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EFFECT OF CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT ON BRAND PERFORMANCE OF THE DAIRY INDUSTRY IN KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Celebrity endorsement has become an increasingly important marketing strategy through which firms use the fame, credibility, attractiveness and public influence of celebrities to create favourable associations between endorsed products and consumers. However, despite the widespread use of celebrity endorsements in the Kenyan dairy industry, empirical evidence on the extent to which celebrity–product congruence contributes to brand performance, and whether marketing strategy changes this relationship, remains limited. This study therefore examined the effect of Celebrity–Product Match on Brand Performance in the Kenyan dairy industry, with Marketing Strategy Alignment examined as a moderating variable. The study was guided by the Match-Up Hypothesis, which posits that endorsement effectiveness is enhanced when the characteristics of the celebrity are congruent with those of the endorsed product. The study was anchored in a positivist research philosophy and adopted a descriptive research design. The target population comprised 218 dairy firms, from which data were collected from 106 respondents using structured questionnaires and stratified sampling. Descriptive findings indicated high levels of agreement regarding Celebrity–Product Match ($M = 4.03$), Marketing Strategy Alignment ($M = 4.07$) and Brand Performance ($M = 4.09$). Pearson correlation analysis established a positive and statistically significant relationship between Celebrity–Product Match and Brand Performance ($r = .560$, $p < .01$), while Marketing Strategy Alignment also demonstrated a strong positive association with Brand Performance ($r = .722$, $p < .01$). Regression analysis further established that Celebrity–Product Match had a positive and statistically significant effect on Brand Performance ($\beta = .266$, $t = 4.477$, $p < .001$), explaining 48.2% of the variance in Brand Performance. However, the interaction between Celebrity–Product Match and Marketing Strategy Alignment was not statistically significant ($\beta = -.043$, $t = -.412$, $p = .681$), indicating that Marketing Strategy Alignment did not significantly moderate the relationship between

Celebrity–Product Match and Brand Performance. The study concludes that greater congruence between a celebrity and the endorsed dairy product is associated with improved brand performance, but Marketing Strategy Alignment does not significantly alter the strength of this relationship. The study recommends that dairy firms should give priority to celebrity–product congruence when selecting endorsers and should assess compatibility in terms of celebrity attributes, lifestyle, values, social image and relevance to the product and target consumers. Firms should also integrate celebrity endorsement into their broader marketing strategies while avoiding the assumption that such alignment automatically strengthens the effect of celebrity–product match on brand performance.

KEYWORDS: Celebrity endorsement; Celebrity–Product Match; Marketing Strategy Alignment; Brand Performance; Dairy Industry; Kenya.

1.1 Background to the Study

The dairy industry is an important component of Kenya’s agricultural economy and food system, providing livelihoods to millions of households and supplying milk and dairy products to consumers across the country. The industry has, however, increasingly operated in a competitive environment characterized by changing consumer preferences, rising production and distribution costs, climate-related disruptions, regulatory challenges and competition between processed dairy products and informal milk channels (KALRO, 2023; KNBS, 2024). Although processed milk volumes increased from 4.6 billion litres in 2022 to 5.2 billion litres in 2023, representing approximately 14% growth, increased industry output has not necessarily translated into sustained competitive advantage for individual dairy brands (KNBS, 2024). Consequently, dairy processors increasingly require marketing approaches capable of differentiating their brands, strengthening consumer associations and improving brand performance.

Celebrity endorsement has emerged as one of the promotional approaches used by firms to influence consumer perceptions and strengthen brand-related outcomes. The effectiveness of celebrity endorsement, however, does not depend merely on the popularity or visibility of the celebrity. The extent to which the celebrity is perceived to be compatible with the endorsed product is particularly important. The Match-Up Hypothesis proposes that endorsement effectiveness is enhanced when the attributes of the endorser are congruent with the characteristics of the product being promoted (Kahle & Homer, 1985). Product-celebrity congruence can enhance the credibility and believability of the promotional message because consumers are more likely to perceive the endorsement as natural and relevant (Till & Busler, 2000; Lou & Yuan, 2019). In the dairy industry, therefore, the appropriateness of a celebrity's image, expertise, lifestyle or perceived values to dairy products may influence consumers' perceptions of the endorsed brand.

The Kenyan market provides an important context in which to examine celebrity product match because dairy products are frequently associated with health, nutrition, family wellbeing and everyday consumption. A celebrity whose public image is strongly associated with health, fitness, family values or other attributes relevant to dairy consumption may create stronger associations with the endorsed brand than a celebrity whose attributes have little connection with the product. Kainyu (2022), for example, found that perceived fit between celebrities and fast-moving consumer goods was positively associated with brand-related outcomes among Kenyan consumers. However, the extent to which celebrity product match affects the performance of dairy brands in Kenya remains insufficiently established.

The effectiveness of celebrity endorsement may also depend on the marketing strategy within which the endorsement is deployed. Strategic Fit Theory emphasizes the importance of alignment between organizational strategies and the internal and external environment in which firms operate (Andrews, 1971; Venkatraman & Camillus, 1984). Marketing strategy provides the broader strategic context through which promotional activities, including celebrity endorsement, are designed and implemented. A celebrity endorsement that is consistent with a firm's target market, positioning, communication channels, pricing approach and overall brand strategy may produce different outcomes from an endorsement implemented independently of the firm's marketing strategy. Thus, marketing strategy may strengthen or weaken the relationship between celebrity endorsement and brand performance.

Brand performance is particularly important in the Kenyan dairy industry because dairy products are often highly substitutable and consumers can readily switch among competing brands and between formal and informal sources of milk. Brand performance therefore extends beyond short-term purchase intentions to include outcomes such as brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, customer loyalty and market-related performance. Brand Equity Theory provides a basis for understanding these outcomes by conceptualizing brand value in terms of consumer-based assets and liabilities associated with a brand name, including awareness, associations, perceived quality and loyalty (Aaker, 1991). From this perspective, effective celebrity endorsement can contribute to stronger consumer associations and perceptions of quality, which may ultimately enhance brand performance.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The Kenyan dairy industry has experienced growth in processed milk production, with processed milk volumes increasing from 4.6 billion litres in 2022 to 5.2 billion litres in 2023 (KNBS, 2024). Despite this growth, dairy processors continue to operate in a highly competitive market characterized by increasing production and distribution costs, climate-related supply disruptions, changing consumer

preferences and competition from informal milk markets (KALRO, 2023; KNBS, 2024). The resulting competitive pressure makes it necessary for dairy processors to develop brands that are differentiated, credible and capable of sustaining consumer preference. However, increased production and promotional activity do not automatically guarantee superior brand performance.

Celebrity endorsement has become an important promotional mechanism through which firms seek to differentiate their brands and influence consumer perceptions. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement depends on more than simply selecting a famous or popular individual. The celebrity product match is particularly important because consumers may respond more favourably when the celebrity's attributes are perceived to be compatible with the product (Kahle & Homer, 1985; Till & Busler, 2000). In the dairy industry, where products are strongly associated with nutrition, health, family wellbeing and everyday consumption, a poor match between celebrity characteristics and dairy products may undermine the credibility and relevance of the endorsement. Conversely, an appropriate match may strengthen brand associations, perceived quality and consumer loyalty. Although Kainyu (2022) reported positive relationships between celebrity-product fit and brand-related outcomes among Kenyan consumers, much of the existing Kenyan research has focused on general celebrity endorsement, consumer attitudes or purchase intentions rather than specifically examining the effect of celebrity product match on brand performance in the dairy industry.

