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The effect of athlete celebrity endorsement on attitude toward brand and purchase intention

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**THE EFFECT OF ATHLETE CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT ON ATTITUDE TOWARD
BRAND AND PURCHASE INTENTION**

A thesis submitted to
the Graduate College of
Marshall University
In partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science

In
School of Kinesiology

by

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Approved by

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December 2018

APPROVAL OF THESIS

We, the faculty supervising the work of Yunheui Jeon, affirm that the thesis, The Effect of Athlete Celebrity Endorsement on Attitude toward Brand and Purchase Intention, meets the high academic standards for original scholarship and creative work established by the School of Kinesiology and the College of Health Profession. This work also conforms to the editorial standards of our discipline and the Graduate College of Marshall University. With our signatures, we approve the manuscript for publication.



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ABSTRACT

In today's intense marketing environment, the use of celebrity endorsers in advertising is a popular strategy to promote products over the competitors. Prior research has studied that the endorser-product congruence (Kamins & Gupta, 1994; Till & Busler, 2000), endorser-consumer congruence (Choi & Rifon, 2012; Hosany & Martin, 2012; Sirgy, 1982; 1985), and endorser credibility (Lee & Koo, 2015; McCracken, 1989; Ohanian, 1990; 1991) can influence consumers' responses, such as attitude toward the ad, attitude toward the brand, and purchase intention. The high degree of congruence between celebrity image and product leads more positive consumers' attitude toward ad, brand, and purchase intention than a low degree. Also, if the consumers perceive themselves (self-ideal image) to match as much or more to the celebrity endorser, the perception of credibility will lead to more positive attitude toward their evaluations of product than consumers who do not. Yet, little is known about when an individual consumes a brand, which one is the most effective factor to build a strong linkage between the brand and consumer. The purpose of this study is to understand the most effective factors that influence consumers' evaluation of brands, and how consumers perceive athlete celebrity endorsements differently based on demographic variables. Results suggest that the degree of congruence between celebrity and product has the potential to be a more important factor than others in advertising strategy. Implications for marketers and recommendations for further studies are discussed.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Celebrity endorsement advertising is a popular and often-used technique to promote a product or brand, and about 25% of the United States (US) advertisements use celebrity endorsers (Shimp, 2000). For example, in 2003, famous basketball player Michael Jordan was paid to endorse products such as cereal, drinks, shoes, and tickets which created an estimated \$13-billion-dollar economy (Dix, Phau, & Pougnet, 2010). Marketers believe that celebrity endorsement will benefit brands, positive attributes and contribute to brand name recognition (Charbonneau & Garland, 2005; Miciak & Shanklin, 1994; Stevens, Lathrop, & Bradish, 2003). Michael Jordan may well be recognized for his Nike brand shoe “Air Jordan’s.” The celebrities play an important role in the advertising for creating and enhancing brand image and equity in order to differentiate their products from competitive companies (Choi & Rifon, 2012). Businesses are spending millions of dollars using the athlete-endorsement advertisements to promote their products or brands (Bower & Mateer, 2008; Byrne, Whitehead, & Breen, 2003; Dix et al., 2010; Thomaselli, 2008). According to Kaplan (2015), Nike spent about \$6 billion in the past year on celebrity endorsements. That is, it is important for marketing practitioners to understand consumers’ perceptions to celebrity endorsements and develop an effective approach in selection of a celebrity endorser to gain the maximum effect in advertising.

With the increasing number of celebrity endorsements in advertising, the previous research indicated that researchers have focused on the importance of celebrity endorsers with the *match-up hypothesis* endorser credibility (Kamins, 1990; Kahle & Homer, 1985). The concept of match-up hypothesis suggested that a good match-up between a celebrity and a

product leads to more favorable attitude of consumer to advertising than a bad fit between them (Kamins & Gupta, 1994; Kamins, 1990; Kahle & Homer, 1985). The match-up hypothesis as one of the essential topics has been applied to the celebrity endorsement studies, and further discussed under the name of *product match-up hypothesis*. The existing studies suggest that the celebrity endorsement is most effective when congruence exists between celebrity image and product being endorsed (Kamins, 1990; Kahle & Homer, 1985; Ohanian, 1991; Till & Busler, 2000). For example, an athlete celebrity endorser has more positive influences on the product (e.g., energy bar) related to athletic performance than non-athletic product (e.g., candy bar) unrelated to athletic performance (Till & Busler, 2000). Past studies showed that endorser credibility has an influence on consumers' attitude toward the advertisement, attitude toward the brand and purchase intention (Atkin & Block, 1983; Goldberg & Hartwick, 1990; Goldsmith, Lafferty, & Newell, 2000; Lee & Koo, 2015). Lafferty and Goldsmith (1999) suggested that endorser credibility is positively associated with advertising effectiveness, attitude toward brand, and purchase intention.

As mentioned above, earlier studies on the match-up hypothesis focused on celebrity endorsers and product being endorsed. Recently, however, researchers have found that congruence between brand image and consumer self-image is an important variable influencing the effects of advertising (Choi & Rifon, 2012; Cowart, Fox, & Wilson, 2008; Jamal & Al-Marri, 2007). Consumer's self-concept is an important facet in influencing purchase decision (Ericksen, 1997; Graeff, 1996b; Sirgy, 1982; 1985). Prior research provided sufficient evidence that high degree of congruence between products and consumer self-concept, either ideal or actual, influences more positively on consumer's purchase intention and consumption of endorsed product (Sirgy, 1982; 1985). Even though the definition of the fit or match is still hazy, the

essential notion of match-up hypothesis is that a good match between the celebrity image and either product or consumer self-image is more effective than a poor fit between them (Choi & Rifon, 2012).

Despite positive effects of celebrity endorsement being well documented in previous studies, there is the limitation of the source models explaining the endorsement effect depending on the different types of product (McCracken, 1989). Further studies use real celebrities to generate varied image evaluations, but this might limit the generalizability of the results because of deficiency in a wide range of celebrities from different fields (Choi & Rifon, 2012).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Little is known which of these three factors, athlete celebrity reputation, athlete celebrity product consistency, and athlete celebrity-consumer consistency are the most effective way to increase attitudes towards brand and purchase intentions.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement strategies by using genuine athlete endorsement and to determine which of these factors, celebrity credibility, celebrity-product congruence, and celebrity-consumer's ideal self-image congruence leads to strongest linkage between brand and consumer.

1.3 Justification of the Study

Marketing practitioners who make decisions on the selection of the celebrity endorser should consider what steps they can take to inculcate a strong credible reputation among consumers. Previous studies on celebrity endorsement have focused on the celebrity features

such as credibility (Choi & Rifon, 2012; Ohanian, 1990) or the congruence between endorser and product (Kamins & Gupta, 1994) or the congruence between endorser and consumer self-concept (Hosany & Martin, 2012; Sirgy, 1982; 1985). Despite the importance of all variables such as celebrity credibility, celebrity-product congruence, and celebrity-consumer congruence, previous studies have failed to examine which factor is the most effective or joint effects. In addition, few studies have investigated the celebrity athlete endorser effects.

This study suggests a new dimension for understanding celebrity endorser effects and selecting the most effective celebrity endorser to increase positive effects on advertising outcomes. Brand managers can improve the effectiveness of their brand positioning strategy by analyzing core elements to influence brand value.

1.4 Delimitations

The study was delimited by the following factors:

1. The framework under which this study operates is based on the high credibility, high congruence between celebrity endorser and product.
2. This study is intended only to examine athlete celebrity endorsers who have high credibility not including general celebrity endorsers.
3. Only students enrolled in a Mid-Atlantic university during the spring semester, 2018 were identified as a sampling frame for the experiment.
4. The in-class survey questionnaire technique was only utilized to collect the data.

1.5 Limitations

The study was limited by the following factors:

1. The willingness of participants to complete the survey and their degree of understanding the survey.
2. The limitation of the generalizability of the results because of a narrow range of celebrity and a type of product. Thus, the result of the study might not be applicable to other advertisements in which general celebrities endorse a product.

1.6 Assumptions

This study was based on the following assumptions:

1. The participants fully understand the research instrument to complete the survey.
2. The participants answered each section of the survey questionnaire honestly.
3. The survey instrument used by this study effectively measures each variable such as credibility of celebrity athlete endorsers, endorser-product congruence, and endorser-consumer congruence.

1.7 Definitions of Terms

For purpose of convenience, the following terms in this research project are defined below:

Celebrity endorser: “Any individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement” (McCracken, 1989, p. 310).

Credibility: The degree to which consumers believe in the athlete celebrity endorsers' trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness (Goldsmith et al., 2000).

Expertise: An individual's knowledge, experience, or training the spokesperson owns including skills in the related field (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953).

Trustworthiness: "The degree of confidence of consumer place in a communicator's (celebrity's) intent to transfer the statements she or he considers most valid" (Hovland et al., 1953; Ohanian, 1990, p. 41).

Attractiveness: One of the dimensions of credibility is related to how consumers evaluate the source with physical characteristics (Ohanian, 1990).

Match-up hypothesis: A theoretical perspective of 'match-up' regarding choice of celebrity endorser and product being endorsed, celebrity and consumer's ideal self-image by examining the fit or congruence between two variables (Kamins & Gupta, 1994).

Actual self-image: The image indicates "how a person perceives himself or herself" (Hosany & Martin, 2012, p. 686; Sirgy, 1982).

Ideal self-image: The image denotes "how a person would like to perceive him or herself" (Hosany & Martin, 2012, p. 686; Sirgy, 1982).

Self-image congruence: "The cognitive matches between consumers' self-concept and a product, brand, or service" (Hosany & Martin, 2012, p. 686; Sirgy et al., 1997; Sirgy & Su, 2000).

CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK, MODEL, AND HYPOTHESES

In this chapter, the important facets of celebrity endorsement are explored and then extended. Understanding the effects of celebrity endorsement in advertising, celebrity credibility, celebrity/product congruence, and celebrity/consumer congruence are each examined. A conceptualized model of present study and corresponding research hypotheses are proposed.

2.1 Celebrity Endorser Effectiveness

Celebrities were perceived by consumers as credible sources of information about the product or brand being endorsed (Goldsmith et al., 2000). “The celebrity endorser was defined as any individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement” (McCracken, 1989, p. 310). How do consumers perceive and evaluate the celebrity endorser’s credibility? Many existing studies examined the endorser’s credibility based on the source-credibility model and source attractiveness model. Prior research identified three dimensions as key components of source credibility to influence consumers’ attitudes and purchase intentions: expertise, trustworthiness (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Hovland et al., 1953), and attractiveness (Ohanian, 1990; 1991). Consumers are more likely persuaded when they perceive the source of information as credible (Ohanian, 1991; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). For this reason, previous studies provided sufficient evidence of the source of credibility to offer better understanding for advertising practitioners who make decisions on the selection of the celebrity endorser.

