

# **STRATEGIC MARKETING DIMENSIONS THROUGH CELEBRITY'S CREDIBILITY ON CONSUMER PURCHASE INTENTION OF PUBLIC UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

**Purpose of the Study:** This study examined the effect of celebrity credibility on consumer purchase intentions among public university students in Western Kenya, focusing on Ariel detergent. Problem Statement: Despite the widespread use of celebrity endorsements in Kenya by brands such as Harpic, Molfix, and Ariel, many companies still experience inconsistent consumer responses.

**Methodology:** The study adopted a descriptive research design targeting 57,715 students from Maseno, Masinde Muliro, and Kibabii Universities. A sample of 397 students was selected using Yamane's formula, with additional input from three Ariel merchandisers in Kakamega, Bungoma, and Kisumu. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and interviews. Reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha = 0.72$ ), and validity was confirmed through KMO and Bartlett's tests. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, including Pearson correlation and linear regression at a 0.05 significance level.

**Results and Discussion:** Findings revealed a strong positive relationship between celebrity credibility and consumer purchase intention ( $r = 0.866$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Regression analysis showed that credibility accounted for 75% of the variation in purchase intention ( $R^2 = 0.750$ ;  $\beta = 0.850$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). Respondents emphasized that honest, skilled, and trustworthy celebrities enhanced their willingness to buy Ariel detergent. Merchandisers further confirmed that sales performance often improved when the endorsing celebrity exhibited moral integrity and professionalism.

**Conclusion:** Celebrity credibility significantly influences consumer purchase intentions. Trustworthy and reliable endorsers build consumer confidence, while negative public perceptions reduce product trust and desirability.

**Recommendation:** Marketers should select credible, ethical, and relatable celebrities aligned with brand values. Regulatory bodies should guide endorsement ethics, and future studies should explore how credibility interacts with other marketing factors such as brand loyalty and pricing.

**Keywords:** *Strategic Marketing, Dimensions, Celebrity's Credibility, Consumer Purchase, Intention, Public University Students*

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## **BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

Marketers strive to enhance consumer perception and likability of their brands, requiring advanced communication strategies in a competitive, media-driven environment (Malik & Qureshi, 2016). Traditional advertising often fails to capture attention, prompting a shift toward more engaging tactics like celebrity endorsement, a widely used strategy across countries 10–25% in the U.S., 21% in the U.K., and 70% in Japan (Belch & Belch, 2013; Pringle & Binet, 2005; Kilburn, 1998). The AIDA model (Strong, 1925) emphasizes influencing consumer behavior, aligning with findings that celebrity endorsers effectively attract attention (Sheth & Solanki, 2015). According to the Elaboration Likelihood Model, persuasive messages can change attitudes, especially when consumers associate the celebrity with the product (Jamil & Hassan, 2014). However, some studies show mixed results (Omar & Ariffin, 2019). In Zimbabwe, Shenje (2016) found celebrity endorsement positively impacts purchase intention, especially among youth, with strong correlations between brand ambassador traits and buying decisions.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Global brands like Nike, Gucci, and Chanel, as well as Kenyan companies, increasingly use celebrity endorsements to attract consumers and differentiate their products (Arora & Sahu, 2013). In Kenya, endorsements by figures such as Celina (Harpic), Terryanne Chebet (Molfix), and Mercy Masika (Ariel) are common. However, despite this trend, some companies still rely on alternative marketing strategies, suggesting that celebrity endorsements alone may not guarantee increased sales or consumer trust. A major concern is the credibility of the celebrity, mere fame does not always lead to persuasion or purchase, particularly if the endorser lacks trustworthiness, expertise, or relevance to the product. Among youth and university students, who are especially critical and influenced by peer opinions, the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements may vary. While companies like Procter & Gamble have combined celebrity appeal with broader campaigns, the exact role of credibility attributes such as trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and product fit remain underexplored. Few studies have focused on how these factors influence purchase intentions among public university students in Western Kenya. This study, therefore, aimed to fill this gap by assessing how celebrity credibility affects purchase decisions, using Ariel detergent as a case study.

