

CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT AND ITS IMPACT ON CONSUMER PERCEPTION: A STUDY OF GLOBACOM NIGERIA LIMITED.

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Abstract

Celebrity endorsement usually involves a written or spoken statement by a public or sometimes private individual promoting the qualities of a particular brand or product. The telecommunication industry in Nigeria has witnessed very stiff competition since 2001 when the first set of GSM operators kicked off operation in the country. This competition has led to the folding up of a number of cellular Network providers in the country. With the growing competition, GSM operators in the country have since then been employing series of marketing communication tools to combat competition. One of which is celebrity endorsement. Globacom, one of the largest telecommunication companies in Nigeria has constantly employed celebrity endorsement and has used about 50 movie, music, football stars, media personalities and statesmen from inception. This study made use of Credibility Model and Source Attractiveness Model theories as a theoretical framework. The study made use of a combination of questionnaires and In-depth interviews to gather data; 200 questionnaires were distributed around Lagos, Nigeria and an interview was conducted with the head of Marketing of Globacom Nigeria. The findings of the research showed that although Celebrity endorsement is a good way to capture the attention of prospective customers, what actually makes these customers stay and what attracts the majority of the brand's customers is not the celebrity but the quality of the product.

Keywords: Celebrity Endorsement, Consumer Behaviour, Consumerism, Advertising and Public Relations.

INTRODUCTION

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, Smith is saying that endorsement is openly flaunted at every available opportunity the brand has.

In Advertising, endorsement usually involves a written or spoken statement by a public or sometimes private individual promoting the qualities of a particular brand or product. Endorsement is different from testimonial in that, endorsement is usually done by celebrities and very public figures while testimonials are usually done by ordinary citizens and is usually not paid for.

Belch & Belch (2001) adds that “when endorser promotes a company or its products or services, the message is not necessarily based on their personal experiences”. What this implies is that in a lot of cases, the celebrity in question sees the endorsement as a gig that he gets paid to perform, it has nothing to do with his/her personal preferences. An example is the case of Ronaldinho, a popular football player in the early-mid 2000s, he was a Coke ambassador and then made a show of drinking Pepsi at a press conference which cost him his 750,000 USD endorsement with Coke. This reflects Belch & Belch’s (2001) position that it is not all about match sometimes, but about the product leveraging on a celebrity’s clout.

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 often seduced by the idea of purchasing a product which is endorsed by someone wealthy or famous, as though by buying the product, the consumer also becomes affiliated with the person who endorses it (Smith, 2009).

Modern product endorsements can come with contracts worth substantial amounts of money. For example, many sports stars agree to participate in product endorsement campaigns with the understanding that the company will compensate them for the trouble; some stars donate the proceeds to charities they support, using the product endorsement as a public relations campaign. In exchange for an endorsement contract, someone may agree to use the product publicly whenever possible, and he or she may be restricted from using products made by a competitor (Smith, 2009).

A product endorsement does not necessarily mean that a product is good. It just means that the company has managed to work its public relations connections to get a big name associated with it. While most people and organizations will try out a product before they agree to endorse it, this is not always the case (Smith, 2009).

Some endorsements take the form of written testimonials, where people write about how the product changed their lives. Historically, such testimonials were often printed on the product packaging directly; modern testimonials are more commonly included in advertising campaigns, with excerpts only on the packaging. Many companies also use photographs of famous people on

their products to create a visual connection between the endorser and the product, which is why sports stars appear on some product packaging (Smith, 2009).

The society that we live in can not only be called secular or democratic, it should be more appropriately termed as over-communicated these days especially the highly populated countries of the world. 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 (Jack Trout and Al Ries, 2004). Likewise, there are around 130 television channels in India broadcasting over 3 million television commercials each year in India. The media-explosion can thus be easily demonstrated. Moreover, people forget 80% of the information in just 24 hours! Just imagine 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.

Celebrities have been involved in endorsing activities since late nineteenth century - Erdogan, (1999). 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. In short it is believed that celebrity endorsement helps increase the recall value of the brand (Sanyukta & Gaulkar, 2007).

