

Celebrity Endorsement vs. Other forms of Advertising: What Appeals to the 18-24 South African Youth Market

Nomfundo Nkosi (NKSNO012)

Department of Psychology

University of Cape Town

Supervisor: Prof. Donald Foster

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Abstract

The 18-24 youth market is an increasingly difficult segment for advertisers to capture and their influence and spending power is continually on the rise. As a result, advertisers are going to great length to try and appeal to this techno savvy market. For the longest time the use of celebrities in advertising brands has been considered as a winning formula despite the exuberant cost and risks of using a celebrity endorser. Yet little is known whether this strategy is enough to capture the techno savvy know it all youth market when compare to other less costly adverting methods. Objective of the study was to find out the from young consumers between the ages of 18 and 24 what type of advertising most appeal to them a total of number of 13 participants where used in 2 focus groups and individual interviews . The study compared celebrity endorsement with other forms of advertising such as non-celebrity spokes person, corporate social responsibility, product placement, adverting in social media or the internet .The findings suggested that the youth market due to the saturation of the advertising young people have grown distrustful of conventional advertising and would much rather trust the opinion and experience of people around them.

Key words : Youth Market , Advertising , Brands , Celebrity Endorsement

Introduction

The vast majority of the South African population are young people although this is a common fact in developing countries. Marketers of brands have only recently taken an interest in the youth market in South Africa. The youth market (18-24) is particularly interesting as it is typically the age range where people are in the process of establishing themselves in the world, their spending power is on the increase. As a result, the 18-24 segment has become crucial for understanding brand preference as well as the general trend in overall brand consumption. However not enough research has been done on what forms of advertising appeals to the youth market. Especially since the segments spending power is still novel and appears to always be in a state of flux.

The rise of the public's fascination with celebrity lifestyles has had tremendous effects on the manner which advertisers advertise their brands. Lamb, Hair, McDaniel, Boshoff & Terblanche (2003) define Advertising as a paid and controlled message by advertisers directed to the masses in an impersonal manner. The purpose of an advertisement is to communicate to consumers the brand's image thereby making the product/ brand appealing to the consumer. A brand can be defined as a product or product line, store, or service with an identifiable set of benefits, wrapped in recognisable personality. An individual or group can also be a brand. The concepts of brands and branding has become an integral part of advertising. Consumer Brands are no longer merely a sign to distinguish one manufacture from the other. Brands have become embedded in the consumer psyche (Carrol, 2009). The manner in which manufactures of consumer products use their brands to communicate and relate to consumers has undergone drastic changes. Previously, advertisers of consumer brands needed to simply motivate the consumer to buy their brand by simply stating how different it is from similar brands. Presently, advertisers techniques have become increasingly sophisticated in an effort to reach consumers who are increasingly becoming bombarded with advertisement. Due to market saturation advertisers need to increasingly review the manner in which their brands are being advertised. However for a brand to be successful it requires key specifics, such as functional element and emotional element that transfer into brand equity which can be defined as difference in value created by a brand less the cost of creating a brand (Blackwell, Miniard and Engel, 2006). Functional

elements of a brand are its performance, quality and price. Emotional elements include style and image. The image or brand attitude is an important element as it's the image the brand puts forward to consumer and it is most likely the image consumers will have of the brand. Brand equity more specifically brand attitude will have a significant influence in the manner the brand / product is being advertised. Another important element is the promise the brand carries which can be defined as what consumers expect in exchange for the purchasing of the brand.

The presently popular use of evaluative conditioning that is changing the attitude “the image “conveyed by the brand. By making use of a celebrity or sports figure to appeal to the consumer has proved popular with marketer of consumer brands directed at young consumers (Sweldens, van Osselaer & Janiszewski 2010). Due to the recent rise of celebrity, culture and what might be refer to as “celebrity obsession” and the rise of social networks such as, facebook and twitter, where every move of a celebrity can be followed. Television channels and publications are dedicated to the business of celebrity watching is evident of celebrities increasing influence in modern culture. (Couldry &Markham, 2007; Furedi, 2010). The HDI Next Generation Youth Brand Survey published in the Sunday Times indicated that South Africa celebrities also have also been used as part of marketing strategies. It is evident that celebrity endorsement is quickly becoming popular choice in the South African market (2011).

Marketers of consumer brands have taken advantage of the celebrity culture and have made successful advertising campaigns using celebrity endorsers. McCracken(1989) defines a celebrity endorser as any individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses his recognition and who uses his recognition on behalf of consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement . Celebrity endorsers include actors , athletes , business people , entertainers , models politicians singers , military leaders . Even animated spokes characters can even serve as a celebrity endorsers

However the public's fascination with celebrity's private lives has become a double-edged sword. Advertisers can tag on to a well established image of the celebrity to easily communicate the brands attitude or “image” with the assurance that consumers will recognise the celebrity's image and therefore understand the brand image . Yet this success often comes at a heavy price. Firstly acquiring a celebrity as an endorser is costly and advertisers need to justify their rationale for such an expensive strategy. The iconic 1983

Pepsi commercial that used Michael Jackson as an endorser is still, regarded as one of the most expensive commercials of all time the commercial \$5million dollars (Hollander, 2010). Secondly, the brand's "image" becomes entangled with that of the celebrity endorser in the public's eyes. Thus what the celebrity does privately or publicly could and will affect the brand's image. The same could be said for athletes and sports figures. The golfer Tiger Woods and the sports brand Nike's relationship serves as a perfect example in the recent light of the Tiger Woods public scandal. Therefore, advertisers need to ask themselves whether it is really worth having a celebrity endorser given the tremendous risk that is associated with celebrity's lifestyle. Critics of the celebrity endorsement model often advocate the use of a spokesperson to bypass the disadvantages that could hurt the brand financially (Amos , Holmes &Strutton , 2008). However celebrity endorsement is not the only effective channel to reach young consumers.

