Impact of Processing Athlete Transgressions on Brand Image and Purchase Intent**Annika Lohneiss****Griffith University****Brad Hill****Griffith University**

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Abstract

Athlete endorsers are commonly used to promote sponsor products and brands. Their image aligns with brands creating meaning and values in consumers' minds enhancing brand-equity. Negative information surrounding an athlete endorser can have adverse effects. This study surveyed 217 people through an online questionnaire distributed using snowballing technique to determine whether the level of processing Tiger Wood's extramarital affair within memory affected Nike's brand image and purchase intent. Repeated measures ANCOVA revealed a significant two-way interaction between Woods as endorser and level-of-processing on brand image. Simple effects analysis showed negative effects for deepest in memory group. Significant within-subjects main effects for endorser and between-subjects main effects for levels-of-processing the transgression emerged on purchase intent. Contrast analysis demonstrated purchase intent increased when Woods endorsed Nike irrespective of level-of-processing the affair. Effects on brand image contrast those of purchase intent. Results indicate even though brand image is depressed, organizations could continue using the athlete that has misbehaved as endorser as consumers' discount negative information surrounding the athlete when making purchase decisions. Athlete endorsers that have transgressed continue to drive sales.

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Athletes are commonly used as celebrity endorsers by companies and marketers to promote consumer products and services (Shanklin & Miciak, 1997). Their utility lies in mediating the brand equity-creation process (Seno & Lukas, 2007) by creating meaning and values in consumers' minds that transfer to brands. Halonen-Knight & Hurmerinta, (2010) confirmed athlete endorsers were capable of creating meaning and value transfer at levels generated by brands. This led them to state athlete endorsers and brands are an "alliance of equals" (p. 452).

The importance in understanding use of athletes as celebrity endorsers is demonstrated through the increasing quantity and range of studies in this area that includes; selection of athlete endorsers (Shanklin & Miciak, 1997; Wheeler, 2003), athlete endorser effects (Liu & Brock, 2011) athlete endorser effectiveness on advertising (Atkin & Bock, 1983; Braunstein-Minkove, Zhang, & Trail, 2011), athlete endorser credibility and product fit (Fink, Parker, Cunningham, & Cuneen, 2012) and athlete-brand match-up effects (Koernig & Boyd, 2009).

Factors of investigation within these studies on athlete endorsement are important to understand as they, along with the attributes of the athlete endorser, impact on consumer processing of athlete endorsed brand information. Companies rely on the attributes of the athlete to develop a positive effect on consumers which they hope transfers through a match-up between athlete and brand to improve brand image within consumers' minds.

However, using athletes as brand endorsers are not without their risks. A more recent area of inquiry to emerge from athlete endorsement literature includes investigating effects of negative information about an athlete on athlete endorsement. In a seminal work, Till and Shimp (1998) demonstrated that negative information about an athlete on athlete endorsement had potential for deleterious effects, yet their findings showed results were not consistent. Their study found lower evaluations of an athlete can lower brand evaluations but

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only when fictitious athletes were used. Brands appear to be more resilient to decreased effects from negative information about an athlete endorser when well-known athletes were engaged. Bednall and Collings (2000) also showed inconsistent results as effects of hypothetical athlete endorsers involved in scandals revealed minor social scandals can be tolerated by consumers. However, more severe ones potentially have “drastic effect” (p. 55) on their effectiveness as endorsers. Louie, Kulik and Jacobson (2001), demonstrated that the lower (higher) the culpability or blame toward athletes and other celebrities for negative information, the higher (lower) were stock market returns. Yet there was a level of blameworthiness of events where deleterious effects reversed and positive stock market returns were possible even though blame on celebrities was acknowledged by consumers. White, Goddard and Wilbur (2009) found a positive relationship existed between negative information about athlete endorsers and affects in the endorsement relationship.

Studies to date reveal inconsistent findings of effects of negative information about an athlete on athlete endorsement. Such findings have implications for organisations using athletes as endorsers who have become surrounded by negative information. Typically, most organisations separate themselves from the athlete by breaking contracts and withdrawing marketing campaigns as it believed the negative information surrounding the athlete will transfer to the organisations brand creating deleterious effects. Findings from previous studies suggest that even though consumers process the negative information there are varying degrees of consumer behaviour that follow. Not all consumers are likely to act in the same manner with consumers appearing to behave within a range from discounting the negative information to being heavily influenced. Organisations might be premature in assuming large quantities of harmful effects are likely toward their brand. It appears not all consumers will respond to negative information in a way that will negatively impact on evaluations and decisions about brands. Organisations might not need to divorce themselves from the athlete

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who has transgressed. Understanding differences in evaluation and decision making behaviour among consumers on negative information surrounding an athlete could be of practical utility for organisations.

Using Craik & Lockhart's (1972) levels-of-processing (LoP) theory it is the purpose of this study to provide better understanding for consumers' varied responses toward brands affected by negative information on an athlete endorser. LoP suggests varied responses among consumers are possible due to different mental operations performed on exactly the same items. Different mental operations result from varied amounts of cognitive activity and meaningfulness people give to a stimulus. These varied amounts of cognitive activity and meaningfulness affect the depth of encoding of a stimulus into memory and later retrieval. Understanding varied effects of encoding and retrieval of negative information on an athlete endorser is important for organisations associated with endorsers. LoP theory suggests not all consumers are likely to be affected by negative information about an athlete endorser's transgression in the same way. In that regard, deleterious effects on consumers due to negative information surrounding an athlete endorser may be less damaging than anticipated. Typically, LoP is a framework to explain memory performance on encoding and retrieval tasks involving recall and recognition (Craik & Tulving, 1975). This study will extend the LoP framework into the context examining effects of strength of associations at various levels within memory processing.

The next section of this paper provides a literature review that discusses athlete endorsement, endorsement transgressions, levels-of-processing theory and match-up hypothesis which is a popular concept used widely within athlete endorsement literature to explain findings. The literature review concludes with a statement of hypotheses for testing. The method section describes procedures and measures used to gather data with a description

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and rationale for statistical analyses performed. Results and discussion of findings are explained in relevant sections that also provide limitations to this study.

Literature Review

Athlete Endorsement

Celebrities develop their image from the way they behave within society and how they are portrayed in media. Organizations seize upon the image of celebrities to assist them with brand promotion. When a famous person endorses a particular brand, it is believed that their image is transferred to that brand (Cianfrone & Zhang, 2006; Erdogan & Baker, 2000; Magnini, Honeycutt, & Cross, 2008). As much as 20 percent of all advertising uses some type of celebrity endorsement (Till, 1998). Typically, celebrity endorsement includes entertainers such as, singers, actors, actresses or models, business people, politicians or athletes (Hsu & McDonald, 2002). Athlete endorsers are popular in their use as they provide both free publicity and testimony for the product or service they endorse, especially when the product is anticipated to have contributed towards their performance, e.g. sports shoes and equipment (Cianfrone & Zhang, 2006; Stone, Joseph, & Jones, 2003).

