

**Tiger Woods, Nike, & I Are (Not) Best Friends:  
How Brand's Sports Sponsorships in Social-Media Impact  
Brand-Consumer Congruity and Relationship Quality**

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**Abstract**

This study examines the effects of brand's sports sponsorship in social-media on brand consumer's congruity and brand relationship quality. The study includes a survey of targeting consumers whose ages range between early twenties and late forties. Data from 322 respondents were collected. The results are as follows. First, brand's sports sponsorship in social-media activities relating to sports brands has substantial influences on brand consumer's congruity. Second, this congruity influences brand relationship quality. Third, male consumers, who have previously purchased products and services associated with a sports brand, perceive the sponsor's brand image more positively when they are exposed to the sponsor's brand's sports sponsorship in social-media activities, compared to those consumers having no prior purchases of the sponsored brand. Lastly, consumers in their forties with prior experience consuming the sponsor's brand products are affected more by the level of self-congruity with the sports brand compared to younger or older consumers.

Keywords: brand relationship quality; brand consumer's congruity; brand's sports sponsorship; consumer's characteristics

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Sports brands in the fashion industry are using social media to improve the quality of the relationships with their customers. Sports brands utilize social media as a promotional and collaborative tool to build relationships with their customers by enhancing the level of communication, increasing brand awareness via sports sponsorship-related images, and stimulating their consumers to actually purchase their products (Boyland, et al., 2012; Choi, 2008). Through social media, brands, and customers may work together to create new products and services that enhance the value of the brand. In this manner, sponsorship by sports brands using social media emerges and, in the present state in which the effects are attracting attention, we concluded that a study was necessary that identifies the relationships of influences among these effects systematically.

Because of the recent rapid increase in the number of sports brands using social media as a marketing tool, studies focusing on social-media coupled with sports marketing are rare. In addition, scholars must research on the specific effectiveness of sponsors that unite their brands and their sponsored players to learn how to effectively manage and improve (brand relationship quality (BRQ). BRQ refers to the combination of the concepts of high versus low value and brand-consumer associations (Fournier, 1998). Celebrity endorsers are associative mechanisms for advertisers to nurture brand-consumer relationships both implicitly and explicitly. The following dynamic chain is an enactment of BRQ, "I know (and possibly love) the celebrity who knows, uses, and loves the brand that enables me to become more alike or build my relationship with the celebrity, or enables me to come-close to enacting behaviors that the celebrity does, by knowing, using, and loving this same brand. About 25% of US advertisements employ celebrity endorsers (Shimp 2000). These actions suggest many US firms have bought into

the premise that celebrity endorsers impact consumer attitudes positively towards an advertisement and the associated brand, consumers' purchase intention, as well as other measures of effectiveness (Amos et al., 2008).

Furthermore, customers and the brand are creating new products, services, and sports brand values via social media. These value configurations may serve to enhance the quality in the relationship between customers and the brand (Kim, 2006). However, despite the fact that the number of cases actively using social media is increasing, few studies have analyzed the brand-consumer-sports impacts quantitatively. Adopting this perspective, not only the study on how people identify themselves with sponsored brands and sponsored athletes is required but there must also be research that efficiently manages and enhances the BRQ.

Therefore, the main objective of this study is to investigate the impact of brand's sports sponsorship in social-media. This study aims to examine the influence of a brand's sports sponsorship in social-media activities have on the self-congruity with its brand image and its BRQ. In addition, the study investigates how consumers' characteristics (e.g., gender and age) moderate the findings of the research model.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Social Media**

“Social media” are online tools or platforms that integrate the social interactions among various components of multimedia, such as text, image, audio, and video. The typical forms of social media include blogs, social network websites, message boards, podcasts, and wikis, all of which involve new two-way functions of the multimedia content sharing services to the virtual reality network.

Recent trends within social media research focus on the impact of a social media

platform's main properties on the interactions among its users. These effects include the impact that a platform's community, involvement, openness, conversation, and connections have on user behavioral patterns, changes in recognition, the revitalization of involvement, and society in general. However, most of the previous studies regarding online communities focus largely on the particular community members and participants.

The blog is one of the most active fields of social media research. Prior research on blogs analyze the types of blogs, the motivations for blogging, the characteristics of bloggers, and implemented success factors associating with blogging services (Kweon et al., 2005; Kim & Bae, 2006; Kim, 2006; Noh, 2005; Trappey & Woodside, 2005). Unlike active studies on the utility of blogs as a social media outlet, studies on the latest trend in social media, micro-blogging, are somewhat rare. Most reports and journals about micro-blogging focus on the conceptual approaches on micro-blogging, micro-blogging applications on mobile phones, or micro-blogging as a learning tool. Additionally, research-relevant data appears through Twitter contexts, which is one of the most famous micro-blogging networks in the world. However, the scholarly empirical research on micro-bloggers is scarce.

Thus, this study aims to describe the relationship between marketing activities and self-congruity with sports sponsorships via using social media, an issue receiving substantial attention in both the workplace and academia. This study is based on the findings of Kim & Ko's (2010a)'s study, which indicates that social media-related marketing activities exert substantial influences on customer equity and purchase intention. Further, this study provides insights on the influence of brand's sports sponsorship in social-media on BRQ.

## **2. 2. Sports Sponsorship**

A sponsorship is a contractual activity that promotes special events to create a favorable brand image, improve brand awareness, and directly increase the sales of products or services associated with the brand (Javalgi & Traylor, 1994; Sleight, 1989). As a sales promotion tool, sponsorships can support various types of events with not only using the traditional mass media (Javalgi & Traylor, 1994). In addition, corporate sponsorship affects consumer's association with a brand image (Meenaghan, 1983) and the brand image of the company or the brand that supports the event (Gwinner, 1997).

