CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENTS (CEED) AND CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR IN NIGERIAN TELECOMMUNICATION INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

The telecom industry has explored numerous media channels to expand their customer base. Endorsement of celebrities is one of such channels. The paper examined the influences of celebrity endorsement on customer buying behaviour in the Nigeria telecommunication industry. The attributes of celebrity used in the study include: trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness. To achieve this, hypotheses were drawn in relation to the selected attributes on consumer buying behaviours of telecom products in Benin City and Auchi metropolis in Edo State, Nigeria. A sample size of 374 customers was selected using the judgmental sampling techniques. Structured questionnaire were used as the instrument of data collection while data collected were analyzed using OLS multiple regression estimation techniques. The results show that: trustworthiness of celebrity has positive effects on behaviour of consumers; also, celebrity expertise has positive effects on buying behaviour of consumers (coefficient 0.681 & significance of 0.000), the study therefore concludes that, endorsement of celebrities are...
veritable strategy for achieving product acceptance among the consumers of telecommunication products. The celebrities used for endorsing telecomm products have both influential and preferential impact on consumers’ purchase of telecom products. The study therefore recommends that, Telecom firms should always endeavour to produce quality products that will foster trust and believability to both the fans and their customers.

**Keywords:** Endorsement, Celebrity, Buying Behaviour, Customers, Product.

### INTRODUCTION

The concept of celebrity endorsement is very crucial and indispensable as promotional tool of marketing. In recent times, marketers are employing promotional strategies of various appeals. These appeals include sexual, emotional and humour etc., aimed at gaining high brand exposure, attention, interest, desire and action towards the advertised products (Belch & Belch, 2015) Hence, in contemporary society, there has been increasing attention on how celebrities can be marketed (Gupta et al., 2020).

Marketers use various strategies advertise their products with an attempt to captivate the attentions of both current (present) and prospective (future) customers (Ekakitie & Sado, 2023). One known approach which marketers use is to endorse well-known (public) figures. These well-known (public) figures are termed celebrity. The rationalization is that, since customers are the hallmark of a highly competitive market, getting their attention may not be easy but to do so with ease, companies may use those they hold with high esteem (Ekakitie, Kifordu, & Nwaegbuni, 2022). This approach has become a norm among firms in and outside the telecom industry such as sports, church, banking industry etc. (Marques, et al., 2021; Malik & Qureshi, 2017). Being an efficient marketing tool (strategy), marketers endorse celebrities (actors/actresses, musicians, athletes etc.) to communicate their product offerings and services to the public. These celebrities (actors/actresses, musicians, athletes etc.) then serve as company’s brand ambassadors that hires them. They both featured in electronic and print media. This therefore further reaffirm why the need for firms to endorse celebrity is still on the rise even till date. More so, it further reaffirmed the role of celebrities in changing the purchasing/consumption patterns of the public.

Aldajani and Daajani (2019) added that, one cost efficient means through which companies can boost the visibility of their brands is through endorsement of celebrities. Hence, stated that, endorsement of celebrities is both a marketing and advertising strategy and when such approach is used efficiently, it can go a long way to increase customer loyalty. Similarly, Gupta, et al. (2020) submitted that, beyond improving sales volumes, endorsement of celebrities improves brand image only if such celebrity create self-selling (unique) adverts. Another notable fact about hiring celebrities is that, the messages which they intend to communicate are easily grasp by the public. However, to note is that, the cost may be highly capital intensive since company must only annual basis send huge amount of money to renew such contracts.

Although, it is a common practice for firms to endorse celebrity as stated earlier, its historical origin in the Nigerian context is still unknown. One notable event as per endorsement of celebrities in Nigeria is linked to endorsement as stated by Henshaw Kate (*Onga Magi*) in 2014, Nneji Sunny, Omotola, J.E. and Kosoko, J. (*Chivita Juice*) in 2016. Ifeanyichukwu (2016) added that, it all started in the early 1990’s but was not certain on the exact date.
Just like other industries, celebrities to market products have become a norm in the Nigerian telecom industry. Notably, the four (4) major telecom service (network) providers in Nigeria (Globacom, MTN, Airtel, and 9Mobile) have been a major advocate of endorsing celebrities. For example, MTN have endorsed iconic musicians such as Davido, Don Jazzy, Tiwa Savage, Iyanya. Recently, Globacom entered into an endorsement deal worth over N600m annually with P-Square, Adekola Odunlade, Funke, and D’banj. In another instance, Globacom endorsed Mr. John Okafor (popularly called Mr. Ibu), Mr. Ukeje, O.C., Mrs. Ozokwor Patience (Mama G), Basket Mouth, and Bovi. Again, Airtel endorsed 2face Idibia, Waje, and the IK Osakioduwa to host Big Brother (Ifeanyichukwu, 2016). Lastly, 9Mobile have at a time ago endorsed Olamide, Seyi Shay, Odega Francis, and Badmus Eniola. (Ifeanyichukwu, 2016). The essence of using these celebrities is to increase their product visibility and patronage.