2.1.1 Source-Credibility Model

The impact of celebrity endorser's credibility has generally employed two foundational source models: the source-credibility model (Hovland et al., 1953) and the source attractiveness model (McGuire, 1985).

Source credibility was commonly used to indicate a communicator's (celebrity's) positive features that influence the receiver to perceive and evaluate a message (Ohanian, 1990). The source-credibility model was developed by Hovland et al. (1953). They examined the elements that affect the perceived credibility of the communicator. Also, the study suggested that both expertise and trustworthiness highlight the concept of source credibility (Hovland et. al, 1953).

Expertise is defined as an individual's knowledge, experience, or training the spokesperson owns including skills in the related field (Hovland et al., 1953). Previous research denoted that celebrity endorsers' expertise is "the extent to which a communicator is perceived to be a source of valid assertions" (Erdogan, 1999; Hovland et al., 1953; Ohanian, 1990, p. 41). Furthermore, expert sources influenced viewer's perception and attitudes toward the brand. For example, audience's perception of the source's expertise positively influenced source effectiveness in a persuasive communication (Ohanian, 1990). The extant literature on celebrity endorsers suggested that the level of perceived celebrity expertise should be considered celebrity endorser effectiveness (Ohanian, 1991).

Trustworthiness is defined as the listener's degree of confidence in the source for providing information in a speaking or message (Erdogan, 1999; Ohanian, 1991). Prior research indicated that likeability was the most significant feature of trust and thus a well-known and well-liked celebrity was considered in selecting celebrity endorsement in advertising (Friedman,

Santeramo, & Traina, 1978; Lee & Koo, 2015). Much of the literature suggested that trustworthiness was an important factor to evaluate the celebrity endorsement effectiveness. Trustworthiness of the celebrity is an important construct in persuasion and opinion change (Ohanian, 1990). Trustworthiness refers to “the degree of confidence of consumer place in a communicator’s intent to convey the assentation she/he considers most valid” (Hovland et al, 1953; Ohanian, 1990, p. 41). The message given by a highly trustworthy source (communicator) had more positive effect to the attitude change than the one given by a low trustworthy source (communicator) (Miller & Basehart, 1969).

2.1.2 Source-Attractiveness Model (Erdogan 1999; McGuire, 1985)

The attractiveness has become an important dimension of source credibility as the use of celebrities continues to be a popular method of advertising (Ohanian, 1991; Patzer, 1985); however, the attractiveness is defined with multi-criteria of the source. Ohanian (1991) defined that the attractiveness is related to how likeable or physically attractive the source is to the consumers. McGuire (1985) indicated that the key components of attractiveness come from familiarity, likeability, and similarity of the source. According to McGuire’s model (1985), if the consumers know, like and were similar to the source, they perceived the source as attractive and persuasive. The existing research showed that physically attractive celebrities as endorsers are more successful in changing beliefs than are not attractive ones (Baker & Churchill, 1977; Chaiken, 1979; Caballero & Pride, 1984; Dion, Berscheid, & Walster, 1972; Horai, Naccari, & Fatoullah, 1974; Joseph, 1982; Kulka & Kessler, 1978; Mills & Harvey, 1972; Ohanian, 1991; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Physically attractive celebrities generated more favorable consumer responses than less attractive celebrities (Eagly, Ashmore, Makhijani, & Longo, 1991; Kahle & Homer, 1985). Till and Busler (2000) suggested that the physical attractiveness of celebrities is a

predictor of advertising effectiveness. Some authors suggested that attractive celebrity endorsers have more positive impact on the perception of products being endorsed than less attractive celebrity endorsers (Joseph, 1982). Existing studies indicate that attractiveness is an important indicator of the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements (Chao, Wuhrer, & Werani, 2005).

2.1.3 Effect of Athlete Celebrity Endorsers' Credibility

Given the risks associated with the inappropriate selection of the celebrity endorser, celebrity endorsement is a popular advertising strategy to create and enhance brand image and equity. Prior research showed that the credibility of celebrity endorsers influences the consumers' attitude, evaluation, and purchase intention. For instance, therefore, endorser credibility is one of the essential elements in an advertising strategy and a great concern to a marketing practitioner who makes decisions on the selection of the celebrity endorser. As the number of global sporting events grows, the marketing practitioners spend millions of dollars on using celebrity athletes in advertisements to develop their promotional strategies. Athlete celebrity endorsers have been employed not only for sports products but also non-sport product advertisements. Based on the above review, the following hypothesis is proposed:

***H1:** The higher the level of athlete celebrity endorser credibility, the higher the brand attitude.*

2.2 Celebrity and Product Relationship

2.2.1 Match-up Hypothesis Between Product and Endorser

Till and Busler (2000) suggested that the theoretical perspective of 'match-up' is consistent with hypotheses of prior research focused on the match-up effectiveness based on "congruence" (Kamins, 1990; Lynch & Schuler, 1994), "fittingness" (Kanungo & Pang, 1973),

“appropriateness” (Solomon, Ashmore, & Longo, 1992), and “consistency” (Walker, Langmeyer, & Langmeyer, 1992). The match-up hypothesis as one of the essential topics has been applied to the celebrity endorsement studies, and further discussed under the name of *product match-up hypothesis*. Even though there is no uniform definition of ‘fit’ or ‘match’ yet, the existing studies suggest that consumers are more likely to purchase and consume products when the celebrity endorser’s image is perceived to be congruent with the product than a poor match or fit (Lee & Koo, 2015; Till & Busler, 2000; Ohanian, 1991; Kamins, 1990; Kahle & Homer, 1985). In other words, celebrity endorsement has a positive influence on consumer’s attitude about the advertisement when there is a congruence between the endorser and the product being endorsed. Congruence between celebrity and product was regarded as a key determinant of celebrity endorsement effectiveness (Erdogan, Baker, & Tagg, 2001; Kahle & Homer, 1985; Kamins, 1990; Kamins & Gupta, 1994; Till & Busler, 2000). Friedman and Friedman (1979) suggested that celebrity effects on advertising vary depending on the types of product. They concluded that the better match-up between celebrity and product fit, as perceived by consumers, the higher the level of endorsement effectiveness. The degree of congruence between the celebrity endorser and the product influenced the consumer perception toward the brand (Till & Busler, 2000). For example, an athlete celebrity endorser had more positive influence on the product (e.g., energy bar) related to the athletic performance than non-athletic product (e.g., candy bar) unrelated to the athletic performance. The research (Till & Busler, 2000) indicated that the congruence between celebrity endorser and product had a positive effect on brand attitude, but no effect on purchase intention. A study by Kanungo and Pang (1973) suggested that the effect of the model for the product varied depending on the types of product with which the model was matched. For example, a male model for the car created a more

favorable attitude toward the product than a female model, whereas a male model for the sofa created an unfavorable attitude toward the product than a female (Kanungo & Pang, 1973). The physically attractive celebrity endorsers were more likely to lead positive consumers' responses when the product was related to attractiveness such as cosmetics (Choi & Rifon, 2012; Kahle & Homer, 1985). On the other hand, the products related to technology were less likely to have a match-up effect due to the irrelevance of physical attractiveness to the product type (Choi & Rifon, 2012; Till & Busler, 2000). Even though attractiveness or expertise of a celebrity was an important match-up element, the consumer's perception of the congruence between the celebrity and products being endorsed was more important in testing the congruence effects because various factors influenced the consumer's evaluation of congruence between the celebrity and product (Choi & Rifon, 2012; Misra & Beatty, 1990; Kamins & Gupta, 1994). Based on the above review, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: The higher the degree of congruence between the athlete celebrity endorser and the product, the higher the brand attitude.

2.3 Celebrity and Consumer's Relationship

The relationship between the celebrity and consumer has been an important facet of the endorsement configuration along with celebrity credibility and celebrity/product congruence. The existing study examined the congruence effect celebrity and consumer's self-image to influence on purchase decisions (Ericksen, 1997; Graeff, 1996a; Sirgy, 1982; 1985).

2.3.1 Match-up Hypothesis Between Endorser's Characteristics and Consumer Self-Image

Earlier studies on the match-up hypothesis focused on celebrity endorsers and product being endorsed (Kamins & Gupta, 1994). More recent studies, however, showed that the impact of congruence between celebrity endorser and consumer's image was based on the consumer personality and self-concepts. Escalas (2004) suggested that consumers can construct a bond with the brand and they can build the self-brand connection. Self-brand connection indicates that when an individual consumes a brand, the consumer incorporates the brand into himself or herself-concept, thus integrating the brand as a part of their extended self (Escalas & Bettman, 2005). Consumers' self-concept becomes an essential element to influence their consumption behaviors. Self-image congruence helps the marketers to predict different faces of consumer behavior (Hosany & Martin, 2012; Quester, Karunaratna, & Kee, 2000). Consumers are more likely to purchase when their self-image matches the celebrity endorser's image (Hosany & Martin, 2012). Choi and Rifon (2012) suggested that a good match between the celebrity image and either product or consumer self-image is more effective than a poor fit between them.

Consumers' self-concept was conceptualized as having more than one element and they might have multiple 'selves' (Hosany & Martin, 2012; Markus & Nurius, 1986; Onkvisit & Shaw, 1987). Previous marketing literature classified four dimensions of self-concept to explain and predict consumers' behaviors: "(1) actual self-concept, how a person perceives himself or herself, (2) ideal self-concept, how a person would like to perceive him or herself, (3) social self-concept, how consumers think others perceive them, and (4) ideal social self-concept, how a person would like to be perceived by others" (Belch & Landon, 1977; Dolich, 1969; Hughes & Guerrero, 1971; Hosany & Martin, 2012, p. 686; Sirgy, 1982). Following Hosany and Martin

(2012), most consumer studies in marketing focused on two components; the actual self and ideal self-concepts to explain behaviors because they received the most empirical support in research. Sirgy (1982; 1985) suggested that there are two components of self-image value; actual self-image and ideal self-image.

