

**Athlete Endorser's Transgression and Sport Consumer's Moral Reasoning Strategy:
Moral Coupling and Boundary Conditions**

by

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to following people:

To my wife, Hyejin Min,

Thank you for your endless prayers and love. Your supports have strengthened and enabled me to accomplish this project. I am very proud of you. Thank you and I love you.

To my lovely daughter, Olivia, and unborn son,

Your brightest smiles have made me strong. I bless your lives, and love you.

To my parents, Chung Ho Lee and Young Soon Kwon,

Thank you for all your prayers and encouragements throughout my entire life. I have learned a lot from your lives, devotion and faith. Thank you and I love you.

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Most of all, I give my heartfelt thanks to my glorious Lord, God.

“Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.”

(Psalm 23:6)

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ABSTRACT

Despite the benefit of athlete endorsement as a viable marketing communication strategy, the potential risks of such campaigns and their consequences have received little attention from scholars. In particular, the various moral reasoning processes of sport consumers, which are triggered by athletes' moral transgressions, deserve greater attention, as these psychological mechanisms can affect consumers' perceptions of brands associated with morally contaminated athletes. The moral reasoning strategies of sport consumers play a crucial role in enabling researchers and practitioners to better understand diverse responses toward the moral transgressions of athlete endorsers. Contemporary research on moral disengagement seems to suggest that this reasoning approach enables the individuals to support of a wrongdoer. However, there still exist situations in the sport marketplace that cannot be explained with moral decoupling (separate performance judgments from morality judgments) and moral rationalization (justify immoral behavior in evaluating a wrongdoer). For instance, some people may find it difficult to either separate performance judgments, or justify immoral behavior of a wrongdoer, and then may tend to conflate both performance and morality judgments when they process celebrity ethical transgressions of athletes. In order to address this theoretical gap, this dissertation mainly focuses on identifying and validating 'moral coupling' (the integration of morality and performance judgments) as a distinctive yet important moral reasoning process that uniquely functions in the athlete endorsement context. By presenting a series of four experiments, this research and analysis is intended to provide an expanded theoretical framework

that facilitates a better understanding of diverse moral reasoning processes, and subsequent responses. Study 1 theorizes and validates the existence of moral coupling as an alternative reasoning process. In addition, this dissertation examines the impact of several potential boundary conditions of moral reasoning strategies and consumer evaluations such as transgression type; the functional fit between athlete and brand (Study 2); and the sociocultural background of sport consumers (Study 3). Finally, causal relationships between fan identification, moral emotions, moral reasoning strategies, and consumer evaluations of an athlete in relation to an associated brand are examined via an actual transgression case involving a celebrity athlete (Study 4).

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The use of celebrity athletes has become prevalent among commercial organizations that aim to accomplish a wide range of corporate objectives by means of advertising (Kim & Cheong, 2011). More specifically, through associations with celebrity athletes, these organizations seek to 1) build and enhance their corporate image, 2) conduct corporate social responsibility, 3) increase brand awareness, 4) drive sales, 5) improve the public's attitude toward brands, and/or 6) to transform the brand image (Charbonneau & Garland, 2005; Cornwell, Humphreys, Maguire, Weeks, & Tellegen, 2006; Olson & Thjømmøe, 2011). In other words, marketing and advertising executives are willing to spend millions of dollars to employ celebrity athletes in an attempt to associate their product images with these athlete endorsers (Kim & Na, 2007).

Although athlete endorsement may serve the aforementioned corporate objectives, utilizing athlete celebrities is far from free of risk. First of all, high profile celebrity athletes can sometimes overshadow an endorsed brand. Evans (1988) referred to this as the vampire effect. The vampire effect can be described as a situation in which consumers recognize and recall a celebrity athlete instead of the endorsed brand. Secondly, an unintended mismatch between an athlete and a brand image may be another disadvantage of employing celebrity athletes. This kind of image conflict has been known to damage the images of both the athlete and the brand (e.g., Kamins & Gupta, 1994; Kotler, 1997; Levy, 1959). Poly-endorsement is another potential risk to an endorsement campaign (Khatri, 2006). This means that utilizing athletes who endorse multiple brands may decrease the effectiveness of advertising campaigns. A celebrity who

endorses multiple brands might confuse consumers and dilute the value of both the celebrity and the brands (Khatri, 2006). Importantly, the transgressions and moral violations of celebrity athletes are the most frequently occurring threats to successful endorsement-based marketing campaigns (Wilson, Stavros, & Westberg, 2008).

Among these potential risks, the unethical actions of athlete endorsers present some of the most critical problems, as various celebrity athletes (e.g., Tiger Woods, Michael Phelps, Michael Vick, Kobe Bryant, Lance Armstrong, Ray Rice, etc.) have been engaged in a wide range of transgressions and immoral behaviors. According to Trosby (2010), athletes cannot be free from various types of transgressions. In particular, given the fact that marketing managers could control the aforementioned other risks (e.g., vampire effect, mismatch between athlete and brand, poly-endorsements) to some extent, athlete transgressions deserve more attention because the incidents are unexpected, marketers have little control over them, and there is a gap in the literature.

However, to date, despite the ubiquity of athlete transgressions, the research community has paid minimal attention to the negative impact of these transgressions on consumer response (Wilson et al., 2008). The lack of understanding caused by insufficient investigations of consumer response has resulted in managerial difficulties in reacting to controversial situations. For example, when Tiger Woods admitted his extramarital affairs in 2009, the golfer was the subject of considerable controversy among brand managers with whom he had signed endorsement contracts. Interestingly, the brands experienced dilemmas in deciding whether to continue their ties with the troubled golfer (e.g., Nike) or to discontinue (e.g., Gatorade). Likewise, in 2012, Lance Armstrong's doping scandal caused similar managerial dilemmas

regarding endorsement deals. This managerial confusion could have been caused by a lack of theory-driven and systematic research into consumer reasoning processes in those situations.

As previously mentioned, this kind of managerial dilemma arises from a lack of understanding of the multifaceted consumer responses to athlete transgressions. Existing research shows that consumers often respond differently to the same transgression (Lohneiss & Hill, 2014). However, most previous studies on celebrity endorser transgressions have mainly focused on the role of the transgression itself, and its negative impact on endorsed brands from the associative memory network approach (e.g., Thwaites, Lowe, Monkhouse, & Barnes, 2012; Till & Shimp, 1998). Much of the attention in the literature has been paid to the outcome of a match-up between a troubled athlete and a brand. For instance, Till and Shimp (1998) found that negative publicity regarding an athlete's transgression negatively influenced consumer evaluations of an endorsed brand. This means that the previous research sought to determine the consequences of transgressions on individual perceptions of endorsed brands. This approach neglects the fundamental question of '*how*' consumers process the transgression information and arrive at their moral decisions. This '*how*' question deserves research attention because it can provide answers about that diverse reasoning processes of sport consumers that lead to multifaceted responses towards the transgressors. Therefore, our knowledge of moral reasoning process of consumers can be expanded through: (a) a deeper understanding of '*how*' preexisting perceptions of a celebrity endorser influence the moral judgment processes of consumers; and (b) how other internal/external factors impact moral judgment processes.

