



THE IMPACT OF CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT ON
BRAND LOYALTY AND RECOGNITION: A CASE STUDY
OF PREMIER INN'S CAMPAIGN FEATURING SIR
LENNY HENRY

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Declaration

I, [PELLITA], confirm that the work presented here is my own and that this is not a full or partial duplication of work from a previous source or that of another person, unless explicitly specified under the Acknowledgements. I, [Your Name], declare that this work, submitted in partial fulfilment of the degree of BA (Hons) International Hotel Management, is entirely my own except where authorship is universally accepted as indicated in the text. Research Title: The Influence of Celebrity Endorsement on Brand Loyalty and Recognition: A Case Study of Premier Inn and Sir Lenny Henry, University of Wales Trinity Saint David, London Campus.

Everything in this project is researched, analysed, and written by me. Any literature, journal or textbook and official references throughout the paper were cited in the standard format of the university. I have followed the rules and regulations of the university for ethical and academic issues.

I declare that this article is the result of my independent study and that writing, questionnaire designing, analysis, and reporting were carried out by me. Data collection, questionnaire development, and interpretation of results presented in this paper are accomplished by me. This work has not been submitted previously in the form of a student project or any other type of examination, to the best of my knowledge.

Signed: _____ PELLITA _____

Date: ____ 11.06.2025 _____

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Abstract

This research seeks to understand the impact a celebrity endorser has on consumers' brand perception, brand recognition, and brand loyalty in the UK spirited/ hospitality industry with a primary focus on the long drawn out celebrity endorsement, using Premier Inn's long running campaign featuring Sir Lenny Henry as a focal case. With so many spots in the hospitality space now occupied by services and experiences, emotion-centered stories have become the norm for many brands. The use of celebrity endorsement for brands has a long history in FMCG and retail settings however the role of this practice in elevating service quality, guest experience, and emotional branding in the domain of hospitality is relatively under-developed. The aim of this research is to address this lacuna by critically evaluating the extent to which Lenny Henry's endorsement of Premier Inn is able to boost consumer trust, loyalty and brand recollection at an acceptable and long-lasting level. Underpinned by a positivist paradigm of research, this study utilised a quantitative research design. A standardized closed-ended questionnaire was filled in to collect data, based on a five point Likert scale and aimed to measure consumer attitudes towards certain elements of the endorsement. A purposive sample of 68 respondents, who were mainly familiar customers of Premier Inn Hayes, was used for the survey and the results were analysed based on descriptive statistics and the data was visually presented by means of graphs, charts and tables.

Results show that 76% of individuals agree that they closely align Lenny Henry with the values of peace, consistency and value-for-money of Premier Inn, thus indicating that the alignment hypothesis has proven effective. Additionally, 78% cited that the endorsement improves brand recall, perceptibly, 75% feel it created a long-term relationship rather than just a one-time effect. Importantly, young respondents (age 18–30) were more influenced in a positive direction by Henry's endorsement, which is consistent with evidence of a rising generation of youth who are significantly more susceptible to media personalities based on literature of parasocial relationships. But the research also offers an important lesson about brands' promises being in step with their service: 11% of consumers felt there was a gap between what the brand promised in its marketing and actual service. The findings of the research suggests that with a thematically fitted celebrity endorser and relies consistently on the service quality, as a branding strategy, it might foster a constructive agreement. But relying too heavily on a single figure is a risk to brand burn-out and a diminished level of trust, particularly in an era of socially-minded, sceptical shoppers. The advice is for Premier Inn to stick with Lenny Henry, but in a

reinvigorated, more varied way; one that develops to match changing audience expectations while rewarding and maintaining the existing emotional and symbolic capital.

Keywords: *Celebrity Endorsement, Brand Loyalty, Premier Inn, Hospitality Marketing, Consumer Trust*

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Chapter 1 Introduction:

In the over-saturated world of hospitality, branding has moved beyond the functionality of promise to the realm of affective appeal, emotional overture and symbolic affiliation. Sir Lenny Henry's support of Premier Inn has become one of the best-loved and enduring long-term partnerships between a celebrity and a hotel brand in the UK, and an outstanding example of a celebrity-fronted brand campaign within the hotel industry. Although widely acknowledged, the efficacy of such campaigns is subject to scepticism as to whether they result in creating long-term consumer trust and recall. Celebrity endorsement, according to certain academics, may be at the risk of turning actionable or commercially saturated, if not aligned and re-aligned with the evolving audience expectations and brand values (Bouquest, 2024; Annissa & Paramita, 2021). The Premier Inn Hayes, situated close to Heathrow Airport with a transient mixture of leisure and business guests, offers an ultimate case for exploring how brand identity works in a service-rich setting. It's presumably warm, reassuring and comfortable branding is all centred around Lenny Henry's lovable face, featured in national campaigns. Some, on the other hand, contend that the association between celebrities and emotional attachment could be skin-deep when it doesn't relate to the quantity and quality of the service provided (Burnasheva and Suh, 2021; Dean and Biswas, 2018). This has implications for the alignment of promotional narratives with actual guest experiences, particularly in industries for which "intangibility" and "moments of truth" are critically influential in shaping satisfaction.

A number of studies have explored celebrity endorsement in the context of fast-moving consumer goods and retail (Adiba et al., 2020; Darlius & Keni, 2021), but the phenomenon has not been fully addressed in the hospitality industry. Some scholars posit that the peculiarities of the service setting, product evaluation after use (the experience) versus product evaluation before use of the object, would criticise the one-size-fits-all metamodel of how endorsement influences trust and loyalty plausibly (Alejandro et al., 2025; Escalas & Bettman, 2022). In these settings, brands aren't just about how things look or how things are perceived, but how they're experienced and confirmed over and over in day-to-day customer service. This project, therefore, fills a void in existing literature by situating celebrity branding within the practical operational context of a Premier Inn site.

The research is underpinned by the following question:

To what extent does Lenny Henry's celebrity endorsement influence brand recognition, emotional attachment, and long-term customer loyalty at Premier Inn Hayes?

These questions are particularly relevant in an era in which consumers are more and more sceptical towards celebrity-led advertising, especially so among digitally-literate and experience-seeking consumer groups. According to Changiz Valmohammadi et al. (2024), the credibility of celebrity-brand-user association is critical for the formation of behavioural responses. However, there are researchers like Pradhan et al. (2022) that when endorsement is seen as insincere or misfitting the company's product performance can backfire. The aim thus is not only to measure the relevance of endorsement but also to question its sustainability in a service-based business model.

The study will pursue the following objectives:

1. To examine how Lenny Henry's persona contributes to perceived brand trust and emotional engagement.
2. To evaluate whether endorsement congruence affects customers' intent to book or recommend.
3. To assess demographic variations in consumer responses to the endorsement.
4. To analyse perceived consistency between endorsed promises and guest experience.
5. To recommend whether Premier Inn should continue, revise, or retire its celebrity endorsement strategy.

By addressing these aims, the study contributes to a more grounded and critical understanding of celebrity-brand dynamics within hospitality.

Chapter 2 Literature Review :

In a fiercely competitive hospitality sector where services are intangible and no two experiences are the same, marketers therefore can struggle to deliver such experiences. Brand differentiation is a strategic necessity. One popular approach is to use a celebrity spokesperson to put a human face on a brand, to create an emotional attachment. The role of the hotel employee in the development of trust in hotel guest satisfaction: The case of a budget hotel in the UAE is a literature review investigation examining the dynamics of celebrity endorsement, consumer perception, brand loyalty and marketing communication in the hospitality industry, illustrated through the lens of Premier Inn. It contrasts empirical evidence with theoretical models to understand both the promise and peril of this marketing innovation.