Self-image congruence refers to “the cognitive match between consumers’ self-concept and a product, brand, or service” (Hosany & Martin, 2012, p. 686; Sirgy et al., 1997; Sirgy & Su, 2000). Self-congruence, self-image congruence, self-congruity, and image congruence are used interchangeably to describe this congruency phenomenon (Hosany & Martin, 2012; Sirgy, 1985). Self-image congruence is an important element to influence the consumers’ behaviors (Hosany & Martin, 2012; Kressmann, Sirgy, Herrmann, Huber, & Lee, 2006; Sirgy & Samli, 1985; Sirgy, Johar, Samli, & Claiborne, 1991). For example, prior research indicated self-image congruence affects advertising effectiveness (Bjerke & Polegato, 2006; Hong & Zinkhan, 1995; Hosany & Martin, 2012), leads more favorable attitudes toward product and brands (Ekinici & Riley, 2003; Hosany & Martin, 2012; Sirgy et al., 1997), influences consumers’ choice (Hosany & Martin, 2012; Quester et al., 2000), attitudes and buying behaviors (Hosany & Martin, 2012; Ibrahim & Najjar, 2008), perceived quality (Hosany & Martin, 2012; Kwak & Kang, 2009), brand preferences (Hosany & Martin, 2012; Jamal & Goode, 2001), and brand loyalty (Hosany & Martin, 2012; Kressmann et al., 2006). Graeff (1996b) suggested that consumers should have more positive attitudes and greater purchase intentions toward the brands perceived to be congruent with their self-image, while unfavorable attitudes toward brands perceived to be incongruent with their self-image.

The self-image and product-image congruence model (Graeff, 1996b) indicated the notion of congruency between consumers’ self-concept and brands. This study suggested that

there are two types of self-brand congruency; self-congruity and ideal congruity. Self-congruity refers to a match between a brand's image and a consumer's actual self-image, while ideal congruity refers to a match between a brand's image and a consumer's ideal self-image (Graeff, 1996b).

In these days, brands serve not only their fundamental functions, but psychological and social purposes as symbols for consumers to express their personality identity and enables social interactions with others (Aaker, 1996; Belk, 1988; Choi & Rifon, 2012; Escalas & Bettman, 2003; Grubb & Stern, 1971; Sirgy, 1982). Sirgy et al. (1997) suggested that a product user's image interacts with the consumer's self-concept generating a personal experience referred to as self-image congruence during the consumption process. Through this process, the celebrity used to endorse the brand can influence the consumer's self-construction. McCracken (1989) suggested that by purchasing and using the product endorsed by the celebrity, the consumers have their own perception and evaluation of the products and use them to construct a satisfying self-concept. Celebrity endorser can be a reference group, which is an actual or imaginary individual or group compared by an individual as the basis for his or her judgment, aspirations or behavior (Choi & Rifon, 2012; Park & Lessig, 1977).

Athlete celebrity endorsers and entertainment figures are frequently used in advertising (Escalas & Bettman, 2003) and influence young adult consumers to establish their identity construction (Boon & Lomore, 2001; Dix et al., 2010). Athlete celebrity endorsers have a positive influence on young adult consumption by switching behavior, generating word of mouth, and establishing brand loyalty (Dix et al., 2010). As reviewed earlier, self-image congruence can influence a variety of consumer behavior phenomena such as brand preferences, attitudes and choices (Jamal & Al-Marri, 2007). Consumers attempt to achieve self-esteem by

enhancing their ideal self-image and they consider some celebrities as inspirational figures with desirable meanings to stimulate their ideal self (Boon & Lomore, 2001; Choi & Rifon, 2012; Escalas & Bettman, 2003). Thus, consumers try to imitate the celebrity endorsers' behaviors and attitudes when the celebrity endorsers' image is perceived to be congruent with their ideal self-image (Choi & Rifon, 2012). Based on the above review, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: The higher the degree of congruence between the athlete celebrity endorser's image and the consumer's ideal self-image, the higher the brand attitude.

2.4 Attitude Toward the Ad, Brand, and Purchase Intention

Prior research has examined attitude toward the ad, attitude toward the brand and purchase intention as variables to influence the effectiveness of advertising and suggests there are interrelationships among those variables (Choi & Rifon, 2012; Heath & Gaeth, 1994; Kalwani & Silk, 1982; MacKenzie, Lutz, & Belch, 1986). According to the Dual Mediation hypothesis (Brown & Stayman, 1992; MacKenzie et al., 1986; Goldsmith et al., 2000) a consistent pattern of the variables exists; attitude toward the ad → attitude toward the brand → purchase intention, which forms the relationship among the dependent variables. Based on the above review, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: The higher the brand attitude, the higher the purchase intention.

Based on the foregoing discussion, I expect there is an independent variable to have significant effects on attitude toward the brand and purchase intention.

In summary, the current study is proposed to extend the present theorization of celebrity endorser effectiveness by evaluating the effects of athlete endorser credibility, athlete celebrity

endorser-product congruence, and athlete celebrity endorser-consumer's ideal self-image congruence on attitude toward the brand and purchase intention. Figure 1 illustrates a path model representing the hypothesized relationships among the variables.

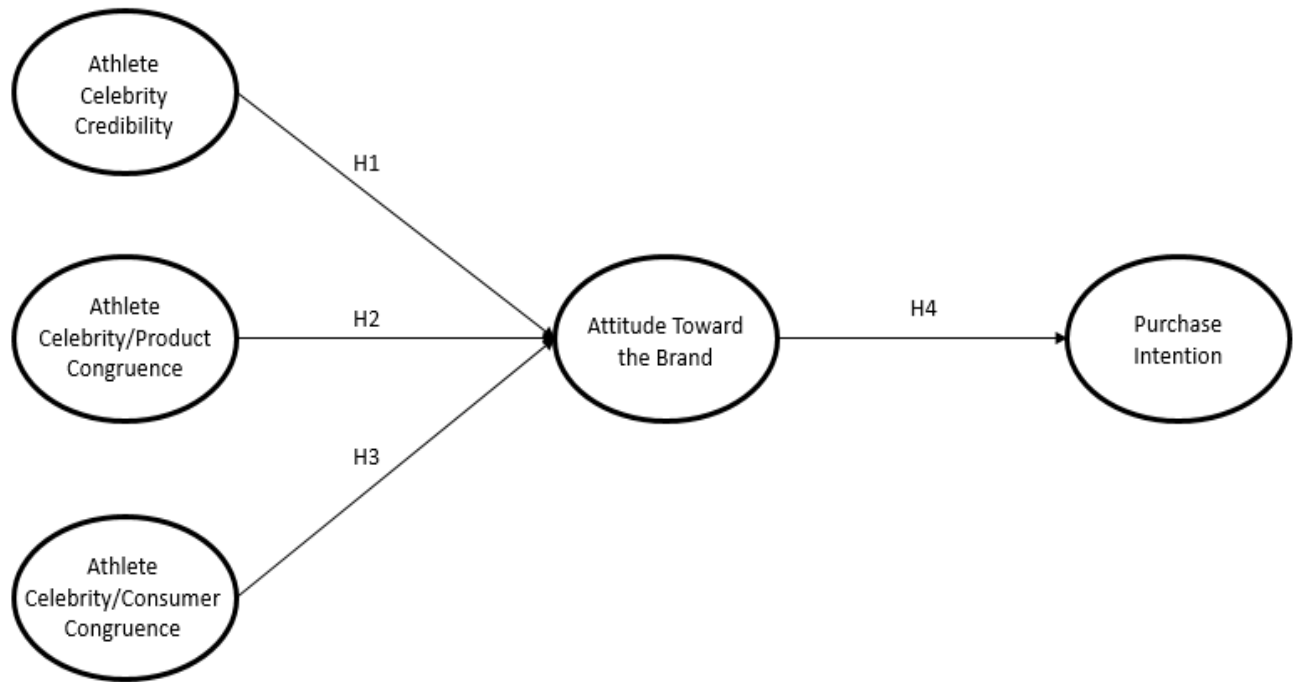


Figure 1. Hypothesized Model

The relationships from credibility of celebrity, celebrity/product congruence, and celebrity/consumer's self-image congruence to brand attitude and purchase intention

For purposes of convenience, a summary of all the hypotheses in current research project are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of Hypotheses

<i>Study</i>	<i>Hypothesis #</i>	<i>Hypothesis</i>
	H1	The higher the level of athlete celebrity endorser credibility, the higher the brand attitude.
	H2	The higher the degree of congruence between the athlete celebrity endorser and the product, the higher the brand attitude.
	H3	The higher the degree of congruence between the athlete celebrity endorser's image and the consumer's ideal self-image, the higher the brand attitude.
	H4	The higher the brand attitude, the higher the purchase intention.
	H5	Among all three independent variables, the degree of congruence between the athlete celebrity endorser and the product will lead to the highest level of brand attitude.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

This study was conducted to uncover and examine which factor is the most effective or joint effects to build a strong linkage between the brand and consumer among endorser credibility, endorser-product congruence, and endorser-consumer congruence. Furthermore, this examination sought to better define the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement based on all variables and select the most appropriate celebrity to maximize the effectiveness of advertisement. In this chapter, the research methodology used to obtain the data was organized and discussed according to (1) sample, (2) design and participants, (3) procedure, (4) measurement items and variables, and (5) statistical analyses.

3.1 Sample

The current study was conducted in a university classroom and the survey questionnaire used in this study was distributed to the students attending a Mid-Atlantic university. To obtain information from a knowledgeable and accessible source, the survey questionnaire used in this study was distributed to 350 and collected 290 responses from the sample. A convenient sampling approach was used in the selection of subjects. The following steps were taken to determine the size of the sample. First, the campus-based classes were selected from two different colleges at a Mid-Atlantic university; College of Health Professions and College of Business. In order to gain more accurate and relevant information from the survey, the participants' responses that were not appropriate in the study were discarded.

3.2 Design and Participants

The questionnaire of this study involved a study of related literature and an analysis by an expert panel. The expert panel consists of three faculty members at a Mid-Atlantic university in the U.S.; two faculty members in the school of Kinesiology and one faculty member in the Division of Marketing, MIS, & Entrepreneurship. Each member of the panel provided feedback regarding the survey's construction, and further assisted with the wording and formulation of items used in the instrument. After drawing from previous research and the advice of the panel, the survey was designed with seven sections to capture the study's main variables: (a) screening test, (b) athlete celebrity endorser's credibility, (c) athlete celebrity endorser-product congruence, (d) athlete celebrity endorser-consumer's ideal self-image congruence, (e) attitude toward the brand, (f) purchase intention, and (g) demographic information including nationality.

A total of 290 college students participated in the experiment voluntarily but was reduced to 271. The number of 6 responses was removed because the participants did not complete their questionnaires. The number of 13 responses was deleted because the screening test indicated that participants did not know either celebrity athlete endorser or brand. A convenient sampling was used for the process of subject selection.

3.3 Procedure

After gaining IRB approval, and printing hard copies of the survey questionnaire, advance-notice letters were delivered to instructors whose classes participated. The experiment was conducted in a university classroom. After introducing the experiment and general information, the questionnaires were provided to the class. Participants listened about the survey

and answered the questionnaires provided. Participants had 10-15 minutes to complete the questionnaires. After completing the questionnaires, the respondents were dismissed.

