Celebrity Endorser Selection Strategies as Effective Marketing Communications Tool in the Automobile Industry – A Review Paper on Related Literature

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ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to examine celebrity selection strategies as effective marketing communications tool in the automobile industry. Both theoretical and empirical literatures have been reviewed on: Effective strategic options to be adopted by automobile companies and their ad agencies to select celebrities to endorse their products or brands; Strategic options automobile companies adopt to achieve the right “fit” between the celebrities and the endorsed brands; How the automobile companies gain sales’ benefits through the adoption of celebrity endorsement to promote their products or brands; The potential risks associated with celebrity endorsements, and their effects on the entire endorsement contracts signed by automakers and explore strategic options automakers adopt to reduce the risks associated with celebrity endorsements. It is concluded that the impact of celebrity endorsement is not all round incredible story of success; it is dotted with attendant challenges and risks. In this wise, a tactical marketing research is suggested to be conducted in the form of carefully searching into backgrounds of celebrity endorsers to identify right attributes and characteristics that can match that of the automobile brands being promoted in the marketplace.

Keywords: Celebrity, celebrity endorsement, celebrity selection strategies, and automobile products.

INTRODUCTION

Overview of marketing communications and their role in the automobile industry

Marketing communications are considered as “the means by which firms attempt to inform, persuade, incite, and remind consumers-directly or indirectly- about the brands they sell” (Kelly, 2001). Pickton and Broderick (2005) perceive the word “means” used by Kelly (2001) as comprising of communications with target audiences on all matters that affect marketing performance, which according to Kotler and Armstrong (1994) include “activities that communicate the merits of a product and persuade target customers to buy it”. It is maintained that communicating a message is the core activity in marketing communications (Johansson and Gabrielsson, 2002), which are always done effectively by the use of famous personalities who are directly associated with a product category being advertised (Freiden, 1984). Such famous personalities are considered as enjoying public recognition (McCracken, 1989) and in the field of automobiles’ marketing the recognition is used on behalf of the automobile brand being promoted by appearing with it in commercials on TV, radio, or in tabloids.

The current authors agree with the positions of the above authors on marketing communications and maintain that the concept comprises of one of the various marketing strategies always adopted by marketers (in this case the automobile
firms) to bring to the awareness of their target audience (customers) about automobile brands offered for sale, which also includes how to influence and persuade such customers to patronise not only the products or brands but all the activities belonging to the automobile firms. The usage of the terminologies, “means” and “activities” to refer to marketing communications by some of the earlier authors are considered as external marketing communications mix which include Advertising, Direct marketing, Sales promotion and Point – of – purchase materials, Point – sale materials, Sponsorship, PR activities, Exhibitions, Personal selling, Branding and packaging, product placement, Celebrity endorsement, Corporate image and corporate literature and Internet marketing (Ofori-Okyere, 2014), Events, Customer service (Ouwwersloot and Duncan, 2008), Interactive marketing and publicity (Belch and Belch, 2007). It is in the light of this that Celebrity endorsement advertising has been recognised as a common practice for modern competitive marketing environment (with the automobile market as being the specifics) and according to (Soderlund, 2003) the companies have recognised its importance as an effective marketing communications tool. For the purpose of this present paper, the authors basically reviewed literature that critically examine celebrity selection strategies (that is an aspect of the whole subject matter of celebrity endorsement) as one of the effective marketing communications tool or mix adopted by players in the automobile industry with specific reference to SUVs and Saloon cars (brands) being advertised.

Marketers are cautioned to carefully select an endorser who currently has a good image and will likely be able to uphold this image in the future (White, Goddard, and Wilbur, 2009). In explaining further, the authors advise that companies should closely evaluate a celebrity’s overall character before associating their brand name with a celebrity in order to protect their own image built over the years. While it is impossible to predict a celebrity’s future moral or ethical actions, automobile companies should be aware of a celebrity’s character weaknesses that could lead to future problems. On the view of Garcia (2009), it has been suggested that to avoid the various risks that contribute to failure, companies should prepare in detail for this kind of marketing strategy. Automobile companies and their advertising agencies need to determine strategic models which will give them the means to achieve effectiveness of celebrity endorser selection for their products or brands.

Therefore a disputable issue that arises is upon which attributes and personal characteristics in the midst of the innumerable ones inherent in the celebrity that a company promoting automobiles together with its ad agency need to base on to do their effective selection for the right celebrities. On this same subject, dealers and industry analysts say they aren’t surprised at the fallout of the Celine Dion’s – Chrysler campaign. This is because “star power is hard to quantify, especially when it comes to selling cars. [http://adage.com/article/news/inside-chrysler-s-ceiline-dion-advertising-disaster/38897/], (Accessed 2014, April 5th). This brings to the fore, a major question that needs to be posed; how can companies and their advertising agencies effectively select and retain the “right” celebrities for their advertising campaigns among many competing alternatives, and, simultaneously manage this resource, while avoiding potential these risks or fears mentioned above?

