

Celebrity Endorsements and Brand Awareness of Betking in Abak Metropolis, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The increasing competition within Nigeria's sports betting industry has compelled operators to adopt innovative marketing communication strategies capable of strengthening brand awareness and attracting consumers. Among these strategies, celebrity endorsement has become increasingly prominent; however, empirical evidence regarding its effectiveness within the betting industry remains limited, particularly in Akwa Ibom State. This study examined the effect of celebrity endorsements on the brand awareness of BetKing in Abak metropolis. Specifically, the study investigated the influence of celebrity popularity, celebrity credibility and endorsement frequency on brand awareness. The study adopted a survey research design. The population comprised 181,717 registered BetKing customers in Abak metropolis, from which a sample of 399 respondents was determined using Taro Yamane's formula. Convenience sampling technique was employed in selecting respondents, while data were collected using structured questionnaires. A total of 397 valid questionnaires were analysed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis with the aid of SPSS version 25. The findings revealed that celebrity popularity significantly enhanced brand awareness ($\beta = 0.292, p < 0.05$), while endorsement frequency exerted the strongest positive influence on brand awareness ($\beta = 0.813, p < 0.05$). However, celebrity credibility showed no significant effect on brand awareness ($\beta = 0.060, p > 0.05$). The study concluded that celebrity popularity and repeated endorsement exposure constitute the major celebrity endorsement dimensions influencing BetKing's brand awareness. The study recommended that BetKing should continue engaging highly recognised celebrities and increase the frequency of endorsement campaigns across multiple communication channels in order to strengthen consumer awareness and brand recall.

Keywords: *Celebrity endorsement, celebrity popularity, celebrity credibility, endorsement frequency, brand awareness, BetKing.*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The increasing intensity of competition across contemporary business environments has made brand awareness one of the most valuable marketing assets available to organisations. As consumers become exposed to thousands of advertising messages daily through traditional and digital media, attracting consumer attention and sustaining brand recognition have become considerably more challenging. Consequently, organisations continually seek promotional strategies capable of differentiating their products and services while creating lasting impressions in consumers' minds. Among the numerous promotional approaches adopted by organisations, celebrity endorsement has emerged as one of the most widely utilised marketing communication strategies because of its ability to attract attention, stimulate consumer interest and strengthen brand awareness.

Celebrity endorsement refers to the use of recognised public personalities such as actors, musicians, athletes and media figures to promote products, services or organisations with the intention of influencing consumer perceptions and behaviour (Phillip et al., 2025). The strategy assumes that the positive characteristics associated with celebrities are transferred to the brands they endorse, thereby improving consumers' recognition, recall and perception of those brands. According to Kotler et al. (2022), brand awareness represents consumers' ability to recognise and recall a brand among competing alternatives, while Schouten et al. (2020) argue that celebrity endorsement enhances brand visibility by increasing consumers' exposure to promotional messages. Similarly, Dwivedi et al. (2021) observed that celebrity endorsements improve advertising effectiveness by attracting attention and facilitating stronger consumer-brand

associations.

The sports betting industry in Nigeria has experienced substantial expansion during the last decade, leading to intense rivalry among operators competing for consumer attention and market share. Companies such as BetKing, Bet9ja, SportyBet and 1xBet invest heavily in advertising campaigns to strengthen their competitive positions within the industry (Phillip et al., 2025). Celebrity endorsement has consequently become one of the industry's preferred promotional tools because celebrities possess extensive public recognition capable of increasing brand exposure. BetKing has consistently engaged prominent Nigerian football personalities and sports icons to promote its services across television, radio, outdoor advertising and social media platforms. These promotional efforts are intended to increase consumer awareness and encourage patronage.