3.4 Measurement Items and Variables

There are three exogenous variables as follows: 1) athlete celebrity endorser credibility, 2) athlete celebrity endorser-product congruence, and 3) athlete celebrity endorser-consumer's ideal self-image congruence. Also, there are two endogenous variables: 1) attitude toward the brand and 2) purchase intention.

3.4.1 Screening Test

To improve the validity of the questionnaire, the screening questions in section A were added to the survey. The two statements were developed: 'Do you know LeBron James' and 'Do you know the brand "Nike."' Thus, the participants who did not know either the celebrity athlete endorser or brand were excluded from the sample for further analysis. In the current study, 13 participants who answered 'No' from the screening questions were deleted from the study.

3.4.2 Credibility

The second section (Section B) of the survey involved the credibility of an athlete celebrity. Here the respondents were asked to indicate on a 7-point semantic differential scale. The current paper selected one athlete endorser who indicates high credibility from the previous research, "*Athlete-product congruence and endorser credibility (Lee & Koo, 2015).*" Lee and Koo (2015) performed the pretest to identify the appropriate endorsers pertaining to high credibility-low credibility. The result of the pretest showed LeBron James was the most credible figure. Based on the result of their pretest (Lee & Koo, 2015), current research selected and

implemented LeBron James as an appropriate athlete endorser for the main experiment which only focused on the high credibility condition.

Participants were asked to rate the credibility of the endorser using a 7-point semantic differential scale to assess the perception of the celebrity. Specifically, five item anchors of “attractive/unattractive,” “classy/not classy,” “ugly/beautiful,” “elegant/plain,” and “sexy/not sexy” assessed attractiveness. Next five items were anchored by “undependable/dependable,” “honest/dishonest,” “unreliable/reliable,” “trustworthy/untrustworthy,” and “sincere/insincere” measured trustworthiness. The last five items were anchored by “expert/not an expert,” “inexperienced/experienced,” “unknowledgeable/knowledgeable,” “qualified/unqualified,” and “unskilled/skilled” assessed expertise.

3.4.3 Endorser-Product Congruence

In the third section (Section C), the participants evaluated the level of congruence between an athlete celebrity endorser and a product type on a 7-point semantic differential scale ranging from 1 the low or negative end to 7 the positive or high end. The eight items were compatible/not compatible, good match/bad match, congruent/not congruent, bad fit/good fit, relevant/irrelevant, inconsistent/consistent, appropriate/inappropriate, and ineffective/effective (Kamins & Gupta, 1994). Participants evaluated appropriate matches between the athlete celebrity endorser and the products being endorsed (i.e., an athlete celebrity endorser, LeBron James x one product type, basketball shoes).

3.4.4 Endorser-Consumer's Ideal Self-Image Congruence

The fourth section (Section D) of the questionnaire involved the congruence between athlete celerity endorser and consumer's ideal self-image. The respondents were asked to measure the level of congruence between each athlete celebrity endorser and consumer's ideal self-image. As mentioned in the literature review, there are four self-concepts; actual self-concept, ideal self-concept, social self-concept, and ideal social self-concept (Belch & Landon, 1977; Dolich, 1969; Hosany & Martin, 2012; Hughes & Guerrero, 1971; Sirgy, 1982). However, this paper focused on only one dimension, ideal self-concepts, following the rich traditions in consumer studies in marketing (Hosany & Martin, 2012; Kressman et al., 2006; Sirgy 1982; 1985). The scale to measure the congruence between celebrity endorser image and consumer's ideal self-image was the same one used to assess the congruence between the celebrity endorser and the product.

3.4.5 Attitude Toward the Brand and Purchase Intention

Next, participants evaluated attitude toward the brand (Section E) and purchase intention (Section F). The participants were asked to assess their attitude toward the brand on a 7-point semantic differential scale anchored with four-items, good/bad, favorable/unfavorable, like/dislike, and pleasant/unpleasant (MacKenzie et al., 1986). Participants indicated their purchase intention in the future by asking how likely it would be that they would consider the advertised brand the next time they purchase the product being endorsed. Subjects were asked to rate their purchase intention with a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 "strongly disagree" to 7 "strongly agree" with following statements, "I intend to buy "Nike" shoes this year," "I intend to buy "Nike" shoes whenever I can," "I intend to buy "Nike" shoes after watching a LeBron James

ad,” “I intend to buy “Nike” shoes because LeBron James matches to my ideal self-image,” “I intend to buy “Nike” shoes because LeBron James is affiliated with the “Nike” brand,” and “I intend to buy “Nike” shoes because LeBron James recommends them.” The respondents rated their agreement with the statement.

3.4.6 Demographic Information

The last section (Section G) consisted of six questions that asked the respondents to give out general background information about themselves in the areas of gender, age, major, class standing, marital status, ethnicity, preference of basketball, student-athlete, and country of origin. This information was important to obtain an accurate sample of students age 18 and older and was necessary in analyzing the demographic and psychographic segments of the sample. For purposes of convenience, a summary of this research question is reported in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of the Survey

Section	Items	Source
A. Screening questions	1. Do you know LeBron James? 2. Do you know the brand “Nike”?	
B. Celebrity Endorser Credibility	1. Attractive/Unattractive 2. Classy/Not classy 3. Ugly/Beautiful 4. Elegant/Plain 5. Sexy/Not Sexy 6. Undependable/Dependable 7. Honest/Dishonest 8. Unreliable/Reliable 9. Trustworthy/Untrustworthy 10. Sincere/Insincere 11. Expert/Not an expert 12. Inexperienced/Experienced 13. Unknowledgeable/Knowledgeable 14. Qualified/Unqualified 15. Unskilled/Skilled	Ohanian (1990)
C. Athlete Celebrity Endorser-Product	1. Not compatible/Compatible 2. Good match/Bad match	Kamins & Gupta (1994)

Congruence	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Incongruent/Congruent 4. Good fit/Bad fit 5. Irrelevant/Relevant 6. Consistent/Inconsistent 7. Inappropriate/Appropriate 8. Effective/Ineffective 	
D. Athlete Celebrity Endorser-Consumer's Ideal Self-Image Congruence	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Not compatible/Compatible 2. Good match/Bad match 3. Incongruent/Congruent 4. Good fit/Bad fit 5. Irrelevant/Relevant 6. Consistent/Inconsistent 7. Inappropriate/Appropriate 8. Effective/Ineffective 	Kamins & Gupta (1994)
E. Attitude toward Brand	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Good/Bad 2. Unfavorable/Favorable 3. Pleasant/Unpleasant 4. Dislike/Like 	MacKenzie et al. (1986)
F. Purchase Intention	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I intend to buy "Nike" shoes this year 2. I intend to buy "Nike" shoes whenever I can 3. I intend to buy "Nike" shoes after watching a LeBron James ad 4. I intend to buy "Nike" shoes because LeBron James matches to my ideal self-image 5. I intend to buy "Nike" shoes because LeBron James is affiliated with the "Nike" brand 6. I intend to buy "Nike" shoes because LeBron James recommends them 	Choi & Rifon (2002)
G. Demographic information	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gender 2. Age 3. Major 4. Year in college 5. Current marital status 6. Ethnicity 	

3.5 Statistical Analyses

Following the collection of survey information, data was input into IBM SPSS Statistics 25.0 for coding and analysis. Initial data analysis consisted of a descriptive analysis. Descriptive analysis is useful for understanding the characteristics of the data set, such as gender, age, ethnicity, and marital status. Moreover, it is also helpful in identifying the data entry errors. To measure the internal consistency of each scale reliability, this test utilized Cronbach's alpha test ($\alpha > .70$) by using SPSS. According to Byrne (2001), missing data is inevitable in the research, so an approach should be used to substitute missing data before data analyses are conducted. Thus, it was necessary to screen the data before implementing confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling analysis.

To assess the factor structure of the constructs including purchase intention, attitude toward the brand, athlete celebrity endorser credibility, athlete celebrity endorse-product congruence, and athlete celebrity-consumer congruence, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used. CFA, built on the statistical theory of structural equation modeling (SEM), is a general analytic approach to provide construct related validity evidence for sample responses on a particular instrument.

The CFA was performed to examine the factor structure of the proposed measurement model. The result of CFA showed the indicator variables selected based on the prior research (Ohanian, 1990) were appropriate for the relevant variables. The evaluation of model fit from different perspectives was examined based on multiple criteria. According to Hu and Bentler (1999), a minimal set of fit indices should be reported when conducting a CFA. Determination of overall model-data fit was based on multiple fit indices. The indices selected of this study were

Chi-square (χ^2), standardized root mean residual (SRMR), comparative fit index (CFI), normed fit index (NFI), and the root means square error of approximation (RMSEA). The following cut-off values were selected for this study: RMSEA < .06, SRMR < .08, NFI and CFI > .90 (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

After establishing the psychometric properties of scores on the measurement models, a full structure equation model with all parameter estimates was computed. The full structure model defines relations among the latent variables and illustrates the connection between the measurement models. The model was comprised of three exogenous variables (athlete celebrity endorser credibility, athlete celebrity endorser-product congruence, and athlete celebrity endorser-consumer congruence) and two endogenous variables (purchase intention and attitude toward the brand). Similar to the CFA, multiple fit indices were used to test if the proposed model has a good fit to the data. The model fit was evaluated by the combination indices in terms of Chi-square value, RMSEA, SRMR, NFI, and CFI. If the model did not indicate a good fit, post hoc model modification was performed based on the statistical criteria (e.g. modification indices, standardized residuals).

CHAPTER 4

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter indicates the results of the survey questionnaires and discusses the findings of data analysis. This chapter is structured as follows (1) the result of measurement models to examine properties of the measurement model, (2) the result of proposed model to assess the hypotheses by analyzing the structural model, and (3) discussion of the findings.

4.1 Measurement Models

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted on each measurement construct to examine the indicator variables of the proposed measurement model. As mentioned in Chapter 2, there are three dimensions as key components of source credibility to influence consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions: expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. Two items from Athlete Celebrity Endorser Credibility (ACC) and two items from Purchase Intention (PI) were eliminated in the measurement model based on the empirical criteria such as factor loadings, modification indices, and standardized residuals. After deleting the unrelated item, a revised measurement model was run. The result of CFA showed that the measurement model presented acceptable fit to the data, as indicated by multiple fit indices falling into an acceptable range.

4.1.1 Athlete Celebrity Endorser Credibility

First of all, confirmatory factor analysis was conducted on the 15 items that measured athlete celebrity endorser credibility. The initial model fit was not good ($\chi^2 / \text{degree of freedom} = 269.68/85 = 3.17$, RMSEA = 0.09 [90 percent CI = 0.08-0.10], NFI = 0.86, CFI = 0.90, and SRMR = 0.11). Therefore, post hoc analysis was utilized based on statistical criteria (e.g.

modification indices, standardized residuals). The model was modified by deleting two items and correlating four items. As a result, the model showed more acceptable values for all indices ($\chi^2 /$ degree of freedom = 144.184/60 = 2.40, RMSEA = 0.07 [90 percent CI = 0.06-0.09], NFI = 0.92, CFI = 0.95, and SRMR = 0.08). Factor loadings for each item were ranged from .41 to .93.