A classical example is in the press release to outdoor Maria Sharapova as a brand ambassador and a face of Porsche, Matthias Mueller, CEO of Porsche AG, described her attributes as “an exceptional athlete. She combines top performance in her sports with elegance and power. These are precisely the qualities that are embodied in our sports cars.” Muller continued and added his voice to the earlier authorities by touting that, it was not easy to find the right person to be Porsche’s ambassador. “Maria Sharapova is the perfect choice. Her profile and charisma are an ideal fit for Porsche. She is also highly respected around the world and enjoys an outstanding reputation.” The CEO claimed. Max Eisenbud, the agent for the tennis icon added, "This says a lot about her longevity and her brand power." [http://press.porsche.com/news/release.php?id=779], (accessed November 26th, 2013).

The current researcher holds a dissenting view concerning the choice and selection of Maria Sharapova as a tennis icon by Porsche’s marketing and brand strategists. The reason for the dissent is that, if a tennis star with the right attributes and personal characteristics is needed to endorse a luxurious sports vehicle in the name of Porsche with quintessential brand equities or attributes, Maria Sharapova as the number four on the WTA rankings should not be given the chance when Serena Williams ranked as the number one has not endorsed any automobile brand and starred in any car advert. As a professional tennis player, she has enjoyed the no.1 spot on the world tennis rankings for the six continues years in her decorated career. But in the words of Matthias Muller, the CEO of Porsche, the company selected the number four instead of those who come before her on the ranking because of Sharapova’s top performance in her sports in terms of elegance and power as well as her profile and charisma which they deem it as ideal “fit” for the Porsche brand. It can be safe to contend that the brand managers of Porsche dwelled much on the qualities they themselves found appropriate which in this case did not base on performance or summary of enviable feats that place another tennis player on the top spot on the world rankings. This goes on to express strong disagreement with the position of the CEO quipping that: it was not easy to find the right person to be Porsche’s ambassador. If to the managers of the Porsche brand, Maria Sharapova the number four tennis star, becomes the perfect choice for them what about the rest who come before her on the ranking, that is number one, (Serena Williams), number two (Victoria Azerenka) and number three being Na Li.
In defending the decision of Porsche’s management, it can also be said that the Maria Sharapova was selected due to the fact that Porsche is a German brand and a celebrity endorser or German athlete was considered a perfect match for the brand. This conforms to existing literature that maintain that compared to foreign celebrities, a local celebrity is more likely to be seen and to be viewed as real by consumers since they share certain characteristics with him or her, in the case of ethnicity, needs, goals, interests and lifestyles (Hou, 2012). This explains the fact that, like the brand managers of Porsche, others in the marketplace have their own perspective in judging and choosing who possesses the right qualities for an endorsement deal. There is no tried and tested selection criteria documented in literature to inform decisions of brand managers when it comes to choosing right celebrities with the appropriate attributes to help achieve the ideal “fit” in endorsement process regarding automobile brands.

Panoply of existing or past studies have reviewed celebrity selection strategies comprehensively in other industry such as fashion, FMCGs, financial institutions, refreshing industry, electronics etc. However, other selection strategies like the Source Factors, Meaning Transfer Model, Match-up Hypothesis have not been fully examined as models in the automobile industry. It is safe to submit that extant literature have not established in specifics, the extra roles in addition to the ones to be performed by celebrities in their profession for them to be perceived as attractive, powerful and being possessing expertise, hence making them to be selected as the right endorsers for automobile products or brands so as to achieve ideal “fit” in the period of endorsement contract. Existing literature on the selection strategies lacks specificity.

The theories are limited in terms of explaining further what a celebrity would indulge in as marketing or promotional activities to be effectively considered as authoritative personality.

The general objective of this current review paper would be to contribute to the body of knowledge in the area of assessing Celebrity Selection Strategies as effective Marketing Communications tool in the Automobile industry. In order to achieve the general objectives, this review paper aimed at addressing the following as specific objectives: (1). To identify effective strategic options to be adopted by automobile companies and their ad agencies to select celebrities to endorse their products or brands; (2). To explore strategic options automobile companies adopt to achieve the right “fit” between the celebrity endorsers and the endorsed automobile brands; (3). To identify how automobile companies gain sales’ benefits through the adoption of celebrity endorsement to promote their products or brands; (4). To determine potential risks associated with celebrity endorsements, and their effects on the entire endorsement contracts signed by automobile companies and; (5). To explore strategic options automobile companies adopt to reduce the risks associated with celebrity endorsement as effective marketing communications tool.

Assumptions of the proposed research

• At all times, there is clear relationship (in terms of “fit”) between celebrity endorsers and automobile brands.
• Effective matching of celebrities strategies in terms of their appropriate qualities and characteristics with brand attributes positioned in the minds of the target consumers will lead to the right “fit”. Achieving the right “fit” also will lead automobile companies contracting celebrities to endorse their products or brands to gain certain number of positive results or outcomes.
• Ineffective selection of celebrity endorsers to endorse automobile products or brands will result to associated risks (negative outcomes).
• Randomly selected and using celebrities in Ghana, Nigeria (Range Rover Evogue ambassadors), Germany (Porsche), and France (Renault) as proxies for emerging and developed markets, it is assumed that, the findings of the proposed research will be generalised to other automobile companies in emerging and developed markets.

Literature Review

This section presents a detailed literature review on celebrities’ selection strategies, achieving “Fit” between endorsers and the endorsed brands using the Match – up Hypothesis, achieving sales’ benefits through the use of celebrities to promote products or brands, potential risks associated with celebrity endorsements, and methods used to reduce risks associated with celebrity endorsements. The section continues with the discussion of the conceptual framework, and finally comes out with conclusions to the whole review paper.

