversity.

The Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (DSE) is a new university entrance examination that has replaced the previous HKCEE (for matriculation) and Hong Kong A-level examinations (for university entrance) (Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority, 2017). The number of students taking the DSE has dropped dynamically compared to that for the previous two examinations under the previous educational system. The number of students taking the HKCEE and Hong Kong A-levels was approximately 160,000 in every academic year under the previous system. Nevertheless, the number of students taking the DSE is approximately 60,000 (37.5% of 160,000) annually (Hui and Lee, 2017; Pak and Tse, 2015). Therefore, it is clear to see that demand for preparing for the DSE is less than 40% compared to the previous number of students under the previous system. The reform has therefore created a threat to the shadow

education sector, particularly the chain tutoring centres because their core business relies on students taking the two examinations (HKCEE and Hong Kong A-level examinations) (*Apple Daily*, 2006; Pak and Tse, 2015).

The results of the first few rounds of the DSE, since 2012, shocked students and parents (Leung, 2012; Ngai *et al.,* 2014). The media revealed that there are some elite students from the traditional prestige schools who failed to go to university due to their failure in the Chinese language examination, although they achieved excellent examination results in other subjects (Kwan, 2012; *Ming Pao*, 2015a).

After six rounds of the DSE examination, which began in 2012, the media have found that the Chinese language is still perceived by students as the most difficult subject, resulting in an increasing demand for tutoring in the Chinese language (*Ming Pao*, 2015a; Ngai *et al.,* 2014). Following the failure rate for Chinese language in the DSE and the panic among students and parents, I have observed that chain tutoring centres' promotion of tutoring for Chinese language as a subject has over-shadowed the traditional preference for English tutoring among students.

A young celebrity tutor in the Chinese language called YY Lam of Beacon College, emerged in the market in 2011 and has been reported on extensively by the media (e.g. Chan and Lau, 2015; *Headline Daily*, 2015). Journalists have commented that the soaring popularity of Lam has been made possible by Beacon College's supports and investment in him, with respect to a prominent level of promotion and image building (Chan and Lau, 2015; Mok, 2017). Lam has become famous in a very short period of time and now has reported annual earnings close to the annual net profit of the chain he serves, around HK$30 million (US$3.85 million) (Lo, 2015; Shum, 2015).

The shadow education sector in Hong Kong has made some tutors extremely wealthy since the growth stage. Looking across journalists' reports, it can be seen that there is an association between celebrity tutors and designer brands such as Lamborghinis and Louis Vuitton, as shown in Figure 5.11 (Apple Daily, 2006; Chan,

2013; Ng, 2014). *Wen Wei Po* (2010) cited an article from Forbes in 2010, which revealed that tutors in the shadow education sector were found to be among the twelve extraordinarily high paid jobs in Asia, with an estimated income of US$1.5 million annually for the top tutors. These stories offer sources of information for the media to report, which accelerates the awareness of celebrity tutors and the public interest in shadow education.

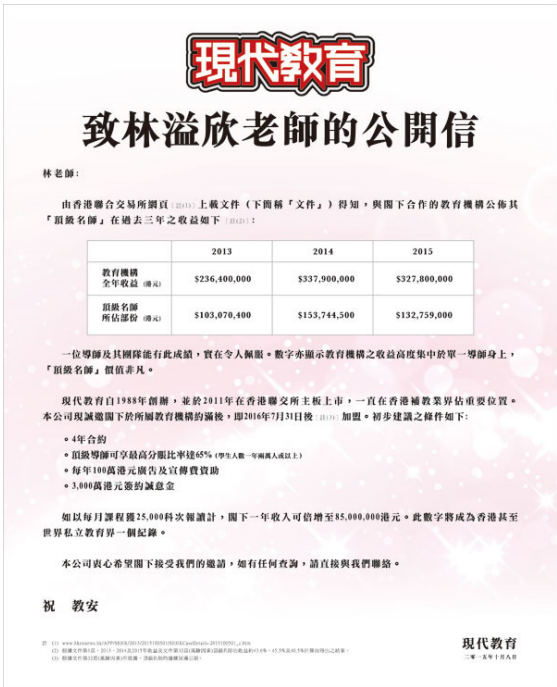
Figure 5.11

Modern Education's Ken sir and his Lamborghinis car

Source: Retrieved from Apple Daily of 1 Oct 2006 issue, https://hk.lifestyle.appledaily.com/lifestyle/car/daily/article/20061001/6362288 (Accessed: 20 Nov 2018)

On 8 October 2015, Modern Education launched a public letter in two local newspapers to lure a tutor in the Chinese language by offering a projected annual income of HK$85 million (US$10.9 million), as shown in Figure 5.12 (*AM 730*, 2015; Wong, 2015). Modern Education's hit triggered a series of discussions in society regarding tutoring, tutors' income and the impacts of tutoring on education and society (Nip, 2015; *Sing Tao Daily*, 2015). It also put a stop to Beacon College's plan to list on the stock exchange of Hong Kong, which reflects the fierce competition in the shadow education sector in Hong Kong. I found that Beacon

College tried again and succeeded to list on the stock exchange of Hong Kong in 2018 by changing its name to Bexcellent Group Holdings Ltd.



現代教育

致林溢欣老師的公開信

林老師：

由香港聯合交易所網頁（註(1)）上載文件（下簡稱「文件」）得知，與閣下合作的教育機構公佈其「頂級名師」在過去三年之收益如下（註(2)）：

	2013	2014	2015
教育機構全年收益（港元）	$236,400,000	$337,900,000	$327,800,000
頂級名師所佔部份（港元）	$103,070,400	$153,744,500	$132,759,000

一位導師及其團隊能有此成績，實在令人佩服。數字亦顯示教育機構之收益高度集中於單一導師身上，「頂級名師」價值非凡。

現代教育自1988年創辦，並於2011年在香港聯交所主板上市，一直在香港補教業界佔重要位置。本公司現誠邀閣下於所屬教育機構約滿後，即2016年7月31日後（註(3)）加盟。初步建議之條件如下：

- 4年合約
- 頂級導師可享最高分佣比率達65%（學生人數一年兩萬人或以上）
- 每年100萬港元廣告及宣傳費資助
- 3,000萬港元簽約誠意金

如以每月課程獲25,000科次報讀計，閣下一年收入可倍增至85,000,000港元。此數字將成為香港甚至世界私立教育界一個紀錄。

本公司衷心希望閣下接受我們的邀請，如有任何查詢，請直接與我們聯絡。

祝　教安

現代教育

二零一五年十月八日

註：(1) www.hkexnews.hk/APPS/SEHK/2015/2015100501/2015100501_c.htm
(2) 根據文件第1段，2013－2014及2015年收益及文件第10頁(現金流量表)顯示頂級名師佔收益約43.6%－45.5%及40.5%計算出得出之結果。
(3) 根據文件第12段(風險因素)所披露，頂級名師的離職通知期。

Figure 5.12

The full-page public letter to a Chinese tutor, by Modern Education, was published in two newspapers in Hong Kong, namely AM 730 (p. A13) and Hong Kong Economic Journal (p. A15), in an attempt to lure a tutor with a projected annual remuneration of HK$85 million (US$10.9 million)

The advertisement contents in English:

8 October 2015

Dear Mr Lam,

<u>A Public Letter to YY Lam, teacher</u>

According to the Hong Kong Stock Exchange website, it is known that in the chain tutoring centre you are working with the top tutors' annual incomes are shown as follows:

	2013	*2014*	*2015*
The chain's annual income (HK$)	*236,400,000*	*337,900,000*	*327,800,000*
Top tutors' income (HK$)	*103,076,400*	*153,744,500*	*132,759,000*

The statistics show clearly that the chain's income is mainly dependent on the contribution of a tutor that reflects the tutor's extraordinary value. It is impressive to see the performance of the tutor and his teaching team.

Modern Education, which was established in 1988 and listed on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange in 2011, has been playing a key role in the tutoring sector. We cordially invite you to join us after the expiry of your contract with your current institute on 30 June 2016. Our tentative offer is shown as follows:

- *4 years contract*
- *Maximum 65% profit sharing ratio (given 20,000 enrolment a year)*
- *Annual HK$1 million promotion allowance*
- *HK$30,000,000 bonus for this invitation upon confirming this offer*

Assuming the monthly enrolment rate reaches 25,000, your projected annual remuneration could reach HK$85,000,000. This remuneration is believed to be the top in Hong Kong or even worldwide.

We would be delighted if you would kindly consider this and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,
Modern Education

Looking across the journalist reports (e.g. Hui and Lee, 2017; Kwok, 2017) and academic research (e.g. Kwo and Bray, 2014; Zhan *et al.,* 2013), it is noticeable to see that the celebrity tutors are described as the celebrities that can be found in entertainment industry or business. Their private lives and scandals, coupled with the innovative tutoring methods, have attracted the interest of the public, which has accelerated the popularity of celebrity tutors and shadow education in Hong Kong.

Furthermore, the reform of the education system in Hong Kong and the fall in the number of students taking the DSE have led the competition in the shadow education sector to become ever fiercer. Tutors and chain tutoring centres are keen to compete (*Eastweek*, 2016; Hui and Lee, 2017). I have observed that there has been a change in the business format in the shadow education sector. Collaboration between different chain tutoring centres and tutors from different chains has occurred since 2016, as shown in Figures 5.13, 5.14 and 5.15.

Tutors from different chain tutoring centres have been shown together in advertisements and on social media, such as Facebook and Instagram. Some of the tutors are direct competitors serving the same subject, English (Figure 5.13), whereas some are responsible for different subjects (Figure 5.14). I consider that this kind of cooperation may reflect the keen competition in the sector, in which

chains and tutors aim to leverage each other's fame and competitiveness to attract students of their own and students from rivals, to secure their market share and business volume.

Figure 5.13

Collaborative promotion between King's Glory Educational Centre Ltd (left-hand side) and Beacon College Ltd (right-hand side) for tutoring in English by English tutors from each chain

Source: Retrieved from King's Glory's website, https://www.facebook.com/kingsgloryeducation/photos/a.127244600620959/1290783374267070/?type=3&theater (Accessed: 11 Mar 2019)

Figure 5.14

Collaborative promotion between Calvin Sun Education Centre (left-hand side) (English tutor) and Modern Education (HK) Ltd (right-hand side) (maths tutor)
Source: Retrieved from Modern Education's website, https://www.facebook.com/modernedu/photos/a.138662893358/1015483987070835 9/?type=3&theater (Accessed: 10 Aug 2017)

Figure 5.15

Collaborative promotion between two chains – Ever Learning Educational Centre and Calvin Sun Education Centre

Source: Retrieved from Ever Learning's website, https://www.facebook.com/ELCenter/photos/a.602071456481913/1270418016313917/?type=3&theater (Accessed: 14 Dec 2016)

The media reveal that celebrity tutors and chain tutoring centres used to be bound by an exclusive contract that contained restrictive covenants to prevent the tutors from serving their rivals after the end of their service (Pak and Tse, 2015; Lam and Chan, 2015). This created numerous lawsuits, which were reported by the media (e.g. *Eastweek*, 2014; Tsui and Fong, 2009). The recent collaborations between different chain tutoring centres and tutors are found novel in the sector, and are considered as the sixth milestone in the history of the shadow education sector in Hong Kong.

5.2.4 Section Summary

This section has shown how the shadow education sector coexists with formal school education in Hong Kong and the changes over the last seven decades. The popularity of shadow education in Hong Kong has been discussed with a particular emphasis on the role of promotion, and the marketing format of chain tutoring

centres and tutors has been identified. Moreover, this section has identified how the shadow education sector has attracted the attention of the public, researchers and journalists. This has been presented as evidence of a celebrity culture in shadow education that is now well established in what has been located as a maturity phase of development for the shadow education sector.

I have classified the development of the shadow education sector in Hong Kong into three stages: the post-war stage (1950s to 1980s), the growth stage (1990 to 2009) and the mature stage (2010 to 2018). This classification shows the different characteristics of the stages and the development of the chain tutoring centres and tutors over the past seven decades. Six milestones have been identified throughout the three stages: first, the use of English name; second, examination-taking-oriented tutoring; third, the emergence of celebrity tutors; fourth, the classroom setting with glass-walls; fifth, video tutoring; and sixth, the collaboration between different chain tutoring centres and tutors. These illustrate the development of both the celebritisation of shadow education in Hong Kong at societal and industrial level influenced by the celebrity tutors, and the celebrification of tutors, which are new to the literature on shadow education, marketisation of (shadow) education and celebrity. I will further discuss these in subsequent sections.

5.3 Tutors as a Kind of Celebrity

The spread of the phenomenon of celebrity tutors in the shadow education sector has attracted attention from both the public and journalists (e.g. Shou, 2015; Chung and Tam, 2008), which was discussed in the previous section regarding the history of shadow education in Hong Kong. The celebrity tutors are found to be a kind of celebrity, similar to the celebrities in the entertainment industry, as mentioned in the literature review (e.g. Leslie, 2011; Turner, 2004). They appear in a variety of advertising formats, such as advertisements in newspapers, on billboards and

emblazoned on the sides of buses (Lee, 2015; Nip, 2015), which shows a parallel with advertisements for consumer goods on the streets.

Some of the celebrity tutors appear in the media; such as they engage in TV and radio programmes, associate with celebrities in the entertainment industry, and write newspaper columns (Chan, 2013; *Face*, 2014). Meanwhile, the media report news and gossip about the celebrity tutors in both the local news sections and entertainment sections (Ng, 2014; *Ming Pao*, 2015b). Hence, the celebrity tutors look like a type of public figures such as stars or famous people in society. This reflects that the celebrity tutors are a kind of celebrity, as discussed in the literature, are frequently found in the media and are well-known by the public. Therefore, it is worth exploring how the practitioners in the shadow education sector under study give meanings to celebrities and celebrity tutors.

5.3.1 Definition of Celebrity Given by the Practitioners

As discussed in section 3.2 of the literature review chapter, the various definitions of celebrity show that celebrity is a broad concept that can refer to any person who is known by other people, regardless of whether this is in a niche market or a mass market (Leslie, 2011; Wohlfeil and Whelan, 2012). Besides, celebrities have been found to rely on regular media exposure to maintain their fame and recognition (Barron, 2015; Leslie, 2011).

In the interviews for the data collection, I approached a variety of practitioners in the shadow education sector, including the chain tutoring centre founders, senior managerial staff, administration staff, marketing staff, customer service staff, tutors, tutors' personal assistants and teaching assistants. I believe that this approach allowed me to gain an in-depth view from many similarities, differences and nuances in the meanings in regard to my research questions.

I asked the participants to describe their understanding of what a celebrity is, and to comment on whether the celebrity tutors found in the Hong Kong shadow education sector are considered to be celebrities. Overall, there was an idea that was commonly shared among participants that celebrities are public figures or famous people whose names are known by the public and are often shown in the media. They stated that the term celebrity can be used to refer to any person, but most celebrities are actors, singers, businesspeople or athletes.

> Florence, teaching assistant of Chinese of Chain A, commented, *'Perhaps a celebrity is someone who is known by other people, who often appears in magazines or on TV, attracts the interest of other people … not just the stars in the entertainment industry, that's a famous person'*.

The meaning of celebrity that was shared among the participants echoes the broad definition of celebrity found in the literature (e.g. Leslie, 2011; Rojek, 2001). These findings also reveal that the media play a role in the establishment of the celebrity status of a celebrity, as argued by Driessens (2013). This is because the public learn about celebrities through the media, which in return may stimulate the media to continue to report on celebrities, and lead to them becoming famous.

The celebrity tutors were recognised by the participants, in general, as a kind of celebrity and public figure. They argued that the celebrity tutors are widely known by the public via their advertisements, in which their names and photos are shown. Besides, they revealed that journalists are often interested in reporting the news and gossips related to the celebrity tutors. This means that the presentation of celebrity tutors in the public via advertisements and journalists' reports can lead to the tutors to becoming well-known and being perceived as celebrities.

> Helen, assistant operation manager of Chain B, said, *'Everyday people won't appear in the media or in ads, but we [celebrity tutors] do. We advertise, also journalists report on us, just like*

stars you see in the entertainment section of newspapers. This attracts more attention from both readers and journalists'.

The recognition of celebrity tutors as celebrity by the practitioners reflects the broad definition of celebrity in the literature (Rojek, 2001; Leslie, 2011). Yet, the majority of the academic research on the topic of celebrity originated from the West, such as the US and European countries (e.g. Leslie, 2011; Rojek, 2001). These findings extend our understandings of celebrity from an Asian perspective in a specific market, that is, the shadow education sector in Hong Kong.

In terms of the development of the shadow education sector in Hong Kong, the nicknames of celebrity tutors, such as Tutor Kings and Queens, first appeared in the 1990s, and they have become icons or symbols in the market that are known by not only students but also the wider public (Chan, 2014; Shou, 2015). In addition to seeking the meaning of celebrity from the practitioners, I was interested in exploring the meanings of the nicknames given by the insiders in the shadow education sector.

John, chief marketing officer of Chain A, suggested, *'Because we [celebrity tutors] appear in public, so we are known. Even if you cannot name us, you know [our nicknames of] Tutor King and the tutoring industry …it's our industry pattern. Over the years, all the [main] chains, all the tutors present [in public] have a high profile to earn awareness… like I said, the tutoring industry looks like the entertainment industry'.*

The findings reflect that the celebrity status of the celebrity tutors extends from the individual level to the industry level. Their nicknames were found to be synonyms of the tutors and the shadow education sector. This reflects Driessens' (2013) claim of celebritisation at societal and industrial level, which has been contributed

to by the celebrity tutors. That is, the celebrity tutors who are industry-specific or expertise-specific celebrity, rather than simply a well-known person in society.

Conversely, several tutors and teaching assistants commented that school teachers cannot be categorised as celebrities because they are not known by the public, but only by a small number of people, such as their students and the teachers in the schools where they work.

> Brenda, English tutor, founder and CEO of Chain D, said, *'Oh yes, I agree we are some sort of celebrity. Especially as the celebrity definition is so wide. Any famous people can be called celebrities. On the contrary, do you know school teachers? Of course not, I think they are only known by their students'*.

This demonstrates that being known by the public and/or famous is critical to being a celebrity, even for celebrities, such as the celebrity tutors, that are found in a niche market like the shadow education sector in Hong Kong. Echoing the extensive studies on celebrities in the literature (e.g. Bell, 2010; Ferris and Harris, 2011; Leslie, 2011), the public's awareness of celebrities including the celebrity tutors, was found to be predominant.

The popularity of shadow education in Hong Kong was commented on by the participants as a clue to the formation of celebrity tutors. Both journalists' reports (e.g. Pak and Tse, 2015; Shou, 2015) and academic research (e.g. Bray, 1999; Mori and Baker, 2010) have found that Asian people are keen to spend money on educating their children. As a Hongkonger, I have found that parents in Hong Kong, like mine, are very concerned about the education of their children. Parents are used to assume that a person's education can influence their future. Parents and students compete for places at prestigious schools and look for ways of excelling in examinations, such as engaging in tutoring, so as to have a brighter road ahead.

I found that the participants, who had different job functions, in general demonstrated a good understanding of the behaviour of parents and students in Hong Kong in regard to pursuing ways of improving children's studies. They argued that parents and students in Hong Kong are eager to avoid being behind their peers in terms of academic performance. This is because the academic performance of a student, particularly the result of the DSE, links directly to the opportunity to enter university and/or choose specific faculties and subjects to study.

> Joyce, Chinese tutor of Chain A, revealed, *'No-one wants to lose. Even if you're not a student, you may know us [tutors], Tutor Kings, our achievements in helping students get 5** [the top score in the DSE], from our ads or word-of-mouth of friends or colleagues, I believe tutoring and Tutor Kings have become a hot topic in Hong Kong over the years'.*

There were shared meanings among the participants, who stated that the extensive advertising of chain tutoring centres and tutors, and students' examination performance, which has been associated with tutoring over the years, have evoked fear and pressure among the public, particularly parents, regarding competition among students in their studies. Meanwhile, this advertising serves as a lighthouse to direct the public in respect to the way to excelling in studying and examination taking, which is by undertaking tutoring at tutoring centres.

> Cynthia, marketing manager of Chain B, argued, *'Lots of advertisements promote their [tutors'] power in helping [students] in examination taking. Even if you don't believe them at the beginning, you may be curious to know more after seeing the advertisements over months or years'.*

Besides, the participants commented that the competition in the shadow education sector, particularly among the chains, is very keen. The insights from the

practitioners revealed that the keen competition among rivals in the shadow education sector stimulates the tutors and the tutoring centres to find ways to compete with each other, such as creating tutors as celebrities to attract students. These findings shed light on previous studies on shadow education (Bray *et al*., 2014; Bray and Kwok, 2003), which state that shadow education and formal school education co-exist.

Furthermore, several tutors argued that the public, particularly students and parents, have recognised the expertise of the celebrity tutors in tutoring and examination taking. They explained that the tutoring offered by the celebrity tutors is perceived by students as a short cut to excelling in examination taking.

> Michael, English tutor and director of Chain B, commented, *'Our success is because the education system is bad, yet people are eager to pursue excellent exam performance … we are their short-cut … we really show our achievements every year, students also know it well'*.

These findings reflect that the celebrity status of celebrity tutors is contributed to by their efforts to promote themselves, their expertise in tutoring and their students' achievements in terms of examination taking, and the curiosity of the public in regard to their performance.

The majority of the participants shared the viewpoint that the awareness of celebrity tutors extends beyond their primary target audiences (secondary students) to the general or wider public, further confirming that the tutors in the shadow education sector are celebrities, rather than just having a well-known professional reputation. This happens because of the presentation of the celebrity tutors through the media and advertising, which is accessible beyond their target audiences.

> Nancy, English tutor, executive director, founder and ex-CEO, of Chain B, commented, *'Maybe it's alright to describe us as a type of celebrity or public figure because we are presented to the public widely.… it's natural because everyone can see our faces from advertisements. Even if you don't need tutoring, you must have seen us [advertisements]. So [it is] logical to know who we are … Well, we want to be recognised, and use our awareness to get enrolment'.*

These findings echo the broad definition of celebrity and the inter-relationship between celebrities and the media, in terms of the characteristic of being regularly exposed in the media for fame and recognition, which has been described in the literature (Leslie, 2011; van Krieken, 2012). Particularly, these sheds light on Wohlfeil and Whelan's (2012) claim that celebrities are often known beyond their fans.

The regular presence of celebrity tutors in the media and advertisements was found to be the factor that led the celebrity tutors to be perceived as celebrities, similar to celebrities in other industries, such as entertainment and sport. The media exposure of celebrity tutors and chain tutoring centres accelerates the curiosity of the public, which in return stimulates the media's interest in continuing to report on them. Hence, this reflects previous studies in the literature that state that celebrities and the media co-exist (Cashmore, 2006; Rein *et al.,* 2006; Rojek, 2012).

The formation of celebrity tutors was found to be constructed in response to fierce competition in the shadow education sector. Being famous, like celebrities in other industries, such as entertainment and sports, was perceived among the participants as giving the tutor a competitive edge. Celebrity tutors earn their awareness and fame in their field, and their celebrity status extends beyond that, to the general public. These findings extend our understanding of Driessens' (2013) claim regarding the function of being famous as a celebrity tutor through

celebrification and the influence of the celebrity tutors towards the celebritisation in the shadow education sector.

The regular exposure of the celebrity tutors in the media was found to evoke pressure in terms of competition among students and stimulate a demand among students and parents for assistance with studying and examination taking. Meanwhile, the celebrity status of celebrity tutors was found to differentiate them from school teachers, which can attract the attention of students. I argue that the nature of tutoring, which is a service, and the tutors themselves, who are the service provider, may inspire the celebrity tutors to pursue awareness and celebrity status in order to compete in the market, leading it to be celebritised.

5.3.2 Importance of Public's Awareness and Fame

The meaning of celebrity and celebrity tutors given by the participants in the previous section shows a common perception, which is an awareness/fame of celebrity tutors. Awareness and fame are used interchangeably in the study, which refers to the public's awareness of tutors and/or tutors' fame. In the literature on celebrity endorsement, the awareness likes brand awareness has been found important to consumers. Arens *et al.* (2011), like other researchers (e.g. Chitty *et al.,* 2015; Shimp and Andrews, 2013), argue that the awareness is reflected from whether a name comes to mind when consumers think about a particular product category and the ease with which the name is evoked. Awareness is conventionally achieved through the mass media, i.e. through advertising (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2016; Moriarty *et al.,* 2012).

As I found that the names of celebrity tutors appear in their advertisements and tutoring materials, I tried to unravel the meanings of tutors' names given by the participants. The tutors and administration staff commented that a celebrity

tutor's name represents his or her awareness/fame and value in the market. It influences his or her competitiveness and business opportunities, such as enrolment and bargaining power. Other participants, including tutoring centre founders and teaching assistants, also argued that the names of tutors are core to the shadow education sector, and are used by the public to differentiate the tutors from unknown school teachers.

> Amy, administration manager of Chain B, commented, *'The name [of the tutor] is very important. It means their [tutor's] awareness, their value. You know, awareness is critical in our industry. The tutors rely on awareness to operate'*.

The participants, who had different job functions, revealed that it is a trend among students to choose famous tutors and evaluate the tutors partially based on their awareness of them. Several administration staff explained that the rationale behind the students' choice of tutor is based on stereotypes. This means that the popularity of tutors perceived by the students could reflect their perceived service quality.

> Susan, course administration manager of Chain B, said, *'The tutor's name and awareness is critical to students' enrolment. They [students] will compare, say why they are enrolling with this tutor, because he is famous, so many people enrol with him, he must be good…. So the more famous a tutor is, the more he gets enrolment'*.

These findings reflect that if a tutor is famous among students in terms of enrolment and word-of-mouth among peers, the students may assume that the tutor's quality in terms of his or her ability to assist them to excel in examination taking should be sound. This demonstrates the value of students' awareness of celebrity tutors and the embeddedness of their names, which constitutes their celebrity status.

Furthermore, several tutors and teaching assistants elaborated that students who undertake tutoring involve risks in terms of time, money and failure in the DSE examination. If a student finds that a tutor does not fit them with their needs, they have lost time in undertaking the wrong tutoring in preparing for the examination, and have to find extra time and an alternative. The teaching assistant revealed that the awareness of tutors serves as a determinant of the perceived quality of tutors by students when they are selecting tutoring.

> Mary, teaching assistant of Chinese of Chain C, revealed, *'Awareness [of tutors] is everything. You [students] dare not take a risk, choosing a nobody [infamous tutor's tutoring]. It doesn't make sense, right? You [students] lose money, also more seriously you lose your time!'*.

This explains why the tutors are very concerned about students being aware of them in the market; this represents their achievements, recognition and earning power. Furthermore, I found that fame was linked to the market position, achievements and celebrity status of the tutors.

> Joyce, Chinese tutor of Chain A, said, *'Anyone known by the public can be a celebrity … awareness represents the recognition and achievements of a tutor. Students are kids. Many of them evaluate tutors based on their awareness such as word-of-mouth and exposure [in the media]… They see YY's [Chinese tutor of Beacon College] advertisements everywhere, plus a lot of positive word-of-mouth. They judge YY as a good tutor'*.

This demonstrates a tension regarding the performance of tutors, which goes beyond their academic content, and extends to how they are perceived in the market by students and the wider public. These findings reflect that the celebrity tutors in the shadow education sector are similar to celebrities in other industries, such as

entertainment, in that being well-known is critical to their success, as argued by Boorstin (1961), as well as other researchers (e.g. Barron, 2015; Williamson, 2016). This offers insights into Gamson's (2007) claim that the name in itself is critical for doing business in the name economy nowadays.

Journalists' reports (e.g. Cho, 2007; *Eastweek*, 2016; Shou, 2015) show that the chain tutoring centres spend millions of dollars every year on launching different advertisements, such as billboards on building walls, advertisements on the exterior of buses, and advertisements in newspapers. However, these reports lack statistics regarding the amount spent by the chain tutoring centres and the celebrity tutors on media advertising. In my observations of the Hong Kong shadow education sector over the past few years, I have found that the advertisements of the chain tutoring centres and celebrity tutors can be seen in those media channels throughout the year. In the interviews, the tutors and marketing staff recognised that their spending on promotion was huge in amount based on the frequency of the advertisements that can be seen on the streets and in the media. However, they hesitated to disclose detailed figures regarding these promotions.

Further to recognising the importance of awareness of tutors among the participants, I found the celebrity tutors and the marketing staff to be eager to build and enhance fame and the public's awareness of tutors in the market, probably due to the nature of their jobs. For example, the celebrity tutors in different disciplines shared the opinion that they preferred to use traditional media such as newspapers and buses to launch their advertisements due to their effectiveness in establishing awareness among the public. They explained that through these media channels, their advertising message can reach not only their target audience, i.e. students, but also the wider public, in respect to the pressure around examination taking in Hong Kong and the value of tutors in assisting students to excel in examination taking.

Furthermore, the marketing staff revealed that billboards on building walls are very popular with the chains in the shadow education sector. The competition for

advertising spaces, particularly on certain building walls in city centres such as Mongkok, is fierce. The celebrity tutors and the chain tutoring centres compete with each other, together with other companies such as designer fashion brands, for the space.

