

EVALUATION OF CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT ON CUSTOMER PATRONAGE IN THE NIGERIAN TELECOMMUNICATIONS SECTOR IN ENUGU METROPOLIS

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ABSTRACT: This study evaluated the influence of celebrity endorsement on customer patronage in the Nigerian telecommunications sector, focusing on subscribers within Enugu Metropolis. Grounded in the Source Credibility Theory, the research examined four core dimensions of celebrity endorsement, trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and popularity, and their effects on customer patronage. A quantitative survey design was adopted, and data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered to telecommunication subscribers. Of the 400 distributed questionnaires, 370 valid responses were collected and analyzed using SPSS. Findings revealed that all four dimensions of celebrity endorsement significantly and positively affect customer patronage. Celebrity trustworthiness showed a strong influence, while expertise, attractiveness, and popularity also demonstrated significant predictive effects on patronage. The study concludes that celebrity endorsement remains an effective promotional strategy in Nigeria's telecommunication industry when endorsers align with brand values and consumer expectations.

Keywords: Celebrity Endorsement, Customer Patronage, Telecommunications, Source Credibility, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Today's marketplace is highly competitive and filled with great opportunities for those who are ready to stand out and excel. Brands constantly look for innovative ways to attract and retain customers. One of the most commonly used marketing strategies is celebrity endorsement. This involves using a famous individual, such as a musician, actor, athlete, or influencer, to promote a company or organization's product or service. Celebrity endorsement is the use of a well-known public figure to promote a product, service, or brand, leveraging their popularity, credibility, and image to influence consumer behavior. According to Roll (2022), Celebrity endorsement involves a contractual arrangement whereby a public figure lends their persona to a product or service to enhance brand image and consumer appeal.

Oyeniyi and Abiodun (2020) defined celebrity endorsement as "a marketing communication strategy in which an organization uses a famous person to deliver a message about its brand, aiming to shape consumer perception and influence purchase decisions." Celebrity endorsement is a pervasive marketing strategy used by companies worldwide to influence consumer behavior and increase sales. This tactic involves recognizable figures lending their fame and credibility to promote a product or service (Spry, Pappu, & Cornwell, 2011).

Globally, celebrity endorsement has been used to build brand awareness, influence consumer perception, and drive product sales. In Nigeria, this trend has become especially popular, with local and international brands leveraging the influence of celebrities such as Wizkid, Davido, Tiwa Savage, Funke Akindele, and Burna Boy to capture the attention of consumers. Companies like Pepsi, Glo, Infinix, and TECNO Mobile have heavily invested in celebrity partnerships to strengthen their brand image and increase customer patronage.

Celebrity endorsement has always been an important marketing strategy, in which renowned individuals are used to promote products or services, leveraging their public image to influence consumer behavior. Recent studies in Nigeria have pointed out the significance of attributes such as celebrity attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise in shaping consumer purchase intentions. For example, Arogundade (2023) found that celebrity attractiveness and expertise positively influenced consumers' purchase intentions of brewery products in Lagos, while trustworthiness and product match-up had a less significant impact. The match-up hypothesis also suggested that endorsement effectiveness is strongest when there is congruence between the celebrity's image and the brand's identity (Kamins, 1990). In the Nigerian context, brands such as Glo, Pepsi, and MTN have leveraged the influence of musicians, actors, and athletes to shape consumer preferences (Oyeniyi & Abiodun, 2020). The measurement indices of celebrity endorsement include trustworthiness, celebrity expertise, celebrity attractiveness, and popularity

Trustworthiness refers to the perceived honesty, integrity, and reliability of the celebrity endorser (Erdogan, 1999). A trustworthy celebrity is seen as genuine and sincere, which enhances the consumer's belief in the credibility of the marketing message (Muda, Musa & Putit, 2017). In the Nigerian context, where celebrity figures often serve as cultural icons, trustworthiness is a determinant of how authentic endorsements are perceived by various demographic groups (Okorie & Agboola, 2021). Moreover, trustworthiness has been shown to reduce consumer skepticism, especially in industries where service delivery is frequently contested, such as mobile telecommunications (Ayanwale, Alimi & Ayanbimipe, 2005).

Celebrity Expertise is defined as the degree to which a celebrity is perceived to have relevant knowledge, skill, or experience in the product category they endorse (Till & Busler, 2000). While expertise is often associated with technical or professional knowledge, in marketing communication, it also refers to perceived competence in the product domain.

