The Relationships between Sports Star Endorsements and Advertising Effects

Chao-Sen Wu    Li-Fen Tsai    Pei-Wen Wang
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Abstract

Spokespersons took a very important role for business. Enterprises applied spokespersons to make products popular, to boost the business's brand and to enhance its brand image by allowing the products to enter the consumers’ lives. This study aims to explore the relationship between the Sport star spokespersons and advertising effects. The study investigated the spokesperson of the fast food restaurant SUBWAY, Hong-Chih Kuo, as a research subject. A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed, and 243 valid samples were retrieved; the return rate was 81.00%. The results indicated that athlete endorsement attraction significantly and positively influences consumers’ attitude toward advertising, attitude toward products and purchase intention in advertising effect.

Keywords: Advertising Spokesperson, Sports Star, Advertising Effects

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Introduction

Background and Motivation

According to the 2008 U.S. Forbes magazine statistics, the global annual income of golf star Tiger Woods, reached 1.5 billion U.S. dollars and it was the highest revenue which an athlete yielded in the world. With Tiger Woods being the spokesperson for Nike Golf, Nike generated $600,000,000 annual revenue. In Britain, soccer star David Beckham endorsed products from Adidas, Motorola and Pepsi and earned an annual income of 3,300 million U.S. dollars in 2009.

Sports and commerce could be integrated together in the United States. NBA basketball stars earn a sufficient annual income. For example the annual endorsement income of the well-known stars Kobe Bryant, Paul Andrew O'Neill and Michael Jordan, are more than 3,000 million U.S. dollars. Bryant’ endorsement for the Adidas sports shoes in Germany while Jordan even became a brand of the Nike trademarks. When overseas Taiwanese athletes accomplished impressive achievements in international competitions in recent years, the advertisers had begun to come to notice on Taiwanese athletes. The American Yankees pitcher Chien-ming Wang endorsed Acer Computer (Acer), Ford Motor, McDonald and E. Sun Bank etc. Olympic Taekwondo gold medalist Mu-yen Chu endorses for Adidas’ Taiwan Area Games while tennis star Rendy Lu was the spokesperson of Taiwan beer. With this kind of advertising trend, here comes the design of the athletes advertising endorsement works. In order to manage and control the effects of advertisement more effectively, it became essential to study on how athlete endorsement advertising gains the effect of business requirements.

Enterprises used spokespersons to boost product popular, to enhance its brand image, to build the advertiser's brand name and hence products quickly become part of the memory of consumers. The athlete usually expressed the identity for the product in the advertisement to build or rebuild the attitudes of consumer for this advertisement (Mowen & Brown, 1981). McCracken (1989) pointed out that personal characteristics of spokesmen would be transferred directly into the brand; Fan (1991) indicates that the advertising forms of celebrity recommendation, is easy to impress consumers and create consumer’s sense of trust and intimacy for the products or the business. So there is a great benefit of well-known advertising spokesmen for the product promotion.
The advertising magazine reports (2000) pointed out that the U.S. TV advertising spending paid 10% more to well-known athletes and film, television, stars and other celebrities (Chou et al., 2008). In addition, Stafford et al. (2002) pointed out that the new products for the market is suitable to the application of celebrity endorsers, because celebrity endorsement can make people feel that these celebrities represented the brand. The celebrity would link the brand and achieve the advertising effects; In addition, celebrity endorsement could make consumers have high brand image and advertising image (Harmon & Coney, 1982; Grewal et al., 1994). In conclusion, the special relationship between celebrity endorsement and advertising effects is very positive.

Based on the above background and motivation, this study survey’s target is the consumers had ever tasted SUBWAY submarine sandwich or heard of that in Taiwan. The SUBWAY invites Taiwanese Dodgers baseball player Hong-Chih Kuo, to endorsement, and this study investigated the Kuo’s influence for advertising effects.

