



TITLE:

The influence of social media celebrity endorsements on Varsity College students.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare the Research Report submitted for the BA Honours in Strategic Brand Communication degree to The Independent Institute of Education is my own work and has not previously been submitted to another University or Higher Education Institution for degree purposes.

Signature |



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ABSTRACT

There is a limited understanding on the influence of social media celebrity endorsements, and their impact on student's perceptions and overall buying behaviour, and that is the research and real-world problem that this study aimed to solve. According to Nirmala, Akila and Mahalaxmi (2017) celebrity endorsements are a popular method of persuading consumers as they act as influential icons that people look up to. This study can provide value for a range of different brands within the South African market. The theoretical framework upon which this study is based is McCracken's (1989) meaning transfer model. Qualitative questionnaires were utilised to conduct the research as they allowed the researcher to gather in-depth information on students' perceptions and experiences. Ten students were given the questionnaire and their responses assisted in answering the research questions and solving the research problem. The major key finding from the research is that social media celebrity endorsements are in fact an influential tool that is used to create awareness of the brand being advertised. Therefore it was found that social media celebrity endorsements have an overall positive influence on students attitudes, perceptions and buying behaviour.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction:

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the concept of social media celebrity endorsements. This chapter commences with a brief discussion of the research title. This chapter also expands on the intended direction of this dissertation.

1.2. Contextualisation:

In the 21st century, celebrity endorsements are seen as a universal feature of contemporary marketing, as celebrity appeal is a common method of persuading consumers, or in the case of this research study, students (Nirmala, Akila and Mahalaxmi, 2017). Egan (2007) mentions that since its establishment, social media has been widely adopted and its introduction has provided brands with new ways of advertising. Celebrities are constantly engaging with their fans on social media therefore, social media has been employed by marketers as a medium for the promotion of their brand (Kaushik and Baliyan, 2017). Over the development of social media, brands have had the chance to come up with different ways to stand out from their competitors and to engage with their desired target market (Kaushik and Baliyan, 2017). This is due to the fact that brands can reach their customers instead of waiting for their customers to contact them thereby creating a new form of communication.

According to Rantanen (2017) in the age of agile brand building, it is becoming increasingly challenging to stand out, this is where celebrity endorsements come into play as they are a good way to create and increase advocacy. Social media celebrity endorsements are a powerful tool for marketers as it allows brands to tap into a pool of potential consumers, who already trust the voice telling them the product is good due to the celebrity's wide reach, expertise, and loyalty (Rantanen, 2017). Social media celebrity endorsements have become an important phenomenon and a winning formula for brands. Celebrity endorsements can also have unwanted effects on the brand's image and students' purchase intentions. Thus it is important to fully understand this new marketing tool use it effectively and to achieve the goal of increased follower engagement and brand awareness (Rantanen, 2017). With this being

said, this dissertation aims to determine the influence of social media celebrity endorsements on Varsity College students.

There are several key concepts that need to be discussed in order to fully understand this topic. Those key concepts, which will be discussed in detail later on, are celebrity endorsements, celebrity credibility, brand image, advertising, social media and buying decisions. These will help to determine whether social media celebrity endorsements are effective amongst Varsity College students.

1.3. Rationale:

This topic is worth investigating as celebrity endorsements have become one of the most favoured and sought-after forms of advertising in the age of agile branding (Schlecht, 2003). Therefore brands need to understand the positives and negatives associated with them. Marketers spend millions annually on celebrity endorsements, thus there is a need to ensure that their endorsements are effective and provide returns on the investments made in those celebrities (Kaushik and Baliyan, 2017). This study is important as it aims to identify the factors that are crucial to the influence of celebrity endorsements in advertising on social media. This will be done to determine if students do find social media celebrity endorsements effective, which will enable marketers to determine whether celebrity endorsements are worth making use of.

This research study is relevant as it can help brands and others who are studying branding, marketing and advertising, find out more information about the influence of social media celebrity endorsements among students in South Africa (Kaushik and Baliyan, 2017). The study will gain insight into the phenomenon of social media celebrity endorsements and apply McCracken's meaning transfer model to practice to determine the influence of social media celebrity endorsements among students. This topic was selected as it aims to make a meaningful contribution to the existing frameworks and literature that are available in South Africa.

1.4. Problem Statement:

Brands around the globe are making use of this modern marketing communications tool known as celebrity endorsements (Kaushik and Baliyan, 2017). Large sums of money are spent on celebrity contracts each year. Therefore, it is important that brands understand both the advantages and disadvantages of social media celebrity endorsements so that they can justify those high costs, and ensure that the celebrity endorsement does not have negative effects on the brands image and students buying behaviour, as this could become a serious issue and decrease a brands equity.

The impact of celebrity endorsements on advertising effectiveness has been studied extensively over the last 30 years (Atay, 2011). However, there are limited studies done on student perceptions of social media celebrity endorsements (Kaushik and Baliyan, 2017) especially in South Africa. Thus, more research needs to be conducted on this topic in South Africa to gain a more clear understanding of the effects of using celebrity endorsements on social media among students.

1.5. Purpose Statement:

The purpose of this study is to make use of a qualitative questionnaire in order to analyse the subjective opinions of students to determine how influential the use of celebrity endorsements on social media really are. This study aims to collect accurate, qualitative data that represents Varsity College students. Another purpose of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of which factors make celebrity endorsements successful. It will do so by looking at previous research, student opinions and McCracken's Meaning transfer model (McCracken, 1989) as a theoretical concept.

With the lack of data on students in South Africa, this research will be able to contribute to the few existing studies and frameworks within a South African context, and potentially add new insights into the study of consumer perceptions of celebrity endorsements on social media.

1.6. Research Questions:

- How would following a celebrity on social media affect students' attitudes towards a brand the celebrity endorses?
- What influence do celebrity endorsements have on a student's buying behaviour?
- What factors influence the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements on social media?

1.7. Research Objectives:

- To describe how following a celebrity on social media affects students' attitudes towards a brand that a celebrity is endorsing.
- To describe the influence that celebrity endorsements have on a student's buying behaviour.
- To describe the factors that influence the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements on social media.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW:

2.1. INTRODUCTION

This study looks at the influence of social media celebrity endorsements on Varsity College students. The argument of this study is that social media celebrity endorsements will be highly effective towards Varsity College students, in that it will positively influence their purchase intentions and decisions. This differs from other studies that have been conducted with regards to celebrity endorsements for numerous reasons. The main reason is that a study such as this one has not been done in South Africa with regards to social media celebrity endorsements and students. Students are exposed to various social media adverts on a daily basis and therefore, celebrity endorsements have become a common strategy to differentiate brands in a highly competitive environment (Deepa and Giridhar, 2018). Thus this topic is worth investigating as celebrity endorsements have become one of the most favoured and sought-after forms of advertising in the age of agile branding (Schlecht, 2003). With that being said the purpose of this study is to make use of a qualitative questionnaire to analyse the subjective opinions of students. This study is largely subjective therefore it fits into the paradigm of interpretivism (Strydom and Bezuidenhout, 2014). This study involves meaningful social action (which is a characteristic of interpretivism) that attempts to understand and describe the influence of social media celebrity endorsements on Varsity College students.

In addition, this study is worth conducting as it will help marketers to examine whether celebrity endorsements are an effective means of advertising, as large sums of money are spent on celebrity contracts each year (Kaushik and Baliyan, 2017). Therefore, it is important that brands understand both the positive and negative effects in order to justify those high costs. It is also crucial to ensure that the celebrity endorsement does not have negative effects on the brands image and students buying behaviour, as this could become a serious issue and decrease a brands equity. In order to make this argument, the following will be discussed in this chapter: the background of the topic, the research paradigm selected, key concepts will be conceptualised and various literature will be used to create an argument on those concepts. Those key concepts are celebrity endorsements, celebrity credibility, brand image, advertising, social media and buying behaviour. Finally, literature will be used to analyse and apply the main theoretical framework to this study.

2.2. CONCEPTUALISATION OF KEY CONCEPTS:

2.2.1. Celebrity endorsements

The use of celebrity endorsements has become a widespread phenomenon (Keller, Aperia and Georgson, 2011). McCracken (1989) defines a celebrity endorser as a person who finds joy in public recognition and uses this recognition to endorse a brand's products or services. Celebrities attach a greater degree of recall, attention and loyalty to a brand therefore they are seen as a useful marketing tool (Zafar and Rafique, 2012). Friedman and Friedman (1979) agree with McCracken's definition in that they say that a celebrity is a person who is well known by the public for their achievements in areas other than that of the product class. Laura and Gabriel (2019) stated that celebrity endorsement or branding is a type of marketing strategy or advertising campaign used by brands. This involves using a famous person's social status to help promote a product or service or even raise awareness of social and environmental issues. According to Keller *et al* (2011), a celebrity can draw attention to a brand and shape the perceptions of the brand by way of conclusions that consumers make based on their knowledge of that celebrity.

A celebrity transfers their personality onto the advertised brand, this typically happens in the beauty industry (Laura and Gabriel, 2019). For example, Drew Barrymore, the actress, signed with a cosmetic producer, Cover Girl. She wanted to bring her personality into the product, and she was committed to endorsing the brand (Laura and Gabriel, 2019). Celebrity endorsements have many advantages in that celebrities are good at generating attention, recall, and positive attitudes towards the product or service provided that there is an explicit fit between the celebrity and the brand (Nirmala, Akila and Mahalaxmi, 2017).

In addition, Mukherjee (2009) mentions that in the age of agile brand building, celebrity endorsements have been established as one of the most popular tools of advertising. In contrast Kaushik and Baliyan (2017) state that there are many risks associated with such endorsements, as there are many cases of brands failing in the marketplace even though celebrities endorsed them (Kaushik and Baliyan, 2017). For this type of marketing to work effectively, the endorser has to fulfil certain objectives, namely, familiarity, meaning the target market is aware of that celebrity, esteem, in that they have credibility, relevance, and finally differentiation (Mukherjee, 2009).

Furthermore, three factors that affect the success of celebrity endorsements are likability, attractiveness, and associations which are also known as the halo effect (Nirmala, Akila and Mahalaxmi, 2017). Keller *et al* (2011) mention that celebrity endorsers should have a rich set of useful associations, feelings, and judgments and a high level of visibility. Mukherjee (2009) also adds that a brand's target audience is more familiar to the physically attractive communicators and those celebrities are more likable. According to Schlecht (2003), this behaviour goes back to the halo effect, whereby individuals who perform well in one area, for example, physical attractiveness, are assumed to do well in other areas as well. Young adult consumers have significant potential purchasing power which means that marketers need to make use of celebrity endorsements in order to positively persuade them (Chun, Leung NG and Luk, 2013). Nirmala, Akila and Mahalaxmi (2017) further add that across the globe young adults already account for \$143 billion in spending, therefore they are on track to become the largest generation of consumers.

There are many risks associated with endorsing a celebrity such as negative publicity, which consumers might link to the brand the celebrity is endorsing (Hoekman and Bosmans, 2010). Instances such as Tiger Woods' alleged affairs have discredited the accompanying brands such as Nike (Hoekman and Bosmans, 2010). Celebrity endorsements may be expensive to endorse, but they can also help to increase the sales of a product in the long run, thereby proving that the positives outweigh the negatives. Celebrity endorsements can also build brand equity (Nirmala, Akila and Mahalaxmi, 2017). Nike is a perfect example of this, prior to Michael Jordan Nike mainly sponsored track and tennis athletes, but then decided to expand their market, which increased sales to become a multibillion-dollar company (Nirmala, Akila and Mahalaxmi, 2017). McCracken (1989) points out that a credible celebrity endorser is therefore a ubiquitous credible feature of modern marketing.