The marketing staff also commented that certain tutors, such as Patrick Chan, shown in Figure 5.16, like to advertise in the same location over a long period of time, which leads to the advertisement becoming a landmark in the region. These findings reflect that awareness building among celebrity tutors is well organised; it extends beyond short term media exposure to strategic presentation in the marketplace.

> Cynthia, marketing manager of Chain B, revealed, *'There's very keen competition for advertising spaces, like Mongkok and Causeway Bay … competing with other chains, also other companies like fashion brands … No doubt, P Chan, Calvin [celebrity tutors], [are] very powerful, and can afford to buying [paying] for the same billboard over years, theirs look like an icon in the street'*.

This represents a pressure among tutors and/or chains in competing advertising spaces, where reflect their market positioning, competitive power and recognition in the market. This also reflects a pressure in the celebrification process in which stronger tutors may have more bargaining power over weak ones, which extends our understanding of the celebrity power and status of celebrity as argued by Rojek (2001) and Cashmore (2006).

Figure 5.16

Billboard of Patrick Chan, English tutor of Modern Education (HK) Ltd

This billboard (the red one in the middle) was set there over 6 years until 2016 when the tutor changed to Beacon College.

Photo taken on 16 Aug 2014
Location: Argyle Street, Mongkok (similar to the junction between Regent Street and Oxford Street in London)

Furthermore, the participants, particularly the founders, the marketing staff and the tutors, argued that regular media exposure through advertising is considered as prerequisite in the shadow education sector in Hong Kong. They revealed that due to keen competition in the sector, different chains and tutors are keen to spending on advertising, such as front-page advertisements in newspapers and billboards, in order to attract students.

The tutors of different chains further elaborated that launching front-page advertisements in newspapers reflects a tutor's power and ranking compared to their rivals. This is because that type of advertisement is commonly known by the public to be expensive, and therefore is believed to be unaffordable for most tutors except the strong ones.

> John, chief marketing officer of Chain A, argued, '*It's [front-page advertisements on newspapers] showing off, telling students, telling parents, even rivals, they [the tutors related to the advertisement] are superior. Otherwise, why spend a lot to advertise? Weak tutors cannot afford it, right?'*.

Hence, these findings show that the promotion format and frequency of launching advertisements reflect the power of celebrity tutors. This power may refer to the market position and financial capacity of the tutors. Meanwhile, it echoes Leslie's (2011) claim that regular exposure in the media is important to celebrities to maintain their celebrity status.

However, the celebrity tutors were found to organise themselves and spend their own money to gain exposure in the media through advertisements. That means that the tutors have to bear the promotional costs and make the efforts to launch their advertisements. These findings are consistent with the journalists' reports mentioned in section 5.2.

Yet, this finding is different from findings in some past research (e.g. Barron, 2015; Dwivedi *et al.,* 2016; Fillis, 2015) that celebrity exposure in the media relies on journalists' reports or advertisements with their endorsement. These findings reflect a specific practice in terms of how a celebrity (tutor) in the shadow education sector in Hong Kong creates his or her awareness. The media exposure and awareness of celebrity tutors are influenced by the tutors' financial capacity to spend on advertising, to a certain extent.

Further to awareness building, it was interesting to see that the participants, who had different job functions, had a shared understanding that their advertisements served as a reminder about examinations and the relevant competition among students in terms of entering universities. These advertisements trigger a latent

demand as a tension for solutions to the fear of examination taking among students and parents.

The founders of different chains commented that the advertisements for tutoring create an atmosphere of competition and a tension in society regarding a linkage between academic achievements and individuals' prospect. They argued that Hongkongers, like many Asian people, believe that if people can obtain outstanding academic qualifications, then they can go to good universities, which will lead to a better career.

> Andy, English tutor and director of Chain C, commented, *'The competition is fierce. We must keep our awareness. Also [we must] continue to remind people about the pressure arising from the DSE. Everyone knows well that examinations in Hong Kong are always a barrier to your future'.*

These findings show that the advertisements for celebrity tutors aim to target not only their target audience, i.e. students, but also the wider public. This reflects that the tutors seek attention from a wide range of people, which echoes another finding, which is that one of the purposes of these advertisements is to stimulate a latent demand for solutions, like undertaking tutoring to cope with the fear of examination taking.

As a Hongkonger, I consider these findings, from the emic perspective, and concur with the participants, because such a claim has been perceived as a common assumption among Hongkongers over the years and has become deeply engraved in our mindset over the generations. Hence, it has come to the attention of the public that undertaking tutoring is a possible way to solve the issue of competition in regard to studying and examination taking among students.

The celebrity tutors were found to not only present themselves in the market to build awareness, but also to actively create an atmosphere and reasons for purchase. This reflects Pringle's (2004) claim that celebrities are perceived differently from everyday people by the public due to having a distinctive power and personality.

Furthermore, different participants, including celebrity tutors and marketing staff, recognised that the advertisements for celebrity tutors and chains target an audience beyond students that includes the wider public. Yet, there were participants, mainly tutors, who stated that the advertisements for celebrity tutors have other purposes, such as showing their rivals that the tutors are still active in the market.

> Michael, English tutor, founder and director of Chain B, revealed, *'The advertisements also aim to tell rivals and students that we [tutors] are still active in the market. If you [tutor] don't present to the public, people may challenge whether you have died [exited the market] or not … you can't let your awareness drop, advertising helps keep you alive'*.

This finding demonstrates that the advertisements for celebrity tutors are not only used to promote their tutoring and the public's awareness of them, but also serve as a showcase to illustrate the value and power of the tutors in the market. This echoes the previous finding from the marketing staff in this section, that the advertisements for tutors are aimed at a variety of stakeholders, including rival tutors. Hence, this illustrates how the celebrity tutors maintain the public's awareness via the mass media, which is also tension among tutors to compete their media exposure.

Additionally, I found that the regular exposure in the media is important not only to the tutors but also to the chains, for awareness maintenance. The regular exposure includes advertisements, feature stories and columns in newspapers. The

marketing staff revealed that the regular media exposure aims to keep the tutoring centres, and particularly the tutors, visible to the public.

> John, chief marketing officer of Chain A, said, '*Regular exposure in newspapers and social media is very important. You need to let people see you, remember you and talk about you. Apart from advertisements, many tutors write in newspapers, especially Ming Pao and Sing Tao [two local Chinese newspapers which are popular among school teachers and students and commonly available in school libraries] because they are perceived as best for students and teachers'*.

This practice is similar to practices around consumer goods, such as soft drinks and fast food, for which the marketers regularly launch promotion campaigns to attract customers and reinforce brand awareness (Keller, 2007; Norris *et al.,* 2012). Marshall (1997) and Turner (2004) argue that a collaboration exists between celebrities and the media, who leverage each other's earnings through awareness, the interest of the public and profit. In regard to the two newspapers mentioned in the above quotes, I found that there were columns in the education sections that were contributed to regularly by the celebrity tutors from different chain tutoring centres, as shown in Figure 5.17. These newspaper columns serve as an indirect promotion, like a news release in a marketing communication.

Figure 5.17

Screen capture of Kenneth Lau's Facebook page, English tutor of Beacon College, regarding his column writing in a local newspaper published on 8 Aug 2016

Source: Retrieved from Kenneth Lau's Facebook page, https://www.facebook.com/Beacon.Kenneth.Lau/photos/a.1015426434324390 8/10154392779958908/?type=3&theater (Accessed: 10 Feb 2019)

Previous studies on celebrities and celebrity endorsement show that scandals and any negative news regarding celebrities can be harmful to the celebrities and the brand and/or products they endorse (Daboll, 2011; Solomon *et al*, 2013). However, I found that the celebrity tutors were keen to be visible in the media so as to attract the attention of the wider public, regardless of the type of news that was written about them.

> John, chief marketing officer of Chain A, revealed, *'No news is bad news. Even if [it is] scandals, because it's about awareness and a topic for the public to discuss, just like the news/gossips about artists in the entertainment industry'*.

This demonstrates that the practice of the celebrity tutors has parallels with the entertainment industry. Regular media exposure and attention from the media are important to the celebrity tutors, just as they are to celebrities in the entertainment industry (Barron, 2015; Rojek, 2012) for their celebrity status building.

Several participants commented that people tend to have vanity and curiosity towards celebrities. They argued that their students, like the wider public, are

delighted to have a direct contact with the celebrity tutor through undertaking tutoring. This is beyond the indirect channels, commonly found among the public, to obtain information in regard to celebrities in the entertainment industry through magazines, newspapers or TV.

> Susan, course administration manager of Chain B, commented, *'Most people are interested in celebrities … unlike celebrities in the entertainment industry that you cannot touch or you can only see remotely, you can see them [tutors] directly, talk to them regularly, adolescents must like it'*.

Additionally, the participants suggested that the tutors presenting as celebrities can lead people, particularly students, to perceive them as successful role models. This is because ordinary people are rarely seen in the media. This reflects Chan's (2008) study in Hong Kong, in which adolescents were found to treat celebrities as role models and idols. The regular media exposure of the celebrity tutors, which occurs mainly through advertisements, and their direct interaction with their students, were found to serve multiple roles including tutor, celebrity and even idol. The multiple roles of the celebrity tutors will be discussed further in the next section.

The awareness of celebrity tutors was talked about by all of the participants as a reference for his or her market value. On the one hand, the public's awareness of a celebrity tutor was found to be useful to attract customers (students) and motivate their purchasing intention (enrolment in the celebrity tutor's tutorials). On the other hand, it reflects the power of the tutor in the market, which can be used to compete and probably attract the management of competitors for a job change.

> Cindy, English tutor of Chain B, commented, *'I think being famous is a way to attract attention. The aim is to get more enrolment. We are running a business, although we aim to teach ... Our competition is keen, particularly in English, so many*

tutors you can see, so we aim for securing our enrolment and increasing it'.

It is an interesting dynamic that the celebrity tutors are a critical resource of the chain tutoring centres and it is worth looking at how the chains manage the celebrity tutors. I argue that the public's awareness of celebrity tutors is a tool that can be used to motivate their target market (students) to purchase their tutoring in order to make a profit. It is also a reference to the market value or competitiveness of the celebrity tutor.

The emphasis on the public's awareness of celebrity tutors sheds light on Driessens' (2013) claim that the name of a celebrity represents a value in a market such as the shadow education sector in Hong Kong. Here, the celebrity value is akin to the celebrity capital discussed by Van Krieken (2012), which celebrities earn and which reinforces their celebrity status.

In sum, the public's awareness and fame of celebrity tutors are found to be critical to the celebrity tutors. This reflects a power of a celebrity tutor in terms of celebrity status and value, which are found to be used by the tutors to seek business, and to establish and enhance their competitiveness in the marketplace. These findings offer insights to illustrate how people, such as celebrity tutors, utilise awareness to earn and enhance their value in the marketplace. Although the chains and the celebrity tutors focus on the secondary students preparing the DSE, their promotion and business practice influence the whole educational market regarding competition in study.

5.3.3 Section Summary

Like the different definitions found in the literature on celebrity, celebrities and celebrity tutors were broadly defined by the participants as anyone who is famous

in the market. I found that the participants, who had different roles, shared the view that celebrity tutors are recognised as a type of celebrity in the marketplace. The awareness of celebrity in the literature of different fields show that it can be achieved through regular media exposure. The public's awareness and fame of celebrity tutors are found to be critical to the celebrity tutors, which extends beyond their target audience (students), to the wider public. The regular media exposure of celebrity tutors and chain tutoring centres was found to be a motivation for, and a means of, increasing fear regarding examination taking and competition in education among students and parents. Its purpose is to stimulate a demand for tutoring as a solution to the tensions among students and parents in respect to competition, examination taking and the opportunity to obtain offers from universities through examination. This also helps the celebrity tutors promote and enhance their celebrity status in the market.

5.4 Multiplicity of Role-practices of Celebrity Tutors

Following the meanings of celebrity and celebrity tutors shared among the participants, as discussed in the previous section, this section will further address the first research question, which is, how are the celebrity tutors created and maintained? As discussed in the previous section, the celebrity tutors are not inherent and were unknown to the public before their engagement in the shadow education sector. Their celebrity status and the public's awareness of them are mainly earned by their own efforts and/or the efforts of the chain they serve. The media serve as a booster to amplify the awareness and celebrity status of celebrity tutors in the market through advertisements. Hence, the celebrity tutors were found to be similar to achieved or attributed celebrities, rather than ascribed celebrities, as argued by Rojek (2001).

The role of celebrity tutors was found to extend beyond conducting tutoring. In this section, I will explore the multiple roles played by the celebrity tutors in terms of performing different functions and illustrate how these different roles lead the celebrity tutors to operate in the market. The multiple roles played by celebrity tutors, as identified in the findings, are organised into three categories based on the thematic analysis and the participants' common accounts, which have been unified under this umbrella. These findings demonstrate the practice and process of the idolisation of tutoring and the commodification of shadow education in Hong Kong.

5.4.1 The Tutor as an Idol

In Hong Kong, idolatry is commonly found among youngsters, who choose popular singers as idols to worship (Yue and Cheung, 2000; Yue, 2010). Chan (2010) found that there is a strong peer effect on consumption among adolescents in Hong Kong, which influences their values and consumption. This is similar to the findings of other studies (e.g. Shek *et al.,* 2011; Yue and Cheung, 2000). There are journalist reports that describe how celebrity tutors are a type of idol or celebrity and that their students are their followers (e.g. Chan, 2013; Ng, 2014; Shou, 2015).

I observed that the celebrity tutors in the chain tutoring centres look like idols; their images are very different from those of school teachers and tutoring is integrated with idolatry. I found that there is a link between idolatry and tutoring, as commented on by the participants. Idolatry was described by the participants, in general, as a way of building the image of celebrity tutors for loyalty building and business generation.

Rojek (2012) claims that idolatry is religious in character and stems from antiquity and that an idol refers to a god that people worship. Other researchers (e.g. Chiou *et al.*, 2005; Raviv *et al.*, 1996) argue that idols are not limited to traditional meanings and can include a variety of people who are known and admired by their

followers based on their talents, achievements or physical attractiveness. This is because modern society has evolved and a great degree of promotional material is disseminated through the mass media (Giles, 2000).

Several participants, including the tutors and the tutoring centre founders, argued that idol worshipping is popular among adolescents. They claimed that most adolescents admire idols or celebrities such as singers and actors in the entertainment industry. These students often worship those idols or celebrities and pay attention to any news or advertising related to them as well. Meanwhile, the tutors and the teaching assistants stated that the celebrity tutors are perceived by some students as idols and role model.

> Alice, tutor of English of Chain D, commented, *'Are we idols? Yeah, I won't deny it, idolising tutoring has long been the way of doing business in our field … it works very well, right? … Peer effect does matter, once students like you [tutor], their friends most likely will like you too '.*

The findings revealed that this idolisation of the tutors is used to attract the attention of students and differentiate their tutoring from school teaching. Once the students like a particular tutor, they may influence their peers to pay attention to that tutor. The goal of idolisation of the tutors is to generate business and build up a closer relationship with students. That is to follow the logic of idolatry and the peer effect among adolescents, the celebrity tutors present themselves as idols and treat their students as their followers or fans.

Tutoring was recognised by the participants as a type of service in which the tutors and the students have a close and regular (weekly) interaction. Several teaching assistants stated that the contact between the tutors and the students extends beyond the tutoring conducted in the classrooms, to social media such as Facebook,

Instagram and WhatsApp. They revealed that most of dialogue and promotional materials on social media are managed by them, rather than the tutors.

The various types of contact, both in the classrooms and on social media, were found to be interactive, which creates value and interest to enrich the tutoring content, such as an integration of tutoring and idol worshipping. The teaching assistants shared their experiences of both classroom management and social media management. They stated that the students enjoy that type of tutoring and interaction over social media, which is reflected in the students' enrolment and attendance at the tutorials. Hence, the tutoring offered by the celebrity tutors is different from school education; it offers interest and fun that students cannot find in school.

> Henry, teaching assistant of English of Chain B, commented, *'Taking tutoring is more than learning but embedded in the daily life of students … [students] can learn, can socialise, can see pretty tutors, just like the Kinder Eggs [a chocolate egg with a toy in the core], it's so good'*.

This demonstrates that enjoyment plays a role in students' learning process. Once the students find it interesting, like the findings from the above quote, they may pay more attention to it and actively participate in it. In return, the students' enjoyment and participation may reinforce their loyalty to their tutors and maintain their enrolment. Hence, this reflects the idea of achieving two things at once.

Furthermore, I concur with the claim of the teaching assistants that undertaking tutoring has become a basic daily activity and a way of socialising for the majority of primary and secondary students in Hong Kong. Tutoring and school education seem to be integrated in Hong Kong; in 2010, over 80% of Hong Kong students were found to receive private supplementary tutoring (Bray and Lykins, 2012).

This integration reflects that the tutors may play a role in the growth of students, including their learning and daily lives.

Additionally, I found that the rationale behind idolising the tutors reflects the fierce competition in the market. The keen competition in the shadow education sector was commented on by different tutors and founders. It pushes the tutors and the chain tutoring centres to develop different methods to attract the attention of students.

The majority of tutors explained that students mostly lack concentration when it comes to their studies. They argued that most students feel bored if the tutoring is like school teaching. That is why the tutors are keen to attract the attention of students while conducting tutoring and aim to provide a pleasant service (tutoring) to the students. The ability of tutors to attract the attention of students and stimulate their motivation to undertake tutoring is reflected in the continuous enrolment of students and/or their loyalty to the tutors.

> Michael, English tutor, founder and director of Chain B, argued, *'Our strength is the ability to draw the attention of students. Students won't pay and sleep in the classrooms. They won't waste money and time if they have found us [tutors and tutoring] boring and useless'*.

In addition to the tutors and founders, the administration and marketing staff also commented that over the years, the chain tutoring centres and the celebrity tutors have been keen to develop different ways of attracting the attention of students. They argued that the idolisation of tutors has proved to be a practical way to promote and attract students. That explains why the tutors proactively present themselves as idols in advertisements, similar to singers or actors.

> Susan, course administration manager of Chain B, explained, *'Idolisation has worked very well over the years in our industry; it was originally initiated by the chains' founders. You know, our competition is very keen, we must find ways to compete, like the idolatry, to attract students'.*

The idolisation of tutoring shows that idolisation and fan culture are embedded in the celebritisation of shadow education, which relates to the study of McCutcheon *et al.* (2002) in the literature on psychology regarding the association between celebrity worship and consumer attitudes towards celebrity brand extension. This is because the tutors were found to have multiple roles including as a celebrity, an idol and a brand.

The marketing staff also revealed that their tutors are often treated by students as a topic that they discuss with their friends, such as their appearance, teaching style or personal lives. This is similar to the way in which celebrities in the entertainment industry are treated. This is because the tutors can be found not only in the tutoring centre, but also on advertisements in the streets and on social media, which differentiates them from school teachers. The extensive exposure of tutors makes them look like celebrities, such as singers or actors in the entertainment industry, rather than teachers.

> John, chief marketing officer of Chain A, revealed, *'I think our fierce competition drives us to use creative ways to compete … Idol tutors? I agree. The image, gesture, media exposure, etc. of the tutors is really like singers or artists that you can see in the street … Surely not just a teacher'.*

The keen competition in the shadow education sector, as described by the participants in general, is an important reason for stimulating the practitioners to develop different strategies to compete, such as the idolisation of tutors. This is

used to not only attract the attention of students, but also to differentiate the tutoring from school education.

There are two ways in which the celebrity tutors were found to perform as idols. First, there are tutors and/or chains' senior management who strategically cast the tutors as idols to attract students' attention and curiosity. A member of administration staff revealed that the idolisation of tutors and the tutor worshipping not only attract students to enrol, but also enhance their loyalty to the tutors. This echoes the concept of idolatry found in the entertainment industry regarding idol celebrities and their followers, as discussed by Chiou *et al.*, 2005. Once the students perceive their tutors as idols, they will actively seek news about the tutors to satisfy their curiosity. This also reflects Rojek's (2001) claim that fans often search for celebrity news to feel closer to their idols.

> Albert, customer service manager of Chain A, revealed, *'I think Tutor Kings really look like idols, treating their students as followers. I think it's a win-win because the tutor can make the students happy and loyal to them, and students are also happy about it'*.

Furthermore, the tutor explained that the news about tutors mainly comes from their exposure in the media through advertising, promotion and journalists' reports. This is similar to celebrities in other industries, such as actors and singers in the entertainment industry. Conversely, news, information and promotional messages about school teachers are rarely found in the media. This reflects the difference between the celebrity tutors and school teachers.

> Brenda, English tutor, founder and CEO, revealed the rationale of tutors in regard to being an idol: *'Every adolescent likes handsome boys and pretty girls. They are simple. They care much about their physical appearance, perhaps don't know how*

to justify what is good or bad. You know, he is a tutor. He is also a handsome boy. I [students] like to see him, like to have him in the classroom. He brings me knowledge, also happiness, I [students] enjoy it. It's much better than the boring school teacher'.

Second, the tutors revealed that the idolisation of tutors can create enjoyment for students. This is because tutoring is perceived by students to be more than just tutoring per se; it is also a source of enjoyment and socialisation for the students. For example, several teaching assistants revealed that some student taking tutoring look like attending a concert held by idol singers, rather than classroom learning. This demonstrates that the tutoring is beyond academic knowledge, but also enjoyment that motivate students to engage and enjoy in the learning process.

Doris, teaching assistant of Chinese language of chain C, revealed, *'It's so exaggerating! Many [students] are excited in attending the live [tutorials] held by handsome or pretty tutors, like [joining] a party or a music concert'.*

Different tutors shared the view that the curiosity of students may influence their peers, such as sharing their thoughts in respect to the tutors with their peers. The tutors also argued that sharing has become a social norm, particularly among youngsters, following the rise of social media such as Facebook. Instagram and YouTube. As argued by Yue (2007), this is because adolescents are eager to seek a group to which they can belong from within their social groups, like their classmates.

Alice, English tutor of Chain D, commented, *'Nowadays, youngsters like sharing. They share everything on Facebook and IG [Instagram] including our news and advertisements … wow, Alan [tutor] looks like Oppa [literally Korean handsome*

man], they like to share his [tutor's] photos on their Facebook seeking likes'.

The concept of idol tutors in these findings is illustrated in Figure 5.18. There is a comparison between a Korean star and a celebrity tutor in terms of physical appearance, as described by Alice in the above quote. The star and the tutor look very similar to each other, like twins, to a great extent, which reflects the shared meanings of the participants, who stated that the celebrity tutors perform as idols. It also shows the fashion sense of the celebrity tutors in respect to the popularity of Korean culture worldwide in recent years (Han, 2015; Kim and Hong, 2017) and how the tutors follow Korean fashion to create an image to sell.

Figure 5.18

A comparison of a Korean star called Chang Wook Ji, and an English tutor called Alan Chan of King's Glory Educational Centre Ltd (the small photo shown in the middle)

Source of the newspaper: Sing Tao Daily, Hong Kong, D10, 20 June 2015
Source of the tutor's poster: Retrieved from https://www.kingsglory.edu.hk/tutorial/mediaNews/mediaNews.asp?mediaId=799 (Accessed: 27 April 2018)

In the literature on celebrity and sociology, physical attractiveness is found to be a key factor for celebrities (Cashmore, 2006; Turner, 2014). In the literature on celebrity endorsement, one group of researchers (e.g. Chao *et al*., 2005; Hollensen and Schimmelpfennig, 2013) argue that the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement is contributed to by the physical attractiveness of the celebrity endorsers.

Following on from the finding that the celebrity tutors perform as idols in the market, I found that the physical attractiveness of celebrity tutors is important to their image and positioning. The physical attractiveness of celebrity tutors reflects in the context of their tutoring and service delivery, such as the bundling of tutoring and idolatry. Hence, it is worth exploring the meanings assigned by the practitioners to the physical attractiveness of idol tutors in the shadow education sector.

The literature on celebrity endorsement shows that researchers have attempted to develop factors such as beauty, elegance and sexiness to measure the perceived attitudes of consumers to the physical attractiveness of celebrities (Eisend and Langer, 2010; Lien *at al.,* 2012). The participants shared a common understanding that the physical attractiveness of celebrity tutors is important to them; yet it is a generic, rather than a precise term. Besides, the administration staff argued that the attractiveness of celebrity tutors is not limited to their physical attractiveness, but also includes their non-physical attractiveness. This relates to the personality and physical appearance of tutors in terms of their image and positioning strategy.

> Susan, course administration manager of Chain B, stated, *'The attractiveness of tutors is not just their appearance…. Some tutors position themselves as experts, some as idol singers. Each type has its fans. Students like it very much, indeed'*.

It was generally agreed by the participants that the majority of celebrity tutors are physically attractive. When I showed Figure 5.18 to the participants to comment

on during the interviews, it was interesting to find that the participants, including tutors, administration staff, marketing staff and teaching assistants, recognised that the tutor in Figure 5.18 is well-known and popular in the market. He was described by these participants as positioned as a Korean idol actor in terms of his physical appearance and style of dressing, following the popularity of Korean culture and stars in Hong Kong in recent years. Hence, being a celebrity (tutor) is insufficient; it needs a clear perceived positioning in the market, like a Korean star.

In addition to the tutors who imitate Korean stars, as seen in the findings, I found that there are celebrity tutors whose physical appearance is charming, as shown on their posters and advertisements (e.g. Figure 5.19). Journalists have also reported that the image of certain tutors, including the tutor shown in Figure 5.19, are explicitly designed as idols by the tutors themselves and/or the founders of the chains they serve (Pak and Tse, 2015; Shou, 2015). They aim to attract students' interests in the tutors, so as to stimulate their interest in undertaking the tutoring offered by them. These findings reflect that the physical appearance of celebrity tutors is critical to enabling the tutors to become idol tutors.

Figure 5.19

Poster of Kelly Mok, English tutor of King's Glory Educational Centre Ltd

Source: https://unautreregarde.files.wordpress.com/2013/05/483575_10152324168300641_1956898341_n.jpg (Accessed: 17 April 2018)

However, a contradiction was found regarding the physical appearance of celebrity tutors. There was one tutor who rejected the idea of idol tutors and denied casting herself as an idol tutor when I asked her about it. Her immediate feedback and gesture in response to my question showed that she believed that it is not true that tutors are perceived to be famous due to their physical appearance, rather than their expertise in a specific area or academic subject, or their tutoring skills; this is a complementary but adverse perception, indeed.

> Rebecca, English tutor of Chain B, argued, *'No, my goodwill is my 10-year experience in this field, my teaching skills. I don't think my appearance can help students'*.

Yet, this tutor recognised that physical appearance is important to the image of tutors, which is consistent with the claims of other tutors and administration staff. She revealed that there are students who admire her as an idol or role model, which is outside of her control and was never her intention. The tutor argued that being an idol does no harm at all if it can allow her to give help to students. She also emphasised that everyone likes to present their best angle to other people.

> Rebecca continued, stating, '*It's reasonable to show the best angle to the public in advertisements … Everyone and anyone must wish to show his best [beauty], right? We just do what other people do…I don't deny that students may treat us as idols. Indeed, many admire us… no harm at all. If they like the tutor, they will pay more attention to the tutorials'*.

There are contradictory findings in regard to the role of idol tutors and the hesitation in recognising the physical appearance of tutors as being related to their perceived performance or image. Physical attractiveness and idolisation were found to be used by the celebrity tutors to attract students' interest and attention. Being an idol tutor was argued by the participants to differentiate the perceived image of celebrity

tutors from that of school teachers. The aim is to improve the students' concentration on their studies and enhance their loyalty to their tutors.

Different tutors might manage their idol status differently, as found in the findings. However, presumably, as I found from the participants, the tutors present only their good side to their students, and even the wider public, through their promotional messages and assisting students to excel in examination taking. This reveals the pressures on celebrity tutors that are not easily recognised in the literature, which in itself is perhaps subject to the idolisation of celebrity.

As well as the physical attractiveness that leads tutors to be perceived as idols, I found that there is a non-physical attractiveness that is embedded in the idol tutors. Both the physical attractiveness and non-physical attractiveness are found to co-exist. For example, one tutor presents herself as having sex appeal on her Facebook page, as shown in Figure 5.20. Unlike the style of the tutor in Figure 5.19, who presents herself as a successful business executive, the tutor shown in Figure 5.20 shows a relatively casual image that looks more like an idol; it is similar to celebrity idols such as singers or actors, who are commonly found in the entertainment industry (Bell, 2010; Chan, 2010). These findings echo the claims in the literature on celebrity that celebrities are often worshipped by their fans and followers mainly due to their physical attractiveness (Galbraith and Karlin, 2012; Chiou *et al.*, 2005).

