

Celebrity Selection Strategies in the Automobile Industry A Review of Related Literature

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Abstract

Practitioners continually face the difficulty of strategically executing their marketing communications in order to draw consumer attention and influence consumer judgments. One of the strategies among the barrage of options proposed to companies yearning to achieve competitive edge is these companies careful and tactical use of marcoms activities such as strategic advertising to promote both corporate and brands image. This paper seeks to assess Celebrity Selection Strategies as effective Marketing Communications tool in the Automobile industry. The specific activities to be carried out in the process of this current study are: To identify effective strategic options to be adopted by automakers and their ad agencies to select celebrities to endorse their products or brands; explore strategic options automakers adopt to achieve the right “congruence” or “fit” between the endorsed brands and the celebrity endorsers; identify how automakers gain sales’ benefits through the adoption of celebrity endorsement to promote their products or brands; determine potential risks associated with celebrity endorsements, and their effects on the entire endorsement contracts signed by automakers and explore strategic options automakers adopt to reduce the risks associated with celebrity endorsements. Both theoretical and empirical literature are reviewed. Conclusions are drawn based on the findings.

Keywords: Celebrity, celebrity endorsement, celebrity selection strategies, automobile products or brands, Ghana, Nigeria, France, Germany.

1. Introduction

1.1 Definitions of Celebrity

An early definition of celebrity endorser is provided by Freiden (1984) to include those "well-known individuals who are directly associated with the product category being advertised" (p. 33). McCracken (1989) defines celebrity endorser to mean "any individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement" (p. 310). Schlecht, (2003) advanced the previous definitions and tout that celebrities are people who enjoy public recognition by a large share of a certain group of people whereas attributes like attractiveness, extraordinary lifestyle are just examples and specific common characteristics cannot be observed though it can be said that within a corresponding social group celebrities generally differ from the social norm and enjoy a high degree of public awareness. It is clear from the foregoing discussions that most celebrities attract high level of attention and recognition from a cross section of the public while performing their professions as entertainers, sports personalities, politicians, business executives, religious personalities, academicians, journalists and the likes.

1.2 Celebrity Endorsement

Celebrity Endorsement is the use of a well-known person to promote a company or product or brand” (Pickton & Broderick, 2004: 56). The definition of Pickton and Broderick (2004) is limited and debatable in a sense that it falls short of certain admirable qualities. The reason is the fact that a person is well-known in the public eye does not qualify the fellow as an ideal candidate to promote brands. The preferred candidate must possess certain appropriate attributes that should match with the attributes of the brand positioned in the minds of the target markets. However, the work of (Okonkwo, 2006) tries to give further explanation to certain attributes that celebrities should possess to make them as endorsers. Thus, according to the author, the concept or the theory of Celebrity Endorsement works where a successful, wealthy, and distinctive celebrity transfers his /or her personality and status – directly to the brand. Though an explanation has been made but it can be strongly disagreed that not all cases would suffice for successful, wealthy, and distinctive celebrities to succeed in transferring their personality and status to the brand directly. The current researcher shares similar view with the above authorities that celebrity endorsement is considered as an effective and more efficient marketing strategy where popular personalities who have achieved a lot of feats in their profession as athletes, models, entertainers, actors or actresses, business personalities, politicians or religious leaders.

2.0 Celebrities’ Selection Strategies

2.3.1 Selecting Celebrities for Endorsement using the “Source Factors”

The Source Factors are divided into three main types: Source Credibility, Source Attractiveness and Source

Power.

