

PERCEPTION OF THE INFLUENCE OF CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT ON BUYING BEHAVIOUR OF SELECT PRODUCTS:

A Study of Residents of Owerri Metropolis

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ABSTRACT

The study was on the perception of the influence of celebrity endorsement on buying behaviour of select products. The objectives of the study among others were to: examine the perception of Owerri metropolis residents on celebrity endorsement and identify the influence of celebrity endorser on the select products like Toma-paste, Harpic plus, Maltina and Holandia. The study was anchored on social learning theory. Survey research design was adopted for this study. A sample size of 385 was drawn from the population of 555,500 using Australian online calculator. Multi-stage sampling technique was used for this study. Findings indicated that the perception of the respondents were as follows: 63.5% of the respondents' admitted that they are familiar with celebrities that appear in the ad, 52% believed the celebrities use in endorsing these brands and 38.6% of the respondents held the brands endorsed by celebrities in a high esteem. In essence the finding showed that 57.5% of the respondents believed that celebrity endorsement influenced their purchase of the select products by enhancing recall of the products, attracting attention to the products and establishing credibility to the products. The researchers therefore, recommended the need to intensify more effort in the placement of celebrity endorsement on television.

Keywords: Advertisement, Celebrity, Endorsement, Influence, Perception

Introduction

The importance of advertising as a promotional strategy therefore, depends on its capability to influence consumers not only to purchase, but continue to repurchase and eventually develop brand loyalty. To increase consumer's expectation and demand, marketers were forced to adopt more creative advertising strategies such as celebrity endorsement to influence consumer buying behaviours. In corroborating this, Comiati and Plaias (2009) observe that consumers are constantly bombarded by messages inducing them to change their attitudes about products, services, brands, producers, suppliers, events among others. These persuasion attempt ranges from logical arguments to expressive images from regular consumer's advice to celebrities' recommendations. The endorsement of products and services in advertising has become an integral aspect of modern day advertising.

Today celebrity endorsement ads have become one of the most popular forms of advertising. Going through the various television channels, print media, radio, and social media consumers find quite a number of endorsements. The increase in popularity of celebrity endorsement can be attributed to the ability to grab audience's attention, thus giving consumers' a better chance for communicating message to consumers (Mwendwa & Mberia, 2014). The use of celebrities is believed to help consumers remember the message of the advertisement and brand name, the celebrity endorsement, helps to create the personality of a brand because when a celebrity is paired with a brand, this image of consumers (Agrawal & Kamakura, 1995; and Mwendwa & Mberia, 2014). The media exposes the audience to a deluge of information every day. This information has a lot of influence on the audience. People tend to believe what they see, hear or read. They take media messages with a lot of concern and put them into practice or rather give them a trial. Media play a major role in agenda setting in the society, informing and this process has a cognitive approach. In the non-celebrities ads receiver focused more on brand and its features while in celebrity endorsement ad receiver concentrate on the celebrity in the advertisement. Celebrity endorsement produced more positive attitudes towards advertising and greater purchase intentions than a non-celebrity endorser (Mwendwa, et al. 2014).

Adeyanju (2013) cited in Magaji (2014, p.2) notes that celebrities are people who enjoy public recognition possessing such attributes as attractiveness and trustworthiness. The importance of this is that celebrities are people who have excelled in their respective fields of endeavours and therefore, command respect, acceptance, popularity and fellowship within the society. According to him, an endorser is a person who makes a testimonial or a written or a spoken statement extolling the virtue of a product or services. It is believed that products or services endorsed by celebrities help such products and services to stand out and attract more attention while shopping due to their improved level of product recall (Bowen, 2002). Celebrity endorsement strategy is effective in selling products and services as status symbols since celebrities are individuals of indisputably high status and in endorsements such individuals invite consumers to join them in enjoying the products.

