PERCEPTUAL AND COMMERCIAL BENEFITS OF CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT

by

FANELWA SAUL

(220484139)

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Supervisor: Dr Trust Matsilele

Co-supervisor: Dr Blessing Makwambeni

Bellville/<u>Cape Town</u>/ /Mowbray/Wellington (choose campus)

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Declaration

I declare that this research study is my work. It is part of the requirement for the completion of the degree of Master of Public Relations and Communication Management at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. The researcher has not submitted the thesis for any other degree or examination in any other university. I also declare that I have obtained the necessary approval and consent from CPUT to conduct this research.

Fanelwa Saul

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ABSTRACT

The growth in social media has birthed a new kind of celebrity called the influencer. Like celebrities, influencers help generate clout and traction for a brand. Therefore, selecting the right celebrity or influencer is vital. With this context in the backdrop, this study aims to investigate the perceptual and commercial benefits of celebrity endorsements. Methodologically, this qualitative study deploys semi-structured interviews for data collection. The researcher conceptually framed the research on the source credible model, the source attractiveness theory, and the non-price competitive theory. The study found that celebrity endorsement is practical as a marketing strategy that helps with brand differentiation. The researcher found a perceptual benefit derived from celebrity and influencer endorsements. The researcher also found that credibility is the essential trait celebrity practitioners look for when employing an endorser, and attractiveness is secondary to credibility in selecting the endorser. Celebrities and influencers transfer their favourable traits to the brand. However, there is no conclusive stance on whether celebrity endorsement premises increased sales of the product endorsed. This research implies that it helps practitioners to select the right celebrity or influencer to support the brand. It contributes to the existing literature on celebrity endorsement in South Africa. It unravels a path of research on commercial benefits derived from celebrity endorsement, as the latter was inconclusive in this paper.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1   Background

With today's fixation with celebrities, organisations are continually scouting for a credible and well-known personality to be part of their marketing and public relations campaigns. Celebrities help generate interest and enthusiasm around the brand. They possess a social capital sought after by brands (Mututwa and Matsilele, 2020). Celebrities are essential to marketing and public relations practitioners because they help practitioners reach their traditional marketing and public relations goals. They also help brands expand their reach on social media.

Opris, Pelau and Lazar (2020) state that celebrities have become a standard feature for consumer products, brands, and organisations in today's marketplace. Supporting the above assertion, Abu-Akel, Spitz and West (2021) postulate that celebrities have demonstrated to wield a strong influence on public opinion in general. The latter suggests that celebrities have become a vital feature for brand promotion for most organisations.

Celebrities are 'tools' that can assist a brand name to be recognised and create a positive attitude and a unique personality for the brand (McCracken, 1989; Stork *et al.*, 2011). Stork *et al.* (2011) furthermore aver that there is substance in anecdotal and academic evidence linking the use of celebrities in advertising campaigns to improvement in the operating performance of the brand. Molelekeng and Dondolo (2021) affirm that celebrity endorsement not only adds to the advertising industry's excellent development but also becomes pivotal as they assist businesses by reaching out to target markets.

This study investigates the perceptual and commercial benefits of using a celebrity endorser for brand promotion, advertising, or marketing. The concept of celebrity endorsement is not new. It originates in the mid-nineteenth century (Erdogan, 1999; Rocha *et al.,* 2018).

Many marketing scholars agree that celebrity endorsements represent excellent vehicles to achieve the significant objectives of marketing communication. Celebrity endorsements are expensive for organisations, but in today's market, it is impossible not to come across celebrity endorsements of brands in their different forms.

According to Lima (2017), organisations allocate significant resources for celebrities to endorse their products through different mediums such as TV, billboards, magazines, and social media. Lima (2017) further alludes that the objective of using celebrity endorsement is to induce consumer purchases to increase an organisation's sales and profits. In addition, celebrities carry a great deal of appeal to public relations as they can help PRPs to achieve traditional public relations goals.

This study seeks to examine and understand the perceptual and commercial benefits of celebrity endorsement for a brand. This investigation will focus on three main questions: How, if at all, do companies benefit from celebrity endorsements? How and why are the celebrity endorsers chosen? Finally, who is the celebrity endorser?

1.2 Research Process

1.2.1 Selecting The Research Area

Celebrity endorsement as a research area has been approached from different viewpoints and opinions, from marketing to management studies in South Africa and beyond. There hasn't been much research available on the subject in South Africa. However, few scholars have attempted to understand this phenomenon (Molelekeng and Dondolo, 2021; Madinga *et al.,* 2020; Ndlela and Chuchu, 2016; Nyamakanga et al., 2009; Van der Waldt *et al.*, 2009; Van Heerden, 2008).

1.2.2 Formulating Research Objectives and Questions

Research objectives are specific statements indicating the critical issues of a research paper (Thomas and Hodges, 2010). Researchers formulate objectives from the study's intended purpose and what the author hopes to achieve.

The researcher has formulated research objectives that are achievable and are designed in such a way that the findings of the study add value and contribute to the available literature on celebrity endorsement.

According to Kishore (2007), research questions identify the problem to be studied and guide the methodology. Ratan, Anand, and Ratan (2019) argue that formulating research questions is essential before starting any research.

1.2.2 Conducting Literature Review

This study has reviewed relevant literature to establish gaps in celebrity endorsement research in South Africa. The researcher, through this study, intended to fill the research gap and contribute to developing celebrity endorsement literature.

1.2.3 Selecting Methods for Data Collection

According to Kabir (2016:202), "data collection is the process of gathering and measuring information on variables of interest, in an established systematic fashion that enables one to answer stated research questions, test hypotheses, and evaluate outcomes."

The researcher has elected to use qualitative methods (semi-structured interviews) to address the research questions put forward for this study. Mathers, Fox and Hunn (1998:2) define semi-structured interviews as "a series of open-ended questions based on the topic areas the researcher wants to cover. Matsilele (2013) observed semi-structured interviews as a process that allows for a symbiotic exchange between the interviewer and interviewee. The open-ended nature of the question defines the topic under investigation but provides opportunities for both interviewer and interviewee to discuss some topics in more detail."

1.3 Rationale of the study

A lot of research on celebrity endorsement is predominantly in America and the United Kingdom. Scholars such as Nyamakanga (2019) (UK); Kheder (2018) (UK); Han (2015) (USA); Foong (2014) (USA); Lofgen (2010) (USA); (UK), and amongst many others, have significantly written about celebrity endorsement. Countries like India,

Turkey and Saudi Arabia are also publishing on the subject even though they are relatively recent than the United States of America or the United Kingdom (Vohra *et al.,* 2021; Patra *et al.,* 2020; Hussain, 2019; Shehadeh and Gomez, 2019; Kohli *et al.,* 2018).

In Africa, Nigeria has seen a reasonable research publication on the subject (Awobamise and Jarrar, 2019; Nwokah, 2015; Nwulu, 2015;). However, in South Africa, there is minimal research on psychology, marketing, advertising, and management studies. Therefore, the interest of this study is to examine the perceptual and commercial benefits of celebrity endorsement and to contribute to existing South African and African research on celebrity endorsement.

1.4   Research Problem

Choosing a celebrity can be a knee-jerk reaction, but one must think hard about it before one decide if that is the route one wants to take (Fotherby, 2000). Likewise, employing an appropriate celebrity endorser to promote a brand is an essential but difficult task (Ilicic and Webster, 2011).

The marketer must select a celebrity whose image best fits the meaning the company wishes to communicate for its product (Canning and West, 2015). Simply, a company should choose a celebrity that is compatible with and embodies its brand to achieve successful public relations and advertising campaigns, among other things.

A celebrity endorser should not overshadow nor upstage the brand. Companies need to consider what it means to employ a celebrity that has already endorsed more than one brand. Granted that it is not unusual for a celebrity to support multiple brands, the latter raises the question of who benefits the most from the endorsement, is it the brand or the celebrity?

Johanson and Bozan (2017) argue that it is good that the celebrity's personality fits that of the brand to help attract attention, but it should not upstage the product itself. Instead, the brand should remain the main attraction. Chen, Chang, Besherat and Baack (2013) assert that there is little data about the benefits to brands from multiple endorsements by one celebrity.

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Celebrity endorsement is a modern marketing strategy that brands widely use. However, there is minimal literature in South Africa about celebrity endorsement's perceptual and commercial benefits. Therefore, there is a need to examine or study these perceptual and commercial benefits of celebrity endorsement to contribute to the existing literature.

1.5 Research Purpose and Objectives

This study aims to examine and understand celebrity endorsement's perceptual and commercial benefits for both the brand and the celebrity.

The celebrity referred to herein is an ascribed celebrity and a traditional celebrity that has attained their status through their societal class, talent and work in the entertainment, sport, beauty, and other related industries.

The researcher also refers to social media celebrities (mega, macro, micro, and nano influencers) that have attained popularity through social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube and TikTok.

The main objective of this study is to examine and understand the perceptual and commercial benefits of celebrity endorsement for both the brand and the celebrity.

The secondary objective is to determine whether brands benefit from celebrity endorsement. Lastly, this study seeks to resolve the value of celebrity endorsement for the brand.

1.5.1 Research Questions

This study aims to examine and understand the perceptual and commercial benefits of celebrity endorsement for a brand.

The latter has led to the following research questions:

1. Who is the celebrity endorser?
2. How and why is the celebrity endorser chosen?
3. How do companies benefit from celebrity endorsement?

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the route and approach this research is taking. It has provided a brief background on the research topic, outlined the research process, and presented the rationale of the study, the research problem, and the purpose and objectives of this research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0   Introduction

The interest in celebrities has historical precedence (Schickel, 1984; Johanson and Bozan, 2017), which in turn has seen brands using stars to differentiate their brand and to create a competitive advantage (Ilicic and Webster, 2015). As a result, celebrity endorsement is widespread among all advertising campaigns and is widely adopted (Erdogan *et al.*, 2001; Opris, Pelau and Lazar, 2020).

Western culture has been enthralled with celebrities, and the endorsement of celebrities is not likely to change (Johanson and Bozan, 2017). The latter is no exception to South Africa. The audiences are flooded and saturated with advertisements featuring celebrities in traditional and new media.

Companies invest substantially to align themselves and their brands with endorsers. Due to the celebrity's fame, the brand can create and maintain attention and achieve high recall rates for advertising messages in today's highly brand-saturated markets (Rawtani, 2010). However, Ndlela and Chuchu (2016) maintain that there is little evidence that a celebrity advertising strategy influences consumer brand purchasing behaviour amongst young consumers in South Africa.

Equally, the growth of social media has intensified and propelled brands' use of celebrities to promote their products or services. However, research suggests that celebrity endorsement affects advertising efficacy, brand awareness, brand recall, buying intentions and buying behaviour (Spry, Pappu and Cornwell, 2011; Johanson and Bozan, 2017).

Wei and Li (2013) argue that celebrity endorsement makes a product more noticeable, appealing, and compelling to consumers. Subbiah and Sathish (2020) state that

celebrity endorsement helps organisations stimulate product awareness. Sajan and Nehru (2014) affirm that celebrity endorsement has the effect of initiating, provoking, informing, exasperating, amusing, and informing the consumer.

2.1 Defining Celebrity and Celebrity Endorser

Cashmore (2006) observes that the world is fascinated with celebrities, attaching extravagant value to public figures whose achievements may be limited, but their presence is extensive. Celebrity is unavoidable in the mediated world opines Penfold-Mounce (2009). Cashmore (2006) further intimates that celebrity culture is with us, like or hate it. It surrounds us and even captures us. It shapes our thought and conduct, style, and manner.

Mututwa and Matsilele (2020) defined Traditional celebrities are people who have gained public recognition because of their professional talent. Furedi (2010) claims that the definition of a celebrity has changed in recent decades and is usually used to reference those famous for being famous. However, Gabler (2001) argues an attempt to find a working definition of celebrity would be a barren academic exercise if the outcome does not help explain the phenomenon and bring us closer to understanding its captivating nature.

The term celebrity is usually associated with people that are frequently in the public eye and typically have a high profile in, amongst others, the sports and entertainment industries (Canning and West, 2006). Gabler (2001) emphasises the need for a celebrity to be known, or he is no celebrity, which is why publicity is a prerequisite.

Nadube and Gowon (2020) state that celebrities are well-recognised personalities with a solid, attractive, and impressive power to pursue the audience either by their likeness, attractiveness, trust or by their congruency with a brand which leads to the creation of a strong brand image and value in viewer's minds. Celebrity narratives can strengthen fears and dreams, teach, and guide us, transport us from daily routine, reassure us that we are not alone in what we think and feel, and impose order on experience (Gabler, 2001).

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Muda, Musa and Putit (2012) say celebrity refers to a notable personality and can make a testimonial of a written or spoken statement praising the virtue of a product (Rodriguez, 2009; Nadube and Gowon, 2020). Celebrity is a method for brand communication wherein the celebrity acts as a spokesperson for the brand. It aligns with the brand's claims and position by lending its personality, popularity, and status in the field of the brand (Ndlela and Chuchu, 2016).

A celebrity endorser is any person who has favourable public recognition, which they utilise on behalf of a consumer good by featuring it in an advertisement (Schimmel pfennig, 2018). The latter is to increase the effectiveness and heighten the credibility of commercials. Molelekeng and Dondolo (2021) state celebrity endorsers' characteristics are frequently transferred to the endorsed product or brand.

Avery and Rosen (2005), in Schimmelpfennig (2018), define a celebrity endorser as an individual popularly known by the public or at least the brand's target audience. Thus, conspicuous literature alludes that celebrity endorser are well-known public figures, such as famous actors, comedians, athletes, entertainers, or musicians (Atkins and Block, 1983; Solomon,2002; Schimmelpfennig, 2018).

Marketers utilise celebrity endorsers to develop their brand image so that, in time, the customer's purchasing decision is influenced (Van der Waldt, Loggerenberg and Wehmeyer, 2009). Consumers value celebrities' prestige and uniqueness, thus the culture of practising what they do and identifying themselves with celebrities to have an image like them (Mmwendwa and Hellen, 2014).

Using celebrity endorsers is a quick means for differentiating the brand from its competitors in the minds of consumers. The right celebrity can deliver the brand message without the need for expounded storytelling. The celebrity endorser acts almost as a guarantee for the product lending the brand credibility (Patel, 2009).

Kumar and Singh-Hundal (2015) suggest that when a celebrity endorser is used, it conveys to the consumer that the company's product or service is of excellent quality

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and its reputation is positive. Research indicates that the effectiveness of a celebrity endorser is dependent on their trustworthiness and perceived trust in their expertise.

The brand can benefit from the popularity of the celebrity, as its brand will have a mass appeal (Zipporah and Mberia, 2014). Van der Waldt *et al*,. (2009) quote (Byrne *et al*., 2003) that brands often use celebrities because they can easily enhance their image and save resources in creating credibility by transferring their values to the brand. If the consumer positively supports the endorser, they might be easier to persuade to buy and use the product. Marketers choose celebrity endorsers solely for their ability to influence consumer attitudes over time (Molelekeng and Dondolo, 2021). Alekar (2014) argues that South Africans generally welcome and relate with celebrity endorsers.

The right celebrity can immediately establish a position for a newly launched product or help alter perceptions of a wrongly positioned product (Van der Waldt *et al.,* 2009). Lastly, celebrity endorsers represent a remarkable tool for achieving significant marketing communication objectives: creating awareness and differentiating the brand and its products from competitors to influence consumers' buying decisions (Erdogan, Baker, and Tagg, 2001; Schimmelpfennig, 2018).

2.1.1 Three Types of Celebrity

There are three types of celebrities as argued by Mututwa and Matsilele (2020). As will be argued below, the three categories are ascribed celebrity linked to the bloodline, the traditional celebrities which refers to people who have gained public recognition because of their professional talent and celetoids are individuals who gain a huge burst of fame (Mututwa and Matsilele, 2020).