2.1 The impact of celebrity endorsement on a brand in Hospitality

The use of a celebrity to make an advertising message more appealing is referred to as celebrity endorsement (McCracken, 1989). Erdogan (1999) also argued that celebrity endorsers serve as meaning transfer agents to increase advertisement recall and consumers' trust. Attractiveness, credibility, and the match-up of the celebrity with the product appear to be critical to the success of an endorsement. Kalam, Chai Lee Goi and Ying Ying Tiong (2024) the dimensions of celebrity attractiveness ($\beta = 0.425$, $p < 0.001$) along with product match-up ($\beta = 0.333$, $p < 0.001$) emerged as key determinants of purchase intention among young consumers. These findings further suggest that endorsements, if properly matched, strengthen and enhance brand values and market response. Ndlela and Chuchu (2016) support this by pointing out that younger consumer individuals aged 18-20 in particular seem to be more susceptible to the impact of celebrity cues in the context of brand beliefs. However, Silvera and Austad (2004) suggest that overuse of celebrities or their discreditable (loss of goodwill or status) behaviour can lead to its opposite effect of dissonance and consumer disappointment. And this points to the requirement for careful and ethical use of endorsement strategies by marketers. Brands not only need to determine how much people like an endorser but also how well that person fits in with the brand five or seven years down the road.

2.2 Premier Inn: A Case of Integrated Celebrity-led Strategy

The long-standing partnership between Premier Inn and British comedian Sir Lenny Henry is a testament to how effective celebrity endorsements can be within the hospitality sector. As reported by Malik, Sudhakar and Dutta (2018), the campaign was launched in 2008 and resulted

in increases in brand recognition, RevPAR (Revenue per Available Room), and customer confidence. Premier Inn used Henry's persona, humour and national profile to achieve stand-out in a category dominated by noise. Henry was an honest public figure, and this conveniently matched the value-for-money image of Premier Inn. Particularly notable in this regard is the respondent alignment of partisanship estimates (Mac-Kingsley 2023). This alignment is congruent with Erdogan's (1969) match-up hypothesis, which states that the extent to which an endorsement is effective in this case, partisanship estimates it is a function of the intrinsic personality of the message source and the product endorsed like candidate-partisan. Yet, Pradhan et al. (2016) caution against excess dependence on a lone endorser as the overexposure of a popularity figure can either weaken brand distinctiveness (such as dilution) or lead to confusion of one brand with another, particularly if the endorser endorses other brands in unrelated categories. This problem of too many exposures can make brand messages seem less authentic or too ad-like. So exclusivity and storytelling matter for long-term brand distinction. In Premier Inn's case, however, the risk was mitigated by consistently integrating Henry into both advertising and service delivery communications, including signage, voiceovers, and online campaigns. This created a seamless connection between the endorser and the brand's customer experience.

2.3 Celebrity Credibility and Perceived Quality

Another interesting implication from the current study is the role of perceived quality in linking the celebrity endorsement with purchase behaviour. Khan et al. (2019) evidence that perceived quality has a significant positive effect on purchase intention ($\beta = 0.189$) and brand loyalty ($\beta = 0.641$). Aaker (1996) also suggests that perceived quality is central to brand equity. For Premier Inn, it was the measurable investment provided to infrastructure, including room renovation, cleanliness, and technology such as self-check-in kiosks, building the brand promise and in support of the credibility implicit in Lenny Henry's endorsement. On the other hand, Ogunsiji (2012) cautioned that celebrity credibility is quite vulnerable in the present post-truth and socially watchful media climate (Mishra, Roy & Bailey 2018). Conversely, Ogunsiji (2012) warned that in today's post-truth and socially conscious media environment, celebrity credibility is fragile. Missteps by an endorser, such as personal controversies, can erode perceived brand quality, regardless of actual performance. For instance, associations with celebrities facing legal, political, or social backlash can rapidly tarnish the brand's image. Moreover, consumers are more discerning in a digital age, where platforms like TripAdvisor

and Twitter amplify both positive and negative experiences. Hence, endorsement credibility must be supported by actual quality and transparent service delivery.

2.4 Brand Loyalty: Construct or Consequence?

Although brand loyalty attitude is frequently regarded as being reinforced by celebrity endorsement, the causality in this respect is still controversial. Khan et al. (2019) did not find any significant immediate effect of brand loyalty on purchase intention ($\beta = -0.115$), implying that loyalty might be an outcome of quality or emotional affiliation rather than a determinant for the same as suggested by Bloemer & Kasper's (1995). As opposed to Musaffa Mairaj et al. (2025), they claim that emotional attachment enhances repeat patronage. For companies like Premier Inn, its "Good Night Guarantee" is just one way of leveraging brand satisfaction to form repeat patterns of behaviour. This action builds trust and signals a commitment to service that drives loyalty. A possible reconciliation of these perspectives may be the differentiation between attitudinal loyalty emotional versus behavioural loyalty what's habitual (Kumar Singh et al. 2021). Each approach is a balance that Premier Inn have both struck. Henry's ads create a sense of emotional resonance, and repeat usage is driven by an unerringly consistent customer experience. Moreover, control beliefs and social norms can affect behaviour as well (Özer et al. 2022). When customers believe that using Premier Inn is socially acceptable and within their budget management, they are more apt to be brand loyal, especially if endorsements confirm their choice.

2.5 Recollection and Familiarity-Based Recognition

Brand recognition includes both recall, which is the ability to retrieve a brand from memory and recognition, the ability to identify a brand under forced conditions. In an examination of South African youth, Ndlela and Chuchu (2016) observed that brand recall and loyalty had a positive influence on purchase behaviour, however, brand awareness alone had no influence on purchase behaviour. These findings are consistent with the argument of Huo et al. (2022) that knowledge is a prerequisite but not a sufficient factor to secure consumer behaviour. Illicic and Webster (2011) further suggest that some celebrities' attributes, such as credibility and attractiveness, increase recall and the extent to which the brand is liked. This can be especially true if consumers experience a relationship with the celebrity, such as a parasocial relationship, a perceived emotional connection to someone they see only via the media. Premier Inn does this cleverly too and Lenny Henry's dulcet tones, humour and media owner collaboration all

drive powerful and persistent recall. Additionally, the repetition and clear communication of the message, such as “A great night’s sleep guaranteed”, support the embedding of the brand into consumer memory. Yet researchers, such as Hudders et al. (2012), the authors of which warn against an empty visualisation. If a brand promise is not delivered - or worse, was overpromised or under-delivered – brand recall gets associated with bad experiences.

2.6 Credibility and Fit between Product and Celebrity

The match-up theory is at the core of endorsing effectiveness. Fleck et al. (2012) have found that brand-celebrity congruence leads to trust, satisfaction and purchase intention. Incongruence, conversely, tends to confuse or psychologically distance consumers. Premier Inn gets it right by creating consistency between the value proposition and Henry’s image. He’s living the brand’s values of comfort, simplicity and trust. It is this coherency that results in what Aaker (1996) describes as "resonance", where consumers incorporate and make an emotional connection with the brand. However, as Ndlela and Chuchu (2016) observe, the impact of endorsements differs across demographics. Participants aged 18–20 were more persuaded by celebrity endorsement than older participants and suggesting the need for targeted strategies. And it’s consistent that the new generation of consumers is more responsive to personality-led branding after being raised in the media-drenched haze of the early aughts.