It is to this end that this study sought to ascertain the perception of Owerri metropolis residents on the influence of celebrity endorsement on consumer buying behaviour of select products like Toma-paste –Ngozi Ezeonu; Harpic plus – Chioma Chukwuka; Maltina – Genevieve Nnaji; and Holandia- Ini Edo, Omotola Jolade Ekehinde and Segun Arinze.

Statement of the Problem

The aim behind any message is to achieve the purpose for which it was conceived. Companies, civil society organizations and government agencies spend billions of naira annually placing one form of advertisement or the other in the media. Also, companies in their bid to outsmart one another for consumers' attention, normally deploy various advertisement strategies so as to identify themselves with their products. They do this in the hope that such an appearance might instantly produce a trickle-down effect of making the product become popular and ultimately influence audience to wish to purchase the product or service. However, it seems that several products in spite of celebrity endorsement have failed to attract customers' attention towards many products. This could be because celebrity endorser is a western transfer orientation where people idolize successful, important personalities. The question is: Are residents of Owerri metropolis so impressionable about celebrity endorser? Does the average Imo residents have the same attitudes towards

celebrities or are they apathetic to such appeals? Would Imo residents not consider it foolish imitation to try to purchase a product simply because somebody else endorsed it? And will the receivers not merely be lured away by the use of an attractive model? These were some of the questions posed in this study, which the researcher sought to proffer answers.

Research Questions

1. What is Owerri metropolis residents' level of exposure to celebrity endorsement on Toma-paste, Harpic plus, Maltina and Holandia?
2. What is the perception of Owerri metropolis residents on the use of celebrity endorsement on select products?
3. What is the influence of celebrity endorsement on Owerri metropolis residents' attitude towards the purchase of select products?

Review of Related Literature

Consumer Buying Behaviour

Consumer buying behavior is considered to be an inseparable part of marketing. Consumer buying behavior is the study of the ways of buying and disposing of goods, services, ideas or experiences by the individuals, groups and organizations in order to satisfy their needs and wants (Kotler & Keller, 2011). Consumer buying behavior refers to the buying behavior of final consumers, both individuals and household who buy goods and services for personal consumption (Kumar, 2010, p.218). Blackwell, Minard and Engel (2006) consumer buying behavior is itself a complex, dynamic issue which cannot be defined easily and commonly. It is a process of choosing, purchasing, using and disposing of projects or services by the individuals and groups in order to satisfy their needs and wants (Solomon, 1995, cited in Dudovsky, 2013, p.2).

The Concept of Celebrity Endorsement

Celebrity is a well-known individual (television stars, movie actors and actresses, famous athletes, pop stars, entertaining, etc) who obliged their fame to their achievements (Parmar & Pate, 2014). Celebrity is associated with individuals who are frequently in the public eye and typically have a high profile in sports, entertainment industries among others. They are used to endorse services, products, ideas or organization (Black, 1995, cited in Mwendwa & Mberia, 2014, p. 180)). Endorsement is a channel of communication where celebrities act as spokespersons of the brands and by extending their popularity and personality they certify the brand's claim and position (Kotler, 2009). Mccracken (1989) cited in Parmar and Pate (2014, p. 3) "celebrity endorser is any individual who enjoys public recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an achievement".

The Concept of Perception

Perception is a complex process we perceive with our senses, but more importantly, it is our interpretation of events which is based on our previous experienced (Onwukwe, Okugo & Ihechu, 2014). According to Gamble and Gamble (2002, p.83) "perception is the process of selections, organizing and subjectivity interpreting sensory data in a way that enables us to

make sense of our world". Watson and Hill (2006, p.212) notes that making sense of the stimuli received from our environment by the senses, sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch.

The above statements indicate that perception is all about noticing, organizing and interpreting. Onwukwe, Okugo and Ihechu (2014, pp 565-566) posits that "audience engage in social perception which is an attempt to notice and understand the message and also make judgment about it which influence their attitude towards the product, services or even the key issues of the advertisement message".