2.1.1.1   Ascribed celebrity

Ascribed celebrity is linked to the bloodline whereby hereditary titled individuals such as kings, queens, emperors, duchesses, and so forth command influence and respect within the social hierarchy (Rojek, 2001). Queen Elizabeth is indeed famous, and so was Princess Diana, and they have been celebrated worldwide. Prince William and Prince Harry of the British royal family and Paris Hilton, the heir of the Hilton empire.

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2.1.1.2   Traditional celebrity

Traditional celebrities have gained public recognition because of their professional talent (Khamis, Ang and Welling, 2017). Although traditionally, celebrity endorsers are movie stars, models, and athletes (Zhang and Wei Wei, 2019), they are known to enjoy fame and public visibility for their achievements in areas other than the product class (Guruge, 2018). For example, Bonang Matheba is a South African television and radio personality. She gained fame through her talent as a presenter and has endorsed brands such as Samsung and Nivea; Nomzamo Mbatha is a South African actress and has endorsed brands such as Puma and Neutrogena.

2.1.1.3   Celetoids

Celetoids are individuals who gain a large burst of fame. They are accessories of cultures organised around mass communications and fabricated authenticity, and several other social types who command media attention one day and are gone the next (Rojek,2001). Moreover, celetoids may not necessarily possess any real talent; their sole mandate is limited to media visibility.

Islam (2019) opines celetoids are created, made, marketed, and sold on television. The media is dedicated to manufacturing television celebrities. Today's media consumers are used to witnessing the making of the celetoids who are abruptly removed from anonymity to a highly specified and arranged celebrity (Islam,2019). For example, individuals who became famous after appearing on Big Brother South Africa: Blue Mbombo, Mbali Nkosi and Themba Mabaso.

2.2   Celebrity Endorsement

The celebrity endorsement concept and practice originated in the mid-nineteenth century (Erdogan, 1999; Rocha, Oliveira, and Giraldi, 2018). For over half a century, the advertising industry has relied on celebrity endorsement (Garnepudi and Sudheer, 2022). However, according to Cavill (2018), the 1990s and 2000s introduced a new era of celebrity endorsements. The age of mutually beneficial joint marketing ventures,

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production creation and co-ownership with celebrities is at the forefront of branding decisions.

Duncan (2017) defines endorsement as a form of advertising, or marketing strategy, paid or not, in which a famous person promotes an organisation's products, services, or brands or even raises awareness about an issue or a charity. According to Kotler (2009), endorsement is a channel of communication where celebrities act as brand spokespersons and by extending their popularity and personality to certify the brand's claim and position.

Zamudio (2015) defines celebrity endorsement as a brand alliance between a corporate brand and a human brand, which is the celebrity. Celebrity endorsement is an ancient marketing communication strategy whereby popular culture and celebrities are used to create a brand image and deliver a message (Yöreş, 2017).

According to Kumar and Singh-Hundal (2015), celebrity endorsement is a trend and is perceived to be a winning formula for product marketing and brand building. They argue that organisations use celebrity endorsement to grab the market or expand their operation and promotion of their brand.

Schimmelpfenning (2018) argues that celebrity endorsements are an excellent tool for marketing communication objectives. This is created by the celebrity's ability to differentiate and create awareness around the brand and its products from the competition.

Celebrity endorsement has increased globally in recent years, especially concerning the advancement of marketing in the digital environment and the emergence of social networking sites like Instagram (Nyamakanga, Ford, and Viljoen, 2019). In addition, the accessibility of celebrities via social media, branded philanthropy, and the flexible nature of television, film and streaming has changed the perception of celebrity endorsements (Cavill, 2018).

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According to Molelekeng and Dondolo (2021), South Africa has shown interest in celebrity endorsement, which has led to ample new opportunities and immense potential. They further affirm that celebrity endorsement theories suggest that people look up to celebrities and use them as purchasing guides. On the other hand, Roozen, and Clayes (2010) in Schimmelpfennig (2018) argue the rise in celebrity endorsements, as suggested by academic literature over the past decades, may be explained by the declining effectiveness of other marketing communications.

In South Africa, celebrity endorsement has been notable in political campaigns, alcohol adverts, and beauty and lifestyle promotional campaigns. Pramjeeth and Majaye-Khupe (2016) found that celebrity endorsement greatly assists product recall and wields persuasive power. In addition, research has found corroborated data that celebrity endorsement impacts audience attention, recall, evaluation, and purchase intentions (Hsu and McDonald, 2002:19 in Van Heerden *et al.*, 2008).

Mahira and Rafique (2012) avow that celebrity endorsement benefits the organisation's ability to hold the audience's attention towards the brand and the product. According to Garnepudi and Sudheer (2022), celebrities may help improve sales by promoting products in advertisements, and consistently using celebrities on a long-term basis typically pays off the money spent on them by the brand.

Sharma (2016) states that celebrities as endorsers are an essential concept of the modern marketing strategy for brand promotions, arguing that endorsement increases sales and mutually benefits organisations, celebrities, and advertising companies. Likewise, Spielman (1981) believes that celebrity endorsement can enhance audience attentiveness, make the advert more memorable, credible, and desirable and add glamour to the endorsed product.

Some examples of celebrity endorsement: the South African actress Pearl Thusi was featured by MAC cosmetics when it launched a collection called MAC X Pearl in February 2020. The latter marked the first time the global brand partnered with a South African public figure for product collaboration. Pearl Thusi is regarded as one of the most bankable personalities on the African continent (Hollywoodbranded, n.d).

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Bonang Matheba is a South African television and radio personality. She has been growing her brand internationally, having endorsed brands such as Revlon, Ipanema, Woolworths, Gert Johan Coetzee, Ciroc, Brutal Fruit, and Courvoisier, amongst others (Tleane, 2017).

Michael Wood, founder, and director of business consulting company Asperio based in Johannesburg, South Africa, says many African consumers, more so the emerging middle class are inspirational, providing them with a personality they can aspire to in the form of celebrity endorsement can work in favour of the brand (Douglas, 2015). Equally, researchers have also compared the use of celebrity endorsers versus non-celebrity endorsers (Van Heerden,2008) and found that using a celebrity endorser leads to a higher brand evaluation than an ordinary person as an endorser (Till,2001; Van Heerden 2008).

2.3   Defining Influencing and Influencer

Power and influence are intertwined in every social interaction (Kemper and Collins, 1990; Boughton,2011). According to (Norry,2009:32), "influencing is changing someone's views, attitudes, decisions, perceptions or beliefs to produce an effect on them positively." Digital influence is no different from the latter because it seeks to create an effect, change opinions and behaviours, and drive measurable outcomes online. It results from three conceptual keystones: reach, relevance, and resonance (Technopedia, n.d).

According to an IMM Graduate School article (2021), influencing is an innovative formulation of brand activation that heavily relies on individuals with a mass social media following. The idea is for these individuals to humanise the brand to their followers to arouse brand awareness, product trial, and brand switching. The latter can be done through endorsement and product placement.

Montoya and Vandehey (2009) understand an influencer as a set of external personal perceptions encapsulating the expectations, promises and experiences that individual displays to others. These influencers are often people who grow their popularity

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socially or economically, and individual members of society look up to them for certain decisions or behaviours within their areas of influence.

Influencers share personal information, news, photos, and videos which can influence the opinions and attitudes of others, popularly known as influencer marketing. This type of marketing is one of the fastest-growing tools for reaching new consumers with the help of online media (Zak and Hasprova, 2020).

According to Humanz Instagram Influencer Marketing Stats and Benchmarks (2020), about 85% of marketers said engagement is their primary KPI for influencer marketing. In addition, influencers typically categorise themselves according to personal interests and passions such as lifestyle, fashion, food, beauty, fitness, health, and travel, amongst others. It, therefore, becomes vital for the marketer to select an influencer that aligns well with their brand and product.

2.3.1 Types of Influencers

a) **Mega-Influencers:** Gil Eyal, CEO and founder of HYPR Brands, said mega-influencers are typically more popular than influential. They tend to have a distant relationship with their followers and usually provide a lot of reach in one hit (Ismail, 2018). For example, Dwayne Johnson, "The Rock", is a mega influencer because he is a celebrity (actor) with millions of followers on social media. In South Africa, Boity Thulo can be classified as a mega-influencer. She is an actress, a presenter, a performing hip-hop artist, and an entrepreneur. She has over five million followers on Instagram, making her the most followed artist in South Africa. Mega influencers tend to come at a higher cost than other influencers.

b) **Macro-influencers** have a user base ranging from 100,000 to a million followers. As a result, brands and companies choose them as their business partners. Contrary, most mega-influencers and macro-influencers usually gain fame through vlogging or by producing funny or inspiring content, Deepak Shukla explained in Ismail (2018). Examples of macro-influencers in South Africa are people like Mihlali Ndamase, an award-winning content creator and Forbes Africa 30 under 30 nominee for 2021 with over 2 million followers on Instagram.

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c) **Micro-influencers**: Marwick and Boyd (2011) note that a micro-celebrity is a self-renunciation technique in which people view themselves as a public figure to be consumed by others, using purposeful intimacy to appeal to followers and regard their audience as fans. They can also be specialists in their field that decide to share their expertise on social media. For example, Dr Mandilakhe Ketelo is a South African medical doctor with 631,000 followers on Facebook and 23 100 on Instagram.

d) **Nano-influencers**: according to MediaKix.com, a nano-influencer is defined as an Instagram influencer with 1000-10 000 followers. Nano-influencers highly engage with their followers. They share interests with them and usually focus on a niche market. These individuals have cultivated a highly engaged following and post sponsored content through partnering with brands.
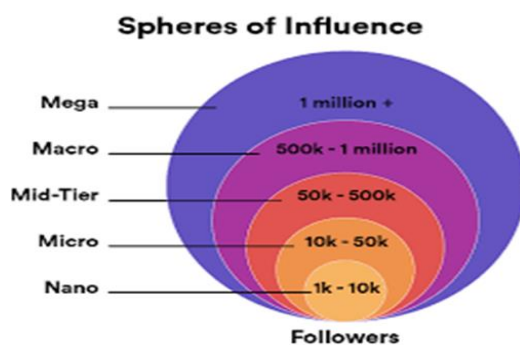
Figure 1: spheres of influence

source: What kind of influencer are you? // Social Bluebook

2.4 Social media Celebrity and Influencer Endorsements

Bright and Cunningham (2012); Samarasing (2018) state that less than ten years after its invention, social media became the most popular online activity and has reached more consumers than email ever. Social media is being used for political campaigns (Matsilele and Ruhanya, 2021; Matsilele, 2019; Mpofu and Matsilele, 2019), transnational solidarities (Matsilele et al., 2021), raise awareness on health issues (Mututwa and Matsilele, 2020). The affordability of social media has allowed ordinary aspirants to popularity to conduct self-branding and self-celebrification practices, consequently maintaining an audience of peer users as their fan base (Hou, 2018).

Social media has created a micro-fame in which everyday people are seen as public and their followers as admirers (Marwick,2015; Arslan,2020). Marketers and publicity practitioners regard homegrown stars on social media as influencers whose visibility and originality can be leveraged for brand promotion (Hou,2018). Hearn and Schoenhoff (2016) opine that companies and advertisers can utilise the authenticity and trustworthiness of the personal brand of social media celebrities to reach consumers.

Zak and Hasprova (2020) opine traditional celebrities have become online influencers, appropriating online spaces to communicate and engage with online users. Lima (2017) argues that celebrities have adopted social media to communicate and interact with their followers or fans. Social media allows for direct access. Information is communicated in real-time, and the interaction between celebrities and their followers has bridged the unfamiliarity with each other.

South Africa has a healthy appetite for internet use and social media despite issues of the digital divide. The #Digital2021 Report for South Africa reported South Africa had twenty-five million social media users in January 2021, an increase of 3.0 million (+14%) between 2020 and 2021. It is testified in the report that the number of social media users in South Africa was equivalent to 41 9% of the total population in January 2021 (#Digital2021 Report for South Africa)

In a survey conducted by MediaKix in 2019, it was discovered that the influencer marketing industry is on the rise and is becoming one of the most lucrative industries and tools for marketing. IMM Graduate School (2021) revealed that 2021 had been labelled the year of South Africa's influencer economy. According to Humanz Influencer Marketing Stats & Benchmarks Report (2022), 2022 is when social commerce is expected to become mainstream.

The Humanz report also showed that about 63% of South African brands launched their campaigns on Instagram in 2021, 21% on Twitter, 13% on TikTok and 3% on YouTube. The latter suggests the social media marketing industry is multiplying in South Africa, and it is not surprising that communicators are taking advantage of this space for brand promotion.

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The popularity of social media among various groups generates excellent possibilities for businesses to attract new customers (Saunders *et al.*, 2012). In South Africa, Instagram is home to most campaigns and continues to rain supreme (Humanz Report, 2022). Legg (2021) states that social media has become a platform where product promotion is expected and conceivably anticipated if it is credible and aligns with the user's values. Below is Figure 2, the example of a celebrity endorser, Cassper Nyovest, a South African artist.

Figure 2: Cassper Nyovest sealed an endorsement deal with South African bank Nedbank, where his song 'Tsibib' will be used in one of Nedbank's TV ads.

2.5   Selecting A Celebrity or Influencer Endorser

Van der Waldt (2009) stresses the importance of selecting the right celebrity for endorsement to ensure that it connects with consumers and interests them in the brand. In choosing the appropriate celebrity, the advertiser or marketer must take into consideration factors such as longevity of the campaign, acceptance of the celebrity by consumers, their relevance and the consumer's perception of the celebrity associating with the brand or product (Fireire, Quevedo-Silva, Senise, and Scrivano, 2018).

Fireire *et al.* (2018) reference Pringle and Binet (2005) that the following four factors must be considered when selecting an endorser: fame-how recognisable is the celebrity by the target market? Adjustment- congruence between the celebrity and the

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brand or product; financial features-cost and returns from hiring an endorser; and role-different ways an endorser can be used in marketing communication.

A celebrity endorser is selected in the hope that it has positive qualities and benefits that can be transferred to the brand. According to Keller (2003); Bergqvist and Taylor (2016), celebrity endorsement is built on the principle that it leverages knowledge consumers associate with another object, such as a celebrity. The latter accepts that a celebrity is attractive to consumers and that positive relations that they have with them can be transferred to the brand.

Reynolds (2000) states in a competitive market. A famous face can appeal to a brand and help it stand out. In a study by Farhati and Khan (2011), they examined the effectiveness of the endorser, and its dependent factor on the meaning the celebrity contributes to the endorsement's physical process. They deduced that success of a brand promotion when assisted by a celebrity is most effective.

Celebrity endorser helps the organisation promote the product or service or raise awareness about products (Sabbiah and Sathish, 2020). Reynolds (2000) argues in a competitive market. A famous face can appeal to a brand and help it stand out. Celebrities may also generate extensive public relations leverage for brands (Erdogan and Baker, 2005; Erdogan, 2005).

Once the organisation decides to use a celebrity endorsement strategy, there is only one but overly critical question to answer: which celebrity to select? (Kansu and Mamuti, 2013). When picking a celebrity endorser, consider which traits are most important to your brand. Celebrity must-have qualities that fit the image you desire for your brand (Wheeler,2003).

For example, AllLife Insurance, based in South Africa, is an insurance company specialising in the chronic illness niche. They partnered with actor and artist Tshepo Howza Mosese, who appeared in their advertisements persuading viewers to take out the insurance although they might have diabetes. This made sense because Mosese lives with diabetes and is open about the fact. He even wrote and recorded a song

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called "I choose to live" about the impact of diabetes on the world and the importance of prevention (Diabetessa, n.d).

Till and Busler (2000) state that celebrity endorsement is more effective when there is a compatibility between the product type and the profession of the celebrity endorsing it. Hence the importance of a match-up congruence between an endorser and the brand. The match-up hypothesis states that there should be a strong match between the celebrity image and the product image. The latter leads to more advertiser and celebrity believability than a weak congruence between endorser and brand (Parmar, Ghuman, Jit, and Mann, 2019).

