

Marcus Rashford's Activism in the UK - How can Celebrities Influence Political Discussions?

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Who is Marcus Rashford?

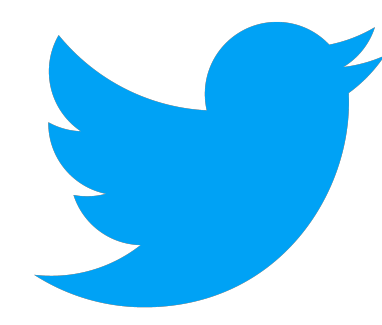
- A British football player for Manchester United and the English National Team
- Born in 1997 in Manchester
- Grew up in poverty as the youngest of five children of a single mother, was dependent on food stamps and free school meals in his childhood

A Timeline of his Campaign:

The UK has a massive **child poverty problem**, the situation even worsened in times of the Covid crisis since the pupils no longer had access to free school meals because of closed schools. **25%** of the children in the UK suffered from **food deprivation** in the lockdown, **16%** even had to skip meals or went a day without eating (The Social Market Foundation 2020).

- **March 2020:** Rashford and the charity Organisation FareShare delivered free meals to poor children in Manchester, then in whole England, raising £20 million
- **June 2020:** A day after his open letter on Twitter, the government announced a U-turn in social politics with the £120m „Covid Summer Food Fond“ (extension of free school meals into the summer holidays)
- **November 2020:** More than 1 million subscribers on Rashford's petition to end child poverty; many businesses, charities and celebrities support his campaign, the government announced another found of £400m to help poor families during the crises

#maketheUturn



“I encourage you to hear their pleas and find your humanity.”

- Rashford in his open letter to the government on Twitter

Political Celebrities Explained:

Celebrities have no institutional power, but the power to shape the public opinion:

-> their influence is based on their image and fame

- **Recognition value:** they already have an audience, their voice is heard by the public
- **Integrity value:** they use their brand identity to promote their cause (Wheeler 2013)

-> people mix the image of their celebrity persona and their personal character traits / reliability

-> and reversed their image is further shaped by their political activism

(Rashford is trustworthy because he's the humble boy who made it out of poverty. And by now he's more famous for his activism than for his football career.)

Marcus Rashford = a non-politicos spokesperson (Cashmore 2014)

- He's influential in political discussions from outside the political system
- He works as patron, fundraiser, and navigational aid (Cashmore 2014) to draw the public attention to social crises and injustice
- People support him because he made important social problems public and brought them into political discussions

Abstract

Marcus Rashford is a meaningful spokesperson for activism in Britain. Due to his biography and massive online presence, he had the power to uncover social problems and even to change directions in the social policy of his country. Rashford personifies a modern opinion leader who not only influences his fans but shapes British society and politics. Furthermore, his activism also provides an insight into political issues like Britain's child poverty problem.

-> **This case study analyzes why a celebrity like Rashford can influence political discussions and how he does it**



The Strategy of Rashford's activism

1. Use your own background story for authenticity
2. Use your social media accounts + the support of your followers to make your campaign public and to put pressure on the government
3. Stay relevant by promoting your campaign in the media (tv+press interviews, documentaries, participation in other charity events)

Marcus Rashford in the Media

A close connection between celebrities, the media, and the audience:

- The audience wants to consume the celebrity, the media = source
 - **Celebrities and the media depend on each other:** celebrities produce content, the media makes the story public and shapes their image
- > The media has a good selling story that affects many people. They praise Rashford's activism and draw attention to his campaign

Similar narrative in most of the articles:

- **Tabloid press:** The victory of a football player over the government

„Marcus Rashford won 2:0“ or „Marcus Rashford strikes again“

- **Political/lifestyle magazines:** Rashford as an influential opinion leader, role model

„The Political Influencer“ , „The Activist Super-Player“ or „ The Face of Hope“

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