SPORT WEBSITE ADVERTISING: THE IMPACT OF CONGRUITY AND ENDORSEMENT ON BANNER ADVERTISING EFFECTIVENESS

by

Christopher Michael Brigham

An Abstract
of this thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in the Department of Kinesiology University of Central Missouri

April, 2011
ABSTRACT

by

Christopher Michael Brigham

Sport is a fixture of American culture. The fusion of sport, media, and advertising lends growing importance to managing the attitudes of consumers. Scholars have made a tremendous devotion to researching effective advertising strategies for online sport marketing. However, a limited number of studies have focused exclusively on sport celebrity endorsement and related congruity in online advertising. The current study applied MANCOVA testing to produce definitive results. Sport managers should be careful when selecting celebrities to endorse advertisements that are of varying levels of congruity. Where moderate to high congruity is present, celebrity endorsement enhances consumer attitudes. Conversely, low to incongruent ads are negatively impacted by sport celebrity endorsements.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

| LIST OF TABLES                      | viii |
| LIST OF FIGURES                    | ix  |
| **CHAPTER 1: NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY** | 1   |
| Introduction                       | 1   |
| Purpose of the Study               | 4   |
| Hypotheses                         | 5   |
| Definition of Terms                | 8   |
| **CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE** | 10  |
| Dynamics of Internet Advertising   | 10  |
| Attributes of Banner Ads           | 12  |
| Advertising Theory                 | 13  |
| Relationship between Website and Ad| 18  |
| Relationship between Ad and Celebrity| 19  |
| Involvement                        | 21  |
| **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**         | 23  |
| Overview                           | 23  |
| Measures                           | 24  |
| Advertising Environment            | 26  |
| Procedures                         | 28  |
| Analysis                           | 29  |
| **CHAPTER 4: RESULTS**             | 31  |
| Pilot Study                        | 31  |
LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Descriptive Statistics of Gender, Ethnicity, and Internet Shopping Experience</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Number of Items, Range, Mean, SD, and Reliability of Scaled Measures</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Descriptive Statistics for Aad, Abr and FI</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


## LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1. Estimated Marginal Means of Aad Total</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2. Estimated Marginal Means of Abr Total</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3. Estimated Marginal Means of FI Total</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1

NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Introduction

The Internet has been firmly integrated with the personal lives and jobs of billions of people around the world. According to Internet World Stats (2011), over 1.96 billion people, 28.8% of the World’s population, were using the Internet World wide in June 2010. That is an increase equivalent to over 13.1% of the current global population since internet usage hit the 1 billion mark in December 2005. Internetworldstats.com found worldwide internet usage to be 1.966 billion as of June, 2010. Society has seen the Internet change the way people consume every type of service and product; from entertainment and relating to others, to news, commerce, and advertising.

Internet users are exposed to hundreds of advertising messages every day. Just like traditional advertising, success of the ad is determined by the consumer’s perceived relevance of the message to their motivations (Schuman & Thorson, 2006). One needs to look no further than the user activity generated by Web sites such as pgatour.com and Yahoo! Sports/Golf. Between March and September, 2009, a Nielson Online Netview Custom Report recorded 85.6 million page views, and 39.6 million video plays from pgatour.com alone. In addition, Internet advertising revenues reached over $26 billion in 2010, a major increase from $8 billion in 2000 (The Internet Advertising Bureau, IAB – PriceWaterhouse Cooper-PWC, Advertising Revenue Report, 2011), and a yearly increase of 15% from 2009. In the case of one of the most popular sport Websites, espn.go.com generates daily advertising revenue of around $44,000 (Websiteoutlook, 2009). A research firm called ZenithOptimedia reported that online advertising
revenue in the United States is expected to reach $117 billion by 2016. These figures reflect that exactly what IAB President Randall Rothenberg stated to the house small business committee in 2008, “… growth that the interactive advertising has been experiencing for the past several years has been fueled by the recognition that consumers are spending more and more of their time with digital media.”

There are many types of online advertising methods. As computer processing and internet technology continues to advance, more interactive and media rich advertisements are showing up during browsing. There are more than nine major recognized forms of banner advertisements. Scrolling banners, expanding banners, interstitials, media-rich and drop-down menu bars are a few of the forms a banner can take. Marketers are also experimenting with new ad forms such as pushdown and fixed-panel styles. Banner ads are the oldest and simplest form of online advertising, but still accounted for 24% of total advertising revenue in 2010, according to the IAB PWC Advertising Revenue Report (2011). Static banner ads were chosen for this study because they allowed the participants to focus completely on the content and context of the ad, rather than eye catching color or graphics.

Despite growth in uses and revenues noted earlier, questions about Internet advertising on sport Web sites still remain: 1) Do sport enterprises effectively utilize the Internet as an advertising tool, 2) Could non-congruent advertisers benefit from the use of sports celebrity endorsements in banners ads; and, 3) How do sport consumers perceive banner ads on sport Web sites? The aforementioned questions provided a basis for the formation of this investigation’s hypotheses.
Over the last few decades, advertising scholars have devoted increased attention to successful advertising strategies which can increase the level of positive consumer attitudes toward the product, and patronage intentions. Some studies were based on consumer attitudes as measured through post-experiment surveys or questionnaires (Briggs & Hollis, 1997; Burns & Lutz (2006); Qin, Rau & Salvendy, 2010; Sirgy, 1982). Some researchers have taken a physiological approach, judging that there is a knowledge gap in the measurement of advertising effects (Goodrich, 2007; Chung, 2007). Chung (2007) argued recording heart rate and skin conductance responses, as a way to measure consumer cognitive responses to different Web advertisement stimuli, gave his study advantages over self-report and behavioral measures. Chung’s study was also aimed toward distinguishing the difference between animated and non-animated banner ads. Although there are several adaptations of banner advertisements, the current study focused on the static banner and utilized post-experiment online surveys as a means to quickly record each participant’s answer without the chance of losing valuable data.

Among the various advertising strategies, the current study applied two of the most dominant approaches: ad-context congruity, and endorsement. According to congruity theory, consumers are likely to produce positive attitudes and emotions if ad-content congruity is consistent with their applications (Keller & Aaker, 1992). Conversely, incongruent advertisement may produce more negative appraisals toward both the advertiser and/or the Web site (Harvey, 2001). Previous studies have produced inconsistent findings related to the effectiveness of congruity strategy (Newman, 2001; Newman, Stem & Sprott, 2003; Jeong, 2003; Moore, Stammerjohan, & Coulter, 2005). For example, Moore et al., (2005) argued that consumers have a tendency to pay more attention to information processing, and consequently
exhibit higher recall and recognition if they are exposed to incongruent information, while Newman (2001) concluded incongruence in web advertisements can provide damaging results, worse than not having banner advertisements on the website at all.

One study has pointed out that endorsement by celebrity sports athletes has a positive influence on generation Y’s word-of-mouth and brand loyalty (Bush, Martin, & Bush, 2004). Further, some studies have suggested that a star athlete’s association with a brand may help to define and enhance the brand’s image while negative characteristics of an endorser could also have a deleterious effect (Horrow, 2002; Pitts & Stotlar, 2002). However, the effectiveness of endorsement in banner advertising has not been thoroughly gauged in the field of advertising. This study chose to use three sport celebrities selected by a panel of experts. Using Braunstein and Zhang’s (2005) Scale of Athletic Star Power (SASP) the experts chose three endorsers based on their image, popularity, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. Steve Nash (Basketball), Landon Donovan (Soccer), and Shaun White (Snowboarding) were chosen. These athletes are well known for having above average talent, an attractive image, and attracting fans to their respective teams and sports.

**Purpose of the Study**

This study examined the effectiveness of banner advertising when Website content congruity strategy is applied in three levels from high to incongruent on a sport Website. This study also sought to investigate the impact of endorsement in banner advertisement. Previous studies have been conducted on each topic separately, but this is one of the first attempts to measure effectiveness of those various levels of congruency and endorsement when used in
banner advertising at the same time. In addition, that makes this the first attempt to study an interaction between the two variables.

