

*Full Length Research Paper*

# Midas touch or time bomb? A look at the influence of celebrity endorsement on customer purchase intentions: The case study of fast foods outlet companies in Harare, Zimbabwe

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Fast foods companies in Zimbabwe have been outcompeting and outclassing each other in using celebrity endorsers for their marketing communications. The study aimed to investigate the impact of celebrity endorsement on consumer purchase intentions. The study's literature review was based on a copious of celebrity endorsement empirical and theoretical literature. The literature review also acted as bedrock for the research methodology which was later adopted. In order to achieve the research objectives, the study was largely quantitative where survey questionnaires were distributed to customers and these questionnaires were useful in the aggregation of the results. The findings were entered into SPSS software package version 22. The result shows that celebrity endorsement variables showed a positive and significant statistical relationship with consumer buying intentions. The study recommends for fast foods companies to gauge the capacity of celebrities to project multi-attributes which would be consistent and of interest to the consumer's requirements. There is also the need to strengthen certain aspects of celebrity consumer relationship as way of understanding the implications for product endorsement in the fast foods industry.

**Key words:** Celebrity credibility, celebrity endorsement, perceived expertise, physical attractiveness, purchase intentions, trustworthiness.

## INTRODUCTION

There has been great interest on the study of celebrity endorsement in recent years (Amos et al., 2008; Jasmina and Cynthia, 2011; Pughazhendi et al., 2012; Sohail and Sana, 2011). In fact, celebrity endorsement has become very popular in modern marketing in both developing and

developed countries. With many organisations facing unprecedented hyper competition, the use of celebrities in advertisements has become the most effective and bombardment tool for gaining significant competitive advantage (Carlson and Donovan, 2008). Consequently,

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customers have been approached by a myriad of companies which have equal or better offers. These customers have also become harder to please, price conscious, more demanding and less forgiving.

The use of celebrities in advertisement is now not uncommon in many developed and developing countries. As noted by Dash and Sabat (2012), about a quarter of all advertisements in the United States of America feature a celebrity endorser. Similarly, in South Korea more than 60% of prime time television commercials which airing on the three major television networks involve celebrity endorsements (Sharma and Kumar, 2013, White et al., 2015). Brajesh and Gouranga (2011) also noted that celebrities are featured in approximately 80% of Japanese television commercials. The situation is also prevalent in western countries such as Ireland and the United Kingdom (Pomerantz, 2013; Tirtiroglu and Elbeck, 2008).

Following the dollarization of the economy in 2009 there had been considerable market demand by various international and local brands. Indeed, many companies in Zimbabwe including fast foods outlets have been outcompeting and outclassing each other in using celebrity endorsers for their marketing communications. Indeed, most of these companies had been endorsed by sport athletes, personalities, local artists or singers in an effort to build up brand awareness and gain acceptance. With the marketing communication environment becoming increasingly colourful and inundated with advertisements, this has made it extremely difficult for any one advertisement to get noticed. Most notable had been prominent musicians from local music, "zimdancehall" and other music genres and these have been viewed as great models to endorse a brand image. For instance, Jah Prayzah endorses chicken slice products whilst Alick Macheso is a brand marketer for Chicken Inn products. These endorsers are seen as dynamic in terms of attractiveness and appealing qualities (Jasmina and Cynthia, 2011).

Moreover, 48% of the Zimbabwean people love sporting activities and music and these two have been taking important dimensions in the country (Yew and Zain, 2013). This is at a time when the market appears saturated and increasingly becoming difficult to penetrate, secure and sustain customers' attention. However, it has increasingly become difficult for these fast foods outlets to go through advertisements cluster since consumers are exposed to over 500 messages everyday through different sources such as television, radio or mobile phones (Manjusha and Segar, 2013). As noted by Veldhuis et al. (2014), approximately 39 341 ads have been broadcast through televisions, private and public radio stations in Zimbabwe in 2013 alone. Against this background, the study sought to investigate the influence of celebrity endorsements on consumer purchase intentions for fast foods products and services in Harare.

Day by day consumers of fast foods in Harare face thousands of voices and images from newspapers, on billboards, radio, and television (Anam et al., 2015; Pughazhendi et al., 2012). Many of these customers are well educated, diverse and technologically proficient and the challenge of the marketers had been how to find "a hook" that will hold customers' attention. In this regard, these fast foods outlets had been signing deals with celebrities in the hope and expectation that this would help in standing out from the clutter and give a relevant position in the minds of consumers. However, poor judgment in the choice of celebrity endorser could harm not only sales and corporate image. Thus, the study sought to investigate the influence of celebrity endorsements on consumer purchase intentions.

