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Assessing the effects of Celebrity Endorsements of Political Parties: An empirical study of Nigerian 2019 Presidential Elections

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Abstract. This research aims to examine the impact of celebrity endorsement on Political Parties and its influence on electorates to vote for a particular Party's candidate. The mediating role of Political Brand Credibility (PBC) and Political Brand Equity (PBE) towards Voting Intention (VI) relationships were also examined. The study's conceptual framework was developed using The Source Credibility, The Associative Network Memory Model, and the Brand Signalling Theory. Primary survey data was collected online and analysed through Structural Equation Modelling. Findings suggest that Endorser Credibility has a direct positive significant relationship with Political Brand Credibility. However, there is no significant direct correlation between Endorser Credibility and Political Brand Equity and Voting Intention. Nevertheless, indirect relationship was established. Findings from the study has proven that the endorsement of celebrities alone does not necessarily influence electorates to vote for political candidates, rather the Credibility of the Party and its Equity play a pivotal role with regards to the Voting Intention of voters. Practically, this study has given us insights into the endorsement of celebrities of political candidates, which the Political Party leaders should consider before bringing on board any celebrity to endorse their candidates. Future research opportunity and limitations were also discussed.

Keywords. Celebrities, Celebrity endorsement, Political Brand Equity, Political Brand Credibility, Voting Intention, Nigeria

1. Introduction

As a phenomenon, traditionally in the realm of advertising and marketing communication, celebrity endorsement has attracted attention on its impact and effectiveness on products and purchase intentions (Abdurrahaman, Owusu, Soladoye, & Kalimuthu, 2018; Apejoye, 2013; von Sikorski, Knoll, & Matthes, 2018). Friedman and Friedman (1979) defined celebrity as "an individual who is known to the public (actor, sports figure, entertainer, etc.) for his or her

achievements in areas other than that of the product class endorsed". Among others, the Nigeria-based telecommunication company, Globacom leads in engaging celebrities as its brand ambassadors. The market is still tough. Oyeniyi (2014, p. 41) alludes that "the difficulty arose from the increasing number of new and competing products in the market with primetime television cluster becoming almost a quarter of promotional content."

Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999, after about two-decades-long military rule, coincided with the time the country's film industries were burgeoning. Therefore, the fan culture was also gaining ground. There are arguably two distinct cinemas in Nigeria. Nollywood films in the Christian-majority south while Kannywood, domiciles in the dominant Muslim north. Celebrities from these film industries have been engaged in campaigns on and off social media for politicians seeking positions at both local and national levels. Their involvement reached a crescendo in the 2019 Nigerian general elections. More and more celebrities were seen on the campaign trail around the country in the build-up to the election.

Celebrities are known for associating with non-for-profit cause and social advocacy to bring about behavioural change. In July 2018, Nigerian minister of information and culture, Lai Muhammad, described the country's entertainment industry as the "new oil", the new export (Franck, 2018). The description is a clear indication that the industry is booming not only nationally but also internationally. Nigerian film and music celebrities, among others, are familiar faces beyond the country's shores. Notwithstanding, they were, arguably, never actively engaged in endorsing politicians until the 2011 elections. However, the 2019 general elections opened a much broader vista for celebrity endorsement trend in the country's political sphere. Still, academic literature is scarce about the matter. Few related works for instance Abdurrahman and Osman (2016) usually focus on the celebrities' endorsements of other consumer products, particular the many competing telecommunication networks based in Nigeria, Itiri (2015) approaches the topic from a slightly different perspective. He examines how the celebrities in 2011 forayed into politics by contesting in what he calls migration from "the entertainment industry to the political industry".

Interestingly, the use of celebrities in the endorsement of candidates for political office is gradually becoming a norm within the political space and elections system globally (Mishra & Mishra, 2014; Chou, 2015; von Sikorski et al., 2018; Agina & Ekwevugbe, 2017). Political candidates and parties expend financial resources on celebrities for endorsement, but it remains unclear how celebrity endorsed advertisement influence voters' intention. In Nigeria, there is evidence in television commercials, billboard, newspaper and online adverts of Nollywood actors/ actresses and musicians endorsing candidates.

Unlike the electioneering process in Nigeria during the first and second republic where few individuals compete for positions and with clear and distinct manifestoes; the realities today is that several people contest for a single position without any marked noticeable difference in the manifesto. As a result, politicians now resort to the use of marketing principles, one of which is celebrity endorsement of advertisement to sell their candidate to electorates (Salaudeen & Adebisi, 2017). Although, a visible activity during electioneering period and attracts lots of millions in terms of expenses, studies into its influence on voters, voting pattern and the outcomes of elections remain scanty.

Agina and Ekwevugbe (2017), in their study, focus on the issues that impact the use of celebrities in an election and how such endorsement affects the Voting Intentions of students aged between 18-25 in Nigeria. Similarly, in a study on how political advertisements affect voters' behaviour in the Lagos State 2015 Gubernatorial election, findings reveal that celebrity endorsement of candidates do not influence the outcome of the election, but have a high recall level among voters (Ojekwe, 2017). Similarly, Jackson and Darrow (2005); O'Regan (2014);

Chou (2015); Nisbett and Dewalt (2016) in their studies also examined the effect of celebrity endorsement of election candidates on the young adult voting pattern. However, and as Von Sikorski et al. (2018) point out, most of the studies on the celebrity endorsement of political candidates focus on the ‘fit’ between a celebrity and the candidate endorsed. However, within the Nigerian context, there are existing gaps in knowledge regarding the impact of mismatch between a celebrity and the endorsed candidates.

