Contextualizing Scandals in Celebrity Endorsement Strategies

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ABSTRACT: Negative celebrity endorsement is a fluid area in celebrity endorsement literature with scholars having diverse opinion on the acceptable way of dealing with its outcomes. There seems to be a paradigm shift of consumers accepting negative information as positive in influencing purchase intentions. The study conveniently sampled 552 respondents and found out that, consumers are highly influenced by celebrities with negative information or scandals. Again, the outcome of the study proved that, congruence or product-fit is important in the endorsement process and therefore, firms must make sure celebrities endorse products that are deemed relevant to their area of specialization. Lastly, the values and beliefs of a celebrity is important in giving a cultural identity to the celebrity.

Keywords: Scandal, Celebrity Negative Information, Endorsements

I.   INTRODUCTION

Scholars over the years have uncovered the fluidity of consumer behaviour as tastes and preferences are not static. This undulating development has been ascribed to segmentation characteristics (D'Souza et al., 2021; Kumar & Smith, 2018) and culture (Shavitt& Barnes, 2020; Strang, 2018). Yu et al. (2018) agree that there is inadequate investigation into the personal and cultural dimensions of endorsers which might have consequences on how consumers might behave and how product even fit the endorser. Nonetheless, the behaviour of consumers have dire consequences on a firm's financial performance and goodwill as a whole (Cho et al., 2019; Feng et al., 2017) and hence, firms ought to discourage anyphenomenon that might thwart brand equity.

There is a general view that negative information about a celebrity or scandal influences consumers as well as brand associations negatively (Abeza et al., 2020; Ge & Humphreys, 2020; Ning, 2019). These views are quite valid however, there are other situations which consumers behave differently from the norm. For example, Ein-Gar et al. (2012) found that sales shot up when the celebrity was involved in a bad press. In addition, Yu et al. (2018) are of the view that, when a celebrity is involved in a scandal, efforts must be taken to assess the extent of the damage to the brand before adopting any punitive measures. The authors further orate that, celebrity scandal sometimes have a mild effect on brand image and therefore, firms must not take a knee jerk reaction. Further, it is observed that celebrities who have negative associations keep getting followers on social media,traditional media and concerts participation.

Wang and Kim (2020) advances that fans of a celebrity are more likely to activate rationalization strategies to deal with issues of scandal. For example, a popular celebrity was sentenced to 90 days in prison for indecent exposure to her son in Ghana. The fan base went in uproar that the jail term was too harsh and the judge should have pardoned her, meanwhile, the same fan base would have rejoiced if it was a politician. Saaksjarvi et al. (2016) are of the view that, celebrities with negative associations are the best to endorse products since they are able to give some level media attention.

Rai et al. (2021) opine that, firms do rigorous checks on the celebrities, their followers and their general social media engagements before negotiations on deals are made. These checks are based on the type of firm, brand and the market position it occupies in terms of competition, therefore, not all firms are able to do due diligence before hiring a celebrity.

These developments are a bit strange to extant literature but that's how some consumers have evolved to, and these issues ought to be delved deeper to ascertain whether, there is a shift in the behaviour of consumers towards celebrity scandals.

II.   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 The Meaning Transfer Model

According to McCraken (1989), the source models are not comprehensive in understanding the characteristics of the endorser because, celebrity carry meaning to products. Subsequently, McCracken (1989) believes that celebrities have or possess certain inherent qualities which is transferred to products once they endorse it and ultimately affects purchase decisions as well. He developed the meaning transfer model to take

care of the other factors that the source models could not capture such as lifestyle patterns and personality traits. In fact, this model has not been used a lot in literature and according to Roy (2018), it is due to the changing complexities of the celebrity and the model. It is also seen that, celebrities have attributes which are transferred to brands in an endorsement process and therefore, the right celebrity should always be preferred in order to have the right impact on consumers.

2b. Empirical Review

2.2 Celebrity Negative Information

Extant literature has opined the need for firms to be cautious in hiring celebrities due to the uncertainties that comes with endorsements (Awais, 2019; Ning, 2019). Erdogan and Baker (2000) assert that, negative information of a celebrity can adversely impact on the fortunes of a firm. This assertion is shared by Hussain et al. (2020) who also are of the opinion that bad image of the celebrity can hurt brands. Clearly, bad press has a dire consequence on the fortunes of brand development and ultimately affecting sales. Um and Kim (2016) found that consumers with less brand commitment are also less concerned about any negative association with a celebrity. The paper further argue that consumers' purchase intention is reduced when the celebrities are involved scandals. It is imperative to note that negative perceptions of an endorser can be transferred to the brand thereby putting the image at risk (Campbell & Warren, 2012; Wang & Kim, 2019).
Consequently, negative perception or information about a celebrity affects consumer purchase decisions.

