Explore the Impact of Team Identification and Consumer Ethnocentrism on Foreign Sponsors: A Cross-Cultural Study

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Globalization has brought products from one country to another; however, people's attitudes toward foreign products vary from person to person. One construct that explains the attitude is consumer ethnocentrism, which means beliefs about the appropriateness and morality of purchasing foreign-made products (Shimp & Sharma, 1987). Home country bias makes consumers believe that purchasing foreign products is wrong due to their anti-outgroup motives, such as patriotism and being afraid of economic loss (Shimp & Sharma, 1987; Balabanis & Diamantopoulos 2004; Supphellen & Rittenburg, 2001).

The increasing studies on consumer ethnocentrism in sports settings have expanded insights into sports consumer behaviors. For example, consumer ethnocentrism negatively moderates the effects of event sponsorship (Lee & Mazodier, 2015; Meng-Lewis, Thwaites, & Pillai, 2014). However, this topic is primarily studied on megasports, where event involvement serves as a critical moderator (Meng-Lewis, Thwaites, & Pillai, 2014). The other setting of sports, local (including professional) sports, has not been touched. While for megasports events, nation's social identity (Turner, 1987) and sports identity can play an equally important role as drivers, if one is not more important than the other, for local sports, team identification is the arguably dominating driver in guiding sports fans behavior. For example, (highly-identified) fans are more likely to exhibit positive attitudes and outcomes related to sponsorship, including sponsor recognition, attitude toward sponsors, sponsor patronage, and satisfaction with sponsors (e.g., Gwinner & Swanson, 2003). Thus, when consumer ethnocentrism (negative) and sports identification (positive) take effects simultaneously, sports fans are facing a dilemma, which deserves sports scholars' attention.

A cross-cultural study in China and the US contains significant managerial implications due to the economy and market significance. Shimp and Sherpa (1987) believe that American aconsumers appraise foreign products inferior to their domestic counterparts. On the other hand, research reveals that Chinese sports fans have positive attitudes toward foreign products (Meng-Lewis, Thwaites, & Pillai, 2014), but there is a trend that Chinese brands are using the concept of consumer ethnocentrism to influence consumers on purchasing domestic products over foreign counterparts (Wang & Lin, 2009). In this study, we emphasize idiocentrism and allocentrism (Triandis, Leung, Villareal, & Clack, 1985) rather than individualism and collectivism (Triandis, 2001) because we consider that nation's social identity may play a minor role in local sports.

Research design

A 2 (consumer ethnocentrism) x 2 (team identification) x 2 (domestic and foreign alternative) factorial design will be conducted for the purpose of the study. Li-Ning (Chinese brand) and Nike (American brand) are the official jersey sponsor for the Chinese Basketball Association and the National Basketball Association respectively. In the experiment, we will replace Li-Ming with a domestic brand and a foreign brand, and ask Chinese basketball consumers about their attitude and purchase intention on the replacements. We will replicate the experiment on American participants. The three constructs, consumer ethnocentrism, sports identification, and idiocentrism-allocentrism will be measured by using CETSCAL (Shimp & Sharma, 1987), Sport Spectator Identification Scale (Wann & Branscombe, 1993), and INDCOL (Singelis, Triandis, Bhawuk, & Gelfand, 1995) respectively.