

# The Influence of Celebrity Endorsement on Consumer Purchasing Behaviour of Alcohol in the South African Market

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**ABSTRACT** The purpose of this paper is to determine the influence celebrity endorsements have on consumers to purchase alcohol products. Focus was placed on the alcohol producer's television advertisements within the context of the South African alcohol industry. The researchers adopted a mixed method research approach using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The respondents for this research comprised of 110 consumers of alcohol in the Western Cape province of South Africa and eight senior marketing executives working for the alcohol producer. The research enabled an insight into the use and effectiveness of celebrity endorsement as a marketing tool for advertising alcohol. The findings of the research revealed that effectiveness of celebrity endorsements is based on who is portrayed to advertise which product or service. The responses from the interviews indicated that the company had selected celebrity endorsements for advertising their power brands based on the gender and characteristics of the selected brand and the notion that brand ambassadors are successful in increasing purchase behaviour and brand awareness but they had conducted no research to support their advertising strategy. The major findings have revealed that celebrity endorsements are not always a successful method of advertising especially for alcohol products even if the brand ambassador is famous, local or liked. The results of the findings led to the development of criteria that would enable the selected alcohol producer for this research to be able to decide on the type of celebrities that would be suitable for its target markets.

## INTRODUCTION

A successful advertising campaign has the ability to achieve the advertising objective of boosting product or service sales and assist an organisation in achieving competitive advantage thereby ultimately the achievement of organisational goals thus ensuring organisational survival (Diehl and Terlutter 2006: 91). However, in present day, advertising is becoming a challenge for marketers to break through advertising clutter and hold the subject's attention as consumer's attention span has decreased from twelve seconds in 2000 to eight seconds in 2013, shorter than that of a goldfish which is at nine seconds (Microsoft Corporation 2015). The study goes on to say that digital technology has enhanced consumers abilities to filter, process and encode information to memory thus begging the question as to 'why stay tuned in if there is no need to and, why not move onto the next new and exciting thing, with multi-screening being a given'. With research proving that celebrity endorsements having a positive effect on consumer purchase intentions, the advertising industry has been utilising celebrity endorsements for a

considerable number of years (Kenyon et al. 2012: 62). According to Garthwaite (2014:76), celebrity endorsements are a common advertising tool to promote through explicit association with celebrities, products ranging from cosmetics, apparel, watches, alcohol, cars, pharmaceuticals, weight loss programs and financial services with the aim of increasing brand awareness and appeal with this type of advertising dating back centuries to Pope Leo XIII's 1899 endorsement of the alcoholic beverage Vin Mariani and the unpaid celebrity endorsement of Frank Sinatra praising the brand Jack Daniels with sales of the brand soaring thereafter (Inciardi 1992 cited by Garthwaite 2014:76; Kell 2015). Research on celebrity endorsement suggests that the percentage of celebrity endorsed advertisements is as high as 25-30 percent in western countries (Shimp 2000 cited in Roy 2012; Elberse and Verleun 2011) and around 60 percent in India (Shashidhar 2008 cited in Roy 2012). Shashidhar (2008) and Hung et al. (2011 cited in Roy 2012), indicate that popular celebrities often endorse over 10 brands in a single year and this trend was common across Asian countries like India and China.

However, the glamour of a celebrity sometimes goes unnoticed or can be detrimental to the brand. According to Bukszpan (2015), there are celebrity product endorsements that seem to be a natural fit and one may find it difficult to imagine the product without the celebrity's face, for example: Michael Jordan and Nike, while there are other celebrity endorsements, which can attract consumer anger and backfire on the product's image and sales. Some of the reasons cited were bad taste, incorrect celebrity choice for the product or an exploding scandal. Contrary to this, a study by Chaturvedi (2014) in India, found that a celebrity involved in a scandal had no impact on consumer purchases of the product. The study by Chan et al. (2013) found that the respondents were "best able to recall celebrity endorsers whom they considered attractive, funny and expressive. They identified popularity, a good image, and congruence between the celebrity's image and that of the brand as important factors for marketers to consider in selecting celebrity endorsers. A majority of the interviewees perceived that using a celebrity in an advertisement would increase brand awareness, attract the celebrity's fans, encourage trial, and enhance purchase confidence."

