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The Influence of Sports Celebrity Endorsers on Consumers' Purchase Intentions

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“TWO ROADS DIVERGED IN A WOOD, AND I—I TOOK THE ONE LESS
TRAVELED BY, AND THAT HAS MADE ALL THE DIFFERENCE.”

Robert Frost (1916): The Road Not Taken

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1 Introduction

1.1 Overview and Structure

This doctoral dissertation is organized as a cumulative dissertation that contains three independent manuscripts that analyze aspects of sports celebrity endorsements and their effectiveness in influencing consumers' purchase intentions. All three manuscripts have been submitted and accepted by peer-reviewed journals, manuscript I by *International Journal of Sport Management and Marketing*, manuscript II by *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, and manuscript III by *Sport, Business, Management: An International Journal*. This summarium brings together the manuscripts' research perspectives on sports celebrity endorsers' influence on consumers' intentions to purchase an endorsed product. The summarium embeds the studies in extant endorsement research, summarizes their findings, and concludes with academic and practical implications for marketing professionals.

Section 1.1 introduces sports celebrity endorsements, section 1.2 discusses the topic's relevance, and section 1.3 identifies relevant gaps in the endorsement research and describes how the three manuscripts add to the perspective of endorsement research. Thereafter, section 1.4 presents the studies' theoretical background by summarizing the main attitudinal concepts, describing the role of endorser-product congruence in determining endorsers' effectiveness, and outlining major differences among types of endorsers and endorser combinations in a multiple-endorser context. Subsequently, the manuscripts' findings are summarized in section 1.5. Thereafter, a full copy of each manuscript is presented: manuscript I in chapter 2, manuscript II in chapter 3, and manuscript III in chapter 4. The journals' decision letters are attached to the Appendix. Chapter 5 aggregates the manuscripts' findings, summarizes their contributions to

endorsement research, and discusses the studies' limitations and directions for future research.

1.2 Relevance of the Topic

The popularity of product endorsements in marketing practice has steadily increased (Bergkvist & Zhou, 2016; Kim, Seo, & Chang, 2017), and companies frequently engage celebrity endorsers to promote their brands and products (Derdenger, Li, & Srinivasan, 2018; Walraven, Koning, Bijmolt, & Los, 2016). Elberse and Verleun (2012) pointed out that more than one in five companies have used celebrity endorsers in their product endorsements to increase their marketing's effectiveness, as this type of endorser is expected to be familiar to a large consumer audience and is usually associated with positive source characteristics (Choi & Rifon, 2012; McCracken, 1989). Accordingly, McCracken (1989) defined a celebrity endorser as an "individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement" (p. 310).

Many companies engage sports celebrity endorsers to stand out in a highly competitive media environment (Charbonneau & Garland, 2005; McCormick, 2018) because they are well-known to consumers for their exceptional performance as athletes and have built advanced media competency in the course of their careers (Brooks & Harris, 1998; McCormick, 2018). Alexandris, Tsotsou, and James (2012) showed that consumers' defense mechanisms as they relate to sports celebrity endorsements are much weaker than they are for other marketing instruments. By engaging sports celebrity endorsers to promote their brands and products, companies seek to leverage consumers' recognition of the athletes' accomplishments and to convert that recognition into

positive perceptions of their brands and products, thus increasing their intentions to purchase them (Darnell & Sparks, 2007; Schaaf, 1995). Studies in the endorsement context have found that sports celebrities are a highly effective type of endorser in enhancing consumers' brand perceptions (Spry, Pappu, & Cornwell, 2011), increasing their purchase intentions (Fink, Parker, Cunningham, & Cuneen, 2012; Till & Busler, 2000), and raising a company's market value (Derdenger et al., 2018; Elberse & Verleun, 2012). However, using sports celebrity endorsements to promote a company's brand or product also carries the risk of a negative influence on advertising outcomes if endorsers misbehave (e.g., swimmer Ryan Lochte) or break the law (e.g., football star O.J. Simpson, golfer Tiger Woods) (Chung, Derdenger, & Srinivasan, 2013; Erfgen, Zenker, & Sattler, 2015). Moreover, endorsers can be overexposed, thus reducing their effectiveness in influencing consumers' brand perceptions and purchase intentions (Charbonneau & Garland, 2005), or they might overshadow the endorsed brand or product so consumers remember the endorsers but not the endorsed brand or product (Erfgen et al., 2015; Ilicic & Webster, 2014). Therefore, companies must evaluate carefully the potential benefits and risks of an endorsement, the type of endorser to use, and potential combinations of endorsers before they engage in any endorsement (Carrillat & Ilicic, 2019; Fleck, Korchia, & Le Roy, 2012).

