

MATCH-UP EFFECT OF BRAND PERSONALITY IN SPONSORSHIP: THE CASE OF THE 2010 WORLD CUP

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Abstract

Given the fact that today consumers perspectives toward the value of products has been changed from utilitarian notion to relationship between a consumer and brands, the importance of brand personality has been more highlighted in the marketing literature. The notion of brand personality was established in an attempt to understand a set of human characteristics that are associated with a brand. Research on brand personality has shown that consumers choose brands matching their own personality for symbolic use of brands. This provides important insights into matching effect of sport and its sponsor personality on sponsorship outcome.

According to matching theories, the personality congruence between sport and sponsors affects consumer's evaluation of the sponsoring brands. It suggests that individuals would show more favorable attitude toward the brand associated with a sporting event on either functional or image bases. Despite the growing interest in image-based communication through sponsorship and its marketing implications, there has been limited empirical evidence for how personality congruence between a sporting event and its sponsors works in the minds of consumers (Cornwell & Maignan, 1998). In addition, little efforts have been made to develop a psychometrically sound measurement scale when evaluating sponsorship effectiveness using image-based matching technique. For example, Aaker (1997) developed the brand personality scale (BPS) using the five-factor model. However, results of previous studies (e.g., Ross, 2007) were not consistent in regard with generalizability and robustness of the scale across different cultures and symbolic functions of brands. Furthermore, researchers in the sport literature (e.g., Ross, 2007) have suggested that the original BPS should be respecified to measure the personality of sport properties (e.g., sport events).

Accordingly, the purpose of this study is threefold: first to propose the refined BPS of Aaker (1997) particularly applicable to both commercial brands and sport properties; second, to investigate personality dimensions on which sport and brands are matched; and to examine how the perceived fit between brands and sport affects the personality of sponsoring brand(s).

For the purpose of this study, a set of five brands, including the World Cup and its sponsor brands, were selected based on brand availability in Korea. With the selected brand, we first employed a scale validation procedure adopted by Churchill (1979) to reexamine and refine the factor structure of the original brand personality scale of Aaker (1997). With the refined BPS, One Group Pre-Post test was conducted with a convenience sample of soccer fans from seven large cities in South Korea. The survey was administered at ten fitness clubs before and after the 2010 FIFA World Cup. 620 usable cases for a total response rate of 52.8% were obtained (51.6% male and 48.4% female). The age of respondents ranged from 18 to 65 years old.

As a result of the scale validation, the refined five-factor model with 15 items was developed. Confirmatory Factor Analysis for the refined BPS revealed a good fit to data. The construct validity and reliability of the structure of BPS in the current study was verified and supported (see Table 1). The result of multiple sets of Congenerity Tests indicated that the World Cup and its sponsor brands are psychometrically comparable with respect to all five dimensions of the refined BPS. The results of Multi-group invariance test clearly showed that only limited personality dimensions for the World cup are congruent with the corresponding dimensions of its sponsor personality (see Table 2). Last, to examine whether a sponsor's brand personality can be enhanced through sponsorship, Congenerity test was conducted by implementing a series of stepwise constraint modeling procedures of SEM. The result indicated the there are significant differences between pre- and post-personality of the sponsoring brands on congruent dimensions of sport and brands personality. This shows that congruence between personality dimensions of sport and its sponsors directly affect the brand personality dimensions of sponsors. In contrast, non-congruent dimensions of sport and brand personality were changed or not changed. The findings show that sponsorship activity reinforces brand images on the personality dimensions. The perceived fit between sport and brands is a necessary condition for brand personality reinforcement/creation through sponsorship. The findings of this study provide scholars and practitioners with several meaningful implications. From a theoretical standpoint, the study further expands understanding of congruence effects of sport and its sponsor personality on the development of brand identity. For marketers, this information can be utilized when developing marketing communication strategies through sponsorship.

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