While searching the available databases it was apparent that very little research has been done specifically in the realm of sport Website advertising. One intriguing aspect of sport Websites is that they can be a “one stop shop” for consumers interested in e-commerce, information seeking, and entertainment. With Web technology, sport marketers can track how many people are clicking on a specific page, how many viewed a post-game press conference video or downloaded an audio-clip, and even if someone has opened or disregarded an e-mail. In the advertising and sport relationship, providing access to the consumer is critical. It is the revenue driver for modern sport. The current study provides useful information to a seldom researched segment of online advertising.

**Hypotheses**

As discussed earlier, it is accepted that banner advertisements work in the online advertising format. But what can advertisers do to make them more effective? Sport marketers have a serious advantage over other online marketers because of the natural connection between sport fans’ information seeking habits and the goal-oriented satisfaction offered by the Internet. The current study analyzed and measured effectiveness of sport celebrity endorsement, and congruity between the brand and the Website, on the consumer’s attitudes toward the advertised brand and the Website itself.

The purpose of studying these hypotheses is three-fold. First, it has added to the existing literature concerning congruity theory in banner advertisements (Newman, 2004; Moore, Stammerjohan, & Coulter, 2005; Yongick & King, 2010). Secondly, the growing market and
shrinking job market should provoke sport marketers’ interest in new research that will aide in successful use of advertising dollars. And finally, the effect of mixing congruity and endorsement in banner advertisement is a relatively untouched research topic.

By presenting empirical evidence provided by thorough analysis of the data, this study attempted to address important questions concerning the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement based on congruity theory such as “Can a highly congruent ad become more effective through celebrity endorsement?” and “Do sport celebrity endorsements make even the most incongruent banner advertisement more effective?” Thus, the following hypotheses were proposed.

\[H_{1a}:\] Individuals who are exposed to banner advertisement with a sport celebrity endorsement will report more positive attitudes toward the ad, compared with individuals who are exposed to banner advertisement without a sport celebrity.

\[H_{1b}:\] Individuals who are exposed to banner advertisement with a sport celebrity endorsement will report more positive attitudes toward brand, compared with individuals who are exposed to banner advertisement without a sport celebrity.

\[H_{1c}:\] Individuals who are exposed to banner advertisement with a sport celebrity endorsement will report more favorable future intentions, compared with individuals who are exposed to banner advertisement without a sport celebrity.

\[H_{2a}:\] Individuals who are exposed to higher congruity banner advertisement will report more positive attitudes toward the ad, compared with individuals who are exposed to lower congruity banner advertisement.
H2b: Individuals who are exposed to higher congruity banner advertisement will report more positive attitudes toward brand, compared with individuals who are exposed to lower congruity banner advertisement.

H2c: Individuals who are exposed to higher congruity banner advertisement will report more favorable future intentions, compared with individuals who are exposed to lower congruity banner advertisement.

H3a: An interaction between endorsement and level of congruity will be present such that under conditions of high congruity between Website and banner ad, participants will exhibit more positive attitude toward the ad with endorsement rather than ad without endorsement and under conditions of low congruity between Website and banner ad, ad with and without endorsement will lead to similar levels of attitude toward the ad.

H3b: An interaction between endorsement and level of congruity will be present such that under conditions of high congruity between Website and banner ad, participants will exhibit more positive attitude toward the brand with endorsement rather than ad without endorsement and under conditions of low congruity between Website and banner ad, ad with and without endorsement will lead to similar levels of attitude toward the brand.

H3c: An interaction between endorsement and level of congruity will be present such that under conditions of high congruity between Website and banner ad, participants will exhibit more positive future intentions to use ad with endorsement rather than ad without endorsement and under conditions of low congruity between Website and banner ad, ad with and without endorsement will lead to similar levels of future intentions.
**Definition of Terms**

Throughout the text several terms are defined. However, in an effort to make the study easy to comprehend for scholars of all disciplines, a number of commonly used terms are defined below:

**Athlete**
A person who is trained or skilled in exercises, sports, or games requiring physical strength, agility, or stamina.

**Cognition**
A person who is trained or skilled in exercises, sports, or games requiring physical strength, agility, or stamina. Occurs when one uses one’s mental processes to attach meaning or make sense of the stimulus.

**Congruent**
Marked or enhanced by harmonious agreement among constituent elements (Congruity).

**Context**
That which surrounds, and gives meaning to, something else.
(Computing dictionary)

**Click through rate**
A method of measuring the success of an online advertising campaign. Obtained by dividing the number of users who clicked on an ad by the number of times the ad was delivered.

**Endorsement**
A written or spoken testimonial in advertising to approve or openly express support or approval for a product publicly. Used to sell or enhance the image of the product.
<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Generation Y</strong></th>
<th>The cohort following Generation X, also known as the Millennial Generation. Characteristics generally include familiarity with communications, media, and digital technologies.</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Halo Effect</strong></td>
<td>A cognitive bias. Using an individual’s judgment of one quality to influence the assessment of other qualities (Asch, 1946).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Incongruent</strong></td>
<td>Containing disparate or discordant elements or parts; not congruent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interactivity</strong></td>
<td>A multifaceted concept that includes two-way communication, a high level of user engagement and/or control over messages, and timeliness of communication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recall</strong></td>
<td>To bring one's own thoughts and attention back to matters previously considered.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this investigation was to measure the effectiveness of congruity and endorsement in banner advertising. This section offers helpful information concerning six areas that have a significant impact on the understanding of the effects online banner advertisements can have. The dynamics of advertising explains the basic benefits for sport marketers who use banner advertising. Attributes of banner ads are discussed. They are followed by relevant advertising theory. Next, key relationships are explored, first, the relationship between the Website and the ad, then the relationship between the ad and the celebrity. Finally, the involvement factor is explained.

Dynamics of Internet Advertising

According to Li and Bukovac (1999) there are two types of Internet users; Web-surfers and information-seekers. Web surfing is an activity that allows users to be highly involved. In essence, the experience is directed by the individual. Simplistic segmentation strategies will fail to be as successful as strategies that account for target-consumer motivations because there are so many variables online (Schuman & Thorson, 2006). The majority of individuals log on to read or send e-mail, gain information, be entertained, or engage in e-commerce (Rainie & Horrigan, 2005). In order to direct consumers toward online purchases, advertisers do their best to generate positive brand awareness and move consumers through the stages of purchase behavior. A number of studies have been conducted with the goal of discovering the best way to present online advertising to consumers in order to motivate them (Carton, 2002; Cho, 2003; Goodrich, 2007; Kai, Wang, & Cheng-Kiang, 2009; Moore, et al. 2005). The IAB (1999-2005) recognizes
at least nine major types of online advertising; banner ads, sponsorship, E-mail, classifieds, rich media, key-word search, referrals, slotting fees, and interstitial. Consumers have an opportunity to click on any of these types of ads to be taken to the brand’s Web site. Consumer attitudes about these types of ads stem from previous experiences with them (Burns & Lutz, 2006). In addition, technological advances have made it easier for advertisers to present advertising through interactive pull-down menus and rich media interaction. Just like the traditional advertising mediums, marketers will continue to compete for consumer attention using the most unique and creative delivery method available. However, compared to traditional methods, internet advertising has its distinctions.

The Web offers a much more conducive environment for advertising than even television. The Internet was generally thought to be less effective than traditional advertising, but Internet ads have been shown to successfully raise brand awareness, consumer loyalty, consumer preferences, and purchase intentions (ARF, IAB, & MSN Study, 2002; Briggs & Hollis, 1997; Cleland & Carmichael, 1997; Li & Bukovac, 1999; Rich, 1997). This is most likely because the internet is supported by advanced technology which can distribute ads to numerous relevant sites (Schumann & Thorson, 2006). Unlike channels on a television, there is no network programming scheme to follow, anything can have its own Website and generate traffic of a very specific nature (Mathison, 2000). Consequently, Websites are more prone to entice both enthusiasts (people who are interested in complex themes), and the advertisers who want to reach their targets, into the same place (Jeong, 2003). Burns (2000, p. 2) wrote “this medium offers an opportunity for a personal and highly individualized relationships between the advertiser and the consumer.” People can view what they want for as long as they want without interruption. Add
to that the ever-growing importance of e-commerce to the national and global economies and it is clear advertisers and scholars will continue to develop and update the understanding of consumer attitudes towards internet advertising.