## **THEORETICAL REVIEW**

This social psychology model was proposed by Howland, Janis and Kelly (1953). It stipulates that a celebrity's affirmative traits could influence consumers purchase decision (Ohanian, 1991). This model says that celebrity credibility is an essential determinant in purchase decisions since a celebrity's skills and trust are important in influencing buyer intentions. (Howland, 1953; Ohanian, 1991). The theory further found the celebrity message to be crucial in changing positively the buyer intentions. Internalization happens when the brand ambassadors' message is accepted by targeted consumers (Erdogan, 1999).

Credibility can be measured by expertise and trustworthiness. These characteristics are important for an endorser to be accepted by the consumers. Belch and Belch (2004) stipulates that credibility is about how a consumer perceives the brand endorser. Trustworthiness is the consumers extend of willingness to buy in and believe the source message (Ohanian, 1991). Marketers consider these traits before engaging a brand ambassador with similar traits (Shimp 2000). The challenge is with the youth who are familiar with the fact that even celebrities endorse product for pay (Baxter, Illicit & Kulczynski, 2014). They see themselves as abet for the producers at the again of the ambassador. Trustworthiness can only be assured when the brand ambassadors shares something personal with the brand. However, in most cases it's only for commercial peruses and fame. Goldsmith (2000) in a study states that source credibility is not relevant to celebrity trustworthiness and is rarely considered. This model anchors the variables on brand ambassadors' endorsement specifically trustworthiness and skills.

## **EMPIRICAL REVIEW**

### **Consumers' Purchase Intentions**

Consumer purchase intention refers to the likelihood or willingness of a customer to buy a product, influenced by both internal desires and external factors (Kotler & Keller, 2006; Porter, 1974). While individual preference plays a role, market forces, advertising, and social influence significantly shape these intentions. Firms leverage brand ambassadors to enhance product image and drive consumer loyalty (Padamsee, 2009). Dodds et al. (1991) define intention as a consumer's readiness to purchase, while Schiffman and Kanuk (2007) describe it as the resolve shown before making a purchase for satisfaction. Kotler, (2003) noted that advertising affects consumer attitudes

toward brands, and Smith & Taylor (2004) added that consumers are willing to sacrifice more for products they perceive as valuable. Similarly, in China, affluent consumers showed a preference for foreign brands due to the value attached via marketing (Wang et al., 2004). Kendall and Sproles (1986) emphasized the intellectual nature of purchase intention, while Assael (1992) warned that poor decisions can lead to dissatisfaction and financial loss.

Celebrity endorsement is a popular strategy to enhance brand recognition and credibility. In the U.S., 14–19% of ads feature celebrities, with companies like Nike spending over \$475 million annually on athlete endorsements. A single announcement of a celebrity partnership can raise stock prices and boost sales by around 4% (Marketwatch). For example, Chanel's global perfume sales increased by 30% after hiring Nicole Kidman in 2003. When Nike signed Tiger Woods in 2000, market share rose from 0.9% to 4% in six months though the brand later lost \$1.7 million in sales after his personal scandal. Michoma (2019) studied celebrity endorsements among cosmetic retailers in Nairobi and found a strong link between endorsements and customer attraction. However, other factors like price, product quality, and quantity also played key roles in shaping consumer perception. These findings indicate that while celebrity endorsements can significantly influence buying decisions, their effectiveness depends on broader marketing strategies and consumer evaluation of value.

### **Credibility of the Celebrity and Consumer Purchase Intention**

Celebrity credibility refers to the level of trust and belief consumers place in an endorser. According to Khan et al. (2016), people are more likely to believe and follow individuals they trust or perceive as experienced. Samat et al. (2016) argue that a celebrity's credibility significantly shapes customer perception and, ultimately, purchase intentions. Marketers consider traits like trustworthiness, expertise, and honesty when selecting celebrity endorsers. Erdogan (1999) states that endorser credibility stems from multiple sources and plays a key role in shaping buying intentions while minimizing negative publicity. Apeyoje (2013) emphasizes that credibility and honesty are critical for endorser acceptance. The source credibility model (Anoh & Hamad, 2015) suggests consumers may rely more on the endorser than the product's actual qualities.

