Cultural Micro-foundations of Celebrity Endorsement: A Behavioral Strategy Perspective from Nigeria's Multicultural Telecommunications Market

Mustapha J. Omotayo[1*], Oluseyi O. Sode[2], Bunmi Omoloso-Dada[3]

[1]Department of Entrepreneurship and Business Management, National Open University of Nigeria

[2]Department of Business, Lazaridis School of Business and Economics, Wilfrid Laurier University, 75 University Avenue West, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada N2L 3C5

[3]Department of Business and Entrepreneurship, Faculty of Management and Social Sciences, Kwara State University, Kwara State, Nigeria.

[*]Corresponding Author

DOI: https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.101000122

Received: 09 October 2026; Accepted: 14 October 2026; Published: 30 October 2026

ABSTRACT

Celebrity endorsement is a prominent promotional strategy in Nigeria's telecommunications industry, but the cultural mechanisms proposed to explain its effectiveness require direct testing. This study documents associations between favorable endorsement perceptions and four brand evaluations (perceived competitiveness, popularity, profitability, and customer acceptance) in a Lagos sample and develops cultural propositions for subsequent testing. Integrating the meaning transfer model, source credibility and attractiveness models, parasocial interaction theory, Hofstede's cultural dimensions, and the elaboration likelihood model within a behavioral strategy perspective, the study proposes a culturally contingent endorsement–evaluation framework. Survey data from 234 respondents (180 subscribers and 54 marketing and customer-service staff) of MTN, Globacom, and Airtel in Lagos were analyzed using chi-square tests, Spearman's rank-order correlation, and ordinal logistic regression controlling for respondent type, age, and operator. Favorable endorsement perceptions were positively and significantly associated with all four evaluations. Reported odds ratios were 1.62 for competitiveness (95% CI [1.23, 2.13]), 1.57 for acceptance (95% CI [1.19, 2.07]), 1.46 for popularity, and 1.35 for perceived profitability (95% CI [1.03, 1.77]). These estimates do not identify symbolic meaning transfer, institutional trust substitution, or parasocial bonding as the mechanisms responsible, nor establish firm-level competitive advantage. Respondents' cultural values, identities, institutional trust, and parasocial bonds were not measured; national indices describe context rather than individual orientations, and Lagos's diversity does not establish the sample's cultural composition. The urban, non-probabilistic design further limits generalization and causal inference. The contribution combines context-specific associational evidence with explicitly theoretical cultural propositions. Ethnocultural endorsement intelligence is proposed as a candidate organizational capability, not a demonstrated finding, and culturally resonant campaigns are recommended for comparative testing rather than presumed superiority.

Keywords: Celebrity endorsement; cultural micro-foundations; ethnocultural matching; behavioral strategy; Nigerian telecommunications

INTRODUCTION

How might cultural logics shape the interpretation of celebrity endorsement and its association with brand evaluations? The question sits at the intersection of consumer behavior, cross-cultural management, behavioral strategy, and brand theory, yet it remains largely unresolved. Most endorsement research treats culture as a backdrop that describes a market rather than as a mechanism that alters how endorsements work (Bergkvist & Zhou, 2016; Erdogan, 1999). Meta-analytic reviews show that endorsement effects vary widely with

moderators such as endorser–product congruence, platform, and audience characteristics (Knoll & Matthes, 2017, p. 55; Pan et al., 2025, p. 52), but the cultural sources of that variation have received little theoretical attention in sub-Saharan Africa.

Nigeria's telecommunications industry offers a revealing setting. The market had approximately 189 million mobile subscriptions in mid-2026, served by four operators: MTN, Airtel, Globacom, and T2 (formerly 9mobile), with MTN and Airtel together holding more than 85% of subscriptions (Nigerian Communications Commission [NCC], 2026). The country is home to more than 250 ethnic groups and more than 500 languages (White, 2023), which makes it one of the world's most culturally heterogeneous consumer markets. Operators have long invested in celebrity ambassadors drawn from music, film, comedy, and sport, and a prior Nigerian study reports that endorser attractiveness is positively associated with purchase intention for telecommunications brands (Onu et al., 2019). Such studies, however, treat Nigerian consumers as culturally homogeneous and do not explain why the same endorsement may resonate differently across ethnocultural segments.

The study separates an empirical question from several theoretical questions. Empirically, how are favorable endorsement perceptions associated with different brand evaluations in a Lagos sample? Standard endorsement theory anticipates positive associations through credibility and meaning transfer (Bergkvist et al., 2016; McCracken, 1989), but the present survey does not identify those mechanisms. Theoretically, when might cultural values and identity resonance alter how endorsement meanings are interpreted, and how might firms develop the capability to assess audience–endorser alignment (Ang et al., 2020; Oyserman et al., 2012)? A further theoretical question concerns whether parasocial dynamics vary with cultural orientations (Chung & Cho, 2017; Labrecque, 2014). These cultural questions motivate propositions for subsequent research; they are not answered by the current data.

To develop these propositions, the framework integrates the meaning transfer model (McCracken, 1989), source credibility and attractiveness models (Hovland et al., 1970; McGuire, 1985; Ohanian, 1990), parasocial interaction theory (Horton & Wohl, 1956), Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory (Hofstede et al., 2010), and the elaboration likelihood model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) within a behavioral strategy perspective (Felin et al., 2015; Powell et al., 2011). Four hypotheses concern associations between endorsement perceptions and perceived brand competitiveness, popularity, profitability, and customer acceptance. Three cultural propositions accompany these analyses but are not tested, directly or indirectly, by the Lagos survey.

The study offers three bounded contributions. First, drawing on endorsement research (Bergkvist & Zhou, 2016; Erdogan, 1999), it develops a theoretical account of how cultural interpretations and institutional trust might shape endorsement responses, without claiming that these mechanisms are demonstrated. Second, informed by cultural intelligence research (Ang et al., 2020), it proposes ethnocultural endorsement intelligence as a candidate organizational capability whose existence, development, and performance implications require investigation. Third, complementing Nigerian research on purchase intention (Onu et al., 2019), it documents associations across four self-reported brand evaluations in one Lagos sample. The empirical contribution concerns individual perceptions, not confirmed cultural moderation or firm-level performance.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 develops the theoretical framework and hypotheses. Section 3 describes the methodology. Section 4 presents the results. Section 5 discusses theoretical contributions, managerial implications, and limitations, and Section 6 concludes.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

Celebrity Endorsement as Strategic Signaling

Endorsement has mainly been conceptualized as a marketing communications tool (Bergkvist & Zhou, 2016; Erdogan, 1999). A strategic interpretation is proposed here: where services are difficult to evaluate, institutional assurances are perceived as weak, or cultural identity is salient, audiences might interpret an endorsement as a signal of quality, alignment, or positioning (Spence, 1973). Signal value might therefore reflect both public recognition and the meanings audiences associate with an endorser (McCracken, 1989, pp.

310, 315). Identity-based motivation and social identity theory provide possible explanations for variation in interpretation (Oyserman et al., 2011, p. 88; Tajfel & Turner, 1979, pp. 38–40). These are theoretical possibilities, not mechanisms identified in the present sample, and individual evaluations do not establish firm-level competitive advantage.

Theoretical Foundations

Cultural dimensions theory

Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory provides contextual concepts for the framework. Power distance concerns acceptance of unequal power, and individualism–collectivism concerns the relative emphasis on autonomy and cohesive groups (Hofstede et al., 2010, chaps. 3–4; Triandis, 1995). Reported national scores for Nigeria are 80 for power distance, 30 for individualism, and 55 for uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede Insights, 2024). These aggregate scores do not measure the orientations of the respondents or establish cultural homogeneity within Nigeria. A meta-analysis of 558 studies found that approximately 80% of cultural-value variation lies within rather than between countries (Taras et al., 2016, p. 455). National dimensions therefore inform theoretical propositions only; individual cultural values and identity salience must be measured before their explanatory role can be tested.