Furthermore, existing literature has not established how the components of source credibility like trustworthiness and expertise, and transferability of source attractiveness key components of familiarity, likeability, and similarity from the endorser to the candidate can influence and shape voters’ intention. Also, the previous study by Agina and Ekwevugbe (2017) did not cover the entire eligible voters in Nigeria as the emphasis of the research was on young adult voters, thus, creating a gap as the findings cannot be generalized to the entire voting population. Given these facts, the field deserves more attention from academics and other professionals alike. Thus, it is this vast gap our article sets out to bridge. Generally, the field of celebrity endorsement has not been given due attention in Nigeria, especially in the country’s political dispensation. For this reason, there is a lack of abundant, if any, academic literature that concentrates on the matter. This article is, to the best of our knowledge, the first of its kind. It, thus, sets out to explore the influence of celebrity endorsement on political parties and their influence on voters’ preference for a particular party or candidates. Moreover, the 2019 election is unique in many respects. The primary and influential candidates are both northerners, Muslims, and Fulani. Both the incumbent, President Muhammadu Buhari and his main rival, an erstwhile two-term Vice President, and a business mogul, Atiku Abubakar contracted several celebrities, mostly from Nollywood and Kannywood as well as Musicians, Comedians, Footballers, for a series of campaigns. For the umpteenth time, the celebrities met these powerful contestants on several occasions for dinner, pseudo-events, and other political activities. Therefore, there is a particular need to examine whether or not their roles have had any significant impact on the voters.

The organisation and sequence of this study is as thus: the researchers discuss related studies and extant literature. This is followed by the conceptualisation and presentation of research framework. The method used as well as the sampling techniques used are presented next. Penultimately, the data analysis was discussed. Finally, the discussion of the findings, achievement of research objectives and questions, implications and suggestion for future study concludes the research.

2. Literature Review

In this section, we outlined the literature survey used for this study which includes the concept of Celebrity endorsement, related studies of Celebrity endorsement, theories underpinning the study as well as the conceptualization and hypotheses development.

2.1 The concept of Celebrity Endorsement

The concept of celebrity endorsements of products has been prominent in academic literature, especially with the marketing of products (Mishra & Mishra, 2014). However, this concept which hitherto was lacking in the developing economies, especially sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is lately gaining a lot of grounds. In the Nigerian context, for instance, quite a number of studies (Apejoye, 2013; Oyeniyi, 2014; Abdurrahman *et al.*, 2018) have looked at the influence of celebrity endorsements on various products on diverse industries. Yet, this phenomenon is unexplored when it comes to endorsements of political parties and their candidates. Whilst this phenomenon is not a unique trend especially from countries such as UK, USA, Canada, Taiwan,

India etc., (Austin *et al.*, 2008; Henneberg and Chen, 2008; Veer and Martin, 2010; Morin, Ivory and Tubbs, 2012), the same cannot be said about developing economies. Jackson (2008) stated that a multitude of professional sportspersons, cinema personalities, musicians, as well as television stars have canvassed against and for candidates, political parties, and on political issues. Yet little is known when it comes to the Nigerian context. Nevertheless, in the recent Nigerian elections, the endorsements of celebrities for the two main political parties (All Progressives Congress, APC and People's Democratic Party, PDP) were emphasized. Musicians, movie stars, comedians, footballers and other sportsmen and women etc. endorsing one of the two candidates of the main political parties was done with vigour. For example, whilst celebrities such as (Chinedu Ikedieze, Kenneth Okonkwo, Mercy Johnson, Daniel Amokachi, Iyanya, Rita Edochie, Korede Bello, Rabiun Rikadawa, Ali Nuhu, Nura Hussein, Jide Kosoko, etc.) endorsed the APC candidate and incumbent President, Muhammadu Buhari, (Davido, Kate Henshaw, Ini Edo, John Okafor (Mr Ibu), Fati Mohammed, Sunusi Oscar 442, Sulaiman Boshu, Sani Lilisco etc.) endorsed the PDP candidate Alhaji Atiku Abubakar.

Celebrity endorsement is defined as “a recognisable person who is contracted to advertise for a product or brand” (McCracken, 1989; Mishra & Mishra, 2014). Spry, Pappu and Cornwel (2011) asserted that Celebrity endorsement is deemed an effectual publicity tool by marketers globally. According to MarketWatch (2006), celebrity endorsement is used by one-in-four advertisements. Spry *et al.* (2011) further declared that Celebrity endorsement stimulates advertising effectiveness, brand recall, brand recognition, purchase behaviour and purchase intentions. Research by Till, Stanley and Priluck (2008) indicates that celebrity endorsement can lead to a promising attitude to the brand endorsed. Choi and Rifon (2007) declared that Celebrities could cause parasocial associations, moods of a personal connectedness, notwithstanding the absence of direct interaction with the customers. Thus, Mishra and Mishra (2014) noted that what the marketing scholars have found in terms of celebrity endorsements could be relevant in the political arena as well. They continue further that, studies on the celebrities’ impact on politics is of fresh origin and is varied on whether their pronouncements and endorsements are valuable in changing voter behaviours and attitudes. According to Pease and Brewer (2008), celebrity endorsements can, “to a limited extent, increase political support for presidential candidates”.

Considering the Nigerian context in the last general elections with so many celebrities endorsing various candidates, we more than agreed with (Mishra & Mishra, 2014) on the need to investigate this phenomenon to establish whether indeed the endorsement has any effect on the Voting Intentions of the voters. Knowing this will help political parties to plan and prepare adequately in terms of what their focus should be going forward in future elections.

2.2 Related Studies

While there exists a plethora of studies in terms of celebrity endorsement of brands and their products, the same cannot be said about celebrity endorsement on politics as this is an emerging area (Mishra & Mishra, 2014) and in the context of SSA economies such as Nigeria, this phenomenon is still at its embryonic state. Table 1 outlines some of the few studies that have looked at celebrity endorsement on political parties in various context.