2.3.1.1 Source Credibility

Credibility is the extent to which the receiver sees the source as having relevant knowledge, skills, experience and trust to give unbiased and objective information. Source credibility is used to imply a communicator's positive characteristics that will affect the receiver's acceptance of a message (Ohannian, 1990 p.41). Hovland, Janis & Kelley (1953) propose that expertise and trustworthiness (also referred to as reputation) are the essential factors that would influence consumers' perceived credibility of a message as described in detail below:

2.3.1.1.1 Expertise

Expertise is defined as the extent to which a communicator is perceived to be a source of valid assertions. It refers to the authoritativeness, competence, qualifications, knowledge, experience or skills possessed by an endorser in a particular product or service endorsement (Belch & Belch, 2001). Furthermore, Ohannian, (1990) states that the perceived expertise of celebrity endorsers is more important in explaining purchase intentions rather than their attractiveness and trustworthiness. The author argued that celebrity endorsers are more effective when they are knowledgeable, experienced, and qualified to talk about the product they are endorsing. In this wise, expertise imply the extent to which an endorser that is, the celebrity is perceived to be an expert of the endorsed product or has the ability as a source to make statements that are considered highly trustful.

2.3.1.1.2 Trustworthiness

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

2.3.1.2 Source Attractiveness

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

2.3.1.2 .1 Similarity

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

2.3.1.2 .2 Familiarity

According to Belch and Belch (2001) familiarity can be considered as the level of knowledge a celebrity possesses of a brand. When a company considers choosing a celebrity for their advertising campaign, they need to analyse the previous knowledge a celebrity has since he /she will utilize such knowledge in the exposure phase of the promotion of the product or brand. The perspective of Belch & Belch (2001) on familiarity of a celebrity with regards to having exposure is contentious. It would have been more appropriate if the authors would have explain further the actual marketing or promotional actions celebrities should engage in before they can be said to have acquired knowledge through exposure of the brand.

2.3.1.2 .3 Likability

Likability refers to affection for the source as a result of the source's physical appearance and behaviour.

Marketers have an important function when choosing which celebrity to use in their advertising campaign. Basically, these celebrities need to be admired or least well known in the public eye (Belch and Belch, 2001). Furthermore, celebrities have to be popular in the market and have certain characteristics that are extravagant. This can be a problem for the company when a celebrity might be associated with negative information. In the field of celebrity endorsement, it needs to be stressed that attractiveness goes beyond physical attractiveness. Endrogon, (1999) made a bold attempt to catalogue a number of virtuous characteristics that are expected to be possessed by celebrity endorsers for example intellectual skills, personality properties, lifestyles, or athletic prowess etc. to enable consumers perceive them as likable.

2.3.1.3 Source Power

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

2.4 Selecting celebrities for endorsement using the Meaning Transfer Model

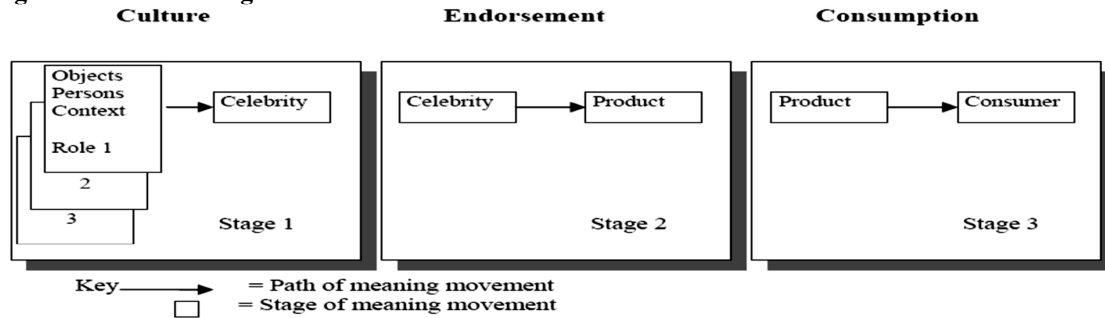
The communication effectiveness of celebrity endorsement activities to some extent relies on the credibility and attractiveness of the source. The source models and match-up hypothesis are tested and confirmed in many studies (Fink et al., 2004; Hunter, Burger, & Davidsson, 2008; Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Kahle & Homer, 1985). However, these models have been criticized for not portraying all the elements that determine communication effectiveness (McCracken, 1989; Hunter, 2009). McCracken (1989) conclude that source models do not serve as a practical explanation to understand the endorsement process from two aspects. First of all, the source models cannot be used to explain the effectiveness of a particular endorser for a particular product. It is therefore impossible to know why a celebrity only works out for certain products, and not for others. In addition, the source models do not provide a method to discriminate celebrities in a useful way. As an alternative, McCracken (1989) contends that celebrity endorsements must be understood as part of a three-part meaning transfer process. In the first stage, the meanings that originate in the dramatic roles, political campaigns athletic /or sporting achievements of the celebrity come to reside in the celebrities themselves. All these together imply that celebrities have particular configurations of meanings that are drawn from the roles they assume in television, film, military, athletic or other careers. They own these meanings because they have created them on the public stage by dint of intense and repeated performances. McCracken (1988) explains that these meanings begin as something resident in the culturally constituted world, in the physical and social world constituted by categories and principles of the prevailing culture. Similarly, McCracken (1986) maintained that advertising is one of the ways to move meanings from culture, to consumers of goods. Advertising works as a method of meaning by bringing consumer needs and the representation of the culturally constituted world together within the frame of a particular advertisement. According to the authors, consumers learn meanings by interpreting product definitions, which in this case are implicit in promotional content. Endorsement gives the ad access to a special category of person. It makes available individuals charged with detailed and powerful meanings.

