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Article

# Exploring the Impact of Celebrity Endorsements and Social Media Platforms on Sustainable Consumer Behavior in Nigerian Tourism

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**Abstract:** The current study explores the impact of celebrity endorsements and social media platforms on promoting sustainable consumer behavior in Nigerian tourism industry. The study employs Mentionlytics software to analyze online documents and examine how political celebrities and social media platforms (Twitter and Facebook) influence consumer behavior and decision-making processes within the tourism industry. The findings in phase 1 suggest that celebrity endorsements and social media platforms have a positive impact on sustainable consumer behavior. The results in phase 2 suggest that political celebrities engage followers on Facebook based on the 70% share. However, no engagement was found on Twitter based on the zero percent (0%) share, suggesting that Facebook enables political celebrities to promote sustainable tourism. The study contributes to the literature on sustainability and celebrity endorsements, offering insights for destination marketers and policymakers in the Nigerian tourism industry.

**Keywords:** celebrity endorsement; social media platforms; sustainable consumer behavior; Nigerian tourism

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## 1. Introduction

The tourism industry is a vital contributor to Nigeria's economy, creating employment opportunities for citizens and generating revenue [1]. However, the industry's rapid growth has also led to concerns about its environmental and social impact [2,3]. The need to adopt sustainable practices in the tourism industry has become increasingly important to ensure its long-term viability and minimize its negative effects on the environment and local communities [4]. The concept of sustainability has been defined as 'Tourism that accounts for its present and future social, economic, and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of the environment, the industry, host communities, and tourists' [5, p. 12]. Sustainability is an important aspect of celebrity endorsements in tourism marketing because the tourism industry keeps leveraging the celebrity's influence in promoting attractions and destinations. It is thus crucial to integrate sustainable practices and ensure that all promotional efforts align with sustainability, promoting environmentally friendly and responsible tourism.

In recent years, celebrity endorsements have become a popular marketing strategy in the tourism industry [6], with some destinations partnering with influential personalities to promote their attractions and experiences [7,8]. The rise of social media has further amplified the reach and influence of celebrity endorsements, allowing them to engage with a vast audience and shape consumer behavior [9,10].

Despite the growing importance of sustainable tourism and the increasing use of celebrity endorsements in the tourism, there is a lack of research on the impact of celebrity endorsements on sustainable consumer behavior in the Nigerian tourism context [11]. Existing studies have primarily focused on the effects of celebrity endorsements on consumer behavior in general, without

considering the specific context of sustainable tourism [12], and the type of celebrity. Furthermore, the role of social media platforms in promoting sustainable tourism practices and influencing consumer behavior has not been fully explored in the Nigerian context [13]. While social media has been recognized as a powerful tool for promoting sustainability, its effectiveness in the Nigerian tourism remains under-researched [14].

The impact of celebrity endorsements and social media platforms on sustainable consumer behavior in Nigerian tourism industry remains underexplored, regardless of the rising importance of sustainable tourism and the increasing use of celebrity endorsements. This raises the following questions: (1) How do celebrity endorsements influence sustainable consumer behavior in the Nigerian tourism industry? (2) What is the impact of social media platforms on the promotion of sustainable tourism practices in Nigeria? (3) How do political celebrities and social media platforms influence consumer behavior and decision-making processes in Nigerian tourism industry? [6,15,16].

While the aim of the study explores the influence of celebrities (political celebrity) and social media platforms (Twitter and Facebook) on consumer behavior and decision-making processes, its scope focus on the Nigerian tourism industry to examine the impact of celebrity endorsements and social media platforms on sustainable consumer behavior. It also aims to explore the potential of Mentionlytics to quantitatively analyze online data. The objective of this study includes (1) To explore the impact of celebrity endorsements on sustainable consumer behavior in the Nigerian tourism industry. (2) To study the role of social media platforms in promoting sustainable tourism practices in Nigeria. And (3) To explore the influence of political celebrities and social media platforms on consumer behavior and decision-making processes.