Prior studies on sponsorship analyze the effects of advertisements with professional athletes (Kim, 2000; Lee, 2003) and the current states of sports brands utilizing sponsorships (Amos et al., 2008; Kim, 2002; Kim, 2004). In addition, prior researchers examined the influence that sports-related sponsorships have on brand image, brand awareness (Kim, 2005; Kim, 2006; Nam, 2003; Woo, 2006), brand assets (Cho, 2007; Kim, 2002; Kim, 2005), purchase intention (Hong, 2004; Lee, 2003; Son, 2002), and the sponsor's brand and self-congruity (Kim, 2006).

Among the many categories in sports sponsorships, especially endorsing famous athletes with an acknowledged accomplishment and physical attraction as the brand model can enhance as well as promote the value of products and the brand (Gardener & Shuman, 1987; Lee, 2003). Celebrity endorsement can be an effective tool in sponsorship marketing communications. With the prosperity of professional sports worldwide, the celebrity endorsements can be effective in promoting sports brands (Kim, 2010). However, theory and research on social media use in such sports sponsorship and related topics remains an open question in need of examination.

### **2.3. Self-Congruity**

Self-congruity indicates the compatibility between an individual's self-concept

and the ideal self-image projected onto a certain product (Sirgy, 1982). The self-congruity theory divides into a mono-dimensional perspective and a multi-dimensional perspective. The mono-dimensional point of view primarily considers the individual's real self-image, whereas the multi-dimensional perspective views the concept of self-image as a multi-layered concept that are classifiable into more than two types. To date, the former approach prevails in the existing literature, but the concept of self-image as two different elements, the actual self and the ideal self, is gaining more validity among researchers recently (Belch 1978; Belch & Landon, 1977; Delozier, 1971; Dolich 1969; Dzewaltowski et al., 1972).

As a customer's self-congruity with a brand increases, the customer's affection and loyalty toward the brand grow as long as the company builds a brand community (Kim et al., 2003; Lee & Jang, 2002; Han et al., 1999). In addition, Kim (2006) argues that the congruity between a sponsor's brand and the consumer's perceived self-image as well as the congruity between the sponsor's brand and the sponsored event can influence BRQ.

Thus, companies that implement certain events and associate certain athletes with an image similar to that of their brand can enhance their image, brand awareness, their consumers' purchasing activities, and the effects of their sponsorships. Therefore, based on the findings of prior studies, this study aims to discover the effects of brand's sports sponsorship in social media on brand consumer's congruity.

#### **2.4. Brand Relationship Quality**

Most consumers have unique relationships with various brands. As a result, estimating which factors are relevant to prolonging and enhancing a consumer's relationship with a brand is an important task. In general, the longer and the better the relationship between a consumer and a brand, the more positively this relationship affects

the company's results (Kim & Ko, 2010b).

Table 1 here.

Blackston (1993) defines a brand-consumer relationship as consisting of an interaction between a consumer's attitude toward a brand and the brand's attitude toward the consumer. Similar to the relations among people, this relationship is the combination of cognitive, emotional and behavioral processes.

Additionally, the establishment of a brand-consumer relationship plays a key role in the creation of strong associations between the consumer and the brand. Research on brand-consumer relationships began with Blackston's pioneering study (1993). Qualitative studies on the brand-consumer relationship range from investigations on the levels and types of the relationship to its effects. In particular, Fournier (1998) outlines the qualitative perspective on brand-consumer relationships by studying the relationship's depth and the characteristics of the ideal brand-consumer relationship. In addition, according to Lim's research (2010), corporate marketing activities that use social media can create a positive and credible brand image, which increases brand loyalty as well. This conclusion indicates that social media strengthens brand-consumer relationships and brand sales.

As a result, companies and brands have a motive to actively engage in social media activities. Therefore, this study focuses on brand-consumer congruity and its effect on the BRQ.

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1. Research Hypotheses**

With the total number of sports fans increasing and various media channels developing, sports sponsors have utilized indirect advertising media to find new ways to

communicate with people whose advertisement awareness levels and acceptance rates had significantly decreased due to overexposure (Choi, 2008). Social media has received great interest in marketing areas as a mean of advertising a brand. In particular, the application of social media in sports sponsorships has proved its effects somewhat noticeable (Carroll et al., 2007). Despite the increased interest and application of social media sports sponsorship in practical area, a limited amount of researches have examined the influence of social media.

Rosers & Chen (2002) states that the exposure provided by a sports team's website and the self-identification of the website's users with the team influenced the level of awareness and satisfaction associated with the sponsor brand.

Thus, a brand that sponsors professional athletes and events can raise the level of familiarity and appeal of its image and motivate consumers to self-identify with this brand. H1: A brand's sports sponsorship in social-media has a positive effect on brand-consumer congruity.

Most consumers have unique relationships with various brands. As a result, estimating which factors are relevant to prolonging and enhancing a consumer's relationship with a brand is an important task. In general, the longer and the better the relationship between a consumer and a brand, the more positively this relationship affects the company's results (Fournier, 1998).

Kim & Ko (2012) investigate the effect of social media marketing activities on customer equity and purchase intention, which concluded five factors of the perceived social media marketing activities of luxury brands through confirmatory factor analysis including entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customization, and word of mouth. The results indicate that all factors of social media marketing activities exert a significant effect on customer equity and purchase intention. Kim & Hur (2003) also suggest that the

interaction between a brand and its consumer from internet-based marketing activities plays an important role in building the brand-consumer relationship. This is because the internet marketing environment is generally based on the consumers' interactions, experiences, and level of activity, which helps strengthening a sense of unity between a brand and consumers. Also, marketing activities through social media aim to provide consumers with the optimum experience and lead to interaction, which continues to enhance the relationship between a brand and consumers (Hur, 2007).