2.2.2. Celebrity Credibility

According to Hoekman and Bosmans (2010) credibility is the degree to which the recipient sees the celebrity as having relevant experience, knowledge or skills, and the brand, as well as the target market, trusts the celebrity to give objective information. In the 21st century, celebrities are seen as credible sources of information especially in the United States (Hoekman and Bosmans, 2010). With that being said Mukherjee (2009) stresses the idea that

celebrities, who are selected as endorsers of a brand should be experienced, knowledgeable and qualified, in order to be perceived as an expert in the category and to be truly effective endorsers.

Furthermore, according to Hoekman and Bosmans (2010) the credibility of a celebrity is described as the total quantity of positive features that create and increase the acceptance of the message. Keller *et al* (2011) mirror this as they mention that a celebrity endorser would be seen as credible in terms of likability, trustworthiness, and attractiveness, as well as having specific associations that have product relevance. A study done by Mukherjee (2009) shows that approximately 20% of the adverts in the United States feature celebrities, and the percentage of adverts using celebrities in other countries, such as Japan, is thought to be even higher. This proves that a credible celebrity is a point of interest for consumers, especially young people who look up to celebrities (Laura and Gabriel, 2019).

In addition, Mukherjee (2009) adds that credibility is the most crucial aspect of celebrity endorsements, as the celebrity is seen as the mouthpiece for a brand in communicating messages to the desired target market. Celebrities' personalities are very strong therefore they can rapidly change perceptions of a brand either positively or negatively, depending on the background and relevance of the celebrity to the brand (Mukherjee, 2009).

Credibility is particularly crucial when individuals have a negative attitude towards the brand and powerful reasoning is needed to positively influence one's attitude towards the brand (Hoekman and Bosmans, 2010). There have been instances where the celebrity has not been credible, in the sense that their credibility did not convince the target audience of the attractiveness of the company's brand (Schlecht, 2003). Chan, Leung Ng and Luk (2013) reveal that negative publicity can negatively affect the attractiveness and credibility of celebrity endorsers.

Celebrities can have a negative impact on the brand's image, however pursuing a celebrity endorsement strategy does actually enable advertisers to project a credible image in terms of persuasiveness, objectiveness, expertise and trustworthiness (Schlecht, 2003). Nirmala, Akila and Mahalaxmi (2017) mirror these findings as they add that a celebrity is used to impart aspirational values and credibility to a brand, but the celebrity does need to match the brand for it to be truly effective. Marketers are in favour of celebrity endorsements as they are perceived

to be credible, are widely recognised and they produce a better influence on the evaluation of the brand, on student's purchase intentions and the brand image (Mukherjee, 2009).

2.2.3. Brand Image

Kotler, Katajaya and Setiawan (2017) define brand image as the set of ideas, beliefs, and the impression that an individual has regarding the brand. Brand image can therefore be positive or negative and it is normally formed in the mind of the consumer (Zafar and Rafique, 2012). McCracken (1989) mentions that a symbolic match or link should exist amongst the celebrity image and the brand image in order for the celebrity endorsement to be effective. Similarly, Nirmala, Akila and Mahalaxmi (2017) further mention that marketers make use of celebrity endorsements in hopes that the positive image of the celebrity will be passed onto the products or the brand image associated with the celebrities.

In addition, a positive image mixed with popularity is the most routinely mentioned factor in selecting a celebrity endorser, as the endorser needs to portray the brand's image (Chan, Leung Ng and Luk, 2013). However, there are negative impacts of celebrity endorsers on the brand's image, especially amongst students or young adults since they are highly perceptive. Such negative impacts include the fact that the brand's image changes if the celebrity ends up having a bad reputation or name (Nirmala, Akila and Mahalaxmi, 2017). Celebrities can also be overexposed, and Tiger Woods is an example of this. When Tiger Woods worked for many different brands, his credibility began to suffer which had a negative impact on the image of the different brands that he endorsed (Nirmala, Akila and Mahalaxmi, 2017). Celebrities can also overshadow brands and therefore students and consumers, in general, begin to focus on the celebrity rather than the product (Nirmala, Akila and Mahalaxmi, 2017). Thus, brands need to ensure that their image is strong before endorsing a celebrity, and they need to ensure that the celebrity chosen matches and continues to portray that brand image.

According to Zafar and Rafique (2012) the meaning of a brand does reside in the minds of the consumer, based on what they have seen, learnt, and felt over a period of time. Therefore, the brand needs to create a strong positive image in students or young adult's minds in order to increase awareness, equity, and sales (Zafar and Rafique, 2012). Equally Mukherjee (2009) adds that celebrity endorsements provide the brand with a small amount of 'glamour' and the

hope that a famous and familiar face will provide name recognition, and additional appeal in a crowded market especially on the multiple social media platforms available to students. Celebrities help to increase the recall value and image of the brand which is crucial in a world of competitive marketing and advertising (Mukherjee, 2009).

2.2.4. Advertising

In an era of information overload almost every brand from different industries uses advertising as their basic tool to promote their products and services (Deepa and Giridhar, 2018). Advertising, according to Deepa and Giridhar (2018) is the best form of communicating information to the masses in an efficient and effective way. In the current era of media influence and information explosion, advertisements, especially on social media, play a profound role in changing the thinking or perception of the consumer (Kaushik and Baliyan, 2017).

Moreover, Kaushik and Baliyan (2017) mention that celebrity endorsement is a good way of maximising advertising effectiveness. However, celebrity endorsements as an advertising tool can have negative effects. For example, the advertising of multiple brands by a single celebrity can damage the marketing campaign of a particular brand (Laura and Gabriel, 2019). Brands lose their power of credibility, persuasion and the relationship between the celebrity and the consumer will slowly get lost (Laura and Gabriel, 2019). This is evident where David Beckham, the football player, advertised perfumes, drinks, and shoes, this meant that the consumer saw him in commercials, but they could no longer remember the advertised product (Laura and Gabriel, 2019).

Conversely, celebrity advertising does have its many benefits which seem to overshadow the negatives. Mukherjee (2009) demonstrates that celebrity advertising provides quick saliency in that the famous person's attention adds value to the advert. Celebrity advertising also allows for quick connection and is a shorthand for brand values (Nirmala, Akila and Mahalaxmi, 2017). This type of advertising is a quick means of brand differentiation and competitive advantage (Mukherjee, 2009).

In addition, Poturak and Kadric (2013) argue that the tool of celebrity endorsement has become a pervasive element in communication and advertising management. Most adverts especially

those that involve celebrity endorsements focus heavily on the young generation, which means that their perception about celebrity-endorsed advertisements is the most important (Poturak and Kadric, 2013). Therefore, celebrity endorsement has become a prevalent form of advertising especially in the United States (Mukherjee, 2009). The use of celebrity advertising for brands has become a winning formula for product marketing and corporate image building. Deepa and Giridhar (2018) found that 8 out of 10 commercials that scored the highest recall are those with celebrity endorsements. Thus, celebrity endorsements are becoming a prominent phenomenon and common practice in advertising around the globe, especially on social media platforms (Mukherjee, 2009).

2.2.5. Social media

Social media provides convenient ways for celebrities to interact with a large number of followers (Chung and Cho, 2017). Social media can be defined as any website that allows users to participate in social networking and to create and share content (Cunningham and Bright, 2012). According to Chung and Cho (2017) celebrities make use of various platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, in order to engage in constant conversation with their fans. Fans will go where celebrities go, this applies to social media as much as it does to the real world (Cunningham and Bright, 2012).

Brands seek to attract and distract the attention of potential customers that live in a world of increasing commercial bombardment, especially with the growth of various social media platforms (Mukherjee, 2009). According to Chan, Leung Ng and Luk (2013) young adults form primary attachments to friends and family and secondary attachments to celebrities, especially on social media platforms since they are able to engage with the celebrity on a regular basis.

Conversely, there is also the possibility that engagement with celebrities may decrease over time (Cunningham and Bright, 2012). Consumers can also build up a tolerance to sponsored messages on social media which means that those messages will not be as effective. Social media can also be overwhelming in that the platforms are endless therefore messages can be missed (Cunningham and Bright, 2012). Celebrities can also get negative publicity on social media platforms and therefore lose followers which means they will not be as valuable to brands. Poturak and Kadric (2013) disagree as they mention that celebrity endorsements on

social media represent certain risks, even though it is a widely used tool to reach a competitive advantage by brands.

Around the world celebrities have been used for different types of brands. Most people are exposed to advertisements, especially young adults through social media (Poturak and Kadric, 2013). Students live in a world of ever-increasing information overload therefore brands seek to attract and distract their attention on social media platforms (Mukherjee, 2009). In today's society there is growing competitiveness and similarity of products offered by different brands, therefore it has become crucial that brands identify the best form of advertising their marketing offerings, which for students seems to be on social media platforms (Poturak and Kadric, 2013). The attitudes of the student population are evolving at a rapid rate and they are becoming more aware of the brands that they use to define their sense of self (Poturak and Kadric, 2013). With this being said, brands need to choose the right celebrities and social media platforms in order to influence and change students buying behaviour.

2.2.6 Buying Behaviour

According to Nirmala, Akila and Mahalaxmi (2017) buying behaviour is defined as a process whereby individuals search for the product or service that they need or want, make the choice to purchase the most suitable option from alternatives and finally use it.

In addition, the appearance of a celebrity in an advertisement is likely to positively influence the buying decision of a product. Such advertisements create awareness of the brand's product or service, which in turn can persuade an individual's purchase intention which consequently increases the brand's sales (Deepa and Giridhar, 2018). Therefore, one can conclude that there is a powerful relationship between celebrity endorsements and buying behaviour. Young adults perceive that adverts using celebrity endorsements influence consumer's brand perceptions, awareness and consumption intentions therefore the celebrity needs to be the right fit for the brand (Chan, Leung Ng and Luk, 2013).

However, celebrity endorsements can negatively affect students buying behaviour, in that a student may not like the celebrity endorsing the product (Chan, Leung Ng and Luk, 2013). Celebrity endorsements on social media can also be regarded as a form of deceptive

marketing and therefore negatively change the purchase intentions of students (McCracken, 1989).

Moreover, celebrities increase the awareness of a brand's advertising, they develop positive feelings towards the brands and are perceived by consumers as more entertaining (Schlecht, 2003). Role models including athletes and entertainers have been shown to influence American adolescents buying intentions and behaviour (Chan, Laung Ng and Luk, 2013). Schlecht (2003) further mentions that making use of celebrity endorsements is likely to positively affect students' attitudes and purchase intentions.

2.3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to McCracken (1989), celebrity endorsements play a central role in the meaning transfer process or model. The meaning transfer model is an accurate theory to use when trying to determine the influence of social media celebrity endorsements on students, as the model has been created to demonstrate the process of the celebrity endorser in advertising (Hoekman and Bosman, 2010). Hoekman and Bosman (2010) further add that the meaning transfer model is based on meanings, the model also suggests that the effect of the celebrity endorser is reliant on the meanings the celebrity brings into the endorsement process.

Furthermore, one can assess the influence of celebrity endorsements by assessing the meanings students associate with the endorser and eventually transfer onto the brand (Schlecht, 2003). McCracken (1989) demonstrates that the model is made up of three stages. The first stage is where the meaning begins, the meaning is associated with the famous person, it then moves from the endorser to the brand. Meaning that is attributed to the celebrity becomes associated with the brand in the consumer's mind (McCracken, 1989). In the third stage which is the consumption process, the brand's meaning is then acquired by the consumer (Hoekman and Bosmans, 2010). The third stage, according to Hoekman and Bosmans (2010), shows the importance of the consumer's role in the process of endorsing brands with celebrities. McCracken (1989) sums up these stages as he mentions that stage one is where the meaning resides in the celebrity. In stage two that meaning gets transferred when the celebrity enters into an advertisement with a brand's product (McCracken, 1989). In the third stage the meaning moves from the product to the consumer. Therefore, if the meaning

is strong enough in the consumer's mind, the celebrity endorsement will have a powerful effect on the consumer or in this case student, granted that the celebrity is credible and the right fit for the brand.