1.3 Gaps in Endorsement Research

The findings in endorsement research suggest that sports celebrity endorsements have an overall positive influence on consumers' purchase intentions (McCormick, 2018; Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018). However, whether endorsers' influence on consumers' intentions to purchase the endorsed products are explained by endorsers' positive direct effect on advertising outcomes or are mediated by attitudinal factors remains a topic of

debate. For example, Mehta (2000) and Newell and Goldsmith (2001) indicated that consumers' perceptions of an endorsement and an endorsed brand determine the effectiveness of the endorsement and its influence on consumers' purchase intentions. Moreover, Till and Busler (2000) found that endorser-product congruence determines endorsers' effectiveness, although whether the congruence between the endorser and the endorsed brand directly affects consumers' purchase intentions or mediates or moderates the endorser's or the brand's influence remains unclear.

Recent studies have also questioned whether sports celebrity endorsers are the most effective type of endorser in influencing consumers' intentions to purchase an endorsed product by arguing that sports celebrities are not always particularly believable or convincing endorsers (Koernig & Boyd, 2009; Taylor, 2016). For example, Munnukka, Uusitalo, and Toivonen (2016) found that peer consumers are more effective in increasing consumers' intentions to purchase an endorsed product than sports celebrities are, as consumers perceive peers as similar to themselves, thus increasing their credibility and affecting consumers' intention to purchase. Examples like that of Apple's former CEO, Steve Jobs, have also shown that managers' endorsements can be effective in improving consumers' perceptions of an endorsed brand and increasing their intentions to purchase the endorsed product. As endorsement research has had ambiguous findings, which type of endorser is most effective in influencing consumers' purchase intentions remains in question.

Most studies have used a single endorsement research design to determine endorsers' effectiveness in influencing consumers' brand perceptions and purchase intentions, whereas marketing practice shows that companies often engage multiple endorsers to promote their brands or products. By engaging multiple endorsers, companies use each endorser's ability to target their consumers and strengthen their attitude about the

endorsed brand and their intentions to purchase it (Rice, Kelting, & Lutz, 2012; Saleem, 2007). However, Agnihotri and Bhattacharya (2018) and Mowen and Brown (1981) indicated that using multiple endorsers to promote a single brand or a single product can also have an overall negative influence on advertising outcomes, as consumers perceive multiple endorsers as less trustworthy than they do a single endorser. Erfgen, Sattler, and Villeda (2016) pointed out that the influence of a multiple-endorser campaign on consumers' intentions to purchase an endorsed product can be diminished if endorsers are overexposed. Therefore, how endorsements by multiple endorsers affect consumers' purchase intentions and whether endorsers' effectiveness is determined by the specific combination of endorsers used remain unclear.

To address these gaps in the endorsement research, manuscript I systematically analyzes the direct and indirect effects on consumers' purchase intentions of their attitude toward an endorser, as well as the role of endorser-product congruence in determining endorsers' effectiveness. Based on those findings, manuscript II determines the most effective type of endorser by analyzing the influence of four types of endorsers on consumers' purchase intentions. As marketing professionals often engage multiple endorsers to promote their brands and products, manuscript III takes a closer look at the effects of different combinations of endorsers on consumers' purchase intentions and potential moderating effects of endorser-product congruence and consumers' involvement with the endorsed product. In pursuing these investigations, the three studies extend the endorsement research and provide marketing professionals useful recommendations for how to organize their product endorsements.