Consumer behavior: meaning transfer, heuristic processing, and social identity

McCracken's (1989) meaning transfer model holds that celebrities acquire cultural meanings through their public personas and transfer them to brands, and from brands to consumers, through advertising (p. 315). The framework extends the model by theorizing cultural contingency in meaning transfer: the effectiveness of transfer may depend not only on celebrity–brand fit but also on alignment between the celebrity's cultural identity and the audience's active cultural schema. Identity-based motivation theory supports this extension. Identities are "dynamically constructed in the moment" (Oyserman et al., 2012, p. 70), and people "interpret situations in ways that are congruent with their currently active identities" and "prefer identity-congruent actions" (Oyserman et al., 2012, p. 88). Social identity theory adds that individuals derive part of their self-image from group memberships and favor in-groups in evaluation and behavior (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, pp. 38–40).

The elaboration likelihood model explains when such meanings matter most. When motivation or ability to process product information is low, attitudes form through peripheral cues, such as source attractiveness and likability, rather than through careful evaluation of arguments (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Choosing among mobile networks with similar tariffs and coverage claims is cognitively demanding, so consumers can be expected to rely on heuristics that ignore part of the available information (Gigerenzer & Gaissmaier, 2011; Kahneman, 2011). From a behavioral strategy perspective, celebrity meanings thus operate as culturally filtered heuristics that reduce information-processing costs during brand evaluation.

Nigerian operators' campaigns provide illustrations for theoretical discussion rather than evidence from this survey. MTN's youth-oriented campaigns have featured Afrobeats artists, including Wizkid as an ambassador between 2013 and 2015 before his move to Globacom (Odunlami, 2015). Globacom has used actors, comedians, and footballers, and Airtel has featured Lateef Adedimeji. Such examples motivate questions about how audiences interpret public personas, language, and campaign themes. The present data do not establish the meanings respondents attributed to particular celebrities or whether those meanings varied with cultural identity.

Source credibility and the institutional trust void

Source credibility theory holds that persuasiveness depends on a communicator's perceived expertise and trustworthiness (Hovland et al., 1970). The source attractiveness model emphasizes familiarity, likability, and similarity (McGuire, 1985), and Ohanian (1990) integrated expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness into a validated measure of endorser credibility. Credibility criteria vary across cultures: advertising appeals that fit the cultural orientation of the audience are more persuasive (Zhang & Gelb, 1996), and the persuasive impact

of source credibility depends on audience and context (Pornpitakpan, 2004). In collectivist settings, an endorser's perceived similarity to the target audience strengthens likability and trust (Erdogan, 1999, p. 297).

Institutional trust substitution is proposed as a possible mechanism. Nigeria scored 26 out of 100 and ranked 140th of 180 countries on the Corruption Perceptions Index 2024 (Transparency International, 2025), and 142nd of 182 in the 2025 index (Transparency International, 2026). These national corruption indicators do not measure respondents' institutional trust, confidence in telecommunications regulation, or reliance on celebrity assurances. Drawing on institutional-void arguments (Khanna & Palepu, 1997), future research could test whether perceived limitations in formal assurances increase reliance on credible endorsers. The present survey neither establishes such limitations among respondents nor demonstrates that celebrity credibility substitutes for institutional trust.

Parasocial interaction as a culturally contingent mechanism

Parasocial interaction describes the one-sided relationship audiences form with media personalities, which creates "the illusion of face-to-face relationship with the performer" (Horton & Wohl, 1956, p. 215). Social media has intensified these bonds by enabling seemingly personal, continuous communication (Labrecque, 2014), and parasocial relationships strengthen endorsement effects on brand attitudes and purchase intentions (Chung & Cho, 2017). Meta-analytic evidence also shows that follower characteristics related to social identity have the strongest effects on attitudes and engagement in influencer marketing (Pan et al., 2025, p. 52). The framework therefore proposes that parasocial intensity varies systematically with culture:

Cultural Proposition 1 (CP1). High power distance amplifies parasocial bonds through aspirational identification. Where hierarchical status differences are accepted (Hofstede et al., 2010, chap. 3), celebrities embody aspirational success, which strengthens identification and attachment.

Cultural Proposition 2 (CP2). Collectivist orientations strengthen parasocial bonds through relationship norms. Where group membership shapes identity and decisions (Triandis, 1995), parasocial relationships may be experienced as quasi-social bonds that increase susceptibility to celebrity influence.

Cultural Proposition 3 (CP3). Ethnocultural matching intensifies parasocial interaction through in-group familiarity. When celebrities share an audience's ethnicity, language/linguistic background, or religion, in-group favoritism (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 38) and identity congruence (Oyserman et al., 2012, p. 88) are expected to heighten perceived closeness and persuasiveness.

Endorser Attributes: Credibility, Attractiveness, Authenticity, and Fit

Endorsement research motivates systematic examination of endorser attributes (Bergkvist & Zhou, 2016). Credibility concerns expertise and trustworthiness (Hovland et al., 1970; Ohanian, 1990), while attractiveness involves appeal, likability, familiarity, and similarity (McGuire, 1985). Nigerian research has linked attractiveness to purchase intention (Onu et al., 2019). Perceived authenticity concerns whether a celebrity is seen as acting consistently with their own identity (Moulard et al., 2015, p. 173). Celebrity–brand fit concerns congruence between the endorser and endorsed object (Kamins, 1990; Knoll & Matthes, 2017, p. 55; Till & Busler, 2000). Cultural resonance and perceived institutional assurances might condition responses to these attributes, but that possibility requires direct measurement. The present endorsement scale captures favorable perceptions of brand attractiveness, trust, believability, choice influence, and image enhancement (Appendix A); it does not separately measure expertise, endorser attractiveness, authenticity, fit, cultural alignment, or parasocial bonds.

Brand Evaluations as a Multidimensional Construct

The study examines four interrelated, self-reported brand evaluations. Perceived brand competitiveness concerns respondents' assessments of positioning, differentiation, and relative advantage (Gupta et al., 2020; Koshksaray et al., 2023). Brand popularity concerns perceived visibility, awareness, and recall (Dean, 1999; Kim & Chung, 1997). Perceived brand profitability concerns perceived commercial success (Baldauf et al., 2003), not observed profit, sales, or firm value (Elberse & Verleun, 2012). Customer brand acceptance is the

study's broad composite of reported trust, satisfaction, preference, continuance intention, loyalty, recommendation, advocacy, needs fulfillment, and intended family-network expansion. The study by Wong & Merrilees (2008) concerns organizational brand orientation and performance; it is not treated here as verified provenance for these ten consumer items. The component concepts were not modeled as separate mediators, and the composite's dimensionality remains unverified. Possible connections between these evaluations and revenue, churn, or competitive advantage remain theoretical (Bayighomog Likoum et al., 2018). The present data do not test those connections or establish which cultural mechanisms explain differences between outcomes.

Proposed Cultural Micro-foundations of Attitudes, Brand Trust, and Purchase Intentions

Figure 1 presents a proposed framework, not a demonstrated causal sequence. Cultural schemas might affect

meaning transfer and brand attitudes (Oyserman et al., 2012, p. 88); perceived weaknesses in institutional assurances might increase reliance on endorser credibility (Khanna & Palepu, 1997); and parasocial closeness might relate to adoption, continuance, and recommendation intentions (Chung & Cho, 2017; Pan et al., 2025). None of these mediating or moderating processes was separately measured here. Behavioral strategy offers a theoretical basis for investigating how individual responses might connect to organizational outcomes (Felin et al., 2015; Powell et al., 2011), but the study does not estimate aggregation or measure firm-level advantage. Similarly, viewing endorsement management as a dynamic capability is a proposal for organizational research, not an empirical finding (Teece, 2007).