Sallam and Abdelfattah (2017) found that trust, perceived authority, and involvement are major determinants of credibility's impact on purchase intention. Credibility can even win back

dissatisfied customers. However, highly involved or authoritative consumers require more credible endorsers, while less involved ones may be swayed by any familiar face. Atkins and Block (1983) found that consumers rate ads with trusted personalities higher than others. Marketers are advised to prioritize credibility in selecting brand ambassadors to avoid backlash or mistrust. While celebrity endorsements can attract consumers, especially fanatics, their effectiveness hinges on the perceived trustworthiness and relevance of the endorser to the product. A credible endorser can be a powerful tool in shaping consumer behavior and building long-term brand loyalty.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted a descriptive research design as outlined by Mugenda and Mugenda (2006) to obtain data on the existing status of celebrity endorsement and its influence on consumer purchase intentions. This design was appropriate because it enabled the researcher to collect quantitative data that described the relationship between celebrity credibility and purchasing behavior among public university students in Western Kenya. Descriptive surveys are particularly useful in explaining social phenomena that have already occurred and allow for detailed analysis of variables, making them suitable for this study (Punch & Oancea, 2014; Mertler, 2019). The target population comprised 57,715 students drawn from Maseno University, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, and Kibabii University, representing the main public universities in the region. To supplement these data, three Ariel detergent merchandisers one from each town near the universities (Kakamega, Bungoma, and Maseno) were engaged as key informants to provide industry insights on celebrity endorsement and product sales performance.

Using Yamane's (1967) sample size determination formula, a representative sample of 397 respondents was derived, distributed proportionately across the three universities: 172 from Masinde Muliro University, 81 from Kibabii University, and 144 from Maseno University. Stratified simple random sampling ensured proportional representation of student groups, while purposive sampling identified the merchandisers. Data were gathered through structured questionnaires containing both closed and open-ended questions. Closed-ended items utilized a five-point Likert scale to capture levels of agreement on issues related to celebrity trustworthiness, expertise, and reliability, while open-ended questions provided qualitative elaboration and verification of responses (Gupta et al., 2011). The questionnaire consisted of five sections—one capturing demographic data and the remaining four addressing the key constructs of the conceptual

framework. The internal consistency of the research instrument was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, where coefficients between 0.6 and 0.9 were considered acceptable for reliability (Gill et al., 2020). Construct validity was assessed through the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity to confirm sampling adequacy and inter-item correlation (Engellant et al., 2016).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Out of the 397 questionnaires distributed to students from Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Kibabii University, and Maseno University, 370 were correctly completed and returned, representing a high response rate of 93%, which exceeds Zikmund's (2010) recommended threshold for generalizability. Additionally, all three targeted Ariel detergent merchandisers from Kakamega, Bungoma, and Luanda towns participated in the interviews, ensuring comprehensive coverage of both consumer and market perspectives. The majority of respondents were male (65%) and aged between 26 and 35 years, indicating a mature and knowledgeable sample. Most participants (59%) held undergraduate degrees, while the remainder had diploma-level qualifications, confirming adequate literacy for reliable responses. The demographic composition reflected a balanced representation across universities and genders, ensuring credibility and dependability of the data collected for this study.

## **DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS**

This section presents the descriptive statistics for the study variables, focusing on the dependent variable consumer purchase intention and the independent variables, which include gender of the celebrity, credibility, attractiveness, and multiple celebrity endorsement. The purpose was to assess how respondents from public universities in Western Kenya perceived these factors in relation to their purchase intention of Ariel detergent. Specifically, the analysis examined the credibility of the celebrity endorser to determine whether traits such as honesty, reliability, sincerity, and expertise influenced students' likelihood to purchase the product. The descriptive results are summarized in the table below.