Shimp (2007) developed the Shimp's No Tear Model to guide managers and advertisers when selecting a celebrity endorser. The Shimp model has the following elements: the match-up between the celebrity and target market; the match-up between the celebrity and the brand; the celebrity credibility; the celebrity attractiveness; cost consideration; endorsement saturation factor; facility/difficulty of working with the celebrity and the likelihood of getting into trouble factor.

Farhati and Khan (2011) found that the success of a brand or product promotion, when assisted by the personality of both the brand and the celebrity, is most effective. In addition, Abu-Akel *et al. (*2021) argue that celebrities have been shown to exert a strong influence on public opinion. McCracken (1989); Stork *et al.* (2011) celebrities are thought to assist in brand recognition and create a positive attitude and a unique personality for the endorsed brand.

According to Kok, Wei, and Li (2013), celebrity endorsement makes a product more noticeable, appealing and compelling to the consumer. In addition, Elberse and Verleun (2012); Wang *et al.* (2019) posit that the value of celebrity endorsement has a positive pay-off to a firm's decision to sign an endorser, and those endorsements are associated with increasing sales in an absolute sense and relative to competing brands.

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On the contrary, Bush *et al.* (2004) questioned whether employing a celebrity endorser yields different results on the bottom line for advertisers. However, there is convincing literature on celebrity endorsement that concur with its effectiveness for brands. Barone and Jewell (2014) professed that endorsement creates advertising flexibility. Wang *et al*. (2019) found that endorsement increases the output of the endorsed firm. Nwulu (2015) found that celebrity endorsement makes the advertisement more memorable, and the company, in the short run, generates high brand awareness as well as an increased market share.

2.6   Risks of Using Celebrity Endorsers

a.   **Overshadowing the brand**

The risk is that consumers will focus on the celebrity and not the endorsed product.

b.   **Multi-product endorsement**

The consumer's perception of the credibility of the celebrity endorser may be endangered if they are engaging in too many endorsements (Jensen and Carlson, 1994).

c.   **Negative publicity**

Negative behaviour of celebrities receives more attention from consumers and can impact the endorsed brands (Money, Shimp and Sakano, 2006).

Conclusion

The primary purpose of this literature review is to establish the base for the researcher's rationale for this study. In addition, the review helps the researcher and the reader of this paper to determine whether there is value in exploring celebrity endorsement as a study, especially in South Africa. Finally, it also seeks to inform the researcher on the necessity of celebrity endorsement for marketing, public relations, and branding.

In the review, celebrity endorsement is a subject worth pursuing not only to understand but to have an in-depth knowledge of what it entails and what contribution it can make to brand marketing. It is also clear that celebrity endorsement is not a new phenomenon, but a marketing strategy developed and adapted to changing times.

With the introduction of social media and technological development, celebrity endorsement is no longer limited to traditional celebrities (actors, athletes, entertainers etc.). Still, it has expanded to include those who gained fame on social media. This new type of celebrity is called the influencer or digital content creator, which is critical for digital marketing nowadays.

This review also showed that influencer marketing is on the rise and is becoming a lucrative business and tool for marketing. Therefore, there is a need for marketing, public relations, and other related scholars to delve deep into research attempting to understand celebrity endorsement in a South African context. In South Africa, there is minimal celebrity endorsement research. Instead, it is found in advertising, marketing, psychology, and management studies.

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CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1   Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher discussed the study's methodological choice and research design process. First, the researcher provided a comprehensive introduction to the study and the choice of methodology. Then, the researcher also justified the chosen research method and design. Furthermore, the researcher also discussed the procedures for collecting, presenting and data analysis for the study.

As indicated, the main objective of this study is to examine and understand the perceptual and commercial benefits of celebrity endorsement for both the brand and the celebrity. To achieve this, the researcher has formulated three fundamental research questions:

1. First, who is the celebrity endorser?
2. Second, how and why is the celebrity endorser chosen?
3. Third, how do companies benefit from celebrity endorsement?

Research is a structured investigation that uses acceptable scientific methodology to solve problems and create new knowledge that is generally applicable (Goundar, 2012). It is the quest for data, using objective and systematic methods to find solutions to a problem. Its purpose is to add to the available literature to contribute to its advancement (Siddiqui, 2014).

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According to Rajasekar *et al.* (2006), research is a coherent and systematic pursuit of new and helpful information on a given topic. Naidoo (2011) posits that research premises on the foundation of five characteristics: relevance; conceptions of research; research orthodoxies, theoretical orientations, and ethical framework. Researchers conduct their study with the help of experiments, observations, analysis, comparisons, and reasonings (Goundar,2012).

3.2   Research Methodology

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) describe qualitative research as a set activity which locates the observer in the world. It aims to provide the researcher with the viewpoint of target audience members through immersion in a culture or situation and direct interaction with people under study (Weinreich, 2009; Makwambeni (2013, 2017).

The study used qualitative research methodology because it was concerned with the phenomena' nature, explanation and understanding**.** The effectiveness of qualitative research rests in its ability to give complex textual descriptions of how individuals experience a given phenomenon (Mack, Woodsong, McQueen, Guest and Namey, 2005; Makwambeni, 2018, 2021).

Qualitative research methodology refers to explanatory and interpretative research and constructs qualitative aspects of communication experiences (Du Plooy, 2009). Punch (2013) describes qualitative research as social science research that gathers and works with non-numerical data that seeks to interpret meaning from the data that assists in understanding social life through the study of a targeted population.

Aspers and Corte (2019) opine that qualitative research is an interactive process in which an improved understanding of the scientific community occurs via new significant distinctions resulting from getting closer to the phenomenon studied. Gopaldas (2016); Mohajan (2018), qualitative research refers to a variety of data collection and analysis techniques that utilise purposive sampling and semi-structured interviews, open-ended interviews.

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Qualitative research is particularly effective in getting socially exclusive information about specific populations' values, opinions, behaviours, and social contexts (Mack *et al.*, 2005). Creswell (2012) and Makwambeni (2021, 2022) suggest that qualitative research emphasises exploring and understanding the meaning that a person or group of people ascribe to a social or human problem.

According to Weinreich (2009), the strength of qualitative research is its ability to engender rich, detailed data that leave the participants' sentiments intact and provides a context for the phenomena under investigation. The ultimate objective is to generate meaning, purpose or reality from the view and experiences of participants (Merriam, 2009; Asenahabi, 2019).

The researcher collected data for the study through in-depth semi-structured interviews with public relations, marketing, and branding experts. According to Iriste and Katane (2018), the opinion of a proficient and experienced expert on the subject matter is the foundation for adopting essential decisions, including implementing innovation recommended by a researcher to get necessary results.

Using public relations and marketing experts for the study gave the research validity, credibility, and reliability because the expert's view came from experience, knowledge, and expertise. Asenahabi (2019) postulates that for something to be considered research, it must be systematic and organised in its pursuit and procedures and meet relevant norms and standards for validity and reliability.

3.3   Research Approach and Design

Research design is a plan for a study that gives the overall framework for collecting data (Leedy, 1997). For Creswell (2014), the research design is the plan for connecting the conceptual research problems to relevant and achievable empirical research. It is an investigation that offers specific direction for procedures in research.

Hakim (2000) opines research design is fundamentally concerned with the aims, uses, purposes, intentions, and plans within fundamental limitations of location, time, money, and the researcher's availability. Furthermore, Asenahabi (2019) argues that research design helps avert frustration by binding the research together through a structured

plan that shows all the significant parts of the research work together in addressing the research problem.

Akhtar and Islamia (2016) opine that research design is the glue that holds all the elements of research together. Research design does not only anticipate and specifies the countless decisions connected with conducting research, collecting data, processing, and analysing, but it presents a coherent foundation for these decisions.

Additionally, the research design is essential because it allows for smooth sailing of the various research procedures, thus creating professional research that yields maximum information with the least expenditure of effort, time, and money (Akhtar and Islamia (2016). MacMillan and Schumacher (2001) opine that the objective of a sound research design is to provide credible results.

3.3.1 Social Constructivism (interpretive)

Qualitative researchers want those studied to speak for themselves and provide their views in words and other actions (Goundar, 2012). According to Asenahabi (2019), qualitative research is typically inductive and has various assumptions: (Rovai *et al.,* 2014). Reality is a social construct; variables are challenging to measure, complex and interwoven; there is a pre-eminence of the subject and data collected will entail the insider's point of view.

Crotty (1998) defines social constructivism as the idea that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is dependent on human practices, constructed in and out of the interaction between human beings and their world and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context. Social constructivism is a qualitative strategy that the researcher identifies the crux of a human experience about a phenomenon as described by participants (Creswell, 2014).

Any effort to comprehend a social reality ought to be grounded in people's experience of that social reality (Grey, 2014: Boru, 2018). For Johnson *et al.* (2007), knowledge as a construction depends on the world where people experience and live.

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The motive for this research's choice of social constructivism is to make sense of the meaning's others have about the world (Creswell, 2007) of celebrity endorsement. This study does not seek to quantify anything about celebrity endorsement but to explain whether there are perceptual and commercial benefits to celebrity endorsement.

The aim is to develop meaning from public relations and marketing experts through in-depth semi-structured interviews. This design has a solid philosophical underpinning and typically involves conducting interviews (Giorgi, 2009). Social constructivism emphasises the need to search for meanings through different views (Boru, 2018). According to (Van Maanen, 1998; Ryan and Dundon, 2008), the interview is commonly concerned with linking events and meanings during the construction of social reality, as experienced by organisational members

3.3.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

The researcher used interviews as a method for data collection for the study. The researcher obtained primary data from industry experts via in-depth interviews with celebrities regarding endorsements. The researcher collected all data ethically and professionally.

Boyce and Neale (2006) define interviews as a qualitative research technique which encompasses conducting full individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, programme, or situation.

Interviews in qualitative research are compelling because they help the researcher explain, understand, and explore participants' opinions, behaviours, and experiences. The latter works because questions in qualitative research interviews are open-ended, allowing in-depth information to be collected.

According to McNamara (1999), interviews are beneficial for getting the story behind a participant's experiences. The interviewer can pursue in-depth information about the topic.

This study used a standardised open-ended interview that is semi-structured. The researcher asked participants the same questions, allowing for a much faster interview process, data analysis, and comparison.

Adam (2015) states that a semi-structured interview is a type of interview that has become the most familiar strategy for collecting qualitative data. The semi-structured interview is an effective qualitative method because it combines a set of pre-set open-ended questions with an advantage for the researcher to ask follow-up questions to understand the phenomenon better.

The semi-structured interview is an effective qualitative research tool for this study because the researcher could prepare the questions well ahead of time. It allows freedom and flexibility for respondents to express their views and opinions on a subject. In addition, there is an opportunity to ask follow-up questions to collect reliable, comparable, and viable data.
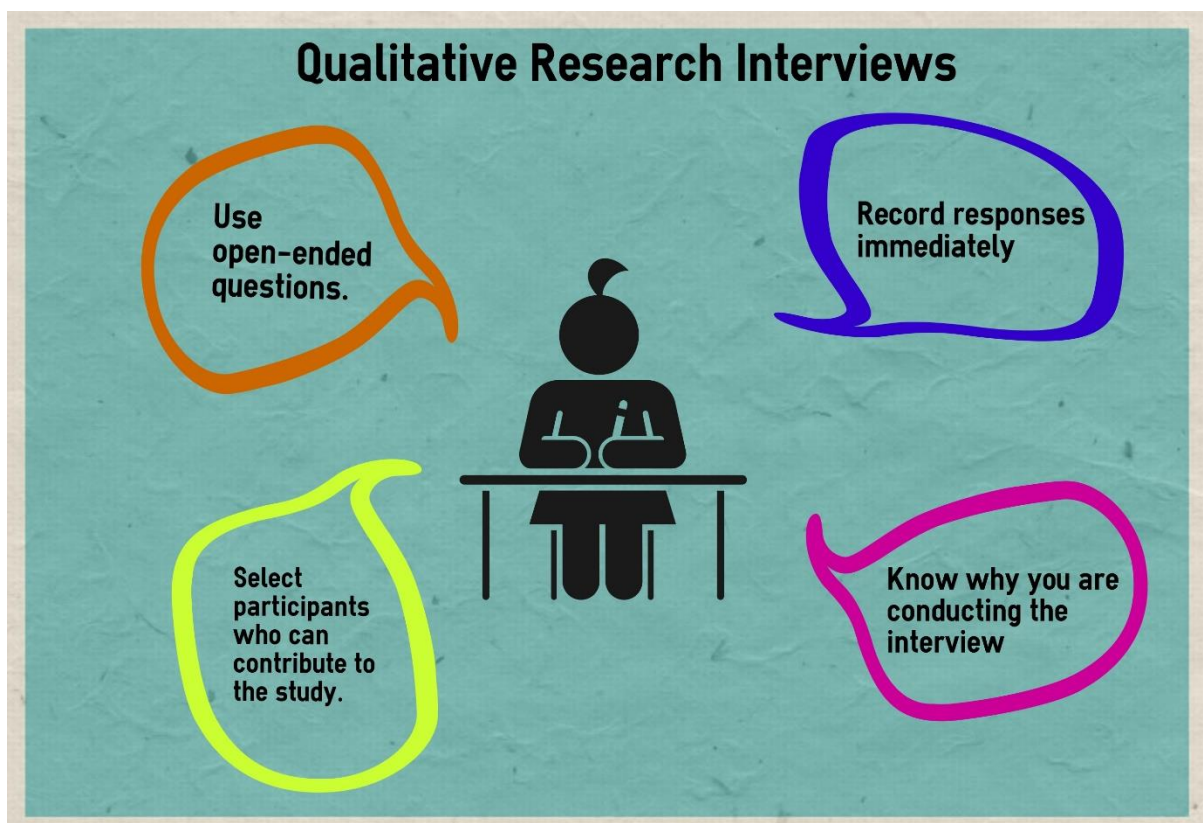
Figure 3. What are the most important things to remember in conducting an interview? (Sarah, 2015).

3.4   Data Collection

Data collection is gathering the desirable information carefully, with the least possible distortion, so the analysis may provide credible answers and stand to logic (Sapsford and Jupp, 2006). Data collection is the heart of any research design, irrespective of the study (Parveen,2017). In other words, an investigation is meaningless without data collected as there would be nothing to analyse and probe.

This research used in-depth interviews as the primary data collection tool. The reason for using interviews is to get the insights of public relations, marketing and branding specialists who are familiar with and work with celebrities and social media influencers to promote brands and products. According to Gill, Stewart, Treasure, and Chadwick (2008), researchers utilise interviews to explore individual participants' views, experiences, beliefs, and motivations.

According to (Guest, Namey and Mitchell, 2013), in-depth interviews are a versatile form of primary data collection method that is adaptable and excellent for generating understanding. In addition, interviews are significant in unfolding opinions, experiences, values, and other aspects of the population under study. Therefore, using interviews was appropriate for this study as the questions drawn up for data collection were open-ended.

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3.4.1 Interviews

Mathers, Fox and Hunn (1998) state that the interview is an essential data-gathering technique involving verbal communication between the researcher and the subject. Interviews are beneficial for getting the story behind a participant's experiences. In addition, the interviewer can pursue in-depth information about the topic (McNamara, 1999).

According to Roller and Lavrakas (2015), the researcher is naturally in control of the questions. After the interview, the researcher analysed the data to create a narrative demonstrating an understanding of the topic under study. The idea of conducting interviews for research is to gain an authentic and undiluted expression or view of what and how the participant feels about the phenomena under study.

The interview approach in qualitative research is not integrally antagonistic. It does not deliberately create conflict to aggravate the participant but instead focuses on building trust where all inputs are honoured. Authenticity thrives because there is an understanding that the conversation will be confidential unless the participant permits them to be disclosed (Roller and Lavrakas, 2015).