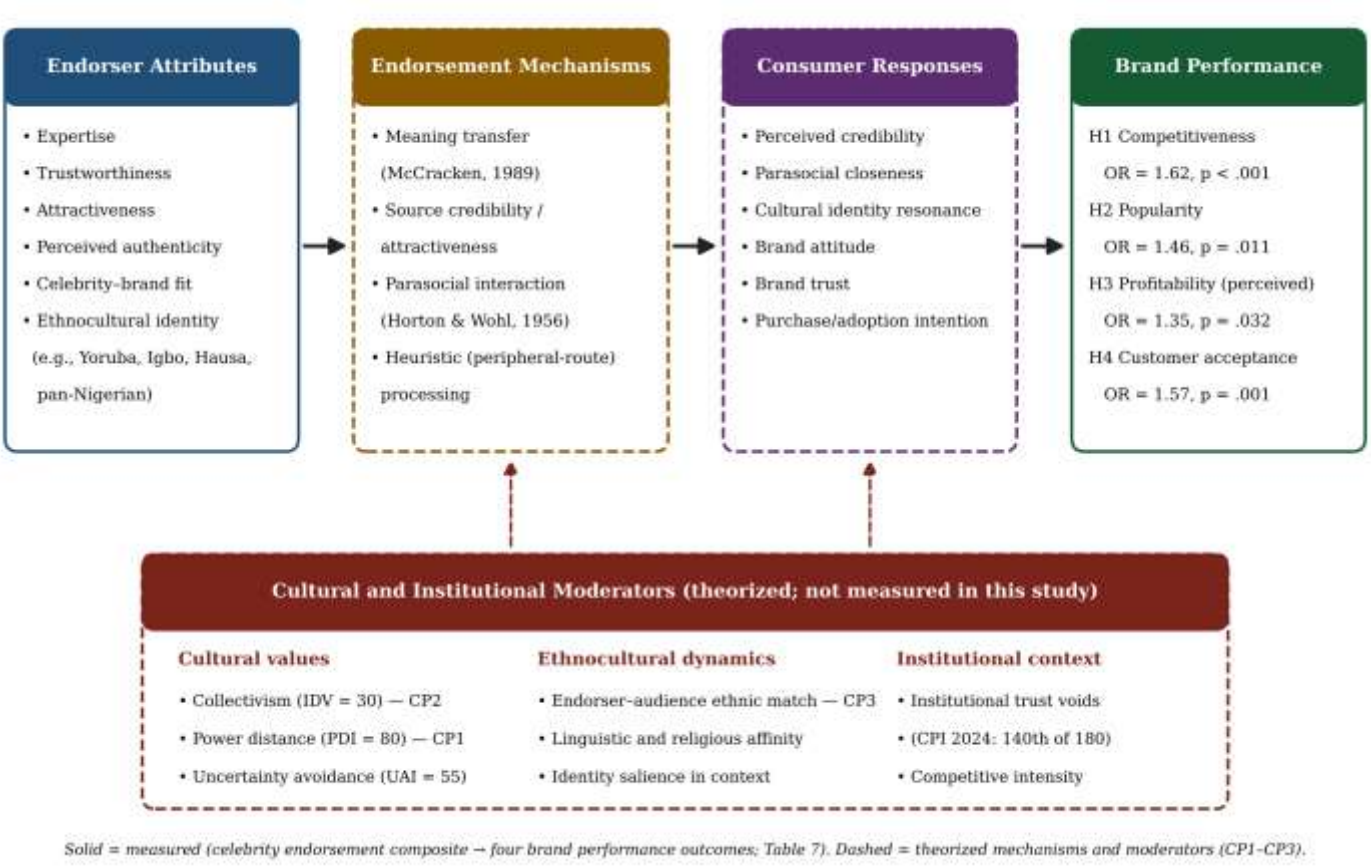


Figure 1. Proposed culturally contingent endorsement–evaluation framework

Note. The empirical analyses concern associations between endorsement perceptions and self-reported brand evaluations (

Table **7**). Mechanisms, cultural moderators, and connections to firm-level outcomes are theoretical and untested. IDV = individualism; PDI = power distance; UAI = uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede Insights, 2024);

CPI = Corruption Perceptions Index (Transparency International, 2025). These national indices provide context, not respondent-level measures.

The empirical analyses test associations between favorable endorsement perceptions and four self-reported brand evaluations. Trust and continuance-intention items form part of the acceptance composite (Appendix A), but they were not modeled as separate mediators. Cultural values, cultural alignment, institutional trust, and parasocial bonding were not measured, so the cultural propositions are not tested. The following hypotheses concern associations only:

H1: Favorable endorsement perceptions are positively associated with perceived brand competitiveness in Nigeria's telecommunications industry.

H2: Favorable endorsement perceptions are positively associated with perceived brand popularity in Nigeria's telecommunications industry.

H3: Favorable endorsement perceptions are positively associated with perceived brand profitability in Nigeria's telecommunications industry.

H4: Favorable endorsement perceptions are positively associated with customer brand acceptance in Nigeria's telecommunications industry.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Philosophical Position

The study used a cross-sectional descriptive survey design, which is appropriate for examining associations among several variables at one point in time (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The study adopts a post-positivist position, relying on empirical observation and statistical inference while recognizing that endorsement effects are shaped by context and interpretation (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Ontologically, the study adopts a critical realist stance in which endorsement effects exist independently of observation, but their manifestation depends on contextual mechanisms that must be theorized (Bhaskar, 2008). A cross-sectional design cannot establish causality; successful brands may also attract better endorsers. Theoretical reasoning and temporal ordering (campaigns preceding evaluations) justify directional hypotheses, but reciprocal causation remains possible (Rindfleisch et al., 2008).

Population, Sampling, and Sample Size

The target population comprised customers and employees of MTN, Globacom, and Airtel, the three operators with the largest subscriber bases and national coverage at the time of data collection; T2 (then 9mobile) was excluded because of its small and declining subscriber base (NCC, 2026). Data were collected in Lagos State, Nigeria's commercial center, for three reasons: it has high telecommunications penetration; its population includes large Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, and other communities, so ethnocultural diversity is present within one market; and it was logistically feasible.

Customer sample. Customers were recruited by convenience sampling at operator retail outlets, university campuses, and commercial districts. Inclusion criteria were (a) age 18 or older, (b) active subscription for at least 6 months, and (c) self-reported exposure to the operator's celebrity endorsement campaigns. Convenience sampling was necessary because operators do not release subscriber databases for research, so no sampling frame for probability sampling was available. Data were collected at varied times of day (10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. and 2:00–4:00 p.m.) and locations to reduce systematic selection of particular customer groups. Of 240 questionnaires distributed to customers, 180 usable responses were retained (75%).

Employee sample. Marketing managers, brand managers, and customer-service supervisors were recruited through purposive (criterion) sampling (Patton, 2015) because eligible employees constituted a specialized population with relevant campaign knowledge. Inclusion criteria were at least 1 year of tenure and

involvement in, or direct knowledge of, endorsement strategy. Eighteen employees per operator (54 in total) were recruited through organizational gatekeepers, and all returned usable questionnaires (100%). Employees were included to complement customer perceptions with informed internal assessments of brand evaluations. Respondent type was entered as a control in all regression models, but this adjustment does not establish that customers and employees interpret the measures equivalently or eliminate employer-favorability bias. No customer-only sensitivity results are reported. The robustness of the pooled estimates to excluding employees therefore remains unverified.

Sample size. The final sample was N = 234 (180 customers and 54 employees). Although G*Power 3.1 was identified as the power-analysis software (Faul et al., 2009), the original calculation specifications are unavailable. The adequacy of the sample for all analyses therefore cannot be established from the available documentation.