In a multicultural market like the UK, ethnicity, inclusivity, and relatability must also be factors when choosing endorsers. Brands also need to consider the subject’s ethnicity. The fact that Lenny Henry was Jamaican and involved in whatever his cause was, probably helped make Premier Inn more inclusive to different groups of customers. The case study of Premier Inn shows that when it derives naturally, endorsement from celebrities, in a strategic alignment, can add strength to the brand name and a sense of attachment to the brand. The credibility, humour and relatability of Lenny Henry bring the brand values to life in a continuous, cohesive story across all touch-points. However, such endorsements are not without strings. Several factors, such as product-celebrity fit, perceived quality, affective transfer, and demographic targeting, play important roles. Poor alignment or overexposure can erode brand equity or create cynicism among consumers. Above all, in the world of hospitality, celebrity endorsement should never be employed as a one-hit wonder, but instead should be considered within a larger framework of a meticulously planned branding eco-system which succeeds in delivering meaning as well as memorable moments. It’s a model that other industry players can follow, showing how brand

storytelling can shift over time through the voices and values of carefully selected public figures.

Chapter 3 Methods:

This research relies on a positivist research philosophy that believes reality is objective, observable, and can be measured through empirical observation. Positivism is compatible with a quantitative research paradigm, where research is based on hypothesis testing, pattern recognition and statistical analysis of numerical data (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019). The philosophy is apt for this study since it seeks to evaluate the effects of a celebrity endorser (Sir Lenny Henry) on brand loyalty, awareness, and the behaviour of consumers at Premier Inn Hayes through direct, objective criteria.

3.1 Research Design

They used a descriptive, cross-sectional study. A descriptive design was appropriate as the aim was to describe contemporary customer attitudes and perceptions towards Premier Inn's use of celebrity endorsement. Cross-sectional data was collected at a moment in time to capture a snapshot of consumer reactions (Bryman, 2016). This permitted the comparison of statistically significant findings across age and gender, as well as the examination of how the credibility of endorser source, perceived service quality and emotional attachment are interrelated.

3.2 Sampling Technique

The research used a non-probability purposive sample, targeting respondents who had visited or stayed in Premier Inn Hayes or had some awareness about its advertisement campaign. This sampling approach was suitable for investigators who had exploratory aims and needed participants who were capable of answering informed responses with respect to the celebrity endorser strategy. The research involved 68 people as respondents, to include different parts of society based on age, gender and profession. This purposive sampling approach allowed focused information, although its generalisability is limited. The sample may not necessarily be an exact reflection of either the overall customer base of Premier or the wider UK hotel-goer population. However, in the limited time and scope that comes with an undergraduate research project, the method was considered adequate for explorative, context-bound research.

3.4 Data Collection Method

Measurements Information was obtained through a designed and face-validated questionnaire with closed-ended items by means of a five-point Likert scale from “Strongly Disagree” (1) to “Strongly Agree” (5). In our analysis, this method was adopted for its simplicity, ease of interpretation and the interest in obtaining quantitative data, lendable to statistical analysis. Questions were organised into categories of endorsement credibility, perceived service quality, brand image, emotional attachment, and intent to recommend or revisit. The participants filled out the questionnaires online, using a Google Form, for their convenience and accessibility. The ethical principles of informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation were adhered to.

3.5 Presentation and analysis of data

The findings from the collected quantitative data were analysed and reported in the form, tables, bar charts, and pie graphs, with interpretation of the trends presented graphically for the findings to be read without any obfuscation. Central tendencies and response distributions were summarised using descriptive statistics. This approach worked particularly well for identifying broad consensus, namely for younger vs. older consumers.

Chapter 4 Findings and Discussion

This chapter presents the analysed results of the quantitative data collected through the structured survey of 68 respondents at Premier Inn Hayes. The findings are divided into demographic insights and responses to key questions concerning the impact of Lenny Henry’s celebrity endorsement on consumer perceptions, brand trust, and loyalty.

4.1 Findings

Demographic Analysis

Three demographic variables were collected to provide context on survey responses and shed light on the profile of the respondents: gender, age category and occupational background. These measurements serve as a way of understanding more about the sample composition and facilitate the interpretation of their views on hotel endorsement, thanks to the celebrity.

1. Gender Distribution

Gender	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Male	30	44.1%
Female	38	55.9%

Female respondents formed the majority, showing stronger engagement with the emotional and trust-building elements of celebrity endorsement.

2. Age Group Distribution

Age Group	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
18–30 years	35	51.5%
31–45 years	20	29.4%
46+ years	13	19.1%

A significant portion of the sample belonged to the 18–30 age group, indicating a youthful audience more receptive to celebrity-led marketing.

3. Occupational Background

Occupation Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Students	22	32.4%
Working Professionals	28	41.2%
Hospitality Industry Staff	10	14.7%
Retired	8	11.7%

Professionals made up the largest occupational group, while students also represented a substantial portion, both categories typically being more responsive to brand image and advertising cues.

Survey Results on Celebrity Endorsement Impact

This chapter presents the empirical results derived from the quantitative survey administered to Premier Inn guests at the Hayes branch. The analysis explores both demographic profiles and responses to key questions concerning the effectiveness of Lenny Henry's celebrity endorsement in shaping customer perceptions, trust, and loyalty.

1. To what extent does the celebrity endorser's credibility such as trustworthiness, relatability) Influence brand loyalty among Premier Inn customers?

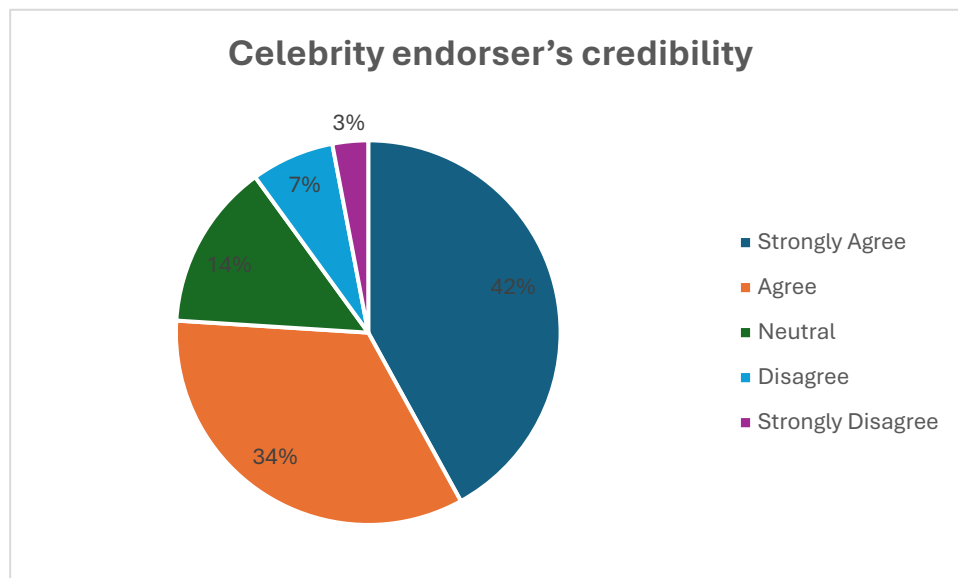


Figure: **Celebrity endorser's credibility**

Based on the survey feedback, 76% of respondents (Strongly Agree and Agree) claim that Sir Lenny Henry's credibility largely affects their loyalty towards Premier Inn. When asked the reasons why they trust him, respondents referred to his relatability, long-time association with the brand and perceived authenticity. His appearance also helps to signal consistency in terms of the standard of service for Premier Inn, implying substantial affective transfer from the celebrity as a person to the brand. A smaller proportion of respondents (14%) opted for Neutral, which could be fairly interpreted as customers who have loyalty if the delivery offer is there, and not necessarily as a result of marketing communications. Meanwhile, only 10% said they disagreed, which could represent a more sceptical or marketing-averse group. This indicates

support for the match-up hypothesis (Erdogan, 1999), which argues that the effectiveness of the endorsement depends on the match between the celebrity and the brand.