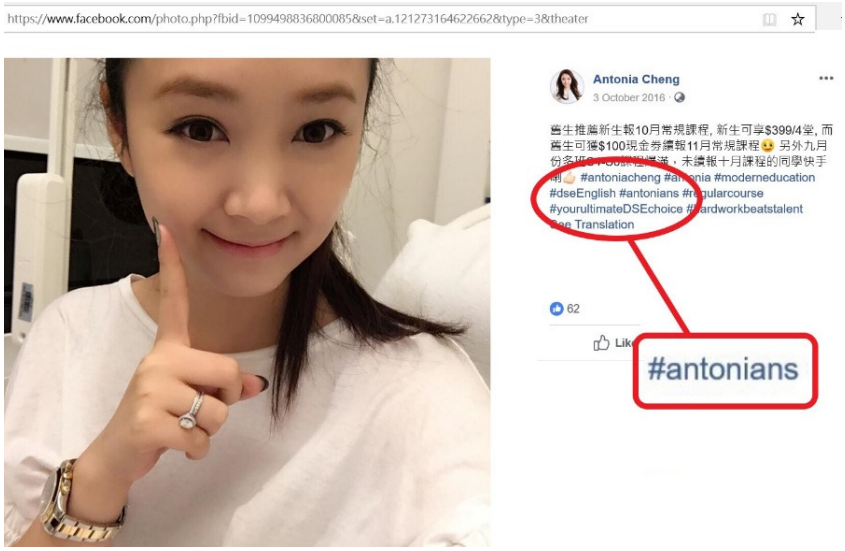


Figure 5.20

Screen Capture of Antonia Cheng's Facebook page, English tutor of Modern Education (HK) Ltd, showing the nickname of her students

Source: Retrieved from Antonia Cheng's Facebook Page, https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1099498836800085&set=a.121273164622662.29252.100002199376522&type=3&theater (Accessed: 18 April 2018)

Furthermore, I found that there is a non-physical attractiveness embedded in tutors, as shown in Figure 5.20. One tutor called Antonia was found to address her students by the nickname '*Antonians*', as shown in the red box in Figure 5.20. This demonstrates a close connection or specific relationship, like idol worshipping, that is established between that tutor and her students. The students were likely to be treated by the tutor as her followers. This might also lead the tutor's students and other followers of her Facebook page to perceive her differently due to that unique name and identity.

Celebrity tutors using nicknames to address their students was first found in the early 2000s, when an English tutor called K Oten was seen to address his students as '*Otenian*' (*Eastweek*, 2009a). I found that there is a chain tutoring centre called Ever Learning Educational Centre that addresses its students as *'Elers'*, as shown in Figure 5.21. This implies that the students are members of Ever Learning.

Figure 5.21

Screen Capture of Ever Learning Educational Centre's Facebook page showing the nickname of its students

Source: Retrieved from Ever Learning's Facebook page, https://www.facebook.com/ELCenter/photos/a.602071456481913/1337108049644913/?type=3&theater (Accessed: 12 April 2018)

I discussed the nicknames of students used by different tutors and the chain tutoring centres with the participants during the interviews. I aimed to understand the meanings of the nicknames in regard to the celebrity tutors and their operation likes how idolisation of tutoring functions and what would the celebrity tutors gain from it. Several tutors and teaching assistants claimed that the idolisation of tutoring is a common way to compete in the shadow education sector. They argued that there are many tutors whose image looks like an idol and who like to promote themselves by emphasising their physical appearance. They commented that those idol tutors serve their students as followers and fans, rather than students. Their interactions are described as idol worshipping, in addition to tutoring, which reflects their interactions in the classroom and on social media, particularly Facebook. Tutors' use of nicknames to refer their students was found to be an element of the idolisation of tutoring.

> Florence, teaching assistant of Chinese language of Chain A, commented, *'Yeah, many tutors treat their students as fans and followers. It is not news. In this industry, I mean the chains, the tutors are idolised, indeed'*.

Furthermore, several tutors recognised that there are tutors who use nicknames to address their students in order to create a closer relationship with them and make them feel a difference. They argued that the students are adolescents whose mindset is relatively simple and easily influenced.

> Cindy, English tutor of Chain B, revealed, *'Kids are fragile. [Students] love to be cared for. They are happy if you focus on them, treat them well, the nickname is so lovely, they find such a nickname represents that they are different from other students, because they belong to the tutor's group, [it's] so amazing, they must like it'*.

The nickname serves to differentiate the students from other students. This illustrates how the tutors develop and practise idol worshipping in their tutoring. It serves as an external stimulation, as argued by Reeves *et al.* (2012), to enhance the celebrity worshipping, materialism and compulsive buying attached to celebrities.

> Brenda, English tutor, founder and CEO of Chain D, commented, *'… like Alan, Anton[Antonia], I think they sell their face [physical appearance] rather than their tutoring skills. Their students are different from mine, like their followers … The nickname? Oh, it seems their students like it very much, perhaps because there are students seeking fun, and being cared for'*.

This demonstrates a dynamic process of idolisation in the shadow education sector. This also implies that the idolisation of tutoring and fan culture are co-developed by both tutors and students. I found that the celebrity tutor is probably a generic name that can be used to describe those tutors serving the main chain tutoring centres that use extensive advertisements. The idol tutors are likely to be the ones who focus on idolatry in their promotion and service, in the hope of attracting particular market segments (students). The idolisation of tutoring demonstrates the performance of the celebrity tutors. It sheds light on our understanding of idolatry, in which the idols come from the entertainment industry in the study of Hong Kong youngsters (Chan, 2010). The celebrity tutors are found to be another source of idols that students (adolescents) worship.

Different voices were found among the participants in respect to the nicknames used to address students. As I found that the nicknames were recognised by the participants as a way to reflect the idol tutor worshipping and enhance tutors' relationship with students, I expected that other tutors might use nicknames to address their students in order to build up and enhance their relationship with them.

However, I found that the majority of tutors were reluctant to tell me clearly whether or not they use nicknames to address their students. As with the physical appearance of tutors, this shows that there were contradictory findings regarding the effectiveness of using nicknames and the willingness of tutors to discuss the use of nicknames.

> Jack, economics tutor of Chain C, said, *'I call them students, normally, not any nicknames. I don't know it; I don't want to comment on what other tutors do. Perhaps different people use different ways'*.

I considered that the hesitation of tutors to discuss the use of nicknames might imply that there are potential hidden problems in respect to the idolisation of tutoring.

For example, the participants agreed that shadow education is an effective way of assisting students to prepare for examination taking, which is consistent with the findings of other studies in the literature on education (e.g. Bray and Kwo, 2012; Lee *et al.*, 2009), as discussed in section 5.2. They also recognised that it is important for them to stimulate their students' interest in the learning process, including the idolisation of tutoring and fan culture. However, why there are only a few tutors and/or the chains use nicknames to address their students? Would the nicknames be effective to motivate students' interest in studying and enhance their loyalty to the tutors and/or chains?

The voices of the participants in regard to the idolisation of tutoring and the use of nicknames reflect a link between shadow education and formal school education. They belong to the same or similar product categories in education. The public presumably believe that the teachers, including the tutors in the shadow education sector, and the students engage in education to acquire knowledge, rather than for entertainment or idol worshipping. The effectiveness of tutoring conducted by the celebrity tutors to learning and examination taking has been recognised by students (e.g. Pak and Tse, 2015; Shou, 2015) and the participants. However, the mix of education, entertainment and idol worshipping found in the research findings shows a difference, which contradicts to the traditional perception of (formal) education and is new to the literature on education and marketisation of education.

The idolisation of tutoring and idol tutor worshipping were also found to be reflected in the emotional aspects of students' loyalty to their idol tutors. Several administration staff and teaching assistants revealed that the students are excited to see their tutors because of their physical attractiveness and/or teaching style. They argued that the celebrity tutors have become a topic of social discussion for students, who treat the tutors as idols and celebrities who they admire and even worship.

The administration staff described some students as fans of their tutors based on their attitudes and behaviours while attending the tutorials. The actions and

behaviours of students, in the following quotes, show that the students treat their tutors as idol tutors, rather than as tutors. Furthermore, these findings reflect the enjoyment of students that is gained from the idolisation of tutoring.

> A teaching assistant of Chinese (the name and relevant chain are hidden for privacy protection) revealed, *'You can't believe it, I saw almost all 3 classrooms were filled up with female students taking Alan's live [tutorial]. Crazy, but real. Yeah, Alan (Figure 5.22) is handsome for sure. His students look like fans rather than students'.*

> Susan, course administration manager of Chain B, revealed, *'I often see students bringing their home-made biscuits or even buying food for their tutors, or even giving flowers to them, … it's true. Sometimes, we see female students who bring big signs with the tutor's name and put them on tables in the classrooms, just like fans meeting their idols at a concert'.*

Figure 5.22

Poster of Alan Chan, English tutor of King's Glory Educational Centre Ltd

Source: https://www.socimage.net/media/106276926847652264 2_1433679011 (Accessed: 17 April 2018)

In addition to presenting themselves in advertisements on the streets and in the media, further evidence was found that tutors make extensive use of social media, mainly Facebook and Instagram, and keep updating their status and sharing their thoughts and daily lives with the public. In Figure 5.23, a celebrity tutor shows a selfie with his students on his Facebook page to thank the students for giving him a birthday cake. This is gossip rather than teaching related performance. It demonstrates a close relationship between the tutor and his students. It also shows the enjoyment that the students gain through interacting with the tutor.

Figure 5.23

Yuen Siu's Facebook post for a birthday cake made by two of his students

Source: Retrieved from Yuen Siu's Facebook page, https://www.facebook.com/siuyuenteam/photos/a.351266729648.127251.288264264648/10152844998649649/?type=3&theater (Accessed: 23 Apr 2018)

> Henry, teaching assistant of English of Chain B, said, *'Sharing is a must today. Everyone is excited to share everything over Facebook. Tutors and students do the same … Students are excited to follow their tutors' sharing'.*

Referring to the comment made by Henry in the above quote, I found that social media is a popular channel with both the students and the tutors, which echoes the

findings of previous studies regarding the popularity of social media and the sharing cultures (e.g. Marwick, 2013; Kowalczyk and Royne, 2013). The findings show that the celebrity tutors aim to use social media to reach not only their existing students, but also potential students and other people who are interested in them. The purpose is to make themselves into idols to attract their students' interest, so as to enhance their brand loyalty. That explains why the participants revealed that the students are excited to discuss the celebrity tutors' sharing on social media and their advertisements as social topics.

The idolisation of tutoring discussed in these findings reflects the idol worshipping of idol singers or actors in the entertainment industry that can be found in journalists' reports (e.g. *Eastweek*, 2009b; Ng, 2014) and the literature on celebrity (e.g. Barron, 2015; Ferris and Harris, 2011; Nayar, 2009). The action and behaviours of the students revealed by the participants illustrate the process and practice of idolisation in terms of how the students perform as followers of the idol tutors.

The idolisation of tutoring was seen as a successful strategy by the majority of the participants, and they agreed that it is actively and purposefully pursued by the chain tutoring centres and the tutors. To enact this, the tutors promote a student worshipping dynamic, whereby the students' attitudes and actions during the tutoring reflect the worshipping. These findings show that celebrity tutors who perform as idol tutors can attract students and stimulate a reaction from them, such as purchasing intention or loyalty.

The relationship between the celebrity tutor and the students reflects that the branding of the tutors as a product, which is successful and appealing to students. For example, the interactions between the idol tutors and the students in classrooms reflect the dynamic of idol tutor worshipping in the shadow education sector, but not the entertainment industry, which extends our understanding of idol worshipping, which, as yet, remains under-examined in the literature.

Furthermore, the participants shared the view that both the physical attractiveness and the non-physical attractiveness of tutors are related to their image and positioning. The image and positioning of tutors is pivotal to maintaining the public's awareness of them. Several tutors commented that different tutors have different images and positioning. For example, some tutors may highlight their expertise and record of predicting the examination questions in advertisements, while other may promote themselves with a focus on their physical appearance.

There is no single format that illustrates the tutors or how they manage their relationship with their students. However, different tutors and founders commented that a good tutor must have a distinctive image to create awareness and differentiate themselves in the market. The idol tutor was found to be a charismatic person who has traits that can attract the attention of students, influence them, and enhance the relationship with them.

The attractiveness of tutors was found to be related to their image and charisma, which involve physical and non-physical elements. These findings echo the broad definition of charisma in the literature (e.g. Ladkin, 2006; Potts, 2009; Yukl, 2013), which was developed based on Weber's (1947) claim that it is a certain quality of personality that sets certain individuals apart and draws other to them.

> Brenda, English tutor of Chain D, claimed, *'You don't need to be very handsome or pretty, although it is always an advantage. But your image must be distinctive to differentiate… Like YY [Chinese tutor of Beacon College] who is just a youngster, below 30, only four years in the market. He is not very handsome, but he is tall and friendly, like an elder brother of students…. He is very sharp [distinctive]'*.
>
> Michael, English tutor, founder and director of Chain B, also claimed, *'Ken sir [Modern Education's founder] and Mr Shum [King's Glory's founder] are very smart and creative. They are*

pioneers, casting themselves and their tutors as celebrities since the 1990s…. This establishes a difference between school teachers and tutors… Nobody knows who a school teacher is, but most people know what a Tutor King means, even if they do not know the detail of the tutor's subject and the name of his tutoring chain'.

These findings also shed light on the issue of awareness of celebrities in the literature. Awareness is critical to a celebrity in order to compete and sustain themselves in the market over time (Cashmore, 2006; Williamson, 2016). This awareness is reflected in the image and positioning of the tutors. For example, referring to the comments of Michael in the above quote regarding several founders of the chains in the 1990s, their names can still be found in the media today (e.g. Chan, 2019; Shou, 2015). This shows that the celebrity status and image of these tutors and founders have been well built in the market, and have even become a legacy in the industry.

These findings also reflect a similarity between the celebrity tutors and artists in the entertainment industry, who require a distinctive image and/or awareness among the public. The average tutor or artist is not as good as those who have attractive and distinctive images and an appearance that attracts audiences. This demonstrates the dynamic of the tutors in the shadow education sector and their similarity to celebrities in the entertainment industry. Meanwhile, the attractiveness of tutors in terms of images and appearance reflects their celebrity power, as argued by Marshall (1997) and Pringle (2004).

The emotional aspect of idol tutor worshipping can also be seen from the buying behaviour of students. The tutors and administration staff informed me that the students are often found to enrol and undertake tutoring together with their peers, mainly their classmates. They also revealed that it is uncommon to see students undertake tutorials on their own.

> Albert, customer service manager of Chain A, revealed, *'Very rare to see students come alone, it's mostly with classmates … in fact, peer effect and peer pressure are keys. Let's say your classmates like Kenneth [English tutor], how dare you disagree, you follow 100% … so it's like a chain effect, when one believes that a tutor is good, he enrols [this tutor's tutorials], and his classmates follow'.*

These findings show that the idolisation of tutoring echoes the concept of idols and fans found in the literature on celebrity and sociology (Bell, 2010; Galbraith and Karlin, 2012). The behaviours and actions of fans (the students) towards their idols (the tutors) are collectivistic and they are influenced by each other, which can be explained by the concept of the peer effect. The peer effect of students in respect to their enrolment in tutoring and their preferences in the selection of tutors was recognised by the participants as a challenge to compete. The tutors would need to influence the behaviour of their students in group, rather than individual, to secure their tutoring business. Once the tutor gains a business (enrolment) from a student, that students may generate more businesses for the tutor through his or her peers. Conversely, if the tutor losses a students' business, its impact is most likely larger than the amount generated from that student, but in a group.

These findings reflect that individual students were found by the participants to follow their peers in choosing tutoring courses and attending tutoring, which illustrates the loyalty of students towards their tutors and their peers. This relates to the findings of Chan (2010), who states that the peer effect of adolescents in Hong Kong influences their consumption preferences, and it extends our understanding of Yue's study regarding how young people benefit from idol worship on the idol transformation education (Yue, 2010).

Furthermore, I found that the behaviours of students described in the findings reflect the issue of group-think and a consciousness of kind in which many students act as

one. This gives a very stable and firm market base in which the students, as followers, are within a communal group that is difficult to disrupt easily. These findings reflect the peer effect and group-think of students, which are beyond functional loyalty in terms of examination success. There is more emotional loyalty in terms of acting as one among peers and the idolisation of tutors in which students being fans and worshippers who worship and admire their tutors. Besides, previous studies have shown that the public learn about celebrities from a distance through the media and the Internet, even though friends, family and co-workers may feed them information about celebrities regularly (Leslie, 2011; Williamson, 2016).

In this study, it was seen, from tutors' perspective, how the direct contact between celebrity tutors and students entails elements of idolisation of the tutors' physical appearance. Although both tutoring and school education are classroom-based, I found that the performance of tutors is critical to the students' learning.

The majority of the participants argued that the presentation skills of celebrity tutors are different from those of school teachers. The tutors argued that the celebrity tutors perform like idols performing on a stage, and tutoring delivery was perceived as a type of stage performance, similar to in the entertainment industry.

> Brenda, English tutor, founder and CEO of Chain D, claimed, *'It [tutoring] is a show …when I find they[students] are starting to get bored, I will do something …. Their concentration span is just half an hour …. So in around every 15-20 minutes, you have to refresh them'*.

These comments from Brenda show that the performance of tutors tricks students to capture their attention. She was cognisant of this and purposefully managed her class to ensure that her performance tricked the students to keep their attention. Meanwhile, this also ensured that she was seen as an entertaining and engaging

tutor. These aspects of entertainment and being engaged are some of the dynamic practices that are used by celebrity tutors to build and maintain their celebrity status.

Further to the claim about stage performance, a specific example of performance was found, which illustrates how a celebrity tutor performs on his or her classroom stage. Several teaching assistants shared their experiences of classroom management. They claimed that a good tutor needs to manage the flow of the presentation in a 75-minute tutorial and make it interesting so as to attract students' attention.

> Frank, teaching assistant of Chinese of Chain A, revealed, *'Joking is very important [for tutoring delivery] for attention seeking and enjoyment. Students enjoy it a lot …. Being inspiring in the boring tutoring process'*.

These findings reflect that the tutoring is more akin to entertainment and is not often seen as a priority in mainstream education. However, this is an interesting tension, as researchers in the literature on pedagogic research (e.g. Fredricks, 2013; Skinner and Pitzer, 2012) argue that being engaged and enjoying learning, and having positive feelings and emotions, are important for effective learning. However, I would question why there seems to be an assumption that in mainstream education enjoyment and entertainment are not a high priority, when this is known to be important for effective education.

Following the performance or performative logic are engaging in contemporary pedagogic understanding, and the evidence of examination passes lubricated by tutoring would suggest that the tutors' tutoring approach via entertainment and performance is effective. These findings extend our understanding of shadow education from a new angle that is under-examined in the literature on education.

The stage performance of tutors was found to be well organised, rather than just involving the tutors' intuition. The tutoring held by the celebrity tutors was found to involve teamwork; the tutoring format was constructed by a team led by the tutor. The English tutor and founder revealed that the tutoring involves precise settings regarding the flow of the tutoring, such as the time management, tutoring content, and time intervals for joking and/or seeking feedback.

> Michael, English tutor, founder and director of Chain B, revealed, *'It's well prepared by a team, not only the tutor … not just the tutoring notes, also the ways of presentation, let's say what to say, when to say it, … it is impossible to be handled by one person'*.

Additionally, several tutors and teaching assistants described that tutoring is similar to stand-up comedy; it is carefully designed for the tutor to perform. These participants argued that humour is critical to the content of tutoring. They aim to integrate the tutoring with enjoyment so as to create a fun learning atmosphere. Hence, the tutor is considered as a stage performer, in addition to his or her original role as a tutor.

> Eric, teaching assistant of Chinese of Chain A, said, *'Like the stand-up comedy, basically the tutor uses joking to gain students' attention and enjoyment. When they [students] are happy, they will pay attention to the tutoring, right? … how many jokes?'*.

Furthermore, I found evidence of similarities between tutoring and film production. For example, scripts were found to be used by the celebrity tutors to assist them with what to say and what to do during a tutorial. Several tutors and teaching assistants, who were responsible for preparing the scripts, revealed that tutoring delivery involves precise time management and content design. Besides, I found that the script contents were often involved news and gossip, particularly those related to rivals or even among the tutors within the same chain. The tutors used

the scripts to make the flow of tutoring well-organised and exciting. The format and style of the scripts were found to be varied, yet several teaching assistants informed me that the majority of tutors prefer to use their tutorial notes as props to guide them in their performance.

> Eric, teaching assistant of Chinese of Chain A, revealed, *'The tutor refers to his tutorial notes like students' textbooks to teach. The tutor's notes are highlighted by him or by us throughout, like a reminder for a punch line, to say a particular joke, to make a particular gesture or action to attract attention'*.

Punch lines can be found in the scripts. The teaching assistants revealed that the punch lines are mostly designed with different types of joke at different time intervals. The aim of this is to draw students' attention, create an atmosphere of excitement, encourage students to respond, and prevent them from being bored. This reflects the element of enjoyment embedded in the tutoring.

> Frank, teaching assistant of Chinese of Chain A, stated, *'He [tutor] and his TA, designers, all work together to create the punch lines … some relate to the tutoring subject, more about competitors, or current soft news, also dirty jokes … you know there are scripts, when to say things, what to say, when to pause … and we have to renew the content every year, ensure its freshness … just like stand-up comedy … students enjoy this [tutoring] very much because they can learn and be entertained simultaneously, unlike their boring school education'*.

The fact that scripts are used by the celebrity tutors reflects that the tutoring and performance of celebrity tutors are managed, and do not simply involve spontaneous delivery. This suggests that the performance for tutors can be learnt and taught to other tutors. Besides, the performance of tutors reflects that tutoring should be enjoyable and that tutors are expected, probably by their students and

even themselves, to deliver a variety of meanings to students, including knowledge and enjoyment.

While previous studies on celebrity (e.g. Barron, 2015; Leslie, 2011) seem to focus on individuals, the findings regarding the operation of celebrity tutors demonstrate that they are far from being individually managed or constructed. Their work involves teamwork. As such, celebrity is the outcome of several people rather than one individual, but importantly, this shows that the celebrity tutor is a relational and socially constructed phenomenon that is also managed and maintained socially and relationally.

The teamwork found in the construction of the performance of celebrity tutors demonstrates that there is a backstage operation going on, which is always an integral and critical part of planning for the performance. However, mainstream teaching focuses more on educational content rather than how it is performed (Depaepe *et al.,* 2013; Evens *et al.,* 2015).

Furthermore, mainstream education often isolates the teacher or sees the academic as the sole person responsible for the delivery of the educational content (Schneider, 2015; Van Driel and Berry, 2012). There is a neglect in mainstream education of teamwork and planning the performance aspect of education. I will further discuss the backstage operation in section 5.4.3 regarding the tutor as an entrepreneur.

Additionally, I found that tutoring delivery is an interactive process between the tutors and their students. The tutors use the scripts, the punch lines and the jokes to manage their tutoring process and stimulate their students to react based on the scripts and the tutors' planned flow of tutoring delivery. These findings demonstrate that both the tutors and the students are engaged and motivated in the tutoring process. These interactions extend our understanding of the experiential learning that effective learning results from active student and teacher involvement with real-life or simulated experiences and subsequent reflection on those

experiences (Brennan, 2014; Camarero *et al.,* 2010) outside the formal/school education.

Researchers in the literature on education and educational psychology argue that motivation and engagement play a key role in students' interest in, and enjoyment of school education, which can drive the effectiveness of learning (e.g. Fredricks, 2013; Malloy *et al.,* 2013). Martin (2006) found that the teacher's confidence and enjoyment in teaching, as well as their pedagogical efficacy and affective orientation in the classroom have a positive impact on student engagement and motivation. The performance of tutoring, which in this study was found to be embedded with enjoyment, extends our understanding of joyful learning, and student engagement and motivation in shadow education, which has been under-examined in the literature on education and educational psychology.

There are other angles from which to analyse the performance of celebrity tutors and the reasons for being idol tutors. Apart from the scripts, I found that there is equipment that is used to facilitate the performance of tutors. For example, I found that tutors use a specific type of microphone to conduct their tutoring, as shown in Figures 5.24 and 5.25. This gives the impression that the tutors look like singers or actors on the screen.

	
Figure 5.24 *Dick Hui, maths tutor of Modern Education (HK) Ltd* *Source: Retrieved from Dick Hui's Facebook page, https://www.facebook.com/modernedu/photos/a.138662893358.111911.27451253358/10152715079958359/?type=3&theater (Accessed: 27 April 2017)*	*Figure 5.25* *YY Lam, Chinese tutor of Beacon College* *Source: www.twoeggz.com/picture/3173772.html (Accessed: 27 April 2018)*

Several teaching assistants told me that the cordless microphone, as shown in Figures 5.24 and 5.25, is standard equipment that is used by tutors. This is because the tutors often move freely and operate the visualiser while conducting their tutoring, so it is not feasible to use a corded microphone in the classroom. Apart from this practical reason, the participants revealed that using this type of cordless microphone is a gesture that casts the tutor as being similar to a singer performing on the stage rather than a school teacher.

> Florence, teaching assistant of Chinese of Chain A, said, *'All tutors use the kind of mic [microphone] that hangs on the face like singers or stage actors. No-one uses corded microphones because they need to write and move while teaching frequently … Most of them [tutors] use their own microphone, rather than the one set in the classroom, perhaps due to hygiene, or to show a difference'*.

> Mary, teaching assistant of Chinese of Chain C, said, *'It's about the image… You want to be perceived as a star, you need to present as a star. Your style, your gesture, your tools all are about a package that casts you as a star tutor rather than an unknown teacher'*.

These findings reflect that the image of celebrity tutors is managed with performance props such as the microphone. This demonstrates that the tutors believe that their image and performance with the props might help them to be perceived by their students as an idol tutor. This implies that there is added value, such as the stage performance being embedded in the tutoring content to attract the attention and interest of students.

The image and performance of celebrity tutors was found to be the result of teamwork. A collective effort is made to construct the content of tutoring with performance props that enable the tutor to perform. Hence, the classrooms seem to be the stage where the tutors perform and the students seem to be the audiences. These idol tutor and idolised tutoring are new to our understanding in the literature on both education and marketisation of education.

Nevertheless, I found that the performance of tutors was not limited to the classrooms. There are also non-teaching activities, such as music concerts (Figure 5.26) and theme park tours (e.g. The Modern Education Halloween 2015 tour in the Ocean Park, Hong Kong, as shown on Modern Education's Facebook page, https://www.facebook.com/modernedu/videos/vb.27451253358/10153177698358359/?type=2&theater). The tutors were found to be the performers in those activities, such as the singers shown in Figure 5.26.

Figure 5.26

Screen Capture of YouTube, four celebrity tutors of Beacon College performing in their singing contest in 2015 for their students at the Queen Elizabeth Stadium, Hong Kong

Tutors from left to right Wayne Leung (Physics tutor), YY Lam (Chinese tutor), Kenneth Lau (English tutor) and Andrew Lo (economics tutor)

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F2pc-x_56Mc&list=LLJHkkBbU8AuwDJRUbxVBuJQ&index=1870 (Accessed: 17 April 2018)

I discussed these non-teaching activities with the participants to explore the rationale behind them. The participants, particularly the management staff, argued that the tutoring centres no longer offer just classroom education. They claimed that both the tutors and the chains are eager to develop gimmicks to attract and retain students, in which enjoyment and engagement are found to be useful to add value to the tutoring.

The tutors agreed that they are often perceived by their students as idols, in addition to their primary role as tutors. To establish and maintain the perceived image of idol tutors, the tutors revealed that they need to behave and perform as idol celebrities, for example as idol singers or actors in the entertainment industry. Those non-teaching activities are therefore deemed another stage on which the tutors perform and reinforce their image of being idol tutors in order to create enjoyment for, and encourage the engagement of, the students.

> Henry, teaching assistant of English of Chain B, said, *'Yeah, the concert [is] really an excellent gimmick, YY and other Beacon's tutors look like superstars, surely that can please their students, also it creates a big noise for students to discuss'*.

Furthermore, I found that those non-teaching activities are organised to reinforce the image of tutors as idol celebrities in the entertainment industry. For example, one tutor revealed that there are tutors whose promotional focus is young, energetic and kind, which contrasts with the widespread image of school teachers, who are seen as mature and experienced..

> Alice, English tutor of Chain D, commented, *'Beacon's tutors are relatively young. They sell [the promotional focus lies on] friendly and energetic. I think not many students are interested in studying but like to play. Taking their tutoring and going to their concert, it's really amazing. Surely they think the tutors are beyond tutors and are stars'*.

Research in education shows that play, particularly guided play, is recognised as a way of learning (Hauser *et al.,* 2018; Weisberg *et al.,* 2013). The play is therefore designed for specific educational purposes. These non-teaching performances, such as concerts and parties, identified from the findings reveal a tension that is not usual for educational research and extend the analysis that celebrity tutors are doing non-educational activities to enhance the association between their image and performance, entertainment and star attributes in the entertainment industry.

I found that these non-teaching activities performed by the celebrity tutors are not related to the tutoring content. Conversely, they are more likely to enhance the image and performance of the tutors as idol tutors and facilitate the enjoyment and engagement of the students, as well as the students' loyalty to the tutors. These

types of play in shadow education extend our understanding of play in pedagogy, which is worth exploring further in the future.

Furthermore, I found that the tutors' participation in music concerts, as shown in Figure 5.26, was done for the students of a particular chain tutoring centre, i.e. Beacon College. This demonstrates the privileged status given to the students. It reflects the relationship between idol celebrities and their fans via the fan club and the privilege of being able to access the celebrities (Leslie, 2011; Turner, 2004). This relationship reflects a difference between the fans, i.e. the particular groups of students, and the public, in relation to accessing idols. This non-teaching performance may also stimulate the curiosity of students and they may seek information and news regarding the idol tutors, which might result in enhancing their awareness of the tutors.