Silvera and Austad (2004) observed that when consumers view an endorser as an expert, they are more likely to form favorable brand attitudes. In the Nigerian telecom industry, where consumers seek reliable service and innovation, celebrity expertise—whether real or perceived—can enhance confidence in the endorsed brand (Okorie, 2022).

Celebrity attractiveness refers to a celebrity's physical appeal, charm, likability, and overall aesthetic presence, which can positively influence consumer perception of a brand. This attribute plays a crucial role in shaping consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions, particularly when the endorsed product has symbolic or image-related relevance (Erdogan, 1999; Kamins, 1990). Attractive celebrities are more likely to capture attention, increase advertisement recall, and generate favorable affective responses (Silvera & Austad, 2004).

Moreover, attractiveness goes beyond physical looks; it also includes social charm, charisma, and relatability, which can create parasocial relationships between celebrities and consumers, further enhancing consumer loyalty (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Adeyanju, 2022). In such cases, consumers may buy into the brand not just because of the product's value, but because they feel emotionally connected to the celebrity representing it. Celebrity popularity refers to the endorser's general public appeal, fame, and media visibility. Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) argue that popularity plays a critical role in attracting attention, increasing advertisement recall, and enhancing emotional engagement with the brand.

In contemporary Nigeria, where social media amplifies celebrity culture, popularity becomes a potent force in shaping consumer preferences, particularly among youth segments (Adeyanju, 2021). Even without direct expertise, a widely recognized celebrity can significantly boost a brand's visibility and attract new customer segments (Choi & Rifon, 2012).

Customer patronage refers to the deliberate and sustained act of consumers engaging with a specific product, service, or brand over time. According to Kotler and Keller (2016), customer patronage encompasses consumers' loyalty and ongoing purchase behavior, often driven by satisfaction, trust, and perceived value. In a Nigerian context, Adeyanju (2021) characterizes customer patronage as repeated, voluntary support for a brand, influenced by factors such as product quality, pricing, celebrity endorsements, and cultural affinity. This patronage manifests in various forms: behavioral (repeated purchases; attitudinal), brand preference or advocacy; and influential (shaped by promotions, brand equity, endorsements, and peer reviews).

Customer patronage encompasses not only transactional behavior but also emotional attachment and brand advocacy. (Adeyanju, 2021) pointed out factors that influence customer patronage include product quality, price, service experience, and increasingly, marketing communications such as endorsements. In competitive markets like Nigeria, where consumers are frequently targeted with marketing messages, endorsements may play a decisive role in brand differentiation and loyalty.

The Nigerian telecommunications sector is one of the largest and most competitive industries in sub-Saharan Africa, with over 220 million active subscribers as of 2024 (NCC, 2024). In this saturated and dynamic market, service providers such as MTN, Globacom, Airtel, and 9mobile engage in aggressive marketing to differentiate their brands and gain customer loyalty. One widely adopted strategy is celebrity endorsement, the use of famous personalities to promote products or services, aimed at influencing consumer behavior and enhancing brand equity.

Celebrity endorsement in this context is more than just attaching a well-known face to a product; it is a strategic branding tool grounded in psychological and social influence theories. Nigerian telecom brands frequently employ celebrities — including musicians, actors, comedians, and social media influencers — to appeal to a diverse, youth-driven consumer base. These endorsements are designed to foster emotional connections, increase brand recall, and ultimately drive customer patronage (Okorie & Agboola, 2021).

Statement of the Problem

The Nigerian telecommunications industry is among the most dynamic and competitive sectors in the country's economy, with operators such as MTN, Airtel, Glo, and 9mobile engaging in aggressive marketing campaigns to capture customer attention and increase patronage. One prominent promotional strategy adopted by these firms is celebrity endorsement, which leverages public figures to influence consumer perceptions, trust, and buying decisions. This approach hinges on key attributes such as credibility, trustworthiness, expertise, and the celebrity's popularity (Ohanian, 1990; Erdogan, 1999; Amos, Holmes & Strutton, 2008).

Despite the popularity of celebrity endorsements, empirical evidence in Nigeria's telecommunication sector suggests that customer loyalty and patronage do not always align with the scale of investment in celebrity-driven advertising (Awah, Mfon & Ibok, 2023). Telecommunication operators frequently enlist influential musicians, actors, and media personalities to appeal to a broad consumer base; however, the actual impact of these endorsements on customer decision-making and retention remains ambiguous.