Other Forms of Advertising

Non-celebrity spokesperson, product placement, internet or social media advertising, corporate social responsibility, multicultural advertising or word of mouth are all well established methods that are just as effective if not more effective .

A non-Celebrity Spokesperson is a created spokesperson by the organization a created spokesperson could be a real person or a animated character. A created spokes person could weather all the disadvantage of using a celebrity spokesperson, less costly and there are no risks that are associated with using a celebrity endorser because the organization has a higher degree of control . Unlike a celebrity endorser a crated non-celebrity spokes person . (van der Walt, van Loggerenberg, Wehmeyer, 2009).

Product Placement: Product placement is technique in which companies pay to have their products shown within an entertainment vehicle. The vehicle could be range from movie , television show to music and music video (Blackwell, Miniard, Engel, 2006).

On line Advertising and Social Media social media had changed the manner in which is consumed forever ordinary people now have access to global arena . The aftermath of the November 26, 2008 Mumbai bombings clearly articulated the paradigm shift in media power. The first reports of the incident where not from big news channels but rather the news came from twitter its was only after social networks had been buzzing with the news from ordinary pole who saw the bombings (Comm , 2009) . The news of Osama bin Laden's death first got broadcasted all over social networks before the story broke out on news networks .

Some even argue that on line sources and social networks have taken over traditional forms of influence and information sharing. Could the same be said for advertising to the youth market?

Until recently a great deal of internet advertising campaigns were based on speculation. Marketers did not fully understand the nature of on line advertising they just knew that their brands had to be there. With the conception of social networks advertiser have also began taking advantage and trying to meet consumers where they are . Facebook , Twitter , Youtube amongst other social networks have transformed the manner in which people interact daily. . Various publication have began conducting extensive research on the power of social networks . Jimmy Wales the founder of Wikipedia articulates that the secret to the prominence of social web and online community lies fundamentally in the need for human beings to share and interact. He highlights that modern human beings are not that different from our ancestor's human beings thrive when they feel they have a sense of community and connection. Social Medias have tapped on that need for humans to connect and interact (Webb, 2009) .

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Following the end of the Apartheid regime in 1994 corporations in South Africa also had the responsibility to help rebuild the nations. Only recently did researchers become ware that CSR initiative could have a profound effect on consumer's perception of the brand / corporations. As consumers will view the corporation in a positive light as socially responsible and will have a dramatic influence in the brand attitude "image "of the corporation. However little yet known whether the reputation of a manufacture or company has an effect in the appeal to the youth market.

Multicultural Advertising Marketers of brand are always interested in expanding their market share. In some respect when a brand associates itself with a particular well-known figure would close itself to other consumers who do not like the chosen endorser. Multicultural marketing is market strategies aims at reaching multiple consumer segments that are distinguished by cultural and sub -cultural characteristics which is what Johnson et al (2010) proposes as the best fit for diversity societies. Particularly in South Africa where there are diverse cultural groups as well as vast inequality amongst citizens. And often times marketers of brands and (or product and services such as banks) are trying to appeal to all member of society .A study done in South Africa aimed at investigating whether the use of multi-racial advertising by South African brands increases perception of social responsibility

and increase brand equity. The results supported the claim, the use of multi-racial advertising did increase the appeal of the youth market. But however the study found out that it is not enough to generate social attribution (Johnson 2009 ,2010) .

Word of Mouth: Friend and Family Informal conversation is the oldest forms of advertising. Merchants and marketers have long been aware of the power of personal recommendation of product and service. It has only been recently that marketer and social scientists have developed a body of data on the role of word of mouth advertising in interpersonal relationships . Key factors that make word of mouth effective was that word of mouth directly usually happens in face to face conversations hence the perceived motives of the communicator are often deemed trustworthy in comparison to commercial advertising where the audience has to be constantly aware that information might be distorted or exaggerated(Arndt, 1967). With Word or Mouth the communicator is not paid by the producer of the product / service so it is deemed more trustworthy.

Key Theories and Arguments in Endorsement Advertising

The debate around which model of advertising works best is guided by key theories in endorsement and advertising . In the literature, reviewed key theories arose that have been established as influential concepts to explain the relationship between the brand, the consumer and the chosen form of endorsement.

Source credibility

For a merchant or endorser to successfully convince a consumer to purchase an item or service it is imperative that they sound like they know what they are talking about , they have to appear to be credible . Source credibility consists of the source expertise and trustworthiness. Expertise can be defined as the extent to which the speaker is capable to make a correct assertion whereas trustworthiness refers to the extent to which the receiver of the message deems the speaker to be credible. Ornpitakapan (2004) highlights that previous studies show that a highly credible source in a commercial is much more persuasive and thus more influential than a low credible source

Match -Up Hypothesis

The role of a brand spokesperson or endorsers is to communicate the attitude of the brand it is imperative for the endorser's attitude and image to match with that of the brand.

This notion stems from the Match –Up Hypothesis . The image of the celebrity and that of the brand should match " converge " to create a successful campaign , there needs to be congruency between a the image of the celebrity. Numerous studies have found evidence of the strong effects of matching the celebrity persona with that of the endorsed brand (Kamins, 1990; Till, Stanley & Priluck , 2008).