### *1.1. The Significance of this Study*

The current study is significant in three ways. First, by exploring the impact of celebrity endorsements and social media platforms on sustainable consumer behavior in the Nigerian tourism industry, the study fills the knowledge gap, contributing to the existing literature on celebrity endorsements, social media, and sustainable tourism. Second, by examining the influence of political celebrities and social media platforms on consumer behavior and decision-making processes, the study provides insights for destination marketers and policymakers in Nigeria, contributing to the development of sustainable of tourism practices. Third, by providing recommendations for sustainable tourism development in Nigeria, the study aids the understanding of the impact of political celebrities and social media platforms on consumer behavior and decision-making processes in Nigerian tourism industry.

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1. Sustainable Consumer Behavior*

Sustainable consumer behavior is an important concept in the contemporary age, where environmental and social concerns are increasingly important [17,18]. The concept considers the choices and actions made by individuals to minimize their environmental, economic, and social impacts [19]. It involves adopting a lifestyle that reduces waste, promotes ethical practices, and preserves resources [20]. Sustainable consumer behavior is influenced by several factors, including attitudes, values, and beliefs [21]. Research has identified several dimensions of sustainable consumer behavior, including social responsibility, economic prudence, and environmental sustainability [22].

Studies have shown that sustainable consumer behavior can be influenced by several factors, including social norms, psychological and demographic characteristics [19,22]. For example, research has found that younger consumers are more likely to engage in sustainable consumer behavior than older consumers [22]. In addition, consumers who are socially responsible and environmentally conscious are more likely to engage in sustainable consumer behaviors [19]. Moreover, research has also shown that sustainable consumer behavior can be influenced by cultural and societal factors, such as cultural values and social norms [21].

Sustainable consumer behavior is particularly important, as it has the potential to significantly conserve resources, promote ethical practices, and conserve resources [20]. Moreover, sustainable consumer behavior can also have positive impacts on the economy, environment, and society [19]. As such, it is essential to understand the factors influencing sustainable consumer behavior and to develop strategies to promote it.

Several studies have examined the factors that influence sustainable consumer behavior. For instance, [22] found that environmental consciousness, social responsibility, and economic prudence were significant predictors of sustainable consumer behavior. [19] also found that attitudes, values, and beliefs were significant factors influencing sustainable consumer behavior. These studies provide valuable insights into the factors influencing sustainable consumer behavior and can inform the development of strategies to promote it.

## *2.2. Consumer Behavior and Celebrity Endorsements Impact*

Celebrity endorsements are a popular marketing strategy used by many companies to promote their products or services. The concept refers to the use of a celebrity to endorse a product or service, with the aim of increasing brand awareness, credibility, and sales [23]. Celebrity endorsements can be an effective way to reach a large audience and to build brand equity [24]. Research has shown that celebrity endorsements can positively impact consumer attitudes and behavior, particularly when the celebrity aligns with the brand's values and image [24].

Studies have found that celebrity endorsements can influence consumer behavior in numerous ways, including increasing brand preference, intention to purchase, and actual purchase behavior [23,25]. In addition, research has found that celebrity endorsements can also influence consumer attitudes, including attitudes towards the brand, product, and advertising [24]. Furthermore, celebrity endorsements can also increase brand awareness and credibility, particularly when the celebrity is perceived as credible and attractive [26].

The impact of celebrity endorsements on consumer behavior can be influenced by a range of factors, including the celebrity's credibility, attractiveness, and relevance to the brand [26]. Research has found that consumers are more likely to be influenced by celebrity endorsements when the celebrity is perceived as credible and attractive [26]. Additionally, the relevance of the celebrity to the brand can also impact the effectiveness of the endorsement [26].

Several studies have investigated the impact of celebrity endorsements on consumer behavior. For example, a study by [23] found that celebrity endorsements significantly increased brand preference and intention to purchase. Another study by [25] found that celebrity endorsements positively impacted consumer attitudes and behavior. These studies provide valuable insights into the impact of celebrity endorsements on consumer behavior and can inform the development of marketing strategies [27,28].

## *2.3. Social Media Platforms and Their Role in Promoting Sustainability*

Social media platforms have become an integral part of modern life, with billions of people around the world using them to connect, share, and learn. In recent years, social media has also become a key tool for promoting sustainability, with many individuals and organizations using platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook to raise awareness about environmental and social issues [29]. Research has shown that social media can be an effective way to promote sustainability, through campaigns that increase awareness, change attitudes, inspire behavior change, and promote marketing [9,30,31].