Empirical Studies

Mwendwa, and Mberia (2014) in a study concluded that celebrity endorsement if used effectively, makes the brand stand out, galvanize brand recall and facilitates instant awareness thus the right choice of celebrity to use marketers; celebrity endorsement in advertisement has negative impact on the audience ranging from the morals, norms and behaviours in the society and celebrity appearance, knowledge, liking, and credibility of the celebrity are also highly correlated with advertising believability.

Jeyapalan (2015) investigated the influence of celebrity endorsement of advertisement and its impact on sales. Finding revealed that celebrity endorsed advertisement does significantly impact on buyers purchase intent. Consumers' are also influenced by simple cries such as attractive slogans, music or imagery in a commercial instead of close scrutiny of the message; endorsed advertisement by a celebrity does significantly increase the popularity and credibility of the product than when the product is not endorsed; most consumers are likely to buy the products endorsed by celebrities. Celebrity endorser does produce greater purchase intentions to buy a product than a non-celebrity endorser.

Parmar and Pate (2014) examined consumer perception for celebrity and no- celebrity endorsement in television commercials for fast moving consumer goods. Celebrity endorsement advertisement positively influenced consumers to purchase that brand. There is a significant difference for all FMG categories advertisements that have a celebrity endorser and those that don't.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on social cognitive theory. The theory was first enunciated by N. E. Miller and J. Dollard in 1941, but later broadened by the works of Albert Bandura (Okoro, Nwafor & Odoemelam, 2014, p. 125). Social learning is conceptualized as an identification by Watson and Hill (2006, p.128) and to them it means the incorporation of characteristics of an admired person into one's own identity by adopting that person's system of values". The theory explains how people acquire and maintain behavioural patterns. It states that behavioural changes depends much on three factors-environment, people and behavior. These three factors environment, people and behavior, are constantly influencing each other.

The likelihood that a person will imitate a model depends on a number of factors, such as the model's prestige, like ability and attractiveness. Whether individual actually performs, modeled behaviour depends on the behaviour's likely outcome. This outcome expectancy is, itself, often learned through an observational learning mechanism called vicarious conditioning meaning a person learns the consequences for someone else. The importance of this theory in this study is that the use of celebrity endorsement in advertisement influence

audience consumption intentions because they watch, listen, observe and would want to consume what the celebrities endorse.

Research Method

The study employed survey research method, given that it would enable a quantitative data to be obtained from those who watch television in order to find out their views on the use of endorser in advertisement. From the official records of the 2016 projection of the population of the Local Government Areas that made up metropolis are as follows: Owerri Municipal- 127, 600, Owerri North- 242,800 and Owerri West-140,100 (NPC, 2016). Therefore, the population of Owerri of metropolis is 555,500. However, the population has grown since the last projection by NPC. In such a situation the research was expected to use the United Nations projected index of 2.28% to extrapolate and predict the new population from the last known figure. The projected population is 593,829. The sample size for this study is 385 using Australian online calculator. Multi-stage sampling technique was use for the study. According to Onyebuchi (2016), this type of sampling technique requires the use of more stages in the sampling procedure. This became necessary because Owerri metropolis is made up of 3 local government areas or clusters with 33 wards or clusters. It is from the 3 LGAs that 5 wards were randomly selected as follows: Owerri Municipal Council- Aladinma i; Ikenegbu i, New Owerri ii and GRA;Owerri North- Egbu, Emekuku ii; Naze and Orji; and Owerri West.- Avu/Oforola; Nekede; Irete/Orogwe and Obinze.In each of the selected wards, 33 respondents were non-proportionately allotted to them and these respondents were purposively selected to reflect the sample size for this study. A closed-ended questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. A face validity test was done on the instrument and the outcome was good. A reliability test was also conducted on the instrument. Data obtained were analysed in simple percentage and frequency tables.

Results

Out of the 385 copies of the questionnaire that were distributed, 4 copies were invalid. It implies that 1% of the printed copies of the questionnaire were invalid for this study. It was the 99% or 381 valid copies that represented the 100% used in this study.

