

A Discourse on Celebrity Influence on Consumers Patronage of Telecommunication Service Providers in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study conceptually spotlighted the influence of celebrity endorsement on consumer's patronage with major focus on telecommunication service providers in Nigeria. Using Globacom Nigeria Limited as a case study, it was acknowledged in the cause of the study that contemporary society is characterized with globalization and competition, because most consumers are exposed to alternative product. These propel business organizations to employ the most effective methods, strategies and programmes in producing and marketing their products and services. The study was rationalized by the reference group theory to link celebrity endorsement attributes and consumer purchasing behaviour as the exogenous and dependent variables of the study. Conclusion was drawn that celebrities have traditionally been the simplest way to debut a new product (consumer goods), and this will likely continue in the near future due to their broad popularity and a large following of devoted followers, mostly in the West. As a recommendation, the study suggested that marketing companies should ensure that their celebrity have a trustworthy nature, as this will influence the behavior of their consumers.

Keywords: Celebrity, Influence, Consumers, Patronage and Telecommunication

INTRODUCTION

A celebrity can be described as someone that is popular and easily recognizable in a society. He/she is someone that attracts media attention and in a lot of cases might also be an extrovert (Ford 2018). There are various ways people can become celebrities and these include acting, singing and beauty pageantry. In Nigeria, there are basically just two ways to become a celebrity; one is by being an entertainer (actor, actress or musician) or be a popular person either through the nature of your job or lavish lifestyle (Muda, Musa, Mohamed & Borhan 2014). Once people become celebrities, they often leverage on their new found status to promote their cause, make more money for themselves by endorsing brands and promoting their image and personal brand (Giffin, 2017). This study focuses on celebrities endorsing brands and personalities and how these endorsements influence audience perception.

Celebrity endorsement, a method of brand communication in which the individual lends the brand credibility by virtue of his or her notoriety, social standing, or industry knowledge as well-known individual serves as a business's spokesman. In a market with a very high proliferation of local, regional and international brands, celebrity endorsement is thought to provide a distinct differentiation, but over the years, many aspiring brands all over the world have jumped on to this celebrity endorsement bandwagon (Hsu, Fournier & Srinivasan, 2016). However, 'Celebrity Endorsement' has attracted immense debate on whether it really contributes to the brand building process or whether it is just another lazy tool to make the brand more visible in the minds of the consumers. Although it has been observed that the presence of a well-known personality helps in solving the problem of over-communication that

is becoming more prominent these days, there are few undesirable impacts of this practice on the brand (Baker & Churchill, 2017).

Concept of Celebrity Endorsement in Advertising

The concept of endorsement is quite ancient. In England, for example, several companies have been advertising themselves as “by appointment of the Queen” for hundreds of years, indicating that they enjoy the patronage of the British royal family. Consumers are frequently drawn to the concept of buying a product that is recommended by a rich or well-known individual, as if doing so makes the customer a member of the person's social circle (Ivewighren, Ogwezi & Igben 2023). Getting the proper celebrity to promote the right brand is crucial, but so is the problem of the celebrity's values matching those of the business. Because the brand is recommended by a reliable authority, consumers believe it to be of higher quality. This establishes endorsement as one of the key determinants of brand quality. Consumer attitudes on the brand and the commercial are significantly influenced by the company's authority and endorser credibility, respectively (Giffin, 2017). However, there are instances where a celebrity's excessive fame overshadows the brand. Consumers are likely to become confused if a celebrity endorses many products, which will harm their opinion of the commercial and the brand. Hence, to say clearly whether the practice of celebrity endorsement impacts positively or negatively on the brand still remains a debate (Hsu, Fournier & Srinivasan 2016). Throughout history key people in the areas of sport and popular culture have been elevated to celebrity status. However, it was only in the twentieth century that the celebrity phenomenon truly permeated society, media, and culture (O'Mahony & Meenaghan, 2007). Through their public manifestations, celebrities hold certain meanings in the eyes of the receiving audience.

The use of celebrity endorsers in advertising is aimed at increasing message persuasiveness and its practice dates back to the 1800s where it found its roots in the burgeoning consumer culture of the time (Ford 2018). In the mid-1990s, it was estimated that as much as 20 percent of American network television advertising used celebrity endorsers (Miciak & Shanklin, 2004). Marketing has sought to use the varied meanings personified by celebrities to assist the achievement of certain advertising objectives (Hsu, Fournier & Srinivasan, 2016). Supporting the use of celebrities in an advertising context is the belief that the profile and attributes of the celebrity both draw attention to the messages they deliver and, through a rub-off effect, transfer image values to those messages. Marketers find the use of celebrities in their advertising campaigns to be highly effective when seeking to intrude into consumers' consciousness and to deliver particular messages based on image. Such campaigns are used in a marketing context, as a form of persuasion, to attract customers, to promote political and social causes and to sell diverse products or services (Baker & Churchill, 2017).

