

2013 North American Society for Sport Management Conference (NASSM 2013)

Method

The 2010 World Cup soccer was chosen as the context of this study. As targets of evaluation, four athletes (e.g., Lionel Messi) were selected based on their popularity as a brand or amount of media coverage. Two actual endorsed products (e.g., Gillette) were matched for each athlete and evaluated; a total of eight currently endorsed product cases were evaluated. The online survey was conducted by using student samples (N = 647) of selected universities in Japan (N = 250), South Korea (N = 160), and United States (N = 237). A student sample is suitable to this study and strengthens the study's practical contribution because this age group is frequently a target market for the product brands used in this study.

We adapted and modified existing scale items including celebrity dimensions of expertise (Ohanian, 1990), attractiveness (Ohanian, 1990), and popularity (Yakimova & Beverland, 2005), and product dimensions of quality (Garvin, 1984), design (Luo et al., 2008), and popularity (Yakimova & Beverland, 2005). The format for the instrument was a seven-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree). Measurement invariance test was conducted to examine whether the same constructs (i.e., athlete and product brand images) has been measured across three different cultural groups using multiple group confirmatory factor analysis. A series of paired-samples t-tests was then employed to examine the image match between athlete endorsers and the products they endorse. The data was analyzed using SPSS 18.0 and AMOS 18.0.

Results

The scale items fitted the three cultural groups adequately (configural invariance: $\chi^2/df = 43.84/24 = 3.05$, RMSEA = .08, CFI = .96, SRMR = .04). Testing measurement invariance using a series of hierarchically nested models indicated that all factor loadings and factor covariances were equivalent (χ^2 difference = 9.61, df difference = 4, $p = .05$), suggesting that there was consistency in response patterns to items across countries (Netemeyer et al., 2003). To evaluate the strategic matches, the ratings of the athletes and their endorsed products were compared on the three-dimensional scale using t-test. In terms of MSMAE, the results suggested that for the American respondents, the majority endorsement was APMD (i.e., 13 cases), followed by six AMD and five PMD. For the Asian respondents, 17 cases were PMD, followed by five APMD and two AMD.

Discussion

The results indicate that there were significant differences between American and Asian (Japanese and Korean in this case) cultures in their perceptions toward the athlete endorsement. For example, American and Asian consumers showed different perceptions largely in hedonic dimensions (i.e., matching between physical attractiveness and product design). However, there were relatively small perceptual differences in the utilitarian aspects of matching (i.e. matching between expertise and quality). Based on the Consumer Style Inventory (Sproles & Sproles, 1990), these results may reflect that consumers with individualistic cultural values (i.e., Americans) tend to be more sensitive to unique, fashionable, and hedonistic aspects of a brand in their consumption decision-making process, when compared to the consumers in collectivistic culture (i.e., Asians).

At the conference, the authors will discuss further theoretical implications as well as practical applications in regard to the associative learning processes (e.g., Van Osselaer & Janiszewski, 2001) and cultural influences on consumer cognition (e.g., Briley, Morris, & Simonson, 2000) by offering systematic insights into strategic athlete endorsement in the context of global market.