A further problem is that celebrity endorsement does not occur in isolation from other marketing decisions. The contribution of an endorsement to brand performance may depend on whether it is aligned with the firm's broader marketing strategy. Strategic Fit Theory suggests that organizational outcomes improve when strategies are appropriately aligned with internal capabilities and external market conditions (Andrews, 1971; Venkatraman & Camillus, 1984). Thus, the same celebrity-product match may produce different brand outcomes depending on the firm's positioning, target-market orientation, communication strategy and other marketing decisions. Existing studies have largely examined celebrity endorsement as a direct predictor of consumer outcomes and have paid comparatively limited attention to whether marketing strategy changes the strength or direction of the relationship between celebrity endorsement and brand performance.

This creates both an empirical and theoretical gap. Empirically, there is inadequate sector-specific evidence establishing whether celebrity product match significantly affects brand performance among dairy brands in Kenya. Theoretically, there is limited evidence explaining whether marketing strategy acts as a moderating variable in the celebrity endorsement–brand performance relationship within the Kenyan dairy industry. Consequently, it remains unclear whether investing in celebrity endorsement, even where the celebrity appears compatible with the dairy product, translates into improved brand performance when the endorsement is not appropriately integrated into the firm's marketing strategy.

The problem addressed by this study, therefore, is the uncertain contribution of celebrity product match to brand performance and the unclear role of marketing strategy in conditioning this relationship among dairy industry firms in Kenya. The study consequently sought to establish the effect of celebrity product match on brand performance and determine whether marketing strategy significantly moderates the relationship between celebrity endorsement and brand performance in the Kenyan dairy industry. The study was guided by the following specific objectives and hypotheses.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1.3.1 General Objective

The general objective of the study was to examine the effect of celebrity endorsement on brand performance of the dairy industry in Kenya.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

The study was guided by the following specific objectives:

- i. To assess the effect of celebrity product match on brand performance of the dairy industry in Kenya.
- ii. To determine the moderating effect of marketing strategy on the relationship between celebrity endorsement and brand performance of the dairy industry in Kenya.

1.4 Research Hypotheses

The study tested the following null hypotheses:

- i. **H0₁:** Celebrity product match has no significant effect on brand performance of the dairy industry in Kenya.
- ii. **H0_{1a}:** Marketing strategy has no significant moderating effect on the relationship between celebrity endorsement and brand performance of the dairy industry in Kenya.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on three theories that directly explain the relationships among its variables. The Match-Up Hypothesis provided the theoretical foundation for celebrity product match, the Strategic Fit Theory explained the moderating role of marketing strategy, while Brand Equity Theory provided the theoretical basis for understanding brand performance. The theories were selected because they directly correspond to the explanatory, moderating and dependent variables of the study.

2.2 Match-Up Hypothesis

The Match-Up Hypothesis, originally advanced by Kahle and Homer (1985), proposes that the effectiveness of an endorsement is enhanced when the characteristics of the celebrity are congruent with the characteristics of the product being endorsed. The central assumption is that consumers are more likely to accept and respond positively to an endorsement when there is a perceived fit between

the endorser and the product. Such congruence can increase the credibility, relevance and believability of the advertising message because the celebrity's attributes provide a meaningful association with the endorsed product (Kahle & Homer, 1985; Till & Busler, 2000).

The hypothesis is particularly relevant to celebrity product match, which constitutes the independent variable in this study. Celebrity product match concerns the extent to which consumers perceive the celebrity's characteristics, expertise, image, lifestyle and values as compatible with the characteristics and positioning of the endorsed dairy product. Where a celebrity is perceived as an appropriate representative of a product, the endorsement may facilitate the transfer of favourable celebrity associations to the brand. Conversely, a mismatch may reduce the credibility of the endorsement and weaken the persuasive effect of the promotional message.

Empirical studies provide support for the importance of congruence in celebrity endorsement. Kamins (1989) demonstrated that the effectiveness of an attractive celebrity depended partly on the type of product being endorsed, supporting the proposition that endorser-product congruence influences advertising evaluations. Till and Busler (2000) similarly demonstrated the importance of expertise and attractiveness in determining endorsement effectiveness, suggesting that different dimensions of celebrity characteristics may become important depending on the product category. More recently, research has extended the match-up perspective to digital influencers, emphasizing the importance of lifestyle congruence between endorsers and their audiences (Kim & Park, 2022). In Kenya, Kainyu (2022) found that perceived celebrity-product fit was positively associated with brand-related outcomes in fast-moving consumer goods.

The Match-Up Hypothesis is particularly applicable to the dairy industry because dairy products possess functional and symbolic associations involving nutrition, health, family wellbeing and lifestyle. Consequently, celebrities whose public characteristics are compatible with these associations may be perceived as more credible representatives of dairy brands. The theory therefore provides a logical explanation for the proposition that celebrity product match may affect brand performance among dairy brands in Kenya.

However, the Match-Up Hypothesis has been criticized for giving considerable attention to endorser-product congruence while paying less attention to contextual and strategic factors that may influence endorsement effectiveness. Lee and Koo (2021), for example, argue that factors such as authenticity and audience involvement may influence consumer responses even where the degree of celebrity-product fit varies. These limitations suggest that product-celebrity congruence alone may not fully explain brand outcomes. This observation supports the inclusion of marketing strategy as a moderating variable in the present study. Thus, the Match-Up Hypothesis supports Specific Objective One and Hypothesis H01, which examine the effect of celebrity product match on brand performance.

2.3 Strategic Fit Theory

Strategic Fit Theory is associated with the work of Andrews (1971) and was subsequently developed through strategic fit perspectives emphasizing alignment between organizational strategy and the environment (Venkatraman & Camillus, 1984). The theory proposes that organizational effectiveness and performance are enhanced when organizational strategies are appropriately aligned with internal capabilities and external environmental conditions. Conversely, a lack of alignment may result in inefficient resource utilization and weaker organizational outcomes.

The theory directly supports marketing strategy as the moderating variable in this study. Marketing strategy provides the strategic context within which celebrity endorsement is designed, implemented and communicated to the target market. A celebrity endorsement may therefore have a stronger effect on brand performance when it is consistent with the firm's broader marketing strategy. Such consistency may involve alignment with the target market, brand positioning, promotional objectives, communication channels and other marketing activities.

Venkatraman (1989) conceptualized strategic fit through different dimensions of alignment, demonstrating that fit can be examined systematically rather than treated merely as a descriptive concept. Zajac et al. (2000) further emphasized the importance of strategic flexibility and alignment as organizational environments change. Sirmon et al. (2019) similarly highlighted the importance of resource orchestration in achieving strategic alignment in dynamic environments. These developments suggest that strategy should not be viewed as an isolated organizational activity but as a configuration of mutually reinforcing decisions.

Applied to the Kenyan dairy industry, Strategic Fit Theory suggests that celebrity endorsement should be integrated into the firm's broader marketing strategy rather than implemented as an independent promotional activity. For example, a celebrity who appropriately matches a dairy product may generate stronger brand outcomes where the endorsement is consistent with the firm's positioning, target consumers and communication strategy. Conversely, a strong celebrity-product match may have a weaker effect where the endorsement is inconsistent with the firm's marketing strategy or is poorly integrated with other marketing activities.

The theory therefore provides the basis for expecting marketing strategy to alter the relationship between celebrity endorsement and brand performance. Its application in this study extends the analysis beyond the direct effect of celebrity endorsement by examining whether strategic alignment determines the extent to which endorsement contributes to brand outcomes. Strategic Fit Theory consequently supports Specific Objective Two and Hypothesis H02, which examine the moderating

effect of marketing strategy on the relationship between celebrity endorsement and brand performance.

2.4 Brand Equity Theory

Brand Equity Theory, principally associated with Aaker (1991), explains the value created by a brand through consumer-related assets and associations. Aaker (1991) conceptualized brand equity as a collection of assets and liabilities associated with a brand name and symbol that can enhance or diminish the value provided by a product or service. Key elements include brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality and brand loyalty.

