

Influence of Product-Endorser Match-Up on Consumer's Purchase Intentions of (Non-Sport) Endorsed Products: Development of a Model

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With an increase in media coverage and social visibility, star athletes have embraced their celebrity status and benefited financially from endorsing products. As the number of high-profile athletes have grown around the world, the number and cost of endorsement contracts have followed suit (King, 2005). While studies have indicated that a star athlete's association with a brand may help to define and enhance the brand's image (Cornwell, Roy, & Steinar, 2001; Javalgi et al., 1994; McDonald, 1991), negative characteristics of an endorser could also have a toxic effect (Horror, 2002; Pitts & Stotlar, 2002). To a great extent, the success of an endorsement depends on product-endorser fit. Congruency of the characteristics between the two entities is often deemed critical in emitting an effectively endorsed message (e.g., Kahle & Homer, 1985; Kamins, 1989, 1990; Kanungo & Pang, 1973; Lynch & Schuler, 1994; Peterson & Kerin, 1977). With endorsement contracts on the rise (e.g., Tiger Woods - \$80 million per year and Michael Jordan - \$33 million per year; Weil, 2005), the organizations that invest in these relationships want to leave as little to chance as possible in terms of their return on their investment. Nevertheless, the issue of product-endorser match-up has been rather mystifying to both researchers and practitioners, possibly due to the lack of a model that examines the relationships among key variables associated with the potential match.

The purpose of this study was to develop a model to examine the structural relationships of identification with an athlete and his/her sport to product-endorser congruency, perceived value of the product, and consumer purchase intentions. Participants (N = 400 college students) responded to an online questionnaire that measured their identification with the athlete and the sport (Robinson & Trail, 2005), perception of product-endorser congruency in terms of Expertise, Trustworthiness, and Image (Aaker, 1997; Braunstein & Zhang, 2005; Tenser, 2004), perceived value of the product (Emotion, Quality, Price, and Social; Sweeney & Soutar, 2001), and purchase intentions after viewing an advertisement containing a product being endorsed by a professional athlete. Confirmatory factor analyses were first conducted for the product-endorser congruency and the perceived value variables, which revealed a lack of discriminant validity among the first-order latent product-endorser congruency variables; hence, an adjustment was made to allow all items to load directly on the general Match-Up factor. For the perceived value variables, the Emotion subscale was eliminated from further analyses due to a lack of discriminant validity with the Quality subscale. The analysis of the structural equation model showed adequate fit of the model to the data, with the largest amount of variance being explained by the relationships of Match-Up to Perceived Value (38%) and Perceived Value to Purchase Intention (52%). With only 7% of the variance explained, Identification (both Athlete and Sport) was found to have a nominal influence on Match-Up. The structural model has provided preliminary information on key socio-psychological factors that may influence the purchase intentions of endorsed products. The model can be adapted, reexamined, and used as a reference by corporations when choosing athlete endorsers.