According to Lim's research (2010), corporate marketing activities that use social media can create a positive and credible brand image, which is said to increase brand loyalty as well. This finding indicates that social media strengthens brand-consumer relationships and brand sales. Also, Rosers & Chen (2002) state that the exposure provided by a sports team's website and the self-identification of the website's users with the team influences the level of awareness and satisfaction associated with the sponsor brand.

Therefore, this study assumes that a brand that incorporates social media into an integrated marketing strategy can improve the brand-consumer relationship quality. H2: A brand's sports sponsorship in social-media has a positive effect on the BRQ.

A consumer's self-identification with a brand has a positive effect on his or her preferences and repurchasing activities (Han et al, 1999; Kim et al, 2003; Lee et al, 2002). In addition, Kim (2006) concludes that the BRQ is significantly influenced by the congruity between the sponsor's brand and the consumers' perceived identification with the brand as well as the congruity between the sponsor's brand and the sponsored events.

Thus, by serving as a marketing tool, a company's sponsorship activity plays a significant and positive role in improving the quality of the brand-consumer relationship quality. The sponsorship activity can enhance the effect of the sponsorship, company's

image, consumer brand awareness, and consumers' purchase behavior when the company sponsors events or athletes that possess a similar image to the existing image of the company. According to Meenaghan's research (1991), if a customer has a good feeling towards a certain sports event, then he or she will become a fan and form positive attitude towards the sponsor's brand.

Hence, if a company effectively utilizes a sports-related sponsorship, then its brand equity will rise in the long term, and the company's image, products, services, and sales will increase in the short term. H3: Brand consumer's congruity has a positive effect on the BRQ.

Also, demographic characteristics (e.g., gender and age) may be important indicators due to the substantial differences in utilizing digital media, especially confirmed by studies applying technology acceptance model (TAM) (Shin, 2009). In case of the characteristics of gender, a gap between female and male was found in using mobile chatting service (Nysveen et al., 2005) as well as in perception of functional aspects of online shopping (Rodgers & Harris, 2003). In addition, Shashaani (1994) and Turkel (1998) suggest that women and men differ in attitudes towards new media, and some researchers insist that using computers (Mok, 2003) or mobile-phones and experiencing various contents of new media (Bae, 2006; Lee & Sohn, 2005) differ according to gender. In result, it can be assumed that the customer's acceptance intention on new technology will vary depending on gender. Also, Kim & Ko (2010a)'s study, which indicates that social media-related marketing activities exert a significant effect on customer equity and purchase intention, suggests that such effect differs by demographic characteristics, including gender.

Sports brands endorsing famous athletes with an acknowledged accomplishment and physical attraction as the brand model can enhance and promote the value of

products and the brand. When endorsed, the relationship between sponsor related image and the consumer tend to differ in accordance to gender, resulting in difference on brand-consumer relationship quality (Kim, 2006; Gardener & Shuman, 1987).

Based on these results, the brand's sports sponsorship in social media activity, the brand consumer's congruity, and the BRQ are likely to vary systematically based on gender. H4a: The effects of brand's sports sponsorship in social-media activities on brand consumer's congruity differ by gender. H4b: The effects of a brand's sports sponsorship in social-media activities on the BRQ differ by gender. H4c: The effect of brand consumer's congruity on BRQ varies systematically by gender.

During the past ten years, the average age of Korean internet users has increased, their age bracket has become larger and they have expanded into using social networking services (Korea Internet & Security Agency, 2010). Internet users in Korea were most commonly found among teenagers and users in their twenties, but people in their thirties and forties showed the highest growth rate for Internet use. The number of internet users increased 4.7 times by 2010 compared to the growth rate in 2000, and the total usage percentage increased by 64.6%. However, the usage patterns of social media also differ depending on age. Men and women in their twenties use social media such as Twitter and Facebook more comfortably with their mobile phones than the elderly (Shim et al., 2011). In the revised TAM, which explains the different acceptance behavior on smart phone based on personal characteristics (i.e. age) and technological aspects, age was found to play a significant role in accepting new technology ( King & He, 2000). The differentiating effect of age which has been suggested in literature needs to be further investigated because age is considered the most basic demographic characteristic that can effectively build a customer segmentation strategy and customer management plan (Kim & Ko, 2012).

According to Lim's research (2010), corporate marketing activities that use social media can create a positive and credible brand image, which increases brand loyalty as well. This finding indicates that social media strengthens brand-consumer relationships and brand sales. However, the results have shown that the degree of such vary according to age difference. In addition, Kim (2006) concludes that the BRQ is significantly influenced by the congruity between the sponsor's brand and the consumers' perceived identification with the brand as well as the congruity between the sponsor's brand and the sponsored events, which also differ depending on the demographic characteristics such as age.

Based on these results, the brand's sports sponsorship in social media activity, the brand consumer's congruity, and the BRQ is likely to vary systematically based on age. These findings inform the following hypotheses. H5a: The effects of a brand's sports sponsorship in social-media activities on brand consumer's congruity vary systematically by age. H5b: The effects of a brand's sports sponsorship in social-media activities on the BRQ vary systematically by age. H5c: The effects of brand consumer's congruity on the BRQ differ by age.

Figure 1 here.

### **3.2. Research Subject**

For the study, sports brand Nike was selected as the focal brand and Tiger Woods and Michelle Wie as the sponsored athletes of the research. Nike was chosen for its active involvement in sports athlete sponsorship both domestically and internationally (Seong et al., 2010). This is not an exception in Korea, as Nike brand is conducting active marketing activity in various sports fields based on their aggressive sports marketing policy. In addition, while they are ranked first in the industry, they are also

said to be the one of the most successful companies in terms of sports sponsorships in Korea. Moreover, Nike is one of the most well-known brands among the consumers (Choi, 2008).

When selecting the sponsored male athlete, Tiger Woods represents a valid male subject because at the time of data collection for the study he was the world's most successful golf player and had the highest annual income (i.e., \$74,300,000) among golf players. For the female subject player selection, Michelle Wie often referred to as "the female Tiger Woods", was selected for her outstanding performance and her 1<sup>st</sup>-ranked income among female golf players (Golf Chosun, 2010).