Interviews are generally easier for respondents, primarily since the researcher seeks to understand the opinions and impressions of the public relations and marketing specialists. For Gill *et al.* (2008), qualitative methods such as interviews provide a deeper understanding of a social phenomenon than would be obtained from purely quantitative methods such as questionnaires.

Three basic types of research interviews are structured, semi-structured and unstructured (Gill *et al.,* 2008). According to Fox (2009), structured interviews allow the interviewer to ask each participant the same questions in the same way, and the intention is to use a quantitative method of data analysis. Open-ended questions characterise semi-structured interviews and use an interview guide in which the broad areas of interest, sometimes including sub-questions, are defined (Hijmans and Kuyper, 2007).

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For unstructured interviews, there is general agreement in research on the essential nature of these interviews. However, unstructured interviews have no predefined theoretical framework and thus no hypotheses and questions about the social realities under investigation (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2009).

This research opted to use semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews typically involve a dialogue between the researcher and participant guided by a flexible interview protocol and supplemented by follow-up questions, probes, and comments (DeJonckheere, 2019). Busetto *et al.* (2020) argue that qualitative interviews have the advantage of being interactive and allowing for unexpected topics to emerge and to be taken up by the researcher.

Researchers often conduct semi-structured interviews in different ways, such as face-to-face, telephone, text, email and virtually on the internet via applications such as Zoom Meeting, Microsoft Teams, and Google Meets. For this study, the researcher conducted interviews and recorded them on Zoom Meetings, as this was a convenient platform for both the researcher and participants. The researcher lives in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. For the study, the researcher approached participants in Johannesburg.

3.4.2 Key characteristics of semi-structured interviews

Researchers like semi-structured interviews because they can prepare questions ahead of time, allowing ample interviewer time to prepare and appear competent (Cohen and Crabtree,2006). It will enable people to speak for themselves and thus increase the validity of the data. Semi-structured interviews give space to explore different participants' experiences to reflect a range of backgrounds (Fox, 2009).

The interviewer follows the interview guide but can follow topical trajectories in the interview that may stray from the manual when the researcher deems it necessary or appropriate (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006). In addition, the open-ended questions in semi-structured interviews allow the researcher and participant to discuss some topics in more detail (Fox, 2009).

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3.5   Sampling

McCombes (2019) argues that collecting data from every person in that group is rarely possible when one researches a group of people. Instead, the researcher must select a sample, the group of individuals who will be part of the research. Researchers do not have the time or resources to analyse the entire population, so they use sampling techniques to reduce the number of cases (Taherdoost, 2016).

This researcher used non-probability sampling in this study. According to (Taherdoost, 2016), non-probability sampling is often associated with the case study and qualitative research design. In addition, Taherdoost (2016) states that mass media researchers often use non-probability samples.

Semasinghe (2019) states that non-probability sampling is the process where the sampling unit is chosen based on personal judgement. This method uses intimate knowledge and opinion to identify individuals from the population. Researchers use this type of sampling method because the procedures employed to choose units for inclusion are more accessible, quicker, and cheaper when compared with probability sampling.

Adwok (2015) defines probability sampling as a method that specifies to the researcher that each segment of a general population will be represented in the sample. Probability samples lend themselves to rigorous analysis to determine the likelihood and possibility of bias and error. The researcher learned that probability sampling is mainly used in quantitative research and would lend a challenging task to the researcher in understanding the phenomena under study.

The appropriate sampling method for this study is non-probability sampling, as the researcher adopts it in exploratory research where the goal is to identify if a problem or issue is quickly and more cheaply (Dissertation Laerd, n.d).

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3.5.1 Types of Non-probability Sampling used in the study

Purposive and snowball sampling were the primary recruitment methods through which participants were selected based on the researcher's judgement with the study's objective in mind. Participants earlier interviewed by the researcher also recommended other potential participants for the study. At the end of the interview, the researcher would ask for any relevant individual in the public relations, marketing or branding space that the participant deemed appropriate and suitable for the study.

3.5.2 Purposive sampling

Purposive sampling is the most common method in qualitative research (Omona, 2013). In purposive sampling, researchers directly select the participants for the study (Stratton, 2021). The researcher considered who would be the best participant for the research to help drive the study's objective and help answer the research questions. The researcher reasoned that the most appropriate individuals to participate in this study are public relations, marketing, and branding experts who have worked with celebrities or influencers as endorsers.

In purposive sampling, the participants were selected based on their experience with celebrity and influencer endorsement. These individuals have abundant knowledge and insight into how and why celebrity endorsement is or could benefit a brand. The participants are not known individuals to the researcher. Instead, they were approached via social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram and by email sourced from either the participant's company website or given by the participant upon initial contact on social media.

3.5.3 Snowball sampling

Handcock and Gile (2011) state that in the 1940s, the Columbia Bureau of Applied Social Research, led by Paul Lazarsfeld, developed an interest in the empirical study of personal influence via media, wherein the researcher asked individuals in an initial diverse sample to name the people who influenced them. Johnson (2014) argues that snowball sampling is a well-known, nonprobability survey selection method commonly used to locate hidden populations.

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This method depends on referrals from those initially sampled to participate in the study to recommend other participants believed to fit the research criteria and have the characteristic of interest in the research. The recommended participant must be likely to agree to participate in the study. According to (Parker, Scott, and Geddes, 2019), the characteristics of networking and referral are central to snowball sampling.

Snowball sampling is not limited to recruiting hard-to-reach populations. Researchers also use it to access the everyday, mundane, and mainstream (Parker, Scott, and Geddes, 2019). Parker *et al.* (2019) argue that researchers combine a snowball with purposive sampling as convenience sampling. In addition, qualitative social researchers in methods, such as interviews, often employ snowball sampling.

The most evident challenge experienced by the researcher in snowball sampling was that some of the recommended participants were unwilling to participate. However, they had initially agreed to the individual who guided them in the first instance. Unfortunately, the referrals responded to the invitation very slowly after several attempts made by the researcher. Other referrals alluded that they did not have time to sit for the interview as they had demanding jobs.

3.6   Interview Settings

The researcher interviewed a total of eight participants for this study. The eight participants either worked for a public relations company or with public relations or marketing experience that ranged from 4 years to 15 years. The experience possessed by the individual participants made it easy to interview them as they were comfortable and had vast knowledge of the phenomena under study, which are perceptual and commercial benefits for celebrity endorsement.

The researcher gave each participant a consent form granted by CPUT Research Ethics Committee and sent a consent form to the participant before the interview for their signature to indicate their consent to the discussion. Some points of the consent form had to be reiterated by the researcher before the interview, such as the researcher's name, their institution of enrolment, the topic under study, the recording of the interview for data analysis purposes and how long the interview will be. All participants agreed with what the researcher outlined in the consent form.

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Participants indicated that they did not consent for their company names to be used in the study as they had agreed to the interview in their capacity as PR and marketing specialists. However, the participants disclosed the companies to the researcher, and they are satisfied that these companies are authentic and operating in the PR and marketing space in South Africa. Therefore, in the discussion chapter, the participants shall be referred to by the position they hold in their respective companies.

The researcher conducted interviews on a one-on-one basis in a virtual Zoom Meeting. Each interview took a maximum of 45 minutes. Research into interview length and interview speed is currently lacking. However, it was found by (Loosveldt and Beullens, 2013) that a valid measurement of interview length is in the range of 30 to 180 minutes. The latter depends on factors such as the respondent's cognitive capacity, educational level, age, and how the interviewer performs their task during the interaction and communication with the respondent.

For Mathers, Fox and Hunn (1998), an in-depth interview can last between 40 minutes and 3 hours, depending on the level of interest generated in the topic. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews are conducted once with an individual or a group and generally cover 30 minutes to more than an hour (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006; Jamshed, 2014).

All interviews were conducted in English since it is the formal language used in corporate South Africa. Nunkoosing (2005) states that discussions deal with thoughts and words that transform into text. Therefore, minimising semantic barriers by conducting interviews in English proved not a challenge for both the researcher and participants as they were all acquainted with the language.

Alssaawi (2014) opines that the interviewer should provide a convenient environment for the interview and make the interviewee feel comfortable and relaxed. For Dornyei (2007), a good discussion should naturally flow and have depth. It can be achieved by minimisation of interruptions by the interviewer and giving the participant time to elaborate.

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The interview's tone was relaxed, conversational, and yet formal throughout to enable participants to express their views without limitation. Ryan and Dundon (2008) argue that the better the relationship quality between the interviewer and interviewee, the richer the quality of data elicited. The interviewee was put at ease and reassured about their role and confidentiality in the interview.

3.7   Participant Recruitment

Recruitment is the conversation between the researcher and a prospective participant and is a prelude to the consent process. It starts with identifying, targeting, and enlisting participants for the research study (Patel, Doku and Tennakoon, 2003). Recruitment is generally the first contact between the researcher and potential participants, and researchers should use fair and equitable recruitment practices in research.

Celebrities, social media influencers, content marketers, public relations and marketing scholars, public relations practitioners, marketing specialists and branding managers are some stakeholders that may have been considered vital in celebrity endorsement. However, using all these stakeholders would have crowded the study and lost focus of the main objectives of the research.

Generally, participants are chosen because of personal experience and knowledge of the topic under study (Wiley and Sons, 2014). The reasonableness of participant numbers includes thoughtful decision-making; too few may risk adequate depth and breadth, but too many may produce false or unwieldy volumes of data (Sandelwoski, 1995; Wiley and Sons, 2014).

Collingridge and Gantt (2008) opine that participants should have a clear rationale and fulfil a specific purpose related to the research question. Therefore, this research chose public relations, marketing, and branding specialists as participants to align the findings with the research questions and objectives.

This research aimed to explore the phenomenon understudy from the perspective of public relations, marketing, and branding specialists. It propelled the author to recruit individuals at management and operational levels in public relations or marketing agencies for the interviews.

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The expert's knowledge of celebrity endorsement plays a paramount role in understanding the benefits of that type of endorsement. According to (Kaiser, 2014), experts are considered knowledgeable of a particular subject and are identified under their specific knowledge, community position, or status.

Therefore, the expert interview was determined to be the route this research took to ensure that the researcher met the study's objectives and the research questions. Meuser and Nagel (2009; DÖringer,2020) described the expert interview as a qualitative interview based on a topical guide, focusing on the expert's knowledge, broadly characterised as specific knowledge in a particular field of action.

The potential respondents were mainly first approached through social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. Social media recruitment is appealing because it is cost-effective and convenient for time and place (Bartell, 2015). As a result, the use of social media as a recruitment tool for research has increased and is likely to continue to grow (Gelinas, Pierce, Winkler, and Cohen, 2017).

The researcher approached other participants through instant messaging platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger. The initial contact was made based on the author's Google Search Engines' search of potential and relevant individuals in the public relations and marketing space

3.7.1 The following are factors considered when recruiting participants

Factors that researchers must consider when recruiting participants include sample size requirements; ethical principles; the type of study design; and the data collection methods to be used (Patel *et al.*, 2003). In qualitative interviewing, it is challenging to specify in advance the number and the type of respondents as there needs to be a willingness for flexibility (Fox, 2009).

However, the latter does not posit that there cannot be planning (Fox, 2009) advises the following methods to recruit participants: approach a senior member of an organisation; use informal networks (for example, snowballing); direct procedures; advertising; and word-wide web.

Hulley *et al.* (2001) postulate that researchers should follow ethical principles and provisions for prospective participants who decline to participate. They further allude that ethical principles are fundamentally embedded in the researcher's respect for all future participants.

3.7.2 Arrangement of Virtual Interview

Moving from face-to-face to online data collection can broaden access by lifting geographic limits. In addition, it can minimise the burden of time and cost of participating in research. For example, participants do not have to travel or host a researcher, and it may be more convenient to conduct interviews and focus groups outside working hours (Carter, Shih, Williams, Degeling and Mooney-Somers, 2021).

From the latter background, it was possible for the researcher to hold interviews with participants in the Gauteng Province of South Africa, whilst they are based in the Eastern Cape Province, without travelling to participants. According to Meho (2006) and Balderston (2012), semi-structured online interviews and virtual focus groups can be conducted via email, instant messaging, videoconferencing, chat rooms, discussion groups, listservs and more.

The researcher had first to establish whether the participants had access to a smartphone, laptop or computer and a reliable internet connection, as the choice of interview platform was Zoom Meetings.

Soon after the initial contact was made, the researcher sent a brief introduction of themselves, which institution enrolled with, the nature of the study and its purpose. The interview setting was outlined, and the researcher proposed two dates and times to the participants. The participant was encouraged to select a date from either those suggested by the researcher or indicate a date and time convenient for them.

The latter was done to create an environment for the participant to choose what is convenient for them to avoid rejection and deferment. However, different participants postponed a few times due to their work schedules. There were a few rejections that were encountered as well. Although the participant had committed to the interview with a date and time, they simply did not show up for the discussion and no further communication was entertained by the participant after that.

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Once the participant committed to the interview, the researcher scheduled a Zoom Meeting, and a link was emailed to the participant a day before the interview. The researcher asked for permission from participants to record the interview before the interview took place. Recording the interview was easy as Zoom Meeting offers to record online interactions.

Technical challenges sometimes affected this process, but they were easily fixed by creating a new link or using a different laptop. According to (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009; King and Horrocks, 2010; Johansson and Bozan, 2017), a researcher should be sensitive and flexible to adjusting interview arrangements because of any deviation between the expected and the actual situation found in the interviewing process.

The researcher asked the participants to reflect and share information on matters that are professionally important to them. Therefore, the 25 predetermined open-ended questions were sent via email to the participants to familiarise themselves with the questions.

 The researcher formulated the interview questions well ahead of the interview. Balderston (2012) stresses the importance of designing good questions and that the interviewer needs to get them right. She further advises that interview questions should be clear, precise, and conversational in tone. Brinkmann (2014); McGrath, Almgren and Liljedahl (2019) argue that the importance of thorough preparation by the researcher should not be underestimated and includes conceptual and practical practices.

Fancott (2004) suggests three questions researchers should ask in research interviews. Main research questions that primarily focus on the objectives of the study; planned follow-up questions that are more specific and help direct the participant to the study's central issue; and spontaneous follow-up questions that the interviewer will ask after listening to the participant's responses encourage more engagement.

The researcher met the interview arrangements with a few challenges of deferments, rejections and potential participants not showing up for interviews despite agreeing to them. However, Robinson *et al.* (2016) found that the most frequently cited reasons for declining to participate in a study were time constraints and study logistics.

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Most of the participants rescheduled due to work commitments; some interviews were conducted in the evening to accommodate the participant's schedules. The researcher conducted many of the interviews during the day between 11:00 am-5:00 pm.

More importantly, the researcher learned through arranging the interviews that one needs to be diligent, patient, and consistent in asking, as the participants have personal and professional commitments. Manning and Kunkel (2014) state that developing empathy and rapport is fundamental in an interview process.

3.8   Saturation

Saturation has been extensively accepted as a methodological principle in qualitative research. It is generally seen as an indication based on the data already collected. There is no necessity for further data collection (Saunders, Sim, Kingstone, Baker, Waterfield, Bartlan, Burrough and Jinks, 2017). According to (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Saunders *et al.*, 2017), the origins of saturation lie in grounded theory, but it now commands acceptance across a range of approaches to qualitative research.

When the researcher notices a pattern in participants' responses, this might indicate saturation. Urquhart (2013) defines saturation as the point in coding you find that no new codes occur in the data. Instead, there are mounting instances of the same principles but no new ones. Given (2016) argues that saturation is where additional data does not lead to new emergent themes.

The researcher found it challenging to clearly define the saturation point for this study because, theoretically, it is easy to define and describe saturation. However, practically it proved to be a daunting task because saturation in that context becomes apparent with the progress of data collected. To understand that there is no necessity for more data, the researcher had to be observant of the themes and codes that were developed with each interview to determine a familiar pattern in the ideas or responses of participants.

