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Celebrity Characteristics and Customer Patronage of Betking Nigeria in Akwa Ibom State

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Abstract

This paper examined the relationship between celebrity characteristics and customer patronage of Betkings Nigeria in Akwa Ibom State. Celebrity characteristics such as attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise are not strong enough to stimulate customer patronage in Betkings in Akwa Ibom State due to the fact that customers are tired of seeing the same celebrity over and over again, which creates a major problem of low customer patronage. The researcher employed the use of survey research design in which primary data were obtained through questionnaire administration. The researcher employed tables and simple percentage method to analyse the research questions. Simple regression technique was used to test hypotheses. The finding of the study revealed that there is a significant relationship between celebrity fit and customer patronage of Betkings in Akwa Ibom State. Another result showed that there is a significant relationship between celebrity credibility and customer patronage of Betkings in Akwa Ibom State. It was further discovered that there is a significant relationship between celebrity expertise and customer patronage of Betkings in Akwa Ibom State. Recommendations were that Betkings should scrutinize the credibility of the endorsed celebrity because credibility determines how the advertising information would impact the customers in terms of the communicated message. There is need to checkmate celebrity fit because when the attributes of the celebrity endorser match with the product features, consumers tend to increase their patronage. Betkings should examine the skill, experience and knowledge of the celebrity to endorse or recommend the product to the public

because customers' actions in response to such recommendations seem to vary directly with the celebrity's perceived level of expertise and the target customers' level of agreement with those recommendations.

Keywords: celebrity characteristics, celebrity fit, celebrity credibility, celebrity expertise, customer patronage, Betkings

Introduction

Betking Nigeria is a company that specializes in sports betting with headquarters at Plot 197, Adeleke Adedoyin Street, Lagos. Betking is owned by SV Gaming Limited with registration number RC 1419108. Betking offers wide selection of sports and services. Betking Nigeria branches in Akwa Ibom State embark on product promotions to create awareness for their service offerings, instigate trial purchase, possible brand adoption and retention. To achieve these promotional objectives, many Betking Nigeria branches in Akwa Ibom State are observed to be into the use of celebrity endorsers or the practice of celebrity characteristics- an advertising technique. Kerin, Hartley and Rudelius (2009) posited that companies are adopting in the belief that it positively affects customer patronage (Ding, Molchanov and Stork (2011). Thus, celebrity characteristics are characterised as an effective way of transferring meaning to brands. The potential positive impact on product sales cannot be understated. According to Chan, Leung & Luk, 2013; Olenski (2016), just one endorsement can spell an increase in sales by 4%, almost immediately and in turn stimulate marketing performance metrics. That's why Betkings hire celebrities to promote their brand. A celebrity endorser is "any individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement" (Odili & Ukpai, 2021). It is a common practice that Betkings use celebrity characteristics to increase the exposure of products to consumers.

The ability of celebrity characteristics to affect consumer behavior has been suggested in both the academic literature and the popular/trade press. For example, Deshwal (2015) who investigated impact of celebrity characteristics on sales, found that there was a significant impact of celebrity characteristics on the buying behaviour and patronage of customers. Physical attractiveness, credibility and congruence of the celebrity with reference to the product in the endorsed advertisement had an impact on customers' perceptions about the endorsement product and the overall marketing performance indicators. In addition, Kumar & Patra (2017) suggests that celebrity product endorsements can become a natural fit in that we have a hard time envisioning the product without the celebrity next to it. Think of Michael Jordan and Nike or Brooke Shields and Calvin Klein. Likewise, several years ago, celebrity characteristics advertising was recognised as a universal, important feature of marketing (Anioke, 2022). Today, there are many successful examples that indicate that celebrity characteristics continues to be one of the most influential advertisements (Hun & Yazdanifard, 2014).

Currently, sports betting are the most patronised form of gambling globally; one for which participation rate has increased during the last decade, particularly among youth (Daha, Acheampong, Bakare & Ramanathan, 2018; Derevensky, Sklar, Gupta & Messerlian, 2010; Hing, 2014). Their increasing participation in gambling is raising concerns among scholars across the world (Deloitte, 2012; Hing, 2014; Sambo, 2018) who shared the view that media advertisements of gambling are disseminating messages of

normalisation and prematurely exposing vulnerable people to engage in them, especially children, adolescents, young men and problem gamblers which in turn lead to serious problems to the individuals, their families and communities. The presence of sports bet advertisements on TV and their appeal, particularly to young people to take to gambling has been documented by scholars (Deans, Thomas, Derevensky & Daube, 2017; Deloitte, 2012; Derevensky et al 2010; Hing, 2014; Sambo, 2018; Deans & Biswas, 2001). These scholars have also raised concerns about the trend which they said is normalising gambling and prematurely exposing vulnerable people, particularly those with gambling problems. This is even more disturbing in Nigeria where roughly 60 million young people between the ages of 18 and 40 were reported to be actively involved in gambling (Odili & Ukpai, 2021; NOIPolls, 2019). These concerns, therefore, warranted the need to investigate celebrity characteristics of Betkings in Akwa Ibom State and its relationship with customer patronage.

Despite the huge cost of securing celebrity endorsers by Betking Nigeria in Akwa Ibom State, customers seemed not to pay much attention to the celebrity characteristics of the company, which has resulted in low customer patronage. The importance of celebrity characteristics in Betking Nigeria in Akwa Ibom State seems to be underemphasized by its customers. Fundamentally, celebrity characteristics have become a common practice in marketing promotion and advertising campaigns (Choi & Rifon, 2012). Many empirical studies (For example, Choi & Rifon, 2012; Ibok, 2013; Koernigand & Boyd, 2009) focused especially in the sport betting sector. Nnamocha and Chukundah (2018) and ZorBari-Nwitambu and Kalu (2017) have also considered the effect of celebrity advertising and characteristics on consumer buying behaviour both in Nigeria and other countries. A problem therefore existed that these studies lack consistent findings and the inability to specifically investigate celebrity characteristics of Betkings in Akwa Ibom State and its relationship with customer patronage.

It seems that celebrity characteristics such as attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise are not strong enough to stimulate customer patronage in Betkings in Akwa Ibom State due to the fact that customers are tired of seeing the same celebrity over and over again. This creates a major problem of low customer patronage that this study seeks to address. The consistent use of the same celebrity in all outlets of Betkings in Akwa Ibom State with same characteristics generally suggests that it is not a persuasive way of influencing customer purchase intentions and patronage. Celebrity characteristics fit in Betkings in Akwa Ibom State seems to lack the congruence between the celebrity and the endorsed product. In the minds of Betkings users in Akwa Ibom State, the credibility characteristics lack the integrity, sincerity and dependability of the celebrity regarding the subject matter, while expertise characteristics are not perceived to make valid assertions.

Celebrity characteristics in Betking in Akwa Ibom State do not necessarily sustain enough customer patronage because of the repetitive nature of endorsing the same celebrity for quite a long time. This thus raises a lot of doubt about whether the strategy is as effective as claimed. Despite the popularity of these constructs in the celebrity characteristics and customer patronage literature, it appears that no previous Nigerian study has examined their effects in one single study with specific link to Betking Nigeria branches in Akwa Ibom State. This study, therefore, fills this important gap by considering the relationship between celebrity characteristics and customer patronage of Betkings in Akwa Ibom State.

Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework guiding this study is represented in figure 1. This will provide a better viewpoint and insight into the study variables.