Nevertheless, endorsement is a form of testimonial from someone which indicates that he or she likes or approve of a product, service, cause or brand. Commonly, endorsements are solicited from people who are socially prominent, allowing companies to advertise their products with statements like “as used by such-and-such an actress,” or “the official product of company/event X.” It's hard to miss an endorsement especially on product packaging and in advertisements; most companies keep their endorsements front and center so that they are always visible to the public (Smith, 2009). In order to make the expected impact, the author went further to state that endorsement is openly flaunted at every available opportunity the brand has.

In advertising, an endorsement is often a public or occasionally private individual's spoken or written expression endorsing the features of a certain brand or product. According to Muda, Musa, Mohamed, and Borhan (2014), testimonies are often provided by regular people and are typically unpaid, whereas endorsements are typically provided by celebrities and other highly visible persons. According to Belch & Belch (2001), an endorser's own observations are not always the basis for the message they convey while promoting a business, its goods, or services. This suggests that the celebrity in issue views the endorsement—which often has little to do with his or her actual preferences—as a gig for which he gets paid to perform. As an illustration, consider the instance of Ronaldinho, a well-known football star in the early to mid-2000s, who lost his \$750,000 USD Coke sponsorship after he pretended to drink Pepsi during a press conference. This supports Belch & Belch's (2001) assertion that, occasionally, it's not only about matching but also about a product capitalizing on a celebrity's influence.

Modern product endorsements can come with contracts worth substantial amounts of money. For instance, a lot of athletes consent to take part in product endorsement deals on the condition that the business would pay them for their time; other athletes use the product endorsement as a publicity stunt, donating the money to organizations they believe in. A contract for endorsement may require the endorser to use the product in public whenever feasible and to refrain from utilizing rival brands (Muda, Musa, Mohamed & Borhan 2014). A product's quality is not always indicated by a product endorsement. It simply indicates that the business has succeeded in using its ties in public relations to align itself with a well-known brand. Although the majority of individuals and institutions will test a product before deciding to recommend it, this is not always the case (Smith, 2009).

Some product endorsements come in the form of written testimonies from customers who describe how the product improved their lives. In the past, these types of testimonies were frequently printed directly on product packaging; in the present, they are more frequently used in advertising campaigns, with brief mentions on the package alone. In order to establish a visually link between the endorser and the product, many businesses also employ images of well-known individuals on their

goods. For example, sports stars may be seen on product packaging (Ford 2018). Contemporary culture is not simply secular and democratic; a more accurate description would be "over-communicated," particularly in the world's most populous nations. A typical super-market in USA displays more than 12000 brands, an American family has at least one television set and a consumer is exposed to around 1000 ads per day (Belch & Belch 2001; Edoh & Ijeh 2023). Similarly, more than 3 million television ads are shown annually on over 130 television stations in India. This makes the media boom clearly demonstrable. Furthermore, in a 24-hour period, people overlook 80% of the knowledge. This makes it huge the plight of the marketer to make his brand shout over the deafening clutter of all other brands! Sometimes in 1980's, Indian marketers found the solution, 'Celebrity Endorsement' for the brand! (Sanyukta & Gaulkar, 2007) Many scholars have since written on the use, reasons and impact of celebrity endorsement.

Theoretical Perspective

The Reference Group Theory

The reference group theory appropriately linked celebrity endorsement attributes and consumer purchasing behaviour as the exogenous and dependent variables respectively in the study. According to the paradigm, a fictional individual or group is thought to display a significant impact on the motivations, behaviors, and assessments of other individuals (Shrestha 2023). It makes the case that buyers often search for product brands that have been verified as having positive credibility by an impartial expert. This supports the notion that customers are already aware of a brand. Consequently, the reference group hypothesis holds that the majority of customers see celebrities as extremely trustworthy sources to validate their product knowledge. Moreover, the reference group theory argues that in order for customers to acquire a brand of items, there must be a certain degree of celebrity likeness; if not, doing so is dangerous. When deciding whether to repurchase anything, it's important to consider what another individual or reference group thinks is acceptable (Dwivedi, McDonald & Johnson 2014). while a celebrity endorses a product, it might have a utilitarian effect on buyers who are looking for conformity while making a purchase. Finally, the reference group hypothesis states that buyers search for a similarity between themselves and a person or group of people who are seen as knowledgeable and have something in common. This might take the shape of purchasing the brand of goods that are utilized or those that are advised by the group of people who are seen to be knowledgeable. A positive self-perception is important because customers prefer to relate to good people over negative people (Thomas & Johnson 2019). Put another way, since people view celebrities as positive role models, they may look for consistency in the celebrities they support when it comes to brands. Following their viewing of a celebrity endorsement, viewers attempt to decipher the advertising, link the endorser to it, and ultimately switch to the brand.