Social media platforms offer several features that make them well-suited for promoting sustainability. For example, hashtags can be used to categorize and make posts discoverable, allowing users to easily find and engage with content related to sustainability [29]. Additionally, social media platforms provide a range of tools and features that can be used to create and share engaging content, such as videos, images, and infographics [9]. And can further provide a space for individuals and organizations to connect and collaborate, allowing for the sharing of ideas and resources [29].

Despite the potential of social media for promoting sustainability, there are also challenges and limitations to consider. For example, social media platforms can be overwhelming and distracting, making it difficult for users to focus on sustainability issues [29]. Additionally, social media platforms can be used to spread misinformation and propaganda, which can be harmful to sustainability efforts [9]. Therefore, it is important for individuals and organizations to use social media responsibly and strategically, to maximize its potential for promoting sustainability.

Few studies have investigated the role of social media in promoting sustainability. For example, [29] and [31] found that social media campaigns can increase awareness and change attitudes towards sustainability issues. [9] also found that social media can be an effective way to promote sustainable behavior, such as reducing energy consumption and using public transportation. These studies provide valuable insights into the potential of social media for promoting sustainability and can inform the development of effective sustainability strategies.

#### *2.4. Potential for Sustainable Practices in Nigerian Tourism*

The Nigeria's tourism industry has the potential to be a significant contributor to the country's economy, with a rich cultural heritage and diverse natural attractions [1]. This makes tourism a necessity [32], and a tool for development [33]. However, the industry is still in its initial stages of development, and there are challenges and limitations that must be addressed to realize its full potential [11]. One of the key challenges facing the Nigerian tourism industry is the need to adopt sustainable practices, to minimize its environmental and social impacts [4].

Despite the challenges, there are opportunities for sustainable tourism development in Nigeria. For example, the country has a rich cultural heritage, with historic sites and traditional festivals that could be developed into tourist attractions [11]. Additionally, Nigeria has a diverse natural environment, with many national parks and wildlife reserves that could be developed into eco-tourism destinations [1,34]. Moreover, sustainable tourism development could provide many benefits for local communities, including job creation and income generation [4].

Few studies have investigated the potential for sustainable tourism development in Nigeria. For example, a study by [11] found that sustainable tourism development could provide numerous benefits for local communities, including job creation and income generation. Another study by [1] found that Nigeria's tourism industry has the potential to be a significant contributor to the country's economy, with a rich cultural heritage and diverse natural attractions. These studies provide valuable insights into the potential for sustainable tourism development in Nigeria and can inform the development of effective sustainable tourism strategies.

To realize the potential for sustainable tourism development in Nigeria, it is important for stakeholders to work together to address the challenges and limitations facing the industry. This could include the development of sustainable tourism policies and practices, the provision of training and capacity building for tourism operators, and the promotion of sustainable tourism destinations and attractions [4]. Additionally, it is important for stakeholders to engage with local communities and involve them in the tourism development process, to ensure that their needs and concerns are addressed [11].

The literature review reveals agreements on the importance of sustainable consumer behavior, celebrity endorsements, social media platforms, and sustainable tourism development in promoting environmental and social sustainability. However, disagreements arise on the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements and social media platforms in promoting sustainability, with some studies finding positive impacts and others highlighting limitations and challenges. Despite these debates, the literature concurs that a multi-faceted approach is necessary to promote sustainability, involving individuals, organizations, and governments. Lastly, the study stresses the benefits of sustainability in various contexts, but also highlights the need for a nuanced understanding of the complex factors in developing effective strategies to promote sustainability.

### **3. Method**

### 3.1. Research Design and Participant

The current study used a mixed methods approach to explore how celebrity endorsements and social media platforms promote sustainability. In phase one, the study aims to gather in-depth insights on how celebrity endorsements influence sustainable consumer behavior, as well as how political celebrities and social media platforms influence consumer behavior and decision-making processes in the Nigeria tourism industry.