Lennox (2014) suggests that the market has evolved to an extent where celebrity endorsements of alcohol is as common as alcohol outlets. He goes on to add that major corporations are aware that the alignment of their brands with actors, society influentials and singers would increase their brands appeal to their targeted audience and provide immense brand awareness due to their large followers on the various social media platforms.

The South African alcohol industry is an important component of South Africa's economy as it makes a substantial contribution to employment, domestic output, taxation and export earnings (Fieldgate et al. 2013: 10). Alcohol can be classified as a sedative drug which slows down the action of the central nervous system and causes disoriented behaviour therefore, causing the individual to exhibit drowsiness, lack of concentration and delayed responses. The abuse or over consumption of alcohol beyond an individual's tolerance threshold could potentially lead the imbibitor to exhibit reckless behaviour which could be potentially fatal (Bezuidenhout 2011: 135). Interventions such as the formation of the government's Anti-Substance

Abuse Programme of Action and the Industry Association for Responsible Alcohol (ARA) have been put in place to address issues of irresponsible drinking and irresponsible alcohol related advertising (to restrict or ban it as previously done with the cigarette industry). In the face of mounting pressure from the government to regulate and combat the misuse and abuse of alcohol in South Africa, Company X<sup>1</sup> was faced with the quandary of increasing awareness of their products and achieving their objectives and sales targets through advertising through new and effective means that were appealing to their target market. However, at the same time the Company needed to ensure that they acted and remained in accordance with the rules regulating alcohol advertising set by the national government, the Industry Association for Responsible Alcohol and the Anti-Substance Abuse Programme of Action. Since research proved that the use of celebrities in advertising can have a positive effect on consumer purchase intentions, the advertising industry has been utilising celebrity endorsements for a considerable number of years (Kenyon et al. 2012: 62). Due to strict alcohol advertising regulations in South Africa, marketers are employing creative techniques efforts, namely celebrity endorsements, to capture the attention of consumers in a way that will set them apart from their competitors by making an impact in the mind of the consumer. The celebrity endorsements of alcohol in other countries have proven to be successful hence the current alcohol producer employing this advertising tool as more celebrities seek to increase their wealth from the increasing popularity of alcohol (Kell 2015), however, the effectiveness of it in influencing consumer purchase behaviour in the South African market has not been ascertained.

### Advertising

Advertising is utilised to capture the attention of target markets and create awareness and demand through informing or reminding the target market about a particular product or service and seeks to change consumer perspectives on products/services by means of persuasion (Jansson-Boyd 2011: 99). Baron et al. (2009: 151) add that in the clamber of competitive advertising messages, advertisements have to be stimulating enough to persuade and capture the attention of the appropriate target market.

Research has shown that customer perception and attitudes have a direct relationship to a brand's market position and business results (Jansson-Boyd 2009: 97). This is due to the fact that consumers evaluate products based on information cues, which are both intrinsic and extrinsic. Stimulating adverts that are noticeable and easily recalled can be expected to create demand and increase the sales of advertised products and services exponentially and perpetuate loyalty over time (Jansson-Boyd 2009: 97). According to Khan (2006: 276), in order for an advertisement to be successful in terms of information and persuasion, the demographic factors of the target audience have to be well defined, as this will dictate and ensure that the advertising message is suitable and captures the interests of the target audience. Both, vivid (elements that make the advertisement stand out in an ordinary manner through provoking imagery or appeal to emotion) and salient (elements that capture the attention of consumers unconsciously such as bright colours, catchy music and a sudden increase in volume) stimuli have to be present to make the target audience assimilate the advertising message. (Jansson-Boyd 2009: 97). Often, soft advertising, which is also referred to as persuasive advertising, utilises these stimuli through the concept of association with celebrities or a certain lifestyle to affect consumer purchase intentions (Waschick et al. 2010: 289).