The ability of a celebrity to recommend or sell a brand to the public is widely recognized as a useful strategy for advertisers. (Koerning & Boyd ,2009 ; Thomson ,2006 ; Till, Stanley & Priluck ,2008 :Marshall et al , 2008)The success of this strategy lies in the celebrities ability to what Kamins (1990) refers to as " symbolic aspiration reference group association " a reference group is a point of association which a person can assess the attitude and behaviour in the ad . The chosen celebrity is regarded as a symbol of the values and attitude the advertisers wish to portray to a particular group. The aim is to make the consumer aspire to be part of the group by buying the product endorsed by the celebrity. The reason of the success of this strategy lies in the celebrity endorser's ability to grab more attention than non-celebrity endorser.

However other studies disagreed with the match –up hypothesis Lee and Thorson (2008). Found little support for the match-up theory the study found that celebrity recognized in a magazine ad did not increase recall of the ad by participants as expected by the match- up and congruency models. The study made use of professional athletes and entertainment celebrities. The participants failed to recognize accurately which celebrity endorsed which brand. (Costanzo and Goodnight 2005). . By applying the Meaning Transference model advertisers can use a model or, and anonymous actor to play the role of the brand representative and not necessarily a celebrity endorser to have a successful campaign. However it is not just the face and the brand that has to be congruent the public image of the celebrity is also an important factor for consumers to believe what the individual in the ad is saying.

Meaning Transference Model

People apply meanings to everyday things to better understand and construct their environments these meanings are often constructed in a cultural context. Advertisers of consumer brands aim to use particular culturally constructed meaning to better convey the attitude of their brands. Theses Cultural constructed meanings include lifestyle, class status to social movements. By making use of a celebrity who is associated with a particular cultural, construct for instance a rock star. The Advertisers hope that the specific cultural

construct meaning associated with a celebrity, a rock star will be transferred to the brands cultural constructed meaning, this form of strategy is known as the Meaning Transference Model. The transference of meaning moves from the celebrity to the brand endorsed and then to the consumer. Only when the consumer captures and identifies with the culturally constructed meaning does the model strategy become useful (Halonen-Knight & Hurmerinta 2010).

However meaning Transference Model is not limited to celebrity endorsers. Meaning Transference model is also applicable to non-celebrity spokesperson and product placement in (McCracken, 1989). Advertisements and brands that make use of actors portraying doctors or pharmacists wearing a white coat are effective in achieving the advertiser's objective. Since the Meaning Transference Model was hypothesised by McCracken other studies have been published that agreed with the hypothesis (Sweldens, et al, 2010). The significance of Meaning transfer model is to increase the connection or congruity between the brand and the consumer. This is particularly imperative when advertising to young consumers who are impressionable and want to be associated with a cultural construct. Marketers cannot assume every young person aspires to be a musician. This is especially true for societies where values and aspirations may differ from the Western model. In a country such as South Africa where there is a diversity in cultures and values this is especially true.

Schema –Congruency and In-congruency

The significance of the match up symmetry between the image of the brand and that of the celebrity endorser is that it increases Schema –Congruency. Schema –Congruency is the extent to which new information conforms to consumer expectation based on previously defined Category- Schema in memory. In endorsements Schema –Congruency occurs when the image of a product is relevant and such that the image of the endorser and the product can be identified. Schema-congruency theory is consistent with the success of athletes and sports figures and their successful relationship with endorsements. Particularly in well known consumer sportswear brands such as Nike and Adidas (Yeung-Jo 2007; Koerning & Boyd, 2009)

However advertising that makes complete use of Schema –Congruency experience low emotional intensity from consumers precisely because of the congruency between the brand and the endorser. By using an endorser who did not necessarily match the brand image receive better response from consumers. This is Schema Incongruent endorser

commercial would require the consumer to ponder on the similarity of this bizarre link between the brand and the endorser causing the ad to continue to be on the minds of the consumer. Nevertheless, the discrepancy must not be too much as this will likely to produce negative feelings and irritation amongst consumers (Lee and Thorson, 2008). A classic example of a successful negative schema congruency was the Trevor Noah and Cell C Campaign, as Trevor Noah is a comedian.

Similarity model

One of the key factors that influence people's interest and purchase intention is if they relate to the person selling the product or service. Simply because on average people like people who look like them. Similarity can range from physical features to lifestyle, occupation and opinions. Cialdini (2009) argues that if someone wants to be liked all they have to do is appear to be similar to the individual whose affection they are seeking. He points out a study that was done in the 1970's which showed that people are more likely to help someone who dresses like them. The study was done using college students the fashion experimenters wore "hippie" or "straight" clothes. The study found that when an individual dressed similar to the student and asked for a dime or some coins to make a phone call when the experimenter was dressed similarly to the student the request was granted in more than two thirds of the time. However when the experimenter was not dressed similarly to the student then request was not granted almost half the time.

Source credibility

For an endorser or spokesperson to convince people to buy a brand it is imperative that the person promoting the brand to project some form of credibility. This theory is regarded as The Source Credibility Model. It is comprised of two fundamental requirements celebrity and non-celebrity endorser trustworthiness, celebrity and non-celebrity expertise. (Amos et al, 2008). Trustworthiness is the perceived willingness of the source to make valid assertions about the brand whereas expertise is the ability of the source to make assertion about the brand. Therefore endorsers who exhibit trustworthiness and expertise appear more credible and thus more persuasive to the potential consumer (McCracken, 1989). The Source Credibility Model has been supported by researchers (Austad & Silvera, 2004). Conversely, the reputation of the company is also a source of credibility endorsement Corporate Credibility has influence on the consumer and has an effect on the brand attitude. However

little yet known whether the reputation of a manufacture or company has an effect in the buyer intention of young consumers.