Um (2013) looked at scandal fallout of celebrities and concluded that, consumers with higher level of identification to a celebrity are less likely to react negatively to the bad publicity. The paper makes it clear that, consumers with strong brand associations do not really care about the negativity of the celebrity and would make purchases regardless.

In a related study, Wang and Kim (2019) also found out that, strong fan base of celebrities applies rationalization and decoupling strategies in dealing with any negative information. Furthermore, the study makes interesting remarks that, negative celebrity publicity hurts both the brand and the image of the endorser and that, negativity increases depending on the severity of the negative action. Wang and Kim (2019) admonishes celebrities to have strong online presence to be able to engage with followers and deal with any negative issues that might come up.

Thwaites et al. (2012) conducted a study and found out that, any negative information associated with a celebrity, either direct or indirect can reduce consumer purchase intentions. The authors further advices celebrities to be of good behavior so as to maintain a strong brand image.

Prameswara and Sjabadhyni (2018) looked at the effect of negative celebrity publicity towards purchase intention and concluded that consumers are affected when celebrities engage in bad press or negativity. The study advances that, celebrities' actions are being monitored and therefore can affect endorsed brands negatively and hence, firms must strongly regulate find a way to regulate the celebrity's activities in a contract to help protect their brands.

2.3 Celebrity Product Fit/Congruence

Studies have shown that brand personality can arouse certain responses which can influence consumer behaviour (Aaker, 1993). Again, Thomas and Johnson (2019) also are of the view that the better the congruence between a celebrity and a brand, the better the attitude towards advertisement and brand. Lee (2009) is of the view that consumers would prefer brands that match their attitudes and therefore, in the endorsement process this phenomenon ought to exist. Pradhan et al. (2016) in their study found out that celebrity's congruence or product-fit influences consumers to make purchases due to the fact that, consumers see such endorsements as credible. Additionally, Paul and Bhaker (2018) found out that celebrity image congruence has a positive effect on attitude towards advertising but has a negative significant on attitude towards brands. This suggests that amount of money used in hiring celebrities do not always yield the desired results. Another study found that the strongest predictor of purchase intention was congruency followed by credibility and attractiveness (Anwarl& Jalees, 2017).

2.4 Values

A lot of studieshave attributed celebrity endorsement studies to culture though they agree that it is under researched (Shavitt&Barnes, 2020; Yu et al., 2018). One of the characteristics of culture is value which Schein (1985) describes it as what is important to people that exist in a social setting.

The model again proposes that people hired on the basis of a common goal between the firm and the person hence, a state of congruence which is expressed in shared values and beliefs. Consequently, consumers are likely to believe an endorsement from as a celebrity who has similar values and this is likely to increase the

appeal of the brand or product.Okyireh (2021) concluded in a study that, the cultural value of a celebrity has a significant influence on the purchase intentions of consumers. Again, the author is of the view that, a lot of investigation is needed to unearth any hidden factors within the context of value as a construct and celebrity endorsements.

2.5 Consumer Purchase Intentions

The influence of celebrity endorsement on consumer purchase intentions is not different from the Ghanaian perspective. For example, Ofosu-Boateng (2020) concludes in a study that, decision making of consumers are enhanced when celebrities are used for endorsements. This assertion is shared by (Ansu-Mensah, Asuamah& Amankwah, 2013; Domfeh, Kusi, Nyarku, & Ofori, 2018; Martey&Frempong, 2014; Osei-Frimpong et al., 2019) who of the view that celebrity bring unique attributes to brands which enhances its appeal. The study consequently alludes to the fact that, attractiveness and credibility are important in ensuring the desired outcome. This assertion is not different from Majeed, Tijani and Yaquob (2020) who in a related study conclude that, celebrity endorsement is an effective tool for advertising and that, consumers are able to make informed decisions when celebrities are used. The authors admonish firms to choose celebrities on merits in order to achieve the desired outcome else, investments will go down the drain.