Despite the growing popularity of celebrity endorsement within Nigeria's sports betting industry, uncertainty remains regarding the extent to which different celebrity attributes contribute to brand awareness. While celebrity popularity attracts widespread public attention, celebrity credibility may influence consumers' confidence in the endorsed brand, whereas repeated endorsement exposure may reinforce consumers' ability to recognise and remember the brand. Existing empirical studies have produced inconsistent findings regarding these relationships, with most investigations concentrating on consumer goods, fashion products, telecommunications and social media marketing rather than sports betting services. Furthermore, relatively few studies have examined these relationships within Akwa Ibom State, thereby creating an important contextual gap in the literature.

It is against this background that this study examined the effect of celebrity endorsements on the brand awareness of BetKing in Abak metropolis, Akwa Ibom State, by focusing on celebrity popularity, celebrity credibility and endorsement frequency as the major dimensions of celebrity endorsement.

Statement of the Problem

Celebrity endorsement has become one of the dominant promotional strategies adopted by sports betting companies to improve brand visibility and consumer awareness. BetKing has invested considerably in celebrity endorsement campaigns featuring popular personalities in an attempt to strengthen its market presence and distinguish itself within Nigeria's highly competitive betting industry. Although these promotional activities require substantial financial investment, limited empirical evidence exists regarding whether the popularity, credibility and frequency of celebrity endorsements actually enhance consumers' awareness of the BetKing brand, particularly within Abak metropolis.

Previous studies have largely focused on celebrity endorsement within telecommunications, fashion, consumer goods and social media marketing, while relatively little attention has been devoted to the sports betting industry. Furthermore, existing findings remain inconsistent, as some studies report significant positive relationships between celebrity credibility and brand awareness, whereas others suggest that popularity and repeated exposure exert stronger influences. These inconsistencies, together with the scarcity of empirical evidence from Akwa Ibom State, created the need for this study. Consequently, this study examined the effect of celebrity popularity, celebrity credibility and endorsement frequency on the brand awareness of BetKing in Abak metropolis.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine the effect of celebrity endorsements on the brand awareness of BetKing in Abak metropolis. Specifically, the study seeks to;

- i. examine the effect of celebrity popularity on the brand awareness of BetKing in Abak metropolis;
- ii. determine the influence of celebrity credibility on the brand awareness of BetKing in Abak metropolis; and
- iii. assess the effect of endorsement frequency on the brand awareness of BetKing in Abak metropolis.

Research Hypotheses

Based on the research questions, the following null hypotheses were formulated:

H₀₁: Celebrity popularity has no significant effect on the brand awareness of BetKing in Abak

metropolis.

H₀₂: Celebrity credibility does not significantly influence the brand awareness of BetKing in Abak metropolis.

H₀₃: Endorsement frequency has no significant effect on the brand awareness of BetKing in Abak metropolis.

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the growing body of literature on celebrity endorsement by providing empirical evidence on how celebrity popularity, credibility and endorsement frequency influence brand awareness within Nigeria's sports betting industry. The findings offer practical insights to marketing managers, advertising practitioners and betting companies, particularly BetKing, on the celebrity endorsement dimensions that most effectively enhance brand visibility and consumer awareness. The study also provides useful evidence for researchers and academics interested in marketing communications, consumer behaviour and brand management, particularly within emerging markets.

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study was conducted in Abak metropolis of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, and focused on the effect of celebrity endorsements on the brand awareness of BetKing. Specifically, the study examined celebrity popularity, celebrity credibility and endorsement frequency as the dimensions of celebrity endorsement. The unit of analysis comprised existing and potential users of BetKing's betting services residing within the study area. The study was delimited to BetKing and did not consider other sports betting operators or other dimensions of celebrity endorsement beyond those examined.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual Review

Celebrity endorsement has become one of the most widely adopted promotional strategies for enhancing brand awareness in competitive markets. It involves the use of well-known public personalities such as athletes, musicians, actors and media personalities to promote products or services with the objective of influencing consumer perceptions and behaviour. By leveraging celebrities' popularity and public image, organisations seek to attract consumer attention, improve brand recognition and establish favourable associations with their brands. According to Schouten et al. (2020), celebrity endorsement enables firms to strengthen consumer attitudes towards brands, while Dwivedi et al. (2021) argue that the strategy improves consumer responses by capitalising on celebrities' influence and market appeal. Erdogan and Islam (2022) further observed that celebrity endorsement enhances consumer engagement and contributes significantly to brand awareness in increasingly competitive markets.

