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# **Influence of Celebrity Trustworthiness on Purchase Intention of Darling Hair among Female Undergraduates in University of Ilorin: A Qualitative Study**

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## **Abstract**

Studies have revealed consumer distrust as a key factor hindering the effectiveness of online celebrity endorsement campaigns, as consumers believe that celebrities do not use the endorsed product. Despite such trends of consumer distrust, Darling (a brand that produces hair extensions for braids and weaves) still employs the endorsement strategy in their online advertisements. This study explores the lived experiences of Darling Hair consumers, examining how their trust in celebrity endorsers featured in Darling Hair online advertisements influences their purchase intention. Qualitative research method was adopted and in-depth interviews were conducted, with the snowball technique on 27 consumers of Darling Hair who are female undergraduates in the University of Ilorin. Thematic analysis was conducted using NVivo 11 software. Thus, the findings show that consumers perceive celebrity expertise and transparency as factors that influence their belief in Darling Hair celebrity endorsers, thereby leading to favourable purchase intentions. The study also reveals that consumers' perceptions of celebrity product experience and communication consistency foster the dependability of Darling Hair celebrity endorsers, which influences their purchase intention. The conceptualization of celebrity trustworthiness can be viewed from two windows of believability (celebrity expertise and transparency) and dependability (product experience and communication consistency). Hence, the findings provide a roadmap for brands and future research can be conducted on improving online celebrity endorsement strategies. The study recommends that brands should partner with knowledgeable celebrities who understand advertising and the advertised product, while such celebrities should regularly share honest accounts of their product experiences to testify to the truthfulness about their endorsement deals

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**Keywords:** celebrity endorser, consumer distrust, darling hair, online celebrity endorsement, purchase intention

## Introduction

In today's digital era, the shift from traditional advertising to online advertising can be explained by the ability of online platforms to reach specific audience effectively (Singh, [2024](#)). Both small and large brands have embraced this trend, with a strong focus on social media advertisements (Adejuwon & Lawal, [2022](#)). As part of their digital strategies, brands frequently feature celebrities in their online ads, contributing to the widespread use of celebrity endorsements (Bogollu & Sathish, [2023](#)). Celebrity endorsements allow brands to leverage the trust consumers place in well-known figures to promote a wide range of products, including clothing, automobiles, and hair extensions (Ciornea et al., [2022](#)). This strategy is particularly effective within the online space, where consumers' trust in celebrities can significantly influence their purchasing decisions (Sufian et al., [2021](#)).

However, not all celebrity endorsements yield positive outcomes. Consumers may sometimes distrust celebrities, perceiving their endorsements as driven solely by financial gain rather than genuine belief in the product (Kurniawati, [2019](#); Muda et al., [2017](#); Shanthi et al., [2022](#)). This concern has led to a growing body of research on the relationship between celebrity trustworthiness and consumer purchase intentions (Afifah, [2022](#); Hartawidjaja & Agus, [2023](#)). Studies suggest that consumers view trustworthy celebrity endorsers as dependable and believable, which can enhance the effectiveness of endorsements (Balaban et al., [2022](#); Sari et al., [2021](#); Wang & Scheinbaum, [2017](#)).

While existing research has established the importance of celebrity trustworthiness, there is a gap in understanding how specific facets of trustworthiness, such as believability and dependability, directly influence purchase intentions. For instance, studies like those by Ekakitie and Okosodo ([2023](#)) and Akindele and Arogundade ([2022](#)) highlight the significance of trustworthiness but do not specifically address its impact on consumer behavior within Nigeria's hair extension industry.

Recognising this gap, this study explores the influence of celebrity trustworthiness on consumer purchase intentions within the Nigerian hair extension market, focusing on the popular brand, Darling Hair. The brand

frequently collaborates with celebrities in various online campaigns, such as "Style Like a Star" and "Black Girl Magic" (Abiola-Tikare, [2022](#); Awodipe, [2019](#)). Despite challenges surrounding celebrity trustworthiness, Darling Hair continues to rely on digital platforms and celebrity endorsements. Consequently, this study examines: (1) the perceived influence of celebrity believability on purchase intention of Darling Hair among female undergraduates in University of Ilorin, and (2) the perceived impact of celebrity dependability on purchase intention of Darling Hair among the students.

## **Literature Review**

### **Online Celebrity Endorsement and Purchase Intention**

Communication between a seller and consumer for promotional purposes, known as advertising, has undergone a digital shift as brands now advertise their products or services on several online platforms (Ciornea et al., [2022](#)). To make advertising more impactful, celebrities are seen promoting products on social media and other online platforms. However, these celebrity endorsements come in different forms, such as pictures, videos, freebies, and incentives, so as to ensure that they appeal to consumers to make purchases (Chaudhuri & Agarwal, [2021](#)).