### **Celebrity Endorsements**

Celebrity endorsements have become a common marketing strategy. Leslie (2011: 45) highlights that the core of this is to link and transfer (directly or indirectly) the qualities of the celebrity that are aspired to and liked by the consumer, such as physique, health or lifestyle through linking the celebrity to the brand. This approach is necessary so that an association between the brand and celebrity is formed in the mind of the consumer. In addition, the approach is necessary to increase the attractiveness of the product and likelihood of influencing consumer preferences and purchase intentions regarding that particular product (Leslie 2011: 45). People are often riveted by and obsessed with celebrities and at times secretly feel familiar with them because celebrities often reinforce their desired image or self-identity (Nayar 2009: 148). The in-

stant recognition of celebrities in advertising campaigns can make an advertisement stand out from the advertising clutter of competitors. Therefore, linking celebrities with certain brands may assist in enhancing a brand in the mind of the consumer through recall and brand association thereby increasing the brand's equity (Chattopadhyay et al. 2009: 110). Since the demeanour and the celebrity's public image can transfer to the endorsed product, it is important that the celebrity maintains a reputation that will transfer only positive effects to the endorsed products. Negative traits and behaviours can overshadow a brand's equity (Kardes et al. 2008: 323).

Marketers spend substantial amounts of money on celebrity endorsements with the hope that these celebrities will inspire consumers to purchase their products as celebrities are deemed to be people that others look up to and desire to emulate (Nayar 2009: 148). Three types of endorsements exist, namely: explicit, implicit and imperative. Explicit endorsement relays the message that the celebrity endorser only endorses the product and does not utilise it. Implicit endorsement occurs when the message relayed informs the consumer that the endorser utilises the product and in an imperative endorsement, the endorser tells the consumer to use the product (Seno and Lukas 2007: 123). According to Jansson-Boyd (2010: 101) endorsements should also be driven by other factors in a bid to attract consumers such as the personal characteristics of the public figure utilised for the endorsement. Jansson-Boyd (2010: 101) adds that this is the reason why models and attractive celebrities are often utilised to endorse products/services. However, research conducted by Marketing-Charts Staff (2014) reveals that TV advertisements containing celebrities underperformed those without celebrities. "Celebrity advertisements underperformed the most in the elements of "desire" and "relevance;" with the analysts noting that the worst performers were those where the celebrities featured had little apparent connection to the brand (such as Jay-Z for Samsung Mobile Phones). By contrast, those that out-performed had a strong connection to the endorsed brand along with a "clever and integrated script." The study goes on to indicate that 45 percent of United States (US) adults believe that celebrities can make either a large or some positive difference to issues they are promoting, but a greater proportion (51%) feel that

they make little to no difference. Respondents were more convinced of celebrities' potential negative impact (55%) they can have on the issue they're promoting (MarketingCharts Staff 2014).

Crutchfield (2010) notes that celebrity endorsements does have its negative implications however the positives of this advertising strategy gives it a reason to be used especially when one considers in the "US celebrities show up in more than 15 percent of advertisements, according to Millward Brown, and the number is far higher in markets such as India (24%) and Taiwan (45%)". Agadoni (n.d) writes that branding experts "Derrick Daye and Brad VanAuken discovered that celebrity endorsements are largely ineffective, rarely producing the sought-after effects businesses want." According the Derrick Daye and Brad VanAuken's research on nationally televised advertised, "almost ninety percent of advertisements with celebrities didn't "lift," or increase, the marketing objective higher than ten percent. One-fifth of advertisements with celebrities had a negative effect, meaning they turned viewers away from the products. Advertisements are determined to be effective when they have a certain brand lift". The reasons postulated by them were that people rely more often on their social media connections view-points about a product of business than a celebrity and the celebrities' advertisements lacked information and relevance which are key determinants to motivate consumers to purchase. The study follows research suggesting that celebrities don't have much influence over consumers when it comes to marketing campaigns. In a study of global consumers' responses to advertising messages, Nielsen Global Trust in Advertising Report (2015) recently found that while humour resonates with a leading forty seven percent of respondents, celebrity (12%) and athlete (8%) endorsements resonate with the fewest consumers. Another study – from Boston Consulting Group, reported by MediaPost – indicates that celebrity endorsements garner less trust from consumers around the world than any other type of brand promotion (Irwin 2013). Irwin (2013) goes on to indicate that countries that trusted celebrity endorsements the most were China (21%), Brazil (17%) and the US (15%) while the Germans were least trusting (6%), with consumers across all countries surveyed placed greater trust on what their family and friends offline had to say, followed by what was being said online about the brand. The Nielsen Global

Trust in Advertising Report (2015) found similar findings were eighty three percent of respondents placed some degree of trust with the recommendations of family and friends and sixty six percent trusting consumer opinions posted online.

