



INFLUENCER MARKETING AND CONSUMERS' PURCHASE BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS NEW SMARTPHONE BRANDS

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ABSTRACT: *This study assessed influencer marketing and consumers' purchase behaviour towards new smartphone brands. Its specific purpose was to determine the effect of celebrity endorsement, giveaway contest and pre-release contest on consumers' purchase behaviour towards smartphone brands. It adopted cross-sectional survey research design, which enabled the collection of primary data from 232 smartphone users through a structured questionnaire survey. Data analysis and interpretation was done using descriptive statistics, while hypotheses testing was done using multiple linear regression in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 23). The study found that celebrity endorsement, giveaway contest and pre-release campaign had significant positive effects on consumers' purchase behaviour towards new smartphone brands. Therefore, we recommended that: smartphone marketing companies should devote more resources to celebrity endorsement by contracting famous and credible celebrities to promote their new brands prior to actual release in order to influence massive product patronage from their followers; all sorts of giveaway contests, including hashtag, photo and referral contests should be included in the introductory marketing mix for new smartphone brands in order to generate positive buzzes on the internet capable of creating mass consumer awareness and patronage; among others. We also provided empirical suggestions to guide further research efforts.*

KEYWORDS: Influencer marketing, Consumer buying behaviour, Celebrity endorsement, Giveaway contest



INTRODUCTION

The practice of modern-day marketing has witnessed evolutionary changes that have redefined how business organisations conceive and implement marketing strategies in an increasingly digitised world. As a result of the development and ongoing modifications of digital technologies, marketing companies are devising innovative strategies for survival and market competitiveness (Junusi, 2020). The internet provides a remarkable platform for influencers (celebrities and content creators) to reach out to a wider audience, create an online community and cultivate trends, norms and standards of behaviour in today's society. As the activities of online influencers continue to cause ripple effects in the social behaviours of people, business organisations are finding new ways to utilise influencers to serve their marketing ends, thereby championing the rise of influencer marketing (Lee & Kim, 2020). According to Stubb, Nyström and Colliander (2019), influencer marketing is a form of social media marketing that utilises popular content creators, celebrities and trend setters to promote and encourage patronage of companies' offerings by their followers or fan base. Around the world today, there is a gradual shift from conventional advertising that directly uses paid media to promote companies' products and services to customers, because consumers are getting saturated with ubiquitous advertisements that sometimes become annoying or intrusive (Riedel, Weeks & Beatson, 2018). As a result, companies, including smartphone manufacturers, are seeking subtle but effective ways of promoting their offerings to their target markets. Influencer marketing therefore creates a platform for companies to exploit the channels, resources and follower base of influencers to promote their offerings to customers who are more likely to make purchases due to their emotional connections to influencers (Jin, Muqaddam & Ryu, 2019).

Harnessing this emotional connection, smartphone companies have resorted to the use of influencer marketing strategies (such as celebrity endorsement, giveaway contest and pre-release campaign) to introduce new smartphone brands into the market. Using these influencer marketing strategies, smartphone companies have attempted to shape and influence consumers' purchase behaviours towards their brands. Famous celebrities in entertainment, music, comedy, sports, fashion and pageantry have been signed on by smartphone brands to endorse and promote their brands to followers as a way of influencing their purchase behaviours towards the brands. The industry has also seen a rise in the online giveaway contests organised by smartphone companies and their brand ambassadors, where participants are tasked with completing certain challenges to stand chances of winning in the contest. Similarly, smartphone companies are organising pre-launch campaigns about new smartphone models to be released in an attempt to generate social media buzz and build customers' desire prior to the actual product release. The problem of this study, therefore, is that although smartphone companies have applied various influencer marketing strategies in their campaigns, it is not yet clearly established whether or not these strategies have contributed to an increase in customers' patronage of smartphones. This is because there are insufficient scholarly attempts to determine the causality between influencer marketing and consumers' purchase behaviour towards smartphones in the Nigerian context. Against this backdrop, this study was carried out to examine the effect of influencer marketing on consumers' purchase behaviour towards smartphones; and how best to apply influencer marketing strategies to positively influence consumers to purchase new smartphone brands.



LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical underpinning of this study comprised the social influence theory, propounded by Kelman (1958). This theory was considered relevant to this study because it explains the processes through which smartphone brands use influencer marketing strategies to shape consumers' purchase behaviour towards their new products. The social influence theory was propounded by Kelman (1958) to explain how the beliefs, attitudes and behaviours of individuals can be determined by communication from other individuals. The basic premise of the social influence theory is that an individual's attitudes, beliefs, and subsequent actions or behaviours are influenced by others through three processes: compliance, identification, and internalisation. Social influence refers to the way in which individuals change their behaviour to meet the demands of a social environment. It takes many forms and can be seen in conformity, socialisation, peer pressure, obedience, leadership, persuasion, sales, and marketing. Typically, social influence results from a specific action, command, or request, but people also alter their attitudes and behaviours in response to what they perceive others might do or think.