Figure 2 indicates the measurement model and the standardized factor loadings.

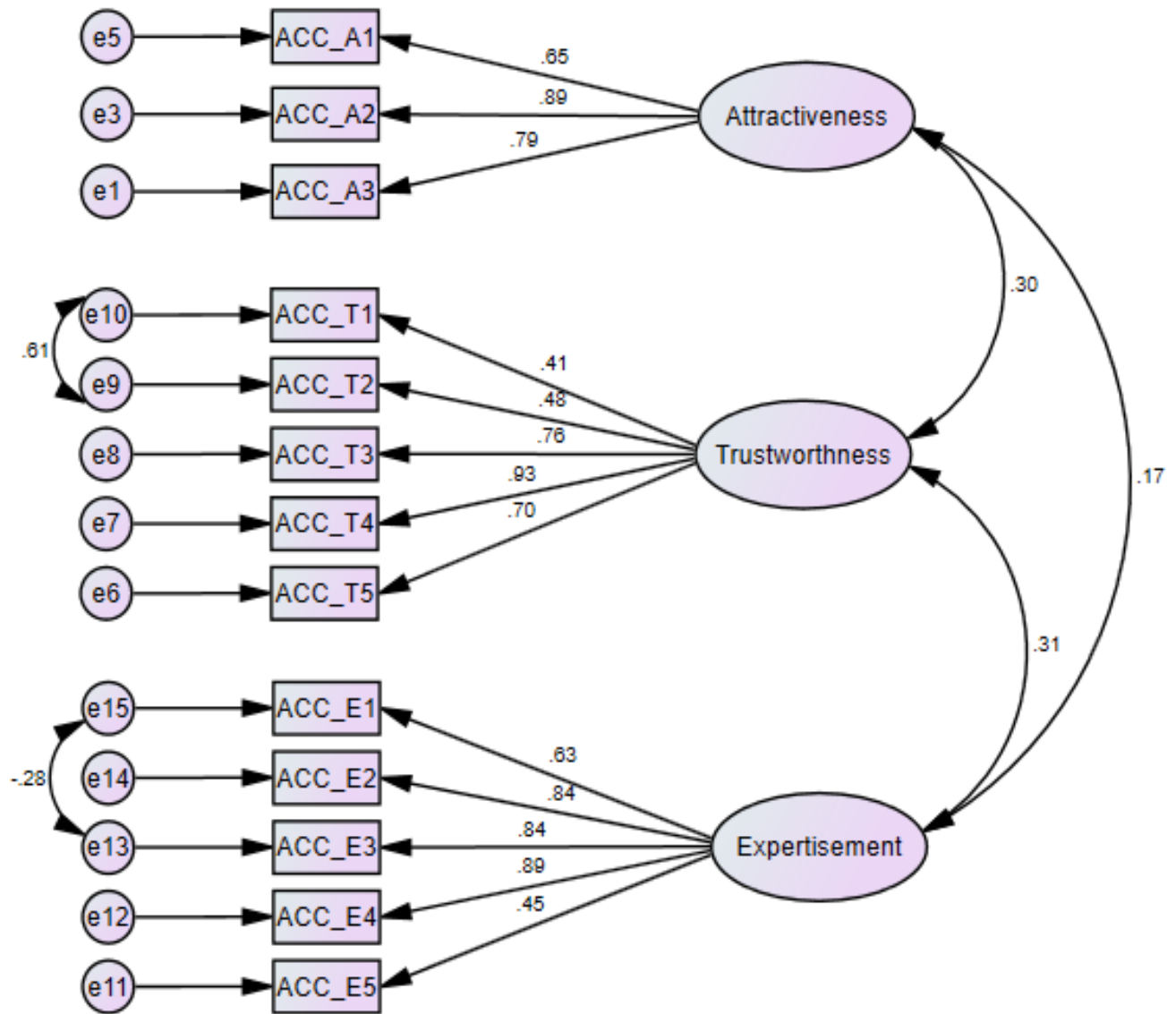


Figure 2. Measurement Model for the Athlete Celebrity Endorser Credibility

4.1.2 Athlete Celebrity Endorser-Product Congruence

Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted on the eight items that measured athlete celebrity endorser-product congruence. The initial model fit was good ($\chi^2 / \text{degree of freedom} = 85.23/20 = 4.26$, RMSEA = 0.11 [90 percent CI = 0.09-0.13], NFI= 0.95, CFI = 0.96, and SRMR = 0.03) with the exception of RMSEA; therefore, post hoc analysis was utilized based on the statistical criteria (e.g. modification indices). The model was modified by correlating between the ACPC 2 and ACPC 8. As a result, the adjustment resulted in RMSEA and other tests of model fit to further improve fit ($\chi^2 / \text{degree of freedom} = 50.0/19 = 2.63$, RMSEA = 0.07 [90 percent CI = 0.05-0.10], NFI = 0.97, CFI = 0.98, and SRMR = 0.03). Factor loadings for each item were ranged from .61 to .94. Figure 3 indicates the measurement model and the completely standardized factor loadings.

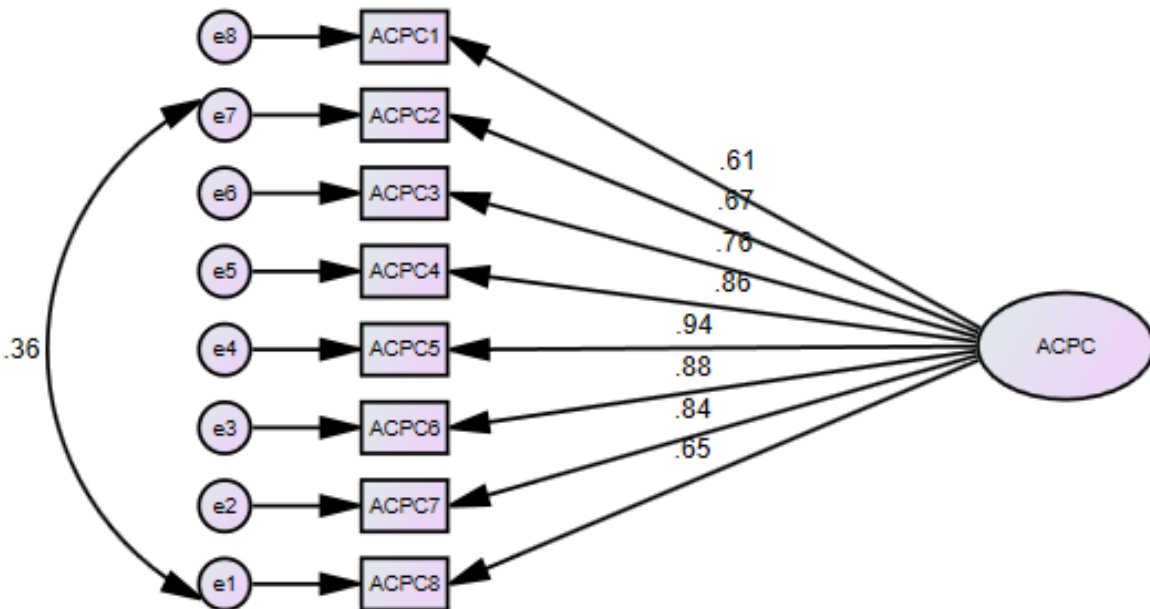


Figure 3. Measurement Model for the Athlete Celebrity Endorser-Product Congruence

4.1.3 Athlete Celebrity Endorser-Consumer's Ideal Self-Image Congruence

The CFA result of ACCC indicated adequate fit indices of the model ($\chi^2 / \text{degree of freedom} = 234.69/20 = 11.73$, RMSEA = 0.19 [90 percent CI = 0.18-0.22], NFI = 0.89, CFI = 0.90, and SRMR = 0.06). The initial model did not strongly fit the data. Therefore, post hoc analysis was utilized based on the statistical criteria (e.g. modification indices, standardized residuals). The model was further modified by correlating items. As a result, the model showed more acceptable values for all indices ($\chi^2 / \text{degree of freedom} = 43.87/17 = 2.93$, RMSEA = 0.08 [90 percent CI = 0.58-0.11], NFI = 0.99, CFI = 0.99, and SRMR = 0.03). Factor loadings for each item were ranged from .66 to .96. Figure 4 indicates the measurement model and the completely standardized factor loadings.

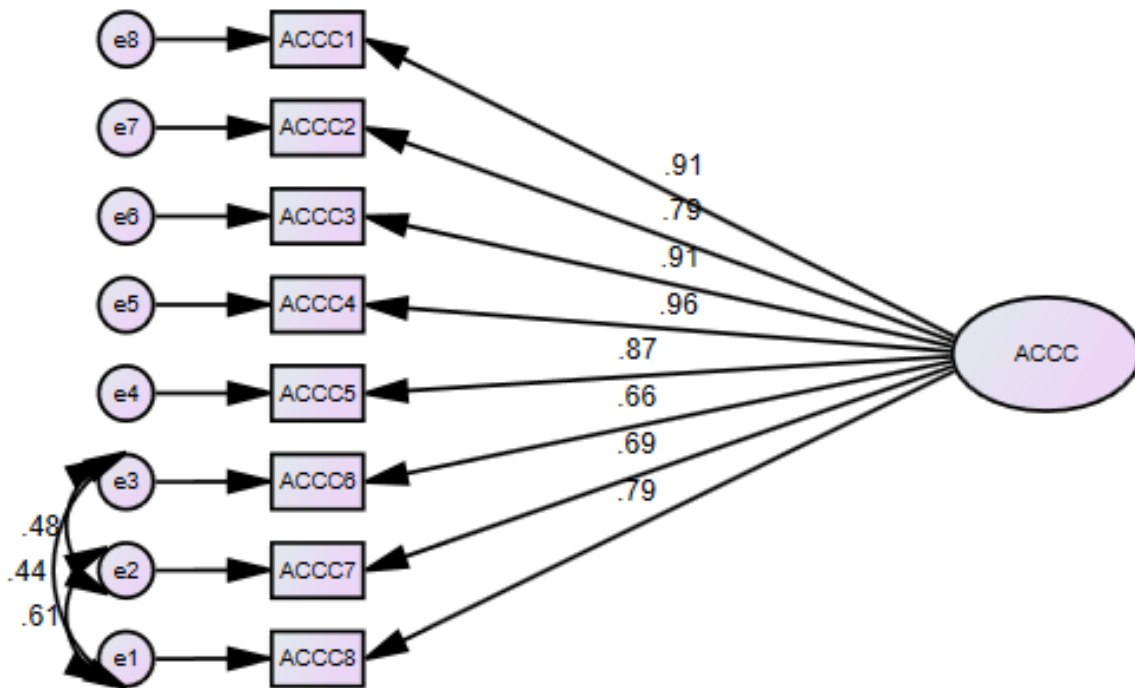


Figure 4. Measurement Model for the Athlete Celebrity Endorser-Consumer's Ideal Self-Image Congruence

4.1.4 Attitude Toward the Brand

Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted on the four items that measured attitude toward the brand. The result of ATB indicated adequate fit indices of the model (χ^2 / degree of freedom = 27.59/2.00 = 13.79, RMSEA = 0.21 [90 percent CI = 0.15-0.29], NFI = 0.96, CFI = 0.96, and SRMR = 0.04) with the exception of RMSEA. Therefore, post hoc analysis was run based on the modification indices by correlating two items between ATB1 and ATB3. The adjustment improved other indices of model fit except RMSEA (χ^2 / degree of freedom = 10.52/1 = 10.52, RMSEA = 0.18 [90 percent CI = 0.09-0.29], NFI = 0.99, CFI = 0.99, and SRMR = 0.02). Factor loadings for each item were ranged from .68 to .91. Figure 5 indicates the measurement model and the completely standardized factor loadings.