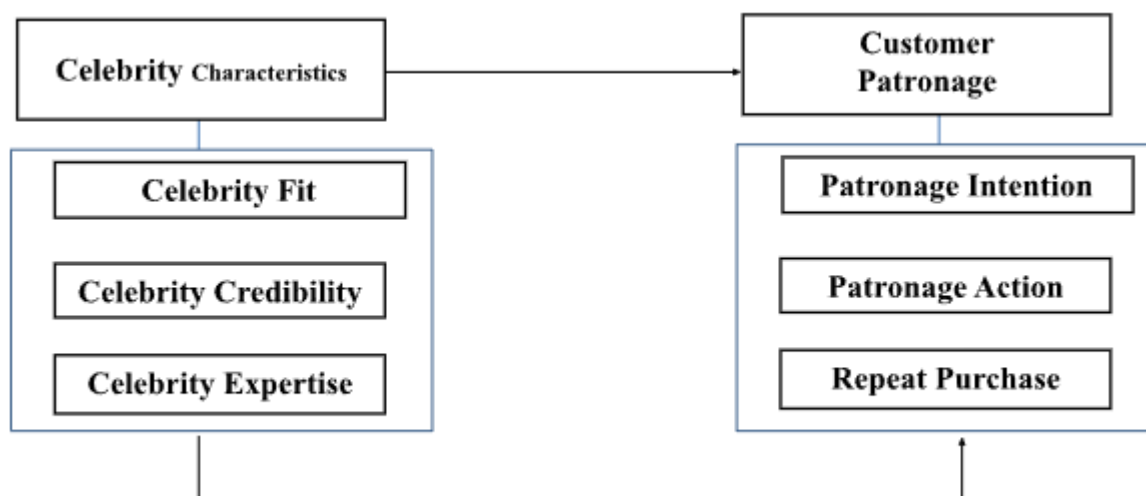


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework Representation

Source: Researchers' Representation (2024)

The above conceptual model depicts the two main variables namely dependent and the independent variable. The dependent variable is the customer patronage. The framework further provides insights into the dimensions of customer patronage such as patronage intention, patronage action, repeat purchase, brand awareness and brand reputation. On the other hand, the independent variable captured in the conceptual model is the celebrity characteristics with the dimensions of celebrity fit, celebrity credibility, celebrity expertise, celebrity physical attractiveness and celebrity trustworthiness.

2.1.1 Concept of Celebrity characteristics

Celebrity characteristics have received considerable attention in the marketing communication literature. Celebrity characteristic is the strategy of using well-known individuals who enjoy public recognition to promote a brand or product. The essence of celebrity characteristics is s to promote a company's image. As an influential reference group, celebrities can influence customer patronage regarding a particular product or brand by endorsing the product and confirming the benefits of using it (Chan, Leung Ng & Luk, 2013). Celebrity characteristic has been conceptualized and examined using different dimensions. Odili & Ukpai (2021) define celebrity characteristics in terms of three endorser's qualities: namely, attractiveness, likeability and trustworthiness. ZorBari- Nwitambu and Kalu (2017) measured celebrity characteristics using four dimensions; namely, perceived expertise, trustworthiness, credibility and belief. Nnamocha and Chukundah (2018) conceptualize celebrity characteristics using two dimensions: endorsement coverage and frequency of endorsement. Abbas, Afshan, Aslam and Ewaz (2018) measured celebrity characteristics using five constructs; likeability, credibility, personality, attractiveness and experience. Ibok (2013) argues that effectiveness of celebrity effectiveness of celebrity characteristics depends on four critical factors: namely, perceived expertise, trustworthiness, credibility and attractiveness. According to Choi and Rifon (2012), the fit or congruence between the celebrity and the product being endorsed as well as the congruence between the celebrity and consumer

self-image both determine the success of celebrity characteristics.

The concept of celebrities is associated with individuals who have attained enviable positions in the public eye and typically have high profile in given career (s) such as sports, entertainment, music and drama among others (Zipporah and Mberia, 2014). Roll (2006) described a celebrity as a person who is widely known in society for his accomplishments in their respective fields, movies, sports, music or politics. These fans associate different celebrities with different attributes such as trustworthiness, reliability, credibility, attractiveness among others. When a celebrity endorses a product, all the attributes associated with the celebrity are transferred to the product. This has a strong influence on consumers' attitude towards the brand, their purchase intentions and actual purchase (Erdogan, 1999).

Celebrity characteristics, according to Business Dictionary (2016), is a marketing strategy for advertising a product or brand, where the status or fame of a well-known person is used to promote a product, service or even to raise awareness on environmental and social matters. Similarly, Udo, Nwulu and Stella (2015), posited that celebrity characteristics is the technique of portraying a well-recognized sports star, entertainer and actor among others to be the brand ambassador or a spokesman for a company to promote a good or a service. Kotler and Armstrong (2000) also defined celebrity characteristics as the channel of brand communication in which a celebrity acts as the brand's spokesperson and certifies the brand's claims and position by extending his/her personality, popularity, status in the society or expertise in his/her field to the brand. Celebrity characteristics therefore, is the engagement of a celebrity by a company or a marketer to create brand awareness, brand loyalty and to influence the purchase decisions of consumers in order to increase sales and extend market share of a company or the marketer.

Celebrity characteristics usually impacts the feelings of the customers and the position they have concerning the advertisement (Bondrea & Ștefănescu-Mihăilă, 2014a) and the brands, thus enhancing the purchase intentions and the sales. Celebrities are expensive due to their notable reputations and their capacities to target audience. Most advertisers insist that their celebrity endorser should have charisma and current popularity which is why we see more movie and television stars, athletes, real-life heroes, and musicians acting as brand ambassadors in the market.

From the forgoing, it is clear that celebrity characteristics have been examined using different dimensions. Thus, we argue that celebrity fit, celebrity credibility, celebrity expertise, celebrity physical attractiveness and celebrity trustworthiness are important dimensions of celebrity characteristics.

2.1.1.1 Celebrity Fit

Celebrity fit is a key concept in the celebrity characteristics literature that has attracted considerable attention. According to Choi and Rifon (2012), celebrity fit, which is also known as congruency or relevance, is the degree of similarity between the endorser and the endorsed product or brand. Koernig and Boyd (2009) found that a well-known athlete is effective when endorsing a sport brand compared to a non-sport brand. The Match-Up theory suggests that when the attributes of the celebrity endorser match with the product features, consumers tend to increase their patronage (Roy, 2006). The theory also implies that perceived lack of fit or incongruency between the celebrity endorser and the product characteristics leads to negative evaluation effects (Bergkvist, Hjalmarson & Mägi, 2016). For example, using a male celebrity with feminine looks to advertise or endorse "a stamina associated product such as Nautilus weightlifting equipment" (Ilicic, & Webster, 2011) would have a negative evaluation effect on the product. Thus, celebrity fit is an important factor for celebrity characteristics.

The celebrity/product fit, also called the 'match-up hypothesis', refers to the

harmony of the match between the celebrity endorser and the product being endorsed. Celebrity/product fit is thought to function as a key determinant of endorsement effectiveness (e.g. Friedman & Friedman 1979; Erdogan et al. 2001). Celebrity effectiveness does vary across different product types. Friedman and Friedman (1979) concluded that the better the celebrity/product fit, as perceived by consumers, the higher the level of endorsement effectiveness. Celebrity/product fit was effective for only certain measures of effectiveness such as brand attitude, but not for other measures such as purchase intention. Regardless of the impact celebrity/product fit has on effectiveness, the absolute weight of the existing literature suggests that the phenomenon should play an important role in celebrity endorser effectiveness.

2.1.1.2 Celebrity Credibility

Perceived credibility of the product endorser is one of the factors that influence customer buying behaviour. Celebrity credibility is defined in ZorBari-Nwitambu and Kalu (2017) as the integrity, honesty and dependability of the celebrity regarding the subject matter. Credibility determines how the advertising information would impact the receiver in terms of the communicated message (Serban, 2010). Spry, Pappu and Bettina Cornwell (2011) argue that celebrity credibility has a positive impact on the credibility of the endorsed brand. A survey of 120 consumers conducted by Ibok (2013) show that the effectiveness of celebrity endorsers depends mostly on perceived expertise and credibility. Thus, celebrity credibility is a significant determinant of the effectiveness of celebrity characteristics.