Table 1 Related studies and their perspectives

Research Paper	Theory	Methodology	Context	Perspective/Focus
Nisbett and Dewalt (2016)	Conceptual	Focus group study	USA	Examined how young voters understand and make sense of the influence of celebrities in politics through a focus group study of young voters
Mishra and Mishra (2014)	Associative network memory model and brand signalling theory	Survey questionnaire	India	Effect of celebrities on politics
O'Regan (2014)	Conceptual	Survey questionnaire	USA	Young adults' perceptions about celebrities' political opinions and endorsements
Wen and Cui (2014)	Social cognitive theory	Survey questionnaire	China	Examine if "young people's involvement with celebrities influence their political and civic engagement"
Agina and Ekwevugbe (2017)	Source credibility	Survey questionnaire	Nigeria	Factors that influence the use of celebrities in an election and how such endorsement affects the Voting Intentions of young adults
Abdel Farrag (2013)	Newman and Sheth model	Mixed method (Interviews and Survey questionnaire)	Egypt	What extent different factors including Islamic religious beliefs influenced Egyptian's voting behaviour intentions
Morin, Ivory and Tubbs (2012)	Source credibility	Experimental study	USA	Examine the "effects of Endorser Credibility and sex on voter attitudes, perceptions, and behaviours"

Research Paper	Theory	Methodology	Context	Perspective/Focus
French and Smith (2008)	Learning theory	A consumer-oriented approach through the Brand Concept Maps (BCM)	UK	An “understanding of how voters view the political brand by analysing the mental maps that voters create when asked to think about a political party”

In reference to Table 1, it is observed that research into celebrity endorsement with political parties and candidates’ studies are still scanty and even sparser when it comes to the developing economies. Again, most of the studies have been survey methods, and the focus has mostly been on the examinations of celebrity endorsement influence on the Voting Intentions of young adults. This is evident with a study by (Agina & Ekwevugbe, 2017) in the Nigerian context which sought to examine the factors that influence the use of celebrities in an election and how such endorsement affects the Voting Intentions of young adults. Thus, our research which is more focused on all the eligible voting population with the support of three prominent theories (the Source Credibility theory, the Associative Network Memory Model, and the Brand Signalling Theory) used in Celebrity endorsement studies will supplement the study by (Agina & Ekwevugbe, 2017) and help provide better insights into the phenomenon of celebrity endorsement of political parties in the Nigerian context.

2.3 Underpinning theories

This study was underpinned by the Source Credibility, the Brand Signalling Theory, and the Associative Network Memory Model. The study’s constructs were extracted based on these theories and existing literature.

Source credibility model is about the conviction and believe the audience has in an advertisement. Therefore, the central thesis of the source credibility theory explains that the acceptance of a product or service being advertised depends on how the audience perceives the source of the message based on the expertise, trustworthiness and his knowledge (Ohanian, 1990; Pornpitakpan, 2004; Lord & Putrevu, 2009; Clow *et al.*, 2011; Bergkvist, Hjalmarson & Mägi, 2016).

The associative network memory model argues from a cognitive standpoint that memory consists of associative symbols which stand for various aspects of human memory. In other words, associative network memory model is a system of diverse nodes connected in which the activation of one of the nodes to retrieve information automatically triggers other nodes that are associated with the triggered nodes (Teichert & Schöntag, 2010; Maggioni, 2016).

The brand signalling theory as one of the theoretical assumptions applied in the study postulates that information asymmetry exists (Erdem, Swait & Louviere, 2002; Tülin, Erdem, & Joffre, 2004; Baek, Kim & Yu, 2010). Consumers do not have access to information equally, and this, over time, affects how consumers perceive products or services (Erdem & Swait, 1998). In brand signalling theory, a brand represents information which influences consumers’ decisions in terms of the quality of the product and above, all if the product and service will be able to meet expectations (Tirole, 1988).

2.4 Conceptualization and hypotheses development

The conceptual framework for this study was developed using the Source Credibility, the Brand Signalling Theory, and the Associative Network Memory Model, as shown in Figure 1.

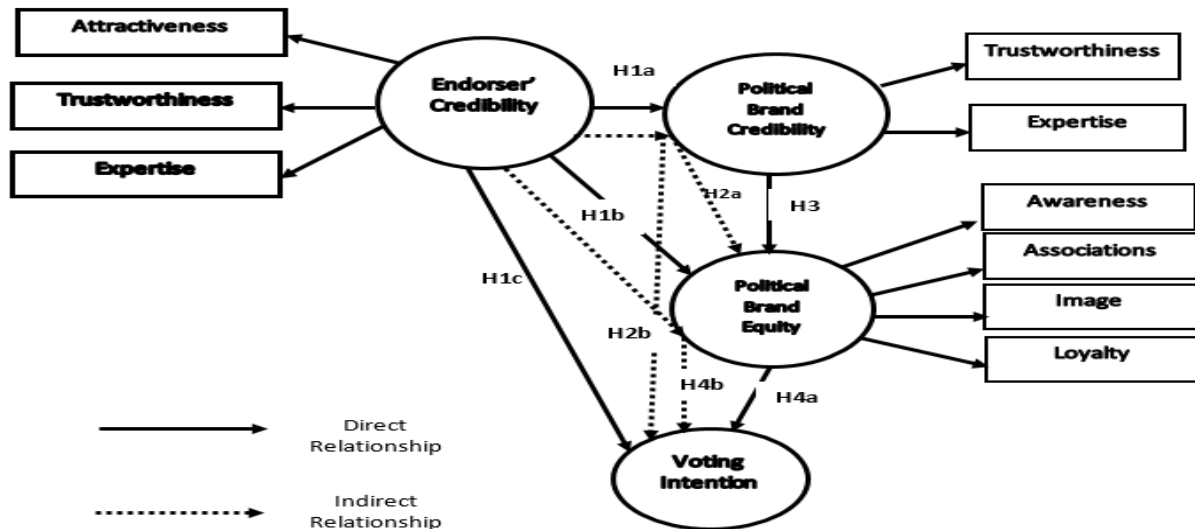


Fig. 1 Conceptual framework of Celebrity Endorsement influence on voters Voting Intention

2.4.1 Endorser's Credibility

Spry et al. (2011) refers to credibility as “how effectively information is conveyed by the brand signal and furthermore, how truthful and dependable that information is considered to be.” According to Goldsmith, Lafferty and Newell (2000, p. 43) and Ohanian (1990), Endorser Credibility is “the extent to which the source is perceived as possessing Expertise relevant to the communication topic and can be trusted to give an objective opinion on the subject”. Thus, an Endorser's Credibility denotes to the communicator's positive features that influence the receiver's receipt of a message. Studies by Ohanian (1990); Goldsmith et al. (2000); La Ferle (2005) and drawing from the source model theory, Endorser's Credibility has been shown to have three sub-dimensions as Attractiveness, Trustworthiness and Expertise

Expertise refers to “the extent to which a source is perceived to hold valid assertions”. Trustworthiness refers to “the degree of confidence in the source's intent to communicate the assertions considered to be most valid” (Spry *et al.*, 2011; Mishra & Mishra, 2014). McGuire (1968) indicated Attractiveness identified from the source-attractiveness model is a dimension of credibility. The physical attractiveness of communicators has a positive effect on opinion modification, as well as product assessments (McGuire, 1968).

