Dynamic Interplay of Athlete and Product Image as Determinants of Overall Signature Brand Image

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Session: Branding 2

Numerous sport brands try to increase market share by holding endorsement deals with highly profiled athletes (Beal & Weidman, 2003). The athlete endorsement can be considered as a form of co-branding between athletes and product brands, as there is continuous interaction of attributes between these two entities (Seno & Lukas, 2007). Such interaction involves developing the network of brand association, which bridges consumers' memories of endorsing athletes and endorsed product brands (Chang, Ko, Tasci, Arai, & Kim, 2014). Specifically, when consumers encounter a signature brand with the athlete’s name or logo, athlete brand image (ABI) and product brand image (PBI) are associated into a single network. Thus, drawing from the perspective of the associative network model, consumers’ existing images of the product brand and the athlete brand interact with each other to generate the image of the signature brand (Van Osselaer & Janiszewski, 2001).

In the current study, authors examined the differential impact of product brand popularity (high vs. low), athlete’s expertise (high vs. low), and brand types (sport vs. non-sport) on consumers’ signature brand image (SBI) and how SBI influence their behavioral responses. In Study 1, the authors employed a 2 (expertise: high vs. low) x 2 (brand popularity: high vs. low) experimental design using fictitious brands. 2-way ANCOVA results ×) using 160 participants from Amazon Mturk exhibited main and two-way interaction effect of athlete’s expertise and product brand’s popularity on all SBI dimensions (i.e., perceived quality, design, and perceived popularity). Thus, the effect of athlete’s expertise on SBI was found to be moderated by the product brand popularity.

In Study 2, the authors employed 2 (expertise) × 2 (brand popularity) × 2 (brand type) experimental design using real athlete brands and used modified dimensions in the SBI scale (i.e., functional, experiential, symbolic). The 3-way ANCOVA results using 320 participants recruited from Amazon MTurk exhibited the two-way interaction effect of expertise and product brand’s popularity on all SBI dimensions. Also, the brand type was found to be a boundary condition of this two-way interaction effect.

Additionally, the results of path analyses models using the data from both studies exhibited significantly positive relationships between SBI and all behavioral responses. These results provide several meaningful theoretical implications while offering brand managers with meaningful and practical implications. Specific details will be addressed in the presentation.