Kotler & Keller (2009) say further that messages delivered by attractive and popular sources can achieve higher attention and recall, which is why advertisers often use celebrities as spokespeople. Celebrities are likely to be effective when they are credible or personify a key product attribute. The use of D, Banj, an energized music artiste to give face to Power Fist, an energy drink could be seen as a good tie; Kanu Nwanko's endorsement of Peak milk at the peak of his career was also an effective blend. "Celebrities can play a more strategic role for their brands, not only endorsing a product but also helping to design, position, and sell merchandize and services" (Kotler & Keller, 2009).

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. A celebrity with a bad public Image might find it very difficult to get brands to employ him/her as an ambassador.

The concept of celebrity endorsement has developed in Nigeria just like in many countries of the world, corporate organizations and government are increasingly leveraging on the popularity of a certain celebrities to drive home a message or promote a brand. Whether or not this endorsements that cost millions of Naira actually does anything to change or influence audience perception in Nigeria is the main point of this study and what it hopes to understand.

The assumption guiding this study is that the telecommunication industry in Nigeria has witnessed very stiff competition since 2001 when the first set of GSM operators kicked off operation in the country. With increase in number, the operators have since then been employing series of marketing communication tools to combat competition. One of which is celebrity endorsement. Globacom, one of the largest telecommunication companies in Nigeria has constantly employed celebrity endorsement and has used about 50 movie, music, football stars, media personalities and statesmen from inception.

There were media speculations that D’banj’s deal alone was worth about 170 million naira which Globacom never clarified. Most of these deals are sealed between Globacom and the celebrities behind closed doors. The company must have spent millions of naira on celebrity endorsement, but every attempt to get the real figure proved abortive as this information is considered classified. It currently has the highest number of known faces on its brand.

With the lucrative deals Globacom recently signed with leading actors, actresses and musicians in Nigeria who now serve as Glo Ambassadors, celebrity endorsement has become one of the ways celebrities know they are appreciated, popular and relevant in the country. In fact it is not unheard of for some people in a bid to prove how popular a celebrity is to start reeling out the number of brands such a celebrity is paid to endorse. The common saying in the entertainment industry these days is that one can only measure the ‘star power’ of a Nigerian artiste and actor by checking the person’s name in 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).

About Globacom Nigeria Limited

Globacom is the Second National Operator (SNO) in Nigeria, licensed to provide an array of telecommunications services. It started operations on August 29, 2003 and has deep penetration countrywide with about 34 million subscriber base.

One of the most significant developments in the Nigerian telecom industry is Per Second Billing (PSB) which Globacom pioneered at launch in 2003. Competition had argued that PSB was not possible until 2007 and that no network in the world had been able to launch with PSB. The innovation by Globacom made it possible for GSM users to pay only for actual time spent on the phone. Other operators in the country have now adopted that billing system.

Globacom has gone on to become one of the cheapest cellular service both for Broadband internet and phone calls. It has continuously kept the telecomms industry on its toes by introducing game changing policies and tariffs that affects the whole industry. For instance, Globacom was the first to introduce very cheap internet services that allowed people unlimited downloads on their blackberry phones and today, it also has one of the cheapest smartphone internet bundles in Nigeria.

Globacom is a big supporter of sports in Nigeria and Ghana, sponsoring the national football teams and the Premier Leagues in both countries.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Competition in the telecommunications industry in Nigeria is very stiff. And this competition has led to a price race between these companies, virtually every day, new promotions kick-off, promising mouthwatering offers and advantages over the competition. This has led to drastic reduction in tariffs (internet, voice-calls and sms) in Nigeria and has forced companies to adopt new ways of retaining their market share as well as attract new customers. One of the methods that have become wildly popular in Nigeria is, Celebrity Endorsement. Celebrity Endorsement in this instance refers to the now popular practice of companies paying celebrities and public figures to endorse their products; invariably acting as ambassadors of the brand.

This celebrities cost a lot of money and it can only be assumed the companies that employ the services of these people expect some form of return on investment in terms of increased patronage or customer retention. However there is simply no academic literature that has adequately captured and provided evidence that point to the fact that celebrity endorsement in Nigeria has been effective in influencing audience perception so far or how these celebrities influence consumer behavior and their buying decision process. This study aims to cover these gaps by trying to understand the role and impact of Celebrity endorsement on brand patronage and consumer perception.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

For the objective of this study to be realized, the following research questions were asked and answered:

1. When did Globacom start using celebrities to endorse its brand and what informed the decision to start doing this?
2. How do the subscribers of Globacom perceive the use of celebrities to endorse its products and brand?
3. How has celebrity endorsement influenced audience perception about the Globacom brand and their decision to patronize the brand?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Theoretically, this study focusing on the Nigerian consumer, would add to the growing body of literature on celebrity endorsement, hence would serve as a reference material on the subject.