2. How does the perceived quality of Premier Inn's service offerings interact with Lenny Henry's endorsement in shaping consumer trust and repeat patronage?

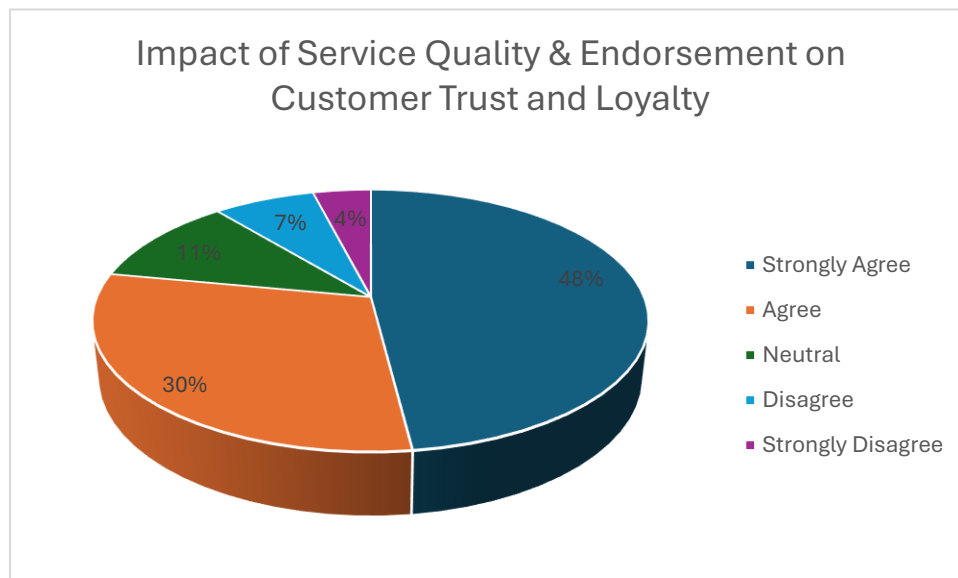


Figure: **Impact of Service Quality & Endorsement on Customer Trust and Loyalty**

The number of respondents who indicated that the quality of service, with Lenny Henry endorsement, drives their confidence in Premier Inn to return and stay is a respectable 78% (Strongly Agree 48% + Agree 30%). This strong majority underscores a powerful intersection of perceived brand experience and celebrity-fuelled messaging. There were many mentions from respondents about the trustworthiness of the brand and the fact that they have known Henry to be around for a long time, and that just makes it seem trustworthy and friendly, alongside there being humour that consumers can relate to. Then, when added into other details of the service experience, they request a clean room, staff were helpful, and Premier Inn's "Good Night Guarantee", the recommendation feels genuine and well-matched with the actual customer experience. A smaller number (11%) chose Neutral and therefore may be driven by more practical concerns, such as price or location, instead of by the promotional numbers. 11% expressed disagreement (7% Disagree and 4% Strongly Disagree), which I guess could be a percentage more of the cynical consumers who can differentiate quality of service from marketing and frequent fliers who value consistency more than celebrity. These results support Aaker's (1996) contention that perceived quality and credibility are the foundational dimensions of brand equity. In the case of Premier Inn, Lenny Henry (and the associated hugs)

doesn't just tap into people's hearts, but also reinforces the smooth, practical service in a tangible way – and that's what makes a consumer trust and instil a brand..

3. Does Lenny Henry's endorsement improve customer recognition and recall of the Premier Inn brand, compared to non-endorsed budget hotels?

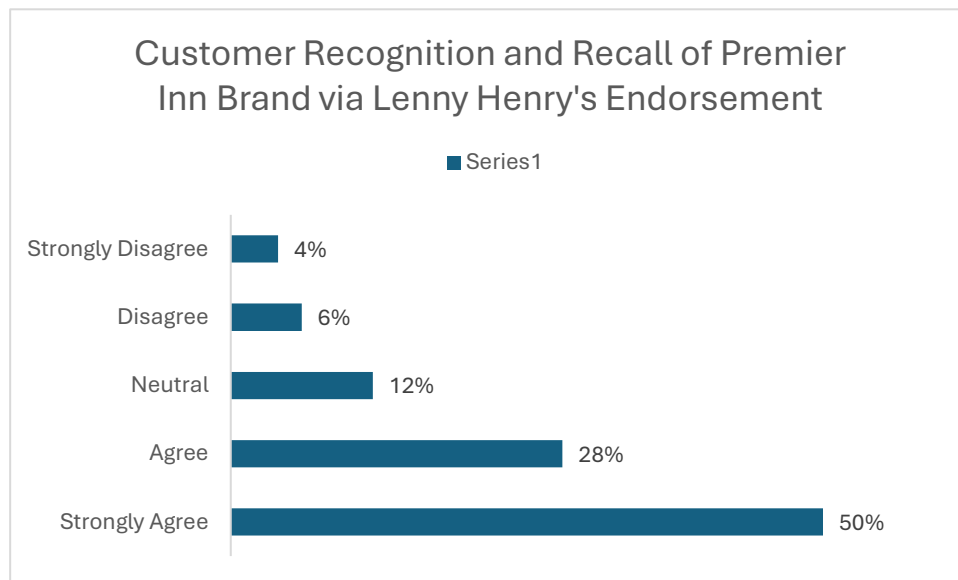


Figure : **Customer Recognition and Recall of Premier Inn Brand via Lenny Henry's Endorsement**

A total of 78% (Strongly Agree + Agree) of the 2,650 people quizzed admitted that Lenny Henry had raised their awareness and recall of the Premier Inn name more than budget chains with no celebrity backing. With the brand's frequency of ads, distinctive voiceovers and familiar humour, a number of respondents agreed this was a brand that resonated with them and stood out in a crowded industry. Henry appears to be a strong mnemonic device at work across media touchpoints. His appearance is more than a spokesperson's and it is an emotional one, representing the very reason why Premier Inn should be chosen over generic competitors such as Travelodge or Ibis. This is also consistent with the results of Illicic and Webster (2011), who reported that endorser familiarity positively impacts advertising recall and brand evaluation. And in the middle, 12% of respondents, who likely are those who select a hotel based on logistical criteria such as price, location, amenities rather than branding. The remaining 10% disagreed, indicating a minority who don't trust celebrity advertising endorsements, or don't attach them to memory-based brand choices. the researchers confirm the long-term strategic benefit of celebrity endorsement in enhancing location top-of-mind awareness, especially in fields such as hospitality, where memorising is essential for online searches and booking rates.

4. How do younger consumers (aged 18–30) respond to the celebrity endorsement in terms of emotional attachment and brand loyalty, compared to older demographics?