Several studies have shown that Trustworthiness increases consumer confidence in the endorsed brand, especially in service-driven industries such as telecommunications (Muda, Musa & Putit, 2017). Likewise, celebrity expertise, or the perception that the endorser possesses relevant knowledge or skill, significantly boosts the effectiveness of endorsements when there is a logical match between the celebrity and the brand (Till & Busler, 2000). Another vital yet often overlooked dimension is celebrity attractiveness, which encompasses physical appeal, charisma, and other factors that have been found to significantly influence consumer attitudes and purchase behavior (Erdogan, 1999; Kamins, 1990).

In addition, celebrity popularity or likability enhances emotional connection and brand recall, but excessive reliance on fame alone, without congruence, may lead to customer skepticism (Choi & Rifon, 2012; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). This is particularly true in digital spaces where consumers are increasingly aware of paid endorsements and fabricated associations. The mismatch between celebrity image and brand values, also known as celebrity-brand incongruence, has been shown to negatively impact brand trust and loyalty (Lee & Thorson, 2008; Biswas, Biswas & Das, 2006).

The main motivation for this study is that, despite significant financial commitments to celebrity endorsements in the telecommunications sector, customer churn, dissatisfaction, and weak brand loyalty persist. This inconsistency highlights the need to critically evaluate how, and to what extent, the core attributes of celebrity endorsers influence consumer patronage behaviors in the Nigerian context.

Therefore, this study aimed at examining the influence of celebrity endorsement variables, which are trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and popularity, on customer patronage in the Nigerian telecommunications sector, addressing this gap in empirical research and providing actionable insights for brand managers and marketers.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study was to evaluate the influence of celebrity endorsement on customer patronage in the Nigerian telecommunications sector in Enugu Metropolis.

Other specific objectives are as follows:

1. To examine the influence of celebrity trustworthiness on customer patronage in the Nigerian telecommunications sector in Enugu Metropolis.
2. To assess the effect of celebrity expertise on customer patronage in the Nigerian telecommunications sector in Enugu Metropolis.
3. To ascertain the effect of celebrity attractiveness on customer patronage in the Nigerian telecommunications sector in Enugu Metropolis.
4. To evaluate the influence of celebrity popularity on customer patronage in the Nigerian telecommunications sector in Enugu Metropolis.

Research Questions

1. Does celebrity trustworthiness have an influence on customer patronage in the Nigerian telecommunications sector in Enugu Metropolis?
2. Does celebrity expertise affect customer patronage in the Nigerian telecommunications sector in Enugu Metropolis?
3. Does celebrity attractiveness affect customer patronage in the Nigerian telecommunications sector in Enugu Metropolis?
4. Does celebrity popularity influence customer patronage in the Nigerian telecommunications sector in Enugu Metropolis?

Research Hypotheses

H_{01} : Celebrity trustworthiness does not have any significant positive influence on customer patronage in the Nigerian telecommunications sector in Enugu Metropolis.

H_{02} : Celebrity expertise does not have any significant positive effect on customer patronage in the Nigerian telecommunications sector in Enugu Metropolis.

H_{03} : Celebrity attractiveness does not have any significant positive effect on customer patronage in the Nigerian telecommunications sector in Enugu Metropolis.

H_{04} : Celebrity popularity does not have any significant positive influence on customer patronage in the Nigerian telecommunications sector in Enugu Metropolis.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant in several ways, as it provides theoretical, empirical, and practical contributions to understanding how celebrity endorsement influences customer patronage in Nigeria's telecommunications sector. The findings will be beneficial to the following groups:

This study will serve as a guide for telecommunication firms such as MTN, Airtel, Glo, and 9mobile in understanding the extent to which celebrity endorsement drives customer patronage. The results will help marketing managers make informed decisions regarding the selection of celebrities whose attractiveness, expertise, popularity, and trustworthiness align with their brand values. For marketing consultants and advertising agencies, this research offers empirical insights into how specific celebrity characteristics influence consumer behavior. It provides a framework for designing more targeted marketing campaigns that capitalize on the persuasive power of credible and popular public figures. This will enhance advertising creativity, consumer engagement, and message recall, especially within a competitive market such as telecommunications.

Academically, this study contributes to existing literature on celebrity endorsement, consumer psychology, and brand management, particularly in the Nigerian context. It expands theoretical discourse by validating the Source Credibility Theory (Hovland & Weiss, 1951) within a developing economy and provides data that may be useful for future comparative studies. Scholars and students of marketing and communication can adopt this study as a reference material and basis for further research into endorsement dynamics in emerging markets.