1.4 Theoretical Background

1.4.1 Attitudinal Concepts

Early on, Ohanian (1991) and McGuire (1985) showed that an endorser's credibility and his or her physical appearance determine consumers' perceptions toward the endorser and the endorsement, while Sato, Ko, Kaplanidou, and Connaughton (2016) found that an endorser's characteristics directly affect consumers' intentions to purchase an endorsed product. Furthermore, Erdogan (1999) and Ohanian (1991) indicated that an endorser's expertise has a positive influence on consumers' perceptions of the endorser, increasing their acceptance of the corresponding advertising stimulus. In this context, Goldsmith, Lafferty, and Newell (2000) defined source credibility as "the extent to which the source is perceived as possessing expertise relevant to the communication topic and can be trusted to give an objective opinion on the subject" (p. 43). Source trustworthiness, described as the "honesty, integrity and believability of an endorser" (Erdogan, 1999, p. 297), has also been found to have a positive effect on advertising outcomes (Ohanian, 1991; Pornpitakpan, 2004). For their part, Joseph (1982) and McGuire (1985) indicated that an endorser's physical attractiveness enhances consumers' attitude toward the endorser and the endorsed brand, which then positively affects consumers' intentions to purchase the endorsed product. The endorser's physical appearance is characterized by an endorser's facial characteristics, body compositions, and athletic abilities, among other factors (Erdogan, 1999; Fraser, Hill, & Sotiriadou, 2016). Although physically appealing endorsers seem to have an overall positive influence on advertising outcomes (Caballero, Lumpkin, & Madden, 1989; Fraser et al., 2016; Liu & Brock, 2011), Fink et al. (2012) contended that endorsers' visual appearance is controversially discussed by marketing professionals because of its high level of subjectivity.

Endorsement studies have indicated that the influence of consumers' attitude toward an endorser on their purchase intention is mediated by attitudinal concepts like consumers' attitude toward the advertisement and the endorsed brand (Felix & Borges, 2014; Lee, Hur, Kim, & Brigham, 2017). Lutz (1985) described consumers' attitude toward an advertisement as their "predisposition to respond [...] to a particular advertisement stimulus during a particular exposure occasion" (p. 49) and Lee et al. (2017) argued that consumers' perceptions of an endorsement mediates an endorser's influence on consumers' attitude toward the endorsed brand and their intentions to purchase it.

Moreover, Arai, Ko, and Ross (2014) and Choi and Rifon (2012) showed that a high level of corporate credibility also has a positive effect on consumers' attitude toward the endorsed brand and that it increases consumers' purchase intentions and enhances the brand's market position. Corporate credibility is characterized by a brand's trustworthiness and expertise (Goldsmith et al., 2000) and is defined as "the extent to which consumers feel that [...] the] firm has the knowledge or ability to fulfill its claims and whether the firm can be trusted to tell the truth" (Newell & Goldsmith, 2001, p. 235).

1.4.2 Endorser-Product Congruence

In the Meaning Transfer Model (McCracken, 1989), a set of meanings is transferred through an endorsement from an endorser to a consumer of the endorsed brand or product (Erdogan & Baker, 2000; Keller, 1993; Seno & Lukas, 2007). Misra and Beatty (1990) found that, if an endorser is particularly congruent with the endorsed product, the endorser's set of meanings is more likely to be transferred to the consumer and is converted into increased brand recall and higher purchase intention. Endorser-product

congruence (also called match-up or endorser fit), a social psychology concept that is based on the work of Walster, Aronson, and Abrahams (1966), hypothesizes in the endorsement research context that a high level of congruence between an endorser and an endorsed product positively affects advertising outcomes (Chang, Ko, Tasci, Arai, & Kim, 2014; Kahle & Homer, 1985; Till & Busler, 2000). Fink, Cunningham, and Kensicki (2004) found a positive influence of endorser-product congruence on consumers' purchase intentions, while Bergkvist and Zhou (2016) indicated that the influence of endorser-product congruence on consumers' intentions to purchase an endorsed brand or product is mediated by their attitude toward the advertisement and the endorsed brand.

1.4.3 Types of Endorsers

Sports celebrities can be effective product endorsers, as they combine outstanding athletic performance with advanced media competency (Brooks & Harris, 1998; McCormick, 2018). Studies have shown that sports celebrity endorsers have a positive influence on consumers' brand perceptions and their intentions to purchase an endorsed product mainly because of these celebrities' high level of source credibility (Fink et al., 2004; Pornpitakpan, 2004) and physical attractiveness (Amos, Holmes, & Strutton, 2008; McCracken, 1989). However, Taylor (2016) and others have questioned the superiority of sports celebrity endorsers over other types of endorsers and have argued that celebrity endorsers lack distinctive trustworthiness traits and so are not particularly effective in influencing consumers' behavior. Marketing professionals also engage other types of endorsers (e.g., peer consumers, company managers, and external experts) to promote their brands and products. Karasiewicz and Kowalczyk (2014)