H1:   Celebrity negative information will have a significant positive influence on congruence or product fit.
H2:   Celebrity negative information will have a significant positive influence on purchase intention.
H3:   Celebrity negative information will have a significant positive influence on total value of measure.
H4:   Congruence or product fit will have a significant positive influence on purchase intention.
H5:   Total value of measure will have a significant positive influence on purchase intention.
H6:   Congruence or product fit will mediate the relationship between celebrity negative information and purchase intention.
H7:   Total value of measure will mediate the relationship between celebrity negative information and purchase intention.

III.   METHODOLOGY

The study used convenient sampling to sample 552 participant from the Ga-East Municipality, Greater Accra. The inclusion criteria were students in the university who had knowledge about celebrity endorsements.
The value measure had six items on the scale with Cronbach alpha of 0.80 which was measured on a five-point Likert scale. An example of the scale is "The company chooses a celebrity endorser whose values are aligned with theirs".

Celebrity negative information was adapted from Low and Lim (2012) with a reliability of 0.84. An example of item on the five scale is "regardless of a negative information about a celebrity I would still have a good impression about him". The study used the five-point Likert scale with Cronbach alpha of 0.90
Congruence or product-fit was adapted from Choi and Rifon (2012) and had a reliability of 0.94. An example of an item on the scale is "Celebrities are compatible with the product they endorse". The study used the five-point Likert scale with Cronbach alpha of 0.78.
Purchase Intention was adapted from Hung et al. (2011) with a reliability of 0.94 on a five-point Likert scale. An example of item on the scale is "I will purchase products endorsed by a celebrity".

IV.   RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

Table 1 shows that all the factor loadings of the individual items of the constructs exceed the minimum satisfactory threshold of 0.4 as suggested by Nunnally (1978). Also, the internal consistency, thus the reliability of the construct was measured using the Cronbach's alpha test. However, the results from Table 1 shows that the values exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.7 as suggested by Hair et al. (2011). As suggested by previous studies (Hair et al., 2011; Henseler et al., 2015) composite reliability values between 0.60 and 0.70 are acceptable in exploratory research, while values between 0.70 and 0.95 are considered satisfactory. Hence, the results from Table 1 shows that the CR values are satisfied since they fall between 0.70 and 0.95. The average variance extract (AVE) of each latent variable was evaluated in other to test for the convergent validity. The results from Table 1 indicate that the AVE values exceeded the threshold of 0.50 as recommended by Henseleret al. (2015).

Table 1. Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Construct	Measurement	Factor loading (ρ)
Negative Celebrity Information	**AVE = 0.715, CR = 0.926, and α = 0.900**	
CNI1	I still have a good impression towards the celebrity endorser	0.830
CNI2	I still believe the celebrity endorser is a trustworthy spokesperson for the product	0.829
CNI3	I still believe the celebrity endorser is a qualified spokesperson for the product	0.870
CNI4	I still believe the celebrity endorser is an effective spokesperson for the product	0.860
CNI5	I still have a positive impression towards the celebrity endorser	0.839
Congruence or Product Fit	**AVE = 0.606, CR = 0.860, and α = 0.781**	
CPF1	Celebrities are compatible with the product they endorse	0.697
CPF2	I am influenced by a celebrity who endorses products that is related to what he does	0.769
CPF3	Celebrities with good relevance to products they endorse will influence me to make a purchase	0.865
CPF4	I am likely to be influenced by a celebrity who is seen to be using product he endorses.	0.774
Total Value of Measure	**AVE = 0.501, CR = 0.857, and α = 0.801**	
TVM1	I believe that the values of a celebrity match the product they endorse	0.671
TVM2	Celebrities endorse goods and services that they believe in	0.708
TVM3	Companies hire celebrities with strong values	0.660
TVM4	Celebrities help in making consumers understand what a product stands for	0.744
TVM5	Products often meet the values of customers	0.717
TVM6	A company chooses a celebrity whose values are aligned with theirs	0.742
Purchase Intention	**AVE = 0.650, CR = 0.917, and α = 0.891**	
PIN1	I will purchase products endorsed by a celebrity	0.745
PIN2	I have an intention to buy an endorsed product	0.787
PIN3	Celebrities have an influence on my purchase decision	0.839
PIN4	I am likely to recommend an endorsed product	0.796
PIN5	My willingness to buy a product endorsed by a celebrity is very high	0.891
PIN6	A celebrity can influence me to buy a product	0.772