The effectiveness of celebrity endorsement largely depends on the characteristics of the celebrity selected to represent the brand. Among the most widely recognised dimensions are celebrity popularity, celebrity credibility and endorsement frequency. Celebrity popularity refers to the extent to which a celebrity enjoys widespread public recognition, admiration and acceptance. Popular celebrities naturally attract greater public attention, thereby increasing the visibility of advertising messages and improving consumers' ability to recognise the endorsed brand (Jin & Ryu, 2020). Similarly, Hudders and De Jans (2022) noted that consumers often regard highly popular celebrities as role models, while Vrontis et al. (2021) argued that their extensive social and media presence enables organisations to reach broader audiences and strengthen brand exposure.

Celebrity credibility represents consumers' perception of a celebrity's trustworthiness, honesty and expertise. It determines the extent to which consumers accept promotional messages delivered by the celebrity and transfer positive evaluations to the endorsed brand. Osei-Frimpong et al. (2022) observed that credible celebrities enhance consumer confidence and improve brand evaluation, whereas Wang and Scheinbaum (2021) found that celebrity credibility strengthens consumer trust and favourable attitudes towards endorsed brands. Likewise, Munnukka et al. (2022) maintained that organisations benefit considerably when celebrity endorsers possess positive reputations that align with brand values, thereby strengthening consumer acceptance and brand associations.

Another important dimension is endorsement frequency, which refers to the number of times consumers are exposed to celebrity endorsement messages within a given period. Repeated exposure enhances consumers' familiarity with the endorsed brand, reinforces memory and improves brand recognition. Lou and Yuan (2020) argued that repeated celebrity endorsements increase brand familiarity and consumer recall, while Ki et al. (2023) found that consistent celebrity appearances across promotional campaigns significantly improve brand visibility and awareness. Nevertheless, Sokolova and Kefi (2020) cautioned that excessive endorsement exposure may reduce message effectiveness if consumers perceive the advertisements as repetitive or lacking authenticity.

Brand awareness, the dependent variable in this study, represents the extent to which consumers recognise and recall a particular brand when making purchase decisions. It reflects the strength of a brand's presence in consumers' memory and constitutes one of the most fundamental dimensions of brand equity (Uford, 2017; Duh & Uford, 2019). Kotler et al. (2022) described brand awareness as consumers' ability to identify and distinguish a brand from competing alternatives, while Foroudi (2022) viewed it as the strength of a brand's presence within consumers' memory. Brand awareness is commonly reflected through brand recognition and brand recall, both of which increase consumers' confidence, influence brand preference and enhance the likelihood of patronage (Hwang & Kandampully, 2021). Consequently, organisations increasingly rely on promotional strategies such as celebrity endorsement to improve brand awareness and strengthen their competitive position within the marketplace.

The relationship between celebrity endorsement and brand awareness has received considerable attention in marketing literature. Celebrity endorsers attract consumer attention, facilitate positive brand associations and improve consumers' ability to recognise and remember endorsed brands. Celebrity popularity increases public exposure to advertising messages, celebrity credibility enhances consumers' confidence in promotional communication, while repeated endorsement exposure reinforces brand recall through continuous consumer interaction with advertising messages (Wang & Scheinbaum, 2021; Osei-Frimpong et al., 2022; Ki et al. 2023). Collectively, these dimensions contribute to improving brand awareness and provide organisations with an effective means of differentiating their brands within increasingly competitive markets.