Theoretical considerations

Definitions of Celebrity endorser

An early definition of celebrity endorser is provided by Freiden (1984) to include those “well-known individuals who are directly associated with the product category being advertised”. McCracken (1989) defines celebrity endorser to mean
any individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement”. Schlecht (2003) advanced the previous definitions and tout that celebrities are people who enjoy public recognition by a large share of a certain group of people whereas attributes like attractiveness, extraordinary lifestyle are just examples and specific common characteristics cannot be observed though it can be said that within a corresponding social group celebrities generally differ from the social norm and enjoy a high degree of public awareness. It is clear from the definitions above that most celebrities attract high level of attention and recognition from a cross section of the public while performing their professions as entertainers, sports personalities, politicians, business executives, religious personalities, academicians, journalists and the likes.

Celebrity Endorsement

Celebrity Endorsement is the use of a well-known person to promote a company or product or brand” (Pickton and Broderick, 2004). The definition of Pickton and Broderick (2004) is limited and debatable in a sense that it falls short of certain admirable qualities. The reason is the fact that a person is well-known in the public eye does not qualify the fellow as an ideal candidate to promote brands. The preferred candidate must possess certain appropriate attributes that should match with the attributes of the brand positioned in the minds of the target markets. However, the work of Okonkwo (2006) tries to give further explanation to certain attributes that celebrities should possess to make them as endorsers. Thus, according to the author, the concept or the theory of Celebrity Endorsement works where a successful, wealthy, and distinctive celebrity transfers his /or her personality and status – directly to the brand. Though an explanation has been made but it can be strongly disagreed that not all cases would suffice for successful, wealthy, and distinctive celebrities to succeed in transferring their personality and status to the brand directly. The current researchers share similar view with the above authorities that celebrity endorsement is considered as an effective and more efficient marketing strategy where popular personalities who have achieved a lot of feats and laurels in their professions as athletes, models, entertainers, actors or actresses, business personalities, politicians or religious leaders.

Celebrities’ Selection Strategies

Selecting Celebrities for Endorsement using the “Source Factors”

The Source Factors as celebrity selection strategy can be divided into three main types: Source Credibility, Source Attractiveness and Source Power.

- Source Credibility

Credibility is the extent to which the receiver sees the source as having relevant knowledge, skills, experience and trust to give unbiased and objective information. Source credibility is used to imply a communicator’s positive characteristics that will affect the receiver’s acceptance of a message (Ohannian, 1990). Hovland, Janis and Kelley (1953) proposed that expertise and trustworthiness (also referred to as reputation) are the essential factors that would influence consumers’ perceived credibility of a message.

Expertise is defined as the extent to which a communicator is perceived to be a source of valid assertions. It refers to the authoritativeness, competence, qualifications, knowledge, experience or skills possessed by an endorser in a particular product or service endorsement (Belch and Belch, 2001). Furthermore, Ohannian, (1990) states that the perceived expertise of celebrity endorsers is more important in explaining purchase intentions rather than their attractiveness and trustworthiness. In the field of automobiles promotion, expertise imply the extent to which an automobile endorser that is, the celebrity is perceived to be an expert of the endorsed automobile brand or has the ability as a source to make statements that are considered highly trustful in the competitive market place. Being considered experts, the celebrity endorsers’ competence, knowledge, experiences possessed of a particular automobile brand are essential for the indirect public relations and sales personnel job they engage in on behalf of the automobile companies. The technical and sophisticated nature of automobile brands means that celebrity endorsers become more effective and efficient when they are knowledgeable, experienced, and qualified to talk about the brands they are endorsing.

Trustworthiness (reputation) is referred to as the degree of consumer’s feeling that how much reliable the message carried by endorsers is. More specifically, trustworthiness refers to the perceived honesty, integrity and believability (Ohanian, 1990) and sincerity (Belch and Belch, 2001) of the endorser are considered as the major aspects of
trustworthiness. Furthermore, Belch and Belch, (2001) maintain that the target audience must find the source (celebrity) believable. Trustworthiness is explained as the degree of confidence in the communicator’s intention to communicate the assertions he/she considers being the most valid (Ohanian, 1990). Desphande and Stayman (1994) confirmed the hypothesis that endorser’s ethnic status would affect endorser trustworthiness and which can create positive attitudes for the brand. These interactions occur because people trust individuals who are similar to them. One managerial implication of their findings is that when targeting particular ethnic groups (e.g. Africans, Europeans, and Asians), ethnic background should be carefully evaluated. It can be summed up that the endorser’s credibility has a significant positive influence on consumer’s identification with the celebrity (Hou, 2012).

- **Source Attractiveness**

Source attractiveness is more related to physical attributes, such as classy, similarity, familiarity, handsome / beautiful, elegance and likability of a potential celebrity endorser. These are important in the individual’s initial judgment of another person (Ohanian, 1990). McGuire (1985) (as cited in Endrogan, 1999) contends that the effectiveness of a message depends on similarity, familiarity and likability of an endorser who can be seen as attractive or unattractive.