There was also evidence that the performance of celebrity tutors extends to social media. I found that there were celebrity tutors – the same tutors who took part in the music concerts – who produced an online programme regarding their overseas travel (Figure 5.27). The stories were organised in a series, which was broadcast on YouTube and their Facebook page. The name of the programme was similar to another popular travel programme on TV that was first launched in 2013 (Yuen and So, 2013).

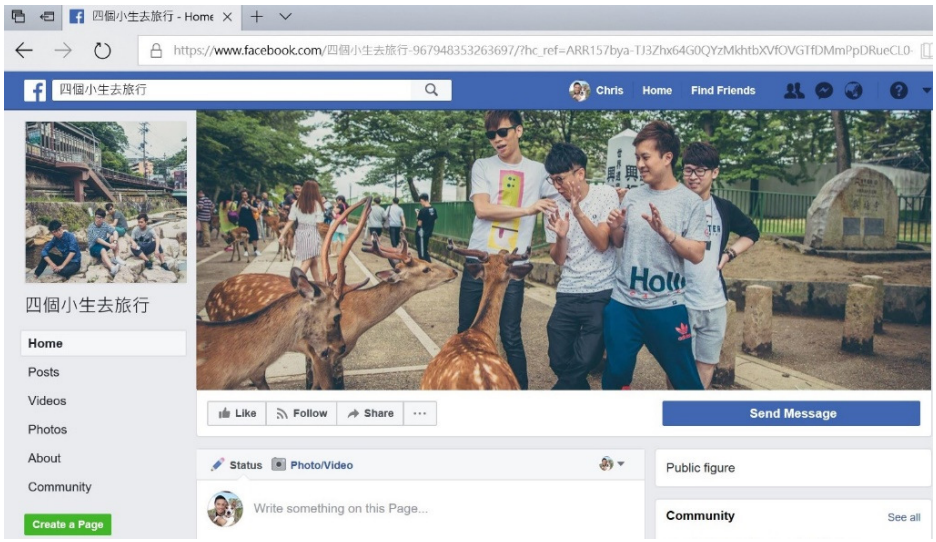


Figure 5.27

Four youngsters go travelling

Cast by four tutors of Beacon College, namely YY Lam (Chinese tutor), Andrew Lo (economics tutor), Wayne Leung (Physics tutor) and Kenneth Lau (English tutor), broadcast on YouTube in 2016 regarding the travel experiences of the tutor. It contains a series of stories including travel to Taiwan, China, Japan, etc.

The programme name is similar to a local Chinese TV series called 'Three Amigos Bon Voyage' performed by three mature artists in 2013.

Source: https://www.facebook.com/pg/四個小生去旅行-967948353263697/posts/?ref=page_internal (Accessed: 18 Apr 2018)

Several tutors stated that the programme was a type of gimmick to attract students and generate social topics for students to discuss, which echoes the voice of the marketing staff, who discussed the importance of awareness of tutors via promotion and news. The tutors from different chains revealed that the programme had generated very positive feedback from students. They found that many students, not only students from the related chains, discussed the programme in their classrooms and on Facebook.

> The tutor [name of the tutor and the chain are hidden for privacy] commented, *'Oh yeah, the travel series created many topics among the students. I know that they [the relevant tutors] talked about it in the classrooms too. Students were excited to see us [tutors] performing on the screen'.*

I found other voices from different participants. The travel programme was customised in favour of hedonism and the popularity among youngsters of sharing on social media. This implies that the tutors were aware of the behaviour of students and the influence of social media on youngsters, as argued by Hackley and Hackley (2015).

> Susan, course administration manager of Chain B, argued, *'Beacon is really good at identifying the fashion [the travel TV series cast by three mature artists] and preparing promotions in line with the fashion … it was very attractive and created much noise among students, I heard. Travelling, sharing, enjoyment all are what youngsters like very much. Surely this is the students' dream [hedonism], they perceive the tutors as idols, more than tutors'.*

The enjoyment of students in respect to the online programme and the performance of tutors shed light on the Chan's (2008) findings regarding celebrity worshipping among adolescents in Hong Kong and the consumption behaviour and peer effect among adolescents in Hong Kong (Chan, 2010; Yue, 2010). This demonstrates that idol tutor worshipping is integrated into tutoring, which creates enjoyment as added value for the students.

Social media has been found to be used by celebrities, particularly those in the entertainment industry, to extend their media exposure in the contemporary entertainment-driven economy (Jenkins, 2006; Preece, 2015; Wolf, 2003).

Driessens (2013) argues that the performance of celebrities has become a part of the daily practice of consumers in the form of views or 'likes', and hence, the idiom of celebrity as a media performance has become deeply inculcated in consumer culture.

The use of social media to perform entertainment-related, rather than teaching-related, activities by the celebrity tutors further demonstrates that the emphasis of the tutors' performance is far from being on the tutoring content. The enjoyment embedded in the tutoring was evidenced from the various types of performances of the tutors, which extended beyond the tutoring delivery in the classrooms.

These findings reflect that by doing non-teaching activities or, rather, by associating themselves with performance and entertainment industry activities, the tutors are able to gain an association with these aspects of the performance and entertainment industry. This means that these associations might help the tutors to be recognised by their students as idol tutors. Therefore, it is critical for the tutors to design non-teaching activities that serve to foster relevant associations with a performer and a star. The meanings of being the idol tutor reflect not only the perceived quality of tutoring but also a variety of types of enjoyment embedded in the tutoring. Idolised tutoring is found to enhance the awareness of the tutor and the loyalty of their students.

The celebrity tutors from the chain tutoring centres were found to perform as idol tutors and their students acted as their followers. The research findings show insights from the perspective of practitioners regarding how a tutor becomes a celebrity tutor through celebrification (Driessens, 2013). This demonstrates that celebrification occurs in the shadow education sector at the individual level regarding the process by which a tutor, like everyday people, is transformed into celebrities. Yet, this celebrification of celebrity tutors is made by efforts of the tutor via teamwork under the tutor's management, rather than the representation industry as found by Leslie (2011).

The attractiveness of celebrity tutors was found to be composed of both physical attractiveness and non-physical attractiveness. This attractiveness reflects the image building of the celebrity tutors. Besides, the tutoring was found to be a performance, which was conducted within classrooms and outside classrooms, such as in field activities and on social media. Different elements were found in the construction of the tutoring content. Specifically, non-teaching related elements were found in the tutoring content, and these enabled the tutors to perform as idol tutors.

5.4.2 The Tutor as a Celebrity Brand

Previous studies in the literature on advertising and marketing show that brands extend to humans (Lunardo *et al.,* 2015; Malone and Fiske, 2013). Celebrities are found to be the most visible human brands (Kerrigan *et al.,* 2015; Preece, 2015). They serve as a commodity (Bell, 2010; Dyer, 2004) and may have transformative value for other products and services such as entertainment (Barron, 2015; Thomson, 2006). Pringle (2004) argues that celebrities are brands in themselves and that they may sell themselves or partner with other brands or products as endorsers.

The celebrity tutors were found to be a brand and the tutoring was found to be their branded product. Several tutors described themselves as a brand in themselves, in addition to being a celebrity. They argued that tutors' names are considered to be brand names, and are used to label their product (tutoring) for promotion and advertising.

> Brenda, English tutor, founder and CEO of Chain D, claimed, *'We are a brand, a product … English is my profession. Students enrol in my tutorials because they want to buy my tutoring … tutoring is a human-oriented service. Our name is the key'.*

The celebrity tutor brand reflects the concept of the human brand in the literature (e.g. Barron, 2015; Lunardo *et al.,* 2015; Thomson, 2006). Celebrity tutor brands serve as the identity of the tutor, which is found to facilitate their performance in the market. Different participants commented that the names of celebrity tutors represent a brand in themselves and awareness of their names helps them sell. Besides, the celebrity tutor brand shows not only a brand in themselves, as argued by Pringle (2004), but also a tutoring service provider under this tutor brand.

> Alice, an English tutor of Chain D, commented, *'Awareness [fame] is a priority. Each tutor is a brand, so is a chain. … You must promote your brand, let people know it, remember it. I think this applies to everything, not just our industry. When you go shopping, you must give preference to brands you are familiar with'.*

These findings reflect that the celebrity tutors use anthropomorphism as a positioning strategy (Delbaere *et al.,* 2011; Puzakova *et al.,* 2013) to humanise themselves as a tutoring brand. This triggers students to perceive the tutors and their tutoring as living entities with their own humanlike motivations, characteristics and emotions. This demonstrates a real lived brand in the market in which the tutor brands themselves are well-aware of branding and use it to sell their branded tutoring. These also shed light on the concept of celebrity as a marketable commodity, as argued by Bell (2010) and Tuner (2004).

Additionally, I found that the tutor brand implies that there are some meanings embedded in the identity and quality of the tutor as their brand value. For example, the claim of Branda in the quote above reflects that there are certain qualities related to the tutors, such as their expertise, positioning and celebrity status in the market, which are embedded in the tutor brand. And each tutor brand may contain different meanings in regard to these perceived qualities, which reflect the branding of consumer goods (e.g. Brannan *et al,* 2015; Kim and Hong, 2017).

Further evidence was found from the marketing staff that branded tutoring is being used by the tutors to differentiate it from their rivals in the market. The names of the tutors from the chain tutoring centres were found to be emphasised in their promotion and tutoring content, which was found to be unusual among their small-scale rivals.

> Cynthia, marketing manager of Chain B, said, *'I think tutors like brands… Unlike a commodity, you cannot touch the tutoring to evaluate [physically]. So it looks better and safer if the tutoring is branded by the tutor's name. The tutoring is conducted by the tutor, anyway, not anyone else'.*

This demonstrates how the tutor branding is managed by the tutors to add meaning and value to their tutoring. The tutoring is humanised by labelling it with the name of the tutor, which becomes tangible, like a branded live, as argued by Brannan *et al.*(2011). The tutor branding found in the findings demonstrates that the tutors are very cognisant that the human performance of a brand is critical and their name represents a performer that is known for their distinctive performance. The tutor brand also acted like a prop that facilitated the tutor to perform.

The celebrity tutor branding is also reflected from the tutors' promotion. In addition to highlighting the tutors' names and their portrait on the advertisements, the name and/or the portrait of the tutors can be found on their tutoring materials and business gifts, as shown in Figure 5.28 and Figure 5.29. These evidences serve as props to promote the celebrity tutor branding and enhance the tutors' celebrity status, which contribute to previous human branding research (Brannan *et al.,* 2011; Thomson, 2006) from a practical perspective of how it practises in the Hong Kong shadow education sector.

Figure 5.28

The names and/or the photos of the celebrity tutors are shown on various promotional materials of Mia Wong, English tutor of Modern Education Ltd

Source: Retrieved from Mia Wong's Facebook page https://www.facebook.com/miawongenglishteam/photos/a.150412368392214.22718.150271341739650/885291874904256/?type=3&theater (Accessed: 30 Apr 2018)

Figure 5.29

The name and photo of the celebrity tutor and the name of the chain tutoring centre are shown on the tutor's tutorial materials

Source: Retrieved from Kenneth Lau's Facebook page https://www.facebook.com/Beacon.Kenneth.Lau/photos/a.363636003907.156547.41485873907/10153761538673908/?type=3&theater (Accessed: 24 Apr 2018)

In the meaning transfer model, McCracken (1989) argues that a celebrity endorser contains certain cultural meanings that are eventually transferred to consumers via the endorsed products. I found that the meanings of the tutor brands in the findings were the tutoring content, the expertise of the tutors, and the teaching performance and/or enjoyment integrated in the tutoring. The enjoyment and engagement of students in the tutoring process, which was discussed in the previous section regarding idol tutors, demonstrate that the various meanings of tutoring performance played by the tutors might transfer to their students via promotion and consumption.

However, previous studies (e.g. Lee and Park, 2014; Sertoglu *et al*., 2014) show that celebrities and brands, in general, exist separately, and are linked by an endorsement contract (Cashmore, 2006; Rein *et al.,* 1997). Their relationship is therefore terminated when the contract ends (Barron, 2015; Belch and Belch, 2012). Yet, the findings show that the tutor, the tutor brand and the branded tutoring are integrated into one piece, which is represented by the name of the tutor as a human brand. Their existence is not based on any contractual arrangement like celebrity endorsements in advertising.

Conversely, it is constructed by the efforts towards human brand development of the tutors. This shows another performance of the celebrity tutor, which is self-branding development, rather than being an endorser for other products or brands. This sheds light on the human branding by celebrity (tutor) as argued by Thomson (2006). Besides, this self-branding establishment is deviated from the self-branding of micro-celebrity that is mainly constructed via social media (Chen, 2013; Khamis *et al.,* 2016) and worthy of further investigation.

Furthermore, the tutor brand extends our understanding of celebrity mono-branding. Past studies show that products under celebrity mono-branding, which are commonly fashion or cosmetics, are branded with the celebrity's name, and the name of the product manufacturers is hidden (e.g. Keel and Nataraajan, 2012; Muda

et al., 2014). I found that the tutor brand and his or her branded tutoring both carry the name of the celebrity tutor (e.g. Figures 5.28 and 5.29), who is also known as the manufacturer of the tutoring. This is because tutoring is a service, and the celebrity tutor is the service provider of that tutoring service. This demonstrates that tutoring has the characteristics of a service, whereby the service provider and the service are inseparable (Lovelock *et al.,* 2015). This hybrid role, identified in the tutor brand, is new to the literature on celebrity mono-branding.

The celebrity tutor brand was also found to be related to the image and positioning of the tutors. Several tutors argued that the names of tutors may lead the students – both existing and/or potential customers – to associate them with their expertise in tutoring subjects, or even a competitive edge in their performance.

> Joyce, Chinese tutor of Chain A, explained, *'Our name is often bundled with the tutoring. Let's say Kenneth equals English. YY represents a Chinese expert. Every tutor links up his name with his expertise to sell'*.

These findings show that for certain tutors, their image and positioning in terms of their (brand) name is strong in the market, which reflects their celebrity status and reputation. This reflects that the celebrity tutors are very skilful in managing their image and position in the market. This involves a variety of marketing knowhow, such as brand building and positioning, which are beyond the territory of teaching, but are common marketing practices found in the marketing of consumer goods (e.g. Cohen, 2014; Holt, 2016). This demonstrates that those non-teaching activities, related to tutor brand building, are critical to the performance of the tutors. The tutor branding is context-specific, i.e. it is associated with the shadow education sector. These findings shed light on the process of both celebrification and the human branding because tutors were found to be transformed into a hybrid identity, which is a celebrity tutor and a tutor brand.

The marketisation of education has long been debated in the literature of different disciplines, such as marketing (e.g. Molesworth *et al.,* 2011; Newman and Jahdi, 2009), education (e.g. Arreman *et al.,* 2013; Whitty and Power, 2000) and ethics (e.g. Natale and Doran, 2012; Ricci, 2018). Yet, past research in this area tends to focus on higher education sector as I identified in the literature review. Besides, although the shadow education sector has attracted the attention of researchers in education (Bray *et al*., 2014; Mori and Baker, 2010), their research focus has been on the impacts of shadow education on students, teachers and schools. Hence, the findings regarding tutor branding in this study shed light on our understanding of the marketisation of education. They are context-specific, i.e. they relate to the shadow education sector, whereas in secondary education, this aspect is new and remains under-examined.

Furthermore, I observed that there are several tutors whose advertisements show that they are under a particular celebrity tutor's team. The names of two or more tutors were found on a single advertisement. For example, Figure 5.30 shows that a lead tutor (the middle one) and six tutors under the lead tutor's Star Chinese team are shown on the lead tutor's Facebook advertisement.

Figure 5.30

YY Lam, Chinese tutor of Beacon College, the middle one, and his teaching team

Each tutor's portrait shows his or her name and specialist such as the right one showing S1-S3, which shows that he aims to serve the junior secondary students of S1 to S3

Source: Retrieved from YY Lam's Facebook page, https://www.facebook.com/Beacon.YYLam/photos/a.409792349031596.103236.216136618397171/1670683406275811/?type=1&theater (Accessed: 18 Apr 2018)

A similar finding from another chain tutoring centre is shown in Figure 5.31. Here the lead tutors in different subjects and their team member(s), with a remark from the lead's team, are illustrated in the boxes in different colours and shapes. The names of the lead tutor and other tutors under the lead tutor's team are shown on the advertisement. This is contrary to the concept of umbrella branding, which refers to the practice of labelling more than one product under a single brand name (Rasmusen, 2016; Sattler *et al.,* 2010). Conversely, this looks like a brand alliance in which two brands appear on a single product (Keel and Nataraajan, 2012). The celebrity tutor branded tutoring is found to be extended to two or more tutors' name (brand), which co-exist on the tutoring advertisement.

Figure 5.31

Celebrity tutors and their teaching team at King's Glory Educational Centre Ltd

The lead tutors in different subjects and their team member(s) with a remark from the lead's team are shown in the boxes with different colours and shapes.

Retrieved from King's Glory's website, https://www.kingsglory.edu.hk/tutorial/tutors/tutors.asp (Accessed: 24 Apr 2017)

I discussed this observation with the participants. Several tutors shared the opinions that the popular tutors often face the problem of over demand. When they cannot take the orders (enrolment), the orders may drain to their competitors. To solve the problem of over demand, the tutor can extend his or her tutoring capacity through other tutors.

For example, the tutor revealed that there are celebrity tutors, particularly strong or famous ones, who attempt to extend their business from the senior secondary students to the junior secondary students. The celebrity tutors serve the senior secondary students who are preparing for the DSE; and they find junior tutors to

serve the junior students under their name, as a celebrity brand extension, as found in the literature on branding (e.g. Kowalczyk and Royne, 2013; Yeung and Wyer, 2005).

> Joyce, Chinese tutor of Chain A, revealed, *'Popular tutors always have their own teaching team. It extends the tutor's tutoring [capacity] from senior secondary students to junior ones … otherwise, how can they take all of the enrolment, particularly the live tutorials? Some students insist on live [live tutorials], if they can't enrol, you may lose them forever'*.

The association between celebrity tutors and other less famous tutors was found to be a strategy that was used to manage the demand, so as to avoid losing business to their rivals. It leverages the fame of the celebrity tutor to attract attention and enhance the credibility and quality of the tutoring provided by less famous tutors. Its aim is to extend a celebrity tutor's service capacity to generate more business.

The association between an established tutor brand (the lead tutor) and junior tutor brands (the tutors associated with the lead tutor) also reflects an apprenticeship. The junior tutors perform as apprentices under the celebrity tutor. In his study of celebrity and culture, Marshall (1997) argues that the power of a celebrity represents the active construction of identity in society with the capacity to house conceptions of individuality and simultaneously illustrate collective configurations of the social world. The celebrity tutor brand and the tutoring offered by a celebrity tutor and/or a team of tutors under a particular celebrity tutor's brand reflect the power of the celebrity tutor.

> Jack, economics tutor of Chain C, said, *'You may say it is a master and pupil relationship… in general, the junior tutors under a famous tutor's team serve junior secondary students … It's not*

risky to the famous tutor, and it's also a way of educating students to continue to enrol in tutoring with the famous tutor in the future'.

The findings show that the power implies the tutor's competence in terms of their celebrity status, their establishment and scale of tutoring, as well as their financial capacity and market positioning. This power reflects how celebrity tutors use it to manage their operation and self-branding, which extend our understanding of human branding and celebrity status. The celebrity tutor's team serve students in different segments. A division of labour was found in the findings, whereby the celebrity tutor serves the senior students who are preparing for the DSE, and the apprentice tutors serve the junior students. This implies that the celebrity tutors might have the power to manage their apprentices and the demand for tutoring. This apprenticeship serves as a brand extension to ensure the tutors' sustainability and continuity in the long run.

Besides, the celebrity tutor was found to be not only a human brand but also an endorser. The findings from the tutors in respect to the advertisements in Figures 5.30 and 5.31 reflect that celebrity tutors attempt to endorse their apprentice tutors through the brand alliance. Both the name of the celebrity tutor and the other tutors associated with them appear on the advertisements. Hence, the findings echo Marshall's (1997) claim of the power of celebrity tutors in terms of their associates under their name in advertisement. This also reflects that the self-branding of celebrity tutors extends to brand-alliance (Keel and Nataraajan, 2012) in which both lead tutors and junior tutors are brand of themselves and are linked. Moreover, this brand-alliance and celebrity tutor endorsement are new to our understanding to the literature on celebrity endorsement.

The apprenticeship found in the findings reflects the barriers to entry in the shadow education sector. Different participants, particularly the tutors and the founders, argued that the barriers to entry in the sector are high and it is very difficult for newcomers to enter the market. This is because the market is not open to the

public, which makes it different from the labour market in other industries. They revealed that it is rare to see chain tutoring centres hiring unknown candidates as tutors. Several founders also explained that journalists' reports regarding news and/or gossip about tutors who have changed jobs are always related to famous tutors, and never unknown ones.

> Henry, teaching assistant of English of Chain B, commented, *'The entry barrier in this industry is high. The chain tutoring centres won't hire unknown tutors. So, almost the only way to become an associate is with an existing tutor. Of course, the terms and conditions must be tough for them. The famous tutors are not idiots'*.

The apprenticeship identified in the findings implies that there is a gateway for newcomers to enter the market. This also serves as a solution for the celebrity tutors to manage the demand for tutoring and avoid losing their market share. Besides, the findings regarding the tough terms and conditions embedded in the apprenticeship reflect how the lead tutors manage their apprentices in the way that protects their interests. This shows the power of the celebrity tutors in regard to the management of their business.

The findings in the previous section show that the performance of the tutors was found to be important, and it can be learnt by other tutors. Hence, the findings regarding the apprenticeship here demonstrate how the junior tutors learn the performance of the celebrity tutors through their apprenticeship. This also shows how the awareness of the junior tutors is established through their lead tutor's endorsement.

The tutors revealed that the awareness of tutors is critical to their evaluation by prospective students; it influences their decision making in regard to enrolment in tutoring. This explains that why a newcomer might find it difficult to get business

in the shadow education sector and why newcomers need to be associated with famous tutors to earn awareness and business.

> Joyce, Chinese tutor of Chain A, explained, *'They [students] trust YY, not me. But you say you are under YY's team and your ad shows it too, that is quality assurance. They [students] may think that under YY's team it should not be too bad and they may choose yours if they can't enrol in YY's courses'*.

These findings reveal that the awareness of the tutors can be extended to other tutors via a brand alliance whereby a strong brand is associated with weak ones. This echoes the findings of previous studies (e.g. Mishra *et al.,* 2017; Riley *et al.,* 2015; Washburn *et al.,* 2004) that have found that when one brand is less famous (e.g. the apprentice tutor brands), consumer evaluation and perception increase when it is bundled with a well-known and good quality brand (e.g. the leading tutor brands). This also demonstrates a power tension between lead tutors and junior tutors, which is reflected from the celebrity status and leadership of the lead tutors. This power tension sheds light on Marshall's (1997) claim regarding a celebrity's bargaining power in the market. Besides, the tutors were found to be eager to increase the enrolment rate because it links to their income and market share. This may explain why the tutors are keen to expand their tutoring capacity by extending their brand to other tutors; otherwise they would limit their market reach.

The findings also reflect that the name of the tutors is more important than that of the tutoring centre. Different tutors and teaching assistants argued that the shadow education sector is similar to other services such as singers, fortune tellers or physicians, in which the name of the service provider is often highlighted. They explained that students are well aware that the tutoring will be conducted by a particular tutor, and the chain tutoring centre is a kind of platform that allows the tutoring to be undertaken. Hence, tutor branded tutoring is a live service centred on the tutor.

> Rebecca, English tutor of Chain B, claimed, *'Students choose me because of my name, my reputation … they are smart, they know very well who is good, who is not… well, the name is important. It's our brand. People know me, Rebecca, that is my brand…because they [students] trust me'.*

This demonstrates that the name of the tutors reflects their positioning and the public's awareness of them in the market; their celebrity status is embedded in their name. Any tutors who lack such positioning and fame, like newcomers for example, will find it difficult to compete in the market. That further explains why there is an apprenticeship system in the shadow education sector, whereby both the celebrity tutors and the apprentice tutors may gain business through a brand alliance.

Researchers in the literature on celebrity and sociology argue that people can easily go public through social media such as YouTube or Facebook (e.g. Khamis *et al.,* 2016; van Krieken, 2012). Digital technology, particularly mobile phones, has triggered the emergence of the do-in-yourself celebrity or the micro-celebrity, who primarily uses social media to present themselves to the public so as to become famous (Marshall, 2010; Senft, 2008; Turner, 2014).

However, I found that social media was seen by the tutors, marketing staff and administration staff as secondary to the tutor brand building. The participants argued that launching advertisements on the high street can make the tutors be perceived by the public as celebrities. The traditional marketing communication method of advertising was perceived by the participants as the best marketing communication channel in the shadow education sector.

> Nancy, English tutor, executive director, founder and ex-CEO of Chain B, argued, *'If Facebook works, why should we spend millions a year to advertise? I think advertising is still our basic way to promote ourselves, of course, we use social media as well'.*

Although the findings and my observations show that social media is employed by the tutors and the chain tutoring centres to promote themselves, the extensive advertisements for the celebrity tutors found in the market, coupled with the comments shared among the participants, reflect that using traditional, above-the-line promotion is still popular. These findings shed light on previous studies of do-in-yourself celebrity and human branding via social media (Marshall, 2010; Turner, 2014), which is found not to be a main channel to earn the public's awareness.

In terms of establishing a celebrity brand, the participants shared the view that the priority is to create idolisation and develop a fan culture. To make the celebrity tutors famous, I found that both the tutors and the chain tutoring centres attempt to use marketing communications and branding strategies to build their brand awareness in the market.

Using giant billboards on building walls or in train stations with the celebrity tutors' portraits and names is one of main promotion methods found in Hong Kong. Advertisements on buses' exteriors or even interiors are another popular promotion method found in the Hong Kong shadow education sector. The portraits of celebrity tutors shown in advertisements can be seen on the high streets of city centres, together with other advertisements with celebrity endorsers, as shown in the Figure 5.32. This creates the perception among the public that the celebrity tutors are a type of celebrity like other celebrities shown in advertisements for consumer goods, such as the celebrity endorser for a coffee shop shown on the right-hand side of Figure 5.32.

Figure 5.32

Giant billboard of celebrity tutors on a building wall

Billboard of Three Chinese Tutors under YY Lam's Star Chinese Team (Left)

Billboard of a café with a celebrity endorser (Right)

Photo taken on 23 Sep 2014
Location: Ginza Square, 565-567 Nathan Road, Mongkok (similar to Oxford Street in London

> Cynthia, marketing manager of Chain B, said, *'You won't see [the portraits of] school teachers appearing in the street. But, you can see the tutors' portraits everywhere, billboards, buses, TV programmes. Many people know about Tutor Kings, Tutor Queens, hear about their names, hear about the names of chains too. No doubt, they are public figures and stars'.*

The high-profile presentation of celebrity tutors via advertisements reflects their know-how in terms of drawing the public's attention and branding themselves in the market. Referring to the above quote, I found that the celebrity tutors were

eager to differentiate themselves from school teachers. Their advertisements of tutor branding, like in Figure 5.32, attract the attention of not only their target students, but also the wider public. These findings shed light on previous studies (Milligan, 2011; Pringle, 2004) regarding how celebrities achieve their brand status through the mass mediatisation and mass consumption of their identities and personalities. Their media exposure may become a discussion topic among people, which is seldom found for school teachers. Hence, it seems that the advertisements for celebrity tutors demonstrate a part of their performance in the market. This runs parallel with the entertainment industry, where media exposure is critical to the celebrity status of celebrities, as argued by researchers in the literature on celebrity (e.g. Leslie, 2011; Rojek, 2001).

In sum, the celebrity tutors were found to present themselves as human brands. The dynamics and practices of their performance, the performative associations with the entertainment industry, and how these feed into idolisation and the creation of a fan culture around a celebrity tutor shed light on this human branding. Celebrity tutors reflect the claims found in the literature on celebrity (e.g. Malone and Fiske, 2013; Thomson, 2006) that states that celebrity is a commodity for sale and may have transformative value for other products as endorsers. This commodification of celebrity tutors could manifest themselves in their branded tutoring as argued by Keel and Nataraajan (2012).

Celebrity tutor branding reflects the previous studies on celebrities regarding brand alliance and celebrity brand extension (Keel and Nataraajan, 2012). There are celebrity tutors who extend their business by partnering with other tutors as their associates to reach the market. This association, which is like an apprenticeship, serves a gateway for newcomers to enter the market. This shows a power tension between tutors with different celebrity status and bargaining power, which is novel to the literature of human brand. The celebrity tutors were found to develop the public's awareness of them, and their own brand and branded products to sell their

tutoring service. This reflects the inseparable product nature of the tutoring and the tutors.

The findings in this section revealed that the celebrity tutors need to regularly expose themselves in the media through advertising and promotion to establish and maintain the public's awareness of them. The tutors promote their own brands and branded tutoring through a variety of marketing communication efforts. Traditional advertisements such as billboards and printed advertisements were found to be the main promotional stream among the celebrity tutors.