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

In the final stage, these meanings transfer, often incompletely, from the product to the consumer. Celebrities play a role in the final stage of meaning transfer because they have created the self. They have done it publicly, in the first stage, out of bits and pieces of every role in their careers. The well-constructed self-image

makes the celebrities a kind of exemplars, inspirational figures to consumers. For instance a celebrity who has acquired a cultural meaning or status symbol of beauty, elegance, attitude, sophistication and charisma can transfer all these attributes to promote cultural products so that the “fit” is indeed considered perfect in the range of highest standards. As described as the consumption process of the three stages, the role played by the customer here is to acquire or attain the brands meaning given to it by the celebrity endorser. All the above stages are illustrated on the model below:

Figure 1: The Meaning Transfer Model



Source : McCracken (1989 pp.45)

3.0 Achieving “Congruence” Or “Fit” Between Endorsers and the Endorsed Brands using the Match – up Hypothesis

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

Forkan (1980) and Kamins (1990) following the positions of the above authorities, caution that in adopting the Product Match-Up Hypothesis, marketers must ensure that certain messages conveyed by celebrity images and the product messages should be congruent for effective advertising. Also, Misra & Beatty (1990) maintain that the determinant of the match between the celebrity and the brand depends on the degree of perceived 'fit' between brand (brand name, attributes) and celebrity image. In other words, it suggests that endorsers are most effective when there is a high degree of fit between the endorser and the endorsed brand / product (Kamins, 1990; Biswas et al., 2006). In a sense, advertising a product via a celebrity who has a relatively high product congruent image leads to greater advertiser and celebrity believability relative to an advertisement with a less congruent product / spokesperson image (Levy 1959; Kamins &Gupta 1994). It states to the large extent that messages portrayed by a celebrity’s image and the product’s message should be uniformed and consistent for the endorsement to work successfully. Extant body of studies or researches (Seno & Lukas, 2007, Hou, 2012;Hsu and McDonald, 2002;Kahle and Homer, 1985; Forkan 1980; Kamins 1990; Misra &Beatty1990; Kamins, 1990; Biswas et al., 2006; Levy 1959; Kamins & Gupta 1994) and their findings have attempted to explain the premises and foundations the match-up hypothesis hinges on. However, it needs to be stressed that none of these has been able to establish how the theory can work in reality so as to achieve the ideal “fit” or “congruence” in the endorsement process. Studies in social psychology support that the similarity between the endorser and audience can lead to positive perceptions of advertisement and product (DeShields, Kara, & Santos, 1999).