With respect to consumer moral reasoning processes, it is well documented that cognitive dissonance occurs when the consumers simultaneously hold an inconsistent set of cognitions: positive perceptions toward an athlete and negative perceptions toward a moral transgression

committed by the athlete (Festinger, 1957). In order to cope with the disequilibrium, consumers become motivated to activate different moral reasoning routes. For instance, the literature has demonstrated that individuals often tend to activate moral disengagement strategies in order to either justify the unethical conduct (moral rationalization; Bandura, 1991), or to separate morality judgments from performance judgments (moral decoupling; Bhattacharjee, Berman, & Reed, 2013). These moral disengagement processes help consumers become more forgiving and more willing to show their support for morally tainted athletes.

Despite the evidence regarding rationalization and the separation of morality judgments, some consumers seem to find it difficult to do either, and thus conflate morality and performance judgments when they encounter celebrity athlete transgressions. For instance, some people still condemn Michael Vick, a professional football quarterback who pleaded guilty to promoting dog fighting saying “He’s NOT a great football player,” and “He is an animal...[with] little or no moral fiber. The NFL should not take him back!” (Perron, 2009). This evidence suggests that some people may find certain immoral actions to be morally impermissible, and may therefore be motivated to engage in strategies other than moral decoupling or rationalization. In some cases, it is plausible that consumers may integrate morality and performance judgments when they evaluate troubled athletes—this is referred to as *moral coupling*. Furthermore, the integration of performance and morality judgments can negatively impact a troubled athlete, and, in turn, the affiliated brands. More specifically, by integrating morality judgment with performance judgment, the image of troubled athletes may be contaminated, and the attenuated athlete images will in turn negatively affect associated brand evaluations. However, the existence of the moral coupling process, and its subsequent impact on troubled athletes and their respective endorsed brands, has not been investigated and documented in the literature to date.

The main purpose of this dissertation is twofold. First, by conducting a series of experiments, this dissertation aims to contribute to the sports marketing literature by investigating how sport consumers process negative information regarding athlete endorsers, and aims to improve understanding of sport consumers’ responses to transgressions. Figure 1 illustrates the overall structure of the dissertation. Second, this dissertation seeks to provide empirical evidence in support of answers to the managerial dilemma —“To continue or not to continue with this athlete, that is the question.”

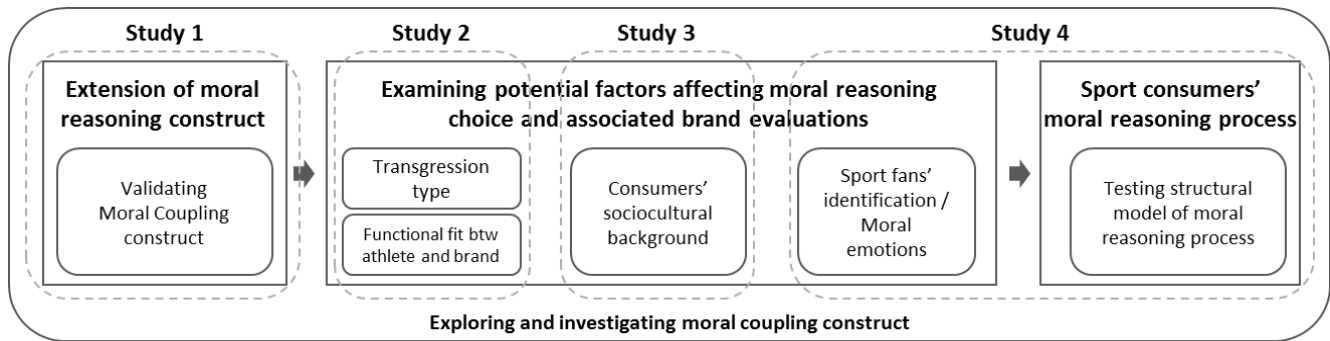


Figure 1. Structure of dissertation

Study 1 utilizes cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957). The first experiment examines the occurrence of cognitive dissonance in the minds of consumers as a prerequisite stage for individuals to activate their moral reasoning processes when confronted with an inconsistent set of information (e.g., outstanding athletic records vs. transgression information). In addition, in order to explore the existence of moral coupling strategy, another experiment examines similarities and differences based on various moral-reasoning strategies (i.e., moral coupling, moral decoupling, and moral rationalization). Study 2 manipulates two potential moderating variables (i.e., types of transgression [on-field vs. off-field] and functional fit between athlete and endorsed brand [high vs. low]) in order to investigate the moral reasoning

choices of consumers, and the subsequent perceptual outcomes regarding an athlete endorser and an endorsed brand. In Study 3, using the disjoint and conjoint models of agency (Markus, Uchida, Omoregie, Townsend, & Kitayama, 2006) as a theoretical framework, the influences of sociocultural background (i.e., Western vs. Eastern culture) on moral reasoning choice and its subsequent impacts are examined. Lastly, based on the findings of previous studies (Study 1, 2, and 3), a sport consumer moral reasoning process model—illustrating the influential relationships between moral reasoning choice, athlete attitude, and brand evaluations—is proposed and tested. In particular, based on the sport marketing literature that has explored the biased cognition processes of sport consumers (e.g., Funk & James, 2001; Kwak, Kim, & Zimmerman, 2010), sport consumer identification level is incorporated into the moral judgment model as a predictor of the consumer moral reasoning strategy. Moreover, the moral emotion approach is also employed in order to examine how affective (negative moral emotions) and cognitive (moral reasoning strategies) are intertwined in the process of moral judgment.

Intended Theoretical and Practical Contributions

Drawing on the relevant literature (e.g., celebrity endorsement, athlete scandal, advertising, moral psychology, sociocultural consumer psychology, and social identity theory), the current dissertation examines the impact of several potential boundary conditions: transgression type, functional fit between athlete and brand, sociocultural background of consumer, fan identification, and moral emotions. The variables have been well documented in the relevant literature to play a pivotal role in sport consumer cognitive processes. By testing the aforementioned factors, this dissertation seeks to provide empirical evidence that will enable marketing practitioners to better understand and predict consumer responses to athlete endorser transgressions.

This dissertation aims to make several theoretical and practical contributions. First of all, it contributes to the moral reasoning literature by adding a new reasoning process, *moral coupling*, to previous moral reasoning frameworks such as moral decoupling (Bhattacharjee et al., 2013) and moral rationalization (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996). In addition, this dissertation contributes to sport-marketing literature by providing a better understanding about sport consumer responses to athlete endorser transgressions. Lastly, the present dissertation sheds light on the moral reasoning processes of sport consumers, which has previously been considered a “black box” (Breuer & Rumpf, 2012) in the athlete endorsement context.

Along with theoretical contributions, the dissertation will also provide empirical evidence that will enable marketing managers to develop strategic approaches to minimizing potential damage from endorsement deals with troubled celebrity athletes. This dissertation will empirically test the impact of various potential boundary conditions (transgression type, functional fit between athlete and endorsed brand, sport fan’s sociocultural background, sport fan identification, negative moral emotions). The results will inform marketing managers about the way in which sport consumers exhibit different responses to the same transgression. The findings are expected to provide marketing managers with theory-based implications that enable them to reach successful strategic marketing decisions.

CHAPTER 2

Study 1

Exploring the existence of moral coupling

Introduction

The unethical or immoral conduct of athlete endorsers happens unexpectedly, leaving marketers with little control to prevent it. Numerous real-life examples (e.g., Kobe Bryant, Tiger Woods, Lance Armstrong, and Ray Rice) have shown sport consumers how vulnerable athlete endorsers' images can be when the athletes are surrounded by negative publicity that results in controversy. As mentioned, such misbehaviors have created managerial dilemmas for brand managers regarding whether the brands should continue or discontinue their relationship with the troubled athlete endorsers. However, to date, empirical research on sport consumer responses to celebrity athlete transgressions, and the effect on their associated brands, remains sparse. Therefore, little evidence exists to explain whether an endorsed brand should continue or discontinue its relationship with a morally tainted endorser.