**Phase 1** ■ **Qualitative**, after a careful thought and deliberations, the authors decided to choose Dr. Ngozi Okonji Iwuala, a Nigerian political celebrity due to the huge online followers, social media presence, and political fame. The celebrity has held several political posts internationally and locally, including minister of foreign affairs. The inclusion criteria are engaging with social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook and having online presence, politically fame at the local and international levels. Moreover, the selected celebrity has distinct professional background, shares Nigerian identity, recognition, potential for collaboration and social influence. Note that the number of participants for any study may depend on the research design, aim, research question, and the type of data being collected. For instance, while [35] used seven participants, [36] used five, it all depends on the aim of the study.

### 3.1. Data Collection

Qualitative data collection may precede quantitative data collection when the intention is first exploring the problem under study, then follow up with quantitative data [37]. The study uses purposive sampling technique to explore publicly available data [online documents] of Dr. Ngozi Okonji Iwuala, a Nigerian political celebrity, on August 20th, 2023. Researchers can gather online secondary data from websites, libraries, museums, and other online sources [38]. They can collect, verify, analyze, and incorporate them from diverse sources or individuals, and can provide a cost-effective and time-efficient way to gather information [38]. We conducted targeted searches on Twitter and Facebook pages for the following keywords: Ngozi Okonjo Iweala, service sector - logistics and tourism.

### 3.2. Data Analysis

The study adopted thematic analysis of online documents. To familiarize ourselves with the content and context, we individually read through online documents, taking notes of the concepts or ideas that emerge, and are related to sustainability. The initial coding follows a line-by-line approach, involving reading the transcript repeatedly to identify word patterns and generate themes based on reoccurring concepts. Since the transcript is not huge, we coded the key theme that captures the essence of the study and labeled it in a consensus.

Ethically, research suggests that the strength of the privacy measure should align with the level of sensitivity of the data [39]. Since phase one uses publicly available data, we do not need any written or verbal ethical approval. Moreover, while using internet data for research may be legal, researchers must do so ethically and responsibly, respecting the rights and privacy of authors/owners [40]. Besides, the study poses no risks, and no privacy is violated, as we only collected publicly available online posts of political celebrities.

## 4. Findings and Interpretations

During the data analysis, several effective online comments emerged. The comments indicated that the political celebrity influenced followers through para-social relationship (likes, comments, and shares) from tourism-related posts, cheering them to visit and promote tourism in destinations they endorsed, as the posts attract large audiences. The findings further indicate that social media presence and the celebrity's status could well impact the effectiveness of endorsements on sustainable consumer behavior through the large audiences, engaging wider followers, increasing brand awareness, and visits. While Facebook was found suitable for influencing political followers, because of its ability to connect families and enable deeper engagement through tourism-related posts,

Twitter had no effect/influence. Previous studies found that celebrities can impact specific tourist destinations by sharing personal travel experiences on social media [41]. To be precise, engagements on Facebook amplifies promotional activities in tourism [42,43], boosting sustainability. Two tourism-related posts influencing the political celebrity's followers were coded and grouped under one theme.

#### 4.1. Concerns For Tourism Developing Economies

The Nigerian tourism industry has enormous potential for economic expansion, underscoring the significance of the sector for sustainable Nigerian tourism. Thus, fostering tourism opportunities can impact consumer behavior on social media. For example, the UNWTO Regional Commission for Africa emphasized the need of innovation, branding, and partnerships, further emphasizing the need for concerted efforts in the tourism sector [1]. We found two comments/posts from the political celebrity's Facebook page, which remarked:

"The pandemic has also widened inequalities in international trade. While some women-led companies did successfully move online, or pivot to new activities, others closed operations, and women were inequal in sectors hit hard by the pandemic, like tourism."

"On recovery of African economies, there is need to solve health crises, get more fiscal stimulus into the economy, and revive the service sector - logistics & tourism."

While the above comments highlight the negative impact of the pandemic on sustainable tourism and the need to revive the service sector, including tourism, the analysis suggests that the political celebrity's online comments could predict consumer behavior and sentiment variations, indicating that the influence extends beyond individual campaigns and product endorsements. Therefore, online followers were more likely to engage with celebrities and make travel decisions based on endorsements, para-social relations, and identification. Figure 1 is the research process.