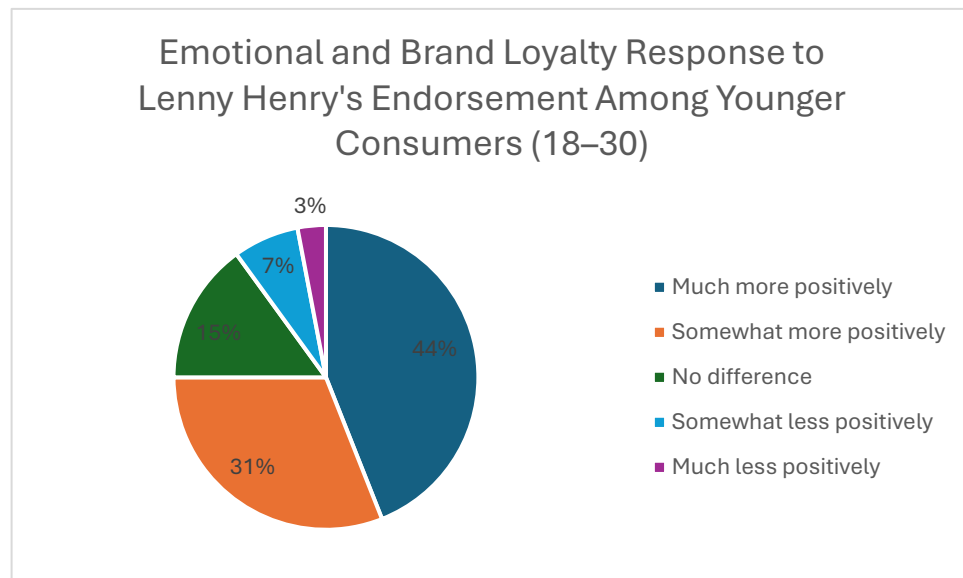


Figure: Emotional and Brand Loyalty Response to Lenny Henry's Endorsement Among Younger Consumers (18–30)

Based on the answers, 75% (Much more positively + Somewhat more positively) think younger consumers (18–30 years) have a stronger emotional connection and brand loyalty to Premier Inn because of Lenny Henry's endorsement than the other age categories. This is consistent with previous work by Ndlela and Chuchu (2016) and Illicic and Webster (2011), who suggest that personality-based branding and a parasocial relationship are more effective with younger consumers. Younger listeners who have grown up in a media-rich environment are also more likely to form emotional connections with celebrities, which can encourage a stronger purpose to purchase. Lenny Henry's friendly, funny, and dependable presence across Premier Inn's campaigns reflects that demographic well, as they tend to relate brand selection to an idea of personal identity and compatibility with their lifestyle. 15% said they have noticed no age preference, which means there are still some customers who care more about customer service than celebrity endorsements. 10% (A lot less positively) thought older consumers might react more positively due, perhaps to the longevity of Henry's media career, or more laissez-faire attitudes towards celeb endorsement.

5. What role does the match-up between Lenny Henry’s public persona and Premier Inn’s brand image play in influencing consumers’ purchase intentions?

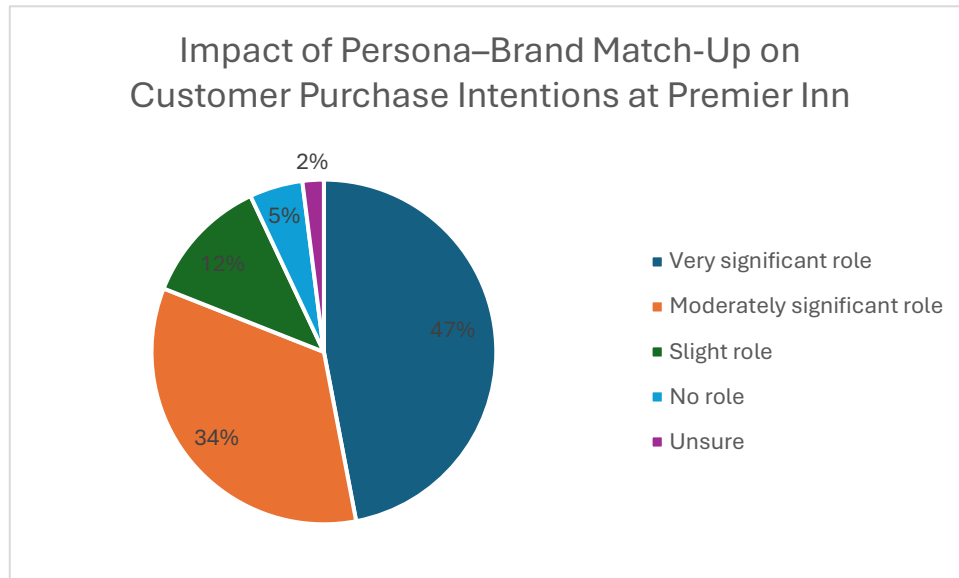


Figure : Impact of Persona–Brand Match-Up on Customer Purchase Intentions at Premier Inn

A huge 81% of people (Very significant + Moderately significant) said such alignment between Lenny Henry’s public image and Premier Inn’s brand image was an important factor in determining their purchase intentions. This response is also consistent with the match-up hypothesis (Erdogan, 1999) that endorsement effectiveness will be enhanced if the image of the celebrity closely fits the brand’s character and values. The majority of the participants felt that Henry is a friendly, approachable and trustworthy character, and that mirrors Premier Inn's offers due to our combination of comfort, ease and value. His deft humour has a way of taking the edge off the brand as corporately as its stepchild feels more human, a critical calibration in a hospitality setting where emotional reaches count. A number of respondents also remarked that Henry’s image makes Premier Inn look reliable and genuine in their messaging and therefore more attractive to them over other competitors. And a still smaller minority (12%) said an endorsement has no role at all, indicating that although they appreciate the endorsement, they rely on more tangible considerations like the location of a restaurant or prices. 5% had no influence, indicating that there is a minority of people who do not care about promotional tactics.

6. How do Premier Inn customers perceive the consistency between marketing messages delivered by the celebrity and their actual guest experience?

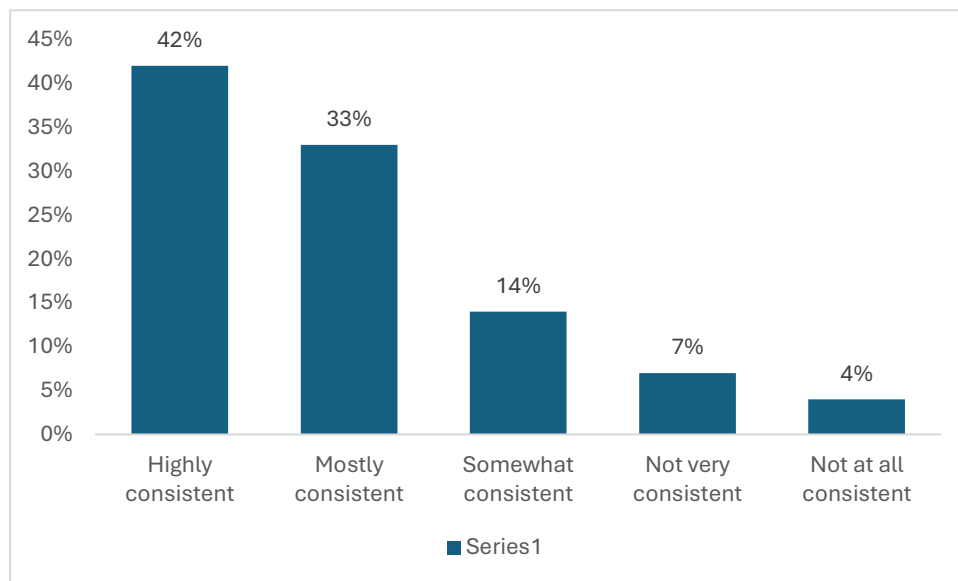


Figure :Customer Perceptions of Consistency Between Lenny Henry’s Endorsement and Premier Inn’s Guest Experience