The theory provides the theoretical foundation for **brand performance**, the dependent variable in this study. Brand performance reflects the extent to which a brand achieves desirable market and consumer outcomes. Strong brand awareness makes the brand more readily recognized and recalled, favourable brand associations strengthen its meaning to consumers, perceived quality enhances consumer evaluations, while loyalty encourages continued preference for the brand (Aaker, 1991). These dimensions provide a useful theoretical explanation of how marketing activities can translate into stronger brand outcomes.

Celebrity endorsement can contribute to brand performance by creating or reinforcing associations between the celebrity and the endorsed brand. Where consumers perceive the celebrity as appropriate for the product, favourable attributes associated with the celebrity may be transferred to the brand, potentially strengthening awareness, associations and perceived quality. Kainyu (2022) provides contextual support for the relationship between celebrity endorsement and brand-related outcomes in Kenya, while Gathenya et al. (2024) demonstrate the continuing importance of marketing activities in strengthening brand-related outcomes among Kenyan enterprises.

Brand Equity Theory is therefore relevant because the ultimate concern of the present study is not merely whether consumers notice a celebrity advertisement, but whether celebrity endorsement contributes to stronger and more sustainable brand performance. The theory helps explain the pathway through which endorsement-related activities can contribute to consumer-based brand assets and, consequently, stronger brand outcomes. The theory also recognizes that brand value is developed through multiple consumer experiences rather than through a single promotional activity. Consequently, celebrity endorsement should be understood as one of several mechanisms through which firms develop and reinforce brand associations. This provides further justification for examining marketing strategy as a moderator because the strategic integration of endorsement with other marketing activities may determine the extent to which celebrity-related associations translate into brand performance.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework presents the hypothesised relationships among Celebrity–Product Match, Marketing Strategy, and Brand Performance in the Kenyan dairy industry. The framework is grounded in the proposition that the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement depends substantially on the degree of congruence between the characteristics of the celebrity and the endorsed dairy product. Celebrity–Product Match is operationalised through personal attributes, social status, lifestyle similarity, and brand relevance, which capture the extent to which the celebrity's characteristics and public image are compatible with the endorsed product and its target consumers. Marketing Strategy is conceptualised as a moderating variable and is measured through target market fit, channel consistency, cultural and ethical fit, and message coherence. These dimensions reflect the extent to which celebrity endorsement is integrated with the firm's broader marketing activities and communication objectives. Brand Performance, the dependent variable, is assessed through sales uplift, market share growth, and customer loyalty, representing key market outcomes associated with successful branding and marketing activities. The framework therefore proposes that Celebrity–Product Match influences Brand Performance and that Marketing Strategy may alter the strength of this relationship. The framework provides the basis for specifying the study objectives, hypotheses, and subsequent empirical analysis.

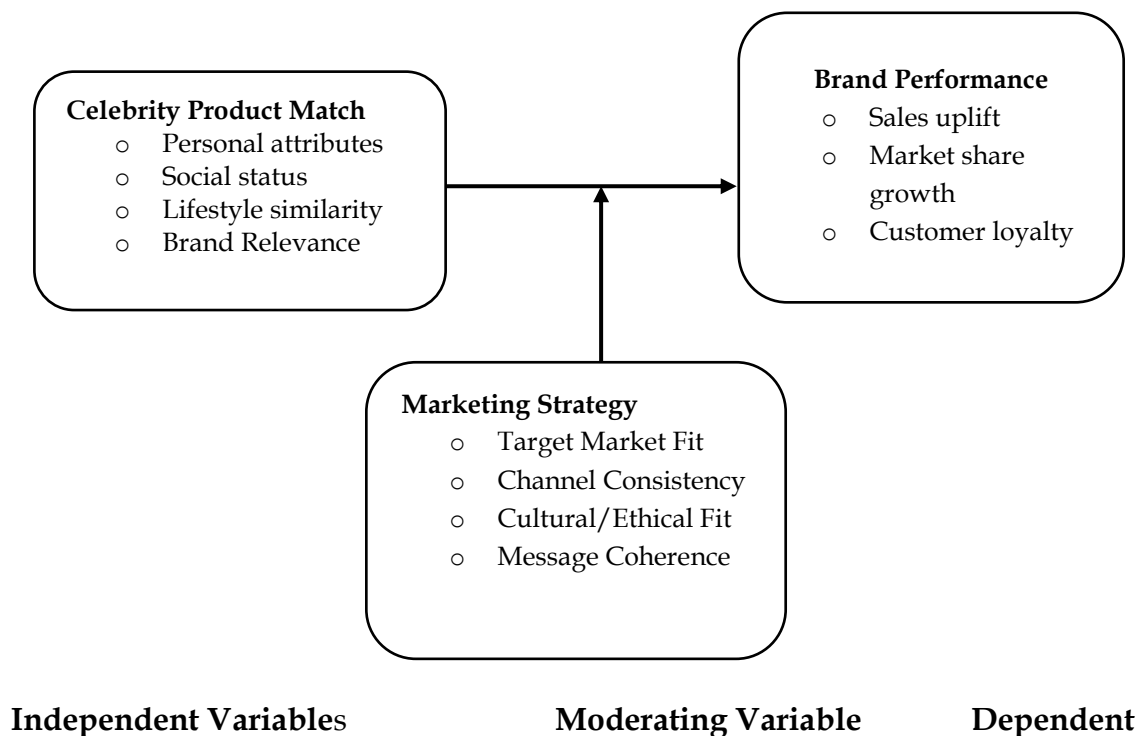


Figure1: Conceptual Framework

3.1 Research Methodology and Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive research design to examine the effect of celebrity endorsement on brand performance in the Kenyan dairy industry. The design was appropriate because the study sought to obtain standardized and measurable information from respondents regarding their perceptions of celebrity product match, marketing strategy and brand performance. A descriptive design enables researchers to systematically collect information from a defined population and describe characteristics, perceptions and relationships among variables using structured data-collection procedures (Hervie & Winful, 2018).

The design was particularly appropriate for the present study because it enabled the researcher to assess celebrity product match as an explanatory variable, brand performance as the dependent variable, and marketing strategy as a moderating variable. It consequently provided a basis for generating comparable responses from respondents and statistically examining the relationships specified in the study's conceptual framework. The design also enabled the researcher to capture variations in respondents' perceptions across the Kenyan dairy market, thereby providing empirical evidence relevant to the two specific objectives of the study.

Specifically, the descriptive design supported the assessment of the effect of celebrity product match on brand performance, as stated in Specific Objective One and tested through Hypothesis H01. It also supported the examination of the moderating effect of marketing strategy on the relationship between celebrity endorsement and brand performance, as stated in Specific Objective Two and tested through Hypothesis H02. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire to facilitate consistent measurement of the study constructs and subsequent statistical analysis.

The choice of a descriptive research design was therefore consistent with the purpose of the study, which was to obtain empirical evidence on respondents' perceptions and statistically establish the relationships among celebrity endorsement, marketing strategy and brand performance rather than manipulate the study variables experimentally. The design provided an appropriate framework for describing the characteristics of the variables and testing the hypothesized relationships within the Kenyan dairy industry.

4.0 RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents and discusses the key findings of the study in relation to the research objectives and hypotheses. The findings are interpreted in light of the empirical and theoretical literature

reviewed, highlighting areas of convergence, divergence, and the implications of the results for understanding the relationships among the study variables.