Belch and Belch (2001) on similarity mention that consumers are more easily influenced by a message coming from someone with whom they feel a sense of similarity with. Hou, (2012) posits that compared to foreign celebrities, local celebrities are more likely to be seen and to be viewed as real by consumers. Individuals tend to depend on the people who share certain characteristics with them, in this case, ethnicity. Furthermore, Ohanian (1990) elaborated on the fact that similarity can be measured if the communicator and receiver have similar needs, goals, interests and lifestyles. Typically, Cui and Yang (2009) confirm that Chinese consumers generate more positive attitudes toward advertisements containing Chinese models than those featuring Caucasian model.

According to Belch and Belch (2001) familiarity can be considered as the level of knowledge a celebrity possesses of a brand. When a company considers choosing a celebrity for their advertising campaign, they need to analyse the previous knowledge a celebrity has since he/she will utilize such knowledge in the exposure phase of the promotion of the product or brand. The perspective of Belch and Belch (2001) on familiarity with regards to having exposure is contentious. It would have been more appropriate if the authors would have explain further the actual marketing or promotional actions celebrities should engage in before they can be said to have acquired knowledge through exposure of the brand. In promoting automobile brands, to achieve familiarity as a selection sub-strategy, the companies and the ad agencies should take the potential celeb through the various stages of production involving the automobile brand. Thus, technical familiarity about the brand is being promoted.

Likability refers to affection for the source as a result of the source's physical appearance and behaviour. Marketers have an important function when choosing which celebrity to use in their advertising campaign. Basically, these celebrities need to be admired or least well known in the public eye (Belch and Belch, 2001). Furthermore, celebrities have to be popular in the market and have certain characteristics that are extravagant. This can be a problem for the company when a celebrity might be associated with negative information. In the field of celebrity endorsement, it needs to be stressed that attractiveness goes beyond physical attractiveness. Catalogue of virtuous characteristics that are expected to be possessed by celebrity endorsers include intellectual skills, personality properties, lifestyles, or athletic prowess etc. (Endrogan, 1999), and it is expected that practicing these virtues bring pleasure to the fan base of the celebs and this can enhance the fans likableness of him/her.

- **Source Power**

When mentioning the power celebrities have in advertising, one mainly refers to how well they can persuade the consumer to a purchase. This is very beneficial in personal selling, where personal communication can be an efficient way to convince or lead a consumer into a purchase (Ohanian, 1990). However, the power as source characteristics is very difficult to apply in a non-personal influence situation such as advertising. The reason is that a celebrity in an ad generally cannot apply any sanctions to the receiver of the message or determine any compliance that will actually occur (Belch and Belch, 2001). In this sense, the source power can be beneficial in an endorsement strategy when using an individual with an authoritative personality as a spokesperson. Belch and Belch (2001) had been impressive for arguing that source power as a component of the Source Factor is very difficult to apply in a non-personal influence situation such as advertising and can be beneficial in an endorsement strategy when using an individual with an authoritative personality as a spokesperson. Authoritative personality is too vague and limited as an expression or description to be made for a celebrity to be qualified as powerful to influence target audience in advertisements. It lacks specificity. The theory is limited in terms of explaining further what a celebrity would indulge in as marketing or promotional functions to
Figure 1. The Meaning Transfer Model

Source: McCracken (1989)

be effectively considered as authoritative personality to endorsing technical and sophisticated brands like automobiles.

Selecting celebrities for endorsement using the Meaning Transfer Model

The communication (message) effectiveness of celebrity endorsement activities to some extent relies on the credibility and attractiveness of the source. The source models and match-up hypothesis are tested and confirmed in many studies as criteria for selecting celebrities to endorse products (Fink, Cunningham, and Kensicki, 2004; Hunter, Burger, and Davidsson, 2008; Hovland and Weiss, 1951; Kahle and Homer, 1985). However, these models have been criticized for not portraying all the elements that determine communication effectiveness (McCracken, 1989; Hunter, 2009). McCracken (1989) conclude that source models do not serve as a practical explanation to understand the endorsement process from two aspects. First of all, the source models cannot be used to explain the effectiveness of a particular endorser for a particular product. It is therefore impossible to know why a celebrity only works out for certain products, and not for others. In addition, the source models do not provide a method to discriminate celebrities in a useful way. As an alternative, McCracken (1989) contends that celebrity endorsements must be understood as part of a three-part meaning transfer process.

In the first stage, the meanings that originate in the dramatic roles, political campaigns athletic/or sporting achievements of the celebrity come to reside in the celebrities themselves. All these together imply that celebrities have particular configurations of meanings that are drawn from the roles they assume in television, acting, military, athletic or other careers. They own these meanings because they have created them on the public stage by dint of intense and repeated performances. McCracken (1988) explains that these meanings begin as something resident in the culturally constituted world, in the physical and social world constituted by categories and principles of the prevailing culture. Similarly, McCracken (1986) maintained that advertising is one of the ways to move meanings from culture, to consumers of goods. Advertising works as a method of meaning by bringing consumer needs and the representation of the culturally constituted world together within the frame of a particular advertisement. According to the authors, consumers learn meanings by interpreting products like automobiles definitions, which in this case are implicit in promotional content. Endorsement gives the car ad access to a special category of persons and charged with detailed and powerful meanings.