Mc Cracken (1989) proposed a comprehensive model called the Meaning Transfer Model to explain this occurrence. This three-phase model illustrates how the significance of the celebrity shifts from the endorse to the brand or product. As a result, the consumer associates the brand with connotations attached to the celebrity, and via the process of consumption, the customer comes to understand the meaning of the brand. The significance of the consumer's involvement in the technique of endorsing companies with well-known individuals is made clear in the final phase of the model. In contrast to anonymous endorsers, celebrities add value to the image transfer process by offering meanings of extra depth and power that is complemented by their life style and personalities (Dwivedi, McDonald & Johnson 2014). Therefore, to transfer the correct meaning to the consumer, the company should select a celebrity that will produce the most favorable response for consumers and for the purpose, the celebrity should have the appropriate set of characteristics and the public should be able to visualize and comprehend the same. The company should consider the consumer's needs while developing their communication strategy and then select an appropriate celebrity to transmit the same. Compatibility of the celebrity's persona with the overall brand image is very important. As a celebrity imparts credibility and inspirational value to a brand, his or her image should perfectly match the brand's image. A good brand campaign idea and an intrinsic link between the celebrity and the message are must, for a successful campaign (Shrestha 2023).

Celebrity Endorsement in Telecommunication Advertising in Nigeria

Celebrities have been involved in endorsing activities since late nineteenth century (Erdogan 2009). Celebrity endorsements therefore give a brand a touch of glamour and the hope that a famous face will provide added appeal and name recognition in a crowded market. In the battle for the mind, you get the customer excited by showing him a known face, and an effective demand is created. Sanyukta and Gaulkar (2007) believed that celebrity endorsement helps increase the recall value of the brand. According to Kotler & Keller (2009), advertisements frequently utilize celebrities as representatives because they may get more attention and memory for their messages when they are presented by appealing and well-known individuals. When celebrities are believable or personify a crucial aspect of a product, they are likely to be effective. One may argue that the combination of D.Banj, an enthusiastic musician, endorsing Power Fist, an energy drink, and Kanu Nwankwo, who endorsed Peak milk during the height of his success, worked well. Celebrities may support corporations in a more calculated way by supporting to develop, position, and market merchandise as well as services in addition to merely endorsing products (Joseph 2002).

Just as Tiger Wood's personality was an added value to all the brands he endorsed, his scandal rubbed off negatively on the endorsed brands. Accenture, a global consulting firm had to take his images off its branding materials to save the

brand. According to a press release from Accenture's head office in New York, dated December 13, 2009, "... However, given the circumstances of the last two weeks, after careful consideration and analysis, the company has determined that he is no longer the right representative for its advertising. Accenture said that it wishes only the best for Tiger Woods and his family" (Pachetti, 2009). The image and public perception of a celebrity is what makes them attractive to brands. It could potentially be quite difficult for a celebrity with a negative public image to convince firms to hire them as ambassadors (Caballero, Lumpkin & Madden 2009). Similarly in many other countries, the notion of celebrity endorsement has grown in Nigeria. Governments and corporations are increasingly using a particular star's appeal to further their message or to market a product. The primary goal of this study is to determine whether or not these millions of Naira-cost endorsements truly alter or affect audience perception in Nigeria. This study is predicated on the premise that Nigeria's telecommunications sector has seen intense rivalry ever since the first group of GSM providers opened for business in 2001 within the nation. Since then, as their numbers have grown, the operators have used a variety of marketing communication strategies to stave off competition. Among them is the endorsement of celebrities.

Globacom Nigeria Limited

From its founding, Globacom, one of the biggest telecom firms in Nigeria, has utilized over fifty movie, music, and sports stars, as well as media celebrities and politicians, for celebrity endorsement. Globacom never provided clarification on media rumors that D'banj's agreement alone was valued about 170 million naira. The majority of these agreements are negotiated behind closed doors between Globacom and the celebrities. The corporation must have spent millions of naira on celebrity endorsements, but all efforts to obtain the actual amount were unsuccessful as the information is secret. Right present, its brand features the greatest number of well-known faces. Celebrity endorsement has grown to be one of the ways that celebrities know they are respected, well-liked, and of significance in the nation thanks to the lucrative partnerships Globacom recently inked with prominent actors, actresses, and singers in Nigeria who now work as Glo Ambassadors. In order to demonstrate how well-liked a celebrity is, some people have even been known to start listing the companies that the celebrity is compensated to promote. In the entertainment business these days, it's a popular adage that an actor or singer from Nigeria can only be judged on their "star power" if their name appears on the Globacom Brand Ambassadors list not just because of the money involved but also because of the status this confers on them meaning that those who are not yet signed on may need to work a bit harder to make the next cut (Uworah, 2009).