Furthermore, most of the studies on celebrity endorsement and purchase intentions have been conducted in developed countries (Culbreath, 2012; Rada, Dominguez-Alvarez, 2014; Parker and Fink, 2012). There is very little research work done in developing countries like Zimbabwe on the Influence of celebrity endorsements on consumer purchase intentions. This gap in literature is somewhat alarming given the emerging changes in consumers' behavioural pattern that seems to be a snowball of the pattern in the developing in economy. The study, therefore, aimed to bridge this gap and highlight the underlying factors of celebrity endorsement on purchasing intentions in a developing country context like Zimbabwe.

The study specifically sought to achieve the following objectives:

1. Establish how celebrity endorsement positively influences the buying behaviour of customers for fast foods products.
2. Identify the effect of the endorser's trustworthiness used in advertisements of food outlets companies on consumer buying intentions.
3. Establish the effect of physical attractiveness of celebrity on consumer buying behaviour.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

There are copious definitions of celebrity endorsement available in the marketing literature. In essence, the authors' views of celebrity endorsement do not differ on the degree to which they define and the spectrum of activities under the celebrity endorsement banner. According to Okorie and Aderogba (2011), celebrity endorsement involves the use of any person who enjoys public recognition and usually uses that recognition on behalf of a consumer product or service by appearing with it in an advertisement. For Prieler et al., (2010), celebrity endorsement is a type of channel in brand

communication through which a celebrity acts as the brand's spokesperson and certifies the brand's claim and position by extending his/her personality. Similarly, Said and Todorov (2011) define celebrity endorsement as individuals who enjoy public recognition and use this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement. From the above definitions, it can be seen that the basic assumption underlying celebrity endorsement is that the value associated with the celebrity is transferred to the brand and thus helps in creating an image that can be easily referred to by consumers.

Examples of celebrities include sport athletes, actors, entertainers, models, pop stars and politicians (Arslan and Altuna, 2010; Schiffman, Kanuk and Kumar, 2010). Moreover, celebrities are known to the general public for their accomplishments. These celebrities usually enjoy high public recognition and do have powerful influence upon endorsing products or services (Knight and Kim, 2007). For instance, the famous footballer David Beckham endorses the sports brand Adidas and American singer Beyoncé endorses Pepsi and the fashion brand H&M (Pandey, 2011). Many celebrities earn much more money from their endorsement contracts than from their usual fields of practice (Lee, Singal and Kang, 2013).

Celebrity endorsement has been used by various manufacturing and retailing companies for a long time in an effort to increase sales (Edlund and Sagarin, 2014; Halliwell, 2013; Temperley and Tangen, 2006). As noted by Tan (2011), companies in both developed and developing countries have been spending millions on celebrity endorsements. For instance, companies such as T-Mobile spend \$20 million in 2012 to celebrities such as Catherine Zeta-Jones (White et al., 2015). Similarly, Pepsi also paid tens of millions to land numerous stars including Beyoncé, Britney Spears, Puff Daddy, Carson Daily, and Tiger Woods (Rada and Dominguez-Alvarez, 2014). Likewise, in India the bulk of advertisements for commercial banks are endorsed by cricketers and Bollywood stars (Kasana and Chaudhary, 2014). These companies go for celebrity endorsement because of its greater benefits and immense possible influence.

There are different dimensions used to evaluate the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement and its effect on customer buying decisions. The dimensions include trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness and respect (Ahmed et al., 2012). For Temperley and Tangen (2006), trustworthiness can be captured within the background of celebrity endorsement such as honesty, integrity and believability of the celebrity by the consumers. Choi et al. (2005) also postulate that celebrity endorser's credibility has both cognitive and positive effects on customers' intention to purchase. Thus, it is more likely that the targeted audience would perceive the celebrity endorser as more likeable because of their familiarity with the target audience.