Even though it is part of a marketing strategy of many companies to align themselves with the sportsperson's brands, athletes are as unpredictable and unmanageable as anyone, which can be problematic for any product they endorse. It is difficult to anticipate an athlete's success in competitions or their behaviour in their private life. If the sportsperson is involved in negative incidents, the brand name they endorse also comes under scrutiny in similar fashion (Weston, 2007). Hence, athletes as endorsers can be a liability to sponsors (Stone et al., 2003).

Till and Shimp (1995) revealed that the value of an endorsement liaison emerges when effectively building an associative link between a celebrity and a brand. However, this

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link is not without risk and may be harmful for both entities. If negative publicity regarding the brand endorser occurs, this might have unpleasant impacts on the brand that the endorser is representing (Charbonneau & Garland, 2005; Miciak & Shanklin, 1994; Pornpitakpan, 2003; Till, 1998; Till & Shimp, 1995; White, Goddard, & Wilbur, 2009).

Personal characteristics and athlete behaviour do not always match the aimed endorsement strategy of a company, particularly if an athlete transgresses and this behaviour leads to negative press (Stone et al., 2003). In the past, companies have reacted differently when confronted with endorser indiscretions. Some companies have kept their endorsers under contract but refused to continue any advertising of the spokesperson until the incident was either barred or no longer in people's minds; others just let their contracts expire in a passive manner, while some dissolved the connection immediately (White et al., 2009).

Endorser Transgressions

A typical reason organisations decide to discontinue with an endorser who has transgressed is a general perception that negative publicity regarding a brand endorser may reduce the revenue of the brand and harm its image (Lear, Runyan, & Whitaker, 2008; Till & Shimp, 1998; Walker, Langmeyer, & Langmeyer, 1993). To guard against negative publicity from an athlete endorser a brand endorsement strategy can include screening out less favourable information and strongly supporting communication of more appealing information about the athlete to the brand's target audience (Farrell, Karels, Montfort & McClatchey, 2000; Seno & Lukas, 2007). However, screening out this information is challenging and might not always be possible, especially if negative incidents are widely publicized by media.

Pullig, Netemeyer, and Biswas (2006) made a distinction between two types of athlete endorsers' misbehaviour and consequent negative publicity. The first distinction is

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performance related and directly pertains to the respective sport; the second distinction is values related that concerns ethical and social predicaments (Pullig, Netemeyer, & Biswas, 2006). In sports, the established standards of behaviour or margins of moral principles are not inevitably driven by what is regarded as socially or morally right or wrong but what is commercially acceptable or unacceptable (Chadwick, 2009; Trosby, 2010). In that regard, athletes discrediting themselves might well be beneficial to a company as their indiscretion could attract new and significantly wider audience reach than the product or brand was initially targeting and allow for brand or product extensions into new markets.

According to Monga and John (2008) negative publicity is not necessarily damaging to a brand, providing that consumers have strong associations and a positive attitude toward that brand. In certain cases consumers will even argue against the negative exposure and challenge it by emphasising the positive attributes of the relevant brand (Ahluwaila, Burnkrant, & Unnava, 2000). Carrigan and Attalla (2001) found negative information in terms of unethical practices can be disregarded in purchase decision-making behaviour suggesting favourable purchase intent can occur against negative information about an athlete endorser. Till and Shimp (1998) suggested that even though misbehaviour and negative press about athlete endorsers can have an impact on the consumer perception of the particular brand, it can also provide extra media attention that can attract larger audiences increasing awareness of the brand. Furthermore, Enrico (1995), Freifeld (2004) and, Lear, Runyan, and Whitaker (2008) found brands can gain additional advertisement attention for their products when organisations were using endorsers that demonstrated socially disregarded behaviour. Dennis Rodman and Kate Moss were expected to misbehave to uphold their prevalent sinister image and maintain an image match-up between endorser and brand (Astrachan, 2010). Interestingly, Shuart (2007) revealed that in the course of time the public is likely to forget

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about the negative incidents of athletes and only remember their career highlights. Hence, not all athletes that have received negative publicity can be regarded as poor endorsers.

Brand image

Brand image is typically defined as the perceptions or brand associations that consumers hold about a brand and it is regarded as an important key determinant of consumer-based brand equity (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990; Keller, 1993). Prior researchers have used brand image to identify the position of the brand and to evaluate the effectiveness of certain advertising practices (Dillon, Madden, Kirmani, & Mukherjee, 2001; Myers, 2003; Romaniuk & Sharp, 2000) that can include athlete endorsement. Gwinner and Eaton (1999) revealed a key reason for companies choosing to enter celebrity endorsement deals is “to establish, strengthen or change brand image” (p.47). Seno and Lukas (2007) and Till and Shimp (1998) suggested that the activation of an associative link triggered by the athlete endorsement process leads to a transfer of information regarding the athlete’s activities and achievements to the brand affecting its image. In that regard, as much as favourable athlete attributes can positively affect brand image, negative information about an athlete endorser is also likely to transfer to the brand image endorsed achieving either decreased or negative brand image (White, et al., 2009).

H₁: Negative information surrounding an athlete endorser will decrease brand image.

Purchase intent

If an endorsement strategy is successful and there is a congruent relationship between endorser and brand, it can have significant positive effects on consumers’ memory such as recall, recognition, attitudes toward the endorsed products or services and purchase intent (Kamins, 1989; Liu, Huang, & Minghua, 2007; Petty, Caccioppo, & Schumann, 1983).

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Additionally, it can also amplify consumers' preferences towards a brand and ultimately their intention to purchase (Kamins, 1989; Liu et al., 2007; McCracken, 1989). Goldsmith, Lafferty, and Newell (2000) proposed that professionalism and attractiveness of celebrity endorsers and a high perceived match regarding the brand positively affects consumers' purchase intention. However, these results are achieved when endorsers are free of transgressions that can bring negative associations toward brands. When negative information surrounds athlete endorsers' transference of this negative information was found to decrease purchase intent (Murray & Price, 2012).

H₂: Negative information surrounding an athlete endorser will decrease purchase intent.