Celebrities become role models and idols for consumers through their presence on social media (Laura and Gabriel, 2019). Therefore, the consumer buys the brands promoted by testimonials, in an attempt to shape their own self-image (Laura and Gabriel, 2019). This is where McCracken's model comes into play as the celebrity becomes a social influence. According to Chung and Cho (2017) McCracken's model explains the idea that certain personality characteristics of a celebrity may be transferred onto a brand that the celebrity endorses, thereby having an effect on consumer's buying behaviour.

In addition, Kaushik and Baliyan (2017) mention that McCracken's model portrays the idea that non-celebrities simply transfer the message. Celebrities convey the message in a meaningful way which is more effective, as the celebrity has already established a meaning outside the advertising world, which is evident on their social media platforms (Kaushik and Baliyan, 2017).

Similarly, Nirmala, Akila and Muhalaxmi (2017) found that McCracken's (1989) model demonstrates the idea that celebrity endorsements are an effective way of transferring meaning onto brands and ultimately the consumer. Thus, if a brand can create the appropriate meaning transfer between the celebrity endorser and the brand image, this will positively influence the attitude and buying behaviour of consumers towards the brand (Hoekman and Bosmans, 2010).

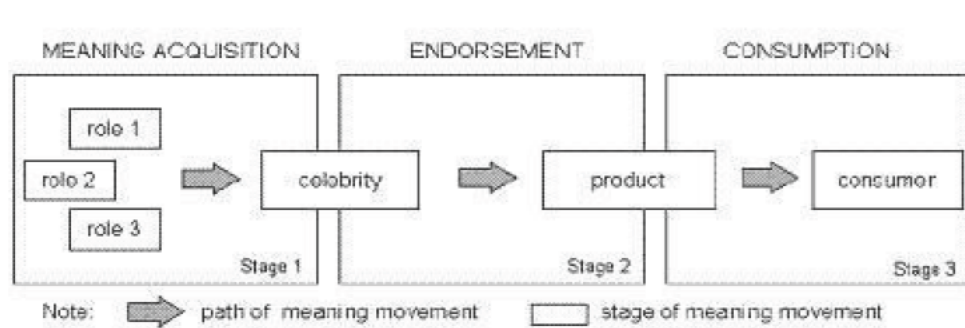


Figure 1: McCracken's meaning transfer model

2.4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, one can see that celebrity endorsements are a central feature of modern marketing (McCracken, 1989). Multiple studies have been conducted on the influence of celebrity endorsements in advertising. However, there are none that have been done on the influence of social media celebrity endorsements on students in South Africa, which is the gap this study aims to fill. This chapter has demonstrated that there are many different elements that influence the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements. The key concepts that have been identified and discussed were celebrity endorsements, celebrity credibility, brand image, advertising, social media and buying behaviour. The paradigm, being interpretivism, and the theoretical framework, being McCracken's meaning transfer model (1989), were also considered as they are both crucial to conducting this study. All of these phenomena have been brought together to argue that, if done correctly, social media celebrity endorsements will be highly influential towards students and their buying behaviour. Therefore, social media celebrity endorsements will have a positive impact on the buying behaviour of students.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY:

3.1. Research design/approach:

3.1.1. Selected Paradigm:

This research study fitted into the paradigm of interpretivism as the study is largely subjective (Strydom and Bezuidenhout, 2014). This study involved meaningful social action that attempted to understand and describe the influence of using social media celebrity endorsements among Varsity College students. Working in this paradigm meant that the researcher adopted a more flexible and personal research structure (Strydom and Bezuidenhout, 2014). The researcher is part of the process and therefore the interpretation of data could never be fully objective (Strydom and Bezuidenhout, 2014). Interpretivism pays attention to and values what people (students in the case of this study) feel, say and do, and how they make meaning of the phenomena being researched (Strydom and Bezuidenhout, 2014). Phenomenology is the study of structures of experiences; therefore, it was applied to students to assess how social media celebrity endorsements have influenced the way they perceive brands. Interpretivism allows the researcher to identify trends and patterns (Nieuwenhuis, 2019) and therefore determine the effectiveness of social media celebrity endorsements on Varsity College students.

3.1.2. Conceptual approach or research strategy:

For the purpose of this study qualitative data was collected and analysed. According to DeFranzo (2011), qualitative research is used to gain an understanding of underlying motivations, reasons and opinions. It also provides insights into the problem being studied, it can help to develop ideas based on feelings and thoughts of the participants and the researcher (DeFranzo, 2011). This research study was subjective in nature as it is based on the student's opinions on the influence of celebrity endorsements on social media. Brand loyalty and consumer perceptions are based on the consumer's personal feelings, experiences and involvement which are factors that align with the definition of qualitative data (Strydom and Bezuidenhout, 2014). Qualitative methods are a means for exploring and understanding the meaning students ascribe to a social problem or phenomenon (Nieuwenhuis, 2019).

3.1.3. *Research design:*

The researcher worked deductively, this is where the researcher deduces the research questions from existing theories such as McCracken's meaning transfer model, that theory will be used when analysing the data (Strydom and Bezuidenhout, 2014). This type of theorising involves reasoning from general assumptions about celebrity endorsements to more specific assumptions to have been able to successfully describe the influence of social media celebrity endorsements on Varsity College students. This was a descriptive study as it aimed to describe the influence of social media celebrity endorsements among Varsity College students (Strydom and Bezuidenhout, 2014).

3.2. Population:

A report about the global trust in advertising demonstrated that millennials, ages 21 to 34 years old are the most responsive to the use of celebrity endorsements in advertising (The Nielsen Global Survey, 2015). Therefore, it was only fitting that the population for this study was Varsity College students, between the ages of 18 and 23, who are brand conscious and active social media users. With that being said, it is evident that all of the students in the population shared three specific characteristics that relate to the research questions. The population only included those between the ages of 18 and 23 as that age group makes up the majority of those who actively follow celebrities on social media platforms and engage with brands via celebrity endorsements. Varsity College students were selected as they act as a proxy for private tertiary students, who all fall into a middle to higher income bracket and living standards measure. The researcher was able to get a more balanced and wider view by asking students from different Varsity College campuses. The target population was tertiary students in South Africa. The accessible population was any Varsity College student, as that allowed the study to be narrowed down and it was easier for the researcher to access that sample of the desired population.

3.3. Sampling:

The researcher made use of non-probability sampling since this research study is qualitative in nature and it was difficult for the researcher to gain access to the entire population (Pascoe, 2014). The sample was, therefore, selected using the researcher's judgment which means that

the participants were not randomly selected from a list (Pascoe, 2014). The unit of analysis for this study was students as they form the major entity that the researcher analysed.

Convenience, purposive and quota sampling methods were utilised as those methods fitted in with the paradigm of interpretivism and there was an ease of access to many samples in terms of the participants who were questioned (Maree and Pietersen, 2019). Convenience sampling is where the researcher selected population elements based on the fact they are conveniently and easily available (Maree and Pietersen, 2019). This type of sampling is usually quick and easy. Due to the current circumstances and restrictions brought on by COVID-19, convenience sampling was an appropriate method as it allowed the researcher to have easy access to the chosen sample, the researcher was then able to ask people whom they know were from Varsity College which saved the researcher time. The research topic also has a very specific population therefore convenience sampling was a fitting match.

Quota sampling is where the researcher identifies categories of people that need to be in the sample and the number (quotas) of people in each category (Maree and Pietersen, 2019). For the purpose of this study, the researcher had two categories which were males and females and the researcher chose 5 females and 5 males making the ratio 5:5. This was an equal quota and it, therefore, contributes to the credibility of the study. Purposive sampling is the third and final method that was used. The researcher purposefully chose the elements that they wished to include in the sample, which was based on a setlist of characteristics that were determined in the population parameters (Pascoe, 2014).

In terms of sample size, 10 participants were questioned which allowed for an equal number of males and female students. The researcher would have preferred a larger sample size however, given the current situation brought about by COVID-19, the sample needed to be small to easily attain and communicate with the selected population. 5 males and 5 females were selected from different degrees and years all from Varsity College, which allowed the researcher to gain in-depth data-rich responses from the participants.

Due to the qualitative nature of this research study, a smaller sample was used. Smaller samples generate complete and accurate information in a particular cultural context (Maree, 2019). This allowed the researcher to gain rich data provided that the participants selected have a certain degree of knowledge in the domain of enquiry (Maree, 2019). Since the sample size was smaller than the researcher would have liked, she made sure that she used an in-depth questionnaire to get a deeper understanding of the participants' subjective experiences about social media celebrity endorsements. Thus, the researcher was able to get a thorough understanding of how the participants were influenced by their environment, and this provided the researcher with insight through the eyes of the participants, their feelings, opinions and thoughts towards social media celebrity endorsements.

3.4.Data collection method:

The researcher made use of a qualitative questionnaire to collect data and to analyse students' opinions, feelings and thoughts on social media celebrity endorsements, thereby answering the research questions and keeping in line with the purpose of this research study. The researcher made use of both secondary research, in the form of past studies such as journals and articles, and primary research, a questionnaire, in order to obtain multiple different viewpoints and an abundance of rich data. Questionnaires are useful as they provide clear and simple instructions; questionnaires also make use of logical sequences for easy flow and understanding (Strydom and Bezuidenhout, 2014).

A questionnaire was the best data collection method for this study as it allowed the researcher to ask a mix of open-ended and closed-ended questions to obtain a variety of answers (Strydom and Bezuidenhout, 2014). A qualitative questionnaire was utilised in order to analyse the influence of celebrity endorsements on students. Smaller sample group studies in the form of questionnaires allowed for common beliefs, opinions and factors to be collected among the participants, which assisted the researcher in answering the research question and objectives (Strydom and Bezuidenhout, 2014). With this being said, similar questions were grouped

together thereby making it an effective method as a variety of data was acquired using a simple and quick collection tool (Strydom and Bezuidenhout, 2014). Questionnaires are also well known by the general public, thus they were the best data collection method as students did not feel anxious or confused with regards to how to fill it out, especially since a questionnaire allowed for the researcher to provide an introduction into what the questionnaire was about and how to fill it out.

A sample of the questionnaire can be seen in the appendix of this paper. The questionnaire consisted of 18 questions, this number provided the researcher with a sufficient amount of relevant data without taking up too much of the participant's time. Questions 1, 9, 10, 11, 15 and 16 were all general questions, as they are relevant to the whole situation being studied (Strydom and Bezuidenhout, 2014). Questions 3 and 13 were specific questions which, according to Strydom and Bezuidenhout (2014) is where the researcher focused on a particular aspect of a whole situation such as social media or buying behaviour. Questions 2, 7 and 14 were all close-ended questions as they contained a fixed number of answers and the participants were only allowed to choose one option (Strydom and Bezuidenhout, 2014). Questions 4, 12 and 18 were matrix questions which are where the participant was asked to pick the option that best reflected their feelings, opinions and attitudes (Strydom and Bezuidenhout, 2014). Questions 5 and 6 were open-ended questions, these questions allowed the respondent to answer in their own words (Strydom and Bezuidenhout, 2014). Questions 8a and 8b were contingency questions, these questions instructed the respondent to answer another set of questions, but only if they had given a particular response to a previous question (Strydom and Bezuidenhout, 2014). Finally, question 17 was a multiple choice question where certain units were grouped together and the participant was asked to select one option (Strydom and Bezuidenhout, 2014). The questionnaire was holistic and it encouraged elaboration, which allowed for fully qualitative responses which in turn allowed the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the views and experiences held by the respondents. This understanding helped the researcher to answer the research questions and objectives.