Figure2: Indicating the role of Kelman (1961) Social Influence theory in achieving “congruence” or “fit”

Source Factors	Process
Attractiveness	Identification
Credibility	Internalisation
Power	Compliance

Source Attributes and Receiver Processing Modes. Source: Belch & Belch (2001)

Belch and Belch (2001) lay emphasis on Kelman (1961) theory of Social influence as having a role to

play in achieving fit between endorsers and the endorsed brands. Kelman (1961) suggests that celebrity endorsement is successful due to three social processes. The first influence is identification, suggesting that consumers conform to the behaviours and recommendations of celebrities because they derive satisfaction from believing they are like these celebrities. In this case, it can be explained further that the celebrity impacts seriously on the beliefs, opinions, and interests of consumers. That makes the celebrity attracted to the consumers. The second social factor is internalization, suggesting that consumers conform to the attitudes or behaviours advocated by others because they believe in the substance of the new attitude or behaviour (Friedman et al. 1979). Identification is therefore linked to likeableness and attractiveness, while internalization is linked to the expert knowledge that an endorser possesses making him or her credible source of the advertising message. When a behavior or attitude is internalized, because a celebrity has endorsed it, the consumer will enact or express both publicly or privately. For instance, Godwin (1987) recounts specifically that when a consumer is fully internalized he or she performs the following roles convincingly: the medical consumer will embark on a fitness program; the auto repair customer will read the owner's manual and follow the maintenance recommendations; the airline passenger will bring material to entertain him/herself on the flight. The third and final influence being compliance occurs when a consumer accepts influence from the endorser or other consumers because he/she wants to obtain a reward or avoid punishment. The induced behavior is adopted not because the consumer believes it is inherently beneficial, but because it produces a desirable consequence. What the individual learns, essentially, is to say or do the expected thing in special situations, regardless of what his private beliefs may be (Kelman 1961).

4.0 Achieving Sales' Benefits Through The Use Of Celebrities to Promote Products or Brands

Creswell (2008) opines that there are examples that suggest that celebrity endorsements actually lead to higher sales. For example, after Chanel signed Nicole Kidman in 2003, it is reported that global sales of Chanel's classic perfume jumped 30%. Similarly, when Tiger Woods switched his endorsed ball from the Titleist brand to Nike in 2000, Nike's market share went from 0.9% to 4% in 6 months.

Chung, Derdenger & Srinivasan (2012) studying Economic Value of Celebrity Endorsements with specific reference to Tiger Woods' Impact on Sales of Nike Golf Balls, the authors sought to answer the fundamental question of whether celebrity endorsements lead to higher sales with the use of two empirical approaches, reduced form and structural.

Following the reduced form analysis, Chung, Derdenger & Srinivasan (2012) move to a structural model of consumer demand and firm supply. In this analysis they employ the same identification strategy to answer more broadly the effects of celebrity endorsements. With this structural model, they determined the impact on profit, price and market share of not only of the endorsed brand but its competitors as well. By developing and estimating a structural demand model, they found that celebrity endorsements can create product differentiation and generate shifts in market share and thus should be thought of as a profitable marketing strategy. Furthermore, empirical studies show that celebrities positively influence the image of the advertised brands, such that a key outcome is a favourable effect on brand image (e.g., Erdogan *et al.*, 2001). During the purchase process, consumers purchase intention would be affected by the product attributes, price, and endorser performance which perceived by consumers (Sheu, 2010). Since consumers' purchase intentions and arousal are easily triggered by the promotion strategies, so their attitude towards the promoted product, service or brand is also easily affected by the popularity and image of the celebrity. Especially when the consumers treated the celebrities as reference group, they wanted to imitate them in an effort to feel successful too (Forbes, 2011). Au-Yeung, (2012) believes that the result of this is that consumers' purchase intention would positively influenced by their admired celebrities.

5.0 Potential Risks Associated With Celebrity Endorsements

Despite the potential benefits of using celebrity endorsers in advertising campaigns, the disadvantages of using them deserve serious consideration. McKee (2008) theorises that celebrity spokespeople are expensive and risky, and they do not always pay off due to the following specific potential risks.

There is the issue of negative celebrity information influence that stems from celebrity scandals and moral violation on brands. When advertisers employ celebrities as their product endorser, they also take a risk of their brand being tarnished by negatively published celebrity information (Erdogan & Baker, 2000). Amos, Holmes, & Strutton (2008) speculated that the high risk associated with using celebrity endorsers as well as the substantial impact negative information about those celebrities can have on consumers' perceptions would exercise the largest impact on the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements in advertising. Till and Shimp (1998) also found that a strong associative link between celebrity and product must be lessened if negative celebrity information happen to lower consumers' brand evaluations.