Nevertheless, the impact of celebrity endorsement can also be traced to the fact that online platforms provide prompt connections for interaction between celebrities and their audience (Ciornea et al., [2022](#)). This is to say that celebrities and their audiences leverage online platforms for the exchange of interactions, thereby bringing the two parties closer to each other (Tengku & Manaf, [2020](#)). Hence, audiences are easily convinced by celebrities to purchase advertised products or services (Afifah, [2022](#)).

### **Celebrity Trustworthiness and Purchase Intention**

In advertising, celebrity endorsement aims to leverage the image or appearance of a celebrity to increase patronage (Onu et al., [2019](#)). In order to achieve this, advertisers carefully select celebrities for endorsement purposes, considering the level of credibility attributed to them (Bogollu & Sathish, [2023](#)). Trustworthiness is one of the characteristics of a credible celebrity, prompting brands to collaborate with them depending upon their affiliation with this trait (Bogoevska-Gavrilova & Ciunova, [2022](#)).

There is a positive relationship between trustworthiness and purchase intention, as studies have indicated that consumers are more likely to purchase products advertised by trustworthy celebrities (Ekakitie & Okosodo, [2023](#); Eseoghene et al., [2020](#); Onu et al., [2019](#)). For instance, consumers' ability to discern insincere celebrity endorsements results in disregarding their advertisements, leading to celebrity endorsements' inability to persuade consumers (Molelekang & Dondolo, [2021](#)). Meanwhile, a trustworthy celebrity endorser possesses the ability to persuade consumers, as their endorsement appears genuine and not merely for monetary purposes (Onu et al., [2019](#)). In this sense, authenticity plays a crucial role in the effectiveness of celebrity trustworthiness towards purchase intention.

### **Online Celebrity Endorsement of Daring Hair**

In this digital age where people spend time surfing the internet, brands have recognised the need to promote their products online (Araujo et al., [2017](#); Cabigting et al., [2022](#)). Darling Hair exemplifies this, as they partner with celebrities to promote their different hair extensions online. The Darling Hair brand markets a wide range of hair extensions for braids, weaves and fix-ons, which are also available in wig form (Jatto, [2023](#)). While the brand employs traditional media for advertisement, they have also been seen running several online campaigns – ‘style like a star’, ‘find your beautiful’, ‘black girl magic’, and ‘the diva’ (Abiola-Tikare, [2022](#); Aliogo, [2021](#); Ebirim, [2021](#)).

Moreover, Darling Hair recognises the necessity of featuring different celebrities in different online campaigns, depending on the extent to which the image of celebrities aligns with the campaign theme (Aliogo, [2021](#)). For instance, the Black Girl Magic online campaign featured celebrities like Daine Russet (Big Brother Naija reality TV star and film maker) and Tiwa Savage (popular Nigerian singer and song writer) with dark skins, emphasising the beauty of African women by promoting the trend of ‘black is beautiful.’ It is worthy to note that these online campaigns come in different forms, such as pictures, comments, reviews, and videos like Do It Yourself (DIY), Get Ready with Me (GRM), and skits (Darling Nigeria, [n.d.](#)). Therefore, Darling Hair stands as a brand that leverages online celebrity endorsement to promote the beauty of African women (Aliogo, [2021](#)).

## Source Credibility Theory

Theories of persuasion exist to provide underlying reasons for people's attitude change (Druckman, [2022](#)). In other words, promotional messages have an impact on audience belief, thereby leading to a change in attitude. Thus, this study is anchored on the Source Credibility Theory (SCT), which states that receivers are likely to be persuaded by a source perceived as credible (Hovland & Walter, [1951](#)). In essence, SCT explains that if the audience finds the person passing a message credible, they are likely to believe and follow the opinion of the sender.

However, trustworthiness is identified as a dimension of SCT, which is the perceived honesty and integrity of a source (Ohanian, [1990](#)). This means that celebrities who are honest and have integrity can successfully persuade audiences, making them more believable and dependable. Meanwhile, further investigation on SCT argues that celebrity trustworthiness does not always lead to a change in consumer attitude, especially when the source's traits does not align with consumers' traits (Hussain et al., [2020](#); Hussain et al., [2021](#)). Despite these differing views, Darling Hair continues to employ celebrities to promote their products. As such, SCT serves as a theoretical foundation for examining how believability and dependability in celebrity trustworthiness influence purchase intention. This study draws insight from the lived experiences of Darling Hair consumers, specifically female undergraduates in University of Ilorin, to understand how believability and dependability, as aspects of celebrity trustworthiness, influence purchase intention within the context of SCT.