4.1 Response Rate

The response rate was assessed by comparing the number of questionnaires distributed with the number returned and considered usable for analysis. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Response Rate by Study Location

Location	Total Population	Questionnaires Distributed	Questionnaires Returned	Response Rate (%)
Athi River	11	7	5	71.4
Kisii	11	7	5	71.4
Meru	11	7	5	71.4
Murang'a	20	13	10	76.9
Nakuru	29	19	15	78.9
NBI Central	21	14	11	78.6
NBI South	11	7	5	71.4
NBI West	29	19	14	73.7
Nyeri	15	10	8	80.0
Thika	11	7	5	71.4
Olkalou	49	31	23	74.2
Total	218	141	106	75.2

Source: Survey Data (2025)

Table 1 shows that 141 questionnaires were distributed and 106 were returned, giving an overall response rate of 75.2%. The response rate varied across the study locations, ranging from 71.4% in Athi River, Kisii, Meru, NBI South and Thika to 80.0% in Nyeri. The relatively high response rate indicates that a substantial proportion of the targeted respondents participated in the study, providing an adequate basis for subsequent statistical analysis. The distribution of responses across the locations also ensured that the study captured perceptions from respondents drawn from the different geographical areas included in the study. The response rate is considered adequate for survey-based research because it provided data from more than three-quarters of the questionnaires distributed. The findings therefore provide a reasonable representation of the views of the sampled respondents and

reduce the likelihood that the results were substantially affected by non-response.

4.2 Reliability of the Research Instrument

Reliability testing was undertaken to establish the internal consistency of the questionnaire items measuring the study variables. Cronbach's alpha was used because the variables were measured using multiple Likert-scale items. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Reliability of the Research Instrument

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Decision
Celebrity–Product Match	12	0.823	Accepted
Marketing Strategy	12	0.835	Accepted
Brand Performance	12	0.784	Accepted
Overall	36	0.821	Accepted

Source: Survey Data (2025)

Table 2 indicates that the Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranged from 0.784 to 0.835, while the overall reliability coefficient was 0.821. Celebrity–Product Match recorded an alpha coefficient of 0.823, Marketing Strategy recorded 0.835, and Brand Performance recorded 0.784. All the coefficients were above the commonly accepted threshold for social science research, demonstrating satisfactory internal consistency among the items used to measure the respective constructs. The results therefore indicate that the questionnaire items consistently measured the intended constructs and were sufficiently reliable for subsequent descriptive and inferential analyses.

4.3 Validity of the Research Instrument

Construct validity was assessed using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. The KMO statistic assesses whether the patterns of correlations among items are suitable for factor analysis, while Bartlett's Test determines whether the correlation matrix differs significantly from an identity matrix. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity

Variable	KMO	Bartlett's Test	df	Sig.
Celebrity–Product Match	0.702	101.532	66	.000
Marketing Strategy	0.756	124.817	66	.000

Variable	KMO	Bartlett's Test	df	Sig.
Brand Performance	0.693	92.608	66	.000

Source: Survey Data (2025)

Table 3 shows that the KMO values were 0.702 for Celebrity–Product Match, 0.756 for Marketing Strategy, and 0.693 for Brand Performance. All the values exceeded the minimum recommended level of 0.60, indicating that the correlation patterns among the questionnaire items were adequate for factor analysis. The Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was statistically significant for all three constructs ($p < .001$), indicating that the correlation matrices contained sufficient relationships among the items to warrant factor analysis. These results provide evidence of satisfactory construct validity of the measurement instrument. In line with Kaiser (1974), the KMO values demonstrate adequate sampling adequacy for examining the underlying structure of the measured constructs.

4.4 Descriptive Results

The descriptive results are presented to provide an overview of respondents' assessments of the study variables. The section summarizes the distribution and central tendencies of the observed indicators using descriptive statistics, thereby providing a basis for understanding the prevailing patterns and perceptions before proceeding to inferential analysis.

4.4.1 Celebrity–Product Match

Celebrity–Product Match was measured using twelve statements addressing four dimensions: personal traits, social status, lifestyle congruence, and celebrity relevance to the product/brand. Respondents indicated their level of agreement using a five-point Likert scale. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for Celebrity–Product Match

Code	Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.
D1	The celebrity's personal traits align with our brand values, positively impacting customer loyalty.	3.86	0.950
D2	Matching the endorser's attributes with the brand leads to higher sales performance.	3.83	1.045
D3	Well-aligned personal attributes of the celebrity enhance brand recognition and market share.	3.86	0.928
D4	The celebrity's high social status elevates the brand image, increasing product demand.	4.06	0.827

Code	Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.
D5	Customers associate premium quality with high-status endorsers, boosting sales.	4.11	0.871
D6	Endorsers with elite social standing help attract new market segments, growing market share.	4.02	0.766
D7	Consumers relate more to the brand when the celebrity shares a similar lifestyle, resulting in loyalty.	4.17	0.711
D8	Shared lifestyle values between the celebrity and target audience encourage brand adoption and sales.	4.14	0.800
D9	The lifestyle match increases emotional connection, improving customer retention and brand performance.	4.03	0.901
D10	The celebrity's relevance to the brand message enhances consumer trust, resulting in improved sales performance.	4.21	0.766
D11	When the endorser is perceived as relevant to the product category, market share growth is achieved through stronger brand–consumer connection.	4.03	0.843
D12	A relevant celebrity endorser reinforces brand identity, fostering long-term customer loyalty and repeat purchases.	3.99	0.866
Overall Mean		4.03	

Source: Survey Data (2025)

Key: 1.0–1.7 = Strongly Disagree; 1.8–2.5 = Disagree; 2.6–3.3 = Uncertain; 3.4–4.1 = Agree; 4.2–5.0 = Strongly Agree.

Table 4 shows that respondents generally agreed that celebrity–product match is an important consideration in celebrity endorsement of dairy products, as demonstrated by the overall mean of 4.03. The responses indicate relatively strong agreement across all twelve items, with mean scores ranging from 3.83 to 4.21. The highest mean score was recorded for D10, which assessed whether the celebrity's relevance to the brand message enhances consumer trust and sales performance ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 0.766$). This was followed by D7, which examined similarity between the celebrity's lifestyle and that of consumers ($M = 4.17$, $SD = 0.711$), and D8, which assessed shared lifestyle values between the celebrity and the target audience ($M = 4.14$, $SD = 0.800$). These findings suggest that respondents placed considerable importance on celebrity relevance and lifestyle congruence when evaluating the appropriateness of a celebrity for a dairy brand. The social-status dimension also received relatively

high ratings. D5 recorded a mean of 4.11, while D4 and D6 recorded means of 4.06 and 4.02, respectively. This suggests that respondents generally perceived a celebrity's social standing as capable of strengthening brand image, communicating quality perceptions and assisting in reaching new market segments. The comparatively lowest mean was recorded for D2 ($M = 3.83$, $SD = 1.045$), concerning the matching of endorser attributes with the brand and higher sales performance. D1 and D3 each recorded a mean of 3.86. Although these scores still indicate agreement, they suggest that respondents were somewhat less emphatic about the direct contribution of personal-attribute matching to sales and market outcomes than they were about celebrity relevance, lifestyle similarity and social status.

Overall, the descriptive findings indicate that celebrity–product congruence is positively perceived by respondents, particularly where the celebrity is considered relevant to the brand message, shares characteristics or lifestyles with the target consumers, and possesses social standing that complements the brand. The findings are consistent with the Match-Up Hypothesis, which proposes that the effectiveness of an endorsement is influenced by the perceived fit between the endorser and the endorsed product. Mundy and Ngugi (2020) similarly emphasize the importance of perceived congruence between the celebrity and the product in shaping consumer responses.

