

Finding out the Suitable Criteria for Sport Star as Endorser by Semi-structured Interview

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Abstract

Celebrity endorsement is a good promotional tool to increase sales. With the increasing numbers of sport stars around the world, many sporting goods and non-sporting goods companies, use sport stars to promote their products. There are two purposes (steps) of this study. First, what are the criteria for non-sporting goods companies to opt for sport star endorsement as a marketing approach. Second, to find out the difference between the criteria for celebrity and sport star as endorser.

We adopt the “semi-structured interview” to identify the sport star endorsement criteria. First, look into the relative advertising campaigns to construct interview principles and interview local non-sporting goods companies including electronics companies, the food and beverage industry, and telecommunication corporations. Second, inspect criteria for choosing an apt athlete. Finally, conclude the four criteria that are the athlete’s performance, glamour, trustworthiness, and product match-up.

Keywords: semi-structured interview, sport star, endorsement, criteria

Introduction

In this modern age, there are more and more business entities and brand names. In other words, the business world is becoming highly competitive. The media utilize advanced technology; consumers are exposed to excessive information from various channels including magazines, newspapers, websites, radio stations, and television every day. Every marketer is facing the same challenge of how to catch consumer’s attention. To achieve this, companies use many marketing approaches including discounts, advertising or large outdoor promotional activities, etc. Celebrity endorsement is the most frequently used marketing strategy.

On the other hand, with an increasing number of sport stars in the world, both sporting

goods companies and non-sporting goods companies adopt sport star endorsement as a marketing approach. In Taiwan, increasing numbers of non-sporting goods companies including PC company Acer, restaurant chains Subway and McDonalds, etc. follow this marketing strategy. Thus, sport star endorsement has a significant impact on the overall marketing strategy. Sport stars appear in all kinds of advertising campaigns. When the portrayed product image matches the endorser's image, the advertising campaign tends to be more persuasive to consumers. It influences the consumer's purchasing decision, and thus sales are increased. Finding the precise sport star is essential. The purpose of this study is to discover the criteria for choosing the precise sport star endorser and find out the difference between the criteria for celebrity and sport star as endorser.

Literature Review

The Source Credibility Model contends the effectiveness of a message depends on perceived level of **expertise** and **trustworthiness** of an endorser (Hovland and Weiss, 1951; Hovland et al., 1953; Ohanian, 1991). Trustworthiness refers to the honesty, integrity, and believability of an endorser as perceived by the target audience. Expertise is defined as the extent to which a communicator is perceived to be a source of valid assertions. It refers to the perceived level of knowledge, experience or skills possessed by an endorser (Hovland et al., 1953)

The Source Attractiveness Model contends that the effectiveness of a message depends on the **similarity**, **familiarity**, and **liking** of an endorser (McGuire, 1968). Similarity is defined as a supposed resemblance between the source and the receiver of the message, familiarity as knowledge of the source through exposure, and likability as affection for the source as a result of the source's physical appearance and behavior.

A generalized application to advertising has been suggested that "**physical attractiveness**" of a communicator determines the effectiveness of persuasive communication through a process called identification, which is assumed to occur when information from an attractive source is accepted as a result of desire to identify with such endorsers (Kelman, 1961). Research has shown physically attractive communicators are more successful at changing beliefs (Baker and Churchill, 1977; Chaiken, 1979; Debevec and Keman, 1984) and generating purchase intentions (Friedman et al., 1976; Petty et al., 1983; Petroschius and Crocker, 1989) than their unattractive counterparts. On the other hand, Caballero et al. (1989) found that positive feelings toward advertising and products do not necessarily translate into actual behavior or purchase intentions.

The Product Match-up Hypothesis literature maintains that messages conveyed by the celebrity image and the product should be congruent for effective advertising (Forkan, 1980; Kahle and Homer, 1985; Kamins, 1989, 1990). The determinant of the match between celebrity and brand depends on the degree of perceived "fit" between brand and celebrity

image (Misra and Beatty, 1990).

A celebrity is used to impart credibility and aspirational values to a brand, but the celebrity needs to **match the product**. A good brand campaign idea and an intrinsic link between the celebrity and the message are musts for a successful campaign. Celebrities are no doubt good at generating attention, recall and positive attitudes towards advertising provided that they are supporting a good idea and there is an explicit fit between them and the brand (Piyush, 2008).

Certain criteria between the celebrity and brand image are:

Table I : Certain criteria between the celebrity and brand image

1.	Celebrity's fit with the brand image
2.	Celebrity—Target audience match
3.	Celebrity associated values
4.	Celebrity—Product match
5.	Celebrity controversy risk
6.	Celebrity popularity
7.	Celebrity availability
8.	Celebrity physical attractiveness
9.	Celebrity credibility
10.	Celebrity prior endorsements
11.	Celebrity profession

Methodology

Semi-structured interview is used to collect qualitative data by setting up a situation (the interview) that allows a respondent the time and scope to talk about their opinions on a particular subject. The focus of the interview is decided by the researcher and there may be areas the researcher is interested in exploring. (Susan, 2011)

The objective is to understand the respondent's point of view rather than make generalizations about behavior. It uses open-ended questions, some suggested by the researcher and some arise naturally during the interview. (Susan, 2011)