Social media was found to be complementary to the traditional advertisements. Yet the promotion of celebrity tutors was found to be moving from physical spaces (e.g. billboards) to online and digital spaces (e.g. Facebook and Instagram), which are visible among different generations of celebrity tutors and students. Therefore, it is worth investigating whether social media will occupy more space in the promotion of celebrity tutors in the future.

5.4.3 The Tutor as an Entrepreneur

Previous studies show that most celebrity artists rely on the representation industry and the media to access their audiences and seek business and performance (Barbas, 2002; Turner, 2004), and this originated with the Hollywood star system (Leslie, 2011; McDonald, 2000). The representation industry consists of a variety of people such as agents, managers and publicists who solicit for or negotiate engagements for their clients, who are the celebrities. These people act on behalf of the celebrities in regard to a variety of activities, such as finding work, feeding information, providing advice and coaching help, arranging introductions to the right people, arranging publicity and lining up other opportunities for a fee (Rein *et al.,* 1997: 43; Turner, 2004). The composition of celebrities and the representation industry implies a division of labour in which both the celebrities and the various parties in the representation industry attempt to use their expertise to perform.

Hence, the celebrity and the parties involved in the representation industries form a reciprocal relationship.

As discussed in section 5.2, the media have revealed that the basic business format of the chain tutoring centres in Hong Kong is 'contracting' i.e. the tutoring is contracted out to tutors (Shou, 2015; Wong and Cho, 2007). Journalists' reports also show that the celebrity tutors are used to running a company to work with the chain tutoring centres to conduct the tutoring (Chu, 2015; *Oriented Press*, 2016).

The participants shared their views on the operation of the celebrity tutors. They recognised that their tutoring is based on contracting, whereby the tutors serve as contractors of the chain, which is consistent with the journalists' reports (e.g. Ramstad, 2011; Shou, 2015). Different tutors revealed that their operation is similar to running a business, rather than being a school teacher. This is because they have to design and manage their tutoring, which involve heavy administration works that are non-teaching related. It reflects that under the contracting relationship with the chain tutoring centres, the celebrity tutors work independently.

> Joyce, Chinese tutor of Chain A, said, *'Our operation is just like running a firm. We [several tutors] are under XX's [the tutor name is hidden for privacy protection] team, we have designers, IT, administration, marketing, tutoring a material writer, also we have our own office, indeed, we're not working in the chain, except for conducting the tutoring'*.

In addition to recognising the contracting business format between the celebrity tutors and the chains, I found that the founders and tutors described the relationship between a celebrity tutor and a chain tutoring centre as a partnership, rather than as contracting, or employee and employer. The tutors and the chain perform like the software and hardware respectively.

> Nancy, English tutor, executive director, founder and ex-CEO of Chain B, revealed, *'Tutors and their tutoring centre work as partners, with a profit-sharing scheme. The tutor is responsible for his tutoring, operation, manpower, and enrolment. The tutoring centre offers classrooms and other facilities, administration, and enrolment, like a platform'.*

This partnership relationship reflects that the power between the celebrity tutors and the chain tutoring centres may be similar or even, rather than one being superior to the other. That means that the celebrity tutors play a role in the formation of tutoring, rather than following the contracting instructions from the chains in the delivery of tutoring, as in the definitions of contracting (Han *et al.,* 2012; Lin *et al.,* 2016). Therefore, partnership seems like a better term to describe the relationship between the celebrity tutors and the chain tutoring centres. The celebrity tutors are found to exist independently, rather than made and used by the representative industry as a commodity to sell as argued by Barbas (2002) and Turner (2004).

Referring to the previous findings in section 5.4.1, the tutoring provided by the celebrity tutors was found to be the result of teamwork, which was led by the celebrity tutor. This teamwork demonstrates that there is a backstage operation going on behind the tutoring, which is responsible for its construction. The backstage operation identified in the findings reveals that there is a system that drives the celebrity tutor's performance.

These findings show a similarity to the teamwork found in the Hollywood star system, where the representation industry work towards the production of celebrity artists (Barbas, 2002; Turner, 2004). There are members such as producers or agents in the representation industry, who take an initiative to produce celebrity artists as an object. They aim to make the artists become famous so that they can perform on the screen, to achieve the ultimate goal of profit making (Turner, 2004;

McDonald, 2000). This means that members of the representation industry and celebrity artists exist independently but work together for different purposes.

However, I found that the operation of the celebrity tutors is based on a variety of settings that are designed and performed by their production team. The production team is managed and owned by the celebrity tutors. It is not run by the chain tutoring centres, nor does it operate independently.

> Peter, economics tutor of Chain C, commented, *'Contracting is our industry norm, at least among the main chain tutoring centres … Each tutor has his own team to run the business'*.

These findings show a difference between how the tutoring centres operate and the practice in the representation industry in the Hollywood star system (Barbas, 2002; Turner, 2004). The difference is that the celebrity tutors perform another non-teaching activity, which is running their business – the contracting of tutoring – which is like an entrepreneur running a company. This implies that a celebrity tutor has an ability that is beyond the primary role of being famous in a specific area (e.g. tutoring), where his or her celebrity status is earned.

The participants shared their understandings and involvement in the production team of the celebrity tutors. I have summarised the findings regarding the composition and key job function of the production team of the celebrity tutors in Figure 5.33. The production team was found to be typically divided into two parts, the backstage and the front stage.

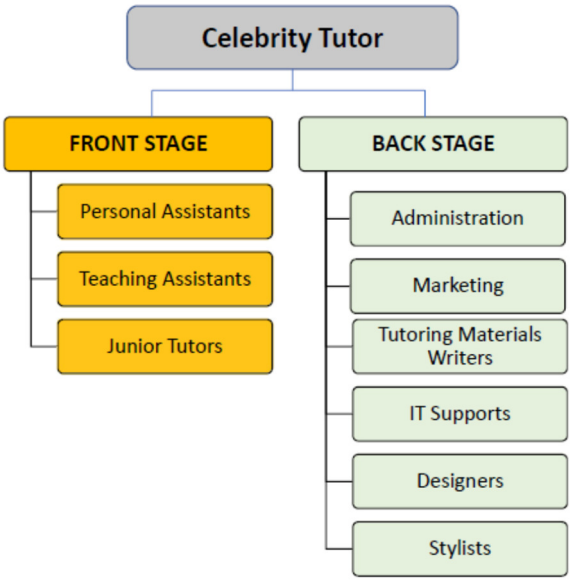


Figure 5.33

A celebrity tutor's production team

The composition of the team may vary according to the celebrity tutor's business scale and financial resources. The chain tutoring centres also offer these functions to their tutors with charges.

Backstage, there are people performing various functions including marketing, the production of tutoring materials, administration, IT supports and management of webpage and social media. Front stage, there are teaching assistants and personal assistants who work together with the celebrity tutors. Besides, there are tutors who may have junior tutors working under their name, as shown in Figures 5.30 and 5.31 in the previous section.

Every tutor's team is composed of a variety of members who have different functions, at the front stage and the backstage. They deal with different parties such as students, staff members of the chain tutoring centres, tutors and teaching assistants at different times. They were also found to be involved in the production of the tutoring. Information and news related to the shadow education sector may become sources for constructing tutoring content, such as the punch

lines and the jokes. This is because the tutoring content was found to be composed of both academic knowledge and non-academic content.

The composition of the production team was found to be varied. It relies on the business scale, requirements and financial capacity of individual tutors. The role of each staff member in the production team is sometimes blurred due to its small-scale operation, so each staff member may be involved in more than one role. Moreover, not every role shown in Figure 5.33 can be found in each tutor's production team. The participants revealed that the tutors may pay the chain tutoring centres for support services if they lack the manpower to handle particular issues, such as IT supports or marketing. This further explains why the composition of the production team varies.

> Paula, teaching assistant of Chain C, said, *'The tutoring centre also have some support [services], like printing, advertising, of course they [tutors] need to pay .. also they have TAs like me, I work for the centre, the centre pays me, not the tutors. All are up to the tutors'.*

The celebrity tutor production team structure in Figure 5.33 illustrates that the celebrity tutor owns and runs the team that produces the tutoring service. Several participants, including the tutors and the administration staff, revealed that the rationale behind running the production team can be explained by practical considerations. They described that the chain tutoring centres serve as a platform for the tutors to obtain enrolments and deliver tutoring. The tutors need to handle a variety of tasks, which is not teaching related and is not possible for them to do alone. This is because there are a variety of types of work involved in the operation of the production team, particularly human resources management, accounting and office management, which are difficult for one individual to handle. Hence, running a company to operate the production team is found to simplify the operation.

> Amy, administration manager of Chain B, commented, *'Running a company is necessary because tutoring operates like running a business. Tutors do not just teach, they also have a team to help them run the tutoring … also you can't rent an office or hire [employees] easily without having a company'.*

These findings reflect that running a company to operate the production team is considered a practical and flexible way of operating. This demonstrates that one aspect of celebrity tutors' work is entrepreneurship, which is beyond their original expertise in teaching. Besides, I found that running a company to operate the tutoring is not limited to the lead tutors, but also the junior tutors who work for the lead tutors. These findings further demonstrate that the operation of the celebrity tutors extends beyond teaching, to a variety of functions, as shown in Figure 5.33.

> Joyce, Chinese tutor of chain A, revealed, *'I also run a company to perform tutoring …, it's common for taxation filing, because we have many expenses [running tutoring] … we can deduct them from our income …, it's a widespread practice in this industry'.*

Joyce was known as a junior tutor under another tutor's team. Her claim shows that a junior tutor may have to bear certain expenses and administration costs while running her tutoring. Although junior tutors were found to be apprentices of lead tutors, their operation was found to be similar to that of lead tutors, in that they conduct their tutoring like running a business. This shows that the business format of celebrity tutors and the associated entrepreneurship also applies to junior tutors.

These findings run in parallel with the findings regarding entry barriers and the apprenticeship in the previous section. The junior tutors have to adopt an under-study or apprentice approach under a regime where performance is the critical factor in the shadow education sector. Yet, the ways of running tutoring and its goals may vary between the lead tutors and the junior tutors. The lead tutors may

make more effort designing and managing their tutoring and production teams, whereas the junior tutors may learn from the experienced tutors, earn their awareness and cultivate their fan and customer base to develop and secure their source of business.

These findings extend our understanding of the celebrity industry and the representation industry, as described in the literature on celebrity (e.g. Barbas, 2002; Turner, 2004). The operation of celebrity tutors is found to be conducted by a team of people, which is similar to the representation industry. However, the team is employed by the celebrity tutor, whereas the representation industry operates independently and links with the celebrities based on a contractual and reciprocal relationship (Marshall, 1997; Leslie, 2011). Besides, the celebrities under the Hollywood star system are produced by the representation industry as a commodity for sale (Leslie, 2011; Turner, 2004), whereas the production team for celebrity tutors is created and managed by the celebrity tutors to support their operation. This shows a difference between these two systems in terms of initiative.

The relationship between a celebrity tutor and a chain tutoring centre is found to be a partnership in which the chain tutoring centre offers a venue for the celebrity tutor to perform for a fee. Hence, the chain tutoring centre is similar to a stage or concert hall, offering a venue for celebrity tutors to perform and students (audiences) to receive the tutors' performance. The representation industry in the shadow education sector is found to be embedded in, managed and owned by the celebrity tutors.

These findings triggered my curiosity to explore why celebrity tutors run their own production team and why the production team does not exist independently like the representation industry found in the entertainment industry. Meanwhile, I was curious to explore why celebrity tutors do not run their own tutoring centre rather than partnering with the existing chains. During the discussions with different participants, I found different views regarding these questions.

First, the tutors were found to handle their business directly for historical reasons. The marketing staff revealed that the celebrity tutors have got used to managing their business directly over the years, including negotiating with the management of the chains in regard to the terms and conditions for contracting and seeking a job change. One member of marketing staff described the tutors as self-made entrepreneurs who work for themselves, which implies that the operation of the celebrity tutors is small-scale. Furthermore, there is probably a lack of representation industry in the shadow education sector, except for the limited support services offered by the chain tutoring centres, which facilitate the operation of the celebrity tutors.

> John, chief marketing officer of Chain A, commented, *'They [tutors] negotiate with the chains directly. Although they look like artists, they don't have a manger for job seeking or bargaining. They do it themselves'.*

Second, I found that the tutors who managed their own production team might have enhanced efficiency and control. In particular, control was found to be essential to secure their interests by preventing potential threats, including from the team members of the production team.

> Susan, course administration manager of Chain B, also suggested, *'Unlike [star systems found in] the entertainment field, ours is simple. The tutors and the chain's boss negotiate for a contract directly … Also, tutors hesitate to disclose too much to their teammates, particularly about their contract terms and conditions. Otherwise, the teammates may easily replace them sooner or later'.*

I found that there were tensions among the tutors and within the system regarding the operation of the tutoring. The tutoring centres were found to prefer to choose

experienced and famous tutors, which created an entry barrier to newcomers. Meanwhile, the celebrity tutors avoided draining their business to rivals. They used junior tutors to satisfy the demand for tutoring in different market segments, for example junior secondary students, in the form of apprenticeships.

A tension was obviously shown in the relationship between the lead tutors and the junior tutors. This is because the junior tutors will probably become competitors of the lead tutors sooner or later. This implies that the lead tutors may use protective clauses to protect their interests in their relationships with the junior tutors, particularly avoid incubating the juniors to be their competitors in the future.

> Brenda, English tutor, founder and CEO, revealed, *'Of course, there are many tough terms involved [against junior tutors] to protect my interests … Very long contractual period, restrictive clauses …'*.

The celebrity tutors own and manage the production team internally, and deal with other parties like the chains externally and directly. This shows that tight control is pursued by the celebrity tutors to manage their business and apprentices. These tensions and practices reflect the entrepreneurship of the tutors, which drives them to run their tutoring business in the market, and extends beyond their academic performance.

Third, several tutors and teaching assistants commented that different skills and financial capacity are required to run the production team and the tutoring centres. The success of the chain tutoring centres was commented on by the participants as their large business scale with a variety of products, i.e. tutoring of different academic subjects within a chain.

Conversely, tutoring centres, like the small-scale rivals specialising in a particular academic subject such as English or mathematics, were commented by the

participants that are no longer welcomed by students. That explains why the chains typically offer tutoring for different academic subjects in different service formats, such as live tutorials and video tutorials in different time slots and at varying prices. Hence, the tutoring chain look like a supermarket or a one-stop shop offering a wide range of products (i.e. tutoring of different subjects), rather than a speciality shop focusing on a particular type of product.

> Michael, English tutor, founder, director of Chain B, revealed, *'It's very difficult, it's not worth running your own [tutoring] centre. Even if you have enough money, you can't run it as big as the chains. You're just an expert in one subject. A chain cannot survive by offering a single subject [tutoring]'.*

These findings show that running a tutoring centre like the chains involves a huge investment in the set-up and operation. Meanwhile, the business scale of the chains requires them to have branches operating in different districts, which is what the students preparing for the DSE examination expect. Otherwise, they appear to be small-scale tutoring centres serving in just one neighbourhood. This explains the reciprocal relationship from the partnership between the celebrity tutors and the chains, rather than tutors running their own tutoring centres with limited offers of tutoring.

Van Krieken (2012) argues that a celebrity is known primarily by his or her expertise, which constitutes his or her celebrity status. The celebrity tutors and their operation were found to run as a business in which the celebrity tutors perform multiple roles. However, the majority of the participants considered that the primary role of celebrity tutors is as tutors and their expertise is their academic knowledge. Meanwhile, the tutors described that the celebrity tutors are basically a kind of teacher, similar to school teachers, who teach students particular knowledge. Yet, their teaching methods are flexible and they can customise them to fit their students.

> Joyce, Chinese tutor of Chain A, argued, *'I am a teacher... the students also treat us as teachers … well, people consider tutoring centres as kind of, or an extension of school education. We must fulfil the qualification requirements of the Education Bureau, but we are flexible in our teaching, no need to follow their curriculum… like a private school teacher'.*

Further evidence was found to illustrate the dynamic of the operation of the celebrity tutors, which is market-driven, unlike school teaching. This dynamic is due to the looser government regulations in the shadow education sector and the goal of examination taking oriented tutoring.

> Nancy, English tutor, executive director, founder and ex-CEO of Chain B, revealed, *'We don't need to follow the school curriculum so it's more flexible to teach'.*

> Jack, economics tutor of Chain C, explained, *'We know very well what we should teach, and what we can skip to make best use of our time and efforts for exam taking'.*

These findings reflect that the tutors and the chain tutoring centres are flexible in their operation; in particular, they can customise their tutoring content to serve their students in better ways. This demonstrates that the success of the celebrity tutors and the shadow education sector is not driven principally by academic knowledge. Their success extends beyond their academic performance, to the performance of the celebrity tutors, the idolisation of tutoring, the enjoyment of tutoring and the fan culture as well as their entrepreneurship in running their tutoring business.

The entrepreneurship of the celebrity tutors in the findings may problematise the findings of previous studies in the literature on celebrity (e.g. Pringle, 2004; Rojek, 2001; Van Krieken, 2012), in which the celebrity status of celebrities is primarily

earned by their expertise or accomplishments in a specific field. The primary expertise of the celebrity tutors in this study may be not only their academic subject, but also the management of their production team, which designs, manages and instructs the performance aspect.

The findings show that the celebrity tutors own and manage their production team to construct the tutoring, which reflects that the celebrity tutors have the power to direct the tutoring performance. This power may not necessarily be celebrity power, as argued by Pringle (2004). Alternatively, the power from the celebrity tutors may look like entrepreneurship power, which facilitates them to manage their tutoring business. This entrepreneurship power seems to be another type of expertise of celebrity tutors, in addition to their original expertise related to their academic knowledge, which influences their performance. The operation of the celebrity tutors and their production team demonstrates that the performance of the celebrity tutors is constructed by a team effort and is not inherent to the tutor. That performance may also contribute to the celebrity status of the tutors.

The celebrity status of the celebrity tutors is therefore found to be contributed to by not only their original expertise related to their academic knowledge, but also by their expertise in other areas, such as entrepreneurship as well as the performance and idolisation discussed in the previous section. These findings shed light on our understanding of the sources of expertise of celebrity tutors, as argued by Van Krieken (2012), and the source of celebrity status, as argued by Rojek (2001), which contributes to the celebrity status of the celebrity tutors.

The performance of celebrity tutors and the idolisation and fan culture of tutoring demonstrate the market-driven dynamic of the Hong Kong shadow education sector. This reflects that the shadow education sector extends beyond teaching and supplements school teaching. The tutoring was found to be an educational product, which is embedded with a variety of content, such as fan culture, idolisation and enjoyment. Besides, the celebrity tutors were found to develop and apply different

commercial settings in their operation. This market-driven dynamic reflects the commodification and marketisation of shadow education in Hong Kong. These not only echo the various findings in the literature show that school teachers and school management have had to shift their policies and practices to be market-oriented, following the commodification and marketisation of education (e.g. Karpov, 2013; McChesney, 2013; Zammit, 2011), but also fill out the research gap in the marketisation and commodification of shadow education.

In sum, the relationship between the celebrity tutors and the chain tutoring centres is found to be contracting, which is consistent with the journalists' reports. Meanwhile, both the tutors and the management staff were found to describe their cooperation as a partnership, which demonstrates a reciprocal relationship with relatively evenly spread power. This illustrates a difference from the relationship between celebrities and representation industry in the entertainment industry as found in the literature on celebrity.

The operation of tutoring was found to be done through teamwork, in which the celebrity tutors own and manage their own production team as entrepreneurs who run their tutoring. This is similar to the representation industry in the entertainment industry. Yet the representation industry operates independently, whereas the production team is under the management of the celebrity tutors.

The production team consists of a backstage and a front stage. The team members in different supporting functions serve at the backstage for the design and production of the tutoring content. At the front stage, the celebrity tutors and their associates, such as personal assistants, teaching assistants and junior tutors, conduct the tutoring. This extends our understanding of celebrity and celebrification regarding how celebrity tutors perform, which is beyond pursuing being famous in the market.

The performance of the celebrity tutors was found to be not only based on their academic knowledge but also on their entrepreneurship in running the tutoring as a business. The market-driven dynamic found in the shadow education sector and the management of the performative aspect of the educational product conducted by the celebrity tutors reflect the commodification and marketisation of shadow education in Hong Kong, which is, to the best of my knowledge, novel in the literature on education and marketing.

5.4.4 Section Summary

The multiple roles identified in the findings show that the celebrity tutors perform beyond conducting tutoring. The research findings demonstrate celebrification of celebrity tutors in practice regarding the process by which a tutor is transformed into celebrities via their own efforts and multiple roles he/she played.

There are three categories of roles that are described in this section. First, the idolisation of tutoring and fan culture were found in the shadow education sector in Hong Kong. The celebrity tutors perform as idol tutors and their students act as their followers. The attractiveness of celebrity tutors was found to be composed of physical attractiveness and non-physical attractiveness, which reflect the image building of the celebrity tutors. The performance of the celebrity tutors was found to extend beyond their academic expertise, to their stage performance and idolisation, which mirror idol celebrities in the entertainment industry. The celebrity tutors were found to seek attention and interest from their students and potential students for the purpose of selling their tutoring and building brand loyalty.

Second, the celebrity tutors were found to present themselves as human brands. The dynamics and practices of performance, the performative associations with the entertainment industry and how these feed into idolisation and creating a fan culture around a celebrity tutor shed light on this human branding. The inseparable

product nature of the tutoring and the tutors reflects the rationale behind the celebrity tutors in developing awareness of themselves, their brand and their branded products in order to sell their tutoring service. Additionally, the association and apprenticeship between the celebrity tutors and the junior tutors demonstrates the entry barriers in the shadow education sector. This also demonstrates the entrepreneurship of celebrity tutors in managing their business, in particular the problem of over demand and ways of expansion.

The traditional media were found to be used primarily by the celebrity tutors and the chain tutoring centres for promotion. This promotion was found to be shifting from physical spaces (e.g. billboards and newspapers) to online and digital spaces (e.g. Facebook and Instagram), and it is therefore visible among different generations of celebrity tutors and students.

Third, the relationship between the celebrity tutors and the chain tutoring centres was found to be contracting. Yet, it is found that partnership would be a better term to describe this reciprocal relationship. This demonstrates the practice of celebrity tutors in which the tutors play a role in planning and operating, rather than only following the chain tutoring centres' instruction. Besides, the operation of the tutoring was found to be done through teamwork, in which the celebrity tutors own and manage their own production team as entrepreneurs running their tutoring.

The literature on celebrity shows that the representation industry in the entertainment industry works independently for celebrities, whereas the production team was found to be under the management of the celebrity tutors in this sector. The performance of the celebrity tutors was based not only on their academic knowledge but also on their entrepreneurship in running the tutoring as a business.

The market-driven dynamic found in the shadow education sector and the management of the performative aspect of the educational product conducted by the celebrity tutors demonstrate different characteristics in the shadow education in

Hong Kong. These characteristics are the idolisation of tutoring, the commodification of shadow education and the self-branding in practice, which are, to the best of my knowledge, new in the literature on education and marketing and worthy of further investigation in the future.

5.5 Celebritisation of Hong Kong Shadow Education Sector

The phenomenon of celebrity tutors, and the idolisation of tutoring and the fan culture, emerged in the 1990s and reflect the celebrification of celebrity tutors and the celebritisation of shadow education sector in Hong Kong. In this section, I will answer the second research question, regarding the motivations behind the chain tutoring centres that use celebrity tutors, and the third research question, regarding why the chain tutoring centres in Hong Kong do not choose existing celebrities from other industries to endorse them.

I will first explore the motives of the practitioners who use celebrity tutors and celebrity tutor endorsement from the perspectives of the historical links and the match. Then, I will present the exceptional cases found in the shadow education sector, in which existing celebrities from the entertainment industry are hired to promote tutoring. After that, I will conclude my findings to respond to my research questions.

5.5.1 Historical Links

The celebritisation of the Hong Kong shadow education sector was found to be historically grounded. It has occurred due to the phenomenon of the idolisation of tutoring and the emergence of a fan culture as well as the commodification of tutoring. The commodification of shadow education is due the historical links to

the entertainment industry. This structural force in part explains the dominance of performance and the idolisation and fan culture in the shadow education sector.

Several founders and tutors shared the view that the celebritisation of shadow education sector was first initiated by the founders of several tutoring centres in the 1990s, which are now the leading chain tutoring centres. They explained that those founders shifted their promotion focus from the tutors' educational background to the tutors' image through the mass media. These founders and tutors were presented as celebrity artists, business executives or fashion icons to promote their tutoring.

> Michael, English tutor and founder of Chain B, revealed, *'Tutor King is not a new idea. It appeared in the 1990s, or probably the late 1980s, it was created by us… each [tutor] looks like a star, is well-known … highlighting their image, particularly their physical appearance'*.

These findings show that the massive above-the-line promotion carried out by the celebrity tutors and the chain tutoring centres, such as the printed advertisements in magazines and newspapers, the billboards on building walls and the TV commercials have made substantial changes to the industry, such as the business format and the product nature.

For example, the celebrity tutors were found to create nicknames, such as Tutor Kings and Queens, and establish the image of celebrity tutors through active engagement in the media. This has become a unique phenomenon of celebritisation in the shadow education sector. These findings echo journalists' reports (e.g. *Eastweek*, 2016; Shou, 2015) regarding the development of the shadow education sector in Hong Kong and the growth stage, as mentioned in section 5.2.

As discussed in the previous section, the tutors were found to have established their brands using their names and have promoted themselves since the 1990s. The tutor branding was found to be aimed not only at the target audience, i.e. the students, but also at the wider public, through advertising and an association with the entertainment industry. This sheds light on the literature on human branding (e.g. Lunardo *et al.,* 2015; Thomson, 2006) in regard to the notion that the awareness of a celebrity and a human brand reach beyond its target segment(s) because non-target segments may help enhance and promote the public's awareness of them.

The emphasis on name recognition and tutor branding in the shadow education sector, as discussed by the participants, demonstrates Gamson's (2007) claim that in the name economy, name recognition in itself is critical for doing business, including tutoring. The name of a celebrity tutor was found to have a bundle of meanings, which are used to assist the celebrity tutor in conducting tutoring and enhancing their celebrity status. The name is associated with the performance of the tutors. Besides, the nicknames of the celebrity tutors, such as Tutor Kings and Queens, are recognised by the wider public (e.g. Shou, 2015; Wong and Cho, 2007) and the participants as icons in the industry. These findings also reflect that the names of the celebrity tutors carry value or celebrity capital, as argued by Driessen (2013), which allows celebrities to earn and enhance their celebrity status.

Furthermore, I found that the celebritisation of the Hong Kong shadow education sector can be explained by the follower strategy. Since the 1990s, the tutors from the main chains have been innovative and developed different promotional strategies to reposition their tutoring, such as self-branding, the idolisation of tutoring and the creation of a fan culture, etc. Both the journalists' reports (*Eastweek*, 2016; Shou, 2015) and the findings from the majority of the participants reveal that the celebrity tutors and the chain tutoring centres like to follow each other in terms of business format and promotional format, which leads the tutoring offered by the chains to be celebritised as an industry norm.

> Susan, course administration manager of Chain B, claimed, *'Every tutoring chain's offers are identical or very similar. They target the same groups of students. I think it's easy to follow each other's practice … We are used to following [rivals]. When we see someone's strategy works well, we follow it. Every chain, every tutor is doing the same. It's our pattern'.*

These findings reflect the reasons why the image and positioning of the celebrity tutors and the business format of the chain tutoring centres are found to be very similar to each other. West *et al.* (2015) argue that companies using the follower strategy learn from the market leader's experience and copy the leader's products and strategies, with less investment in general. However, I found that in the shadow education sector, the tutors and the chains follow their rivals in terms of their products, business formats and promotional formats, which are not limited to following the market leader but is ubiquitous. This may also mean that there is a lack of a market leader, and instead a few rivals compete fiercely. Their practices under this follower strategy were also found to have become the industry norm. These findings extend our understanding of the follower strategy found in the literature (West *et al.*, 2015; Wilson and Gilligan, 2005).

Different types of promotion and advertising in respect to the tutoring have been found over the years in which the core of the communication message features the celebrity tutors. These include printed advertisements in newspapers and magazines, billboards on building walls and buses' exteriors, TV commercials and so forth. This is how the tutor branding was found to operate in the shadow education sector, as I discussed in the previous section. These findings shed light on the journalists' reports (e.g. Poo, 2009; Leung, 2016) regarding the promotion and operation of the shadow education sector in Hong Kong. These also shed light on the marketisation of education argued by Molesworth *et al.* (2009) and Nordensvard (2011) regarding consumerism in education leads education to become a commodity that is chosen and consumed by consumers (students).

Several participants from the administration and marketing areas of the tutoring business shared their views on the promotional strategies of the tutors. They revealed that the celebrity tutors and their unique selling points, such as the hit rate in terms of the prediction of examination questions, or the number of students, are central to their advertisements.

> John, chief marketing officer of Chain A, claimed, *'No matter [an advertisement with] an individual [tutor] or group [a group of tutors], the tutor's name and portrait are the focus, forever … so you can see their power [reputation] over the photo [of group advertisement], that's their position … those located in the centre are superior to the rest'.*

These findings reflect that the follower strategy is adopted by the tutors and the chains. It has become the business model and the promotional format in the shadow education sector. The theme of the advertisements from different tutors and/or chains may show a similar format, related to the name and photo of the tutors. Rather than using differentiation to distinguish their offering and/or promotion message from their rivals, the tutors and the chains were found to imitate to each other to compete directly in the market.