Research Question One: What is Owerri metropolis residents' level of exposure to celebrity endorsement?

Table 1: Respondents' frequency of exposure to television programmes

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Frequently	107	28%
Occasionally	169	44%
Never	37	10%
Can't say	68	18%
Total	381	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2019

The result from the table above show that majority of the respondents' that have television sets use them to watch programmes occasionally at 44%.

Table 2: Respondents awareness of celebrity endorsement

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	276	72.4%
No	43	11.3%
Can't remember	62	16.3%
Total	381	100%

Source: *Field Survey, 2019*

The table above shows that majority or 72.4% of the respondents in the valid sample were aware of celebrity endorsement extensively. This means that a good number of the respondents are fully aware of these celebrities that were used in endorsing the select products.

Research Question Two: What is the perception of Owerri metropolis residents on the use of celebrity endorsement?

Table 3: Familiar with celebrity who appear in the advertisement

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Familiar	242	63.5%
Unfamiliar	33	8.7%
Can't say	106	27.8%
Total	381	100%

Source: *Field Survey, 2019*

The result from the table above shows that 63.5% or majority of the respondents that watch television programmes were familiar with celebrities used in advertisements. The implication is that both the celebrities and the endorse products are household names.

Table 4: Believability of celebrities by respondents

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	198	52%
No	89	23%
Not sure	94	25%
Total	381	100%

Source: *Field Survey, 2019*

According to the table above, 52% of the respondents believe the celebrities used in endorsing these brands. The implication is that most of the respondents had trust and believe on the celebrities used in the endorsement of the select product based on the roles they in the Nigerian movie industry.

Table 5: Respondents perception of a brand endorsed by a celebrity

Response	Frequency	Percentage
In a high esteem	147	38.6%
Esteem	110	29%
Not at all	37	10%
Low esteem	36	9.4%
Can't say	51	13%
Total	381	100%

Source: *Field Survey, 2019*

The table above shows that majority of the respondents at 38.6% perceived a brand endorse by a celebrity in a high esteem.

Research Question Three: What is the influence of celebrity endorsement on Owerri metropolis residents' attitude towards the purchase of select products?

Table 6: Celebrity endorsement and purchasing of a product

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	219	57.5%
No	79	20.7%
Can't say	83	21.8%
Total	381	100%

Source: *Field Survey, 2019*

This means that majority of the respondents believed that celebrity endorsement stimulate the purchase of a product at 57.5%. It means majority of the respondents buy certain products based on the fact on the fact that those celebrities used in endorsing such products are held in high esteem.

Table 7: How celebrity endorsement influence purchase of the select products

Response	Frequency	Percentage
By enhancing recall of a brand	137	36%
By attracting attention to a brand	110	29%
By establishing credibility to a brand	55	14%
Not at all	79	21%
Total	381	100%

Source: *Field Survey, 2019*

The implication of the result above shows that celebrity endorsement enhanced recall of a brand, attract attention to a brand and establish credibility to a brand among viewers of such advertisement.

Discussion of Findings

Residents of Owerri metropolis level of awareness of celebrity endorsement

The finding showed that 72.2% or majority of the respondents were aware of celebrity endorsement extensively. This is 44% or majority of them were exposed to television programme occasionally. It means that one must own a television set, watch television programmes, before he/she becomes aware of celebrity endorsement in advertisement. It means that residents of Owerri metropolis are aware of celebrity endorsement to extensively. This implies that people who watch television are most likely to be aware of the celebrity endorsement. According to Makata (2012, p. 99) television do indeed induced some people to establish alternative vision of the real world, luring them into thinking that their wishes about reality constitutes itself.