Motivation

The youth market is constantly in a state of flux influenced by technology and the environments they find themselves in. The use of celebrity and sports figures as endorsers to enhance congruency between the consumer youth market and the brand is a popular strategy. However whether it is the most effective strategy when compared to other forms of strategies such as non-celebrity endorsers, multicultural advertising and the brands corporate social responsibility is not clear given the high risks associated with celebrity endorsements. In the literature reviewed, it emerged that the jury is still out on whether using celebrity endorsers is an effective means to advertise to the youth market in comparison to traditional methods of advertising. Despite the popularity of celebrity endorsers in advertising campaigns research, not enough research has been done on the effectiveness of this technique. It only seems fitting that research be conducted on whether celebrity endorsement in comparison with other forms of strategies lures and increase buyer intention of young the South African young consumer.

Methods

A qualitative research design was ideal for this study because the researcher aimed to gain insight on the opinions and thought of young consumers therefore using a method that will encourage interaction. Qualitative study is of great use when a research study aims to understand particular phenomenon. Qualitative research provided the researcher with much more insightful information on participants and the phenomenon that is under investigation. As qualitative research is primarily concerned with description rather than measurement. This form of research design enables the researcher to adequately investigate the proposed questions compared to a quantitative study would not have been able to give the research questions with adequately information as participants in questionnaire or experiments would not be able to adequately articulate their preferences and motivation for preferring other forms of advertising the other. And the researcher will not be able to request clarification or ask participants to elaborate on specific points. Uncovering consumer's preference of a brand over another requires in depth enquiry and understanding this often takes time and effort. Much of what brand means to people is subjective (McGivern, 2006). Therefore the researcher made use of open-ended questions to uncover in -depth meanings on key issues.

The focus groups and interviews aimed to encourage participants to be spontaneous and responsive as opposed to quantitative research that only seeks answers to the questions posed. Because the overall aim of the study was to understand the individual and groups of participants holistically their thoughts, perceptions and feeling towards a brands and advertising.

Focus groups

The use of focus groups as a empirical method originated from market researchers who wanted to understand interactions consumer had with the product. Focus groups are still widely used in consumer studies today. It is only fitting that the research made use of focus group as a method. Particularly because the research questions aimed to gain insight from the youth market perception of the effect of various advertising techniques used by consumer brand (Puchta & Potter, 2004). The researcher's interest was not centred around a hypothesis but rather on a series of proposed questions. Focus group is a technique of collecting data through group interaction. It is a useful technique in understanding consumer behaviour. By encouraging interaction between the group members enhances the quality of data received from participants this because the interaction amongst members encourages and modifies ideas and perception (Greenbaum, 2000). The question in the focus group were aimed to serve as a guide to steer the focus group. Participants were encouraged to be forthcoming in with their opinions and responses.

Interviews

It is a common misconception to regard interviews as an alternative to using focus groups. Whereas the ideally focus groups and in- depth interviews should be used to enrich the data acquired from participants (Keegan, 2009). The great advantage with interview method is it provides an opportunity for the researcher to ask the individual participants separate questions on their experiences and personal views separate from the group. The interview as oppose took on a ethnographic approach as opposed to the focus group which took on phenomenological approach where the focus of investigations is brands and endorsements. As a person's particular background shapes the appeal of different types of advertisements. For instance someone from a minority group might find multicultural representation in an advertisement appealing compared to other forms of advertising, because the person might feel their group is often not represented in advertisements. The interview session as an additional method would enable the researcher to take note of subtle indications

such as body language how the participants respond to particular questions. Interviews give the individual participants to air the views without the influence of a group .

Participants

The key focus of the investigation was the South African young consumers. The most appropriate approach was to attempt to have diversity within the participants. . The aim was not necessarily to achieve representation of the South African population, as that is not the general aim of a qualitative study the aim is to generate knowledge of the opinions of diverse young consumers on the proposed study

All participants in the study were between the ages of 18-24, participants consisted of eleven participants , three Indians , one coloured females and one white female . It was the researcher's intention to have a fair representation of gender in the study as a result the participants consisted of six males and nine female. In total the study made use of 15 participants. The participants were recruited by the researcher through word of mouth The majority of participants were students from a across a wide variation of institution in Cape Town .with the exception the exception of two male participants who were employed

Procedure

Individual interviews are to be conducted with each participant before the general focus group. As even though brand consumption might be regarded as a manner of outward self expression by many brand literature. Reasons for brand choices might also be a private thing especially for intimate brand, brands that are considered for private consumption. Interviews might also reveal insight to other aspect that focus group interaction might have otherwise overshadow. As much as other people might feel uncomfortable with one on one interaction, others too might be shy to share their opinions amongst others out of a fear of being judged. Therefore, one on one interview situation might enable the individual to speak. This will be effective for the researcher to ask direct questions to the participant, to get data that would not be possible in a focus group situation. The interviews will be semi structured

Type of brands / product

For the purpose of the study the key brands and products that were researched were those that they most likely appeal to the 18- 24 youth market in the following categories . The key criteria of brands that will be under investigations are brands that are largely youth

market oriented. That is product and consumer brands that explicitly target the youth market in their advertising product and brands in the technology category that is cell phone accessories , computers and laptops, music players . The second categories will be personal care that is fragrances /deodorants, soaps, hair care products, cosmetics, shaving creams feminine products. The final category will be clothing, underwear including shoes, bags and watches . These categories are specifically chosen because they include material the individual would have to place some thought into purchasing the product or brand. These three categories were chosen because they include products that are for private consumption personal care products that can be regarded as non-conspicuous. As well as products that are considered conspicuous such as clothes . Because youth market is highly technologically oriented technological product and brand. The researcher will purposely exclude products such as cars , as the research cannot assume that every participant owns a car.