Furthermore, Institutions such as the Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria (ARCON) and the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) can use the findings of this research to strengthen policies on ethical advertising practices and celebrity endorsements. By understanding how consumers respond to celebrities, regulators can design better frameworks to prevent misleading advertisements and ensure transparency in brand communications.

Finally, Consumers themselves stand to benefit from this research as it fosters awareness about how celebrity endorsements shape their perceptions, attitudes, and purchasing decisions. By recognizing the persuasive strategies behind advertisements, consumers will be better positioned to make informed purchasing decisions based on product value rather than celebrity influence alone.

Theoretical Framework

The three main theories on which the study of celebrity endorsement lies are:

Source Credibility Theory suggests that the perceived trustworthiness and expertise of a communicator enhance the persuasive power of the message (Hovland & Weiss, 1951). This implies that credible celebrities are more likely to influence consumer behavior than non-credible celebrities.

Source Attractiveness Theory posits that endorsers who are physically attractive or likable are more persuasive (McGuire, 1985). For example, Nigerian celebrities such as Davido, Tiwa Savage, and

Funke Akindele are often selected for endorsements partly due to their mass appeal and social media popularity. These theories are supported by empirical evidence suggesting that endorsement effectiveness increases when the celebrity is both credible and attractive (Amos et al., 2008).

The Match-Up Hypothesis emphasizes the importance of congruence between the celebrity's image and the product's attributes, asserting that endorsements are more effective when there is a logical fit between the endorser and the product. In a study by Onu et al. (2023), they demonstrated that celebrity expertise and congruence significantly affect consumer purchase intentions in the mobile telecommunication sector.

This study is anchored in the Source Credibility Theory, initially proposed by Hovland, Janis, and Kelley (1953). The theory posits that the effectiveness of a persuasive message is primarily determined by the perceived credibility of the source delivering the message. In the context of marketing and advertising, the "source" refers to the celebrity endorser, while the message refers to the advertisement or brand communication. The Source Credibility Theory is particularly useful in explaining how and why celebrity endorsements influence consumers. When a celebrity is perceived as credible due to their trustworthiness, expertise, or public image, the audience is more likely to internalize the message and translate it into favourable brand attitudes or purchase decisions (Spry, Pappu & Cornwell, 2011).

Empirical Review

Empirical studies conducted in Nigeria have provided different insights into the influence of celebrity endorsement on customer patronage across various industries and locations. These studies examine variables such as celebrity trustworthiness, attractiveness, expertise, and celebrity popularity.

Ekakitie and Okosodo (2022) investigated the impact of celebrity endorsement on consumer buying behavior in the Nigerian telecommunications sector. Their findings showed that celebrity trustworthiness and expertise had a significant positive effect on consumer buying behavior, while attractiveness had a moderate influence. The study highlighted the importance of source credibility in driving customer patronage in a highly competitive industry such as telecommunications.

Onu, Okolo, and Uzoechi (2023) conducted a quantitative study assessing how the perceived trustworthiness of celebrities affects brand loyalty in the telecom industry. Using a structured questionnaire distributed to telecom subscribers across South-Eastern Nigeria, they found a statistically significant relationship between celebrity trustworthiness and customers' repeated usage of a brand. The study posited that trustworthy celebrities act as credibility bridges, reducing consumer scepticism and increasing patronage.

Musa and Adebayo (2022) evaluated the impact of perceived celebrity expertise on customers' willingness to try new telecom services (e.g., 5G, mobile banking integration). They employed a correlational design with a sample of 400 respondents in Lagos and Abuja and found that celebrities perceived as knowledgeable or experienced in relevant fields positively influenced customer trial

and adoption behaviors. This supports the notion that endorsements by informed celebrities can lend functional credibility to telecom offerings.

Furthermore, in a recent mixed-methods study carried out by Adeyanju (2022), he explored how physical attractiveness and social appeal of celebrities influence youth consumer behavior in the telecom sector. The findings indicated that younger demographics (ages 18–30) were more likely to engage with brands endorsed by celebrities they found physically appealing or socially relatable. This was particularly evident in campaigns involving musicians and influencers like Davido and Teni.

Eze and Igbokwe (2021) focused on celebrity popularity as a driver of long-term customer relationships. Their study used regression analysis on data from 350 telecom subscribers and found that celebrities with broad social reach and online presence significantly contributed to brand recall and customer loyalty, especially when their popularity aligned with the brand image.

