Impact of Celebrity Endorsement on Brand Image: A Survey of GSM Users in Umuahia Urban, Abia State

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ABSTRACT
This study focuses on the influence of celebrity endorsement on brand image among GSM users in Umuahia Urban. In other to achieve the objective of this study, two research hypotheses were formulated and the generated data were analyzed and tested using the Pearson moment correlation analysis with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS .22). Data for the study were collected through questionnaire administered on 200 respondents which constituted the sample size. The study found a positive and significant relationship between celebrity endorsement and all the metrics of brand image considered in the study. Significantly, the study showed a strong and positive correlation between celebrity endorsement and brand awareness, while the relationship between celebrity attractiveness and brand personality is found to be moderate. The paper therefore concluded that celebrity endorsement is a needful communication strategy for building a strong brand image, and recommends that marketers must be careful enough to ensure a good brand ambassador is chosen so as to raise the unique selling proposition of the firm to new heights.

INTRODUCTION

All over the world, people tend to look up to specific people when they make decisions on their product consumption (Nkan and Usoroh, 2012). Usually such people disseminate opinions and other individuals are pressured into following their trend, identifying with them and using them as the basis for their decisions in their daily lives. Such people are known as reference group leaders and they include entertainment figures, sport heroes, political leaders, parents, coworkers, teachers and peers (Martin and Bush, 2000; Bristol and Mangleburg, 2005; Akpan, Nkan and Usoroh, 2012; Akpan and Nkan, 2013). Studies have shown that firms can build customer trust and positive preference through adopting brand celebrity endorsement strategy. By contracting a brand ambassador with positive image in the eyes of the public, the consumers tend to accept the brand wholly, since the celebrity endorsing the product has a positive image.

Sherman (1985) opines that the first early application of celebrity endorsement in advertisingis traced back to the late nineteenth century. However, it gained acceptance among firms during the advancement of commercial radio in the 1930s and commercial television in the 1950s (McDonough, 1995). Ever since then, the usage and application of this strategy has constantly increased and despite the growth in the adoption and implementation of this strategy, there is paucity of empirical literature on the effect of this marketing strategy on the patronage decision of GSM users in Umuahia urban.

Statement Of Research Probem

There are limited empirical studies on impact of celebrity endorsement on patronage among GSM users in Umuahia Urban. Even in the developed countries, related studies are not specific to GSM products but to other products. Celebrity endorsement as a marketing communication tool and its effect on a firm's brand image has been shadily researched upon. Whether the use of celebrities in promoting different GSM products has affected consumers' perception of such brands especially in Umuahia Urban is the thrust of this study.

Objective Of The Study

The main objective of the study is to examine the influence celebrity endorsement on brand image (identity, awareness and personality) among GSM users in Umuahia Urban.

Research Hypothesis

Ho_1: there is no significant relationship between celebrity endorsement and brand image among GSM users in Umuahia Urban.

Scope Of The Study

The scope of this research work is concerned with the impact of celebrity endorsement on brand image among GSM users in Umuahia urban, Abia State.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Conceptual Review

A celebrity is a person who is publicly recognized by a large share of a certain group of people, and for the purpose of this study, celebrity endorsement is someone who is widely known for achievements and roles in other areas than the product class endorsed. Celebrities are further said to enjoy a significant level of public awareness and they generally differ from the social norm in a corresponding social group.

Understanding the Concept of Celebrity Endorsement

Martin (2014) opined that endorsement is a brand communication channel where the celebrity certifies a brand's position and claim by extending his or her popularity, personality, expertise in the field or iconic position in the society to the brand and then acts as the brand ambassador. It is also opined that to be effective in a competitive marketing environment with a high variety and also provide differentiation, celebrity endorsement is the answer. As it will help consumer to differentiate the product from that of competing firms, for instance, Loya Milk sort the endorsement of a music icon ("Don Jazzy") in Nigeria who is publicly known for his achievement in the entertainment industry. After his endorsement of the Loya brand, most consumers started patronizing the product and the company's sales and profit was enhanced tremendously. Endorsement as a marketing communications tool ensures that the endorser transfers its already existing credibility to the brand promoted (Spry *et al.,* 2011; Ogunsiji, 2012).

Celebrity endorsement is gaining popularity in our contemporary society, more than 40% of marketing communication messages in the Nigeria feature celebrities from Entertainment, music, movie and sports industry (Solomon, 2009; Andreas, Jesper& Mario, 2015). If the right measures are met it is believed that celebrity endorsement can be a successful marketing strategy to persuade and inform customers, increase customer preference, increase sales and revenues, and differentiate a firm's products and services from those of competitors (Rosa, 2010; Schlecht, 2003; Solomon, 1996). The source-attractiveness model of celebrity endorsement asserts that the attractiveness of any source is determined by the communication of receiver's perceptions (Customer) of the source's similarity, familiarity, and likeability.