## Method

For this study, a phenomenological qualitative research design was adopted, which was borne out of the need to explore consumers' perspectives on how the trustworthiness of celebrities in endorsement advertisements influences their purchase intention, with a specific focus on Darling Hair consumers who were female undergraduates of University of Ilorin. To gather data from consumers, snowball technique was used to sample participants for an in-depth interview. The adoption of the snowball technique was deemed imperative, given the need to locate participants who were not easy to come by (Dragan & Isaic-Maniu, [2022](#)). Initially, seven prospective participants were identified through hairdressers in the University of Ilorin complex, given their close relationship with regular buyers of hair extension products

like Darling Hair. Three of these participants were selected for the interview after confirming their familiarity with Darling Hair online advertisements. These participants suggested potential candidates for interviews. To elicit responses from consumers. This study opted for an in-depth interview, as it offers interviewees the opportunity to provide detailed responses while sharing their experiences (Elhami & Khoshnevisan, [2022](#)). However, during the sampling process, the study stopped recruiting participants at 27 samples due to a lack of new insights. This aligns with the recommendation by Fofana et al. ([2020](#)) that, for a large population, 20 samples are acceptable for a qualitative study.

In addition, this study was grounded in thematic analysis, a method described by Elliott et al. ([2023](#)) that involves the systematic identification, organisation, and interpretation of patterns, known as themes, across a set of data. Hence, interview transcripts were imported into the NVIVO 11 qualitative data analysis tool to guide the coding process, which was executed in three stages of open, axial, and selective coding as recommended by Brailas et al. ([2023](#)). Consequently, themes and subthemes were identified during the coding process.

## Results

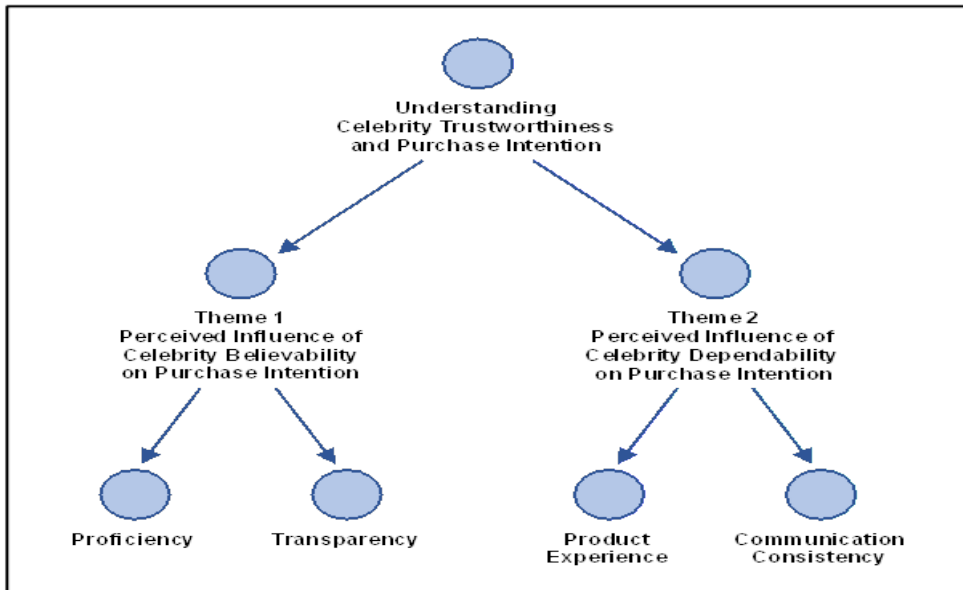
Based on participants' shared experiences and views of celebrity trustworthiness and their purchase intention of Darling Hair, two major themes emerged. As reflected in figure 1, these include the perceived influence of celebrity believability, and perceived influence of celebrity dependability. Each theme along with its constituent sub-themes is described as follows.