Furthermore, most athlete scandal studies to date have presumed that the perception of athlete transgression negatively affects subsequent endorser/brand evaluations through the association of the troubled athletes with the brands. For example, people tend to judge a troubled celebrity based on a binary judgment: holistically 'good' or 'bad'. This superficial dichotomous perspective may prevent the research community from gaining a comprehensive understanding of how consumers process negative incidents in the context of athlete endorsement. This

dichotomy provides only limited predictability regarding consumer responses to transgression and its potential influence on subsequent attitudinal and behavioral outcomes. This approach does not delve into the question of what motivates consumers to make judgments of the troubled athlete as well as the associated brand, but simply compares perceptual outcomes. This approach has also limited our understanding of how consumers process negative information from a scandal, which is evidenced by mixed findings. As a result, the research community has gained little understanding of how the diverse reasoning processes of consumers can explain their multifaceted responses to athlete transgressions.

However, a recent study (Bhattacharjee et al., 2013) further extended the moral reasoning processes of individuals regarding the immoral conduct of other individuals. In particular, the study revealed that consumers often decouple or separate celebrity immorality judgments from job performance judgments (so-called moral decoupling) when considering the celebrities' transgressions (to be further discussed in the theoretical background section). This provides an appropriate theoretical framework for explaining how individuals can support morally tarnished public figures while simultaneously holding two different types of inconsistent perceptions (positive for performance judgment vs. negative for morality judgment).

Despite this contribution, there still exist phenomena that have not been explained by previous moral reasoning frameworks (i.e., moral decoupling and moral rationalization). For instance, although some people tend to dissociate judgments, actual evidence indicates that some people are likely to integrate judgments. The aforementioned example regarding Michael Vick reflects a reasoning strategy evidently different from moral decoupling or moral rationalization. This means that individuals also may combine judgments when they evaluate and process negative information about athletes. Therefore, Study 1 aims to explore the actual existence of

judgment integration in moral reasoning (i.e., moral coupling). For this purpose, two experiments are conducted (Study 1A and 1B). Study 1A aims to empirically examine whether cognitive dissonance actually occurs when sport consumers come to hold two conflicting perceptions (e.g., favorable vs. unfavorable) with respect to a troubled athlete endorser. Study 1B examines different and similar perceptions about a troubled athlete in relation to moral reasoning strategies such as moral coupling (MC) vs. moral decoupling (MD) vs. moral rationalization (MR). In particular, the occurrence of cognitive dissonance, evidenced by negative affective responses toward a troubled athlete (Festinger, 1957), is examined in Study 1A. In Study 1B, by activating specific types of moral reasoning strategies (i.e., moral coupling, moral decoupling, and moral rationalization) and comparing perceptual outcomes associated with each, the distinct existence of moral coupling strategy is explored.

Theoretical Background

Celebrity Athlete Endorser Transgression

Despite the various benefits of athlete endorsement, endorsement marketing can be risky due to unpredictable and uncontrollable athlete transgressions (Till & Shimp, 1998). From Tiger Woods to Ray Rice, celebrity athlete scandals have been frequently highlighted in the media, and have caused public outrage. These scandals have become catastrophes for the marketing managers, resulting in managerial dilemmas. Though previous studies have investigated the relationships between endorser transgression and subsequent impacts on endorsed brands, the works have provided mixed findings, resulting in more manager confusion.

In particular, previous endorser transgression studies have mainly utilized the associative memory network approach: associative learning mechanism (Anderson, 1976). The principle of this mechanism is that human memory works as a network consisting of various processing units, or nodes, linked by associative connections (Anderson, 1976). These nodes are activated

when associated nodes are stimulated, affecting personal attitude change either positively or negatively. In this sense, the associative learning theory has been employed to explain how a negative evaluation of an athlete elicited by the athlete's transgression will also negatively influence an associated brand. In other words, a transgression will damage the image of a celebrity athlete, and will in turn negatively influence an endorsed brand. However, the associative learning approach is limited in its ability to fully capture unique phenomena in athlete endorsement (Lohneiss & Hill, 2014; Um, 2013).

As mentioned earlier, previous studies that have incorporated this approach have provided equivocal results (e.g., Bednall & Collings, 2000; Thwaites et al., 2012; Till & Shimp, 1998). For instance, Bednall and Collings (2000) found inconsistent results, showing that athlete scandals can be tolerated by consumers when the scandals are minor and social ones. Moreover, Till and Shimp (1998) found that athlete scandals adversely affected affiliated brands evaluations when the troubled athletes in the vignettes that they utilized in their study were fictitious. These inconsistent findings limit our understanding of phenomena in the actual world. For instance, NFL player Michael Vick was charged with promoting and funding illegal dogfighting in July of 2007. Although his public image was damaged by the cruel and inhumane sporting activity, he re-signed endorsement contracts for several brands, including Nike, when he was released from prison. Moreover, in late 2009, Tiger Woods admitted his marital infidelity, and announced an indefinite break from professional competitions. However, although Tiger Woods was negatively implicated in the extramarital scandal, many people still supported him, offering comments on his official website, such as "I have been a fan of yours and will continue to be a fan because I believe that you are a great golfer. My heart goes out to you... Hang in there... this media storm won't last forever... (Wheeler, 2009)" In summary, the associative memory approach, as one of

the most frequently employed frameworks, has provided only limited insight into the multifaceted responses of consumers to celebrity athlete transgressions.

Consumers' Moral Reasoning

Athlete endorser transgressions are seen as immoral not only to consumers who have developed deep emotional attachments to the athletes, but also to other consumers who are indifferent to them. In light of moral psychology theory, moral emotions occur intuitively and automatically; moral reasoning then follows to construct reasons (Haidt, 2001). Moreover, according to Kunda (1990), individuals are likely to select information, and try to draw a self-serving moral conclusion. The body of literature on this subject, including the work of Bhattacharjee et al. (2013) on moral coupling, and Bandura et al. (1996) on moral rationalization, has provided useful theoretical frameworks to explain the moral reasoning mechanisms of individuals. In particular, the literature has suggested that cognitive dissonance motivates individuals to activate their moral reasoning strategies.

Cognitive dissonance. It has been noted in the literature that consumers who have emotional attachments to endorsers and associated brands will experience a dilemma when the endorsers commit transgressions (Thomson, 2006; Thomson, MacInnis, & Park, 2005). Previous studies argue that this phase of the dilemma could be understood by applying the social psychology theory of cognitive dissonance. The cognitive dissonance theory proposes that individuals experience discomfort when they hold two or more conflicting perceptions, such as beliefs, ideas, and affective responses (Festinger, 1957). According to Festinger, people in a state of dissonance experience 'disequilibrium' such as embarrassment, frustration, anger, hunger, dread, guilt, and anxiety as an evidence of this state. As for negative consumer emotional responses toward corporate ethical transgressions, a recent study (Grappi, Romani, & Bagozzi, 2013) discovered that consumers also often tend to experience an unstable feeling, evidenced by

negative moral emotions (e.g., contempt, anger, and disgust), when confronted with negative publicity regarding the commercial organization's immoral behavior. Likewise, in the context of athlete endorsement, consumers attached to a celebrity athlete endorser could experience this stage when confronted or exposed to information inconsistent with a prior positive feelings about the athlete.

