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## Tiger Woods, Nike, and I are (not) best friends: how brand's sports sponsorship in social-media impacts brand consumer's congruity and relationship quality

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This study examines the effects of brand's sports sponsorship in social media on brand consumer's congruity and brand relationship quality. The study included 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 significant effects on brand consumer's congruity. Second, this congruity significantly 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 previous purchases of the sponsored brand. Lastly, consumers in their forties with prior experience consuming the sponsor's brand products are most affected by the level of self-congruity with the sports brand compared to younger or older consumers.

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

### 1. Introduction

Sports brands in the fashion industry are using social media to improve the quality of the relationships to their customers in order to communicate more effectively. Sports brands utilize social media as a promotional and collaborative tool to build a relationship 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 (Choi 2008). Through social media, brands and customers are working together to create new products and services that enhance the value of the brand. In this manner, sponsorship by sports brands using social media has emerged and, in the present state in which the effects are attracting attention, it was determined that a study was needed that systematically identifies the relationships of influences among these effects.

Despite the rapid increase in the number of sports brands using social media as a marketing tool, studies related to social-media marketing are rare. In addition, scholars must research on the specific effectiveness of sponsors that unite their brands and their sponsored players because this tool may effectively manage and improve the brand relationship quality (BRQ). About 25% of US advertisements use celebrity endorsers (Shimp

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2000). These trends show many companies thought that celebrity endorsers positively impact consumer attitudes towards an advertisement, purchase intention (Amos, Holmes, and Strutton 2008).

Furthermore, customers and the brand are creating new products, services, and sports brand values together through social media, which influence the enhancement of quality in the relationship between customers and the brand (Kim 2006; Park and Kincade 2010). However, despite the fact that the number of cases actively using social media increases, studies that have analyzed the effects quantitatively are currently insufficient. Having this as a consideration, at present, 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 the 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 (i.e., 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.

A 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 (Chu, Kamal, and Kim 2013; Kim and Bae 2006; Kim 2006; Noh 2005; Pihl 2013; Trappey and 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, much research appears through Twitter contexts, which is one of the most famous micro-blogging networks in the world. However, the empirical research on micro-bloggers is insufficient.

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 and Ko's (2010a) study, which indicates that social-media-related marketing activities exert a significant effect on customer equity and purchase intention. Further, this study can provide insight on the influence of brand's sports sponsorship in social media on BRQ.

## 2.2. Sports sponsorship

Sponsorship is one of the most popular and fastest-growing promotional tools available to brand managers (Groza, Cobbs, and Schaefers 2012). 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 (Chang and Ko 2012; Chun et al. 2013; Javalgi and Traylor 1994; Kim et al. 2012b; Kim and James 2013; Sleight 1989; Zdravkovic and Till 2012). As a sales promotion tool, sponsorships can support various types of events with not only using the traditional mass media (Javalgi and 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; Han et al. 2013).

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, Holmes, and Strutton 2008; Chang and Ko 2012; Chun et al. 2013; 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; Groza, Cobbs, and Schaefers 2012; Kim 2002; Kim 2005; Kim, Ko, and Lee 2012a; Park 2010), purchase intention (Hong 2004; Lee 2003; Son 2002), and the sponsor's brand and self-congruity (Kim 2006). In addition, Han et al. (2013) suggest that high cheering event fit leads to more favorable sponsorship response.

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 and Shuman 1987; Lee 2003; Park 2010). Moreover, celebrity endorsement is considered one of the most effective ways in sponsorship marketing communications. With the prosperity of professional sports worldwide, the celebrity endorsements can be effective in promoting a sports brand (Kim 2010). However, an application of social media in such sports sponsorship and related topics remains untouched and is required to be studied.

## 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 is divided 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 and Landon 1977; Delozier 1971; Dzewaltowski, Noble, and Shaw 1972; Dolich 1969).

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 (Han, Kim, and Sung 1999; Lee and Jang 2002; Kim, Ryoo, and Sung 2003; Zhang, Ko, and Kim 2010; Han et al. 2013). 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 and Ko 2010). The BRQ includes the concepts of high quality and continuity into its conceptualization of the brand–consumer relationship (Fournier 1998).

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 finding indicates that social media strengthens brand–consumer relationships and brand sales.

As a result, companies and brands have a motive to engage actively in social-media activities. Therefore, this study focuses on brand consumer's 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 (Belch and Belch 2013; Choi 2008). Recently, 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 a practical area, a limited amount of researches have examined the influence of social media.