### **Theme 1: Perceived Influence of Celebrity Believability on Purchase Intention**

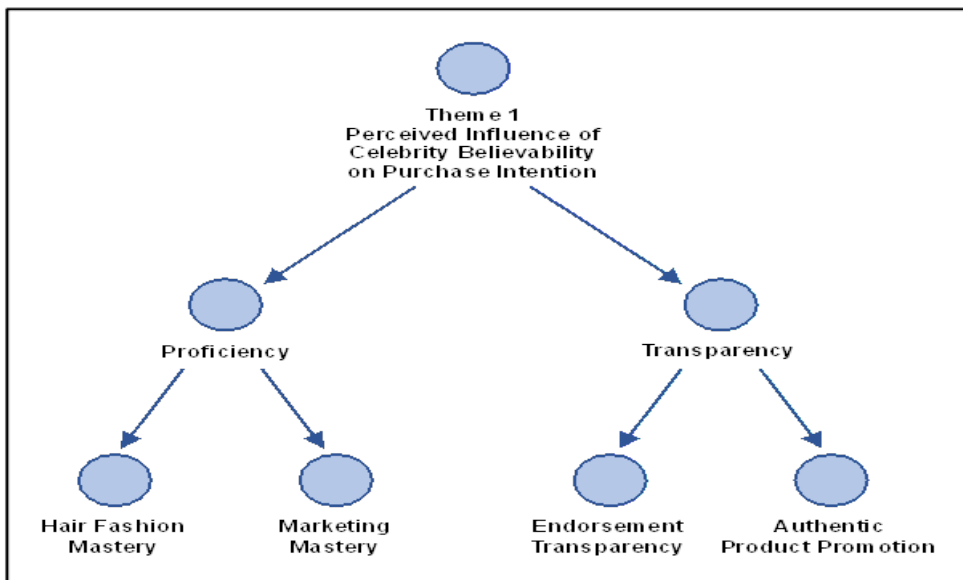
Evidenced by the shared experience of participants on celebrity trustworthiness and their purchase intention of Darling Hair, as shown in Figure 2, it becomes apparent that celebrity proficiency and transparency foster a sense of belief in Darling Hair celebrity endorsers; this belief in turn builds trust in the endorsers, subsequently leading to a favourable purchase intention.

**Figure 1**

*Summary of Findings on Understanding of Celebrity Trustworthiness and Purchase Intention*

**Figure 2**

*Perceived Influence of Celebrity Believability on Purchase Intention*





### ***Sub-Theme 1a: Proficiency***

Darling Hair celebrity endorsers who demonstrate proficiency are easily believed by participants, which eventually leads to trust. The extent to which participants believe these endorsers depends on how well the endorsers are knowledgeable. However, while some celebrity endorsers have hair fashion mastery, understanding different hair extensions and their fitting styles, others have a solid marketing mastery.

**Hair Fashion Mastery.** Participants emphasised the importance of having celebrity endorsers who are vastly knowledgeable about hair extensions and styles, as they effectively persuade them to buy Darling Hair. This is reflected in the account of participant 18:

I'm always clueless about what hairstyle to do, but seeing Daine, who knows fashion, telling me that I should buy Darling hair, (smiles) it gives me *ginger* (motivates me) to buy the hair ASAP. You know that Daine and nut braids are like 5 and 6 (go hand in hand). Although I know she is advertising Darling Hair whenever I see a new style on her, I don't mind. I will still buy it since I don't know fashion (I know little about fashion) (smiles).

In the same vein, Participant 11 explained thus: "For me, if a celebrity that knows the different type of hair that fit different people advertise Darling hair, I will believe her because she is good at that, and I'll buy the hair."

**Marketing Mastery.** Some participants maintain a contrasting view that Darling Hair celebrities with a deep understanding of marketing and advertising effectively persuade them to purchase Darling Hair. In this manner, participant 22, who sees herself as a critical thinker, explained that she is more concerned about how celebrity endorsers market products:

... I look at things critically, .... it's not about posting your figure or nudes to advertise, focus on the main thing that you want to sell... I so much like Darling celebrities, they don't post nudes, they advertise with sense, that's the major reason why I buy what they advertise....

Another informant, Participant 08, also narrated her ordeal at the market as she purchased Darling hair because she remembered a well-executed Darling hair advertisement:

There was one time I wanted to buy attachment in Idumota market. In fact, I already picked X-expression (a hair extension brand), that's when I saw Darling too, my brain just remembered the video I saw online, that Mocheddah was advertising Darling Hair. The advert is like a short story. I really like the delivery of the advert. One thing about Mocheddah, she knows this promotion thing. I was literally glued to the advert... first, I didn't know it was Darling Hair advert, it was towards the end I discovered. It's that advert that made me drop X-expression, I had to buy Darling attachment that day

### ***Sub-Theme 1b: Transparency***

Some respondents shared their experience with the transparency of Darling Hair celebrity endorsers, stating that the extent to which a celebrity endorser is honest and open to customers informs their buying decision. In other words, the level of honesty or openness of a celebrity endorser convinces consumers to purchase Darling Hair.