With regard to attitude changes, the cognitive dissonance theory proposes that people often tend to change their attitudes and behaviors in order to reduce the dissonance created by inconsistent information (Festinger, 1957). For instance, individuals are motivated to alter existing cognitions, create new perceptions, or overlook the importance of inconsistent factors, in order to reduce discomfort in their minds. In the athlete endorsement context, it is possible to imagine that a sports consumer learns that his/her favorite athlete admitted to violating doping regulations, and the consumer experiences conflicting cognitions: positive perceptions and cognitions toward the celebrity athlete, and personal moral convictions that the doping violation damages the integrity of the sport and should not be tolerated. To reduce dissonance, the consumer could change either his/her attitude toward doping (e.g., Doping committed by the athlete does not harm anybody) or his/her attitude and behavior toward athlete (e.g., I do not like the athlete anymore, and will stop supporting the athlete). Alternately, the consumer may retain their original attitudes about doping, and change or add his/her new cognition to be consistent with the initial one (e.g., The favorite athlete must have worked out so hard even if the athlete committed the moral transgression).

Individuals are likely to retain positive perceptions about their favorite public figures, as mentioned. However, since people usually want to be perceived as ethical beings, they often tend to reject immoral behaviors that conflict with their moral standards (Bandura, 1991; Baumeister,

1998). This means that when sport consumers learn about their favorite athlete endorsers' immoral behaviors, maintaining only positive perceptions toward a troubled athlete might threaten their moral standards. Thus, researchers have argued that the transgressions of public figures cause cognitive tensions regarding the retention or rejection of moral standards (Aronson, 1969; Festinger, 1957). In order to cope with this uncomfortable state, individuals activate specific psychological reasoning processes. The moral reasoning literature has proposed two concepts to explain these complicated moral reasoning processes: moral rationalization and moral decoupling.

Moral rationalization. Moral rationalization is defined by Bhattacharjee et al. (2013) as “the process of reconstruing immoral actions as less immoral in order to maintain support for an immoral actor” (p. 1168). Based on the rationalization concept, people can reduce discomfort from dissonance between prior perceptions and moral standards by reconstructing transgressions so that damaged immorality is excused and justified (Bandura, 1991; Ditto, Pizarro, & Tannenbaum, 2009; Tsang, 2002). In particular, moral rationalization is based on moral disengagement, which is regarded as the most comprehensive theory to explain rationalization mechanisms (see Tsang, 2002).

Moral disengagement refers to a self-regulatory process of justifying or excusing immoral actions so that the immoral actions become acceptable to the self (Bandura, 1991, 1999; Bandura et al., 1996). In other words, it means that people convince themselves to not apply their ethical standards in a particular situation by distinguishing their own moral judgments from the immoral events (Fiske, 2004). In particular, Bandura and others (1996) classify and detail mechanisms of moral disengagement into several broad categories: (1) redefining the harmful

action; (2) minimizing the negative role of an actor in causing harm; (3) minimizing or distorting negative consequences; and (4) blaming or dehumanizing a victim.

However, employing the concept of moral rationalization, consumer responses in athlete endorsement contexts cannot be fully understood. As Bhattacharjee and colleagues (2013) propose, even though the rationalization processes may reduce individual tensions from cognitive dissonance, people would be seen to be condoning immoral actions to some extent, which would threaten their own moral standards. More specifically, in choosing to rationalize immoral events, individuals reevaluate transgression as less immoral and become permissive toward improper behaviors. In turn, this risks violating the individuals' ethical norms or being evaluated negatively by other people (Bhattacharjee et al., 2013).

Moral decoupling. Recently, considering the risks of moral rationalization, a different type of moral reasoning strategy has been proposed that resolves the dissonance created by inconsistent information (Bhattacharjee et al., 2013). According to the authors, examples of moral decoupling can be found everywhere; from President Clinton's extramarital scandal to film director Roman Polanski's rape scandal, and NBA star Kobe Bryant's rape allegations. The authors define moral decoupling as "a psychological separation process by which consumers selectively dissociate judgments of morality from judgments of performance" (p. 1168). In other words, moral decoupling reasoning enables individuals to simultaneously admit a public figure's immorality and support the public figure's job performance.

Compared to the moral rationalization strategy, the moral decoupling strategy enables consumers to support a troubled public figure's performance without threatening their own ethical criteria (Bhattacharjee et al., 2013). Bhattacharjee and his colleagues (2013) identified the existence of moral decoupling reasoning, and systematically examined the roles of the reasoning

strategy. In a series of experiments, they found that moral decoupling is a distinctive reasoning strategy that allows consumers to still support the wrongdoer. In particular, the study uncovered that moral decoupling is easier to justify than moral rationalization. In other words, consumers do not have to endure risk of violating their own moral standards and being seen negatively by other people by separating their judgments of immorality from judgments of performance.

However, as discussed earlier, sport consumer responses to the same scandal can vary. As evidenced by the Michael Vick case, some people may find it difficult to support the troubled athlete even after he paid for his misconduct. Moreover, in their field study, Bhattacharjee et al. (2013) identified a clue to the existence of integration judgment. Their findings implied that the integration of performance judgment and immorality judgment (e.g., moral coupling) could have different subsequent impacts on consumers' perceptual outcomes compared to the outcomes created by moral decoupling and moral rationalization. Thus, exploring the existence of the moral coupling strategy and testing potential factors which can influence sport consumers' moral coupling reasoning processes deserves investigation. Figure 2 illustrates the research framework of Study 1.

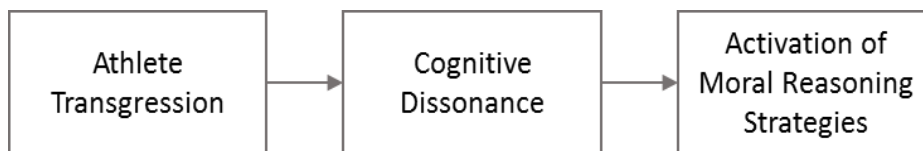


Figure 2. Research framework of Study 1

Study 1A - Cognitive dissonance as prerequisite condition for moral reasoning

As briefly mentioned, many people have a strong motivation to maintain positive perceptions of a public figure to whom they have developed an emotional attachment

(Bhattacharjee et al., 2013). However, previous studies contend that individuals want to be perceived and perceive themselves as moral beings, and often try to avoid behaviors that may damage their moral reputations (Bandura, 1991; Baumeister, 1998). This implies that, in an athlete transgression case, maintaining prior perceptions toward a troubled athlete might threaten the moral standards of consumers. Thus, the moral transgressions of celebrity athlete endorsers could produce moral dissonance or tension (Aronson, 1969; Festinger, 1957), which in turn creates cognitive dissonance.

Previous cognitive dissonance studies have identified various types of evidence such as task performance, physiological arousal, and negative affect (Elliot & Devine, 1994; Harmon-Jones, 2000; Kidd & Berkowitz, 1976; Losch & Cacioppo, 1990; Martinie, Olive, Milland, Joule, & Capa, 2013; Rhodewalt & Comer, 1979; Zanna & Cooper, 1974). Likewise, Festinger (1957) argued that cognitive dissonance causes unpleasant feelings. Informed by these findings, the current study focused on the experience of negative affect as evidence of cognitive dissonance caused by information about an athlete's transgression.

H1-1. Participants who are exposed to an athlete endorser's transgression will exhibit more negative emotional responses than other participants who are not exposed to the transgression.