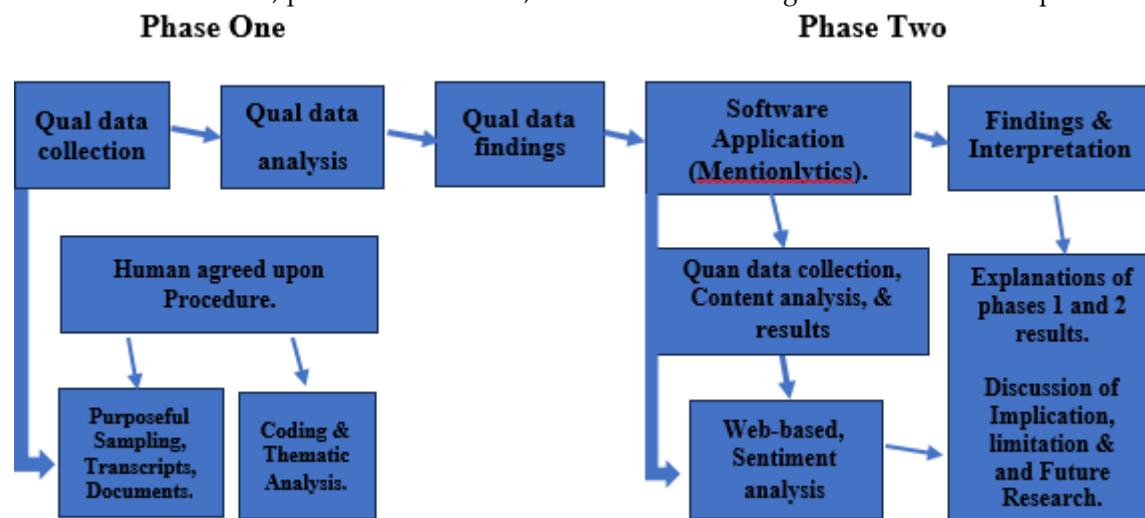


Figure 1. The Research Process.

#### 4.2. Phase 2 -Design and Participants

**Phase -2 Quantitative**, data collection was enabled using Mentionlytics software, which facilitated the tracking of social media posts related to sustainability. Online documents, including industry and government reports provided information. The software provided a wealth of data, including social media posts and comments, which were analyzed to identify sentiments (likes, shares and comments) towards the political celebrity's social presence related to sustainability in the industry. This helps to understand the impact of social media platforms on the promotion of sustainable tourism practices [44].

The participants were 725 online consumers who engage with the political celebrity's social media pages through likes, shares, and comments. The inclusive criteria include being active on social media, ensuring effectiveness of the endorsements by engaging followers online and ensuring that

participant's interests, comments, and behaviors are related to sustainability. Mentionlytics upholds ethical rules in the media data collection process by abiding by the terms of service, safeguarding user privacy, and being transparent about how data is collected and used.

#### 4.3. Data Collection and Analysis

On September 20th, 2023, the study used Mentionlytics software to search the political celebrity's Twitter and Facebook pages as popular social networking platforms for sharing opinions, feelings, and concerns [45–47]. Since qualitative approaches are gaining popularity, and advancements in computer analysis software have led to a rapidly evolving array of novel methodologies and analytical tools, there is a need for more in-depth discussions about integrating these computer-based tools with conventional methods [48] to gain quantitative insights. Such data triangulation provides a pathway to scientific rigorous study with insights on the sustainability of celebrity endorsements and social media platforms.

The process involves typing the keywords: #Ngozi Okonjo Iweala, #service sector -logistics and #tourism into the search bar. Next select the Twitter and Facebook platforms, then press the enter button. The software will run the analysis using its algorithms to search for the terms. The analysis is based on the sustainability of celebrity endorsements and social media platforms through likes, comments, and shares [49]. Mentionlytics as a Natural Language Processing tool uses its algorithms to identify trends and patterns in large bulks of data. Using content analysis, the software analyzes unstructured data to extract insights for reputation and sentiment analysis. It then classifies the sentiments under positive, neutral, and negative sentiments, see prior study [50]. Figures 2 and 3 present the results.