Generally, if consumers perceive a celebrity endorser as similar to their existing personality and they are familiar with it and have love for the celebrity, they will tend to find the brand more attractive simply because it was endorsed by their respected celebrity and thus patronize the product that they endorse.

BRAND IMAGE

Brand image could be seen asthe perception that the consumers have in mind on a given product characteristic and attributes which includes its physical build up, psychological and performance capability (Sengupta, 2014). Ogilvy and Atherton(1963) opined that the brand image and brand personality are same. It is all about how the brand is perceived by consumer and it is painstaking to amend, because any given brand acquires the personality built over a period of time (Moorthi, 2010). Brand image emanates from consumer's perspective (Kapferer, 1992; Bhatia, 2012). It is a combination of notion about a given product or product line which might be positive or negative (Kotler, 1988). (Aaker, 1992) define brand image as a set of association that is generally organized in certain meaningful way.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

The study reviewed three theories that are related to the subject matter and they include as follows;

The Source Attractiveness Theory Propounded by McGuire (1985)

The attractiveness model was propounded McGuire's (1985) throws more lighton gaining efficiency from celebrity status, respect, goodwill and physical attractiveness. The attractive model does not only dwell on physical attractiveness though; a message's effectiveness also depends on the similarity, likeability and familiarity the receiver feels towards the source. Similarity is about the resemblance between the source and the receiver, likeability is about the devotion for a source depending on his/her behaviour and physical attractiveness, and familiarity is about the knowledge a receiver has of the source through previous exposure (McGuire, 1985). Other attributes that receivers' feels about a source are for example personality properties, athletic prowess, lifestyles or intellectual skills (Erdogan, 1999). These factors are demonstrated to change beliefs among consumers, form positive stereotypes and generate stronger purchase intentions (Debevek&Kernan, 1984)

The Source Credibility Theory Propounded by Hovland, Janis and Kelly (1953)

The credibility model is a more established model than the attractiveness model (Hunter, 2010). It was developed by Hovland and Kelly (1953). The source credibilitymodel asserts that the goodwill, respect and trustworthiness of an endorser are vital for the effectiveness of the message. A credible source can have influence on consumers' opinions, beliefs, and attitudes and in the end behaviour through internalisation (Solomon, 1996; Erdogan, 1999). Further, Hunter (2010) states that source credibility is argued to improve consumer confidence, improve consumers' reactions towards a brand, alter negative predispositions, and that a credible source is more effective at endorsement.

Social Learning Theory by Albert Bandura (1977)

Social learning theory is domiciled in learning and social behavior and it holds that new behaviors can be gainedand acquired by observing and imitating other people. It propose that learning is a cognitive process that takes place in a social context and happensby observation or by guidance, even in the absence of motor reproduction or direct reinforcement (Bandura, 1971).Social learning theoryis also viewed as the connecting hub between traditional learning theory and the cognitive approach of human behaviour. This is because it revolves on how cognitive variables are involved in the learning process.

This study adopted the social learning theory since it explains the interplay of drives, stimuli, cues, responses and reinforcement. It aids the understanding of celebrity endorsement influence on GSM users' patronage in Umuahia Urban.

Empirical Review

There are limited empirical studies on impact of celebrity endorsement on patronage among GSM users in Umuahia Urban. Various studies have pointed out thebenefits and consequencesof adopting and implementing celebrity endorsement as a marketing strategy. Hunter (2010) findings revealed that celebrity engagement affect the communication effectiveness positively due to increased perceptions of emotional involvement and trustworthiness. Mukherjee (2009), carried out a study on Impact of Celebrity Endorsement on Brand Image and concluded that advertising is seen as playing a manipulative and merciless role in the emerging brands cape, seeking to transform customers into the personification of brand identity.

Ateke, OnwujaririamdNnennanya (2015), studied the relationship between celebrity endorsement and brand image in Rivers state and they conclude that there is a positive correlation between celebrity endorsement and brand image in the fast food industry in their study area.

METHODOLOGY

The survey design was adopted and used in the course of this study. This survey method allows for generalization of findings and is also descriptive in nature which suits the purpose of this study. This study employed the use of structured questionnaire which was designed on a 5-point Likert scale to measure the responses from the respondents. The population of Umuahia North was adoptedwhich is 359,230 (National Population Commission, 2006). This is mixed with civil servants, trader farmers and so on.200 respondents were drawn from the population as the sample size. Osuala (2005); Creswell and Creswell (2018), opine that purposive sampling is a technique in which researcher uses his or her initiative when choosing members of a population that will be used in a given study. The researcher used purposive sampling technique considering the fact that the actual number of consumers that uses the product in the study area is unknown. To ensure the validity of the research instrument, the researcher subjected the research instrumentto experts jury review. Furthermore, Cronbach's coefficient alpha test was run, the test resultgave a high total scale reliability of 0.915. 0.915 is above the required minimum score of 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978).This study employed the use of simple percentage, frequency tables and other descriptive statistical tools to present the data that will be generated, while Pearson's product moment correlation was used to analyze the data obtained from the structured questionnaire with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.