Methods

Stimuli Development

Two transgressions — doping and financial fraud — were identified from a pretest ($n = 57$) involving undergraduate students enrolled in sport marketing courses at a large Midwestern university in the United States. The students were asked to freely recall three types of transgressions that they could easily associate with athletes. Out of a total of 158 responses,

doping ($n = 47$; 30%) and fraud ($n = 36$; 23%) were identified as the two most often recalled transgressions.

The current study then utilized a fictitious athlete to minimize the potential confounding effects from preexisting knowledge and attitudes formed by prior exposure and familiarity (Till & Shimp, 1998). The scenario consisted of the outstanding records of a fictitious cyclist at the beginning, and information about the athlete's transgression at the end. Only the athlete transgression information was manipulated and everything else (e.g., word counts) was consistent across conditions in order to prevent unintended confounding effects (see Appendix A).

Participants and Procedures

A total of 81 undergraduate students at a large Midwestern university were recruited for a single factor between-subjects experiment designed with three levels: on-field transgression vs. off-field transgression vs. control. The participants were randomly assigned, and exposed to one of three scenarios depicting a professional cyclist's transgression and a brief description of their endorsement. The on-field transgression scenario included a news article reporting that an athlete had used banned performance-enhancing drugs. In the off-field transgression scenario, financial fraud was used as the transgression. The control scenario described an athlete's hobby that was unrelated to a transgression. After reading one of the three scenarios, participants completed a survey that assessed their affective state.

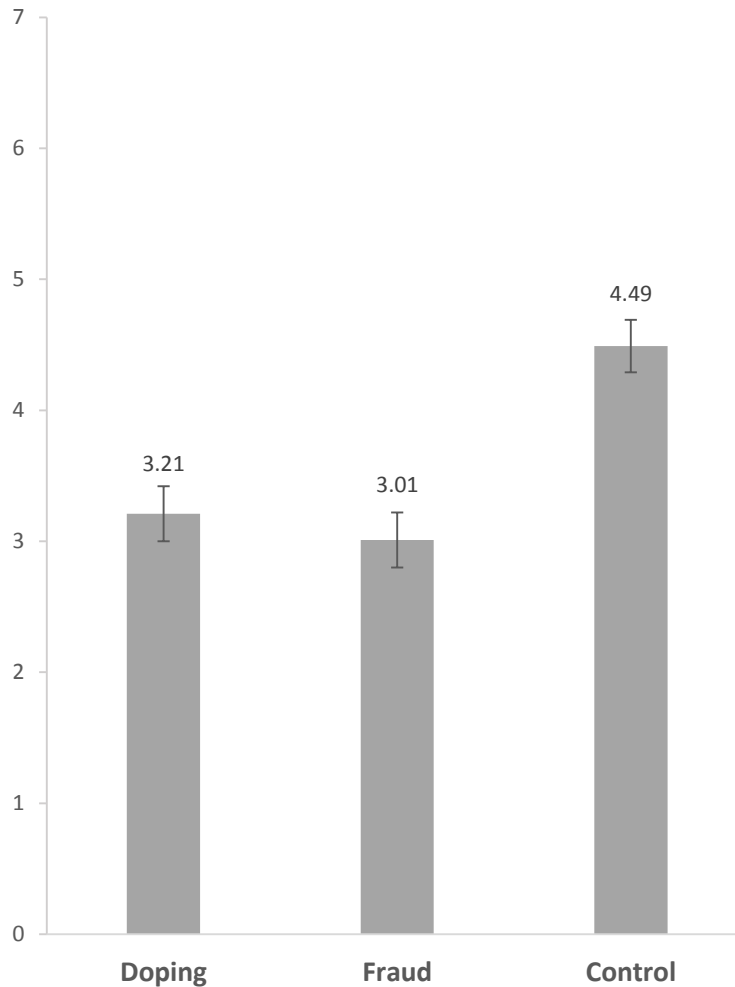
Instruments

In order to measure the participants' affective responses to the cyclist, three items using 7-point semantic differential measurements from 1 to 7 (e.g., *unpleasant—pleasant*; *dislike very much—like very much*; *left me with a bad feeling—left me with a good feeling*) were adopted from existing consumer and marketing literature (Kim, Allen, & Kardes, 1996; Stuart, Shimp, &

Engle, 1987). Lower scores on this scale indicate more negative feelings while the higher scores indicate more positive feelings. All scores were totaled and averaged in order to create a composite affective response score.

Results

Examination of Cronbach's alpha analysis showed acceptable level of internal consistency in affective response toward athlete ($\alpha = .95$; Nunnally, 1978). In order to test a single factor between-subject design with three levels (e.g., transgression type: doping vs. fraud vs. control), one-way ANOVA was conducted in order to test the main effect of the transgression on the affective responses of participants to a troubled athlete. There was a significant effect of transgression on participants' emotional responses ($F(2, 78) = 15.97, p < .01$). Furthermore, the follow-up contrasts (Figure 3) found that, as expected, participants under both the doping ($n = 26; M = 3.21, SE = .21; p < .01$) and fraud ($n = 25; M = 3.01, SE = .21; p < .01$) conditions reported lower levels of affective responses to the athlete compared to other consumers in the control condition ($n = 30; M = 4.49, SE = .20; H1-1 supported$). Moreover, there was no significant difference between the emotional responses to the doping and fraud conditions ($p < .52$). The results show that individuals exposed to a conflict of beliefs demonstrate more negative affect toward the cyclist compared to the participants without the conflict.



Note. Error bars denote standard errors.

†. Higher scores—close to 7—indicate more positive emotional feelings.

Figure 3. Emotional responses across conditions

Discussion

The purpose of Study 1A was to investigate whether consumers experience cognitive dissonance when they simultaneously hold an inconsistent set of information about a celebrity athlete endorser. This finding provides empirical evidence of dissonance in that individuals experience negative affective responses to a troubled athlete when they learn about an athlete's transgression, regardless of type. However, this finding may provide only limited and indirect evidence of cognitive dissonance. More specifically, though the occurrence of negative emotions

is clear, it cannot be concluded that the negative affective responses were actually triggered solely by the dissonance. For instance, moral emotion literature has noted that negative moral emotions such as contempt, anger, disgust, are automatically experienced (Haidt, 2001) when individuals witness or experience violations of moral standards. Thus, future research could establish whether conflicting cognitions actually occur when individuals are exposed to athlete transgression information.

Findings suggest that information about a celebrity athlete's transgression create conflicting perceptions (i.e., outstanding performance vs. immoral behavior) in consumers, which, in turn, evoke negative feelings. Such affective states may motivate consumers to activate moral reasoning strategies in order to cope with the dissonance (Bandura, 1991; Ditto et al., 2009; Tsang, 2002). Study 1B is designed to prime specific moral reasoning strategies (i.e., MC, MD, or MR), and examines subsequent impacts of each primed reasoning strategy on consumers' evaluation of the athlete. In particular, the study explores the existence of a MC strategy and compares its different perceptual results with other types of reasoning strategies.

Study 1B - Moral reasoning priming and athlete evaluations

The objective of this study was to investigate different functions of moral reasoning strategies by priming participants to respond with moral decoupling, rationalization, or coupling. Following Bhattacharjee et al.'s (2013) priming procedure, specific types of moral reasoning strategies were primed and compared to the perceptual outcomes associated with each. By priming participant moral reasoning strategies, the present experiment attempts to identify similar and different perceptual outcomes in relation to an athlete and endorsed brand, as evidenced in different moral reasoning strategies.