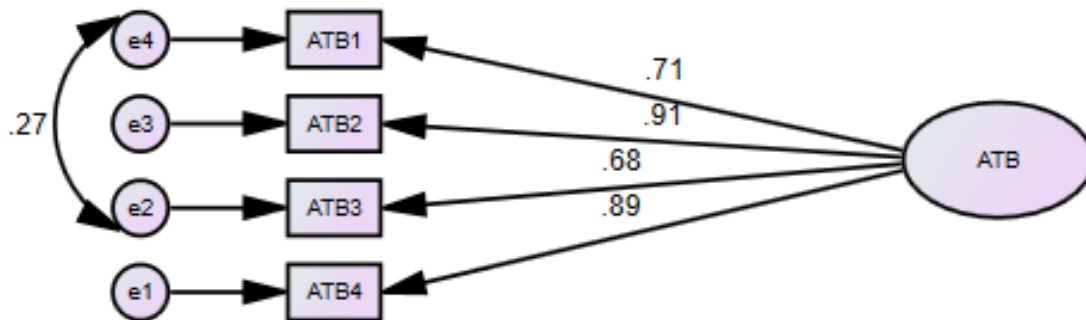


Figure 5. Measurement Model for the Attitude Toward the Brand

4.1.5 Purchase Intention

Lastly, confirmatory factor analysis was conducted on four items that measured purchase intention. The result of PI (Purchase Intention) indicated adequate fit indices of the model (χ^2 / degree of freedom = 13.54/2.00 = 6.77, RMSEA = 0.14 [90 percent CI = 0.08-0.22], NFI = 0.99,

CFI = 0.99, and SRMR = 0.02) with the exception of RMSEA. Factor loadings for each item were ranged from .75 to .95. Figure 6 indicates the measurement model and the completely standardized factor loadings from the CFA.

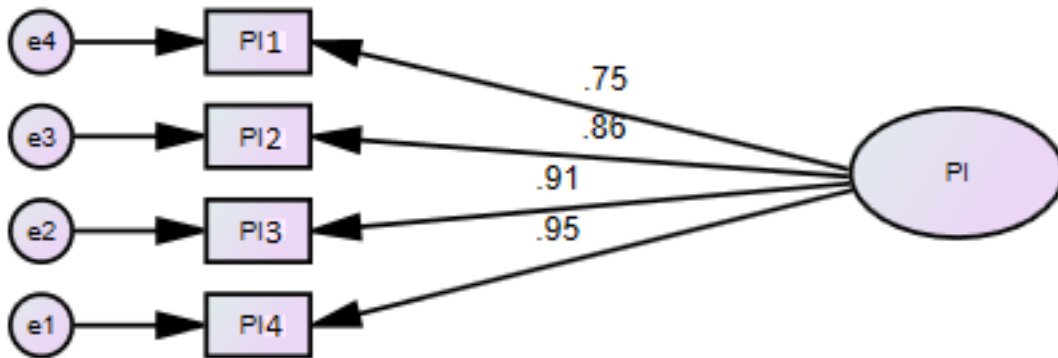


Figure 6. Measurement Model for the Purchase Intention

Descriptive statistics, factor loadings and Cronbach’s alpha (α) for the measurement model are reported in Table 3.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics Standardized Factor Loading and Cronbach’s Alpha (α)

Factors	Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Factor Loading	Cronbach’s Alpha
ACC					0.83
	ACC A1	4.01	1.69	0.65	
	ACC A2	3.99	1.44	0.89	
	ACC A3	3.55	1.72	0.79	
	ACC T1	5.21	1.61	0.41	
	ACC T2	5.04	1.35	0.48	
	ACC T3	4.89	1.74	0.76	
	ACC T4	4.84	1.54	0.93	
	ACC T5	4.70	1.52	0.70	
	ACC E1	6.02	1.57	0.63	
	ACC E2	6.49	1.06	0.84	
	ACC E3	6.00	1.30	0.84	
	ACC E4	6.26	1.25	0.89	
	ACC E5	5.82	2.06	0.45	
ACPC					0.93
	ACPC1	6.11	1.48	0.61	

	ACPC2	Bad match/Good match	6.28	1.22	0.67	
	ACPC3	Incongruent/Congruent	5.68	1.42	0.76	
	ACPC4	Bad fit/Good fit	6.15	1.29	0.86	
	ACPC5	Irrelevant/Relevant	6.11	1.36	0.94	
	ACPC6	Inconsistent/Consistent	5.96	1.33	0.88	
	ACPC7	Inappropriate/Appropriate	6.17	1.32	0.84	
	ACPC8	Ineffective/Effective	6.03	1.34	0.65	
ACCC						0.95
	ACCC1	Not compatible/Compatible	3.90	1.97	0.91	
	ACCC2	Bad match/Good match	4.03	1.90	0.79	
	ACCC3	Incongruent/Congruent	4.03	1.83	0.91	
	ACCC4	Bad fit/Good fit	4.11	1.91	0.96	
	ACCC5	Irrelevant/Relevant	3.88	2.13	0.87	
	ACCC6	Inconsistent/Consistent	4.11	1.93	0.66	
	ACCC7	Inappropriate/Appropriate	4.28	1.88	0.69	
	ACCC8	Ineffective/Effective	4.27	1.91	0.79	
ATB						0.88
	ATB1	Good/Bad	6.23	1.34	0.81	
	ATB2	Unfavorable/Favorable	6.07	1.29	0.86	
	ATB3	Pleasant/Unpleasant	5.74	1.56	0.72	
	ATB4	Dislike/Like	5.86	1.39	0.91	
PI						0.93
	PI1	I intend to buy “Nike” shoes after watching a LeBron James ad	2.66	1.64	0.75	
	PI2	I intend to buy “Nike” shoes because LeBron James matches to my ideal self-image	2.22	1.58	0.87	
	PI3	I intend to buy “Nike” shoes because LeBron James is affiliated with the “Nike” brand	2.30	1.56	0.91	
	PI4	I intend to buy “Nike” shoes because LeBron James recommends them	2.27	1.58	0.95	

Notes: $n = 271$. ACC, Athlete celebrity credibility; ACPC, Athlete celebrity endorser-product congruence; ACCC, Athlete celebrity endorser consumer’s ideal self-image congruence; ATB, Attitude toward brand; PI, Purchase intention

Given the acceptable model fit, the Cronbach’s α coefficients for all factors exceeded the benchmark of 0.70, ranging from 0.83 for ACC to 0.95 for ACCC (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

Discriminant validity was established by analyzing the correlations among the five factors in the proposed measurement model. All correlations among the five factors were less

than the recommendation of 0.85 (see Table 4; Kline, 2005), indicating evidence of discriminant validity.

Table 4. Correlations between Factors included in the Measurement Model

Factors	ACC	ACPC	ACCC	ATB	PI
ACC	1				
ACPC	0.55	1			
ACCC	0.24	0.14	1		
ATB	0.49	0.61	0.33	1	
PI	0.25	0.15	0.53	0.31	1
M	6.19	6.06	3.46	5.98	2.36
SD	1.08	1.09	1.42	1.20	1.44

4.2 SEM Testing of the Proposed Model

The overall model fit of the proposed structural model was evaluated by analyzing goodness-of-fit indices. The results from the SEM was found to be good fit indices of the model ($\chi^2 / \text{degree of freedom} = 1396.94/647 = 2.20$, NFI = 0.84, CFI = 0.90, RMSEA = 0.06 [90 percent CI = 0.06-0.07]) with the exception of NFI. Figure 7 depicts the standardized path coefficients of the model from the CFA.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that the higher the level of athlete celebrity endorser credibility, the higher the brand attitude. Looking at the structural relationships, athlete celebrity credibility had a significant direct impact on ATB ($\beta = 0.23$, $p < 0.001$). In other words, an athlete celebrity endorser who has a high credibility would more likely lead favorable attitude toward brand.

Therefore, *H1* was supported.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that higher the degree of congruence between the athlete celebrity endorser and the product, the higher the brand attitude. The athlete celebrity endorser and product congruence have a significant direct impact on ATB ($\beta = 0.46$, $p < 0.001$). In other

words, a high degree of congruence between the athlete celebrity endorser and the product will induce favorable attitude toward brand. Therefore, *H2* was supported.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that the higher the degree of congruence between the athlete celebrity endorser's image and the consumer's ideal self-image, the higher the brand attitude. Athlete celebrity endorser and consumer's ideal self-image congruence had a significant direct impact on ATB ($\beta = 0.24, p < 0.001$). In other words, a high degree of congruence between the athlete celebrity endorser and the consumer's ideal self-image will induce favorable attitude toward brand. Therefore, *H3* was supported.

Hypothesis 4 predicted that the higher the brand attitude, the higher the purchase intention. The analysis generated that ATB was found to significantly influence the purchase intention ($\beta = 0.34, p < 0.001$). In other words, an individual who has positive attitude toward brand would be more likely to make a purchase. Therefore, *H4* was supported.

Hypothesis 5 predicted that among all three independent variables, the degree of congruence between the athlete celebrity endorser and the product will lead to the highest level of brand attitude. The results of SEM indicated that the degree of congruence between the athlete celebrity endorser and the product showed the highest level of ATB ($\beta = 0.46, p < 0.001$) among three independent variables. Therefore, *H5* was supported. Figure 7 depicts the final structural model of measurement model with standardized path coefficient from the SEM.