The social influence theory is relevant to this study because it makes assumptions that resonate with the purpose of this study. This study examined the effect of influencer marketing on consumers' purchase behaviour towards new smartphone brands. In that sense, the social influence theory asserts that the beliefs, attitudes and perceptions of customers towards new smartphone brands could be influenced by social interactions and communications from brand ambassadors or influencers. The theory further implies that the purchase behaviour of customers towards new smartphone brands could be influenced by influencer marketing activities (such as celebrity endorsement, giveaway contest and pre-release campaign). Furthermore, it can be deduced from the social influence theory that influencer marketing activities are social forces that have the potential to shape and/or influence consumers' purchase behaviour towards new smartphone brands. Therefore, the hypotheses of this study sought to verify the relevance of the social influence theory by testing whether or not influencer marketing activities (celebrity endorsement, giveaway contest and pre-release campaign) significantly influenced consumers' purchase behaviour towards new smartphone brands.

Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing is a form of social media marketing that utilises popular content creators, celebrities and trend setters to promote and encourage patronage of products and services by their followers or fan base (Lee, Koseoglu, Qi, Liu & King, 2021). It is a hybrid of old and new marketing tools. It takes the idea of celebrity endorsement and places it into a modern-day content-driven marketing campaign. However, influencer marketing does not just involve celebrities. Instead, it revolves around influencers, many of whom would never consider themselves famous in an offline setting. According to Masuda, Han and Lee (2022), an influencer is someone who has the power to affect the purchasing decisions of others because of his or her authority, knowledge, position, or relationship with his or her audience. Hence, influencer marketing can be seen as a form of social media marketing involving endorsements and product placement from influencers, people and organisations who have a purported expert level of knowledge or social influence in their field. According to Sodeinde, Olomjobi and Abiola (2022), influencer marketing takes place whenever a brand enrolls influencers who have an established credibility and audience on social media platforms to discuss or mention the brand in a social media post. Brands use influencers to promote their product or service through paid advertisements, free giveaways, and endorsements. In addition, they



can generate significant brand awareness and loyalty through paid or unpaid posts. The goal is to get them to share valuable information and create excitement around a particular topic, product, or service. The key benefit for brands is that they reach a larger audience at a lower cost than traditional advertising methods. Similarly, Ali and Alqudah (2022) observed that influencer marketing is an effective way to improve a brand's marketing strategy, reach business objectives, and even cut expenses.

Consumers' Purchase Behaviour

Consumer buying behaviour is the sum total of a consumer's attitudes, preferences, intentions, and purchase-related decisions in the marketplace towards goods and services he expects to satisfy his needs (Craig, 2015). The study of consumer behaviour draws upon various social science disciplines such as anthropology, psychology, sociology, and economics. The author maintains that consumer buying behaviour is the process by which individuals search for, select, purchase, use, and dispose of goods and services for the purpose of satisfying their needs and wants. Yakup and Sabastian (2012) define consumer behaviour as the study of individuals, groups, or organisations, and the processes they use to select, secure, use and dispose of products, services, experience or ideas in order to satisfy their needs and wants. It is the process of searching, organising, evaluating, using and disposing of goods with the aim of satisfying consumer needs and wants. Hence, consumer behaviour simply refers to the study of whom, why, how, and where people buy or do not buy a product. In the view of Fullerton (2013), consumer behaviour is the study of individuals, groups, or organisations and all the activities associated with the purchase, use and disposal of goods and services, including the consumer's emotional, mental and behavioural responses that precede or follow these activities. It examines how emotions, attitudes and preferences affect buying behaviour. The author further asserts that characteristics of individual consumers such as demographics, personality lifestyles and behavioural variables such as usage rates, usage occasion, loyalty, brand advocacy, willingness to provide referrals, in an attempt to understand people's wants and consumption are all investigated in formal studies of consumer behaviour.

Celebrity Endorsement and Consumers' Purchase Behaviour

Celebrity branding or celebrity endorsement is an influencer marketing strategy or a form of advertising campaign used by brands, companies, or a non-profit organisation which involves celebrities or a well-known person using their social status or their fame to help promote a product, service or even raise awareness on environmental or social matters (Business Dictionary, 2019). According to Knepper (2017), celebrity endorsement refers to a marketing strategy whose purpose is to use one or multiple celebrities to advertise a specific product or service. The primary goal, in this case, is to reach a greater audience, represented by the celebrity's fan base. In the view of Bhasin (2018), celebrity endorsement is the use of celebrities by advertisers as spokespeople for their brands. This is done due to the perception that messages conveyed by attractive or well-known sources can achieve higher retention and recall. Around the world, the growing number of celebrities and entertainers produced by the Nigerian entertainment industry makes celebrity endorsement a preferable influencer marketing strategy for top brands, including smartphone brands. By harnessing the credibility, likeability, attractiveness and trustworthiness of celebrities or influencers to promote a brand, companies amplify the effectiveness of their promotional campaigns on consumers' purchase behaviour, thereby enhancing sales performance (Kingsley, Deji & Yinka, 2017). The foregoing assertion is reinforced by the study of Goerge and Carl (2021), which revealed that celebrity endorsement had a significant positive relationship with American consumers' purchase behaviour towards Apple smartphones. The assertion is also supported by the study of Zhou and