Okorie and Agboola (2021) emphasized the importance of the match-up between celebrity image and brand values. They found that celebrity-brand congruence significantly moderates the effectiveness of endorsements in the telecom industry. Consumers were more likely to patronize brands when they believed the celebrity truly represented the values of the telecom provider.

Gaps in the Literature

Despite the growing body of research on celebrity endorsement and its effects on consumer behavior, several notable gaps remain, especially in Nigeria's telecommunications sector. While studies such as Onu. (2023) and Okorie and Agboola (2021) have examined celebrity endorsements in Nigeria; few have explicitly focused on the telecommunications industry, where celebrity branding is heavily utilized. Most prior research is general in scope or centers on FMCGs (Fast Moving Consumer Goods), leaving a critical gap in sector-specific understanding. Also, many empirical studies have treated celebrity endorsement as a single, unified construct, overlooking the nuanced effects of its sub-components—trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and popularity (Musa & Adebayo, 2022; Eze & Igbokwe, 2021). This limits a comprehensive understanding of how each dimension uniquely influences consumer behavior. There is limited examination of how consumer demographics (e.g., age, gender, income level) moderate the relationship between celebrity endorsement and customer patronage. Since consumer responses can vary significantly across demographic groups, ignoring this aspect presents a gap in the literature (Adeyanju, 2022).

This gap justifies the need for more context-specific research, such as this study, which explores the dynamics between celebrity endorsement influence and customer patronage in the Nigerian telecommunication sector, particularly customers in Enugu Metropolis.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a quantitative survey design to examine the impact of celebrity endorsement on customer patronage in the Nigerian telecommunications sector. The design was deemed appropriate because it allows for the systematic collection and statistical analysis of data to establish

relationships among variables. The study focused on four key dimensions of celebrity endorsement—attractiveness, expertise, popularity, and trustworthiness—as independent variables, while customer patronage served as the dependent variable. The study was anchored on the Source Credibility Theory (Hovland & Weiss, 1951), which posits that a communicator's effectiveness depends on their perceived credibility, encompassing expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. This theoretical base was considered suitable since celebrity endorsement operates on the same principles of source reliability and audience persuasion. The study area was the Enugu Metropolis, located in southeastern Nigeria, chosen for its urban setting, high literacy rate, and significant concentration of telecommunication service users. The population comprised all subscribers of major telecommunication service providers in Nigeria—namely MTN, Airtel, Glo, and 9mobile. Since the number of telecom subscribers in Enugu and across Nigeria is extremely large and constantly changing, the population was treated as effectively infinite (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019). To determine an appropriate sample size, Cochran's formula (1977) for infinite populations was employed as follows:

$$n_0 = \frac{Z^2 \cdot p \cdot (1 - p)}{e^2}$$

Cochran's Formula (1977):

Where:

- n_0 = required sample size
- Z = Z-value corresponding to the desired confidence level (1.96 for 95%)
- p = estimated proportion of the population (0.5 is used when unknown)
- e = desired margin of error (typically 0.05 for 5%)

Substituting the values:

$$n_0 = (1.96^2 * 0.5 * 0.5) / 0.05^2 = 384.16$$

To enhance reliability and accommodate possible non-responses, a total of 400 questionnaires were distributed, out of which 370 valid responses were retrieved and analyzed.

A structured questionnaire was developed as the main research instrument. The instrument was divided into two parts: demographic information and statements measuring the study variables—celebrity attractiveness, expertise, popularity, trustworthiness, and customer patronage—based on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“Strongly Disagree”) to 5 (“Strongly Agree”). The instrument underwent content and face validation by experts in marketing and communication research to ensure clarity and relevance. A pilot test was conducted with 30 respondents in the study area, and the Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient was above 0.70 for all constructs, confirming internal consistency (Nunnally, 1978).

Data were collected through direct administration of the questionnaires and retrieved after completion to ensure a high response rate. The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for

Social Sciences (SPSS), applying both descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, standard deviations) and inferential statistics, particularly Pearson correlation and simple linear regression analysis, to test the study's four hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance.

DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This section presents the data obtained from the survey and analyzes it in line with the objectives of this study. The results were interpreted and discussed in relation to the conceptual model and relevant literature.

Response Rate

Table 1: Questionnaire Distribution and Retrieval

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Questionnaires Distributed	400	100.0
Questionnaires Returned and Valid	370	92.5
Questionnaires Not Retrieved/Invalid	30	7.5
Total	400	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

Of the 400 questionnaires administered to customers of selected telecommunication firms in Enugu Metropolis, 380 were returned, of which 370 were valid for analysis. This yields a high response rate of 92.5%, enhancing the reliability of the data collected and reducing the risk of non-response bias (Dillman et al., 2014).