### **3.3. Measurement**

The questionnaire consisted of questions about the consumers' sports-brand-related purchase behavior, experiences with using social media, brand consumer's congruity, BRQ, and demographic information. In addition, the questionnaire included questions about the attributes of the Brand's Sports Sponsorship in Social-Media activities. Questions about the purchase behavior focused on purchase experience and purchase frequency (Kim & Ko, 2010a).

Additionally, based on Kim & Ko's study (2010a), four questions measuring the consumers' experiences with using social media were used. The study included asking 25 questions on the relevancy of attributes of brand's sports sponsorship in social-media activities (Han & Suh, 2010; Lee, 2007; Kim, 2010). Based on prior studies (Lee et al., 2008; Sirgy, 1980), the questions about brand consumer's congruity consisted of 3 parts: brand-self image congruity, brand-athlete image congruity, and athlete-self image congruity. To measure the BRQ, we referred to the studies by Fournier (1998), Kim (2002), Hur (2003), and Kim (2006) to construct a total of 32 questions that were largely

categorized into 3 parts: emotional, socio-emotional attachment, and supportive-cognitive belief.

### **3.4. Sample and Data Collection**

This study conducted the convenience sampling method targeting men and women from their twenties to forties. For equalizing the age and gender as much as possible and obtaining a similar number of samples between men and women, samples were collected from undergraduates and graduate students in Korea and employees in sports centers, golf clubs and domestic companies, LG and Samsung. We conducted the questionnaire survey by testing whether the respondent had experiences with using Nike-related products and social media. In addition, we separated the female and male subjects (i.e., Michelle Wie and Tiger Woods, respectively). A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed. From these questionnaires, 362 responses turned out to contain entirely completed questionnaires, and 322 out of the 362 respondents had experience with the brand. Nike these 322 responses were used for analysis. We conducted frequency analysis, factor analysis, correlation analysis, and reliability analysis by using the data collected from SPSS 18.0. Confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling were assessed via AMOS 18.

The sample is divided almost equally between males (50%) and females (50%). Additionally, the numbers of respondents in their twenties, thirties, and forties were 139 (43.1%), 110 (34.3%), and 73(23%), respectively. With regard to the level of education, more than half of the respondents (53%) had graduated from a university or a higher-level institution, which indicates a relatively high level of education. With respect to occupation, the largest proportion of the population, 111 people (34%), held an office job. The second most common occupation was a student, and the least common position was a professional.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Factor Analysis

After eliminating the questions showing low relevance and reliability, multiple factor analyses were conducted, which resulted in 14 questions on the attributes of Brand's Sports Sponsorship in Social-Media activities, 18 on the brand consumer's congruity, and 22 on the BRQ (Table 2, 3, 4).

Cronbach's alpha values of all factors were higher than 0.8, which indicates the sample's reliability because values are above the standard (0.7) (Dabholkar & Baghozzi, 2002). Next, Amos 18 was used to test the convergent validity. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted for three variables; brand's sports sponsorship in social-media activities, brand consumer's congruity, and BRQ included in the research model and extracted substantial evidence to explain the correlations of the variables. The Structural Equation Model (SEM) shows an excellent model fit:  $\chi^2=124.08(p=.00)$ , AGFI=.88, NFI=.92, IFI=.94, CFI=.94, GFI=.93 and RMSEA=.05.

Before verifying the hypotheses, Pearson's correlation analysis was conducted to investigate each variable's correlation with each other. The correlations among all three variables were found to be above 0.01 at a significant level (Table 5).

Table 5 here.

### 4.2. Hypotheses Testing

#### 4.2.1. Results of Structured Equation Model Analysis

Relationship between brand's sports sponsorship in Social-media activities and brand consumer's congruity

H1 examines the relationship between Brand's Sports Sponsorship in Social-Media activities and brand consumer's congruity. The result shows that this relationship

is significant ( $\beta=0.56, p <.001$ ). This finding complements Rosers & Chen's (2002) research findings, which discovered that self-congruity with a brand can be affected by exposure to the sponsored sports team through websites, various events, and the athletes' sponsorships, as self-congruity can elevate the benevolence and attractiveness of the brand. That is, a corporation can effectively improve its image through brand's sports sponsorship in social-media activities and increase the sense of unity between the customers and the sponsoring brands.

### **Relationship between brand's sports sponsorship in Social-media activities and BRQ**

With regard to H2, the relationship between brand's sports sponsorship in social-media activities and BRQ were examined. From the analysis, brand's sports sponsorship in social-media activities does not have a direct impact on BRQ. Thus, the findings support H2 (Table 6). This finding indicates that brand's sports sponsorship in social-media activities affect brand consumer's congruity but not the BRQ, which means that not only the usage of social media by corporations but also the general awareness toward social media remain relatively low. To resolve this problem, companies should use social media from an integrative point-of-view. That is, companies should utilize social media not just for short-term promotional purposes but also to induce genuine brand consumer interaction through active communication, involvement, and improvements in user-brand interface. By doing so, the company will ultimately improve its brand-consumer relationship and produce successful marketing results, such as improved brand assets, customer affection, satisfaction, rate of repurchase, and word of mouth.

### **Relationship between the brand consumer's congruity and BRQ**

H3 predicts the relationship between the brand consumer's congruity and BRQ. The result shows that the relationship is significant ( $\beta=0.82, p <.001$ ). This finding

supports the findings of prior research (Han et al., 1999; Kim et al., 2003; Lee et al., 2002). Thus, self-congruity with a brand can influence the affection toward the brand, the word-of mouth effect, and the attitudes toward the social media interface positively. In addition, Kim (2006) suggests that congruity between the sponsor's brand and consumer's perceived self-image as well as the congruity between the sponsor's brand and the sponsored events can influence BRQ significantly. That is, corporate sponsorship activities function as significant marketing tools that enhance the quality of the brand-consumer relationship. The structured equation model provides a good fit ( $\chi^2=125.64$ ,  $DF=32$ ,  $AGFI=90$ ,  $NFI=.92$ ,  $IFI=.94$ ,  $CFI=.94$ ,  $GFI=.93$ ).