The Fornell–Larcker Criterion and Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) was evaluated in other to test for discriminant validity. Discriminant validity specifies the extent of uniqueness of a construct relative to another construct (Afumet al., 2020). The Fornell–Larcker Criterion suggest that the square root of the AVE (diagonal values) should be more than the correlation that relates one construct to another (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). In this study, the results in Table 2 shows that the Fornell–Larcker criterion wassatisfied. It is however said that in a well-fitted structural model, the value of the HTMT ratio should not exceed 0.85 (often perceived as a stricter threshold) or 0.90 (reasonably more tolerablethreshold) or substantially smaller than 1(Afum et al., 2020; Benitez et al., 2020). A look at Table 3 shows that the values of the HTMT ratio are below the suggested threshold. In view of the above, it can be concluded that further analysis can be done since the psychometric properties of the structural model of our study was satisfied.

Table 2. Fornell–Larcker criterion for Discriminant Validity

Construct	CNI	CPF	PIN	TVM
CNI	*0.846*			
CPF	0.578	*0.779*		
PIN	0.541	0.698	*0.806*	
TVM	0.548	0.583	0.493	*0.708*

CNI = Celebrity Negative Information CPF = Congruence or Product Fit PIN = Purchase IntentionTVM = Total Value of Measure

Table 3 The Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

Construct	CNI	CPF	PIN	TVM
CNI				
CPF	0.685			
PIN	0.603	0.831		
TVM	0.636	0.736	0.573	

CNI = Celebrity Negative Information CPF = Congruence or Product Fit PIN = Purchase IntentionTVM = Total Value of Measure

As shown in Figure 1, the R-square (R^2) was used to test the predictive accuracy structural model. The R^2 signifies the percentage of how the exogenous latent combine to explain the variance in each of the endogenous latent variable. The results show that negative celebrity information, total value of measure and congruence of product fit combines to explain 52% of the variance in purchase intention. Likewise, Celebrity Negative Information explains 30% and 34% of the variance in total value of measure and congruence or product fit respectively.

Table 4. Correlational Analysis of Study Construct

		Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1	Total Value of Measure	2.2156	.87233	-			
2	Purchase Intention	2.6407	1.04005	.488[**]	-		
3	Negative Celebrity Information	2.4283	1.02169	.541[**]	.540[**]	-	
4	Congruence or Product Fit	2.3080	.95701	.581[**]	.694[**]	.573[**]	-

Note: *$p<0.05$, **$p<0.01$ and ***$p<0.001$

In other to establish the association that exist between the constructs under study, the Pearson's product moment correlation analysis was used. This was necessary since the correlation analysis looks at the positive and the negative relationship that exist between the study variables (Cohen &Swerdlik, 2002) as an indication of how the study variables were related (Sekaran, 2000). Therefore, the correlational analysis was used to determine whether statistically significant relationship existed between the negative celebrity information, total value of measure, congruence or product fit and purchase intention.

As shown in Table 4, the results showed that positive relationship exist between the construct understudied. From the Table, it can therefore be seen that Celebrity negative information has a significant positive relationship with total value of measure (r= .541, p< 0.01), congruence or product fit (r=.573, p< 0.01), and purchase intention (r= .540, p< 0.01). Correspondingly, the results of the study revealed that total value of measure has a significant positive relationship with purchase intention (r= .488, p< 0.01). Thus, the values of a celebrity positively affect the intention of a customer to purchase a product. The same is the case for congruence or product fit which has a positive relationship with purchase intention (r= .694, p< 0.01).

4.1 Structural path significance in bootstrapping

As shown in Table 5, the estimated values for the path relationship were evaluated. The paths from Celebrity negative information to congruence or product fit, purchase intention, and total value of measure were significant and positive, thus($\beta = 0.578$, t-statistic = 15.124,$p < 0.001$), ($\beta = 0.183$, t-statistic = 4.091$p < 0.001$), and ($\beta = 0.548$, t-statistic = 14.379, $p < 0.001$) support hypotheses 1, 2, 3 respectively. Similarly, the path from congruence or product fit to purchase intention was also found to be positive and significant ($\beta = 0.550$, t-statistic = 12.499, $p < 0.001$) and supports hypothesis 4. However, the path from total value of measure to purchase intention was found to be positive but insignificant ($\beta = 0.072$, t-statistic = 1.686, n.s) and does not support hypothesis 5.

