

Celebrity endorsers role on brand equity: a qualitative study on Cristiano Ronaldo and Nike.

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I hereby declare that the Research Report submitted for the HBSM412 RESE8419 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.

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Abstract

The fight for market share in saturated industries has put immense pressure on marketing campaigns and how they can be made as effective as possible. The use of celebrity endorsers has become an increasingly popular marketing method for brands to increase their brand equity (Ahmed & Ashfaq, 2013). However, how does a business choose the right celebrity influencer for their brand and how important is this alignment? This research study aims at gaining an understanding of consumers perceptions of celebrity endorsers and the brand equity of the endorsing brand, with specific reference to Cristiano Ronaldo's endorsement of Nike. Data was collected from participants who partook in an in-depth online interview involving open-ended questions that were constructed in relation to David Aaker's model of brand equity. The most significant findings of this research study is that consumers need to be able to associate themselves with the celebrity endorser in order for them to be effective. The research also found an agreement with celebrity endorsers and their contribution towards the awareness of their endorsing brand.

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Introduction

In times of increased competition for market share, brands look towards finding the most effective marketing methods to give them the competitive advantage in saturated industries. The endorsement of celebrities has become an increasingly popular marketing method for brands to increase their brand equity (Ahmed & Ashfaq, 2013). This research aims to understand individual perceptions on the role celebrity endorsers have on brand equity. This will be achieved through a qualitative interpretive research approach through the conduction of online in-depth interviews on South African consumers. The study will explore South African consumers subjective behaviour with specific reference to Nike's endorsement of Cristiano Ronaldo.

Nike has always been a keen user of celebrity endorsers. Nike's first athlete endorser was runner Steve Prefontaine in the 1970s, followed by a string of world-renowned sports personalities such as John McEnroe, Michael Jordan, Eric Cantona, Cristiano Ronaldo and Tiger Woods. The company does not simply use its athletes as posters, they are the brand just as much as product, advertising or the people who work at Nike. This leads to a multifaceted brand personality, however, consistently valuing qualities such as risk-taking, competitiveness and live-and-breathe sport. As the 'athletes are the brand' the brand imagery of the athletes is used explicitly to contribute to Nike's brand image and is seen as an investment in the brand identity, asserting that Nike intentionally acquires meaning from association with their athletes (Seyed-Mohamed, 2010).

Rationale

Current market environments illustrate the rising level in which brands seek increased competitive advantage and market share (Pratap, 2018). One way in which brands are able to achieve competitive advantage is through celebrity endorsement, a topic covered in numerous scholarly articles. The recognition of this topic in academic research is indicative of the interest to consumers and organisations and provides the basis for this research.

Celebrity endorsers allow brands to strategically personify themselves, giving them greater reach and a sense of differentiation from in saturated markets, both of which allow for a competitive advantage (Olenski, 2016). The topic of celebrity endorsements

and brand equity has been extensively covered in previous research, however, there is very little qualitative research on the subject and no available research on the South African consumer. This research will provide valuable insight into the role of celebrity endorsers on brand equity, including brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand association and perceived quality. These insights will assist in the development of more effective marketing campaigns that make use of celebrity endorsers.

Problem Statement

The use of celebrity endorsers in marketing campaigns has become an increasingly popular method of building brand equity (Ahmed & Ashfaq, 2013). Brand equity is considered as the consumers perspective of the value provided by the brand (Thusyanthy & Tharanikaran, 2015). In other words, the knowledge a consumer has of a brand creates equity and consumers' perception of product performance may be influenced by their perception of the brand (Ginman, 2010). It is therefore what resides in the minds of consumers that constitute the brand's value – which makes it imperative that consumers have the right type of experiences and feelings toward the brand. The stronger, more favourable and unique associations that consumers have toward a brand the more powerful it will be (Keller, Apéria & Georgson, 2008).

Celebrities associate themselves with a brand and make it possible for the brand to become easily recognisable to consumers (Saini & Chauhan, 2017). Empirical evidence indicates that celebrity endorsement generates greater recall for the brand and advertisement (Spry, Pappu & Cornwell, 2009). Sports are one of the most important modern entertainments and are no longer limited by physical and geographical constraints (Moura & Souza-Leão, 2020). This has resulted in brands partnering with global sport athletes for their endorsements thereby packaging brand elements to enable consumer attachment, regardless of where they are located. The equity of a brand is influenced by the link between the consumer and the sport athlete endorsing the brand. It is therefore important to understand consumers perceptions of brand equity, as a result of the celebrity endorsement. This research aims to understand consumers perceptions of brand equity, specifically Cristiano Ronaldo's endorsement of Nike.

Research Question and Goal

The main goal of this research is to explore consumers perceptions of celebrity endorsements and brand equity with specific reference to Cristiano Ronaldo and Nike. This research aims to observe the pertinent factors achieved through the endorsement of a celebrity figure, allowing for an understanding on how these elements support perceived brand equity. This will be achieved in answering the research question:

What are the perceptions of consumers towards brand equity of celebrity endorsement by Cristiano Ronaldo and Nike?

Objectives

The total objective of this research is to understand how celebrity endorsers contribute to the endorsing brands' consumer purchasing behaviour and brand equity. Each objective smaller reachable step that when combined with all other objectives, answers the main goal. This will be achieved by addressing the following objectives:

- Explore consumers perceptions of brand awareness with regard to Cristiano Ronaldo's endorsement of Nike.
- Explore consumers perceptions of brand associations with regard to Cristiano Ronaldo's endorsement of Nike.
- Explore consumers perceptions of perceived quality with regard to Cristiano Ronaldo's endorsement of Nike.
- Explore consumers perceptions of brand loyalty with regard to Cristiano Ronaldo's endorsement of Nike.

Literature Review

Conceptualisation

- *Celebrity endorsers*: The promotion of a brand, product or service through an individual that has garnered a popular public image through career success or expertise. These individuals have a large following and are usually highly reputable within their industry of expertise (Lombardo, 2015).

- *Consumers perceptions*: A concept in marketing that relates to the way in which a consumer is aware, conscious and/or associated to a brand and their offerings. This has a direct affect on the attraction of new customers and the maintenance of existing customers (Iero, 2018).
- *Brand equity*: The extent to which consumers perceive the value of a brands image. This is a form of commercial value that derives from brand assets and consumer experiences, rather than that of the brands particular product or service offerings (Hayes, 2020).