Levels-of-Processing Theory

As stated by Bettman (1979), memory is an essential part of consumer choice. Memory can be influenced by product stimuli, advertising, word of mouth and other sources of product or brand related information. It determines what data are stored in a consumer's mind and how it is organized (Bettman, 1979). Craik and Lockhart (1972) proposed a framework, levels-of-processing theory, for how information could be encoded, organised and retrieved within memory. They proposed that incoming information might require processing within a range that involves simple sensory surface analysis to a more complex semantic and cognitive elaboration. This range of encoding information results in allocation and storage of information at various levels of processing within memory (Bettman, 1979; Craik & Lockhart, 1972).

Originally, LoP theory suggested that a hierarchical order exists for the depth of information that is processed within memory suggesting a "fixed, linear series of analytical levels that could be 'stopped' at various stages" (Craik & Tulving, 1975, p. 448; Craik &

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Lockhart, 1972). This simple suggestion for memory processing has undergone considerable change whereby LoP has been refined to refer to a general process view acknowledging that elaboration and distinctiveness of information at encoding and repeated mental operations due to top-down and bottom-up processing can interrupt the linear hierarchical ordering (Craik & Tulving, 1975; Lockhart & Craik, 1990).

According to LoP theory, information processed concerned with sensory surface qualities are likely found in lower or shallower levels of memory and stored within short-term memory. Information processed from an abstract or symbolic standpoint are likely found in deeper levels of memory as they require greater capacity of processing and elaboration and are associated with a longer lasting memory of information (Craik, 1979, 1990; Craik & Lockhart, 1972). Deeper processing of information into memory requires interpretation of information and meaningfulness applied to it which usually occurs through a “richly structured knowledge base” (Craik & Lockhart, p. 361, 1986). This knowledge base is where the integration of new information can be processed allowing for significant meaningful associative connections to occur between this knowledge base and new information which assists in easier reconstructive retrieval (Craik, 1979; Craik & Lockhart, 1986).

Hence, consumers that have applied great meaning and elaboration to an athlete’s transgression and deemed it significant are likely to have processed that event deeply within memory and when consumers become exposed to that athlete they can more readily retrieve the transgression. As strong associative links occur between information processed deeply in memory, when the athlete that has misbehaved is associated with a brand through endorsement, integration of brand and athlete information is more likely leading to associative effects on the brand. On the other hand LoP theory indicates reduced meaning or significance of an event might see use of simple sensory processes which require less cognitive effort and therefore would result in weaker associations with new information. In

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this regard, associated effects between negative information about an athlete on athlete endorsement could be weak having little effect on brand evaluations.

In summary, Craik and Tulving (1975) postulate with LoP theory that the extent to which events are processed in memory is dependent upon the meaning and significance of that event to consumers and the amount of elaboration that consumers give to that event. As a result, very different outcomes are possible due to different mental operations that can be performed on exactly the same event. LoP theory suggests then that consumers making brand evaluations when exposed to negative information about an athlete endorser could have differing brand evaluation outcomes due to the different mental operations consumers can perform on the athlete's misbehaviour due to different meanings, significance and elaboration consumers' place on that transgression. As consumers' can hold varying degrees of effects of athlete indiscretions within memory, effects of the level of processing of negative information into memory about an athlete endorser on brand evaluations, in particular brand image and purchase intent, are unclear.

H₃: A hierarchical order for processing negative information surrounding an athlete endorser in memory will exist with the deepest level having greatest effect on brand image.

H₄: A hierarchical order for processing negative information surrounding an athlete endorser in memory will exist with the deepest level having greatest effect on purchase intent.

Match-Up Hypothesis

Match-up hypothesis is a popular theoretical framework used to explain findings in many studies on the relationship or fit between endorser and brand (e.g. Charbonneau & Garland, 2005; Kahle & Homer, 1985; Kamins, 1990; McCracken, 1989; Miciak & Shanklin, 1994; Till & Busler, 2000). It explains how the congruence between image, brand and

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endorser results in more positive evaluations of the ambassador, brand and advertisement (Kahle & Homer, 1985; Kamins, 1989; Koernig & Boyd, 2009). Match-up hypothesis also describes the meaning transfer of characteristics between endorser and the associated brand (e.g. Hall, 1991; Kamins, 1990; Klein, 1991; McCracken, 1989; Seno & Lukas, 2007; Till, 1998) in that to build an advantageous associative link through meaning transfer, a brand or product has to have certain symbolic features that need to be matched by the appropriate choice of athlete.

Friedman and Friedman (1979) and Ohanian (1991) revealed the benefits of developing associative links and appropriate celebrity match-up when they found the likelihood of purchasing more complex/expensive products increases when they are endorsed by someone regarded as an expert within the subject area. As an example, Tiger Woods endorsing golf equipment presents a highly congruent product image for consumers (Shank, 2002). Woods is a professional golfer, and prior to his extramarital affair was regarded as representing believability and credibility in the field of golf. Hence, the two concepts in this case, i.e., successful golfer and golfing equipment, can easily be interlinked within people's minds and providing good match-up. As levels-of-processing theory posits elaboration of meanings and associative links determine depth of processing and therefore likely effects on brand evaluations, match-up hypothesis appears a useful framework to assist in explanation of findings within this study.

Method

Sampling and Procedures

Data gathered for this study were collected through software program LimeSurvey version 1.90+ via an on-line questionnaire distributed through snowballing technique. A direct link to the online questionnaire was sent out via email contacts, asking recipients to

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forward this email and share it in turn with their own contacts. Additionally, the study link was posted on Facebook and broadcast to contacts in the same manner as email requests. Ethical approval for the study was granted by the authors' institution; Protocol Number AIS/02/11/HREC.

Initially 309 responses were collected however, inspection of cases and data cleaning revealed 217 cases were suitable for further analysis. Respondents aged in range from 18-76 ($M = 30.26$, $S.D. = .98$) years with 116 female and 101 male. The sample was mostly from European (80.5%), Australian (9%) and North American (6%) countries. Seventy per cent of respondents indicated that their highest level of education was a university degree.

The on-line questionnaire was designed in four sections using a matrix question format for most items. Participants were asked to respond to measures separately and once completed were prevented from returning to a previous screen or measure to control for re-entering of responses after possibly receiving cues from those prior sections or measures. For example, if respondents were able to read the full set of questions before completing the first section, this might have influenced their opinion about the brand image of Nike since they would already associate the brand with Tiger Woods. In that case, respondents might have then gone back and made changes to responses they made at an earlier stage.