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Hennink (2011); Johansson and Bozan (2017) state that saturation is related to the potential codes and themes in the data analysis. The researcher swiftly noticed a pattern of themes commonly expressed by participants concerning specific questions asked in the interview. For instance, almost all participants said that credibility, authenticity, and a celebrity's public character were essential when considering a celebrity for an endorsement. Also, most participants believe celebrity endorsement cannot be used as a standard marketing tool but as a marketing strategy. Therefore, the researcher quickly identified saturation across all interviews in the above-case scenario.

Johansson and Bozan (2017) argue   saturation appears and varies according to the researcher's interpretation of the data. It is, therefore, wise to continue exploring the potential themes that have emerged early in data collection to confirm if other participants in the study support the initial understanding of saturation.

3.9   Ethical Consideration

The cornerstone of ethical research is informed consent (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Fleming and Zegwaard, 2018). Informed consent is essential to conducting ethical research (Cacciattolo, 2015). In addition, informed consent and issues about privacy and confidentiality are fundamental principles of ethical analysis (Eysenbach and Till, 2001).

 Many universities have developed guidelines for conducting ethical research (Polonsky, 1998). All research at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) requires honest review and approval. The researcher obtained the Ethics Approval Certificate: 220484139/2021/38 from the Faculty of Informatics and Design Research Committee of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

Fleming and Zegwaard (2018) assert the importance of gaining approval before data collection from human participants, saying that ethics committees cannot permit research after data collection has begun.

Cacciattolo (2015) argues that good research has at its foundation a responsibility to ensure that strategies for collecting data are responsible; that research always attends to a professional code of conduct that safeguards all those participating in the study. On the other hand, punch (2005) alludes research does involve collecting data from people about people.

When conducting research and collecting data, the general principle of every researcher to be ethical and moral applies. Kitchin (2007); Gupta (2017) state that the general principles that guide ethical practices in online research are the same as those that guide any research concerning human beings and include respect for autonomy, justice, and generosity.

The decision to recruit and conduct interviews online was convenient and suitable for the researcher as it allowed for a broader potential participant reach and a greater chance to recruit various experts to offer a diverse contribution to the phenomenon under study. James and Busher (2009) argue that researchers increasingly use the internet for qualitative online research.

The online space has become popular as a research medium for collecting primary data, as seen in marketing, communications, and media research (James and Busher, 2009). Therefore, it was deemed a reasonable cost and time-effective convenience for this research to be conducted virtually rather than face-to-face.

However, this has come with a host of challenges for research ethics. Miller *et al.* (2012) argue that the new research tools have triggered new ethical concerns and questions about what should or can be regulated. The common problems that arise from research studies employing online methods are ensuring anonymity, maintaining confidentiality, and obtaining informed consent in a virtual setting (Moreno *et al.,* 2013; Gupta,2017).

Keller and Lee (2010) argue that when conducting online surveys or interviews, ethical concerns may arise regarding obtaining informed consent, ensuring the anonymity of participants, and maintaining confidentiality. When using the internet or email for research purposes, issues of privacy and support are equally important (Eysenbach and Till, 2001).

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However, it is evident in the literature that the researcher's responsibility remains to safeguard the participant's personal information and not reveal anything without the participant's permission. Balderston (2012) opines that researchers using online methods must be sensitive to the ambiguity (of informed consent) and follow the usual stipulations for informed consent.

Kitchin (2007) emphasises that research participants' treatment should be fair, equal, and noble throughout the research process. In this study, all participants were treated equally, fairly, and decently. Furthermore, although there was no principal participant, they were all seen as specialists who added value to the study through their expertise and knowledge of celebrity endorsement.

The researcher addressed anonymity and confidentiality by conducting one-on-one individual interviews. The participants were each informed that the interview would be recorded for data analysis and interpretation, and they gave verbal consent reiterating the written permission they had already signed. Balderston (2012) postulates that participants should be aware of the research topic and type of questions they may be asked and how data will be stored and used.

Participants came from various cultural backgrounds, and each was afforded respect. In the interviews, diction that is non-offensive and discriminatory in any form, including gender, age, race, or creed, was used. O'Grady (2016) argues that interpersonal respect plays a significant role in the esteem felt within the relationship and helps build trust between the researcher and participants.

Those informed ethical considerations in this study of the institution. Lastly, to prevent any data leakage or loss, all recordings of the interviews and related transcripts were kept in a password-protected file.

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4.   Issues of Validity and Reliability

McMillan and Schumacher (2006) describe validity as the degree of unity between the explanations of the phenomena and the realities of the world. Validity is specified in the quantitative paradigm but confusing in the qualitative one (Bashir, Afzal and Azeem, 2008). For Creswell (2009), validity is the researcher ensuring that their findings are accurate from the perspective of the participants, the researcher, and the readers.

Reliability refers to the soundness of the research, particularly concerning the correct method used and how those methods were applied and implemented in a qualitative research study (Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, 2014). Reliability rests on the notion that the more times the findings of a study can be replicated, the more stable and reliable the phenomenon is thought to be (Merriam, 1995; Cypress, 2017).

A research process, whether quantitative or qualitative, is constantly evaluated for its worth and merits by peers, experts, reviewers, and readers (Cypress, 2017). Patton (2001) argues that reliability and validity should be considered by qualitative inquiries while designing a study, analysing results, and judging the quality of the study.

Historically and in modern circles of scholarship, qualitative research has felt criticism from outsiders for its perceived failure to adhere to canons of reliability and validation (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982; Rose and Johnson, 2020). There is an ongoing debate about whether terms such as validity, reliability and generalisability are appropriate to evaluate qualitative research.

Stenbacka (2001) argues that since reliability concerns measurements, it has no relevance in qualitative research, saying it is irrelevant in judging the quality of a qualitative study. However, Stenbacka has not disregarded the validity issues in qualitative research. Instead, she opines that the concept of validity should be redefined for qualitative research.

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It is a qualitative research study, and an excellent qualitative study seeks to understand a situation that would otherwise be enigmatic or confusing (Eisner, 1991). However, it is imperative to remember that the issues of human behaviour and interpretations are not static; therefore, there must be a difference in how validity and reliability are proven in qualitative research compared to quantitative approaches.

Noble and Smith (2015) postulate that quantitative researchers apply statistical methods to establish the validity and reliability of research findings. Qualitative researchers, on the other hand, aim to design and incorporate methodological strategies to ensure the trustworthiness of the results.

To ensure reliability in qualitative research, the examination of trustworthiness is paramount (Golafshani, 2003). Reliability and validity are conceptualised as trustworthiness, rigour, and quality in the qualitative paradigm (McMillan and Schumacher, 2006).

In this research, reliability and validity were increased using Lincoln and Guba's (1985) concept of trustworthiness, which entails credibility, transferability, confirmability, and reflexivity.

Credibility is the accurate and truthful portrayal of the participants' lived experiences (Cypress, 2017). It was achieved through in-depth semi-structured interviews with public relations, marketing, and branding experts. Individuals with experience working with celebrity endorsers were purposely selected to participate in the study. The experts interviewed for the research have worked in the industry for 4 to 15 years.

The interview questions were relevant to the research questions, and enough time was spent thinking and preparing the questions before the interview (Balderston, 2012). As a result, the participants had enough time during the interview to express their experiences and knowledge of celebrity endorsement. The interviews were scheduled for a maximum of 45 minutes per interview.

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Transferability concerns the aspect of applicability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). By its makeup, qualitative research does not aim for replicability (Stahl and King, 2020). However, the researcher's responsibility is to provide a thick description of the participants and the research process to allow the reader to assess whether the findings are transferable to their setting (Korstjens and Moser, 2018).

The premise is that this study's patterns and descriptions apply to previous studies on the phenomenon under study. These patterns are evident in the literature review on celebrity endorsement and the findings of this study. The main goal is for researchers to learn from previous studies (Stahl and King, 2020).

Reflexivity relates to the researcher's ability to make and communicate nuanced and ethical decisions amid the complex work of generating real-world data that reflect the messiness of participants' experiences and social practices (Finlay 2002a). According to (Cunliffe, 2004), reflexivity draws from social constructionist assumptions to highlight subjective multiple constructed realities.

In this study, the researcher maintained sufficient detachment and avoided over-familiarity with the phenomenon under study. The latter was ensured by not pressuring participants to disclose and share any information they were not comfortable sharing whilst being encouraged to share their experiences and knowledge on celebrity endorsement.

5. Consent Form

The researcher must inform the participant of what is required of them in the process of their participation in the study. It is paramount that the researcher tells the participant about the research, what kind of information is required from the participant, how the researcher collected the data, and whether there will be any consequences resulting from their participation in the study.

Ariffin (2018) argues that consent should be given freely, participants should understand what is being asked of them, and involved persons must be competent to consent. One of the most important ethical rules for human research is that participants must give informed consent before participating in the study (Nnebue, 2010).

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Therefore, clear communication from the researcher is key to allowing potential participants to make an informed choice about participation. Consent is not forced. It is voluntary, so articulating clearly to a potential participant what their role is in the research is vital. Nnebue (2010) notes that participation in research should be based on an informed decision after sufficient information about the study has been provided.

In this study, a consent form was sent to the potential participant once they indicated an interest in participating upon the first contact. In addition, the researcher's identity was shared, the purpose of the study was explained, and the data would be collected in a virtual interview via Zoom Meetings.

The copy of the consent form was attached as a word document so that the participant could edit their details and send the form back via email. Many participants responded via email, expressing their willingness to participate with a commitment to the interview time and date.

The researcher did not coerce any participant against their will to participate, even those who initially agreed to participate and withdraw. Instead, the researcher respected the decision of each participant to participate or withdraw from the interviews at any point in the research.

6.   Data Analysis

Data analysis is putting facts and figures to solve the research problem (Ashirwadam, 2014). However, Grbich (2013) posits that the data analysis process in qualitative research is complex because it stems from the participants' experience (Ashirwadam, 2014).

 The latter includes a combination of three key areas: the researcher's views and choices in the research process and the impact of the data one collects and analyse; the design and methods used, the quality of data gathered and how the researcher managed it; and the display of findings and the theoretical interpretation of the analysed data (Grbich, 2013).

This study used thematic analysis. Researchers such as King (2004) and Braun and Clarke (2006) agree that thematic analysis is highly flexible and provides a rich, detailed, yet complex data account. It is also relatively easy to grasp for researchers who may be new and unfamiliar with other qualitative methods.

Research suggests that thematic analysis is suitable for qualitative research using semi-structured interviews to collect data. It helps with analysing participants' personal experiences and identifying patterns in participants' views and perspectives of the phenomenon under study (Nowell, 2017).

 The study used semi-structured interviews as the tool to collect data. In addition, the thematic analysis will help find patterns of themes in the interviews conducted with all the participants. The latter is ideal for this study because the research focused on the semantic approach, which stresses the value of excerpts' views and opinions on celebrity endorsement.

According to (Braun, Clarke and Weate, 2016) semantic approach engages with the data at the point of apparent meanings expressed, the purposes and frameworks that underpin the things explicitly stated by participants or in a textual representation.

6.1 Thematic analysis

The aim is to present patterns observed and found during the research study's interview process. The themes that emerged through data collection were the following: conceptualisation of celebrity endorsement in SA; determining factors for celebrity endorsement in SA; selecting the right endorse; and deducing the benefits of celebrity endorsement.

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Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher focused on the methodology used in this study. First, the researcher explained the qualitative research method for data collection, such as interviews, interview settings, sampling, and recruitment of participants. Finally, the researcher discussed saturation, ethical consideration, and consent form.   The researcher also discussed data analysis in this chapter, and the researcher selected thematic analysis as a method of data analysis for this study.

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CHAPTER FOUR

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

4.0   Introduction

This chapter explores the significance and relevance of the study and how the study design appropriately responds to the research questions. The researcher explained the theories and models used in the study and their importance. It is imperative for this study that the researcher outline the concept of the conceptual framework first defined and its purpose.

Camp (2001) opines that a conceptual framework is a structure the researcher believes can best explain the natural progression of the phenomenon to be studied. It serves as a guide and a stabiliser for research (Ravitch and Riggan, 2016). It is connected to the concepts, empirical research and critical theories utilised in encouraging and structuring the knowledge espoused by the researcher (Peshkin, 1993; Adom, Hussein and Agyem, 2018).

4.1   Non-Price Competition Theory

Non-price competition theory is a marketing strategy in which one firm tries to distinguish its product or service from competing products based on attributes like design or craft (McConnell and Campbell, 2002).

Instead of engaging in price wars with competitors, companies rely on non-price competition use of promotional expenditures such as marketing campaigns, brand management, advertising, sales staff, sales promotions, gifts, and free delivery services (Iger,2022).

 The non-price competition involves ways that firms seek to increase sales and attract customers through methods other than price. It can include the quality of the product, unique selling point, superior location, and after-sales services (Pettinger, 2019). This study argues one of these ways is celebrity endorsement.

Consumers experience large-scale advertisements due to the highly competitive era (Tanjung and Hudrasyah, 2016). The excessive number of ads bombarding the

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consumer may lead to their inability to recall the adverts due to their limited memory capacity (Ha and McCann, 2008). The use of celebrities has become a common phenomenon for higher brand recall and change in brand preferences (Dhotre and Bhola, 2010).

Therefore, advertisers should focus on advertising strategies that capture consumers' attention and influence buying decisions (Tanjung and Hudrasyah, 2016). In addition, there is documented evidence in the empirical literature that non-price advertising has concurrently increased demand and differentiated product effects (Gomez and Mello, 2005).

Chie and Chen (2013) argue that the modern economy (business) has progressed to a stage far detached from the early experiences of the Industrial Revolution. Instead, today the focus is on the service industry, which has replaced the manufacturing industry and has become the most significant component in many countries' domestic products.

Savel'eva, Prokopenko, Zueva, Kuklin and Yanov (2016) avow that consumers demonstrate increased attention to visible service elements such as company equipment, staff appearance, the brand and everything else that gives indirect information about the nature and quality of the product or service.

Non-price competition theory essentially focuses on product differentiation and product variation. It may be achieved through advertising, branding, packaging, better location, quality service, sponsorships, and brand loyalty.

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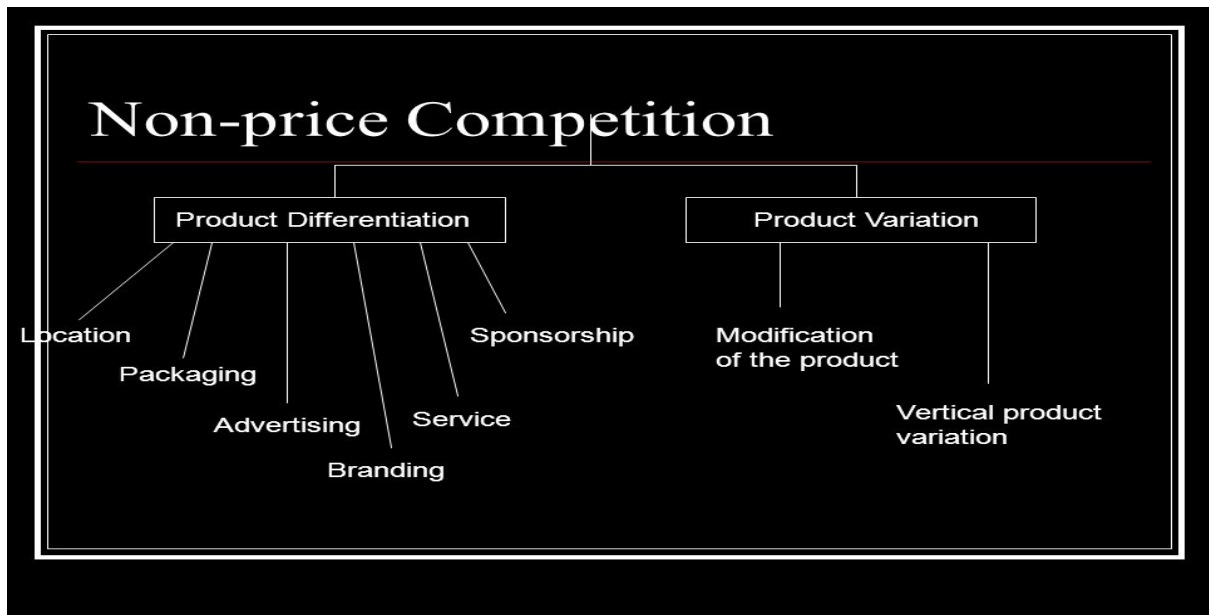
Figure 4 Non-Price Competition: Product Differentiation and Product Variation (Ami Skinner, 2015).