Theoretical Foundation

Brand equity refers to the value of the brand. This value can be perceived through consumers cognitive psychology, relating to their awareness and association with the brand (Bhasin, 2019). David Aaker defines brand equity as the brand assets (or liabilities) linked to brand's name and symbol that add to (or subtract from) a product or service. Brand equity derives from consumers perceptions of a brand, product or service. Brand equity is reflected in the way consumers act, think and feel with regards to the brand as well as in price, market share and profitability that the brand commands (Sasmita & Suki, 2014). Aaker developed his brand equity model based on four elements in which he deemed necessary to attain brand equity: brand awareness, brand association, brand loyalty and perceived quality (Bhasin, 2019).

Brand awareness

Brand awareness involves brand recognition and brand recall (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000) and refers to how consumers associate the brand with the particular product that they aim to own (Sasmita & Suki, 2015). Brand recall is when a person remembers the brand without external help, retrieving the brand from memory (Ginman, 2010). Brand recognition refers to situations where consumers are subjected to images of brands whereupon consumers recognise the brand and can identify it based on previous exposure (Ginman, 2010) Often not enough attention is paid to the value of brand awareness. Awareness can lead to familiarity, and it is seen that people like the familiar. Brand Awareness is the extent to which a brand is known among the public, which can be determined by familiarity and likeability, anchor to associations, commitment to brand and brand to be considered during purchasing (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). Consumers receive brand awareness through

marketing communications which give assurance of product quality and credibility (Aaker, 1996). Brand awareness has a direct effect on brand equity. Consumers know a brand simply by its name, logo, slogan and celebrity endorsement and Nike makes use of many athletes for endorsements. Cristiano Ronaldo has a lifetime contract with Nike, based on him being one of the most valuable football players in the world (Chen, 2017).

Brand Associations

Brand association refers to the information in the consumers mind about the brand and is connected to memory (Sasmita & Suki, 2014), and it provides meaning to the brand (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). Brand association is an information collecting tool which allows for brand differentiation and brand extension, the higher the brand association the more it will be remembered (Sasmita & Suki, 2014). High brand associations lead to brand loyalty and the relationship between brand association and brand equity is positive. Brand managers need to determine what associations should be developed and created (Ginman, 2010). Brand associations can be explored by the ability of the consumer to retrieve associations from the consumers mind, how the association contributes to brand differentiation related to competitors, the roles that brand associations play in the buying process, attitudes and feelings created by brand associations and the number of brand extensions in the market (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). For most consumers who like Nike, it is not only a sports brand but also the spirit of sports, this is Nike's brand association (Chen, 2017).

Perceived Quality

Perceived quality relates to a consumer's opinion on whether a particular product will be able to meet his / her expectations (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). Perceived quality has a massive effect on profitability and influences brand associations. Aaker (1992) explained that perceived quality provides value by providing a reason to buy, differentiating the brand. Essentially, perceived quality is the consumer's judgement about a products overall excellence or superiority (Ginman, 2010).

The extent to which a brand is considered to provide good quality products can be explore through the availability in different sales channels, the number of brand extensions, the level of differentiation to competitors, the price and the quality offered by the product (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). The perceived quality of Nike is that it

is a complete sports brand, providing equipment for all functions, sells both professional athletes shoes as well as normal shoes, all sporting needs can be purchased from Nike (Aaker, 1996).

Brand Loyalty (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000).

Refers to consumers loyalty established after their first purchase (Aaker, 1996). It is related to consumers repetitive buying behaviour due to their behavioural tendency of the brand or product of choice (Sasmita & Suki, 2014). Integrated marketing communication plays an indispensable role in convincing consumers' brand loyalty, which influences purchasing decisions (Sasmita & Suki, 2014). Consumers develop brand loyalty by creating a positive output of brand equity. Brand loyalty is influenced by brand awareness and associations and Nike communicate consistently with consumers to understand what consumers want (Aaker, 1996).

Ultimately, David Aaker has developed this model to assess the ways in which a business can use their brand assets to create brand equity. This will assist in identifying the main contributions celebrity endorsers offer towards brand equity, which in turn, influence consumers purchasing behaviour.

Murty. (2018) conducted a research study aimed at identifying the main drivers of brand equity. Their findings indicated that brand awareness, brand association, brand loyalty and perceived quality are the most important elements in the creation of brand equity. These findings directly correlate with Aaker's brand equity model, thus, will be used as the theoretical foundation for this research study. This model will be used to gather data from consumers on their perceptions of Nike's brand equity from Cristiano Ronaldo's role as a celebrity endorser

Review of literature

The topic of celebrity endorsement and brand equity has received a lot of attention in previous research. Dwivedi, Johnson and McDonald (2015) conducted research to examine the impact celebrity endorsers credibility have on brand equity, as well as consumers personal connection with the brand. The research positioned consumers personal connection with the brand as an influencer towards the effect celebrity

endorsers have on brand equity. The method of research followed a cross-sectional survey approach, involving 382 individuals that consume sport drinks. The survey involved questions on sport drink brands that make use of celebrity endorsements within the US industry, analysed through structural equation modeling. The research findings indicated that celebrity endorsements impact brand equity in two ways. Firstly, consumers personal connection with the brand was identified as a partial facilitator towards the effectiveness of celebrity endorsers contribution to brand equity. Secondly, a congruent and positive effect on consumers perceived celebrity endorser credibility and brand equity was identified. These findings prove a positive relationship between celebrity endorsers and their effect on brand equity, as well as consumers personal connection with the brand.

Goutam (2013) set out to identify whether consumers purchase a product simply because it is endorsed by their favorite celebrity. In doing so, Goutam also explored the possibility of consumers refusing to purchase a product due to its endorsement of a celebrity they dislike. The research method consisted of a survey of 100 people between the ages of 17-35. The research findings indicated that 51% of respondents do not base their purchasing decision on the brands celebrity endorser, but rather the quality and value for money offerings from the brand. Along with this, 63% of respondents stated that celebrity endorsers have not been able to influence them to purchase the endorsed brand. However, 40% of respondents were able to associate the celebrity to their endorsing brand, showing the positive effect celebrity endorsers have on the reach and awareness of their endorsing brands. Lastly, 64% of respondents stated that a brand endorsing a personally disliked celebrity would not stop them from purchasing the brands products. This supports this research study as it proves the positive relationship between celebrity endorsers and their contribution towards brand awareness and brand association. These are two elements are included in Aaker's brand equity model, supporting the use of this theory within the research.

Elberse and Verleun (2012) conducted research with the aim of understanding the returns on celebrity endorsement. The research by Elberse and Verleun focused on the economic value of celebrity endorsements where over 300 brand endorsement campaigns were studied. Their findings illustrated that celebrity endorsements have an average contribution of \$10 million towards the brands surveyed total sales

annually. These findings assist this study through its secondary research, providing evidence of celebrity endorsers contribution towards consumer purchasing behaviour.