Representation of Ethnicity, Language/Linguistic Background, and Religion

Lagos's cultural diversity motivated the choice of setting, but it does not establish the cultural composition of the sample. Respondents' ethnicity, language/linguistic background, and religion were not recorded, and the study did not stratify by these characteristics or by region. Cultural representation and between-group differe-

nces therefore cannot be assessed. The findings concern associations among individual respondents' perceptions, not market-level cultural effects. Ethnocultural matching and the other cultural propositions were not examined directly or indirectly. Section 5.7 outlines designs for their subsequent testing.

Instrument

A structured questionnaire assessed favorable endorsement perceptions (5 items, analytical label celebrity endorsement [CE]), perceived brand competitiveness (5 items), brand popularity (5 items), perceived brand profitability (5 items), and customer brand acceptance (10 items). The CE composite concerns perceived enhancement of brand attractiveness, trust in celebrity-endorsed brands, perceived influence on network choice, endorser believability, and brand-image enhancement. Brand attractiveness is not a measure of the endorser's attractiveness. Expertise, authenticity, celebrity–brand fit, parasocial relationships, and cultural identity alignment were not separately measured. Acceptance combines trust, satisfaction, loyalty, continuance intention, preference, recommendation, advocacy, perceived needs fulfillment, and intended family-network expansion; these components were not estimated as separate constructs or mediators. Both composites remain subject to construct validation. Exact item derivation and adaptation histories are not documented; the administered items are listed in Appendix A. Endorsement and brand research provides conceptual background (Baldauf et al., 2003; Bergkvist et al., 2016; Erdogan, 1999; Gupta et al., 2020; Kim & Chung, 1997; Wong & Merrilees, 2008), not verified provenance for the item wording.

All items used a 4-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree). Reported Cronbach's alpha values indicate internal consistency (celebrity endorsement $\alpha = .84$; competitiveness $\alpha = .82$; popularity $\alpha = .80$; profitability $\alpha = .83$; acceptance $\alpha = .88$) rather than unidimensionality or construct validity. Three marketing academics and two telecommunications managers reviewed the items for face and content validity (reported content validity index = .89). The available documentation does not include sufficient factor-analytic evidence to establish convergent or discriminant validity. The measurement properties of the composites therefore require further validation.

Data Collection and Ethical Procedures

Data were collected between June and August 2024 in paper (n = 156) and online (Google Forms; n = 78) formats. Online questionnaires were distributed through employee intranets and customer email lists. Mode-specific analyses sufficient to establish comparability between the two administration formats are unavailable. Possible mode differences therefore remain a limitation of the pooled analyses. Participants received a written explanation of the study's purpose, its voluntary nature, anonymity protections, and the right to withdraw, and they gave informed consent before participating. No incentives were offered.

Of 294 questionnaires distributed, 234 usable responses were retained (79.6%). Sixty customer questionnaires were excluded because of substantial missing data, invariant responding, or a failed attention check. Detailed exclusion and missing-data records are unavailable, which limits assessment of the resulting sample.

Procedural measures intended to reduce common method bias included assuring anonymity, counterbalancing item order, and placing predictor and criterion items in separate sections (Podsakoff et al., 2003, p. 887). The reported Harman single-factor diagnostic attributed 34% of variance to the largest factor and did not identify a dominant single factor; however, its extraction specification and supporting output are unavailable. This diagnostic does not establish the absence or severity of common method bias, which remains possible given the shared self-report source and cross-sectional administration (Podsakoff et al., 2003, pp. 888–889).

Data Analysis

Analyses were conducted in IBM SPSS Statistics 28. Descriptive statistics and Cronbach's alpha summarized the sample and scales. Chi-square tests examined associations between categorized endorsement perceptions and brand evaluations, Spearman's rank-order correlation assessed monotonic composite-score associations (Field, 2018), and separate regression models included respondent type, age group, and operator as controls (Agresti, 2012).

Ordinal logistic regression was used for ordered outcome categories. Complete model-specific diagnostics for the proportional-odds assumption are unavailable, which limits interpretation of the regression estimates. The chi-square analyses satisfied the expected-cell-frequency criterion, and monotonicity was assessed using scatterplots. Significance was set at $\alpha = .05$ (two-tailed), with Cramér's V, Spearman's ρ, and odds ratios reported as effect-size measures (Cohen, 2009, chap. 7).

Scoring and categorization limitations. Composite-score aggregation, category cut-points, tie handling, and procedures for partially incomplete responses were not fully documented. The rationale for combining low and moderate brand-popularity categories and the coding of age and outcome categories in the regression models are also unavailable. These limitations reduce the reproducibility of the analyses and should be considered when interpreting the reported estimates.

RESULTS

Sample Characteristics

Table 1 presents the sample profile. Gender counts are 128 male and 106 female, totaling 234. The two youngest age bands contain 170 respondents (72.6%), and bachelor's and postgraduate categories contain 168 (71.8%). Operator counts are MTN 90, Globacom 78, and Airtel 66; respondent-type counts are 180 customers and 54 employees.

Table 1. Sample demographic characteristics (N = 234)

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	128	54.7
	Female	106	45.3
Age group	18–25 years	89	38
	26–35 years	81	34.6
	36–45 years	42	17.9
	46–55 years	16	6.8
	56 years and above	6	2.6
Education	Secondary school	15	6.4
	Diploma/HND	51	21.8

	Bachelor's degree	112	47.9
	Postgraduate degree	56	23.9
Respondent type	Customer	180	76.9
	Employee (manager/supervisor)	54	23.1
Operator	MTN	90	38.5
	Globacom (Glo)	78	33.3
	Airtel	66	28.2
Subscription duration	6–12 months	28	12
	1–3 years	74	31.6
	3–5 years	68	29.1
	More than 5 years	64	27.4

Note. Operator representation reflects subscriber base and national footprint rather than strict market-share proportions. Respondents' ethnicity, language/linguistic background, and religion were not recorded. HND = Higher National Diploma.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 reports descriptive statistics. Means clustered near 3.0 on the 4-point scale, standard deviations ranged

from 0.64 to 0.72, and skewness and kurtosis values were within ±1.0. Brand popularity had the highest mean (M = 3.12, SD = 0.64) and perceived profitability the lowest (M = 2.94, SD = 0.72).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for key constructs (N = 234)

Construct	Items	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	α
Celebrity endorsement (CE)	5	2.98	0.71	−0.18	−0.42	.84
Brand competitiveness (BC)	5	3.04	0.68	−0.22	−0.31	.82
Brand popularity (BP)	5	3.12	0.64	−0.31	0.14	.80
Perceived brand profitability (BPr)	5	2.94	0.72	−0.09	−0.55	.83
Customer brand acceptance (CBA)	10	3.01	0.67	−0.25	−0.28	.88

Note. Scale range 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). α = Cronbach's alpha.

Hypothesis Tests

H1: Brand competitiveness. Celebrity endorsement was significantly associated with brand competitiveness, $\chi^2(4, N = 234) = 25.50$, $p < .001$, Cramér's V = .23 (Table 3). Among respondents with high endorsement scores, 44.9% reported high brand competitiveness, compared with 11.5% of those with low scores. H1 is supported.

Table 3. Cross-tabulation of celebrity endorsement and brand competitiveness (H1)

Outcome level	CE: Low (n = 78)	CE: Moderate (n = 78)	CE: High (n = 78)	Total
Low	34 (43.6%)	22 (28.2%)	14 (17.9%)	70 (29.9%)
Moderate	35 (44.9%)	36 (46.2%)	29 (37.2%)	100 (42.7%)
High	9 (11.5%)	20 (25.6%)	35 (44.9%)	64 (27.4%)
Total	78 (100%)	78 (100%)	78 (100%)	234 (100%)

$\chi^2(4, N = 234) = 25.50$, $p < .001$, Cramér's V = .23. Note. Cells show counts with column percentages. CE categories contain 78 respondents each; exact score boundaries and tie handling are undocumented. All expected cell frequencies exceeded 5 (minimum = 21.3). With $\min(r - 1, c - 1) = 2$, Cramér's V benchmarks are approximately .07 (small), .21 (medium), and .35 (large) (Cohen, 2009, chap. 7).