The order of questions in the survey commenced with measures of brand image and purchase intent of Nike. After completing those measures respondents were then asked to provide three thoughts about Tiger Woods. Respondents were then asked to complete measures of familiarity with Tiger Woods before moving on to repeated measures of brand image and purchase intent however, this time, statements included Tiger Woods as endorser of the Nike brand or product. Demographic measures that included age, gender, nationality and highest level of education completed the questionnaire.

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Measures

Brand image.

Brand Image was measured using a scale which was implemented in prior research by Martinez and Pina (2009) when assessing tangible and intangible attributes and benefits of brand image. Martinez and Pina reported a Cronbach's alpha $\alpha = .85$. Statements from their scale were adapted to include the brand name Nike for the brand image scale used in this study. Statements included; Nike is a brand that is high quality, Nike's products have better characteristics than competitors, Products of competitors are usually cheaper than Nike's products, Nike is a nice brand, Nike has a personality that distinguishes itself from competitors, Nike is a brand that does not disappoint its customers, Nike is one of the best brands in the sector and, Nike is very consolidated in the market. Items were measured using a seven-point Likert-scale, anchored by Strongly agree / Strongly disagree. Scores on items were combined to form an average score of brand image of Nike. Cronbach's alpha achieved a score of $\alpha = .83$.

To measure brand image of Nike when Tiger Woods endorsed product, the brand image scale was replicated except each item incorporated "Tiger Woods as endorser of Nike product". Statements included; Nike endorsed by Tiger Woods is a brand that is high quality, Nike's products endorsed by Tiger Woods have better characteristics than competitors, Products of competitors are usually cheaper than Nike's products endorsed by Tiger Woods, Nike endorsed by Tiger Woods is a nice brand, Nike endorsed by Tiger Woods has a personality that distinguishes itself from competitors, Nike endorsed by Tiger Woods is a brand that does not disappoint its customers, Nike endorsed by Tiger Woods is one of the best brands in the sector and, Nike endorsed by Tiger Woods is very consolidated in the market. Scores on items were combined to form an average score of brand image of Nike when Woods was endorser. Cronbach's Alpha reported strong reliability of $\alpha = .90$.

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Purchase intent.

Esch, Langner, Schmitt and Geus (2006) used behavioural measures of current purchase and future purchase intent to describe relationships between present and future purchase behaviour that allowed more realistic interpretations of purchase of behaviour. Adapting Esh et al's measures for this study current purchase behaviour was measured using their two items that had statements; "How often have you bought Nike product in the past?" and "How often do you consume Nike product?" Both items were measured using a five-point scale with anchors that ranged from Not at all / Very frequently. Scores for the two items were combined forming an overall measure of current purchase behaviour of Nike product. Cronbach's alpha achieved a score of $\alpha = .92$. Future purchase intent was measured using their one-item five point semantic differential scale with the adapted statement "In the future, do you intend to buy Nike product endorsed by Tiger Woods"? This statement was anchored by Not at all / Very likely.

Levels-of-processing.

Levels-of-processing theory suggested that a hierarchical order existed for the depth of information that is processed within memory with information processed at deeper levels demonstrating longer elaboration and greater memory performance than that processed at shallower levels (Craik & Tulving, 1975). To provide a guide to determine on which level within memory Woods' transgression is likely to be processed, use is made of the cognitive response model (Greenwald, 1968). The cognitive response model asks respondents to list thoughts or associations about an object when they come to mind. Respondents' initial opinion has been found to have strongest effect on a stimulus (Sternthal, Dholakia, & Leavitt, 1978) and with strongest effects of a stimulus found deepest in memory (Craik & Tulving, 1975) respondents' first cognitive response was likely to have been processed deepest within memory. As a hierarchical order of strength of processing is posited through levels of

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processing theory, cognitive responses that follow after the initial response are likely to decrease in strength of elaboration of a stimulus. This decreasing strength allows responses to be assigned to shallower levels within memory depending upon the order it was listed in the set of cognitive responses.

The cognitive response measured in this study asked respondents to list three thoughts about Tiger Woods. This gave respondents three opportunities to recall Tiger Woods' transgression from memory. It was considered respondents who acknowledged Woods' transgression as their first thought had processed his indiscretion deepest within memory. Those who mentioned Woods' transgression as a second thought were likely to have processed his infidelity in a middle level of memory while those acknowledging the transgression as a third thought were likely to have processed it at a shallower level. Respondents who did not list Woods' misbehaviour at all were placed in a fourth category labelled "not acknowledged".

Using the LoP theory and cognitive responses made it possible to identify groups of people that had varying strengths of associations within memory about Tiger Woods' transgressions, ranging from a strong association to no association at all. To determine which level within memory respondents processed Woods' infidelity two researchers separately inspected cognitive responses from respondents about Woods to identify the types of responses that acknowledged Woods' infidelity. The two researchers then met to discuss these cognitive responses which formed the parameters for analysis and coding of data into the various levels of memory. Cognitive responses deemed to acknowledge Woods' transgression included; cheater, affair, sex addict, adulterer, womaniser, and unfaithful. The two researchers inspected data separately and coded responses into the various levels of memory that corresponded to the location of acknowledgement of Woods' transgression within cognitive responses. After coding all data the researchers met again to determine the

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level of agreement of coding responses into various levels of memory. It was found a high level of agreement was obtained. Groups formed through coding were then entered into SPSS version 19 which allowed testing to determine whether differences existed between them on brand image of Nike and purchase intent of Nike products endorsed by Woods.

Familiarity.

Familiarity of Tiger Woods could be predictive of results. Hence, familiarity of Woods was measured and included as a covariate in further testing to partial out effects of this variable. The brand familiarity with Tiger Woods was measured using a three-item, seven-point scale, with the following anchors: Familiar / Unfamiliar, Inexperienced / Experienced and Knowledgeable / Not knowledgeable. Scores for all three items were combined forming an overall measure of familiarity with Tiger Woods. According to prior research by Kent and Allen (1994), the reliability of this scale achieved a Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = .85$. Cronbach's Alpha on familiarity of Tiger Woods in this study scored $\alpha = .71$.

Data Analysis

Data gathered through use of brand image, purchase intent and familiarity scales were recalibrated and centred against zero and therefore assisted with interpretation of results. This was performed by deducting 4.0 from raw scores of brand image and familiarity scales and 3.0 from raw scores of purchase intent scale. This brought the midpoint for these scales back to zero (i.e., the point where respondents neither agree nor disagree). Positive mean scores would indicate favourable brand image or purchase intent or level of familiarity with Woods while, negative mean scores would indicate damaging effects on brand image or purchase intent and levels of unfamiliarity with Woods.