Credibility is the degree of confidence consumers place in a communicator's intent to convey the assertions s/he considers most valid. Favorable disposition, acceptance, psychological safety and perceived supportive climate are favorable consequences of credibility on celebrity. Much of the literature supports the positive effect of credibility on effectiveness (Chao, Wuhner, & Werani, 2005). A message from a highly credible communicator produces an effective attitude change, while non-trusted communicators' impact proved immaterial. Perceived communicator trustworthiness has also been shown to produce a greater attitude change than perceived expertise. The extant literature on celebrity endorsers suggests that credibility is an important predictor of celebrity characteristics effectiveness (Chao, Wuhner, & Werani, 2005).

2.1.1.3 Celebrity Expertise

Celebrity expertise has been defined as the extent to which the celebrity is perceived to make valid assertions (Chekima, Wafa & Sulong, 2018; Erdogan, 1999; ZorBari-Nwitambu & Kalu, 2017). Put differently, the celebrity is considered to have the competence regarding the information or message he is delivering to the public. Thus, expertise relates to the skill, experience and knowledge of the celebrity to endorse or recommend the product to the public. Studies suggest that expertise and effectiveness are positively related (Ohanian, 1990) and that persuasive endorsers tend to have higher degree of expertise (Chan, Leung Ng & Luk, 2013; Chekima, Wafa & Sulong, 2018; Erdogan, 1999).

Erdogan (1999, p. 298) defines celebrity endorsers' expertise as 'the extent to which a communicator is perceived to be a source of valid assertions'. The literature investigating source credibility in settings involving persuasive communication generally indicates that a receiver's perception of the source's expertise positively influences source effectiveness (Ohanian, 1990). Respondents' actions in response to the source's recommendations seem to vary directly with the source's perceived level of expertise and the target person's level of agreement with those recommendations. Subjects exposed to a source perceived as highly expert exhibit more agreement with the source's recommendation than did those exposed to a source with low expertise (Ohanian, 1990). The level of perceived celebrity expertise should predict celebrity

endorser effectiveness.

The term expertise is defined as “the extent to which a communicator is perceived to be a source of valid assertions” (Hovland et al., 1953). In order to persuade recipients of information endorser’s expertise has encouraging effect on receivers (Ohanian, 1990). Belch and Belch (1994) said that information receivers have strong belief upon the person who is practically having related knowledge, expertise in advocating area. Endorser with high knowledge and skills has strong power of recommendation as compare to the endorsers with low expertise (Ohanian, 1990).. If the celebrity advocating the product has strong knowledge and experience, then he/she will ultimately have differential power to pursue due to strong believability. Expertise is whether or not the target audience perceive that the endorser as a valid source of assertions, that he or she has experience and knowledge in the area of the product category (Andreas et al, 2015). Celebrity endorser’s expertise is a true sign of professionalism and has encouraging effect on receiver’s loyalty (Ohanian, 1990). According to Eyitayo (2017), the expertise of a celebrity provides consumers with a more concrete information on the product offering, which can then lead to a favourable attitude towards the brand (Magnini, Honeycutt and Cross, 2008), while Ohanian (1990), concluded from physical attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise, seeing expertise as the characteristic which is associated with the intent to purchase a product which is being endorsed.

2.1.2 Customer Patronage

Customer patronage is conceptualized in different ways using both financial and non-financial dimensions. According to Adiele, Grend and Ezirim (2015), customer patronage is the commitment of an individual to purchase a product because of its quality or perceived quality. They use two financial dimensions; namely, sales volume and profit margin, and one non-financial dimension; namely, customer retention, to measure customer patronage. Lam, Shankar, Erramilli and Murthy (2004) contend that customer patronage is a component of customer loyalty that has to do with repeat purchase. Ogbuji, Onuoha and Abdul (2016) measure customer patronage in terms of customer satisfaction and referrals. In the context of green restaurant patronage, Hu, Parsa and Self (2010) measure customer patronage using three dimensions; namely, considerable chance to patronize, recommend others to patronize and predominantly patronize.

According to Seock (2009), patronage behaviour is measured in Pan and Zinkhan (2006) using two dimensions: store choice and frequency of visit. While store choice is defined as a customer’s preference for a particular store, frequency of visit denote show often the customer buys from that store. Similarly, Shim and Kotsiopoulos (1992) use store choice behaviour, which represents a customer’s preference for a particular store, to measure patronage behaviour. Adeleke and Aminu (2012) and Pataka, Lostakovaa, Curdovaa and Vlckovaa (2014) described patronage as a deeply held commitment to re-patronise a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior. When customers are satisfied with services offered by the organization, they will be patriotic and loyal. A satisfied customer is a customer that owes his loyalty to the vendor by displaying regular patronage in spite the situation. The need to customer satisfaction and patronage is a basic concept of any business success. This support the view of Prabhakaram and Satyal (2003) that the customer is the king in business and the basic purpose of any business is to satisfy the customer. In this competitive commercial world, customer value is becoming a control element for all business strategies, with every organization emphasizing on customer satisfaction. Individual perception largely determines how an individual acts towards some products/services or even to an organization and could change consumers’

behavior towards other brands and also changes that of people close to them (Hun and Yazdanifard, 2014; Olotu and Ogidi, 2014).

Patronage intention can be defined as the probability that specific customers would be willing to buy organizational products in future (Zeithainl, 1988). Fishbein & Ajzen (1985) were also of the opinion that the final decision of customers to buy or not to buy specific product is greatly affected by his purchase intention. Purchase intention is more psychological than behavioral because it is the outcome of such intention which determines the end point of any purchase transaction. According to Ajzen (1991), behavioural intention is a function of customer attitude and subjective norm: ($BI = A + SN$) where BI= behavioral intention, A= attitude and SN= subjective norm.

2.1.3.1 Celebrity fit and customer patronage

There is the tendency that people will always associate themselves with celebrities and most especially within the entertainment industry, which in turn make buyers to quickly associate themselves with product endorsed by celebrities. In consequence, celebrities can be very useful when it comes to promoting brands through the process of endorsement (Bhasin, 2018). However, firms enjoy high popularity among other brands when using celebrity endorsers (Deshwal, 2015). Thus corporations invest great amount in convincing celebrities to endorse their products/brands. In Pughazhendi and Ravindran (2012) who stressed that endorsers are referred to “any individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of consumer goods by appearing with it in an advertisement”. Firms often use this type of promotional strategy to communicate new product attributes to potentials and retaining existing customers. Currently, this form of promotional approach seems to be increasing across all types of products in media presentation. Erdogan (2012) asserted that with the level of intense competition celebrity endorsement will inevitably provide differentiation and strengthen brand image. Thus, firm using celebrities should seek to fulfill the following objectives of familiarity, relevance, esteem and differentiation. And by differentiation, celebrities should stand out amongst others. By esteem, celebrities’ credibility must be considered. By relevance, there should be a link and connectivity from celebrities to the product and audience. And by familiarity, we mean that the endorser/celebrity is recognized by the target market (Lalwani, 2011). Based on the foregoing that we formulate the hypothesis that:

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between celebrity fit and customer patronage of Betkings in Akwa Ibom State.

2.1.3.2 Celebrity credibility and customer patronage

Celebrity endorsement, according to Business Dictionary (2016), is a marketing strategy for advertising a product or brand, where the status or fame of a well-known person is used to promote a product, service or even to raise awareness on environmental and social matters. Similarly, Udo, Nwulu and Stella (2015), posited that celebrity endorsement is the technique of portraying a well-recognized sports star, entertainer and actor among others to be the brand ambassador or a spokesman for a company to promote a good or a service. Kotler and Armstrong (2000) also defined celebrity endorsement as the channel of brand communication in which a celebrity acts as the brand's spokesperson and certifies the brand's claims and position by extending his/her personality, popularity, status in the society or expertise in his/her field to the brand. Celebrity credibility therefore, is the engagement of a celebrity by a company or a marketer to create brand awareness, brand loyalty and to influence the purchase decisions of consumers in order to increase sales and extend market share of a company or the marketer. Based on the foregoing that we formulate the hypothesis that:

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between celebrity credibility and customer patronage of Betkings in Akwa Ibom State.