The nature of these negative events involve incidents that change, or damage the endorser's reputation, whether innocent or not, but they can damage the reputation of the firm. Typically, these negative events and can

range widely from accidents that hinder a celebrity's ability to perform including career ending injuries, to exposure to substance abuse (Louie & Obermiller 2002) or could be as serious as criminal charges brought against a celebrity endorser. White et al.(2008) agrees that one of the greatest fears of using celebrities is the possibility of bad publicity arising involving the celebrity endorser – with reference to Miciak and Shamklin (1994), when an endorser's image becomes 'tarnished by allegations of illicit, unethical, unusual, or even slightly unconventional behaviour', this instantly creates problems for the endorser. This is believed to affect the product or service that is endorsed by the celebrity. As a result "any negative news about a celebrity may reduce the celebrity's allure, and therefore the appeal of the brand that the celebrity has endorsed" (Bruce *et al.*, 2004: 127). Transference theory assumes that "the effect of past relationships (positive and negative) will carry over into future relationships" (Bunker and Ball, 2005). When a negative event occurs, audience gain new information into the celebrity's bundle of meanings and in turn it will impact the social relational process into the future (ibid).

The risk is "Vampire Effect" or the celebrity overshadowing the brand (Khorikova, 2012). Viewers of commercials featuring both celebrity and the brand radically ignore the brand endorsed by the celebrity, others are so enthralled and fascinated by the personality of the endorser that they completely forget about the brand being advertised, and according to Fill (2005) leads to the celebrity moving to the first place leaving the product or brand outside of consumer attention. Cyber media research study shows that 80% of the respondents remember the celebrity but could not recall the brand being endorsed.

The overshadowing by celebrities on their endorsed products puts forth another negative aspect on using celebrity endorsements. That is, consumers would focus their attention on the celebrity and fail to notice the brand being promoted (Belch & Belch, 2001). The authors caution that it is important that the celebrity spokesperson will attract attention and enhances the sales message without overshadowing the product (ibid). This often occurs when celebrities are endorsing multiple products or brands in the marketplace. Petty, Cacioppo, & Schumann, (1983) maintain that due to the enhanced attention drawn to celebrities in many types of advertisements, a general lack of people's interest in assessing merits of the product may occur, which can result in reductions in their brand recognition. For example, Tiger Woods endorses for Nike, Buick, American Express, Accenture, Electronic Arts and Heuer whereas David Beckham endorses for Adidas, ESPN, Motorola, Gillette, Pepsi, Soccer-lite America and many more (Shimp, 2003).

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

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

6.0 Methods Used To Reduce Risks Associated With Celebrity Endorsement

Tellis (1998) maintain that there are several ways in which companies can ensure against some surprises that can occur when using celebrity endorsers. Companies should start with a properly screening of candidates to ensure that they are buying the right image, and that the risk with the celebrity contract is worth the potential risk for damage. Companies can also set up contracts that have a moral clause. A moral clause is a legal statement that gives companies the option to terminate a contract with a partial fee or no fee at all. These often state if the celebrity becomes involved in any situation or occurrence, which in the company's reasonable opinion, subjects Talent or Company to ridicule, contempt or scandal (ibid.). On managing celebrity endorsers, Till (1998) suggests further that companies must establish a link between the endorser and the brand or product. When an associative link is built between the celebrity and the brand each is then part of the association set, a group of concepts, which are meaningfully related to a target brand. One good example of this is consumers thinking of Michael Jordan. Repeated pairing of the two stimuli is a key to associative learning process, because repeating the pairing of the two stimuli increases confidence that the presence of one stimulus predicts the presence of the other stimulus. According to Till (1998) the way to decrease the chances of overshadowing the advertising executions should be single minded in communicating the brand – celebrity pairing. The brand and the celebrity should be the two strongest elements in the ad. Ad executions which are cluttered with superfluous executional devices, distract from the brand celebrity pairing is weakening the potency of the celebrity endorser. The likelihood of forming an associative link between the celebrity and the brand increases when there are few other competing elements in the advertisement. (ibid). To reduce the risk of extinction companies should expand their use of celebrity endorsement. Because it is unrealistic to expect that every time a consumer encounters a brand