Table 5. Results of Partial Least Square Path

	Path	Original Sample	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	*P* Values	Decision
H1	CNI→CPF	0.578	0.579	0.038	15.124	0.000	Supported
H2	CNI→PIN	0.183	0.181	0.045	4.091	0.000	Supported
H3	CNI→TVM	0.548	0.549	0.038	14.379	0.000	Supported
H4	CPF →PIN	0.550	0.552	0.044	12.499	0.000	Supported
H5	TVM→PIN	0.072	0.076	0.043	1.686	0.092	Not Supported

CNI = Celebrity Negative Information CPF = Congruence or Product Fit PIN = Purchase IntentionTVM = Total Value of Measure

4.2 Mediation Effects

The results in Table 6 shows the mediation effect of the intervening variables (congruence or product fit and total value of measure) in the relationship between celebrity negative information and purchase intention. The analysis signifies the extent to which the indirect effect (congruence or product fit and total value of measure) mediated the hypothesized direct path (Celebrity negative information and purchase intention). Thus, in this study, congruence or product fit and total value of measurewere considered the mechanism through whichCelebrity negative information will impact on purchase intention. The analysis revealed that a significant specific indirect effect exist in the relationship between Celebrity negative information and purchase intentionthrough congruence or product fit (CNI→CPF→PIN:β = 0.318, $p < 0.001$) just as stated in hypothesis 6. However, the results of the study revealed that total value of measure does not mediate the relationship between Celebrity negative information and purchase intention. Hence hypothesis 7 was not supported.

Table 6. Mediation effects through Congruence Product Fit and Total Value of Measure

	Path	Original Sample	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	*P* Values	Decision
H6	CNI→ CPF → PIN	0.318	0.319	0.033	9.631	0.000	Mediation
H7	CNI→ TVM → PIN	0.040	0.042	0.024	1.616	0.107	No mediation

CNI = Celebrity Negative Information CPF = Congruence or Product Fit PIN = Purchase IntentionTVM = Total Value of Measure
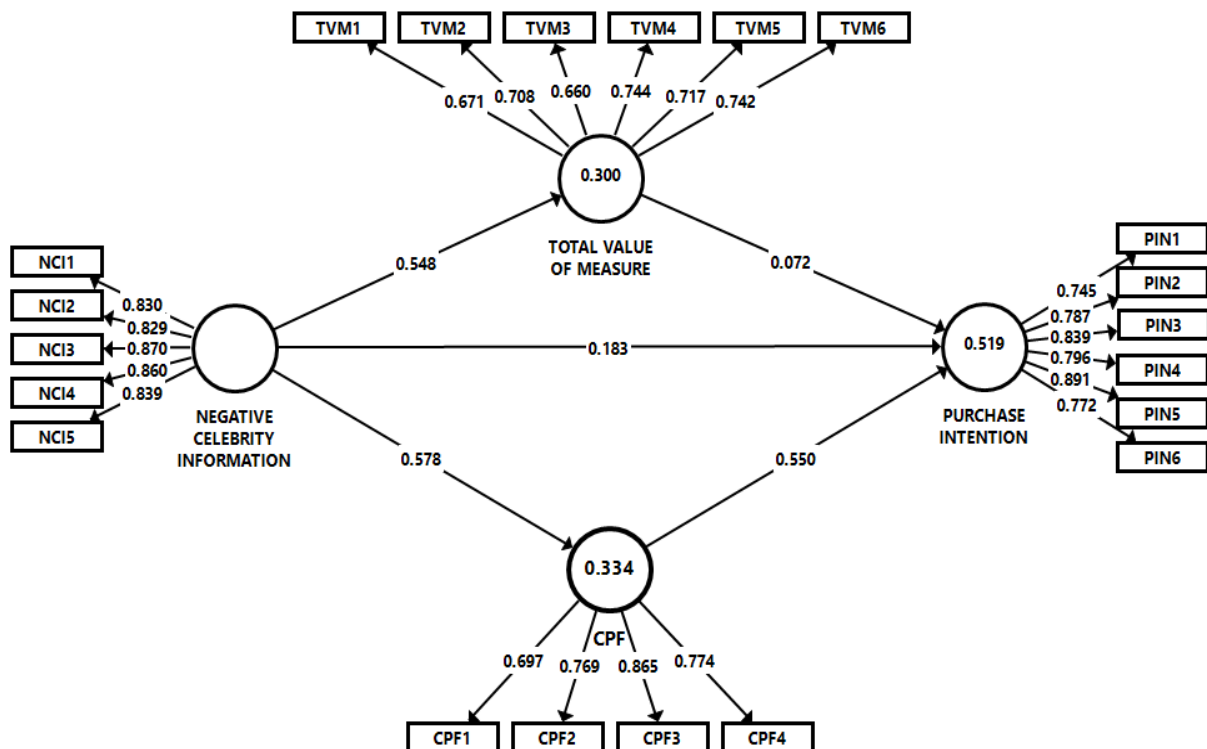