Moreover, Tan (2011) elucidates that consumers are usually persuaded to purchase advertised brands which are endorsed by knowledgeable celebrity or whose profession is closely linked to the brand functions. La Eerie and Sejung (2005) also corroborate that perceived expertise of an endorser is seen as the most significant component for endorsement to be effective. In this regard, expert opinion of the endorser also matters in persuading and influencing the consumers (Kanibir and Nart, 2009). A study by Akturan (2011) showed that proficiency of the celebrities was a momentous factor explaining customer purchase intentions. These findings are supported by Banytè et al. (2011) who concluded that expertise had greatest impact on the consumer's intention to purchase. Hence, it can be concluded that celebrities can be chosen as endorsers because of the perceived link that exists between them and the service or product.

The other dimension of celebrity endorsement is the physical beauty and other beauty embodiments such as sportsmanship, charm, grace and intelligence (Nelson, 2010). Hakimi et al. (2011) describe physical attractiveness as informational cues which are pervasive; inescapable, subtle, and transcend culture in its effects. Some Products and services are linked with a person's physical attractiveness or facial looks and these include facial creams, beauty soaps, dresses, hair colours and shampoos are much influenced by physical attractiveness of celebrity (Dix et al., 2010). According to Fleck et al. (2012), celebrity endorser's physical attractiveness can be a source to capture attention of audience in both print and electronic media. For instance, meta-analysis study about Razor revealed that attractiveness of celebrity produces significant results as people are themselves conscious about their own attractive looks (Hakimi et al., 2011). Another similar study by Jain (2011) on Malaysian commercial banks also showed a positive association between celebrity physical attractions and likeability of a given brand. Additionally, findings from Indonesian hotels by Yusoff and Khan (2013) concluded that an attractive celebrity does have a positive effect on consumer attitudes towards a brand.

Product and celebrity association is another important factor for generating positive feedback because people take it as evidence that product is in reality used or consumed by celebrity. Fortini-Campbell (1992) expounds that people use brands which do have some association with personalities. Thus, the more familiar an endorser, the more likely consumers are to purchase the endorsed products or services. For instance, Michael Jordan endorsed Nike and he used various products of Nike when he trained and played basketball (Seno and Lukas, 2007). As observed by Forbes (2011), the endorsement improved the sales of Nike shoes in the United States and across the world.

There are numerous reasons that have been adduced

for the use of celebrities in advertising. Key among them includes building credibility, fostering trust and drawing attention and all these can translate into higher organisational brand sales (Dash and Sabat, 2012; Kim et al., 2013; Pughazhendi et al., 2011). As argued by Ashikali and Dittmar (2012), celebrity endorsement not only enhances advertising messages but also encourages brand recognition and creates positive attitudes toward the brand. In concurrence, Martin and Bush (2000) argue celebrity endorsement creates a personality for the product or service being advertised. Accordingly, it is easier to establish a product image with an initial celebrity endorsement than it is to change a product image that is already associated with a celebrity.

Another argument put forward by Sharabi (2012) is that celebrities can influence consumers' feelings, attitudes and buying behavior favorably. Roy et al. (2013) also opine that celebrity endorsements contribute to higher consumer awareness and favorable product evaluations. This is also corroborated by Zafar and Rafique (2012) who argue that repeated association of a brand with a celebrity might ultimately lead consumers to think the attractive qualities that are similar to the celebrity's. However, Shimp and Andrews (2013) caution that celebrity endorsement is effective only if there are positive links between the brand and the celebrity. In this regard, Manjusha and Segar (2013) and Pedhiwal (2011) suggest that there should be congruence between a celebrity and brand image of the product/service. Furthermore, celebrity image will have a long lasting impact on brand image and this helps marketing managers to introduce new products or reposition the existing ones (Bukxa and Mitsis, 2011).

In some instances, celebrities also act as ambassadors in promoting products and services (Kotler and Keller, 2009). In agreement, Naz and Siddiqui (2012) believe that famous people achieve higher degree of attention and awareness. Furthermore, Van der Waladt et al. (2009) elucidate that the use of celebrities helps a product to stand out from the crowd. This is because celebrities are professed as more entertaining and trustworthy. For instance, a study by Rengejangan and Sathya (2014) in India found that consumers are likely to take more notice of celebrity advertisements and also improve their level of product recall. Okorie and Aderogba (2011) also note that customers are more likely to choose goods and services endorsed by celebrities than those without such endorsements. In this regard, celebrities help advertisements to carve a niche in a competitive environment thereby repositioning the brand in the market. Thus, it can be concluded that using popular celebrity can affect consumers' feeling as well as their purchase intentions.