**Literature review**

**Athlete endorsement**

McCracken (1989) suggested that advertising spokespersons demonstrate consumers’ use benefit by their reputation in advertising. When consumers receive the information from advertising, they would determine the product image according to the image of the advertising spokespersons. Such shifting of spokesperson image is one of the focuses of advertisers. O’Gainn et al. (2000) and Wang et al. (2002) suggested that celebrities, experts and consumers are the most common advertising spokespersons. Schiffman & Kanuk (2004) divided spokespersons into celebrities, experts, ordinary people, high-rank managers, and symbols. Celebrities include social celebrities, particularly movie stars, TV celebrities, popular artists, and sports idols. As to dimensions of advertising spokespersons, Ohanian (1991) and Chanthika (2003) indicated attraction, reliability and professionalism; Premeaux (2005) suggested reliability, professionalism and preference; Lei & Sung (2009) divided dimensions of spokesperson into professionalism, reputation, attraction, reliability and exposure. According to Ho & Lee (2010), the measurement could be based on attraction, reliability and professionalism. Based on the above, this study suggests that
athlete endorsement is athletes’ reputation, reliability and attraction demonstrated by advertising. When consumers receive information from advertising, they determine product image upon advertising spokespersons’ image.

The advertising effects

Lavidge & Steiner (1961) referred advertising effect to communication effect and sales effect, and probed into potential influence of advertising information on consumers’ cognition and preference and consumers’ purchase intention (actual sales). Ducoffé (1996) defined advertising effect as potential communication between advertisers and consumers regarding advertising information. Based on studies of Lutz (1985), Gardner (1985), MacKenzie et al. (1986), Lafferty & Goldsmith (1999), Wang et al. (2002), measures of advertising effect include attitude toward advertising, attitude toward brands and purchase intention. Attitude toward advertising is consumers’ preference to advertising and trust in information which would influence their attention toward advertising. Attitude toward brands is consumers’ preference for products of certain brands; purchase intention is the possibility of consumers’ purchase of products. Based on the above, this study suggests that advertising effect can create, communicate with and deliver value to consumers to result in consumers’ favor for products and increase possibility of product purchase.

Hypothesis Testing

Study on relationship between athlete endorsement and advertising effect

Kamins (1990) suggested that when spokespersons fit the products, the endorsement effect would be the best. Solomon et al. (1992) and Lynch & Schuler (1994) indicated the importance of fit between spokesperson and products by conditions of “match-up hypothesis”. Past researches demonstrate that advertising effect would be influenced by advertising spokespersons (Till, 1998; Bower & Landreth, 2001). Research of Stafford et al. (2002) suggests that attraction and attitude toward advertising would significantly influence advertising effect of celebrity endorsement. Brian et al. (2006) indicated that fit between spokespersons and types of products is important for consumers’ positive attitude. Lei & Sung (2009) considered business applied high-reputation sports stars to be the endorsers to attract the consumers’ attention, then athlete
endorsers could increase consumer purchase intention. According to the related literature and analysis, the study established the following assumptions:

H1: Athlete endorsement influenced positively on advertising effectiveness.

**Research methods**

This study treated consumers who had tasted SUBWAY sandwich as the subjects in order to probe into the correlation between athlete endorsement, consumer involvement and advertising effect. The conceptual framework is shown in Figure 1. Advertising effect is influenced by athlete endorsement. By treating consumer involvement as a mediating variable, this study explored the correlation between athlete endorsement, consumer involvement and advertising effect (“→” refers to the direction of effect.)

**The Research Framework**

In this study, the consumer who tasted SUBWAY submarine sandwich were the research object to explore the relevance of sports star endorsers, consumer involvement and advertising effects. The conceptual framework is shown in Figure 1 ("→" shows the direction of effect).

![Figure 1. The research framework](image)

**The measurement of study variables**

The dimensions of the study were based on the related literatures, and applied these references to the variable definition and operation for matching the target of the study. The authors also invited two marketing teachers to discuss the contents and modify the items of the questionnaire. This study applied 30 pre-test questionnaires to determine the feasibility of the questionnaire. Cronbach’s α value of the athletes endorsers’ was 0.89, Cronbach's α value of advertising effects was 0.92. Total Cronbach's α values of reliability analysis were greater than 0.8, so that the pre-questionnaire had good reliability.
Besides the questionnaire personal information, the study were used Likert 5-point scale, with “strongly disagree” (1 point) to “strongly agree” (5) items to measure, It included athlete endorsement: this study referred by Ohanian (1991) who proposed the source of the credibility factors of athlete endorsement to measure the degree of identification of consumer for endorsement of for the athletes, and there were nine questions to measure these items. Advertising effects meant to measure the consumers’ perceived attitude toward the SUBWAY submarine sandwich by twenty one questions, which includes advertising attitude, product attitude and purchase intention perception.