In the second stage, as a result of celebrity endorsement, some, but often not all, of the meanings of the celebrity are transferred to the product. The creation of product personality takes place as the meaning is transferred from the endorser to the consumer (Tom, et al. 1992). Thus, the set of meanings inherent and attributed to the celebrities become associated with the brand in the minds of the target consumers being communicated to. In this stage, the advertising agency first must determine the symbolic properties sought for the product and then must choose a celebrity who approximates or represents the proper symbolic properties. In this process of endorsement, once a celebrity is chosen, a car advertising campaign must identify and deliver these meanings as well as attributes resident in the celebrity to the automobile brand.

In the final stage, these meanings transfer, often incompletely, from the product to the consumer. Celebrities play a role in the final stage of meaning transfer because they have created the self. They have done it publicly, in the first stage, out of bits and pieces of every role in their careers or profession. The well-constructed self-image makes the celebrities a kind of exemplars, inspirational figures to consumers. For instance a celebrity who has acquired a cultural meaning or status symbol of beauty, elegance, attitude, power, sophistication and charisma can transfer all these attributes to promote hi-tech brand like automobile so that the "fit" is indeed considered perfect in the range of highest standards. As described as the consumption process of the three stages, the role played by the customer here is to acquire or attain the meanings ascribe to the automobile brand by the celebrity endorser. All the above stages are illustrated on the model or figure 1.
achieving “fit” between endorsers and the endorsed brands using the match—up hypothesis

Matching up of the celebrity with the attributes of the product shown in the advertisement is very important to ensure credibility. Many researchers have emphasized that product-celebrity congruence (matching the characteristics of a celebrity endorser with the attributes of a product) is an important management principle for identifying suitable celebrity endorsers (Seno and Lukas, 2007; Hou, 2012). In laying emphasis on the importance of “fit” between an endorsed product and a celebrity, it is the concept of “match up hypothesis”, has become a strong theme in academic literature and guides for practitioners. The match up hypothesis proposes that the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement depends on the existence of a complete association between the celebrity and endorsed brand (Hsu and McDonald, 2002). Kahle and Homer, (1985) laying emphasis on the association between the celebrity and endorsed brand stressed that the “match-up hypothesis hinges on the premises that the message conveyed by the image of the celebrity and the message about the product ought to converge in effective advertisements.

Forkan (1980) and Kamins (1990) following the positions of the above authorities, caution that in adopting the Product Match-Up Hypothesis, marketers must ensure that certain messages conveyed by celebrity images and the product messages should be congruent for effective advertising. Also, Misra and Beatty (1990) maintain that the determinant of the match between the celebrity and the brand depends on the degree of perceived ‘fit’ between brand (brand name, attributes) and celebrity image. In other words, it suggests that endorsers are most effective when there is a high degree of fit between the endorser and the endorsed brand / product (Kamins, 1990; Biswas et al., 2006). In a sense, advertising a product via a celebrity who has a relatively high product congruent image leads to greater advertiser and celebrity believability relative to an advertisement with a less congruent product / spokesperson image (Levy 1959; Kamins and Gupta 1994). It states to the large extent that messages portrayed by a celebrity’s image and the product’s message should be uniformed and consistent for the endorsement to work successfully. Extant body of studies or researches (Seno and Lukas, 2007; Hou, 2012; Hsu and McDonald, 2002; Kahle and Homer, 1985; Forkan 1980; Kamins 1990; Misra and Beatty 1990; Biswas et al., 2006; Levy 1959; Kamins and Gupta 1994) and their findings have attempted to explain the premises and foundations the match-up hypothesis hinges on. However, it needs to be stressed that none of these has been able to establish how the theory can work in reality so as to achieve the ideal “fit” in the endorsement process. Studies in social psychology support that the similarity between the endorser and audience can lead to positive perceptions of advertisement and product (DeShields, Kara, and Santos, 1999).

Table 1. indicate the role Social Influence theory play in achieving “fit” between celebrities and endorsed products in the competitive marketplace Belch and Belch (2001) lay emphasis on Kelman (1961) theory of Social influence as having a role to play in achieving fit between endorsers and the endorsed brands. Kelman (1961) suggests that celebrity endorsement is successful due to three social processes. The first influence is identification, suggesting that consumers conform to the behaviours and recommendations of celebrities because they derive satisfaction from believing they are like these celebrities. In this case, it can be explained further that the celebrity impacts seriously on the beliefs, opinions, and interests of consumers. That makes the celebrity attracted to the consumers. The second social factor is internalization, suggesting that consumers conform to the attitudes or behaviours advocated by others because they believe in the substance of the new attitude or behaviour (Friedman et al. 1979). Identification is therefore linked to likeableness and attractiveness, while internalization is linked to the expert knowledge that an endorser possesses making him or her credible source of the advertising message. When a behavior or attitude is internalized, because a celebrity has endorsed it, the consumer will enact or express both publicly or privately. For instance, Godwin (1987) recounts specifically that when a consumer is fully internalized he or she performs the following roles convincingly: the medical consumer will embark on a fitness programme; the automobile user customer will read the manufacturer’s manual and follow the maintenance cautions and recommendations; the airline passenger will read the exclusive rights printed on the air ticket for him / her to be educated on the dos and donts. The third and final influence being compliance occurs when a consumer accepts influence from the endorser or other consumers because he/she wants to obtain a reward or avoid punishment. The induced behavior is adopted not because the consumer believes it is inherently beneficial, but because it produces a desirable consequence. What the individual learns, essentially, is to say or do the

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<tr>
<td>Attractiveness</td>
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Source: Kelman (1961); Belch & Belch (2001)
expected thing in special situations, regardless of what his private beliefs may be (Kelman, 1961).