**Attributes of Banner Ads**

Banners are almost as old as the Web itself, and were the original method of online advertising. In the online format, banner advertisements are the equivalent of a traditional newspaper or magazine ad. They tend to consist of two major elements; informative or persuading text, and/or a graphic. Banner advertisements offer a three-fold advantage over other types of internet advertising. First, they are simplistic and can be used on any type of Web site without complications. Secondly, they are the least intrusive online advertising tool. Another benefit is that banner ads can easily integrate rich media and video capabilities meant to evoke consumer emotion. And finally, they are not invasive and can easily be ignored by the consumer because they do not command attention at a specific time (Chung, 2007). However, this has long been a criticism of the banner ad because most Web surfers are on a goal-oriented mission (i.e. information seeking), and hence, unaware of the advertiser’s message (Chung, 2007). That is why some studies have found that incongruence, or lack of context fit between the Web site and ad, can be effective at grabbing consumer attention (Putrevu & Lord, 2003; Rodgers, 2003, 2004; Sundar & Kalyanaraman, 2004)

Conclusive results from a study of online advertising formats called The Function of Format (Burns & Lutz, 2006) found a significant positive relationship between the attitudes toward on-line ad formats. Their results supported previous research indicating format of the ad is important to formation of positive attitudes toward the ad (Rodgers & Thorson, 2000). Chung
(2007) pointed out that despite the many criticisms of banner ads, they have become increasingly popular. In fact, the IAB’s 2009 Internet Advertising Revenue Report also indicated that display banner ads earned $5.1 billion, or 22%, of the 2009 total yearly advertising revenue.

Briggs and Hollis (1997) indicated that banner ads, “remind people of a brands existence, stimulate latent or dormant brand associations, and can cause people to change their attitudes toward the brand, thus increasing their likelihood to purchase.” Therefore, it is important for sport, or any kind of business advertiser, to evoke the desired attitude from consumers viewing a banner. As discussed earlier, there are numerous theoretical approaches for marketing managers to choose from. The next section will touch on some theories impacting this investigation.

**Advertising Theory**

The current study sought to understand the consumer’s cognitive response to viewing Internet advertisements containing congruent, incongruent, and celebrity endorsed banner ads. In order to understand where this study fits into the scheme of previous research, we must look at theories currently used in the advertising industry. Schumann and Thompson (2007) examined more than 65 studies and extracted over 25 theories. A majority of them are derived from research on influencers of the effectiveness of internet advertising. Since the current study falls into this category, it is fitting that some of the most influential theories, with bearings on this study be explained. There are four areas of focus within the research on influencers of Internet ad effectiveness. They are ad characteristics, consumer characteristics, and interactivity and personality (where congruity theory is based).
Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)

ELM theory argues that in an advertising environment, when individuals are highly involved with the product or service being promoted, they will be more likely to process the message arguments for the use of the product or service. On the other hand, when individuals are not involved, they will not likely process message arguments, but may still be persuaded by associating the product or service with peripheral cues in the advertising environment. Petty and Cacioppo (1981, 1986) were credited with the introduction of this theory and highlighted the two routes of approach. First, central route processing is the term used when an individual is motivated (by involvement) and able to elaborate on (cognitively process) message arguments. The peripheral route basically says that even if the individual has no involvement or motivation for information on the Web site, they may still be persuaded by cues in the communication environment. Yoon (2000) studied this effect when looking at celebrity endorsements, much like the current study, and makes the point that the use of attractive and credible endorsers should be more persuasive than the informational content of the ad when consumers follow the peripheral route. In the current study, ELM may have an impact on the associations made between endorsed or non-endorsed banner processing. When consumers are given a time constraint on the viewing of a Webpage they will be more likely to centrally process information because the motivation to deliver a complete opinion of the page will be stronger.

Schema Theory

This theory is based on the concept of ‘flow’, where it is referred to as the process of optimal experience. Schema theory states that what we expect to encounter in the world influences how we process and understand newly met events. Exploring this concept helped
Hoffman and Novak (1996) argue that flow is an outcome of interactivity and influences how people surf the Web. An increase in flow is considered to improve the users’ memory for Web content. Therefore, when a person navigates to a golf club virtual storefront from the PGA.com homepage, they will likely form positive associations and attitudes about the click-through and be more likely to purchase.

On the other hand, some studies have flipped the Schema theory on its back (Garcia-Marques & Hamilton, 1996; Goodstein, 1993; Jeong, 2003; Lee, 2000; Lee & Mason, 1999; Lee & Shen, 2009; Yi, 1990). Instead of using an advertisement that flows with the context of the Website to initiate positive attitudes, ads atypical to the schema are thought to require more extensive processing (Jeong, 2003). This is referred to as the Schema Incongruent Effect. In theory, this explains how a new stimulus is processed when a new stimulus is different from prior organized expectation-induced by current stimuli (Jeong, 2003). Thus, this theory helps us to understand context effects occurring in a particular situation where the ad is unexpected. For instance, if a soccer fan is browsing the FIFA Web site an ad for computers will be unexpected. According to Yi (1990) there are expectations among consumers. When people read the business section of the newspaper they expect to see business-related features, including articles and goods advertised, based on their previous personal experiences of reading the newspaper. Lee and Shen (2009) conducted their study with previous supporting evidence in favor of incongruent information. Garcia-Marques and Hamilton (1996) suggested that incongruent information tends to be better remembered and evaluated because it is elaborated to a greater extent than congruent information.
Perceived Interactivity

Perceived interactivity is a commonly studied phenomenon within the advertising industry (Cho & Leckenby, 1999; McMillan, 2000; McMillan & Hwang, 2002). McMillan (2000) found that a strong positive relationship exists between perceived interactivity and attitude toward the Web site. Further, McMillan and Hwang (2002) developed a three scale measure to record perceived interactivity. First, there must be a two-way direction of communication, user control, and time. Users are more likely to have a higher perceived interactivity if it causes a need for higher cognition levels. Examples of advertisements with high levels of perceived interactivity would include pull-down menus and interstitial ads. Although the current study does not use those types of banners in the experiment, there is a basic level of perceived interactivity derived from the involvement, attitude toward the ad, attitude toward the Web site, need for cognition, and consumer involvement. For example, subjects were instructed to give their opinion on the contents of the page. The instructions and the resulting survey answers established a two-way direction of communication. Each participant who read the instructions should have experienced a feeling of interactivity which led to higher cognition and more valid results. To lend further importance to the current study, involvement and perception of message-relatedness between the banner and target ads, are two of three antecedent variables thought to predict the level of interactivity (Cho & Leckenby, 1999).

Congruence Theory

Congruence or congruity theory is the major governing theory for this study. The idea of congruence theory as a predictor of consumer purchasing motivation has been studied since the early 1980’s. Sirgy (1982) developed a theoretical congruence model using self-esteem
indicators to more accurately predict purchasing intentions based on consumer self-concept. Burns (2000) took a similarly psychological approach and applied it to Web sites. She found that since any brand can be personified into something exhibiting human characteristics, Sirgy’s congruency model could also work with the relationship between the consumer self-image and the product image. Congruity theory holds that the level of congruence between the consumer’s self image and their projection of the image of the brand will influence their intention to choose the brand or their attitudes towards it. Congruence can also be described as the “fit” between two contexts. In the case of the current study, congruence existing between the FIFA.com Website and banner advertisements of three fictional online retailers was tested. Sirgy’s (1992) research supported the congruence theory as it has now transferred into the digitally primed 21st century.

Aaker and Brown (1972) found there to be a significant effect of style congruency on print advertising effectiveness. As anyone could expect, people respond better to consistency in marketing and advertising stimuli (Newman, Stem & Sprott, 2004). An example would be that when looking at the sports section of the local newspaper one would not expect to find advertisements for garden tools. On the other hand, you would not be surprised to see an ad for a sporting goods store. As with print, congruency is also effective on the Web.