### **Brand Awareness**

Okonkwo (2013: 2) mentions that celebrity endorsements are one of the strategies used to create brand awareness as celebrities can enhance the quality of a brand through borrowed equity. In addition, a celebrity can also bring awareness to an unknown brand, and a brand can also be easily recalled and recognised through the image or mention of the name of the celebrity representing it. Celebrity endorsements can encourage repeat purchases as a result of consumers wishing to emulate the celebrity representing the brands (Nayar 2009: 80; Okonkwo 2013: 2). Kell (2015) indicates that celebrity endorsements have immense gains for both celebrities and alcohol brands. "The brands boost their sales by associating with a well-known actor, or rapper, benefiting from free press when those celebrities go on talk shows, or promote their brands to millions of fans on Twitter and other social media platforms. Celebrities enjoy the benefits of associating with a category that denotes luxury" (Kell 2015).

The purpose of this paper was to establish the effectiveness or lack thereof of celebrity television endorsements in the South African alcohol industry. In addition the research study sought to determine which attributes consumers pay attention to when evaluating and selecting a brand and which factors brought about by celebrity endorsements contribute to building brand loyalty in the context of the Company's advertisements in the South African market.

The objectives of the study were:

1. To establish the impact of celebrity endorsements on the consumers' purchase decision making process.
2. To determine if celebrity endorsements impact the brand loyalty and equity of the Company's products.

### **MATERIAL AND METHODS**

Due to the nature of this research that sought to comprehend the effect celebrity endorsements have on consumer purchase intentions of alcohol, the methodology utilised in this research

was an exploratory approach where qualitative and quantitative research methods were used, adopting purposive and random sampling techniques. Furthermore, through analysis of the data collected, a greater understanding was achieved relating to the factors influencing the alcohol purchase and the appropriateness of the use of celebrity endorsers to achieve the advertising aims. The respondents for this research comprised of one hundred and ten consumers of alcohol in the Western Cape Province of South Africa and eight senior marketing executives of the alcohol producer – Company X with data being collected from September to October 2014 using a structured close-ended questionnaire for the consumers and an in-depth interview for the senior marketing executives. Thematic data analysis was conducted on the in-depth interviews and the survey data was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 17.0). A pilot test was conducted on a sample group of ten respondents for the quantitative study. Additionally two face to face in-depth interviews were conducted as part of the pilot study for the qualitative study. A Cronbach Alpha value of 0.751 emerged from the relevant items in the questionnaire, indicating an acceptable reliability of the responses.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Factors Influencing Purchases

The most important factors considered by the respondents when purchasing a product in general were the brand name (27%) and the price (27%). Quality (23%) was indicated as the next criterion that the respondents considered when purchasing a product. The findings are in agreement with Kotler and Armstrong (2012: 267) and Okonkwo (2013: 2) whom explained that brand

equity is an important factor in consumer purchasing behaviour because consumers base their purchase decisions on their own perceptions of brands and their value. Occasion played an insignificant role (9%) in the purchase decision.

### Celebrity Endorsements

Based on Table 1, only fourteen percent of the respondents strongly agreed/agreed that alcohol was more appealing when endorsed by celebrities, while sixty percent indicated otherwise. This is contrary to the findings of the in-depth interviews where Company X marketing executives believed that celebrity alcohol endorsements make the product resonate more with consumers and also make the products more enticing to consumers who admire and respect the chosen celebrities. Thus, the Company's executives need to review their current strategies on celebrity endorsement and conduct further market research using a larger sample size and other geographic regions to determine if similar findings are evident.