Data Analysis

Thematic Analysis will look for reoccurring themes in the conversation it involves coding participants' conversations in categories. The categories for analysing participant's responses will be derived from the reviewed literature .For instance whether participants prefer brands and product that support charities this will fall under corporate social responsibility .The responses of participants can be coded into qualitative data. For instance the number of times participants mentioned a brands that use a soccer players as endorsers. Because the attention or the focus is not on the discussion per say as in how language and descriptive are used. But rather the focus will be how reoccurring topics and themes whether participant feel persuaded by the ad advertisements using celebrity endorsers, multicultural representatives , a company's corporate social responsibility or event the image of the company . The analysis of the data will be based on theories that emerged from the literature. The content can be analysed by using coding for the number often times people reference a brand with a sports endorsers (Wilkinson, 2008).

Braun and Clark (2006) thematic analysis so a qualitative analytic method . Even though thematic analysis has sometimes been used not a specific method but rather as a tool across different methods. However Braun and Clark argue that thematic analysis can be used as a method in its own right rather than a theoretical instrument . One of the main advantages of using thematic analysis

Thematic analysis can be defined as a method of identifying patterns or themes within the data . Thematic analysis helps describe data in rich detail. Thematic analysis seeks to describe patterns across qualitative data . By using thematic analysis the researcher sets out to identify key themes that emerged from the data. The themes were identified by going through the data repetitively to identify patterns in the data by keeping the research question in mind. For a participant's response an idea to count as a pattern the theme or thought had to be prevalent in at least one of the focus group and at least more than 4 times in the 8 interviews. However because the question surrounding the reach where more in tune to give young people a voice and hence the researcher chose to use semi structured interviews and focus groups. The researcher was guided by a research question but the researcher was interested in the views and experiences of participants. In addition the key themes were not only guided by mere prevalence but also whether the researcher felt that the theme capture an interesting element of the research . The themes highlighted from the data are Semantic themes these are themes are explicit

Results and Discussion

The focus 2 focus groups and 8 interviews conducted were transcribed and analysed. The participants spoke on a variety of matters around advertising even though the researcher had key question that guided the focus group and interview participants were encouraged to voice their opinions. Of the various things that were mentioned during the course of the research key themes or trends were noted by the researcher relating to the overall question. The key themes that emerged were themes that most if not all of the participants touched on and most importantly the themes relate back to the researcher question , what form of advertising appeals best to the South African youth market .

Key Themes that emerged from the data

One of the first really interesting elements that emerged in the data was that purchase intention and appeal of an Advert was not related to the content of the ad whether it was a celebrity endorser or charity campaign. What appealed to most participants was the brand behind the ad that directed appeal and purchase intention . The brand name spoke so much more than the advert itself. Therefore conversation around advertising was almost

inextricable from brands and branding. When participants were asked to recall ads that they liked almost all of them recalled the brand that was being advertised first than the content of the ad. Two key themes were picked up from this observation, brand awareness was a very strong element amongst participants almost all participants being aware of brands than the content and type of advertisement. That being said participants were well versed in advertising campaigns and theories. All participants had at least a Grade 12 certificate with the exception of one who is still in high school. Participants were literate almost all tertiary students who lived in metropolitan areas and are therefore prime targets for advertising as they are exposed to on a daily basis.

Advertising is inextricable from brands after all adverts are promoting particular branded products. Therefore when one has a conversation around advertising and advertising

Brand Consciousness: The promise of quality and familiarity

“We are brand conscious because everything is branded; basically I mean look at all the ads”

Brand consciousness will be for the purpose of this study will be defined as being aware of brands and branding especially when making a purchase or intending to buy an item or use a service. One of the questions relating to brand consciousness asked to participants was, how much does brands have an influence on purchases and things you wish to own and use? Most participants reported that they are aware of what brands are out there expensive and mid range brands. One participant reported the advantage of being brand conscious.

I mean if you are a lazy shopper and you want to stuff instead of checking the texture, you just look at the brand and you are assured of quality “

The idea that a well known brand is synonymous with quality was a theme that ran throughout all the participants' responses. When participants were asked of the ads that appealed to them and why they buy the items they own as well as services they receive all of them spoke about the brand behind the ad and the quality associated with that brand. As mentioned prior when a participant spoke of ads brands and branding was part and parcel of the conversation. Therefore when a commercial came on TV for example participants would place a considerable weight on their judgement on whether the commercial advertised a product or service that carried a brand that was synonymous with quality. For the promise of quality

participants reported that they were willing to pay a hefty price for an item because the product was worth it .

N (Researcher): what the difference between a normal jean form say Truworths and a Diesel jean

S: i find that it last longer way longer , a diesel will last you 3-5 and a normal one will last you 2 years.