Ahmed and Ashfaq (2013) argued that celebrity endorsers have become an increasingly popular marketing campaign to promote a brands products or services. They conducted research with the purpose to explore the impact of celebrity endorsers, persuasiveness and advertising on consumers buying behaviour. The study makes use of secondary data, collected from journals and the internet, as well as primary research, collected in the form of questionnaires from a sample of 120 respondents. Their findings indicated that quality and price are greater influencers towards purchasing the product or service than that of the endorsed celebrities' persuasiveness. 66% of respondents indicated that quality was the main driver behind their purchasing decision. 23% of respondents listed price as the main driver, whilst only 11% claimed celebrity endorsers as the driver behind their purchasing decision. This research has slightly opposed the positive effect celebrity endorsers have on consumer purchasing behaviour and brand equity, listing quality and price as more influential driving factors. This presents the possibility that the endorsement of a celebrity may not be as effective if the product or service lacks in quality and is not cost effective for the intended audience.

Bodet, Geng, Chanavat and Wang (2020) conducted research with the purpose to understand professional footballing brands attraction factors towards foreign fans. This research also aimed to explore the influence of individual characteristics on these attraction factors in the context of sports spectators. The research method followed a quantitative approach, surveying 1160 foreign spectators of the English Premier League (EPL). The data findings were presented through exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis. These findings indicated that organisation-induced factors were the most influential attraction towards foreign fans. Along with this, individual characteristics such as brand identification and loyalty were identified to be strong influencers of attraction towards footballing clubs. These findings support the elements within Aaker's brand equity model, illustrating brand loyalty and awareness as encouragers towards brand engagement.

Similarly, Pourazad, Stocchi and Pare (2019) conducted research to determine whether brand passion influences loyal behaviour towards brands. The research

referenced important driving factors such as brand advocacy, social media followings and willingness to pay a premium price within their questioning. The research approach surveyed consumers through online and face-to-face questioning of consumers who actively engage with sports apparel. Their findings indicated that brand passion positively influences brand loyalty and other driving factors as mentioned above. However, their findings listed social media following as a non-influential driving factor towards brand loyalty. These findings further support the theoretical foundation of this research study. The findings prove that brand loyalty, an important element within brand equity, plays a distinct role in the consumers passion and engagement with the brand. From this, one can explore whether the passion for an endorsed celebrity reflects to that of the endorsing brand. This reflection can also be explored in relation to similar traits consumers see in endorsed celebrities with which they personally identify. For example, a consumer may be inclined to purchase Cristiano Ronaldo's football boots because they identify with his determined and hardworking traits. Garud (2013) conducted research aimed at understanding the influence that celebrity endorsers and product advertisement have on consumer purchasing behaviour and brand image. The research findings indicated that brands that endorse celebrities that reflect their values and qualities enjoy more effective marketing campaigns. Thus, one can identify a positive relationship between celebrity and brand traits that reflect that of the consumers.

Yang (2017) summarized literature on celebrity endorsers with the aim to identify key trends and challenges and provide recommendations for future celebrity endorsement campaigns. This research engaged in a critical review of literature in the context of hospitality and tourism industries. The research findings indicated that genuine support from the endorsed celebrity is an important factor for an effective marketing campaign. As consumers are unable to experience certain products or services before purchasing, the celebrity endorsers provide a sense trust and reliability. The logic behind this suggests that when consumers see a celebrity genuinely support and make use of a product or service, they gain confidence and trust in the offerings for themselves. Similarly, Deshbhag and Mohan (2020) conducted research with the aim to determine the level of influence celebrity endorsers have on consumers risk perception and buying intention. The research method consisted of a survey amongst 250 Indian consumers, whereby 18 measurement scales were incorporated. The

research findings indicated that consumers risk perception is most influenced by the perceived trust and expertise of the celebrity endorsers. The findings also identified a positive relationship between consumers risk perception and their buying intention. These findings indicate that celebrity endorser traits such as trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness play a large role in determining how effective their endorsement is.

The review of the current research provides support for the use of Aakers model of brand equity for the purpose of this research. This research accepts that there is a positive relationship between celebrity endorsement and brand equity, that celebrity endorsers effectively contribute towards brand awareness, play a role in brand association amongst consumers and can provide a significant return on investment with their contribution to sales and brand awareness. Furthermore, brand associations reflective of the celebrity endorser are strong driving factors towards consumers that identify with these associations. Celebrity endorsers provide a sense of trust for consumers, who believe if the product or service is good enough for celebrities, its good enough for them. The literature further demonstrates that brand loyalty is a strong driver towards the development of brand equity, however, celebrity endorsers may be ineffective in attracting consumers if the quality and price of offerings fail to satisfy consumers.

Research Design and Methodology

Paradigm

The interpretivist research paradigm is best suited to explore the role celebrity endorsers have on consumer purchasing behavior. This research requires analysis on subjective and unique behavioral actions of participants. Interpretivism allows one to gain insight into the different factors that influence individual's consumer purchasing behavior.

Epistemology is the theory of knowledge and deals with the way in which knowledge is interpreted and sourced. The epistemological position of interpretivism acknowledges that the way in which researchers interpret data findings is strongly influenced by their social context and current knowledge of truth (Brown, 2017). Thus, it is important for the researcher to clearly state the position of their philosophical standpoint before data is interpreted. For the purpose of this research, facts and

individual truths will be treated as subjective and non-neutral data. This is due to the way in which individuals insights are based on their own unique perspective of the world (du Plooy-Celliers, 2014). Additionally, Burrell and Morgan identify three ways in which researches place assumptions on the nature of humans and their perspectives; determinism, voluntarism and somewhere between the two extremes (Maree, 2020). Determinism describes how individuals respond mechanically to their environment, whilst voluntarism illustrates the way in which individuals initiate their own actions. This research study will interpret data from a standpoint between these two extremes, allowing for an inclusive perspective on subjective data and assumptions. This will assist the qualitative research in identifying personal driving factors that determine individual purchasing behaviors, encouraging non-neutral forces rather than that of a positivist neutral stance (Maree, 2020).

The ontological position of interpretivism has a nominalist stance on reality, viewing social constructs as a product of individuals unique realities and levels of consciousness (Maree, 2020). This position rejects the view of objective and external realities and focusses on the different realities experienced through personal perspectives. The interpretivist position of this perspective claims that there is no direct access to a real world as there is no single external reality, but rather a combination of realities that are interdependent and reliant on other social constructions (Edirisingha, 2012). This encourages the findings socially constructed information rather than that of objectively determined perceptions. The ontological position of interpretivism will assist the research in gathering data from people who have different opinions on celebrity endorsers and how they contribute towards their own purchasing behaviour and brand equity (du Plooy-Celliers, 2014). This plays an important role in seeking answers that are external from the researchers perspective, ensuring that reality posited through multiple, relative perspectives (Edirisingha, 2012).

