

CELEBRITY CONTAGION AND ADVERTISING SUCCESS IN NIGERIAN TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

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Abstract

The paper examines Celebrity Contagion and Advertising Success in Nigerian telecommunications industries. The main purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which celebrity contagion affects advertising success in Nigerian telecommunications industries. Data collected from 200 senior managers in four(4) major telecommunications firms in Nigeriawere analyzed using Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient with the aid of (SPSS version 14.0).It was found that celebrity contagion dimensions- trustworthiness, physical attractiveness affects the advertising success measures of market share and repeat purchase of these telecommunications firms. We therefore, recommend that in the long term, the telecommunication companies might find it more cost-effective to create its own spokesperson because of the risk of possible characteristics changes or negative associations of celebrity endorsers.

Keywords:

Celebrity Contagion, Trustworthiness, Physical Attractiveness, Advertising Success, Market Share, Repeat Purchase.

Introduction

The dynamism in advertising has forced many telecommunication companies in Nigeria to source for credible image mostly in film and musical industry given the intense competition and brand switching nature of most consumers. Celebrity contagion is quite expensive yet, most companies are eager to pay more for celebrities whose credibility and image is

mostly attracted by the public. According to Schlecht, (2003). A celebrity is a well-known personality Celebrities are often used by organizations, because they can easily enhance the brands of the organization and save resources in creating credibility through transferring their values to the brand (Byrne *et al*, 2003: 289). This occurs through associative learning principles. Thus, the target audiences' positive feelings towards a chosen celebrity will transfer to the endorsed brand, organisation or products (Till & Shimp, 1998).

Often, celebrity contagion is used so intensively that consumers are lured into buying products that their favourite star has endorsed. For instance, Wizkid and Tiwa Savage were confirmed as the new Pepsi ambassadors. Loya milk, from the stable of Promasidor Nigeria limited, officially unveiled Don Jazzy as its new brand ambassador. Olamide and Davido were also signed as the brand ambassador for Guinness Nigeria.

(<http://globalexcellenceonline.com/nigerian-celebrities>, retrieved October, 2013). It is common that companies who use celebrities in advertisements are associated with celebrity endorsers over a long period of time (Hsu and McDonald, 2002). A noticeable trend is that endorsement by actors, athletes and other celebrities are associated with both the product and the target audience (Ohanian, 1990). Celebrity endorsements have been found effective if the characteristics of the celebrity match with the attributes of the product (Hsu and McDonald, 2002).

In order to achieve its business objectives in the face of stiff competition in the Nigerian Telecommunication Industry, marketers in each telecommunication firms strives to retain both new and existing customers with all the available marketing communication tools of which celebrity advertising is one amongst others such as: Public relations, advertising, sales promotion, event sponsorship, direct marketing etc. This paper therefore examined the relationship between celebrity contagion and advertising success. Also, the model of meaning transfer and source credibility would serve as theoretical foundation of discussions.

Research Problem

One of the most effective means of creating awareness for telecommunication Company is advertising. Most especially music and drama which are effective elements employed in the company's adverts to attract people to the network. These adverts feature close to 25 celebrities in the Nigerian entertainment industry. However, celebrities who appeal to some audience may serve as a turn off to others. Not all celebrities can endorse a product. The loss of public acceptability of an endorser can ruin the product or brand endorsed by the celebrity. Thus, the study aims to determine if the acceptance or non-acceptance of a celebrity will affect customer's patronage and opinion about the organization.

Theoretical Foundations

The use of celebrities in marcoms is not a recent phenomenon (Kaikati, 1987). Celebrities have been endorsing products since the late nineteenth century. Such an example from the early days of utilisation involves Queen Victoria in association with Cadbury's Cocoa (Shennan, 1985). The emergence of cinema was to extend the scope of endorsement as an advertising technique, even though its present day popularity owes much to the growth of commercial radio in the 1930s and to commercial television in the 1950s

(McDonough, 1995). In those days, supply of 'stars' (i.e. potential endorsers) was limited (Kaikati, 1987).

For this reason, advertisers were restricted in their search for 'stars' that were exactly right due to their lack of availability. From the late 1970's, supply of 'stars' increased as a result of the deflowering of most Virgin celebrities who had previously refused to cloud their image with endorsements (Thompson, 1978). Notably, as the number of film and television roles has expanded, any perceived shame in commercial exploitation has faded, which, in turn, allowed advertisers greater choice in the celebrity selection process.