4.1.1 Product Differentiation

Kopp (2021) defines product differentiation as a marketing strategy to differentiate a company's product or service from the competition. It involves identifying and communicating the unique qualities of the brand. It goes hand in hand with developing a solid value proposition so that a product or service can be attractive to the target market.

Product differentiation is the process of identifying distinctive features and introducing their unique features to ensure that the product has a unique selling proposition within its market (Pickering, 2019). Rachmat, Hurriyat and Sultan (2019) ascertain a substantial influence between product differentiation variables on purchase intention and that celebrity endorsement influences purchase intent.

Davidge (2016) cites a Taiwanese study, which established consumers indicate a more excellent recall of products endorsed by a celebrity. The latter is regardless of whether they are actual fans or not. Consumers place a higher value on products that a celebrity has approved. It is as if they are receiving advice from a trusted friend.

Kopp (2021) says that product differentiation may not necessarily require any changes to the product but a new advertising campaign or other promotions. This paper argues

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that using celebrity endorsement assists in product differentiation. According to (Spry *et al.*, 2011; Kheder, 2018), a celebrity endorsement strategy is tremendously helpful in brand differentiation and enhancing competitive advantage.

According to Olenski (2016), the brand value added by using celebrity endorsement is immediate and tangible. In addition, using a celebrity endorser presents an element of legitimacy to the company because of the power of the celebrity's name. Olenski (2016) further notes that a star helps differentiate a product through perceived legitimacy from the endorsement, even though the product has not changed.

4.1.1.1 Sources of the product (and brand) differentiation

It occurs due to buyers perceiving a difference. Differentiation sources may be the product's usability and functionality, distribution, and marketing (Pickering, 2019). Below are critical sources of product differentiation adapted from the 7ps of traditional marketing.

Figure 5: Key sources of product differentiation (which are also adapted from the 7Ps of classic marketing thinking) source: marketingmix.co.uk

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4.1.1.2   Types of product differentiation

a) Vertical product differentiation

According to Merel and Sexton (2011), in vertical differentiation, consumers share the same ordinal ranking but differ in their preference for higher-ranked products. Pickering (2019) argues that vertical differentiation concerns distinguishing a product on a single characteristic where the customer is transparent about its quality. It seeks to create more demand for the product by demonstrating product quality to increase its perceived quality against others.

In a Lux Soap advertisement featuring former Miss South Africa and Miss Universe Zozibini Tunzi, the beauty queen chose Lux soap because it gives her confidence, radiance and even-toned skin. The latter are attributes of a high-quality product, and the fact that Tunzi appears in the advert gives Lux credibility as the body soap of choice and gives the perception of legitimacy for the brand because a beauty queen has 'chosen' the brand over many others.

b)   Horizontal product differentiation

Horizontal product differentiation occurs when goods are different, but at the same price, some consumers will buy one, and some will buy the other depending on customer preference. Merel and Sexton (2011) argue that consumers disagree on a preference ranking among products in the category in horizontal differentiation. For example, a customer may choose the pie from Woolworths over Shamrock pie due to personal preference rather than price concerns.

4.1.2 Product Variation

Product variation refers to any change that alters the physical characteristics of a product or the conditions under which it is sold, like changing the colour of a toothpaste tube. A company does this to raise its market share of a product. Below is an example of product variation (changing of packaging) by the German cosmetics manufacturer, Beiersdorf.

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Figure 6: Beiersdorf rethinks Nivea's Naturally Good beauty packaging as a sustainable alternative. Source: https://www.cosmeticsbusiness.com

Beiersdorf has opted for a sustainable packaging alternative for Nivea's Naturally Good day and night creams. They use a bio-based polypropylene resin from the Saudi Arabian Chemicals Company Sabic. It is in line with its Sustainability Agenda, Care Beyond Skin, to reduce fossil-based, virgin plastic for its cosmetics products by 50% (Bargh, 2021).

Nivea India featured a Bollywood actor, Taapsee Pannu, in their Naturally Good range campaign, emphasising its 95 per cent natural origin ingredients and eco-friendly packaging (Indiantelevision, n.d).

Non-price competition is helpful in this study because it emphasises product differentiation, giving prospective customers added value. The value can come directly from product, service, or brand perception (Hart, 2022). Elberse and Verleum (2012) addressed the importance of celebrity endorsement and found a positive pay-off to a firm's decision to sign an endorser.

Among all product differentiation strategies, celebrity endorsement advertising has proven to influence consumer perceptions of product differences (Gasmi *et al.,* 1992; Wang, Kao and Ngamsiriudom, 2017). According to Kok, Wei and Li (2013), celebrity endorsement makes a product more noticeable, appealing and compelling to the consumer.

Hart (2022) states that product differentiation develops brand loyalty, so the customer will likely choose your product over the competition. In today's highly competitive environment, organisations seek to create the concept of brand loyalty in their customers' mentality (Audi, Masri and Ghazzawi, 2015).

4.2   The Selection of Celebrity Endorsement

4.2.1 The Source Attractiveness Theory

According to Wang *et al.* (2019), source attractiveness theory premises on consumers forming a positive stereotype about people who are famous and successful and believing if they too act like those who are successful, they will also be recognised and successful (Mulye and Rahman, 2018). Furthermore, the source attractiveness theory links an endorser's similarity, familiarity, and likeability to the effectiveness of a message (Seiler and Kucza, 2017). Therefore, the source attractiveness theory will help the study articulate how the celebrity endorser is selected.

Researchers have presented models such as the source attractiveness model to help companies find the right endorser for their brand. Attractiveness is related to how likeable or physically attractive the source is to the audience (Ohanian, 1991; Eren-Erdogmus, Lak and Çiçek (2016). According to (Singer, 1983; UKEssays, 2018), advertisers have chosen celebrities based on their attractiveness to gain from the dual effects of celebrity status and physical appeal.

 Studies on attractiveness have releveled that the consumer exposed to an attractive celebrity lean towards the product favourably more than the consumer exposed to an unattractive celebrity. However, there is an indication that unlikable celebrities tend to be better recognised than likeable celebrities in advertisements (UKEssays,2018).

Frank and Mitsumoto (2021) opine that the traditional role of the source attractiveness model in selecting the celebrity endorser is influential. However, they felt it overlooked other essential factors by only focusing on three aspects of a communication source: likability, similarity, and familiarity, and neglecting different dimensions such as the effects of personality appeal and successful appeal.

The major limitation of the source attractiveness model is that it does not measure any specific characteristics of an endorser. Hence advertisers have difficulty understanding which celebrity to enlist as an endorser (Amos et al., 2008; Frank and Mitsumoto, 2021).

Frank and Mitsumoto (2021) extended the source attractiveness model to assist advertisers in selecting an endorser with a specific type of attractiveness that is best effective for advertising. They drew from the psycho-socioeconomic theory of beauty by Hartz (1996).

Below are the Ohanian Model of Source Credibility (Figure 7), which has attractiveness with its three-aspect traditional role of similarity, familiarity, and likability. Figure 8 is the extended source attractiveness model with factors such as sex appeal, personality appeal and success appeal that are not shown in the Ohanian model.
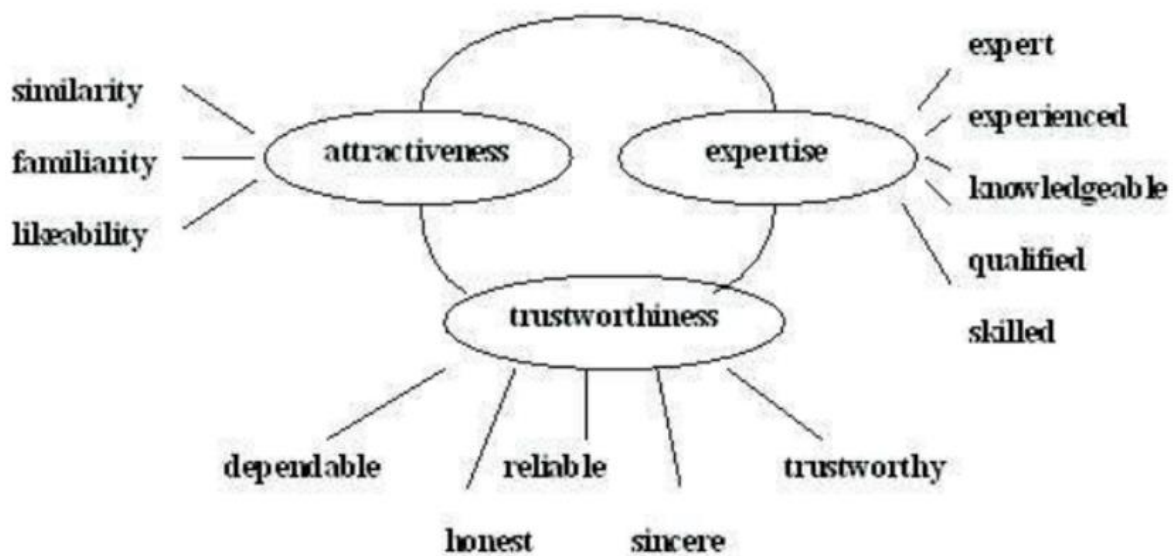

Figure 7: The Ohanian Model of Source Credibility

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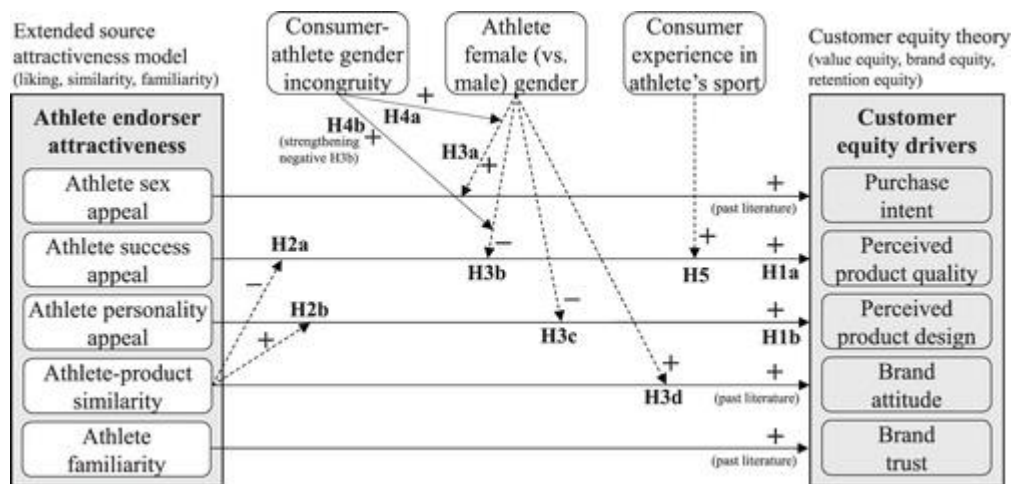
Figure 8: Extended source attractiveness model. Source: Frank and Mitsumoto (2021)

Frank and Mitsumoto (2021) found that success appeal, attraction, personality, and athlete-product similarity, but not sex appeal, positively affect customer equity drivers. For example, a female athlete's sex appeal positively influences male consumers, whereas a male athlete's success appeal positively impacts female consumers.

No perfect celebrity can endorse all types of brands and generate maximum outcomes (Dom, Ramli, Chin and Fern, 2016). Hence, advertisers and businesses must consider the selection of an endorser. Consumers react positively to communicators whose personality, image, behaviour, or views match the brand image and the target audience (Neubauer, 2008).

Personality traits are behavioural patterns or characteristics established over time (Popkins, 1998; Neubauer, 2008). According to the study by Lewandowski (2007), the perception of an upbeat personality can lead to likeability. The celebrity's personality must therefore match that of the brand. Therefore, brands should refrain from only choosing a celebrity based on their popularity and appeal but must understand the role that a celebrity's personality brings to the brand (Brandmatters, 2009).

When selecting a celebrity endorser, the brand must consider the traditional source attractiveness model factors such as likability, familiarity, and similarity, and juxtapose those with the extended factors by Frank and Mitsumoto (2021), such as personality appeal and successful appeal. The latter will help the brand select a wholesome celebrity endorser that will be the right fit for their brand and be effective in their role.

4.2.2 The Source Credibility Theory

Celebrity endorsement's effectiveness is sustained by credibility, expertise, and attractiveness (Ohanian, 1991; Quevedo-Silva and Scrivano, 2016). Therefore, the celebrity must demonstrate high confidence and believability when interacting with the endorsed brand, especially in public. That is why the celebrity needs to know and have a greater understanding of the brand endorsed.

Choi and Rifon (2012); Freire *et al.* (2016) state when consumers believe that the endorser reflects their idealised self-concept and self-image, the evaluation of the act is positive and increases product purchase intentions. Information from a credible source, such as a celebrity endorser, can influence beliefs, opinions, attitudes, and behaviour through internalisation. The latter occurs when recipients of the message accept a source influence (celebrity) in terms of their attitude and value structure (Kelman, 1961; Erdogan, 2001).

The idea of the source credibility model is that if the source (celebrity) is considered credible, the message will be evaluated positively and have greater persuasiveness (Hussain and Khan, 2017). The source credibility model proposed by Hovland, Janis and Kelly (1953) states that expertise and trustworthiness are the two essential factors from which credibility originates, which the researcher explained in this paper.
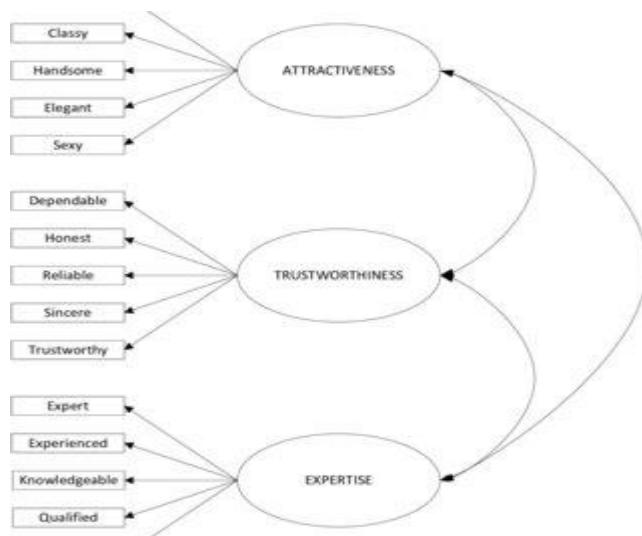
Figure 9: Source Model for Celebrity Endorsement. Source: Researchgate.net

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4.2.2.1   Expertise

Expertness is the extent to which a communicator is perceived to be a source of valid assertions and speaks of the knowledge, experience, and skills the endorser has (UKEssays, 2018). Some scholars have expressed that it does not matter whether the celebrity has the actual expertise of the product endorsed, but all that matters is how the consumer perceives the endorser.

However, Speck *et al.* (1998) found that expert celebrities produced higher recall of product information than non-expert celebrities, even though there is no significant difference. According to Till and Brusler (2000), when a celebrity has professional accomplishments and expertise, this may connect logically with the product and ultimately make the endorsement more believable to the consumer.

Below is an example of a collaboration between a brand (Revlon South Africa) and a Beauty Content creator (Mihlali Ndamase). Mihlali Ndamase is a professional makeup artist and beauty content creator with a YouTube channel and is very active on social media with her makeup tutorials and other beauty content. So, the collaboration with Revlon South Africa makes sense to the consumer because Ndamase is regarded as an expert on beauty.