2.2 Theoretical Review

This study is anchored on Social Comparison Theory and Meaning Transfer Theory, both of which provide useful explanations for how celebrity endorsements influence consumers' awareness of brands.

i. Social Comparison Theory

Social Comparison Theory was developed by Festinger (1954). The theory posits that individuals evaluate their attitudes, beliefs and behaviours by comparing themselves with others whom they admire or perceive as successful. Such comparisons influence personal evaluations and behavioural decisions. In the marketing context, consumers often compare themselves with celebrities who possess desirable attributes, making them more receptive to products and services endorsed by such personalities. Jaiswal and Gupta (2015) argued that social comparison helps individuals shape their self-concept, while Albert et al. (2017) observed that admired personalities significantly influence consumer perceptions and purchase-related decisions.

The theory is relevant to this study because consumers who admire celebrities endorsing BetKing are likely to develop favourable perceptions of the brand through psychological identification with the endorser. As consumers repeatedly compare themselves with popular and admired celebrities, their familiarity with the endorsed brand increases, thereby enhancing brand awareness (Gentina et al., 2018; Choi & Rifon, 2019; Jin & Muqaddam, 2021).

ii. Meaning Transfer Theory

Meaning Transfer Theory was propounded by McCracken (1989). The theory explains that celebrities possess symbolic meanings, values, lifestyles and personalities which are transferred to the brands they endorse. Consumers consequently associate the characteristics of the celebrity with the endorsed product or service, thereby strengthening brand image, recognition and

consumer perceptions. According to McCracken (1989), the endorsement process enables organisations to leverage celebrities' social meanings in creating favourable brand associations. The theory provides an appropriate framework for this study because celebrity popularity, credibility and endorsement frequency facilitate the transfer of positive meanings from the celebrity to the BetKing brand. As consumers repeatedly encounter credible and well-known celebrities promoting BetKing, they become more familiar with the brand and develop stronger brand awareness (Dwivedi et al. 2021). Consequently, Meaning Transfer Theory offers a useful explanation of how celebrity endorsement contributes to improving brand awareness among consumers.

2.3 Empirical Review

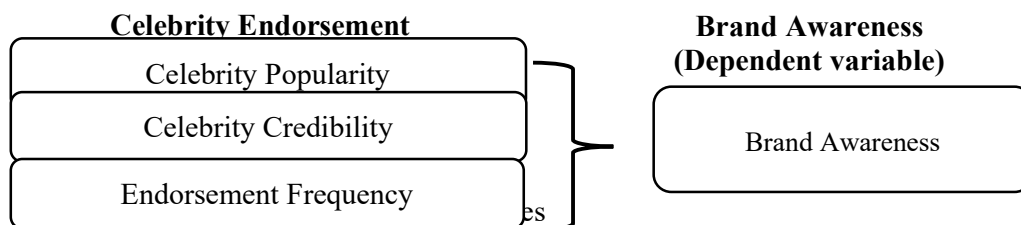
Empirical studies have consistently established that celebrity endorsement enhances brand awareness across different industries. Hudders and De Jans (2022) found that celebrity endorsement significantly improved consumers' brand awareness in Belgium, while Dwivedi et al. (2021) reported that celebrity endorsement positively influenced brand awareness and consumer attitudes in Australia. Similarly, Vrontis et al. (2021) established that celebrity popularity significantly enhanced brand awareness, whereas Jin and Ryu (2020) concluded that highly popular celebrities generated stronger brand recognition than less popular endorsers.

With respect to celebrity credibility, Osei-Frimpong et al. (2022), Wang and Scheinbaum (2021), and Munnukka et al. (2022) found that credible celebrity endorsers positively influenced brand awareness, consumer trust and brand evaluation. Likewise, Ki et al. (2023) and Lou and Yuan (2020) reported that repeated celebrity endorsements significantly improved brand awareness by reinforcing consumers' familiarity and recall of endorsed brands.