Estimates about utilising celebrity endorsers in marketing communication activities have risen markedly. In 1979, celebrity endorsers' used in commercials was estimated as one in every six advertisements (Howard, 1979). By 1988, estimates were one in five (Motavalli, 1988). Shimp (1997) claimed that around 25% of all US-based commercials utilized celebrities.

Study Variables and Research Framework

In our study, celebrity contagion is our predictor variable with its dimension as trustworthiness, and physical attractiveness while criterion variable is measured in terms of market share and repeat purchase. Specifically, they are defined as follows:

Celebrity contagion: A celebrity is a well-known personality who enjoys public recognition by a large share of a certain group of people (Schlecht, 2003).

Trustworthiness: Trustworthiness is the honesty, integrity and believability the endorser possesses (Erdogan, 1999)

Physical attractiveness: "Physical attractiveness is an informal cue that involves effects that are subtle, pervasive, and inescapable; produces a definite pattern of verifiable differences; and transcends culture in its effects". Patzer (1985)

Advertising success: Degree to which an advertisement or advertising campaign achieves its stated objectives. Advertising effectiveness is typically gauged by measuring a campaign's impact on sales, brand awareness and/or market share. (<http://www.suasionresources.com/glossary/index.php>)

Market share: Market share is the percentage of a market (defined in terms of either units or revenue) accounted for by a specific entity (David, 2010)

Repeat Purchase: The buying of a product by a consumer of the same brand name previously bought on another occasion