Many scholars argue that celebrity endorsement is effective due to the influential personalities of the celebrities. For instance, Brown (2007) and White, Goddard and Wilbur (2009) suggest that celebrity

advertising is effective because of its ability to tap into consumers' symbolic association. Another benefit of using celebrity endorsement is that it can provide testimony for a product or service, particularly when the product has contributed to their celebrity (Brajesh and Gouranga, 2011; Yusoff and Khan, 2013). Furthermore, celebrities create positive feelings towards brands and are perceived by consumers as more entertaining. Ranjbarian et al. (2010) also posit that celebrities succeed in creating an aspiration in the minds of the consumer to acquire what their favourite celebrity endorses. Studies by Ronay and von Hippel (2010) concluded that people selectively integrated the perceived values and behaviors they saw in celebrities they admired and adopted these into their own lives.

Ahmed et al. (2012) posit that celebrities are used by organizations because they enhance the brands of the organisation and save resources in creating credibility. This implies that the endorser's qualities must match those that the advertiser tries to link with its brand (Temperley and Tangen, 2006). The other advantages for using celebrities include increasing attention to the product and reaching the target market and giving the same status to a product that is being established in an international market. At the corporate level, trustworthy celebrity endorsers are an effective means of communicating positive messages to customers about the company and its products, its contribution to society and corporate competency (Schiffman et al., 2010). Secondly, effective endorsement by an attractive celebrity has the potential to enhance corporate image by diluting negative attitudes toward the company including beliefs that the company is environment-oriented, effective for revenue-generation, competent for marketing (Waladt et al., 2007).

It should be noted that some organisations have suffered financially from the inconsistency in the professional popularity of the use of celebrities in endorsements. As noted by Roozen and Claeys (2010), some celebrities may lose popularity due to some lapse in professional performances. For instance, the 2003 Cricket World Cup threw up the Shane Warne incident, which caught Pepsi off guard when the celebrity was accused of drug abuse (Kulkarni and Gaulkar, 2005). In addition, companies that have their products endorsed by Tiger Woods and Lance Armstrong in advertising their products and services experienced drastic decline in sales as a result of the negative moral questions that hanged over their necks (Forbes, 2011). Indeed, the two personalities were named as the worst celebrity endorsement of year the 2010 (Harrison and Hefner, 2014). Therefore, in choosing a celebrity to endorse a product or service the credibility of the person should be considered since any mishap can affect the buying behaviour of the customers.

Poor judgment in the selection of celebrity endorser can harm not only sales and corporate image but may

hasten commercial failure of products in markets where morality and ethical standards are of high essence. According to Edlund and Sagarin (2014), there are many cases of brands failing in the market place despite famous celebrities endorsing them. Another dangerous pitfall in the celebrity endorsement can be the mismatch between a celebrity and the image of the brand whereby celebrities may manifest certain qualities for the audience. Each celebrity portrays a broad range of meanings, involving a specific personality and lifestyle. For example, the personality of Desmond Elliot, a Nigerian movie artist, is best characterized as the perfect gentleman, whereas Omotola Jolade has the image of the 'good girl' (Okorie, 2010). Okorie and Aderogba (2011) also note that the use of Nkem Owoh, a male in the Harpic advert was a mismatch since as a norm in Nigeria men do not clean toilets at home. Hence, the target audience to promote any toilet cleaning products should be women. It is, thus, pivotal that there is an association between the character of the celebrity and the image of the brand.

Another challenge in the use of celebrity endorsement is the issue of multi brand endorsements by the same celebrity and this may usually lead to overexposure. Consequently, the novelty of a celebrity endorsement gets diluted because of doing too many advertisements. For instance, Sainsbury encountered a problem with Catherina Zeta Jones, whom the company used for its recipe advertisements, yet she was caught shopping in Tesco (Agarwal et al., 2013). As noted by Chen and Huddleston (2009) some celebrities will be willing to endorse anything for lots of money. This is also echoed by Edlund and Sagarin (2014) who argue that most celebrities endorse brands due to monetary benefit they get from companies.