In view of the above, this paper examined whether celebrity endorsement has high impacts on the telecom industry’s consumer behavior or not. The essence is to x-ray their antecedents, correlates, and also predict their likely influence it has on the demands for telecom products/services. The major celebrity endorsement related issues to handle are: celebrity trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise against consumer behaviour. Specifically, this paper seeks to:

- examine if celebrity trustworthiness has a high impact on consumer behaviour or not;
- ascertain if celebrity expertise has a high impact on consumer behaviour or not; and
- determine if celebrity attractiveness has a high impact on consumer behaviour or not.

The scope of the study was premised on two major dimensions of content and geographical scope. The content scope focused on celebrity endorsement (CEED) on consumer behaviour. The geographical scope covered customers of four major telecommunication network providers in Edo state, these include MTN, Airtel, Globacom and 9-Mobile. The geographical locations covered are Benin City and Auchi Metropolis.

The study help to gain insights into implications CEED has on the consumer behaviours. It has assisted marketers to get a better idea as to what attributes are important and which factors matters the most to the consumers as customers engage patronage of telecom products. The findings of this study imparts marketers and brand managers with independent data which would be useful for making informed decision on the use of CEED for brands in the sector.

**REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

Conceptually, the endorsements are seen as a relational phenomenon. CEED is the use of popular figure of reputable position to convey product offerings (Sridevi, 2012). Most often, information presented by celebrities are trusted considering the fact that, every celebrity desire to retain the confidence the public has on them (Ogunsiji, 2014). Meanwhile, consumer behavior focuses on how consumers decide what, why, when, where, and how often a particular product is bought (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004; Chucks, Felix, & Temile, 2022). It also accounts for how consumers choose, purchase, use, and discard goods, ideas, experiences, and services to meet their wants alongside how such actions affect not just the consumer but the society at large (Ekakitie & Alagba, 2022). It is therefore the thought process, feelings and actions which relates to consumption process. The four (4) main factors...
which influence consumer behaviour are cultural, personal, social and religious, and psychological factors. All these factors have implications on CEED considering the fact that, Nigeria is a multi-cultural country.

In trying to link the CEED to consumer behaviour, the paper decomposed CEED into four proxies. Notable among the attributes of celebrities are celebrity trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise. Firstly, the term “celebrity trustworthiness” is the (degree) extent of confidence consumers have on the celebrity. Here, the consumer believes in the Judgement of the celebrity. More so, the consumer considers the statement of the celebrity has valid, honest, and believable. As such, the character profile of such celebrities can either make or mar an advertising campaign such that, a scandal-free life is worthy of commendation and can go a long way to boost consumer level of confidence and believability on the information which the celebrity intends to convey (Pamar & Patel, 2015). It has been demonstrated that celebrity credibility has a stronger effect on CEED than perceived knowledge because fans and followers will consciously or unconsciously purchase a celebrity-endorsed goods based on their personal confidence on the celebrity (Agbada & Ekakitie, 2016). As such, trust is essential, and many consumers associate trust with value delivery. "If it is not Panadol, it is not the same thing as Panadol," as the pharmaceutical businesses will says (Ekakitie, 2021).