**Endorsement Transparency.** Participants of this study agreed that when celebrities are honest about the type of endorsement deal, it encourages them to believe them. It is in this sense that participant 15 narrated thus:

If there's one thing I like about Darling celebrities, it's because they don't lie, they'll tell you that the hair on their head is free of charge, they don't hide the fact that Darling gave them free products and how expensive the hair is, but they'll let you know that it's worth it, that's why I believe them and just decide to buy it.

Similarly, Participant 01 explained that the truthfulness of celebrity endorsers about the advertised product encouraged her to believe in the advertisement:

I almost stopped buying Darling hair at some point, if not for Daine's Instagram live, thanked God I believed the things she said... So, she talked about the nature of the deal, which is a paid one, I mean that they will pay her for promoting the product... she made us know that she was sceptical at first because she didn't believe there's anything special in Darling attachment...

**Authentic Product Promotion.** Some participants explained that the extent to which Darling Hair celebrity endorsers are void of deception

influences their purchase intention. Participant 08 articulated her thoughts in this manner:

Unlike some brands, Darling celebrity don't give fake information about product. For instance, we all know Darling does not have human hair, and I have never seen them try to package their hair as half human and half synthetic hair like some brands do... they won't say because they want you to buy the product, and then lie about what the hair is, that's why I buy the product

In the same vein, Participant 14 shared her experience about how she was convinced to buy Darling Hair by a blunt endorser:

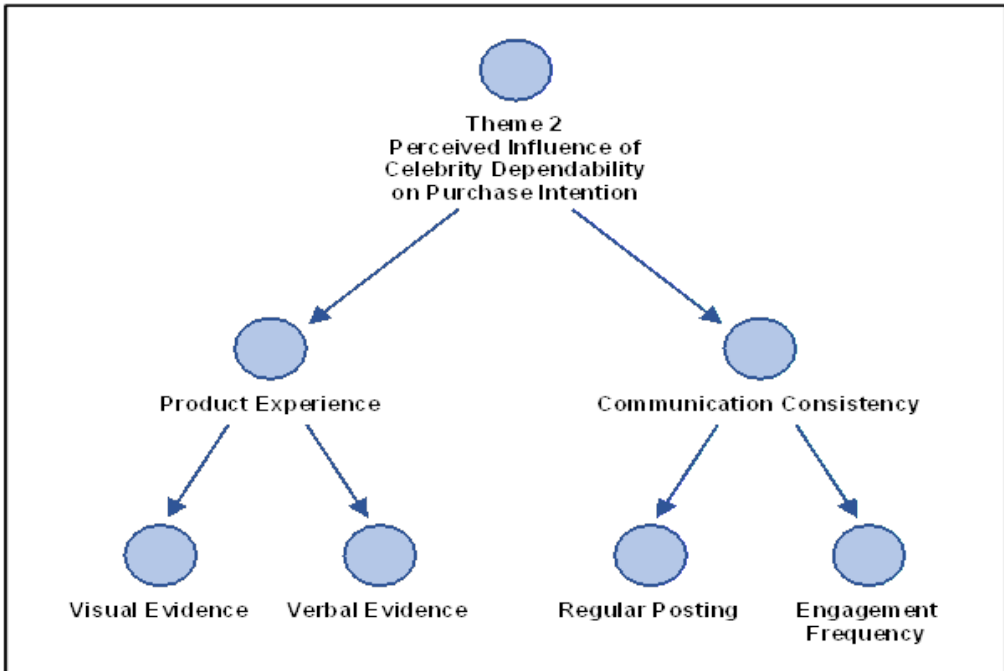
...For instance, Nengi said something in one video... she talked about how certain hairstyles and colour should not be used by some people, like a dark person using orange colour attachment, which is not going to look good on the person... I was shocked because I felt she bad mouthed (talked down on) the product, but then I realised that It's a good thing that she was blunt, that way, some people won't buy it and start saying that Darling attachment is not fine, not knowing that the colour or the style does not fit them. Since then, I always believe Nengi and go for her recommendations.

## **Theme 2: Perceived Influence of Celebrity Dependability on Purchase Intention**

While describing their experience with Darling Hair online celebrity endorsements, participants emphasised the significance of how a dependable celebrity endorser shaped their inclination to purchase Darling Hair. As indicated in Figure 3, their conceptualization of dependability consists of product experience and communication consistency, fostering their dependence on Darling Hair celebrity endorsers and thereby effectively persuading them to purchase Darling Hair.