In a study directed at banner advertisement and Web site congruity effects on consumer Web site perceptions, results showed that brand managers need to consider the nature of the banner ad and the Web knowledge of the target market when making decisions about the placement of banner ads on the Web site (Newman, Stem & Sprott, 2004). Not many studies have applied congruity theory to analyze the effectiveness of banner advertisements like this. In the Newman (2004) study, congruity between an airline Web site and the product category
characteristics of high, medium and low congruity advertisements were used to test the effectiveness of the banner ads. Results found that adding a highly congruent banner ad was better than having no banner advertisement at all, as attitudes towards the Web site are harmed without a banner. But, no significant difference between the attitudes toward high congruity banner ads and the no banner ad conditions was found.

Jeong (2003) also conducted research on the effects of Web site context relevance on banner advertisement effectiveness. Although not using congruity theory specifically, this study proposed that ads are more effective when a context and an embedded ad have the same involvement structure, essentially the same concept as the congruity theory used in Newman et al. (2004). The researcher showed subjects a computer Web site with both a computer store banner and a student loan banner. Results indicated that Internet advertisements are evaluated more favorably and lead to greater purchase intention toward advertised products when embedded in contextually relevant Web sites (Jeong, 2003).

**Relationship between Website and Ad**

Newman (2001) confirmed that Web advertisements should be consistent with the Web site. His research provided reliable information to brand managers who wanted insight on consumer perceptions of the congruity between the Web site and the advertised brand. Following in the path of Briggs and Hollis (1997) Newman et al., (2004) focused on the attitudinal effects of adding a banner ad to a Web site. Those findings indicated that the ad should be congruent with the content of the site, if not; the attitudes toward the Web site will be harmed. This is not a difficult concept to grasp. NBA basketball marketing managers would not want to damage the overall image of their Web site by allowing an advertisement for crop fertilizer on it. However,
Newman’s research was not guided by congruity theory. Newman et al., (2004) also noted that there were no significant attitudinal benefits from adding high congruity banner advertisements. Still, others have discovered that when consumers perceive the fit of two brands to be highly congruent, information relevant to those brands will become easier to process (Lee & Shen, 2009; Moore, Stammerjohan & Coulter (2005).

Reports of high congruence between banner ads and Website have indicated important positive influences for consumer attitudes, other research points out it may not be so significant. Jeong (2003) considered the effectiveness of banner advertisements based on the contextual relationship between the ad and the Web site. Applying schema incongruent theory, Jeong (2003) placed two banners, one for a computer store, and another for student loans, on Web sites created to deliver information and e-commerce for both of those products. Jeong (2003) based his hypothesis that a contextually irrelevant banner would be recalled easier than the contextually similar banner, on the same research which developed the schema incongruent theory. To the contrary, Jeong (2003) found neither the Web site congruent banner nor the incongruent banner provided better recall for the participants. These results contradict the common belief that congruent advertisements should be more effective than incongruent advertisements (Jeong, 2003).

Relationship between Ad and Celebrity

Using celebrity endorsement has had a highly successful record with encouraging consumers to purchase. In sport related media, the use of the athlete as an endorser is more widespread than in non-sport-related media (Jones & Schumann, 2000). There was an infamous T.V. commercial in the 1990’s where NBA star Charles Barkley uttered the infamous phrase, “I am
not a role model.” His intentions were good, but the reality is that “sports and sports celebrities have become a major spectacle of today’s media culture,” (Bush, Martin, & Bush, 2004, p. 108).

Athletes were not generally used in advertising until the mid-1960’s. In the 1970’s, Miller Lite used 16 retired athletes in a campaign to endorse its alcoholic beverages. It was said that the use of those athletes helped increase the company’s annual sales by 43 percent (Ludtke, 1977). In today’s market, use of celebrities has been found to impact the attitude toward an advertisement (Tripp & Jensen, 1994), as well as increase the likelihood of choosing a product or brand (Kahle & Homer, 1985; Kamins, Brand, Hoeke, & Moe, 1989).

Braunstein and Zang (2006) attempted to explain the effect of congruency between the product and the endorser on consumer purchase intentions. Their study sought to develop a model to examine the various dimensions that an athlete endorser brings to the product such as the identification between the sport and the athlete, and the perceptions of consumers about the athletes, their relevance to the product, and how that affects consumer purchase intentions. Further, benefits from aligning the sport celebrity with the brand are dependent the consumer cognitively establishing a link between the two, this link may not develop if the advertisement goes unnoticed or the relationship does not make sense (Pitts & Stotlar, 2002).

Although previous research by Braunstein and Zhang (2005) determined that sport identification and athlete identification by the consumer were key influencers of perception of the ad, their model found a very low variance by those two factors to explain the match-up of the model. They theorize that one of the reasons could have been due to lack of cognition for the endorser-product congruency by the participants being included into the model.
Identification between the consumer and the celebrity stands to be much more important than identification with the sport. While a person might like to watch American football on T.V., if their favorite athlete is a baseball player then an ad with the baseball player would likely develop better recall than an ad with an unknown football celebrity. Identification between a consumer and an athlete comes down to the way a person feels their self-image matches up with the image of the athlete. Using the self-reference theory, Marshall (2008) posits when an image portrays a model that is congruent with the observers ideal self-image, a significant probability exists that there is a positive attitude change and even formation of positive purchasing decisions. Following that line of empirical evidences, the current study will attempt to prove that those feelings of identification with the celebrity endorsing the product will lead participants to produce more favorable attitudes towards those ads than to ads of the same product without celebrity endorsement.

**Involvement**

One of the most important factors to obtaining meaningful data concerning online advertising is the moderating effect of involvement. The current study accounts for a participant bias towards soccer by using soccer involvement as the control variable. This will also help explain the relationship of interests between the consumer and the Web site as a limitation of the study. Pelsmacker (2002) noted that involvement level influences motivation to process information centrally. Those who have low involvement with soccer will perceive the importance and risk as less important and therefore devote less attention to advertising content. With an effort to elicit responses that are not biased, we can increase the internal validity of the study.
The current study hypothesizes that individuals who are exposed to highly congruent banner advertisements will be more likely to report positive attitudes toward them. If we are to correctly interpret the data given by participants it is important to control their level of involvement with the context sport of soccer. Previous research has given weight to moderating variables such as the amount of time the consumer uses the internet, online shopping enjoyment, and consumer knowledge of the internet (Newman et al., 2004). Those factors will be documented in the post-test demographic and psychographic survey for use in analysis. However, it will not be as important to the internal validity of the study as the factor of involvement.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of researching this topic is to measure consumer attitudes toward different manipulated banner advertisements. Chapter three elaborates on the procedures, design, and analysis used in this study. The research experiment was designed to investigate the effectiveness of adding endorsement to various congruencies of banner advertisements found on the Website of a governing body of sport. The methods contained within this section allowed the researchers to determine what influences endorsement has on a subject’s cognitive responses to different banner advertisement contexts through a quasi-experimental design intended to maximize operationalization of variables in the study. Following guidelines established in previous endorsement and banner advertising research experiments, the current study carefully controlled many of the limiting factors which allowed for more reliable results.

Overview

The current study followed a 2 × 3 between-subjects quasi-experimental design. Sport celebrity (presence of sport celebrity in banner ad vs. absence of sport celebrity in banner ad) and level of congruity between Website and banner ad (high congruity – soccer, medium congruity - snowboard, and low congruity – computer) were the main independent variables. Data was collected in two stages. An initial pilot study (n = 40) established reliability and validity of the scaled measures guiding this test. The second phase of data collection, the main study, took place over a 5 day period. Random assignment of treatment conditions (i.e. exposure to one of six banner ad manipulations) was followed by a series of short surveys designed to measure
dependent variables on subjects’ cognitive ad responses (i.e. attitude toward ad, attitude toward
brand, and future intention).

Measures

For the purposes of the current study, there were no demographic restrictions. Following
the test, meaningful participant data was collected from all ages, genders, education backgrounds,
and races. In an effort to divide subjects into more useful categories, two psychographic
measures of internet knowledge were also recorded. First, level of e-commerce experience (never
bought online, novice, experienced, highly proficient) will reveal the attitudes of those who are
more familiar with online purchasing and what effect banner advertisements had on them. The
second psychographic trait measured the degree of internet use measured in hours spent online
per day and average length of time spent online.