2.1.3.3 Celebrity expertise and customer patronage

The concept of celebrities is associated with individuals who have attained enviable positions in the public eye and typically have high profile in given career (s) such as sports, entertainment, music and drama among others (Zipporah and Mberia, 2014). Roll (2006) described a celebrity as a person who is widely known in society for his accomplishments in their respective fields, movies, sports, music or politics. These fans associate different celebrities with different attributes such as trustworthiness, reliability, credibility, attractiveness among others. When a celebrity endorses a product, all the attributes associated with the celebrity are transferred to the product. This has a strong influence on consumers' attitude towards the brand, their purchase intentions and actual purchase (Erdogan, 1999). Based on the foregoing that we formulate the hypothesis that:

Ho3: There is no significant relationship between celebrity expertise and customer patronage of Betkings in Akwa Ibom State.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

There are three theories that guided this study. These theories are Source Credibility Theory, Reasoned Action (TRA) Theory and Source Attractiveness Theory. Considering the three theories used in the study, Source Credibility Theory was chosen as the anchored theory because of its utmost relevance to the study.

The source credibility theory was propounded by Carl Hovland & Walter Weiss in (1953). This theory explains how communication persuasiveness is affected by the perceived credibility of the source of communication (Asemah, Nwammuo & Nkwan-Uwaoma, 2017, p. 139). This theory explains how a particular source (media or individual gives credence to products or services of an organisation to persuade people to taking an action. According to Asemah et al (2017), the theory states two factors that underscore the concept of source credibility which is trustworthiness and expertise. Goldsmith, Lafferty & Newell (2000) say that the theory states that for a message to be effective, it has to be perceived by the receiver with some level of trustworthiness and expertise; in essence, the source of the message (celebrity) has to be an expert in his field and the receiver of such messages must have a level of trust on the source. Source credibility can be categorised into three models; namely; the factor model which determines the extent to which the source judges the individual credible, the functional model which views the degree of satisfaction by which a receiver's needs are met by the source and the constructivist model which analyses the information /message received from the source (Anaeto & Anaeto, 2010). The matchup between the source (celebrity) and marketing performance is necessary in order to influence consumer patronage.

Also, the theory of reasoned action was propounded by Martin Fishbein and Icek Ajzen in 1975. The theory explains the links between beliefs, attitudes, norms, intentions and behaviours of individuals. According to the theory, a person's action is determined by his behavioural intentions. The intention by itself is determined by the person's attitude and his subjective norms toward the behaviour. The subjective norms are determined by normative beliefs of an individual and by his motivation to comply with the norms. The theory of reasoned action focuses on a person's intention to behave in a certain way and looks at the person's attitudes towards the behaviour as well as the subjective norms, which are influential people or groups that could induce those attitudes. The theory believes that if a person evaluates the intended behaviour as positive (attitude), and if they think that significant others want him to perform the behaviour (subjective norm), this results in higher intention (motivation) and they are more likely to do so. The stipulations of the theory of reasoned action imply that the theory can produce good predictors of choices made by an individual when facing several alternatives under the influence of external stimuli, such as celebrity

characteristics state that celebrity characteristics are extension of that theory. The theory in dealing with an individual's basic motivation to perform an action implies that celebrity characteristics can influence a consumer's attitude, intention, beliefs and behaviour to patronise a product certified by a celebrity.

Propounded by (McGuire, 1968), the Source Attractiveness Theory contends that the effectiveness of a message depends on the similarity, familiarity, and likeability of an endorser. Similarity is defined as a supposed resemblance between the source and the receiver of the message, familiarity as knowledge of the source through exposure, and likeability as affection for the source as a result of the source's physical appearance and behavior. This theory explains the message acceptance in two ways: Identification and Conditioning. Identification is when the receiver or the target audience of the communication begins to identify with the source's attractiveness, and hence tends to accept his opinions, beliefs, habits, attitudes etc. Conditioning is when the attractiveness of the source is supposed to pass on to the brand after regular association of the source with the brand.

2.3 Empirical Review

Etuk, Akpan & Awah (2024) examined E-service fulfilment and customer loyalty in online shopping in Nigeria: the moderating role of age and education. Three hundred and fifty-three (353) Nigerian online shoppers participated and provided useful data through a structured questionnaire. Hierarchical regression analysis was employed to analyze the data, focusing on the interactions between e-service fulfillment, demographic variables (age and education), and customer loyalty. Findings indicate a significant positive relationship between e-service fulfillment and customer loyalty among Nigerian online shoppers. Age and education were found to moderate this relationship, with older consumers and those with higher education levels showing stronger preferences for reliable e-services. These results underscore the importance of considering demographic factors in designing e-commerce strategies to enhance customer loyalty. Recommendations include enhancing e-service fulfillment, segmenting marketing strategies, and prioritizing customer education and support to foster long-term customer loyalty in the Nigerian e-commerce landscape.

Etuk, Awah & Akpan (2024) examined tangibility and Customer Patronage of Microfinance Banks in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The researcher adopted the survey research design approach and data were collected from 323 respondents drawn from the banks customers' base. A total number of 295 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved in useable form representing 91.3 percent of data analyzed using the Simple Regression Model (SRM). Data generated from the study were processed using descriptive and inferential statistics and hypothesis tested at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that tangibility had significant influence on customer patronage of Microfinance banks in Akwa Ibom State. Thus, the study recommended that the managers of Microfinance banks should employ employees that have a neat and professional appearance and also make provisions for visually appealing materials associated with the banks service products in order to delight their customers and enhance their consistent patronage.

Etuk, Anyadighibe, James & Uma (2022) conducted a study on sociological factors and consumer buying behaviour towards fashion clothing. The study adopted crosssectional survey research design. A structured questionnaire was used to obtain primary data from 185 consumers of fashion clothing. Data analysis was done using descriptive statistics, while hypotheses testing was done using multiple linear regression. Consequently, the findings of the study revealed that culture ($\beta = .507$; $p\text{-value} = 0.000 < 0.05$) had the highest significant positive effect on consumer buying behaviour towards fashion clothing, followed by family ($\beta = .244$; $p\text{-value} = 0.000 < 0.05$), reference group ($\beta = .238$; $p\text{-value} = 0.000 < 0.05$) and peer group ($\beta = .085$; $p\text{-value} = 0.005 < 0.05$). The study

concluded that sociological factors are key determinants of consumer buying behaviour towards fashion clothing and made practical implications to that effect.

Martina (2022) evaluated the influence of celebrity characteristics on the patronage of skin care products by female lecturers in Federal Universities in South-East Nigeria using age as a base. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The population for the study comprised of all the 1,897 female lecturers in all the Federal Universities in South-East Nigeria. The sample size for the study was 330 female lecturers obtained through Taro Yamane formula. Primary source of data was employed through a validated and reliable research instrument. The data collected was analysed using mean, standard deviation and ANOVA statistics. The mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while ANOVA statistics was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that celebrity characteristics influences patronage of skin care products by female lecturers in Federal Universities in South-East Nigeria. It also found that Age was not a source of significant ($p < 0.05$) difference in the mean ratings of female lecturers' responses on the influence of celebrity characteristics on their patronage of skin care products.

Odionye, Yareh, Ibekwe & Salami (2022) conducted a study on influence of celebrity characteristics of consumers buying decision of a brand using globacom telecommunication Nigeria limited as its case study. The study was carried out to find out the perception of the use of celebrity characteristics and determine the influence of celebrity characteristics on the buying behaviour and also to know if endorsement of celebrity reflects the quality of globacom telecommunication. The mixed method and in-depth interview was used as the research methods. Findings showed that celebrities have significant influence on buying decisions of subscribers.

Ejiga, Omirigwe & Nelson (2021) in their work titled "sports bet advertisements on television and its influence on betting participation among youths in Makurdi metropolis, Benue State, Nigeria" adopted the survey research method and examined how TV advertisement influenced betting participation among youth. Findings revealed that unemployment was the major factor that informed youth participation in sports betting followed by peer group pressure. Another finding showed that sports bet advertisements on TV, to a reasonable extent, influenced young people to stake a bet.