Pyoung (2019), which revealed that celebrity endorsement significantly enhanced customers' patronage of mobile phones in South Korea. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H₁: *Celebrity endorsement has a significant effect on consumers' purchase behaviour towards new smartphone brands*

Giveaway Contest and Consumers' Purchase Behaviour

Giveaway contest is an online-based contest organised by companies where participants complete assigned tasks to qualify for certain rewards within a specific timeframe (Dewi & Pujiyono, 2020). It is a form of sales promotion that is used to generate buzz for a brand on the internet by engaging the brand's customers online in exciting and challenging contests. The selected winners of the contest are given a variety of rewards from the brand. Also, Henry (2015) views giveaway contests as an online competition organised by companies and/or influencers with the objective of boosting the market position of their brand. Participants in the contest are actually required to compete with each other by fulfilling specified tasks under strict instructions for a limited period of time. Particularly in the fast-moving consumer goods sector, companies are somewhat fond of using giveaway contest strategy to build market demand for their products, especially new products (Walsman & Dixon, 2020). Using this strategy, a limited copy or quantity of the product to be released is given free of charge to potential customers in exchange for performing certain promotional tasks for the company. By promising to offer free versions of the product to selected customers, companies can greatly motivate their target customers to advocate for and promote their brands free of charge. This enables companies to easily create broad awareness about the prospective product, entice consumer demand and generate sales for their products when finally commercialised. The foregoing premise suggests that companies could favourably influence consumers' purchase behaviours towards new products by organising giveaway contests. This premise aligns with the study of George and Carl (2021), which revealed that giveaway contests had a significant positive relationship with American consumers' purchase behaviour towards Apple smartphones. The premise is also reinforced by the study of Imran, Khan and Preetam (2018), which revealed that giveaway contests had a significant positive association with consumer purchase behaviour towards made-in-India smartphones. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H₂: *Giveaway contests have a significant effect on consumers' purchase behaviour towards new smartphone brands.*

Pre-release Campaign and Consumers' Purchase Behaviour

A pre-release campaign is a form of influencer marketing whereby new products are pre-introduced to a limited portion of the target market before actual commercialization to generate positive responses from customers (Xiong & Bharadwaj, 2019). It is a test-marketing promotional activity that is meant to generate preliminary consumer demand for a new product prior to its formal introduction. Companies use pre-release campaigns to inform their target markets of new products set to be released shortly. These campaigns also give customers the opportunity to catch a glimpse of the upcoming production before it hits the market. For pre-release campaigns to be maximised, companies organise pre-launch events where influencers and celebrities are made to interact and promote the brand ahead of the actual product launch (Chakravarty, Liu & Mazumdar, 2020). A pre-release campaign enables companies to create preliminary buzz for their products prior to full-scale commercialization. It is a form of sample marketing activity that enables customers to get a sense of what the final product will be when fully introduced. As such, it enables a potential product to gather



significant momentum required to ensure its success in the actual market when eventually released. By giving customers a chance to learn about the product, see its promotional campaign and even pre-order trial versions, pre-release campaigns are an effective way to influence consumers' love and preference for a product prior to commercialization (Houston, Kupfer, Hennig-Thurau & Spann, 2018). The foregoing premise suggests that consumers' purchase behaviour towards a product could positively be influenced through pre-release campaigns. This premise is supported by the study of Zhou and Pyoung (2019), which revealed that pre-release campaigns significantly enhanced customers' patronage of mobile phones in South Korea. The premise is also supported by the study of Roberts and Kellerman (2021), which revealed that pre-release campaigns had a significant positive impact on customer patronage of new mobile phone brands in Canada. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H₃: *Pre-release campaign has a significant effect on consumers' purchase behaviour towards new smartphone brands.*

Empirical Review and Research Model Conceptualization

This unit reviews various relevant scholarly research articles by previous researchers to determine the position of scholars on the relationship between influencer marketing and consumers' purchase behaviour. Awobamise and Jarrar (2018) examined the impact of celebrity endorsement on consumer perception towards Globacom Nigeria Limited. The primary data obtained for the study were from 200 subscribers of Globacom Nigeria Limited in Lagos, Nigeria through a questionnaire and in-depth interview. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics and qualitative data analytics. The findings of the study revealed that celebrity endorsement is a good way to capture the attention of prospective customers, but customers' patronage and loyalty towards brands were greatly influenced by product quality. Although this study was carried out in Nigeria in the telecommunications industry, it is limited in scope to just celebrity endorsement and consumer perception. As such, it is incapable of explaining the effect of influencer marketing strategies on overall consumers' purchase behaviour towards new smartphone brands in Nigeria.