The Second National Operator (SNO) in Nigeria, Globacom, holds a license to offer a wide range of telecommunication services. With over 34 million subscribers, it began operations on August 29, 2003, and has since gained significant traction

throughout the nation. Per Second Billing (PSB), which Globacom introduced in 2003, is one of the most important innovations in the Nigerian telecom sector. Rivals had claimed that no network in the world had been able to launch with PSB and that PSB was not feasible before 2007. Thanks to Globacom's innovation, GSM customers may now only pay for the real time they spend on the phone. That billing mechanism is currently being used by various carriers throughout the nation (Globacom, 2009).

Globacom has developed into one of the most affordable cellular providers for phone calls and broadband internet. By enacting laws and taxes that alter all aspects of the telecom sector, it has consistently kept the sector on its toes. For example, Globacom was the first to provide incredibly low-cost internet services that let users download anything and everything into their Blackberry phones. It also now offers one of Nigeria's lowest smartphone internet packages. Globacom is a major sports sponsor in Ghana and Nigeria, supporting both nations' Premier Leagues and national football teams (Globacom, 2009).

Influence of Celebrity on Consumer Behaviour

Celebrities are generally viewed by consumers as credible sources of information about the product or firm they endorse (Goldsmith, Lafferty, & Newell, 2000). The literature exploring celebrity endorsements has generally employed one of two foundational source models: (1) the source-credibility model, and (2) the source-attractiveness model (Erdogan 2009). Source credibility can be defined as 'a communicator's positive characteristics that affect the receiver's acceptance of a message' (Ohanian, 2000, p. 41). The elements influencing the communicator's perceived trustworthiness are examined via the source-credibility model (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 2013). According to the model, an endorser's or communicator's perceived level of knowledge and reliability affects how successful a message is (Erdogan, 2009). Expertise and reliability are assumed to represent the source credibility notion when taken into account together (Ohanian, 2000). According to the source-attractiveness paradigm, a source's likeability, familiarity, and similarity are all seen by the communication recipient as factors that affect how attractive a source is. In essence, customers will likely to discover a celebrity more appealing if they believe the celebrity to be similar to them and if they know and like the celebrity.

According to research on celebrity endorsements, beauty is a significant predictor of efficacy (Chao et al., 2005); yet, the concept of attractiveness is multifaceted. Attractiveness is more than simply physical appearance, which is rather arbitrary in and of itself. It also includes traits like personality and athletic prowess (Erdogan, 2009). According to some writers, a celebrity's physical attractiveness can foretell how successful their advertisement would be (Till & Busler, 2000). Undoubtedly, compared to their less handsome peers, physically attractive celebrities are often evaluated more positively on a variety of personality attributes (Kahle & Homer 2015).

CONCLUSION

Celebrities have traditionally been the simplest way to debut a new product (consumer goods), and this will likely continue in the near future due to their broad popularity and a large following of devoted followers, mostly in the West. According to the advertising director, who disclosed that celebrity endorsement was an arena entry tactic to summon instant public appeal, this was one of Glo's primary motivations when they decided to employ the option of celebrity endorsement. However, as far as Nigeria is concerned, this study has demonstrated and demonstrated that, in terms of product quality, celebrity endorsements are far less significant than actual product quality. This suggests that his means that instead of depending solely on wealthy people to support your business, marketers and brand owners should put more of their attention into making sure that high-quality service are provided. After all, if you can afford to hire a celebrity to promote your product, everything will be okay. Even if face appeared in every advertisement for the Perfect phone device, it would be intriguing to investigate why the product did not become popular. Investigating why one of the biggest superstars in Nigeria at the time of his celebrity failed to draw customers and had to break quickly might be another worthwhile study project. These are a few of the topics the researcher intends to investigate further after writing this piece. Therefore, it can be said that while celebrity endorsements are a great and noisy method to generate rapid buzz and attention for your business, service, or product, it is more crucial to prioritize quality and client pleasure is ideal at all times is to keep our customers' perception favorable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Glo companies should ensure proper implementation of policy for celebrity endorsement as this will enhance a better behavior from their consumers. Marketing companies should ensure that their celebrity have a trustworthy nature, as this will influence the behavior of their consumers.

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