found that engaging peer consumers as product endorsers significantly increases consumers' intentions to purchase the endorsed product, as targeted consumers perceive a peer endorser as trustworthy and as having a pronounced level of product expertise, which increase the advertising message's acceptability and believability (Bower & Landreth, 2001). Moreover, many companies leverage their own managers for product testimonials (e.g., Steve Jobs promoting Apple's new iPhone models). However, Schimmelpfennig (2018) found that managers' influence on consumers' attitudes and their purchase intention is limited, which Reidenbach and Pitts (1986) explained as being the result of managers' not necessarily being well-known to a company's consumer audience and so not necessarily credible or otherwise attractive. In keeping with this view, Stephens and Faranda (1993) stated that company managers "evoked the highest proportion of [...] negative thoughts about the spokesperson, the advertisement or the company" (p. 40). Companies also engage external experts, such as experts from independent organizations, to promote their brands and products, as their consumers may perceive external experts as highly credible (Norman, 1976). Early on, Friedman and Friedman (1979) and Kamins, Brand, Hoeke, and Moe (1989) concluded that external experts are effective endorsers, especially for products that feature a high level of financial, performance, or physical risk.

1.4.4 Combinations of Endorsers

Most previous research has analyzed an endorser's effectiveness in influencing consumers' brand perceptions and their purchase intentions in a single-endorsement context (Tripp, Jensen, & Carlson, 1994), although companies often engage multiple endorsers to promote their brands and products (Hsu & McDonald, 2002; Um, 2008).

Ilicic and Webster (2011) pointed out that engaging multiple endorsers to promote a company's product is not necessarily a recipe for success, whereas Hung, Chan, and Tse (2011) and Temperley and Tangen (2006) found evidence that a multiple-endorser strategy can even have an overall negative influence on consumers' brand perceptions and decrease their intentions to purchase the endorsed product. Moreover, Kim and Han (2016) found that, if a company engages multiple endorsers to promote its product, endorsers might overshadow the endorsed product such that consumers remember the endorsers rather than the product. However, Saleem (2007) and others indicated that using multiple endorsers to promote a single brand or product can have a positive influence both on consumers' perceptions toward the endorsed brand and on their purchase intentions. In addition, Hsu and McDonald (2002) and Rachita, Nirmal, and Priya (2013) showed that the effectiveness of a product endorsement by multiple endorsers increases if the endorsers are highly congruent with the endorsed product.

1.5 Study Findings

1.5.1 Manuscript I: Do endorsements by sports celebrities positively influence consumers' purchase intentions? Endorser-product congruence and the amplifying influence of consumers' involvement in the sport

The purpose of this study is to determine endorsers' direct and indirect influences on consumers' purchase intentions as mediated by attitudinal factors. Multigroup analyses were conducted to determine the differences in the results achieved by sports-related endorsers versus non-sports-related endorsers and to determine the influence of consumers' involvement with the endorsed product on their purchase intentions. Findings indicate a consumer's attitude toward an endorser is primarily determined by

their perceptions of the endorser's trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness, while a consumer's attitude toward the endorsed brand is characterized by the brand's trustworthiness and expertise. Moreover, the study's findings reveal a negative direct effect of attitude toward the endorser on consumers' purchase intentions, but the effect compensated for by a positive indirect influence of consumers' attitude toward the endorser through consumers' perceived congruence between the endorser and the endorsed product. The study also reveals a positive direct effect of consumers' attitude toward the endorsed brand on consumers' purchase intentions, indicating the importance of consumers' brand perceptions in the endorsement context. Observed effects were independent of the endorsed product category, suggesting that sports celebrities are effective product endorsers for both sports-related and non-sports-related products. However, multigroup analyses revealed that, if a sports-related endorser promotes a non-sports-related product and consumers are highly involved with the endorsed product, the endorser's influence on consumers' purchase intentions turns negative. Accordingly, the study's findings indicate that companies that are choosing a sports-related endorser to promote their brand or product must take the endorser's characteristics, his or her congruence with the endorsed product, and consumers' involvement with the endorsed product into account.

1.5.2 Manuscript II: How the type of sports-related endorser influences consumers' purchase intentions

This study uses (moderated) serial mediation regressions to determine the direct and indirect effects of four types of endorsers on consumers' intentions to purchase an endorsed product. The study reveals an overall positive influence of a product

endorsement on consumers' purchase intentions, independent of the type of endorser used. The study also shows that endorsers' direct influence on consumers' purchase intentions is not significant and that endorsers' influence on consumers' purchase intentions is rather mediated by the consumers' perceptions of the endorsement and the endorsed brand. Further analyses indicate that the type of endorser used moderates endorsers' effectiveness in influencing consumers' purchase intentions. Sports celebrity endorsers turn out to be the most effective type of endorser in increasing consumers' intentions to purchase the endorsed product, while company managers' endorsements and peer consumers' endorsements have also a positive but less substantial effect. Moreover, the study's findings indicate an insignificant influence of an endorsement by an external expert endorser on consumers' purchase intentions.