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Statistical Power

A post hoc statistical power analysis with program *G*Power* (Erdfelder, Faul, & Buchner, 1996) was conducted to determine whether the sample size and design of the study demonstrated adequate power to detect effects among levels of processing. Power analysis revealed a medium-sized effect ($f = 0.3$; cf. Cohen, 1977) could be detected at .91 critical $f(7, 209) = 2.05$, $p = .05$ when the type of statistical test used in this study, i.e., repeated measures ANOVA, was taken into account with sample size. Cohen (1988) indicated a power value of .80 should be achieved to ensure that the probability of a statistical significance test had gathered enough evidence to correctly reject the null hypothesis in preference for the alternate hypothesis. As a power value of .91 was obtained the sample size for this study was deemed adequate for statistical analysis.

Results

Manipulation Checks

Prior to testing hypotheses, manipulation checks were conducted to confirm respondents demonstrated differing levels of processing within memory of Woods transgression. As initial cognitive responses were found to have strongest effects on a stimulus (Sternthal et al., 1978) and Craik and Tulving (1975) proposed that strongest effects of a stimulus were found deepest in memory, it would be expected that respondents who acknowledged Woods' infidelity first would have strongest effects about that indiscretion and that those associations would affect brand image and purchase intent similarly. As proposed by Sternthal, Dholaki, and Leavitt (1978) and Craik and Tulving, it would also be expected that as respondents cognitive responses about Woods' transgression occurred in later responses, effects of acknowledgement of his infidelity would become weaker, suggesting weaker associations on brand image and purchase intent. This indicates relationships exist

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between level of processing transgression and effects on brand image and purchase intent and that people have differing levels of processing this indiscretion into memory.

As levels of processing groups represent strength of processing, a measure can be developed based on the hierarchical levels for processing the infidelity whereby, level 4 would represent deepest processing of transgression to level 1 representing transgression not acknowledged. In that regard, testing of relationships between levels of processing and brand image and purchase intent can occur to determine support for levels of processing. If support for evidence of levels of processing is to be found, it would be expected that relationships would exist between levels of processing and brand image or purchase intent. Correlation analyses conducted on these variables found significant negative relationships; LoP and brand image $r = -.180$, $n = 217$, $p = .008$ and LoP and purchase intent $r = -.239$, $n = 216$, $p = .001$. Results show that level of processing Woods transgression into memory is related to respondents' level of brand image or purchase intent. The higher or earlier respondents acknowledged Woods' infidelity within cognitive response analysis, which represented deeper levels of memory, the more negative brand image and purchase intent became. Hence, support is found for the proposal of existence of levels of processing and that respondents had differing levels of processing of Woods' transgression into memory.

Manipulation checks were also conducted on familiarity, age and gender of Woods by those who did and did not acknowledge Woods' transgression as well as level of processing the indiscretion. Independent samples t -test showed no significant difference between familiarity of Woods on those who did and did not acknowledge his transgression $t(257) = .787$, $p = .376$, $\eta_p^2 = .001$, observed sample effect size = .001. ANOVA also revealed no significant difference on familiarity of Woods among four levels of processing his transgression into memory $F(3, 255) = .795$, $p = .498$, $\eta_p^2 = .009$, observed sample effect size = .009. Chi-square analysis showed no significant associations of gender between those who

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did and did not acknowledge Woods' transgression $\chi^2 = .296$ (df, 1), $p = .586$ and four levels of processing $\chi^2 = 2.176$ (df, 3), $p = .132$. Age groups were measured as categories therefore chi-square analysis tested associations between age groups and those who did and did not acknowledge Woods transgression and also levels of processing. Chi-square analysis revealed no significant associations existed between age groups and those who did and did not acknowledge Woods transgression $\chi^2 = 2.871$ (df, 4), $p = .580$ and four levels of processing $\chi^2 = 12.158$ (df, 12), $p = .433$.

H₁: Negative information surrounding an athlete endorser will decrease brand image.

A 2 x 2 (endorser x transgression acknowledgement) repeated measures ANCOVA was conducted on Nike's brand image with an adjustment made for the covariate familiarity. Wilks' Lambda criterion displayed no significant two-way interaction between endorser and transgression acknowledgement $F(1, 214) = 3.241$, $p = .073$, $\eta_p^2 = .015$, observed sample effect size = .433 and no significant interaction between endorser and familiarity $F(1, 214) = .992$, $p = .195$, $\eta_p^2 = .008$, observed sample effect size = .253. Maunchley's test of sphericity showed no violation of variance between conditions. Significant within-subjects main effects were found for endorser $F(1, 214) = 89.83$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .296$, observed sample effect size = 1.0. ANCOVA revealed a large effect size with partial Eta squared demonstrating endorser accounted for approximately 30% of overall (effect+error) variance. Repeated measures ANCOVA also revealed significant main effects for covariate familiarity $F(1, 214) = 15.53$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .068$, observed sample effect size = .975. There was no significant between-subjects main effect on acknowledgement of transgression $F(1, 214) = .563$, $p = .454$, $\eta_p^2 = .003$, observed sample effect size = .116.

To check whether the non-significant result on acknowledgement of transgression was due to a lack of statistical power, post hoc power analyses using GPower (Erdfelder, et al.,

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1996) was conducted. Power ($1 - \beta$) was set at 0.80 and $\alpha = .05$, two-tailed. GPower revealed that at the observed sample effect size of .116 a sample size of 183 was needed to reach statistical significance at the .05 level. As the sample used in this study was greater than 183, results suggest it is unlikely the negative finding on acknowledgement of transgression can be attributed to sample size.

Inspection of within-subjects means when Woods did not endorse product compared to when he did showed a depressed result. Table 1 provides descriptive statistics. Results showed that when Tiger Woods endorsed Nike product he decreased their brand image but there was no indication of an effect on brand image due to his infidelity.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of With or Without Endorser and Acknowledgement of Transgression on Brand Image and Purchase Intent

		Not Acknowledged		Acknowledged	
		<i>M</i>	<i>S.D.</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>S.D.</i>
Brand Image					
No Endorser		1.43	0.72	1.38	0.77
Woods					
Endorsed		0.88	0.91	0.66	0.95
Purchase Intent					
No Endorser		-1.53	0.76	-1.68	0.59
Woods					
Endorsed		-0.37	1.13	-1.04	1.01

H₂: Negative information surrounding an athlete endorser will decrease purchase intent.