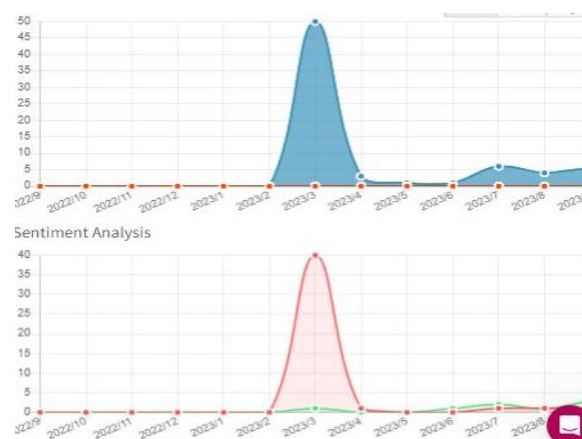


Figure 2. Mentionlytics Analysis.

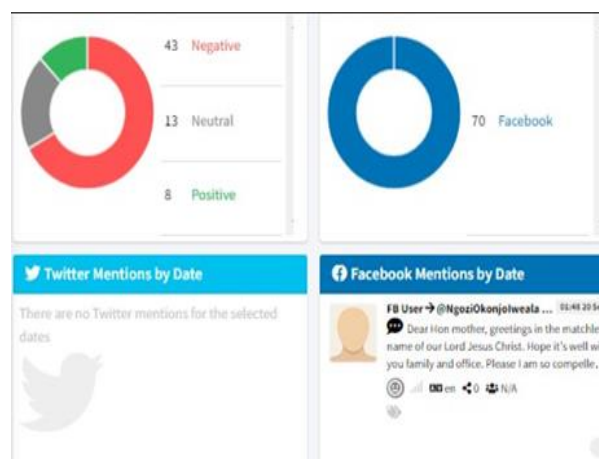


Figure 3. Sentiment Analysis with Facebook 70 Twitter 0.

#### 4.4. Findings and Interpretations

The analysis found 725 total mentions, grouped under 8 positives, 13 neutrals, and 43 negative sentiments see Figures 2 and 3. The 8 positive sentiments indicates that celebrity endorsements have a positive impact on sustainable consumer behavior in Nigerian tourism. This aligns with [51] study; that consumers are likely to engage with media brands that evoke their emotions. It also aligns with the findings in phase 1; that online followers were likely to engage with political celebrities and make travel decisions based on endorsements, para-social relations, identification, and concerns for tourism-related posts/remarks. However, the 43 negative sentiments suggest that there may be criticisms about the authenticity or effectiveness of celebrity endorsements in promoting sustainable tourism practices. For instance, there may be disputes that celebrity endorsements for sustainable tourism practices are superficial, in that celebrities may only lend their image or name to a cause without genuinely communicating or understanding the issue. In such case can question the authenticity and credibility, undermining the effectiveness and sustainability of such endorsement. This result addresses research question 1.

The findings of 13 neutral sentiments may suggest that social media platforms have neutral impact on promoting sustainable tourism practices. It may also refer to the celebrity follower's moderate satisfaction, a balanced perception of the tourism products/services, or indifferences on the celebrity's impact. Nonetheless, the 43 negative sentiments could indicate that social media platforms may have negative impact or not even be effectively used on promoting sustainable tourism practices in the country due to follower's platform preferences. For instance, information overload can decrease the effectiveness of promotional campaigns, making the efforts less meaningful. Sometimes, followers may feel more pressure over sustainable tourism practices or become traumatized by such issues because social media platforms are sometimes jam-packed with information, leading to followers' fatigue. This result answers research question 2. In addition, the 8 positive sentiments and 13 neutral sentiments suggests that political celebrities and social media platforms may have influence on consumer behavior and decision-making processes in Nigerian tourism. Yet, the 43 negative sentiments suggest that there may be some concerns about the impact of political celebrities and social media platforms on consumer behavior and decision-making processes. For instance, social media platforms and political celebrities may use excessive influence on consumers, leading to harmful behaviors and hasty decisions. This can encourage hasty choices that may not align with sustainable interests and values.