RegressionModel

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_1 + \beta_2 x_2 + \beta_3 x_3 + \beta_4 x_4 + e$$

Where;
Y = Brand image
X_1 = Celebrity endorsement
X_2 = Celebrity Trustworthiness
X_3 = Celebrity credibility
X_4 = Celebrity attractiveness

In testing the hypothesis, the decision rule is to reject the null hypothesis (Ho) and accept the alternative hypothesis if the P-values are less than 0.01 (i.e $p<0.01$), otherwise do not reject.

RESULTS

Out of the 200 copies of the questionnaire distributed, a total of 156 were returned. This produced a response rate of 78 per cent. Out of the 156 returned copies of questionnaire, 41 questionnaires were dropped based on errors and omissions in some of the demographic questions as well as scale items. Hence, to avoid obtaining misleading information in the course of the research, the researchers decided that it would be appropriate to exclude such data in favour of more genuine and standard questionnaires. Consequently, the usable questionnaires extracted were 115 which produced a response output of 57.5 per cent. Nevertheless, it is supported within literature in research that response rate above 30 per cent is of goof fit and have attained acceptable level for a research that uses survey questionnaire (Crimp and Wright, 1995).

Table 4.1 Responses on the Influence of celebrity trustworthiness on brand identity among GSM users in Umuahia Urban

	Responses	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	STRONGLY DISAGREE	5	4.3	4.3	4.3
	DISAGREE	10	8.7	8.7	13
	UNDECIDED	20	17.4	17.4	30.4
	AGREE	40	34.8	34.8	65.2
	STRONGLY AGREE	40	34.8	34.8	100
	Total	115	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field survey, 2018

From the table 4.1 above, it can be seen that celebrity trustworthiness influences brand identity and it has high response rate (34.8 and 34.8%) in agreement to the question given to them on this bases, 17.4% were uncertain, 8.7% and 4.3% disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. This could be attributed to the fact GSM users tend to look up to the trustworthiness of brand ambassadors to guide their choice of product that they use. This conforms to the findings of Brown and Onwujiri (2015) that opine that celebrity endorsement determines the extent to which a particular brand is being recalled and identified.

Table 2 Responses on the Influence of celebrity credibility on brand awareness among GSM users in Umuahia Urban

	Responses	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	STRONGLY DISAGREE	5	4.3	4.3	4.3
	DISAGREE	7	6.1	6.1	10.4
	UNDECIDED	8	7.0	7.0	17.4
	AGREE	37	32.2	32.2	49.6
	STRONGLY AGREE	58	50.4	50.4	100
	Total	115	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field survey, 2018

From the table 2 above, it can be ascertained that celebrity credibility influences brand awareness and it has high response rate (32.2 and 34.8%) in agreement to the question given to them on this bases, 17.4% were uncertain, 8.7% and 50.4% disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. This conforms to the findings of Zafar (2010) that opine that celebrity credibility builds a high level of awareness for any given brand.

Table 3 Responses on the Influence of celebrity attractiveness on brand personality among GSM users in Umuahia Urban

	Responses	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	STRONGLY DISAGREE	10	8.7	8.7	8.7
	DISAGREE	14	12.2	12.2	20.9
	UNDECIDED	16	14.0	14.0	34.9
	AGREE	50	43.5	43.5	78.4
	STRONGLY AGREE	25	21.6	21.6	100
	Total	115	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field survey, 2018

From the tabl.3 above, it can be ascertained that celebrity attractiveness influences brand personality and it has high response rate (43.5 and 21.6%) in agreement to the question given to them on this bases, 14% were uncertain, 812.2% and 8.7% disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. This conforms to the findings of Bhatia (2012) that concluded that celebrity attractiveness builds a high level of brand personality that push the consumers to always sort for that product.

Table 4: Analysis on the Influence of Celebrity Endorsement on Brand Image among GSM users in Umuahia Urban

Variable	Coefficients	Standard Error	t-statistics	P-value	Sig.
Intercept	8667.45	8275.85	1.035454	0.030166	
Celebrity Endorsement	249.7145.	147.877	2.27652	0.034209	**
Cele.Trustworthiness	3908.676	1009.87	3.674565	0.000456	***
Celeb. Credibility	1873.788	259.231	6.832267	5.33E-10	***
Celeb. Attractiveness	0.005489	0.01004	0.875646	0.655873	
F-ratio	18.67532				
R-square	0.766546				
Adjusted R-square	0.81255				

Source: Researchers Computation using SPSS, 2018

Based on the table 4 above, the R square has the value of 0.766 which means that 76.6% variation in brand image is explained by celebrity endorsement, celebrity trustworthiness, celebrity credibility and Celebrity attractiveness. The remaining 24.4% is a result of error in variables. The value of the Adjusted R square is 0.832 which means that there is 81.2% relationship between celebrity endorsement and brand image among GSM users in Umuahia Urban.