3.5. Application of data collection:

Firstly an ethical clearance form was sent out to the IIE, which asked permission for the researcher to utilise and email a questionnaire to their Varsity College students. Then the researcher devised a questionnaire where they decided on what should be asked, how to phrase each question and how it should be presented.

Pre-testing the questionnaire:

The researcher first tested the questionnaire by making use of 4 students from Varsity College all between the ages of 18 and 23. Pre-testing the questionnaire allowed the researcher to detect any mistakes on the questionnaire and it enabled the researcher to ensure that respondents fully understood the questions asked. The respondents in this pilot test expressed a clear understanding of the questions asked but some needed an explanation on certain questions such as question 5 and 6. The pre-testers' feedback was taken into account and slight changes were made to the questionnaire and instructions provided.

Sharing the questionnaire:

The researcher developed the questionnaire using Microsoft Word. The questionnaire was then sent out via email from the researcher to the 10 respondents that were selected by the researcher. A consent form was also sent to the respondents to ensure that the researcher had their permission and consent, the email stated the purpose of the study. The questionnaire included an introduction that explained the purpose of the questionnaire, how to go about filling it in, and how to return it to the researcher. The questionnaires were sent out on Tuesday the 11th of August and were then collected a week later via email on Tuesday the 18th of August. The questionnaires that were collected from the respondents were stored in a secure locked folder that was only viewed by the researcher. None of the names of the respondents was released or mentioned within the data analysis process.

3.6. Data analysis method:

The researcher made use of qualitative content analysis, which according to Elo and Kyngas (2008) is used to describe a phenomenon in a conceptual form. Content analysis is a form of analysing visual, written or verbal forms of communication messages, which made it appropriate to the purpose and nature of this research study (Elo and Kyngas, 2008). Thematic coding was used to categorise answers to facilitate analysis (Bezuidenhout and Cronje, 2014). That process of data analysis was used to decrease the volume of text collected, the process then identified and grouped categories together in order to seek understanding of it (Bengtsson, 2016).

By making use of qualitative content analysis the researcher attempted to 'stay true' to the text from the questionnaires and to achieve and enhance trustworthiness (Bengtsson, 2016). The researcher was working in the interpretivism paradigm, therefore, it is appropriate to have made use of qualitative content analysis as it allowed the researcher to provide a rich description of the social reality mirrored in the texts (Strydom and Bezuidenhout, 2014). The purpose of this study was to determine if social media celebrity endorsements influence Varsity College students, therefore content analysis and thematic analysis is only fitting as it enabled the researcher to identify patterns of similar opinions and thoughts held by the students.

Thematic analysis was used to identify common themes, trends, ideas or patterns of meaning that occur repeatedly (Maree, 2019). The researcher made use of a thematic analysis as it was useful in gaining a deeper understanding of the perspectives and feelings of the different students questioned. Thematic analysis, also known as concept coding, involves identifying passages of text that are linked by a common theme or category which allowed the researcher to index the text into groups and create a framework of thematic ideas (Mountain, 2019). Thematic analysis helped the researcher to identify any similarities or differences to the themes previously identified in this study, which was beneficial as the previous research aimed at identifying if students are in fact influenced by social media celebrity endorsements. This type of analysis allowed the researcher to reduce a large amount of data in order to identify the most important themes and categories, thereby assisting the researcher in answering the primary research question of whether or not social media celebrity endorsements will have an

influence on students. The researcher will first familiarise themselves with the data that was collected. The researcher will then read over the data a few times and start writing down some ideas. Thereafter the researcher will begin to generate initial themes or trends that appear across the data set. Codes will be collected in order to form central themes (Strydom and Bezuidenhout, 2014). The researcher will then review the themes to check if they relate to the coded extracts, and the data set. This will generate a map of themes of the analysis of the data (Strydom and Bezuidenhout, 2014). That process will help the researcher to identify and highlight a possible relationship between students and social media celebrity endorsements. Lastly, the researcher produced a report by analysing the selected extracts from the data, and related the extracts to the research questions and the literature review (Strydom and Bezuidenhout, 2014).

3.7. Application of data analysis:

The individuals who provided the data in the questionnaire consisted of students who were between the ages of 18 and 23, the researcher had analysed their subjective experiences, thoughts and feelings, based on their answers to the questions in the questionnaire. The researcher had ensured anonymity of her respondents by referring to them as participants one, two three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine and ten. Therefore, the researcher had given each participant an identification number, and saved their interviews separately on Microsoft Word. The open-ended questions were analysed by making use of thematic analysis and were presented through the use of word-clouds. The multiple-choice and close-ended questions on the other hand were analysed through the use of pie charts and bar graphs, however, no percentages were shown or used in order to keep in the paradigm of interpretivism.

The researcher first familiarised herself with the data at hand by reading and re-reading the data from each questionnaire. Before analysing the data the researcher firstly grouped all the questions according to the research objective that they fell under as this made it easier to find commonalities. The researcher carefully went through all of the data from the ten questionnaires and started taking notes, in order to mark initial ideas for codes that would

describe the present study content. This also helped the researcher to become more familiar with the data.

In the second step of the thematic analysis, the researcher began to generate succinct labels or codes that identify important features of the data that might be relevant to answering the research question. Once the researcher had coded the data by finding fitting and interesting information, she began to search for initial themes. This phase involves examining the codes and collected data to identify significant broader patterns of meaning (Strydom and Bezuidenhout, 2014). The themes identified were broader than the codes and involved actively interpreting the codes and data. The researcher had taken the themes from their literature review, and then extracted similar themes from the questionnaires.

In the next phase the researcher checked the candidate themes against the dataset, to ensure that they told a convincing story of the data and that they answered the research question and objectives. The researcher had gone back and forth between the codes, themes and extracts until she felt positive that she had coded the relevant data and had enough themes to represent her data accurately, the researcher then began to describe each theme.

Furthermore, the researcher related the story of each theme to the other themes, the literature review as well as the research objectives and questions, this essentially allowed the researcher to write a coherent analysis of each theme. Examples of the themes found in the literature review are: celebrity endorsements, brand image, advertising, celebrity credibility, social media and buying behaviour. The main themes that were found through the data analysis process were: social media marketing, influential tool of advertising, associations and appeal, buying behaviour, brand image and factors affecting the success of the celebrity endorsement.

Lastly, the researcher produced the report. The researcher achieved this by writing out all of the results on Microsoft Word. The researcher typed out a clear account of the data collection process, as well as the content and thematic analysis. The researcher used the description of the themes and the trends found as the bases of her final report, and presented the themes in the form of word-clouds as a means of demonstrating her research findings.

3.8. Trustworthiness:

The researcher enhanced the trustworthiness and rigor of this study by ensuring that the findings were consistent with reality and that the four criteria of trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability were met. One's research is trustworthy when it is deemed believable or true, therefore the researcher made sure that they remain ethical and that the findings are credible (Koonin, 2014).

Credibility refers to how consistent the findings are with reality and the accuracy with which the researcher interpreted the data that was provided by the respondents (Koonin, 2014). This study can be deemed credible as the researcher interpreted the data provided by the participants with accuracy and objectivity thereby ensuring that there was limited bias in the analysis. The researcher also selected appropriate data analysis methods to ensure the most accurate interpretation of the data, which was provided by the students' answers to the questionnaire.

Moreover, if the research findings are applied in a similar situation, context or settings with other respondents and then similar results are obtained, the research is then said to have an element of transferability (Korstjens and Moser 2018). The researcher thereby enhanced transferability by focusing on the context that the findings are applied to.

Dependability refers to how reliable the findings of the study are over time (Koonin, 2014). With that being said, the researcher ensured consistency throughout and the researcher did not stray away from the important concepts such as celebrity endorsements and social media.

Lastly Korstjens and Moser (2018) add that confirmability is the degree to which the findings of the research study could be confirmed by other researchers. Confirmability was attained by ensuring that the data collected supported the findings and interpretation of the researcher, thus others who view the collected data will be able to come to similar conclusions (Koonin, 2014). That is evident in the next chapter of this study as the researcher made interpretations of the findings.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Presentation and Interpretation of findings:

4.1 Objective 1 - To describe how following a celebrity on social media affects students' attitudes towards a brand that the celebrity is endorsing.

The three main themes that fall under this objective are: 'the influence of celebrity endorsements,' 'consumer perceptions and attitudes' and 'social media marketing.'

4.1.1. The influence of celebrity endorsements:

Below is a word-cloud illustrating the codes established from the key phrases and trends found in the responses to questions 10 and 12.



Figure 2: Questions 10 and 12 response word-cloud (own image)

According to Nirmala, Akila and Mahalaxmi (2018), celebrities are a powerful influential tool when it comes to generating recall, attention and positive attitudes towards the brand's product. The responses to questions 10 and 12 mirror those findings by Nirmala, Akila and Mahalaxmi (2017). All of the participants either agreed or strongly agreed that celebrities do help people to

remember a product or brand, which shows that celebrity endorsements are in fact a persuasive tool used to gain and sustain viewers attention (Dhotre and Bhola, 2010).

From the research conducted it was found that eight out of the ten participants do feel that the use of celebrities makes the message more persuasive. The respondents felt that celebrity endorsements make the product being advertised more desirable, one respondent even went as far as saying that they would buy that product just so that they could mimic the celebrity since he idolised Ronaldo (the celebrity in the given advert). There were however two respondents that felt that the celebrity in the given advert did not make the advert more persuasive, those respondents each felt that the food advertised is unhealthy and that the celebrity used does not change that fact. This shows that the viewer's opinions of the product trumped their opinion of the celebrity, this is a finding that the literature and the researcher did not think of.

Findings from the literature reveal that the average person is exposed to 600 advertisements per day (Dhotre and Bhola, 2010) therefore, celebrity endorsements are a huge influence when trying to persuade viewers and to stand out. With that being said, it is clear that the findings from the conducted research support the findings from the literature, as all ten participants stated that they do find celebrity endorsements both influential and persuasive.

4.1.2. Consumer perceptions and attitudes:

Below is a word-cloud illustrating the codes established from the key phrases and trends from the responses to questions 5, 6 and 7.

Question 5: What do you associate the brand in the given advert with?

Question 6: What do you associate the celebrity in the given advert with?

Question 7: Does the use of this particular celebrity heighten the value and appeal of this brand?



Figure 3: Questions 5, 6 and 7 response word-cloud (own image)

According to Roy (2016) consumers' perceptions are what their impression is, what their awareness is and how conscious they are about a certain brand or its offering. Consumers attitudes, on the other hand, are the combination of their feelings, beliefs and behavioural intentions towards a brand or its offering (Perner, 2017). When looking at figure 3 it is evident that the student's perceptions of the brand and the celebrity in the given Calvin & Klien advert are based on their opinions, as well as how aware and conscious they are of that brand (Clavin and Klien) and the celebrity (Kendall Jenner). From the research conducted, it was found that

nine out of the ten respondents have a positive perception of celebrity endorsements as they felt that celebrities do heighten the value and appeal of the brand being advertised.