Based on the results of previous moral reasoning research (Bhattacharjee et al., 2013), immorality judgment apparently plays a crucial role in consumers' reasoning processes followed

by the consumers' attitudinal and behavioral outcomes. The study recognizes that since consumers often tend to separate immorality judgment from performance judgment, they can still support troubled other people. Based on this argument, it could be reasoned that if a MC route exists, consumers taking MC strategy would consider an athlete endorser's immorality when they evaluate the athlete's job performance. In other words, if consumers include negative cognition about morality in their overall evaluation processes, the performance judgment would also be affected by negative evaluations of morality. Based on this conceptualization, it could be expected that consumers activating MC reasoning strategy may evaluate the performance of troubled athletes more negatively than other consumers who utilize MD and MR strategies, who dissociate immorality judgments or justify a misbehaved athlete's morality.

With respect to immorality judgment, consumers both taking MC and MD path will not justify or condone the athlete's immorality. As a result, consumer assessments of an athlete's morality become more negative relative to the assessments other consumers who utilize MR, who will justify troubled athlete's immorality. Taking all these previous findings and discussions into account, the following hypotheses have been developed.

H1-2. Participants in MC condition will more negatively evaluate the performance of transgressed athlete, compared to participants in MD and MR conditions.

H1-3. Participants in MD and MC conditions will more negatively evaluate the morality of transgressed athlete, compared to participants in MR condition.

Methods

Stimuli Development

Priming materials. For a single factor between-subjects design with four levels (e.g., moral reasoning priming: MC vs. MD vs. MR vs. control), four different types of priming materials were created (see Appendix B). In the MC condition, three statements that argue the

importance of integrated judgment into the overall evaluation of performance were employed, based on the work of Bhattacharjee et al. (2013) (e.g., It is important to take into account someone's personal actions when assessing their job performance.). For the MD condition, three statements were adapted from Bhattacharjee et al. (2013) stressing that judgments of immorality should be separated from the evaluation of job performance (e.g., As a society, we are often too quick to let our view of someone's immoral actions affect our view of their value to society.). In the MR condition, three statements that were appropriate and applicable to the context of athlete endorsement were adapted from Bandura et al. (1996) (e.g., As a society, we often fail to consider that small indiscretions are not as bad as some other horrible things that people do). Finally, regarding the control condition, three statements describing the importance of humor were presented.

Athlete transgression information. Based on the pretest result, tax fraud was utilized as the transgression in the scenario. The current research utilizes a fictitious athlete (a long-distance runner) and brand (sport drink) to minimize the potential confounding effects from preexisting knowledge and attitudes formed by prior exposure and familiarity (Till & Shimp, 1998). To sum up, the scenario consisted of the outstanding records of a long-distance runner, followed by information about the athlete's transgression information (see Appendix C).

Participants and Procedures

A total of 97 participants were recruited from an on-line panel service (Amazon Mturk.com). Males accounted for 53% ($n = 51$) of the sample, and the mean age of the participants was 33.2 years old ($SD = 10.8$) (see Table 1). The majority were Caucasian (60%), followed by Asian (27%), African-American (8%), and other ethnicities (5%).

The overall procedures for the priming process in the current study replicated Bhattacharjee et al.'s (2013) priming procedures. After consenting to participate in a 10-minute-

long experimental survey, participants were randomly assigned to one of four priming conditions: MC ($n = 23$), MD ($n = 22$), MR ($n = 23$), and control ($n = 29$). On the first page of the survey, participants were asked to carefully read priming materials consisting of three statements. They were then asked to reflect on the statements, and describe, in as much detail as possible, a situation in which the statements might apply. All participants then were asked to read a brief scenario about an athlete's career record, and the athlete's transgression or hobby. After reading the scenario, participants completed questionnaires that inquired about their perceptions about the athlete's performance and immorality.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of sample age for Study 1B

	Age		
	<i>n</i>	Mean	SD
MC	23	32.4	11.6
MD	22	33.6	11.2
MR	23	33.6	9.7
Control	29	33.2	11.3
Total	97	33.2	10.8

Instruments

Performance evaluation. Three items were employed from the work of Bhattacharjee et al. (2013) in order to assess the fictitious athlete's performance excellence. The items were modified to suit the research context. Three 7-point scales (1 = *strongly disagree*; 7 = *strongly agree*) were utilized in the evaluation of the following aspects of the scenario: 1) the long-distance runner is an outstanding athlete; 2) the record of the athlete reflect commendable

achievements; and 3) the performance of the long-distance runner is excellent. The scores were summed and averaged to create a composite performance evaluation score.

Immorality evaluation. Based on Bhattacharjee et al. (2013), two statements measuring the perceived level of athlete's immorality were adapted and modified. The statements were: 1) It is morally wrong for the athlete to fail to report tax returns; and 2) I find the long-distance runner's actions to be morally reprehensible. The measure used a 7-point Likert scale, and the scores were summed and averaged to create a composite morality score.

Results

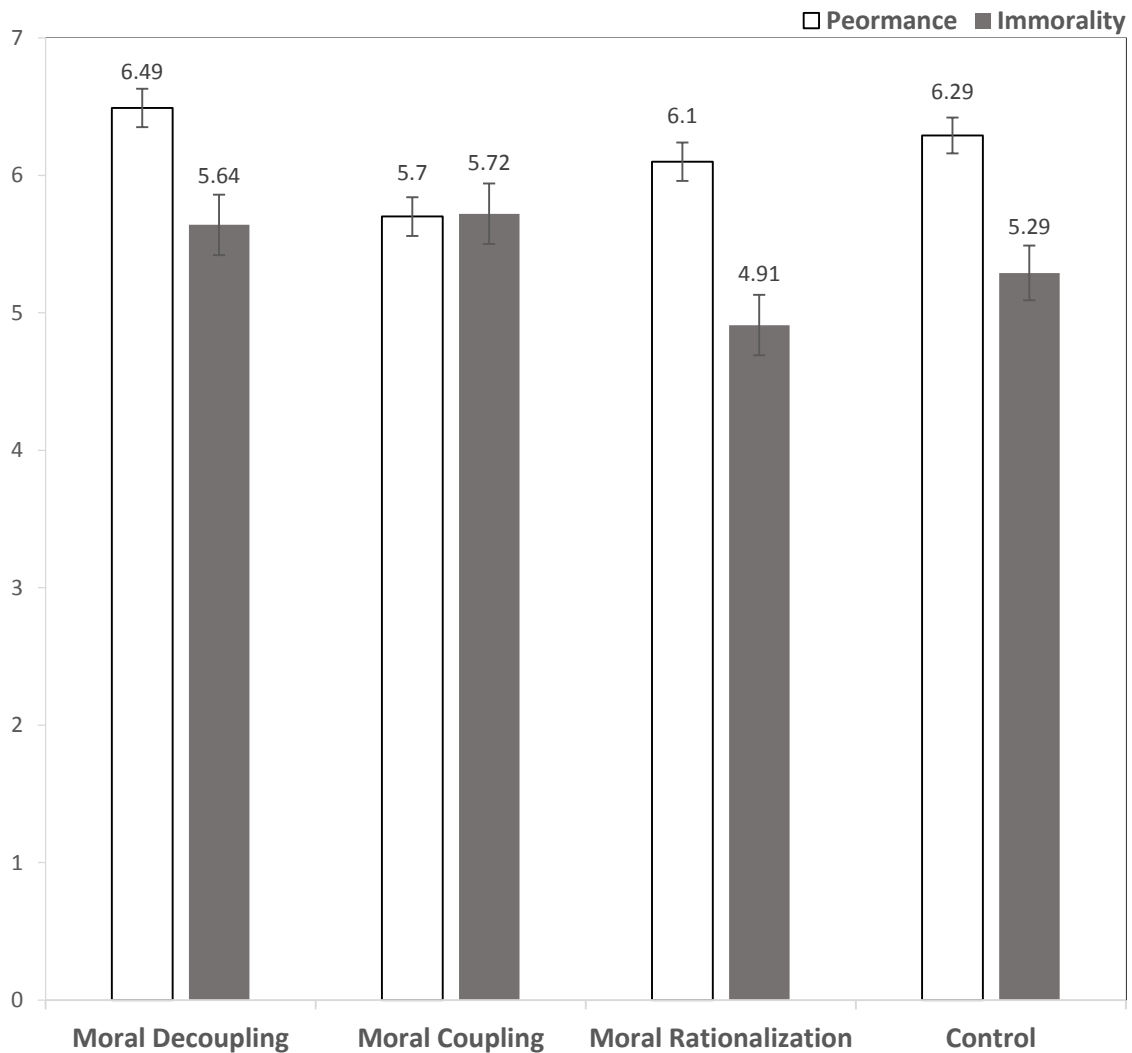
Before testing the main effects of the priming effect, the reliability levels of the scaled measures were checked by examining Cronbach's alphas. The reliability assessments for performance judgment ($\alpha = .89$) and immorality judgment ($\alpha = .72$) exceeded the acceptable standard of .70 suggested by Nunnally (1978). After checking the reliability of the measures, a set of one-way ANOVAs was performed to test main effects of moral reasoning priming on both performance and immorality evaluation.