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

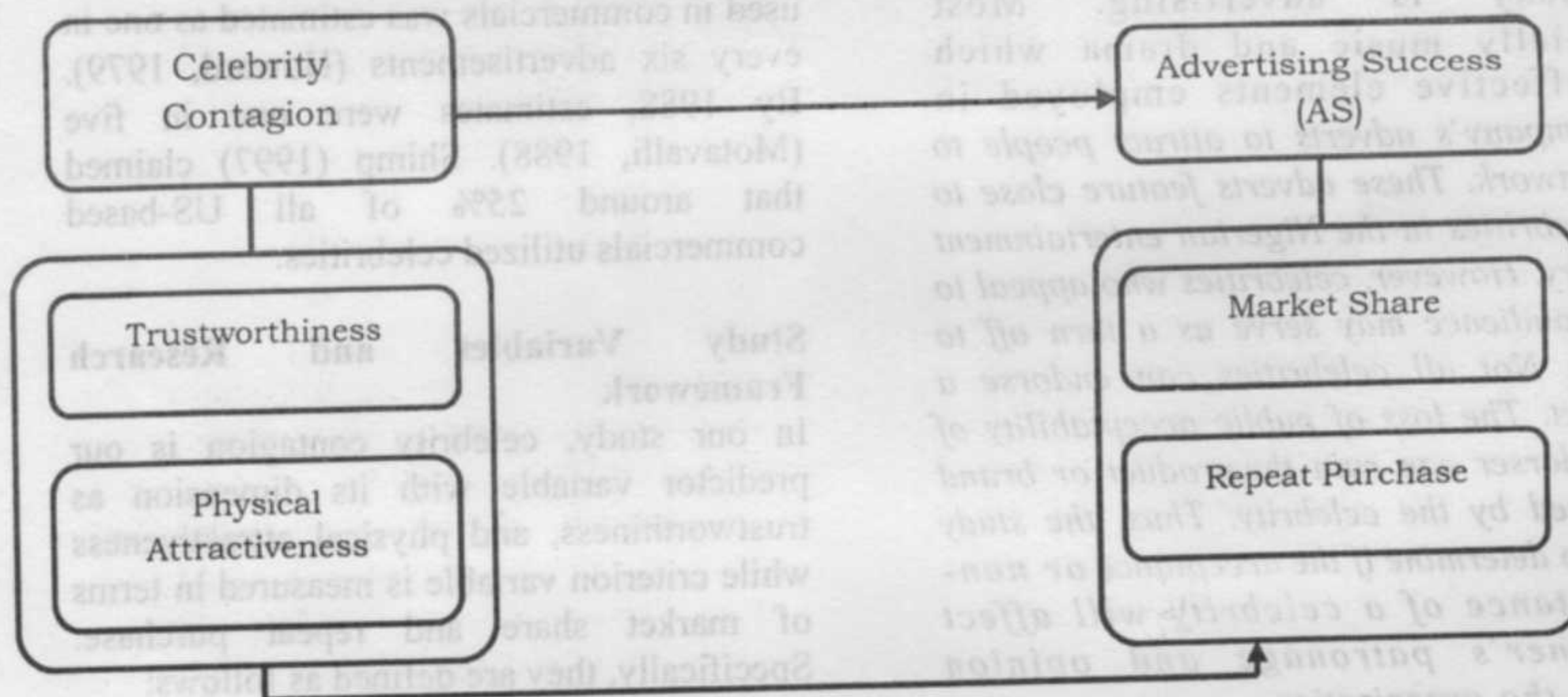


Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the relationship between celebrity contagion and advertising success of the Nigerian telecommunication industry

Source: Researcher's Conceptualization from review of literature, 2014

Based on our study variables, this paper is expressed in the functional relationship as seen below:

$$AS = F(CC) \dots\dots\dots 1$$

$$CC = F(T, PA) \dots\dots\dots 2$$

$$AS = F(MS, RP) \dots\dots\dots 3$$

Where:

AS = Advertising Success

CC = Celebrity Contagion

T = Trustworthiness

PA = Physical Attractiveness

MS = Market Share

RP = Repeat purchase

OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK

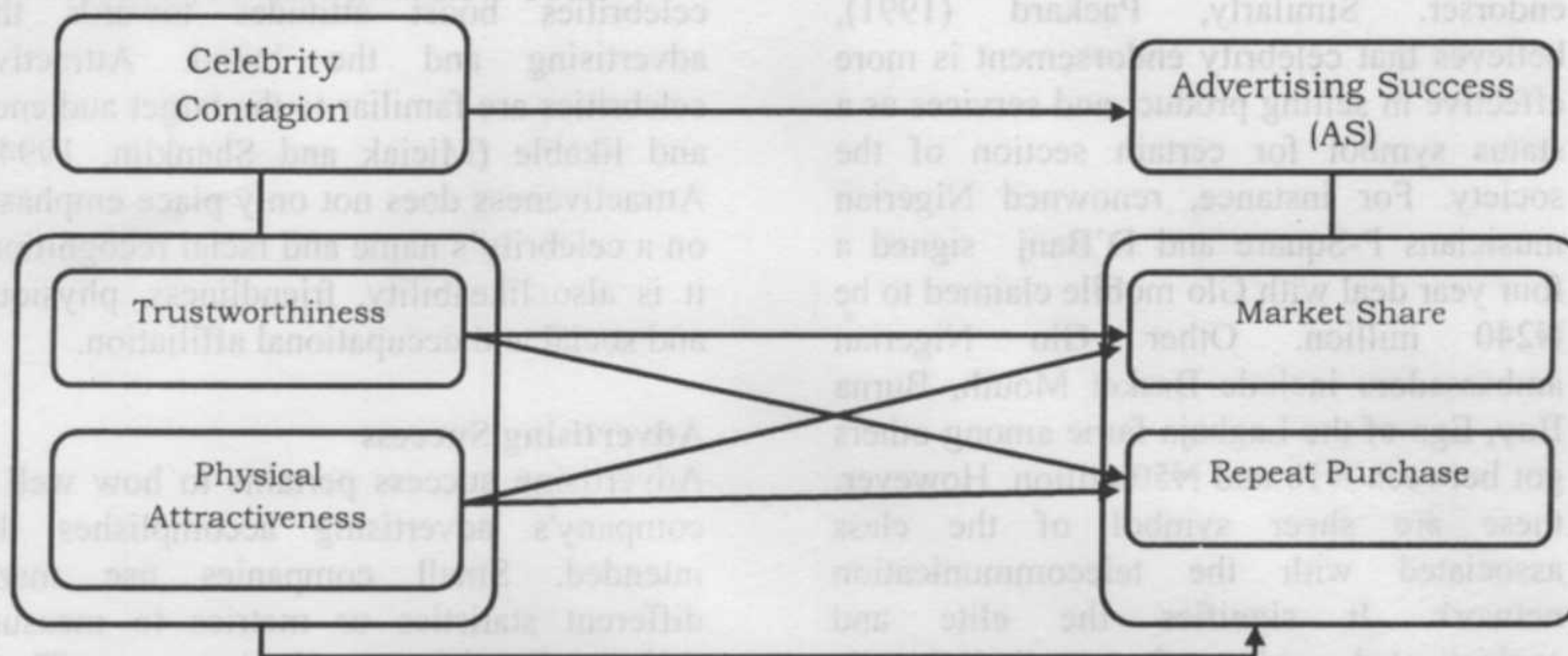


Figure 1: Operationalization of the relationship between celebrity contagion and advertising success of the Nigerian telecommunication industry

Source: Researcher's Conceptualization from review of literature, 2014.

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses are stated:

H₀₁: There is no significant and positive relationship between trustworthiness and market share in Nigerian telecommunications industries

H₀₂: There is no significant and positive relationship between physical attractiveness and repeat purchase in Nigerian telecommunications industries.

Review of Relevant Literature

Concept of Celebrity Contagion

In the words of McCracken, (1989) celebrity is a person who enjoys public recognition from a large share of a certain group people and uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in advertisements. Also, a celebrity is a well-known personality who enjoys public recognition by a large share of a certain group of people (Schlecht, 2003). Celebrity endorsement has become a very popular strategy to promote a product and build the awareness in target market's mind of the endorsed product. Meanwhile, on the other hand, the consumers have become a complex variable because of their variability across cultures and buying behavior (Alsmadi, 2006).

Consumers are becoming more sophisticated and demanding while marketers work tirelessly to satisfy their needs even as business becomes more competitive in nature. Joshi and Ahluwalia (2008) found that the use of celebrity for endorsements create a very favourable impact on the consumer and it creates a connect which forces a consumer to purchase a product. Theory and practice proves that the use of superstars in advertising generates lot of publicity and attention (Agrawal and Dubey, 2012). Companies invest large sums of money to align their brands and themselves with endorsers. Such endorsers are seen as dynamic with both attractive and likeable qualities and companies plan that these qualities are transferred to products via marketing communications activities. Furthermore, because of their fame, celebrities serve not only to create and maintain attention, but also to achieve high recall rates for marketing communication messages in today's highly cluttered environments (Agrawal and Dubey, 2012).

In like manner, Atkin and Block (1983); Petty (1983); Ohanian (1991); Kamins (1990), O'Mahony & Meenaghan (1998) suggested that the celebrity endorsers

entertains more positive attitude and greater intensions for purchases than a non-celebrity endorser. Similarly, Packard (1991), believes that celebrity endorsement is more effective in selling product and services as a status symbol for certain section of the society. For instance, renowned Nigerian musicians P-Square and D'Banj signed a four year deal with Glo mobile claimed to be ₦240 million. Other Glo Nigerian ambassadors include Basket Mouth, Burna Boy, Ego of the Lagbaja fame among others got between ₦10 and ₦50million. However, these are sheer symbol of the class associated with the telecommunication network. It signifies the elite and sophisticated side of an individual's personality.

Dimensions of Celebrity Contagion

Celebrity contagion as an advertising strategy as proposed by scholars (Silvera and Benediktts, 2003; Ohanian, 1990; and Thompson, 2006) consist of four main features, namely; perceived expertise, trustworthiness, Attractiveness and credibility among others.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is the honesty, integrity and believability the endorser possesses. The most important attribute, by which trustworthiness is measured, is the likeability of the endorsee. This is further correlated to ethnic issues, where likeability is likely to increase when using endorsers that are similar to the intended target market (Erdogan, 1999). It is more likely that the target audience would perceive the celebrity endorser as more likeable than the created spokesperson because of their familiarity with the target audience.

Physical Attractiveness

Patzer (1985) posit that "Physical attractiveness is an informal cue that involves effects that are subtle, pervasive, and inescapable; produces a definite pattern of verifiable differences; and transcends culture in its effects". Most importantly, the physical attractiveness of a celebrity

becomes ideal in the search for an endorser. (Byrne et al., 2003). Hence, attractive celebrities boost attitudes towards the advertising and the brand. Attractive celebrities are familiar to the target audience and likable (Miciak and Shanklin, 1994). Attractiveness does not only place emphasis on a celebrity's name and facial recognition, it is also likeability, friendliness, physique and social and occupational affiliation.