Another participant reported similar notion

P:I buy Guess jeans cause they fit me better and they last longer than other jeans....you know their ads they are very appealing its always like a sexy guy and a sexy chick . When you say you have an original Guess handbag it's like ohhh as oppose to like a like a Kelso (handbag) and it has a certain feel to it when you say it.

Both participant expressed they preference of product where due to the perceived quality that the brand carries compared to other brands that have the similar products . Participants throughout the study even though their reported being immune to advertising” gimmicks “ all associated well known / popular upper priced brands with quality . Most attributed their perception of quality with experienced. Most participants reported spending

Experience influences a lot in what people do after all human being are creature of habits. It was then no surprise to find that most participants reported that ads that showcased brand that they are familiar with or that they grew up having where more persuasive than those that were less familiar. One participants spoke of using inherited products, these are products that reminder of home or that she grew up using. This is perhaps surprising as the Economist hailed teens and young adults as the generation concerned with change and innovation (Walker, 2008). Brand familiarity was linked to trust expertise. Few participants reported changing their purchasing habits because of an advert. One participant reported changing to a different new deodorant by created by a well known cosmetic house Ganier . His reasons for changing to the new line deodorant was because he saw the ad on TV and the deodorant promised 48 hours protection and he was familiar with the ganier brand so he was keen to try it .Most participants

Distrust and Annoyance with Mainstream Advertising

Despite being aware of popular ads and branding campaigns most participants exhibit annoyance and distrust with mainstream advertising. Many participants reported “zoning out “when advertisement came on mainstream advertising channels such as tv and radio. A number of participants reporting purposely avoiding TV advert and TV in general. *“I don’t really watch ads anymore it’s the sort of thing when it comes on I’m like I need to go to the bathroom now because I watch series on my laptop I download series and i don’t have to watch an adverts m not going to sit and watch an ad . I’m not going to like stair at the screen when an ad comes on”*

This extracts exemplifies the annoyance that participants have towards advertising. This might be perhaps be due to consumers feeling constantly bombarded by ads trying to get their attention. And now that consumers have an option to not watch an advert they often jump for it. The participants mentions how she does not watch TV because of the ads she would much rather down load or buy series or shows to avoid adverts.

Participants ado displayed a lot of distrust towards celebrity endorsed campaigns. Quite a number of participants attributed their distrust to the fact that celebrities use endorsement as a money making scheme . Celebrity lacking source credibility because they are simply using the endorsement as a means to make additional income. One participant stated that

“ these perfumes are like ... especially if it’s like I just got famous so I perfume or its like my career is not doing well so I’m gonna try to make a perfume .. I prefer like perfume house names ... When you Think Red Door .. Those people to make perfume they were not out to promote a celebrity

Celebrities do these things not because they are passionate about them but out of desperation or greed im going to capitalise on fame im gonna have tooth brushes , underwear coming out of my name Ya man mix it put my name on it!

She explained that whereas the perfume house or the brand is more genuine and thus trustworthy than a celebrity who endorses brands and product for self-serving purpose. This is perhaps a point advertises who make use of celebrities as celebrities appear to have lost their credibility. Source credibility is an important element in advertising as the endorser is seen as a credible and trustworthy source by consumers. But what the participants highlight is that celebrities are no longer seen by the consumer as a credible source. The participant’s response also highlights another important factor. One of the major reasons offered by the

participants was that celebrities tend to promote a number of different product and that cause the celebrity to lose credibility a participant offered an example of a local TV soap opera actress who is involved in a number of ad campaigns from facial brand *Ganier* to a furniture house *Lewis*. The participant highlighted that the actress was “over doing it” hence she lost credibility. The participant’s response is in line with contemporary theory regarding a spokesperson’s credibility and

Like the KFC R2 add hope thing, they make it seem like this big thing ...its an advertising gimmick “

“I don't watch TV ads they are so annoying, when they come on I usually get up or like text a friend”

Blackshaw argues that trusted recommendation is increasingly becoming important because advertisers continue to bombard consumers with intrusive and sometimes invasive advertising formats (Blackshaw, 2005)

Despite consumers annoyance with advertising Walker (2008) argues that the art of marketing is not fading away instead it is adapting into an evolutionary form of advertising. The more sophisticated consumers become the more sophisticated marketing methods become to match up with consumers taste. As in the case with product placement, recently product placement has been on the steady rise in mainstream television. A number of blockbuster movies have featured an impressive amount of product placement. Although a well noted and spoken about topic not many researchers have only until recently taken a real interest in the effects of product placement. Product placement is seen by many as a manner to bypass consumer annoyance and avoidable of commercial whether billboards or on TV screens. A male participant perhaps illustrated by the power of product placement. When he suddenly spoke about one of his favourite movie and the automobile the actor was driving. *...Most of those brands usually like appeal to me for some weird reason because it's like you know the Quantum of Solace, 007 I saw the, Oh my gosh ...I'm gonna get the name of this car wrong...Aston Martin and I was like oh okay but most of the time when people say Aston Martin id be like leave me alone.. But when you see James Bond there driving that car like oh okay that looks*

N (Researcher): Would you like to own one?

Yes and um no, you know speed freak you know car junkie. You know those people who are obsessed about cars and stuff like that but just for that fact that I've seen it there and like it is the coolest cool-ass car. Awesome so most of the time they usually appeal to me.” (Male participant, interview)

The expert ?

