Towards a Multi-Endorsements Effect Model: A Duo-Processing Perspective

Min Jung Kim, University of New Mexico
Luke Lanhua Mao (Advisor), University of New Mexico

Marketing - Branding (Professional Sport)
20-minute oral presentation (including questions)
Abstract 2018-200

Friday, June 8, 2018
11:40 AM
Room: Sable B

Athlete endorsement represents an important area of inquiry in contemporary marketing milieu. It has been found that celebrity endorsements can lead to higher rates of brand recall (O'Mahony & Meenaghan, 1997), and can improve communications with potential customers (Atkin & Block, 1983). Endorsement revenue is also a significant financial source for celebrity athletes. For instance, the top 100 highest-paid athletes earned a total of $924 million through endorsement from June 2015 to June 2016 (Opendorse.com, 2016). The total numbers are possible because many celebrity athletes have multiple brand endorsement contracts in different product categories.

To date, various studies have examined the effects of endorsement in the context of single endorsement setting, and in general they found that celebrity endorsements affect brand recognition, brand recall, purchase intentions and purchase behavior (Agrawal & Kamakura, 1995; Atkin & Block, 1983; Till & Shimp, 1998; Till, Stanley, & Priluck, 2008; Tripp, Jensen, & Carlson, 1994). While few studies have also examined the endorsement effect in the multi-endorsements context (Mowen & Brown, 1981; Mowen, Brown, & Schulman, 1979; Tripp et al., 1994), questions remain regarding the findings. Some studies showed that multiple endorsements by a celebrity positively affected consumers’ evaluation (Till & Shimp, 1998), others showed that multiple endorsements negatively affected consumers’ evaluation (Till, 1998; Tripp et al., 1994). Previous research indicated that consumers recognize that celebrities who endorse brands in multiple product categories are less credible than those who only endorse one (Mowen & Brown, 1981; Tripp et al., 1994).

As noted above, while studies, which examined an athlete celebrity to the endorsed brands have conducted, little is known about the image consistency between the endorsed, and relationships between the endorser and the endorsed brands. Thus, the complexity of multi-endorsements portfolio introduces new research questions. For example, how does the breadth of a portfolio, defined as the number of brands, impact consumers’ evaluation of a particular brand in the portfolio? How does the depth of a portfolio, defined as the industrial category span of the endorsing brands, impact consumers’ evaluation of a certain brand in the portfolio? How do brands in the same portfolio interact with each other? Accordingly, the purpose of current study is to propose a model to account for the empirical paradox of the effects of multi-endorsements and provide some insights into the potential impact of an endorsement portfolio on an individual brand.

The proposed multi-endorsements effect model is based on contemporary two-route theories. Theories in human judgment and decision making suggested that information can be processed in two different ways. Typically, the two processes consist of an automatic, subconscious, implicit process and a controlled, conscious, explicit process (Kahneman, 2003; Sloman, 1996; Strack & Deutsch, 2004). Strack and Deutsch (2003) labeled these two systems as reflective and impulsive processes. They suggested that these two systems directly lead to a different pattern of consumer behavior through the activation of the behavioral schema (Strack & Deutsch, 2006). We propose that consumers’ evaluation of a given brand in a multi-endorsements portfolio depends on the dual-process, in which a more automatic affective process is operated based on perception, associative learning, and emotions, and a more reflective cognitive process is operated based on reasoning and cognitive evaluation.

Route 1: Affective Processing
Affective processing refers to the determining the location of a stimulus on the affective dimension based on evaluative conditioning (De Houwer & Hermans, 2001). Evaluative conditioning is a process in which pairing a neutral element (unconditioned stimulus) with a balanced element (conditioned stimulus) leads to a transfer of valence from one to the other element (Sweldens, Van Osselaer, & Janiszewski, 2010; Van Osselaer, 2008). As the evaluative conditioning process is assumed exemplar-based and unfocused, the affective processing does not depend on controlled cognition, but could occur automatically (Martin & Levey, 1978; Zajonc, 1980, 1984). From this...
reasoning, the multi-endorsement portfolio would directly impact consumers’ evaluation towards any given brand in the portfolio. The breadth and depth of the portfolio usually do not directly impact consumers’ evaluation. Consumers’ evaluation of a brand is as same as the context of single endorsement. Therefore, only the pairing of the brand and the athlete will impact consumers’ evaluation. This discussion leads to the following proposition:

Proposition 1. Under affective processing, the breadth of multi-endorsements portfolio will not impact consumers’ evaluation of any endorsing brand in the portfolio.
Proposition 2. Under affective processing, the depth of multi-endorsements portfolio will not impact consumers’ evaluation of any endorsing brand in the portfolio.
Proposition 3. Pairing a brand with a favorable athlete will increase consumers’ positive evaluation of the brand; pairing a brand with an unfavorable athlete will increase consumers’ negative evaluation of the brand.

Route II: A Trustworthiness-Mediated Cognitive Processing
When consumers are motivated, they may engage in a more elaborated cognitive processing mode, particularly when consumers are motivated to predict their consumption benefits (Van Osselaer & Janiszewski, 2001). The multi-endorsements portfolio and individual brands within a portfolio are expected to interact with each other and exert impact on consumer’s evaluation. We propose that this route is mediated by a trustworthiness judgment as found in some of previous studied. A celebrity’s trustworthiness can establish a positive attitude and increase the acceptance of the message (Erdogan, 1999). Thus, trustworthiness is one of the most important criteria consumers use when judging a brand (Ohanian, 1990). Accordingly, we propose that celebrity’s trustworthiness will mediate consumers’ evaluation of the endorsing brand. This illustration leads to the following propositions:

Proposition 4. Under cognitive processing, the breadth of multi-endorsements portfolio will impact the trustworthiness of the endorsee. When an athlete represents more brands, consumers will perceive the athlete less trustworthy.
Proposition 5. Under cognitive processing, the depth of multi-endorsements portfolio will impact the trustworthiness of the endorsee. When an athlete represents more product categories, consumers will perceive the athlete less trustworthy.
Proposition 6. Under cognitive processing, the inclusion of a particular brand will impact the trustworthiness of the endorsee.

By proposing this duo-route based multi-endorsements effect model, some initial insights into the multi-endorsements phenomenon, which in our judgment has been under-researched. In the presentation, we will present the conceptual model and our methodology to test the proposed model.