Table 6 and Figure 2 here.

#### **4.2.2. Moderating Effect of Gender**

A multi-group analysis was conducted to test the moderating effects of gender. With regard to H4-a, it was found that a company's social-Media activities showed a significant relationship with the male consumer group's brand consumer's congruity ( $\beta=0.63$ ,  $p < .001$ ). For the female consumer group, the relationship was significant as well ( $\beta=0.47$ ,  $p < .001$ ). In addition, the difference in the standardized coefficients between the two groups is above 0.10, which supports H4-a (Table 7).

That is, gender does moderate the relation between a brand's sports sponsorship in social-media activities and its consumers' self-congruity with the sports brand. For both male and female consumers, who have previously experienced the sports brand's products, brand's sports sponsorship in social-media activities can improve the brand image overall.

The findings of H4b differ by gender. For the male consumer group, the brand's

sports sponsorship in social media activities does not show a significant relationship with the BRQ, whereas for the female group, the brand's sports sponsorship in social media activities show a significant relationship with the BRQ ( $\beta=0.44, p <.001$ ).

The difference in the standardized coefficients between the 2 groups is above 0.10, which also supports H4b (Table 7). This result confirms that gender is a significant moderator in the relationship between brand's sports sponsorship in social media activities and the BRQ. More specifically, of the two groups, female consumers are more effective subjects of brand's sports sponsorship in social media activities with respect to improvements in the BRQ.

With regard to H 4-c, the results show that brand's sports sponsorship in social-media activities have a significant relationship with the self-congruity with the sports brand for both male ( $\beta=0.93, p <.001$ ) and female ( $\beta=0.77, p <.001$ ) consumers. Additionally, the difference in the standardized coefficient between the two groups is above 0.10, which also supports H4c. (Table 7).

Table 7 here.

#### **4.3.3. Moderating Effect of Age**

Findings for H5-a indicate that the participants in their twenties ( $\beta=0.52, p <.001$ ), thirties ( $\beta=0.44, p <.01$ ) and forties ( $\beta=0.79, p <.001$ ) all show significant relationships between a brand's sports sponsorship in social-media activities and their self-congruity with the sports brand. In addition, the difference in the standardized coefficient among the 3 groups is above 0.1, which supports H5a (Table 8). This result indicates that age is a significant moderator to a brand's sports sponsorship in social-media activities and the brand consumer's congruity.

According to the study on the current state of Internet usage conducted by the Korea Internet & Security Agency (2010) and the study by Trappey and Woodside (2005) in U.S. and U.K. contexts, consumers in their thirties and forties who used the Internet and social network services (SNSs) show particularly rapid growth because they actively engage in brand's sports sponsorship in social media activities. With respect to H5b, the findings shows that the consumers in their twenties, thirties, and forties who had prior experience purchasing sports-brand-related products did not have significant relationships between a brand's sports sponsorship in social-media activities and the BRQ.

Therefore, the findings do not support H5-b. In the case of H-5c, the participants in their twenties ( $\beta=0.83, p <.001$ ), thirties ( $\beta=0.63, p <.01$ ) and forties ( $\beta=1.11, p <.001$ ) all show significant relationships between their self-congruity with the sports brand and the BRQ. The differences in the standardized coefficient among the three groups are above 0.1, which supports hypothesis 5-c (Table 8). These findings indicate that age is a significant moderator to the sports sponsorship image congruity and the BRQ.

Table 8 here.

## **5. Conclusion and Implication**

This research examines the impacts of a brand's sports sponsorship in social-media activities on the self-congruity with the sports brand and the BRQ. Specifically, the study describes how the attributes of a brand's sports sponsorship in social-media activities influence the brand consumer's congruity and the BRQ. Furthermore, the study reveals how each consumer's demographic characteristics (i.e., age and gender) moderates the relationships among the brand's sports sponsorship in social-media

activities, the self-congruity with the sports brand, and the BRQ.

The findings support the following conclusions. First, the relationship between brand's sports sponsorship in social-media activities and the brand consumer's congruity is significant. That is, a brand can effectively improve its image through brand's sports sponsorship in social media activities, these activities can increase the sense of unity between the consumers and the sponsoring brands and, consequently, heighten the BRQ.

Second, a brand's sports sponsorship in social-media activities seldom has a direct impact on BRQ. This result contradicts the findings of existing research, which suggest that corporate brand's sports sponsorship in social-media activities can help project a positive and credible brand image as well as improve brand loyalty and the customer-brand relationship (Lee et al., 2004; Kim et al., 2003; Trappey & Woodside, 2005).

Thus, companies should use social media from an integrative point of view instead of using these media as a short-term promotional tool. Brand strategists should induce more people to engage in genuine interaction by increasing the level of active communication and involvement and improving the user interface. So brand strategists improve brand consumer relationships ultimately and produce successful marketing results, such as more brand assets, customer affection, satisfaction, rates of repurchase, and word-of-mouth.

Third, by examining the relationship between the brand consumer's congruity and the BRQ, the study shows that brand consumer's congruity has a positive effect on the BRQ. In particular, prior studies (Han et al., 1999; Kim et al., 2003; Lee et al., 2002) claim that as the self-congruity with a brand increases, the formation of the brand community influences the brand's affection, rate of repurchase and word-of-mouth effect positively. This result is in accordance with this study's findings. Thus, self-congruity with a brand can affect the brand affection, word-of-mouth effect, and attitude toward the

social media interface positively.