Roser and 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's 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 and Ko (2012) investigated 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 and 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 and 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, Kim, and Sung 1999; Han et al. 2013; Kim, Ryoo, and Sung 2003; Kim, Ko, and Lee 2012a; Ko et al. 2011). 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 (Groza, Cobbs, and Schaefer 2012). 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, the demographic characteristics (i.e., gender and age) are important indicators due to the significant differences in utilizing digital media, especially proved by major studies on 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, Pedersen, and Thorbjornsen 2005) as well as in perception of functional aspects of online shopping (Rodgers and Harris 2003). In addition, Shashaani (1994) and Turkel (1988) suggest that women and men differ in attitudes towards new media, and some researchers insist that using computers (Mok 2004) or mobile-phones and experiencing various contents of new media (Bae 2006; Lee and 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 and 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 sponsors related image and the consumer tend to differ in accordance to gender, resulting in difference on brand–consumer relationship quality (Kim 2006; Gardener and 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. 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 and 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 effect of brand consumer’s congruity on the BRQ differ by age.

Figure 1 has shown concept research model.

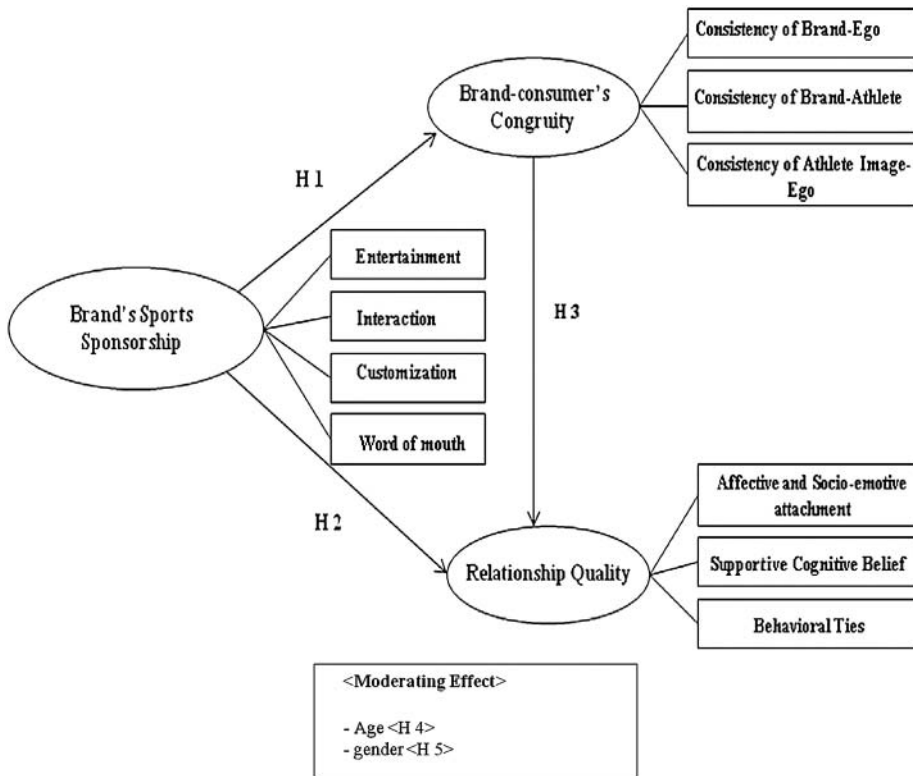


Figure 1. Research model.

### 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, Cho, and Sun 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., \$74,290,000) 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 first-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). Table 1 has shown brand relationship quality measurement.

Additionally, based on Kim and Ko's study (2010a), four questions measuring the consumers' experiences with using social media were used. We also asked 25 questions used on the attributes of brand's sports sponsorship in social-media activities (Han and 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 three 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), Kim and 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

Table 1. Brand relationship quality.

Affective and socio-emotive attachments	Love/passion
Behavioral ties	Self-connection
	Interdependence
	Commitment
Supportive cognitive beliefs	Intimacy
	Brand partner quality

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 (50.3%) and females (49.7%). Additionally, the numbers of respondents in their twenties, thirties, and forties were 139 (43.1%), 110 (34.3%), and 73(22.6%), respectively. With regard to the level of education, more than half of the respondents (52.8%) 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 (34.5%), 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 2–4).

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 and 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 the hypotheses testing, Pearson's correlation analysis was conducted to investigate each variable's correlation with each other. The correlations among all 3 variables were found to be above 0.01 at a significant level (Table 5).

### 4.2. Hypotheses testing

#### 4.2.1. Results of structured equation model analysis

4.2.1.1. 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 Roser and Chen's (2002) research findings, which discovered that self-congruity with a brand

Table 2. Confirmative factor analysis of brand's sports sponsorship in social media.