4.4.2 Marketing Strategy

Marketing Strategy was measured using twelve questionnaire items assessing target-market fit, customer orientation, communication consistency, cultural fit, ethical alignment and consistency of celebrity endorsement messages. Respondents rated each statement on a five-point Likert scale. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics for Marketing Strategy

Code	Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.
E1	A good target fit drives higher brand engagement.	4.11	0.733
E2	Brands perform better when they reflect customer needs.	4.26	0.681
E3	Poor fit leads to low interest and weak sales.	4.10	0.910
E4	Consistent channels reinforce brand identity.	4.08	0.789
E5	Aligned messaging boosts customer trust and response.	3.99	0.872
E6	Mixed channels dilute the brand and reduce impact.	4.05	0.771
E7	Cultural fit strengthens emotional brand connection.	4.02	0.747
E8	Ethical connection improves public perception and loyalty.	4.03	0.720

Code	Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.
E9	Misfit can damage brand image and reduce performance.	3.97	0.930
E10	Consistent and coherent celebrity messages across platforms enhance brand credibility, resulting in stronger sales performance.	4.13	0.839
E11	When the celebrity's message aligns seamlessly with brand communication, market share grows through unified brand perception.	4.06	0.824
E12	Clear and coherent endorsement messages build trust and emotional connection, fostering long-term customer loyalty.	4.08	0.736
Overall Mean		4.07	

Source: Survey Data (2025)

Key: 1.0–1.7 = Strongly Disagree; 1.8–2.5 = Disagree; 2.6–3.3 = Uncertain; 3.4–4.1 = Agree; 4.2–5.0 = Strongly Agree.

Table 5 shows that respondents generally agreed that Marketing Strategy was important to brand performance, as indicated by the overall mean of 4.07. The item means ranged from 3.97 to 4.26, indicating consistently high levels of agreement across the twelve statements. The highest mean was recorded for E2, which assessed whether brands perform better when they reflect customer needs ($M = 4.26$, $SD = 0.681$). This falls within the “Strongly Agree” category and indicates that customer orientation was highly emphasized by the respondents. E10, which concerned consistency and coherence of celebrity messages across platforms, also recorded a relatively high mean ($M = 4.13$, $SD = 0.839$). Similarly, E1 recorded a mean of 4.11, while E3 recorded 4.10, suggesting that target-market fit and consistency between marketing activities and customer expectations were important considerations. The findings further show relatively high agreement concerning communication consistency and brand identity. E4 recorded a mean of 4.08, while E12 recorded 4.08, indicating that respondents perceived consistent communication as important in reinforcing brand identity, trust and long-term customer relationships. Cultural and ethical alignment also received high ratings, with E7 and E8 recording means of 4.02 and 4.03, respectively.

The lowest mean was recorded for E9 ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 0.930$), concerning the potential damage caused by a mismatch between the celebrity and the brand. Although this was the lowest-rated statement, it remained within the “Agree” category. Overall, the findings demonstrate that respondents perceived customer orientation, target-market fit, communication consistency and coherent celebrity messaging as important components of Marketing Strategy. These findings are consistent with the strategic marketing perspective that marketing activities should be aligned with customer needs and

organizational objectives. The results also suggest that celebrity endorsement is perceived within a broader marketing strategy rather than as an isolated promotional activity. However, the descriptive findings indicate respondents' perceptions and do not, on their own, establish that Marketing Strategy causes higher brand performance.

4.4.3 Brand Performance

Brand Performance was measured using nine questionnaire items relating to sales growth, customer acquisition, competitive position, market share, customer repurchase, emotional attachment and customer trust. The findings are presented in Table 6.

Table 4.6: Descriptive Statistics for Brand Performance

Code	Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.
F1	The use of celebrity endorsements has directly increased our dairy product sales in recent months.	4.10	0.872
F2	There has been a noticeable rise in product purchases after launching celebrity-endorsed campaigns.	4.24	0.778
F3	Celebrity endorsements have helped us attract new customers, leading to higher sales revenue.	4.17	0.731
F4	Our brand has gained a competitive edge in the dairy market due to celebrity-endorsed promotions.	4.02	0.730
F5	Celebrity marketing has enabled our dairy brand to increase its share compared to competitors.	4.08	0.834
F6	The presence of celebrity endorsers has helped our products reach a broader customer base, expanding our market share.	4.05	0.795
F7	Customers are more likely to repurchase our dairy products because of the celebrity associated with the brand.	4.04	0.843
F8	Celebrity endorsements have strengthened customer emotional attachment and loyalty to our brand.	3.96	0.860
F9	The endorsement has increased customer trust, making them more committed to our brand over time.	4.06	0.766
Overall Mean		4.09	

Source: Survey Data (2025)

Key: 1.0–1.7 = Strongly Disagree; 1.8–2.5 = Disagree; 2.6–3.3 = Uncertain; 3.4–4.1 = Agree; 4.2–5.0

= Strongly Agree.

Table 6 indicates that respondents generally agreed that celebrity endorsement was associated with positive brand performance outcomes, as shown by the overall mean of 4.09. The individual means ranged from 3.96 to 4.24, indicating generally favourable perceptions across all the brand-performance indicators. The highest mean was recorded for F2 ($M = 4.24$, $SD = 0.778$), indicating strong agreement that product purchases increased following celebrity-endorsed campaigns. F3 also recorded a relatively high mean ($M = 4.17$, $SD = 0.731$), suggesting that respondents perceived celebrity endorsements as contributing to customer acquisition and sales revenue. F1 recorded a mean of 4.10, further indicating agreement regarding perceived improvements in product sales. The results also show positive perceptions regarding market position. F5 recorded a mean of 4.08, while F6 recorded 4.05, suggesting that respondents generally perceived celebrity marketing as contributing to market share and broader customer reach. Customer trust and commitment also received relatively high ratings, with F9 recording a mean of 4.06.

The lowest mean was recorded for F8 ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 0.860$), relating to emotional attachment and loyalty. Despite being the lowest-rated item, the mean still falls within the “Agree” category. Overall, the findings indicate that the respondents perceived celebrity endorsement as being associated with sales, customer acquisition, market reach, competitive position, repurchase intention, trust and loyalty. The descriptive results therefore establish that Brand Performance was rated favourably by the respondents. Nevertheless, the findings should be distinguished from evidence of causal influence. Whether celebrity-related factors and Marketing Strategy significantly explain variations in Brand Performance is examined through the correlation and subsequent inferential analyses.

4.5 Correlation Matrix Results

Pearson's product-moment correlation analysis was conducted to establish the direction and strength of the relationships among the three variables under study, namely Celebrity–Product Match, Marketing Strategy and Brand Performance. The analysis was conducted at the 0.01 level of significance using a two-tailed test. The results are in table 7.

Table 7: Pearson Correlation Matrix for the Study Variables

Variables	Celebrity–Product Match	Marketing Strategy	Brand Performance
Celebrity–Product Match	1	.502**	.560**
Marketing Strategy	.502**	1	.722**
Brand Performance	.560**	.722**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	—	.000	.000

Variables	Celebrity–Product Match Marketing Strategy Brand Performance		
N	106	106	106

Note: **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Survey Data (2025)

Key: 0.00–0.09 = Negligible correlation; 0.10–0.29 = Weak correlation; 0.30–0.49 = Moderate correlation; 0.50–0.69 = Strong correlation; 0.70–1.00 = Very strong correlation.

Table 7 shows that all the three variables under study were positively and significantly correlated with one another at the 0.01 level. The correlation between Celebrity–Product Match and Brand Performance was positive and strong ($r = 0.560$, $p < .01$). This indicates that higher levels of perceived celebrity–product congruence were associated with higher levels of Brand Performance. Similarly, Marketing Strategy had a very strong positive correlation with Brand Performance ($r = 0.722$, $p < .01$). This was the strongest relationship observed among the three study variables, indicating that favourable perceptions of Marketing Strategy were strongly associated with favourable perceptions of Brand Performance. The correlation between Celebrity–Product Match and Marketing Strategy was also positive and strong ($r = 0.502$, $p < .01$). This suggests that stronger celebrity–product congruence tended to occur alongside stronger Marketing Strategy. The finding indicates that celebrity–product match and Marketing Strategy are related dimensions within the broader marketing context of the dairy brands studied.

