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The Influence of Customer Loyalty on Celebrity Endorser Choice Decision Making: An Exploratory Survey of Customers of Selected Celebrity Endorsed Products in Kenya.

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Abstract

Previous scholars have extensively explored customer loyalty as one of the fundamental objectives of marketers. By and large, most of researchers have viewed this mono-directionally in respect to customers vis-à-vis products where customer loyalty has been construed to signify loyalty towards consumer products. However, in the context of celebrity endorsement, the researchers in this paper explore customer loyalty in bi-dimensional perspective, that is, convectional customer loyalty towards a product and customer loyalty toward a celebrity. The configuration of the two dimensions is considered to determine the subsequent effects resulting from the extent of the two aspects.

The researchers introduce a Celebrity-Product Loyalty Congruency (CPLC) model as an instrument to aid in celebrity endorser choice for product advertising. Existing literature on the study area has been reviewed in an effort to identify areas of concurrency/parity and points-of difference serving as research gaps in the reviewed literature. The paper is expected to fill the gaps identified regarding not only the perception of customer loyalty but also to help circumvent the difficulty of celebrity endorser choice. Exploratory research design was used in this study targeting customers of selected celebrity endorsed brands in Kenya. Questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collection. Data collected was analyzed using SPSS as the ideal statistical analysis tool. The analyzed data reveal that customers would be more inclined to buy products to which they possess high degree of loyalty than to celebrities in Kenya.

Key words: Celebrity Endorsement, Brand Loyalty, Celebrity Attributes.

1. Introduction

Celebrity endorsement has become a prominent MARCOM strategy in modern advertising throughout the world. History has it that modern advertising originated in Britain and in the last several decades, the use of celebrities in advertisements worldwide has increased dramatically mainly as a result of the development of commodity culture and the ambiguity of mass media. The need to break away and stand out of the ambiguous and clustered advertising messages. However, dire need is beckoning for advertisers to focus on celebrity endorsement as an alliance of two brands: the product and the endorser. The level of loyalty directed to the two aspects is pertinent. Firms strive to win customer loyalty as those with large groups of customers have been shown to be associated with higher rate of return on investment (Buzzell et.al, 1975). This study seeks to dissect this customer loyalty into the two perspectives, their relative strengths and consideration in product-celebrity congruency decision.

2. Objectives of the study

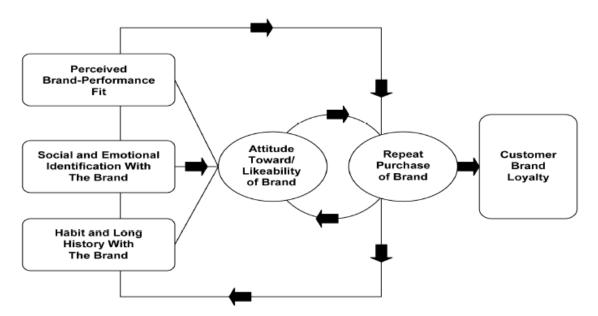
The general objective of this research is to determine the influence of customer loyalty in celebrity endorser choice decision making while specific objectives are:- To determine the extent of customer loyalty as influenced by celebrity endorsement in purchasing decision, to determine the extent of customer loyalty towards products/services in celebrity choice decisions, to determine the optional match-up alternatives for product-celebrity endorser choice decision and to develop and recommend a working model for enhancement of product-celebrity choice decision.

3. Loyalty

Loyalty is a deeply held commitment to re-buy or re-patronize a preferred product or service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same brand or same brand-set purchasing despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior(Oliver, 1999). Jacoby et.al(1973), define

brand loyalty as the biased (non-random) behavioral response (purchase) expressed over time by some decision making unit with respect to one or more alternative brands out of a set of such brands, and is a function of psychological (decision-making, evaluative) process. These definitions clearly are skewed to the idea that loyalty is directed towards consumer products and services. These in the marketing realm enter in the market in the form of brands-this being any word, device(sound, shape, or color) or a combination of these used to distinguish a seller's goods or services (Kerin, 2011) In the context of this study loyalty is considered to be bi-dimensional in the sense that loyalty may be directed towards a product as well as towards the celebrities. According to Harlonen-Knight(2010) celebrities are brands in their own rights and their endorsement of products amounts to an alliance of brands These combine to bring out brand loyalty which according to Jacoby et.al(1978) is the characteristics of those consumers who have a strong commitment to a brand, because they view that brand as being satisfactory than the alternative and this evaluation is reinforced through repeated use. Distinction, however, need to be made between true brand loyalty and "spurious" repeat purchase in which case the latter may result due to compelling factors as convenience, prompt influence by second or third parties, availability, inertia and other external forces.