Another study by Ifeanyichukwu (2016) examined the impact of celebrity endorsements on consumers' purchase decisions in Nigeria. The study obtained primary data from 200 young adults in Anambra State, Nigeria using a structured questionnaire. The data were then analysed using descriptive statistics while multiple regression was used for hypothesis testing. The findings of the study therefore revealed that celebrity endorsement (expertise, attractiveness and respect) had a significant positive impact on consumers' purchase decision. However, the limitation of this study is that its scope only centres on celebrity endorsement; hence it is incapable of explaining how other variables of influencer marketing (such as giveaway contest and pre-release campaign) could influence consumers' purchase behaviour towards new smartphone brands in Nigeria. A similar study by Omorodion and Osifo (2019) explored the relationship between celebrity endorsement and consumer purchasing behaviour among students of the University of Benin, Nigeria. The study obtained primary data from 397 students of the University of Benin, Edo State using a structured questionnaire. Data analysis was carried out using multiple regression, and Pearson matrix correlation techniques through Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) estimation technique. The findings of the study revealed that celebrity endorsement has a positive and significant link with the purchase decision of consumers in the Nigerian telecommunication industry. Like previous Nigerian studies reviewed, this study focuses overwhelmingly on celebrity endorsement, without emphasis on other dimensions of influencer marketing (such as giveaway contests and pre-release campaigns). Hence, the study is incapable of providing credible empirical explanation of the effect of influencer



marketing on consumers' purchase behaviour towards new smartphone brands in Nigeria.

Also, George and Carl's (2021) study assesses the relationship between influencer marketing and American consumers' purchase behaviour towards Apple smartphones. The study obtained primary data from 1200 users of Apple smartphones in Arizona using an online structured questionnaire. The data obtained were descriptively analysed and interpreted while the hypotheses of the study were tested using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation analysis. Consequently, the findings of the study revealed that influencer marketing (celebrity endorsement, brand advocacy, and giveaway contests) had a significant positive relationship with American consumers' purchase behaviour towards Apple smartphones. However, the limitation of this study is that its geographical scope is centred on the United States of America and respondents comprised American smartphone users. As such, the study is deemed incapable of providing credible empirical explanation of the effect of influencer marketing on consumers' purchase behaviour towards new smartphone brands particularly among Nigerian users. Similarly, Zhou and Pyoung's (2019) study centred on evaluating the impact of influencer marketing strategies on consumer purchase behaviour towards mobile phones in Seoul. The study used a 5-Point Likert Scale questionnaire to elicit primary data from 501 users of smartphones in Seoul in a cross-sectional survey. The data obtained were analysed and interpreted using descriptive statistics, while regression analysis was carried out to test the hypotheses developed. The findings of this study revealed that buzz marketing, celebrity endorsement, pre-release campaigns, and giveaway contests significantly enhanced customers' patronage of mobile phones in South Korea. However, the limitation of this study is that its geographical scope is centred on South Korea and respondents comprised South Korean mobile phone users. As such, the study is deemed incapable of providing credible empirical explanation of the effect of influencer marketing on consumers' purchase behaviour towards new smartphone brands particularly among Nigerian users.

Furthermore, a study by Roberts and Kellerman (2021) sought to explore the impact of influencer marketing campaigns on customer patronage of new mobile phone brands in Toronto. The study used an online questionnaire survey to obtain primary data from 354 respondents in Toronto. Mean ratings, frequencies, and columns were used to analyse and interpret the data obtained while multiple linear regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses of the study. The findings of the study therefore revealed that viral marketing, pre-release campaigns, online giveaway contests and celebrity endorsement had significant positive impacts on customer patronage of new mobile phone brands in Canada. However, the limitation of this study is that its sampling frame solely comprised Canadian mobile phone users. As such, the study is deemed incapable of providing credible empirical explanation of the effect of influencer marketing on consumers' purchase behaviour towards new smartphone brands particularly among Nigerian users. Finally, a study by Imran, Khan and Preetam (2018) aimed to assess the relationship between influencer marketing and consumer purchase behaviour towards made-in-India smartphones. To obtain primary data for the study, an online questionnaire survey was carried out on 421 users of smartphone technologies in Mumbai. The data obtained were analysed using descriptive statistics, while Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis was used to test the hypotheses of the study. The findings thereof revealed that influencer marketing (pre-release campaign, celebrity endorsement and giveaway contest) had a significant positive association with consumer purchase behaviour towards made-in-India smartphones. However, the limitation of this study is that its sampling frame solely comprised Indian mobile phone users. As such, the study is deemed incapable of providing credible empirical explanation of the effect of influencer marketing on consumers' purchase behaviour towards new smartphone brands particularly among Nigerian users.

From the review of empirical studies, a conceptual model was developed for the study to portray the

hypothesised relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The independent variable (influencer marketing) was disintegrated into three specific parameters, namely: celebrity endorsement, giveaway contest and pre-release campaigns, as informed by George and Carl (2021), Zhou and Pyoung (2019), and Roberts and Kellerman (2021). The dependent variable (consumers' purchase behaviour) was also disintegrated into three specific parameters, namely: consumers' awareness, consumers' preference and customer patronage, as informed by Chopra, Avhad and Jaju (2021). In the context of this study, it was presumed that the dimensions of influencer marketing (celebrity endorsement, giveaway contest and pre-release campaigns) were related to consumers' purchase behaviour towards new smartphone brands. A conceptual model (see Fig. 1) was hence developed to portray the relationship between the study variables (influencer marketing and consumers' purchase behaviour) as hypothesised in the study.