The researcher found a link between question five and question six as all of the respondents agreed that the celebrity used (Kendall Jenner) was the right fit for the brand and they associated one with the other. The link between an endorsed celebrity and the brand that they are endorsing is crucial as brands want to associate themselves with celebrities that share the same values as the brand (Laura and Gabriel, 2019). Similar words were used to describe the celebrity and the brand thereby creating an association. Words such as wealth, status, influence and appealing were used interchangeably between question five and question six. That finding links with the insights found by Laura and Gabriel (2019), as they mention that a celebrity transfers their personality onto the advertised brand. With that being said, it is evident that the findings from the conducted research confirm the findings from the literature, as the students had overall positive perceptions and attitudes towards the celebrity and the brand being advertised.

4.1.3. Social media marketing:

Below is a thematic map illustrating the codes established from the key phrases and trends from the responses to question 14 and 16.

Question 14: Do you follow celebrities on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter?

Question 16: Do you think social media has become the most successful marketing platform for brands?

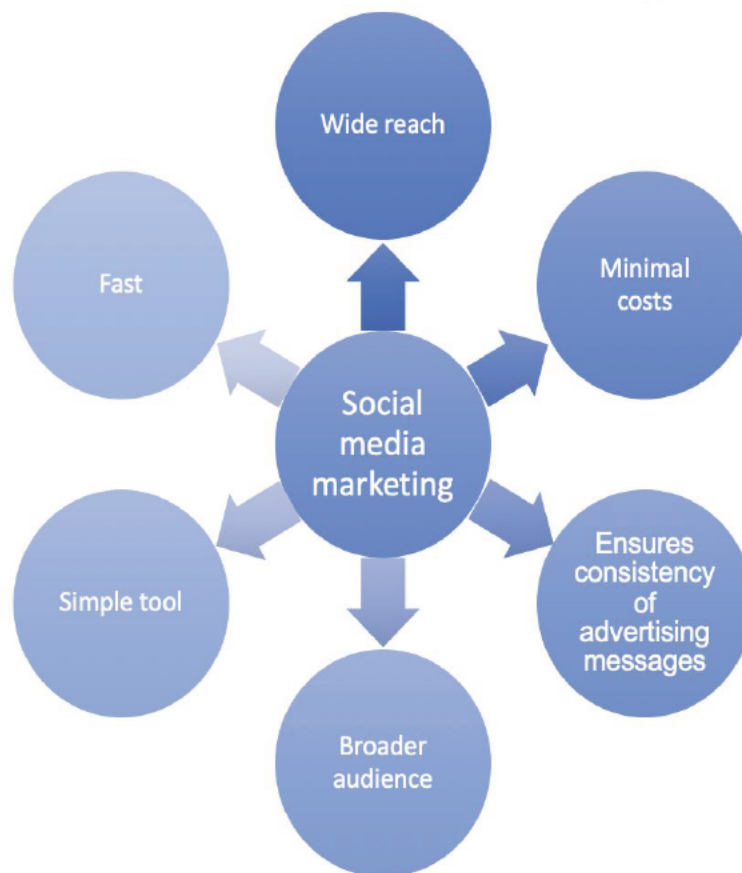


Figure 4: Questions 14 and 16 response thematic map (own image)

When asked whether or not the respondents follow celebrities on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, nine said yes and one student said no. This corresponds with the findings in the literature as celebrities make use of various platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, in order to engage in constant conversation with their fans (Chung and Cho, 2017).

Brands seek to attract and distract the attention of students since they now live in a world of increasing commercial bombardment. Brands need to start making use of social media platforms in order to connect with students since social media marketing is on the rise. This links with question sixteen as all ten of the respondents felt that social media has become the most successful marketing platform for brands. Many of the respondents mentioned that social media is a simple tool that has a wide reach. Therefore, the findings from the conducted research support the findings from the literature as all of the respondents agreed that social media is a crucial and growing marketing tool.

4.2. Objective 2 - To describe the influence that celebrity endorsements have on students buying behaviour.

The main themes that fall under this objective are 'buying behaviour' and 'brand image.'

4.2.1. Buying Behaviour:

Below is a word-cloud illustrating the codes established from the key phrases and trends from the responses to questions 9, 11, 12, and 13.



Figure 5: Questions 9, 11, 12 and 13 response word-cloud (own image)

Buying behaviour is affected by many factors however, a symbolic link should exist amongst the brand image and celebrity image in order for the celebrity endorsement to truly be effective (McCracken, 1989). Nine of the ten students felt that they will have a better social status if they wear or use a product endorsed by a celebrity. In addition, three of the students agreed and seven of the students strongly agreed that celebrity endorsements help people to remember a product or brand. Those findings suggest that celebrity endorsements do have positive and

lasting effects on students. Deepa and Giridhar (2018) mention that the appearance of a celebrity in an advert is likely to positively influence the buying decision of a product as the celebrity increases recall and awareness of the brand, thereby supporting the findings in the conducted research. Both the conducted research and the literature demonstrate that the celebrity acts as a link between the brand and the consumer thereby creating brand loyalty, however, the celebrity needs to be the right fit for the brand in order for the endorsement to influence students buying behaviour. With that being said the conducted research does support the literature for the most part. The findings from the conducted research did present some difference in that the students said their opinion and review of the celebrity also affected their purchase intent, this is not something the literature had thought of. This new finding does, however, link to information found by Chan, Leung Ng and Luk (2013) as they found that celebrity endorsements can negatively affect students buying behaviour, in that a student may not like the celebrity endorsing the product.

4.2.2. Brand Image:

Below is a word-cloud illustrating the codes established from the key phrases and trends from the responses to question 15.



Figure 6: Question 15 response word-cloud (own image)

Mukherjee (2009) mentions that celebrities assist in increasing the recall value and image of the brand which is essential in a world of competitive advertising. This matches the findings from the questionnaire as all of the respondents felt that celebrity endorsements give the brand a higher status. According to Zafar and Rafique (2012) brands need to create a strong positive image in the minds of students in order to increase appeal, awareness, sales and overall equity and celebrity endorsements are a clever and innovative way to do so. It was found in both the conducted research and the literature that celebrity endorsements can have a positive effect on the brand's image which is formed in the mind of the consumer.

4.3. Objective 3 - To describe the factors that influence the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements on social media.

The predominant themes that fall under this objective are 'endorsement factors' and 'influential marketing tool.'

4.3.1. Endorsement factors:

Below are two bar graphs illustrating the responses from question 17 and question 4.

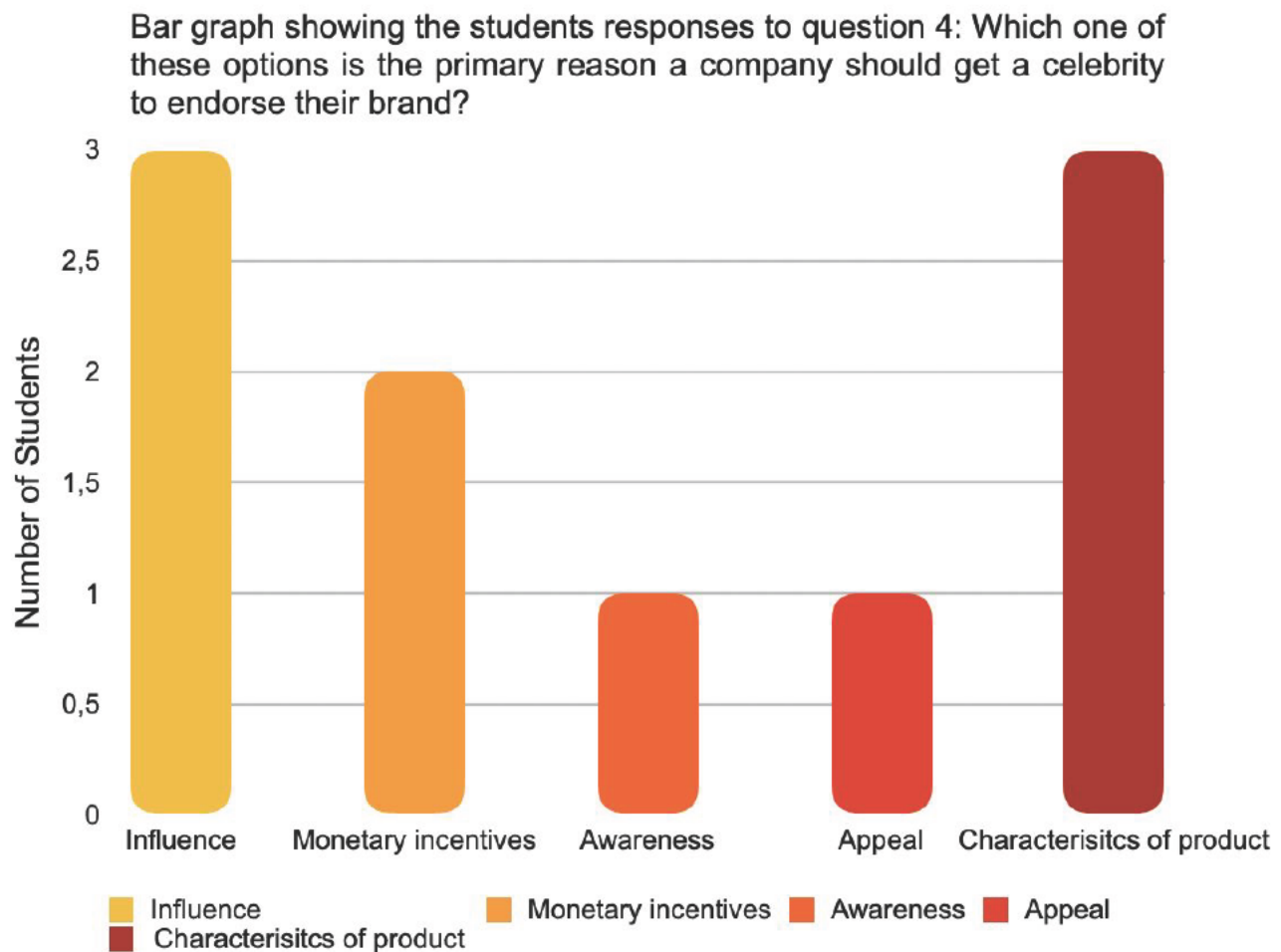


Figure 7: Bar graph showing the responses from question 4 (own image)

Bar graph showing the students responses to Question 17: Which of the following factors is the most important when endorsing a celebrity on social media?