Dick et.al (1994) consider customer loyalty as a two faceted aspect, that is, behavioral and attitude facets. The researchers present an integrative model that explains how behavioral and attitudinal loyalties lead to repeat purchase and eventually to customer brand loyalty.



Source: Adapted from Dick and Basu (1994); Sheth et al. (1999)

According to the model, behavioral aspects of perceived brand performance, socio-emotional identification with a brand and habitual long history with a brand combine with attitude towards the brand to yield repeat purchase of a product and eventually customer loyalty towards the product is established. Behavioral loyalty relates to customers' repeat purchasing of a brand, which is revealed through patterns of continued patronage and actual spending behavior (Kathy et. al, 1996). It is however possible that repeat purchase can result from habit formation or lack of a substitute. If the latter is the influential determinant, then it is not prudent to consider the repeat business as true loyalty. Attitudinal loyalty, according to Mellen et.al (1996) is an attitude disposition consisting of commitment to a brand and intention to repurchase the brand. The commitment aspect is an affective component while intentional aspect is cognitive component of attitude in this respect.

4.0 Celebrity Endorsement

Friedman et.al (1979) defines a celebrity as an individual who is known to the public (actor, sports figure, entertainer etc) for his or her achievements in areas other than that of a product class, while a celebrity endorser,

according to McCracken (1989) is any individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a customer good by appearing with it in an advertisement. According to Yeshin (2006), celebrities have been endorsing products since 19th, century and advertisers have long recognized the value of using spokespersons who are easily identified by consumers. The concept of celebrity endorsement has become a prominent marcom strategy over the years, most advertisers considering it as a unique communication strategy that aide in breaking away and standing out of the ambiguous and saturated mass media.

Studies show that about 25% of all television and print advertisements in the US feature celebrities. Again 10% of the dollar spent on television commercials have been used in celebrity endorsements (Erdogan, 1999). Celebrity endorsement simply stipulates that the value associated with the celebrity is transferred to the brand and therefore help create an image that can be easily referred by customers (Okorie et al, 2012). Studies in celebrity endorsement have reveal that customers are more likely to choose products endorsed by celebrities than those without such endorsements (Okarie et.al.2011) and celebrities help advertisements to carve a niche in

a competitive environment thus repositioning the brand in the market. Brand communication experts believe that using popular celebrity can affect consumer feeling and their purchase intentions (Belch et.al 2001

Celebrity endorsement is not devoid of inherent dangers. Erdogan (1998), points out some of the potential dangers in the use of celebrity personality that may trigger a change in customer loyalty. Firstly, when the celebrity is embroiled in some form of scandal or controversy the brand image is extensionally tainted and customer loyalty switch becomes eminent. Internationally the most famous example are; late Michael Jackson, who was the lead personality for Pepsi and was immediately dropped by Pepsi when adverse activities surrounded his activities, and O.J Simpson who was charged with the murder of his wife at a time when he was the lead endorser for Hertz Corporation and was also consequently dropped (Yeshin 2006). Secondly, a celebrity may fade from the public limelight during the period of campaign which may diminish the recall on customer's part. Thirdly, a celebrity can change his or her public appearance to the detriment of a campaign and attitude of customers to the product or service endorsed. Fourthly, the perceptions towards the celebrity may vary across the market segment as there will inevitably be different perceptions of any personality within a given audience. Some people will like the celebrity and others will dislike him or her. The latter may extrapolate their dislike of the individual to the product posing potential risk of loyalty shift from the endorsed product .Yeshin (2006) further notes that the advertiser who chooses to use a celebrity has no control over the celebrity's future behavior. Any negative news about the celebrity may reduce the celebrity's allure, and therefore the appeal of the product endorsed. The risk is Potentially great for new or unfamiliar product for which the association set is relatively scanty and for which the celebrity is essentially the primary attribute on which customers form evaluation of the product. Negative celebrity information may have a much greater effect on such products than it does on familiar established brands (Yeshin, 2006).).