**Table 1: Descriptive Analysis for Credibility of the Selected Celebrity**

Statement	SD	D	U	A	SA
Honest	12 (3%)	18 (5%)	41 (11%)	189 (51%)	110 (30%)
Reliable	6 (2%)	101 (27%)	94 (25%)	63 (17%)	106 (29%)
Sincere	19 (5%)	22 (6%)	45 (12%)	171 (46%)	113 (31%)
Trustworthy	22 (6%)	15 (4%)	139 (38%)	148 (40%)	46 (12%)
Expert	14 (4%)	16 (4%)	122 (33%)	129 (35%)	89 (24%)
Skilled	8 (2%)	20 (5%)	132 (36%)	68 (18%)	142 (38%)
Dependable	13 (4%)	96 (26%)	105 (28%)	85 (23%)	71 (19%)
Experienced	5 (1%)	112 (30%)	58 (16%)	60 (16%)	135 (36%)
Knowledgeable	92 (25%)	36 (10%)	125 (34%)	52 (14%)	65 (18%)
Qualified	15 (4%)	171 (46%)	45 (12%)	88 (24%)	51 (14%)
Average Level of Credibility of Celebrity	Mean = 3.5203 (70%)	Std. Dev. = 0.72054	Std. Error = 0.03746	Min = 1.00	Max = 5.00

**CORRELATION ANALYSIS**

The study utilized correlation analysis, in specific Pearson moment correlation (r) to evaluate the strength as well as direction of the relationship among celebrity endorsement (Credibility and Attractiveness of the Celebrity) and Consumer Purchase Intention among public university students in Western, Kenya. According to (Gravetter *et. al*, 2000), the correlation coefficient r ranges from +1 to -1; a coefficient,  $|r| < 0.1$  indicating an insignificant relationship,  $0.1 \leq |r| < 0.3$  indicates a weak association,  $0.3 \leq |r| < 0.5$  indicates a moderate association, and  $|r| \geq 0.5$  implies a strong association. Table 4.16 summarizes the findings.

**Table 2: Correlation Matrix**

	Consumer Purchase Intentions	Gender of Celebrity	Credibility of the Celebrity
Credibility of the Celebrity	Pearson Correlation .866**	.559**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed) .000	.000	
	N 370	370	370

The table shows that there was strong positive correlation between Consumer Purchase. Intentions as well as celebrity endorsement variables (Credibility of the Celebrity) among public university students in Western, Kenya as indicated by;  $r = 0.866$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.000 < 0.05$ ).

### REGRESSION ANALYSIS

The study utilized simple linear regression analysis for the study hypothesis testing, that is examining the significance of the casual and effect relationship between celebrity endorsement (Credibility) and Consumer Purchase Intention among public university students in Western, Kenya. Multiple linear regression was utilized in determination of the partial influence of independent variables to the dependent variable and thus able to strength of the celebrity endorsements) in influencing Consumer Purchase Intention among public university students in Western, Kenya.

**Table 3: Linear Regression Analysis for Credibility of Celebrities and Consumer Purchase Intentions**

Model Summary					
Model	r	r-square	Adjusted r-square	Std. Error of the Estimate	
1	.866 <sup>a</sup>	.750	.749	.35443	

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p-value
1	Regression	138.480	1	138.480	1102.381	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	46.228	368	.126		
	Total	184.708	369			

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients	t	p-value
1	(Constant)	.443	.092		4.816	.000
	<i>Credibility of Celebrity</i>	.850	.026	.866	33.202	.000

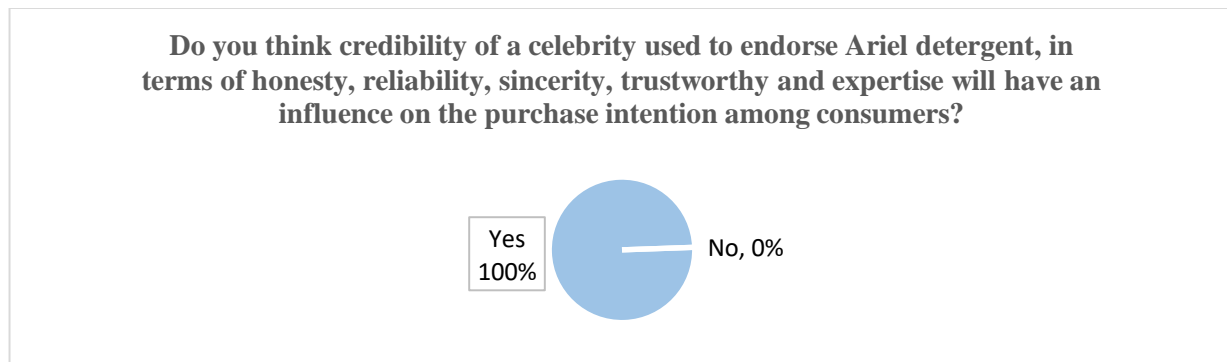
*a. Dependent Variable: Consumer Purchase Intentions*