H2: Brand popularity. Celebrity endorsement was significantly associated with brand popularity, $\chi^2(2, N = 234) = 9.71$, $p = .008$, Cramér's V = .20 (Table 4). High popularity was reported by 51.3% of high-endorsement respondents and 26.9% of low-endorsement respondents. H2 is supported.

Table 4. Cross-tabulation of celebrity endorsement and brand popularity (H2)

Outcome level	CE: Low (n = 78)	CE: Moderate (n = 78)	CE: High (n = 78)	Total
Low/moderate	57 (73.1%)	47 (60.3%)	38 (48.7%)	142 (60.7%)
High	21 (26.9%)	31 (39.7%)	40 (51.3%)	92 (39.3%)
Total	78 (100%)	78 (100%)	78 (100%)	234 (100%)

$\chi^2(2, N = 234) = 9.71$, $p = .008$, Cramér's V = .20. Note. Brand popularity was dichotomized (low/moderate vs. high), giving df = 2. With min(r − 1, c − 1) = 1, Cramér's V benchmarks are .10 (small), .30 (medium), and .50 (large) (Cohen, 2009, chap. 7); V = .20 is therefore small to medium.

H3: Perceived brand profitability. Celebrity endorsement was positively correlated with perceived profitability, $r_s = .24$, $p < .001$ (Table 5), supporting the positive-association hypothesis. Popularity had the smallest reported endorsement–outcome correlation (.22), followed by profitability (.24), competitiveness (.31), and acceptance (.33). This numerical ordering is descriptive; differences between correlations were not formally tested. Profitability instead had the smallest reported regression odds ratio (1.35;

Table **7**), a distinct comparison that does not establish a statistically weaker effect.

Table 5. Spearman rank-order correlations among study variables (N = 234)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Celebrity endorsement	—				
2. Brand competitiveness	.31**	—			
3. Brand popularity	.22**	.38**	—		
4. Perceived brand profitability	**.24****	.29**	.41**	—	
5. Customer brand acceptance	.33**	.44**	.36**	.32**	—

Note. $^{**}p < .01$ (two-tailed). The focal H3 coefficient (bold) is $r_s = .24$, $p < .001$.

H4: Customer brand acceptance. Celebrity endorsement was significantly associated with customer brand acceptance, $\chi^2(4, N = 234) = 19.07$, $p < .001$, Cramér's V = .20 (Table 6). High acceptance was reported by 37.2% of high-endorsement respondents and 11.5% of low-endorsement respondents. H4 is supported.

Table 6. Cross-tabulation of celebrity endorsement and customer brand acceptance (H4)

Outcome level	CE: Low (n = 78)	CE: Moderate (n = 78)	CE: High (n = 78)	Total
Low	31 (39.7%)	20 (25.6%)	12 (15.4%)	63 (26.9%)
Moderate	38 (48.7%)	38 (48.7%)	37 (47.4%)	113 (48.3%)
High	9 (11.5%)	20 (25.6%)	29 (37.2%)	58 (24.8%)
Total	78 (100%)	78 (100%)	78 (100%)	234 (100%)

$\chi^2(4, N = 234) = 19.07$, $p < .001$, Cramér's V = .20. Note. Cells show counts with column percentages. All expected cell frequencies exceeded 5 (minimum = 19.3). Exact acceptance score boundaries are undocumented. Benchmarks for V as in Table 3; V = .20 is approximately medium.

Regression associations.

Table **7** reports positive endorsement coefficients in four separately fitted models controlling for respondent type, age group, and operator: competitiveness OR = 1.62, 95% CI [1.23, 2.13], $p < .001$; acceptance OR = 1.57, 95% CI [1.19, 2.07], $p = .001$; popularity OR = 1.46, 95% CI [1.09, 1.96], $p = .011$; and perceived

profitability OR = 1.35, 95% CI [1.03, 1.77], p = .032. Their numerical ordering is descriptive and does not test differences in associations across models.

CE score units and outcome coding, especially popularity's regression categorization, are undocumented and limit interpretation. The reported control-variable tests were nonsignificant. Nagelkerke pseudo-R^2 values range from .07 to .14; these are not percentages of variance explained by endorsement alone. Table 8 summarizes the tests, subject to the coding and diagnostic limitations.

Table 7. Regression associations between endorsement perceptions and brand evaluations

Predictor	B	SE	Wald χ^2	p	OR	95% CI
Brand competitiveness						
Celebrity endorsement	0.48	0.14	11.76	< .001	**1.62**	[1.23, 2.13]
Respondent type (employee)	0.31	0.19	2.66	0.103	1.36	[0.94, 1.98]
Age group	0.09	0.11	0.67	0.413	1.09	[0.88, 1.36]
Operator (Glo vs. MTN)	0.14	0.21	0.44	0.507	1.15	[0.76, 1.74]
Operator (Airtel vs. MTN)	0.11	0.22	0.25	0.617	1.12	[0.72, 1.73]
Brand popularity						
Celebrity endorsement	0.38	0.15	6.45	0.011	**1.46**	[1.09, 1.96]
Respondent type (employee)	0.27	0.2	1.82	0.177	1.31	[0.89, 1.93]
Age group	0.06	0.12	0.25	0.617	1.06	[0.84, 1.34]
Operator (Glo vs. MTN)	0.19	0.22	0.75	0.387	1.21	[0.79, 1.85]
Operator (Airtel vs. MTN)	0.08	0.23	0.12	0.729	1.08	[0.69, 1.70]
Perceived brand profitability						
Celebrity endorsement	0.3	0.14	4.59	0.032	**1.35**	[1.03, 1.77]
Respondent type (employee)	0.22	0.2	1.21	0.271	1.25	[0.84, 1.85]
Age group	0.04	0.12	0.11	0.74	1.04	[0.82, 1.32]
Operator (Glo vs. MTN)	0.12	0.22	0.3	0.584	1.13	[0.73, 1.74]
Operator (Airtel vs. MTN)	0.07	0.23	0.09	0.764	1.07	[0.68, 1.68]
Customer brand acceptance						
Celebrity endorsement	0.45	0.14	10.35	0.001	**1.57**	[1.19, 2.07]
Respondent type (employee)	0.29	0.19	2.33	0.127	1.34	[0.92, 1.94]
Age group	0.08	0.11	0.53	0.467	1.08	[0.87, 1.35]
Operator (Glo vs. MTN)	0.16	0.21	0.58	0.446	1.17	[0.78, 1.77]
Operator (Airtel vs. MTN)	0.1	0.22	0.21	0.647	1.11	[0.72, 1.70]

Note. N = 234; each outcome was modeled separately (df = 1 for each Wald test). Reference categories: customer (respondent type) and MTN (operator). OR = odds ratio; CI = confidence interval.

Model-specific parallel-lines statistics, degrees of freedom, exact significance values, and convergence diagnostics are not supplied; the proportional-odds assumption remains unverified where applicable. Nagelkerke pseudo-R^2: competitiveness = .14; popularity = .09; profitability = .07; acceptance = .13.

Table 8. Summary of hypothesis tests

Hypothesis	Bivariate test	Bivariate result	Ordinal regression	Decision
H1: CE → Brand competitiveness	Chi-square	$\chi^2(4) = 25.50$, $p < .001$, $V = .23$	OR = 1.62, p < .001	Supported
H2: CE → Brand popularity	Chi-square	$\chi^2(2) = 9.71$, $p = .008$, $V = .20$	OR = 1.46, p = .011	Supported
H3: CE → Perceived profitability	Spearman	$r_s = .24$, $p < .001$	OR = 1.35, p = .032	Supported

H4: CE → Customer acceptance	Chi-square	$\chi^2(4) = 19.07$, $p < .001$, $V = .20$	OR = 1.57, p = .001	Supported

Note. CE = celebrity endorsement. H3 concerns a positive association only, not a weaker association than other outcomes. No formal comparison of association strengths was performed.