1.5.3 Manuscript III: The influence of multiple combinations of celebrity endorsers on consumers' intentions to purchase a sports-related product

As theoretical evidence for using multiple endorsers is limited and existing findings are ambiguous, manuscript III is conducted to determine how using multiple endorsers to promote a single product influences consumers' purchase intention. Analyses of endorsers' direct and indirect effects on consumers' intentions to purchase and tests for the moderating effects of endorser-product congruence show substantial variations for the effects of different endorser combinations. Potential moderating effects of consumers' involvement with the endorsed product are also analyzed to derive practical suggestions for marketing professionals on how to target existing consumer groups, which tend to have a high level of product involvement, as well as new consumer audiences, which probably do not. Serial mediation regressions reveal a positive

indirect influence of consumers' attitude toward the endorsers on their purchase intentions. Endorsers' influence on consumers' purchase intentions is mediated by their perceptions of the endorsements and the endorsed brand. Moreover, analyses reveal that consumers' perception of endorser-product congruence moderates endorsements' effectiveness in a multiple-endorser context. More precisely, the study's findings show that highly congruent combinations of endorsers have the most positive influence on consumers' purchase intentions. Survey participants see the combination of two sports celebrity endorsers and the combination of a sports celebrity endorser and a non-sports celebrity endorser as similarly congruent with a sports-related product. However, a moderating influence of consumers' involvement with the endorsed product on their attitudes toward the advertisements, the endorsed brand, and their purchase intention is not confirmed, indicating that companies can target both existing consumers and new consumers with a highly congruent multiple endorser campaign.

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2 Manuscript I: Do endorsements by sports celebrities positively influence consumers' purchase intentions? Endorser-product congruence and the amplifying influence of consumers' involvement in the sport

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3 Manuscript II: How the type of sports-related endorser influences consumers' purchase intentions

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4 Manuscript III: The influence of multiple combinations of celebrity endorsers on consumers' intentions to purchase a sports-related product

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5 Conclusion and Outlook

5.1 Summary of Findings

Manuscript I shows that sports celebrity endorsements are an effective marketing instrument with which to increase consumers' purchase intentions. However, an endorser's influence on consumers' intentions to purchase an endorsed product is mediated by their attitudes toward the endorsement and the endorsed brand. Moreover, the study's findings indicate that further mediation effects as well as moderation effects determine an endorsement's effectiveness in influencing consumers' purchase intentions: Consumers' perceived congruence between the endorser and the endorsed product positively affects their purchase intentions, whereas consumers' product involvement has a negative indirect influence on their intentions to purchase the endorsed product if the endorsement is not particularly congruent.

Manuscript II analyzed the effectiveness of different types of endorsers in influencing consumers' intentions to purchase an endorsed product using (moderated) serial mediation analyses. The study's findings show that sports celebrity endorsers are the most effective type of endorser. Other types of endorsers, like peer consumers and company managers, also have an overall positive influence on consumers' intentions to purchase an endorsed product but their influence is less pronounced than that of a sports celebrity endorser. However, the anticipated positive influence of an external expert's endorsement on consumers' intentions to purchase an endorsed product was found to be not significant, so the notion that an expert's endorsement affects consumers' purchase intentions is not supported.

Manuscript III analyzes the influence of multiple endorser combinations on consumers' purchase intentions and shows that the effects on consumers' purchase intentions of an endorsement that uses multiple endorsers are comparable to those of an endorsement that uses a single endorser. In a multiple-endorser context, endorsers' effectiveness depends on the combination of endorsers used and serial mediation analyses revealed that it is not a single endorser's congruence with the endorsed product that determines the endorsements' effectiveness but consumers' perceptions of the congruence between the combination of endorsers and the endorsed product. The analyses also indicate that consumers perceive multiple sports-related endorsers and the combination of a sports-related endorser and a non-sports-related endorser (here, a film actor) both as highly congruent with a sports-related product, resulting in a comparable, overall positive influence of both combinations of endorsers on consumers' purchase intention.