Performance evaluation. A one-way ANOVA uncovered a significant main effect of a moral reasoning priming on consumer performance judgment of a transgressing athlete endorser ($F(3, 93) = 5.68, p < .01$). In addition, the follow-up contrasts found that, as predicted, consumers primed with the MC reported a lower performance evaluation ($M = 5.70, SE = .14$) compared to other consumers in the MD condition ($M = 6.49, SE = .14; p < .01$), the MR condition ($M = 6.10, SE = .14; p < .05$), and the control condition ($M = 6.29, SE = .13; p < .01$) respectively (*H1-2 supported*) (see Table 2 and Figure 4). Additionally, there was a marginal difference across MD and MR condition ($p = .06$).

Table 2. Performance and immorality judgments across priming groups

	Performance judgment				Immorality judgment			
	MC (<i>n</i> = 23)	MD (<i>n</i> = 22)	MR (<i>n</i> = 23)	Control (<i>n</i> = 29)	MC (<i>n</i> = 23)	MD (<i>n</i> = 22)	MR (<i>n</i> = 23)	Control (<i>n</i> = 29)
Mean	5.70	6.49	6.10	6.29	5.72	5.64	4.91	5.29
SE	.14	.14	.14	.13	.22	.22	.22	.20

Immorality evaluation. Another one-way ANOVA was conducted in order to test the main effect of priming on consumer evaluation of the athlete’s immorality. Similarly, there existed a significant effect on immorality evaluation ($F(3, 93) = 2.80, p < .05$). As expected, follow-up contrasts found that participants in the MR condition ($M = 4.91, SE = .22$) rated the athlete’s immorality as lower than consumers in the MC condition ($M = 5.72, SE = .22; p < .05$) and the MD condition ($M = 5.64, SE = .22; p < .05; H1-3 supported$). Since a high score on the immorality scale means less moral, it can be understood that the participants in the MR tend to rate the athlete’s morality higher than participants in MC and MD conditions. Furthermore, immorality judgments did not differ across the MC and MD conditions ($p = .80$). In a comparison of the MD and the MR condition, there existed a significant difference ($p < .05$).



Note. Error bars denote standard errors.

Figure 4. Performance and immorality evaluations across conditions

Discussion

Study 1B was designed to examine the existence of MC routes by priming participants' various moral reasoning strategies, and comparing subsequent perceptual outcomes regarding athlete evaluations, based on the type of moral reasoning. The main contribution of the current study is to demonstrate the existence of moral coupling, which is a distinct type of moral reasoning strategy. Most importantly, the results offer empirical evidence that consumers primed

to activate a MC route demonstrated a different perceptual tendency relative to those activating other moral reasoning routes. As predicted, the results showed that individuals who process an athlete's transgression by integrating judgments of both performance and immorality – moral coupling – tend to demonstrate different facets of athlete evaluations than those who separate or justify immoral acts. This means that, regarding the difference between MC and MR, the group of people who activated the MC showed significantly lower level performance and morality evaluations compared to other consumers who activated the MR strategy. In addition to this distinction between MC and MR, the results show that consumers activating MC exhibit a significantly lower level of performance evaluation than those consumers who activated MD strategy. These different evaluation tendencies provide initial evidence to differentiate MC reasoning strategy from MD and MR reasoning strategies. In addition, the findings contribute a new insight to the athlete endorsement literature: the MC reasoning strategy activated by sport consumers may play a critical role in consumer attitudinal and behavioral outcomes in relation to troubled athletes and associated brands.

In addition, consistent with the literature, the results confirmed the previous findings that people using MD tend to show more positive job performance evaluations and more negative immorality evaluations than those who use a MR reasoning strategy (Bhattacharjee et al., 2013). In regard to the performance and immorality evaluations, the comparison between the MD and MR showed similar outcomes. As Bhattacharjee et al. (2013) discovered, the results of the current study showed that people in the MD condition reported marginally higher levels of performance judgment compared to other people in the MR condition. Moreover, consistent with their findings, higher levels of immorality judgment were reported in the MD condition than the

MR condition. In line with previous research, these findings confirm and reinforce the existence of the MD reasoning strategy.

The present findings make several theoretical contributions. First, the findings of Study 1 expand the moral reasoning literature by theorizing and validating alternative moral reasoning process, *moral coupling*, that can be added to existing moral reasoning frameworks such as moral decoupling: (Bhattacharjee et al., 2013), and moral rationalization (Bandura et al., 1996). These results support the existence of the moral coupling strategy. In particular, the results showed that consumers primed with moral coupling integrate judgments of a transgressor's morality and performance. For instance, consumers primed with moral coupling reasoning reported significantly lower levels of performance evaluation compared to respondents in other conditions. In terms of morality judgments, respondents in both the moral coupling and moral decoupling conditions reported the troubled athlete to be more immoral than did respondents in the moral rationalization and control conditions. This is in line with the concept that the moral decoupling strategy allows consumers to support the transgressor while simultaneously rejecting the misbehavior (Bhattacharjee et al., 2013). In summary, the results from Study 1 suggest the distinct existence of a moral coupling process by demonstrating different types of judgments of a transgressor.

The findings also contribute to celebrity endorser scandal literature. As discussed above, the results showed that moral coupling has its unique predictive function that is distinctively different from moral decoupling and rationalization. By including the moral coupling route, the moral reasoning approach could provide more comprehensive theoretical frameworks to explain and predict sport the unique and diverse responses of consumers in the athlete endorsement context. Although the central idea of moral coupling — that some consumers tend to integrate

judgments of morality and performance — seems evident, the findings of Study 1 provide empirical evidence that such a process not only exists but also has unique predictive functions compared to other moral reasoning processes. Although this study neither allowed sport consumers to make their own moral reasoning choices nor measured the consumers' evaluations about associated brands endorsed by the troubled athlete, the findings still suggest more possible conceptual frameworks to understand the mixed responses of sports consumers to an athlete scandal and affiliated brands, based on different types of moral reasoning routes.