Advertising Success

Advertising success pertains to how well a company's advertising accomplishes the intended. Small companies use many different statistics or metrics to measure their advertising effectiveness. These measurements can be used for all types of advertising, including television, radio, direct mail, Internet and even billboard advertising. A company's advertising success usually increases over time with many messages or exposures. But certain advertising objectives can be realized almost immediately. (suttle,) Batra et al. (1995), the effectiveness of advertising should be considered for its effect on sales in the short term.

According to (Moore, 2004). "Advertisement is one of the effective tools of integrated marketing communication to emotionally motivate consumers to buy the products. It also has strong linkage with entertainment and the proliferation of media has blurred the distinguishing lines between advertisements and entertainment". Notable examples of advertising successes in Nigeria is Nigerian super models Agbani Darego and Oluchi Onweagba who have done the country proud with their performances on the international fashion scene. Darego was crowned Miss World in 2001 and thereafter, she secured a three-year contract as the face of L'oreal beauty product. Now, the former beauty queen has joined super model Onweagba as global brand ambassadors for the Nigerian hair company, Natures Gentle Touch (Nigeriafilms.com, May 7, 2011)

Market Share

Market share is the percentage of a market (defined in terms of either units or revenue) accounted for by a specific entity. Marketers

need to be able to translate sales targets into market share because this will demonstrate whether forecasts are to be attained by growing with the market or by capturing share from competitors. The latter will almost always be more difficult to achieve. Market share is closely monitored for signs of change in the competitive landscape, and it frequently drives strategic or tactical action (David, 2010).

Repeat Purchase

The buying of a product by a consumer of the same brand name previously bought on another occasion. A repeat purchase is often a measure of loyalty to a brand by consumers and is often taken into account by marketing research professionals to evaluate a business. (Business Dictionary.com). Repeat-buying is one aspect of the way in which consumers buy fast-moving goods. These are the kinds of products which are bought fairly frequently, like the various lines of food and drink, of soap and toiletries, of cigarettes and petrol, and so on, which tend to be generally available from grocery and other retail outlets. In as far as the same person buys any particular item more than once within a relatively short time-period, such as a week, a month, or a year, the notion of repeat-buying becomes particularly relevant.

Celebrity Contagion: The Nigerian Experience

Amongst Nigerians, celebrities are seen as rare personalities with aura of greatness and capabilities to ignite supersonic excitement in their fans. This phenomenon is best described during live concerts performed by popular artists as crowds have been known to frenzy, with fans screaming and shouting and some even shedding tears. (Bizcommunity.com/Daily industrynew, 2009).

The concept of brand ambassador was first developed in the western world with a concept or process whereby a brand identifies a known person whose attributes aligns with its brands and thereafter selects that individual to serve as its representative.

In some cases, brand ambassador may be a person of influence in the market in which the brand has influence. So for the brand it will help to use the ambassador's goodwill to penetrate the market. Some brand ambassadors are paid while some are glad for the recognition and association. "For instance Kanu, Dbanj are notable United Nation's ambassadors.. Having said this, one huge disadvantage of this practice for the brand is appearance of character failure in a brand ambassador since the attitude of the ambassador may affect brand's image. For example Tiger Wood immoral affairs greatly affected the brand he was associated with then. So, for the brand ambassadors, their lifestyle can affect brand positively or negatively'. On the part of Muyiwa Akintunde, CEO/lead Consultant at Lead Communications claims the motive behind having a brand ambassador is connecting with the market segments that acknowledges such an ambassador as a role model. He further explained that "the more acceptable or credible the ambassador is to the core targets, the more the brand equity is enhanced. (fisayoajibola.blogspot.com, 2012)

Celebrity Contagion and Advertising Success in Nigeria

There is an increasing and consistent findings among scholars that have linked celebrity endorsed advertisement to celebrity perceived characteristics (license, 2007; McCaughan, 2007; Mowen and Stephen 1981). Sena and Lukas (2007), for instance, found a strong correlation between how well companies use celebrities and product patronage. For instance, Bullet Energy Drink produced by multi-national company, Sun Mark, one of the leading energy drinks in Nigeria recently tied up with Nigerian Football legend Austin 'Jay Jay' Okocha as one of its Brand Ambassadors. Also, a renowned Nollywood actress, Chika Ike was also unveiled as one of the faces of the international beverage brands. Silvera and Benedikte (2003) found a significant improvement in product advertisement and boosted profits resulting from celebrity endorsed advertisements. As a result

celebrity endorsement has become a subject of serious academic attention (Ohanian, 1990; Pornpitakpan, 2003; Speck, David and Craig, 1988). However, one of the most important decisions regarding celebrity endorsement pertains to which qualities do firms need from celebrities that will make their product advertisement successful (Agrawal and Wagner, 1995; Atkin and Martin, 1983).