Attitude towards the Ad (Aad)

Participants’ Aad (see Appendix 1) was measured by a 6-item semantic differential scale
developed by Wells, Leavitt and McConville’s (1971) called the Reaction Profile (RP).
Following the main experiment, participants indicated their overall attitude toward the
manipulated Web page through identifying with the following semantic pairs: unattractive /
attractive, depressing / refreshing, unappealing / appealing, unpleasant / pleasant, dull / dynamic,
and not enjoyable / enjoyable.

Attitude towards the Brand (Abr)

Abr is defined as a predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable
manner to a particular brand (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). As it applies to this study, Abr referred
to general feelings toward the brand advertised on the banner, and were recorded as three general
semantic differential items (bad-good, unfavorable-favorable, negative-positive) on a 7-point likert scale (see Appendix 2).

**Future Intention (FI)**

This final questionnaire was designed to measure the participants’ future intentions to visit the mock Websites via the response to the statement, “I would consider visiting/using a Web site like soccershop.com.” This statement was followed with a 3-item, 7-point semantic differential scale (unlikely / likely, improbable / probable, and impossible / possible) (see Appendix 3). Previous studies have used this scale successfully (MacKenzie et al., 1986; Machleit & Wilson, 1988).

**Control Variables**

A person’s involvement with the focal subject of the Website was an extremely important part of the study. In Conway and Rubin (1991), the level of importance one attaches to a product was found to be a significant predictor of their decision making process. That is, soccer fans are more likely to favor soccer images, advertisements, promotions, or celebrities. Further, one’s involvement with a product or service influences information-processing motivation and activates the subject’s product-related elaborations (Celsi & Olson, 1988; Park, Lee, & Han, 2007). It has also been suggested that personal involvement with a specific sport might influence one’s evaluation of ads that use sport images (McDaniel, Lim, and Mahan, 2007). Therefore, Zaichowsky’s (1994) 10-item Personal Involvement Inventory (PII) was employed to gauge respondents’ overall interests in preference for soccer using 5-point Likert scales (see Appendix 4). Zaichowsky’s (1994) measure was used in other studies where advertising in sports media was measured to find a true level of personal interest for the participants. The involvement
construct can be developed as a motivational state which is found on a range from low to high. One’s affective and cognitive dimensions dealing with the personal relevance of a media stimulus has been gauged using such a scale (Park & Mittal, 1985; Zaichkowsky, 1994). Previous studies of advertising in sport media have used the involvement construct developed by Zaichkowsky (1994) to measure the level of interest a person has for a specific sport, therefore it is appropriate for this study.

**Advertising Environment**

The official Web site of the Federation International Football Association (FIFA.com) was chosen to represent the online sport advertising medium. The site is used for informational and entertainment purposes, fans can also give feedback, and interact with a global online community. The FIFA.com Website context is much more generalized than say, soccer Websites devoted to a single team or a certain brand of equipment manufacturer. It appeals to a larger audience. Although it is not as popular in this part of the country, soccer was chosen because it is one of the most popular sports in the world, and is growing in popularity in the United States. A study by the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association called, *Sports Participation in America* (2009), found that soccer had the highest percentage of growth among the top-three most participated in sports in the nation. It estimates that a total of 14 million athletes participated in high school and college soccer across the U.S. in 2008-2009, an estimated growth of 3.8% over the previous year (2009 SGMA Sports and Fitness Participation Topline Report).

The manipulations of banner advertisements were also selected for their generalizability. One important factor of internal validity was accomplished by creating fictional advertisement brands in order to avoid the effects of pre-existing knowledge. The high congruity ad (i.e.,
Soccershop.com) was discovered to be an existing Web page after the experiment, so it is not a fictional online marketplace, but still a highly generalized name. Subjects formed attitudes about the site’s offerings based on the fit of the name to the host site. The medium (i.e., Snowboardshop.com) and incongruent offerings (i.e., Computershop.com) are fictional and hold the same intentions for providing generalized and unbiased cognitive processing for subjects. Although the FIFA site and the ads hold varying degrees of congruence, these themes are still highly relevant to our subjects. A dummy advertisement (i.e., Islandtraveler.com) was also placed under the manipulated ad in an effort to disguise the intent of the study. The dummy ad was placed directly underneath the test ad so that the placement of the banners did not have an adverse effect on consumer recognition.

**Banner context**

Banner ads were created by one of the researchers with working access to and working knowledge of Adobe PhotoShop CS5, to enhance realism. Every effort was made to avoid pre-conceived preferences based on the attributes of the ad. All six banners were the same size (300 × 100) and background color to avoid color effect. Also, text font-size and highlighting effects were uniform throughout all six manipulations (Moore, Stamerjohan, & Coulter, 2005). Subjects would not have been able to distinguish any differences from the banners other than the presence or absence of a celebrity endorser and the name of the brand, even if they had been presented with all six manipulations.

**Celebrity endorsement**

Selection of recognizable celebrities was critical to the success of this study. Those celebrities with relatively the same social reputation (Image) combined with a winning reputation
(Expertise) in their respective sport were used, based on the ideal match-up model (Expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness/image) generated by Braunstien, Zhang, and Trial (2006). All three of the selections currently hold legitimate endorsement contracts. Landon Donovan, Shawn White, and Steve Nash were selected as the endorsers to be placed in advertisements for soccer, snowboard, and computer stores, respectively.

**Procedures**

**Pilot Study**

The subjects (n = 40) were collected from physical activity classes because those classes facilitate the recruitment of subjects from a variety of academic backgrounds and majors. The purpose of the pilot study was not only to gauge reliability and validity of the scaled measures used in this study but to validate various manipulations of endorsements in banner advertisements. After being exposed to the manipulated website for 30 seconds, subjects were asked to answer three surveys recording dependent variables (i.e., Aad, Abr, and FI) and one measuring the control variable (i.e., PII). In addition, they were asked to rate three sport celebrities (i.e., Landon Donovan, Shawn White, and Steve Nash) in terms of expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness/image, following Braunstien’s (2006) study. The subjects in the pilot study were excluded from the main study.

**Main Study**

Data were collected from a convenience sample of 151 graduate and undergraduate students, faculty, coaches and other UCM employees. Using the UCM GroupWise E-mail system, users (mostly employees) were solicited via e-mail. Within the e-mail, the subjects’
instructions were to click a link that takes them to a Web based survey program called ‘Qualtrics,’ where the test was self-administered.

Each subject was shown one of the manipulated FIFA.com Web pages. They were instructed to browse the page as they would normally do, without the ability to navigate back or forward to other pages. The test page was just an image, there were no flashing or scrolling movements to distract the attention of the subject, and they could not navigate further into the site. They each viewed the Web page for a total of 30 seconds, and then the program automatically transferred them to the first questionnaire. In order to collect a representative sample, each ‘cell’ should be viewed a total of 25 times. Following the test, an $n$ of 150 unique sets of data (6 banners viewed 25 times per banner exposure) was confirmed for analysis. In addition, to their exposure to one of the six conditions, all subjects were exposed to one dummy ad (a fictitious travel ad) in an effort to disguise the intent of the study.

Following the test, a set of four post-test questionnaires were filled out in a pre-determined order (Aad, Abr, FI, and PII).