DISCUSSION

Cultural Micro-foundations of Endorsement-Based Signaling

Favorable endorsement perceptions were positively associated with all four brand evaluations in the Lagos sample. Table 5's reported bivariate coefficients increase from popularity (.22) to perceived profitability (.24), competitiveness (.31), and acceptance (.33).

Table **7** instead reports the smallest odds ratio for profitability (1.35), followed by popularity (1.46), acceptance (1.57), and competitiveness (1.62). These are different statistical comparisons, and both rankings are descriptive: neither differences between correlations nor differences between separately fitted regression coefficients were formally tested. The associations do not identify cultural meaning transfer, parasocial bonding, or institutional trust substitution. The explanations below are theoretical proposals for subsequent testing, not demonstrated mechanisms.

The competitiveness association concerns perceived brand superiority, not observed market position or sustained competitive advantage. Meaning transfer and culturally informed heuristics provide possible explanations (Felin et al., 2015; Hofstede et al., 2010, chap. 4; Powell et al., 2011), but the survey did not measure the inferences respondents made or their cultural orientations. Testing these explanations would require direct measures of interpretation and cultural values; establishing aggregation into firm-level advantage would additionally require organizational or market-performance evidence.

Ethnocultural Endorsement Intelligence as a Proposed Strategic Capability

The acceptance association does not test CP3: neither audience–endorser cultural alignment nor parasocial bonds were measured. Perceived similarity and identity resonance offer theoretical possibilities for further investigation (Erdogan, 1999, p. 297; Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 38). Ethnocultural endorsement intelligence is proposed as a candidate organizational capability for assessing how audiences interpret endorsers and campaign meanings, informed by cultural intelligence research (Ang et al., 2020). Its existence, effectiveness, and contribution to differentiation remain unverified. The findings do not establish that culturally segmented portfolios outperform broadly directed campaigns.

Institutional Trust Voids and Strategic Substitution

Institutional trust substitution remains a theoretical boundary-condition argument (Khanna & Palepu, 1997). National corruption indicators provide context (Transparency International, 2025), but they do not establish that respondents distrusted regulatory assurances or relied on endorsers instead. The competitiveness association cannot distinguish this explanation from alternative mechanisms. Future research should measure perceived institutional assurances, endorser credibility, and reliance on each before testing whether institutional trust conditions endorsement responses.

The Modest Profitability Association

Endorsement perceptions were positively associated with perceived profitability. The reported profitability odds ratio was numerically smaller than the other regression estimates, but the study did not formally test their differences. Neither actual profitability nor operational performance was measured. Prior work motivates investigation of whether endorsement responses translate into sales, retention, or firm value under different

service conditions (Bayighomog Likoum et al., 2018; Elberse & Verleun, 2012). The present findings do not establish that endorsements complement operational excellence or substitute for it.

Theoretical Contributions Relative to Prior Research

Contribution 1: Theoretical cultural micro-foundations of strategic signaling. Building on source-attribute and fit research (Bergkvist & Zhou, 2016; Knoll & Matthes, 2017), the framework proposes how cultural interpretation and perceived institutional assurances might shape endorsement responses. Its connection to behavioral strategy is conceptual (Felin et al., 2015; Powell et al., 2011): cultural processing, mediation, moderation, and aggregation into organizational outcomes remain to be tested.

Contribution 2: A proposed organizational capability. Cultural intelligence and social identity research inform the concept of ethnocultural endorsement intelligence (Ang et al., 2020; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This is a theoretical proposal, not a validated construct or demonstrated firm-level capability. Organizational data are needed to establish how it is developed and whether it improves campaign or business outcomes.

Contribution 3: Multidimensional associational evidence. Complementing Nigerian research on purchase intention (Onu et al., 2019), the study documents positive associations between favorable endorsement perceptions and four self-reported brand evaluations in a Lagos sample. Cultural propositions concerning values and identity resonance, together with an institutional trust argument, accompany these findings but are not empirically established boundary conditions. Numerical differences between regression estimates do not by themselves demonstrate differences in effects.

These contributions are bounded by the study's design. The sample is urban, educated, non-probabilistic, and drawn from one state; its cultural composition is unknown. Cultural mechanisms were proposed, not inferred empirically or measured, and national indices cannot establish respondents' orientations or institutional trust. The results do not establish causality, market-level cultural effects, or firm-level competitive advantage, and generalization beyond the sampled respondents requires replication.

Managerial Implications

Evaluate the proposed endorsement capability. Operators could pilot a structured assessment of symbolic fit, audience relevance, perceived credibility, authenticity, cultural resonance, and reputational risk. These attributes were not separately tested here, so a scoring matrix should be treated as a decision aid to validate against audience feedback and campaign outcomes, not an empirically validated selection rule.

Test culturally resonant narrative campaigns. Operators could compare sustained narrative formats with one-off appearances and evaluate audience responses to language, themes, and values. The acceptance association does not establish narrative superiority or parasocial mediation. Campaign tests should therefore measure perceived resonance and parasocial bonds directly rather than assume them from endorsement ratings.

Compare endorsement portfolios rather than presume a preferred design. Operators could test broadly directed campaigns against culturally tailored alternatives using reported audience interpretations and campaign outcomes. The present data do not establish that nationally recognized, regionally anchored, or mixed celebrity–influencer portfolios perform better. Perceived relevance should be measured rather than presumed from shared identity, and portfolio decisions should remain contingent on comparative evidence.

Evaluate endorsement alongside operational performance. Operators could track campaign responses together with network quality, customer service, and digital-experience measures to assess whether favorable perceptions translate into satisfaction and retention. The perceived-profitability association does not support a budget-allocation rule or demonstrate commercial returns.

Monitor reputation and evaluate across key performance indicators. Reputation monitoring, contractual safeguards, response protocols, and portfolio diversification are possible management practices to evaluate, not interventions tested by this study. Operators could assess perceptual (awareness, preference), behavioral

(acquisition, churn), and financial (revenue, market share) indicators using pre- and post-campaign comparisons. Such evidence would help assess outcomes that the present self-report survey does not establish.

LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Design and causality. The cross-sectional design limits causal inference. Longitudinal designs that track performance before, during, and after campaigns, or quasi-experiments comparing matched brands with and without endorsers, are needed.

Unmeasured cultural and institutional mechanisms. Cultural values, cultural matching, institutional trust, and parasocial bonds were not measured. National cultural and corruption indices provide contextual information, not respondent-level measures. Because substantial cultural variation lies within countries (Taras et al., 2016, p. 455), using national scores to characterize individuals risks the ecological fallacy. Future studies should measure cultural values directly, for example with CVSCALE (Yoo et al., 2011), and separately measure institutional assurances, credibility, and parasocial bonds before testing mediation or moderation.

Instrument coverage and provenance. CE captures favorable endorsement perceptions, not a combined validated measure of credibility, endorser attractiveness, authenticity, and celebrity–brand fit. The brand-attractiveness item does not measure endorser attractiveness, and expertise, authenticity, fit, parasocial relationships, and cultural identity alignment were not separately measured. Acceptance combines several evaluative and intentional components without establishing them as separate constructs or mediators. Exact item sources and modifications remain unverified (Appendix A). Future research could separately measure endorser attributes using appropriate validated instruments, such as Ohanian's (1990) scale and authenticity measures (Moulard et al., 2015), and assess the dimensionality of acceptance.