**Table 1: Impact of celebrity endorsements**

<i>Alcohol is more appealing when endorsed by celebrities</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Strongly agree	5	5
Agree	10	9
Neutral	29	26
Disagree	48	44
Strongly disagree	18	16
Total	110	100

Source: Author

### Products More Likely to be Purchased as a Result of Celebrity Endorsements

According to Table 2, the respondents believe that celebrity endorsements are more likely

**Table 2: Products more likely to be purchased as a result of celebrity endorsements**

<i>Are you more likely to purchase the products below if they are endorsed?</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Disagree disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>
Alcohol	3%	15%	35%	24%	23%
Furniture	0%	0%	14%	35%	51%
Sports apparel	30%	43%	11%	11%	5%
Car	19%	23%	9%	25%	24%
Health and beauty products	55%	25%	4%	9%	7%
Electronics	16%	25%	35%	11%	13%
Clothing	50%	40%	5%	3%	2%

Source: Author

to influence their decision to buy clothing, health and beauty products and sports apparel, respectively (90%, 80% and 73%) and that furniture endorsed by celebrities do not persuade them to buy the advertised furniture. Only a small number portion of respondents felt that celebrity endorsement affected their alcohol purchases (18%). However, Kell (2015) writes that many celebrities are endorsing alcohol as these partnerships create immense gains for both celebrities and alcohol brands, with the brand experiencing increased awareness and even sales while the celebrity enjoys the benefit of associating with an alcohol category that denotes luxury and status. Kell (2015) goes on to quote Michael Stone, CEO of licensing agency Beanstalk, saying that “The endorsement by a celebrity really gives consumers the feeling that they can partake in the kind of lifestyle they assume these celebrities are living”.

### Celebrity Endorsements and Their Connection to Brands

In Table 3 it is evident that a celebrity’s reputation has the ability to affect his/her persua-

siveness in celebrity endorsements. This echoes the sentiment of Leslie (2011: 45) and Chan et al. (2013) who explains that the reputation of a celebrity is an important criterion in selecting a brand/product/service as a good reputation makes the endorser more admirable and believable to consumers. Also, congruence between the celebrity’s image and the brand is extremely important.

It is also clear from the findings of Table 3 that celebrity endorsements assist greatly in product recall (72% - statement 2) although the respondents do not believe that products are good quality just because they are endorsed by celebrities (57% - statement 7).

However, it is also evident that celebrity endorsements wield persuasive power as forty four percent (statement 6) of the respondents have agreed that they will purchase an endorsed product with only fifty three percent (statement 4) of the respondents indicating that they have purchased a product from a celebrity they admired. This is congruent with the findings that reveal that the highest number of respondents (75% - statement 11) would want to buy products be-

**Table 3: Celebrity endorsements and their connection to brands**

		<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>
1.	I prefer brands/products that are endorsed by celebrities	17%	17%	22%	22%	22%
2.	I remember brands/products by the celebrity that endorses it.	32%	40%	15%	11%	2%
3.	I often refer/relate to a brand/product based on the celebrity that endorses it.	10%	12%	30%	25%	23%
4.	I have bought a product because it was endorsed by a celebrity I admire.	25%	28%	20%	15%	12%
5.	I am aware of certain brands only because they are endorsed by a celebrity.	27%	40%	20%	11%	2%
6.	I am more likely to buy a brand based on the type of celebrity who endorses it.	20%	24%	30%	15%	11%
7.	Products endorsed by celebrities are of good quality	11%	18%	14%	30%	27%
8.	Rumours about celebrities have an impact on their credibility and persuasiveness in endorsements	38%	33%	14%	8%	7%
9.	I would stop buying a product if the celebrity endorsing it was involved in a scandal	35%	35%	16%	9%	5%
10.	I would stop buying a product if the celebrity endorsing it is not credible and trustworthy	39%	30%	15%	9%	7%
11.	I would buy a product if the celebrity endorsing it was good looking and sexy	35%	40%	17%	5%	3%
12.	I would buy a product if the celebrity endorsing it was a man	7%	9%	36%	25%	23%
13.	I would buy a product if the celebrity endorsing it was positively famous and successful	39%	34%	21%	5%	1%

Source: Author

cause they are endorsed by sexy and good looking celebrities. A large percentage of the respondents indicated that they would stop buying a product if the celebrity endorsing it was not trustworthy and credible (69% - statement 10) and was involved in a scandal (70% - statement 9). Further to this, seventy one percent (statement 8) of the respondents feel that rumours about celebrities have an impact on their credibility and persuasiveness in endorsements. Sixty seven percent of the respondents (statement 5) indicated that they are aware of the brand only because of the celebrity endorsing the brand.