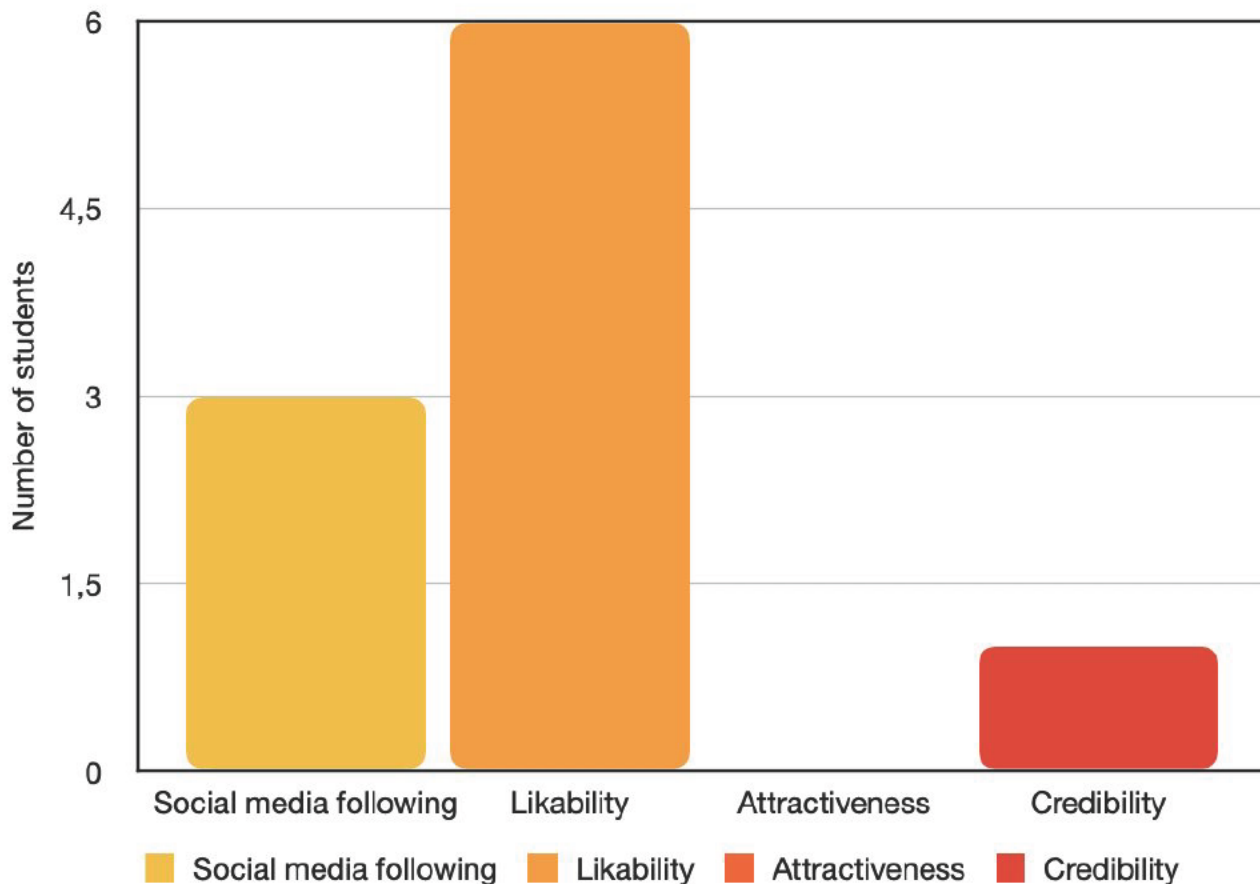


Figure 8: Bar graph showing the responses from question 17 (own image)

According to Nirmala, Akila and Mahalaxmi (2017) there are three predominant factors that affect the success of celebrity endorsements, those factors are attractiveness, likability and associations. The conducted findings contrast Nirmala, Akila and Mahalaxmi (2017) to an extent as no students selected attractiveness. It is also evident in the above bar graph (figure 8) that likability is the most important factor when endorsing a celebrity on social media according to the students questioned, social media following was the second-highest and credibility was selected by only one student. This finding is key as it shows brands and

marketers the most important factors to keep in mind when endorsing a celebrity on social media. The bar graph (figure 7) shows that the students felt the characteristics of the product and influence are the most important reasons a brand should get a celebrity to endorse its products or services.. The celebrity endorsement needs to fit the characteristics of the product to create a link and to make the product stand out more.

In addition, seven of the students agreed and three of the students strongly agreed that attractiveness and credibility of a celebrity have a positive effect on one's online purchase intentions. This means that a brand's target audience is more comfortable and familiar with physically attractive communicators as those celebrities are more likeable (Mukherjee, 2009). The findings in the pie chart prove that credibility is one of the most important features when endorsing a celebrity as it makes the endorsement more effective, believable and real. This matches the findings in the literature as Hoekman and Bosmans (2010) mention that the credibility of a celebrity is the total positive features that create and increase the acceptance of the brand's message.

4.3.2. Influential marketing tool:

Below is a pie chart illustrating the responses to question 8a.

Pie chart showing the responses to question 8a:
Do you believe the use of celebrities bring
benefits to the products they promote?

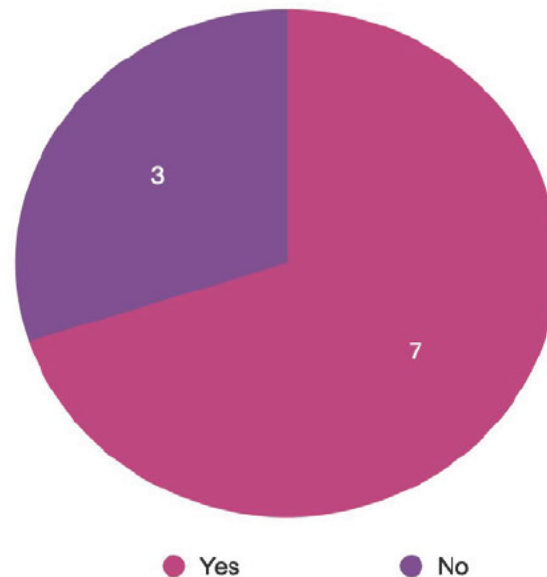


Figure 9: Question 8a pie chart (own image)

Eight out of ten students said they would purchase a brand's product simply because it is endorsed by a celebrity. Those eight students felt that a celebrity makes the message more trustworthy, believable and of a higher value. The two students that said no did bring other factors up that the researcher and the literature had not considered. Those two factors were opinion and price, therefore brands need to also take those two factors into account when endorsing a celebrity in order to choose the right celebrity, one with a positive reputation and to ensure the price is right for the product being endorsed.

Seven of the ten questioned students said yes they do believe that the use of celebrities bring benefits to the products they promote. Many of the students noted that celebrities add value to the product being endorsed, they also create another reason to buy the product as many of the

students said they want to be more like the celebrity and live a lifestyle similar to that of the celebrity. One student even mentioned that the celebrity psychologically makes a person think the product is more desirable and of a higher value thereby generating more awareness and interest in the product being endorsed. There is, therefore, a synergistic agreement between the conducted findings and the literature as they both came to the conclusion that social media celebrity endorsements are in fact the most effective and influential marketing tool in the 21st century.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

5.1. Findings in context:

Research question 1: How would following a celebrity on social media affect students' attitudes towards a brand the celebrity endorses?

Overall, it was found that the conducted research supports the literature when it comes to the first research question: How would following a celebrity on social media affect students' attitudes towards a brand the celebrity endorses? From both the literature and the conducted research, it is clear that social media is a viable platform to use celebrity endorsements since most of the respondents make use of social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, to engage with celebrities. One of the most important findings from both the primary and secondary research is that celebrities have become idols for consumers through their presence on social media.

Consumer perceptions and attitudes are likely to be influenced through social media celebrity endorsements due to the fact that consumers buy a brand's product promoted by testimonials, in an attempt to share their own self-image (Laura and Gabriel, n.d). From the conducted research it is evident that brands need to choose the right celebrities and social media platforms in order to influence and change students' attitudes. McCracken's meaning transfer model comes into play with this first research question as the researcher is able to assess the influence of social media celebrity endorsements by assessing the meanings students associate with the endorser and eventually transfer those meanings onto the given brand (Schlecht, 2003).

Research question 2: What influence do celebrity endorsements have on a student's buying behaviour?

From the literature and the conducted research, it is clear that brand image and students' buying behaviour or purchase intentions go hand in hand. According to Chan, Laung Ng and Luk (2013), entertainers and athletes have been shown to influence students' buying intentions

and behaviour, this links to the primary research finding that students would buy a brand's product simply because it was endorsed by a famous credible celebrity. This is a crucial insight that brands can use to increase the appeal and awareness of their products and services. Hoekman and Bosmans (2010) mirror the findings from the primary research, as they add that a brand can positively influence the attitudes and buying behaviour of consumers towards the brand if that brand can create the appropriate meaning transfer between the celebrity endorser and the brand's image. McCracken's (1989) model demonstrates the above idea that celebrity endorsements are an effective way of transferring meaning onto brands and ultimately the consumer.

Research question 3: What factors influence the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements on social media?

Firstly, it was found that there are a variety of common factors that influence the effectiveness of social media celebrity endorsements. In the primary research, the students seemed to agree that the most common factors are characteristics of product, likability and influence. In order for this type of marketing to be successful, the endorser needs to fulfil certain objectives such as familiarity, credibility, relevance and differentiation (Mukherjee, 2009). It was found in both the conducted research and the literature that if a brand can tap into those factors then the endorsement can have many advantages as celebrities are good at generating recall, attention and positive attitudes towards the product or service.

5.2. Research Problem:

'The influence and importance of social media celebrity endorsements needs to be further understood and evaluated, in order for brands to justify the high costs associated with this new marketing technique, and to use the most credible celebrity to have positive lasting effects on the brand's image.'

Hsu and McDonald (2002) suggest that endorser-product fit positively affects consumers' perceptions of celebrity's attributes, recall, buying behaviour and willingness to pay a higher price. Endorser-product fit was a major finding in both the primary and secondary research, and the final conclusion was if the brand can get the right fit then students will be positively influenced by celebrity endorsements. The use of celebrity endorsements is becoming increasingly popular amongst brands to assist in advertising their products and services to gain a competitive edge, that notion is supported by both the findings and the literature. The literature and the findings have revealed that celebrity endorsements are in fact an influential tool used to create awareness of the brand advertised. From the interpretations and answers to the research questions and objectives, it can be concluded that social media celebrity endorsements have an overall positive influence on students attitudes, perceptions and buying behaviour. It is therefore clear that celebrity endorsements are in fact an influential tool used to create awareness of the brand being advertised.

5.3. Recommendations for future research:

The following are recommendations that can be made according to the findings from the research conducted throughout this study:

- The researcher should make use of a bigger sample size in order to gain even more in-depth data, as this will allow the findings to be generalised to a larger population.
- The researcher could also narrow down the study more by focusing on one or two brands in order to make the study more specific.
- It is also suggested that more research be done in terms of students buying behaviour as this was one predominant insight that the researcher came across.
- More research should be conducted regarding social media celebrity endorsements' influence on students in South Africa as a whole, not just private tertiary students.
- More research could be conducted into whether or not social media celebrity endorsements are different for male and female students.

5.4. Ethical Considerations

Ethical Considerations related to the researcher:

The researcher needed to ensure that they were precise in their interpretation of the data. The researcher ensured that no information is falsified and that the results gathered were distorted or misused (Louw, 2014). The researcher ensured that there is no bias in the research proposal as the researcher tried to remain objective. The researcher did not misuse any of the information as the data that was collected from the students is for research purposes only. Finally, the researcher only made use of appropriate research methods, thus the research methods were not harmful to the students and those methods were suited to the researcher's stated purpose. The researcher made sure credible sources were obtained and utilised throughout the study (Louw, 2014).

Ethical Considerations related to the participants:

Students from Varsity College were notified about the questionnaire beforehand. No physical or emotional harm was done to the participants. The researcher ensured confidentiality of participants as their answers were only used for the purpose of this study. The researcher ensured that the returned emails (questionnaires) were kept in a safe folder that is protected, and any names that are visible in the email were blocked out in order to ensure anonymity. The participants were made aware of what this research proposal is about, and they were given instructions on how to answer the questionnaire. No incentives were provided to the participants rather their involvement was voluntary.

5.5. Limitations

- There was limited time to conduct this study which means that the researcher was only able to question a very limited number of students.
- This study could not be generalised to the broader student population as the population is large and the researcher only questioned ten students
- The sample size was small and therefore limited as the sample was only taken from Varsity College students.

- The researcher had a lack of finances.
- The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in many restrictions and limitations.
- The researcher made use of convenience sampling which meant there was an element of bias since the researcher knew who the participants were.

