

**Celebrity Athlete Endorser Effectiveness: Construction and Validation of a Scale**

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**Marketing**

**Friday, May 31, 2013**

**20-minute oral presentation  
(including questions)**

**Abstract 2013-109**

**9:45 AM**

**(Room 410)**

The use of celebrity athletes as endorsers has become a popular marketing strategy. In fact, athlete endorsers are the most represented form of celebrity endorsers (Carlson & Donovan, 2008; Cunningham, Fink, & Kenix, 2008) and a significant portion of the \$46.3 billion dollar corporate sponsorship expenditures globally (IEG, 2010). Celebrity athletes are often used to endorse products because it is believed they positively impact brand attitudes (Friedman & Friedman, 1979; Kamins, et. al., 1989; Till, Stanley, Priluck, 2008) and foster brand loyalty (Bush, Martin & Bush, 2004). In addition, celebrity athletes are used to help companies differentiate their products and build instant name recognition (Henriks, 1996). The perceived benefits of this marketing strategy have caused marketers to increase the use of celebrity athlete endorsers in advertising campaigns. Endorsements are now one of the most popular forms of retail advertising (Choi & Rifon, 2007). Although research has examined endorser effectiveness and the many factors related to this concept, a comprehensive study examining the two most widely recognized endorsement models has not been conducted. A current conceptual gap exists as to which factors influence endorser effectiveness.

This study explored factors associated with celebrity athlete endorser (CAE) effectiveness. The theoretical framework guiding the research was a combination of two previously validated instruments, the Source Credibility Model (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953; Hovland & Weiss, 1951; McGuire, 1968) and the Source Attractiveness Model (McGuire, 1985). The two models generated the following key factors tied to endorser effectiveness: expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness, similarity, familiarity, and likability. These six factors were analyzed to gain a better understanding of the construct celebrity endorser effectiveness or the ability of an endorser to produce a strong positive impression. Therefore, the purpose of the study was to create a valid and reliable instrument to assess CAE effectiveness, based on the six factors included in the source credibility and source attractiveness models. The specific research questions were; 1) What factors (expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness, similarity, likability, familiarity) contribute to CAE effectiveness? 2) Does a respondent's gender affect the perceived effectiveness of a CAE? 3) Does the CAE's gender affect his/her perceived effectiveness?

The study was conducted during the spring of 2012 through the use of an online survey. An undergraduate student sample (n= 813, 310 males, 503 females) viewed one of two randomly assigned hypothetical advertisements of two CAE. The participants answered a 42-item survey with questions pertaining to the six factors associated with the two original models. To create two advertisements, one using a male athlete and one using a female athlete, a convenience sample (N = 50) was instructed to list as many celebrity athletes as they could remember in three minutes. The celebrity athlete names were then ranked based on frequency of mention and gender (Ohanian, 1990). Kobe Bryant and Serena Williams ranked as the most frequently mentioned athletes and thus were included in the final instrument. The product used in the advertisements was a hypothetical cellular phone called the Summit 4G. Caution was used to determine a product that was believable and not already associated with the athlete. Each athlete was placed next to a picture of the product with the brief tagline, "The cell phone has been perfected".

In addition to the questions pertaining to the factors associated with the Source Credibility and Source Attractiveness Models, demographic information was collected. To determine the impact of respondents' age and gender on the evaluation of the six factors included in the study, analysis of variance (ANOVA) was calculated. Based upon previous research a conceptualized factor structure was determined. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was used because all six factors included in the study had not been evaluated together in previous studies. The results were the basis for creating the condensed final instrument. Consideration was given as to the length of the final instrument and its reliability. Lastly, a final EFA was run to ensure that the factor solutions did not change after the new instrument was condensed (Worthington and Whittaker, 2009).

In response to the first research question, the EFA uncovered three factors impacting CAE effectiveness. Two of the factors, attractiveness and familiarity, were represented previously in the two original models, while a newly forged

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

factor, compatibility was also uncovered. The new factor labeled compatibility was the combination of two previously used factors, similarity and expertise. The new factor represented the strength of the perceived relationship between consumers and the CAE, thereby creating a new category for measurement. The second research question examined whether a respondent's gender affected the perceived effectiveness of the CAE. The results of independent t-tests indicated a gender difference in how Serena Williams was evaluated, including key factors of likeability, expertise, similarity, and trustworthiness. Results for Kobe Bryant showed no statistically significant differences for any of the six factors. The last research question addressed whether the CAE's gender affected his/her perceived effectiveness. The independent t-tests showed significant differences in mean scores on all six factors from the two original model's factors however the effect size was small (.001 or less).

A key manifestation of the study was the development of an 11-item Endorser Effectiveness Scale which provides a simple and comprehensive evaluation tool for sport marketers and researchers to further our understanding of the CAE phenomenon. The study also supports prior research showing female consumers have stronger associations with products endorsed by female athletes than males have to products endorsed by male athletes (Veltri & Long, 1998). Interestingly, the study did not show a gender effect difference in evaluation of the male CAE. Researchers should continue to closely monitor and analyze factors discussed in this study to gain a more complete understanding of endorser effectiveness.

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