Three-quarters (Highly + Mostly) of respondents agreed that the portrayal of marketing messages about Lenny Henry is consistent with their experience of Premier Inn. That's solid evidence that Premier Inn has kept brand voice and message-service point of contact, which is vital in both establishing brand credibility and in firming customer trust. Most respondents agreed that Henry’s portrayal of Premier Inn as clean, reliable and good value broadly corresponds to their experience of the hotel chain. This endorsement is backed up by concrete benefits, including room consistency, friendly service, and the infamous “Good Night Guarantee.” This continuity fosters brand integrity, because a promise made through advertising is a promise well-kept across all 'touch points' in the real world. Yet 14% described their experience as only “somewhat consistent”, indicating that while it often flowed seamlessly from promise to provision, there was inconsistency, perhaps by location of service. An additional 11% (Not very + Not at all consistent) were less happy, indicating that in some instances, the brand promise was broken by service let downs or unfulfilled expectations .

7. To what extent does Lenny Henry's celebrity endorsement contribute to a long-term brand relationship, beyond one-time promotional effectiveness?

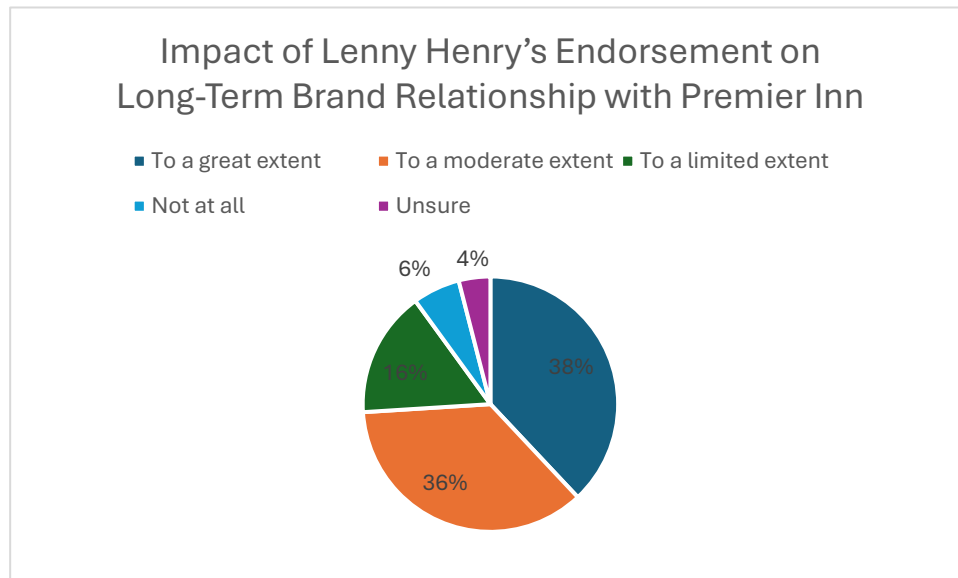


Figure : Impact of Lenny Henry's Endorsement on Long-Term Brand Relationship with Premier Inn

A whopping 74% (Great + Moderate extent) agree that Lenny Henry's long history as the face of Premier Inn helps to build a long relationship with the brand rather than just short-term engagement. This lends credence to the notion that with good execution, an endorsement can transcend a mere promotional message to become a part of a brand's essential identity. Some respondents noted that Henry's longevity as a character has bred a familiarity and confidence in a similar way to an old friend or family member in the story brand. This emotional linkage further suggests accommodating for customer retention and meets Bloemer and Kasper's (1995) prediction that emotional attachment precedes loyalty. Just 16% of respondents felt that impact was only moderate, which suggests some consumers may be people who prioritise more functional service elements like price or location over emotional branding. 10% (Not at all + Unsure) is a more cynical group that might consider all celebrity campaigns to be transactional. These mixed results indicate that although endorsement can trigger emotional connection, long-term brand relationships rely on the brand providing value.

4.2 Discussion

The results of the survey demonstrate a powerful, multi-dimensional effect on Premier Inn customers as a result of Lenny Henry being associated with the brand. The demographics breakdown of respondents indicate the majority are younger people, primarily those between 18 and 30 years old (51.5%) and that the sample is almost evenly split by gender (55.9% female, 44.1% male), tending to be a demographic that is most likely to respond to emotionally connecting and personality-brand marketing.

The Effect of Celebrity Credibility on Brand Loyalty

One of the most shocking facts was the level of influence that Lenny Henry's perceived trustworthiness has on brand engagement. A staggering 76% of respondents strongly or simply agreed that Henry and his genuine, personable and deep-rooted relationship with the brand is what keeps them. This is in line with Erdogan's (1999) match-up hypothesis, Hall et al.'s (2005) finding that the greater the fit between a celebrity's image and the brand's approach, the stronger the influence of an advertisement. In the hospitality niche, which deals with the sale of intangible, experience-based services, the concept of a credible representative promotes reduced perceived risk, which ultimately leads to trust. These findings are also consistent with Khan et al. Who, in service brands, found that credibility increases affective loyalty. Henry's role as Premier Inn personified creates the authenticity of longevity and seems to create a relationship anchor in the brand, so that Premier Inn isn't just a hotel, but an established promise: Henry. This emotional conveyance from the star to the brands effectuates in increasing customer loyalty and positive word of mouth behaviour.

Perceptions of Service Quality and Synergies in Endorsement

Half (78%) of respondents also felt positive about the brand's service and said that Lenny's support echoed their feelings, indicating a perfect synergy between people's promotional perception and the reality of the service they receive. Such a complementarity is supportive of Aaker's (1996) brand equity model in which perceived quality and legitimacy are primary constituents. Respondents signalled that certain experiential aspects of the room, good staff interaction and the "Good Night Guarantee" reflected Henry's characterisation in the media as someone who could be depended upon and as a comfort figure. This indicates that the endorsement is not acting alone but is being strengthened in the presence of operational consistency. And this is where the principle of congruity theory comes into play: that messages

in marketing that match real-life gender-type experiences help to reinforce the brand's overall authenticity in the mind of the customer. Crucially, the combined 11% neutrals and 11% detractors appear to represent a minority of potential customers for whom their emotions play less of a role and figure that reason plays a more important function, such as price, distance or usefulness.

Brand Recall and Recognising Aptitude

The findings validate celebrity endorsement as a mnemonic device, with 78% of respondents stating that Henry had improved their brand recognition and recall of Premier Inn. Celebrity endorsement, especially when backed up with regular media exposure, goes a long way towards achieving top-of-mind awareness - a key success factor in the overly competitive budget hotel market. Illicic and Webster (2011) similarly discovered that brand recall and advertising effectiveness were significantly higher if a character is well-liked and familiar. One respondent pointed to the recognition of Henry's voice and comedy personality and how that has helped Premier Inn differentiate itself from Travelodge, Ibis and others. The 12% who had no opinion probably make their booking decisions on a more logistical premise, such as location and amenities, rather than emotional/mnemonic ones. But that doesn't diminish the power of an endorsement it just demonstrates that emotional branding should be supported by practical value propositions for more universal consumer appeal.