The researcher tries to build a rapport with the respondent and the interview is like a conversation. Questions are asked when the interviewer feels it is appropriate to ask them. They may be prepared questions or questions that occur to the researcher during the interview. The wording of questions will not necessarily be the same for all respondents. (Susan, 2011)

Results

After interviewing, we found out some different criteria between a celebrity and a sport star as an endorser:

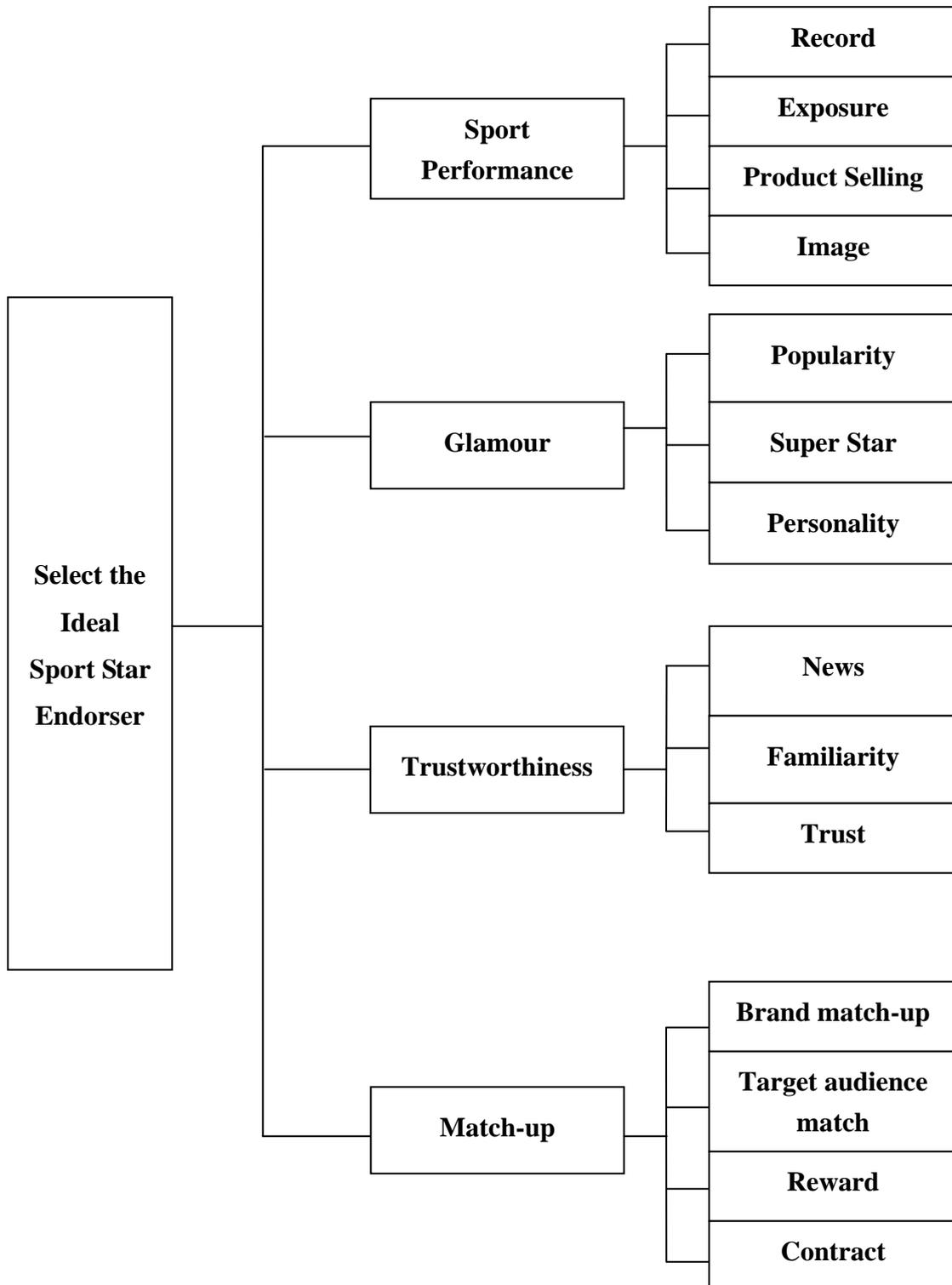


Figure I : The criteria for sport star as endorser

Conclusions

After interviewing three non-athletic brands including electronic, food and beverage industry, and telecommunication corporations in Taiwan using sport star endorsement for products and brands, we discovered four main criteria including **sport star's athletic performance**, glamour, trustworthiness, and product match-up. Compare with the criteria for celebrity as endorser, **Sport Performance** is the most significant criteria for sport star as endorser. Under the four criteria, there are also some other smaller criteria which are different from celebrity criteria including, **Record**, **Reward**, and the **Contract**. Additionally, **Prior Endorsements** is not a important criterion for sport star as endorser, but it is a important criterion for celebrities as endorser.

The major limitation of the study is not knowing the relative weights of the suitable criteria. "Analytic Hierarchy Process" (AHP) (Saaty, 1980) is adopted to construct a selection model. After the sport star selection criteria are identified, we use the "Analytic Hierarchy Process" (AHP) to determine relative weights of the suitable criteria. Next, we rank the importance of the criteria by each relative weight. Local well-known non-sporting goods companies are used as samples to demonstrate the appropriate choice of models.

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