**How to achieve Sales’ Benefits Through The Use Of Celebrities to Promote Products or Brands**

Creswell (2008) opines that there are examples that suggest that celebrity endorsements actually lead to higher sales. For example, after Chanel signed Nicole Kidman in 2003, it is reported that global sales of Chanel’s classic perfume jumped 30%. Similarly, when Tiger Woods switched his endorsed ball from the Titleist brand to Nike in 2000, Nike’s market share went from 0.9% to 4% in 6 months. Chung, Derdenger and Srinivasan (2012) studying Economic Value of Celebrity Endorsements with specific reference to Tiger Woods’ Impact on Sales of Nike Golf Balls, the authors sought to answer the fundamental question of whether celebrity endorsements lead to higher sales with the use of two empirical approaches, reduced form and structural.

Following the reduced form analysis, Chung, Derdenger and Srinivasan (2012) move to a structural model of consumer demand and firm supply. In this analysis they employ the same identification strategy to answer more broadly the effects of celebrity endorsements. With this structural model, they determined the impact on profit, price and market share of not only of the endorsed brand but its competitors as well. By developing and estimating a structural demand model, they found that celebrity endorsements can create product differentiation and generate shifts in market share and thus should be thought of as a profitable marketing strategy. Furthermore, empirical studies show that celebrities positively influence the image of the advertised brands, such that a key outcome is a favourable effect on brand image (e.g., Erdogan, Baker, and Tagg, 2001).

During the purchase process, consumers purchase intention would be affected by the product attributes, price, and endorser performance which perceived by consumers (Sheu, 2010). Since consumers’ purchase intentions and arousal are easily triggered by the promotion strategies, so their attitude towards the promoted product, service or brand is also easily affected by the popularity and image of the celebrity. Especially when the consumers treated the celebrities as reference group, they wanted to imitate them in an effort to feel successful too (Forbes, 2011). Au-Yeung, (2012) believes that the result of this is that consumers’ purchase intention would positively influenced by their admired celebrities.

**Potential Risks Associated With Celebrity Endorsements**

Despite the potential benefits of using celebrity endorsers in advertising campaigns, the disadvantages of using them deserve serious consideration. McKee (2008) theorises that celebrity spokespeople are expensive and risky, and they do not always pay off due to specific potential risks. There is the issue of negative celebrity information influence that stems from celebrity scandals and moral violation on brands. When advertisers employ celebrities as their product endorsers, they also take a risk of their brand being tarnished by negatively published celebrity information (Erdogan and Baker, 2000). Amos, Holmes, and Strutton (2008) speculated that the high risk associated with using celebrity endorsers as well as the substantial impact negative information about those celebrities can have on consumers’ perceptions would exercise the largest impact on the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements in advertising. Till and Shimp (1998) also found that a strong associative link between celebrity and product must be dealt with if negative celebrity information happens to lower consumers’ brand evaluations. A case in point is “the effect of Tiger Wood’s infidelity scandal on Buick as an automobile brand”.

The nature of these negative events involve incidents that change, or damage the endorser’s reputation, whether innocent or not, but they can damage the reputation of the firm. Typically, these negative events and can range widely from accidents that hinder a celebrity’s ability to perform including career ending injuries, to exposure to substance abuse (Loui and Obermiller 2002) or could be as serious as criminal charges brought against a celebrity endorser. White et al.(2008) agrees that one of the greatest fears of using celebrities is the possibility of bad publicity arising involving the celebrity endorser – with reference to Miciak and Shamklin (1994), when an endorser’s image becomes ‘tarnished by allegations of illicit, unethical, unusual, or even slightly unconventional behaviour, this instantly creates problems for the endorser. This is believed to affect the product or service that is endorsed by the celebrity. As a result “any negative news about a celebrity may reduce the celebrity’s allure, and therefore the appeal of the brand that the celebrity has endorsed” (Bruce, Moore, and Birtwistle, 2004). Transference theory assumes that “the effect of past relationships (positive and negative) will carry over into future relationships” (Bunker and Ball, 2005). When a negative event occurs, audience gain new information into the celebrity's bundle of meanings and in turn it will impact the social relational process into the future. A practical instance in the automobile industry is the highly publicised news about Tiger Woods’ infidelity scandal that led to the termination of his contract with Buik, the US car maker.

The risk is “Vampire Effect” or the celebrity overshadowing the brand (Khorkova, 2012). Viewers of commercials
featuring both celebrity and the brand radically ignore the brand endorsed by the celebrity, others are so enthralled and fascinated by the personality of the endorser that they completely forget about the brand being advertised, and according to Fill (2005) leads to the celebrity moving to the first place leaving the product or brand outside of consumer attention. Classical example is Celine Dion and Chrysler, instead of the automobile brand, Dion’s song was rather promoted. Cyber media research study supports that, 80% of the respondents remember the celebrity but could not recall the brand being endorsed.