Based on the open-ended question, when respondents were asked which particular attributes would make a celebrity endorsing alcohol credible to the respondents, the recurring responses that emerged were:

- ♦ *“If the celebrity is scandal free”;*
- ♦ *“If the celebrity has similar values to mine”;*
- ♦ *“If the celebrity is trustworthy”;*
- ♦ *“If the celebrity also uses the product that they endorse, they can’t be spotted with rival products whilst endorsing another product, but with some endorsements it is so easy to see that the celebrity does not utilise the products/services that they endorse, especially if the products and services are low end products/services”;*
- and
- *“If the celebrity is good looking and their good looks can be attributed to the product or service”*

The open-ended question in the questionnaire that enquired what effect a celebrity endorser would have on the respondent’s decision to buy alcohol, the main responses were: *“A very limited effect”;* and *“None”*.

These responses from the open-ended questions above correlate with the responses in Table 3. The reasons behind these responses was that the respondents buy alcohol depending on what the respondent considers good tasting or what fits in with their lifestyle and is also congruent with their financial circumstances. They explained that the reason for experimentation with other brands at times, is because of the recommendation of friends and acquaintances or because of the emergence of a new product on the market.

### **Types of Celebrities Endorsing Alcohol Brands**

In comparison, the majority of the respondents (41%) stated that international artists would persuade them to buy alcohol over endorsements by local celebrities (36%). This differs in comparison to the findings where forty seven percent of the respondents indicated that they disagree that they would buy alcohol because it was endorsed by celebrities and only eighteen percent agreeing that celebrity endorsements would persuade them to purchase alcohol. Out of Company X’s four current celebrity endorsement campaigns, three of them are international artist endorsements and only one of them is a local celebrity endorsement. Company X’s marketing executives selected international artists to endorse their brands because it:

*“Helps to give local products a big persona, as products affiliated with the international market are often associated with high quality and status”.*

### **Type of Celebrity Profile that Would Persuade the Purchase of Alcohol**

Socialites (27.2%) emerged as the type of celebrity who would be more persuasive alcohol endorsers. Atkinson et al. (2011: 13) indicated that “a social norms approach to alcohol consumption suggests that individuals draw on the behaviour of significant others (e.g. peers, parents, siblings, role models) as a guide to what are normal drinking practices, which then reinforces socially acceptable behaviour.” These sentiments were also found in the Nielson Global Trust in Advertising Report (2015).

This was closely followed by singers and models (23% each), with actors (11%) deemed as the least persuasive alcohol endorsers, perhaps this is due to the many and varying (and at often times conflicting) roles actors play throughout their lifetimes which would impact their credibility. In Table 3 (statement 11), a high number of respondents (75%) indicated that they would buy products because they are endorsed by appealing and good-looking celebrities. Often socialites, singers and models are classed as being sexy and good looking.

### **Advertising Media**

Television (32%) emerged as the most persuasive media, followed by the internet (26%), magazines (20%), newspapers (13%) and lastly

radio (7%). Television and audio visual internet advertising engages both sight and hearing as compared to radio and print media which engage a single sense at a time thus making television and the internet perceived as a more effective form of advertising media. Due to creative and innovative advertising techniques, television and audio visual internet advertisements are able to evoke senses and emotions in an individual, which the person may feel as if though they are actually in the situation presented by the advertisement or can relate to a similar situation.

### Company X's Advertisements

The majority of the respondents (79%) had seen Company X's celebrity endorsed television advertisements. The respondents most favourite celebrity endorsement was an advertisement by Company X's international Celebrity Endorser 1<sup>2</sup> (46%) and the least favourite advertisement is that of a local rap artist Celebrity Endorser 3 (6%), further reinforcing the respondents view that endorsements by international celebrities would persuade them to buy alcohol more than those with local celebrity endorsers.