Studies show that effectiveness of celebrity endorser depends on the procession of most or all of attributes as trustworthiness, expertise, physical attractiveness, respect and similarity to the target audience (Shimp, 2010, Ohanian, 1990, Erdogan, 1999 and Arker et al.1987).

4.1 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness relates to honesty, integrity and believability of a source. An endorser's trustworthiness depends on the perception of the audience on the endorser's motive. According to Shimp (2010), if the audiences, who are the customers, perceive the endorser as driven by personal interests, they will tend to be less persuaded unlike the endorser perceived to have nothing to gain who is considered to be more persuasive. Consumers view untrustworthy celebrity endorsers regardless of their other qualities as questionable message sources(Erdogan,1999).Endorsers need to embrace caution that they do not attempt to manipulate audience and that they are objective in their presentations (Shimp,2010) Also, an endorser has greater likelihood of being perceived as trustworthy if he/she matches the audience in terms of district characteristics such as gender and ethnicity which promotes more favorable attitudes towards the advertised brand (Shimp 2010)

4.2 Expertise

Expertise is the knowledge, experience or skills possessed by an endorser as they relate to the endorsed brand (Shimp 2010).Sometimes it does not matter whether an endorser is an expert; all that matters is how the target audience perceives the endorser (Erdogan 1999). However, a source / celebrity possessing more expertise have been found to be more persuasive and generate more intentions to buy a brand than non-experts. Findings in source credibility studies are equivocal. What factors construct source credibility and what factors are more important than others in certain situations is ambivalent (Erdogan, 1999). A study by Ohanian (1991) found that

perceived expertise of celebrities was a significant factor explaining the respondents' intention to purchase. In affirmation of this study, O' Mahoney et.al (1997) revealed that source characteristics with the greatest impact on consumers' intention to purchase were those of credibility and expertise.

4.3 Physical Attractiveness

Advertisement with physically attractive spokespersons fare better than advertisements with less attractive people (Shimp 2010). This personality component helps viewers form emotional bonds with the spokesperson. If a spokesperson (celebrity) is seen as having a sour personality even if physically beautiful, consumers are less likely to develop an emotional bond with the individual and the product (Clow et al 2007). Physical

attractiveness hence is generally considered as a fundamental attribute to consider in choosing a celebrity endorser.

4.4 Respect

Respect represents the quality of being admired or even esteemed due to one's personal qualities and accomplishments. Respect is the functional or substantive element of individual attractiveness. Sometimes respect triumphs form (Physical attractiveness) even in brand endorser relations (Shimp 2010). Shimp further notes that celebrities are respected for their acting ability, athletic prowess, appealing personalities, their stands on important societal issues such as the environment, politics, war, peace and so on. He further observes that individuals who are respected are also generally liked and it is this likability factor that can serve to enhance brands equity when a celebrity endorser enters into an endorsement relationship with the brand. In turn, the brand acquires some substance of the characteristics that are admired in the celebrity who endorsed the brand (Shimp 2010).

4.5 Similarity

Similarity is defined as a supposed resemblance between the source and the receiver of the message (Erdogan 1999). Shimp (2010) defines it as the degree to which an endorser matches an audience in terms of characteristics pertinent to the endorsement relationship – age, gender, and ethnicity and so on. According to Shimp (2010) people tend to prefer individuals who share with them common features or traits and therefore it is typically desirable for a celebrity to match his/her endorsed brand's target audience in terms of pertinent demographic and Psychographic characteristics (Shimp 2010) consumers are more including to be influenced by a message delivered by a person who is somehow similar. The receiver is able, in some manner to identify with the source (Clow et. al. 2007). This identification, according to Clow et.al. (2007), may be based on believing the source has similar beliefs, attitude, preferences or behaviors and is in the same or a similar situation with the customer. Related to the credibility and attractiveness components is likeability attributes. According to Clow et.al (2010), consumers respond more positively to celebrities they like. This liking arises from various sources, including situations in which viewers like the actor or the character played by the actor.