The methodological position of interpretivism requires the researcher to acknowledge their personal perspective and how it alters throughout the course of research. This position identifies reality as a continuously changing construct that evolves as new information and experiences are acquired (du Plooy-Celliers, 2014). The methodological perspective of interpretivism aims to understand and interpret subjective viewpoints, allowing the researcher to let feelings and reasoning to govern the way in which information is interpreted (Edirisingha, 2012). This fits in with the

qualitative nature of this research, encouraging personal opinions through in-depth interviews that accept a disconnection between subjective reasoning and facts.

The metatheoretical position of interpretivism views the researcher and what is being researched as an inseparable element, bound by their unique life experiences. This position supports the notion of personal knowledge being an internal process of individuals unique interpretations and understandings (Lor, 2011). This position seeks to identify the deeper reasoning behind individuals' perspectives, aiding the research in understanding what influences their decision-making behavior. With regards to this research question, the metatheoretical position of interpretivism will assist in identifying the most influential factors that drive consumers purchasing behaviour in relation to celebrity endorsers. This will allow for the deduction of common factors that either support or oppose the role celebrity endorsers play in consumers purchasing behavior.

Axiology relates to the nature of value within the research, identifying what values a researcher should possess as well as what is worthwhile in the research (Deane, 2018). The axiological position of interpretivism prioritises a non-judgmental exploration of individuals perceptions and reasonings. This allows the researcher to construct a subjective understanding of individuals unique and complex realities (du Plooy-Celliers, 2014).

Design Approach

Due to the nature of individuals unique perceptions, a qualitative research approach will be used to conduct research. Open-ended questioning will be used to explore the subjective perceptions of individuals, following an inductive research approach, allowing Aaker's model of brand equity to guide the research (Davis, 2014). This approach consists of two stages as described by Streefkerk (2019):

1. Observation: In the context of this research, observations will be made through the open-ended questioning of participants.
2. Observing a pattern: From this observation, recurring themes and key findings will be noted.

Population

The population included in this research will consist of South African amateur footballers, playing non-professional football in friendly league competitions, residing in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg. This population participates in Discovery Park's 5-a-side football academy and engage with both Cristiano Ronaldo and Nike content, whether it be viewing adverts, purchasing Nike branded products or watching Cristiano Ronaldo use Nike products. The population consists of individuals between the ages of 19 to 27. The population will be accessed through individuals playing for Aubameyang FC – a 5-a-side football team consisting of 8 players. The general psychographics of the participants are as follows:

- Interests: sports, football, professional footballers, sporting brands, branded clothing, celebrities and social media.
- Lifestyle: participate in sport, make use of branded sport products, engage with or follow sporting personalities on social media and engage with or follow sport brands on social media or television.

Sampling

For the purpose of this research, participants are considered a unit of analysis. The sampling method used to conduct this research will follow a convenience sampling approach. This suits the research as it allows for engagement with a specific accessible population. Convenience sampling is defined by Dudovski (2019) as the collection of data from a population that is easily accessible, allowing the researcher to choose participants on the basis that they are reachable and willing to contribute their subjective opinion towards the research study. This method of sampling poses an element of risk, as Siegle (2019) warns researchers of the possibility of attaining skewed data. This is due to the fact that generalisations may be formed about the population. However, this only relates to quantitative data and will not affect this qualitative research study as it is not intended for generalisation. Within the context of this research, there is an element of inherent bias as the sample is not chosen at random. However, as this is a qualitative research study a subjective approach is suitable, whilst a standardised distribution is not required. Furthermore, all participants within the sample are aligned with that of the population characteristics – mitigating the risk of attaining skewed data.

Data-Collection Method

In-depth interviews, conducted online via video call, was the data collection method used for this research. This method allows for a conversationalist approach which encourages interviewees to give deeper, meaningful and more insightful responses to questions (Steber, 2017). The only drawback to this method of data-collection is that it is time consuming. The in-depth interviews require one-on-one engagement; hence, interviewees are not able to participate simultaneously in a more time-effective manner. This is due to nature of open-ended questions, whereby each individual provides responses of different lengths based on their subjective opinions. However, this is needed for the research study. The purpose of this qualitative research study is to gain an understanding of individuals perceptions, not to gather large amounts of general information on brand equity. In order to understand participants unique perceptions and experiences, substantial time must be spent with each individual and their interview. This gave the researcher a deeper understanding of the samples personal lived experiences, which was then used to interpret the research with regards to its alignment with Aaker's model of brand equity.

Application of Data-Collection Method

The following will define how the in-depth interviews will be conducted to ensure a valid and quality method of data-collection (Newbold, 2018):

1. Developing questions to be asked:

Questions were developed using Aaker's model of brand equity. When developing the questions to be asked in the interview, it was ensured that they pertained to and offered valuable insight to the research study. The questions were aimed at answering the objectives of the research study and were constructed in alignment with Aaker's model of brand equity. The questions were focused on brand association, brand awareness, brand loyalty and perceived quality amongst participants and Cristiano Ronaldo's endorsement of Nike. The use of open-ended questions encouraged a conversationalist approach, enticing deeper, longer and more meaningful responses. Due to this nature, follow up questions were allowed in attempts to observe patterns throughout participants responses. As this research is a qualitative study, there were

no closed-ended questions and participants were encouraged to share their personal opinions and subjective perceptions pertaining to the research study.

2. Recruitment of participants:

Before participants were recruited, the framework of the interview was constructed, detailing the number of questions to be asked and ensuring they were relevant to the subject of research. Participants were recruited from Aubameyang FC, a 5-a-side football team playing non-professional football in friendly league competitions. These participants were recruited as they were conveniently available for the research interview, as well as met the characteristics of the sample population as they play for Aubameyang FC.

3. Recording the data:

When conducting in-depth interviews through one-on-one engagement online, the entire interview was recorded and transcribed. The purpose of the research was explained to participants and they were asked to sign a participant consent form. Participants were asked for permission to record the interview before any questions pertaining to the research were asked. As these interviews were conducted online via video call, a screen recording application was used to capture the interview. From this, the screen recording was consulted to transcribe the responses from participants and uploaded onto OneDrive. This ensured that the interviews were not only available for review after they had been conducted, but also recorded and safe in the event of data corruption.