The overshadowing by celebrities on their endorsed products or brands puts forth another negative aspect on using celebrity endorsements. That is, consumers would focus their attention on the celebrity and fail to notice the brand being promoted (Belch and Belch, 2001). The authors caution that it is important that the celebrity spokesperson will attract attention and enhances the sales message without overshadowing the product (ibid). This often occurs when celebrities are endorsing multiple products or brands in the marketplace. Petty, Cacioppo, and Schumann, (1983) maintain that due to the enhanced attention drawn to celebrities in many types of advertisements, a general lack of people’s interest in assessing merits of the product may occur, which can result in reductions in their brand recognition. For example, Tiger Woods endorses for Nike, Buick, American Express, Accenture, Electronic Arts and Heuer whereas David Beckham endorses for Adidas, ESPN, Motorola, Gilette, Pepsi, Soccer-lite America and many more (Shimp, 2003). The risk of overshadowing is not always as a result of the celebrity endorsing multiple brands in the marketplace. It can be a single brand as posited by Belch and Belch (2001) target consumers would focus their attention on the celebrity and fail to notice the brand being promoted. A classical industry case that is consistent with this type of celebrity endorsement is what is titled the Chrysler disaster. DaimlerChrysler, one year after signing a three-year contract with Celine Dion for a reported $14 million, Chrysler is all but pulling the plug on the French-Canadian chanteuse. The advertising campaign that featured more Dion than the promoted car has been a disaster for Chrysler. Dealers found in the product’s market complain that the branding campaign did more to sell the singer than it did the new Pacifica.

Walker, Langmeyer, and Langmeyer (1992) throw light on financial risk companies to incur in the process of celebrity endorsement. The cost of hiring celebrities as endorsers cost several millions of dollars to endorse a single product. Till (1998) and Shimp (1997) are of the view that this makes it huge a financial risk since companies have no control over the actions of the celebrity and that the use of celebrity is a high-risk decision. A good choice can pay off handsomely but it can just as easily mean a disaster for the company since they have no control on how the celebrity behaves.

Celebrities may disappear from the media flashlight during a market campaign, which is a disaster because this means that the attractiveness that the celebrities are suppose to bring to the company disappears (Ziegel, 1983), that is celebrity extinction. If this happens celebrities often tries to change their image to become famous again which can damage the image of the company they are endorsers for.

**Methods used to reduce risks associated with celebrity endorsement**

Tellis (1998) maintain that there are several ways in which companies can ensure against some surprises that can occur when using celebrity endorsers. Companies should start with a properly screening of candidates to ensure that they are buying the right image, and that the risk with the celebrity contract is worth the potential risk for damage. Companies can also set up contracts that have a moral clause. A moral clause is a legal statement that gives companies the option to terminate a contract with a partial fee or no fee at all. These often state if the celebrity becomes involved in any situation or occurrence, which in the company’s reasonable opinion, subjects Talent or Company to ridicule, contempt or scandal (Tellis, 1998). On managing celebrity endorsers, Till (1998) suggests further that companies must establish a link between the endorser and the brand or product. When an associative link is built between the celebrity and the brand each is then part of the association set, a group of concepts, which are meaningfully related to a target brand. One good example of this is consumers thinking of Michael Jordan. Repeated pairing of the two stimuli is a key to associative learning process, because repeating the pairing of the two stimuli increases confidence that the presence of one stimulus predicts the presence of the other stimulus. According to Till (1998) the way to decrease the chances of overshadowing the advertising executions should be single minded in communicating the brand – celebrity pairing. The
brand and the celebrity should be the two strongest elements in the ad. Ad executions which are cluttered with superfluous execution devises, distract from the brand celebrity pairing is weakening the potency of the celebrity endorser. The likelihood of forming an associative link between the celebrity and the brand increases when there are few other competing elements in the advertisement (Till, 1998). To reduce the risk of extinction companies should expand their use of celebrity endorsement. Because it is unrealistic to expect that every time a consumer encounters a brand the celebrity endorser image also will be present. Therefore companies should work to get endorsers more integrated into the marketing mix. Although most commonly used in advertising, celebrity endorsers can be effective in promotion activities, such as giving away related items or trips, which tie into the celebrity. The celebrity should also be used at large trade shows, national sales meetings and other significant publicity events (Till, 1998). There is issue regarding financial risk. Companies must decide how cost effective their choice of celebrity is. The celebrity with the highest potential is often also the most expensive one. Companies should therefore look for a lesser-known person that fits into the message of the brand and appeals to the target audience (Tellis, 1998).

Lastly, concerning reducing the risks associated with celebrity endorsement, automobile firms can adopt Q – ratings. Shimp (1997) stressed that to find out how effective a celebrity endorser might be questionnaires must be designed and distributed to individuals that are asked to answer two simple questions: Have you heard of this celebrity? The second question is: if you have, do you rate him or her, poor, fair, good, very good or one of your favourites? Sandin and Widmark (2005) are of the view that a celebrity may not be widely recognized but he or she can still attain a high Q – rating as one individuals who do recognized celebrity also likes the celebrity. On the other hand, a celebrity may be widely recognized but still have low Q – rating since the respondents may not like them. Q –ratings are considered good way for companies to avoid hiring big celebrities that are not popular among their target audience (Rossiter and Percy, 1987). In the final analysis on the issue of using Q –ratings to reduce risks associated with celebrity endorsement in the automobile industry, it can be maintained that the Q –rating makes an effective method to filter and shortlist celebrities for an automobile firm.