As endorsement seen as a communication instrument will usually encompass some of the signals of the brand endorsed, it seems probable that the endorser's credibility will transfer to the brand subsequently. For example, Drew Manning – a fitness coach and the founder of ‘Fit2Fat2Fit’ who purposely gained over 70 lbs. for six months only to effectively show how to lose it and become fit after another six months (Samuel, 2014). In summary, the higher the endorser's credibility, there is a tendency for it to lead to greater brand credibility (Spry et al., 2011; Mishra & Mishra, 2014).

In the US context, Morin et al. (2012) organized an experimental study and determined that Endorser Credibility has no impact on “attitudes toward the endorsed candidate, perceptions of the candidate's credibility, or intended voting behaviour” (Mishra & Mishra, 2014). Netemeyer *et al.* (2004) asserted that purchase intention is influenced by brand equity while other scholars

declared that brand equity has a robust relationship with purchase intention (Aaker, 1991; Cobb-Walgren, Rubble, & Donthu, 1995; Agarwal & Rao, 1996).

Spry et al. (2011) in their study of probing the direct association between celebrity endorsement, brand credibility and brand equity found out that “there is a direct and positive relationship between Endorser Credibility and brand credibility”. Their results, however, showed that “there is no direct positive relationship between Endorser Credibility and consumer-based brand equity” (Spry et al., 2011). Similarly, Mishra and Mishra (2014) also found that “there is a direct and positive relationship between Endorser Credibility and Political Brand Credibility“. However, their results “find no support for the direct association between Endorser Credibility and Political Brand Equity”. Yet, their results found “evidence for the mediating effect of Political Brand Credibility in building Political Brand Equity”.

Based on the discussion above, it is hypothesised that:

- H1a: The Endorser’s Credibility in terms of Attractiveness, Trustworthiness, and Expertise will have a significant impact on Political Brand Credibility
- H1b: The Endorser’s Credibility in terms of Attractiveness, Trustworthiness, and Expertise will have a significant impact on Political Brand Equity
- H1c: The Endorser’s Credibility in terms of Attractiveness, Trustworthiness, and Expertise will have a significant impact on Voting Intention of voters
- H2a: The correlation between Endorser Credibility and the Political Brand Equity will be mediated by Political Brand Credibility
- H2b: Political Brand Credibility will mediate the correlation between Endorser Credibility and the Voting Intention

2.4.2 Political Brand Credibility

Political Brand Credibility is defined as “the believability of the information contained in a political brand, which depends on the willingness and ability of political parties to deliver what they promise” (Mishra & Mishra, 2014). Precisely, a “brand is assumed to be credible when consumers see it as having the capability (i.e., Expertise) and willingness (i.e., Trustworthiness) to offer consistently on what it has promised” (Erdem, 2004, p. 192; Mishra & Mishra, 2014). Political parties have their ideologies and develop manifestos based on their belief and what they stand for. They then campaign based on their manifestos as policy document/products they’ll deliver when voted into power.

Thus, based on how voters trust a political party will influence their Voting Intention. It is therefore perceived that the higher the Trustworthiness of voters towards a political party, the higher they will vote for them. In addition, the higher people perceived there are Experts, and knowledgeable people in a political party they can have influence on voters.

According to Mishra and Mishra (2014), Brand credibility “favourably affects attribute perceptions, information costs, and perceived risk, thus adding value to the brand by increasing consumer-expected utility” and concluded that “it is so important that without it even the most credible endorser can be expected to do little in developing brand equity”. Keller (2005) asserts that Brand credibility supports brand equity.

Spry et al. (2011) found out that there is a direct and positive correlation between brand credibility and brand equity. Their results also showed that brand credibility mediates between Endorser Credibility and consumer-based brand equity. The assumption is made that these same relationships will be supported in politics. In addition, Mishra and Mishra (2014) also found that Political Brand Credibility has a significant positive impact on Political Brand Equity.

Based on the discussion above, we hypothesised that:

H3: The Political Brand Credibility in terms of Trustworthiness and Expertise will have a significant impact on Political Brand Equity

2.4.3 Political Brand Equity

Brand equity refers to “incremental value added by a brand name on to a product” (Farquhar, 1989). From a consumer perspective, Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993) deliver two of the utmost broadly accepted conceptualizations.

Whilst Aaker (1991) operationalized “brand equity as a set of assets (or liabilities) consisting of brand associations”, brand awareness, brand loyalty, “perceived quality, and other proprietary assets”, Keller (1993, p. 2) on the other hand, “referred to brand equity as customer-based brand equity” and defined it as “the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand” (Spry et al., 2011). Brand awareness refers to “the strength of a brand’s presence in a consumer’s mind” (Aaker, 1991) and is “a necessary condition for brand equity without which consumers cannot have brand associations, perceptions of quality and brand loyalty” (Spry et al., 2011). Perceived quality refers to “a consumer’s subjective evaluation of brand”(Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1988). Brand loyalty refers to “the propensity to be loyal to a focal brand, which is evidenced by the intention to purchase that brand as a primary choice” (Yoo & Donthu, 2001).

Political Brand Equity refers to “the value voters associate with a political brand, as reflected in the dimensions of political brand awareness, political brand associations, political brand image and political brand loyalty” (Mishra & Mishra, 2014). Similarly, Political Brand awareness refers to “the strength of a Party’s presence in a consumer’s mind” (Mishra & Mishra, 2014). Political Brand associations refer “to the various meanings surrounding a political brand”. Political Brand Image is “the perceptions about the political brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory”. Political brand loyalty is defined as “the propensity to be loyal to a focal political brand, followed by a strong likelihood considering that brand as a primary choice” (Mishra & Mishra, 2014).