The findings would provide marketers and brand managers with independent data which would be useful for making informed decision on the use of celebrity endorsement for brands because the findings of this study revealed some facts about celebrity endorsement: why and when do you use celebrity endorsement as a marketing strategy? Audience perception of the use of celebrity endorsement in Nigeria, amongst other things.

So, the practical significance is, given the fact that celebrity endorsement is a growing trend in Nigeria, perhaps as brand managers and marketers have more knowledge of the tool through the findings of the study, it is hoped that they would apply it more effectively in their marketing activities.

THE CONCEPT OF CELEBRITY AND CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT

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. There are various ways people can become celebrities and these days the most popular ways are through acting, singing or beauty, while others become accidental celebrities. In Nigeria, there are basically just 2 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 (Linda Ikeji- popular blogger is a good example). Once people become celebrities, they usually leverage on their new found status to promote their cause, make more money for themselves by endorsing brands and promote their image and personal brand. This study focuses on celebrities endorsing brands and personalities and how these endorsements influence audience perception.

Celebrity endorsement is a channel of brand communication in which a famous personality acts as the brand's spokesperson and certifies the brand's claim and position by extending his/her personality, popularity, stature in the society or expertise in the field to the brand. 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.

Today '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.

The theories like 'Source Credibility Theory, Source Attractiveness Theory and Meaning Transfer Theory' provide a basis on which the methodology of celebrity endorsement works and

also explains how the process of the celebrity endorsement influences the minds of the consumers. Firms invest huge amounts as advertising expenditure for hiring the right celebrity.

However there lies uncertainty with respect to the returns that the company might be able to garner for the brand. The issue of matching the values of the celebrity with the brand values is also very important, i.e. getting the right celebrity to endorse the right brand. Consumers perceive the brand as having superior quality because it has been endorsed by a credible source. This makes endorsement as one of the indicators of quality for any brand. Corporate credibility along with endorser credibility plays a significant role in the attitude of the consumer towards the brand and the advertisement respectively.

On the other hand, the over popularity of the celebrity sometimes overshadows the brand. If the celebrity is involved in multiple endorsements, it tends to create confusion among consumers and hence negatively affects the perception of the advertisement and the brand. Hence, to say clearly whether the practice of celebrity endorsement impacts positively or negatively on the brand still remains a debate.

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, 1997). 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. In the mid-1990s, it was estimated that as much as 20 percent of American network television advertising uses celebrity endorsers (Miciak & Shanklin, 1994).

Marketing has sought to use the varied meanings personified by celebrities to assist the achievement of certain advertising objectives (O'Mahony & Meenaghan, 1997). 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.

CELEBRITY ENDORSERS' EFFECTS AND ADVERTISING EFFECTIVENESS

A review of the literature revealed the following key predictors: celebrity performance, negative information, celebrity credibility, celebrity expertise, celebrity trustworthiness, celebrity

attractiveness, celebrity familiarity, celebrity likeability, and celebrity/product fit. Each predictor is examined below.

Celebrity performance - In the context of this study, celebrity performance refers to the level of achievement a celebrity attains at any given time in their chosen profession. Performance could refer to the level of athletic performance, acting success, musical success, etc. of any given celebrity. This perceived level of performance may be enduring, as in the case of the Rolling Stones who have maintained a high level of rock and roll notoriety for decades, or fleeting, as in the case of one-hit-wonder Right-Said-Fred.

However, no guarantee exists that any celebrity can continuously produce popular music, act in financially successful movies, or win sports championships. In fact, depending on their level of performance, celebrities do rise and fall in popularity throughout their entire career (Agrawal & Kamakura 1995). When a celebrity fails to perform acceptably, as defined by consumers, a celebrity endorser's effectiveness tends to decline (Agrawal & Kamakura, 1995).