### ***Sub-Theme 2a: Product Experience***

According to participants, celebrity endorsers seen on Darling Hair are dependable; their advertisements are more persuasive, and as such, they purchase the product. In essence, consumers depend on Darling Hair celebrity endorsers who have used the advertised products, as their testimony informs consumers' purchase decisions for such products.

**Figure 3***Perceived Influence of Celebrity Dependability on Purchase Intention*

**Visual Evidence.** Some participants hold the opinion that visual evidence, such as videos and pictures, builds trust, and as such, they depend on celebrity endorsers who visibly use Darling Hair extensions. An example of such a scenario is reflected in the words of participant 03, as follows:

They (Do) you know there's difference between advertising with mouth alone and advertising with pictures? .... I know that celebrities that advertise for Darling always do video, they use pictures too, .... When they are saying what they like about the hair or what they feel when they use the attachment, they put pictures. Like one time on Daine's live video when she was talking about why she prefers *empress* to *kinky* (types of Darling Hair extensions). She pinned a link to the picture comparison for people to check out. Things like this is what I eagerly wait for when I want to buy Darling hair. You know it's like review, without it I really can't say If I will buy Darling Hair or know the type to buy...

In the same vein, participant 16 explained thus:

What's the point of them (celebrity endorsers) talking without a picture or video to describe? Na why I like Mocheddah be that (that's why I like Mocheddah) most of her adverts for Darling are like a get-ready-with-me video, she shows the process of the hair making. In fact, one of the video adverts is how I know that Darling kinky (a type of Darling Hair extension) is not long like another brand. Can you see that it's not just about talking, but show us the picture or video that you're talking about? Let me just say that I depend on her because evidence choke (there are evidences everywhere).

**Verbal Evidence.** On the other hand, a few participants argued that visual evidence, such as pictures, does not guarantee celebrity endorsers' genuine use of a product. They find celebrity endorsers' statements more convincing, as they can detect dishonesty in their utterances. Hence, their dependence subsequently leads to trust, which influences their purchase intention.

Participant 13's explanation captures the preference of verbal testimonial over visual testimonial as a criterion that fosters dependence:

To me, when celebrities talk about what they feel about a Darling hair when they use it, it quickly enters my head than them just posting pictures. Because they always do things like that, it makes me to always go to their page and always look out for their comments or reviews on any type of hair. That is the main reason why I buy the hair.

Meanwhile, another informant, Participant 19, narrated her intentionality at detecting dishonest promotional claims, resulting in her dependence on celebrity endorsers:

... it's not that I don't like it when celebrities post pictures to advertise Darling Hair, but can I know if the pictures are real? When they talk about what they know about a product, I can tell if they are lying or not, that's why I depend on their own idea to know if I will buy.

### ***Sub-Theme 2b: Communication Consistency***

Based on the shared experiences of participants, it is evident that consistent communication between Darling Hair celebrity endorsers and

consumers strengthens the dependability of celebrity endorsers, which eventually leads to the consumers' trust in such endorsers. According to participants, consistent communication can be determined by how regularly an endorser post and the frequency of endorsers' engagement with them.

**Regular Posting.** Darling Hair celebrity endorsers that give daily updates and post contents in the form of series are perceived to communicate consistently, thereby fostering a sense of dependability. Furthermore, many participants are of the opinion that Darling Hair celebrity endorsers who keep them updated every day are easily dependable due to the fact that their posts serve as a form of reminder. For example, according to participant 10: "...it's every day I go to Darling Hair's page that I see one or two of their celebrities posting something new about the hair, that's what make me to always remember the product to buy." This act of posting every day is specifically noticed on the pages of less popular celebrities: As encapsulated by participant 16:

Why I always rely on Darling Hair celebrities to buy attachment is because they post every day, but it's not all of them that post every day. You see those ones that are very popular, they don't really post like that, but I see their advert on Darling's page, even though it's not very plenty there. Now those celebrities that are not popular, they are trying, especially on Instagram. I see their adverts on reels and they also post on their stories. It is an everyday thing for them...

However, findings reveal that overwhelming daily update can lead to consumers' indecisiveness, where they are unsure of which product to purchase, which is a result of the advertisement's lack of in-depth information about the product. This is reflected in the shared experience of Participants 03, as follows:

... you know that point where there is too much things to do at a time, sometimes you may not do the thing very well, because you are focused on how to do a lot. I think that's how I can describe some of these celebrities that Darling is using to advertise. They have a lot of adverts on their page... what I now notice is that these adverts will just show the hairstyle, and that's all... Maybe because they want to do plenty advert for Darling. Even if they don't have enough information about the product, I still find them interesting, and I can always go to their page and be rest assured that I will find

something there to make. That's why I turn to Darling celebrity to make fine hair (smile)

It is worthy to note that the Darling Hair advertisements presented by celebrities in a sequential manner serve as an identification of consistent communication between celebrity endorsers and consumers. Few participants believe that Darling Hair celebrity endorsers' act of breaking down promotional content into bits keeps consumers eager for the continuation of the promotion. Participant 15 explained that:

I always look forward to Mocheddah's advert on Darling Hair, especially when she is advertising with something like *Get Ready with Me* (a video detailing the routine involved in the preparation for an event). Those kinds of advert are like one step at a time, so I start thinking—what is the next thing she want to show us. Because of that I'll have to see the remaining advert. Like this now, I feel I can bank on her advert to know what to buy...