A 2 x 2 (endorser x transgression acknowledgement) repeated measures ANCOVA was conducted on purchase intent for Nike product with an adjustment made for the covariate familiarity. Wilks' Lambda criterion demonstrated a significant two-way interaction between endorser and transgression acknowledgement $F(1, 213) = 6.303$, $p = .013$, $\eta_p^2 = .029$,

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observed sample effect size = .705. ANCOVA showed a medium to large effect size however, partial Eta squared was small indicating endorser x transgression acknowledgement only accounted for approximately 3% of overall (effect+error) variance. No significant interaction was found between endorser and familiarity $F(1, 213) = .641, p = .424, \eta_p^2 = .003$, observed sample effect size = .125. The significant interaction indicates that Woods as endorser of Nike product and his indiscretion affected purchase intent.

Simple effects analysis revealed that when Woods endorsed Nike's product significant differences between those who did or did not process Woods' transgression emerged on purchase intent. Inspection of mean scores indicated that with Woods as endorser both groups improved purchase intent with those not acknowledging Woods' transgression achieving the highest score. Table 1 illustrates descriptive statistics.

Simple effects analysis also revealed a significant difference between no endorser and Woods as endorser for those who acknowledged the transgression. This finding suggests that even though acknowledgement was made of Woods' infidelity people appeared to discount this negative information and demonstrated they were significantly more likely to purchase Nike product than when Woods did not endorse product.

H₃: A hierarchical order for processing negative information surrounding an athlete endorser in memory will exist with the deepest level having greatest effect on brand image.

A 2 x 4 (endorser x level of processing of transgression) repeated measures ANCOVA was conducted on brand image of Nike with an adjustment made for the covariate familiarity. Wilks' Lambda criterion demonstrated a significant two-way interaction between endorser and level of processing of transgression $F(3, 212) = 6.701, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .087$, observed sample effect size = .973. ANCOVA revealed a large effect size. Partial Eta squared demonstrated endorser x level of processing transgression accounted for 8.7% of overall

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(effect+error) variance. No significant interaction was found between endorser and familiarity $F(1, 212) = 2.244, p = .136, \eta_p^2 = .010$, observed sample effect size = .320. The significant interaction indicates that Woods as endorser of Nike product and the level of processing of his indiscretion into memory affected Nike's brand image.

Simple effects analysis revealed that when Woods endorsed Nike's product those who processed Woods' transgression deepest into memory were significantly different from all other levels of processing groups. Inspection of mean scores indicated deepest level processing group achieved the lowest score. There were no significant differences found between not acknowledged, shallow or middle level processing groups. Table 2 provides descriptive statistics and Figure 1 illustrates results.

These results suggest that when negative information surrounds an athlete endorser, brand images are likely to be negatively affected more when people process that negative information deepest into memory than shallow or middle levels of processing. Inspection of mean scores revealed shallow, middle and not acknowledged levels of processing groups also decreased on brand image. However, as the not acknowledged group also decreased and was not significantly different from shallow and middle level groups, data suggest something else other than Woods' transgression has affected brand image of Nike.

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Figure 1. Effects of endorser and levels of processing Woods transgression on Nike's brand image. Scale has been recentred with midpoint at zero. Therefore, even though results show decrease in Nike's brand image when endorser was used scores remained favourable across LoP groups.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of Levels of Processing Groups and With or Without Endorser on Brand Image and Purchase Intent

		Not Processed		Shallow		Middle		Deepest	
		<i>M</i>	<i>S.D.</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>S.D.</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>S.D.</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>S.D.</i>
Brand Image									
No Endorser		1.43	0.72	1.38	0.78	1.52	0.81	1.45	0.76
Woods Endorsed		0.88	0.91	0.66	0.81	0.87	0.94	0.07	1.00
Purchase Intent									
No Endorser		-1.53	0.76	-1.68	0.71	-1.69	0.58	-1.65	0.34
Woods Endorsed		-0.37	1.13	-1.04	1.01	-0.99	0.94	-1.19	0.82

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H₄: A hierarchical order for processing negative information surrounding an athlete endorser in memory will exist with the deepest level having greatest effect on purchase intent.

A 2 x 4 (endorser x level of processing of transgression) repeated measures ANCOVA was conducted on purchase intention of Nike's product with an adjustment made for the covariate familiarity. Wilks' Lambda criterion displayed no significant two-way interaction between endorser and level of processing of transgression $F(3, 211) = 2.141, p = .096, \eta_p^2 = .030$, observed sample effect size = .541 and no significant interaction between endorser and familiarity $F(1, 211) = .681, p = .410, \eta_p^2 = .003$, observed sample effect size = .130. Maunchley's test of sphericity showed no violation of variance between conditions. Repeated measures ANCOVA revealed significant main effects for covariate familiarity $F(1, 211) = 11.125, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .050$, observed sample effect size = .913. Significant within-subjects main effects were also found for endorser $F(1, 211) = 146.47, p = .001, \eta_p^2 = .410$, observed sample effect size = 1.0. ANCOVA revealed a large effect size with partial Eta squared demonstrating endorser accounted for 41% of overall (effect+error) variance. Significant between-subjects main effects were observed for levels of processing of transgression, $F(3, 211) = 6.725, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .087$, observed sample effect size = .974. ANCOVA showed a large effect size with partial Eta squared demonstrating levels of processing transgression accounted for 8.7% of overall (effect+error) variance.

Contrast analysis on levels of processing the transgression when Woods endorsed product showed significant differences existed between those who did not acknowledge Woods' transgression and shallow, middle and deep levels of processing. No significant differences were found between shallow, middle or deep levels of processing groups. Interestingly, inspection of within-subjects means when Woods did not endorse product compared to when he did showed an improved result. Table 2 provides descriptive statistics

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and Figure 2 illustrates results. Results showed that when Tiger Woods endorsed Nike product he improved the purchase intention of Nike product. However, processing Woods' transgression affected purchase intent by reducing potential sales that were likely compared to those who did not acknowledge his transgression.

Figure 2. Effects of endorser and levels of processing Woods' transgression on purchase intention of Nike product.

Discussion

Using Levels-of-Processing theory as a framework, this study investigated effects of cognitive responses toward negative information surrounding an athlete endorser on brand image and purchase intent. Brand image was found to decrease but not through consumer acknowledgement of the negative information but due to the athlete endorser. Consumers processing the transgression deepest into memory had the greatest negative effect on brand image. People, even though acknowledging the negative information, demonstrated greater purchase intent for products endorsed by the athlete who has transgressed than if there were no brand endorser. However, consumers acknowledging the transgression were found to

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record lower levels of purchase intent than those who did not acknowledge the negative information.

