Empirically Examining the Impact of Brand-Event Personality Fit on Sport Sponsors’ Consumer-Based Brand Equity: A Case Study in College Football

Junqi Wang, University of Georgia
James J. Zhang (Advisor), University of Georgia
Kevin Byon (Advisor), University of Georgia
Thomas Baker (Advisor), University of Georgia
Zhenqiu (Laura) Lu (Advisor), University of Georgia

Marketing

Abstract 2015-063

Thursday, June 4, 2015
20-minute oral presentation
(including questions)

As a crucial marketing asset, consumer-based brand equity (CBBE) has been studied by various researchers in a broad array of professional fields that revealed consistent findings of its positive influence on promoting consumer preferences and purchase intentions (Cobb-Walgren, Ruble, & Donthu, 1995), lowering consumer price sensitivity (Erdem, Swait, & Louviere, 2002), and elevating consumer perceived quality toward products (Dodds, Monroe, & Grewal, 1991). Understandably, corporations are always seeking efficient ways to build strong CBBE. Among proposed approaches, sport event sponsorship, as a major type of corporate marketing schemes, has been identified as one of the most effective, widely used, and rapidly growing strategies to build CBBE (Henseler, Wilson, & Westberg, 2011; Nicholls, Roslow, & Laskey, 1994). However, tangible guidance for utilizing sport event sponsorship to build CBBE has seldom been offered in literature. To strength this proposition, the current study highlighted the role of perceived brand-event personality fit (BEPF) in event sponsorship and empirically examined the positive influences of multi-dimensional BEPF on consumers’ cognitive, affective, and conative responses, covering the dimensions of CBBE.

Based on the schema theory (Fiske & Linville, 1980; Stoltman, 1990; Wright, 1986), hierarchy of effects model (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961), as well as empirical findings from relevant studies (e.g., Dean, 2002; Lee & Cho, 2009; Speed & Thompson, 2000), following hypotheses were proposed. BEPF would positively influence sponsors’ CBBE (i.e., brand awareness/brand association, perceived quality, and brand loyalty); prior brand attitude and prior event attitude, two major control variables, would positively influence sponsors’ CBBE; within dimensions of CBBE, brand awareness/association would positively influence consumer perceived quality, which in turn would positively influence brand loyalty.

Study 1 was designed to develop the multi-dimensional BEPF scale based on a modification of Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf’s (2009) brand personality scale. Two steps were executed: 1) employing a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to assess the generalizability of proposed personality scale in the setting of a college football event (i.e., Chick-fil-A Kickoff Game) and 2) developing the BEPF scale based on the results of assessment. Data from 207 student-participants were considered usable. Results of the CFA shown that the goodness of fit was reasonably sound ($\chi^2 = 100.333$, $p < 0.001$; $\chi^2/df = 100.333/44 = 2.280$; RMSEA = .079; CFI = .913; SRMR = 0.063). Both the reliability and validity of measurement scale were confirmed. These results indicated that the adapted proposed personality scale was effective in assessing the personality of the college football event. Based on this conclusion, a multi-dimensional BEPF scale was further developed to measure the fit level of 12 personality traits under five dimensions (i.e., responsibility-fit, activity-fit, aggressiveness-fit, simplicity-fit, and emotionality-fit) between a sponsoring brand and a sport event.

Study 2 aimed to explore the structural relationships between dimensions of BEPF and CBBE, which was still conducted in the setting of Chick-fil-A Kickoff Game. Six representative sponsors of the event were selected to generate a sponsors’ pool. When data were pooled from the six brands, generalized solutions were sought for investigating the research questions. Data were collected from 282 student-respondents who positively confirmed the awareness of the sponsorship relationship. A CFA was conducted to assess the measurement model. The goodness of fit indexes were reasonable ($\chi^2 = 484.299$, $p < 0.001$; $\chi^2/df = 1.907$; RMSEA = 0.057; CFI = 0.923; SRMR = 0.054). Both the reliability and validity of measurement scales were superior to suggested criteria. The
goodness of fit indexes for the structural model also was reasonably well ($\chi^2 = 484.932, p < .001; \chi^2/df = 1.902; RMSEA = .057; CFI = .923; SRMR = .054$). Results of structural model shown that, among dimensions of BEPF and CBBE, responsibility-fit was found to positively influence brand awareness/association ($\beta = .232, p < .05$); responsibility-fit and emotionality-fit positively influenced brand loyalty ($\beta = .265, p < .05; \beta = .138, p < .05$); emotionality-fit ($\beta = .185, p < .05$) positively influenced brand loyalty; no significant indirect path was found between dimensions of BEPF and dimensions CBBE. In terms of control variables, prior brand attitude exerted positive impact on brand awareness/association ($\beta = .232, p < .05$), perceived quality ($\beta = .480, p < .01$) and brand loyalty ($\beta = .315, p < .01$), whereas no significant influence from prior event attitude was confirmed. Within the dimensions of CBBE, brand awareness/association positively influenced perceived quality ($\beta = .181, p < .05$), and perceived quality further positively influenced brand loyalty ($\beta = .372, p < .01$). Overall, the coefficient of determination ($R^2$) of three dependent variables were .153 (brand awareness/association), .542 (perceived quality), and .522 (brand loyalty), respectively, indicating 15.3%, 54.2%, and 52.2% of explained variance in these three dimensions of CBBE.

With an intention to explore the positive relationships between BEPF and CBBE, the current study helped bridge a gap between these two research areas in the exiting literature. The findings of the structural relationships largely enriched the research scope of building CBBE and deepening the understanding of sport consumer behavior. Moreover, the current study shed new light on the study of BEPF from multidimensional perspectives and proposed a reasonably modified measurement scale for assessing multidimensional BEPF, which fundamentally promoted for future BEPF studies both theoretically and empirically. In marketing practice of college football events, brand managers could obtain the specific references in terms of which aspects of BEPF should be prioritized in their event sponsorship to efficiently build CBBE; event marketers could also utilize this information to communicate with corporations regarding potential or continued sponsorship agreements.

A number of limitations associated with the current studies have been identified, such as adopting convenience sampling technique and student-participants, using post-test for prior attitude, and without including potential moderating variables. Correspondingly, the suggestions for future studies were offered at end of research.