Negative celebrity information - Since repeated pairings of a brand and celebrity strengthen the associative link consumers establish between brand and celebrity, negative information about the celebrity may negatively impact the endorsed brand (Erdogan & Baker 2000). Till and Shimp (1998) observed that a strong associative link between celebrity and product must be present before negative celebrity information lowers brand evaluations. Regardless of the strength of association consumers perceive between the celebrity endorser and the product, negative information about celebrity endorsers can put a firm's products and image at risk. Pop star Michael Jackson's child molestation indictment produced negative connotations. The resultant celebrity image transformation would have bottomed out Jackson's endorsement effectiveness for Pepsi – had the company not long since opted out of Jackson as an endorser due to his prior alleged indiscretions.

Celebrity credibility - 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 1999).

Source credibility can be defined as 'a communicator's positive characteristics that affect the receiver's acceptance of a message' (Ohanian, 1990, p. 41). The source-credibility model analyses the factors leading to the perceived credibility of the communicator (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953). The model contends that the effectiveness of a message depends upon the perceived level of expertise and trustworthiness associated with an endorser or communicator (Erdogan, 1999). When considered jointly, expertise and trustworthiness are presumed to embody the source credibility construct (Ohanian, 1990).

The source-attractiveness model posits that the attractiveness of any source is determined by the communication receiver's perceptions of the source's similarity, familiarity, and likeability.

Essentially, if consumers perceive a celebrity endorser as similar to them and they are familiar with and like the celebrity, they will tend to find the celebrity more attractive.

Celebrity expertise - Erdogan (1999, p. 298) defines celebrity endorsers' expertise as 'the extent to which a communicator is perceived to be a source of valid assertions'. The literature investigating source credibility in settings involving persuasive communication generally indicates that a receiver's perception of the source's expertise positively influences source effectiveness (Ohanian 1990). Respondents' actions in response to the source's recommendations seem to vary directly with the source's perceived level of expertise and the target person's level of agreement with those recommendations. Subjects exposed to a source perceived as highly expert exhibit more agreement with the source's recommendation than did those exposed to a source with low expertise (Ohanian, 1990). The level of perceived celebrity expertise should predict celebrity endorser effectiveness.

Celebrity trustworthiness - Trustworthiness is the degree of confidence consumers place in a communicator's intent to convey the assertions s/he considers most valid (Ohanian, 1990). Giffin (1967) describes favorable disposition, acceptance, psychological safety, and perceived supportive climate as favorable consequences of trust. Much of the literature supports the positive effect of trustworthiness on effectiveness (Chao, Wuhrer, & Werani, 2005). Miller and Baseheart (1969) found that a highly opinionated message from a highly trustworthy communicator produces an effective attitude change, while non-trusted communicators' impact proved immaterial. Perceived communicator trustworthiness has also been shown to produce a greater attitude change than perceived expertise (McGinnies & Ward, 1980). The extant literature on celebrity endorsers suggests that trustworthiness is an important predictor of celebrity endorsement effectiveness.

Celebrity attractiveness - Celebrity endorsement literature has indicated that attractiveness is an important indicator of effectiveness (Chao et al. 2005); however, the attractiveness construct is multi-dimensional in nature. Far from just encompassing aspects of physical attractiveness, which themselves are rather arbitrary, attractiveness also entails other characteristics such as personality and athletic ability (Erdogan, 1999).

Some authors suggest that physically attractive celebrities are a predictor of advertising effectiveness (Till & Busler, 2000). Certainly, physically attractive celebrities are generally viewed more favorably on various personality traits than their less attractive counterparts (Kahle & Homer, 1985, Eagly, Ashmore, Makhijani, & Longo, 1991). Joseph (1982) studied endorsers' attractiveness beyond the level of personality traits. Specifically, he examined the impact of endorser attractiveness on opinion change, product evaluation, and other measures of effectiveness. The study concluded that attractive endorsers have a more positive impact on the products they endorse than less attractive endorsers. Baker and Churchill (1977), however, found that while attractiveness was effective in increasing positive advertisement evaluations, it was not effective in producing stronger purchase intentions.

Similarly, Caballero, Lumpkin, & Madden (1989) observed that endorser attractiveness had no effect on advertising effectiveness. Within the broader context of celebrity endorsement, endorser attractiveness is certainly a relevant construct. However, the nature and scope of the attractiveness construct remains uncertain, and therefore appears worthy of additional attention.