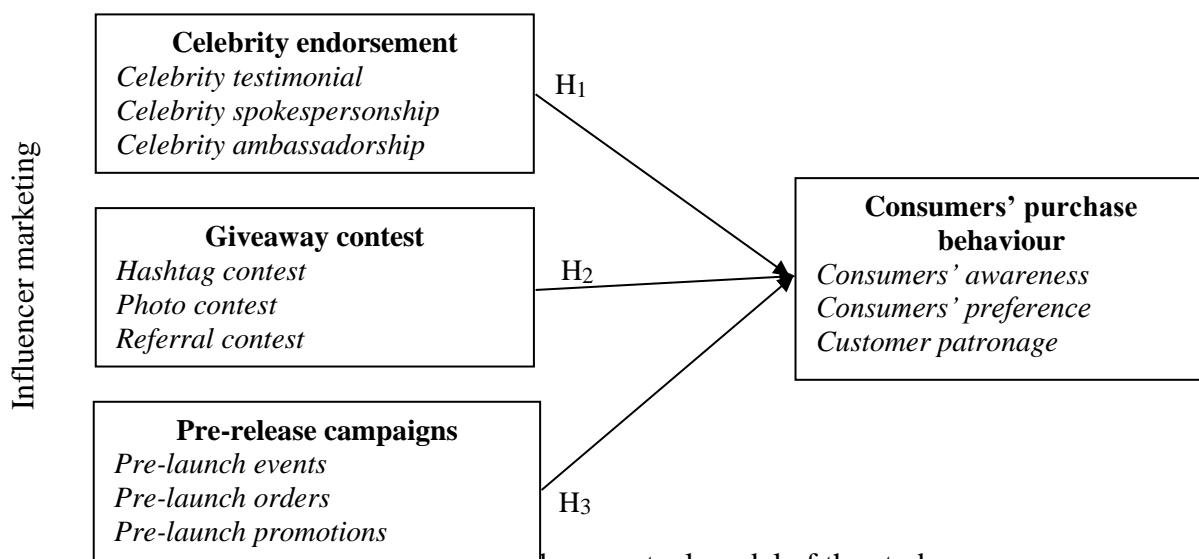


FIG. 1: Adapted conceptual model of the study

Source: Parameters of independent variables adapted from George and Carl (2021); Zhou and Pyoung (2019); Roberts and Kellerman (2021). Parameters of dependent variable adapted from Chopra, Avhad and Jaju (2021)



METHODOLOGY

The study adopted cross-sectional survey research design. The target population comprised all users of smartphone brands in Nigeria; however, due to the absence of reliable data, the population was numerically unknown. Hence, the Topman sample size determination procedure was applied to determine the sample size of the study through a pilot survey. This procedure is based on the Topman formula which states thus:

$$n = \frac{Z^2Pq}{e^2}$$

Where n: Sample size required

Z: Tabular statistical unit (1.96)

P: Probability of positive response (0.8)

q: Probability of negative response (0.2)

e: Margin of error (5 percent)

To obtain the probabilities of positive and negative responses (P and q respectively), the researcher conducted a pilot survey in November, 2022 by interviewing a random selection of 30 respondents. These respondents were asked to identify whether or not they were users of smartphone brands during the pilot survey. Out of the 30 respondents interviewed, 24 respondents representing 80 percent said they were users of various smartphone brands, while 6 respondents representing 20 percent said they did not have a smartphone brand at the moment. From the result of the pilot survey above, the Probability of Positive Responses (P) is 0.8, while the Probability of Negative Responses is 0.2. By simple substitution, the Topman formula was applied thus:

$$\begin{aligned} n &= \frac{1.96^2 (0.8 \times 0.2)}{0.05^2} \\ &= \frac{3.8416 (0.16)}{0.0025} \\ &= \frac{0.6147}{0.0025} \\ &= 245.88 \end{aligned}$$

n = 246 users of smartphone brands approximately

Convenience sampling technique was used to select respondents to participate in the survey exercise. To obtain primary data for the study, we sought the assistance of a 3-member team of enumerators, who were charged with questionnaire administration and retrieval. Prior to questionnaire administration, all potential respondents were debriefed on the aim of the study, and asked to provide consent to participate in the survey in order to be included in the questionnaire survey. The research instrument used in the study was a five-point Likert scale questionnaire. It was made up of two parts, namely: Section A (demographic section) and Section B (which contained statements drawn from the study variables: celebrity endorsement, giveaway contest, pre-release campaign and consumers'



purchase behaviour). The opinions of respondents were gauged on the following five-point Likert scales: Strongly Agree (SA = 5 points), Agree (A = 4 points), Undecided (U = 3 points), Disagree (D = 2 points) and Strongly Disagree (SD = 1 point). The statements measuring celebrity endorsement (1 – 3) were adapted from George and Carl (2021); the statements measuring giveaway contest (4 – 6) were adapted from Zhou and Pyoung (2019); the statements measuring pre-release campaigns (7 – 9) were adapted from Roberts and Kellerman (2021); while the statements measuring consumers' purchase behaviour (10 – 12) were adapted from Chopra, Avhad and Jaju (2021). The instrument was further validated through content validity, while Cronbach's alpha reliability was applied to verify the reliability of the instrument as shown in Table 1, which reveals that all research constructs produced reliability coefficients from 0.7 and above.