Overall, the results indicate that Celebrity–Product Match and Marketing Strategy are both positively associated with Brand Performance, with Marketing Strategy exhibiting the stronger bivariate relationship. However, correlation analysis only establishes the direction and strength of association and does not demonstrate causality. Consequently, the finding that Marketing Strategy has the strongest correlation with Brand Performance does not by itself establish that it causes better Brand Performance. The subsequent regression analysis should therefore be used to determine the extent to which Celebrity–Product Match and Marketing Strategy individually and jointly explain variation in Brand Performance.

4.6 Multiple Linear Regression Results

Regression analysis was conducted to empirically assess the hypothesised relationship between Celebrity–Product Match and Brand Performance in the Kenyan dairy industry. The analysis examined the overall explanatory power of the regression model and the statistical significance and direction of the predictor. The results provide evidence on whether variations in Celebrity–Product Match are associated with corresponding variations in Brand Performance and therefore provide the basis for evaluating the study hypothesis. The regression results are presented in the subsequent tables.

4.6.1 Direct Relationship between Celebrity–Product Match and Brand Performance

The first stage of regression analysis examined the direct relationship between Celebrity–Product Match and Brand Performance. The analysis sought to establish the extent to which Celebrity–Product Match explains variations in Brand Performance before introducing the moderating effect of Marketing Strategy.

Table 8: Model Summary for the Direct Relationship between Celebrity–Product Match and Brand Performance

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.695 ^a	.482	.472	.37187	1.729

^a Predictors: (Constant), Celebrity–Product Match

^b Dependent Variable: Brand Performance

The results in Table 8 indicate a strong positive relationship between Celebrity–Product Match and Brand Performance, with $R = .695$. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = .482$) indicates that Celebrity–Product Match accounts for 48.2% of the variation in Brand Performance in the sample. The adjusted R^2 of .472 indicates that approximately 47.2% of the variation in Brand Performance is explained by the model after adjustment for the predictor. These findings suggest that the perceived congruence between the celebrity and the dairy product is an important predictor of Brand Performance. The result is also consistent with the descriptive findings, where respondents generally agreed that alignment between the celebrity, the brand and the product enhance consumer responses. However, the R^2 value should be interpreted as the explanatory power of the statistical model rather than evidence that Celebrity–Product Match alone causes Brand Performance. The Durbin–Watson statistic of 1.729 is reported as part of the regression output. However, because the study is based on cross-sectional survey data, the statistic should not be presented as evidence of general “estimation reliability” or absence of time-dependent errors. Its inclusion is therefore descriptive rather than a basis for drawing substantive conclusions about the model.

4.6.2 Regression Coefficients for the Direct Relationship

To determine the extent to which Celebrity–Product Match predicts Brand Performance, a linear regression analysis was conducted. The analysis assessed the direction, magnitude, and statistical significance of the contribution of Celebrity–Product Match to Brand Performance. The regression

coefficients presented in Table 9 indicate the estimated change in Brand Performance associated with a unit change in Celebrity–Product Match, while the corresponding *t*-statistics and significance levels establish whether the observed relationship is statistically significant.

Table 9: Regression Coefficients for the Direct Relationship between Celebrity–Product Match and Brand Performance

Model	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Standardized Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	.969	.239	—	4.052	.000
Celebrity–Product Match	.237	.058	.269	4.090	.000

Dependent Variable: Brand Performance

The coefficient results in Table 9 show that Celebrity–Product Match has a positive and statistically significant relationship with Brand Performance ($B = .237$, $\beta = .269$, $t = 4.090$, $p < .001$). The positive coefficient indicates that an increase in perceived Celebrity–Product Match is associated with an increase in Brand Performance, holding the model specification constant. The standardized coefficient ($\beta = .269$) indicates the relative contribution of Celebrity–Product Match to Brand Performance within the direct regression model. The statistical significance of the coefficient provides evidence that Celebrity–Product Match is a significant predictor of Brand Performance. The findings support the Match-Up Hypothesis, which proposes that the effectiveness of an endorsement is enhanced when there is congruence between the endorser and the endorsed product or brand. They also complement the descriptive results, which showed relatively high levels of agreement regarding the importance of celebrity relevance, lifestyle congruence and alignment with the brand.

Based on the unstandardized coefficients, the direct regression model is expressed as:

$$Y = 0.969 + 0.237\text{CPM} + \varepsilon$$

Where:

Y = Brand Performance

CPM = Celebrity–Product Match

ε = Error term

4.6.3 Regression Results for the Moderating Effect of Marketing Strategy Alignment on the Relationship between Celebrity–Product Match and Brand Performance

The study further examined whether Marketing Strategy Alignment moderates the relationship between Celebrity–Product Match and Brand Performance in the dairy industry. Moderation was assessed by introducing an interaction term between Celebrity–Product Match and Marketing Strategy Alignment (INT-cpm) into the regression model. The interaction term was used to determine whether the strength or direction of the relationship between Celebrity–Product Match and Brand Performance changes with the level of Marketing Strategy Alignment. The results are presented in tale 10.

Table 10: Regression Coefficients for the Moderating Effect of Marketing Strategy Alignment

Model	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Standardized Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.098	.286	—	3.839	.000
Celebrity–Product Match	.266	.059	.301	4.477	.000
CPM × Marketing Strategy Alignment	-.015	.036	-.043	-.412	.681

Dependent Variable: Brand Performance

The results in Table 10 show that Celebrity–Product Match has a positive and statistically significant relationship with Brand Performance ($B = .266$, $\beta = .301$, $t = 4.477$, $p < .001$). This indicates that, within the moderated model, higher levels of perceived congruence between the celebrity and the dairy product are associated with higher levels of Brand Performance. However, the interaction term between Celebrity–Product Match and Marketing Strategy Alignment (INT-cpm) is negative and statistically insignificant ($B = -.015$, $\beta = -.043$, $t = -.412$, $p = .681$). Since the significance value is greater than the conventional 0.05 threshold, there is insufficient statistical evidence to conclude that Marketing Strategy Alignment significantly moderates the relationship between Celebrity–Product Match and Brand Performance. Although the moderated model reported an increase in explained variance from 48.2% ($R^2 = .482$) in the direct model to 51.6% ($R^2 = .516$) after introduction of the interaction term, the increase of 3.4 percentage points should not, on its own, be interpreted as evidence of moderation. The statistical significance of the interaction term is the critical criterion for establishing moderation, and the interaction term in this case was not significant ($p = .681$).

The findings therefore indicate that Celebrity–Product Match remains an important predictor of Brand Performance irrespective of the interaction with Marketing Strategy Alignment, but the evidence does not demonstrate that Marketing Strategy Alignment significantly changes the strength of this relationship. Thus, the findings support the direct relationship between Celebrity–Product Match and

Brand Performance but do not provide empirical support for a moderating effect of Marketing Strategy Alignment. The moderated regression equation based on the reported coefficients is: $Y = 1.098 + 0.266\text{CPM} - 0.015(\text{CPM} \times \text{MSA}) + \varepsilon$

Where:

Y = Brand Performance

CPM = Celebrity–Product Match

MSA = Marketing Strategy Alignment

CPM $\times$ MSA = Interaction between Celebrity–Product Match and Marketing Strategy Alignment

ε = Error term

4.7 Hypothesis Results

The hypothesis testing results are presented in Table 11, which summarizes the statistical decisions made regarding the study hypotheses based on the regression analysis. The table indicates whether each null hypothesis was rejected or failed to be rejected, thereby establishing the significance of the relationships between the study variables.