Celebrity familiarity and likeability - In some studies, celebrity familiarity and likeability are treated as if each were analogous to attractiveness (Kahle & Homer 1985). Each celebrity attribute may, in fact, be subsumed within the attractiveness construct. But other studies address familiarity and likeability separately, investigating each construct's effect on effectiveness as if each were distinct from endorser attractiveness (O'Mahoney & Meenaghan, 1998).

In the celebrity endorsement context, familiarity has been defined as 'knowledge of the source through exposure' (Erdogan 1999, p. 299). Likeability is defined as 'affection for the source as a result of the source's physical appearance and behavior' (Erdogan 1999, p. 299). On this basis, in this study the two constructs are treated as if each were distinct from attractiveness. This path was followed in an attempt to determine each construct's value as a possible predictor of celebrity endorsement effectiveness.

Celebrity/product fit - The celebrity/product fit, also called the 'match-up hypothesis', refers to the harmony of the match between the celebrity endorser and the product being endorsed (Till & Busler 2000). Celebrity/product fit is thought to function as a key determinant of endorsement effectiveness (e.g. Friedman et al. 1978; Friedman & Friedman 1979; Kahle & Homer 1985; Kamins 1989, 1990; Kamins & Gupta 1994; Erdogan & Baker 2000; Till & Busler 2000; Erdogan et al. 2001; Batra & Homer 2004). Celebrity effectiveness does vary across different product types. Friedman and Friedman (1979) concluded that the better the celebrity/product fit, as perceived by consumers, the higher the level of endorsement effectiveness. Till and Busler (2000) found that celebrity/product fit was effective for only certain measures of effectiveness such as brand attitude, but not for other measures such as purchase intention. Regardless of the impact celebrity/product fit has on effectiveness, the absolute weight of the existing literature suggests that the phenomenon should play an important role in celebrity endorser effectiveness (Till & Busler 2000).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theory behind the selection of celebrity endorsers has attracted a considerable amount of academic and practitioner interest. Carl Hovland and his associates laid a foundation for this research agenda in the early 1950s with the development of the Source Credibility Model (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953; Hovland & Weiss, 1951). Following the initial Source Credibility Model, three additional models have been proposed: the Source Attractiveness Model (McGuire, 1968), the Product Match-Up Hypothesis (Kahle & Homer, 1985; Kamins, 1989, 1990), and the Meaning Transfer Model (McCracken, 1989). This study shall briefly discuss Source Credibility Model and Source Attractiveness Model.

Source Credibility Model

The first of these models, the Source Credibility Model, contends that the effectiveness of a message depends on perceived levels of expertise and trustworthiness of an endorser (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Hovland et al., 1953; Ohanian, 1991). Information from a credible source (e.g., celebrity) can influence beliefs, opinions, attitudes, and/or behavior through a process called internalization, which occurs when receivers accept a source influence in terms of their personal attitude and value structures (Kelman, 1961). Trustworthiness refers to the honesty, integrity, and believability of an endorser as perceived by the target audience.

Expertise is defined as the extent to which a communicator is perceived to be a source of valid assertions. It refers to the perceived level of knowledge, experience, or skills possessed by an endorser (Hovland et al., 1953). A celebrity who also appears to

be an expert has been found to be more persuasive (Speck, Schumann, & Thompson, 1988) and can generate more intentions to make purchase decisions or donate money (Ohanian, 1991).

Source Attractiveness Model

According to (McGuire, 1968) The Source Attractiveness Model contends that the effectiveness of a message depends on the *similarity, familiarity, and likeability* of an endorser. *Similarity* is defined as a supposed resemblance between the source and the receiver of the message, *familiarity* as knowledge of the source through exposure, and *likeability* as affection for the source as a result of the source's physical appearance and behavior.

This theory explains the message acceptance in two ways: Identification and Conditioning. Identification is when the receiver or the target audience of the communication begins to identify with the source's attractiveness, and hence tends to accept his opinions, beliefs, habits, attitudes etc. Conditioning is when the attractiveness of the source is supposed to pass on to the brand after regular association of the source with the brand.