Evidently, Omoregbe and Osifo (2019) examined the impact CEED has on the purchasing behaviours of 4 telecom brands in the University of Benin. 397 students were conveniently sampled. They evidenced that, the more celebrities are endorsed, the more consumers purchase telecom brands. Simiarly, Aldajani and Daajani (2019) examined the impact CEED has on the purchasing behaviours of 120 consumers in Saudi Arabia. The multivariate analysis was used to test the research hypotheses. They reaffirmed that, the attractiveness of the celebrities informed their decision to purchase a target good/product. Hence, the paper does hypothesize:

\[H_0: \text{Celebrity trustworthiness has no high impacts on consumers’ buying (purchasing) behaviour}\]

Secondly, the term celebrity attractiveness goes beyond the facial looks of the celebrity to include desirable attributes like intellectual skills (Adam & Hussain, 2017). Also, celebrities can be considered attractive because of great sports performances (Priyankara et al., 2017). Attractiveness comes with certain level of intensities and affect (Ekakitie & Orranye, 2020). The strength of the affect (emotions) can be very strong with respect to the product and this attribute can positively be deployed into a programme of emotional branding which draws a lot from the pool of attractiveness. It is not in contention, logically speaking, that attractiveness can be arousal in nature and has close relationship with psychic energy of strong libido, a powerful crude and innate strength that has capacity to pull and influence individuals to make a purchase decision even when it is entirely unplanned. Thus attractiveness has long been key in the endorsements of financial services offered by banks (Ekakitie & Alagba, 2022), Airline carriers and even the sporting world with special reference to Nike and Mr. Tiger Woods in the recent past. Hence, the paper does hypothesize:

\[H_0: \text{Celebrity attractiveness has no high impact on consumers’ buying (purchasing) behaviour}\]

Lastly, Celebrity expertise is the degree to which a celebrity communicates to the public the overall company’s strategic goals. It has to do with the competence of the celebrity endorser
as regards the message being communicated to the public. Similarly, Malik and Qureshi (2017), perceived expertise is concerned with the experience, skill and grounded knowledge of the celebrity to improve a product’s quality. Erdogan (2015) defines celebrity endorsers’ expertise as the endorser’s ability to prove high sense of mastery in a chosen endeavour.

Existing literature indicates that, a receiver’s perception of the source’s expertise positively influences source effectiveness (Ohanian, 2016). In current advertorial scenes powered by ICT, it is found that digital applications to administration of celebrity endorsements activities have resulted in mind-blowing advert runs laden with compelling and expert’s innuendos warranting believability. The impetus and thrill added with the digital edge produces an unbeatable value delivery when experts are engaged in advert acts as celebrity (Ekakitie & Odanibeh, 2016). Marques, et al 2021 study found a strong association between celebrity expertise and purchase intentions.

**H03: Celebrity expertise has no impact on consumers’ buying (purchasing) behaviour**

Theoretically, the three hypotheses stated above are reaffirmed by both the Kamile theory and the Kokil theory. Accordingly, both theories suggest that Marketers believe that celebrity endorsement generates several advantages which include building credibility, fostering trust and drawing consumers’ attention which will result into sales for that brand. CEED is that successful strategy that helps to raise the sales and capture market share. This technique provides a product with a glamorous touch and sparkle with the expectations that a popular look will give that product an added appeal and recognition. Specifically, Kamile suggests that customers normally command very encouraging approach towards those who are attractive. Attractiveness is a trigger to communication of certain attributes in unique phenomena (products and/or services). McCraken (2016) asserts that usefulness of any kind of communication (product communications) depends on 3 attributes which are: Similarity; Familiarity; and Likeability. Researchers have proved that physical attractiveness can very easily change beliefs of the people (Chaiken, 2015). Thus, similarity, familiarity and likeability are constructs that predict acceptance and change in behavior (usually positively) to enhance likelihood of consumer patronage. The theory suggests that the message and its source are key triggers of familiarity and likability. Also, celebrity attractiveness leads consumers to certain persuasions and thence consumer get motivated and become more willing to purchase a particular good.

Kaikai (1987) suggests that, when celebrities are used for advertisements they will help to: facilitate brand identification; impressing or altering the negative attitude towards the brand as they can reposition a new brand/product. Celebrity endorsers may correct market risk posed by changes in the economic system as presented by Orjinta and Ighosewe (2022).

In contemporary times, the risk and allusions made above on celebrity can be very effectual and even very damaging. In the events (infidelity) that led to the divorce of Tiger Woods from his wife over time, corporations across the world cancelled all their endorsements with the Gulf champion. This is to avoid the risk of losing patronage and harming the fidelity of the products Mr. Tiger Woods has endorsed over the years.