Figure 10: Mihlali Ndamase, a South African Beauty Content Creator and YouTuber partnered with Revlon South Africa for a makeup masterclass. Source: Mihlali Ndamase on Twitter https://t.co/pOo1K1NtSu/Twitter

4.2.2.2   Trustworthiness

Eren-Erdogmus (2016) cites Hovland *et al*. (1953), in which trustworthiness is defined as the degree of confidence in the communicator's intent to communicate the assertions they consider the most valid. Fundamentally, the endorser must present honesty, integrity, and believability to achieve a successful and effective endorsement. Trustworthiness is a significant quality of a good endorser (Cheong and Morrison, 2008; Monge, Elorriaga and Olabarri, (2020).

According to Shimp (1997); UKEssays (2018), advertisers take advantage of the value of trustworthiness by selecting endorsers who are widely regarded as honest, believable, and dependable. Marketing scholars have found that an endorser's ethnic status can affect the endorser's trustworthiness because people trust what is like them. So, the brand needs to be inclusive and diverse in selecting an endorser that will appeal to and reflect what is familiar to its consumers.

Wang and Scheinbaum (2018) found that endorser trustworthiness is the only component of source credibility that is important to low-involvement consumers. So, advertisers should use attractive celebrity endorsers with a global appeal who are trustworthy to enhance brand credibility. Furthermore, according to (Bergkvist *et al*., 2016; Monge *et al*., 2020), consumers' perception regarding a celebrity's motives for endorsing a product or brand has a substantial impact on their belief in that person's credibility.

Nomzamo Mbatha is a South African actress with impeccable reviews for her acting. However, her work as the Goodwill Ambassador for the UNHCR gives her credibility and trustworthiness. She has also partnered with Hollywood Bets through her foundation, The Lighthouse Foundation, to give out bursaries to deserving young students (Kaya959, n.d).

Figure 11: Nomzamo Mbatha partners with Hollywood Bets for an R500 000 bursary fund. Photo: Nomzamo Mbatha/Instagram

Mbatha has endorsed many brands, such as Puma South Africa, Topo Chico SA, Neutrogena SASA, and Audi. Her work as a philanthropist enhances her public image, which can be seen as a positive characteristic by brands who wish to partner with her, and customers may respond favourably to her endorsement.

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter helps set the foundation for this study by justifying the role of celebrity endorsement and the select of thereof. Non-price competition is a marketing strategy characterised by product differentiation and variation. In its nature, the non-price competition seeks to enhance the brand's experience for the consumer by focusing on specific product factors other than price.

Unlike price competition, where competition is focused on price, non-price competition focuses on factors such as product quality, distribution efficiency, location, packaging, sponsorships, branding, marketing, and after-care sales. Companies no longer concentrate on the price of the product alone but pay attention to the value of service, staff appearance and the overall experience the consumer encounters with the product or brand.

The company may use a celebrity endorser to communicate and highlight these differences by giving the firm a unique selling point that will lead to product recall and brand recognition. Celebrity endorsement is a form of marketing tool firms use for

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product and brand promotion. Because of their status and popularity in society, celebrities may legitimise and afford the brand a status of legitimacy.

When selecting the endorser, there is a consensus that the credibility of a celebrity endorser is essential. In addition, the endorser must be likeable, familiar, and like the target audience. In other words, the consumer must relate with the endorser. Frank and Mitsumoto (2016) expanded the Ohanian Source Credibility Model by adding two factors: personality appeal and successful appeal, emphasising that the personality and success of the celebrity must match that of the brand.

The endorser must have credibility. They must be trustworthy and demonstrate the expertise of the product being endorsed. If the endorser has professional accomplishments related to the product, it will help justify why that individual was chosen. Lastly, the endorser must be a conscientious individual with honesty, integrity, and believability. Finally, the firm must select an endorser that is disciplined.

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CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Discussion

5.1.1 Conceptualisation of celebrity endorsement in South Africa.

The study's findings show that public relations practitioners (PRPs) understand celebrity endorsement and view it in two ways. First, some PR practitioners view it in a traditional context, such as hiring actors, tv hosts, and athletes to endorse a brand or product. At the same time, others view celebrity endorsement in a contemporary context of hiring a social media influencer or content creator to advertise a product or be part of a PR campaign for a brand. This understanding of celebrity endorsement is reflected in how the participants responded to the question "who is a celebrity?" and "what is celebrity endorsement?"

This view is augmented by the Independent Specialist Brand Advisor at Sibusiso Mfeka when defining celebrity as:

> Someone who is celebrated for their works, not the fact that their faces are seen on TV every day. However, for a younger audience, a celebrity might be defined. The young audience might consider popularity on social media more attractive than traditional celebrities who are actors, TV hosts, etc.

The Managing Director at Kgotla PR and Communications cemented the notion of social media influencers being hired for product endorsement:

> I do use social media influencer marketing for more focused digital marketing.

A senior Account Manager at a communications firm speaking to this had this to say:

> I have worked with celebrity or influencer endorsers. Although traditional marketing is still relevant, companies aim for a larger audience, using social media to push for a 360-degree marketing approach.

PR practitioners' view of celebrity endorsement in SA is like the conceptualisation of celebrity endorsement globally, as brands all over the world recognise the power of the clout possessed by celebrities and social media influencers. Nouri (2018) argues

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that since the beginning of mass media, the notion of a celebrity and liking media personalities have been apparent.

Recent studies report that over 75% of marketers use social media influencers to share product-related information (Hughes *et al.*, 2019; Koay *et al.*, 2021). This aligns with the South African PR practitioners' view of recognising traditional celebrities and social media influencers as endorsers. Since there is no longer a limitation to conventional celebrities, categorised as actors, musicians, and models to influence, micro-celebrities or non-traditional celebrities have emerged (Nouri, 2018).

5.1.2 Determining factors for celebrity endorsement in South Africa.

The study's findings show that PR practitioners have a consensus that a brand benefits from pre-existing relationships celebrities and influencers have with their followers. Practitioners indicated that celebrities and influencers have an established online community unrelated to any brand, but brands can benefit from it by employing the celebrity.

However, some practitioners cautioned against total reliance on celebrity endorsement for brand marketing.

The managing Director confirmed this view at People of Colour, who says:

> As a marketing tool, it would be hazardous to base your marketing on individuals because individuals come and go.

According to (Till and Shimp, 1998; Kumar and Kaushal, 2014), celebrity endorsers may become a liability to the brand they endorse.

5.1.2.1 Celebrity endorsement adds value to marketing communication

The study found that celebrity endorsement adds value to traditional marketing, public relations, and brand promotion. Additionally, celebrity endorsement can be used as a marketing strategy to enhance marketing communication for the brand. Biswas *et al.* (2009) opine that celebrity endorsement is essential for brand value development.

Soliciting celebrities is a developed instrument in marketing and advertising (Katikati, 1987; Hani and Andre, 2018). The brand value added by celebrity endorsers is

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immediate and palpable, and endorsements are a powerful and valuable tool that magnifies the effect of a campaign (Olenski, 2016).

Confirming this phenomenon, a Senior Account Director at a PR agency and Freelancer in Digital Management says:

> A marketing campaign aims to ultimately reach the eyeballs you need to get and turn that into sales. If your audiences' eyeballs are on a celebrity and influencer page that can drive brand awareness and conversions, excite the target market and drive sales…. then it's worth it! You tailor your media channels to get the most out of your campaign and ultimately engage the desired audience.

The study also found that celebrity endorsement help differentiates the brand and make it stand out from the competition. None-price competition theory emphasises product differentiation through means other than price.

The study found that PR Practitioners in South Africa choose celebrities and influencers to collaborate with brands because they already have established online communities and are recognisable to be able to provide access to a ready-made relevant audience, thereby expanding their reach, target new audiences and increase conversions, and sales (Okorie Nelson, 2017).

Affirming this view is Senior Account Director at a PR agency and a Freelancer in Digital Management. He says:

> Most brands still use celebrities for their mass appeal and bring in influencers to drive engagement through their authentic content curation and expertise.

Agarwal and Garg (2021) argue that using celebrities as a tool for marketing communication by brands is one of the primary forms of marketing used today. In addition, the study found that celebrity endorsement is a viable marketing tool that adds value to brand marketing.

A senior Account Executive at a PR agency and Freelancer in Digital Marketing added that:

> Sometimes, the celebrity or influencer is why some campaigns turn out successfully.

It was found that influencer marketing is relatively cheaper than traditional advertising or even using a formal celebrity. As a result, practitioners are increasingly using social

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media influencers to reach a wider audience. Schouten, Janssen and Verspaget (2019) opine that companies are increasingly abandoning traditional celebrities in favour of social media influencers.

The account Director of Influencer Marketing for a marketing company who cannot be identified noted that:

> Influencer campaigns can be more cost-effective than using traditional celebrities. Brands prefer influencers because it's more affordable and inclusive, and influencers are good content creators. It's probably the most cost-effective and affordable way to get your brand out there.

5.1.3 Selecting the right celebrity endorser: the perspective of PR practitioners in South Africa.

The study found no single or uniform approach or criteria for selecting an endorser. The endorser's credibility is the most crucial factor when selecting an endorser. Attractiveness plays a secondary role in credibility when choosing a celebrity endorser. The study found that beauty has no significant role in what marketers look for when selecting an endorser. However, likability matters in terms of celebrity appeal to the targeted audience.

5.1.3.1 Credibility (trustworthiness, believability, and reliability) and attractiveness

Affirming this finding is the Account Director of Influencer Marketing at a marketing company saying:

> Credibility is crucial. For instance, your followers know you don't have a dog. Therefore, promoting dog food wouldn't be authentic.

Bhatti (2017) found that the credibility of the celebrity endorser has a significant and positive association with purchase intentions and advertising effectiveness. A credible source leads to a favourable impact on attracting consumers and influencing their attitudes towards the brand the celebrity is associated with (Goldsmith *et al.*, 2000; Singh and Banerjee, 2021).

The study found that endorsers should be trustworthy, authentic, believable, relatable, and reliable. If the public trusts the source, the campaign will likely succeed. This fits well with the premise of the source credibility model used in this study. Celebrity

endorsement's effectiveness is sustained by credibility, expertise, and attractiveness (Ohanian, 1991; Quevedo-Silva and Scrivano, 2016).

 Senior Account Executive at a Communications firm accentuated the importance of believability when choosing an endorser by saying:

> I'd prefer someone believable because that comes with being authentic.

The source attractiveness theory links an endorser's similarity, familiarity, and likeability to the effectiveness of a message (Seiler and Kucza, 2017). The source attractiveness theory in this study was used to determine whether the attractiveness of the endorser is considered when selecting an endorser. The study found it has no significant role in choosing an endorser.

Independent Specialist Brand Advisor at Sibusiso Mfeka Global holds up this view saying:

> I don't think attractiveness is essential because it might divert attention from the brand.

5.1.3.2 Public perception matters

The study also found that the public perception of the celebrity or influencer is considered by practitioners when selecting an endorser, and how the public sees the star may determine whether they use that individual or not.

The Managing Director at People of Colour noted in the interview that:

> One of the most significant errors many brands make is thinking that the public cannot sniff out a lie.

Head of Sales Division Webfluencial also weighed in supporting the view:

> Your brand will also be questioned if a person's character is questionable.

Senior Account Director for a PR agency and Freelancer in Digital Management put forward that:

> Branding is all about perception, and perception can be the truth. It can also be just what people perceive, not remotely the truth. But what matters is what people perceiving as fact. So, we work with that.

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Jackson (2018) argues that endorsement can help or hurt a cause depending on how the public view the celebrity. He further states that people are likely to agree with the celebrity's position if they have a favourable perception of them. Conversely, there is evidence that endorsements from unliked celebrities could fail (Jackson, 2018).

Head of Sales Division Webfluencial accentuated this idea noting:

> You must study the patterns of the press and the history, the exposure, and what has been said about them in the media spaces. How did they respond? You consider all those because they can make or break the brand.

5.1.3.3 Active social media platforms

Account Director of Influencer Marketing at a marketing firm note:

> We need to see activity reports, we want to know the talent investment and how you engage with people, and I need to see how often you post. Are there any organic posts in-between? Otherwise, it becomes too much and may lead to disbelief.

The study found that there should be evidence of interaction or engagement between the celebrity and their followers. The practitioners believe that the social media platforms of the prospective endorser should be active and interactive. Whether they post organic (unpaid) reactions and content on their social media, interaction with their followers must be positive, and the quality of their content should matter.

Higher levels of engagement, like comments, conversations, and peer-to-peer reviews, are paramount to gaining trust and building relationships online (Sellas, 2018). In addition, the study found practitioners prefer a social media page of a potential endorser to not look like an advertisement dedicated page. Instead, there should be authentic and original content about the influencers' real life.

The Managing Director at Kgotla PR and Communications supported the above point saying:

> You want a person who would buy and enjoy a product without collaboration. But just allowed them to talk about it for money.

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5.1.3.4 Brand and celebrity match-up

The study found that brand alignment and match-up are paramount in celebrity endorsement. Okorie and Agbaleke (2017) opine that celebrity endorsement is most effective when the endorser's personality matches the brand or product.

Head of Sales Division Webfluencial concurs with the viewpoint above, noting:

> Find a relevant influencer to promote a product. For example, if you encourage vegan food, you must find a vegan influencer. Also, when selecting an endorser, I must ensure they align with the brand. Finally, it needs to be believable.

Freire (2018) states that their unity with the endorsed product should guide celebrity choice. A senior Account Manager at communications company further supported the view saying:

> When you choose a brand ambassador or influencers, they must match you and your product category that can be put to drive towards where you want to go.

Nomzamo Mbatha is a South African actress who is also a philanthropist, so her collaboration with Hollywood Bets South Africa through her foundation, The Lighthouse, to offer bursaries to young students made sense. Furthermore, it reiterates the notion of the source credibility model that the celebrity source should be trusted, credible and believable.

Another example is Mihlali Ndamase, a South African multi-award-winning content creator with a foundation called Siyasizana, which fosters wellness and education. Her partnership with Miles for Smiles Foundation South Africa for children born with a cleft palate to raise funds for Operation smile made sense because, although known for beauty and lifestyle content, she has shown the public that she cares for the wellbeing of others.

5.1.3.5 The reach of the celebrity

The study found that the reach and cost of a celebrity matter when selecting an endorser. The number of followers the celebrity or influencer has on their social media matters. It was also found that the cost of hiring a celebrity is considered when hiring an endorser. The decision might be whether the brand hires a traditional celebrity or an influencer.

Agreeing with this viewpoint is the Account Director at a PR agency who notes:

> Celebrity and influencers nowadays tend to have rate cards determined by reach, engagement, expertise, and content curation, whereas celebrity endorsement has to do with mass appeal.

According to (Bones, 2022), understanding the audience of the endorser helps to determine their fit for the brand and their ability to reach the brand's audience. Therefore, it is paramount to consider whether the celebrity's existing audience overlaps your demographic. The endorsement can be worthless for the brand if the endorser does not have a strong following.

5.1.3.6 Authenticity and originality.

The study found that celebrities and influencers that are honest and openly share what excites them with their followers but are as equally eager to share their frustrations and challenges may be more appealing to the public than those who only share "feel good" content.

An Independent Branding Specialist, confirmed in the interview:

> We follow people because they resonate with us.

It was found that some practitioners prefer using nano or micro-influencers as they tend to be more engaging and authentic than macro-influencers and traditional celebrities.

Account Director of Influencer Marketing at a marketing firm enunciated that:

> Micro-influencers are passionate about whatever they post about the brands they love, so they come across as sincere and credible.

Senior Account Director at a PR agency who cannot be named noted:

> Celebrity is more likely to be one-way communication. On the other hand, influencers tend to inspire engagement with their audience.