Hence, since F-calculated of 18.675 is greater than the significant value of 1.94, we conclude that celebrity endorsement influence brand image.

TEST OF HYPOTHESES

Table 4.5 Summary of Result of Test of Hypotheses

	Brand Image	Brand Awareness
Celebrity Endorsement	0.816**	0.798**

** Correlation is Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Source: Researchers computation from SPSS

The test of Ho1 as can be seen on Table 4.6 above indicates a positive relationship between celebrity endorsement and brand image in the GSM (communication) industry. The test generated 0.816** in the Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient, meaning that a very strong relationship exists between celebrity endorsement and brand image in the GSM

industry in Umuahia Urban. Based on this result obtained from the analysis, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis accepted.

The test of Ho_2 as it is indicated on Table produced a positive correlation between celebrity credibility and brand awareness among GSM users. The test result generated a correlation coefficient of 0.798** which imply that a strong relationship exist between the variables. Hence, this study rejects the null hypothesis since it cannot hold; and accepts the alternate hypothesis which states that there exist significant relationship between the two variables.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study found a very strong and positive correlation between celebrity endorsement and brand image among GSM users in Umuahia urban. This position is premised on the test result of Ho_1. This finding is validated by the fact that customers are more likely to have high brand image or recall brands that are associated with known celebrities, especially those they have a liking for. This finding also corroborates the finding of Chan *et al* (2013) and Zafar (2010) who found a similar relationship between celebrity endorsement and brand image in China and Sabunwala (2013) who found a similar relationship between the variables in India.

Ho_2 of this study speculated that celebrity credibility does not have a significant impact on brand awareness. However, the test result of 0.795** obtained from the test of the hypothesis proved the falsity of that speculation. Consequent upon the test result, this study posit that a very strong and positive relationship exist between the variables. This position is shared by Sabunwala (2013), Chan *et al* (2013) and Mukherjee (2009).

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The objective of this study was to examine the influence of celebrity endorsement on brand image among GSM users in Umuahia Urban.

The findings of the study are summarized as follows;
    i.   It was ascertained that celebrity endorsement to a great extent influences brand image among GSM users in Umuahia urban. Hence, there exists significant relationship between the two variables.
    ii.   To a large extent, as the make use of celebrity credibility to sale their brands; it tends to enhance customer patronage and improve brand awareness. This is based on the fact that organizations that budgets and uses more of celebrity endorsement strategy tend to have more influence on the customer since the brand will be associated with the credibility of the celebrity.
    iii.   It was ascertained that celebrity attractiveness helps in building a sound brand personality. Thus, there exists a significant relationship between the celebrity attractiveness and brand personality.
    iv.   It was also ascertained that using celebrities that are trustworthy enhances brand identity among GSM users in Umuahia Urban.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study posits that there is a strong and positive correlation between celebrity endorsement and brand image among GSM user in Umuahia Urban. Building a strong brand image is essential in modern day business environments, being an effective way to get the brand noticed amidst the rush and clutter in the in media. All marketing communication aims to create awareness and arouse interest in the minds of the target audience; and in order to achieve this aim, firms employ several strategies which include celebrity endorsement.

Celebrity Endorsement is one of such power tools by which firms try to position the image and identification of celebrities to promote their product lines. Celebrity endorsement if used effectively makes the GSM brand stand out from the competing products, enhances brand awareness and preference, facilitates brand ease identification, gives personality to the brand and ensures sound competitive advantage. To achieve this, the firm needs to be careful in the choice of a celebrity; since the right match between the product and the celebrity can enhance the competitive advantage of a brand compared to rivalry products.

RECOMMENDATIONS
On the basis of the findings of this study and the conclusion reached, the study recommends that:
1. Organizations should continue to engage celebrity endorsers in their marketing communication efforts, as this will enhance the image of their brand in the consumers' mind.
2. Celebrity endorsement should become a strategic marketing communication practice for firms that must break through the advertising clutter and stand out of the competition.
3. Firmsshould be careful to ensure that a good endorser-brand fit so as to raise the unique selling proposition of the firm to enviable heights. Since when used effectively, celebrity endorsement can enhance brand awareness and brand preference and identification, and attract the brand a positive personality and prestige.
4. To build a strong brand personality, firms should review thoroughly the credibility; attractiveness and trustworthiness of the celebrity that they choose to endorse their brands.

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