Source credibility is an important factor in advertising, it is imperative that consumers deem the advertiser of the brand as believable or as an expert. Advertisers go to great lengths to ensure that endorsers, spokesperson and actors convey a sense of credibility to ensure trustworthiness is achieved. Celebrity endorsers were reported by participants to lack credibility because *“hey do it for the money not the passion”*. Participants asserted that some celebrities *do not even use the brands and products they advertise*. However the lack of credibility is not only directed at celebrity endorsers but conventional advertising as a whole. Participants reported that they would rather do their own research than completely rely on an ad for information on what to purchase.

When participants were asked what influences their buying intention all said people around them or a known expert. Various reasons were put forth on why they preferred people around them as influencers and experts. With Technology products participants reported that they would rather try something first and see if it fits their lifestyle. One participant reported that *“With things such as cell phone and laptops they are expensive, you want to have it soft the next couple of years so you want to make sure what you getting is right for you”*

However participants distrust in advertising has resulted in advertisers lacking credibility. A large number of participants reported that they distrusted celebrity endorsers as well as companies Corporate Social Responsibility initiative. Many of the participants used words such as “gimmick” to express their feelings regarding conversation advertising. The participants that their “resentments “towards advertising came from the fact that they explicitly felt they were being targeted by campaigns advertised to. Participants articulated that a number of commercials were not genuine. An overall sentiment from participants was that conventional advertising might be informative in terms of it let consumers know what is out

there but they reported that adverts were not enough to yield buyer intention. Various reasons around credibility were expressed by participants. Most participants felt ads were not trustworthy and thus they preferred known experts to help decide what they were going to try out.

It seems according to participants celebrities with the exception of sports stars lack credibility when it comes to advertisement of products. Most participants reporting that it is unlikely that a product endorsed even by their favourite celebrity would yield an intention to purchase.

like for foundation if like my friend or my mom said try this one then ya I would try it but not cause I see some celebrity is using it”

“It did some research and on GSM (techno website) everyone was raving about it ! They were like the iPhone is good, so I was like ok this is the one “

“: Definitely friends. Definitely who have watched the film or who have read the book or people who I know I’m very similar too so that I know that if I do watch it, the chance of it being good are much better than a generic poster being stuck telling the world that the movie is good. Because that’s what they’re there for, to endorse themselves. Whereas with friends, they’re looking out for your preferences specifically.”

Social networks have largely been attributed with increase of a sense of community that consumers feel the constant interaction has to an increase in knowledge as well as opinion . Ordinary individuals can yield incredible influence. A sense of shared information has drastically changed media is being consumed. . All participants reported being active users of at least one social networks site. Five participants reported getting their news exclusively from internet sites such as News 24

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good. Because that's what they're there for, to endorse themselves. Whereas with friends, they're looking out for your preferences specifically.

These two extracts highlight that the experts is no longer the celebrity nor the advertisers but it is the consumer and his or her circle of friends and family that yields the most influence when a young person want to buy an item . The popular phrase the consumer is king rings true.

The lifestyle

South Africa is diverse nation make its youth practically difficult to pin point due to the diversity and vast inequalities in the country. Which is perhaps the reason behind market segmentation has been so widely used in the South African marketing industry. Yet despite the seemingly vast diversity that exist the South African youth has a lot more in common than what was actually thought. The young people interviewed articulated that the lifestyle of that the ad portrays was much more important than the race or culture of the individual in the ad. The concept of an appealing to either one's lifestyle or a desired lifestyle was a common factor amongst most participate thta were interviews. A female participant in focus group illustrated this point perfectly.

I'd buy Levi because of the ads. Because they look like they're having fun. So obviously you wanna buy their brand because you're subconsciously thinking, I wanna be like those people in the ad.

N (Researcher): Could you tell me what's in the ad?

B: It's wonderful. There's this one guy who is rebelling against a whole bunch of policemen at this spot. Then there's these two girls at a party, a party that looks like its blasting all night. Then there's the one businessman walking to work. But they're all wearing Levis so you can be whoever you want to be in Levi (Female participant . focus group).

The ability to transfer meaning to the consumers is not just limited to a celebrity and ad that portrayals an aspired lifestyle or a lifestyle that consumers identify with is just as effective perhaps even more. In the example put forward by the participant the actors where not well now and she did not question the credibility of the individuals in the ad, she had full knowledge that the ad was meant to entice into looking at the brand differently at most enticing her to desire the brand. However because of the lifestyle and the message that was in

the ad “be who you want to be in Levi” she was captured by the lifestyle and the story the ad told. The lifestyle portrayed in the ad “being cool know it all techno savvy “is often to appeal to young consumers who are cool and most likely techno savvy. Participants found advertising and branding campaign appealing when they portrayed a lifestyle and ideology that is similar to their without necessarily using a well know face.

It's almost not about the colour of the person; it's about the wellbeing that they're representing

Yeah, if I can identify with the lifestyle that they're portraying in the ads then I will buy it.

Whereas it's not about the colour of the person in the ad I think.

The similarity model is echoed in this statement. Lifestyle oriented advertising appeals more to the youth market than most forms of advertising techniques.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity is a crucial element in Qualitative research as the ability of the researcher to be aware of her intentions and her role is crucial to the research process. The research questions arose from my own observation on the interaction between consumer brands and the youth market. My research interest in the topic is both out of academic curiosity and as a young consumer who is constantly bombarded with advertisement. Because I am as much a part as an The researcher was thus be aware of her own subjective views on the matter and guard against impressing her own views on to the participants. However, the researcher being part of the youth market serve as an advantage as participants were feel at ease talking to someone who they feel they can relate to.