How residents of Owerri metropolis perceived the use of celebrity endorsement

The finding indicates that 63.5% of the respondents' admitted that they are familiar with celebrities that appear in the ad, 52% believed the celebrities use in endorsing these brand and 38.6% of the respondents held the brands endorsed by celebrities in a high esteem. This means that the respondents held the brand endorsed by celebrities in a high esteem. According to them such celebrities are familiar to them. This finding is accordance with the basic assumption of the social learning theory that provided a theoretical framework for this study. To buttress this Onwukwe (2014) observes that audience engage in social perception which is an attempt to notice and understand the message and also make judgment about it which influence their attitude towards the product, services or even the key issues of the advertisement message. Gamble and Gamble (2002, p.83) note that perception is the process of selecting, organizing and subjectivity interpreting sensory data in a way that enables us to make sense of our world. Thus, the kind of celebrity used to endorse a particular product determines how people could perceive such a product.

The influence of celebrity endorsement on Owerri metropolis residents' attitude towards the purchase of select products

The finding shows that majority or 57.5% of the respondents in the valid sample believed that the use of celebrity endorsement stimulate the purchase of the select products. According to them, exposure to celebrity endorsement ads helping in enhancing recall of a brand, attracting attention to a brand and establishing credibility to a brand at 79%. This means that enhancing recall, attracting attention and establishing credibility to a brand makes such brand or product popular and credible before the consumers. This theory advocates that behaviour is learned from the environment through the process of observation learning. Humans are active information processors and think about the relationship between that behaviour and its consequences. The finding is in agreement with the study conducted by Jayapalan (2015) where he found that endorsed advertisement by a celebrity does significantly increase the popularity and credibility of the product than when the product is not endorsed. In furtherance of this, Mwenda and Mberia (2014) confirmed this in their study. According to them celebrity endorsement if used effectively, makes the brand stand out, galvanize brand recall and facilitates instant awareness. They maintained that celebrity appearance, knowledge, liking and credibility of the celebrity are highly correlated with advertising believability.

This finding is supported by the social learning theory and cultivation theory respectively. These theories that form that formed the theoretical framework for this study help to explain this phenomenon. The social learning theory posits the likelihood that a person will imitate a model depends on a number of factors, such as the model's prestige, likeability and attractiveness. The importance of this theory is that the use of celebrities in endorsement effects or influence audience consumption intentions because they watch, listen, observes and would want to consume what the celebrities endorsed.

In corroboration to this, Parmer and Pate (2014) found that Celebrity endorsement advertisement positively influenced consumers to purchase that brand. In the same vein, Jayapalan (2015) concluded that most consumers are likely to buy the products endorsed by celebrities. Celebrity endorser does produce greater purchase intentions to buy a product than non-celebrity endorser.

Conclusion

Celebrity endorsement play's significant roles in stimulating residents of Owerri metropolis purchase of a product. It means there is a positive and strong relationship between celebrity endorsement and consumer's buying of a product. This is because exposure to television commercial on celebrity endorsement helps in creating popularity and building credibility for the product or brand advertised. The ability of celebrity endorsement to achieve this is because it helps the audience or consumers to quickly recall the brand, draw's consumer's attention to the product and as well as build personality or credibility for the product. It is believed that when the right celebrities that consumers are familiar with and unquestionable characters are used to endorse a brand, people tend to perceive such brand or product in a high esteem. However, the extent to which celebrity endorsement stimulates the purchase of a product is minimal. This is because majority of the residents that owned TV sets occasionally watch television programmes.

Recommendations

The researchers made the following recommendations:

1. There is need to intensify more effort in the placement of celebrity endorsement on television. This is because most people are aware of celebrity endorsement on television.
2. In choosing a celebrity to endorse a product or brand, there is need to examine the celebrity's lifestyle and his general acceptance by the public before the endorsement so as to avoid negative image or scandals that could have negative effect on the product.
3. Advertisers should also ensure before using celebrity to endorse their products that there is a level of congruence between an endorser and the product to be endorsed. This is to avoid where the public image and acceptance of an endorser overshadows the products endorsed.

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