Using Brand-Based Value Congruity in Brand-Consumer Relationship Marketing: The Case Study of the International Olympic Committee

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According to the literature in relationship marketing, brands should aim to understand consumers’ values in order to define and communicate their own (Elbedweihy et al., 2016). When studying international sport organizations (ISOs), a consumer-based approach seems limited in view of the fact that it implies a relationship exclusively dictated by a specific and easily identified set of consumers’ values.

We argue that ISOs may be able to use value congruity in order to assess the effect of their current corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategy and develop better relationships with their consumers. The opportunity to use the brand’s CSR statement to develop a brand-based value congruity (BBVC) measurement is assessed through a case study of the International Olympic Committee (IOC). The research aims to (1) develop a brand-based value scale for the IOC and (2) to apply this scale in order to assess the influence of BBVC on relationship quality (RQ).

Self-congruity theory (Sirgy, 1985) defines value congruity as a psychological comparison that consumers make when assessing similarities and dissimilarities between the values of an entity and their own (Tuškej, Golob, & Podnar, 2013). By seeking value congruity, the brand manager can help consumers to satisfy their identity needs by consuming the brand (Lam et al, 2013). Self-congruity has often been studied in a perspective going from the individual to the brand (Zenker, Gollan & Van Quaquebeke, 2014). Yet, brand traits may transfer to consumers, especially when congruity between brand and consumer’s behavior is strong (Jeronimo, Ramos & Ferreira, 2018). The sport industry is an interesting context to study the occurrence of value transfers going from the brand to the consumer, as ISOs often use their political power successfully as part of a militant branding strategy (Inoue and Kent, 2012).

Method

In order to develop the scale representing the values of the IOC, we followed the psychometric scale development procedure (Churchill, 1979). Six studies (n=1197) were conducted to develop and to apply the scale. Studies were conducted in the United States and France, before and after the Olympic Games of Rio and PyeongChang. Factor analyses and covariance-based structural equation modeling were used to analyze the data.

Results and Discussion

This research provides a conceptualization of the structure of values of the IOC. The findings confirm the nomological, convergent and discriminant validity of the scale as well as its reliability and internal consistency over six studies, across cultural settings (United States and France), and before and after the Olympic Games, when describing one’s values relating to sports and one’s perceptions of the values of the IOC. The structural model applying BBVC successfully predicted various dimensions of brand-consumer RQ. These results are consistent with findings on the influence of consumer-based value congruity (Elbedweihy et al., 2016) and suggest that the values of a brand can be used in order to measure brand-consumer value congruity. The model demonstrates cross-cultural invariance.

The scale can be used by brand managers to measure the evolution of the position of the brand in a longitudinal perspective.