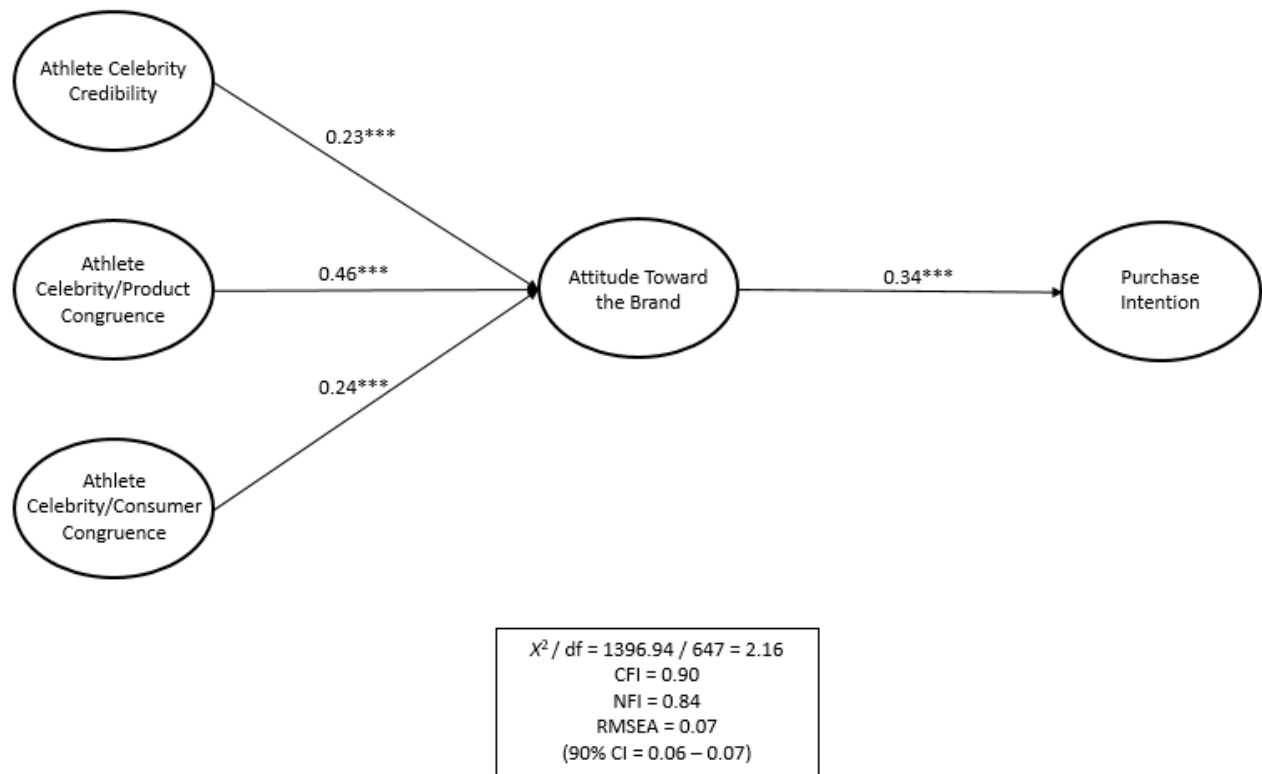


Figure 7. Path Diagram of the Final Structural Model with Standardized Path Coefficients.
Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.001$**

Taking the above results together, all three independent variables, ACC, ACPC, and ACCC had significant direct impact on ATB. Among all three variables, ACPC was found the highest level of effects on ATB. In addition, the analysis indicated that ATB had a significant effect on PI.

4.3 Discussion

Celebrity endorsement advertising is a common and popular technique to promote and sell products and services. Despite the fact that businesses are spending millions in using celebrity endorsements, this promotional strategy is still a noticeable practice in advertising

campaigns. Prior research suggested there are several factors such as celebrity's credibility, celebrity endorser-product congruence, and celebrity endorser-consumers' ideal self-image to influence consumers' responses. First, the celebrity's credibility effects consumer responses. Next, the literature indicates that celebrity endorsement has a positive influence when consumers perceive a congruence between the endorser and the products being endorsed. Prior studies also have suggested that celebrity endorsement is more persuasive when consumers perceive a celebrity as possessing an image close to his or her ideal self-image. The majority of prior studies have focused on the main effect of two variables such as the relationship between endorser-product fit and endorser-consumer fit, or effectiveness of endorser-product fit and credibility. However, no research to date has addressed all three variables together to see which factors are the most valuable aspect of the celebrity endorsement configuration. This research not only ensured the interaction effects among all three factors, but also expanded the dependent measures involved in the process, by including variables such as attitude toward the brand and purchase intention. Testing three variables (i.e., celebrity's credibility, endorser-product fit, and endorser-consumer fit) together may have been the main reason for the discrepancy in the current research outcomes from previous studies.

The current study explored how athlete celebrity credibility, athlete celebrity endorser-product congruence, and athlete celebrity endorser-consumer's ideal self-image congruence affect consumers' responses such as attitude toward brand and purchase intention. This study examined and discovered the impact of effectiveness of celebrity endorsement strategies depending on the range of consumers by using a real athlete and actual brand (product) in the experiment. The present study confirmed all hypotheses (1-5) indicating the relationships between aspects of celebrity and consumer responses. Analyses of the study results further

indicated that endorser-product congruence appeared to have a direct, positive effect on attitude toward the brand than the other two factors, celebrity endorser credibility, and endorser-consumer congruence. The current research successfully supports empirical evidence that the match-up effect strengthened the attitude toward brand by using real athlete endorser and actual sport-related product which indicates high congruence between celebrity and product.

The prior research indicated the path diagram of the structural model with three traditional advertising measures; attitude toward ad, attitude toward brand, and purchase intention (Choi & Rifon, 2012; Goldsmith et al., 2000; MacKenzie et al., 1986). The result of current study was not consistent with the prior research. Choi and Rifon (2012) suggested that celebrity and product congruence did not significantly influence attitude toward brand. This study did not employ the attitude toward brand as a mediator from attitude toward ad to purchase intention in terms of all three variables; ACC, ACPC, and ACCC. However, many prior research suggested that the congruence between endorser and product had a positive effect on attitude toward brand and purchase intention (Kamins & Gupta, 1994). Lee and Koo (2015) suggested that the high endorser-product congruence had a significantly stronger effect on attitude toward brand than the low endorser-product congruence. Till and Busler (2000) suggested that the brand attitude was significantly higher when the endorser matched with the product being endorsed than when the endorser did not match with it.

In addition, the results of this study are consistent with prior studies indicating athlete celebrity endorser-consumer's ideal self-image congruence also had a positive effect on attitude toward the brand. Sirgy (1982; 1985) suggested that high degree of congruence between products and consumer self-concept, either ideal or actual, influences more positively consumers purchase

and consumption of endorsed product. Hosany and Martin (2012) suggested that consumers were more likely to purchase and consume when there was a high degree of congruence between their self-image and celebrity endorser's image.

Although the data of athlete celebrity endorser credibility, and athlete celebrity endorser-consumer's ideal self-image congruence indicated lower than endorser-product congruence, both factors also have a positive effect on attitude toward the brand.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This chapter includes a summary of findings, implications, limitations, and recommendation for further research.

This study examined a linear structural equation model that explained effectiveness of celebrity endorsement strategies based on the three variables; athlete celebrity endorser credibility, athlete celebrity endorser-product congruence, and athlete celebrity endorser-consumer's ideal self-image congruence. In addition, this study showed which factor had the most impact on attitude toward brand. For purposes of convenience, a summary of all the findings are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Summary of Findings

#	Hypothesis	Result
H1	The higher the level of athlete celebrity endorser credibility, the higher the brand attitude.	Supported
H2	The higher the degree of congruence between the athlete celebrity endorser and the product, the higher the brand attitude.	Supported
H3	The higher the degree of congruence between the athlete celebrity endorser's image and the consumer's ideal self-image, the higher the brand attitude.	Supported
H4	The higher the brand attitude, the higher the purchase intention.	Supported
H5	Among all three independent variables, the degree of congruence between the athlete celebrity endorser and the product will lead to the highest level of brand attitude.	Supported

5.1 Theoretical Implications

The current research contributes to the marketing literature by demonstrating among all three variables; athlete celebrity endorser credibility, athlete celebrity endorser-product

congruence, and athlete celebrity endorser-consumer congruence, which criteria led the highest level of attitude toward brand.

A number of theories and models have been suggested to explain the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement and the aspects of endorsement to maximize the effect. Even if there is ample evidence and research about the celebrity, previous studies focused on either one or two variables to examine the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement. However, the current study suggested which one has the most impact on the attitude toward brand by implementing three variables in the experiment. This study supplements several limitations in methodological approaches of the previous research. Unlike prior research, which used female actresses to identify the impact of congruence between celebrity image and consumers' ideal self-image (Choi & Rifon, 2012), the current study used a male athlete celebrity endorser (sport figure) and sport-related product. This study may encourage more scholars to focus on the effect of celebrity endorser in a wide range of celebrities with different types of product and different fields. As predicted, the result of this study indicated that the high celebrity-product congruence led to the highest level of brand attitude. Therefore, the level of congruence between celebrity and product may favorably impact the attitude toward brand when they match. Most importantly, the current study suggests that the degree of congruence between celebrity and product has the potential to be a more important factor than others in advertising strategy.

5.2 Managerial Implications

The findings of this study provide strategic insights on the selection of a celebrity endorser to the marketing practitioners. Marketers believe that celebrity endorsements will benefit brands, create positive attributes, and contribute to brand name recognition, so businesses are spending millions using athlete-endorsement advertisements to promote their products or

brands. However, they cannot maximize the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement by considering one or two factors. Therefore, when marketing managers use the celebrity endorsement advertising, they should consider what steps they can take to inculcate a strong credible reputation among consumers. According to the prior research (Erdogan et al., 2001), the celebrity-product congruence and the celebrity-target consumers ranked as the first and second most important criteria to be considered in selection of a celebrity endorser. Thus, the findings of the current study help the brand managers increase the positive effects of celebrity endorsement advertising and also effectiveness of their brand value by analyzing core elements. The athlete's level of credibility or popularity might not be the most considerable factor to maximize the advertisement outcomes. There are various elements to influence the consumers' responses of celebrity endorsers and their perceptions. Marketers can expect the positive image to be transferred when the celebrity's image is well-matched with the product being endorsed. Therefore, this study enables marketing practitioners to understand consumer's perception to celebrity endorsements and develop an effective approach in selection of celebrity endorsers to gain the maximum effect in advertising.