When the athlete who misbehaved endorsed a brand, results found no difference between those who did or did not acknowledge the negative information in cognitive responses on brand image. Hypothesis 1 is not supported. Findings are consistent with studies suggesting consumers might discount negative information surrounding an athlete endorser and that negative information might not necessarily be damaging to a brand (Ahluwaila, et al., 2000; Chadwick, 2009; Monga & John, 2008; Pullig, et al., 2006; Till & Shimp, 1998; Trosby, 2010). Consumers appear to make judgements about the negative information surrounding an athlete and the likely affect that will have on their perceptions of brand image. They have been found to argue against negative information, discount the severity of negative information or blameworthiness toward an athlete and make distinctions about whether the misbehaviour is sport, values, social or ethically related. It appears consumers might search for reasons to excuse athletes who have transgressed to justify schemas. However, such reasons for discounting effects of negative information surrounding an athlete are unclear. Further work is warranted to provide a deeper understanding of consumer motives for discounting negative information surrounding an athlete endorser.

Results show that 30% of the decrease in brand image was due to Woods. As brand image decreased whether or not consumers acknowledged Woods' transgression, other factors surrounding Woods appear to negatively influence brand image when Woods is endorser. Further investigation is needed to identify such factors.

Investigation of effects of negative information surrounding an athlete endorser on purchase intent revealed significant differences between those acknowledging the transgression and those who did not when the athlete endorsed the product. Yet, scores for using an athlete endorser were significantly greater than not using an athlete endorser. Use of

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endorser improved purchase intent whether or not acknowledgement of negative information was made but, those not acknowledging the negative information demonstrated greatest likelihood for purchase. Hypothesis 2 is not supported.

Findings contrast those of Murray and Price (2012). Consumers continued to demonstrate favourable purchase intent when Woods endorsed product even though they had acknowledged his transgression. Perhaps an explanation is found in the congruent relationship between Woods and Nike and Woods and transgression. Goldsmith, et al. (2000) suggested that professionalism and attractiveness of celebrity endorsers and a high perceived match between endorser and brand positively affects consumers' purchase intention. Consumers could perceive a strong congruent relationship between Woods and Nike as there is a high perceived match between the two and this relationship has had many years to develop. On the other hand, congruence between Woods and transgression could be weak as the transgression occurred in a much shorter period of time and match between Woods and transgression is low. The professionalism and attractiveness of Woods with a highly perceived fit toward Nike has developed strong associations within consumers' minds which appear to continue to drive positive effects and purchase intention. Such strong associations might have assisted to overcome and limit effects of the weaker associations of the transgression in consumers' minds. Further investigation is needed to support this point.

The study examined whether consumers processed negative information surrounding an athlete endorser at different levels within memory which could affect perceptions of brand image. Some evidence was found that a pattern of effects for processing negative information within memory exists. Significant deleterious effects on brand image were found among those processing the negative information surrounding an athlete endorser deepest in memory. However, even though significant results were found for deepest level of processing negative information, no differences occurred among middle, shallow and not acknowledged

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groups. Data suggested shallow and middle processing levels did not follow a hierarchical order but a pattern of effects which is consistent with Lockhart and Craik (1990). Hypothesis 3 is partially supported.

Results indicate that negative information surrounding an athlete endorser or in this case Tiger Woods' infidelity was prevalent in the majority of participants' minds. However, in terms of brand image, data suggest that not all respondents who acknowledged Woods' transgression allowed that negative information to affect brand evaluations. Data showed that only those who processed the negative information deepest into memory were significantly affected. This finding suggests an entire target market is unlikely to be affected by athlete misbehaviour as not all people change their perception of a brand's image due to negative information surrounding an athlete endorser. Results suggest that a smaller percentage of people are affected by negative information about an athlete endorser than those who are not. Organisations might be premature in rescinding contracts with athlete endorsers or terminating marketing campaigns as benefits could still be gained through athlete endorsement for the remainder of those not affected.

Results on brand image also revealed deleterious effects but no differences among shallow, middle and not acknowledged processing groups which, is consistent with findings on H_1 . As brand image scores for not acknowledged transgression group also decreased, this finding supports the suggestion from H_1 that something other than the transgression has affected results.

Levels of processing negative information on purchase intent showed some evidence of a hierarchical order within memory with those processing the transgression deepest into memory recording lowest purchase intent. However, when the athlete endorser was used, no differences emerged between levels within memory for processing the transgression with middle and shallow levels not in hierarchical order. Hypothesis 4 is partially supported.

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Interestingly, and perhaps more importantly from an organisations standpoint, is that purchase intent scores were counter to those of brand image. Results showed significant increases in purchase intent of Nike product across all groups when Woods was used as endorser. Even though those who did not acknowledge the transgression were found to be significantly higher than the LoP groups, the LoP groups themselves demonstrated significant increases in purchase intent when Woods endorsed product. Hence, Woods as endorser provides great benefit to Nike as people across all levels of processing Woods indiscretion appeared to discount this negative information when considering future purchases. This finding alone strongly suggests organisations may be hasty in cancelling contracts with athlete endorsers when they are surrounded by negative information.

H₃ and H₄ were developed on the original proposal of LoP theory that stated a linear hierarchical order exists for the depth in which information is processed within memory. LoP theory was later refined to acknowledge that repeated top-down and bottom-up mental operations and elaboration of information could interrupt this linear process and a pattern of effects can emerge. Results of this study are consistent with the refinement of LoP theory.

Data showed the hierarchical order for processing negative information surrounding an athlete into memory was interrupted at shallow and middle levels. Craik and Tulving (1975) indicated that shallow sensory structural analysis does not “shade” (p. 290) into deeper semantic analysis and therefore, cannot lie on a continuum. Initial structural analysis precedes semantic analysis however, a full structural analysis may not take place on certain types of information particularly that which is highly predictable at a semantic level. In such cases minimal structural analysis may be sufficient to confirm the expectation for example, the type of negative behaviour surrounding an athlete endorser. Negative information surrounding an athlete endorser may result in less elaboration at encoding as it might be

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passed quickly to deeper levels. Upon later retrieval, increased effects are found due to semantic analysis at that point.

Some people appear to have encoded Woods' transgression quickly at shallow levels as they may have deemed such behaviour as predictable at the semantic level. When asked to make judgements on Nike's brand image and purchase intent when Woods endorsed product these people appear to have applied deeper semantic processing at retrieval which recorded greater effects than those in middle level group. If this were true, then impacts on information at time of retrieval could have greater temporal effects for those who initially processed information at a sensory level, than other processing levels. It appears that not fully processing or elaborating on negative information surrounding an athlete endorser at time of encoding may not be providing completeness within consumers' minds about the negative information. Further work appears warranted to provide greater clarity on, and effects of this point.