Furthermore, the 8 positive sentiments and 13 neutral sentiments indicate that social media platforms and political celebrities may have influence on consumer behavior and decision-making processes in Nigerian tourism. Nonetheless, the 43 negative sentiments suggest that there may be criticisms regarding the impact of social media platforms and political celebrities on sustainable consumer behavior and decision-making processes in the Nigerian industry. For instance, suppose a travel destination promoted by a political celebrity has a high crime rate. It may discourage tourists from visiting the destination, despite its attractiveness or endorsement on social media, limiting the sustainability of tourism practices. This result answers research question 3. Finally, while there may be positive impacts of celebrity endorsements and social media platforms on sustainable consumer behavior, criticisms regarding the effectiveness of their sustainability need to be resolved, providing insights for policymakers and destination marketers to create sustainable marketing strategies [52,53] for promoting tourism practices. These results also suggests that Mentionlytics can quantitatively analyze online data.

## 5. Discussion

The results have significant implications for the Nigerian tourism industry. For instance, the results that celebrity endorsements can influence sustainable consumer behavior suggests that tourism operators in Nigeria can leverage celebrity endorsements to promote sustainable tourism practices. They can do this by partnering with celebrities who are enthusiastic about sustainability and have a strong following. Additionally, the results suggest that social media platforms, particularly Facebook, can be effective for promoting sustainable tourism products and services by

political celebrities. Tourism operators in Nigeria can use the platform to reach a large audience and increase awareness about sustainable tourism options, boosting the spirit of sustainability.

The results also suggest that consumers are increasingly considering environmental and social factors when making tourism choices. This implies that tourism operators in Nigeria need to prioritize sustainability and social responsibility in their operations to attract conscious consumers. The Nigerian government can also support the tourism industry by implementing policies and regulations that promote sustainability and social responsibility by building a crime-free state and ensuring that endorsed celebrities resonate with sustainable practices for all parties. Compared to existing literature and the gaps, the results are consistent with extant literature on the impact of celebrity endorsements on consumer behavior [23,24]. However, the current study encompasses existing literature by exploring the impact of celebrity endorsements on sustainable consumer behavior, and social media marketing in Nigerian tourism.

A gap in the extant literature is the scarcity of studies on the impact of political celebrity endorsements on sustainable consumer behavior in Nigerian tourism. The current study fills the gap by providing insights into the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements in promoting sustainable tourism practices in the Nigerian tourism industry. Moreover, there is limited research on the use of social media platforms in promoting sustainable tourism products [54] in Nigeria. The current study fills this gap by exploring the effectiveness of Twitter and Facebook in promoting sustainable tourism products, informing the development of effective marketing strategies that promotes sustainability agenda, and reach sustainable development goals.

### *5.1. Limitations and Future Research*

Though the study has achieved its aims, few limitations emerged. For instance, the reliance on Mentionlytics software and online documents may not fully capture the level of consumer behaviors and decision-making processes. In this case, future research could combine online documents with interviews to provide a broader understanding of the topic under study. In addition, conducting a comparative study on the effectiveness of different social media platforms, such as YouTube, Instagram and TikTok, and celebrity endorsement strategies, such as influence marketing on sustainable consumer behavior in Nigeria could provide deeper insights for policymakers and marketers.

## **6. Conclusion**

To conclude, this study has revealed that celebrity endorsements have a profound impact on sustainable consumer behavior in the Nigerian tourism industry. This study showed that celebrity endorsements influence consumers' intentions to engage in sustainable tourism practices, and that social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook are effective platforms for promoting sustainable tourism products. Moreover, the study highlighted that the celebrity's reputation, crisis, as well as social media preferences are main factors influencing sustainable tourism.

These results suggest that destination marketers and policymakers should leverage celebrity endorsements in the promotion of sustainable tourism. While social media platforms, Facebook to be precise was more effective in promoting sustainable tourism by political celebrities, Twitter was not suitable for political celebrities in promoting sustainability. Policymakers should make regulations and policies in conjunction with social media teams that promote sustainability of tourism industry for the benefit of all parties. Based on these results, the current study contributes to the literature on celebrity endorsement and sustainability by exploring the impact of celebrity endorsements on sustainable consumer behavior. This provides insights on the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements in promoting sustainability in the Nigerian tourism.

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