5.2 Contribution to the Extant Endorsement Research

The purpose of this doctoral dissertation is to extend the extant body of endorsement research and to derive practical suggestions for marketing professionals regarding the use of product endorsements as part of their marketing repertoire. The studies' findings show that sports celebrity endorsers do not have a positive direct influence on advertising outcomes but rather indirectly affect consumers' purchase intentions through their attitudes toward the endorsement(s) and the endorsed brand. Therefore, an endorsement unfolds its full potential only if it is thoroughly embedded in a company's overall brand strategy.

As the studies' findings indicate that the influence of sports celebrity endorsers on consumers' purchase intentions is superior to that of other types of endorsers, it is most beneficial for companies to engage sports celebrities as product endorsers, especially for congruent product categories which do not carry considerable financial or product risk. Besides sports celebrity endorsers, companies can also consider using peer consumers and company managers as product endorsers, as an overall positive, albeit less pronounced, influence of their endorsements on consumers' purchase intentions was found. Engaging multiple types of endorsers can be advantageous for a company, as doing so can target different consumer audiences at what may be a lower cost base, as non-celebrity endorsers are generally less expensive than (sports) celebrity endorsers. As this study finds no evidence of a positive influence of an external expert's endorsement on consumers' purchase intentions, the value of companies' practice of engaging this type of endorser to affect consumers' behavior is questionable, indicating that there needs to be a strong argument (e.g., pronounced product risk) for engaging external expert endorsers as part of a company's marketing campaign.

As it is common practice for marketing professionals to engage multiple endorsers to promote a single brand or a single product, and as research findings in the multiple-endorser context are ambiguous, the effectiveness of different combinations of endorsers in influencing consumers' intentions to purchase an endorsed product was analyzed in more detail. As in a single-endorser context, in a multiple endorser context endorser-product congruence determines the endorsements' effectiveness in influencing consumers' purchase intentions. More precisely, the analyses show that product endorsements that use multiple endorsers are effective in increasing consumers' intentions to purchase an endorsed product if at least one of the endorsers used is highly congruent with the endorsed product, so a high level of product

congruence is likely to be transferred from a congruent endorser to less congruent endorsers. Moreover, analyses reveal that endorsements with multiple non-congruent endorsers were less effective in increasing consumers' intentions to purchase an endorsed product when being compared to endorsements using at least one congruent endorser. Thus, the study's findings provide marketing professionals guidance on how to set up an effective multiple-endorser campaign that will most likely increase consumers' purchase intentions.

5.3 General Limitations and Directions for Future Research

While this dissertation adds to the extant endorsement research by broadening the understanding of endorsers' influences on consumers' purchase intentions, its three studies share several limitations. These limitations are associated primarily with their experimental study design, as external validity was sacrificed to strengthen the studies' internal validity.

The studies' findings might be limited by the restricted data samples, as survey participants' average age was relatively low (reported with 34.6 – 36.7 years), and their average monthly net income reported with a median of 2,501 – 3,000 EUR/month was relatively high. However, the relatively high monthly net income could be explained by participants' advanced educational backgrounds. External validity was further constrained as consumers' purchase intentions was surveyed as a proxy for consumers' real purchase behavior and as print advertisements were the only type of endorsement stimulus used.

Further research is needed to confirm the applied conceptual frameworks, address the stated limitations, and extend the current state of endorsement research. Online and social media endorsements could be used to analyze endorsers' influences on consumers' brand perceptions and their purchase behavior, which could enable marketing professional to design their marketing campaigns more holistically across multiple channels. Using real endorsers and analyzing their influences on consumers' purchase behavior for real brands and real products would also address external validity constraints. Moreover, a replicated study design that targets a more representative data sample with older, more socially and economically diverse participants would strengthen the explanatory power of the studies' findings.

Abstract

This doctoral dissertation analyzes endorsers' influences on consumers' purchase intentions from multiple perspectives. Therewith, the dissertation's findings extend the perspectives of endorsement research and provide marketing professionals practical guidance on how to use product endorsers effectively.