5.6. Conclusion:

To conclude this chapter and the overall study, it was vital to conduct this research in order to solve the issue of a lack of understanding as to the influence social media celebrity endorsements have on Varsity College students. Each chapter in this study has been a step towards solving the research problem and answering the research questions. Chapter one firstly introduced the purpose of this study, chapter two was a review of previous literature relating to the topic of this study, chapter three looked at the research methodology utilised by the researcher and how it was conducted and analysed. Chapter four presented the findings from the conducted research as well as the interpretations of them, finally chapter five concluded the study with recommendations of how this study can be beneficial to students, brands and celebrity endorsers themselves. The overall finding of this research study that has come about from an integration of those chapters is that social media celebrity endorsements are in fact an influential tool when it comes to Varsity College students and their attitudes, perceptions and buying behaviour. Therefore this study has high heuristic value.

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APPENDIX:*Appendix A: Research forms checklist*

Student name: GINA HOOPER

Title of the research: The influence of social media celebrity endorsements on Varsity College students.

	Yes	No	Comment: supervisor/ navigator/lecturer
Are you using human subjects in your research?	✓		
I intend to use human subjects - I understand that I will not conduct research with human subjects under the age of 18 and other vulnerable groups. - I understand I can only proceed once I receive an ethical clearance letter.			
Interviews/ Focus groups An example of the <i>written consent form</i> I intend to use is attached.		✓	
I will record the interview/focus groups and the sample of the letter where I ask for permission to do so is attached.		-	
I plan to use an interview schedule: The example of my research instrument is attached.			
I plan to use a questionnaire: The example of my research instrument is attached.	✓		
I plan to use a gate-keepers letter: The example of my letter is attached.		✓	
I plan to do research on an IIE site/with IIE students/staff/artefacts and I filled in the application for permission to do so. The application is attached. I understand I can only proceed once I receive IIE Approval for this.	—		



Signed: student.....

Appendix B: Research request form

REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH ON OR ABOUT ARTEFACTS, SITES AND/OR OFFICES OF THE INDEPENDENT INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

1. Particulars of the researcher	
First name:	Gina
Last name:	Hooper
Title:	Ms
Student number:	[REDACTED]
SA ID number:	[REDACTED]
Home address: [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Code: [REDACTED] Code: [REDACTED] Tel: [REDACTED] Cell: [REDACTED] Fax: [REDACTED] Email: [REDACTED]	
2. Purpose and details of the proposed research	
2.1	Purpose of the research Tick where appropriate Undergraduate Study – Self Postgraduate Study – Self ✓ Private Company/ Agency Celebrate Teaching and Learning or Other IIE Conferences or Workshops Private Research by Independent Researcher
2.2	Full title of the research The influence of social media celebrity endorsements on Varsity College students.
2.3	Value of the research project/dissertation

Celebrity endorsements have become a trend in the age of agile branding; therefore, this study is of value as the researcher will be able to gain a deeper understanding into this phenomenon.

This study will also gain further insights into the fairly new concepts of celebrity endorsements and social media, thereby helping other researchers, students who are studying marketing and branding and brands as a whole.

2.4 Proposed date of completion of study/ project and submission of research findings to The IIE

30 November 2020

2.5 Student and postgraduate enrolment particulars (if applicable)

Name of institution where enrolled:	Vega
Degree/ Qualification:	BA Honours in strategic brand communications
Faculty and Discipline/Area of Study:	Humanities
Name of Supervisor/Promoter:	Gareth Gray

2.6 Employer (where applicable)

Name of Organisation:			
Position in Organisation:			
Head of Organisation:			
Street Address:			
		Code:	
Tel:		Fax:	
Email:			

3. Proposed research methods

Please indicate by ticking the appropriate block whether the following methods would be utilised.

3.1 Questionnaire/s

If yes, supply copies of each to be used.

Yes	☒	No	☐
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3.2 Interview/s

If yes, provide copies of each schedule.

Yes		No	
3.3 Workshops/Group Discussions			
<i>If yes, supply details.</i>			
Yes		No	
3.4 Standardised tests (e.g. Psychometric Tests)			
Yes		No	
3.5 Are other methods being used?			
<i>If yes, please specify them below.</i>			
Yes		No	
3.6 Names of sites/offices/artefacts to be researched			
10 Students will be questioned – those students will be sent the questionnaire via email			
The site is Varsity College however the researcher will not need to be on any of the campuses as they will communicate with participants via email.			

3.7 Are the participants to be involved in groups or individually?		
<i>Participation:</i>		
Groups		
Individual	✓	
3.8 Average period of time each participant will be involved in the research activities		
<i>Please indicate time in minutes.</i>		
<i>Participants</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Time</i>
A	Questionnaire	20minutes to 1 hour
B	Questionnaire	20minutes to 1 hour

C	Questionnaire	20minutes to 1 hour
D	Questionnaire	20minutes to 1 hour
E	Questionnaire	20minutes to 1 hour
F	Questionnaire	20minutes to 1 hour
G	Questionnaire	20minutes to 1 hour
H	Questionnaire	20minutes to 1 hour
I	Questionnaire	20minutes to 1 hour
J	Questionnaire	20minutes to 1 hour

Conditions for conducting research in or on The Independent Institute of Education

Permission will be granted in writing and then the researcher may proceed with the study, subject to the conditions listed below being met and may be withdrawn should any of these conditions be flouted: [Additional Conditions may be added by the committee, these are the standard conditions for any application and should be considered before the submission of the application]

Permission is granted to proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met and may be withdrawn should any of these conditions be flouted.

Please note:

The panel has not considered the merits, accuracy or ethical soundness of the research. The only merits examined are the use of The IIE as a sample. Permission is granted subject to the following conditions:

1. A copy of the final paper must be submitted electronically to The IIE's Research and Development Manager at research@iie.ac.za no later than 30 days post finalisation.
2. The researcher(s) is not permitted to refer to The IIE/ brands or use The IIE/ brand's name, logo, brand or any other identifiers in any way including in questionnaires, surveys, interviews, proposals, research reports, etc. The IIE/ brand needs to be referred to in a generic manner, for example, 'A HE provider; ... an educational brand of a HE provider; ... etc.'
3. The researcher(s) will need to obtain informed consent in writing from all the participants in his/ her sample if the study is not anonymous.
4. If the Learning Management System (LMS) of The IIE is used, the researcher(s) is not permitted to refer to Learn by name. Learn needs to be referred to it in a generic manner such as the "Learning Management System of a Higher Education provider."
5. A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the relevant person(s) at the brand or The IIE Central Academic Team that would be involved in the study.
6. Research may only be conducted in such a way that the normal programme of the site/ offices is not interrupted.

7. The principal/ manager of a site must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher(s) may carry out the research at the site.
8. The researcher(s) may only use this data for research purposes and in no other way.
9. Should the researcher(s) wish to publish this research or in any way make the results public, such as publishing the results on social media, etc., this committee will need to approve the request first.
10. Photographs of human subjects may only be taken if relevant to the research and informed consent was obtained and even with informed consent the photographs may not be published on any platforms.
11. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/ her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/ or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
12. No names or identifying information of participants may be used within the research and the research must be voluntary.

If any of The IIE reports are used as part of the research, identifying information needs to be removed.

Declaration by the researcher	
1.	I declare that all statements made by myself in this application are true and accurate.
2.	I accept the conditions associated with the granting of approval to conduct research and undertake to abide by them.
 Signature 17/06/20 Date	
Declaration by the supervisor/promoter/lecturer/ethics committee	
Name of researcher:	Gareth Gray
I declare that	
1.	the above researcher is enrolled at the institution/ employed by the organisation to which the undersigned is attached;
2.	and that the research proposal and or study has been approved by the Ethics Committee of The Independent Institute of Education; and
3.	and that the questionnaires/structured interviews/tests meet the criteria of: • Educational accountability; • Proper research design;

	• Sensitivity towards participants; • Correct content and terminology; • Acceptable grammar; and • Absence of non-essential/superfluous items.		
First name:	Gareth		
Last name:	Gray		
Institution/organisation:	Vega		
Faculty/department:	Durban		
Tel:			
Signature			17 June 2020 Date

NOTE: This form (and all other relevant documentation where applicable) should be completed and forwarded electronically to [REDACTED]

The Independent Institute of Education (Pty) Ltd is registered with the Department of Higher Education and Training as a private higher education institution under the Higher Education Act, 1997 (reg. no. 2007/ HE07/ 002). Company registration number: 1987/ 004754/ 07.



Appendix C: Consent form to conduct questionnaires using email

Explanatory information sheet and consent form for participants

To whom it may concern,

My name is Gina Hooper and I am a student at IIE's Vega La Lucia. I am currently conducting research under the supervision of (insert supervisor's name) about the influence of social media celebrity

endorsements on Varsity College students. This study aims to collect accurate, qualitative data that represents Varsity College students. Another purpose of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of which factors make celebrity endorsements successful in order to help brands as well as students studying marketing and branding. I hope that this research will enhance our understanding of social media celebrity endorsements. The biggest contribution that this research study aims to make is to provide a deeper understanding of how effective social media celebrity endorsements are for brands, as celebrity endorsements have become a trend in the age of agile branding. This study will help to fill the gap in the limited literature in South Africa on students

I would like to invite you to participate in my study. In order to explain to you what your participation in my study will involve, I have formulated questions that I will try to fully answer so that you can make an informed decision about whether or not to participate. If you have any additional questions that you feel are not addressed or explained in this information sheet, please do not hesitate to ask me for more information. Once you have read and understood all the information contained in this sheet and are willing to participate, please complete and sign the consent form below.

What will I be doing if I participate in your study?

I would like to invite you to participate in this research because you are a student at Varsity College, and you are between the age of 18 and 23.

If you decide to participate in this research, I would like to email you my questionnaire on Microsoft word. If you could please fill that questionnaire out and then email it back to me.

You can decide whether or not to participate in this research. If you decide to participate, you can choose to withdraw at any time or to decide not to answer questions on the questionnaire.

Are there any risks/ or discomforts involved in participating in this study?

Whether or not you decide to participate in this research, there will be no negative impact on you. There are no direct risks or benefits to you if you participate in this study. If you find at any stage that you are not comfortable with the questions, you may withdraw or refrain from participating.

Do I have to participate in the study?

- Your inclusion in this study is completely voluntary
- If you do not wish to participate in this study, you have every right not to do so
- Even if you agree to participate in this study, you may withdraw at any time without having to provide an explanation for your decision.

Will my identity be protected?

I promise to protect your identity. I will not use your name in any research summaries to come out of this research and I will also make sure that any other details are disguised so that nobody will be able to identify you. I would like to ask your permission to record the interviews, but only my supervisor, I and possibly a professional transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings. Nobody else, including anybody at Varsity College, will have access to your questionnaire. I would like to use quotes when I discuss the findings of the research, but I will not use any recognisable information in these quotes that can be linked to you.

What will happen to the information that participants provide?

Once I have finished all questionnaires, I will write summaries to be included in my research report, which is a requirement to complete my BA Honours in Strategic Brand Communications. You may ask me to send you a summary of the research if you are interested in the final outcome of the study.

What happens if I have more questions about the study?

Please feel free to contact me or my supervisor should you have any questions or concerns about this research, or if there is anything you need to know before you decide whether or not to participate.

You should not agree to participate unless you are completely comfortable with the procedures followed.

My contact details are as follows:

Gina Hooper

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

The contact details of my supervisor are as follows:

Gareth Gray

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

By completing the questionnaire, I agree to participate in the research conducted by Gina Hooper about the influence of social media celebrity endorsements on Varsity College students.

This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that:

- My anonymity will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private.
- My participation in this research is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. There will be no repercussions should I choose to withdraw from the research.
- I may choose not to answer any of the questions that are asked in the questionnaire

- I may be quoted directly when the research is published, but my identity will be protected.