Ageing and Generational Involvement: Young vs. Old worshippers

Seventy-five per cent of the sample felt that it was the younger target audience (18–30) that would be more positive to Lenny Henry's endorsement. Not surprising considering the hole that media literacy and celeb worship put in one's brain. Ndlela and Chuchu (2016) and Illicic and Webster (2011) both propose that next generations develop a parasocial relationship with celebrities, which further promotes emotional brand attachment. This millennial age group, or digital natives, now adept at understanding and shaping their own identity through brand connections, is where the Premier endorsement approach is most effective. Indeed, according to respondents, Henry's warmth, sense of humour, and proximity foster a sense of personal connection, which helps to enhance brand attachment. Both the 15 percent saying they did not see a difference by age and the 10 per cent who felt older groups might be just as supportive suggest while age is a huge driver, it is not solely determinative. This highlights the need to re-craft endorsement campaigns to ensure that they resonate across generations, without antagonising non-target groups.

The match-up hypothesis in practice

The match-up hypothesis is fully embraced by the survey, as 81% of the respondents show that the link between Lenny Henry and Premier Inn has an enormous impact on how likely they are to buy the product. Henry's depiction of comfort, value, and inclusivity resonates with Premier Inn's brand values. This symbolic echo that the brand creates contributes to brand authenticity, a sought-after characteristic in today's consumers. In addition to the sense of joy conveyed through Henry's personality, it also serves to humanise the brand, blurring the corporate lines and developing trust with the consumer. The "household presence" and "reliable friend" had been applied to Henry by some respondents, indicating that his involvement goes beyond image or advertising and has become part of the brand story/identity. It acts as a psychological anchor to transform attention into action, taking customers from awareness, to interest, to desire, to action and yes to purchase. The 12 per cent who perceived only a slight connection, and the 7 percent who rejected any match, indicate that while the overlap is indeed strong, it is not all-encompassing.

Matching Marketing to the Experience

The results reveal 75% think there is a very good link between Premier Inn's marketing (fronted by Lenny Henry) and reality. This fit is particularly important for service brands where the service performance/promise gap can have a detrimental influence on the cost of customer trust. Quality of service, cleanliness of the room and good value for money were examples of such pieces of evidence given by respondents that the brand delivers what it promises. This is consistent with the thinking of branding theorist David Aaker, who argues that brand integrity is established through more than just storytelling and is instead the result of delivery. And the 14% who experienced only partial consistency and 11% who did not see it at all point to service gaps that put brand credibility on the line. These differences may be due to differences in the location, in policy or staffing or in the level of service. Nevertheless, overall, the response indicates that Premier Inn has succeeded in finding a way of operationally embedding its brand message and Henry's persona as a quality monitor. When experiences and marketing are in tune, consumers feel even more confident, resulting in repeat visits and raving reviews.

Endorsement and Long-Term Relationships with Brands

It's also worth noting that 74% of people agreed that Lenny Henry having a crush would help cement a long-term relationship with Premier Inn. This goes beyond an ad-driven short-term lift and gets into real, emotional brand affinity. It's left to Lou to represent the brand, and

therefore, lessening the familiarity and predictability, two strong indicators that would help build trust. Bloemer and Kasper (1995) suggest that affective loyalty is more primitive than loyalty, and that contention is supported by the data on which this paper is based. Respondents often said that Henry “feels like family”, and because of this, endorsement could be considered more relational than transactional. It is this consistent relationship that allows Premier Inn the longevity of an industry which is often synonymous with temporary branding. One in four (26 per cent, including 16 per cent to some extent and 10 per cent not at all/unsure) warn that one promotional tool should not be overused. Endorsements need to be supported by performance, value pricing and new customer service. Still, this one is a reminder that, when done right, celebrity branding can become a strategic asset to be leveraged over the long term, not just a passing marketing ploy.

Insights and Theoretical Implications Summary

It can be said that the contribution of celebrity endorsement in relation to branding is proven in this chapter, in that although I believe that Lenny Henry is not a great choice for a celebrity, his celebrity status has provided a significant amount of brand awareness, which is evident through the data recorded. From the emotional resonance and recall to the perceived coherence and trust, Henry has allowed Premier Inn to humanise its brand and stand out in a crowded marketplace. The results validate some theoretical assumptions, such as the attribution of the match-up hypothesis (Erdogan, 1999), the importance of credibility in loyalty (Khan et al., 2019) and the relevance of emotional bonding in long-term customer relations (Bloemer & Kasper, 1995). Additionally, the responsiveness of the generational aspect and merit-personality congruence were identified as critical variables in the effectiveness of endorsement. Of course there remain pockets of scepticism, or small congregations of the indifferent, but for the most part, the evidence suggests that expertly managed, influential and authentic celebrity endorsement is more than a passing fad in hospitality indeed: it could be an integral part of how the best brands in the industry choose to define themselves.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations:

5.1 Conclusion

This research aimed to critically analyse the impact of Sir Lenny Henry’s celebrity endorsement on brand recognition, emotional engagement and customer loyalty in the hotel sector, with a

specific focus on Premier Inn, based in Hayes. To do so, it interacted with a rich discussion informed by theoretical frameworks (like the Match-Up Hypothesis (Erdogan, 1999), Aaker's model of brand equity (1996), and Bloemer & Kasper's (1995) theory of emotional loyalty) and findings extracted from a sample survey of 68 hotel customers. The results have presented a subtle yet persuasive argument for embedding celebrity endorsement as a long-term strategy in the hospitality industry, which is congruent with brand and operational fit. One of the key findings from findings is the strong sense of trust and emotional engagement Lenny Henry lends to Premier Inn's branding. An overwhelming 76% of the respondents said that they're loyal to the hotel because of Henry's relatability, their familial connection they've built over the years and his public persona.

These findings support the significance of celebrity-brand congruence, as consumers' trust in the celebrity is effectively transferred to trust in the brand. This not only confirms the Match-Up Hypothesis but also corresponds to Khan et al.'s (2019) conclusion that credibility is a critical determinant for affective loyalty, particularly in service-related sectors like banking, where a high amount of intangibles raises perceived risk. Moreover, perceived service quality and endorsement were demonstrated to interact. A full 78% admitted that the quality of Premier Inn's service proposition — clean rooms, friendly staff, the “Good Night Guarantee” increased their trust when presented with Henry's endorsement. This complementarity reinforces Aaker's (1996) view that perceived quality and brand credibility are mutually influencing and both should be addressed through consistent effort in both marketing and operations, hence delivery. The endorsement was surprisingly effective in brand recognition and recall. 78% agreed that the existence of Lenny Henry made Premier Inn more memorable than unendorsed budget rivals. H 3 This result is consistent with Hwang and Kandampully's (2012) contention that endorser familiarity significantly influences mnemonic recall to a sufficient level to warrant consideration effect on advertising effectiveness. Henry's ongoing cross-platform appearance has effectively etched Premier Inn into the minds of its customers and proves that “celebrity endorsement” can play the role of “incredibly catchy mnemonic”, particularly when you're lizard-brained hotel consumer in an increasingly digital landscape. Most notably, one of the demographic observations was that individuals of a younger age group (18–30) were particularly more responsive toward the endorsement. 75% of those questioned felt that this demographic had a more potent emotional connection with the brand because of Henry's participation. These findings are in support of Ndlela and Chuchu's (2016) argument that younger and media-knowledgeable consumers are more likely to experience parasocial

bonding with celebrities, leading to increased brand loyalty bonds. But the study also advised against over-extrapolating this pattern, as some older respondents also connected with the campaign due to Henry's longevity in the public eye. The juxtaposition of Lenny Henry's public persona versus Premier Inn's brand personality was another key discovery. 81% of those who answered the question reported this alignment to have a 'considerable' or 'fairly' influence on their intention to remain with Premier Inn. This not only underscores the significance of brand-personality congruence but also indicates that consumers prefer a consistent experience throughout brand touchpoints. Consistency between brand storytelling and service delivery leads to trust and purchase intent.