Table 11: Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Beta (β)	t- value	p- value (α)	Decision
H01: There is no significant effect of Celebrity–Product Match on Brand Performance of the dairy industry in Kenya.	0.266	4.477	0.000	Reject H01
H01a: There is no significant moderating effect of Marketing Strategy Alignment on the relationship between Celebrity–Product Match and Brand Performance of the dairy industry in Kenya.	–0.015	–0.412	0.681	Fail to reject H01a

Source: Survey Data (2025)

4.7.1 Hypothesis H01

The first hypothesis stated that there is no significant effect of Celebrity–Product Match on Brand Performance of the dairy industry in Kenya. The regression results show a positive and statistically significant coefficient for Celebrity–Product Match ($\beta = 0.266$, $t = 4.477$, $p < 0.001$). Since the p-value is below the 0.05 significance level and the absolute t-value of 4.477 exceeds the critical value of approximately 1.96, the null hypothesis is rejected. The findings therefore indicate that Celebrity–Product Match has a statistically significant positive effect on Brand Performance.

The positive beta coefficient implies that higher levels of perceived congruence between the celebrity

and the dairy product are associated with higher Brand Performance. The finding is consistent with the descriptive results, in which respondents expressed relatively high agreement that celebrity relevance, lifestyle congruence and alignment between the celebrity and the endorsed product are important in shaping consumer responses.

The finding is also consistent with literature emphasizing the importance of endorser–product congruence in celebrity endorsement effectiveness. Ilicic and Webster (2021) reported that congruence between an endorser and a product can strengthen perceptions of authenticity and improve consumer responses. Similarly, research on celebrity–brand congruence suggests that a good match between the endorser and the endorsed brand can enhance the effectiveness of endorsement communications. The present finding therefore provides empirical support for the proposition that fit between the celebrity and the dairy product is an important consideration in achieving favourable Brand Performance.

The finding also supports the Match-Up Hypothesis, which proposes that endorsement effectiveness is enhanced when characteristics associated with the endorser are compatible with those of the product or brand. In the Kenyan dairy industry, the result suggests that selecting a celebrity who is perceived to be appropriate for the product can strengthen consumer responses and contribute to favourable brand outcomes.

The practical implication is that dairy firms should give careful consideration to **celebrity–product congruence** when selecting endorsers. Rather than relying solely on celebrity popularity, firms should assess whether the celebrity's image, lifestyle, values and public persona are compatible with the identity and positioning of the dairy product.

4.7.2 Hypothesis H01a

The second hypothesis stated that there is no significant moderating effect of Marketing Strategy Alignment on the relationship between Celebrity–Product Match and Brand Performance of the dairy industry in Kenya. The interaction term between Celebrity–Product Match and Marketing Strategy Alignment produced a coefficient of $\beta = -0.015$, with a t-value of -0.412 and a p-value of 0.681 . Since $p = 0.681 > 0.05$, and the absolute t-value ($|-0.412| = 0.412$) is substantially below 1.96 , the interaction effect is not statistically significant. Consequently, the study fails to reject H01a.

The results therefore indicate that Marketing Strategy Alignment does not significantly moderate the relationship between Celebrity–Product Match and Brand Performance. Although the moderated model showed an increase in R^2 from 0.482 to 0.516 , representing a 3.4 -percentage-point increase in explained variance, this increase does not constitute sufficient evidence of moderation. The critical test of moderation is the statistical significance of the interaction term, and the interaction between

Celebrity–Product Match and Marketing Strategy Alignment was not significant ($p = 0.681$). Thus, the increase in R^2 should be interpreted cautiously and should not be presented as evidence that Marketing Strategy Alignment strengthens the relationship. The finding suggests that the positive relationship between Celebrity–Product Match and Brand Performance does not significantly change according to the level of Marketing Strategy Alignment represented in the model. In other words, while Marketing Strategy Alignment may be important in its own right, the present evidence does not demonstrate that it changes the strength of the relationship between Celebrity–Product Match and Brand Performance.

This finding has an important theoretical implication. It suggests that product–celebrity congruence may operate as a relatively independent predictor of Brand Performance, rather than its effectiveness being contingent upon the interaction specified with Marketing Strategy Alignment. This does not imply that marketing strategy is unimportant; rather, it means that the specific moderating mechanism tested in this study was not statistically supported. Accordingly, the practical implication should also be stated cautiously. Dairy firms should continue to ensure that celebrity endorsement campaigns are consistent with their broader marketing strategies, but the present findings do not provide empirical evidence that such alignment significantly amplifies or weakens the effect of Celebrity–Product Match on Brand Performance.

Overall, the hypothesis testing provides support for the direct relationship but not for the proposed moderating relationship. Specifically, Celebrity–Product Match had a significant positive effect on Brand Performance ($\beta = 0.266$, $p < 0.001$), leading to rejection of H01. Conversely, the interaction between Celebrity–Product Match and Marketing Strategy Alignment was not statistically significant ($\beta = -0.015$, $p = 0.681$), leading to failure to reject H01a. Thus, the empirical evidence supports the conclusion that Celebrity–Product Match is a significant predictor of Brand Performance, whereas Marketing Strategy Alignment does not significantly moderate this relationship among the dairy industry firms examined in Kenya.

5.1 CONCLUSION

The study concludes that Celebrity–Product Match is an important predictor of Brand Performance in the Kenyan dairy industry. The descriptive results showed a high level of agreement among respondents regarding the importance of congruence between the celebrity and the endorsed dairy product, with an overall mean of 4.03. Respondents particularly agreed that celebrity relevance to the brand message, shared lifestyle values, social status and alignment between the celebrity and the product contribute to favourable consumer responses. These findings indicate that consumers generally perceive a strong fit between the celebrity and the endorsed product as an important component of effective celebrity endorsement.

The correlation results further demonstrated a positive and statistically significant association between Celebrity–Product Match and Brand Performance ($r = .560, p < .01$). The regression results provided additional evidence of the relationship, with Celebrity–Product Match recording a positive and statistically significant coefficient ($\beta = .266, t = 4.477, p < .001$). The direct regression model explained 48.2% of the variation in Brand Performance ($R^2 = .482$). On this basis, the study concludes that greater perceived congruence between the celebrity and the dairy product is associated with better Brand Performance. The finding reinforces the Match-Up Hypothesis, which suggests that endorsement effectiveness is enhanced when there is compatibility between the endorser and the endorsed product.

The study also concludes that Marketing Strategy Alignment is strongly associated with Brand Performance, based on the descriptive and correlation findings. Respondents expressed high agreement regarding the importance of target-market fit, consistency of communication channels, alignment of celebrity messages with brand communication and coherence between endorsement activities and broader marketing activities. Marketing Strategy Alignment recorded an overall mean of 4.07, while its correlation with Brand Performance was strong and statistically significant ($r = .722, p < .01$). This indicates that respondents who perceived greater alignment between marketing strategy and endorsement activities also tended to report more favourable perceptions of Brand Performance.

However, the regression analysis did not provide evidence that Marketing Strategy Alignment significantly moderates the relationship between Celebrity–Product Match and Brand Performance. The interaction term between Celebrity–Product Match and Marketing Strategy Alignment was statistically insignificant ($\beta = -.043, t = -.412, p = .681$). Although the moderated model increased the explained variance from 48.2% to 51.6%, the increase in R^2 should not be interpreted as evidence of moderation because the interaction term itself was not statistically significant. Consequently, the study concludes that Marketing Strategy Alignment does not significantly change the strength of the relationship between Celebrity–Product Match and Brand Performance.