In a similar view, Participant 17 explained as follows:

... Advert does not need to be at once, like this Darling advert that I saw, it was little by little that they dropped it on their page. In fact, I had to follow the advert to the end. Something I realized later is that I was already looking at the type of wigs that I can wear to one occasion, so I kept on following the advert to the end.

**Engagement Frequency.** consumers perceive consistent communication by observing how often celebrity endorsers promote Darling hair by means of interaction. As a result, they depend on these celebrity endorsers, thereby leading to trust. Consumers believe that the timeliness of endorsers' responses is a good determinant of frequent engagement. While celebrity endorsers respond to consumers' questions about products, such replies are crafted so that they serve as a promotional message. This notion reflects in the thoughts of participant 21: "Darling celebrities respond to people's questions about Darling hair, you don't need to be on their page before seeing their response, it could be on Darling page, that's why I look for their comments before I buy hair." Despite the quick responses to consumers' inquiries, there's a notable difference among the accounts that receive responses. Participant 27 explained that accounts with huge followings often get replies, while smaller accounts receive replies occasionally:

One thing I like about Darling Hair celebrities is that they respond to their audience, in as much as you ask questions about Darling Hair. But what I notice is that they mostly reply to people that have plenty followers. It is not that they don't reply people that have small followers, but the people that have plenty followers usually get replies most times. The thing is now that the reply mostly looks like an advert itself. That's why I don't even bother to watch their adverts if I want to make my hair or buy attachment, I go straight to comment sections, that's where you will see the real thing.

### Discussion

Individual participants provided insights highlighting the significance of different celebrities' proficiency, transparency, product experience, and communication consistency as they contribute to the conceptualization of the dependability and believability of celebrity endorsers. It is worthy of note that the trustworthiness of Darling Hair celebrity endorsers hinges on how believable and dependable they appear to consumers. Hence, the findings of this study, derived from the standpoint of Darling Hair consumers, contribute to the literature on celebrity trustworthiness and consumer purchase intention.

Following the insights from Darling hair consumers, it was discovered that 'Proficiency'—the celebrity endorser's extensive knowledge in the field of hair extension and advertising—plays a significant role in the buying decisions of consumers. In essence, consumers are convinced to purchase Darling Hair extensions due to their belief in the celebrity endorser's vast knowledge of hair fashion and advertising itself. This aligns with previous literature that suggested that the believability of a celebrity endorser is measured by the degree to which consumers perceive the endorser as an expert in the field of the product advertised (Mookda et al., [2020](#)). While this finding is in line with the proposition of SCT that expertise (celebrity's knowledge in a field) influences purchase intentions, according to SCT, 'expertise' is a dimension of credibility, whereas in this study, similar to 'expertise' is 'proficiency', which is a facet of believability that influences purchase intention.

It is important to understand that the transparency of Darling Hair celebrity endorsers regarding the nature of the endorsement deal (monetary or not) and the authenticity of the information provided encourage



consumers to believe in celebrity endorsers' statements, thereby prompting them to purchase the product. Similarly, Balaban et al. (2022) explained that the transparency of social media influencers fosters consumers' belief in them, which easily leads to an increased purchase intention. However, it is worthy of note that while both studies highlight the influence of transparency on purchase intention, the specific source context differs, as the current study focuses on the transparency of celebrity endorsers while Balaban et al. (2022) focus on the transparency of social media influencers for persuasion purposes. Nonetheless, the disparity in source context affirms SCT, as it does not confine the persuasion of a message to a type of source. This means that SCT supports the idea that the effectiveness of a persuasive message is determined by a transparent source, which is not necessarily a known figure.