Sampling and generalizability. The sample over-represents urban, educated Lagos residents. Pooling customers with employees may influence evaluations, and a respondent-type control does not demonstrate measurement equivalence. No customer-only sensitivity analysis is reported, so robustness to employee inclusion remains unverified. A comparison of customer-only and pooled estimates could assess this sensitivity. Stratified random sampling across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones, including rural and semi-urban areas and direct measurement of cultural backgrounds, would strengthen subsequent assessments of generalizability.

Self-report. All measures were self-reported. Future work should combine perceptual measures with behavioral data such as subscription records, switching, and usage.

Measurement and diagnostic evidence. Internal-consistency coefficients and item review do not establish factor structure, convergent validity, discriminant validity, or equivalence across respondent types and administration modes. Measurement-model results, mode-by-respondent comparisons, model-specific proportional-odds diagnostics, and documented sample-size calculations are not reported. The associations therefore remain subject to measurement and model-specification uncertainty.

Further extensions. Experiments that manipulate endorser–audience ethnocultural matching could test CP3 directly. Cross-national comparisons (e.g., Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, and South Africa) could test whether parasocial effects are stronger in more collectivist cultures and whether institutional trust voids moderate endorsement effects. Studies could also compare traditional celebrities with micro- and nano-influencers, examine how firms build endorsement portfolios as dynamic capabilities (Teece, 2007), and use cultural neuroscience methods to probe culture-specific processing of social information (Han & Northoff, 2008).

CONCLUSION

This study documents associations between favorable endorsement perceptions and brand evaluations in a Lagos sample and develops cultural propositions for subsequent testing. Integrating meaning transfer, source credibility and attractiveness, parasocial interaction, cultural dimensions, and heuristic-processing theory within a behavioral strategy perspective provides a conceptual framework, not evidence that cultural

mechanisms caused the observed associations. Among 234 respondents, favorable endorsement perceptions were positively associated with perceived competitiveness (OR = 1.62), popularity (OR = 1.46), profitability (OR = 1.35), and customer brand acceptance (OR = 1.57). These are individual-level evaluations, not measures of firm-level competitive advantage or actual financial performance; the numerical ordering of regression estimates does not establish differences in effects.

Cultural micro-foundations and ethnocultural endorsement intelligence are offered as theoretical proposals. Cultural values, identities, institutional trust, and parasocial bonds were not measured, so their explanatory roles remain untested. Lagos's diversity does not establish the sample's cultural composition, and national indices do not measure individual orientations. Future studies should combine direct measures of these mechanisms with broader sampling and organizational or behavioral outcomes. Culturally resonant campaigns and endorsement portfolios should be comparatively tested rather than presumed superior on the basis of the present associations.

Declarations

Ethical approval. The research was conducted independently and in accordance with the ethical principles of the Declaration of Helsinki. All procedures were designed to protect participant confidentiality and autonomy, and the study adhered to applicable national data protection guidelines for research involving human subjects.

Informed consent. Written or electronic informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. Participants received information about the study's purpose, anonymity protections, and their right to withdraw before agreeing to participate.

Funding. This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Data availability. The anonymized dataset and SPSS syntax are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request. Public posting is restricted because participants were assured that their responses would be used only for research by the study team.

Author contributions. Mustapha. J. Omotayo: conceptualization, data collection, formal analysis, writing (original draft). Oluseyi. O. Sode: conceptualization, theoretical framework, writing (review and editing). Bunmi. Omoloso-Dada: data collection, validation, writing (review and editing).

REFERENCES

1. Agresti, A. (2012). Analysis of ordinal categorical data. In Analysis of Ordinal Categorical Data: Second Edition (2nd ed.). Wiley. https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470594001
2. Ang, S., Ng, K. Y., & Rockstuhl, T. (2020). Cultural intelligence. In R. J. Sternberg (Ed.), The Cambridge handbook of intelligence (pp. 820–845). Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108770422.035
3. Baldauf, A., Cravens, K. S., & Binder, G. (2003). Performance consequences of brand equity management: Evidence from organizations in the value chain. Journal of Product & Brand Management, 12(4), 220–236. https://doi.org/10.1108/10610420310485032
4. Bayighomog Likoum, S. W., Shamout, M. D., Harazneh, I., & Abubakar, A. M. (2018). Market-sensing capability, innovativeness, brand management systems, market dynamism, competitive intensity, and performance: An integrative review. Journal of the Knowledge Economy, 11(2), 593–613. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13132-018-0561-x
5. Bergkvist, L., Hjalmarson, H., & Mägi, A. W. (2016). A new model of how celebrity endorsements work: Attitude toward the endorsement as a mediator of celebrity source and endorsement effects. International Journal of Advertising, 35(2), 171–184. https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2015.1024384
6. Bergkvist, L., & Zhou, K. Q. (2016). Celebrity endorsements: A literature review and research agenda. International Journal of Advertising, 35(4), 642–663. https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2015.1137537