The  $F(1, 368) = 1102.381$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.000 < 0.05$  ANOVA test discoveries in the table exhibit that the simple linear regression model was an excellent match to the dataset. The model (Credibility of the Celebrity) managed to clarify 75% of the variation in Consumer Purchase Intention of public university students Western, Kenya as exhibited by the  $r\text{-square} = 0.750$  as depicted table 4.18's model summary. The regression Coefficient discoveries exhibited that the

credibility of celebrity unstandardized beta coefficient was significant;  $\beta = 0.850$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.000 < 0.05$ ; therefore, the research rejected the null hypothesis and resolved that Credibility of Celebrity has a statistically significant influence on the Consumer Purchase Intention of Public University Students Western, Kenya. Credibility of Celebrity had a positive standardized beta coefficient = 0.866 as exhibited in the table 's coefficients outcomes; this pointed out that a unit increase in the Celebrity's Credibility was probable to cause an improvement in the Consumer Purchase Intentions of University Students in Western Kenya by 86.6%. To predict the Consumer Purchase Intention of Public University Students Western, Kenya when given the Credibility of Celebrity level, the following model is proposed by the study;

$$\text{Consumer Purchase Intentions} = 0.443 + 0.850 \text{ Credibility of Celebrity}$$

The empirical findings were supported by key informants who concurred that celebrity credibility had a significant influence on the Ariel detergent consumer purchase intentions as indicated by 100% response in support as shown in figure 4.12 below.



**Figure 1: Credibility of Celebrity and its Influence on Customer Purchase Intentions**

The explanation given by the key informants suggested that sales of Ariel detergent in the market also relies on the celebrity's credibility used to advertise the product on the market as indicated in the quote below:

*.... the sales of Ariel detergent and any other product always contingent on the celebrity credibility used to advertise the product. If the celebrity is known to the target customers to have bad behavior, untrustworthy, unreliable among other credibility traits, then the customers will not also trust the product as it is fronted by an untrustworthy person.*

The findings compliment the findings of a study by Apeyoje (2013) who found out that it is important that celebrity endorsers are superbly honest and credible to earn trust from their followers. Celebrity credibility has the capacity to draw consumers more than any other feature of the product. Trust issues are hard to earn and easy to lose so marketers must give this a sure consideration before making that final decision. Also, Credibility has the ability to influence even customers who were disappointed and still draw them back, however, fanatics can easily be attracted with even a lesser credible source (Sallam & Abdelfattah, 2017). Customers with high influence on the organization producing the products will use their influence to determine many aspects of the value chain including the celebrity to be the brand ambassador.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study concludes that credibility of celebrity had a significant strong positive effect on customer purchase intentions. That if the celebrity is known to the target customers to have bad behavior, untrustworthy, unreliable among other credibility traits, then the customers will not also trust the advertisement message and in the end the product as it is fronted by untrustworthy person. In general, the study concludes that credibility had significant influence on the customer purchase intentions.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study recommends that brands and marketers ought to consider the credibility of a celebrity before engaging them to endorse their products. That their behavior, trust and reliability are key in determining whether or not customers watching an advert promoted by the celebrity would be influenced to buy the product.

## **Contribution of the Study**

This study contributes to academic discourse in terms of giving insights on the various attributes that might work to influence consumer purchase intentions. It also contributes to study in terms of which attributes have higher influence when using celebrities to endorse products and services. Academic debates and discussions in what circumstances should firms and companies consider engaging celebrities to promote their products.

## Suggestions for Further Studies

Future studies should therefore consider exploring these other factors not covered in this study that significantly influence customer purchase intentions. Future studies should also consider carrying out such a comprehensive study across many items, which may be more beneficial to this field of research.

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