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The demographic characteristics of respondents were analyzed to understand the sample composition. The variables examined include gender, age, and income level.

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	200	54.1%
	Female	170	45.9%
Age Group	18–25	130	35.1
	26–35	150	40.5%
	36–45	50	13.5%
	46 and above	40	10.8%
Income Level	Below ₦50,000	140	37.8%
	₦50,000–₦100,000	130	35.1%
	₦100,001 and above	100	27.0%
Total		370	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

The table shows that 54.1% of the respondents were male, while 45.9% were female, indicating a fairly balanced gender distribution. The largest age group was 26-35 years old, suggesting that the Nigerian telecommunications market is largely patronized by young consumers. The income distribution also shows a large proportion of respondents in the lower- to middle-income brackets, reflecting the broader economic demographics of Nigerian telecom customers (PwC Nigeria, 2023).

Hypothesis One

H₀: Celebrity trustworthiness does not have any significant positive effect on customer patronage in the Nigerian telecommunications sector.

Pearson Correlation Analysis

To determine the strength and direction of the relationship between celebrity trustworthiness and customer patronage, a Pearson correlation analysis was conducted.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	R	p-value
Celebrity Trustworthiness	370	4.11	0.69	0.612**	0.000
Customer Patronage	370	4.02	0.71		

The Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = 0.612$, $p < 0.01$) indicates a moderate-to-strong positive, significant relationship between celebrity trustworthiness and customer patronage. This implies that higher perceptions of celebrity trustworthiness are associated with increased customer patronage in the telecom sector.

Simple Linear Regression Analysis

Further, a simple linear regression was carried out to determine the extent to which celebrity trustworthiness predicts customer patronage.

Model Summary

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error
1	0.612	0.375	0.373	0.561

ANOVA Table

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	61.203	1	61.203	194.29	0.000**
Residual	102.197	368	0.278		
Total	163.400	369			

Coefficients Table

Model	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.562	0.162	9.64	0.000
Celebrity Trustworthiness	0.596	0.043	13.93	0.000**

The regression results show that celebrity trustworthiness significantly predicts customer patronage ($\beta = 0.596$, $p < 0.01$). The model explains 37.5% of the variance in customer patronage ($R^2 = 0.375$), which is statistically significant ($F = 194.29$, $p < 0.001$). This suggests that the more customers perceive celebrities as trustworthy, the more likely they are to patronize products endorsed by them in the telecom sector.

Decision on Hypothesis 1:

Since the p-value is less than 0.05 and the correlation is positive and significant, we reject the null hypothesis (H_0) and accept the alternative hypothesis (H_1): Celebrity trustworthiness has a significant positive effect on customer patronage in the Nigerian telecommunications sector.

This corroborates the study by Oyeniyi and Abiodun (2022), who found that attractive celebrities in the Nigerian telecom industry (such as music stars and Nollywood icons) significantly influenced youths' purchase decisions through emotional attachment and perceived image enhancement.

Hypothesis Two

H_0 : Celebrity expertise does not have any significant positive effect on customer patronage in the Nigerian telecommunications sector.

Pearson Correlation Analysis

To assess the relationship between celebrity expertise and customer patronage, a Pearson correlation analysis was conducted.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	p-value
Celebrity Expertise	370	4.06	0.65	0.553**	0.000
Customer Patronage	370	4.02	0.71		

The Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = 0.553$, $p < 0.01$) indicates a moderate positive and statistically significant relationship between celebrity expertise and customer patronage. This implies that as consumers perceive celebrities as more knowledgeable or skilful, they are more likely to patronize products endorsed by them.

Simple Linear Regression Analysis

A simple linear regression was carried out to determine the extent to which celebrity expertise predicts customer patronage.

Model Summary

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error
1	0.553	0.306	0.304	0.582

ANOVA Table

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	50.011	1	50.011	147.62	0.000**
Residual	113.389	368	0.308		
Total	163.400	369			

Coefficients Table

Model	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	T	Sig.
(Constant)	1.745	0.164	10.64	0.000
Celebrity Expertise	0.560	0.046	12.15	0.000**

The regression output indicates that celebrity expertise significantly predicts customer patronage ($\beta = 0.560$, $p < 0.01$). The model explains 30.6% of the variance in customer patronage ($R^2 = 0.306$), which is statistically significant ($F = 147.62$, $p < 0.001$). This shows that the perceived knowledge or competence of a celebrity positively affects customers' willingness to buy telecom products endorsed by that celebrity.