In addition, Kim (2006) suggests that the self-congruity between the brand and the consumer's perceived self-image, as well as that between the brand and the sponsored events, affects BRQ. That is, corporate sponsorship activities work as a marketing tool that enhances the quality of the relationship between brands and consumers.

Fourth, after examining the moderate effects of gender on a brand's sports sponsorship in social-media activities, the self-congruity with the sports brand and the BRQ, gender is a significant moderator to a brand's sports sponsorship in social-media activities as well as the self-congruity with the sports brand. For the male group having prior experience with the sports brand's products, brand's sports sponsorship in social-media activities can improve their self-congruity with the sports brand, which makes the male consumers associate the brand with a more positive value. This result agrees with Kim (2006)'s findings suggesting that male consumers show brand consumer's congruity and that this image congruity affects the BRQ.

In addition, with regard to the relationship between a brand's sports sponsorship in social-media activities and the BRQ, the study here finds that gender is a significant moderator in the relationship between brand's sports sponsorship in social-media activities and the BRQ. More specifically, if the objective is to improve the BRQ, then the female consumer group is the more effective subject for a brand's sports sponsorship in social-media activities. With respect to the relationship between the brand consumer's congruity and the BRQ, gender acts as a significant moderating variable.

Fifth, the study shows that age is a significant moderator on the relationship between a brand's sports sponsorship in social-media activities and the brand consumer's congruity. The detailed findings suggests that the consumer group in their forties who had previously purchased the sports brand's products are the most susceptible to having

their brand consumer's congruity affected by the a brand's sports sponsorship in social-media activities. The users in their thirties and forties are as active as the users in their twenties in participating in a brand's sports sponsorship in social-media activities.

However, in the relationship between a brand's sports sponsorship in social-media activities and the BRQ, age was not a significant moderator. This result is likely due to the lack of authentic information provided by social media and the risk of leaking private information, despite the rapid growth in the number of Internet and social networking users. In conclusion, self-congruity can be influential to increase the BRQ in the sponsorship activities (Kim, 2006; Lim, 2010). Moreover, this study extended previous studies by including additional factors such as brand's sports sponsorship in social media activities and consumers' characteristics.

Studies of the social media marketing of sports brands targeting Korean consumers are scarce until now. However, if the use of the social media marketing may increase since the target groups can be identified precisely. From academic perspectives, the findings of this study are an important contribution to the improvement on brand outcome and BRQ by providing valuable information to marketing specification and establishing and managing brand strategy.

Also, this research provides the brand manager and practitioners with useful information for customer segmentation and building brand strategy in sports sponsorship using social media in practical perspectives. The findings of this study suggest tools for improving brand outcomes by investing in a brand's sports sponsorship in social-media. Moreover, it provides information that can predict the future moves of consumers by analyzing consumer-brand relationship quality.

Limitations of this study comes from selecting Tiger Woods as a case subject, considering the possibility of the results being distorted due to his recent personal issues.

Also, the generalization of this study may be limited since it used a specific brand and category. Moreover, the survey was conducted with the consumers within a limited range of age and geographic area.

Future research can improve the present study by conducting a survey in the American market as well since this study focuses on an American brand and American athletes. Since this study only focuses on a specific category, future studies may explore many different sports and countries.

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**Table 1: Brand Relationship Quality**

<b>Affective and Socio-Emotive Attachments</b>	Love/ Passion
	Self-Connection
<b>Behavioral Ties</b>	Interdependence
	Commitment
<b>Supportive Cognitive Beliefs</b>	Intimacy
	Brand Partner Quality

**Table 2: Confirmative Factor Analysis of Brand's Sports Sponsorship in Social-Media**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Items</b>	<b>Factor Loading</b>	<b>Cronbach's <math>\alpha</math></b>
<b>Entertainment</b>	Nike's social media contents are interesting.	.82	.90
	Using Nike's social media is fun.	.87	
	Gathering information regarding a brand or fashion product through Nike's social media is fun.	.81	
	Using Nike's social media is good for wasting time.	.68	
<b>customization</b>	Nike's social media provides customized service to my demand.	.79	.84
	Nike's social media enables information search customized to my demand.	.76	
	Nike's social media will provide information I am interested in real time.	.85	
<b>Word of mouth</b>	I want to write my opinion regarding brand, product, or service in Nike's social media outlet.	.74	.85
	I want to give my opinion regarding the brand, product and service to others in Nike's social media outlet.	.79	
	I want to upload the contents of Nike's social media to my blog or micro-blog.	.82	
<b>Interaction</b>	Through Nike's social media, mutual communication is possible.	.75	.89
	Using Nike's social media makes it easy to deliver my opinion.	.77	
	Through Nike's social media, conversation or exchanges in opinion with other users is possible.	.86	
	Through Nike's social media, sharing information with other users is possible.	.84	

**Table 3: Confirmative Factor Analysis of Brand-consumer's Congruity**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Items</b>	<b>Factor Loading</b>	<b>Cronbach's <math>\alpha</math></b>
<b>Congruity of Brand Ego</b>	Nike expresses my own image well.	.77	.94
	Nike's image is consistent with the actual image that I have.	.84	
	Nike's image is consistent with my actual image that others also perceive.	.87	
	Nike's image is consistent with the image that I want to have.	.86	
	Nike has the ideal image that I want to have.	.85	
	Nike's image is consistent with my ideal image that I want to show others.	.83	
<b>Congruity of Brand-Athlete</b>	The athlete's image expresses Nike's corporate image well.	.86	.95
	The athlete's image is consistent with the actual image of Nike, the sponsoring company.	.90	
	The athlete's image is consistent with Nike's actual image that its consumers perceive.	.87	
	The athlete's image is consistent with the actual corporate image of Nike which wishes to project.	.88	
	The athlete's image has the ideal image that Nike wants to have.	.83	
	The athlete's image is consistent with Nike's ideal image that Nike wants to show consumers.	.78	
<b>Congruity of Athlete Image Ego</b>	The athlete's image expresses my image well.	.76	.95
	The athlete's image is consistent with my actual image.	.81	
	The athlete's image is consistent with my actual image that others also perceive.	.83	
	The athlete's image is consistent with the image that I want to have.	.83	
	The athlete's image is the ideal image that I want to have.	.86	
	The athlete's image is consistent with my ideal image that I want to show others.	.87	