There are two types of advertisement that are commonly found among the chains. The first type is advertisements that promote the chain, as shown in Figure 5.34, which are paid for by the chain tutoring centre and the tutors. The second type is advertisements that promote individual celebrity tutors, as shown in Figure 5.35, which are paid for by the tutors. The tutors are cast as celebrities whose portraits and names are presented on advertisements as spokespeople for the brand or their branded tutoring. Their aim is to promote themselves or their tutoring service, rather than the tutoring centre they serve.

Figure 5.34

A front-page newspaper advertisement for Modern Education (HK) Ltd on Ming Pao on 14 Sep 2014

The advertisement shows the chain's tutors in different subjects to promote their regular tutoring courses with an emphasis on a 50% discount for several types of enrolment including a referral programme.

Figure 5.35

A front-page newspaper advertisement for Ken Tai, Maths tutor of Beacon College on Sing Tao Daily on 11 Nov 2015

The advertisement promotes the tutor's Maths tutorials for secondary 6 students and his mock examination

Referring to the findings from the quote from John and the advertisement in Figure 5.34, the position of the tutors reflects their celebrity status. The participants commented that the tutors shown in the middle of the advertisements, which is the most attractive position, are the focus of the chain, due to their outstanding performance and their potential for business generation. Conversely, the tutors shown outside the central position in the advertisement have a relatively weak ranking. Hence, a tension is found among the tutors within a chain tutoring centre

where the performance of a tutor is reflected in their rankings and their celebrity status, as shown in the advertisements.

Furthermore, given that the performance of the tutors is reflected in the advertisements and the second type of advertisement (Figure 5.35) is managed by the tutors, this implies that there is competition over the promotions among the tutors within the chain and outside their own chain. The advertisements and the frequency of promotion by the tutors also imply the financial resource of individual tutors in managing their promotion campaigns. For example, strong tutors may be able to launch more advertisements than weak ones. This means that the financial capacity of the tutors may be used as a source to construct their performance in terms of the frequency of promotions, so as to lead their audiences to perceive them as popular. This implies a tension regarding competition of resource, such as financial resource and positioning or ranking within a chain among tutors. These findings also reflect the human branding in which individuals seeking work in established organisational fields can effectively position themselves, as argued by Parmentier *et al.* (2013: 373). This shows that individuals like the celebrity tutors have field-specific social and cultural capital, like their celebrity status or tutor brand awareness, which can allow them to stand out while having the habitus to comply with field and occupation-specific expectations to fit in.

The popularity of celebrity tutors in the shadow education sector reflects the phenomena of celebrity tutors and celebritised tutoring since the growth stage in the 1990s due to the historical links and the follower strategy adopted by the tutors and the chain tutoring centres. I found that the shadow education sector is mainly driven by a few chains and the celebrity tutors, whose business format and promotional format are very similar. The influence of this oligopolistic market structure and the follower strategy may be a force that has driven the celebritisation of shadow education and created the performance and fan culture, as the industry norm.

The journalists' reports (e.g. Ng, 2009 and Shou, 2015) and academic research (e.g. Bray, 2009; Bray and Kwok, 2014) show that the spending on promotion, mainly printed advertisements in newspapers and magazines, by the chain tutoring centres has been huge since the 1990s. One tutor and founder revealed that at the peak, around the mid-1990s and the mid-2000s, there were several magazines in which 70% to 80% of the advertisements were ordered by the celebrity tutors and the chain tutoring centres.

> Michael, English tutor, founder and director of Chain B, said, *'Several magazines targeting youngsters, 70-80% of the ads came from us [celebrity tutors and the chain tutoring centres]. Their editors and journalists, of course, treated us [tutors and tutoring chains] as a big boss… they were always pleased with us and happy to co-work with us in organising promotional events, just a win-win …'.*

These findings reflect that a close and reciprocal relationship exists among the celebrity tutors, the chain tutoring centres and the media, which may stimulate these parties to collaborate. This reflects that the practitioners find the mass media useful to them to promote their business, so they have continued to use this method over the years. It further demonstrates the effectiveness and recognition of the follower strategy and the engagement of the tutors in advertisements. These echo Leslie's (2011) claim that the media and celebrities co-exist and rely on each other.

Furthermore, I found that there are tutors and chains that strategically select specific gossip magazines that target adolescents to advertise. They attempt to associate themselves with the idol celebrities in the entertainment industry to present themselves in the media. This reflects how idol worshipping and fan culture are practised by the tutors through their promotions.

> Elisa, economics tutor of Chain C, revealed, *'YES Magazine, Easy Finder [local gossip magazines in Chinese in Hong Kong], I dare to say that 90% of their ads about tutoring come from us. Even the contents [of the magazines], sometimes we prepared them for them … Their business was very good, ours [was good] too'.*

These findings demonstrate that the selection of the medium in which to advertise is not based on the intuition of the tutors and/or the chains, but is more likely to be driven by strategic planning. The advertisements are used to not only promote the tutoring courses, the tutors and the chains, but also to establish the celebritisation of shadow education and the idolisation of tutoring.

Every industry has a prevalent way of advertising, for example, above-the-line promotion is commonly found among consumer goods (O'Guinn *et al.,* 2012), and the celebrities in the entertainment industry are often found to appear in printed advertisements (Barron, 2015; Bell, 2010). I found that printed advertisements and billboards were found to have constituted the majority of the promotional media in the shadow education sector over the past decades. Through the understanding of historical links, the celebrity tutors were found to present themselves in their advertisements to promote their own branding, which reflects a part of their performance.

The tutors' direct engagement in the promotion and advertisement was found to be recognised by the participants as a tradition in the shadow education sector. This may also demonstrate that the tutors and the chain tutoring centres are conservative in terms of changing their strategy, and use marketing methods that are perceived as successful to compete. The business format and promotional format of the celebrity tutors and the chain tutoring centres look similar to each other, which may have accelerated the celebritisation of shadow education and enabled it to become

the industry norm. These shed light on the rationale behind the marketisation of shadow education found in the Hong Kong shadow education sector.

Furthermore, these findings shed light on previous studies (e.g. Belch and Belch, 2013; Kim, 2006; Tantiseneepong *et al.,* 2012) regarding the percentage of celebrity endorsers used in advertisements in magazines from another angle. If a magazine's advertisements income is contributed by a few companies, such as the chains and the tutors revealed from the findings, would these companies influence the editor and/or management of that magazine in terms of contents, direction, or even political stances? Further study is needed to extend our understanding of the relationship between advertisers and the media.

5.5.2 Match

The historical links discussed in the previous section illustrate that the development of a business format and promotional format among the celebrity tutors in the shadow education sector has been driven by the follower strategy, which was perceived by the participants, in general, as a practice that has come to be recognised over the years. In this section, I will further elaborate the meanings behind that strategy so as to uncover why the celebrity tutors are found to continuously engage in their own promotion and why they do not use existing celebrities from other industries to promote themselves.

Several participants shared their opinions from the perspective of product nature to elaborate why the tutors engage in their own promotion and advertising. They claimed that tutoring is a type of service, and is not a physical commodity. The tutoring is conducted by tutors and not by celebrity endorsers. Therefore, it matches best if the tutors promote their tutoring directly.

> Alice, English tutor of Chain D, said, *'I think the product nature of tutoring explains why we promote directly, because we conduct the tutoring, serving students directly … no matter whether we are known as Tutor King or not, we serve [tutoring], the spokesperson does not serve'.*

These findings reflect that a match is expected by the practitioners between the product nature and the service producer, which may influence the effectiveness of a promotional message. Besides, I found that the focus of the participants was on the tutors rather than the chain tutoring centres. Their argument concentrated on the alignment between the tutoring and the tutor. The role of the tutor was thus highlighted. This echoes my previous finding that the tutors were recognised by the participants as more important than the chain tutoring centres in the shadow education sector.

I also found that the match was related to the credibility of the tutors. The tutors are the service provider of their branded tutoring, which is constructed by their expertise and academic knowledge. Several tutors argued that the credibility of tutors is critical in the shadow education sector. They revealed that the students are aware that the tutoring is conducted by the tutors, and not the celebrity artists shown in the advertisements for tutoring, such as Figures 5.37 and 5.39 in the next section.

> Joyce, Chinese tutor of Chain A, revealed, *'I think students trust the tutor who is shown on an ad, rather than someone else. They know very well that it's the tutor who conducts the tutoring, not the stars [endorser]'.*

Furthermore, I found the tutors' engagement in their advertisements can be read from a different angle. The customer service staff argued that using an endorser like artists to endorse the tutoring (e.g. Figures 5.37 and 5.39) may confuse students.

This is because the students may be confused by the advertising message and may be in doubt about whether the celebrity endorser or a tutor will carry out the tutoring.

> Flora, senior customer service executive of Chain C, said, *'If we used Kwan-Gor [James Ng, the artist and singer in Hong Kong] to endorse us, most likely the ad would confuse… whether Kwan-Gor or the tutor will carry out the tutoring because they are used to seeing the tutor on the advertisements'*

These findings revealed that the historical links extend to the perception of students and their assumption in regard to advertisements for tutors and/or chains. They expect the tutors to show in advertisements, rather than any ones else. This explains why the tutors keep engaging in their advertising.

I found that the different voices of the two participants above do not show a contradiction regarding their view of the appropriateness of using a third party to endorse the tutoring and their understandings of students in regard to advertisements with celebrity endorsers. Conversely, their voices complement each other in this regard. The historical tradition of the tutors presenting themselves in their advertisements has become a well-known pattern in the industry. People presumably interpret those advertisements with an expectation that the photo and/or name shown on them represents the service tutors. Any deviation from such an assumption, such as using existing celebrities to endorse the tutoring centres, might confuse the audiences, particularly students, which will adversely affect the advertising message eventually.

These findings also reflect that the engagement of the tutors in promotion and advertising was found to be a part of their performance and quality assurance. The involvement of the tutors in their advertisements was found to be a match between the celebrity's expertise and the product category, as argued by Keel and Nataraajan (2012) and Liu *et al.* (2007). Their involvement helps the tutors promote their

tutor brand and branded tutoring. The tutors prefer to participate in their own promotion because it is more persuasive, which may enhance their credibility. Conversely, finding third parties such as existing celebrities from other industries to endorse the tutors is not matched and persuasive. The consistency of an advertising message can be achieved if an advertisement for a service (tutoring) is endorsed by the service provider (tutor).

Furthermore, these findings reflect that the product nature can influence the selection of an endorser in advertising. The participants' concerns imply that tutoring is embedded with the service provider, that is the tutor. The tutoring is branded by the name of the tutor. This combination reflects a match between the service and the service provider, which is considered as the best match. This explains why hiring an endorser, such as an existing celebrity from another industry, was not preferred by the participants. It extends and simultaneously advances Erdogan *et al.*'s (2001) theoretical paper on celebrity endorsement and the selection of endorsers, published almost 18 years ago.

There are other reasons that I found for why the practitioners do not choose existing celebrities from other industries to endorse them. For example, it was generally perceived among the participants that most celebrities in Hong Kong, particularly those from the entertainment industry, are not well-educated and their image does not match the product nature of tutoring. The participants claimed that using existing celebrities such as celebrity artists to endorse their tutoring may adversely influence the acceptance of the advertising messages. It is also unlikely to enhance awareness of the tutor or their credibility.

> Amy, administration manager of Chain B, argued: *'No doubt most stars in the entertainment industry are not well educated, they're really not credible to endorse our tutoring'*.

These findings show that the perceived credibility of an endorser is influenced by his/her perceived expertise, which will be used by audiences to evaluate the credibility of an advertisement. Take the quote above, when the endorser's perceived credibility is poor (e.g. artists in Hong Kong) and does not match the endorsed product (e.g. the tutoring), the effectiveness of the endorsement by that endorser is poor. This echoes the previous findings in respect to the match-up hypothesis in the literature on celebrity endorsement (e.g. Amos *et al.,* 2008; Sertoglu *et al.,* 2014). These also extend our understanding of the match between the endorser and the endorsed product in a niche market, in this case the shadow education sector in the Asian context; the majority of past studies (e.g. Goldsmith *et al*., 2000; Törn, 2012) tend to focus on American and European celebrities and brands for consumer goods.

The expertise of the tutors was found to be important to their perceived quality and performance. Tutors with a sound educational background are therefore superior to other tutors without such a background. I found that one tutor agreed with this understanding to a certain extent.

> Brenda, English tutor, founder and CEO of Chain D, said, 'H*aving a sound educational background is always good, but probably not compulsory. Perhaps [it] can attract attention at the beginning. But, the key point is, can the tutor lead students to excel in the exam?*'.

However, it seems that the tutors' expertise, in terms of their educational qualifications, was only partially recognised by the participants. Educational qualifications were found to be relevant to the tutor's expertise and the product nature of tutoring. Yet, a contradictory view in respect to the celebrity tutors' educational qualification and their perceived quality was found in the above quote. This reflects that having a sound educational background does not automatically lead the tutors to be famous or credible.

The educational qualifications of the tutors were perceived by the participants to be secondary to their performance while tutoring. Conversely, a tutor's achievement and recognition can be achieved through the perception of the students, their experience of consuming the tutor's tutoring service and finally their examination results. This extends beyond the academic background and performance of the tutors, and is also beyond the tutor's control, particularly the examination results of their students. Moreover, there are other non-academic performance aspects of the tutors, identified in the previous sections, that were found to be more important to the perceived quality of the tutors.

Cost was found to be another reason why tutors participate in their advertising and promotion. The participants argued that their operation is small-scale and has limited financial resources. They claimed that it is costly to hire existing celebrities to endorse their advertising; it is just not affordable. Their experience echoes the research findings in the literature on advertising and celebrity endorsement regarding the huge cost involved in the use of celebrity endorsers (e.g. Belch and Belch, 2012; Shimp and Andrews, 2013).

> Andy, English tutor and director of Chain C, commented, *'Cost is the key reason [not hiring celebrity endorsers]. Because it's very expensive, maybe [it involves] hundreds, thousands or even millions to hire a superstar to endorse. Totally not affordable, not worth it too'*.

Furthermore, I found that the barrier of cost reflected from the findings can be understood from the perspective of the business format of tutoring, as I discussed in the previous section. The tutors were found to be partners and contractors who work with the chain tutoring centres. They operate independently and manage and pay their own production team to run the tutoring, which means that the tutors can design their promotional strategy and operation at their own discretion.

The business scale and financial capacity of the tutors are also factors that influence their ways of operating, including their direct engagement in advertising and promotion, and not hiring existing celebrities from other industries to endorse them. Hence, the findings regarding the historical links and the limited financial resources of the tutors reflect that hiring existing celebrities to endorse their tutoring is not the best choice for the tutors. This explains why the tutors were found to have engaged in their own promotion and advertising for many years, particularly their direct engagement was found efficient to promote their own brand as discussed in section 5.4.2.

The rise of digital technology and social media has altered the traditional ways of marketing communication (Lee, 2009; Solomon, 2015). Social media was found to be complementary to the promotion of the tutors, as I discussed in section 5.4.2. Furthermore, I found that social media was another reason why the tutors attempted to promote themselves and interact with their students directly, rather than choosing celebrities from other industries to promote them.

The marketing staff revealed that the tutors and the chain tutoring centres have their own Facebook pages and Instant messaging apps, such as WhatsApp and WeChat to manage their students. Both the celebrity tutors and the chains were found to use social media to link up and communicate with both current and potential students.

> John, chief marketing officer of Chain A, said, *'Nowadays, everyone uses Facebook and WhatsApp, it's just like a part of our daily life. They are surely a great platform to promote and interact with students, also they're free, Students like it [social media] too, more importantly'.*

The use of social media by the tutors and chains reflects that the practitioners are sensitive to fashions, such as the popularity of social media and sharing among

people, particularly adolescents. Through the social media, the distance between the tutors and their students is shortened and their relationship is enhanced.

Besides, I found that the cost of social media was perceived by the participants to be lower than traditional promotion methods like advertising. Hence, this shows that the barriers to adopting social media to promote and support the operation of the tutors are low, which is why this method is chosen by the tutors. This also extends Holt's (2016) claim that using traditional media such as TV commercials or printed advertisements is no longer enough to promote a business.

There were tutors and teaching assistants who argued that their direct involvement with social media was not replaceable with other people like the endorsers. They revealed that in addition to their classroom interactions, there have regular interactions on social media with their students; for example they answer students' questions and offer supplementary tutoring. These require a quick response. More importantly, the tutors revealed that social media is the best medium to socialise with their students in a casual way.

> Cindy, English tutor of Chain B, argued, *'Every day we update our Facebook status and contents and reviews and respond to their [followers] comments and questions, this has already become a part of our daily work. Of course not only I, but also my team mostly [do it]. ... It's so attractive to post our sharing on there, like dining in a wonderful restaurant, you get lots of likes… Back to your question, I don't believe that a spokesperson can do this'*.

These findings reflect that social media serves as a platform, in addition to classrooms, where the tutors perform and interact with their students as a part of their performance and the fan culture led by the celebrity tutors. This extends our understanding of the study of Chan and Prendergast's (2008), who found that

adolescents in Hong Kong are subject to influences from advertisements featuring celebrities. The interactions on social media extend beyond one-way communication, whereby youngsters reach celebrities or idols through the media, such as television, newspapers and magazines. This is because the students can contact the celebrity tutors physically through attending tutoring and virtually via social media.

Furthermore, I found that the tutors were central to the advertising on both traditional media, such as advertisements in newspapers and billboards, and on social media such as Facebook and Instagram. This reflects how the tutors perform their self-branding, celebritising their tutoring and establishing a fan culture through different media exposures. This shows why the tutors use advertising and promotion for their tutoring.

The problem of over-shadowing, as discussed in the literature on celebrity endorsement (e.g. Ilicic and Webster, 2014; Zwilling and Fruchter, 2013), is found to be another barrier and explains why the tutors do not use existing celebrities from other industries to endorse them. The participants shared the view that using existing celebrities to advertise may lead their audiences to pay attention to the celebrity endorser rather than the tutoring, the tutor or the chain tutoring centre. As a result, this may blur the advertising messages.

> Eric, teaching assistant of Chinese of Chain A, tells, *'If [we] finding a star to promote, students will focus on the star rather than the tutor … Students are youngsters. Of course, they are interested in stars rather than school education [attending tutorials]'.*

Several tutors mentioned the problem of cannibalisation related to using existing celebrities to endorse their advertising. They argued that the tutors are both a celebrity and a brand. If the tutors hire other celebrities such as celebrity artists to

endorse their tutoring, they would cannibalise each other, which would lead the audiences to become confused.

> Charles, chemistry tutor of Chain A, said, *'We [tutors] are already a brand in ourselves, why bother to find other celebrities to promote us? That would confuse people, surely. Who is the tutor? The star? Or else? Having a star on the advertisement may overshadow the tutor'.*

These findings reflect that it is a redundant idea to use an existing celebrity to endorse another celebrity, a celebrity tutor, and/or his or her branded product (tutoring). This is also unlikely to be found in other industries such as the entertainment industry. Meanwhile, the findings reflect the risk that students might shift their focus to the celebrity endorsers from their tutors if an advertisement were endorsed by an existing celebrity from other industries. Alternatively, the students might be confused by seeing existing celebrities in advertisements related to tutoring, as discussed in the previous section regarding the historical links. Besides, the direct involvement of the tutors in advertising allows them to present themselves in the media, and this was found to be a type of performance and enhance their celebrity status.

A difference was also found in the association between the tutors and celebrities in the entertainment industry, between the 1990s and the present. One tutor argued that associating celebrity artists with tutors and/or the chains is perceived to be old-fashioned at present. This contrasts with the practice in the 1990s of the founders of one chain tutoring centre, as discussed in section 5.2.

> Michael, English tutor, founder and director of Chain B, revealed, *'I think the way Richard [English tutor and founder of Beacon College] uses [i.e. associating him and his tutoring centre with his sister, who was an artist in the 1990s in Hong Kong, to promote] doesn't work at present. Everybody already knows*

our industry and star-like tutors. There is no need to leverage the fame of artists anymore'.

This demonstrates the dynamic of the shadow education sector, the changing practice of the tutors in response to the market situation and the growth of tutor branding over the years. The use of existing celebrities from other industries to promote their business, which was once perceived as a successful strategy, is found to be outdated. Meanwhile, the tutors were found to have already established their celebrity status and celebrity brand in the market so they no longer need to leverage other celebrities' fame to promote themselves. Conversely, their direct involvement in the promotion and advertising was found to be more effective.

Risk reduction was found to be a reason why the tutors prefer to participate directly in their advertising. Previous studies in the literature on celebrity and celebrity endorsement show that endorsed brands may suffer from negative news about celebrity endorsers, such as scandals (Daboll, 2011; Rovell, 2012) and misbehaviour (Solomon *et al*, 2013; York, 2009). That explains why researchers in this discipline have attempted to identify the factors that can improve the selection of celebrity endorsers and minimise the risks arising from negative news about endorsers.

In addition to the historical tradition that the tutors and the chains follow each other's practices, I found that the participants in general argued that there are risks arising from negative news about existing celebrities, which can harm the image of tutors and chains, and eventually their business (enrolment).

Specifically, the selection of celebrity endorsers was found to be a concern for the participants. For example, the administration staff argued that if they were to use celebrities to endorse their advertising, they could not afford to hire first-tier celebrities, only second- or third-tier ones. However, this would be risky because they perceived that there are many scandals arising from those second- and third tier celebrities.

> Helen, assistant operation manager of Chain B, said, *'Even if we could afford to hire celebrities to endorse us, I think we could only hire second- or third-tier artists. You know many scandals come from them, perhaps they need scandals to expose themselves in the media, why bother us!'*.

These findings echo the claims in the literature of scandals about celebrities that negatively affect the brands they endorse (Daboll, 2011; Rovell, 2012). There is a potential link between the rankings of celebrities and the opportunity for scandal in the entertainment industry in Hong Kong. This is worthy of further exploration in the future. Besides, these findings reflect the affordability of tutors and chains in promotion and their small business scale in which the involvement of tutors in advertisement is justified.

However, there were participants who shared the opposite perspective. They argued that scandals among celebrity tutors may not be totally wrong. This is because some scandals can become a competitive edge or a gimmick for the concerned tutor. For example, there have been investigations into tutors or chain tutoring centres regarding the leaking of examination questions, arising from bribery between the staff of the Examination Authority and the tutors/tutoring centre (Man and Yau, 2010; *Ming Pao*, 2009b). The marketing staff argued that such scandals imply that the tutors concerned may have extraordinary power to access inside information in respect to the examinations. This would differentiate the tutor and, as a result, they may be perceived as superior to their rivals.

> John, chief marketing officer of Chain A, revealed, *'In our industry, scandals can be good, especially like the leaking of exam questions, or the accurate prediction of exam questions, like the Lemon Tea case of Yuen Siu in 2006 … it shows that the tutor is powerful. Students are not stupid. They of course welcome tutors who offer such leaks… it lets them perform well in the DSE'*.

One tutor claimed that one of the reasons why students undertake tutoring is to seek a shortcut to excelling in examination taking. Scandals, like those related to examination question prediction and the leaking of examination questions, are very much welcomed by students.

> Cindy, English tutor of Chain B, concurred with John's comment, *'Everyone [tutors] is doing the same. Why choose you? Because you have something different, because you can give more to the students, especially tips about hitting the examination questions'*.

These findings extend our understanding of scandals among celebrities and human brand. Certain scandals among celebrity tutors, such as those mentioned above, were found to give the tutors an advantage. The scandals are therefore considered part of tutors' performance. Conversely, scandals among celebrity endorsers and human brand, as discussed in the literature, have been found to hurt the celebrities and their endorsed or own brands (e.g. Moulard *et al.,* 2015; Solomon *et al*, 2013). These findings are also echoed in the advertisements for celebrity tutors, an example of which is shown in Figure 5.9 in section 5.2, in which a lawsuit investigation against the tutor is highlighted in his advertisement as one of the advertising messages to imply the tutor's value.

In sum, the shadow education sector in Hong Kong was found to be celebritised. It is mainly constructed by celebrity tutors and the main chain tutoring centres. Direct engagement in advertising and promotion by the celebrity tutors was found to be the best match between the advertising messages and the tutoring. The advertising message from the tutor's self-branding was perceived as persuasive by the participants, which could enhance the effectiveness of the advertisements.

The business format of the tutors and the chains demonstrates that the tutors have more control to design and manage their promotion, rather than simply following the chains' orders. These findings answer the second and third research questions,

regarding the reasons for choosing celebrity tutors to promote them rather than hiring celebrities from the pool of celebrities in other industries. Meanwhile, it clarifies the understanding that it is the celebrity tutors, rather than the chains, that design and manage the promotion format.

There are several aspects that can illustrate the match and the follower strategy that is used in the sector, which are the product nature, the credibility, the cost and the risk. The media exposure and interaction with the students were found to be a part of the tutors' performance; they are not replaceable by any third parties such as celebrity endorsers. Yet, these reflect how celebrity tutors brand themselves through direct engagement in promotion. The similarities between the image building and promotions of the tutors echo the rationale and confusion behind the development of the shadow education sector since the 1990s discussed in section 5.2.

On the one hand, the tutors and the founders of a few tutoring centres have attempted to create innovative strategies to compete and stand out from the competition. On the other hand, they follow each other's practices. This implies a contradiction. As a result, the use of celebrity tutors and celebrity tutor promotion/endorsement has become an industry norm in the sector under study. These findings shed light on the literature on the match-up hypothesis and human branding regarding the popularity of featuring celebrities in advertisements in a specific industry, which is the shadow education sector in Hong Kong.

5.5.3 Exceptional Cases of Hiring Existing Celebrities to Endorse

The findings in the previous sections show that the celebritisation of the Hong Kong shadow education sector is due to the historical links and the match. The celebrity tutors' direct engagement in their advertising and promotion was found to be

recognised by the participants as the best fit between the advertising messages, the tutoring and the tutors. This explains why existing celebrities from other industries do not fit the shadow education sector for promotion.

However, I found that different chain tutoring centres have used celebrities from the entertainment industry to endorse them and even to provide their tutoring. Collaboration between tutors and celebrities from the entertainment industry was also found in the journalists' reports. For example, there was a singer, who was originally a performer on the streets, as shown in Figure 5.36, who was reported to have joined a chain tutoring centre as a Chinese language tutor (*Apple Daily,* 2013; *Eastweek,* 2013).

Figure 5.36

Siu Kwan Lung's advertisement for joining King's Glory Educational Centre as a tutor of Chinese language offering a free trial of Chinese tutoring

Source: https://h1-skyhigh.blogspot.hk/2013/07/blog-post_9992.html (Accessed: 27 Apr 2018)

In the interviews, the majority of the participants could quickly recall the names of celebrities from the entertainment industry who had been hired to endorse chain tutoring centres and even provide tutoring. This demonstrates a view that is contractionary to the previous findings. It implies that using existing celebrities from other industries to endorse the tutors and/or the chains is not rare.

> Albert, customer service manager of Chain A, revealed, *'No, we have used singers to promote ourselves. Also to provide [tutoring]. Siu Kwan Lung [a singer in Hong Kong], you know she was so hot before due to her masked image … And now she is unmasked, and is creating lots of noises. She is now the Chinese language tutor at King's Glory, she also serves as a spokesperson [King's Glory]'.*

These findings show that the sources of celebrities that the tutors and the chains use have extended to existing celebrities in niche markets, such as singers who perform on the streets, which is outside of the mainstream in the entertainment industry. The participants' responses also reflect the possibility that practitioners in the shadow education sector have paid close attention to the market. This monitoring was not limited to the management level but also included staff at the operational level such as teaching assistants. The multiplicity of celebrity tutors and their operation may explain why a variety of staff perform the monitoring.

Further evidence was found from the participants regarding the use of existing celebrities from other industries to endorse them. One teaching assistant claimed that the rationale behind hiring existing celebrities from other industries to endorse them is that it is a gimmick. They aim to create and use gossip or soft topics, such as news appearing in the entertainment sections of newspapers or magazines, to attract attention from audiences, particularly students.

> Frank, teaching assistant of Chinese of Chain A, revealed, *'King's Glory found GEM [the singer in Hong Kong, as shown in Figure 5.37] to promote the chain. I think some students like it because GEM was famous. Yet it is just a gimmick for a while.'*

Figure 5.37

GEM, the singer in Hong Kong, endorsing King's Glory Educational Centre Ltd's intensive courses on an advertisement on a bus's exterior

Source: www.hkitalk.net/HkiTalk2/forum.php?mod=viewthread&action=printable&tid=459579 [Accessed: 3 Mar 2018]

The celebrity endorsers mentioned by the participants in Figures 5.36 and 5.37 can be found in journalists' reports (*Apple Daily,* 2013; *Eastweek*, 2013; *My Plus,* 2011). I perceive these celebrities are second- or third-tier celebrities in the rankings of popularity in Hong Kong. Nevertheless, these celebrities were recognised as popular at the time that they endorsed the chain and provided tutoring, as reflected in the journalists' reports. These findings reflect that the celebrity status of individual celebrities is one of the selection criteria used by practitioners in the shadow education sector. This sheds light on the limit research in this area from the perspective of practitioners in the literature (Erdogan *et al.,* 2001).