Three studies are conducted to determine endorsers' direct and indirect influences on consumers' intentions to purchase an endorsed product. The studies' findings indicate that, independent of the product category endorsed, endorsers' influence on consumers' intentions to purchase an endorsed product is mediated by their perceptions of the endorsement and the endorsed brand. Analyzing the effectiveness of different types of endorsers shows that sports celebrities are the most effective type of endorser in influencing consumers' purchase intentions, while endorsements by peer consumers and company managers also have a positive, but less influential, effect. However, no evidence is found for a positive influence of an external expert's endorsement on consumers' purchase intentions. Moreover, it is not only endorsements by a single endorser that have an overall positive effect on consumers' intentions to purchase but also endorsements that use multiple endorsers. In a single-endorser context, consumers' perception of the congruence between the endorser and the endorsed product mediates the endorser's effectiveness, whereas it moderates the effectiveness of multiple endorsers. The influence of consumers' involvement with the endorsed product on their intentions to purchase it are ambiguous, as a company can benefit from engaging multiple sports-related endorsers to target existing consumer groups that have high levels of product involvement and new consumer groups that have low levels of product involvement. However, consumer involvement has a negative indirect influence on

consumers' purchase intentions in a single-endorser context if the endorsement is not particularly congruent.

In summary, companies that use product endorsements as part of their marketing repertoire should clearly analyze the endorsement context, determine the consumer audiences to be targeted, and select their endorsers carefully to ensure that an endorsement campaign has an overall positive influence on consumers' purchase intentions.

Kurzzusammenfassung

Diese Dissertation analysiert den Einfluss von Werbeträgern auf die Kaufabsicht von Konsumenten aus unterschiedlichen Perspektiven. Die Ergebnisse dieser Arbeit erweitern den bisherigen Forschungsstand und geben Marketingexperten praxisorientierte Handlungsempfehlungen wie Werbeträger effektiv eingesetzt werden können.

Im Rahmen von drei Studien werden sowohl direkte als auch indirekte Effekte von Werbeträgern auf die Kaufabsicht von Konsumenten analysiert. Unabhängig von der beworbenen Produktkategorie konnte gezeigt werden, dass der Einfluss von Werbeträgern auf die Kaufabsicht von Konsumenten sowohl von deren Wahrnehmung der Werbung selbst als auch von deren Wahrnehmung des beworbenen Produktes bestimmt wird. Die Analyse unterschiedlicher Arten von Werbeträgern hat zudem ergeben, dass prominente Sportler die Kaufabsicht von Konsumenten am wirksamsten beeinflussen können. Einen insgesamt positiven, aber weniger stark ausgeprägten Einfluss auf die Kaufabsicht von Konsumenten haben auch den Konsumenten gleichartige Werbeträger sowie Unternehmensmanager als Werbeträger aufgewiesen. Dagegen konnte kein positiver Einfluss von externen Experten als Werbeträger auf die Kaufabsicht von Konsumenten nachgewiesen werden.

Des Weiteren konnte gezeigt werden, dass nicht nur Werbung mit einem einzelnen Werbeträger einen positiven Einfluss auf die Kaufabsicht von Konsumenten hat, sondern auch Werbung, welche gleichzeitig mehrere Werbeträger nutzt. Bei Produktwerbung mit einem einzelnen Werbeträger beeinflusst die von den Konsumenten wahrgenommene Kongruenz zwischen Werbeträger und beworbenem Produkt die Wirksamkeit des Werbeträgers indirekt, wohingegen es die Kaufabsicht von Konsumenten bei mehreren Werbeträgern moderiert. Der Einfluss, den die Nähe

des beworbenen Produktes zu den Konsumenten auf deren Kaufabsicht hat, ist dagegen nicht eindeutig. Im Rahmen einer Multi-Werbeträgerstrategie kann ein Unternehmen bereits bestehende Konsumenten, die eine gewisse Nähe zum beworbenen Produkt aufweisen, ansprechen sowie Konsumentengruppen, welche gegenwärtig eine gewisse Distanz zum beworbenen Produkt haben, neu erschließen. Falls ein Unternehmen im Rahmen seiner Werbung jedoch einen einzelnen Werbeträger nutzt, hat die Nähe der Konsumenten zum beworbenen Produkt einen indirekt negativen Einfluss auf deren Kaufabsicht.

Insgesamt konnte gezeigt werden, dass Unternehmen, die Werbeträger im Rahmen ihrer Marketingstrategie einsetzen wollen, den Werbekontext genau bestimmen, potenzielle Konsumentengruppen eindeutig definieren und Werbeträger mit Bedacht auswählen sollten, um sicher zu stellen, dass diese einen insgesamt positiven Einfluss auf die Kaufabsicht von Konsumenten haben.