Although these studies provide useful evidence on the relationship between celebrity endorsement and brand awareness, they were largely conducted outside Nigeria and concentrated on industries such as fashion, consumer goods, telecommunications, cosmetics and online retailing. Consequently, limited empirical evidence exists regarding the influence of celebrity popularity, celebrity credibility and endorsement frequency on the brand awareness of sports betting brands in Nigeria. This study addresses this gap by examining the effect of these celebrity endorsement dimensions on the brand awareness of BetKing in Abak metropolis, Akwa Ibom State.

2.4 Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework illustrates the relationship between the independent and dependent variables of the study. Celebrity endorsement is the independent variable, measured by celebrity popularity, celebrity credibility and endorsement frequency, while brand awareness is the dependent variable;



Source: Researcher's Compilation (2026)

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a survey research design to examine the effect of celebrity endorsements on the brand awareness of BetKing in Abak metropolis, Akwa Ibom State. The target population comprised 181,717 registered BetKing customers across the five districts of Abak metropolis, as obtained from the Regional Office, Ediene Abak. A sample size of 399 respondents was determined using Taro Yamane's (1967) sample size determination formula, while convenience sampling technique was employed in selecting respondents because it provided easy access to existing and potential BetKing customers within the study area.

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire designed on a five-point Likert scale ranging from *Strongly Disagree (1)* to *Strongly Agree (5)*. The instrument elicited information on celebrity popularity, celebrity credibility, endorsement frequency and brand

awareness. Of the 399 questionnaires administered, 397 were properly completed and found suitable for analysis, representing a response rate of 99.5%.

Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations, while multiple regression analysis was employed to examine the effect of celebrity popularity, celebrity credibility and endorsement frequency on brand awareness. The analyses were conducted using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25, and the hypotheses were tested at the 5% level of significance.

4.0 DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

4.1 Socio-Demographic Information of Respondents

The socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents were analysed to ascertain that the appropriate category of respondents participated in the study. The information obtained included respondents' gender, age and religion, which provided an understanding of the background characteristics of BetKing customers in the study area. A total of 399 copies of the questionnaire were administered to selected respondents. Of these, 397 were correctly completed and returned, representing a response rate of 99.5%, while two copies were either not returned or rejected due to incomplete responses. Consequently, 397 valid questionnaires were used for the analysis. The socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	377	95.0
	Female	20	5.0
Age	18–28	151	38.0
	29–38	117	29.5
	39–48	74	18.6
	49 and above	55	13.9
Religion	Christianity	328	82.6
	Islam	42	10.6
	Traditional Religion	18	4.5
	Others	9	2.3

Source: Field Survey (2026).

Table 1 presents the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. The results show that the majority of the respondents (95.0%) were male, while only 5.0% were female, indicating that males constituted the dominant proportion of BetKing customers surveyed in the study area. Regarding age distribution, 38.0% of the respondents were between 18 and 28 years, 29.5% were between 29 and 38 years, 18.6% were between 39 and 48 years, while 13.9% were aged 49 years and above. This indicates that the respondents were predominantly young and middle-aged adults, who constitute the active segment of sports betting customers. In terms of religion, the majority (82.6%) were Christians, followed by Muslims (10.6%), adherents of traditional religion (4.5%) and other religions (2.3%). Overall, the socio-demographic characteristics indicate that the respondents possessed the relevant attributes required to provide reliable information for achieving the objectives of the study.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were employed to examine the distribution of the study variables. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Brand Awareness	397	4.2694	.75998	-.817	.254	-.240	.503

CELEBRITY POPULARITY	397	4.3667	.72010	-.640	.254	-1.087	.503
CELEBRITY CREDIBILITY	397	4.2500	.81764	-.788	.254	-.692	.503
ENDORSEMENT FREQUENCY	397	4.3417	.77119	-.828	.254	-.503	.503
Valid N (listwise)	397						

Source: Researcher's Computation (2026) using SPSS 25.0

The results in Table 2 indicate that all the study variables recorded high mean scores above the benchmark value of 4.00, suggesting favourable respondents' perceptions of celebrity popularity, celebrity credibility, endorsement frequency and brand awareness. Celebrity popularity recorded the highest mean score ($M = 4.367$), followed by endorsement frequency ($M = 4.342$), while all variables exhibited negative skewness values, indicating that responses were concentrated towards the agreement end of the measurement scale.