5.3 Limitations and Future Directions

Even if the current study provides both marketers and researchers valuable insights into understanding celebrity endorsement advertising, several issues appear to warrant future studies. In this study, an actual athlete celebrity and a sports related product with a real brand name were used to provide a range of overall match perception. With regard to the generalizability, the findings of the study are still limited to the celebrities and products. Further studies could investigate the relationship with a wide range of celebrities from different fields.

Next, the current study had a small size of sample compared to the number of items to be measured. SEM requires a large sample size with normal items. If non-normal items exist, even larger sample size is necessary to increase an accuracy of the procedure. However, to recruit as many participants as possible with the paper-pencil based questionnaire was not easy within the time. For further studies, alternative or additional sampling methods such as web-based surveys will help recruit more participants and reduce or delete some non-normal items.

Another issue for further studies is the demographic profile of the sample. Most of the participants of this study were university students, or young adults who may be influenced by a celebrity endorser. Young consumers might use a celebrity endorser they admire to construct their identity (Boon & Lomore, 2001). Also, a young consumer's perception of celebrity athlete endorsers has a positive influence on brand loyalty and their product switching intention (Dix et al., 2010). Consumer's age or gender may influence the perception of celebrity endorsements. Future research should be conducted among more diverse and larger sample of respondents to increase the generalizability of the findings. Thus, future studies could investigate the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement strategies with a wide range of consumers.

Despite its limitations, the current study provides a valuable replication and supports a number of findings by prior researchers. Moreover, this study adds weight to reliability and validity of measures used to examine the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement advertising in terms of three variables.

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Appendix A: IRB APPROVAL LETTER



Office of Research Integrity
Institutional Review Board
One John Marshall Drive
Huntington, WV 25755

FWA 00002704

IRB1 #00002205
IRB2 #00003206

March 19, 2018

Jennifer Mak, PhD
School of Kinesiology

RE: IRBNet ID# 1213185-1

At: Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral)

Dear Dr. Mak:

Protocol Title: [1213185-1] The Effect of Celebrity Athlete Endorsement on Attitude toward Brand and Purchase Intention

Site Location: MU

Submission Type: New Project APPROVED

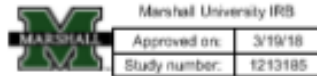
Review Type: Exempt Review

In accordance with 45CFR46.101(b)(2), the above study was granted Exempted approval today by the Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral) Designee. No further submission (or closure) is required for an Exempt study unless there is an amendment to the study. All amendments (including the addition of research staff) must be submitted and approved by the IRB Chair/Designee.

This study is for student Yunheiu Jeon.

If you have any questions, please contact the Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral) Coordinator Bruce Day, ThD, CIP at 304-696-4303 or day50@marshall.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

Appendix B: STAMPED CONSENT FORM



Marshall University

Anonymous Survey Consent

The Effect of Celebrity Athlete Endorsement on Attitude toward Brand and Purchase Intention

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled “The Effect of Celebrity Athlete Endorsement on Attitude Toward Brand and Purchase Intention” designed to analyze the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement depending on the rage of consumers. The study is being conducted by Dr. Jennifer Mak and Ms. Yunheui Jeon of Marshall University. This research is being conducted as part of the thesis for Ms. Yunheui Jeon.

INFORMATION

The survey questionnaire will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. There are seven parts to the questionnaire: a) screening test b) Athlete Celebrity Credibility, c) Athlete Celebrity Endorser-Product congruence, d) Athlete Celebrity Endorser-Consumer’s Ideal Self-image Congruence, e) Attitude toward Brand, f) Purchase Intention, and g) General Information. There are no known risks involved with this study.

BENEFITS

The purpose of this study is to see what factor is the most effective factor to influence consumer’s evaluation of a brand, and how do the consumers perceive celebrity endorsements differently depending on their demographic files such as cultural variables to contribute a fuller picture of impact on celebrity endorsements. In addition, the current study will focus on how the consumers perceive celebrity endorsements differently depending on their demographic files such as cultural variables to contribute a fuller picture of impact of celebrity endorsements. The result of this study could be beneficial to marketing practitioners who contribute to the selection of the celebrity endorsements to increase a strong and credible reputation among consumers.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your replies will be anonymous, so do not put your name anywhere on the form. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link participants to the study.

PARTICIPATION

Participation is completely voluntary and there will be no penalty or loss of benefits if you choose to not participate in this research study or to withdraw. If you choose not to participate you may either return the blank survey or you may discard it. You may choose not to answer any question by simply leaving it blank. By completing this survey and returning it, you are also confirming that you are **18** years of age or older.

CONTACT

If you have any questions about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Dr. Jennifer Y. Mak at GH104E, Huntington, WV 25755, 1-(304)696-2927, or mak@marshall.edu. If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research participant, Marshall University Office of Research Integrity at (304) 696-4303.

Please keep this page for your records.

Appendix C: FINAL REVISED QUESTIONNAIRE



The Effect of Celebrity Athlete Endorsement on Attitude Toward Brand and Purchase Intention



You must be 18 or over to participate in this study. Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may refuse to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. This is an anonymous survey study. No reference will be made in oral or written reports, which could link you to the study.

Section A.

1. Do you know **LeBron James**? ¹ Yes ² No
2. Do you know the brand "**Nike**"? ¹ Yes ² No

Section B. Athlete Celebrity Credibility

Instruction: Below is a set of word pairs. Please **circle the number** that best reflects personalities or images of the athlete who endorses the product. For example, if you think the athlete celebrity endorser is honest, you might respond like the example below:

Dishonest 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 : **7** Honest

LeBron James

Attractive	1	:	2	:	3	:	4	:	5	:	6	:	7	Unattractive
Not classy	1	:	2	:	3	:	4	:	5	:	6	:	7	Classy
Ugly	1	:	2	:	3	:	4	:	5	:	6	:	7	Beautiful
Elegant	1	:	2	:	3	:	4	:	5	:	6	:	7	Plain
Not sexy	1	:	2	:	3	:	4	:	5	:	6	:	7	Sexy
Undependable	1	:	2	:	3	:	4	:	5	:	6	:	7	Dependable
Dishonest	1	:	2	:	3	:	4	:	5	:	6	:	7	Honest
Reliable	1	:	2	:	3	:	4	:	5	:	6	:	7	Unreliable
Trustworthy	1	:	2	:	3	:	4	:	5	:	6	:	7	Untrustworthy
Sincere	1	:	2	:	3	:	4	:	5	:	6	:	7	Insincere

Expert	1	:	2	:	3	:	4	:	5	:	6	:	7	Not an expert
Inexperienced	1	:	2	:	3	:	4	:	5	:	6	:	7	Experienced
Unknowledgeable	1	:	2	:	3	:	4	:	5	:	6	:	7	Knowledgeable
Unqualified	1	:	2	:	3	:	4	:	5	:	6	:	7	Qualified
Skilled	1	:	2	:	3	:	4	:	5	:	6	:	7	Unskilled

Section C. Athlete Celebrity Endorser-Product Congruence

Instruction: Below is a set of word pairs. Please circle the number that best describes how you feel about the pairing of the athlete celebrity endorser and the product being endorsed.

LeBron James and basketball shoes

Compatible	1	:	2	:	3	:	4	:	5	:	6	:	7	Incompatible
Bad match	1	:	2	:	3	:	4	:	5	:	6	:	7	Good match
Congruent	1	:	2	:	3	:	4	:	5	:	6	:	7	Incongruent
Good fit	1	:	2	:	3	:	4	:	5	:	6	:	7	Bad fit
Relevant	1	:	2	:	3	:	4	:	5	:	6	:	7	Irrelevant
Consistent	1	:	2	:	3	:	4	:	5	:	6	:	7	Inconsistent
Appropriate	1	:	2	:	3	:	4	:	5	:	6	:	7	Inappropriate
Ineffective	1	:	2	:	3	:	4	:	5	:	6	:	7	Effective

Section D. Athlete Celebrity Endorser-Consumer's Ideal Self-Image Congruence

Instruction: Below is a set of word pairs. Please circle the number that best describes your opinion about the paring of the athlete celebrity endorser and your ideal self-image.

LeBron James and your ideal self-image

Not Compatible	1	:	2	:	3	:	4	:	5	:	6	:	7	Compatible
Good match	1	:	2	:	3	:	4	:	5	:	6	:	7	Bad match
Incongruent	1	:	2	:	3	:	4	:	5	:	6	:	7	Congruent
Bad fit	1	:	2	:	3	:	4	:	5	:	6	:	7	Good fit
Irrelevant	1	:	2	:	3	:	4	:	5	:	6	:	7	Relevant
Consistent	1	:	2	:	3	:	4	:	5	:	6	:	7	Inconsistent
Appropriate	1	:	2	:	3	:	4	:	5	:	6	:	7	Inappropriate
Effective	1	:	2	:	3	:	4	:	5	:	6	:	7	Ineffective

Section E. Attitude toward Brand

Instruction: Using each of the following pairs of words below, please circle the number that best reflects your feelings about the brand advertised by LeBron James.

LeBron James and Nike

Good	1	:	2	:	3	:	4	:	5	:	6	:	7	Bad
Unfavorable	1	:	2	:	3	:	4	:	5	:	6	:	7	Favorable
Pleasant	1	:	2	:	3	:	4	:	5	:	6	:	7	Unpleasant
Dislike	1	:	2	:	3	:	4	:	5	:	6	:	7	Like

Section F. Purchase Intention

Instructions: Please circle the number for how strongly you disagree or agree for each of the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1 I intend to buy "Nike" shoes this year	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2 I intent to buy "Nike" shoes whenever I can .	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3 I intend to buy "Nike" shoes after watching a LeBron James' ad.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4 I intend to buy "Nike " shoes because LeBron James matches to my ideal self-image.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5 I intend to buy "Nike" shoes because LeBron James is affiliated with the "Nike" brand	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6 I intend to buy "Nike " shoes because LeBron James recommends them.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Section G. General Information

Instruction: This part is to get some information about yourself. Please Check (☑) the appropriate box.

- Gender: ¹ Male ² Female
- Marital Status: ¹ Single ² Married ³ Other(s) _____
- Class Standing: ¹ Freshman ² Sophomore ³ Junior ⁴ Senior
⁵ Masters ⁶ Doctorate ⁷ Other(s) _____
- How old are you? _____ years old
- Ethnicity: ¹ African-American ² Asian ³ Hispanic ⁴ White ⁵ Native American ⁶ Other(s)
- Is basketball your favorite sport to watch? ¹ Yes ² No
- Are you a student-athlete? ¹ Yes (Please answer question 7a) ² No
7a. I am a student athlete and I am on the _____ team.
- Are you an international student? ¹ Yes (Please answer question 8a) ² No
8a. I am an international student and my country of origin is _____

☺ Thank you very much for completing this survey ☺