Table 1: Research Constructs Operationalization and Reliability Coefficients

Variables	Statement	Cronbach's alpha coefficient
<i>Celebrity endorsement (CELENDORS 1-3)</i>		0.785
CELENDORS 1	Smartphone brands use celebrities' testimonials to promote newly released products.	
CELENDORS 2	Famous celebrities are recruited by smartphone brands to speak favourably about new products.	
CELENDORS 3	Celebrities act as brand ambassadors to promote new smartphone brands to customers.	
<i>Giveaway contest (GIVCONT 4-6)</i>		0.812
GIVCONT 4	Smartphone brands conduct hashtag contests to promote new products to customers.	
GIVCONT 5	Photo contests are organised by smartphone brands to promote new products to customers.	
GIVCONT 6	Customers are made to refer others to purchase new smartphone brands with rewards.	
<i>Pre-release campaign (PRECAMP 7-9)</i>		0.756
PRECAMP 7	Manufacturers host pre-launch events to promote new smartphone brands before actual release.	
PRECAMP 8	Manufacturers take customers' orders for new smartphone brands during the pre-launch period.	
PRECAMP 9	Marketers of smartphone brands	



promote them to customers even before the actual release.

Consumers' purchase behaviour (CONSBEHAV 10-12)	0.776
CONSBEHAV 10	I am aware of new smartphone brands released in the market.
CONSBEHAV 11	I prefer upgrading my device to new smartphone brands once released.
CONSBEHAV 12	I only patronise brand new smartphone brands released in the market.

Source: *Authors' Analysis via SPSS 2023*

After confirming the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, the data obtained were analysed and interpreted using descriptive statistics. Whereas, hypotheses testing was carried out using multiple linear regression, with the following regression model:

$$Y = a + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + e \text{ ----- EQ1}$$

$$\text{CONSBEHAV} = a + \beta_1 \text{CELENDORS} + \beta_2 \text{GIVCONT} + \beta_3 \text{PRECAMP} + e \text{ ----- EQ2}$$

Where:

CONSBEHAV = Dependent variable (consumer purchase behaviour)

a = The intercept

$\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3$ = Coefficients of the independent variables

INFLUMARK = Independent variable (influencer marketing)

e = Error margin (5 percent)

Hence,

$\beta_1 X_1$ = Coefficients of celebrity endorsement

$\beta_2 X_2$ = Coefficients of giveaway contest

$\beta_3 X_3$ = Coefficients of pre-release campaign



ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

During the questionnaire survey, we administered a total of 246 questionnaire copies to users of smartphone brands. Out of that, we were able to retrieve and use 232 copies representing 94.3 percent of the total questionnaire copies. 14 copies representing 5.7 percent of the questionnaire were deemed un-usable for the analysis because they were improperly completed by the respondents.

Table 2: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percent
18 – 24 years	44	19.0
25 – 31 years	56	24.1
32 – 38 years	35	15.1
39 – 45 years	50	21.6
46 years or above	47	20.3
Total	232	100.0

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	118	50.9
Female	114	49.1
Total	232	100.0

Marital status	Frequency	Percent
Single	138	59.5
Married	94	40.5
Total	232	100.0

Occupation	Frequency	Percent
Student	89	38.4
Businessman/woman	59	25.4
Civil/public servant	84	36.2
Total	232	100.0

Source: *Authors' Analysis via SPSS, 2023*

Table 2 shows that most of the respondents surveyed (56 or 24.1 percent) were between the ages of 25 – 31 years. With respect to gender, most of the respondents surveyed (118 or 50.9 percent) were male. With respect to marital status, most of the respondents surveyed (138 or 59.5 percent) were single. And with respect to occupation, the data shows that most of the respondents surveyed (89 or 38.4 percent) were students.

**Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables**

	Item	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remark
Celebrity endorsement					
1	Celebrity testimonial	232	3.845	1.842	Accepted
2	Celebrity spokesperson ship	232	3.323	1.325	Accepted
3	Celebrity ambassadorship	232	2.473	1.229	Accepted
Giveaway contest					
4	Hashtag contest	232	4.601	1.382	Accepted
5	Photo contest	232	3.827	1.272	Accepted
6	Referral contest	232	4.646	1.292	Accepted
Pre-release campaigns					
7	Pre-launch events	232	4.477	1.303	Accepted
8	Pre-launch orders	232	3.110	1.333	Accepted
9	Pre-launch promotions	232	4.349	1.298	Accepted
Consumers' purchase behaviour					
10	Consumers' awareness	232	3.314	1.334	Accepted
11	Consumers' preference	232	2.177	1.287	Accepted
12	Customer patronage	232	4.039	1.269	Accepted