Thus, the assumption is made that based on the awareness of voters about a political party in terms of their ideologies, track record, and policies, may lead to voters voting for them than a political party without much awareness. Also, the higher the political party has associations, it is assumed that the higher the voters will vote for them. In addition, if the political party has a good image, it is more likely that voters will vote for them than those with a bad image. Lastly, if the political party’s brand loyalty is considered high, then it can attract even floating voters as their members can easily convince other voters.

Mishra and Mishra (2014) found out that Political Brand Equity played a key role in establishing the Voting Intention of the electorates’ s and found out that Political Brand Equity has a significant and positive effect on Voting Intention.

Based on this, it is hypothesised that:

H4a: The Political Brand Equity in terms of awareness, association, image, and loyalty will have a significant impact on Voting Intention

H4b: Political Brand Equity will mediate the relationship between Endorser Credibility and the Voting Intention

3. Methodology

This study adopted the quantitative approach through a survey method and contribute towards understanding the mediating effect of Political Brand Equity and Political Brand Credibility in the relationship between celebrity endorsement on political parties and voters’ intention to vote for a particular party’s candidate.

3.1 Sampling

Based on the data available from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), in 2019, 72,775,502 eligible voters collected their Permanent Voters' Card -PVC- (INEC, 2019). Using Probability Sampling, these eligible voters were clustered across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones (North Central, North-East, North-West, South-East, South-South and Southwest) and Abuja. From these clusters, respondents were randomly sampled using Simple Random Sampling (see Table 2). The Permanent Voters Card was the eligibility criteria used. Gpower software by Erdfelder (1996) was used to determine the minimum sample needed. Accordingly, 160 samples were deemed fit for this study according to the Gpower. However, this number was doubled, and 320 respondents were sampled in order to reach out to more voters who participated in the 2019 elections and to avoid under-sampling.

Table 2 Population and Sampling distribution

Serial No.	Clusters	Population (PVC collection)	Ratio	Total Sample Required	%
1	North-Central	10,540,893 (15%)	10,540,893/72,775,502 *320	46	14
2	North-East	10,450,882 (14%)	10,450,882/72,775,502 *320	46	14
3	North-West	18,231,193(25%)	18,231,193/89455*320	80	25
5	South-West	12,814,246 (18%)	12,814,246/72,775,502 *320	56	18
6	South-South	11,120,948 (15%)	11,120,948/72,775,502 *320	48	15
7	South-East	8,590,420 (12%)	5,128 /72,775,502 *320	38	12
	FCT	1,026,920 (1%)	1,026,920/72,775,502*320	6	2
	Total Sample required	72,775,502 (100%)		320	100%

3.2 Data Collection

The data were collected using an online questionnaire which targeted all eligible voters in Nigeria who were willing to participate in the study. A questionnaire was designed based on extant literature and modified to suit the context of the current study. The questionnaire consists of ten (10) parts with all the indicators other than the Demographic Profile of the respondents and Endorser Credibility being measured using Seven-Point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree represented by (1) to Strongly Agree denoted by (7). On the other hand, Endorser Credibility was measured using the Semantic Differential Scale. **Error! Reference source not found. Error! Reference source not found.** presents the sources of the items adapted.

Error! Reference source not found. presents the adapted measurements and details.

Constructs	Dimensions	Items/Indicators	Source
Endorser Credibility	Attractiveness, Expertise, and Trustworthiness	16	Ohanian (1990), Abdurrahman <i>et al.</i> (2018)

Political Brand Credibility	Nil	7	Spry et al. (2011), Mishra and Mishra (2014)
Political Brand Equity	Awareness, Image, Loyalty and Association	17	Donthu and Yoo (2001), Kaur and Kaur (2019), Spry et al. (2011), Mishra and Mishra (2014)
Voting Intention	Nil	8	Abdurrahman <i>et al.</i> (2018), Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) and Kulwant et al. (1995)

4 Data Analysis and Findings

The study embraced PLS-SEM using SmartPLS. The choice of PLS-SEM specifically SmartPLS 3.2.8 (Ringle, Christian, Wende, Sven, & Becker, 2016) was informed due to its wide usage in several research in behavioural social sciences (Abdurrahman & Osman, 2017; Bakare, Owusu & Abdurrahman, 2017; Owusu, 2017; Owusu *et al.*, 2017; Abdurrahman *et al.*, 2018, Abdurrahman *et al.*, 2020; Owusu, 2019; Owusu *et al.*, 2020) and has proven to be reliable.

4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 3 Demographic Descriptive statistics—Frequencies and percentages

Variable	Item	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	185	57.1%
	Female	129	39.8%
	Transgender	1	0.3%
	Prefer not to say	9	2.8%
	Total	324	100%
Age Group	18 – 35	160	49.4%
	36 – 50	83	25.6%
	51 – 70	50	15.4%
	70 & above	31	9.6%
	Total	324	100%
Education Level	Secondary School	58	17.9%
	Diploma	75	23.1%
	Bachelors	92	28.4%
	Masters	61	18.8%
	PhD	38	11.7%
	Total	324	100%
	North Central	49	15.2%
	North East	48	14.8%
	North West	80	24.6%

Geo Political Zone	South West	59	18.2%
	South-South	50	15.4%
	South East	38	11.7%
	Total	324	100%
PVC?	Yes	324	100%
	No	0	0
	Total	324	100%

From Table 3, it is evident that 185 respondents representing more than 57.1% were males. The remaining were Females (39.8%); Transgender (0.3%); and those who prefer not to reveal their identity were 2.8% of the total respondents. Furthermore, 49.4% of the respondents were under 35 years of age, thus, reflecting the actual population of Nigerian voters dominated by over 50% youth according to Data from INEC. Eighty-three respondents representing 25.6% were between the ages of 36-50, while those above 50 years made up the remaining 25%.