The findings of this study regarding the trustworthiness of Darling Hair celebrity endorsers corroborate with (Afifah, 2022), and Lee and Ande (2022) by providing meaning to the dependability of celebrity endorsers. Based on the data gathered from participant experiences with Darling Hair online celebrity endorsements, it was discovered that consumers depend on Darling Hair celebrity endorsers with first-hand product experience and those who maintain consistent communication with them. It is essential to note that endorsers demonstrate their product experience in verbal and visual form, assuring consumers that they have indeed used the advertised product. Basically, when celebrities endorse the products they have used, consumers find it easy to depend on them as their endorsement is rooted in their experience with the product. Therefore, it is evident that consumers depend on celebrities who demonstrate a strong personal experience with the product, thereby leading to a favourable purchase. This finding is in agreement with Lee and Ande (2022), emphasising the significant influence of celebrities with experiential knowledge about a product on the purchase intention of consumers. While SCT maintains that the persuasiveness of a message is driven by the source's expertise (the extent to which a source is knowledgeable in the relevant field), in this study, the persuasiveness of a message is determined by the source's knowledge derived from their personal experience with the product rather than the broader field.

The influence of consistent communication between Darling Hair celebrity endorsers and consumers on purchase intention is another finding in this study. Consumers believe that dependable celebrity endorsers are

those who constantly engage with their audience on social media via comment sections and live videos. However, consistent communication is determined by how regular endorsers post and the frequency of engaging consumers on their posts. Consumers specifically highlighted the fact that social media accounts with a significant number of followers get more attention than accounts with a lesser number of followers in terms of responses from the endorsers. From the view of Darling Hair consumers, this is because responses to high-following social media accounts attract high viewership. Meanwhile, consumers explained that these responses are presented in the form of advertisements, which means that such advertisements reach a larger audience. In essence, consistent communication fosters a sense of dependability, resulting in the trustworthiness of celebrity endorsers, thereby influencing consumers purchase intentions for Darling Hair. This study aligns with Szak et al. (2024), suggesting that influencers maintain strong communication with their audience with the aim of influencing their opinion. While the findings of the current study indicate that communication is a persuasive tool that drives celebrity dependability, consequently leading to an increase in purchase intention, Szak et al. (2024), on the other hand, highlighted the influence of communication on audience's opinion rather than specifically looking into certain consumer behaviours like purchase intention. By underscoring the importance of communication for persuasive messaging, this study enriches SCT to include the dynamics of celebrity trustworthiness, illustrating how consistent communication fosters celebrity dependability.

## Conclusion

With a focus on the perceptions of Darling Hair consumers, this study provides an understanding of the association between celebrity trustworthiness and consumer purchase intention. Accordingly, this study has validated the submission of SCT that consumers' inclination to make purchases is influenced by the trustworthiness of celebrity endorsers. However, this study proved that trustworthiness, as perceived by consumers, hinges on the believability and dependability of celebrity endorsers. The study has also revealed that expertise and product experience make a celebrity endorser believable to Darling Hair consumers. Likewise, the investigation revealed how transparency and communication consistency, as attributes of a dependable celebrity endorser, influence

consumer purchase intention. While SCT serves as a basis for this study, its use was narrowed to believability and dependability as aspects of trustworthiness, neglecting other factors that influence consumers' purchase intention. Additionally, insights from this study are specific to hair extension brand, particularly Darling Hair, making findings less generalisable to other brands or consumers.

## Recommendations

Based on its findings, the recommendations of this study are as follows:

1. It has been revealed that celebrity expertise and product experience influence purchase intention, therefore, brands should partner with celebrities who are vastly knowledgeable in advertising and also in the product domain.
2. While maintaining consistent communication with the target audience, celebrity endorsers should ensure they are transparent about the product and nature of the deal, as endorsers' communication and transparency foster purchase intention.
3. To gain a deeper understanding of product experience and celebrity expertise, future research should look into how these phenomena contribute to consumer purchase intention.
4. Brands should ensure that celebrity endorsers share their experiences with the product after usage, as consumers are easily convinced by celebrity endorsers' testimonials about the product.

## Author Contribution

**Maryam Timilehin Lawal:** Conceptualization, Data Collection, Formal Analysis, Methodology; Resources, Validation, Visualization, Writing –Original Draft, Writing – Review & Editing. **Aisha Imam Omoloso:** Conceptualization, Formal Analysis, Methodology, Project Administration, Supervision, Writing – Review & Editing. **Abdulkadir Oba La'aro:** Methodology, Writing – Review & Editing. **Rasaq Muhammed Adisa:** Methodology, Project Administration, Writing – Review & Editing. **Patrick Udende:** Project Administration; Writing – Review & Editing.

## Conflict of Interest

The authors of the manuscript have no financial or non-financial conflict of interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

## Data Availability Statement

Data supporting the findings of this study will be made available by the corresponding author upon request.

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