Odili & Ukpai (2021) examined the effect of celebrity characteristics on customer patronage in consumer goods manufacturing industry in Rivers State Nigeria using cross-sectional regression approach. The study also considered the moderating role of brand image in the relationship between celebrity characteristics and customer patronage. Celebrity characteristics were measured using three dimensions; namely, celebrity fit, celebrity credibility and celebrity expertise. On the other hand, customer patronage was measured in terms of brand choice, repeat purchase and customer referral. All variables were measured using the Likert scale with five ordered options from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Seventy-Six (76) final year marketing students from the three universities (University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education) in Rivers state constitute the sample. The students were randomly selected, and the response rate is 86%. The results show evidence that the three dimensions of celebrity characteristics; celebrity fit, celebrity credibility and celebrity, all have positive relationship with customer patronage. However, while the effect of celebrity fit and celebrity credibility both are highly statistically significant, the effect of celebrity expertise is significant only at 10% level. Also, the joint effects of celebrity fit, celebrity credibility and celebrity expertise is highly significant and explain approximately 82% of the variance of customer patronage. The results also show evidence of a highly significant positive effect of brand image on customer patronage both directly and through its interaction with celebrity

characteristics.

Egbeh, Nkwocha & Oguguo (2020) examined the use of celebrity characteristics in product promotions. This qualitative study was therefore carried out to explore the opinions of experts on the practice with a view to arriving at a position that advertisers can rely upon in their decision making on the subject matter. After the extensive review of available literature on the practice, this study takes the position that celebrity advertising has the potential to help sellers actualize their product promotional goals with more ease and may actually result to enhanced product acceptance especially at the introductory stage of the life cycle of a product. The study also arrived at the conclusion that celebrity characteristics is not an alternative to excellent product quality, features and benefits. And that where an organization settles for celebrity characteristics as an advertising technique, it must ensure that there is: i) celebrity/product match ii) celebrity/audience match ii) celebrity credibility, attractiveness and expertise and iv) the celebrity of choice is not involved in multiple endorsements.

Paul & Toruyouyei (2020) conducted a study that investigated the relationship between celebrity characteristics and sales performance of telecommunication firms in Port-Harcourt. The dimension of this study is celebrity expertise while the measures are new customers acquired and timeliness. This study adopted cross-sectional survey research design. The population consisted of the four telecommunication companies in Port-Harcourt, which are MTN Nigeria, GLOBACOM, AIRTEL, and 9MOBILE. Data was collected using a self-administered structured questionnaire and validated for the study. Cronbach's Alpha reliability for major constructs ranged between 0.70 and 0.92. This study adopted the quantitative method of data analysis which means that the gathered data from the retrieved research questionnaire was analysed statistically and in three phases' namely descriptive analysis, univariate analysis and bivariate analysis. The findings revealed that celebrity characteristics has a significant relationship with sales performance of telecommunication firms in Port-Harcourt.

Omoregbe & Osifo (2019) conducted a similar study on the impact of celebrity characteristics on consumers purchasing behaviour of four brands of telecommunication network operators in Nigeria. Their findings revealed that the purchase decisions of consumers are related to the endorsement of celebrities and these endorsement attributes have a positive and significant link with buying behaviour of consumers.

Awobamise (2018) examined celebrity characteristics and its impact on consumer perception in Globacom Nigeria Limited. This study made use of Credibility Model and Source Attractiveness Model theories as a theoretical framework. The study made use of a combination of questionnaires and In-depth interviews to gather data; 200 questionnaires were distributed around Lagos, Nigeria and an interview was conducted with the head of Marketing of Globacom Nigeria. The findings of the research showed that although Celebrity characteristics is a good way to capture the attention of prospective customers, what actually makes these customers stay and what attracts the majority of the brand's customers is not the celebrity but the quality of the product.

Ladipo & Adeosun/Oniku (2018) analyzed the impact of celebrity characteristics on sales performance of Pepsi-Cola in Lagos, Nigeria, with focus on celebrity's credibility, popularity, acceptance and integrity as a measure of celebrity characteristics on sales performance. Few studies exist without any clear cut idea on which factors firms can use to evaluate the strength and weakness of potential celebrity endorsers in Nigeria and most especially in the beverage industry. The research design is purely descriptive and data collected using cross-sectional survey method from 193 valid questionnaires out of 203. Data collected were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics including regression analysis. The findings, however confirmed significant relationships that exist between celebrity characteristics and sales performance. In the light of the

analyses and interpretations, it is suggested and recommended that firms should intensify the use of popularity, acceptance and integrity as a measure of celebrity characteristics to promoting their products, hence not leaving out celebrity's credibility to protecting brand image.

Methodology

Research Design

The researcher adopted a survey research design in which primary data were obtained through questionnaire administration. The research design permits the collection of data from primary sources, using the questionnaire. This research design is necessary when the collection of data is from firsthand information. Also, this method does not allow the easy manipulation of data by respondents.

3.2 Research Area

This study focuses on the relationship between celebrity characteristics and customer patronage of Betkings Nigeria in Akwa Ibom State. Thus, the study area is Betkings outlets in Akwa Ibom State.

3.3 Population of the Study

The population of this study is the estimated number of Betkings users in Akwa Ibom State. It is estimated that the number of Betkings users in Akwa Ibom is approximately 6 million users. Hence, because of the large population size, the researcher decided how many people fit in the research demographic by narrowing down to the sample size.

3.4 Sample Size

Since the population was 6 million, there was need for the researcher to calculate a sample size using Taro Yamane's scientific formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where n = required sample size

N = Population size = 58

e = Error term = 5% = 0.05

1 = Constant = 1

$$n = \frac{6,000,000}{1 + 6,000,000(0.0025)}$$

$$N = 1 + 6,000,000(0.0025)$$

$$n = \frac{6,000,000}{1 + 15,000}$$

$$n = \frac{6,000,000}{15,001}$$

$$n = 399.97$$

$$n = 399.97$$

$$n = 399.97$$

3.5 Sampling Technique

The stratified sampling was adopted to divide the Betkings users into three (3) strata representing the three senatorial districts: Uyo, Eket and Ikot Ekpene Senatorial districts. Furthermore, the three hundred and ninety nine were selected using purposive sampling technique. The purposive sampling technique was adopted because the researcher needed to be sure that the selected participants were Betking users. The three (3) strata representing the three senatorial districts: Uyo, Eket and Ikot Ekpene Senatorial districts. This was based on the assumption that each senatorial districts were homogeneous. In order to provide reliable estimates, the sample size for the study was 399 Betking users. The first step involved choosing 3 senatorial districts from the

estimated population of 6 million and divided the sample size of 399 into three equal parts ie 399/3. Therefore, each senatorial district were served with 133 questionnaires. Table 3.1 below shows sample allocation to each senatorial district.

Table 3.1 Sample Allocation

Senatorial District	Sample selected
Uyo senatorial district	133
Ikot Ekpene senatorial district	133
Eket senatorial district	133
Total	399

3.6 Sources of Data

Data for this study was obtained from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was obtained through a structured questionnaire. The questions are closed-ended, and directed to collect relevant data. The questionnaire is preferable because it is convenient for respondents to fill during their spare time. Secondary sources were information from existing literatures such as relevant textbooks, Journals and periodicals, and library source.

3.7 Methods and Instrument of Data Collection

The questionnaire was the main instrument used for the study. The questionnaire used captures all the variables of study and to provide relevant answers to the research questions. The instrument comprise of sections A, which covers personal information about the respondents and section B covered research questions. The five-point Linkert type of rating scale was adopted as follows: strongly agree = 5, agree = 4; disagree = 3; strongly disagree = 2; undecided= 1;

3.8 Test of Validity and Reliability of Instrument

The validity of the instrument is based on the evident that the questions are related to the research topic and measures what it ought to measure. On the other hand, the reliability of the instrument is based on the premise that the measuring instrument would produce similar result when repeated over and again. The internal consistency of the instrument was determined by Cronbach's Alpha (CA).