Regarding the education level of the respondents, 17.9% have studied up to Secondary School Level, 23.1% were Diploma holders, and 18.8% were Master's Degree holders. Majority of the respondents, 28.4% were Bachelor's Degree holders. Finally, 11.7% of PhD holders responded to the survey.

Further Analysis of the Demographics of the respondents, the result shows that the North West, which has the highest number of registered voters according to data available from INEC, has the highest respondents (24.6%). The Northwest was followed by Southwest with 18.2% respondents. The next Geopolitical zones are South-South and North Central with 15.4% and 15.2% respondents, respectively. Penultimately, North East, and South East were represented by 14.8% and 11.7%, respectively.

Lastly, having the PVC is mandatory eligibility criteria for this survey, hence 100% response of Yes.

4.2 Findings

4.2.1 Measurement Model

Following two-staged approaches (measurement and structural model assessment) as recommended by Hair, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2017), the researchers observed the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Factor Loadings, Composite Reliability (CR) to test the Convergent Validity. The assessment of Discriminant Validity follows. In analysing the results obtained for the first stage (measurement model), the reflective constructs were examined. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 Internal Consistency Reliability

Constructs	Indicators	Outer Loadings	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted (AVE)	Square root of AVE
	ATTR1	0.786	0.9705	0.972	0.688	0.83
	ATTR2	0.839				
	ATTR3	0.86				
	ATTR4	0.828				



	ATTR5	0.773				
	EXP1	0.817				
	EXP2	0.829				
	EXP3	0.841				
Endorser	EXP4	0.826				
Credibility	EXP5	0.816				
	EXP6	0.808				
	TRU1	0.818				
	TRU2	0.836				
	TRU3	0.881				
	TRU4	0.846				
	TRU5	0.863				
	PBC1	0.902	0.976	0.980	0.874	0.94
	PBC2	0.932				
	PBC3	0.95				
Political Brand	PBC4	0.949				
Credibility	PBC5	0.947				
	PBC6	0.926				
	PBC7	0.938				
	PASS1	0.887	0.972	0.975	0.694	0.84
	PASS2	0.906				
	PASS3	0.907				
	PASS4	0.858				
	PAW1	0.77				
	PAW2	0.777				
Political Brand	PAW3	0.845				
Equity	PAW4	0.836				
	PAW5	0.729				
	PIM1	0.886				
	PIM2	0.892				
	PIM3	0.884				
	PIM4	0.896				
	PIM5	0.877				
	PLOY1	0.718				

	PLOY2	0.718				
	PLOY3	0.731				
	VINT1	0.869	0.959	0.965	0.774	0.87
	VINT2	0.898				
	VINT3	0.904				
Voting Intention	VINT4	0.906				
	VINT5	0.892				
	VINT6	0.871				
	VINT7	0.859				
	VINT8	0.837				

It is evident from Table 4 that all the Factor Loadings (> 0.708), (AVE > 0.5), and (CR > 0.7) are higher than the desired threshold suggested by (Hair et al., 2017). Thus, this allows the researchers to conclude that the measures for the model are highly reliable.

To assess the discriminant validity of the constructs, the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) method was used (Henseler, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2015). A construct ought to have an HTMT value of < 0.9 to suggest discriminant validity has been established. All Constructs were below this threshold, as evidenced in Table 5 thus affirming discriminant validity has been achieved.

Table 5 Discriminant Validity - HTMT

		Political Brand			
		Endorser Credibility	Credibility	Political Brand Equity	Voting Intention
Endorser Credibility		-			
Political Brand	Credibility	0.371	-		
Political Brand	Equity	0.317	0.878	-	
Voting Intention		0.16	0.505	0.548	-