Current literature lacks a clear conclusion on the relationship between celebrity endorsement and buyer behavior (Roozen and Claeys, 2010; Wagner and Petty, 2011). Some researches such as Manjusha and Segar (2013) indicate that celebrity endorsement has a positive effect on buyer behavior; whereas others, like Pedhiwal (2011), have found that some celebrity advertisement campaigns were not successful and hence had a negative result on willingness to buy. Ghani and Kakakhel (2011) found that celebrity endorsers pass on their symbolic meanings and acquired associations to the products they endorse easier because they have an ability to communicate with mass. In China, a strong positive effect is created by celebrity endorsement practices (Chang et al., 2005). In this instance, celebrities are considered to bring attention towards advertisement due to their likeability and attractiveness (Fleck et al., 2012). A study of Malaysian teenagers by Yew and Zain (2013) also concluded that there is a positive relationship between the perceived role model and purchasing behavior. In the United States, 25% of all advertisements

in newspapers and magazines employ the use of endorsers (Abdulmajid-Sallam and Wahid, 2012). In essence, these measures suggest that many US organisations have bought into the hypothesis that celebrity endorsers positively impact consumers' attitude to an associated brand (Okorie and Aderogba, 2011).

However, the relationship between celebrity endorsement and purchase intention is not consistent for all product categories. For example, Rengejangan and Sathya (2014) empirically demonstrated that celebrity endorsement had a nominal relationship in the soft drink category and no relationship with some other product categories.

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that there is a relationship between celebrity endorsement and consumer buying intentions. This means that celebrities do have a positive impact on brand loyalty of the demand for banking products and services. The study reviewed that celebrities, notwithstanding diverse views goes a long way to improve on purchase intentions. As such, it is important for advertisers to be aware of the complex expectations and views underlying the endorsement of celebrities.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND INSTRUMENTATION

The study was largely confined to fast foods companies in Harare and the research took place from October 2015 to November 2015. The study sample consisted of 280 customers from the 5 selected fast foods companies. The city of Harare was selected for the study because significant consumers of fast foods products are largely in that town as compared with other cities. Thus, the population from the city was representative of the other cities in Zimbabwe.

Since the study was largely explanatory in nature, a quantitative research design was deemed best suited to this type of research. More significantly, a quantitative research design would allow the researcher to focus on various aspects of celebrity endorsement including perceived expertise, physical attractiveness and trustworthiness (Creusen et al., 2012; Makienco and Bernard, 2012). In addition, a quantitative research design would largely focus on providing the statistical description of the research problem thereby highlighting the celebrity endorsement variables to the research problem (Ergu and Kou, 2012; Stallen et al., 2010).

The study's primary data were collected with the help of self-administered questionnaires from respondents obtained using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sampling determination table. In the questions, a 5-point Likert type-scale was used whereby the respondents were asked to select the most appropriate number that corresponds with the extent to which they agree with given statement. The scales in the survey questions ranged from 1 to 5 with "1" denoting "strongly disagree" and "5" denoting "strongly agree". The five point Likert type scale offered a greater range of answers to participants and the main advantage of the Likert scale was that it was reasonably easy to instruct and administer (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012; Hempel, 2012). Additionally, the 5-point Likert scale also determined respondents' feelings towards the attributes of celebrity endorsers such as trust-worthiness, expertise, physical attractiveness and respect.

Before the distribution of the questionnaires, stimulus advertisements were shown to the study respondents. Accordingly, the

**Table 1.** Cronbach's Alpha.

Variable	Number of items	Cronbach alpha
Perceived Expertise	5	0.876
Physical Attractiveness	4	0.954
Trustworthiness	5	0.957
Buying Behaviour	3	0.869
Total	17	0.914

**Table 2.** Demographic data of respondents.

Variable	Items	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	116	53.9
	Male	99	46.1
Age of respondents	Below 20 years	25	11.6
	21 to 30 years	119	55.4
	31 to 40 years	45	20.9
	41 to 50 years	19	9.1
	Above 50 years	7	3
Academic qualifications	Secondary education	30	14
	Diploma education	70	32.5
	Undergraduate Degree	90	41.9
	Master's degree and above	25	11.6

questionnaires contained a print advertisement of celebrity endorsing a fast foods product. After viewing the advertisement, the respondents were asked to rate the celebrities in regarding attractiveness, expertise and trustworthiness as provided by Lee et al., (2013). All primary data were analysed using SPSS software package version 22 and were tested using correlation analysis.

#### Reliability test

To ensure reliability, the study checked for consistency of questionnaires by using the Cronbach Coefficient Alpha. The method measures squared correlations between observed scores and true scores and this method helped in estimating internal consistency of celebrity endorsement variables under study. Thus, alpha values ranged from coefficient of 0.7 or higher for them to be acceptable (Creswell, 2009). In line with Giroux (2011) and Warburton (2010), the current study used Cronbach's alpha test for measuring the reliability of the variables using SPSS software package version 22. Table 1 shows different Cronbach's Alpha values for the various constructs of the questionnaire.