Table 3.2: CA result of the variables of the study

Variables	Code	No. of Items	CA values
customer patronage	CUSPAT	4	.767
celebrity fit	CELEFIT	4	.711
celebrity credibility	CELECRE	4	.869
celebrity expertise	CELEXPT	4	.744`

Source: Researcher's Computation (2024)

As shown above, the CA values for all variables are above 0.7, which are considered to be appropriate to adjudge the variables as being reliable. Consequently, based on the above cited past studies, the variables have high reliability and acceptable indicating that the variables used for this study is declared reliable for used for further statistical analysis, the result of which is considered valid and reliable.

3.9 Model Specification

Stated below are the regressions models for testing of the earlier stated research hypotheses:

$$\text{CUSPAT} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{CELEFIT} + u_t \quad (\text{equation 1})$$

$$\text{CUSPAT} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{CELECRE} + u_t \quad (\text{equation 2})$$

$$\text{CUSPAT} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{CELEXPT} + u_t \quad (\text{equation 3})$$

Where;

CUSPAT = marketing performance of Betkings in Akwa Ibom State proxy by customer patronage (Dependent Variable)

CELEFIT = celebrity fit (Independent Variable)

CELECRE = celebrity credibility (Independent Variable)

CELEXPT = celebrity expertise (Independent Variable)

u_t = the stochastic error term.

β_0 is a regression constant while β_1 is the coefficient of the independent variable.

3.11 Method of Data Analysis

The researcher employed tables, simple percentage and descriptive statistics methods to analyse the research questions. However, simple Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression technique was used to test hypotheses in order to show the strength and direction of the relationship between the variables of study. To test the significance of the individual explanatory variables and coefficients to determine whether there is a linear relationship between the independent and dependent variables, we use the p-value to perform the test. If the reported calculated p-value from SPSS regression outputs is less than the benchmark p-value of 0.05 at a scaled 5 percent level of significance, the independent variable is considered to have a linear and positive relationship with the dependent variable, and hence the null hypothesis is rejected.

Operational Definition of Variables and Indicators

1. Purchase interest is the process of planning to purchase a product or service that includes planning, action, and purchase decision. Transactional interest, Referential interest, Preferential interest, Explorative interest.
2. Product completeness refers to the condition or quality of a product that is fully equipped with all components, features, information, or elements necessary to meet customer expectations and achieve intended purposes. Indicators: diversity of products sold, variety of products available, and availability of products in the market.
3. Price is determining the income of a business by determining the critical point decision in the marketing mix. Indicators: Price affordability, Price suitability with quality, Price competitiveness, Price suitability with benefits.
4. Store location includes various marketing activities aimed at facilitating and facilitating the storage and distribution of goods and services from producers to consumers in a particular area. Indicators: access, visibility, traffic, parking, expansion, environment, competition (competitor locations), and government regulations.
5. Promotion is "a communication activity carried out by individuals or companies to the wider community, with the aim of introducing goods, services, brands, or companies, and influencing the community to buy and use these products.". Indicators: Advertising, Sales promotion, Personal selling, Public relations, Direct marketing.

Results and Discussion

4.1 Data Presentation

The data for this study is presented in Appendix I. The data presented contains responses to the items in the questionnaire and the computed data for variables of the study. The data on the items are based on the five-point Likert scale used in scoring the instrument.

4.1.1 Data Presentation of Questionnaire Administered

In this section, the questionnaires administered to the respondents were collected and presented as shown in Table 4.1 below:

Table 4.1: Summary of Questionnaire Administered and Retrieved

Questionnaires	Number of questionnaires	Percentage (%)
Total questionnaires served	399	100
Total questionnaires Returned	398	99.75

Source: Field Survey Data, 2024

Table 4.1 shows that 398 questionnaires were correctly filled and returned. These represent 99.75%, which were used to interpret the results and formed the basis of the analysis.

4.2 Data Analysis

The responses to the various questions on the items measuring each construct are presented and analyzed in this section. As presented in each tables, the responses to the questions on the items measuring research construct or opinions and the analysis is done to know the position of the respondents on each likert scale. This section begins with data analysis of respondents' demographics and physiognomies.

4.2.1 Data Analysis of Respondents' Demographics and Physiognomies

A qualitative research with a blend of survey research design involves the analysis of respondents' demographics and physiognomies such as the subjective opinions of the participants, which is vital to determine the types, nature, class and kinds of persons whose responses were used in the study.

Table 4.2: Distribution of Respondents' Designation

Designation	Frequency	Percent
Valid Uyo senatorial district	133	33.42
Ikot Ekpene senatorial district	133	33.42
Eket senatorial district	132	33.16
Total	398	100.0

Source: Field Survey Data (2024)

Table 4.2 shows that 133 questionnaires representing 33.42% were distributed to Uyo senatorial district, 133 (33.42%) were distributed to Ikot Ekpene, 132(33.16%) were distributed to Eket senatorial district.

Table 4.3: Distribution of Respondents' Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Valid Male	358	89.95
Female	40	10.05
Total	398	100.0

Source: Field Survey Data (2024)

Table 4.3 revealed that 358 respondents representing 89.95% were male, while 40 respondents representing 10.05% were female. This indicates that majority of the respondents were male. This does not presumes the fact that using more male in the

study will in any way affect the analysis and findings of the study. This is because the opinions expressed are highly likely to represent general position or opinion concerning the research issues and not depending on feminine or masculine opinion or position.

Table 4.4: Distribution of Respondents' Age

	Age	Frequency	Percent
Valid	25-30 years	33	8.3
	31-35 years	110	27.6
	36- 40 years	154	38.7
	41 and above years	101	25.4
	Total	398	100.0

Source: Field Survey Data (2024)

Table 4.4 shows that 33 respondents representing 8.3% were aged 25, 30 years, 110 of the respondents representing 27.6% were aged 31-35 years, 154 respondents, representing 38.7% were 36-40 years. Also, 101 of respondents representing 25.4% were aged 41 and above years.

Table 4.5: Distribution of Respondents' Marital status

	Marital status	Frequency	Percent
Valid	Single	212	53.3
	Married	135	33.9
	Divorced	31	7.8
	Widowed	20	5.0
	Total	398	100.0

Source: Field Survey Data (2024)

Table 4.5 revealed that 212 respondents representing 53.3% were single, 135 respondents representing 33.9% were married while 31 respondents representing 7.8% were divorced, and 20 respondents representing (5%) were widow.

Table 4.6: Distribution of Respondents' Highest Educational Qualifications

	HEQ	Frequency	Percent
Valid	FSLC	45	11.3
	SSCE	72	18.1
	OND/NCE	167	42.0
	HND/BSc	89	22.4
	Others	25	6.3
	Total	398	100.0

Source: Field Survey Data (2024)

Table 4.6 indicates that 45 respondents representing 11.3% were holders of FSLC. 72 respondents representing 18.1% were holders of SSCE, 167 respondents representing 42% were holders of OND/NCE while 89 respondents representing 22.4% were holders of HND/BSC. Only 25 respondents representing 6.3% were holders of other qualifications.

Table 4.7: Distribution of Respondents' working experience

	WEX	Frequency	Percent
Valid	0-5 years	45	11.3
	6-10 years	72	18.1
	11-15 years	167	42.0
	16-20 years	89	22.4
	above 21 years	25	6.3

Total	398	100.0
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Source: Field Survey Data (2024)

Table 4.7 shows that 45 respondents representing 11.3% have 0-5 years working experience, 72 respondents representing 18.1% have 6-10 years working experience, 167 respondents representing 42% have 11-15 years working experience while 89 respondents representing 22.4% have 16-20 years working experience and 25 respondents representing 6.3% have above 21 years working experience.

The disparities in respondents' demographics or physiognomies do not presuppose the fact they would in any way affect the analysis and findings of the study. This is because the opinions expressed are highly likely to represent general position or opinion concerning the research issues and not depending or tying to a particular respondent physiognomy.