**Analysis**

Internal consistency coefficients for Aad, Abr, FI, and PII were employed to examine their construct reliability. Further, a series of one way ANOVAs were utilized to investigate the internal validity of manipulations. In order to test hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 in the current study, 3 × 2 multivariate analyses of covariance (MANCOVA) tests helped to examine the main effects of the independent variables and interaction effects on cognitive responses to the ads. McDaniel et al. (2007) noted personal involvement with a specific sport could influence a subject’s evaluation
of an advertisement. Therefore, personal involvement with soccer was used as the covariate variable.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

Pilot Study

The purpose of the pilot study was to examine the validity and reliability of scaled measures as well as to validate the manipulations for sport celebrity endorsement. The pilot data (n = 40) indicated that all of the scaled measures exceeded acceptable levels of internal consistency. Aad reached an alpha of .96, while alpha coefficients for Abr, Fl, are .97 and .94, respectively. Also, the reliability for personal involvement inventory with soccer reached .95. In order to gauge predisposition to three sport celebrities used in this study (i.e., Steve Nash, Shawn White, and Landon Donovan), participants were told to rate each celebrity based on their image, likability, trustworthiness, and attractiveness using seven-point semantic differential scales. Results of a one-way ANOVA also showed that there were no significant differences among the three endorsers in terms of image \(F(2, 28) = 2.45, p > .05\), likability \(F(2, 28) = 3.13, p > .05\), trustworthiness \(F(2, 28) = 2.98, p > .05\), and attractiveness \(F(2, 28) = 1.38, p > .05\) among responses to their images, indicating that predispositions of three sport stars would not have an impact on dependent variables used in the current study (i.e., Aad, Abr, and Fl).

Main Study Sample Description

The sample consisted of 151 usable responses. Participants age ranged from 18 to 71 years, \(M = 45.21, SD = 8.36\). 68.2\% (n = 103) were females and 29.8\% (n = 46) were male, with 2\% (n = 3) not reporting their gender. The majority of participants were Caucasian (n = 134, 88.7\%), followed by African American (n = 3, 2\%), Latino (n = 3, 2\%), and Asian (n = 3, 2\%). Participants reported that the average hours per week they use the internet is 23.16 hours (SD =
All participants have shopped for products or services using the Internet and a sizeable percentage, 36.4% (n = 55), reported having shopped using the Internet at least more than once a month (See table 2).

Table 1.

*Descriptive Statistics of Gender, Ethnicity, and Internet Shopping Experience*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>29.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>68.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>88.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internet Shopping Experience</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a year</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once every six months</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once every three months</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a month</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>26.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than once a month</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>36.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows a number of scaled measures, range, mean, standard deviation, and reliability. These scaled measures include Aad, Abr, FI, and PII with soccer. Reliability tests of all the scaled measures resulted in satisfactory levels consistent with previous studies (Stafford &
Day, 1995). For example, Aad, Abr, FI and PII reached an alpha of .96, .97, .93, and .95 respectively. Further, no increase in Cronbach’s alpha resulted from the deletion of any of the scale items.

Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>No. of items</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aad</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6 – 42</td>
<td>25.76</td>
<td>7.82</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abr</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3 – 21</td>
<td>12.50</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FI</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3 – 21</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.97</td>
<td>.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PII</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10 - 70</td>
<td>39.78</td>
<td>14.10</td>
<td>.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Hypotheses Testing**

In order to test all hypotheses, 2 X 3 multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was performed on the data. The independent variables included in the analysis were celebrity endorsement and level of congruity between website and banner ad. The dependent variables were Aad, Abr, and FI. Levene’s test showed an $F$-value of 1.82, $p = .08$, indicating that the assumptions for equivalent variance are met. The Box’s $M$ test for covariance equality was also met, $M = 36.63, p = .192$. Descriptive statistics for the analysis can be found in table 3. The results with attitude toward the ad as a dependent variable indicated a main effect of sport celebrity endorsement on attitude toward the ad, such that participants who viewed the ad with endorsement ($M = 26.98, SD = 8.41$) showed a more positive attitude toward the ad than did participants who viewed the ad without endorsement. [$M = 24.13, SD = 6.92, F(1, 148) = 4.53, p < .05$]. Because there was a significant affect of endorsement on Aad hypothesis 1a was
supported. Hypotheses 1b and 1c proposed that participants who are exposed to banner ad with endorsement would respond with more positive attitudes toward brand and future intentions than would participants who viewed the ad without endorsement. However, the main effects of both were not statistically significant in .05 level. Thus, hypotheses 1b and 1c were not supported.

Hypothesis 2a proposed that participants who were exposed to ads higher in congruity would show more positive attitude toward the ad scores when compared to participants exposed to ads lower in congruity. The results failed to show significant main effect on attitude toward the ad. Therefore, hypothesis 2a was rejected. Hypothesis 2b stated that participants who were exposed to ads higher in congruity would respond with more positive attitude toward the brand than will participants who view ads lower in congruity. The results indicated a main effect of level of congruity on Abr, such that participants who viewed an ad with high congruity \( (M = 13.38, SD = 3.14) \) reported more positive attitude toward the brand than did participants who viewed an ad with low \( (M = 11.40, SD = 3.34) \) or medium congruity \( [M = 12.78, SD = 4.36, F(2, 147) = 3.22, p < .05] \). The results also showed that there was a significant main effect for level of congruity on future intentions, indicating that participants who were exposed to an ad with high congruity \( (M = 11.60, SD = 5.00) \) reported higher future intentions than did participants who were exposed to an ad with low \( (M = 9.48, SD = 4.88) \) and medium congruity \( [M = 8.98, SD = 4.83, F(2, 147) = 3.11, p < .05] \). Therefore hypotheses 2b and 2c were supported.

The MANCOVA results found all three interaction effects were statistically significant and thus, hypotheses 3a, 3b, and 3c were supported. Wilks’s Lambda for interaction between endorsement and level of congruity on Aad was .896 and \( F(2, 147) = 2.64 \), showing that under conditions of medium and high congruity, participants exhibited more positive attitude toward
the ad with endorsement, whereas under conditions of low congruity, the ad without endorsement lead to more positive attitude toward the ad (see figure 1).

![Figure 1. Estimated Marginal Means of Aad Total](image)

**Figure 1. Estimated Marginal Means of Aad Total**

The other significant interaction was between endorsement and level of congruity on Abr [Wilks’ Lambda = .973, \(F(2, 147) = 2.73\)]. Participants who viewed higher congruity ads generated more positive Abr when exposed to an ad with endorsement rather than ad without endorsement. In addition, when viewing a low congruity ad, participants generated higher Abr when ad did not include endorsement, whereas when viewing higher congruity ad, participants generated higher Abr in conditions where endorsement in the ads was absent (see figure 2).
Final interaction on FI was also statistically significant [Wilks’ Lambda = .964, $F(2, 147) = 3.58$], indicating that under conditions of higher congruity, participants exhibited more positive future intentions to use the ads with endorsement rather than ad without endorsement. However, under conditions of low congruity between website and banner ad, participants rated more positive future intentions to use the ad without endorsement (see figure 3).
Table 3.

*Descriptive Statistics for Aad, Abr and FI*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent</th>
<th>Endorsement</th>
<th>Match</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aad</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>26.54</td>
<td>6.61</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aa</td>
<td></td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>21.48</td>
<td>5.78</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aa</td>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>7.68</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aa</td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24.23</td>
<td>6.92</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td></td>
<td>23.10</td>
<td>9.02</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td></td>
<td>28.56</td>
<td>7.81</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
<td>29.52</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>27</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>26.98</td>
<td>8.41</td>
<td>80</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td></td>
<td>24.69</td>
<td>8.11</td>
<td>52</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>25.02</td>
<td>7.68</td>
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<tr>
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<td>27.55</td>
<td>7.57</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>25.70</td>
<td>7.85</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| Abr       | No          | Low   | 12.17| 2.63| 24 |
| Abr       |             | Medium| 11.44| 3.92| 25 |
| Abr       |             | High  | 13.00| 2.99| 20 |
| Abr       |             | Total | 12.14| 3.27| 69 |
| Yes       | Low        |       | 10.75| 3.78| 28 |
| Yes       | Medium     |       | 14.12| 4.42| 25 |
| Yes       | High       |       | 13.67| 3.27| 27 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent</th>
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<th>Match</th>
<th>Mean</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>12.79</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
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<td>3.34</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>12.78</td>
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<td>47</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>3.73</td>
<td>149</td>
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<td></td>
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CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This research was conducted with the purpose of filling in the gaps of what known effects congruity and endorsement have on consumer attitudes toward sport Website advertisements, the advertising brand, and consumer future intentions. Congruity in Web advertising (Pelsmacker et al., 2002; Jeong, 2003; Moore et al., 2005; Newman, 2001, 2004), and sport celebrity endorsement (Braunstein, 2005, 2006; Bush, 2004; Marshall, Na, State & Dueskar, 2008) have been studied separately in single stand-alone studies but this is one of the first known attempts to measure how they effect consumer attitudes when presented together embedded in a sport Website homepage using a fixed model. This study fits the need expressed by Zhang and Kim (2008) for additional research in the field of Web advertising, and serves as a basis for additional research in the sport marketing industry. Research on the effects of congruity have been inconsistent, some finding that highly congruent ads are important to consumer attitudes, others finding more significant responses when consumers are faced with incongruent ads.