Limitations in existing literature

The above literature is prone to the following as limitations. On the Meaning Transfer Model, it needs to be maintained critically that McCracken (1986;1989) did over generalization of meanings that reside in celebrities by virtue of performing their roles in the culturally constituted world, in the physical and social world constituted by categories and principles of the prevailing culture. Here, McCracken (1988; 1989) failed to highlight in specifics the actual meanings inherent in celebrities that can be transferred to spotlight the advertising of products or brands in competitive market place. In achieving “Congruence” or “Fit” Between Endorseurs and the Endorsed Brands using Match-up Hypothesis, extant body of studies or researches (Seno and Lukas, 2007; Hou, 2012; Hsu and McDonald, 2002; Kahle and Homer, 1985; Forkan 1980; Kamins 1990; Misra and Beatty1990; Kamins, 1990; Biswas et al., 2006; Levy 1959; Kamins andGupta 1994) and their findings have attempted to explain the premises and foundations the match-up hypothesis hinges on, that is: marketers must ensure that certain messages conveyed by celebrity images and the product messages should be congruent for effective advertising. However, it needs to be stressed that none of these has been able to demonstrate in existing knowledge how the theory can work in reality so as to achieve the ideal “fit” or “congruence” in the endorsement process.

Conceptual Framework

Based on the purpose of the current study, the following conceptual framework is formulated which serves as the linkage between the research questions and theories. This framework of celebrity endorser selection strategies and achievement of “fit” introduces new constructs and uniquely combine them for effective selection of celebrities to endorse automobile brands which leads to positive results or consequences. Whereas, ineffective matching-up of the attributes of a celebrity endorser to the attributes of an automobile brand may result to potential risks associated with the endorsement contract.

Based on the theories from McCracken, (1989); Belch and Belch, (2001)

Figure 2. illustrates in detail the conceptual framework of this current study. On the left hand side of the framework is celebrity endorser which is linked to various theories indicating Celebrity Selection Strategies (Source Factors, Meaning Transfer Model and the Match-up Hypothesis) beneath it.

On the right hand side of the figure is the position of the Brand, which is also linked to various positioning strategies in
terms of the brand attributes. In between the celebrity endorser and the brand is the intervening variable that is, the concept of “fit” or “congruence”. There is correlation between the independent variable that is, celebrity and the Brand being the dependent variable.

The expected ideal “fit” is achieved in the endorsement process when appropriate attributes inherent in the celebrity selection strategies are matched or paired properly with the Brand positioning indicators. It needs to be stated that in the instance where there emerge effective match or fit or congruence between the independent variable and the dependent variable, and the intervening variable is achieved, the resultant effects or consequences tend to be positive such as...
positive perceptions about product and ads; enhances effectiveness of the ads; enhances attractiveness and effectiveness of the celeb; impacts consumer attitudes and purchase intentions; and lastly increases sales prospects of automakers hiring celebs for endorsements as the overall result. However, when there is lack of effective match or “fit” or “congruence” between the Celebrity endorsers and the Brand, it results to potential risks (celebrity moral scandal; negative information; overshadow/ celebrity vampire; Extinction; over exposure and lastly, necessary evil) to be evidenced in the endorsement process.

CONCLUSION

A lot of authors have explained that the impact of celebrity endorsement is not all round incredible story of success; the marketing strategy is dotted with attendant challenges and risks (Sola, 2012; Halonen-Knight and Humerinta, 2010; Katyal, 2007; Keller, 2008). Katyal (2007) in his article quoted Aristotle, the great philosopher’s quote on anger, “Any brand can get a celebrity. That is easy. On the contrary, getting a celebrity to be consistent with the right brand, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose and in the right way, that is, not easy.” This means that picking the right celebrity endorser for an automobile brands remains a daunting task, and few branding teams in the automobile companies together with advertising agencies do it well.

In the current study, it can be concluded that, tactical marketing research should be conducted in the form of carefully searching into backgrounds of celebrity endorsers to identify right attributes, characteristics, and traits inherent in them that can match that of the automobile brands being promoted in the marketplace. In practical sense, when advertising high involvement purchase decisions regarding products such as automobiles, using marketing research to identify and select a recognised race car driver would be more effective in achieving ideal “fit” than using an attractive model or actress. This is due to expert knowledge and trustworthiness to be demonstrated by the race car driver, as opposed to solely fulfilling social standing by purchasing the automobile.

In the final analysis, it can be maintained that the proposed study would use the Source Factors, Meaning Transfer Model and Match-up Hypothesis as benchmarks in comparing the proposed study to what automobile companies have been doing with respect to selecting celebrities to endorse their automobile products or brands to achieve ideal “fit” or “congruence” in the endorsement process. The proposed study seeks to refine and extend knowledge on the Source Factors (Ohanian, 1990; Belch and Belch, 2001; Hou, 2012; Cui and Yang, 2009; Andsager et al., 2006; Tantiseneepong, Gorton, andWhite, 2012); Meaning Transfer Model (McCracken, 1986, 1989; Erdogan and Baker, 2000) and Match-up Hypothesis (Seno and Lukas, 2007; Hou, 2012; Hsu and McDonald, 2002).

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