4.2.2 Data Analysis of Responses to Research Construct

The data presented contains responses to the items in the questionnaire and the computed data for variables of the study. The data on the items are based on the five-point Likert scale used in scoring the instrument. The responses to the various questions on the items measuring each construct are presented and analyzed in this section. As presented in each tables, the responses to the questions on the items measuring research construct or opinions and the analysis is done to know the position of the respondents on each likert scale. The presentation and analysis is done based on the research objectives.

4.2.2.1 Celebrity Fit

The first objective was on the relationship between celebrity fit and customer patronage of Betkings in Akwa Ibom State. This implies that respondents were asked several questions linking celebrity fit to customer patronage. The responses are presented in Table 4.8 and following is the interpretation.

Table 4.8 Analysis of items and research constructs on celebrity fit.

Items and research constructs	SA 5	A 4	N 3	SD 2	D 1
CELEBRITY FIT					
There is a degree of similarity between the endorser and the endorsed product or brand.	127(31.9%)	40(10.1%)	68 (17.1%)	104(26.1%)	59(14.8%)
A well-known athlete is effective when endorsing a sport brand compared to a non-sport brand.	164(41.2%)	68(17.1%)	95(23.9%)	37(9.3%)	34(8.5%)
Celebrity/product fit is thought to function as a key determinant of endorsement effectiveness.	32(8%)	180(45.2%)	116(29.1%)	50(12.6%)	17(4.3%)
The better the celebrity fit, as perceived by consumers, the higher the level of endorsement effectiveness.	36(9%)	70(17.6%)	197(49.5%)	76(19.1%)	19(4.8%)

Source: Field Survey Data, 2024

Table 4.8 shows that 127 respondents representing 31.9% strongly agreed that there is a degree of similarity between the endorser and the endorsed product or brand. Also, it was revealed that 164(41.2%) respondents strongly agreed that a well-known athlete is effective when endorsing a sport brand compared to a non-sport brand. Furthermore, 180(45.2%) respondents agreed that celebrity/product fit is thought to function as a key determinant of endorsement effectiveness. It was also found that 197(49.5%) respondents were neutral to the claim that the better the celebrity fit, as perceived by consumers, the higher the level of endorsement effectiveness. However, these findings are subject to scientific testing and until such test is conducted, it becomes

valid.

4.2.2.2 Celebrity Credibility

The second objective was on the relationship between celebrity credibility and customer patronage of Betkings in Akwa Ibom State. This implies that respondents were asked several questions linking celebrity credibility to customer patronage. The responses are presented in Table 4.9 and following is the interpretation.

Table 4.9 Analysis of items and research constructs on celebrity credibility.

Items and research constructs	SA 5	A 4	N 3	SD 2	D 1
CELEBRITY CREDIBILITY					
Perceived credibility of the product endorser is one of the factors that influence customer buying behaviour.	100(25.1%)	117(29.4%)	114(28.6%)	45(11.3%)	22(5.5%)
Credibility determines how the advertising information would impact the receiver in terms of the communicated message	57(14.3%)	96(24.1%)	110(27.6%)	99(24.9%)	36(9%)
The effectiveness of celebrity endorsers depends mostly on perceived credibility	166(41.7%)	95(23.9%)	83(20.9%)	47(11.8%)	7(1.8%)
Consumers place in a communicator's intent to convey the assertions s/he considers most valid. Favorable disposition, acceptance, psychological safety and perceived supportive climate are favorable consequences of credibility on celebrity.	191(48%)	72(18.1%)	77(19.3%)	36(9%)	22(5.5%)

Source: Field Survey Data, 2024

Table 4.9 shows that 117 respondents representing 29.4% agreed that perceived credibility of the product endorser is one of the factors that influence customer buying behaviour. Also, it was revealed that 57(14.3%) and 96(24.1%) respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively that credibility determines how the advertising information would impact the receiver in terms of the communicated message. Furthermore, 166(41.7%) respondents strongly agreed that the effectiveness of celebrity endorsers depends mostly on perceived credibility. It was also found that 191(48%) respondents strongly agreed to the claim that consumers place in a communicator's intent to convey the assertions s/he considers most valid. Favorable disposition, acceptance, psychological safety and perceived supportive climate are favorable consequences of credibility on celebrity.

4.2.2.3 Celebrity Expertise

The third objective was on the influence of celebrity expertise on customer patronage of Betkings in Akwa Ibom State. This implies that respondents were asked several questions linking celebrity expertise to customer patronage. The responses are presented in Table 4.10 and following is the interpretation.

Table 4.10 Analysis of items and research constructs on celebrity expertise.

Items and research constructs	SA 5	A 4	N 3	SD 2	D 1
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CELEBRITY EXPERTISE					
Celebrity expertise relates to the skill, experience and knowledge of the celebrity to endorse or recommend the product to the public.	71(17.8%)	112(28.1%)	118 (29.6%)	90 (22.6%)	7(1.8%)
Persuasive endorsers tend to have higher degree of expertise	178(44.7%)	88(22.1%)	99(24.9%)	19(4.8%)	14(3.5%)
The level of perceived celebrity expertise predicts celebrity endorser effectiveness.	73(18.3%)	165(41.5%)	117(29.4%)	27(6.8%)	16(4%)
Celebrity endorser's expertise is a true sign of professionalism and has encouraging effect on receiver's patronage	53(13.3%)	75(18.8%)	165(41.5%)	78 (19.6%)	27(6.8%)

Source: Field Survey Data, 2024

Table 4.10 shows that 71 respondents representing 17.8% and 112(28.1%) respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively that, celebrity expertise relates to the skill, experience and knowledge of the celebrity to endorse or recommend the product to the public. Also, it was revealed that 178(44.7%) respondents strongly agreed that persuasive endorsers tend to have higher degree of expertise. Furthermore, 165(41.5%) respondents agreed that the level of perceived celebrity expertise predicts celebrity endorser effectiveness. It was also found that 165(41.5%) respondents were neutral to the claim that celebrity endorser's expertise is a true sign of professionalism and has encouraging effect on receiver's patronage. These findings are subject to scientific testing and until such test is conducted, it becomes valid.

4.2.3 Descriptive Statistics Analysis

This analysis is conducted to assess the descriptive properties of the research variables in order to ascertain if the data possess requisite characteristics for statistical analysis. These analyses involve descriptive statistics such as the mean, standard deviation, minimum, maximum as well as skewness and kurtosis. These statistics discloses the characteristics of the research variables principally in terms of variance or closeness of the data points to the mean. The ultimate is to determine the degree of variability of the data away from the mean. A high variability indicates high degree of variance and high potential of non-normality of the data thus leading to unreliable estimate. It is desired that the dataset has low level of variability and normally distributed.

Table 4.13. Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
CELEFIT	398	1.00	4.75	3.5578	.60262	-.909	.122	1.144	.244

CELECRE	398	1.4285	4.5714	3.3862	.56704	-.640	.122	.289	.244
CELEXPT	398	1.2	4.8	3.478	.6859	-.345	.122	.233	.244
CUSPAT	398	1.50	5.00	3.4259	.82402	-.052	.122	-.578	.244
Valid N (listwise)	398								

Table 4.13 shows that since the standard deviation values were less than the calculated mean values, it indicates there was a low disparity in variables since the standard deviation values were clustered below the means values. This indicates that the effect of celebrity characteristics dimensions on customer patronage was minimal at 34.25%.

4.2.4 Table 4.14: Bivariate Correlations and Test-retest Reliability Analyses

		CUSPAT	CELEFIT	CELECRE	CELEXPT
CUSPAT	Pearson Correlation	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
	N	398			
CELEFIT	Pearson Correlation	.726**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000			
	N	398	398		
CELECRE	Pearson Correlation	.750**	.776**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		
	N	398	398	398	
CELEXPT	Pearson Correlation	.722**	.891**	.266**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	398	398	398	398

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

From the above table, the correlation coefficients of the study variables were above 0.70 indicating a strong correlation among the variables. Also, the Pearson Correlation is the test-retest reliability coefficient, the Sig. (2 tailed) is the p-value that is interpreted, and the N is the number of observations that were correlated. If the p-value is less than 0.05 and the Pearson correlation coefficient is above 0.7, then there is evidence of test –retest reliability. The above table shows that all the Pearson correlation coefficients were above 0.7 and their p-vales were less than 0.05 indicating that there is evidence of test –retest reliability.