More specifically, this study attempted to record significant data related to the combination of the variables in a 3 X 2 design where varying levels of congruity (i.e. high, medium, low) are grouped with and without a celebrity (i.e. Landon Donovan, Shaun White, Steve Nash). Analyses of the results revealed significant factors which were in-line with several of the hypotheses. In addition, the results of this study have also implicated a functional interaction effect between the two variables. The following section explains how these results should be interpreted and offers recommendations that could assist sport marketers to better understand consumer attitudes on the Web, and plan marketing campaigns which could yield
improved responses to sponsor and advertising stimuli. Limitations of the study are discussed and recommendations for future research are also given.

**Understanding the Results**

First, the acceptance of hypothesis 1a indicates, just as previous studies have shown, endorsement by a celebrity can positively impact the attitude toward an advertisement (Tripp & Jansen, 1994), and help increase the chances of the consumer choosing the product (Kahle & Homer, 1985; Kamins, Brand, Hoeke, & Moe, 1989). That was especially true with the high and low congruent advertisements (i.e. soccershop.com, snowboardshop.com). The lowest mean Aad numbers were found to be in response to the medium congruity manipulation with no celebrity endorsement (Snowboardshop.com).

The only instance across each of the three sets of ads where participants did not report more significant scores was when celebrity endorsement was used in the incongruent (Computershop.com) banner. One possible explanation for this result would be that the participants’ focus on evaluating the contents of the Website overall caused them to have more extensive processing of the incongruent information because it violates expectancies (Lee & Shen, 2009). Although the brand of the ad was incongruent, use of a sport celebrity may have indicated that the ad was not a reputable computer retailer, as there is little comparison between a sport celebrity (Steve Nash) and an online computer store, particularly one found on a soccer Website. This could have helped subjects fail to develop an extrinsic cue (Olson & Jacoby, 1972) from identification with the sport celebrity damaging the halo effects of the endorser to rub-off on the brand. Another possible reason for this could be consumers gave the endorsed computer ad less thought because the presence of a sport celebrity disguised the message of the ad. Where
the celebrity endorsement was absent, consumers could have found the incongruent ad worthy of a more careful evaluation, adding novelty and interest to the brand’s communication (Dahlén, Rosengren, Törn, & Öhman, 2009). This affect could also be explained with the help of research confirming that online celebrity endorsement may not be as effective as it is in traditional media (Nan, 2003; Yoon, 2000).

Interestingly, the results could not support hypothesis 2a, which stated that participants who were exposed to higher congruity banner advertisements would show more positive attitudes towards the ad, compared to those who were exposed to lower congruity advertisements. This is, in some ways, disappointing because the current study had intentions of clearing up inconsistent research as to the effects congruity has on consumer attitudes toward online advertisement (Moore et al., 2005, Newman, 2001; Newman et al., 2004). Instead it seems to have added, slightly, to the inconsistency of advertiser-Website congruity. However, there are some limiting factors that could have played a part in this outcome. With the subjects being asked to evaluate an entire Website in only 30 seconds, with three banner ads on the same side of the page there could have been some clutter effects (Cho & Cheon, 2004). The most likely answer involves the elaboration likelihood model (ELM) (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981, 1986). Subjects would not have been processing the advertisements centrally because they were focused on evaluating the Website as a whole. Therefore, through the peripheral route, a simple positive cue was noted with the presence of celebrity endorsement. Without the endorsement image to provoke heuristics, the congruency of the ad was almost negligible.

On the other hand, hypotheses 2b and 2c were supported. It seems that where Abr and FI are concerned, high congruity advertisements elicit more positive attitudes from consumers and
in-turn help transfer those attitudes from the parent brands of the Website to the ad brand when fit is high. These findings are in-line with several previous studies pertaining to use of congruity theory in advertising (Aaker & Keller, 1990; Jeong, 2003; Keller & Aaker, 1992; Moore et al., 2005; Newman, 2001; Newman et al., 2004), where the use of a contextually similar ad within a Web page improves consumer recall, attitudes, and purchase intentions.

Arguably the most important results from analysis of the data pertain to hypotheses 3a, 3b, and 3c, concerning a main effect of interaction between endorsement and congruity. The MANCOVA results reveal a serious positive relationship when medium and high congruity ads are accompanied with a sport celebrity endorsement. That is, adding a celebrity endorsement to the ad improved scores across all three of the dependant variables; Aad, Abr, and FI. Contradictory to that, the incongruent manipulation saw more positive scores without the celebrity endorsement in all three dependent variable measures. A number of researchers have noted messages are more effective when celebrity endorser image is congruent with the image of the product being promoted (Kahle & Homer, 1985; Kamins, 1989, 1990; Lynch & Schuler, 1994; Peterson & Kerin, 1977). For example, a sophisticated product like a Mercedes Benz would be more effectively endorsed by a professional golfer rather than a professional bull rider. Computershop.com was not only incongruent with the FIFA Website, which may have damaged processing initially, but no fit whatsoever existed between the product and the endorser (i.e. Steve Nash). The believability of the endorsement was likely damaged (Friedman & Friedman, 1979). Ultimately, the measure of FI which included the question, “I would consider visiting/using a Web site like computershop.com,” scored lower than any other condition in the study.
Furthermore, Braunstein’s (2006) Match-Up Model which was used as a basis for the selection of celebrity athletes in the pilot study. Image, likability, trustworthiness, and attractiveness measures were used to evaluate the endorsers’ effectiveness, which improved on the Source Credibility Model (McGuire, 1968) and the Source Attractiveness Model (McGuire, 1985). The Source Credibility Model holds trustworthiness and expertise of the endorser as the main catalysts for effectiveness of the message. Source Attractiveness basically states that effectiveness of the message is dependent on the celebrity endorser’s level of similarity to the consumer, familiarity of the consumer, and likability of the consumer. While those are all good models there is a more recent study that improves upon those findings.

Simmers, Damron-Martinez, and Haytko (2009) saw a need for a new theoretical construct that considered both the roles of expertise and attractiveness in determining effectiveness of celebrity endorsers for a particular brand. And according to the Endorser Sexpertise Continuum (Simmers et al., 2009) Nash should not have a suitable combination of attractiveness and credibility to effectively endorse an online computer store. Although he is considered an expert in his field, his range of endorsement products is relegated to more left-of-center on the scale. That is, his particular branding should be more effective when used to endorse sport or sport related products where the consumers processing is more cognitive and there is a higher involvement with the product (Simmers et al., 2009; Friedman & Friedman, 1979).

**Recommendations for Sport Marketers**

Sport’s Industry Almanac 2011, estimates annual spending for sports advertising and marketing in the U.S. to be at $27.3 billion. Online advertising at sport Websites is estimated to
surpass $1 billion this year (Miller & Washington, 2011). These figures are up even amid recovery from an economic recession, and U.S. involvement in three foreign wars. Sport Marketers can ill afford to squander funds on questionable athletes or even superstar endorsers, lest their brand be associated with extracurricular scandal, ugly labor negotiations, or contract holdouts. So how can the modern sport marketer get the highest return on investment for endorsed advertisements using results from this study?

Initially this research suggests that when advertising on a sport Website is moderately to highly congruent the overall consumer attitudes toward them are favorable. For instance, a sport recovery drink advertisement is moderately congruent with nearly every sport. It should do well as a static or graphic banner without endorsement. However, adding a celebrity endorsement, no matter how popular, to the ad improves peripheral cues (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981, 1986). It will also elicit more positive consumer attitude even when consumers have limited cognitive resources to devote to the ad as they did in the current study.