Most respondents felt that Company X's celebrity endorsements for television advertisements are generally not creative nor enticing. However, the overwhelming majority of the respondents felt that only one international artist, Celebrity Endorser 1, was the most appropriate alignment to the brand, and with the other artists selected for these advertisements are not considered very appropriate for the brands that they were matched to. The local artist scored the lowest frequency of responses although the majority felt that they could relate to him as a celebrity which is most likely due to the fact that he is a local celebrity. The most popular endorser, Celebrity Endorser 1, created brand awareness and recall, displayed credibility and trust, and the respondents could relate to her.

Another recurring theme that was revealed was the fact the majority of the respondents did not feel that the television advertisements persuaded them to purchase alcohol. This was also possibly due to the established drink preferences of the consumers, similar to what the majority of the consumers had stated previously explaining that celebrity endorsements would not have a major effect on their decisions to buy alcohol

as the decision to buy alcohol is mainly determined by their drink preferences and the suggestions of friends and acquaintances.

### Results from the Interviews

All of the executives explained that in their view, celebrity endorsements are a good way to positively affect consumer purchasing decisions, as humans often aspire to be like people they admire and those they consider to be more successful/rich/ attractive compared to themselves. Harris et al. (2010: 180) concur with the response presented above by stating that celebrities have persuasive sales capabilities due to certain traits that they may possess such as attractiveness, status and likeability. This sentiment was also echoed in the responses displayed in Table 3, where the respondents stated that they would buy a product which is endorsed by an attractive or positively famous and successful celebrity.

The executives indicated that celebrities can improve brand recall which is also a viewpoint supported by Kardes et al. (2008: 475). This is similar to the findings presented in Table 3 where sixty seven percent (statement 5) of the respondents also strongly agree/agree that they recall certain products that are endorsed by celebrities.

All executives echoed similar sentiments and explained that celebrities can influence the purchasing behaviour of consumers. The majority of the executives explained how they have purchased products because of the celebrities who endorsed them. Table 2 sought to establish the types of products that celebrity endorsements would persuade respondents to purchase. In the case of sports apparel, seventy three percent strongly agreed/agreed and only five percent strongly disagreed with this idea while for alcohol, only eighteen percent strongly agreed/agreed that they would purchase a product that is endorsed by a celebrity. The percentages of those who agreed or disagreed that celebrity endorsement would persuade them to buy a product, varied depending on the type of product that was mentioned. This therefore proved that celebrity endorsements do not have the same effect on all products but are rather better suited to certain types of products or brands. One respondent indicated that "*celebrities certainly have the power to influence the purchasing behaviour of consumers. Celebrities are opinion leaders. We often think that the products or*

*services they utilise have made them who they are, more so for the more admirable celebrities.”*

The findings of Table 2 where that fifty five percent of the respondents strongly agreed that celebrity endorsements would persuade them to purchase health and beauty products, as compared to a low seven percent who strongly disagreed that this would be the case.

Company X's executives indicated that they opted to utilise the strategy of celebrity endorsements in advertising certain products, their power brands: brands that have a large market share, high gross income and brand equity. The reason for investing was to maintain their brand equity and to also ensure that the brands are always a priority in the minds of the consumers. Table 3 (statement 5) illustrates that almost half of the respondents (40%) agree that celebrity endorsements do assist them with product recall.

The above mentioned finding was contradictory to the findings of the research. Company X's marketing executives believe that celebrity endorsements will win their power brands more market share. However the findings displayed in Table 1 illustrates that forty four percent of the respondents disagree and sixteen percent strongly disagree that celebrity endorsements would make alcohol more appealing to them. This was further stressed in Table 2 where thirty five percent were neutral to the question that enquired whether celebrity endorsements would persuade them to purchase alcohol, forty seven percent strongly disagree/disagree and a low eighteen percent strongly agreed/agreed. These findings therefore prove that Company X's celebrity endorsements may not be providing them with the results that they seek.