From the above reliability analysis, there was no need to delete any item as all the values of alpha for the variables were more than 0.70. Indeed, the total scale of reliability for overall Cronbach alpha of 0.914 indicated an overall higher reliability factors. Moreover, the results do show that the Cronbach alpha values were in the range that was good for an explanatory study (Hair et al., 2010).

## RESULTS

A total of 280 questionnaires were distributed to customers in the main five fast foods outlets in Harare. A total of 215 questionnaires were returned fully completed representing a response rate of 76.8%. Of the total respondents, 45% were males and 55% were females. In terms of age category, the majority of the respondents (55.4%) were aged between 21 years and 30 years. Regarding the educational qualifications, the majority of the respondents (74.4%) had either diploma or undergraduate degrees. The findings are shown in Table 2.

The study also used descriptive statistics which consisted of a range of possible values such as means and standard deviation. The Likert scale type of questions was used to calculate mean values and standard deviations. Accordingly, the calculated mean values offered information regarding the central tendency of the values and the standard deviations provided information about the dispersion of the responses by participants in relation to the mean values. The findings are tabulated in Table 3.

The standard deviations in the above table were

**Table 3.** Descriptive Statistics.

Item	Description	N	Mean	Standard deviation
1.	Celebrity endorsed product captures my attention.	215	4.36	0.08
2.	Celebrity endorsed product creates a lasting impact in my mind	215	4.68	0.16
3.	Words of endorsement about a product from a favourite celebrity is accepted as a testimonial by the consumers	215	4.04	0.86
4.	Product information from a celebrity reinforces its credibility.	215	4.89	0.05
5.	Celebrity expertise carry more weightage	215	4.56	0.70
6.	Celebrity attractiveness increases the possibility of purchasing the product	215	4.77	0.04
7.	Celebrities trustworthiness the awareness of the desired product	215	4.69	0.07

**Table 4.** Correlation analysis.

Variable		Perceived Expertise	Physical Attractiveness	Trustworthiness	Buying Behaviour
Perceived Expertise	Pearson Correlation	1.000	0.440**	0.426**	0.707**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Physical Attractiveness	Pearson Correlation	0.440**	1.000	0.448**	0.785**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Trustworthiness	Pearson Correlation	0.426**	0.448**	1.000	0.776**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Buying intention	Pearson Correlation	0.707**	0.785**	0.776**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

generally less than 1 and that showed that the responses were normally distributed. The descriptive statistics revealed that Celebrity endorsed products captures consumer attention (mean = 4.36). Furthermore, the empirical findings from the above table shows that celebrity endorsed products created a lasting impact in consumer minds (mean = 4.68) as well as reinforcing product credibility (mean = 4.89). Interestingly, the findings showed celebrity attractiveness (mean = 4.77) and trustworthiness (mean = 4.69).

The study proceeded to investigate the correlations between the elements of celebrity endorsement such as perceived expertise, physical attractiveness, trustworthiness and buying intentions. Table 4 shows the results of the analysis from the study conducted on the association between these variables:

The above Pearson's correlation coefficient table shows that perceived expertise has a positive and significant relationship with purchase intentions of products or brand. In particular, the results showed a correlation

coefficient score of 0.707 ( $p = 0.001$ ) at 0.01 level of significance. This means that the more a celebrity is perceived to have expertise on the product being advertised the higher customers will be willing to buy the product. As such, the findings indicate that celebrity expertise about a product is necessary in the advertisement since the audiences also care about the opinion of celebrity about the product or service offered by an organisation. In this instance, using celebrity with expertise in advertisements should act as a goldmine for the fast foods companies for earning the market share, revenues and profits.

The study also revealed that physical attractiveness of a celebrity has a positive and significant relationship with customer buying behaviour at 0.01 level of significance. Physical attractiveness had a positive correlation with buying behaviour with  $r = 0.785$  ( $p = 0.001$ ). This invariably implies that the more physical attractiveness a celebrity possesses the more consumers' will to buy the product being advertised and vice versa. It means that

the greater the perceived “attractiveness”, the greater the purchase intention. Likewise, trustworthiness had a correlation coefficient score of  $r = 0.776$  ( $p = 0.001$ ) at 0.01 level of significance. This indicates that shows that there is a positive and significant relationship between trustworthiness and buying intention. This suggests that physical attractiveness is an important determinant in predicting consumer buying intentions.