Overall, the findings indicate that Celebrity–Product Match is directly and significantly related to Brand Performance, while Marketing Strategy Alignment demonstrates a strong bivariate association with Brand Performance but does not significantly moderate the Celebrity–Product Match–Brand Performance relationship. The results therefore suggest that celebrity–product congruence should be considered an important component of celebrity endorsement decisions, while marketing strategy should be viewed as an important contextual and strategic consideration rather than as a statistically supported moderator in the relationship tested in this study.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are made.

5.2.1 Strengthen Celebrity–Product Match

Dairy firms in Kenya should place greater emphasis on Celebrity–Product Match when selecting celebrity endorsers. The study established that Celebrity–Product Match has a statistically significant positive effect on Brand Performance. Managers should therefore evaluate the extent to which a celebrity's public image, lifestyle, values, personality and identity are compatible with the dairy product and its target market. Celebrity selection should not be based solely on popularity or the size of the celebrity's following; rather, firms should prioritize a credible and natural fit between the celebrity and the product.

5.2.2 Undertake Consumer Assessment before Selecting Celebrity Endorsers

Dairy firms should conduct consumer-based assessment of prospective celebrities before entering into endorsement contracts. Since the study found that Celebrity–Product Match significantly predicts Brand Performance, firms can improve their endorsement decisions by pre-testing different celebrities among their target consumers. Such assessment should establish whether consumers perceive the celebrity as relevant, appropriate and compatible with the product and brand. This would enable firms to identify endorsers whose image and identity are most consistent with the intended brand positioning.

5.2.3 Align Celebrity Endorsement with the Overall Marketing Strategy

Although Marketing Strategy Alignment did not significantly moderate the relationship between Celebrity–Product Match and Brand Performance, the study established a strong positive association between Marketing Strategy Alignment and Brand Performance ($r = .722, p < .01$). Dairy firms should therefore ensure that celebrity endorsement activities are incorporated into the broader marketing strategy. Endorsement campaigns should be consistent with the firm's brand positioning, target-market requirements, communication objectives and promotional activities.

5.2.4 Maintain Consistency in Celebrity Endorsement Messages

Managers should ensure that celebrity endorsement messages are consistent with the established brand message across marketing channels. The descriptive findings showed high levels of agreement regarding the importance of target-market fit, coherent communication and consistency of celebrity messages. Firms should therefore provide clear communication guidelines to celebrities and agencies to ensure that endorsement content reinforces the intended product and brand positioning.

5.2.5 Do Not Rely on Marketing Strategy Alignment as a Moderator of Celebrity–Product Match

Dairy firms should not assume that Marketing Strategy Alignment will automatically strengthen the effect of Celebrity–Product Match on Brand Performance. The moderation analysis produced a non-significant interaction effect ($\beta = -.015$, $p = .681$). Consequently, managers should treat Celebrity–Product Match and Marketing Strategy Alignment as distinct strategic considerations. Priority should be given to achieving an appropriate celebrity–product fit, while marketing strategy should simultaneously be managed to support overall Brand Performance.

5.2.6 Continuously Evaluate Celebrity–Product Fit

Dairy firms should periodically review whether the selected celebrity continues to be compatible with the endorsed product and brand. Changes in a celebrity's public image, lifestyle, reputation or consumer appeal may alter the perceived appropriateness of the endorsement over time. Continuous monitoring of consumer perceptions can therefore help firms maintain an effective Celebrity–Product Match and minimize the risk of an endorsement becoming inconsistent with the brand.

5.2.7 Use an Integrated but Evidence-Based Endorsement Approach

Overall, dairy firms should adopt an integrated approach to celebrity endorsement that combines strong Celebrity–Product Match with effective Marketing Strategy Alignment, while recognizing that the present study did not establish a moderating effect of Marketing Strategy Alignment. The evidence suggests that celebrity–product congruence is directly relevant to Brand Performance, whereas strategic alignment is independently important because of its strong association with Brand Performance. Managers should consequently avoid treating celebrity endorsement as an isolated promotional activity while also avoiding the unsupported assumption that strategic alignment necessarily changes the effect of celebrity–product fit.

5.3 Managerial Implications of the Study

The findings have several implications for managers of dairy firms in Kenya. First, the significant relationship between Celebrity–Product Match and Brand Performance implies that celebrity selection should be treated as a strategic decision rather than merely a promotional decision. Managers should evaluate the compatibility between the celebrity's public image, lifestyle, values and identity and the characteristics of the dairy product and its target consumers. A celebrity who is perceived as a natural fit with the product is more likely to communicate the brand proposition coherently and credibly.

Second, the strong correlation between Marketing Strategy Alignment and Brand Performance ($r = .722$, $p < .01$) implies that managers should integrate celebrity endorsement into the wider marketing strategy. Celebrity campaigns should be consistent with brand positioning, target-market expectations, communication objectives and other promotional activities. This requires coordination between marketing managers, brand managers, advertising agencies and celebrity representatives so that

endorsement messages reinforce rather than contradict the broader brand message.

Third, managers should distinguish between a strong association and a moderating effect. Although Marketing Strategy Alignment was strongly associated with Brand Performance, its interaction with Celebrity–Product Match was not statistically significant ($p = .681$). Managers should therefore not assume that strategic alignment necessarily strengthens the effect of celebrity–product fit. Instead, the findings suggest that Celebrity–Product Match has its own significant contribution to Brand Performance, while Marketing Strategy Alignment represents an important strategic consideration in its own right.

Fourth, the findings imply that managers should continuously monitor consumer perceptions of celebrity–product fit. Changes in consumer preferences, celebrity image, product positioning and market conditions may alter perceptions of endorsement appropriateness over time. Periodic evaluation of endorsement campaigns can therefore help dairy firms determine whether the celebrity continues to represent the brand effectively.

Overall, the managerial implication is that dairy firms should adopt a product-congruent and strategically coordinated approach to celebrity endorsement. However, the strategic coordination should not be described as a statistically confirmed mechanism that amplifies the effect of Celebrity–Product Match, since the moderation hypothesis was not supported.

5.4 Areas for Further Research

Future studies could extend the present research in several ways. First, researchers could examine additional dimensions of celebrity endorsement that were not included in the present study, such as celebrity popularity, relatability, familiarity, cultural relevance and perceived authenticity. Such research could establish whether these characteristics provide additional explanations for variations in Brand Performance beyond Celebrity–Product Match.

Second, future research could investigate the longitudinal effects of celebrity endorsement on Brand Performance. The current findings are based on cross-sectional data and therefore capture respondents' perceptions at a particular point in time. Longitudinal studies could examine whether the effects of celebrity–product congruence remain stable throughout the life of an endorsement campaign and whether prolonged exposure produces changes in brand loyalty, customer retention and repeat purchase behaviour.

Third, future studies could examine the relationship between Marketing Strategy Alignment and Brand Performance using alternative analytical models. Since the present study found a strong bivariate

association but no significant interaction effect, future researchers could investigate whether Marketing Strategy Alignment operates as an independent predictor, mediator, or through other mechanisms, rather than assuming a moderating role.

Fourth, comparative studies could be undertaken across different sectors of the Kenyan economy, such as telecommunications, banking, tourism, fashion and fast-moving consumer goods. Such comparisons would establish whether the importance of Celebrity–Product Match differs according to product characteristics, consumer involvement and industry context.

Fifth, future research could examine differences across demographic and geographical groups in Kenya. Consumers in different age groups, regions and market segments may interpret celebrity–product congruence differently. Such studies could therefore provide a more nuanced understanding of the conditions under which celebrity endorsement contributes to Brand Performance. Finally, future studies could examine the growing role of digital influencers and social-media personalities alongside traditional celebrities. The increasing use of social-media platforms provides an opportunity to determine whether influencer–product congruence operates in the same way as traditional celebrity–product congruence and whether factors such as audience engagement, perceived authenticity and parasocial relationships influence Brand Performance.

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