4.3 Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the effect of celebrity popularity, celebrity credibility and endorsement frequency on the brand awareness of BetKing. The results are presented in Tables 3–5.

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.789 ^a	.622	.609	.47505

a. Predictors: (Constant), CELEBRITY_POPULARITY, CELEBRITY_CREDIBILITY, ENDORSEMENT FREQUENCY

Source: Researcher's computation (2026) using SPSS 25.0

The model summary indicates a strong relationship between the explanatory variables and brand awareness ($R = 0.789$). The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.622$) shows that celebrity popularity, celebrity credibility and endorsement frequency jointly explained 62.2% of the variation in brand awareness, while the remaining 37.8% was attributable to other factors outside the model.

Table 4: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	31.996	3	10.665	47.261	.000 ^b
	Residual	19.408	86	.226		
	Total	51.403	89			

a. Dependent Variable: BRAND AWARENESS

b. Predictors: (Constant), CELEBRITY_POPULARITY, CELEBRITY_CREDIBILITY, ENDORSEMENT FREQUENCY

Source: Researcher's computation (2026) using SPSS 25.0

The ANOVA result shows that the regression model was statistically significant ($F = 47.261$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that the explanatory variables jointly exerted a significant effect on brand awareness.

Table 5: Regression Coefficients and Hypotheses Testing

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	-.688	.503		-1.368	.175
CELEBRITY_POPULARITY	.308	.075	.292	4.108	.000
CELEBRITY_CREDIBILITY	.031	.034	.060	.887	.378
ENDORSEMENT FREQUENCY	.801	.069	.813	11.538	.000

a. Dependent Variable: BRAND AWARENESS

Source: Researchers Computation (2026) using SPSS 25.0

The regression results indicate that celebrity popularity had a significant positive effect on brand

awareness ($\beta = 0.292$, $p < 0.05$), leading to the rejection of the first null hypothesis. Celebrity credibility, however, did not significantly influence brand awareness ($\beta = 0.060$, $p > 0.05$); therefore, the second null hypothesis was accepted. Endorsement frequency exerted the strongest positive effect on brand awareness ($\beta = 0.813$, $p < 0.05$), resulting in the rejection of the third null hypothesis.

4.4 Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed that celebrity popularity significantly enhanced the brand awareness of BetKing in Abak metropolis. This suggests that consumers are more likely to recognise and remember the BetKing brand when it is endorsed by highly popular celebrities with strong public visibility. The finding supports those of Vrontis et al. (2021), who reported that celebrity popularity positively influences brand awareness, and Jin and Ryu (2020), who found that highly recognised celebrities generate stronger brand recognition than less popular endorsers. The result further reinforces the view that celebrity popularity remains an important determinant of brand awareness in competitive markets.

The study further revealed that celebrity credibility did not significantly influence the brand awareness of BetKing. This implies that although consumers may perceive celebrity endorsers as trustworthy and credible, such attributes alone may not necessarily improve awareness of the brand. This finding contrasts with those of Osei Frimpong et al. (2022), Wang and Scheinbaum (2021), and Munnukka et al. (2022), who reported significant positive relationships between celebrity credibility and brand awareness. The disparity may be attributed to the nature of the sports betting industry, where repeated exposure and celebrity visibility appear to exert greater influence on consumers than perceived credibility.