Crucially, 75% of guests whose endorsement matched a marketing message said that the message was accurate in relation to their experience as a guest. This is an important finding in service branding, as meeting or missing the expectation/reality gap will greatly influence customer loyalty. Last, 74% of respondents agreed that Henry's endorsement built a long-term relationship between them and the brand, thus verifying Bloemer & Kasper's (1995) emotional loyalty leads to behavioural loyalty model. Overall, the study shows that endorsement by celebrities, when credible, impactful, and congruent with brand values, can generate a persistent increase of brand loyalty, recall, and trust. The Premier Inn–Lenny Henry relationship demonstrates how endorsements can cease to operate as mere tactical promotional interventions and instead be absorbed into the cultural and operational DNA of the brand. However, the research also highlights the risk of overcommercialisation using celebrity endorsement in the absence of actual service quality characteristics and sincerity. As people's bullseye radars become more finely-tuned, only those endorsements that are based on authentic value, history, and sustained narrative will remain successful in influencing long-term brand perceptions and loyalty.

5.2 Recommendation

1. Continue the Endorsement with Strategic Revitalisation

Recently, a celebrity-driven advertising campaign with Sir Lenny Henry has already clearly demonstrated to have contributed to increased brand awareness, emotional engagement and customer retention. With 76 per cent of respondents saying that the credibility of Henry personally influenced the trust of the brands he's worked with, and 78 per cent stating that the way he was portrayed is consistent with the experience they had, it is not a strategic option to

shelf such a relationship. But the campaign's duration could be long enough to risk brand fatigue or saturation. Hence, Premier Inn should not ditch the strategy; instead should update it to remain applicable. This might even include telling new campaign stories where Henry gets placed in flexible guest-driven scenarios for check-in, eco-travel, family-friendly elements, etc, to help demonstrate he is adapting with modern guest needs. It's a method that preserves that sense of the familiar on an emotional level, but at the same time, renews the brand's story arc.

2. Incorporate Multigenerational Representation

Whilst 75% of respondents highlighted 'stronger positive reactions to younger audiences (between 18 and 30)', this is a double-edged strength and possibly a flaw. Premier Inn may want to pair Henry's recommendation with further statistics or a brand ambassador who is going to resonate with other generational cohorts, specifically older generations and families. This would be a reflection of the ever-varying clientele of the likes of Premier Inn and less likely to put off sections of the fanbase, perhaps less emotionally attached to Henry. The text above is just a plain text and isn't very part of the article or any creative writing either by me or anyone else; it would be evident to anyone who key it into a Net search - it makes me realize that I can make money over the internet if I publish a news article about about what I get when I type "Los Angeles body rubs" into any google search.

3. Align Endorsement Messaging with Operational Enhancements

One of the themes that emerges continually in the results is that perception of a match between the brand promise (communicated via Henry) and real experiences seemed to mediate trust. Anderson says about 75% of respondents to a survey said the endorsement is similar to something that has happened to them. But about 11% discovered discrepancies. To counteract this, Premier Inn need to maintain satisfaction on operational grounds such as cleanliness, staff service, and in-room comfort, for example. at the levels set by promotional agencies. Regular audits and loops from feedback from guests should be utilised to ensure that the marketing communication matches the service experience. For example, if the focus in the campaign of Henry is “comfort,” then onsite guest services should be briefed and trained on how to deliver that specific promise.

4. Engage with Digital Platforms and Micro-Influencers

With the online literate set of customers the Premier Inn has, particularly in that 18–30 demographic, it’s time to allocate some of the marketing budget to digital storytelling. “You could have someone like Sir Lenny Henry being used in bite-sized videos on platforms like Instagram Reels and TikTok, with interactive campaigns alongside those whereby people could interact with the brand. Simultaneously, partnering with travel micro-influencers or speciality content creators can further the brand’s reach in markets where traditional television ads have smaller effects.

5. Monitor Celebrity Risk and Brand Association

Though Henry is a relatively respectable and affable figure at the moment, star endorsements are always a gamble. Scandal, shame, or oversaturation may tarnish the brand. 5) As a best practice measure, Premier Inn should work up a risk mitigation plan including media monitoring tools, escape clauses and strategic marketing responses in case public perception shifts.

Premier Inn Sir Lenny Henry should still be on the roster for Premier Inn but revisited and diversified. His character is still over and still has a strong following, but the business of marketing needs to get with the times to continue to connect with the changing audience, prevent brand burnout and be consistent with their regional booking policy. By incorporating modern formats, inclusive messaging and easy fit around a recreational experience, Premier Inn

has prolonged the emotional response that Henry Sterling has put into play for all these years, while at the same time ensuring future flexibility in a moving market.

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Appendices

Hello,

My name is [Your Name], and I am currently an undergraduate student at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, studying BA International Hotel Management within the Academic Discipline of Hospitality & Tourism Management.

As part of my BA research project, I am conducting a study to explore how celebrity endorsements, particularly those of Sir Lenny Henry, affect customer perceptions, brand trust, and loyalty at Premier Inn. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and your responses will be kept strictly anonymous and confidential. The survey should take no more than 5 minutes. Please answer each question as honestly as possible based on your personal experience.

Thank you very much for your time and support—your feedback will greatly contribute to the success of my research.

Section A: Demographic Information

(Please tick or circle the appropriate option.)

1. **Gender:**

☐ Male

☐ Female

2. **Age Group:**

☐ Under18

☐ 18–30

☐ 31–45

☐ 46+

3. **Occupation:**

☐ Student

☐ Working Professional

☐ Hospitality Industry Staff

☐ Retired

Section B: Opinion Statements

(Please indicate your level of agreement with each statement.)

Scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree | 2 = Disagree | 3 = Neutral | 4 = Agree | 5 = Strongly Agree

4. **Lenny Henry's credibility (e.g., trustworthiness, relatability) makes me more loyal to Premier Inn.**
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
5. **The quality of service at Premier Inn, when combined with Lenny Henry's endorsement, increases my trust and likelihood to book again.**
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
6. **Lenny Henry's endorsement improves my ability to recall and recognise the Premier Inn brand compared to other budget hotel chains.**
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
7. **Younger customers (aged 18–30) are more emotionally attached and loyal to the Premier Inn brand due to Lenny Henry's endorsement.**
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
8. **There is a strong alignment between Lenny Henry's public image and the brand identity of Premier Inn.**
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
9. **My guest experience at Premier Inn reflects the messages conveyed in Lenny Henry's marketing campaigns.**
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
10. **Lenny Henry's long-standing role as the face of Premier Inn contributes to building long-term customer relationships.**
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

The End