## DISCUSSION

The primary data from the study sample indicated that expertise of celebrities was of profound importance in determining the buying behaviour of consumers. These findings are in tandem with Chan et al. (2013) who argue that endorser credibility in terms of expertise has significant importance to the endorsed product. This is corroborated by Anam et al. (2015) studies in Indonesia which revealed that experience matters for most consumers. This is also in line with Banyté et al. (2011) but unlike Malik and Guptha (2014) and Rengejargan and Sathya (2014) the study results did show that credibility of the endorser is related to his or her attractiveness and expertness. Furthermore, Pughazhendi et al. (2011) suggested that if a celebrity endorser is respected, the respect for the celebrity might extend to the brand, and this could lead to a positive attitude towards the brand.

The findings do show that if the trustworthiness of the celebrity is high then this will influence more people to buy than with a celebrity with relatively low trustworthiness. In other words, trustworthiness is a crucial catalyst in the consumer’s assessment processes. This is in line with the findings of Ronay and von Hippel (2010). In fact, Veldhuis et al. (2014) argue that celebrities who endorse products and services perceived as far from being trust worth can indirectly hurt consumers’ perceived images resulting in negative purchase intentions.

Physical attractiveness of respondents was found to be significant and positive. A plethora of studies (Ghani and Kakakhel, 2011; Halliwell, 2013; Yew and Zain 2013) have shown that people respond favourably to endorsement if the endorsers are attractive and desirable. Other researchers such as Bhavana (2011) and Jasmina and Cynthia (2011) also found that consumers most often require endorsers to be physically beautiful if they are to increase brand recognition and purchase intentions. Findings from this study also support meta-analysis studies by Agarwal et al. (2013) and Radha and Jija (2013) in terms of physical attractiveness as a determinant of the buying intentions of customers. Studies by Pughazhendi et al. (2012) in Chennai, India also found that consumers usually require endorsers to be physically attractive so as to increase purchase intentions towards a product. In brief, the physical attractiveness of endorsers unequivocally has a significant effect on consumers and

is a very important factor for fast foods consumers in Harare.

## CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Findings from the survey study confirmed the positive and significant correlations that exist between celebrity endorsement variables (such as physical attractiveness, perceived expertise and trustworthiness) and consumer buying intentions and this have implications for product positioning and brand management. The study showed that celebrity endorsement variables such as trustworthiness, physical attractiveness and perceived expertise are important in enhancing product information and creating awareness among consumers. It can also be concluded that celebrity endorsement enhances product information and also creates awareness among the consumers of fast foods in Harare. In addition, it also helps consumers to recall the brands of fasts foods products. As such, selecting the right endorser is of profound significance for organisational success. For instance, physical attractiveness and trustworthiness do positively affect customer purchase intentions. Accordingly, these traits, must be considered while selecting the endorsers for the target audience.

The study revealed that an advertisement endorsed by celebrity has significant impact in creating positive attitude towards advertisement. This information suggests that if advertisers of products make use of celebrity endorsement for advertising their products then they are likely to get their desired impact and appropriate reach for the money spent. Thus, there is the need to strengthen certain aspects of celebrity consumer relationship as way of understanding the implications for product endorsement in the fast foods industry. This is particularly important in a country like Zimbabwe where celebrities are beginning to command substantial followings.

It is of paramount importance for fast foods companies to gauge the capacity of the celebrity to project multi-attributes which would be consistent and of interest to the consumer’s requirements in all attributes. In other words, managers should ensure that any celebrity selected to endorse the product has the “right” personality and other symbolic properties associated with the celebrity. As such, fast foods companies in Harare must evaluate the overall fit of the celebrity with the brand. From a managerial perspective, it should be noted that the fast foods companies which use promotional strategies such as celebrity endorsement must be careful whilst selecting celebrity for endorsement. This is because the study showed that credibility of endorsers matters for the consumers of fast foods products.

The study was limited to celebrity endorsement and its impact on consumer buying behaviour. Future studies should be able to exploit the implications of multiple



endorsements by the celebrity on the brands endorsed. More so, further studies must also explore with width and breadth on the impact of celebrity endorsement on the products they endorsed.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflicts of interest.

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