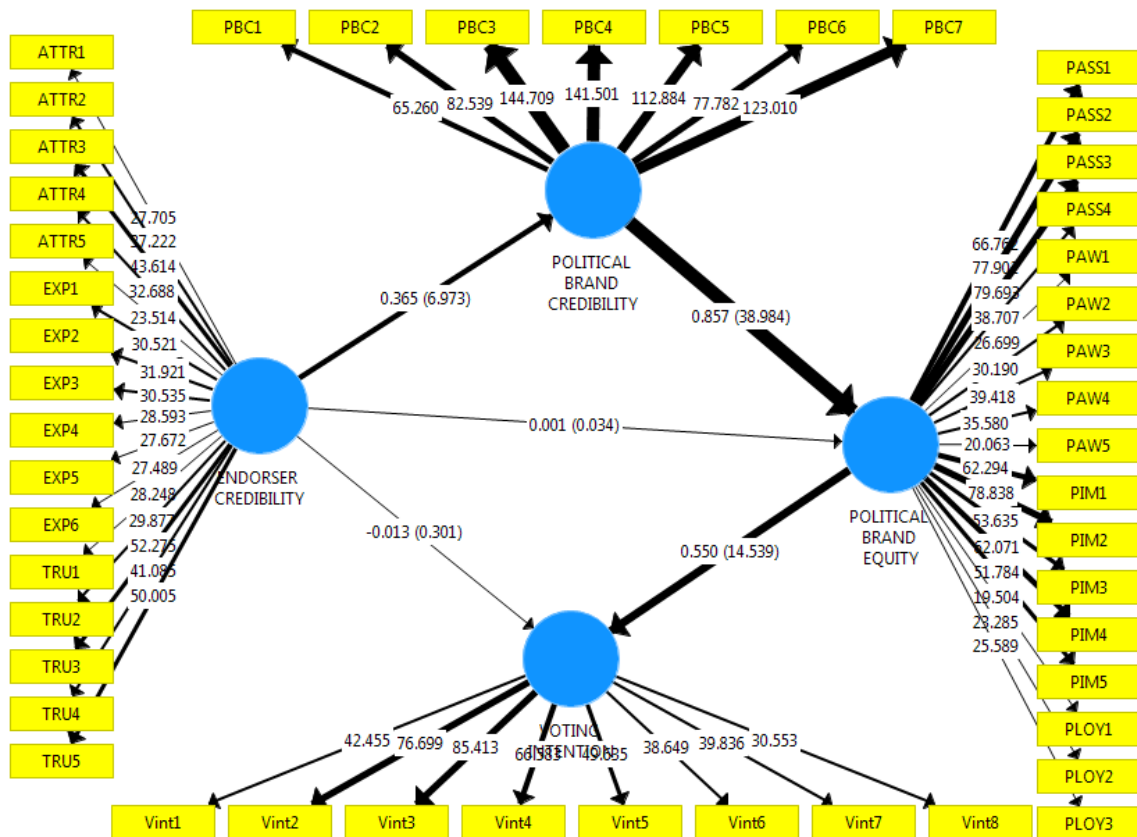


Fig. 2 The Structural Model

4.2.2 Structural model

Hair et al. (2017) recommended the procedure of bootstrapping to examine the structural model. In PLS-SEM, the “popular critical t values for a two-tailed test are 1.65 ($\alpha = 0.10$), 1.96 ($\alpha = 0.05$), or 2.57 ($\alpha = 0.01$)” (Hair *et al.*, 2017, p. 134). Fig. 2 and Table 7 presents the result of the structural model. The correlations between Endorser Credibility and Political Brand Credibility ($t = 6.808$); Political Brand Credibility and Political Brand Equity ($t = 38.329$); Political Brand Equity to Voting Intention ($t = 14.891$) were significant. Conversely, the paths between Endorser Credibility and Voting Intention ($t = 0.294$); Endorser Credibility and Political Brand Equity were insignificant ($t = 0.033$) at 5% significance interval.

Table 6 Structural Model – Direct effects

Hypothesis	Correlations	Original Sample	Sample Mean	Standard deviation	t-statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
H1a	Endorser Credibility -> Political Brand Credibility	0.365	0.366	0.054	6.808	0.000

Hypothesis	Correlations	Original Sample	Sample Mean	Standard deviation	t-statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
H1b	Endorser Credibility -> Political Brand Equity	0.001	0.001	0.033	0.033	0.974
H1c	Endorser Credibility -> Voting Intention	-0.013	-0.013	0.043	0.294	0.769
H3	Political Brand Credibility -> Political Brand Equity	0.857	0.857	0.022	38.984	0.000
H4b	Political Brand Equity -> Voting Intention	0.55	0.552	0.037	14.891	0.000

4.2.3 Coefficient of determination—R²

Represented as R² value in PLS-SEM, the ratio of determination measures a model's predictive accuracy which "represents the amount of explained variance of the endogenous constructs in the structural model" (Hair et al., 2017, p. 224). The R² threshold ranges from 0 to 1. Values of 0.75, 0.50 or 0.25 for a given dependent variable is classified as substantial, moderate and weak (Hair et al., 2017, p. 175). Findings from the analysis show that Political Brand Credibility, Political Brand Equity, and Voting Intention have R² values of 0.133, 0.735 and 0.299, respectively. Endorser Credibility explains 13% of the variance on the Political Brand Credibility. Likewise, Endorser Credibility and Political Brand Credibility explain 74% of the variance on Political Brand Equity. Finally, Endorser Credibility Political Brand Credibility, Political Brand Equity explain 29% of the variance in Voting Intention.

4.2.4 Indirect Effects – Mediation Results

Mediation effect relationships of Endorser Credibility -> Political Brand Credibility -> Political Brand Equity; Endorser Credibility -> Political Brand Credibility-> Voting Intention; Endorser Credibility -> Political Brand Equity -> Voting Intention were observed. All the indirect effects did not straddle a 0 in between, thus indicating there is mediation as recommended by (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Consequently, as shown in Table 7, H2a, H2c, and H4a are supported.

Table 7 Indirect Effects – Mediation Results

Hypothesis	Correlations	Original Sample	Sample Mean	Bias	UL	LL
H2a	Endorser Credibility -> Political Brand Credibility -> Political Brand Equity	0.173	0.175	0.003	0.108	0.234
H2c	Endorser Credibility -> Political Brand Credibility -> Voting Intention	0.472	0.473	0.001	0.397	0.538
H4a	Endorser Credibility -> Political Brand Equity -> Voting Intention	0.313	0.317	0.004	0.221	0.397

4.2.5 Effect size—F²

Table 8 R², R² adjusted f², and Q² values

Construct	R ²	R ² Adjusted	F ²	Q ²
Endorser Credibility	-	-	0.154	-
Political Brand Credibility	0.133	0.130	2.406	0.108
Political Brand Equity	0.735	0.734	0.390	0.473
Voting Intention	0.299	0.294	-	0.208

According to Hair et al. (2017, p. 224), the f² values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 are interpreted as small, medium, and large effect sizes, respectively. Evidently, as seen from Table 8, Endorser Credibility (0.154), Political Brand Credibility (2.406), Political Brand Equity (0.390) have medium and large effect sizes, respectively. The findings show that Political Brand Credibility has the highest effect size, while Endorser Credibility has the lowest effect.

4.2.6 Predictive Relevance— Q^2

Geisser (1974) and Stone (1974) Q^2 value was used in determining the current study's predictive relevance. Furthermore, Hair et al. (2017, p. 224) suggest the blindfolding method, which recommends checking the Cross Validated Redundancy to calculate the predictive reliance value. As shown in Table 8, the Q^2 values of 0.108, 0.473, 0.208 demonstrates that the structural model path has predictive relevance.

5. Discussions

To understand the intention of voters and the impact or lack thereof in using celebrities to market political parties and their candidates, the present study developed a structural model via PLS-SEM to dissect this phenomenon. The results obtained from the findings were impressive. The findings show that, indirectly (via mediation) the Endorser Credibility positively impacted Political Brand Credibility and Political Brand Equity, which leads to Voting Intentions. However, Endorser's Credibility (the direct path) does not lead to Political Brand Equity and Voting Intention s. These findings are further expatiated as hypothesised.

Starting with the insignificant paths; recall that we posited and hypothesised in the model's conceptualization that the Endorser Credibility would lead to Political Brand Equity and Voting Intention. Interestingly, our findings overwhelmingly reject this hypothesis. These findings are inconsistent with the works of (Spry et al., 2011; Mishra & Mishra, 2014). There are, however, possible explanations for these inconsistencies.