I also found that existing celebrities from the entertainment industry were mainly hired to endorse chain tutoring centres, rather than individual tutors. The historical links in the shadow education sector show that there are certain tutors and founders who associated them with celebrities in the entertainment industry to promote them. For example, Figure 5.38 shows that a celebrity artist (the left hand one with an image of superman) was hired to endorse a chain tutoring centre's new courses for kindergarten students.

Figure 5.38

Bob, the artist in Hong Kong, shown on Beacon College's billboard on a building wall where a branch of Beacon College is located

Photo taken on 25 Sep 2015

Location: Ginza Square, 565-567 Nathan Road, Mongkok (similar to Oxford Street in London)

> Andy, English tutor and director of Chain C, shared his thoughts: *'It's well-known that Beacon College is a pioneer in leveraging artists to promote them. Richard [the founder of Beacon College] associates with his sister [Christine Ng, an artist in the 1990s] to expose them in the media… and over the years, they [Beacon College] have kept hiring artists to promote them … it's a kind of gimmick and their style'.*

Furthermore, I found that there was one chain tutoring centre whose founder and English tutor had associated with a singer for every advertisement over the years. Figures 5.39 and 5.40 show a singer called Hins Cheung, who has served as an endorser for the Calvin Sun Education Centre for a period of time. For example, the advertisement shown in Figure 5.39 was found on 16 July 2014. The webpage

capture shown in Figure 5.40 was found on 5 March 2019. Cheung was found to have been actively associated with the chain tutoring centre as an endorser for over four years. These findings demonstrate that existing celebrities from the entertainment industry have been used in the shadow education sector.

Figure 5.39

Hins Cheung (the right-hand one, singer) appearing on Calvin Sun Education Centre's billboard at the Richmond Commercial Building, Mongkok

Photo taken on 16 Jul 2014

Figure 5.40

Front page of Calvin Sun Education Centre's website

- *Left hand side: Calvin Sun, English tutor and founder*
- *Right hand side: Hins Cheung, the singers in Hong Kong*

Source: Retrieved from Calvin Sun's website, https://www.calvinsun.hk/index.html (Accessed: 5 Mar 2019)

Several participants commented that the association between the singer and the founder/English tutor of the chain tutoring centre in Figures 5.39 and 5.40 has become well-known. Yet, they also revealed that such long-term promotion by a particular singer is rarely found in the sector.

> David, customer service manager of Chain B, said, *'No, Hins Cheung has appeared in Calvin Sun [Calvin Sun Education Centre's advertisements] over the years, [like] on the billboards [which are located] in Mongkok [i.e. Figure 5.39] … [I] cannot say we don't use celebrities to promote ourselves '.*

Besides, I found that the billboard shown in Figure 5.39 had been there for years; it is like a landmark in Mongkok, which is similar to another tutor's billboard as shown in Figure 5.16. I also found that most of the participants could recall that advertisement and its location. This demonstrates the tension among the tutors in competing for advertising space, as discussed previously. This is because the advertisements for tutors and their promotion pattern help build their image and position in the market and reinforce the memory of customers and potential customers in the long run.

These findings offer a different angle on the use of celebrities from other industries to endorse tutoring in the shadow education sector. They also extend our understanding of celebrity endorsement and co-branding by illustrating a long-term collaboration between an existing celebrity and a celebrity tutor (also known as a human brand) in a specific market.

I also found that the celebrities employed by the chain tutoring centres, such as those in Figures 5.36, 5.37 and 5.38, had an existing relationship with the chains prior to the endorsement. The relationship was found to be a personal connection with the founders and/or tutors of the chains.

> Albert, customer service manager of Chain A, revealed, *'GEM [Figure 5.37] was Wilson Liu's student [mathematic tutor of King's Glory Educational Centre Ltd] in the past'.*
>
> Susan, course administration manager of Chain B, said, *'I heard Bob [Figure 5.38] and June [the founder of Beacon College] are friends. [Beacon College] Seems to follow King's Glory [using GEM, the singer in Hong Kong] to [use celebrity artists] promote [them] or the other way round'.*

The established relationship between the existing celebrities, the chains and/or the tutors presents a known or hidden association between them to the public. This implies that such an association may serve as a motive to link up the endorsement, whereas existing celebrities without this prerequisite association are not likely to be hired to endorse tutoring. This shows a barrier that explains why hiring existing celebrities to endorse celebrity tutors and/or the chains was found to be unpopular.

Meanwhile, these findings reflect that the management staff, such as the founders of the chains, perform as the agents of celebrities and advertising agents, connecting brands and celebrities for endorsement jobs, which is similar to the representation industry in the Hollywood star system (e.g. deCordova, 2001; Leslie, 2011; McDonald, 2000). These findings show that the celebrities employed by the chain tutoring centres are not connected by the agents as stated in the literature. Conversely, their endorsement is based on a personal relationship between the parties. This reflects another barrier to existing celebrities from other industries seeking endorsement opportunities in the shadow education sector.

The finding that there are exceptional cases where existing celebrities are hired to endorse the shadow education sector shows a view that contrasts with my previous findings. This was not found to be the leading promotion method in the sector.

Hence, it raises a question to analyse the effectiveness of these exceptional promotion methods.

Several participants commented that hiring singers to endorse and provide tutoring is ineffective. Echoing the follower strategy that I discussed in the previous section, if using existing celebrities from other industries to promote tutoring worked well, other rivals would have followed.

> Susan, course administration manager of Chain B, argued, *'To be honest, if using stars to promote were useful, everyone would have already followed'*.

These findings reflect that using existing celebrities from the entertainment industry may attract the attention of students in the short run. This may link tutoring with celebrities in the entertainment industry to enrich the contents of tutoring, such as enjoyment and socialising. This is because those celebrity endorsers shown on advertisements for chains may become gossips among students. However, it may not sustain their attention in the long run. Besides, it does not fit the product nature of tutoring and the match between tutoring and the endorser, as I discussed previously.

Furthermore, I observed that co-branding and celebrity tutor endorsement were found on the Facebook pages of the celebrity tutors and the chain tutoring centres. Figure 5.41 shows a Facebook page shared by a celebrity tutor in regard to an advertisement for a facial wash cream, which is endorsed by another celebrity tutor. Besides, there is an advertisement on one chain tutoring centre's Facebook page for a collaborative promotion between a chain tutoring centre and a Japanese beverage company for an energy drink, which is endorsed by a Japanese celebrity endorser, as shown in Figure 5.42. Both the name of the chain and the brand are shown on the advertisement.

Figure 5.41

A Facebook advertisement for a facial wash cream endorsed by a female celebrity tutor as shown on the packaging, which is shared by another celebrity tutor's Facebook page

Source: Retrieved from Kenneth Lau's Facebook page, English tutor of Beacon College https://www.facebook.com/Beacon.Kenneth.Lau/ (Accessed: 12 Mar 2019)

Figure 5.42

A collaborative Facebook advertisement for an energy drink and a chain tutoring centre shown on the chain's Facebook page

Source: Retrieved from Modern Education's Facebook page, https://www.facebook.com/modernedu/photos/a.138662893358/10154155340268359/?type=3&theater (Accessed: 9 Mar 2019)

This observation was made in 2016/17, which was after the data collection period, so that I did not obtain comments from the participants, nor they mentioned it, regarding this observation in interviewing. I argue that whether this type of collaborative promotion would fit the endorsed product, the celebrity tutors and the chain tutoring centres. What would the tutors and the chains gain from these promotions? How would the students perceive the promotion and what would be the influences towards their perception of the tutors and the chains? Furthermore, these advertisements reflect business opportunities for co-branding, which are not often found in the education industry. I believe that these research directions are worthy of further study because this may extend our understanding of the main theories of the celebrity endorsement and human branding.

In sum, the findings in this section show a few exceptional cases where existing celebrities from the entertainment industry were found to have been hired to endorse and provide tutoring in the shadow education sector in Hong Kong. However, this approach was found to be ineffective. This explains why using existing celebrities to promote tutoring has not become a mainstream promotion method in the sector.

5.5.4 Section Summary

The phenomena of celebrity tutors and celebritised tutoring found in the shadow education sector in Hong Kong emerged in the 1990s and were led by several tutors and founders of tutoring centres. They attempted to idolise their tutors as celebrity tutors so as to differentiate them from school teachers. Meanwhile, these tutors and founders tried to associate their tutors with the entertainment industry and leveraged existing celebrities in the entertainment industry to promote themselves. Through advertising and promotion, these tutors were found to position themselves as a tutor brand to earn the public's awareness. The tutoring offered by these

celebrity tutors was positioned beyond tutoring per se and included a variety of meanings, such as idol worshipping, entertainment and socialising.

These historical links and the follower strategy used by the celebrity tutors were found to be the background of the celebritisation of the shadow education sector in Hong Kong. The phenomenon of celebrity tutors and their engagement in advertising and promotion were recognised among the participants as the industry norm. The tutors were found to be the key players in the process of the idolisation of tutors and fan culture building. The tutors were found to work independently to collaborate with the chains as contractor and partners. The tutors' direct engagement in advertising and promotion was found as the tutors' decision. This practice was found to facilitate the tutors' self-branding, performance and awareness building. Meanwhile, this demonstrates the entrepreneurship of tutors in running their tutoring like running a business.

The tutors' engagement was recognised by the participants as the best match to the product nature of tutoring, the credibility of the tutors related to their tutoring, the cost and the risks. In particular, the celebrity tutors were found to interact with their students and potential students through social media for both academic and non-academic activities, which was considered a part of their performance. This could not be handled by a third party, such as celebrity endorsers from other industries.

The findings answer the second research question and clarify the reasons why tutors promote themselves. They also reflect why it is uncommon to see existing celebrities from other industries being hired to endorse tutoring centres in the shadow education sector, which responds to the third research question. Besides, they extend our understanding of the development of the shadow education sector in Hong Kong and its association with celebrities from the entertainment industry and the media.

Exceptional cases were found in the shadow education sector. Different chain tutoring centres were found to have hired existing celebrities from the entertainment industry to endorse their businesses, rather than using individual tutors. Meanwhile, certain celebrities from the entertainment industry were found to have provided tutoring. However, these exceptional cases were found to have been short term, and their effectiveness in the long run was perceived by the participants as unclear. Yet, the emergence of collaborative promotion between the celebrity tutors, the chain tutoring centres and consumer goods like the health care and beverage are worthy of further investigation. Furthermore, an existing and personal relationship was found between the celebrity endorsers and the chains prior to their endorsement. This implies that there is a barrier to existing celebrities pursuing endorsement in the shadow education sector, due to the lack of a prerequisite link, which is worth investigating further.

6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter provides further conceptual reflections on the findings and aims to conclude this thesis. To explore the unknowns from the literature and the phenomenon of celebrity tutor and their promotion, as an interpretivist researcher, I tried to investigate this issue from an exploratory angle to uncover and interpret the meanings of the research questions given by the practitioners in the field of shadow education in Hong Kong.

I first provided a panoramic view of the Hong Kong shadow education sector, in which I reviewed and discussed the development of celebrity tutors and their promotion over the past seven decades. The dynamic and commercially driven business nature of shadow education were found to inspire the chain tutoring centres and tutors to build their image and role as celebrities to attract students (customers) and compete in the market.

The multiple roles played by the celebrity tutors and their participation in advertising and promotion reflect not only the dynamics of the industry, but also update the main theories in the literature on celebrity, human brand and marketisation of education, rather than the original assumption regarding celebrity endorsement. In the following section, I will discuss the achievements and contributions of this study. Then, I will provide reflections on the study and recommendations for future research.

6.2 Achievements and Contributions

This study offers insights into celebrity tutors, their identity, business format and promotion in the Hong Kong shadow education sector. Instead of identifying and

generalising factors commonly found in the key models in the literature on celebrity, celebrity endorsement and human brands, this study proceeds by exploring the extent to which the various theories are found in practice in the phenomenon under study. It reveals certain factors that are novel and under-examined in the existing literature on celebrity, human branding and marketisation of shadow education, such as tutor brand and self-branding in practice.

From the review of the Hong Kong shadow education sector over the last seven decades, I found that shadow education co-exists with formal education, echoing previous studies in the literature on shadow education, particularly Bray and his team (Bray *et al.,* 2014; Zhan *et al.*, 2013). The majority of studies in this discipline focus have examined the cultural and historical background of shadow education, including the limited supply of school education (Kim and Lee, 2010; Mori and Baker, 2010), and its influences on the education system, students, families and society (Bray and Lykins, 2012; Zhan *et al.,* 2013). The present study fills the research gaps in our understanding of the operation of celebrity tutors and the chain tutoring centres from the perspective of practitioners. The popularity of shadow education in Hong Kong led by celebrity tutors shows an evidence of a celebrity culture in shadow education that is now well-established. The celebritised tutoring in Hong Kong led by celebrity tutors since the 1990s reflects Driessens' (2013) claim of celebritisation, which is initiated and influenced by the celebrity tutors over the years, not a spontaneous effect, to respond keen competition.

My classification of the development of the shadow education sector in Hong Kong into three stages: the post-war stage (1950s to 1980s), the growth stage (1990 to 2009) and the mature stage (2010 to 2018) illustrates the different characteristics of the stages and the development of the chain tutoring centres and tutors over the past seven decades. The six milestones throughout the three stages that I propose demonstrate the dynamic of the shadow education sector. These milestones highlight the development of celebrity (tutors) and reasons behind, mainly due to

fierce competition and business opportunities. This development sheds light on Driessens' (2013) claim of celebrification regarding how a tutor changes to be a celebrity and uses his/her celebrity status to generate profit as argued by Dyer (2004). Moreover, this celebrification is like to cultivate the celebritisation of the Hong Kong shadow education sector, which is new to the literature on celebrity and marketisation of shadow education.

From the voice of the participants, the research findings extend, from a practical perspective, our understanding of the factors that the practitioners in the Hong Kong shadow education sector consider when they are pursuing effective celebrity tutor promotion and branding. The historical links were found to be the backbone to address the second and third research questions regarding why the chain tutoring centres use celebrity tutors, rather than hiring existing celebrities from other industries to endorse them. The shared experiences of the participants show that the phenomenon of celebrity tutors can be traced back to the development of shadow education in Hong Kong, mainly since the growth stage.

The findings also reflect and extend our understanding of the journalists' reports (e.g. *Eastweek*, 2016; Shou, 2015; Wong and Cho, 2007), which state that the rise of the shadow education sector in the 1990s was initiated by a few founders and tutors, who changed the business format and the competition. Their business format and promotion format were recognised by the participants as a successful business model. This model was found to have been used continuously by the practitioners, even today, which reflects the follower strategy adopted by the practitioners in the sector. This follower strategy stimulates tutors and chains to develop celebrity tutors, idolised tutoring and fan culture to compete, which results in cultivating a celebrity culture and celebritised tutoring as industry norm. These findings of unique and unexplored settings of shadow education led by celebrity tutors shed light on the research gaps identified in the literature on shadow education and marketisation of shadow education.

Echoing the ongoing debate in the literature on celebrity, famous tutors, like any well-known individuals as argued by different researchers (e.g. Leslie, 2011; Rojek, 2001), are found to be recognised as celebrity. The research findings in regard to the celebrity status and value of celebrity tutors also shed light on previous studies on celebritisation (e.g. Thompson *et al.,* 2015; Lewis, 2010) in which the logic of celebrity is used as a mode of production in services, such as tutoring. This is based on an economic calculation and marketing ends in a consumer society (Debord, 1994), where being famous such as the public's awareness of the celebrity tutors represent the celebrity status and value of the celebrity tutors. This celebrity status was recognised by the participants as their value or celebrity capital echoing previous studies in celebrity (e.g. Tuner, 2004; van Krieken, 2012).

The findings reveal how celebrity tutors perform by referring to the factors that create and maintain their celebrity status, and how they utilise their celebrity status to generate business and manage their existing and potential students (customers) through human branding. This self-created human brand and celebrity is new to both the literature on celebrity and human brand. These practices of celebrity tutors and the phenomenon of celebrity tutors over the past three decades in Hong Kong reflect the phenomenon of celebritisation (Driessens, 2013) in the shadow education sector. This echoes previous studies (e.g. Hepp, 2012; Krotz, 2007) in regard to celebritisation that refers to a long-term structural development regarding the societal and cultural changes in the shadow education sector implied by celebrity (tutors). The celebritised tutoring led by the celebrity tutors is recognised by a wider public across fields, which echoes Moeran's (2003) claim, and the practitioners as industry norm. The celebrity status of the celebrity tutors is embedded in contemporary society and culture (Barron, 2015; Van Krieken, 2012) over the past three decades in Hong Kong, where people (students and the wider public) consume them, by enrolling in their tutoring and discussing their promotions or gossips in the media.

The research findings also show insights from the perspective of practitioners regarding how a tutor becomes a celebrity tutor and a tutor brand through celebrification. This offers insights into Driessens' (2013) claim by demonstrating that celebrification occurs in the shadow education sector at the individual level regarding the process by which a tutor, like everyday people, is transformed into celebrities. Further to being a celebrity, this celebrification plays a key role in the establishment of celebrity tutor brand, which is new to the literature on human brand regarding self-branding. Moreover, the participants' shared meanings demonstrate how a celebrity tutor becomes a labour (celebrity tutor, tutoring service provider and tutor brand) to produce a commodity (tutoring, tutor brand, idol tutor) for consumers (mainly students) to consume. These research findings shed light on Dyer's claim that states that *'stars are involved in making themselves into commodities; they are both labour and the thing that labour produces'* (Dyer, 2004 [1986]: 5), and *'stars are made for profit'* (Dyer, 2004 [1986]: 5).

In regard to the first research question, which aims to explore how the chain tutoring centres in Hong Kong create and maintain their celebrity tutors, the findings show that the celebrity tutors are self-created. The formation of celebrity tutors is mainly initiated and managed by the tutors themselves. This is reflected by the historical links and the business format in the shadow education sector. Besides, the celebrity tutors were found not to be inherent, as with ascribed celebrities (Rojek, 2001), or created by the media, as with attributed celebrities or celetoids (Rojek, 2001). Celebrity tutors are constructed through a mixture of self-establishment and achievement by the tutor, rather than constructed by third parties such as the media. This finding fills out the research gap in Rojek's (2001) classification of celebrity regarding the self-created celebrities. Moreover, this finding is in contrast to the first research question that assumes that celebrity tutors are created and maintained by chain tutoring centres.

The research findings reveal that in the Hong Kong shadow education sector, there is no representation industry, as in the entertainment industry in Hollywood, which

is responsible for the production of celebrity artists for profit making (Cashmore, 2006; Turner, 2004). The creation and maintenance of the celebrity status of a tutor is done through their own efforts towards above-the-line promotion. This celebrity status also helps the tutors build their brand, which echoes Milligan's (2011) study that the mass mediatisation of individual personality leads celebrities like the celebrity tutors as human brand. These findings also extend our understanding in respect to Marshall's (1997) claim that celebrities are produced by the celebrity industry to help sell other commodities. This self-establishment of celebrity tutor also demonstrates a unique type of celebrity in the Hong Kong shadow education sector, which is new to the literature on celebrity and human brand.

The entrepreneurship spirit of the celebrity tutors was found to be a driver that motivates a celebrity tutor to perform. This is because the operation of a celebrity tutor was found as running a business, which is owned and managed by the celebrity tutor. The celebrity tutor performs beyond conducting tutoring and has a series of management functions such as marketing communication, administration and brand management, which shows a contrast with celebrity artists, who are led by the representation industry. This extends understandings of celebrification (Driessens, 2013) in which entrepreneurship plays a role in the celebrification process in the Hong Kong shadow education sector. This also sheds light on marketisation of shadow education (Molesworth *et al.,* 2011) by illustrating how practitioners use business knowhow and their original academic expertise to perform.

Furthermore, the celebrity tutors were not like the do-in-yourself celebrity or micro-celebrity on social media that exist for self-interest rather than profit making (Kowalczyk *et al.,* 2016; Lin *et al.,* 2018). They were found to use a variety of activities (e.g. innovative tutoring delivery, idolisation of tutoring and fan culture), channels (both the traditional media and social media) and resources (financial resource and the tutor's power such as market share and celebrity status) for awareness and loyalty building. The tutors also use their celebrity status to brand

themselves and their related tutoring. The operation of the celebrity tutors and the chain tutoring centres is business-oriented for profit making, rather than self-interest. That is, being a celebrity tutor is found to be a mean to do tutoring business, which sheds light on our understanding of do-in-yourself or micro celebrity (e.g. Kowalczyk *et al.,* 2016; Turner, 2014).

Thomson (2006) argues that any well-known individuals can be called human brand, particularly celebrities through the mass mediatisation of individuals personality (Milligan, 2011; Parmentier *et al.,* 2013). The findings show that celebrity tutors have earned their celebrity status, which is used to build their brand and branded product (tutoring), and they use it to promote themselves. These shed light on the study of Kerrigan *et al.,* (2011) that celebrity brand represents not only its economic value but also mediatised marketing accomplishments. Besides, the celebrity tutors brand is found to embed with transformative values, such as their academic expertise, and non-academic performance, such as stage-like performance, idol worshipping, fan culture and self-branding. The insights from the participants illustrate the celebrity tutors' self-branding or promotion with their own branded tutoring service, which shed light on previous studies in human brand from the perspective of consumers (Lunardo *et al.,* 2015; Malone and Fiske, 2013; Thomson, 2006). It also reveals reasonings in respect to the factors considered by practitioners in the shadow education sector and their measurement of the effectiveness of celebrity tutor branding and endorsement. This is an integration of self-created celebrity (tutor) and tutor brand in the Hong Kong shadow education sector, which is new to the literature on celebrity, human brand and marketisation of education.

In addition to human brand, the lead tutors' engagement in their advertisements for their junior tutors sheds light on understandings of the match-up hypothesis in the literature on celebrity endorsement (e.g. Lee and Park, 2014; Törn, 2012) regarding the match between the endorser (tutor) and the product nature of the endorsed product (tutoring). Yet, this is not a one-way marketing communication that the

junior tutors gain from the lead tutors' endorsement. Through the endorsement, the lead tutors (endorser) also gain from demonstrating their power in the market, such as their business scale and market influence, which is new to the literature on match-up hypothesis.

The chain tutoring centres were found to be partners with the celebrity tutors, rather than creating and maintaining the celebrity tutors. The chains offer venues and administration to the celebrity tutors to enable them to serve their students (customers). The celebrity tutors are responsible for a variety of functions in the supply chain, including product design and production, branding and promotion, delivery, and management of their own production team. I argue that there is a reciprocal partnership between the celebrity tutors and the chain tutoring centres, rather than a contracting business format led by the chain tutoring centres, as described by journalists' reports (e.g. Lo, 2015; Shou, 2015) and the chains (e.g. Bexcellent Group Holdings Ltd, 2018; Modern Education, 2011). This finding is new to the literature on both shadow education (Bray *et al,* 2014; Zhan *et al.,* 2013) and marketisation of education.

The finding also sheds light on understandings of the contracting business in the literature on contract manufacturing and management (Han *et al.,* 2012; Lin *et al.,* 2016) in a specific industry. This reciprocal relationship also implies a power tension between the celebrity tutors and the chains. They cooperate, or the one, like the strong one, leads the business direction and operation. These offers insights, such as business elements, into the marketisation of education (Molesworth *et al.,* 2009; Newman and Jahdi, 2009) in the Hong Kong shadow education sector.

Apart from the tutor brand, the names of the chains were also found to embody elements of branding. The collaboration between the celebrity tutors and the chain tutoring centres suggests the organic co-branding practices (Mishra *et al.,* 2017; Riley *et al.,* 2015; Washburn *et al.,* 2004) in the shadow education sector. The

famous celebrity tutors may rely on their own celebrity status and brand awareness to promote and compete. The chain that the tutors collaborate with may be beneficial for the tutors. Conversely, for the junior tutors, who do not have a sound celebrity status may be beneficial for leveraging the brand awareness and reputation of the chain. This reflects another type of reciprocal relationship between the tutors and the chains, which sheds light on both co-branding and human brand.

The findings regarding the idolisation of celebrity tutors offer insights into the operation of human brands or idolised brands in service, which are centred on the service provider and brand owner. This sheds light on the studies on human branding that state that celebrities are a brand in themselves (Kowalczyk and Royne, 2013; Lunardo *et al.,* 2015). The tutor brand was found to be used to enhance the visibility and celebrity status of the celebrity tutors and even extend their business opportunities, for example developing branded products and job changes. It would be worth investigating further the practice of human brands in different industries and also different contexts to extend our understanding of it.

Previous studies on celebrity brands have focused on consumer goods such as fashion and sports goods, which are labelled with the names of celebrities and distributed through third parties like retailers (e.g. Akturan, 2011; Keel and Nataraajan, 2012). The research findings in this study show a difference. Celebrity tutor branded tutoring was found to be not only created but also promoted and delivered directly by the celebrity tutors. Both the celebrity tutor and the students (consumers) are highly involved in the process of tutoring production and consumption due to the nature of the tutoring service and their interaction.

For example, the tutors were found to use props, such as scripts, punch lines and jokes to manage their tutoring process and stimulate their students to react based on the scripts and the tutors' planned flow of tutoring delivery. Meanwhile, the tutors were flexible and sensitive to adjust their tutoring process and contents to keep the process running smoothly according to their students' feedback, which may vary

from time to time due to their behaviour and emotion. The tutoring was composed of a series of elements including teaching and non-teaching activities, such as idol worshipping and entertainment, which were co-participated by tutors and their students. These findings are new to the literature on both shadow education (e.g. Bray *et al.,* 2014; Kwo and Bray, 2014) and marketisation of shadow education (e.g. Molesworth *et al.,* 2009; Newman and Jahdi, 2009).

The majority of the promotion methods used by the celebrity tutors and the chain tutoring centres were found to be traditional above-the-line promotions, such as printed advertisements, billboards and posters. These promotion methods were found to be the industry norm and a proven promotion method in the shadow education sector. However, the social media were found to play only a secondary role in the formation of celebrity tutors and the management of their celebrity status. Celebrity tutors use social media such as Facebook, WeChat and WhatsApp as a medium to maintain their celebrity status, manage their customers and followers, and extend their interactions with students in the classroom. This can be understood that the tutoring involves physical interaction between the tutors and the students. The traditional promotion methods may lead the tutoring to be perceived by the students as a type of consumer goods and services, such as fitness, beauty or fashion. These go beyond the virtual contact with the do-it-yourself celebrities and micro-celebrities mainly through social media. This shows a difference of the role of social media in the construction and maintenance of celebrity status between celebrity tutors and do-it-yourself or micro-celebrities in the past studies (e.g. Kowalczyk *et al.,* 2016; Senft, 2008; Turner, 2014).

Particularly, the way that celebrity tutors pursue their celebrity status through the traditional media is found to be more expensive than social media used by the do-it-yourself or micro-celebrities. This implies a pressure likes entry barrier exists in terms of money and/or marketing knowhow that leads individuals to become a celebrity tutor and earn their celebrity status. This also demonstrates how

individuals, like tutors, becomes a celebrity through the traditional media in the celebrification process (Driessens, 2013).

Furthermore, I found that the tutors' direct engagement in promotion and operation including their interactions on the social media demonstrates the match between the product nature of tutoring, and the credibility and relevance of the tutors as the service provider of the tutoring. This can be explained from a practical perspective. As a service provider of tutoring, the tutors need to interact with their students, regardless of whether this is through direct contact or via their production team members. This could not be handled by other people like endorsers. These findings explain in part why existing celebrities from other industries are not commonly found as endorsers in the shadow education sector, which addresses the second and third research questions.

Intellectuals such as educators, philosophers, scientists or politicians, like Alexander the Great in ancient Greek and Jean-Paul Sartre in modern world, who have historically sought for fame through debates and presentation in public (Barron, 2015; Williamson, 2016). Sartre wrote in popular newspapers and demonstrated in the streets of Paris to become a celebrity (Baert, 2015; Desan, 2018) – these (amongst other) were the practices that made him a celebrity in the particular socio-historical conditions and made students and readers follow him in amphitheatres or cafés. The research findings extend our understanding of fame in this historic phenomenon within a market environment. The celebrity tutors in Hong Kong adopt traditional marketing techniques to build their fame, secure their jobs and receive cultural, social and economic capital.

Literature on celebrities and human brand (Lunardo *et al.,* 2015; Thomson, 2006) show that celebrities are most popular source of human brand due to their existing celebrity status. Yet, research in measurement of the effectiveness of celebrity brand is limited. The public's awareness of tutors and tutors' fame were recognised by the practitioners as key factors in evaluating the performance and

perceived image of a celebrity tutor. Gamson (2007) claims that name recognition in itself is critical for businesses. The research findings shed light on Gamson's claim that the tutors use their various knowhow in their multiple roles to create their celebrity status and use their celebrity status to brand themselves by their name to run their tutoring business. These offer insights for further study on the effectiveness of human brand.

Additionally, I argue that in a crowded city like Hong Kong, where the majority of people take public transport such as buses, trains and underground trains, or even travel on foot, above-the-line promotion offers more opportunities for people to see advertising messages over traditional promotion methods, such as billboards building walls or bus exteriors. This reflects why celebrity tutors and chain tutoring centres keep using the traditional promotion methods to promote themselves. Further research could be conducted to investigate the relationship between the effectiveness of advertising, space and the selection of transport means to advertise.

