The Effect of Directional Dominance in the Concurrent Environment of Multiple-Endorser and Multiple-Brand Endorsement

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Significance of the Study

With increasing corporate investment in sponsorship/endorsement and the use of sponsorship/endorsement as a versatile marketing and branding method, the concurrent presentation of multiple sponsors sponsoring multiple athletes/endorsers, sport teams, leagues, and/or sporting events has become increasingly prevalent (Cobbs, Groza, & Rich, 2015; Smith, 2014). Despite the omnipresence of multiple-brand and multiple-endorser sponsorships/endorsements in the market, existing research has primarily examined the effectiveness of a single endorser who endorses a single brand (Mowen & Brown, 1981), a single endorser who endorses multiple brands (Rice, Kelting, & Luts, 2011), or a single brand endorsed by multiple endorsers. In the sports sponsorship/endorsement context, sponsor–event congruence (Chien, Cornwell, & Pappu, 2011; Groza, Cobbs, & Schaefers, 2012), the fit between an endorser and endorsed brand (Till & Busler, 200), and endorser characteristics (Tripp, Jensen, & Carlson, 1994) in relation to sponsorship/endorsement effectiveness (Chang & Ko, 2016) have predominantly been investigated. However, thus far none of these research streams has provided evidence to indicate how the pre-existing salient dominance between an endorser and endorsed brands (i.e., asymmetric directional dominance) affects consumers’ perception and evaluation of an existing or a newly endorsed brand in the context of concurrence of multiple-brand and multiple-endorser endorsement.

Purpose

Thus, based on associational network theory (Collins & Loftus, 1975), the purposes of the current study were to examine (1) the directional dominance between endorser and endorsed brand influence on consumers’ brand confusion over a newly endorsed brand; (2) whether the interaction between directional dominance and brand confusion results in a negative brand evaluation; and (3) purchase intention toward a newly endorsed brand in the context of multiple brand and multiple endorser endorsement.

Method

The research is a 3 (directional dominance: symmetric dominance vs. asymmetric dominance with an existing endorsed brand vs. asymmetric dominance with a newly endorsed brand) x 2 (brand confusion: confusion vs. no confusion) between-subject factorial design. The real case of TaylorMade endorsement was used. A total of 194 golf consumers who were aware of the golf brand and athlete endorser were purposively recruited via Amazon MTurk (male–female ratio: 7:3; age 19–39: 79.9%; Caucasian: 74.2%; handicap: 20.39). A two-way Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was performed to examine the research hypotheses using SPSS 25.

Results

The results indicated that (1) the directional dominance influenced consumers’ brand confusion (F(2,768)=3.79, p=.023, partial etasq=.10) and (2) directional dominance interacted with brand confusion on brand evaluation (F(2,765)=4.50, p=.011, partial etasq=.12) and (3) on purchase intention toward a newly endorsed brand (F(2,765)=6.81, p<.001, partial etasq=.18) while controlling for elaboration.

Discussion and Implications

The study was one of the first attempts to examine consumers’ actual evaluation and track the mechanisms beyond either the multiple-brand or multiple-endorser endorsement environment in order to broaden our understanding of how symmetric directional dominance significantly influences consumers’ brand identification, brand evaluation, and future purchase behavior. The results suggested that practitioners should be cautious when adding multiple
endorsers who have strong pre-existing dominance with previously endorsed brands; in addition, multiple endorsement efforts must be part of a longer-term plan.