**METHODOLOGY**

The paper adopted the survey design so as to gather the opinions/experiences of people based on a series of questions about an issue (CEED and BYA). The study focused on customers of MTN, Globacom, 9 Mobile and Airtel. Getting the total customers of these networks
providers in Benin City Metropolis may be uncertain, thus using the entire population will be unrealistic and not economical. On sample size determination, this study adopt the Cochran’s Sample Size Formula for infinite sample size given in equation below

\[ n_0 = \frac{Z^2pq}{e^2} \] …… (1)

Where \( n_0 \) is the sample size, \( e \) is the desired precision level (i.e. error margin), \( p \) is the estimated sample proportion, \( q \) equals \( 1-p \), and \( Z \) is the \( Z \) score at a specified confidence level.

If \( P=0.5 \) for this research and similar research in marketing, we want a 95% confidence level, and at least \( +5 \) percent (0.05 precision), at a 95% confidence level, the \( Z \) value is 1.96. The sample size is

\[ n_0 = \frac{1.96^2 \times 0.5 \times (1-0.5)}{0.05^2} = 385 \]

Therefore, our sample size is 385. Since our study covers three major telecommunication providers, the sample size distribution as presented in table 1.

Table 1
Sample Distributions of Telecommunication Service Providers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Telecommunication</th>
<th>Number of Customers Considered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MTN</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airtel</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Com.</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Mobile</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>385</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Survey data, 2023

Questionnaire generated. It was structured into three focused attributes such as Celebrity Attractiveness (CTR), Celebrity Expertise (CEX), and Celebrity Trustworthiness (CTR). The five point Likert scale are represented as follows: 5 - Strongly Agree (SA), 4 - Agree (A), 3 - Undecided (U), 2 - Disagree (D), and 1 - Strongly Disagree (SD). Cronbach alpha measures internal reliability – the questionnaire. Values range from 0 and 1.0 was used such that 1.0 indicated perfect reliability, the value 0.70 is the lower level of acceptability. This implies that the recommended value greater than 0.7 was adopted.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this section, the study questions were presented while the responses from respondents were analyzed.

Table 2
Correlations Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>BYA</th>
<th>CTR</th>
<th>CEX</th>
<th>CAA</th>
<th>TCA</th>
<th>CAA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BYA</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTR</td>
<td>.097</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEX</td>
<td>-.089</td>
<td>.785</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAA</td>
<td>-.266</td>
<td>.665</td>
<td>.902</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.174</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SPSS output, 2023
The Pearson correlation (table 2) showed the coefficient of the relationship that exists between the regressed (BYA) and the regressor (CTR, CEX, and CAA). The results shows that the r=0.1 (10%) of CTR and BYA indicates a very weak relationship. A coefficient of r=0.1(-10%) between CEX and BYA reveal a weak negative relationship. There was a strong (high) relationship between TCA and BYA with the r=0.7(70%). CAA had a coefficient of r=0.266 indicating a negative relationship. It was obvious that CTR had a significant influence on BYA while Celebrity attractiveness negatively influences consumers’ buying (purchasing) decisions.

**Result Presentation**

The results from multivariate analysis/regression are presented herein.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>6.048</td>
<td>.616</td>
<td>9.811</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTR</td>
<td>-.154</td>
<td>.043</td>
<td>-.173</td>
<td>-3.558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEX</td>
<td>.681</td>
<td>.067</td>
<td>.790</td>
<td>10.159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAA</td>
<td>-.752</td>
<td>.048</td>
<td>-.999</td>
<td>-15.652</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SPSS output, 2023

From table 3, the beta value of -0.152 was assigned to CTR while the T-statistics of -3.56 and a significant value of 0.00 indicates a negatively significant relationship exist between CTR and BYA. This imposes a strong reversal influence on BYA. It means as high as (t-3.558), a significant constraints on ‘CTR’. It further connotes that trust is not a factor to influence buyer behavior in the telecom sector.

Secondly, the values of CEX beta, CEX T-statistics and CEX significant level were 0.681, 10.16 and 0.00 respectively. This indicates that, CEX have high impact on BYA. Therefore, the alternate hypothesis is accepted. This negates the null hypothesis’s claim. It implies that the more we increase the factor of ‘expertise’ the more customers are or will be willing to engage a positive buyer behavior in the Nigerian telecom sector.