Source: Authors' Analysis via SPSS, 2023

Table 3 shows that the parameters of celebrity endorsement were all accepted at a 5.00-point evaluation maximum, with 3.00 as minimum acceptable point. Mean values were 3.845, 3.323 and 2.473 respectively for celebrity testimonial, celebrity spokesperson ship and celebrity ambassadorship. The data also shows that the parameters of the giveaway contest were all accepted at a 5.00-point evaluation maximum, with 3.00 as minimum acceptable point. Mean values were 4.601, 3.827, and 4.646 respectively for hashtag contest, photo contest and referral contest. On the same 5.00-point evaluation maximum and minimum acceptable point of 3.00, all the parameters of the pre-release campaign were accepted. Mean values were 4.477, 3.110 and 4.349 respectively for pre-launch events, pre-launch orders and pre-launch promotions. Similarly, on the same evaluation scale, all the parameters of consumers' purchase behaviour were accepted. Mean values for consumers' awareness, consumers' preference and customer patronage were 3.314, 2.177 and 4.039 respectively.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis one

Ho: Celebrity endorsement has no significant effect on consumers' purchase behaviour towards new smartphone brands.

Hypothesis two

Ho: Giveaway contests have no significant effect on consumers' purchase behaviour towards new



smartphone brands.

Hypothesis three

Ho: Pre-release campaign has no significant effect on consumers’ purchase behaviour towards new smartphone brands.

Independent variables: Celebrity endorsement, giveaway contest, and pre-release campaign

Dependent variable: Consumers’ purchase behaviour

Test statistic: Multiple linear regression

Decision criteria: Accept the alternative hypothesis if ($P < .05$) and reject the null hypothesis, if otherwise.

Table 4: Model Summary of the Effect of Influencer Marketing on Consumers’ Purchase Behaviour Towards New Smartphone Brands

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.795 ^a	.633	.626	1.673

a. Predictors: (Constant), Celebrity endorsement, giveaway contest, and pre-release campaign

Source: *Authors’ analysis via SPSS 2023*

Table 5: ANOVA^a of the Effect of Influencer Marketing on Consumers’ Purchase Behaviour Towards New Smartphone Brands

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1093.773	3	364.591	130.304	.000 ^b
	Residual	635.106	227	2.798		
	Total	1728.879	231			

a. Dependent Variable: Consumers’ purchase behaviour

b. Predictors: (Constant), Celebrity endorsement, giveaway contest, and pre-release campaign

Source: *Authors’ analysis via SPSS 2023*

Table 6: Coefficients^a of the Effect of Influencer Marketing on Consumers’ Purchase Behaviour Towards New Smartphone Brands

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.156	.857		1.349	.000
	Celebrity endorsement	1.425	.093	.687	15.323	.000
	Giveaway contest	.195	.049	.483	3.949	.000
	Pre-release campaign	.176	.045	.564	3.878	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Consumers’ purchase behaviour

Source: *Authors’ analysis via SPSS 2023*



Tables 4, 5 and 6 present the multiple linear regression results of the effect of influencer marketing on consumers' purchase behaviour towards new smartphone brands. The model summary presented in Table 4 shows that the correlation between the independent variable (influencer marketing) and the dependent variable (consumers' purchase behaviour) is 79.5 percent (as seen in the R column), thereby indicating that there is a very strong degree of correlation between the study variables. The R^2 (coefficient of determination) value of 0.633, signifies that up to 63.3 percent of the variation in the dependent variable (consumers' purchase behaviour) can be explained by the independent variable (influencer marketing). Hence, a unit change in the application of influencer marketing by marketers of smartphone brands will affect consumers' purchase behaviour towards them by up to 63.3 percent when other factors are held constant. The F-test (130.304, $P < 0.05$) statistic in Table 5 signifies that the overall prediction of the dependent variable by the independent variable is statistically significant; therefore implying that influencer marketing has a significant effect on consumers' purchase behaviour towards new smartphone brands.

Table 6 (the coefficients table) provides information on the capability of each influencer marketing dimension to explain or predict consumers' purchase behaviour towards smartphone brands. As seen on Table 6, all the influencer marketing dimensions tested (celebrity endorsement, giveaway contest and pre-release campaign) were found to significantly predict or explain consumers' purchase behaviour towards new smartphone brands. This is because their p-values [celebrity endorsement (p-value = 0.000), giveaway contest (p-value = 0.000), and pre-release campaign (p-value = 0.000)] were less than the error margin of 0.05, with positive t-test values. This explains that the relationship between these influencer marketing dimensions and consumers' purchase behaviour is a direct and positive one. As such, we reject all null hypotheses, accept all alternative hypotheses and conclude that celebrity endorsement, giveaway contest and pre-release campaign have significant positive effects on consumers' purchase behaviour towards new smartphone brands. Furthermore, the standardised beta coefficient column in Table 6 shows that the highest-contributing dimension to the model is celebrity endorsement, with a beta coefficient of 0.687 (68.7 percent). The second-highest contributing dimension to the model is pre-release campaign, with a beta coefficient of 0.564 (56.4 percent), while the least contributing dimension to the model is giveaway contest, with a beta coefficient of 0.483 (48.3 percent).