Data analysis and results

The basic characteristics of the sample

This study formally had 300 questionnaires to customers who had tasted and heard of SUBWAY sandwich. A total of 243 valid samples were received, and the return rate was 81%. The respondents included 111 males (45.7%) and 132 females (54.3 %); 121 participants were 21-30 years old (49.8%); most of them had university or college education (200 people, 82.3%); most of them were military personnel, public servants, teachers, and students (123 people, 50.61%); most of them had income of $20,000~30,000 NTD (89 people, 36.6%), followed by below $10,000 NTD (49 people, 20.2%).

Reliability and validity analysis

By the largest variation axis method of factor analysis, factors with eigenvalue above 1 were extracted from different scales, and items with lower factor loading were eliminated. The internal consistency of items was measured by Cronbach’s α. Table1 showed the Cronbach’s α of all dimensions were above 0.7. According to Nunnally (1978), Cronbach’s α above 0.7 was acceptable criterion; therefore, reliability of this questionnaire should be acceptable.

In scale of athlete endorsement, two factors were extracted and accumulated explained variance was 81.38%. Factor 1 was related to athletes’ image and attraction and it was called “athlete endorsement attraction”; factor 2 was related to trust, image and importance of athlete endorsement, and it was called “athlete endorsement reliability”. Cronbach’s α of these two factors was 0.85 and 0.96.
In scale of advertising effect, three factors were extracted and accumulated explained variance is 80.94%. Factor 1 was related to consumers’ impression and perception of advertising and it was called “attitude toward advertising”; Factor 2 was related to consumers’ brands, trust and value of products in advertising and it was called “attitude toward products”; Factor 3 was related to consumers’ product purchase desire after reading advertising and it was called “purchase intention”. Cronbach’s α of three factors were 0.95, 0.92 and 0.85.

In this study, Cronbach’s α of dimensions were above 0.80. It indicates certain degree of reliability of the scale. Items extracted in factor analysis meet the original design of this study. It demonstrated proper construct validity of this scale. (Showed in Table 1)

Table 1 The Factor Analysis of Dimension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Question item</th>
<th>Factor Loadings</th>
<th>Cumulative Variance</th>
<th>Cronbach’s α</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spokespersons</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attractiveness</td>
<td>I think the appeal of athletes spokesperson SUBWAY submarine sandwich can bring out the image of the SUBWAY</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>40.96%</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I think this spokesperson is very suitable for SUBWAY submarine sandwich to recommend product</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I think the SUBWAY submarine sandwich endorser is attractive to me</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I think the SUBWAY submarine sandwich need to find well-known celebrities to be the spokesperson</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>I think the spokesperson of SUBWAY submarine sandwich is trustworthy</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>81.38%</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I think the ad. SUBWAY submarine sandwich spokesperson reinforced my impression of SUBWAY</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I think who are Taiwanese SUBWAY spokespersons is important to me</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising effects</td>
<td>I think the SUBWAY submarine sandwich advertisement are often impressive</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>46.43%</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I think the SUBWAY submarine sandwich advertising content is persuasive</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I think the advertisement messages of the SUBWAY are very clear</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I think the SUBWAY submarine</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude toward product</td>
<td>Item</td>
<td>Correlation</td>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>Purchase Intention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think SUBWAY submarine sandwich is reliable.</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>67.66%</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think that SUBWAY submarine sandwich is a trustworthy.</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think that SUBWAY submarine sandwich is valuable.</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think the SUBWAY submarine sandwich is a good brand, and will introduce someone to know.</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase Intention</td>
<td>I think the whole SUBWAY submarine sandwich advertisement is interesting.</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>80.94%</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would like to buy a submarine sandwich to eat after reading the SUBWAY submarine.</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Research Variables Correlation**

According to the correlation analysis in Table 2, “athlete endorsement attraction” and “athlete endorsement reliability” reveal positive correlations with “attitude toward advertising”, “attitude toward products” and “purchase intention”. In other words, when “attraction” and “reliability” of products endorsed by athletes are higher, consumers’ “attitude toward advertising”, “attitude toward products” and “purchase intention” are better.
**Table 2 The Table of Pearson Correlation Analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Athlete endorsement attraction</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Athlete endorsement reliability</td>
<td>.26**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Attitude toward advertising</td>
<td>.75**</td>
<td>.11†</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Attitude toward products</td>
<td>.20**</td>
<td>.54**</td>
<td>.23**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Purchase Intention</td>
<td>.27**</td>
<td>.22**</td>
<td>.39**</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * indicates p <0.1; * indicates p <0.05; ** indicates p <0.01