METHODOLOGY

The study worked within the framework of the research questions. However, in order to achieve objectives of the work; opinion of the subscribers to Globacom network, used as case study were sampled through questionnaires. Also, the advertising director of Globacom, a celebrity endorser for Globacom and a top executive from an advertising agency were interviewed for expert view.

POPULATION OF THE STUDY

The research population was Globacom's subscribers in Lagos State which is the commercial hub of the nation and the most populated state in Nigeria with about 15million residents.

In the interview with Joe Inuwa (2010), the Advertising Director of Globacom Nigeria Ltd, he said, “let me say while the whole product conceptualization was going on, celebrity endorsement was part of the entry strategy. By that time, they were not celebrities from the point of view of mass appeal but we selected celebrities most of who were state men, because coming in as a new brand after many years of competitive operation in the industry and coming with a local background to compete with international organizations, the brand needed to muster immediately acceptance of the people. The brand decided to appeal to the people through statemen”.

Research Question 2: How do the subscribers of Globacom perceive the use of celebrities to endorse its products and brand?

Another research question this study aims to answer, is about how the subscribers of Globacom perceive the use of celebrities to endorse its products and brand and their response is contained in the next table.

Table 1: Perception of subscribers of the use of celebrities to endorse Glo’s products and brand.

How do you perceive the idea of Globacom’s use of celebrities to endorse its products and brand?	Percentage
It is a waste of money	12.9
It is a good communication strategy	81.7
I don’t know	5.4
Total	100%
N	195

Table 1 above contains the perception of subscribers of the use of celebrities to endorse Glo’s products and brand. The table shows that 12.9 per cent of the subscribers perceived the efforts as a waste of money. About 82 per cent said it is a good communication strategy, while 5.4 per cent said they had nothing to say to the question. The view of 81.7 per cent of the respondents who opined that celebrity endorsement is a good communication strategy for Globacom is a pointer to the fact that the tool has the hope of growth in Nigeria. Their opinion may not translate to taking the expected actions that could add value to the brand but seeing it in positive light is a very good start.

Many of them explained that celebrities are better at delivering advertising messages than unknown models. This could be a function of perception which may not necessarily be true. Since 24.9 per cent picked familiarity as their topmost element of celebrity endorsement; it is possible they are attracted to the messages because they can relate with the models and this gives them the feeling that these messages are better delivered. Whichever way, the first thing an advertising expert wants to achieve is to attract attention to adverting messages, since celebrity endorsement delivers this, the perception of the tool in the table above is correct.

Table 2: Respondents’ reply to question on elements they look out for in celebrity endorsement

What elements do you look out for in celebrity endorsement?	Percentage
Trustworthy	16.6
Attractive	18.8
Product fit	24.3
Expertise	12.9
Familiarity	24.9
Other	2.8
Total	100%
N	195

In the table above, respondents revealed various elements they look out for in celebrity endorsement. 16.6% picked trustworthy, 18.8% chose attractive, 24.3% picked product fit, 12.9% sought for expertise, 24.9% looked at familiarity while 2.8% picked others where attitude takes the lead. This shows that majority only look out for faces they can relate with. This may be the reason why Glo is running more endorsement with celebrities in the entertainment industry; people who subscribers see every now and then and are also familiar with. While answering the question on recall, most of the names mentioned were that of celebrities from music and movie industries. Most of the respondents have forgotten completely the statesmen, media and sport stars used by Glo.

Several scholars have researched into what consumers look out for in celebrity endorsement and came up with elements like trustworthy, attractive, product fit, familiarity, expertise and so on as stated in the table above. In this study, Globacom’s subscribers mostly look out for familiar faces and people who match the brand. This demonstrates the Product Match-Up Hypothesis and Selection of Celebrity figure in chapter two; consumers relate better with endorsement where the endorser and brand constitute a good blend.

1. When did Globacom start using celebrities to endorse its brand and what informed the decision to start doing this?
2. How do the subscribers of Globacom perceive the use of celebrities to endorse its products and brand?
3. How as celebrity endorsement influenced audience perception about the Globacom brand and their decision to patronize the brand?

Research Question 3: How as celebrity endorsement influenced audience perception about the Globacom brand and their decision to patronize the brand?