5. Research Methodology

This research was based on exploratory research design because of its nature and population infinity. Nonprobability sample method was used as it was found to be the most appropriate approach in this study. Customers purchasing two designated celebrity-endorsed products in Kenya ,that is, Kiwi Shoe Polish endorsed by David Rudisha(World's 800 meters record holder) and Rexona Bathing Soap endorsed by Wahu (Music artist), were approached while purchasing the products at respective shelves at Nakumatt Supermarket (Mombasa-Kenya). A total of 132 responses were realized. The researchers felt this number was adequate to give indicative views and opinions of customers on celebrity advertising and loyalty. A large sample is not a guarantee for representing the entire population (Lofgren et.al, 2101).A questionnaire was used as the instrument of data collection. Questions were framed in bi-polar scale (Likert Scale) format and respondents required to indicate how they agree or disagree with statements outlined.

6. Reliability Test

Before the data collection exercise was rolled out, a pilot test was conducted on 10 respondents to test the validity of the study bases on the study objectives and reliability test undertaken using SPSS. On testing, a Cronbach Alpha value of 0.707 was obtained which met the minimum recommended value of 0.70 (Graziona et.al, 2101).

Table 6.1 Reliability Test

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.707	4

7. Data Analysis

The data collected was analyzed using SPSS which the researchers considered as a universally accepted statistical tool and was appropriate for this research. Of the respondents 54.5% were male and 45.5% were female perhaps a reflection that women shop quite often than men. The highest number of respondents were aged 30-49 (59.1%) followed by 18-29 (22.7%) while 40-40 and 50-59 tied at 9.1% each. Respondents who had achieved secondary, college and post-graduate education tied at 27.3% each while graduate category was at 18.2%.

To ascertain the level of loyalty customers have in the context of celebrity influence, respondents were required to indicate their agreement or disagreement on a bi-polar scale. 50% disagree that they buy on influence by celebrity advertisement while 36.4 disagree.13.5% were indifferent. 59.1% would not switch to competitive products whether advertised by celebrities or not while 31.8% would. To further reinforce this stand, 63.7% would stick to product they are accustomed to rather than try unfamiliar brands even if endorsed by a celebrity but 31.8% are likely to switch. These are shown in table 7.1 below. For simplicity of results conceptualization, strongly disagree and disagree responses are bundled and so is strongly agree and agree responses due to proximity of feelings expression.

	Strong		ebrity and weak	Frec	luency	Percent		id cent	Cumulative Percent
		А		30		22.7	22.7	7	22.7
B 42 31.8 31.8		3	54.5						
Valid		С		16		18.2	18.2	2	72.7
Valid		D		12		9.1	9.1		81.8
		E		24		18.2	18.2	2	100.0
		Total		132		100.0	100	.0	
CL7: S	trongly	loyalty to pro	duct and weak lo	yalty	to a ce	lebrity			
		A		6	_	4.5	4.5		4.5
		С		12		9.1	9.1		13.6
Valid		D		36		27.3	27.3	3	40.9
		Е		78		59.1	59.1	I	100.0
		Total		132		100.0	100	.0	
CL8	:Strong	ly loyalty to b	oth the celebrity	and tl	ne prod	uct			
	В	6	4.5		4.5			4.5	
Vali	D	12	9.1		9.1			13.6	
vali	E	114	86.4		86.4			100.0	
	Tot	al 132	100.0		100.0				
CL9):Weak	loyalty to both	n celebrity and th	e pro	duct				
	А	90	68.2		68.2			68.2	
	В	18	13.6		13.6			81.8	
Vali	C b	6	4.5		4.5			86.4	
vali	D	12	9.1		9.1			95.5	
	Е	6	4.5		4.5			100.0	
	Tota	al 132	100.0		100.0				

Table 7.1 Loyalty Responses

Key: E-Highly likely to buy, D-likely to buy, C- Indifferent, B-Unlikely to Buy, A- Highly Unlikely to Buy

81.8% would still buy what they ordinarily buy even if endorsed by a different celebrity. This in essence means they have greater degree of loyalty to products than to celebrities. This brings out the concept of dual loyalty: to the product and to a celebrity each of which being distinct brand (Knight-Holone et al, 2010). In this respect, the study revealed: 54.5% would not buy if they have strong loyalty to celebrity and weak loyalty to product endorsed. 59.1% would buy if they have strong loyalty to product and weak loyalty to celebrity. 84.4% would buy if they have strong loyalty to both celebrity and the product. 68.2% would not buy if they have weak loyalty to both product. 68.2% would not buy if they have weak loyalty to both product.