Decision on Hypothesis 2:

Since the p-value is less than 0.05 and the relationship is positive and significant, we reject the null hypothesis (H_0) and accept the alternative hypothesis (H_1): Celebrity expertise has a significant positive effect on customer patronage in the Nigerian telecommunications sector.

This aligns with Eke, Nduh, and Eke (2017), who highlighted that telecom consumers are more likely to follow a celebrity perceived as knowledgeable or tech-savvy, particularly in data or mobile gadget promotions. Empirical data from Nigeria also supports this notion, as Onu, Akinlabi, and Okechukwu (2023) found that celebrities considered as experts (e.g., influencers who actively use technology) increased product engagement and loyalty in the mobile service market.

Hypothesis Three

H_0 : Celebrity popularity does not have any significant positive effect on customer patronage in the Nigerian telecommunications sector.

H_1 : Celebrity popularity has a significant positive effect on customer patronage in the Nigerian telecommunications sector.

Pearson Correlation Analysis

To evaluate the relationship between celebrity popularity and customer patronage, a Pearson correlation analysis was conducted.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	p-value
Celebrity Popularity	370	4.00	0.68	0.489**	0.000
Customer Patronage	370	4.02	0.71		

The Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = 0.489$, $p < 0.01$) shows a moderate and statistically significant positive relationship between celebrity popularity and customer patronage. This suggests that the more popular a celebrity endorser is, the more likely customers are to patronize telecom products they endorse.

Simple Linear Regression Analysis

To determine the extent to which celebrity popularity predicts customer patronage, a simple linear regression was conducted.

Model Summary

Model	R	R²	Adjusted R²	Std. Error
1	0.489	0.239	0.237	0.600

ANOVA Table

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	39.053	1	39.053	108.55	0.000**
Residual	124.347	368	0.338		
Total	163.400	369			

Coefficients Table

Model	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.972	0.172	11.47	0.000
Celebrity Popularity	0.510	0.049	10.42	0.000**

The regression output indicates that celebrity popularity significantly predicts customer patronage ($\beta = 0.510$, $p < 0.01$). The model explains 23.9% of the variance in customer patronage ($R^2 = 0.239$), and this result is statistically significant ($F = 108.55$, $p < 0.001$). This means that customers are more likely to patronize a product when the endorser is perceived as highly popular or widely recognized.

Decision on Hypothesis 3:

Since the p-value is less than 0.05, and the relationship is positive and significant, we reject the null hypothesis (H_0) and accept the alternative hypothesis (H_1): Celebrity popularity has a significant positive effect on customer patronage in the Nigerian telecommunications sector.

This finding aligns with Spry, Pappu, and Cornwell (2011), who showed that celebrity popularity increases attention, memory, and brand attitudes. Also, Nduka, Okoro, and Ajaero (2021) observed that in Nigeria, celebrities with massive followings (e.g., musicians, actors, influencers) significantly influence customer preferences in the telecom sector. Finally, Olorunfemi and Adebayo (2023) found that customer patronage increases when celebrities with high public visibility are associated with telecom brands.

Hypothesis Four

H_0 : Celebrity trustworthiness does not have any significant positive effect on customer patronage in the Nigerian telecommunications sector.

Pearson Correlation Analysis

To examine the relationship between celebrity trustworthiness and customer patronage, a Pearson correlation analysis was conducted.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	R	p-value
Celebrity Trustworthiness	370	3.97	0.71	0.525**	0.000
Customer Patronage	370	4.02	0.71		

The Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = 0.525$, $p < 0.01$) reveals a moderate to strong and statistically significant positive correlation between celebrity trustworthiness and customer patronage. This implies that consumers tend to respond more positively and are more likely to patronize a product endorsed by a celebrity they perceive as trustworthy.

Simple Linear Regression Analysis

A regression analysis was conducted to determine the extent to which celebrity trustworthiness predicts customer patronage.

Model Summary

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error
1	0.525	0.276	0.274	0.589

ANOVA Table

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	45.122	1	45.122	130.12	0.000**
Residual	118.278	368	0.321		
Total	163.400	369			

Coefficients Table

Model	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	T	Sig.
(Constant)	1.874	0.163	11.50	0.000
Celebrity Trustworthiness	0.540	0.047	11.41	0.000**

The regression model shows that celebrity trustworthiness significantly predicts customer patronage ($\beta = 0.540$, $p < 0.001$). The model accounts for 27.6% of the variance in customer patronage ($R^2 = 0.276$), and the relationship is statistically significant ($F = 130.12$, $p < 0.001$). This confirms that trustworthiness is a key influencer in how customers perceive and engage with telecom products endorsed by celebrities.