Choosing the right celebrity to use in the endorsement is a two-part system. First, sport Website managers should consider the available options of advertisers based on their congruity to sport in general, and more specifically to the Website itself. A firm should not think they can just contract any moderately successful athlete to an endorsement of a non-related product and think that the connections between being successful on the court and the product will automatically be perceived by the consumer. When there is an available advertisement endorsement slot that is highly or moderately congruent to the Website the firm can likely use an athlete who is considered an expert in their sport, and offer a high degree of trustworthiness. With these types of ads there is no need to seek out a symbolic, holistic, superstar like celebrity
because it is likely that the response to both endorsers will be the same. For example, a golf retail Website would like to place an advertisement on the Web page of a popular golf course located in the same region as one of its locations. The endorsement of a high profile golf celebrity (i.e., Tiger Woods or Michele Wie) would not be needed. For a much smaller contract, the firm could also get significant results and favorable attention from consumers using another professional golfer with suitable expertise and trustworthiness (i.e., Jim Furyk or Paula Creamer).

Secondly, choosing to run an incongruent or unrelated product ad should only include endorsement by the most attractive celebrities based on the Source Attractiveness Model developed by McGuire (as cited in Simmers & Martinez, 2009, p. 53). Even a large image congruity gap, in the right direction, can ultimately influence purchasing motivations (Marshall et al., 2008). In addition, since the greatest negative slope in the entire study was found with the endorsed incongruent ad, this study would suggest that incongruent or unrelated products would be more favorable to consumer attitudes if they did not include an endorsement at all.

**Limitations of the Study**

Research objectives, experimental design, and measures used to protect internal and external validity were rooted in existing research. However, certain limitations which may have influenced the participants’ interpretations of the variables should be noted. As with most social science studies the findings of the study should be qualified by the subject pool. This study used a heterogeneous sample of graduate and undergraduate students, athletic department staff, university professors, and general employees of the University of Central Missouri. This helped to employ a more representative sample of a real population. The results would also have been limited by the demographics of those who chose to participate in the study. As it was, the
researchers in this study would have liked to have a more male dominant subject pool, and it was dominated by female subjects (65%).

As with most quasi-experimental studies, it was difficult to control environmental factors in the current study. Use of e-mail and the subjects’ personal computer meant that is was difficult to obtain environmental validity for the results. Subjects were left to complete the survey on their own time with any amount of distraction conceivable interfering with their utmost attention on the survey questions. Had the subjects been in a controlled environment during participation in the data collection, the environmental variables would have been much more valid.

The generalization of the results can only be applied to static banner ads. Banners can be static or rich media. Rich media make use of audio, video, and interactive features to draw attention to produce central processing. Furthermore, only banners were used in the study, so the results are limited to the use of banner advertising. Previous studies of static banners have suggested the similar limitations (Briggs & Hollis, 1997; Bush et al., 2004; Jeong, 2003).

In addition, the current study only sought to measure consumers’ attitudinal responses. Although understanding how consumers cognitively process Internet information will help advertisers successfully target them and enhance purchasing activity (Schumann & Thorson, 2007), there are other ways to gauge effectiveness of Web advertising. Two such ways that have been explored in previous studies are physiological (Chung, 2007), and behavioral (Briggs & Hollis, 1997). Additionally, use of a highly credible corporate Website may have impacted subjects’ perception of the highly congruent banner advertisement, as persuasiveness of the ad would likely have been enhanced (Kim & Choi, 2010).
Finally, the purpose of this investigation was to encourage natural viewing conditions of all parts of the Website, mimicking goal-directed behavior. However, the 30-second time allotment for Web page viewing may have attributed to reduced attention to peripheral stimuli (Janiszewski, 1998), presented in this case by the fictitious banner advertisements. Reduced attention to peripheral stimuli could have confounded the results of the current study.

**Directions for Future Research**

The meta-analysis research by Zhang and Kim (2008) concluded that, “… the Web ads area is wide open and there are many opportunities for interested researchers to conduct research on this important area…” (pp. 09). The current study intended to fill at least one gap in the research, however small, but in order to verify the results, future research is warranted. Consumers, advertisers, and Websites present an intriguing triad of possibilities for discovering what works and what doesn’t. Previous research suggests that arousing pictures in banner advertisements are encoded and stored better than moderately arousing or calm pictures (Chung, 2007). A hybrid of the current study could explore other consumer reactions such as recall and brand recognition response using a highly congruent celebrity in all three manipulations, but with varying levels of arousing contexts.

The current study considered the moderating effect of involvement (DePelsmacker, 2002) and adjusted for it using involvement as a covariate. Another avenue of research could be started with respect to interaction effects of endorsement and congruity when involvement is extremely high and accounted for as a moderating variable. By recruiting only highly involved sport fans of a sport specific Website (i.e. the Dallas Cowboys, Major League Baseball) and exposing them to a similar 3x2 experimental design, how would it affect the results? It would also be prudent to
measure endorser effectiveness by product type for the sport Website, based on the same principles as the Friedman and Friedman (1979) study to find out where the best fit between endorser and product brand rest on the Endorser Sexpertise Continuum (Simmers & Martinez, 2009).

Adjustment to some of the limitations could also yield a less confounded experimental outcome. Future studies using varying and different samples, such as different sport service types would broaden understanding and generalizability of the results. Also, as the results of this study were collected immediately after viewing the manipulated Web page. Subjects should be examined after 24 hours to measure effectiveness on long-term recall of the advertising brand when using celebrity endorsement. Based on the results of the Kim and Choi (2010) findings, a fictitious Web page could be used as the host site to reduce persuasiveness of the banner ads based on the credibility of the FIFA Website. The current study is also left with no way of telling which was more effective on the study, the congruency of the endorser to the advertising brand, or the congruency of the advertising brand to the Website. Adding to the results of this study by controlling the variable of congruency to one or the other might have additional influence on these results.

In conclusion, the current study attempted to measure effectiveness of congruity and endorsement on banner ads presented on sport Websites. Using a combination of three types of congruency (i.e. highly congruent, moderately congruent, incongruent) each ad was presented with and without a celebrity endorsement. Participants responded to a trio of surveys which captured their attitudes toward the ad, attitudes toward the brand, and future intentions. Results of the MANCOVA test supported six of the nine hypotheses of this experiment. Individuals
exposed to banner ads with sport celebrity endorsement showed more positive attitudes toward the ad. Higher congruity banner ads also had significant effects on attitudes toward the brand and future intention. Also, the empirical information supports the finding that congruent banner advertisement effectiveness can be improved through the use of celebrity endorsement. However, incongruent advertisement is negatively affected by the presence of a celebrity endorsement when there is no fit between the endorser and the product brand image. The results extracted from this study will confirm that where advertising theory has been inconclusive about product-Website congruity, on sport Websites congruency of product and endorser to the Website is certainly effective.
References


Appendix 1
Wells, Leavitt and McConville’s (1971)
Attitude toward Advertisement (Aad) and Brand (Abr)

For questions 1 thru 6, please click the number below that best describes the way you feel after viewing the advertisement:

1. Unattractive
   (1)  (2)  (3)  (4)  (5)
   Attractive

2. Depressing
   (1)  (2)  (3)  (4)  (5)
   Refreshing

3. Unappealing
   (1)  (2)  (3)  (4)  (5)
   Appealing

4. Unpleasant
   (1)  (2)  (3)  (4)  (5)
   Pleasant

5. Dull
   (1)  (2)  (3)  (4)  (5)
   Dynamic

6. Not enjoyable
   (1)  (2)  (3)  (4)  (5)
   Enjoyable
For questions 7 thru 9, please click the number below that best describes the way you feel “I would consider visiting/using a website like Soccershop.com”

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<tr>
<td>9</td>
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Appendix 3

Personal Involvement Inventory (PII)
Zaichkowsky (1994)

To me soccer is:

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Appendix 4

High Congruency without Endorsement
Appendix 5

High Congruency with Endorsement
Appendix 6

Medium Congruency without Endorsement
Appendix 7

Medium Congruency with Endorsement
Appendix 8

Incongruent without Endorsement
Appendix 9

Incongruent with Endorsement