4. Interviewing participants:

As the interview process will be conducted online, participants will require a device that allows for video calling and has access to a secure internet connection. A video calling platform will not be prioritised due to the variety of devices participants may use, for example, FaceTime is only available to Apple devices. Thus, the participant will be allowed to choose their preferred platform for communication. Although it is not preferred, a normal phone call may be used to conduct the interview in the event of a participant not being able to use video call. However, a video call is of preference to observe the body language and facial expressions of respondents to deem the validity and credibility of their responses. Throughout the interviewing process, it will be up to

the researchers discretion as to whether a follow up question is necessary, or if participants have answered a question in enough detail or substantiation.

5. Analysing results:

Once the interviewing process is completed and results have been transcribed, observations can be made on responses. These observations will compare responses in order to identify patterns and key findings that contribute to the research study. In doing so, there may also be findings that oppose to that of the anticipated results. In the context of this research, such findings will not be ignored to ensure the validity and truth of this study.

Data Analysis Method

A thematic analysis of the transcribed recorded data will be used to identify common themes, non-verbal cues and agreements amongst individuals responses. This analysis method is designed to interpret qualitative data, suiting both the subjective nature of responses as well as the interpretive approach. A thematic analysis will allow for a greater understanding of individuals perceptions, experiences and opinions on celebrity endorsers and consumer purchasing behaviour. For this form of analysis, it is important that the researcher remains neutral when analysing the recorded data. This is due to the subjective nature of the research, requiring the researcher to consider their own personal views and ensure that they do not influence the judgement of the data. If the aforementioned is ignored, the researcher runs the risk of potentially obscuring or overlooking data that is present, or visa versa, whereby opinions or argumentations are formed upon vague or non-existent data (Caulfield, 2020). The thematic analysis will follow an inductive research approach whereby data is gathered and allows Aaker's model of brand equity to guide the research (Davis, 2014). An inductive approach allows themes to emerge from the data, rather than prescribing codes to the data before analysis.

Application of Data-Analysis Method

The following data-analysis process was followed to ensure data is analysed accurately and effectively. In the context of this research, a thematic analysis was conducted through the following steps (Caulfield, 2020):

1. Understanding the data:

The collected data was transcribed. The researcher then read through these transcriptions to gain an understanding of the data. Any notes or observations made of the nonverbal cues and emotions were added to the transcription for interpretation purposes. Through observation of transcripts, common themes and key findings were identified and grouped. This played an important role in understanding how the gathered data contributes to the research study. At this stage, in-depth analysis was not conducted, but positioned to give a wholistic view on the findings of the gathered data.

2. Coding:

Once the researcher became familiar with the data and identified, transcribed and added notes and nonverbal cues, the researcher assigned codes to participants answers. The coding process involved the researcher highlighting sections of the transcript that display signs of reoccurring patterns and common themes. The codes serve to segment data into groups, whereby common themes can be easily identified and understood. This process further contributed to understandings of the data gathered and allowed the researcher to begin to identify the most pertinent themes with regards to the study.

3. Generating themes:

After codes were constructed and assigned, the researcher reviewed the codes and assigned them to categories. The categories form the themes or patterns of the research and allows the researcher to identify and understand the relationships between these themes aligned to the research questions and objectives. This also gave the researcher insight into themes that are more prominent and common amongst respondents, as well as themes that are scarcer that may be used to oppose the anticipated contribution. It also allowed the researcher to gain an understanding of

the scope the data, identifying key themes and patterns that contribute within the parameters of the research study.

4. Constructing the report:

The findings of the analysis are then presented, aligned back to previous theory and literature, and interpreted based on the researchers perspective in line with the objectives and research questions.

The final stage of a thematic analysis consisted of the researcher compiling a report on the findings within the data collected. This process presented the opportunity for the researcher to make conclusions on the research findings and provide evidence that either supports or opposes the anticipated contribution of the research. As mentioned before, this process required the researcher to separate personal views and opinions that may add bias to the research study, ensuring only the views of respondents were used to make conclusions.

Findings and Interpretation of Findings

Presentation of Findings

Celebrity Endorsers and Consumers

Findings indicated a general consensus amongst respondents where celebrity endorsers considered the best in their field, are perceived to use the best products. This was further supported by respondents claiming that *“if the product is good enough for professionals, it must be good enough for me.”*

All respondents claimed to have purchased and used Nike products, however, the majority of respondents listed Nike’s quality, design and comfortability as the deciding purchase factor. This verifies the findings of Seyed-Mohamed (2010) who found that majority of consumers consider the brand in making their purchase decision with Nike being the preferred brand. Respondent A attributed the main reason behind choosing Nike products to the celebrity endorser, Cristiano Ronaldo, stating that “I believe product offerings from similar brands are relatively undifferentiated.” According to Hasaan, Kerem, Biscaia and Agyemang (2016) the agreement between Cristiano

Ronaldo and Nike helped this sports brand to win the Asian market that was previously dominated by Adidas. Respondent B claimed that *“a collaboration between Nike and a professional footballer that I like would interest me to the point of purchase, but it is my commitment to my team and the endorsed player of my team.”* These findings align with Chang, Ko, Tasci, Arai and Kim (2014) who found that athlete endorsements result in favourable advertisement ratings and product evaluations; all of which, ultimately, have a substantial positive impact on financial returns for companies. All respondents claimed that although it would pique their interest, the quality, comfortability and design of the product is the deciding factor.

Celebrity Endorsers Contribution to Awareness

Findings indicated that all respondents are aware of various football celebrity endorsers as well as endorsers for other industries. Furthermore, all respondents believe that celebrity endorsers increase brand awareness for the endorsing brand. This aligns with the research of Kumar and Ramana (2019) which states that celebrities impact very quickly on brand dimensions like brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, and brand loyalty. Two respondents claimed that celebrity endorsers were the sole reason they became aware of different brands. This can be ascribed to the fact that celebrity endorsement has been the most important part of modern marketing practice to increase the value of the brand (Malik, Sudhakar & Dutta, 2017). Respondent A provided the example of New Balance and the celebrity professional footballer endorser, Sadio Mane. Respondent C provided the example of Fashionova and the celebrity media endorser, Kylie Jenner. This is an important finding as Seyed-Mohamed (2010) states that the stronger the awareness of the brand is in the mind of a consumer, the greater the likelihood for future purchases.