The next research question of this study is about the role celebrity endorsement plays in ensuring continued patronage of a brand or product and how it generally influences the buying decision of consumers in Nigeria. The impact questions are anchored on subscription, permanent patronage, loyalty, message appeal and celebrities recall. As such, the tables that follow present their responses.

Table 5: Why respondents subscribed to Globacom’s network

Why did you subscribe to Globacom’s network?	Percentage
Celebrity endorsement	1.8
Network quality	70.3
Low tariff	19.4
Promotion incentives	8.5
Total	100%
n	195

From the table above, 70.3% of the respondents subscribed to Glo because of the network quality, 19.4% because of low tariff, 8.5% because of promotion incentives while only 1.8% came on Glo network due to celebrity endorsement. This shows that the impact of celebrity endorsement in driving traffic to the network is very low compared to other factors like network quality. This negates Inuwa’s (2010) stand that celebrity endorsement was the force which drove people to the network. Meanwhile, virtually all the respondents told the interviewer that other than the options above, they subscribed because of the indigenous nature of the brand.

And speaking of the effect the strategy has had on the network, Joe Inuwa (2010), the Advertising Director at Globacom, said, It has impacted, I must be very honest with you. If you look at the brand from inception, you will ask yourself how come, a brand that has no pedigree and from a local source could stand up and play against international players. We were massively accepted by the people when we started and the reason was very clear. Aside from what the brand promised, which it delivered, there is this public sentiment around people that are liked.

So, when we use statesmen like Ojukwu, Wole Soyinka, China Achebe; John **Mohmoh** in the business circle and sportsmen that were highly rated at that time, if they speak in favor of Glo, who will then speak against Glo. If those people who were and remain key decision makers in

their lines could choose Glo, who will not choose Glo. If those people say Glo is good, who will then say otherwise? They really watered the ground for the brand to grow and till today, there is mass followership whenever we use celebrities to endorse our brand.

What the company and its advertising director do not know is that, it is not these people mentioned above that moved people to the network. Because when they were asked the reason why they subscribed to the network, only 1.8% subscribed due to celebrity endorsement. Also, in their response to ‘if they would still be using the network even if their favorite celebrities stop endorsing the brand’, 96.8% of them said, yes. This is an overwhelming opinion indicating that even without these ‘celebrities’, Globacom would still have been able to attract the kind of subscribers it had mustered over time. Though it has not all turned out a bad case for the company, celebrity endorsement has, however, not been the main drive behind the success recorded by Globacom.

Table 6: Respondents’ reaction to their understanding of the concept celebrity endorsement.

Do you understand the concept of celebrity endorsement?	Percentage
Yes	86.5
No	13.5
Total	100%
N	195

The table above indicates understanding of respondents on the concept celebrity endorsement. 86.5% indicated that they understood celebrity endorsement while 13.5% did not understand this tool. It is clear here that majority of the respondents had a good understanding of the concept; some even gave explanation to buttress their proper understanding. This is a pointer to the fact that their responses to the research questions were not products of ignorance.

Conclusion

Celebrities have always been the easiest way for a new product launch (consumer goods) and will remain so in the near future on account of their mass appeal and a world full of star struck loyal fans mostly in the Western World. This was one of the driving reasons for Glo when they opted to use the option of celebrity endorsement, according to the Advertising Director who revealed that celebrity endorsement was a market entry strategy to muster immediate mass appeal. But what this study has shown and proven is that product quality is much more important than which celebrity is endorsing it, at least as far as Nigeria is concerned. What this implies for marketers and brand owners is that focus should be concentrated more on ensuring quality

service delivery rather than relying on deep pockets, thinking once you can pay for a celebrity to endorse your product, then all is well.

It would be interesting to research on why the mobile phone product named Perfect failed to take off, despite the fact that all their adverts had 2face on them. Another worthy research would be to find out why the mobile phone owned by one of the top celebrities in Nigeria at the height of his popularity failed to attract buyers and had to fold up in very short order. These are some of the issues that the researcher hopes to study as a follow up to this article. It can therefore be concluded that although celebrity endorsement is a good and loud way to get immediate buzz and attention for your product/service/brand, it is however more important that quality and customer satisfaction is optimal at every time if we are to maintain a positive viewpoint in the eyes of the consumers.

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