

THE EFFECT OF ENDORSED PRODUCT ON ENDORSER IMAGE

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ABSTRACT

Over the years there has been much interest in understanding the effect of endorsers on the brands they endorse. In the marketing literature, research ranges from Friedman and Friedman's (1979) work on the interaction between the type of endorser and the type of endorsed product up to Till and Shimp's (1998) study of the extent to which negative information about the endorser may impact the endorsed product. No research, however, has focused on the impact that the endorsed product has on the endorser's image. The intent of the studies presented here is to undertake such an examination. This issue is an important one as famous endorsers begin to recognize the importance of managing their own brand equity.

A variety of mechanisms have been invoked to explain the effectiveness (or ineffectiveness) of endorsers including the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty, Cacioppo, and Schumann 1983), social adaptation theory (Kahle and Homer 1985), schema theory (Lynch and Shuler 1994), attribution theory (Mowen and Brown 1981; Tripp, Jensen, and Carlson 1994), cultural-meaning transfer (McCracken 1989), source-characteristics (i.e., attractiveness, expertise, trustworthiness, etc.) (Ohanian 1991), and associative learning (Till and Shimp 1998). While all the above mentioned perspectives have applicability, given the intent of this research, associative learning seems most appropriate as a theoretical focus. In brief, associative learning posits that, through the endorsement process, a link is formed between the endorser and the endorsed brand. The typical issue of interest is the effect that this link between the endorser and the endorsed brand has on the brand. In this research, the interest is on how an associative link between an endorser and a brand can affect the endorser.

The present study examines the effect of two types of endorsed products on two types of endorsers. The relatively "negative" product was chewing tobacco, and

the relatively "positive" product was orange juice. The two types of endorsers tested were volleyball player (athlete) and fashion model (non-athlete). It was hypothesized that associating an endorser with a "negative" product would have a deleterious effect on the image of the endorser, and that such effect would be particularly strong for the athlete endorser as the "negative" product has health implications.

Ten print ads were created featuring Florida Gold orange juice with fictional endorser Phil Johnson (described as either a fashion model or volleyball player). Ten print ads were created featuring Moracco chewing tobacco with fictional endorser Phil Johnson (described as either a fashion model or volleyball player). The study was a 2 X 2 X 2 design. The first factor was type of product (either Florida Gold orange juice or Moracco chewing tobacco)—between subjects. The second factor was the type of endorser (either fashion model or volleyball player)—between subjects. The third factor was the time at which the endorser was evaluated (before and after viewing the ten print ads)—within subjects.

One-hundred and twenty-seven undergraduate students participated. Subjects were given background information on the endorser and the endorsed product. Subjects evaluated both the product and the endorser. Subjects viewed ten print ads featuring the product (either Florida Gold or Moracco) and the endorser (either fashion model or volleyball player). Subjects again evaluated both the product and the endorser. The results showed a significant product-type by time-of-evaluation interaction ($F_{1,125} = 22.8, p \leq .01$), indicating that pairing of the endorser with the chewing tobacco resulted in a lower evaluation of the endorser. Considering just the chewing tobacco, there was a significant endorser-type by time-of-evaluation interaction ($F_{1,65} = 7.9, p \leq .01$), indicating that the negative effect of the association with chewing tobacco was greater for the volleyball endorser than for the fashion model endorser.

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