**Table 4: Confirmative Factor Analysis of the BRQ**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Items</b>	<b>Factor Loading</b>	<b>Cronbach's <math>\alpha</math></b>
<b>Affective and Socio-emotive attachment</b>	I think that Nike and I fit well.	.72	.92
	I have bought many Nike-related products.	.82	
	I think other brands cannot substitute for Nike.	.70	
	I feel strong attraction to Nike.	.82	
	I used Nike for a long time.	.80	
	I feel the emotion I can't have in other brands in Nike.	.80	
	Nike is similar to me in many parts.	.74	
	In the future, I want to maintain long-term relations with Nike.	.74	
<b>Supportive Cognitive Belief</b>	I know a lot about Nike.	.80	.95
	I feel I know a lot about Nike.	.87	
	I know many things about Nike that people don't know.	.83	
	I know about the company behind the Nike brand.	.79	
	I feel I have known Nike for a long time.	.73	
	Whenever I use Nike, I feel how much I like this brand and how necessary it is.	.75	
	I know that Nike is sincerely in its treatment toward me.	.83	
<b>Behavioral Ties</b>	Nike makes me think about who I am.	.87	.92
	Using Nike, I can convey my image well, so I especially feel affection toward the brand.	.86	
	Nike tells many things about my current and future look.	.91	
	Nike expresses my social position.	.81	
	I think Nike and I share a mutually beneficial existence.	.88	
	I regard Nike as very precious to my life.	.90	
	I will not use other brands besides Nike.	.77	

**Table 5: Correlation analysis**

Construct	SMMA	SSIC	BRQ	Mean	S.D.
BSSMA	1.00	-	-	4.24	.92
CBC	.422**	1.00	-	3.83	1.06
BRQ	.41**	.61**	1.00	3.55	1.18

BSSMA: Brand's Sports Sponsorship in Social-Media activities, CBC: Consumer-Brand Congruity, BRQ: Brand relationship quality, \*\* $p < .01$

**Table 6: Hypotheses Testing Results**

Hypotheses		$\beta$	t-value	Result
H 1	Brand's Sports Sponsorship $\rightarrow$ Brand-consumer's Congruity	.56	7.33***	O
H 2	Brand's Sports Sponsorship $\rightarrow$ BRQ	.05	.74	X
H 3	Brand-consumer's Congruity $\rightarrow$ BRQ	.82	9.37***	O

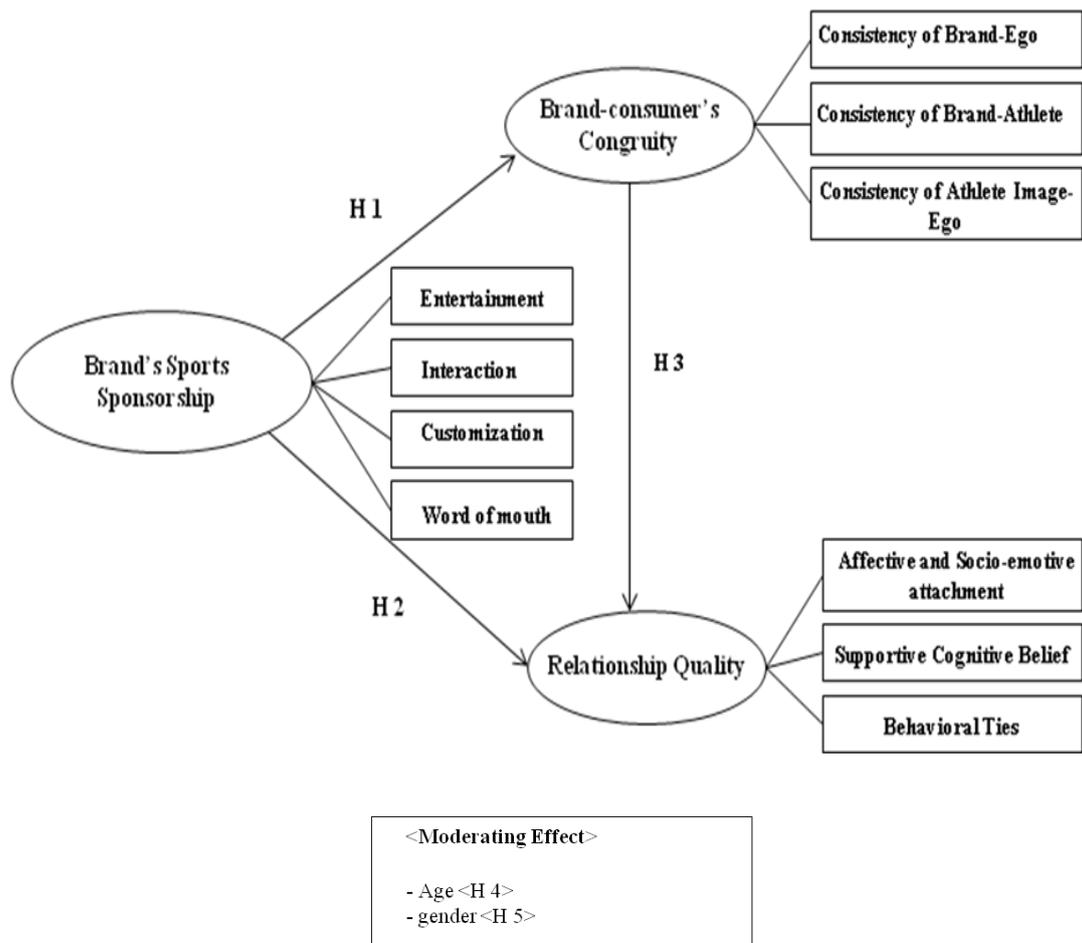
\*\*\* $p < .001$ , O: Supported, X: Rejected