All respondents stated that they were already aware of Nike before the use of celebrity endorsement. Nike has always been a keen user of celebrity endorsers. Nike's first athlete endorser was runner Steve Prefontaine in the 1970s, followed by a string of world-renowned sports personalities such as John McEnroe, Michael Jordan, Eric Cantona, Cristiano Ronaldo and Tiger Woods. The company does not simply use its athletes as posters, they are the brand just as much as product, advertising or the people who work at Nike. This leads to a multifaceted brand personality, however, consistently valuing qualities such as risk-taking, competitiveness and live-and-

breathe sport. As the 'athletes are the brand' the brand imagery of the athletes is used explicitly to contribute to Nike's brand image and is seen as an investment in the brand identity, asserting that Nike intentionally acquires meaning from association with their athletes (Seyed-Mohamed, 2010). This illustrates the extent to which consumers are aware of the Nike brand solely due to their reputation as a quality brand that has consistently delivered satisfactory offerings over decades. According to Keller, Apéria and Georgson (2008) brand awareness is created through increasing familiarity with the brand through repetitive marketing efforts, logos and packaging.

Celebrity Endorsers vs Brand Loyalty

All respondents claimed that their idolisation and 'fanboy-like' admiration contributes to them wanting to support the endorser as well as the endorsing brand. However, most respondents claimed that *"if product offerings were identical, I am more inclined to purchase from the brand that is endorsed by my favourite football team over that of a celebrity endorser."* Respondent D claimed that their *"loyalty lies with the team I support, rather than that of the celebrity endorser or the endorsing brand."* Along with this, two respondents claimed that a celebrity endorser that is associated with another football team would be largely ineffective towards them. Respondent D stated that *"I will not support Cristiano Ronaldo's endorsed products as he is a direct rival to my team."*

Celebrity Endorsers and Association

All respondents attributed their inherent admiration of a celebrity endorser as a contributing factor towards wanting to be like the endorser and use the same products as them. Along with this, all respondents claimed that they need to be able to associate with the celebrity endorser in order for them to be effective. Respondents listed integrity, morals, loyalty and reputation as factors to which they would need to be aligned with. These attributes are consumer perceptions which need to be understood by the brand when partnering with a celebrity endorser. The credibility of the endorser is defined by expertness and trustworthiness (Kumar & Ramana, 2019). High brand associations lead to brand loyalty and the relationship between brand association and brand equity is positive. Findings indicated that an inherent admiration of the celebrity endorser creates a desire for consumers to be like the endorser and use the same products as them. Thus, the more brand associations created by Nike through their

celebrity endorsers, the more connections Nike make in the minds of consumers. From this, Nike are able to use positive connections between consumers and celebrity endorsers to reflect their associations upon the Nike brand. Along with this, findings indicated that consumers need to be able to align themselves with the celebrity endorser in order for them to be effective. This puts weight on how important the selection process is when choosing a celebrity endorser to promote the brand.

Interpretations of Findings

The Power of Celebrity Endorsers

From the analysis of gathered data, there is an acceptance of the claim that celebrity endorsers increase the awareness of the endorsed brand. Although all respondents were aware of the Nike brand, this awareness was present before the use of celebrity endorsers. However, two responses supported the use of celebrity endorsers as the sole reason they became aware of the brand, such as Sadio Mane's endorsement of New Balance. This could be due to the current position of New Balance in relation to other brands in the footballing industry. New Balance only entered the footballing industry in 2015, a relatively new face in comparison to other brands such as Nike, Adidas and Puma who have over two decades of industry experience (Football Fashion, 2015) From this finding, one can ascertain that celebrity endorsers are effective in creating awareness for brands entering new industries, or new brands in general.

Consumer's Want to Associate Themselves with the Best

The findings indicated that in order for a celebrity endorser to be effective, they have to be considered amongst the best in their field. Professionals are perceived to use the best products in terms of quality, reliability and performance. This perception lead to respondents claiming that if the product is good enough for professionals, it must be good enough for them. However, findings suggested that brands do not rely on celebrity endorsers to reflect the brands quality, reliability and performance. The fact that all respondents were aware of Nike without the support of celebrity endorsers supports this statement. Thus, one can suggest that celebrity endorsers play a larger role in reaffirming the constructed perception of their endorsing brand, rather than creating it.

However, the findings illustrated another role celebrity endorser play in supporting their endorsed brand. All respondents attributed their inherent admiration of a celebrity endorser as a contributing factor towards wanting to be like the endorser and use the same products as them. This supports the notion that consumers may use the celebrity endorser as a deciding factor when engaging with similar products from different brands. Thus, if the quality and pricing attributes of two offerings are relatively similar, a consumer may sway towards the product that his/her idol uses. In order for this to be effective, consumers need to be able to associate themselves with the celebrity endorser. These associations are mainly drawn between the celebrity endorsers integrity, morals and loyalty but also include the reputation and overall skillset encompassed by the endorser. Through these associations, trust is formed between the consumer and endorser, which in-turn reflects onto the endorsing brand. This highlights how important the choice of celebrity endorser is when choosing an individual to represent a brand.

Quality, Design and Comfort vs Celebrity Approval

The research findings showed the majority of respondents attributing quality, design and comfortability as the main factors that drive their purchasing decision. Although one respondent listed Cristiano Ronaldo as the sole reason behind the purchase of a pair of football boots, the findings suggest a brand perceived quality, along with comfort, design and positive experiences, are stronger drivers than that of endorsers when it comes to the final purchasing decision. This is supported by further findings gathered from respondents faced with the question as to whether a collaboration between Nike and a footballer of their liking would appeal to them. All but one respondent claimed that although it would pique their interest, the quality, comfortability and design of the product is the deciding factor. Thus, one can determine that the inherent perception of the brand plays a greater role in a consumers decision making than that of the celebrity endorser or their approval of the brand.

Findings in Context

The theory used to guide this research is David Aaker's Theory of Brand Equity.

Perceived Quality

Perceived quality relates to a consumer's opinion on whether a particular product will be able to meet their expectations (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). Perceived quality has a massive effect on profitability and influences brand associations. According to respondents, the perceived quality of Nike is high with respondents attributing quality, design and comfortability as the main factors behind their purchasing decisions towards the brand. Along with this, respondents indicated that the products used by professionals are perceived to be the best products. Thus, there is a large consensus that considers Nike products to be amongst the best. This further supported by respondents claims that a collaboration between Nike and a professional footballer of their liking would pique their interest, but the quality, comfortability and design of the product is the deciding factor. This proves that Nike's perceived quality is not reliant on a celebrity endorser.

Brand Awareness

Brand awareness involves brand recognition and brand recall (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000) and refers to how consumers associate the brand with the particular product that they aim to own (Sasmita & Suki, 2014). As mentioned, all respondents were aware of Nike before a celebrity endorser started to promote the brand. This illustrates the extent to which consumers are aware of the Nike brand solely due to their reputation as a quality brand that has consistently delivered satisfactory offerings over decades. Often not enough attention is paid to the value of brand awareness. Awareness can lead to familiarity, and it is seen that people like the familiar. Thus, one can ascertain that the collaboration between a familiar brand and a familiar endorser should lead to effective increases in brand awareness, which has a direct effect on brand equity.

Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is related to consumers repetitive buying behaviour due to their behavioural tendency of the brand or product of choice (Sasmita & Suki, 2014). Nike

constantly communicates with consumers to identify what they want in order to increase this repetitive behaviour. The loyalty shown towards celebrity endorsers from consumers can also reflect upon the endorsing brand. Findings indicated that a 'fanboy-like' feeling towards the celebrity endorser contributes towards them wanting to support the endorser as well as the endorsing brand. Thus, an endorser with reach across loyal supporters may transfer that loyalty across the endorsing brand.

Brand Association

Brand association refers to the information in the consumers mind about the brand and is connected to memory (Sasmita & Suki, 2014), and it provides meaning to the brand (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). High brand associations lead to brand loyalty and the relationship between brand association and brand equity is positive. Findings indicated that an inherent admiration of the celebrity endorser creates a desire for consumers to be like the endorser and use the same products as them. Thus, the more brand associations created by Nike through their celebrity endorsers, the more connections Nike make in the minds of consumers. From this, Nike are able to use positive connections between consumers and celebrity endorsers to reflect their associations upon the Nike brand. Along with this, findings indicated that consumers need to be able to align themselves with the celebrity endorser in order for them to be effective. This puts weight on how important the selection process is when choosing a celebrity endorser to promote the brand.

Addressing of Research Question and Problem

This research aims to understand consumers perceptions of brand equity with specific reference to Cristiano Ronaldo's endorsement of Nike. This was achieved by addressing the following objectives:

Exploring consumers perceptions of brand awareness with regard to Cristiano Ronaldo's endorsement of Nike: After analysis of gathered data, it was found that all respondents were aware of Nike before the brand partnered with Cristiano Ronaldo. However, awareness of the brands product performance increased as a result of the endorsement.

Explore consumers perceptions of brand associations with regard to Cristiano Ronaldo's endorsement of Nike: Findings indicated that associations drawn between

Cristiano Ronaldo and Nike were positive. Respondents claimed that their inherent idolisation and associations towards Ronaldo played a role in their purchasing decisions towards the Nike brand.

Explore consumers perceptions of perceived quality with regard to Cristiano Ronaldo's endorsement of Nike: Respondents claimed that Ronaldo is perceived to be the best football player in the world, and due to his use of Nike products, they are perceived to be the best products. However, respondents also stipulated that they believe Nike products encompass good quality, design and comfortability without the need to rely on endorsers to convey these attributes.

Explore consumers perceptions of brand loyalty with regard to Cristiano Ronaldo's endorsement of Nike: Findings indicated that a 'fanboy-like' feeling towards the celebrity endorser contributes towards them wanting to support the endorser as well as the endorsing brand. This loyalty is shown to transfer across to the endorsing brand.

Conclusion

By addressing each objective, the research question exploring the perceptions of consumers towards brand equity of celebrity endorsement by Cristiano Ronaldo and Nike has been answered. The most significant findings of this research study are that consumers need to be able to associate themselves with the celebrity endorser in order for them to be effective. Along with this, the research found an agreement with celebrity endorsers and their contribution towards the awareness of their endorsing brand. Findings also indicated that an inherent admiration of the celebrity endorser creates a desire for consumers to be like the endorser and use the same products as them. Thus, the more brand associations created by Nike through their celebrity endorsers, the more connections Nike make in the minds of consumers. From this, Nike are able to use positive connections between consumers and celebrity endorsers to reflect their associations upon the Nike brand.

Trustworthiness

Koonin (2014) identifies four elements to ensure the validity and trustworthiness within qualitative research. The elements identified are listed as; credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Koonin, 2014).

Credibility will be ensured throughout the interview process whereby valuable data is sourced from participants. This will be guaranteed by ensuring participants fit the population characteristics and sufficient time is spent with them to understand the way in which they communicate. Spending time with participants through online interviews poses a tricky obstacle, but necessary to gain better insight into their lives and the way they perceive certain elements pertaining to the research. More importantly however, there is a need to understand their unique perspective based on their construction of social reality.

Transferability relates to the ability for research findings to be applied to similar situations and broader research studies. The transferability of data gathered will be assessed in relation to its consistency across participants responses. This should provide the grounds similarities and agreements to be made from the data that can be applied to a broader spectrum of research.

Dependability of the research gathered will be ensured through the use of the aforementioned thematic analysis. This will ensure that data collected is accurate, valid and processed to identify key findings and themes. Along with this, the thematic analysis process will ensure the data is in alignment with the research study, allowing it to be used for similar and broader research spectrums.

Confirmability refers to how effective the data findings support the anticipated contribution of the research study. This will be ensured by developing a logical flow of data that has been described in its entirety, allowing other researchers to make use of the findings in a clear a coherent manner. In the context of this research, findings that oppose the anticipated contribution will not be dismissed. This will ensure data gathered remains transparent and free from bias.

Anticipated Contribution

The anticipated contribution of this research is to gain an understanding of consumers perceptions towards celebrity endorsers and brand equity. Once this has been achieved, brands can benefit from this research in their strategic approach to using celebrity endorsers in their marketing campaigns. The reasoning behind this anticipation derives from the increased popularity of celebrity endorsers used in marketing campaigns to promote a brands products or services (Ahmed & Ashfaq,

2013). If this anticipation is confirmed, future marketing managers will be able to confidently determine whether or not their brand is suited to be endorsed by a celebrity endorser and whether they will be able to achieve their brand goals.

Ethical Considerations

The following ethical considerations will be met in accordance with the IIE's ethical guidelines. This is done to ensure the trustworthiness and integrity of the research.

The ethical considerations are as follows:

- *Informed consent:* Participants will be informed that their answers will be used for a research study, requiring their consent.
- *Collecting data from participants:* The process of how their personal information will be protected and what questions they can expect to be asked will be fully disclosed.
- *Providing incentives:* No incentives will be provided to ensure bias is avoided with regards to who participates and how they structure their responses.
- *Avoiding deception:* This will be achieved by fully disclosing the topic of research in study and how their responses will contribute to it.
- *Avoiding harm:* Participants will be free from any physical or emotional harm. All questions that can entice a negative response, such as embarrassment, vulnerability or trigger a negative past memory will be avoided.
- *Falsifying information:* This is the unethical act of distorting or changing the data to suit the needs or requirements of the research goals.
- *Distorting results:* Similarly to falsifying information, distorting results is the act of preference or focus on one aspect whilst disregarding another aspect of equal importance.
- *Bias influence:* Data gathered should not be influenced by the researchers inherent bias towards the subject. All data is to be gathered and analysed impartially.