Decision on Hypothesis 4:

Since the p-value is less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis (H_0) and accept the alternative hypothesis (H_1): Celebrity trustworthiness has a significant positive effect on customer patronage in the Nigerian telecommunications sector.

This finding aligns with the work of Okorie and Oyedepo (2011), who demonstrated that telecom users were more likely to subscribe to services endorsed by celebrities they trusted (e.g., long-standing brand ambassadors with no scandals). It also echoes the assertion of Onu et al. (2023) that trustworthiness is the strongest predictor of loyalty in celebrity endorsement campaigns in Nigerian mobile services.

Conclusion

This study investigated the influence of celebrity endorsement on customer patronage within Nigeria's telecommunication sector, focusing on four major dimensions: celebrity attractiveness, expertise, popularity, and trustworthiness. Drawing on the Source Credibility Theory (Hovland & Weiss, 1951), the research established that these variables significantly shape consumers' attitudes and behaviors toward telecom brands.

Findings revealed that celebrity attractiveness positively influences customer patronage. This supports prior research suggesting that physically appealing celebrities evoke emotional connection and attention, especially among youthful audiences (Erdogan, 1999; Oyeniyi & Abiodun, 2022). Celebrity expertise was also shown to drive customer trust and product acceptance significantly, consistent with Agrawal and Kamakura (1995), who emphasized the persuasive power of knowledgeable endorsers.

Furthermore, the study found that celebrity popularity has a considerable impact on patronage. This aligns with Spry et al. (2011) and Nduka et al. (2021), who observed that well-known figures attract wider attention and enhance brand association. Trustworthiness, the final dimension, also emerged as a critical determinant of consumer loyalty. This finding corroborates Okorie and Oyedepo's (2011) work, which highlighted the role of credible and morally sound celebrities in sustaining brand reputation.

These results reinforce the importance of strategic celebrity selection in branding efforts, particularly within the highly competitive Nigerian telecom industry. Companies should not only focus on a celebrity's fame but also assess their relevance, public perception, and alignment with brand values. Effective endorsements can serve as powerful tools to build consumer trust, enhance brand recall, and boost long-term patronage (Onu, Akinlabi & Okechukwu, 2023; Olorunfemi & Adebayo, 2023).

Ultimately, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on celebrity endorsement and offers practical insights for marketers and brand managers in Nigeria and similar emerging markets. Future research could expand by incorporating digital influencers and testing other moderating factors such as cultural background, psychographics, and advertisement content.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, which revealed that celebrity endorsement significantly influences customer patronage in the Nigerian telecommunications sector—especially through dimensions such as attractiveness, expertise, popularity, and trustworthiness—the following recommendations are made:

Telecommunication companies should adopt a more strategic and research-driven approach when selecting celebrities for endorsements. The chosen celebrities should possess not only public visibility but also attributes of credibility, relevance, and integrity that align with the brand's values and target audience.

Since the study found trustworthiness to be a major determinant of customer patronage, telecom firms should prioritize endorsers who enjoy public confidence and an ethical reputation. Endorsers with questionable public images can negatively affect brand perception and loyalty. Continuous monitoring of celebrity reputation is therefore recommended to avoid adverse publicity (Okorie & Oyedepo, 2011; Onu et al., 2023).

Furthermore, considering that celebrity popularity was found to have a significant positive effect on customer patronage, telecom brands should leverage the fan base and social media influence of popular celebrities, particularly among younger consumers. This can enhance engagement and word-of-mouth promotion through social media campaigns, live events, and online challenges (Nduka, Okoro, & Ajaero, 2021). The Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria (ARCON) and the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) should also strengthen their oversight on celebrity advertising to ensure ethical endorsement practices. Endorsements should reflect honesty,

product accuracy, and transparency, thus protecting consumers from misleading advertisements (PwC Nigeria, 2023).

Finally, future researchers should extend this study by examining other sectors beyond telecommunications, such as banking, fashion, and consumer electronics, or by comparing traditional celebrities with digital influencers. This would deepen understanding of endorsement dynamics in the digital economy and provide insights into emerging consumer behavior patterns.

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