**Regression Analysis**

In order to probe into the relationship between athlete endorsement (attraction and reliability) and advertising effect (attitude toward advertising, attitude toward products and purchase intention), regression analysis is performed. When criterion variables are attitude toward advertising, attitude toward products and purchase intention and predictors are athlete endorsement attraction and reliability. The results indicated that athlete endorsement attraction and reliability significantly influence attitude toward advertising, attitude toward products, and purchase intention in advertising effect (β are 0.75, 0.11, 0.20, 0.54, 0.27 and 0.22). It means that there is a linear correlation, as shown in models 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6. (Take in Table 3)

**Table 3 The Regression Analysis of Athlete endorsements and advertising Effects**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion variable</th>
<th>Mode 1 Attitude toward Advertisement</th>
<th>Mode 2 Attitude toward Advertisement</th>
<th>Mode 3 Attitude toward Product</th>
<th>Mode 4 Purchase Intention</th>
<th>Mode 5 Purchase Intention</th>
<th>Mode 6 Purchase Intention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Athlete endorsement attraction</td>
<td>0.75**</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.20**</td>
<td>0.27**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athlete endorsement reliability</td>
<td>0.11†</td>
<td>0.54**</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.22**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F value</td>
<td>313.10**</td>
<td>3.29*</td>
<td>10.96**</td>
<td>101.61**</td>
<td>20.32**</td>
<td>12.29**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>0.563</td>
<td>0.009</td>
<td>0.040</td>
<td>0.294</td>
<td>0.074</td>
<td>0.045</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * indicates p <0.1; * indicates p <0.05; ** indicates p <0.01

**Conclusions and Suggestions**

Based on data analysis and discussion above, the conclusions are shown below:

**Conclusions**

**Athlete endorsement and advertising effect**

This study found that athlete endorsement attraction positively and significantly
influenced consumers’ attitude toward advertising, attitude toward products and purchase intention of advertising effect. Upon more significant advertising effect, the firms’ search for the right endorsers to take consumers’ attention and promote maximum advertising effect became critical in product marketing. As suggested by Brian et al. (2006), the fit between spokespersons and types of products was important for consumers’ positive attitude. Hsu & McDonald (2002) indicated that celebrity recommendation referred to a shift in consumers’ attitude and feelings toward celebrities to the brands through celebrities’ attraction. In other words, in current sports marketing market, attraction of athlete endorsement positively enhanced consumers’ attitude toward advertising, attitude toward products and purchase intention. Therefore, when searching for advertising spokespersons, how to take the consumers’ attention and transfer the product characteristics to spokespersons, and further increase advertising effect, became important issue for the firms. Reliability of athlete endorsement significantly and positively influences consumers’ attitude toward advertising, attitude toward products and purchase intention in advertising effect. In other words, reliability of athlete endorsement would increase consumers’ attitude toward advertising, attitude toward products and purchase intention. The result met the suggestion of Premeaux (2005) and Chou et al. (2008) that experts’ and celebrities’ persuasion was based on their reliability and professionalism. Thus, consumers would believe that they recommend the products sincerely with their professional judgment. Consumers would identify with the products. The findings of this study showed that reliability of SUBWAY product endorsed by baseball player, Hong-Chih Kuo, could enhance consumers’ attitude toward advertising, attitude toward products and purchase intention of advertising effect.

Suggestions

Based on above, suggestions were indicated below:

When consumers received advertising information, they valued endorsers’ reputation and personal attraction. They trusted spokespersons’ professionalism in the field, and believed that they could provide reliable product information for consumers. It was suggested that when looking for endorsers of products, the firms should consider endorsers’ attraction, reliability and match with products in order to enhance advertising effect, business image and benefit.

Selection of the right endorsers was one of the critical decision-making of
advertising since endorsers directly represent the brands. When selecting endorsers, the firms should consider advertising policy and purposes since different endorsers would reveal different effects in different markets and on different products.

**Limitations**

First of all, future research could include variable of consumer involvement. Secondly, regarding the subjects of questionnaire survey, this study adopted convenient sampling, and thus, demographic variables were not upon average distribution. Future studies could adopt stratified sampling or sampling according to different nationalities.

Consumers who had tasted SUBWAY sandwich were invited to fill in the questionnaire, and they might be influenced by subjective or external factors such as environment, emotion, attitude and perception. Future studies investigated on consumers’ purchase behavior or service quality in order to probe into correlation between consumers’ purchase behavior and service quality, in order to enhance management and advertising effect of SUBWAY.
References


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