Moulard *et al.* (2015); Cruikshank (2018) define celebrity authenticity as the perception that a celebrity behaves according to their true nature. Although subjective to the observation of others, the literature suggests authenticity can be measured by two main factors: rarity and stability.

According to (Illicic, 2016), a celebrity may be seen as authentic because they are consistent and open about their values and show these in how they interact with others.

5.1.3.7 Multi-endorsements by a celebrity

The study found practitioners would work with a celebrity or influencer with multi-endorsements except when it's a direct competitor, and the endorser needs to disclose who else they are working with.

A senior Account Executive at a communications company authenticates the view above, noting:

> I wouldn't work with a person who works with a competitor   brand,

Senior Account Director and Freelancer in Digital Management further added:

> Make sure the person you work with does not have an existing relationship with competitive brands that they are endorsing.

The Managing Director at Kgotla PR and Communications enunciated in an interview that:

> Multi-endorsement of competitive brands might lose credibility if you are talking about this brand today, and the following is another.

Dhotre and Bhola (2013) argue that most researchers did not favour multiple product endorsements by the same celebrity because it dilutes the Impact and loses the exclusivity of the celebrity, particularly the brand. However, rice *et al.* (2011) found that in high involvement conditions and intense source match-up, the positive effect of multi-endorsers is found only with congruence.

The source credibility model in this study is to determine whether brands and urgencies consider the extent to which the celebrity is perceived to be a source of valid assertions and speak of the knowledge, experience, and skills the endorser has (UKEssays,2018). The source credibility model also emphasises the trustworthiness of the source.

This study has found that muti-endorsement will not render celebrities untrustworthy or unbelievable when they endorse more than one brand. What is vital is that the celebrity discloses the other brands they support, and that they are not endorsing competitive brands.

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5.1.3.8 The celebrity's historical conduct and scandals

The study found that brands do not want to be associated with someone with a scandal against their name. They want to be seen as custodians of society. Therefore, they do not want to be associated with individuals who disregard those values. Equally, brands believe in brand re-invention and the evidence that demonstrates a change in behaviour on the part of a prospective endorser.

The Managing Director of People of Colour noted that:

> All the time, that's what we research first. Black Twitter will bring those tweets or scandals up and drag the brand for having associated itself with that individual.

Companies suffer greatly when associated with celebrities embroiled in a scandal (Komane, 2020). But Dolmis (2021) found that consumers believe that a scandal caused by the brand itself may negatively impact their purchase decision, while a scandal by a celebrity leads to less trustworthiness. But, on the other hand, consumers are open to forgiving such mistakes of stars.

In 2020 the Cape Town Jazz Fest removed Jabulani Sjava Makhubo, a South African musician, from their line-up amid rape allegations by a fellow female artist, Lady Zamar (Komane, 2020). On 3 March 2020, Sjava released the official statement refuting the claims, and the charges were later thrown out of court. Another celebrity and TV presenter, Katlego Maboe, is another excellent example of what a personal scandal can do to a celebrity. In a Sunday world article by Mbalenhle Zuma dated 17 March 2022, Maboe is returning to the entertainment industry after allegations of misconduct were made by his former partner Monique Muller in October 2020 (Zuma, 2022). The allegations saw Katlego lose his television gigs and endorsements with big brands such OUTsurance. However, in January 2022, he shared that his court woes were ending, and the magistrate court had absolved him against those allegations.

Figure 12: Katlego Maboe returns to IG-says it's been challenging as he's 'lost everything' Source: TimeLive-Chrizelda Kekana

5.1.3.9 The cost of the endorsement

The study found that the cost of the endorsement depends on what the brand wants out of the campaign, the type of content and how long the campaign will be.

Head of Sales Division Webfluencial noted this about endorsers:

> They have rate cards determined by reach, engagement, expertise and quality of the content for influencers.

It was also found that using influencers is relatively cheaper than using traditional celebrities and that influencers tend to be more interactive with their followers

Account Director of Influencer Marketing in a marketing company says:

> Get value for money with a much smaller influencer

Head of Sales Division Webfluencial noted that:

> You could work with a pool of people at a cheaper value rather than working with one person.

5.1.4 Deducing the benefits of celebrity endorsement through the lens of PR Practitioners in South Africa.

The study found that celebrity endorsement positively contributes to the brand or product it endorses. It is especially true for the campaigns launched on social media platforms. There was consensus among the PR practitioners that celebrity endorsement brings brand awareness, brand reach and traction, direct engagement with the target audience, and share of voice. Equally, some participants cautioned that the latter is only possible if the brand has chosen the right endorser that fits the brand and embodies the same values as that of the brand.

5.1.4.1 Effectiveness of celebrity and social media influencers

The study revealed that using celebrities and social media influencers is an effective marketing strategy for brands. According to (Hennayake,2017), in a cluttered market, celebrity endorsement becomes an effective strategy to gain consumer interest and brand loyalty. It aids in increasing brand awareness and creating positive feelings towards the brand.

A senior Account Executive at a communications firm speaking to this had this to say:

> Suppose you choose the right celebrity and influencer with the right numbers, the proper following, and the correct messaging. Then, your brand will gain popularity, so people will start to pay more attention to it because their favourite person is talking about it or using the product or the service. Hence, it is an expeditious way of getting a brand on your side.

However, there is limited evidence of the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement, although it is pervasive (Olmedo *et al.,* 2020). For (Freire *et al.*, 2018), using celebrity endorsement with charm and relatability can be an effective strategy. Although the same authors point out that, at times, celebrity endorsement cannot substantially help with product promotion. Gan (2006) supports the use of the non-price competitive theory in this study by arguing that celebrity endorsement can be an effective competitive weapon in mature and saturated markets to help differentiate the product from the competition.

5.1.4.2 Celebrities and influencers bring audiences

The study found that celebrity endorsement help brings in the kind of audience brands want, and finding the right endorser is vital for the brand. The managing Director confirmed this view at People of Colour, who says:

> If you select the right celebrity or influencer, your brand gains traction.

A Senior Account Executive for a Communications firm confirmed this phenomenon intimating that:

> After the brand acquires a credible and authentic influencer or celebrity for the brand and product offering, that can only drive credibility, awareness, and conversions.

Nie and Liu (2022) say that celebrity endorsement has become an essential strategy for brands to increase their visibility. Celebrities strongly influence product and brand association (Munnukka et al., 2016). Now with digital marketing, influencers can sway the opinion of their audiences because they are deemed relatable and a powerful tool for word-of-mouth (Barbe and Neuburger, 2022).

Relatability and trust play a significant role in establishing a solid relationship between storytelling content and audience engagement (Atiq *et al.*, 2022). With the growing popularity of Instagram, especially among the youth, businesses pay celebrities to post sponsored content on their accounts. The idea is that the fame and likability of the celebrity with a substantial fan base will pass on to the endorsed brand (Gupta *et al.,* 2021).

The idea of the source credibility model is that if the source (celebrity or influencer) is considered credible, then the message will be evaluated positively and have greater persuasiveness (Hussain and Khan, 2017). Ardley *et al.* (2022) opine that the source's trustworthiness means the brand's values align with the endorsers. According to (Duh and Thabethe, 2021) influencer's trustworthiness, familiarity, similarity, and likability are vital for brand engagement.

5.1.4.3 Celebrity endorsement drawbacks and negative perception

The study found that it is not common for brands to experience negative perceptions because of associating with a particular celebrity or influencer. However, there are

exceptional circumstances where this has occurred. Nevertheless, brands have managed such situations swiftly without any permanent damage to them.

Confirming this phenomenon, a Senior Account Director at a PR agency and Freelancer in Digital Management says:

> Yes, we were working with a celebrity caught drinking and driving. We had to let her go immediately and distance ourselves and the brand without spiralling out of control.

The Managing Director at People of Colour also weighed in supporting the view:

> The celebrity I was working with carried a competitor device instead of the one she was endorsing. Unfortunately, she was let go after numerous attempts to be reminded of her obligation towards the brand.

The study also found that many companies have not experienced a significant financial loss in collaborating with a celebrity or influencer. However, there have been minor losses due to celebrities not adhering fully to the contract conditions of the endorsement. The Independent Specialist Brand Advisor augments this view at Sibusiso Mfeka Global.

> Some celebrities and influencers have breached contracts, acted in ways that put them to shame or got into bed with competitor brands, and there are repercussions for this in terms of fines and terminations of contracts.

The above responses from the interviewees confirm that when brands act swiftly and disassociate themselves from a celebrity experiencing negative perception, they are likely to avoid losing money and permanent damage to their brand. This conclusion speaks to other similar studies. For example, when Hollywood actress Lea Michele's alleged racism and on-set bullying made news, HelloFresh terminated their endorsement, fearing brand damage (Breberina, Shukla and Rosendo-Rios, 2022).

5.1.4.4 Celebrity endorsement and increasing sales

The study found that it is challenging to link celebrity-endorsed campaigns with direct sales of the product. However, there is some evidence of positive feedback from gaining sales during the endorsement.

Dey *et al*. (2021) argue that celebrity endorsement does not directly influence purchasing intentions. Celebrities might assist with product reach, but there is no

guarantee that the celebrity alone affects consumers to buy the product. For example, the account Director of Influencer Marketing for a marketing company who cannot be identified noted that:

> When it comes to connecting sales to influencer marketing, that's a big problem. I don't know if someone is walking into a shop to buy that product because they saw it in the campaign.

A Senior Account Manager further supports the point at a communications firm note that:

> Unfortunately, there is still a disconnect between influencer marketing and direct sales.

According to Andita *et al.* (2021), selecting the right celebrity endorser is key to reducing the advertising budget and increasing sales. In addition, a celebrity endorsement strategy is a resourceful way to differentiate the brand from its competitors. Weighing on this debate, Gomez and Mello (2005) suggested that non-price advertising has both the increasing demand and the differentiating products effect.

Omeje *et al.* (2022) opined that using celebrities impacts the advertising and sales of the product. An Independent Branding Specialist, confirmed this in an interview:

> A celebrity endorsement can push up sales and brands and putting suitable systems in place can translate into sales.

Elberse and Verleun (2012) argue that there is a positive pay-off to a brand's use of endorsement and that endorsements are linked with increasing sales in an absolute sense relative to competing brands. On the contrary, Tiwari, Manral, and Jyoti (2021) concluded in their study that celebrity endorsements mainly help disseminate the new product in the market, and there is no direct impact on buying behaviour.

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CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The principal objective of this thesis was to determine the perceptual and commercial benefits of celebrity endorsement. Additionally, the concepts of celebrity, celebrity endorsement and influencers were investigated to assist the study in lending itself coherent and logical. Finally, the research problem was the imperative task of selecting an appropriate celebrity endorser that fits, embodies and is compatible with the endorsed brand to achieve a successful marketing communication task.

The following research questions informed the study:

i) Who is the celebrity endorser?

ii) How and why are celebrity endorsers chosen?

iii) How do companies benefit from celebrity endorsement?

The above research questions were chosen to address the objective of this study, which is to determine the perceptual and commercial benefits of celebrity endorsement. Based on the data analysis, it was evident that the participants in the research were aware and knowledgeable about celebrity endorsement. This study used in-depth semi-structured interviews with industry experts. Moreover, it could be observed that the participants have all worked with celebrities and influencers for either brand promotion, advertising or as ambassadors.

The study found that brands benefit from celebrity endorsement. They benefit perceptually from both celebrity and influencer endorsers. Suppose the celebrity or influencer is perceived positively and has a good relationship with followers. The brand will be perceived positively by association because the audience trusts their source (celebrity or influencer).

Additionally, traditional celebrities and influencers contribute to marketing communication in different ways and on different scales. Both personalities have a social media following, have some influence, and can carry celebrity status. Equally, public perception of the celebrity matters. How the public perceives them may determine whether they get the endorsement.

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The study was not conclusive on celebrity endorsement's contribution to direct sales. There is no outright stance on whether there is a benefit of increased sales in celebrity endorsement deals. It is still a challenge for brands to directly link celebrity endorsement with an increase in sales of a product. However, brands can use different mechanisms to monitor how target audiences have received the campaign. One of these is following the celebrity's social media and seeing how the audiences respond to the campaign.

It was found that the source model (credibility) was the most relevant for selecting the celebrity and influencer endorser. The credibility or lack thereof of the celebrity may influence their decision to either employ the celebrity or not. Attractiveness was said to be secondary and of no significance in selecting an endorser. The non-price competitive theory was anchored by the study that celebrity and influencer endorsement can be used as a marketing strategy for brand promotion, adding value to marketing.

The study also found celebrities and influencers are chosen for their pre-existing online communities and following that can benefit the brand by bringing clout and traction to the brand. When an endorser is selected, the quality of the celebrity's and influencer's online content is crucial. Moreover, brand alignment, brand fit and match-up of the celebrity with the brand are paramount in endorser selection. The brand can optimally benefit from an endorsement by selecting and using the right celebrity with intact credibility.

For celebrities embroiled in scandals, the study found that brands do not want to be associated with them amid a scandal. Nevertheless, brands believe in the re-invention of the celebrity brand. It was also found that celebrity endorsement, although practical, should not be used as a standard marketing tool but as a marketing strategy.

Lastly, the study found that the cost of celebrity endorsement depends on the type of campaign, how long it will run for, and the type of content required. It was found that there is no significant financial loss in celebrity endorsement except in the exceptional circumstance where there has been a breach of contract.

Overall, this study confirms other studies (Swart, 2021) that celebrity endorsement proved influential using association across all endorsement constructs. Erdogan and

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Kitchen (1998) opine that brands use celebrity endorsement to boost their marketing effectiveness, and celebrities with a negative connotation in their private lives may prove to be a short- and long-term liability for the brand (Bartz, Molchanov and Stork, 2013).

6.2   Limitations

A qualitative method of semi-structured interviews was used in this study. It was ideal for this study because the objective was to understand whether benefits exist for the brand in celebrity endorsement. Therefore, the study used open-ended questions to probe the respondents' opinions, views, and experiences as marketing and public relations specialists on celebrity endorsement.

However, there are limitations experienced in the data collection process:

i.   For example, a sample size of eight respondents may not be enough to draw absolute conclusions on the phenomenon under study. However, the literature on samples suggests that qualitative research samples typically incline to small numbers to support the depth of case-oriented analysis.

ii. It proved difficult to secure appointments with industry-experienced PR practitioners. Their main reason for rejecting the invitation was tight work schedules; others would cancel appointments at the last minute and never respond to further communication.

iii. Many of the respondents in this study work with social media influencers rather than traditional celebrities. Although they do not make much separation between the two because traditional celebrities can be on social media and have some influence (mega-influencers), they may not be as engaging as micro and nano influencers. These respondents were very passionate about influencer marketing which may have bordered on the bias.

iv. Although it is generally cost-effective to collect qualitative data, the cost of WIFI data was a challenge for the researcher because interviews were conducted via Zoom Meeting and could go on for up to 45 minutes per interview.

v.   Technical and connectivity issues were experienced due to the use of digital means to collect data.

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6.2   Implications of this research

The researcher undertook this study because there is minimal research or literature on celebrity endorsement in South Africa. The literature in this country tends to focus on celebrity endorsers influencing consumer purchasing decisions rather than the benefits for the brand to utilise a celebrity or influencer for brand promotion, public relations campaigns, and marketing.

This research will help marketing and public relations practitioners select the right celebrity or influencer to fit the brand's ideals. Practitioners can also explore social media marketing more by using influencers with popularity on the table and credibility, trust, creativity, and built-in audiences that value their opinion. Traditional celebrities may still be employed as endorsers with an understanding that they offer popularity. However, they may not necessarily bring the same traction as an influencer who tends to inspire engagement with their followers and is relatively cheaper than traditional celebrities.

For future research, marketing and public relations scholars must take this research further to explore whether there is a conclusive link between celebrity or influencer endorsement and an increase in direct sales, as this study failed to reach that conclusion.

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Fanelwa Saul   220484139