Further analysis using statistical means show that CL8 has the highest mean response of 4.77 and the least standard deviation of 0.685 perhaps this is as a result impact of alliance of strong brands' loyalties.CL 7 yields a mean of 4.36 with standard deviation 1.002 signifying that respondents loyalty is highly skewed in favor of product than to celebrity. The two means fall within highly likely to buy (5) and Likely to buy (4).The other variable scored poorly with CL6 managing 2.68 (above not buy) and CL9 is at dismal mean of 1.68(tending towards highly not buy). Hence firms should avoid CL9. However, although CL8 and CL7 have the highest means this could be attributed to mild fanaticism towards celebrities in Kenya. The advertiser focus should be CL6 when engaging celebrities for endorsements.

		CL6	CL7	CL8	CL9
N	Valid	22	22	22	22
Ν	Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean		2.68	4.36	4.77	1.68
Std. D	Deviation	1.427	1.002	.685	1.211
Varia	nce	2.037	1.004	.470	1.465

Table 7.2 Statistical Means Analysis

8. Conclusion

The results from the analysis above reveal interesting scenario on celebrity choice in endorsement strategy. They apparently reveal that celebrity is just but one of the many factors that influence customer purchasing decision. This in essence means that customers are influenced by celebrities to a certain extent the remainder of which could be attributed to factors such as product quality, influence by other individuals or peers, attitude towards the product, all these and more condensed into attitudinal and behavioral aspects of loyalty (Dick et. al, 1994). It is paramount that loyalty is considered in the perspective of celebrity and product as each is a distinct brand and therefore endorsement becomes an alliance of brands (Knight-Holone et.al, 2010). Celebrity endorsement decision should put into consideration the degree of loyalty towards a celebrity and a product separately before an optimal product-celebrity match-up decision is reached.

9. Recommendation

The researchers recommend Celebrity-Product-Loyalty Congruency (CPLC) model and matrix below to advertisers to aid in the match-up effort. The selection of celebrity endorser should be a well thought decision and advertisers should make a thorough research on the loyalty directed to product and the celebrity. The optimal option is where the product has weak loyalty while the celebrity has strong loyalty as it emerges from the model and corresponding matrix below.

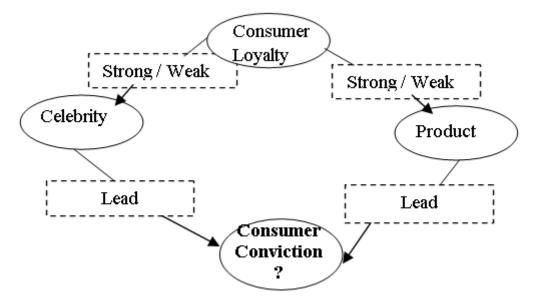


Figure 9.1: Celebrity-Product Loyalty Congruency Mode

The question of customer conviction in figure 9.1 above is answered by the matrix below which depicts the two loyalties towards celebrity and product as distinct brands and their relative strengths.

Table 9.1: Ce	lebrity- Product	Loyalty (Congruency	Matrix

S	S/S	W/S
	QII	QIII
	QI	QIV
W	SW	W/W
	S	W

Product

KEY: S – Strong, W- Weak, Q – Quadrant,

- QI Strong product loyalty and weak celebrity loyalty. Possible outcome is unlikely celebrity influence on consumer conviction. Celebrity endorsement is non-consequential.
- **QII** Strong product loyalty and strong celebrity loyalty- possible outcome is reinforced fortification of product loyalty. Product celebrity divorce yields consumer royalty dilemma due to divided yet strong loyalty to both product and celebrity.
- **QIII** Weak product loyalty and strong celebrity loyalty-Possible outcome is that celebrity endorsement brings forth impetus to the product due to possible enhanced consumer conviction. This could work best for weak products and products at launch stage in the product life cycle.
- QIV- Weak product loyalty and weak celebrity loyalty possible outcome is non-starter effect in which case "celebrity" endorser has very few followers and the product endorsed is much unknown in the market. This is a game of losers.

The above model (figure 9.1) in combination to the matrix(table 9.1) are considered by researchers in this study as fundamental instruments that can serve as enabling tool to advertisers and other marketing and management practitioners in matching celebrities to their product(s) in endorsement decision making. Essentially, this serves as an indicator to firms that a pre- endorsement research would be an essential undertaking to make a perfect match between the firms' products and the targeted celebrity endorser.

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