Factors	Items	Factor loading	Cronbach's $\alpha$
Entertainment	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	
Customization	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	
Word of mouth	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	
Interaction	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	

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.

*4.2.1.2. 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 do 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. Therefore, the company will ultimately improve its brand-consumer relationship and produce successful marketing results, such as

Table 3. Confirmative factor analysis of brand consumer's congruity.

Factors	Items	Factor loading	Cronbach's $\alpha$
Congruity of brand ego	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	
Congruity of brand athlete	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	
Congruity of athlete image ego	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	

improved brand assets, customer affection, satisfaction, rate of repurchase, and word of mouth.

#### 4.2.1.3. Relationship between the brand consumer's congruity and BRQ.

H3 examines 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, Kim, and Sung 1999; Kim, Ryoo, and Sung 2003; Lee and Jang 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

Table 4. Confirmative factor analysis of the BRQ.

Factors	Items	Factor loading	Cronbach's $\alpha$
Affective and socio-emotive attachment	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	
Supportive cognitive belief	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	
Behavioral ties	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		$\beta$	<i>t</i> -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.

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 structural equation model provides a good fit ( $\chi^2 = 125.64$ ,  $DF = 32$ ,  $AGFI = 90$ ,  $NFI = .92$ ,  $IFI = .94$ ,  $CFI = .94$ ,  $GFI = .93$ ).

#### 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 shows 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

Table 7. Result of multi-group analysis (gender).

Hypotheses		$\beta$		<i>t</i> -value		Results
		<i>M</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>F</i>	
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	$\beta$		<i>t</i> -value			Results	
	20s	30s	20s	30s			
H 5-1 Brand's sports sponsorship → brand consumer's congruity	.52	.44	.79	5.00***	2.91**	4.6***	O
H 5-2 Brand's sports sponsorship → BRQ	.13	.06	-.28	1.49	.46	-1.32	X
H 5-3 Brand-consumer's congruity → 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.

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).

#### 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 US and UK 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 result 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 reject 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 difference in the standardized coefficient among the three groups is above 0.1, which supports hypothesis 5-c (Table 8). This finding indicates that age is a significant moderator to the sports sponsorship image congruity and the BRQ. Figure 2 has shown the results of research model.

## 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



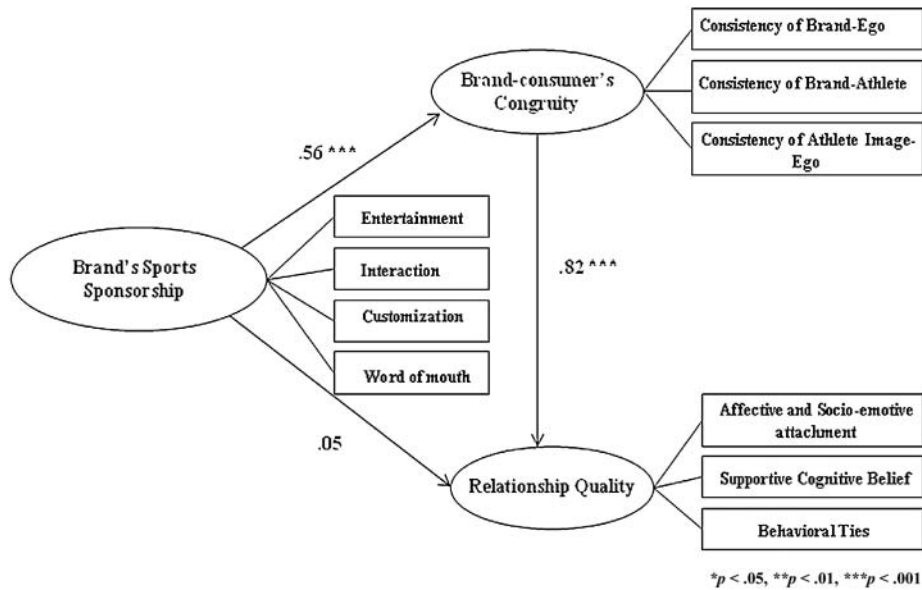


Figure 2. Results of hypotheses testing.

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, the 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, Choi, and Lim 2004; Kim, Ryoo, and Sung 2003; Trappey and 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, Kim, and Sung 1999; Kim, Ryoo, and Sung 2003; Lee and Jang 2002) explain 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.

A study of the social-media marketing of sports brands targeting Korean consumers is scarce until now. However, if the use of the social-media marketing increases, the target group is formed precisely. From academic perspectives, the result of this study will be a significant 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 can provide 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 come 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. Lastly, this study only focused on a specific category and Korean market, future studies may explore many different sports categories and different countries.

### Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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