**Table 7: Result of Multi-group Analysis (Gender)**

Hypotheses		$\beta$		t-value		Results
		M	F	M	F	
H 4-1	Brand's Sports Sponsorship $\rightarrow$ Brand-consumer's Congruity	.63	.47	5.58***	4.76***	O
H 4-2	Brand's Sports Sponsorship $\rightarrow$ BRQ	-.09	.44	-.73	4.37**	O
H 4-3	Brand-consumer's Congruity $\rightarrow$ BRQ	.93	.77	5.98***	7.68***	O
Multi-Group Analysis: $\Delta\chi^2=16.77(p < 0.05)$ , ** $p < .01$ , *** $p < .001$ , O: Supported						

**Table 8: Result of Multi-group Analysis (Age)**

Hypotheses		$\beta$			t-value			Results
		20s	30s		20s	30s		
H 5-1	Brand's Sports Sponsorship $\rightarrow$ Brand-consumer's Congruity	.52	.44	.79	5.00***	2.91**	4.6***	O
H 5-2	Brand's Sports Sponsorship $\rightarrow$ BRQ	.13	.06	-.28	1.49	.46	-1.32	X
H 5-3	Brand-consumer's Congruity $\rightarrow$ BRQ	.83	.63	.77	7.45***	3.47***	7.68***	O
Multi-Group Analysis: $\Delta\chi^2=17.73(p < 0.05)$ , * $p < .05$ , ** $p < .01$ , *** $p < .001$ , O: Supported, X: Rejected								



**Figure 1: Research Model**

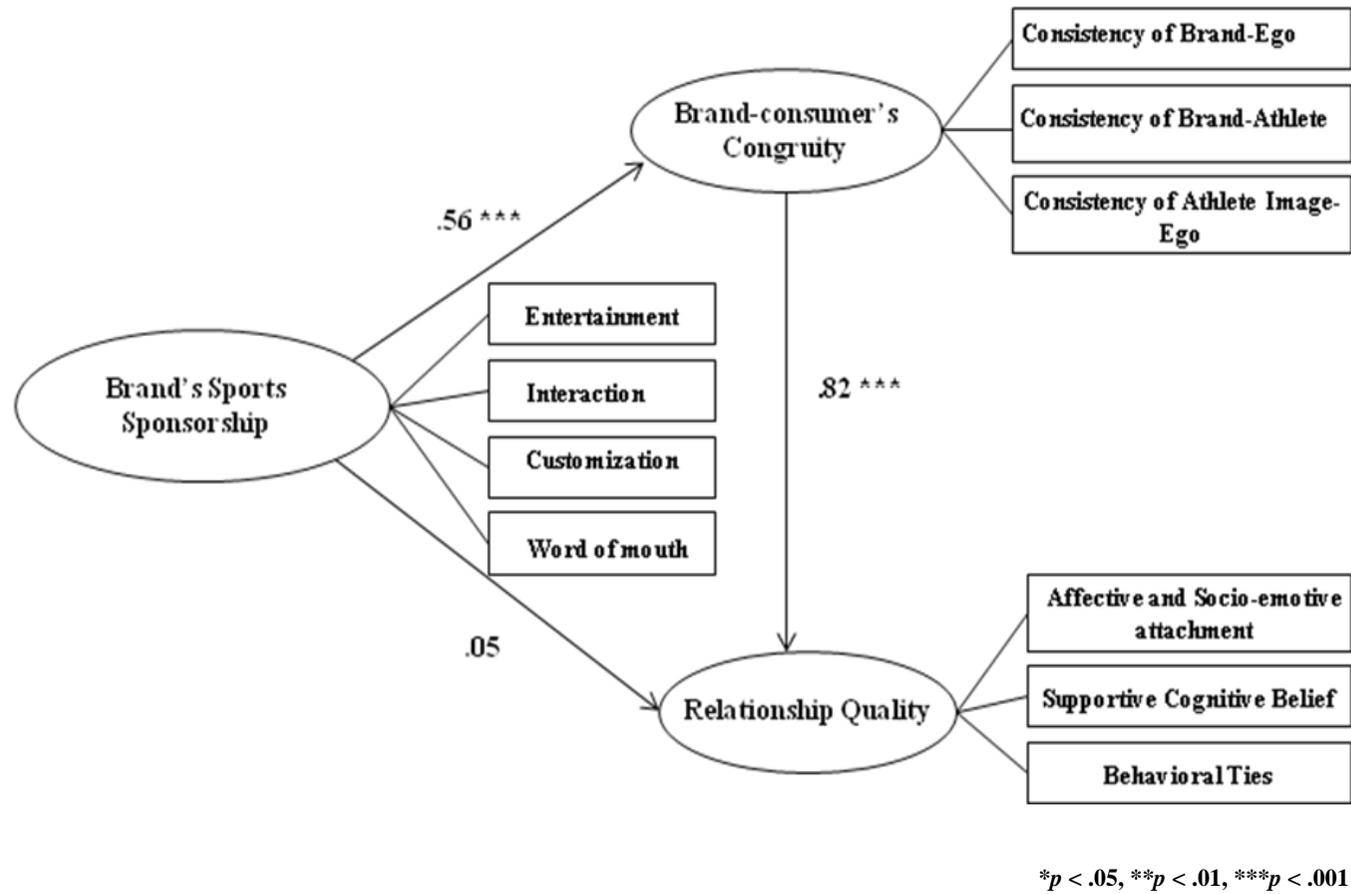


Figure 2