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The test of hypothesis one has revealed that celebrity endorsement has a significant positive effect on consumers' purchase behaviour towards new smartphone brands. This finding is reinforced by the study of George and Carl (2021), which revealed that celebrity endorsement had a significant positive relationship with American consumers' purchase behaviour towards smartphones. The finding is also supported by the study of Zhou and Pyoung (2019), which revealed that celebrity endorsement significantly enhanced customers' patronage of mobile phones in South Korea. The implication of this finding, in the context of this study, is that celebrity endorsement, as an influencer marketing strategy, has the potential to substantially and positively influence consumers' purchase behaviour towards new smartphone brands among smartphone users.

The test of hypothesis two revealed that giveaway contests have a significant positive effect on consumers' purchase behaviour towards new smartphone brands. This finding aligns with the study of George and Carl (2021), which revealed that giveaway contests had a significant positive relationship with American consumers' purchase behaviour towards smartphones. The finding is



also reinforced by the study of Imran, Khan and Preetam (2018), which revealed that giveaway contests had a significant positive association with consumer purchase behaviour towards made-in-India smartphones. The implication of this finding, in the context of this study, is that giveaway contests, as an influencer marketing strategy, have the potential to substantially and positively influence consumers' purchase behaviour towards new smartphone brands among smartphone users.

Finally, the test of hypothesis three revealed that pre-release campaigns have a significant positive effect on consumers' purchase behaviour towards new smartphone brands. This finding is corroborated by the study of Zhou and Pyoung (2019), which revealed that pre-release campaigns significantly enhanced customers' patronage of mobile phones in South Korea. The finding is also supported by the study of Roberts and Kellerman (2021), which revealed that pre-release campaigns had a significant positive impact on customer patronage of new mobile phone brands in Canada. In the context of this study, this finding implies that a pre-release campaign, as an influencer marketing strategy, has the potential to substantially and positively influence consumers' purchase behaviour towards new smartphone brands among smartphone users.

CONCLUSION AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

As a globally-dynamic practice, marketing has witnessed the evolution and development of several competitive strategies applied by business organisations to improve competitive performance in their chosen industry. In the 21st century, as more sophisticated information and communication technologies have proliferated across the world, the influence of social groups on the behaviour of people has been amplified, giving rise to the influencer marketing strategy. The popularity of influencer marketing continues to rise as more companies resort to the use of celebrities, content creators and buzz-marketing techniques to promote their brands amidst hardened competition. This study was carried out to determine how influencer marketing has impacted the purchase behaviour of Nigerian smartphone users towards new brands. To that end, primary data were obtained from sampled users of smartphone brands through a structured questionnaire survey. With the aid of descriptive and inferential statistics, the data obtained were analysed and findings were generated thereof. The findings revealed that celebrity endorsement, giveaway contests and pre-release campaigns had significant positive effects on consumers' purchasing behaviour towards new smartphone brands. The findings also revealed that the most effective influencer marketing strategies with the capacity to achieve the highest positive influence on consumers' purchase behaviour towards new smartphone brands are celebrity endorsement and pre-release campaigns. Therefore, the findings of the study have provided substantive empirical evidence to conclude that influencer marketing, as a contemporary marketing strategy, has an immense capacity to substantially improve consumers' purchase behaviours towards new smartphone brands in developing African countries like Nigeria.

Considering the revelations made in the findings of the study, the following practical recommendations are suggested for adoption by smartphone marketing companies:

- i. Smartphone marketing companies should devote more resources to celebrity endorsement by contracting famous and credible celebrities to promote their new brands prior to actual release in order to influence massive product patronage from their followers. Celebrities are powerful social influencers, so smartphone companies can take advantage of their popularity, social appeal, credibility and fan base to successfully facilitate the introduction of new smartphone



brands.

- ii. All sorts of giveaway contests, including hashtag, photo and referral contests should be included in the introductory marketing mix for new smartphone brands in order to generate positive buzzes on the internet capable of creating mass consumer awareness and patronage.
- iii. It is important that smartphone companies prioritise the execution of pre-release campaigns, such as pre-launch events, orders and marketing promotions in order to prepare consumers' minds ahead of product release and build customer traffic for the actual product launch. These campaigns are essential in stimulating consumers' awareness, interest and desire for new smartphone brands even before they are actually released in the market.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study was limited in scope to smartphone users in a developing African country; it does not explain other industries where influencer marketing may be an effective marketing strategy for marketers. As such, we suggest that future research should encompass more industries, both in the product and service sectors in order to generate comprehensive empirical evidence of the effectiveness of influencer marketing strategy across sectors. The study was restricted to just three influencer marketing strategies (celebrity endorsement, giveaway contest and pre-release campaign). There is thus a need for future researchers to explore other variables of influencer marketing in order to expand the scope and generalizability of the present study findings.

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