the celebrity endorser image also will be present. Therefore companies should work to get endorsers more integrated into the marketing mix. Although most commonly used in advertising, celebrity endorsers can be effective in promotion activities, such as giving away related items or trips, which tie into the celebrity. The celebrity should also be used at large trade shows, national sales meetings and other significant publicity events (Till, 1998). Lastly on Financial risk: Companies must decide how cost effective their choice of celebrity is. The celebrity with the highest potential is often also the most expensive one. Companies should therefore look for a lesser-known person that fits into the message of the brand and appeals to the target audience (Tellis, 1998).

7.0 Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

Panoply of existing or past studies have reviewed celebrity selection strategies comprehensively in other industry, however, other selection strategies like the Source Factors, Meaning Transfer Model, Match-up Hypothesis have not been fully examined as models in the automobile industry. It is safe to submit that extant literature have not established in specifics, the extra roles in addition to the ones performed by celebrities in their profession for them to be perceived as expertise, attractive and powerful hence making them to be selected as the right endorsers for automobile products or brands so as to achieve ideal “fit” or “congruence” in the period of endorsement contract. It lacks specificity. The theory is limited in terms of explaining further what a celebrity would indulge in as marketing or promotional function to be effectively considered as authoritative personality. On the Meaning Transfer Model, it needs to be maintained critically that McCracken (1986;1989) did over generalization of meanings that reside in celebrities by virtue of performing their roles in the culturally constituted world, in the physical and social world constituted by categories and principles of the prevailing culture. Here, McCracken (1988;1989) failed to highlight in specifics the actual meanings inherent in celebrities that can be transferred to spotlight the advertising of products or brands in competitive market place. In achieving “Congruence” Or “Fit” Between Endorsers and the Endorsed Brands using Match-up Hypothesis, extant body of studies or researches (Seno & Lukas, 2007, Hou, 2012; Hsu and McDonald, 2002; Kahle and Homer, 1985; Forkan 1980; Kamins 1990; Misra & Beatty 1990; Kamins, 1990; Biswas et al., 2006; Levy 1959; Kamins & Gupta 1994) and their findings have attempted to explain the premises and foundations the match-up hypothesis hinges on, that is: marketers must ensure that certain messages conveyed by celebrity images and the product messages should be congruent for effective advertising. However, it needs to be stressed that none of these has been able to demonstrate in existing knowledge how the theory can work in reality so as to achieve the ideal “fit” or “congruence” in the endorsement process. In the current study, it can be stated that, tactical marketing research should be conducted in the form of searching carefully into backgrounds of celebrity endorsers to identify right attributes and characteristics that can match that of the automobile brands being promoted. In practical sense, when advertising high involvement purchases, such as automobiles, using marketing research to identify select a recognized race car driver would be more effective in achieving ideal “fit” or “congruence” than using an attractive model or actress. This is due to expert knowledge and trustworthiness to be demonstrated by the race car driver, as opposed to solely fulfilling social standing by purchasing the automobile. The proposed study would use the Source Factors, Meaning Transfer Model and Match-up Hypothesis as benchmarks in comparing the proposed study to what automobile companies have been doing with respect to selecting celebrities to endorse their automobile products or brands to achieve ideal “fit” or “congruence” in the endorsement process. The proposed study seeks to refine and extend knowledge on the Source Factors (Ohanian, 1990; Belch & Belch, 2001; Hou, 2012; Cui and Yang, 2009; Andsager et al., 2006; Tantisenepong, Gorton, & White, 2012); Meaning Transfer Model (McCracken, 1986, 1989; Erdogan & Baker, 2000) and Match-up Hypothesis (Seno & Lukas, 2007; Hou, 2012; Hsu and McDonald, 2002).

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