Firstly, the celebrity endorsers do not directly build a Political Party's Brand Equity (awareness, associations, image, and loyalty); rather, it is the Political Party that does. An endorser's task is chiefly to indirectly boost the Political Brand Credibility, which in turn would lead to enhanced Political Brand Equity (awareness, associations, image, and loyalty). This assertion lends credence to our supported hypothesis via mediation. Secondly, the insignificant path from Endorser Credibility to Voting Intention could be due to the fact that the voters do not believe that any celebrity could change their opinion on who to vote, rather, it is through their Party's Brand Credibility and Brand Equity their opinion is formed.

In fact, towards the run-up to the American Election that brought Donald Trump to power in 2016, several prominent celebrities such as (Beyoncé, Katy Perry, Lady Gaga, Ariana Grande, the Kardashians, Rihanna, LeBron James, Jay Z, Jennifer Lopez, Stevie Wonder etc.) rallied behind the then Democrat Candidate Hillary Clinton. This colossal army of celebrities with huge followership could not sway voters to vote for Mrs Clinton (Roberts & Ben, 2016; Kenzie, 2016; Natalie, 2016).

Similarly, in the African context and in the same year, a former Ghanaian President John Dramani Mahama employed the services of several top Nigerian/Ghanaian celebrities and Public Relation Gurus including (Afia Schwarzenegger, John Dumelo, Selassie Ibrahim, Kwame Dzokoto, John Okafor-Mr Ibu, Dele Momodu, to mention just a few) aboard his campaign trail to help his cause (Ghanaweb, 2016). However, the President, Mahama lost the election in a manner never seen in Ghana, where an incumbent lost woefully to the opposition, leading the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and its candidate to attribute their "failure to leaving their campaign in the hands of the celebrities" (Atta, 2019; Starrfmonline, 2019).

For political parties, the findings of this research provide several insights as this implies that merely hiring a celebrity for promotional activities during the campaign may not necessarily translate to positive results in shaping the electorates' opinion.

Although inconsistent with previous studies, the findings empirically add value to the body of knowledge in Political Brand Credibility, Political Brand Equity, and Celebrity Endorsements studies. It is also affirmed that Political Brand Credibility ($f^2 = 2.406$) and

Political Brand Equity ($f^2 = 0.390$) plays a vital role in shaping the Voting Intentions of electorates' than Endorser's Credibility Equity ($f^2 = 0.154$)

The hypothesised relationships between Endorser Credibility, Political Brand Credibility and Voting Intention (H2) were found to be significant. Consistent with the literature, these finding broadly support the works of other prominent studies (Spry et al., 2011; Mishra & Mishra, 2014) in this area linking Endorser Credibility, Political Brand Credibility and Voting Intention which is seldom addressed in marketing related studies and sparsely in political marketing (Mishra & Mishra, 2014). Thus, these findings add to the growing body of literature in the political marketing branding and celebrity endorsement research streams. A possible explanation for this finding indicates that a credible endorser could lend his or her image to echo a Party's Brand Credibility, which in turn boost its Brand Equity, thereby leading to Voting Intention. As pointed out above, it is the Party's Brand Credibility and Equity (awareness, associations, image, and loyalty) that holds the key in shaping the voter's opinion. With the highest effect size ($f^2 = 0.406$), it could be reported that the hypothesized path (H3) between the Political Brand Credibility and Political Brand Equity has the most substantial effect.

On the other hand, the relationship between Endorsers' Credibility and voting Intention was found to be insignificant. This finding affirms findings. The findings might not be unconnected to the reality of the situations that touch the lives of the respondents directly. It is possible, therefore, that the situation of the country with regards to the economy, inflation, insecurity, kidnappings, and banditry could be the main triggers of the respondents/electorates to vote. Similarly, infrastructural developments such as roads, hospitals, schools etc. could be major determinants of voting intention and not a mere endorsement.

Hence, a note of caution is due here as the researchers' bear in mind the possible bias in the respondent's mind regarding these vital variables that touch their lives. These results therefore need to be interpreted with caution.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study investigated and discerned the factors motivating eligible voters in Nigeria to vote using the predictors (Endorser Credibility, Political Brand Credibility, Political Brand Equity and Voting Intention) as presented in the model -see Fig. 1. The most obvious takeaway (finding) to emerge from this study is that the celebrity endorser, despite being credible with attributes such as Attractiveness, Trustworthiness and Expertise is not a good predictor of positive Voting Intention s. Likewise, a credible endorser, the findings revealed, would not have a positive and significant effect on a Political Party's Brand Equity. Taken collectively, the new empirical findings in this study would provide a new understanding of this new political marketing strategy in the Nigerian context. The insights gained from this study may be of assistance to the political parties to focus and invest more effort, resources, and energy in branding their parties with meaningful manifestos that would touch the lives of the electorates.

6.1 Implications, Limitation and Suggestions for further studies

To start with, the first implication of this study is based on the finding that Endorser Credibility has a direct and significant impact on Political Brand Credibility. This implies that, to build credibility for the political party, if an endorser is to be used, he/she must be a credible person. Secondly, the implication of the finding that Endorser Credibility does not have a direct influence on Political Brand Equity and Voting Intention is that political parties should explore better options of influencing voters' intention to vote for them. This could be in the form of running an issues-based campaign and a manifesto that addresses issues that can benefit the voters. Interestingly, Political Brand Equity and Political Brand Credibility have been found to

mediate between Endorser Credibility and Voting Intentions. This implies that political parties should ensure that their parties are not found wanting in terms of credibility and equity.

The generalizability of these results is subject to certain limitations. The first one relates to the calibre of the respondents sampled. It is obvious that they are all educated as can be seen from their demographic profile. It is a fact that the less educated citizens take part in the voting process in Nigeria more than the elites. Going by this, it is suggested that future studies should include respondents who are not elites; this will most likely give more dependable findings. Another limitation of this study is in the area of the method of data collection. The study was quantitative in nature and data was collected via an online questionnaire. Consequent upon this, it is suggested that future studies should look at qualitative study or mixed method where opportunities would be given in an open-ended manner for voters to voice out their opinions.

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