Lastly, the beta, T-statistics, and significant level were -0.752, t-15.65 and 0.00 respectively in the case of CAA and BYA. This also indicates that, CAA have high indirect impact on BYA, it is certainly in the reverse order. It implies therefore that the more the factor of attractiveness is increased the more harm it will do to customers likelihood or willingness to engage a buying behavior in the telecom sector.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>Adj. R²</th>
<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
<th>Durbin-Watson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.852</td>
<td>.726</td>
<td>.723</td>
<td>1.81240</td>
<td>1.995</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SPSS output, 2023
From table 4, Model summary, the value of R and R² was 0.85(85%) and 0.73(73%) respectively indicates that a very strong relationship/association exist among regressed (Buying Behaviour of Customers) and the CEED attributes (CAA, CTR, CEX) and the variation in BYA was explained by the regressor. More so, the Durbin-Watson statistics was also used to determine the existence of auto-correlation. A D-W value of 1.995 indicates no autocorrelation in the model.

Finally, the ANOVA result shown in table 5 shows the overall significance of the model. With F-statistics of 244.6 and a significant value of 0.00 indicates that a joint significant relationship exists between the CEED (CTR, CEX, CAA,) and dependent variables (BYA).

Discussions
CTR: The study has provoked insightful outcome as regards the behavior of data collected. The first factor of CTR has a negative (B -.154) effects on BYA and the extent of the adverse relationship (t -3.558) is high and this has a very significant (reverse effect) effect on the dependent variable. Although literature reviewed suggest that trustworthiness of celebrities (Ali, & Masoud, 2018) has positive impact on BYA, this study reveals otherwise with respect to the telecom sector in Nigeria. Trustworthiness in the opinion of (Katyal, 2017) is responsible for consumer continued patronage of Nike products endorsed by Tiger Woods, a Golfer and celebrity which resulted in improved revenue for Nike. Again, studies by averse that consumer confidence (trust) improves buyer behavior. This study posts a reverse effect. A logical explanation could be differences in climes (Western nations and Nigeria in Africa.) and the intensity in Western countries on media channels, not forgetting industrial differences.

CEX: As a contrast to the above, celebrity expertise is the second predictor variable. A strong value of (.681) is revealed and it suggests a positive/good correlation. Celebrity expertise is driving high demands in daily needs like Dettol and Hypo cleaning and hygiene products. Expert knowledge has resulted in huge public relations advantage to owners of these firms (Ekakitie and Sado, 2023). This hold true for telecom industry where celebrity personalities like Don Jaszy (musician) and Shaggy (comedian) for Globacom (Glo) endorsements have resulted in high patronage of Glo data bundle. These iconic celebrities are used heavily as drivers whose knowledge as social media experts with huge twitter following has resulted in influencing positive buyer behavior and adoption of telecom products. Studies by Ali and Masoud (2018) has revealed celebrity expertise as a good reinforce of buyer confidence.

CAA: Celebrity attraction which posts (-.752) – this is a negative association with buyer behaviour. On the aspect of its extent of damaging effect (t-15.652) and the resultant impact on buyer behavior (.000 at 5%) is very unfavourable. Studies by (Malik and Qureshi (2017)
suggest that the ‘pull-force’ attraction has on buyer behavior is strong and resulted in huge patronage as the firm’s posts handsome revenue. Also, (Marques, et al, 2021) endorsements of (product name) attracted consumer patronage and imparted buyer behavior positively. In Nigeria celebrities with flamboyant and attractive public outlook like Banky W and Falz have over the years imparted much attraction on MTN a leading telecom corporation in Nigeria. Summarily, celebrity trustworthiness and attraction are not relevant CEED predictors in the final choice consideration of telecom products and services consumers in Nigeria. Rather, celebrity expertise holds an overriding force as influencer of the customers’ buying/purchasing decisions. This finding as regards the consumer behaviour of telecom products is an eye opener and a contribution to knowledge and scholarship in CEED.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Although prior literature contends that celebrity endorsements are veritable strategies for achieving product acceptance among the consumers of telecommunication products, this study’s two (2) major variables indicate otherwise. The celebrities used for endorsing telecommunication products have both influential and preferential impact on consumers’ decisions to buy telecom products. Hence, the study recommends the following:

1. Telecom firms should always use celebrities to generate good image and subsequently attract consumer purchase.
2. The attractiveness of the celebrity should be matched with the right product and customers. This way, the company’s products would have been projected effectively and the return on investment boasted through increased purchase.
3. The execution of the advertisement in which a celebrity endorser is used should be executed in a simple and clean manner with an endorser who have expertise knowledge of the product been advertised. Hence, only endorsers who have expertise knowledge on the products should be contracted.

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