Ethics

Informed Consent

Participants were a crucial element in the research process and were treated with the outmost respect. Even though the participants used will be. The participants were issued with two informed consent forms informed that two informed consent form will issued to them prior to the focus group and interview sessions. The first consent form is to inform participants on what the research project as well their role in the research project. The seconds consent form will ask permission from participants for the researcher to record the focus group sessions and the interview sessions. Both consent forms will serve to reassure

participants that the opinions expressed in both will not be used or any other purpose other than for the research undertaken.

Confidentiality

In order to get accurate information for the study ensure participants that the matters discussed in the focus group will be confidential and not be publicised without the participant's permission. As part of the ground rules that will be established to guide the focus group the researcher will encourage participants to stay clear of sensitive issues that might upset others. In addition, should such issues arise that the participants respect each other's views and not discuss the matter further or outside the focus group.

Debriefing and Feedback

Although the subject matter of the conducted research was not of a sensitive nature debriefing of participants was done at the end of every session. Participants who were interested in the findings of the study were promised to be emailed a summary of the findings of the study .

Conclusion

Participant heavily criticised celebrity endorsement as noting but a money making scheme. Although magazine and media at large cover celebrities extensively and the participants reported not being amused by celebrity and endorsements. Young people are well informed around matter of advertising and branding. Because they are so are of all the tricks and the trade of advertizing. The fact that most participants grew up in metropolitan cities and have at least a Grade 12 certificate would contribute the

However to assume that the youth market is immune to advertising , branding and marketing is a mistake . Walker (2009) argues that young people are not immune to advertising and consumerism but they have embraced consumerism and advertising to suit their needs and lifestyle .

While the traditional celebrity endorsement model seems to have fallen out of favour with the youth market advertisers need to unrest in novel ways to reconnect with an ever changing youth market . Celebrity endorsement compared with varies forms of advertising came up short. Word of mouth and lifestyle oriented advertising was concerned the most appealing by the youth market samples. Future research could perhaps broaden the sale and by performing a quantitative study in the same line is this research.

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Appendix A

Focus groups Questions that will direct the group discussion.

1. Does a brands social responsibility initiative have an effect in the way you perceive a brand? For instance the charities a brand supports?
2. Does it matter what the people who represent brand in an Advertisement look like ?
Do you care if they look like you?
3. Does it matter to you which celebrity endorsers the brand you like ?
4. Do your favourite celebrity influence the brands you desire and buy ?

Appendix -B

Interview Questions

1. To what extent do you consider yourself brand conscience?
2. To what extent do you consider yourself a celebrity follower?
3. What are you favourite consumer brands in the clothing category , cosmetics and technology category
4. If you were to receive a clothing voucher, which store would you go to?
5. If you were out shopping for a t-shirt and you had three options between one that was worn by your favourite celebrity on TV, a t-shirt that a small percentage goes to charity which one would you choose ?
6. To what extent does your favourite celebrity have an influence on items you aspire to own?
7. What do you most look for when buying a technology item such as a cell phone, laptop or watch?
8. When buying technology items such as cell phones and laptop to what extent does a well-known name have an influence on you purchase?
9. When looking for a technology brand to purchase what would be the most persuasive to you. A brand that gives a sizable portion of its profits to a needy cause , a brand that is well known and used by a diverse number of people , or a brand that is used and supported by a your favourite celebrity ?
10. If you were to receive a voucher to buy, cosmetics and you had three options. One set of cosmetics is endorsed by your favourite celebrity, the other shows various people of skin colour using it and finally the other has a testimony of a satisfied customer which would be most persuasive to you ?

Appendix –C

Informed Consent Form

We want to tell you about a research study we are doing. A research study is a way to learn more about something. We would like to find out more about whether brands that use endorsers appeal to the youth market. You are requested to join the study because you are between the ages of 18-24.

If you agree to join this study, you will be asked to be part of a focus group with other participants as or take in an interview that will take no longer than an hour per session .

The study poses no risks to your mental or physical health as all the researcher is interested in is your opinion on the topic.

We do not know if being in this study will help you. But the study will contribute to understanding what makes a brand appeal to young people.

This study will help us learn more about the use of celebrity/sport endorsement versus traditional marketing strategies by consumer brands to appeal to the South African youth market.

You do not have to join this study. It is up to you. You can say okay now and change your mind later. All you have to do is tell us you want to stop.

Before you say **yes or no** to being in this study, we will answer any questions you have. If you join the study, you can ask questions at any time. Just tell the researcher that you have a question. If you have any questions about this study please feel free to contact the researcher Nomfundo Nkosi on 0762671252 . If you sign your name below, it means that you agree to take part in this research stud

Date (MM/DD/YEAR)

Signature of participant

Appendix –D

Informed Consent Form - Recording of focus group and interview session

The focus groups and interviews aims to get the participants opinion and views. For the purpose of the study, it is imperative that the researcher records the sessions using a voice recorder the recordings will be transcribed and analysed by the researcher. The researcher

If you agree to the join the study, you also agree that your opinion and comments are going to be recorded in the focus group and the interview with the researcher. The recordings will be solely used for the purpose of the researcher. The information and expression will be confidential will not be used for any other means other than for the purpose of the research without your prior consent.

Before you say **yes or no** to being having your voice being recorded, we will answer any questions you have. If you join the study, you can ask questions at any time. Just tell the researcher that you have a question. If you have, any questions about the study please feel free to contact the researcher Nomfundo Nkosi on 0762671252. If you sign your name below, it means you consent to having your voice recorded in both focus group session and the interviews.

Date (MM/DD/YEAR)

Signature of participants