Company X's marketing executives were in unison with the respondents when it came to the matter of the importance of a celebrity matching the product which he or she endorses. Seventy nine percent of the respondents had seen Company X's advertisements; however, those respondents who have seen the advertisements believe that some of the utilised celebrities are not the correct fit for the brands that they have been matched to. Almost half of the respondents (57%) stated that the Celebrity 1 and Brand 1 celebrity endorsement is their favourite and eighty percent stated that it was an appropriate alignment. At the other extreme, more than half of the respondents (57%) indicated that the Ce-

lebrity 3 and Brand 3 endorsement was their least favourite with 30% strongly disagreeing that Celebrity 3 was an appropriate alignment to the brand. Due to the Celebrity 3 endorsement being the least favourite forty nine percent of the respondents stated that the advertisement did not assist with creating awareness and assisting with brand recall as Company X's marketing executives had thought that this advertisement would. However, eighty percent of the respondents strongly agree that Celebrity 1 and Brand 1 endorsement increased the awareness and recall of the brand.

## CONCLUSION

From the research findings it was revealed that consumers believe that celebrity endorsements would be more persuasive to them when making a decision to purchase health and beauty products and less likely to persuade them to purchase alcohol and furniture.

The research also revealed that the respondents believe that if they were to be persuaded by the celebrity endorsements to purchase alcohol, they would more likely be enticed by endorsements made by international celebrities with socialites being the most preferred.

Due to the power of brand association, sixty seven percent (statement 5, Table 3) of the respondents revealed that they are often more likely to recall brands due to the celebrity endorsements associated with the brands. However, contrary to this finding, it was revealed that the respondents (48%, statement 3, Table 3) don't refer/relate to products based on the celebrity that endorses the products, which reveals that the celebrity's do not often overpower the brands they represent. Seventy nine percent of the respondents reported that they have seen Company X's advertisements and twenty one percent stated that they have never seen any of Company X's advertisements. Out of all of Company X's celebrity endorsements, a high number of respondents disagreed that the endorsements have the ability to persuade them to purchase alcohol. Based on the data collected, it is evident that a blanket approach of celebrity endorsement cannot be utilised for all products, even those that belong to one classification will not all yield the same results from celebrity endorsements.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to be able to decide on the use, type and extent of celebrity endorsements as a suitable marketing strategy for the identified alcohol consumption target markets, the researcher identified three critical conditions for these recommendations to be successful.

1. Researching and understanding the target market
2. Preferred advertising media, frequency and time slots should be determined
3. Celebrity and brand fit

The research findings have proven that celebrity endorsements are not always an effective means for marketing all of Company X's power brands. It is recommended that the following alternative means of advertising and marketing:

- ♦ **The use of non-celebrity's and international celebrities and socialites:** The alcohol company can explore the use of a regular, admirable person in advertising power brands, as is done with non-power brands such as Savannah and Hunters Dry, would be cheaper and could also yield the desired effects of positively affecting consumer purchasing behaviour or alternatively use international celebrities with preferences given to socialites to endorse their brand. However, good celebrity fit, relevance and product knowledge is recommended. Focus group research on the possible celebrity endorsements for each brand should be undertaken to ascertain the correct celebrity brand fit or not. Performance evaluation of the celebrity endorsement needs to be conducted regularly.
- ♦ **Memorable phrases for brand recall:** The utilisations of catchy and memorable phrases, as is done with Savannah such as "Its dry but you can drink it" and Klipdrift' "Met eish", can be utilised with power brands. This will craft a memorable phrase, which, when mentioned or when similar utterances are made, the mind of the consumer will automatically refer to the brand. This is a cheaper alternative to utilising celebrities to assist in brand recall.
- ♦ **Influencer marketing:** With the aid of key social group influencers, the alcohol company can use these individuals to promote the alcohol brand among their social peers.

## AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This paper was solely based on Company X's products and celebrity endorsements. Hence the findings of this research paper cannot be extended to the impact of other celebrity endorsement campaigns even if they exhibit similar characteristics. However, this research paper finding can be utilised as a basis for further research.

It is advised that based on the limitations of the research (exploratory research, small sample size and geographic region limitation) the findings of the research must be interpreted with caution and it is advised that using a larger sample, multiple geographic regions and experimental research further research into this area be conducted.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The name of the alcohol producer has been omitted due to confidentiality reasons.
- <sup>2</sup> Celebrity endorsers names and brands they endorsed where removed for confidentiality purposes

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