Finally, the findings established that endorsement frequency exerted the strongest positive influence on BetKing's brand awareness. This indicates that repeated exposure to celebrity endorsements enhances consumers' familiarity with the brand and improves their ability to recognise and recall it. The finding corroborates those of Ki et al. (2023) and Lou and Yuan (2020), who concluded that frequent celebrity endorsement significantly strengthens brand awareness through repeated consumer exposure. The result underscores the importance of maintaining consistent endorsement campaigns to sustain brand visibility and consumer awareness within the sports betting industry.

4.5 Summary of Findings

The major findings of the study are summarised as follows:

- i. Celebrity popularity had a significant positive effect on the brand awareness of BetKing in Abak metropolis, indicating that highly popular celebrities enhanced consumers' recognition and awareness of the brand.
- ii. Celebrity credibility did not have a significant effect on the brand awareness of BetKing in Abak metropolis, suggesting that consumers' perception of a celebrity's credibility alone did not significantly improve brand awareness.
- iii. Endorsement frequency had a significant positive effect on the brand awareness of BetKing in Abak metropolis and emerged as the strongest predictor of brand awareness, indicating that repeated exposure to celebrity endorsements substantially enhanced consumers' recognition and recall of the BetKing brand.

5.0 CONCLUDING REMARKS

5.1 Conclusion

The study examined the effect of celebrity endorsements on the brand awareness of BetKing in Abak metropolis, Akwa Ibom State, with emphasis on celebrity popularity, celebrity credibility and endorsement frequency. The findings established that celebrity popularity and endorsement

frequency significantly enhanced brand awareness, whereas celebrity credibility had no significant effect. The study therefore concludes that the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement in creating brand awareness depends more on the visibility of the celebrity and the consistency of endorsement campaigns than on the perceived credibility of the celebrity. Consequently, organisations operating within the sports betting industry should prioritise celebrity endorsement strategies that maximise consumer exposure and strengthen brand visibility in order to improve brand awareness.

5.2 Implication of the Findings

The findings of this study have important implications for marketing practice and brand management within the sports betting industry. The significant influence of celebrity popularity suggests that organisations should carefully select celebrities with strong public recognition and wide audience appeal to enhance brand awareness. The finding that endorsement frequency exerted the greatest influence indicates that sustained and consistent endorsement campaigns are essential for reinforcing consumers' awareness and recall of the brand. Conversely, the insignificant effect of celebrity credibility implies that marketers should not rely solely on the perceived trustworthiness of celebrity endorsers but should combine credibility with popularity and continuous promotional exposure to maximise advertising effectiveness.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. BetKing should continue to engage highly popular celebrities whose broad public appeal can effectively increase brand awareness among existing and potential customers.
- ii. The company should increase the frequency of celebrity endorsement campaigns across television, radio, outdoor media and digital platforms to strengthen consumers' recognition and recall of the BetKing brand.
- iii. While selecting celebrity endorsers, management should consider credibility as a complementary attribute rather than the primary criterion, since celebrity credibility alone was not found to significantly influence brand awareness.

5.4 Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to the literature on celebrity endorsement by providing empirical evidence on the influence of celebrity popularity, celebrity credibility and endorsement frequency on brand awareness within Nigeria's sports betting industry. Unlike many previous studies that focused on consumer goods, fashion, telecommunications and digital brands, this study extends the application of celebrity endorsement to the sports betting sector. The findings further demonstrate that endorsement frequency is a stronger predictor of brand awareness than celebrity credibility, thereby providing additional empirical insight into celebrity endorsement research within an emerging market context.

5.5 Limitation of the Study

This study was limited to BetKing customers in Abak metropolis, Akwa Ibom State. Consequently, the findings may not be generalised to customers of other sports betting companies or to consumers in other geographical locations. In addition, the study relied solely on questionnaire data, which were based on respondents' perceptions and may therefore be subject to personal bias.

5.6 Suggestions for Further Studies

Future studies should examine the effect of celebrity endorsement on other dimensions of brand performance, such as brand loyalty, customer patronage and purchase intention. Further research may also replicate this study in other states or compare multiple sports betting companies to enhance the generalisability of the findings.

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