

Effects of Athlete Endorsements on Purchase Intentions Toward Footwear Brands: A Comparative Analysis of U.S. and Korean High School Students

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Abstract

It is well known that celebrity endorsements are effective in a wide range of consumer products because such promotional activities strengthen the image of a given brand or company, especially among younger, more impressionable consumers such as students. The general logic behind celebrity endorsements is that people generally like to emulate those whom they hold in high regard. Therefore, footwear companies have often employed athlete endorsements to promote their footwear brands, and this has been the case in the U.S and Korea. However, the desire to emulate others is more consistent with a collectivistic culture than with an individualistic culture. As such, theory suggests that consumers in a collectivistic culture may be more prone to celebrity endorsements than those in an individualistic culture. One product line that has received substantial benefits from celebrity endorsements is footwear, particularly, athletic footwear. Top athletes from a diverse range of sports have endorsed footwear, generating huge revenues for manufacturers. Based on this fact, this paper examines the effects of athlete endorsements on purchase intentions toward athletic footwear by comparing U.S. and Korean consumers of athletic footwear since these two groups represent strongly individualistic and collectivistic cultures, respectively. According to the results, both U.S. and Korean high school students favorably perceived athletic footwear brands endorsed by athletes, but U.S. students were significantly more likely to have a favorable perception. Both U.S. and Korean high school students showed strong purchase intentions toward athletic footwear brands endorsed by athletes, but U.S. students were significantly more likely to have these intentions. The results have important implications for marketers of athletic footwear.