This study reveals that the celebrity status and value of a celebrity tutor is influenced by his or her financial capability and entrepreneurship, which can influence their performance. The limited financial capacity and the small business scale of the celebrity tutors are practical reasons that explain why tutors build their own brand and engage in promotion. These also demonstrate a pressure to tutors to run their tutoring business, which is beyond their original expertise such as academic knowledge and teaching knowhow. Unlike celebrity artists in the entertainment industry, who have a representation industry to support them (Barbas, 2002; Rein *et al.,* 1997), the celebrity tutors were found to operate independently and bear their own operation costs, which limits their business scale and expansion. Yet, this format was found to fit best with the product nature of tutoring, the perceived image of the tutors and the students. These findings extend our understanding of the operation and performance of human brand and marketisation of shadow education in a specific industry, which is worth investigating further in the future.

Echoing previous studies in celebrity, human brand and the source attractiveness model (e.g. Cashmore, 2006; Hollensen and Schimmelpfennig, 2013; Kerrigan *et al.,* 2011), physical attractiveness is found to be important to celebrity tutors. The findings show that there are tutors who build up themselves as idol through a positive image, which is recognised by the participants as the tutor's brand image. Yet, the celebrity tutors manage their image themselves rather than being set by the representation industry.

The shared experience among the participants shows that a variety of non-physical attractiveness factors, such as awareness, word-of-mouth, media exposure, enjoyment, charisma and entrepreneurship are found to constitute the credibility and attractiveness of a celebrity tutor. These seem not to be related to the literature on celebrity endorsement or celebrity, but more to human branding, which illustrate what is involved in the formation and operation of the human branding and how it performs in the Hong Kong shadow education sector.

Referring to the nature of tutoring as service, the celebrity tutors interact with their students in the tutoring production and consumption process. These findings are new to the literature of both human brand (e.g. Cashmore, 2006; Kerrigan *et al.,* 2011) and the source models in celebrity endorsement (e.g. Hollensen and Schimmelpfennig, 2013; Spry *et al*., 2011) in regard to the perceived elements of a celebrity tutor's and/or tutor brand's attractiveness. The findings reflect the situation in Hong Kong, which could be extended in other parts of the world and other Asian countries through further research.

The idolisation of tutoring and fan culture shed light on the practice of idol worshipping among adolescents and the relevant impacts, such as the consumption on idols and their related products, as discussed in previous studies (e.g. Allen and Mendick, 2012; Banister and Cocker, 2014). There are celebrity tutors who act as idol to perform and interact with adolescents (students) by casting themselves as popular artists and using their attractive physical appearance or sex appeal to attract

students. They also treat their students as followers, which is appreciated by their students through their reactions, such as displaying banners to appreciate and support their tutors, and taking photos with their tutors and sharing them on social media, etc. These consumerism in education and mediatised marketing accomplishments are managed strategically and professionally by the tutors through different media and direct interaction. These findings are new to the literature on marketisation of education.

Tutoring was found to be recognised by the practitioners as an extension of students' social life, such as socialising and entertaining with their peers and the celebrity tutors. These findings reflect the role and influence of marketing (celebrity) practices on our way of life, which seem to be critical to the merging of social life and education. The idolisation of tutoring and the fan culture identified in the findings extend our understanding on the study of Chan and Prendergast (2008) regarding the influence of celebrity role models (e.g. celebrity tutors) and materialism among Chinese youths. These also shed light in the literature on marketisation of education regarding the contribution of non-academic activities embedded into the learning content.

The research focus of this study deviates from the mainstream studies in the literature on celebrity endorsement. This study explores insiders' meanings and understandings regarding the creation and operation of celebrity tutors and celebrity tutor endorsement. The research findings shed light on the research gaps identified in the literature, particularly with regard to celebrity formation and human branding in shadow education. The findings regarding the celebrity tutors' production team and apprenticeships also reflect their business format and operation in unique and unexplored settings. These offer insights into the marketisation of shadow education. I argue that this is a unique finding for the Hong Kong setting. The celebrity tutors would be better described as human brands or tutor brands, which are established to sell their branded product (tutoring), rather than celebrity endorsers who endorse tutoring.

Previous studies on shadow education have criticised the fact that private tutoring could become a burden to families in terms of the spending on tutoring and a social problem in terms of ethical implications in relation to school education and shadow education (e.g. Kwo and Bray, 2011, Bray *et al.,* 2014). Although shadow education was found to co-exist alongside with the school education (e.g. Dawson, 2010; Lee and Shouse, 2011), the non-academic elements involved in shadow education, such as celebritisation of shadow education, idolisation of tutoring and fan culture, which were found in the study, are new to these disciplines. The celebrity tutors are a type of idol who serve the students beyond education, encouraging them to purchase the tutoring service and participate in the idolisation of the tutoring process, through being followers of the idol tutors. Further studies could be done to investigate this, such as studying the relationship between idol worshipping and spending and its influence on families and adolescents.

The research findings extend our understanding of tutoring beyond its commonly known objective of learning (e.g. Bray and Kwo, 2014; Byun, 2014) to a variety of functions, such as idol worshipping, entertainment and socialising, which are novel to the literature on shadow education, celebrity endorsement and human brand. The variety of functions performed by the celebrity tutors and their interactions with students also shed light on the study of Cocker *et al.* (2015) with respect to the production and consumption of celebrity identity myths among young consumers. Perhaps learning has been too functional in its orientation. Learning in the Hong Kong shadow education sector led by the celebrity tutors is facilitated by socialising and idolising (admiring), yet education theory or the ideas of practitioners in education regarding learning have failed to recognise these non-functional aspects of learning. I argue that these functions serve as by-products, offering additional value to the service encounter, brand loyalty building and learning, which shed light on the marketisation of shadow education.

6.3 Critical Reflections and Future Research

In this section, I will provide critical reflections on this study for improvements in future research. I found that the research topic of this study was very interesting and unique to Hong Kong. The phenomena of celebrity tutors and shadow education are found to be embedded in formal school education in Hong Kong. However, the phenomenon of celebrity tutors is under-examined in the literature on branding, marketing and education. I believe that observation is important to a researcher because there are many opportunities that are noteworthy in research that are overlooked.

However, I found that the phenomenon of celebrity tutors and their promotion is broad that crosses different disciplines, such as celebrity, human brand, celebrity endorsement, marketisation of education and so forth, which may blur the research focus. For example, my original perception of the phenomenon under study was like celebrity endorsement commonly found in consumer goods, in which celebrity tutors promote educational products in the Hong Kong shadow education sector. After my initial study, such as the review of the industry and related literature on education and celebrity endorsement, I realised that I needed to extend my focus to other disciplines like branding and marketisation of education. I consider that this would facilitate my study and avoid missing any theories that are potentially relevant. The research findings show that the celebrity tutor is better described as tutor brand and the Hong Kong shadow education sector reflects the celebritisation of tutoring at the industrial and societal level. Yet, I keep my thesis' title of celebrity endorsement to reflect my original perception on the research topic and use it to contrast with my findings as I have discussed.

This study was exploratory and aimed to uncover insiders' voices related to the phenomenon of celebrity tutors and their promotion. Their insights and location in a specific context (Hong Kong) may extend our understanding of the various factors found in the sources models and the match-up hypothesis in the literature

on celebrity endorsement from the emic perspective for future research. For example, I found that different participants argued that several factors, including tutors' physical appearance and expertise, contributed to their celebrity status . However, it was commonly agreed by the participants that the number of students enrolled and the number of students acquiring outstanding examination results could directly reflect a tutor's celebrity status and achievement, and these factors are outside of the control of the tutors. Further study is needed to clarify the understanding of the different factors that constitute the celebrity status of celebrity tutors and celebrities in other industries. These factors are also beyond celebrity endorsement, but more relevant to human branding and marketisation of education.

The celebritisation of shadow education, the idolisation of tutoring and fan culture and tutor brand were found to be due to the efforts of the celebrity tutors in regard to running their business of tutoring for profit making. Unlike formal school education, shadow education is commercially driven. Different pressures and tensions were found between tutors, tutoring chains and the media, such as the ways to collaborate, compete and protect. I hope that these findings could show a bearing to encourage further study in the future.

The majority of previous studies in celebrity endorsement have been conducted from the perspective of the western world. Further research from different perspectives, such as an Asian perspective, or different industries, apart from shadow education, could extend our understanding of the various disciplines, such as celebrity, human brand and marketisation of education. This study focused on the phenomenon of celebrity tutors in Hong Kong. Nevertheless, shadow education is found to be widespread in Asia and is becoming popular in the US and Europe (Bray and Kwok, 2003; Mori and Baker, 2010). It may be worth extending this study to explore the phenomena of celebrity tutors and celebrity tutor promotion in other countries.

Following Driessens' (2013) clarification of the concept of celebrification and celebritisation, I found that the popularity of celebrities (Barron, 2015; Van Krieken, 2012; Williamson, 2016) has extended from consumer goods markets to niche markets and/or specific contexts such as the shadow education sector in Hong Kong. Social media is also found in the literature to stimulate the formation of celebrity and celebrity culture (Kowalczyk *et al.,* 2016; Lin *et al.,* 2018; Senft, 2008). Further investigation into social media and celebrity is needed to extend our understanding of celebrification and celebritisation.

This study echoes the media reports that the shadow education sector in Hong Kong is dynamic in nature and that practitioners are keen to develop and adopt innovative approaches, such as celebrity tutors and the idolisation of tutors in order to compete (Pak and Tse, 2015; Shou, 2015). I observed that there have been strategic alliances, and mergers and acquisitions between different chain tutoring centres and their tutors since 2016 in Hong Kong. Besides, co-branding and celebrity tutor endorsement for drinks/toiletries were found. Further investigation could extend our understanding of these changes, particularly human branding and marketisation of education. The research findings show that the name of a celebrity tutor and his or her expertise (tutoring subject) can be linked. It also reveals that there is a strong tie between celebrity tutors and the chain tutoring centres. It would be worth exploring how the celebrity tutors and/or the chains react to mergers and acquisitions or even job changes in relation to their branding and/or co-branding.

The majority of the research on celebrity and celebrity endorsement has relied on the perception of consumers. This study reveals novel findings regarding and the formation of celebrity (tutor), human (tutor) brand and celebrity tutor endorsement from the perspective of practitioners. This is something that is missing from the existing models in the literature on celebrity endorsement and human brand.

Finally, I recommend conducting a more systemic analysis of the phenomenon of celebritisation of shadow education to investigate how have diverse contingencies

shaped the shadow education sector throughout history? What are the perceptions of students (consumers) about celebrity tutors? What are managerial and policy implications for this sector, the broader education sector, and other sectors? How does celebrity tutoring affect the learning experience? And what are social and ethical implications of celebritisation of tutoring?

6.4 Summary

In the conclusion chapter, I have described the key achievements and contributions of this study. The voices of the practitioners in the shadow education sector in Hong Kong offer insights into the formation and operation of celebrity in this specific context, which fill the research gaps identified in the literature of different disciplines including celebrity, celebrity endorsement, human brand and marketisation of education. The research findings extend our understanding of how celebrity tutors and the shadow education sector in Hong Kong operate in the marketplace. The three stages and the six milestones I proposed reflect the development of celebritisation in the Hong Kong shadow education and celebrification of celebrity tutors. This presents evidence as marketisation of shadow education, which also sheds light on the literature on shadow education from the lens of marketing and branding. I hope these classifications would guide understanding of the phenomena of celebrity tutors and celebritisation of shadow education, and encourage further study from different disciplines. The end of this chapter provides critical reflections on this study and offers recommendations for future research.

7 APPENDICES

Appendix A – Interview Guide

Interview Guide

Title	Celebrity Endorsement – a Qualitative Study of Private Chain Tutoring Centres in the HK Shadow Education Sector
Research Objective	To explore the phenomenon of celebrity endorsement (celebrity tutors) in HK shadow education sector
Research Questions 1	To explore *how* the chain tutoring centres in Hong Kong create and maintain their celebrity tutors
Research Questions 2	To explore the motivations behind Hong Kong's chain tutoring centres' use of celebrity tutors
Research Questions 3	To understand *why* the chain tutoring centres in Hong Kong do not choose celebrities from other industries to endorse them.

Category	Reasons / Purposes	Estimated Answer / Potential Challenges
Opening		
1. Good morning / afternoon. Thank you very much for your time today for this interview. I am Chris. I am the PhD student at the University of Leicester. This is my PhD research project. Meanwhile, I am working for the Open University of HK as tutor and research assistant for various business subjects.	Introduction Ice breaking	Warm up Basic fact collection / re-confirmation
2. This is an academic research. This research aims to explore the phenomenon of celebrity endorsement in HK shadow education.	Reminder of the meeting purpose	
3. I attempt to collect meanings from the practitioners who have experience in creating and maintaining celebrity tutors (tutorial kings and queens).	Explain what I will collect from the participant	Clarify the difference between academic research and the media investigation, and publication in the future Sign the informed consent Or further clarification
4. Here is an information sheet and an informed consent for this research project. Please read it carefully and feel free to ask.	Explain the research ethics and the participant's rights in his or her participation	Agree the arrangement Or request for further clarification

5. Spelling out each point verbally to the interviewee and ask for signing the informed consent if he or she agrees	Release the participant's potential concerns of rightness	
6. There is no right or wrong answer. Your experience sharing is important to my understanding of the phenomenon under study and answer my research questions. You can express yourself freely. This is not a question and answer interview but more for you to tell me about your experiences, what happened, how you felt, what you thought, what you think about it now, what was said, who as involved – in the sense that you are telling me a story – you are trying to make me there and relive the events. This is what I am looking for. If I think we need to move on, I will let you know. So please just tell your experiences and stories and what comes into your mind as your tale begins to unfold and you take me back there	Give confidence to the participants regarding their identity and opinion protection Let the participants know to tell the lived experience Let the participants that I am a guide in the interview Emphasize on story telling alike	

7. All data collected will be kept confidentially. None of your identity and your school's identity will be mentioned or can be identifiable in publication in the future. And your supervisors or any member of your schools or anyone else cannot assess your data. They also will not know your participation in this research. 8. To keep the confidentiality and anonymity, your real name will not be mentioned in the research report or any other academic context. But I would like to use quote from this interview and other interview. At all times your identity will not be used and I will use a pseudonym and any contextual comments that might reveal your identity will be removed.	Give confidence to the participants regarding their identity and opinion protection	Agree the arrangement Or request for further clarification
9. This interview will last for approx. one hour, or possibly a bit longer if you haven't told me all your stories. Is that ok? Our conversation will be audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis. I will not share with anyone the audio-recorded materials but it does help me to record it so that I can have an exact and accurate record of the conversation we will have	Let the participant know the estimated duration of interview	Agree the arrangement Or request for further clarification In case the participant concerns that he or she may rush for next meeting, ask how much time he or she can spare in this interview, and speed up the progress, or the worst case, reschedule

10. Both the recording and the transcription will be password-protected and stored in a secured location. 11. You are free to stop me or end our interview at any time. You are not obliged to answer any question that you do not feel comfortable answering. 12. So, can we start now?	Recap the data protection Let the participant know when to start	May ask again the confidentiality of the audio recording, how to use it later, or how to answer Agree or request for further clarification

Category	Reasons / Purposes	Estimated Answer / Potential Challenges
Closing		
1. I think I have already asked the questions covering my research topic.	Closing	Interview end Or further discussion
2. Do you have anything else you would like to tell me?	Probe further elaboration	Open-ended, depend on the participant's reaction
3. How did you find the experience of interviewing?	Attempt to get feedback about the participant's opinion on the interview	Open-ended, depend on the participant's reaction
4. Thank you very much again for your time and experience sharing.		Closing
5. I appreciate for your kind support in my research project.	Closing	Agree or not
6. Can I ask you again in the future if I might miss or want to clarify something? How would it be best for me to do that, by email, Skype or telephone?	Leave a backdoor for further data collection or clarification	
7. Thank you very much for your time		Request for signing the consent, if not yet
8. Check if informed consent signed and returned	Ensure no missing of the signed informed consent	

Category	Reasons / Purposes	Estimated Answer / Potential Challenges
Background		
1. Gender – M / F	Warm up	M / F
2. Job Title – Tutor? Principal? Marketing Manager? Founder? Director? Else?	Starting from relatively easy answer	Multiple roles for certain types of participants
3. Job function / responsibility		
· Teaching		Facts
· Subject(s)		
· Class categories (e.g. one to one, normal classroom, theatre class, and number of students)		
· Marketing		
· Admin		
		Approx. months or years
4. Can you describe your first experiences in the industry?	Employment history may reflect the participant's experience in the chain / industry	
5. How long have you served for this school? This industry?		
	Allow participants to express their feeling and thoughts when they entered the industry and become nostalgic	

Category	Reasons / Purposes	Estimated Answer / Potential Challenges
Industry and The Chain		
1. Can you describe your industry (shadow education) in general? ・ Market competition? ・ Key players ・ Business format ・ Market share & segmentation ・ Product categories ・ Pricing ・ Distribution (e.g. location of school, service delivery)	Collect general info Easy questions Warm up	Facts
2. What is your job function(s)? ・ Main? ・ Sub?	Confirm and clarify the participant's job function	Perhaps more than one function
3. What is your working relationship with your school? ・ Employee/employer? ・ Contractor?	Specific questions to encourage the participant to elaborate the details of his/her jobs and operation	Perhaps explain orderly or not orderly Need to keep track on the direction towards the RQs
4. How do you work with tutors? or How do you work with management team members such as principals, founders, marketing managers, etc.? (for tutors)		
5. What types of tutoring service do you provide? (for tutor)	Client composition, preference and service content	Categories of services ・ individual classes ・ small classes ・ theatre classes
6. Which one is the most popular among your students (clients)? Why?		

7. Which one is least popular among your students (clients)? Why? 8. How would the celebrity tutors influence price? 9. How would the celebrity tutors influence enrolment?	Pricing may influence distribution and format of service and the types of tutor to serve	Perhaps a variety of classes such as General small class, Intensive class, Live theatre class, Video broadcasting class, etc. These are known facts available in the media that can be used to probe the participants to elaborate or update
10. Does every tutor have his/her own teaching team?	It may matter the operation of celebrity tutors	
11. How does your teaching team work? 12. How to work with the school? the advertising agent?	To explore how to manage the celebrity tutors and their team	May hesitate to explain to detail
13. Is the team led by the celebrity tutor? · Division of labour? · Location? · Live tutoring vs. video broadcasting · Profit sharing (tutorial fee) scheme in general? Specific? · Cost splitting? · How many staff involved in your teaching team in total? · # teaching assistant? · # clerical support? · # marketing? · # else?	This may influence the power between the tutors and the chain in making decision, hence affect the maintenance of celebrity tutor	Sensitive info Need to probe, may skip and re-ask later From the media, it's known that the celebrity tutors have quotas with the chain for business generation that will affect their profit-sharing scheme May hesitate to disclose

14. Does the celebrity tutor pay directly to his/her teaching team? Or share with the chain? If so, what is the %?		
15. Can you describe the characteristics and categories of student (client)? · % walk-in · % re-purchase · % referral	Explore how do the celebrity tutors get business	
· Level of schooling · e.g. primary school @ ? level · e.g. secondary school @ ? level	Student enrolment may influence maintenance of the celebrity tutors	
16. Do the students continue to enrol or spot enrol at particular times? Why?		
17. What do you think about the future of this industry? ✓ Growth rate of children ✓ Competition ✓ Regulations ✓ Turnover of labour	Explore the trend, practice and operation of tutoring by celebrity tutors	

Category	Reasons / Purposes	Estimated Answer / Potential Challenges
Celebrity tutors / Tutorial Kings and Queens		
1. Do you know the phenomenon of celebrity tutors (tutorial kings and queens) found among the chains in shadow education sector in Hong Kong? Can you give me some examples? Who or what is your favourite, even if it isn't in your school?	Explore the participant's perception towards the phenomenon under study, and how he or she gives meanings to it.	Perhaps the participant may not answer directly particularly he or she may avoid highlight it due to potential negative perceived images by the public
2. Can you tell me about your tutors' portraits showing on advertisements on the exterior of buses, billboards on the wall of buildings, train and underground stations, etc.	Different individuals may have different meanings give to the phenomenon	Need to probe based on the participant's feedback
3. Have you heard about tutorial kings and queens?		
4. Have you heard about celebrity tutors?		More emphasis may fall into Pros, so need to probe Cons
5. Do you think the tutorial kings and queens a good thing? Why?	Probe the participants to explain the Pros and Cons of celebrity tutors	
6. Why do you (or the chains or the media) call tutors of the chains tutorial kings and queens?		
7. Do you think it is difficult to become a celebrity tutor / tutorial king or queen?		
8. Who becomes a celebrity tutor? Why do some tutors not become a celebrity?		

9. Can you tell me any names of tutorial kings and queens? 10. Who do you know or who can you remember as celebrity tutors? Why do you know or remember these ones? Why do they catch your mind and interest? 11. What is it like to be a celebrity tutor? Can you tell me what it is like for you? Why do you not consider yourself to be a celebrity tutor?	Creation and maintenance of celebrity tutors, more details on what being a celebrity requires	Probe the variables found in the four existing models of celebrity endorsement to encourage elaboration
12. Why do you know or remember their names? 13. Are you responsible for making tutorial kings and queens? How? 14. Can you describe what celebrity tutors look like? 15. Can you tell me which celebrity tutors you think are the most successful or powerful? Why?	To see if there are any common characteristics of being a celebrity tutor	
16. What purpose does it serve for do your school and other similar chains promote by using tutorial kings and queens?	Motive to Have or not have	
17. What would happen if you didn't have a celebrity tutor? What do you think would happen?		Need examples and explanation to understand the meanings
18. Is celebrity tutors the main form of promotion for your school?	Promotion is one of main activities in its operation	

19. What other forms of promotion are used? What is the relationship and interaction between the different forms of promotion? 20. How do your tutors and their teaching team work with your school? 21. Can you describe the characteristics of celebrity tutors' image? Do you think these characteristics would be transferred from the tutor to the students? 22. What factors do you think important to be a tutorial king or queen? Why? ・ Credibility? ・ Attractiveness? ・ Match-up? 23. Can you tell me what does credibility / attractiveness / match-up mean? 24. And give me an example 25. What are some of the main challenges in being a celebrity or tutor or managing celebrity tutors? Can you give me some examples of things that have happened, incidents and stories	Explore the variables used in the existing models of celebrity endorsement to be applicable to the HK context Potential themes in data analysis Identify what are meanings do the participant give to the factors, then compare them with the concepts in the literature in data analysis The challenges of managing celebrity tutors Raise more issues on celebrity and lead into the next section	Probe by the known media (e.g. newspaper, TV, billboard, Facebook)

Category	Reasons / Purposes	Estimated Answer / Potential Challenges
Promotion		
1. Can you describe the ways you chain is using in promotion? 2. Which type of promotion is best? 3. Which type of media you think is most frequent use? 4. Which type of media you think is most effective? 5. Which type of media is least frequent use?	Explore how does the participant make use of the celebrity endorsement in operation	Many promotion methods can be seen in the street Need to explore reasons behinds
6. When is your peak season (s)? 7. When is your low season (s)? 8. Who are your target audience regarding your promotion? 9. What does your promotion mean to your target audience? 10. What are the key meanings from your promotion that you want to pass to your target audience? 11. Why do you think you target audiences are interested in your promotion (tutorial kings and queens)?	May explain why the chain use a specific way to promote	Need to ask primary and secondary target audience
12. Which media is your priority in placing your promotion? 13. Which media are the most effective?	It matters to the ways of promotion, cost, etc.	% of each type of media

14. Does a tutor's physical appearance matter? Why? How?	How does the image or physical appearance matter?	May probe further elaboration
15. Do you think your tutors act as a celebrity / star? Why? How?	What does physical appearance mean?	
16. Do you intend to create your tutors as celebrities / stars? Why? How? 17. Why not hiring a star to promote? 18. What do you define as a star?	Related to the RQ3, why not hiring celebrities from the existing pool	Follow up to check how does the participant perceive expectations from the target audience (students/parents)
19. Why not hire other?	Re-clarify the target audience of the advertising	See if the chosen promotion method is driven by the target audience directly or indirectly
20. Whom do you want to attract from your advertisements and promotion? · e.g. Students? Parents? Teachers from regular school?	Collect voice from other stakeholders that may influence the decision of the chain	see if the participant gives different meanings at different times
21. What elements do you think your target audience cares most? 22. Are there any particular celebrities you consider hiring? And if so, why?		See if any association e.g. would tutors react (promote) based on the target audience's demand or reaction?
23. Do you think your target audience is attracted by celebrity endorsers? Why?	Student enrolment and tutors	
24. How do you attract enrolment? 25. What do students concern when choosing a course or a school to enrol?	How to manage celebrity tutors	

Category	Reasons / Purposes	Estimated Answer / Potential Challenges
Creation and Maintenance of Celebrity Tutors		
1. Do you remember when the advertisements with tutors' portrait on bus exterior, building exterior have become popular? Why?	Facts, direct questions to probe further questioning	Approx. date or year (accelerating since 80s based on info from the media)
2. Who involve in the image building of tutorial kings and queens? 3. Does the tutor involve? 4. Do they co-develop? Or led by any particular one(s)? Who is the one(s)? 5. What are the characteristics of the image of tutorial kings and queens involved? 6. Which characteristics are most important? Why? 7. Do you have a delegated team to handle tutor image creation and promotion? 8. Or ad hoc? 9. Do you use external parties in the image building of tutorial kings and queens? 10. Who are the external parties? Why did you choose these external parties?	How and who to create and maintain celebrity tutors These questions aim to collect opinions and clarify different feedbacks from different angles	Ad agent? Me-too strategy? Need to ask further based on the initial feedback

11. Are your tutors free to design their image for promotion? Why? 12. How to do the image building? 13. How to maintain?		
14. Do tutors keep a constant image? Or it changes from time to time? Why?	Understand how long does each promotion last?	Ad hoc? Weekly? Monthly? Or else?
15. What is the interval? Why?	Any continuity of the advertising?	
16. Do your tutors participate in the creation and maintenance?	Participation of advertising	Degree of participation and relevant influence
17. What is the percentage of participation?	Cost bearing may influence decision making process	Approx. %
18. Which parts the tutors participate? Why?	To understand reasons and rationale behind the creation and maintenance of celebrity tutors	Factors may relate to the variables in the existing models of celebrity endorsement
19. Who bear the cost of creation and maintenance?		
20. What are important factors to be a tutorial king and queen? 21. How to create the tutorial tutor to fulfil those factors? 22. How to maintain consistency of your tutors' image? 23. Do you have any guideline for image building? 24. Can you describe it? 25. Does the school specify a particular image for the tutor?		Also relate to specific context in HK

Appendix B – Informed Consent

University of Leicester

Informed Consent for PhD project

Title: **Celebrity endorsement: a qualitative study of private chain tutoring centres in the Hong Kong shadow education sector**

Information Sheet

1. I am a PhD student in the School of Management at the University of Leicester. This PhD project I am inviting you to participate is a part of my studies. The research has been approved by the University's Media and Communication and School of Management Research Ethics Committee.

2. This research project investigates the phenomenon of celebrity endorsement in Hong Kong shadow education sector with a focus on the chain tutoring schools.

3. You are invited to participate in this interview is based on your likely ability and experience in creating and maintaining celebrity tutors.

4. All interview data will be treated as confidential with respect and stored securely with password protection. Pseudonym will be used to label your identification, relevant transcript and analysis to avoid your name, job position and relevant characteristics that may be identifiable to others.

5. Your participation is voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without any consequences.

6. You are not obliged to answer any question that you do not feel comfortable answering.

7. You can consider the information for this study and ask questions freely at any time

8. The interview will last for approximately an hour.

9. The interview will be audio recorded for data analysis.

10. Information about the project including interview data will be shared with my thesis supervisors.

11. The final thesis resulting from this project will be publicly available through the University of Leicester Library. Further academic publication may be made in the future in form of academic journal articles, conference presentations, blogs and media interviews. Your contribution to this project will be treated as confidential and anonymised in all these academic publications. Verbatim quotations from your interview with me may also be included and these will also ensure confidentiality and anonymity for you.

12. I can be reached by email (ckl17@le.ac.uk) or phone (xxxx-xxxx). Alternatively, you may contact Dr Andrea Davies, who is one of my thesis supervisors, by email (a.davies@le.ac.uk) or phone (xx-x-xxx-xxx-xxxx).

University of Leicester

Informed Consent for PhD project

Title: **Celebrity endorsement: a qualitative study of private chain tutoring centres in the Hong Kong shadow education sector**

		Please initial box
1	I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	☐
2	I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without any consequences for me.	☐
3	I understand that I am not obliged to answer any question that I do not feel comfortable answering.	☐
4	I have been informed that the interview will be audio-recorded and I give my consent for this recording to be made.	☐
5	I understand that all information I provide will be treated as confidential and will be anonymised.	☐
6	I agree to the use of anonymised direct quotes from my interview in publications and presentations arising from this study.	☐
7	I agree to take part in the above study.	☐

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Signature	Date
Chris C K Lai		
_____	_____	_____
Researcher	Signature	Date

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