Till (2004) stated that celebrity experience should be a key variable for organizations interested in the value of celebrities. Perceived expertise provides value to customers by providing them with reasons to buy the product and / or appreciate the advertisement. Frazer and Brown (2002) examined how audience members identified themselves with celebrities, and how this affected their personal lives. They concluded that people selectively integrated the perceived values and behaviors they saw in celebrities they admired and adopted them into their own lives. Pappas (1999), who examined the value of star power in an endorsement, indicated how a well-designed advertising helped celebrities convert their star power into brand equity.

Trustworthiness and Advertising Success

Trustworthiness implies that celebrity is dependable and can be relied upon by customers. Trustworthiness which is built on consumer's association with the endorsed brand has been considered an integral component of celebrity product advertisement framework. Thus, consumer consumption experience is a function of consumers' perception of how reliable the celebrity is (Ohanian, 1990; Silvera and benedikte 2003). The hypothesis is stated thus:

H₀₁: There is no significant and positive relationship between trustworthiness and market share in Nigerian telecommunications industries

Physical attractiveness and Advertising Success

Attention to a given advertising message begins with the customer becoming

interested in who does the advertisement (Busler, 2000). Thus, the more the customer is attracted by the celebrity, the greater the possibility that his or her endorsement will be accepted by the customers. Therefore, one of the greatest achievements of celebrities in maintaining loyalty to an advertised brand is to build a strong image before the customers. Attractiveness is a function of credibility, which is necessary to develop proactively between the customer and the celebrity regarding the company's products or services.

However, the use of celebrities to influence brand acceptance, create brand awareness and enhance patronage in Nigeria is gaining currency by the day. The use of Kate Henshaw-Nuttal, a Nollywood star to promote Onga food seasoning has also been hailed by many as falling into brand alignment, especially because she hails from the part of Nigeria that is noted with good delicacies and quality recipe (Desmund, 2009). Thus, celebrity endorsement is strategically significant if the customers increase their expectations regarding the quality of relationship that may ensue from the dialogue. The success of celebrity endorsement depends on a number of factors, which trust is an essential part. Researchers also argue that celebrity's attractiveness to the audience or market is a major determinant of advertising performance (Biswas, Abhijit and Neel, 2006; Datamoniton, 2006). The hypothesis is stated thus:

There is no significant and positive relationship between physical attractiveness and repeat purchase in Nigerian telecommunications industries

Methodology

The objective of this paper is to empirically investigate the impact of celebrity contagion on advertising success in Nigerian telecommunications industries. The research adopted a cross-sectional survey. Data were drawn from four(4) major telecommunication firms e.g (MTN, GLO, ETISALAT, AIRTEL) in South-South States in Nigeria. Two hundred (200) senior

managers were randomly chosen as the sample size of our study. 50 managers from each telecommunication firms were respectively sampled. A 5-point Likert scale was used in questionnaire design

(Walton,1975). Data obtained from the field and were analyzed using Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient with the aid of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS Version 14.0)

Presentation and Findings

Table 4.1 Analysis of Respondents Demographics

Demographics	Frequency	Percentage %
Age	Less than 20 years	-
	20-29	40
	30-39	90
	40-49	56
	50 years and above	6
	Total	192
Minimum Educational Qualification	First school leaving certificate	-
	SSCE	4
	Diploma/certificate	118
	Bsc/HND	70
	Master/Ph.D	192
	Total	192
Working Experience	1-5 years	-
	6-10 years	10
	11-15 years	66
	16-20 years	92
	Above 20 years	24
	Total	192

Source: Desk Research, 2014

From table 4.1 above, none of the respondents are within the less than 20 years age group, 40 representing 20.8% are between 20-29 years, 90 representing 46.9% are between 30-39 years, 56 representing 29.2% of the respondents are between 40-49 years, while 6 representing 3.1% of the respondents are within the 50 years and above. This means that majority of the respondents are between 30-39 years.