7. Bhaskar, R. (2008). A realist theory of science. In A Realist Theory of Science (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203090732
8. Chung, S., & Cho, H. (2017). Fostering parasocial relationships with celebrities on social media: Implications for celebrity endorsement. Psychology and Marketing, 34(4), 481–495. https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.21001
9. Cohen, Jacob. (2009). Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences (2nd ed.). Routledge.
10. Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2023). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches (Sixth edition.). SAGE.
11. Dean, D. H. (1999). Brand endorsement, popularity, and event sponsorship as advertising cues affecting consumer pre-purchase attitudes. Journal of Advertising, 28(3), 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.1999.10673585
12. Elberse, A., & Verleun, J. (2012). The economic value of celebrity endorsements. Journal of Advertising Research, 52(2), 149–165. https://doi.org/10.2501/JAR-52-2-149-165
13. Erdogan, B. Z. (1999). Celebrity endorsement: A literature review. Journal of Marketing Management, 15(4), 291–314. https://doi.org/10.1362/026725799784870379
14. Faul, F., Erdfelder, E., Buchner, A., & Lang, A.-G. (2009). Statistical power analyses using G*Power 3.1: Tests for correlation and regression analyses. Behavior Research Methods, 41(4), 1149–1160. https://doi.org/10.3758/BRM.41.4.1149
15. Felin, T., Foss, N. J., & Ployhart, R. E. (2015). The microfoundations movement in strategy and organization theory. Academy of Management Annals, 9(1), 575–632. https://doi.org/10.1080/19416520.2015.1007651
16. Field, A. (2018). Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS statistics. Sage.
17. Gigerenzer, G., & Gaissmaier, W. (2011). Heuristic decision making. Annual Review of Psychology, 62, 451–482. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-120709-145346
18. Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), Handbook of qualitative research (pp. 105–117). Sage.
19. Gupta, S., Gallear, D., Rudd, J., & Foroudi, P. (2020). The impact of brand value on brand competitiveness. Journal of Business Research, 112, 210–222. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.02.033
20. Han, S., & Northoff, G. (2008). Culture-sensitive neural substrates of human cognition: A transcultural neuroimaging approach. Nature Reviews Neuroscience, 9, 646–654. https://doi.org/10.1038/nrn2456
21. Hofstede, G., Minkov, M., & Hofstede, G. J. (2010). Cultures and organizations: Software of the mind: Intercultural cooperation and its importance for survival (3rd rev. ed.). McGraw-Hill.
22. Hofstede Insights. (2024). Country comparison: Nigeria. Hofstede Insights. https://www.theculturefactor.com/country-comparison-tool?countries=nigeria
23. Horton, D., & Wohl, R. R. (1956). Mass communication and para-social interaction. Psychiatry, 19(3), 215–229. https://doi.org/10.1080/00332747.1956.11023049
24. Hovland, C. I., Janis, I. L., & Kelley, H. H. (1970). Communication and persuasion: Psychological studies of opinion change. Yale University Press.
25. Kahneman, D. (2011). Thinking, fast and slow. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
26. Kamins, M. A. (1990). An investigation into the “match-up” hypothesis in celebrity advertising: When beauty may be only skin deep. Journal of Advertising, 19(1), 4–13. https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.1990.10673175
27. Khanna, T., & Palepu, K. (1997). Why focused strategies may be wrong for emerging markets. Harvard Business Review, 75(4), 41–43.
28. Kim, C. K., & Chung, J. Y. (1997). Brand popularity, country image and market share: An empirical study. Journal of International Business Studies, 28(2), 361–386. https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.jibs.8490105
29. Knoll, J., & Matthes, J. (2017). The effectiveness of celebrity endorsements: a meta-analysis. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 45(1), 55–75. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-016-0503-8
30. Koshksaray, A. A., Quach, S., Trinh, G., Keivani, S. B., & Thaichon, P. (2023). Brand competitiveness antecedents: The interaction effects of marketing and R&D expenditure. Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 75, Article 103532. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2023.103532
31. Labrecque, L. I. (2014). Fostering consumer-brand relationships in social media environments: The role of parasocial interaction. Journal of Interactive Marketing, 28(2), 134–148.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2013.12.003
32. McCracken, G. (1989). Who is the celebrity endorser? Cultural foundations of the endorsement process. Journal of Consumer Research, 16, 310–321. https://doi.org/10.1086/209217
33. McGuire, W. J. (1985). Attitudes and attitude change. In G. Lindzey & E. Aronson (Eds.), Handbook of social psychology (3rd ed., Vol. 2, pp. 233–356). Random House.
34. Moulard, J. G., Garrity, C. P., & Rice, D. H. (2015). What makes a human brand authentic? Identifying the antecedents of celebrity authenticity. Psychology and Marketing, 32(2), 173–186. https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.20771
35. Nigerian Communications Commission [NCC]. (2026). Subscriber Statistics. NCC – Market Data Reports: Q2, 2026. https://www.ncc.gov.ng/market-data-reports/subscriber-statistics
36. Odunlami, D. (2015, June 23). Wizkid confirms "dumping" MTN for GLO . TheCable. https://www.thecable.ng/wizkid-dumps-mtn-glo/
37. Ohanian, R. (1990). Construction and validation of a scale to measure celebrity endorsers' perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. Journal of Advertising, 19(3), 39–52. https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.1990.10673191
38. Onu, C. A., Nwaulune, J., Adegbola, E. A., & Nnorom, G. (2019). The effect of celebrity physical attractiveness and trustworthiness on consumer purchase intentions: A study on Nigerian consumers. Management Science Letters, 9, 1965–1976. https://doi.org/10.5267/j.msl.2019.7.009
39. Oyserman, D., Elmore, K., & Smith, G. (2012). Self, self-concept, and identity. In M. R. Leary & J. P. Tangney (Eds.), Handbook of self and identity (2nd ed., pp. 69–104). The Guilford Press. https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2012-10435-004
40. Pan, M., Blut, M., Ghiassaleh, A., & Lee, Z. W. Y. (2025). Influencer marketing effectiveness: A meta-analytic review. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 53(1), 52–78. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-024-01052-7
41. Patton, M. Q. (2015). Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice. In Qualitative research and evaluation methods (4th ed.). Sage.
42. Petty, R. E., & Cacioppo, J. T. (1986). Communication and persuasion: Central and peripheral routes to attitude change. Springer-Verlag.
43. Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J. Y., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: A critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. Journal of Applied Psychology, 88(5), 879–903. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.88.5.879
44. Pornpitakpan, C. (2004). The persuasiveness of source credibility: A critical review of five decades' evidence. Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 34(2), 243–281. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.2004.tb02547.x
45. Powell, T. C., Lovallo, D., & Fox, C. R. (2011). Behavioral strategy. Strategic Management Journal, 32(13), 1369–1386. https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.968
46. Rindfleisch, A., Malter, A. J., Ganesan, S., & Moorman, C. (2008). Cross-sectional versus longitudinal survey research: Concepts, findings, and guidelines. Journal of Marketing Research, 45(3), 261–279. https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkr.45.3.261
47. Spence, M. (1973). Job Market Signaling. The Quarterly Journal of Economics, 87(3), 355–374. https://doi.org/10.2307/1882010
48. Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W. G. Austin & S. Worchel (Eds.), The social psychology of intergroup relations (pp. 33–47). Brooks/Cole.
49. Taras, V., Steel, P., & Kirkman, B. L. (2016). Does country equate with culture? Beyond geography in the search for cultural boundaries. Management International Review, 56(4), 455–487. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1007/s11575-016-0283-x
50. Teece, D. J. (2007). Explicating dynamic capabilities: The nature and microfoundations of (sustainable) enterprise performance. Strategic Management Journal, 28(13), 1319–1350. https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.640
51. Till, B. D., & Busler, M. (2000). The match-up hypothesis: Physical attractiveness, expertise, and the role of fit on brand attitude, purchase intent and brand beliefs. Journal of Advertising, 29(3), 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2000.10673613
52. Transparency International. (2025). Corruption Perceptions Index 2024. Transparency International. https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2024

53. Transparency International. (2026). Corruption Perceptions Index 2025. Transparency International. https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2025
54. Triandis, H. C. (1995). Individualism and collectivism. In Individualism and Collectivism (1st ed.). Westview Press. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429499845
55. White, T. C. (2023). Nigeria. EBSCO Research Starters. https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/geography-and-cartography/nigeria
56. Wong, H. Y., & Merrilees, B. (2008). The performance benefits of being brand-orientated. Journal of Product & Brand Management, 17(6), 372–383. https://doi.org/10.1108/10610420810904112
57. Yoo, B., Donthu, N., & Lenartowicz, T. (2011). Measuring Hofstede's five dimensions of cultural values at the individual level: Development and validation of CVSCALE. Journal of International Consumer Marketing, 23(3–4), 193–210. https://doi.org/10.1080/08961530.2011.578059
58. Zhang, Y., & Gelb, B. D. (1996). Matching advertising appeals to culture: the influence of products' use conditions. Journal of Advertising, 25(3), 29–47. https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.1996.10673505

APPENDIX A: MEASUREMENT ITEMS

All items were rated on a 4-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree). "This brand" refers to the respondent's primary mobile network operator.

Favorable endorsement perceptions (analytical label CE; α = .84)

1. Celebrity endorsers make this brand more attractive.

2. I trust brands endorsed by credible celebrities.

3. Celebrity endorsements influence my network choice.

4. This brand's celebrity endorsers are believable.

5. Celebrity endorsements enhance this brand's image.

Brand competitiveness (BC; α = .82)

1. This brand is more competitive than rivals.

2. This brand leads the market in innovation.

3. This brand offers superior value.

4. This brand is well positioned in the market.

5. This brand has clear advantages over competitors.

Brand popularity (BP; α = .80)

1. This brand is well known in Nigeria.

2. People frequently talk about this brand.

3. This brand is popular on social media.

4. This brand is top of mind in telecommunications.

5. This brand has high visibility.

Perceived brand profitability (BPr; α = .83)

1. This brand appears financially successful.

2. This brand is growing its market share.

3. This brand is profitable.

4. This brand attracts many customers.

5. This brand has strong commercial performance.

Customer brand acceptance (CBA; α = .88)

1. I would recommend this brand to others.

2. I intend to continue using this brand.

3. This brand meets my communication needs.

4. I trust this brand.

5. I am satisfied with this brand.

6. I would choose this brand over competitors.

7. This brand is my preferred network.

8. I feel loyal to this brand.

9. I would add family members to this network.

10. This brand deserves my advocacy.

Item provenance and interpretation. Exact source wording, source locations, and adaptation histories are not documented, so the items cannot be classified as verified verbatim adoptions, adaptations, or study-developed wording. The literature cited in Section 3.4 provides conceptual background rather than verified item provenance. The endorsement items describe favorable perceptions, and the acceptance items combine evaluative and intentional components; neither set establishes separately validated subscales or tested mediators.