4.3 Test of Hypotheses

The regression technique was performed to test the hypotheses.

Table 4.15: Multiple Regression Results

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.901 ^a	.811	.808	.26401	1.682

a. Predictors: (Constant), CELEFIT, CELECRE, CELEXPT

b. Dependent Variable: CUSPAT

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	116.987	7	16.712	239.765	.000 ^b
	Residual	27.184	390	.070		
	Total	144.171	397			

a. Dependent Variable: CUSPAT

b. Predictors: (Constant), CELEFIT, CELECRE, CELEXPT

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.491	.104		4.731	.000
CELEFIT	2.269	.155	2.135	14.653	.000
CELECRE	1.516	.100	1.725	15.163	.000
CELEXPT	1.659	.074	1.684	22.568	.000

Residuals Statistics^a

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted Value	1.5644	4.7397	3.5578	.54284	398
Residual	-.97454	.71898	.00000	.26168	398
Std. Predicted Value	-3.672	2.177	.000	1.000	398
Std. Residual	-3.691	2.723	.000	.991	398

Source: Econometric SPSS outputs, 2024

Decision Rule: 5% level of significance

4.4.1 Test of Hypothesis I

The first hypothesis (Ho1) was that: "There is no significant relationship between celebrity fit and customer patronage of Betkings in Akwa Ibom State". This hypothesis was tested using regression statistics and the results are presented in Table 4.15. The test of the null hypothesis (H0) against the alternate hypothesis (H1) is that H0 is rejected if the calculated p- value is less than the p-value of 0.05. From Table 4.15, since the calculated p-value of 0.000 is less than the p-value of 0.05, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis and accepted the alternative hypothesis, which states that there is a significant relationship between celebrity fit and customer patronage of Betkings in Akwa Ibom State. A coefficient of 2.269 implies that celebrity fit has a positive relationship with customer patronage. It was found, on average that for every 1% change in celebrity fit, customer patronage will increase by about 2.27%, and this change is significant at 5% level ($p=0.000 < 0.005$). In quantitative perspective, as indicated by the t-value of 14.653, this would mean that celebrity fit has about 14.7% statistical influence on customer patronage. The marketing implication of the result is that improvement in

customer patronage of Betkings in Akwa Ibom State can be achieved if the celebrity fit is sustained.

4.4.2 Test of Hypothesis II

The second hypothesis (Ho2) was that: "There is no significant relationship between celebrity credibility and customer patronage of Betkings in Akwa Ibom State". This hypothesis was tested using regression statistics and the results are presented in Table 4.15. The test of the null hypothesis (H0) against the alternate hypothesis (H1) is that H0 is rejected if the calculated p- value is less than the p-value of 0.05. From Table 4.15, since the calculated p-value of 0.000 is less than the p-value of 0.05, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis and accepted the alternative hypothesis, which states that there is a significant relationship between celebrity credibility and customer patronage of Betkings in Akwa Ibom State. A coefficient of 1.516 implies that celebrity credibility has a positive relationship with customer patronage. It was found, on average that for every 1% change in celebrity credibility, customer patronage will increase by about 1.52%, and this change is significant at 5% level ($p=0.000<0.05$). In quantitative perspective, as indicated by the t-value of 15.163, this would mean that celebrity credibility has about 15.2% statistical influence on customer patronage. The marketing implication of the result is that improvement in customer patronage can be achieved if the celebrity credibility is sustained in Betkings in Akwa Ibom State.

4.4.3 Test of Hypothesis III

The third hypothesis (Ho3) was that: "There is no significant relationship between celebrity expertise and customer patronage of Betkings in Akwa Ibom State". This hypothesis was tested using regression statistics and the results are presented in Table 4.15. The test of the null hypothesis (H0) against the alternate hypothesis (H1) is that H0 is rejected if the calculated p- value is less than the p-value of 0.05. From Table 4.15, since the calculated p-value of 0.000 is less than the p-value of 0.05, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis and accepted the alternative hypothesis, which states that there is a significant relationship between celebrity expertise and customer patronage of Betkings in Akwa Ibom State. A coefficient of 1.659 implies that celebrity expertise has a positive relationship with customer patronage. It was found, on average that for every 1% change in celebrity expertise, customer patronage will increase by about 1.66%, and this change is significant at 5% level ($p=0.000<0.05$). In quantitative perspective, as indicated by the t-value of 22.568, this would mean that celebrity expertise has about 22.57% statistical influence on customer patronage. The marketing implication of the result is that improvement in customer patronage can be achieved if the celebrity expertise is sustained in Betkings in Akwa Ibom State.

4.4 Discussion of the Findings

The empirical results obtained from the test of five hypotheses revealed consistent results. The results showed that there is a significant relationship between celebrity fit and customer patronage of Betkings in Akwa Ibom State. This implies that consumers tend to increase their patronage of a product or brand whose features matches with the physical appearance or features of the endorser. This is consistent with the Match-Up theory which suggests that when the attributes of the celebrity endorser match with the features of the endorsed products or brand, consumers tend to increase their patronage. This also agrees with results of many empirical studies including Koernig and Boyd (2009) who find that a well-known athlete is effective when endorsing a sport brand compared to a non-sport brand.

Further results showed that there is a significant relationship between celebrity credibility and customer patronage of Betkings in Akwa Ibom State. This is consistent with the source credibility theory of Hovland, Janis and Kelly (1951) which states that people tend to be persuaded if the information is perceived to come from a credible

source. In other words, celebrities who are perceived to be highly credible generate more behavioural compliance than less credible sources. This finding agrees with findings of Ibok (2013) and ZorBari-Nwitambu and Kalu (2017) that effectiveness of celebrity endorsers depend mostly on perceived expertise and credibility of the celebrity endorser.

It was found that there is a significant relationship between celebrity expertise and customer patronage of Betkings in Akwa Ibom State. This finding is backed up by the source credibility theory which suggests that the efficacy of the message communicated by an endorser depends on consumers' perception of the brand endorser's expertise among other qualities (Amos, Holmes & Strutton, 2008). The endorser's expertise is akin to the source's qualification, which directly influences the level of conviction in order to persuade consumers to purchase that which is endorsed. Expertise has a positive influence on both new customers that are acquired and the timeliness of sales, as we have seen in this study. When a consumer perceives that a celebrity endorser has a high level of expertise, he or she is more likely to be persuaded by the message (Speck et al., 1988; Ohanian, 1991; Amos et al., 2008). Therefore, a celebrity with high expertise is assumed to be more persuasive (Ohanian, 1991; Erdogan, 1999) than a celebrity with low levels of perceived expertise.

Conclusions

This study examined the relationship between celebrity characteristics and customer patronage of Betkings in Akwa Ibom State. It was found that all the independent variables significantly influenced the dependent variable. By implications, every celebrity through his/her activities creates an impression on his/her fans which could be positive or negative. In Betkings, the impression created by celebrity characteristics is positive thereby sustaining customer patronage and marketing performance. Based on the findings, it is concluded that there is positive and significant relationship between celebrity characteristics and customer patronage of Betkings in Akwa Ibom State.

Suggestion

1. Betkings should scrutinize the credibility of the endorsed celebrity because credibility determines how the advertising information would impact the customers in terms of the communicated message.
2. There is need to checkmate celebrity fit because when the attributes of the celebrity endorser match with the product features, consumers tend to increase their patronage.
3. Betkings should examine the skill, experience and knowledge of the celebrity to endorse or recommend the product to the public because customers' actions in response to such recommendations seem to vary directly with the celebrity's perceived level of expertise and the target customers' level of agreement with those recommendations

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