Consent form for participants

I, _____, agree to participate in the research conducted by Gina Hooper about the influence of social media celebrity endorsements.

This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that:

- I agree to be interviewed for this research.
- My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private.
- My participation in this research is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. There will be no repercussions should I choose to withdraw from the research.
- I may choose not to answer any of the questions that are asked during the research interview.
- I may be quoted directly when the research is published, but my identity will be protected.

Signature	Date

Appendix D: Screenshot of the ethical clearance letter



[7 August 2020]

Student name: Gina Hooper

Student number: 0700000000

Campus: IIE Vega - Durban

Re: Approval of BA strategic brand communication Research Proposal and Ethics Clearance

Title: The effectiveness of social media celebrity endorsements on Varsity College Durban North Students.

HONOURS/PGDIP ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER

Your research proposal and the ethical implications of your proposed research topic were reviewed by your supervisor and the campus research panel, a subcommittee of The Independent Institute of Education's Research and Postgraduate Studies Committee.

Your research proposal posed no significant ethical concerns and your supporting documents and instruments are in order to proceed. We hereby provide you with permission to proceed with your research.

In the event of you deciding to change your research methodology in any way, kindly consult your supervisor to ensure all ethical considerations are adhered to and pose no risk to any participant or party involved. A revised ethical clearance letter will be issued.

We wish you all the best with your research!

Appendix E: Questionnaire

Hi, my name is Gina Hooper, I am a Vega honours student currently conducting research on Varsity College students, in order to try and describe the influence of social media celebrity endorsements among Varsity College students; therefore you, as a participant will be answering questions in relation to that topic. This questionnaire makes use of both open-ended and closed-ended questions and you are required to please answer all the questions. Please be open, honest and free to express your opinions and feelings of the questions being asked. The researcher requires you to please fill this questionnaire out on Microsoft word and once completed send it back to the researcher via email. If you have any problems or questions please do not hesitate to email Gina Hooper, the researcher, at [REDACTED]

Age:

1. What do you understand about celebrity endorsements?

2. Would you purchase a brand's product simply because it is endorsed by a celebrity?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Please explain your choice:

3. Do you think that the use of celebrity endorsements justifies the high costs of certain products such as perfumes?

Yes ☐

No ☐

4. Which one of these options is the primary reason a company should get a celebrity to endorse their brand?

Characteristics of product ☐

Monetary incentives ☐

Awareness ☐

Appeal ☐

Influence ☐



5. What do you associate the brand in the above advert with?

6. What do you associate the celebrity in the above advert with?

7. Does the use of this particular celebrity heighten the value and appeal of this brand?

Yes ☐

No ☐

8a. Do you believe that celebrities bring benefits to the products they promote?

Yes ☐

No ☐

(If you selected yes then please answer question 8b, if you selected no then please move on to question 9)

8b. Please describe your reason for saying yes to the above question:



9. What would be your reason to buy this product?

10. Do you feel that the use of the celebrity in the above advert makes the message more persuasive?

Yes ☐

Reason:

No ☐

Reason:

11. Do you feel that you have a better social status if you wear a product endorsed by a celebrity? For example a pair of Nike shoes endorsed by Cristiano Ronaldo.

Yes ☐

No ☐

12. Celebrities help people to remember a product or brand?

Strongly Disagree ☐

Disagree ☐

Agree ☐

Strongly agree ☐

13. Do you feel that celebrity endorsements affect your own buying behaviour?

Yes ☐

Reason:

No ☐

Reason:

14. Do you follow celebrities on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter?

Yes ☐

No ☐

15. How does following a celebrity on social media affect your attitude towards the brand that they are endorsing?

16a. Do you think social media has become the most successful marketing platform for brands?

Yes ☐

Reason:

No ☐

Reason:

17. Which of the following factors is the most important when endorsing a celebrity on social media?

Following ☐

Likability ☐

Attractiveness. ☐

Credibility ☐

18. Attractiveness and credibility of a celebrity has a positive significant effect on one's purchase intention online?

Strongly Disagree ☐

Disagree ☐

Agree ☐

Strongly agree ☐

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire!

Appendix F: The process that led to the findings:

Objective 1: To describe how following a celebrity on social media affects students' attitudes towards a brand that the celebrity is endorsing.

Question 5: What do you associate the brand in the above advert with?

Codes:

- Popular
- Wealth
- Status
- Appealing
- To the celebrity
- Fashionable
- Luxury

Question 6: What do you associate the celebrity in the above advert with?

Codes:

- Wealth
- Statues
- Fame
- Highly influential on social media
- Large following

*There is a link between question 5 and question 6 as many of the respondents said that the celebrity used is the right fit for the brand and they associate one with the other. Kendall Jenner also makes the advert and the brand seem more powerful.

Question 7: Does the use of this particular celebrity heighten the value and appeal of this brand?

- 9 People said yes
- 1 Person said no

Question 10: Do you feel that the use of the celebrity in the above advert makes the message more persuasive?

- 9 people said yes

Codes to the yes answers:

- Swaying opinions
- Makes it the product more desirable
- Trustworthy
- Want to mimic the celebrity
- More persuasive and influential
- Celebrity is appealing to both genders
- Tagline also matches the celebrity's passion

– One person said no.

Codes to the no answers:

- The food is unhealthy, so the celebrity doesn't change that
- The celebrity does not fit the product being endorsed

Question 12: Celebrities help people to remember a product or brand?

- Agree – 3 people
- Strongly agree – 7 people

Question 14: Do you follow celebrities on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter?

- 9 People said yes
- 1 person said no

Question 16: Do you think social media has become the most successful marketing platform for brands? – provides a strong platform

Codes:

- Broader market and audience
- Wide reach – all ages groups – larger audience – large reach
- Easy access

- People use social media to buy and review products
- Simple tool
- Consistency
- Fast
- Minimal costs
- Start trends

Objective 2: To describe the influence that celebrity endorsements have on students buying behaviour.

Question 1: What do you understand about celebrity endorsements:

Codes:

- Promotion and Influence
- Fame and following
- Desirable
- Appeal and likability
- Advertising

Question 2: Would you purchase a brand's product simply because it is endorsed by a celebrity?

Codes:

- Trustworthy
- Believe
- High quality
- Quality / Value
- Other factors – price and opinion

Question 4: Which one of these options is the primary reason a company should get a celebrity to endorse their brand?

- Characteristics of product – 3 people

- Monetary incentives – 2 people
- Awareness – 1 person
- Appeal – 1 person
- Influence – 3 people

Question 8a: Do you believe the use of celebrities bring benefits to the products they promote?
– pie chart

- Yes – 7
- No – 3

Question 8b: Please describe your reason for saying yes to the above question:

Codes:

- Add value – gives another reason to buy the product
- More awareness created
- Generates more interest
- Makes the product seem more valuable
- Psychologically making a person think the product is more desirable of a higher quality
- Influential
- Associations – people want to be like them and live their lifestyles

Question 17: Which of the following factors is the most important when endorsing a celebrity on social media?

- Social media following -3 people
- Likability – 6 people
- Attractiveness – no one
- Credibility – 1 person

Question 18: Attractiveness and credibility of a celebrity has a positive significant effect on one's purchase intention online?

- Agree – 7

- Strongly agree -3

Objective 3: To describe the factors that influence the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements on social media.

Question 3: Do you think the use of celebrity endorsements justifies the high costs of certain products such as perfumes?

- 3 people said no
- 7 people said yes

Question 9: What would be your reason to buy this product?

Codes:

- Share interest with the celebrity
- Hungry/good reviews
- Because of Ronaldo
- Mood
- Fan of the celebrity

Question 11: Do you feel that you have a better social status if you wear a product endorsed by a celebrity? For example, a pair of Nike shoes endorsed by Cristiano Ronaldo.

- People said yes
- People said no

Question 13: Do you feel that celebrity endorsements affect your own buying behaviour?

Codes to the yes answers – 7 people

- Higher value
- Appealing
- Quality
- Social status
- Remembrance

Codes to the no answers – 3 people

- Would take other factors into account more such as price and quality

Question 15: How does following a celebrity on social media affect your attitude towards the brand that they are endorsing?

Codes:

- Guidance
- Influences
- Makes the brand's product stand out
- Brand has a higher quality and status
- Creates a connection
- Makes you more aware of the product
- Repetition – seeing and remembering the brand
- Positive attitude towards the brand
- Creates brand loyalty
- Creates a positive brand image

Appendix G: Final research report summary document table:

Title: The influence of social media celebrity endorsements on Varsity College students.

Research Purpose/Objective	Primary Research Question	Research Rationale	Seminal Authors/Sources	Lit Review – Conceptual Framework	Paradigm	Approach	Data Collection Method(s)	Ethics	Key Findings	Recommendations
The objective of this study is to describe the influence of social media celebrity endorsements on Varsity College students.	How would following a celebrity on social media affect students' attitudes towards a brand the celebrity endorses?	Celebrity endorsement has become a winning formula and trend and in the age of agile branding, it is one of the most popular forms of advertising. Therefore, it is important to allow brands to see the benefits of celebrity endorsements on social media.	-McCracken, 1989 -Lau and Lee, 1999	Theme 1: Attractiveness Theme 2: Likability Theme 3: Brand Image Theme 4: Celebrity credibility Theme 5: Associations and the halo effect	Paradigm Interpretivism Epistemology The researcher wanted to obtain involved subjectivity and common sense, in order to find out if celebrity endorsements on social media are in fact effective among students.	Qualitative approach -This research study was subjective in nature as it is based on the student's opinions on the influence of celebrity endorsements on social media. Population Who: -Students at Varsity College Parameters: -Must be Varsity College students -Must be between the ages of 18 and 23 -Must be brand conscious and active social media users.	Qualitative questionnaire was utilised in order to gather insights into the perceptions, feelings and experiences of students.	-The researcher ensured that there was no bias in the research proposal as the researcher tried to remain objective and the appropriate research methods were used throughout. -The researcher ensured that no information is falsified and that the results gathered were distorted or misused -The researcher ensured confidentiality of participants as their answers were only used for the purpose of this study.	- The use of celebrity endorsements is becoming increasingly popular amongst brands as they are used to assist in advertising their products and services, in order to gain a competitive edge -Social media celebrity endorsements have an overall positive influence on students' attitudes, perceptions and buying behaviour -Celebrity endorsements are in fact an influential tool used to create awareness of the brand being advertised.	-The researcher should make use of a bigger sample size in order to gain even more in-depth data, as this will allow the findings to be generalized to a larger population. -The researcher could also narrow down the study more by focusing on one or two brands in order to make the study more specific.
Research Problem	Secondary Questions/Hypotheses / Objectives	Key Concepts	Key Theories							
The influence and importance of social media celebrity endorsements needs to be further understood and evaluated, in order for brands to justify the high costs associated with this new marketing technique and to use the most credible celebrity to have positive lasting effects on the brand's image	- What influence do celebrity endorsements have on a student's buying behaviour? - What factors influence the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements on social media?	-Celebrity endorsements -Brand image -Advertising -Celebrity credibility -Social media -Buying behaviour	McCracken's Meaning transfer model.			Non-probability sampling Sampling method -Convenience -Purposive -Quota Size -10 students in order to have an equal number of male and female students	Unit of Analysis: -Students Data Analysis Method(s) -Qualitative content analysis -Thematic coding	-Time – only have a few months to complete the study -Having a small and limited sample size as the sample is only taken from Varsity students -Finances	-As celebrity endorsements have become a brand in the age of agile branding, this study will help to fill the gap in the limited literature in South Africa on students. -The study will also be able to help brands increase sales and awareness of their products by seeing the benefits of endorsing celebrities.	