Figure1: Results of Structural Equation Model

IV.   DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The outcome of the present study makes it unequivocally clear that, negative celebrity information has a significant relationship to consumer purchase intentions. This is to say that, consumers prefer to buy endorsed brands regardless of the scandalous nature of the celebrity. In fact, it is imperative to note that, the study sample would purchase a product when the celebrity is involved in a bad press. Consequently, it can also be deduced that, negative information of a celebrity can be viewed as a marketing strategy in some selected brands and hence, firms must be careful not to assume that consumers will unilaterally like it. Since different cohorts of customers exist, it is necessary to identify them and tailor products at satisfying their needs. This study is consistent with Wang and Kim (2019) and Nam-Hyun (2013) who are of the view that negative celebrity information tends to influence consumers positively. However, the study did not support the works of Campbell & Warren (2012) and Hussain et al. (2020).

Furthermore, congruence or product-fit between a celebrity and consumers was able to mediate the relationship and this mean that, consumers likelihood to be influenced is enhanced when there is congruence or fit between the celebrity and the type of product that has been endorsed. Again, when a celebrity endorses a product that is deemed relevant to his line of work or expertise, and he is even involved in a scandalous behavior, consumers would buy. This finding is seems to be a new wave of consumers behavior especially on endorsement strategies. This attribute can be likened to the fact that, fan base or supporters of celebrities often rationalizethe negative information they receive on regular basis. This assertion is supported by Paul and Bhaker (2018) and Thomas and Johnson (2019)and who also found out that product-fit between the celebrity and brands leads to increase in purchase intentions.

It must be noted that, celebrity's value thus the cultural dimension of values, norms and beliefs do not influence purchase intentions, however, there is a positive relation between celebrity negative information and the value measure. This means that it is important for celebrities to be aligned to specific norms and beliefs which helps in shaping their identity. Largely, consumers do not consider the culture of celebrities in influencing their intentions to make purchases and this assertion can interpreted to be that, regardless of who the celebrity is, consumers would not care much about cultural orientations. Though extant literature has called for further improvement in cultural and celebrity endorsement studies, the current study has watered that call down to mean that, culture dimension of value does not predict consumer purchase intentions.

V.   CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

The marketing literature is unequivocally clear that celebrity negative information is not conclusive as some authors see it as a new trend of making brands popular by getting media attention. Nonetheless, it is also worthy of mention that, celebrity endorsement does not operate in a vacuum but needs certain attributes or factors to make meaning out of it as espoused by McCracken (1989). Celebrities who engage in scandalous activities have the ability to influence consumer purchase intentions towards a brand and though this is a deviation from extant literature, it seems to be a new wave in the endorsement process. Furthermore, when a celebrity endorses a product that matches with personal attributes or skills, it is able to increase the appeal to consumers and hence, it can be argued that, celebrities would prefer to engage in a misconduct in order to get media attention.

5.2 Summary and Conclusion

The study is very unique in extending the frontiers of knowledge in celebrity studies and it has been proven, negative information of celebrities can be a strategy in the marketing literature but care must be taken to deploy it well. Market segmentation might vary but the onus is on the firm or agency planning the marketing campaign. It must be noted that though a lot of studies have said that scandal can hurt brands, with a few studies going on the contrary, the current study makes bold claim that there seems to be a shift of consumers in celebrity endorsements to the point that, negative is positive. Of course, this is possible when the consumers like the celebrity.

Again, congruence or product-fit cannot be relegated because, consumers are very sensitive to the type of brands celebrities endorse. Hence, the need for careful evaluation on the part of celebrities so as not to fall for the endorsement deals but one that will give maximum benefit. In addition, the congruence that exist between a celebrity and a brand should always be at the front burner due to the change in behavior of potential and actual customers. Once, congruence exists, the appeal for influence will be high.

From the study celebrity negative information and value was supported but could not mediate the relationship between the consumers and the negative information of a celebrity. Future studies should be

mindful that culture is dynamic and hence, the need to delve deeper to ascertain any differences in the pattern of behavior.

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