Also, none of the respondents indicated a minimum of first school leaving certificate or a senior secondary certificate, 4 representing 2.1% holds a diploma/certificate as a minimum educational qualification, 118 respondents representing 61.5% holds BSc/HND, while 70, representing 36.4% of respondents holds Masters/Ph.D. this analysis reveals that majority of our respondents are BSc/HND

holders, meaning they are educated and will understand the questions on the instrument, thereby responding adequately to the questionnaire.

Similarly, none of the respondents are within 1-5 years working experience, 10 representing 5.2% are between 6-10 years, 66 representing 34.4% are between 11-15 years, 92 representing 47.9% are between 16-20 years, while 24 respondents representing 12.5% are between the above 20 years working experience.

Analysis and Results

The dimensions of celebrity contagion: trustworthiness, and physical attractiveness, were all correlated against the dependent variable measures which include, market share, and repeat purchase. The aim was to ascertain if there is a significant relationship

between these dimensions of celebrity contagion and the measures of advertising success, the correlation values with their

related significant values are shown in table 1-2 below.

Table 1: Decision Table for Ho₁

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Indep1	3.80	1.109	192
Dep-1	3.68	1.096	192

Source: Desk Research, 2014

Correlations			
		Indep	Dep_1
Indep 1	Spearman Correlation	1	.370**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	192	192
Dep-1	Spearman Correlation	.370**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	192	192

Source: Desk Research, 2014

Decision Rule

The research hypothesis one states that there is no significant relationship between trustworthiness and market share. As evident in the statistical testing of hypothesis one, a significant relationship was revealed to exist between trustworthiness and market share,

this is evident in the correlation value of 0.37 (37%). The null hypothesis one was therefore rejected and the alternative hypothesis one accepted. Thus, there is a significant relationship between trustworthiness and market share.

Table 2: Decision Table for Ho₂

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Indep 2	3.70	1.117	192
Dep-2	3.60	1.230	192

Source: Desk Research, 2014

Correlations			
		Indep	Dep_2
Indep_2	Spearman Correlation	2	.316**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	192	192
Dep_2	Spearman Correlation	.316**	2
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	192	192

Source: Desk Research, 2014

Decision Rule

The research hypothesis two states that, there is no significant relationship between physical attractiveness and repeat purchase. As evident in the statistical testing of hypothesis two, a significant relationship was revealed to exist between physical attractiveness and repeat purchase, this is evident in the positive correlation (r^2) value of 0.32 (32%). The null hypothesis two was thus rejected and the alternative hypothesis two accepted. Therefore there is a significant relationship between physical attractiveness and repeat purchase.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Consequent upon the analysis and findings, we therefore conclude as follows; that the gaining of customers trustworthiness by the telecommunication operators will encourage a desired increase in the number of loyal customers of the telecommunication firms and consequently her control of an encouraging portion of the industry's market; the physical attractiveness of the firm's products is capable of increasing the repeat purchase of the telecommunication firm at any point in time of their product sales.

In view of the above conclusions, the paper recommends amongst others that:

1. In making decisions, marketers in the telecommunication firms should focus more on other factors that might have a bigger influence on the credibility of the endorser, for example product fit and overall brand image.

2. In the long run, the telecommunication companies might find it more cost-effective to create its own spokesperson because of the risk of possible characteristics changes or negative associations of celebrity endorsers.

Marketing Implication

The implication of this paper is that advertisers and marketers need to be cautious when using celebrity endorsement as they are not believable in certain instances and hence may not deliver the intended effect. Since psychological traditions posit that negative information has disproportionate influence on consumers' beliefs and evaluative judgments, it is not surprising that many marketers glaringly avoid negative information about their brands and anything or any personality that is bound to bring such brands into disrepute (Till and Shimp, 1998). This is certainly true of those celebrities generally who are seen as endorsing many types of products across a wide spectrum. For instances, Lux soap model, like Michael Jordan, Magic Johnson, John Travolta, and Jennifer Capriati (illegal drug use), is just resilient as public opinion can be fickle sometimes.

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