H₃ and H₄ included testing of LoP theory that posited deeper levels of processing within memory are associated with elaboration of information. Craik and Tulving (1975) found that deeper encodings into memory took longer and with increased durability improving memory performance. This study extended the context in which LoP theory might be applied and findings suggest that deeper levels of processing may also be associated with strength of effects. Findings that deeper levels of processing were associated with greatest effect on brand image and purchase intent appear consistent with LoP theory.

Craik (1979) and Craik and Lockhart (1986) indicate deeper processing of information occurs due to the meaningfulness people apply to information. Findings from this study suggest various degrees of meaningfulness have been applied by respondents to Woods' transgression as different effects were found on brand image and purchase intent. Hence, not all consumers are likely to be affected by negative information in the same way.

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Furthermore, results indicated that on purchase intent consumers appeared to discount negative information surrounding Woods.

LoP theory has provided a useful framework to segment consumers in terms of their level of processing negative information about an athlete endorser and resultant effects on brand image and purchase intent. Results show consumers process negative information about an athlete endorser at different levels within memory. Within each level different strengths of associations and effects are likely due to various degrees of elaboration and meaningfulness. These differences among consumers' for processing an athlete transgression provide varied outcomes. This demonstrates negative information can be processed differently among consumers and that processing of negative information surrounding and athlete endorser does not always lead to negative consequences on brand image and purchase intent. LoP theory has provided an understanding of likely segmentation within consumer memory for processing negative information about an athlete endorser. Through use of LoP theory it was found that deleterious effects on brand image and purchase intent are unlikely to occur across a brand's entire market. It appears only a small portion of market share is influenced by negative information that is likely to affect brand image. In terms of purchase intent, using an endorser that consumers have acknowledged has transgressed retards potential sales but, it boosts likely purchases beyond not using an athlete endorser. From that perspective continuing to use an athlete endorser that has transgressed continues to provide practical utility.

Understanding the various levels within memory and the meaningfulness people apply to negative information can be useful when considering implementation of an athlete endorser marketing strategy. Organisations before embarking on an athlete endorser strategy could predict the meaningfulness that their consumers have toward potential negative

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information. In that way, organisations could anticipate likely effects if such an event were to occur and make decisions accordingly about using an athlete endorser strategy.

Match-up Hypothesis suggests the increased favourable results and limiting effects of Woods' transgression on purchase intent could be due to the highly perceived fit between the athlete and the sport brand. There is clearly a strong natural link between Woods, as a highly achieving world class golfer, and Nike, as a successful global sports brand. Hence, Woods and Nike could be regarded as an extremely strong conglomerate working together as a co-brand. Repeated pairing of the two brands may have led to the formation of an immense link between them within the minds of consumers and according to Match-up Hypothesis this link becomes prevalent in peoples' minds. When thinking about Woods and future purchase of Nike product, Wood's infidelities appear not to pose a strong influence on consumers' opinions about Woods as the connection or congruence of the elements of the infidelities are not a strong match-up or fit compared to those of Woods and Nike. The development of this congruence and favourable outcome for purchase intention could also be due to consumers' desire for value in product purchases (Carrigan & Attalla, 2001) and the tangible nature and benefits for consumers that Nike bring.

Hence, the infidelities and Woods could be viewed as a weaker association than that of Woods and Nike leading to consumers discounting the effect of the transgression on future purchases. In addition, Nike and a sex scandal are not a perceived fit in people's minds and again, the strength of this relationship is therefore much weaker than the naturally perceived connection between Nike and the athlete Tiger Woods. Consumers appear to have discounted Woods' infidelities on purchase intention because of the much stronger associations and benefit the pairing of Woods and Nike provide consumers.

Furthermore, Carrigan and Attalla (2001) indicated consumers can discount unethical behaviour and social responsibility in product purchases. Woods' misbehaviour was widely

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publicized but the nature of them was deemed as family issues that were private and personal. Media did not scrutinize his professional capabilities as a golf champion and he did not face criminal charges for his actions, yet it is unquestionable that he acted immoral hurting his family and friends on a psychological level. Some may despise infidelity more than others, however; he is not a notorious criminal. This suggests that there may be scales of severity of misbehaviour within consumers' minds they use to judge negative information about an athlete when making associations to brands they endorse. Consumers may be more tolerant towards some indiscretions but not others which could have differing effects on brands. This assumption would support the indication by Chadwick (2009) that in the world of sports the margins of moral principles are not driven by what is anticipated to be socially right or wrong but rather by what is commercially acceptable. Further work is needed to provide clarity on this point.

Limitations and Further Research

Use of only one case study of a "personal" transgression was tested and results could have been valued more descriptively if a comparison to a similar case or against a "professional" misconduct issue such as a celebrity athlete found cheating in their respective sport. Differing results are likely dependent upon strengths of athlete status and the brand they are endorsing. Additionally, as the sample was mostly European, further investigation involving cross-cultural studies would be useful to increase generalizability of findings and identify similarities and differences among nationalities.

Tiger Woods' transgressions occurred over two years ago and therefore this study does not take into consideration short-term effects that may result a few weeks after such an incident. It is highly likely differing results might have occurred if this research were conducted immediately after the incident. People's negative short-term effects in relation to

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Woods' incident may have diminished; however, this study provides value in terms of a longer-term assessment of consumer's opinions supporting Shuart's (2007) suggestion that people are willing to forget and discard negative information over time.

In terms of determining levels of processing Woods' transgression into memory this study only recorded the first cognitive response made by subjects that acknowledged the infidelity. It was noted that some respondents mentioned the indiscretion in more than one cognitive response which could indicate greater effects of the infidelity on that respondent. Further investigation would be warranted to provide clarity on this point.

Further investigation of effects of negative information about an athlete endorser could be benefited by understanding the psychological involvement or attachment a consumer has with a sport in which the athlete endorser is involved. For example, differing results could emerge between those with high levels of involvement with golf and evaluations on Nike when Woods is used as celebrity athlete endorser compared to those who have no or little attachment to golf.

In conclusion, negative information about an athlete on athlete endorsement has mixed results in terms of brand image and purchase intent. Effects of negative information on brand image appear to have an elemental (those who processed transgression deepest in memory) rather than a perceived holistic (all processing groups) effect on markets. Negative elemental market effects on brand image were outweighed by positive purchase intent found across all groups which would be more beneficial to organisations considering, it involves sales and revenue. Hence, organisations need to consider carefully decisions to rescind athlete contracts or terminate marketing campaigns involving celebrities that have transgressed as perceived deleterious effects may be much less than anticipated and affect only a small segment of their market.

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