Limitations

Within the context of this research, limitations will define the parameters by which research is conducted and data is gathered. Limitations relate to the constraints and limits of the research study that are out of the researchers control, such as time,

access to resources and financial constraints (Enslin, 2014). The following is a list of limitations that affect the researcher and this research study:

- This research study will need to be completed within a 12-month time period as the researcher will be involved in a full-time honours programme.
- All primary information gathered through in-depth interviews will have to be conducted online due to Covid-19 constraints.
- All primary information will have to be gathered through interviews as there is no direct contact available between the brand, Nike, and the celebrity endorser, Cristiano Ronaldo.
- There is a possibility that participants from the accessible population choose to not be a part of the research study.
- Interview participants may not have access to a secure internet line, making them unable to participate in an online interview.
- Due to the researcher being responsible for all funding, financial limitations may occur if unforeseen financial requirements arise.

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Annexures

Consent Form

Title: Celebrity endorsers role in consumer purchasing behaviour and brand equity: a qualitative study on Cristiano Ronaldo and Nike.

Researcher: Bradley Lamberti

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Degree: BCom Honours in Strategic Brand Management

Institute: Vega Bordeaux, Johannesburg

I _____ understand that my participation in Bradley Lamberti's research study on "Celebrity endorsers role in consumer purchasing behaviour and brand equity: a qualitative study on Cristiano Ronaldo and Nike" is voluntary and I am able to retract my contribution at any time.

I am aware that the interview will be conducted by the researcher via a video or telephonic call that will last around 30 minutes.

I am aware that this interview will be recorded and transcribed.

I am aware that there is no compensation for my contribution in this study.

In-depth Interview

1. Do celebrity endorsers get your attention?
2. Do celebrity endorsers increase your awareness of the endorsed brand?
3. Are you aware of celebrity endorsers in football? If yes, what is your opinion on this?
4. Has a celebrity endorser contributed towards your desire for the endorsed brand? Why?
5. What does a celebrity endorser need in order to influence your purchasing behaviours?
6. Do you purchase or make use of Nike products? Why?
7. Would Cristiano Ronaldo's endorsement of Nike influence your purchasing behaviours?
8. Would a collaboration between Nike and a professional footballer interest you? Why?
9. Would a collaboration between Cristiano Ronaldo and Nike interest you? Why?
10. Do you have any additional thoughts or opinions on Cristiano Ronaldo, Nike or consumer purchasing behaviour that you would like to add?

Ethical Clearance Letter



12 October 2020

Student name: Bradley Lamberti

Campus: Vega Bordeaux

Re: Approval of RESE 8419 Proposal and Ethics Clearance



HONOURS 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!

Originality Report

 View Report Summary

 **Attachment 1**
Plagiarism Submission.docx

100 %

Sources

INCLUDED SOURCES 

Institutional database (13) 99 %

Global database (1) 0 %

Scholarly journals & publications (1) 0 %

Internet (3) 0 %

Top sources

Bradley Lamberti

① Celebrity endorsers role on brand equity: ② a qualitative study on Cristiano Ronaldo and Nike.

Bradley Lamberti

17749382

Tish Taylor

RESE8419

HBSM412

Abstract

The fight for market share in saturated industries has put immense pressure on marketing campaigns and how they can be made as effective as possible. ② The use of celebrity endorsers has become an

increasingly popular marketing method for brands to increase their brand equity (Ahmed & Ashfaq,

2013). However, how does a business choose the right celebrity influencer for their brand and how

important is this alignment? ① This research study aims at gaining an understanding of consumers

perceptions of celebrity endorsers and the brand equity of the endorsing brand, with specific reference

to Cristiano Ronaldo's endorsement of Nike. Data was collected from participants who partook in an in-

depth online interview involving open-ended questions that were constructed in relation to David Aaker's

model of brand equity. ① The most significant findings of this research study is that consumers need

to be able to associate themselves with the celebrity endorser in order for them to be effective. The

research also found an agreement with celebrity endorsers and their contribution towards the awareness of their endorsing brand.

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14/12/20

Submission UUID:
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2d8a0193-be7b-e4d2-b713-95e798f184a3

Final Research Report Summary Document Table

20

2020

Annexure A: Final Research Report Summary Document Template
TITLE: *What is my study about?*

Research Purpose/Objective	Primary Research Question	Research Rationale	Seminal Authors/Sources	Literature Review – Conceptual Framework	Paradigm	Approach	Data Collection Method(s)	Ethics	Key Findings	Recommendations
The total objective of this research is to understand how celebrity endorsers contribute to the endorsing brands' consumer purchasing behaviour and brand equity.	What are the perceptions of consumers towards brand equity of celebrity endorsement by Cristiano Ronaldo and Nike?	The recognition of this topic in academic research is indicative of the interest to consumers and organisations and provides the basis for this research.	David Aaker	Theme 1: Brand Awareness Theme 2: Brand Association Theme 3: Brand Loyalty Theme 4: Perceived Quality Theme 5:	Paradigm Interpretivism Epistemology Data findings is strongly influenced by social context and knowledge of truth. Ontology Nominalist stance on reality, viewing social constructs as a product of individuals' unique realities Axiology Identifying what values a researcher should possess as well as what is worthwhile in the research	Qualitative Population SA amateur footballers, playing non-professional football in friendly league competitions, residing in the northern suburbs of JHB. Sampling	In-depth interviews, conducted online via video call, was the data collection method used for this research.	Informed consent Collecting data from participants Providing incentives Avoiding deception Avoiding harm Falsifying information Distorting results	Consumers need to be able to associate themselves with the celebrity endorser. Research found an agreement with celebrity endorsers and their contribution towards the awareness of their endorsing brand. Key Contribution	Brands should strive to create as many positive brand associations as possible in order to effectively make connections in the minds of consumers.
Research Problem The use of celebrity endorsers in marketing campaigns has become an increasingly popular method of building brand equity	Secondary Questions/Hypotheses/Objectives Explore consumers' perceptions of brand awareness, loyalty, association and perceived quality with regard to Cristiano Ronaldo's endorsement of Nike.	Key Concepts Celebrity endorsers Consumer perceptions Brand equity	Key Theories David Aaker's model of brand equity	Theme 6: Theme 7:			Data Analysis Method(s) Unit of Analysis Individuals Data Analysis Method(s) Thematic analysis	Online interviews Covid-19 Funds Internet connection	A deeper understanding of consumers' perceptions of celebrity endorsers and brand equity.	

