Understanding the Impact of Michelle Wie’s Performance on Source Credibility

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Poster

In 1995, U.S Companies paid more than $2 billion to 2,000 athletes for endorsement deals, representing nearly 10% of the expenditures on corporate sponsorships as a specific promotion (Stone, Joseph, & Jones, 2003). An interesting issue rarely explored in the celebrity endorsement literature is whether or not the activities of a celebrity endorser affect company performance (Farrell, Karels, Monfort, & McClatchey, 2000). An athletic endorser’s source credibility is a major factor in determining their impact when promoting their sponsor’s product. Source credibility is a term commonly used to imply a communicator’s positive characteristics that affect the receiver’s acceptance of a message (Ohanian, 2001). Ohanian (1990) provides a source credibility model including attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise as the primary characteristics in defining an endorser’s source credibility. Attractiveness is concerned with physical and non-physical characteristics of the endorser related to personality, lifestyle, and intellect (Stevens, Lathrop, & Bradish, 2003). Source trustworthiness refers to consumer confidence in a source providing information in an objective, honest, and believable manner (Ohanian 1991; Shank 1999; Stevens, Lathrop, & Bradish 2003). Expertise is defined as the knowledge, skills, or special experiences of an athlete (Shank, 1999; Stevens, Lathrop & Bradish, 2003). Athletes, in general, are perceived to have high levels of expertise when endorsing sports-related products (Boyd & Shank, 2004). However, although previous research has investigated source credibility factors, a majority of these studies have not analyzed performance and its impact on an athletic endorser’s source credibility, or its effect on consumer satisfaction, attitude, and purchase intentions toward the sponsoring brand. Therefore, the purpose of the study is two-fold: (1) to gain a better understanding of the impact that golfer Michelle Wie’s performance has on her overall source credibility and (2) to examine the relationship between the dimensions of source credibility and consumer satisfaction, attitude, and purchase intentions toward the sponsoring brand.

For the study, the sample population will include a total of 450 student participants from a major university in the Southeastern United States. They will be evenly divided and randomly assigned to one of three treatment groups. One group will act as a control group, and the other two groups as experimental groups. The control group will not be provided with any information pertaining to Wie’s performance. They are expected to use their current perceptions of her gained through the media and other information outlets. One experimental group will be provided with a positive performance scenario. They will be presented with information that portrays Michelle Wie as a high level performer. For example, this scenario will include a list of Wie’s top finishes in major golf events. The other experimental group will be provided with information that portrays Michelle Wie as a low level performer, which will be lower than her current performance. The study will be conducted using a slightly modified version of Ohanian (1990)’s 27 item scale and will employ multivariate analysis of variance to examine the impact of performance on source credibility among the three treatment groups. In addition, multiple regression analysis will be used to measure the relationship between the dimensions of source credibility and consumer satisfaction, attitude, and purchase intentions toward the sponsoring brand.

The data collection for this study has not yet been performed, but several results are expected. We expect that the group presented with positive information regarding Michelle Wie’s performance will perceive her as having a significantly higher level of source credibility when compared with the control group as well as those presented with negative information. Furthermore, the group presented with negative information will perceive Michelle Wie as having a significantly lower level of source credibility when compared to the other two groups. Also, it is expected that the expertise dimension will have the greatest variation between all three groups. Finally, the group presented with positive information regarding Wie’s performance will likely have higher consumer satisfaction, attitude, and purchase intentions toward the sponsoring brand.

The present study will provide valuable information for sport marketers to consider when implementing athletic endorsement strategies because it is significant for sport marketers to realize the practical implications regarding athletic endorsements and the athletes they choose to endorse their brand. The practical implications regarding this study will be explained in further detail during the presentation.