The empirical findings of Study 1 also have practical implications. As the findings indicate, depending on the types of moral reasoning strategies in which sport consumers engage, evaluations about a misbehaved athlete endorser can differ. When consumers use moral disengagement strategies (moral decoupling and rationalization), they are motivated to positively view a troubled athlete endorser. In contrast, when consumers engage in their moral coupling strategies, they tend to demonstrate different judgment tendencies, which elicit more negative consumer evaluations of a troubled athlete. Although this study did not examine potential impacts of each moral reasoning strategy on affiliated brands endorsed by a troubled athlete, the findings imply that negative evaluation of an athlete derived from the moral coupling strategy may carry over to brands endorsed by the transgressed athlete. Therefore, brand managers should proactively manage the adverse impact of the moral coupling strategy on consumer responses to a wrongdoer, which could negatively impact consumer perceptions of brands closely associated with the troubled athlete endorser.

CHAPTER 3

Study 2

Influence of transgression type on moral reasoning choice and subsequent outcomes

Introduction

The results of Study 1 suggest that individuals might take the MC reasoning strategy as an alternative strategy to MD or MR when they evaluate troubled athletes. Moreover, the findings of Study 1 show that, depending on the different moral reasoning strategies, individuals demonstrate different tendencies in evaluating a troubled celebrity's performance and immorality. On the basis of this empirical evidence of MC, several further research questions need to be addressed.

First, when do consumers choose a specific moral reasoning strategy? Given the findings from Study 1, individuals select their own moral reasoning strategies (e.g., MC, MD, or MR) to cope with uncomfortable tension, or cognitive dissonance, caused by an inconsistent set of information (e.g., preexisting positive cognitions vs. negative cognitions from transgression information about a celebrity athlete endorser). Previous studies have suggested various potential internal and external factors that might affect the moral reasoning choices of individuals, such as subjective moral standard, emotional attachment toward a troubled celebrity, personal involvement with moral transgressions, a troubled celebrity's intention, and expected negative impacts of immoral behaviors to others (Carroll & Payne, 1976; Um, 2013; Weiner, 1986). In particular, researchers have pointed out that, in the athlete endorsement context, transgression

type plays a critical role, resulting in different consumer responses toward troubled athlete endorsers (Hughes & Shank, 2005).

The second question is how do moral reasoning choices affect consumers' subsequent perceptions of a troubled athlete endorser and the brand associated with the troubled athlete? Study 1 revealed that individuals tend to judge a troubled athlete in different ways depending on their primed moral reasoning strategies. People who primed with MC reasoning showed more negative responses toward a troubled athlete relative to those who were primed with MD and MR. Based on this finding, subsequent evaluations of affiliated brands are expected to differ based on different moral reasoning strategies. Although Study 1 showed MC reasoning is distinct from MD and MR, the participants in the study did not freely select their moral reasoning strategy but instead were primed. Enabling consumers to choose their reasoning strategies reflecting their personal beliefs would yield more ecologically valid results. Thus, subsequent evaluations of transgressed athletes based on consumers' moral reasoning choices that are not primed should be investigated.

Finally, another question of how the moral reasoning choices influence the consumers' brand evaluations should be considered. As uncovered in Study 1, there exist different types of moral reasoning strategies (MD, MR, and MC) by which individuals might process negative information about athlete endorsers. Considering the different evaluation tendencies of the reasoning strategies, these strategies could have diverse impacts on subsequent evaluations of brands endorsed by troubled athletes. Following the attitude-behavior consistency paradigm (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2000), it can also be expected that sport consumer attitudes formed by different moral reasoning strategies could influence the consumer brand attitudes and purchase intentions in different ways. In particular, in sports sponsorship and endorsement contexts, the fit

between athlete and brand (functional- or image-based fit; Gwinner, 1997) is known to have significant impacts on the effectiveness of marketing campaigns. Therefore, potential impacts of the fit should be investigated in cases where consumers process negative information about athlete endorsers.

In order to address the research questions above, Study 2 aims to examine different moral reasoning choices, and the subsequent impacts on athlete evaluation such as performance judgment, immorality judgment, and attitude toward athlete and brand evaluations such as attitude toward brand and purchase intent. In particular, the current study incorporates two potential variables in order to examine their effects on reasoning choice and brand evaluations: type of transgression (e.g., on- [doping] vs. off-field [financial fraud]), and functional fit between an athlete and a brand (e.g., high- [sports drink] vs. low-fit [carbonated drink]). Furthermore, personal involvement level with sport is employed as a covariate in order to control potential confounding effects.

Theoretical Background

Transgression Type

The cultural meanings and images celebrity endorsers possess have been considered to affect the effectiveness of endorsement campaigns (McCracken, 1989). According to McCracken, the images of celebrity endorsers may derive not only from their professions, but also from their actual lifestyles. In a similar vein, celebrity athlete images will depend on both on-field performance and off-field life. For example, Arai, Ko, and Kaplanidou (2013) proposed several aspects involved in establishing athlete brand image. The aspects include athletic performance (i.e., on-field attributes), marketable lifestyle (i.e., off-field attributes), and athlete attractiveness (i.e., physical appearance attributes). In particular, athletic performance is defined as an athlete's performance related to his/her athletic expertise, competition style, sportsmanship,

and rivalry. Likewise, the lifestyle includes the athlete's off-field life story, personal values, and ethical behaviors. This conceptual framework contributes significantly to our understanding of sport consumers' perceptions of athletes as human brands. According to this multidimensional framework, sport consumers would consider an athlete as a brand by combining their on-field and off-field images.

The type of transgressions may also have an impact on-field and/or off-field image of an athlete. Previous studies (Hughes & Shank, 2005; Wilson et al., 2008) have suggested that the extent to which an athlete's transgression is related to their performance level has different influences on consumer perceptions. For example, Hughes and Shank (2005) suggest that people may consider incidents to be more scandalous when the acts involve violating the sport integrity (e.g., cheating on performance, match fixing). According to Hughes and Shank, eight out of ten interview participants indicated that sport consumers tend to perceive incidents that are closely related to athletic performance as more scandalous than unrelated incidents. According to one respondent, "(if) the act affects the integrity (e.g., records) of the sport... (it) is viewed as more scandalous" (p. 213).

In light of the above discussions, it becomes plausible that the extent to which an athlete's transgression is related to either their on-field performance or off-field image may play an important role in the processing of transgression information by sports consumers. In particular, given that immoral behavior related to on-field records cannot be separated from, but instead is directly related to a troubled athlete's performance, one might argue that exist significant associations exist between performance-related misconduct and the activation of moral coupling. Considering the arguments presented in previous studies (Bhattacharjee et al., 2013; Hughes & Shank, 2005), a transgression with high relevance to an athlete's performance

could lead sport consumers to integrate performance and immorality judgments. However, to date, no empirical study has examined the impacts of transgression type (e.g., on-field vs. off-field) on moral reasoning choice, or the subsequent evaluations of transgressed athletes and endorsed brands that resulted from this choice.

According to Bhattacharjee et al. (2013), the degree of correlation between job performance and transgression decreases in relation to the extent to which consumers choose the MD route. Individuals cannot easily dissociate moral judgment from performance evaluation because performance-related transgressions directly affect job performance. As a result, the MC strategy suggests that, due to significant relevance, consumers may take into account an athlete's immoral behavior when evaluating their job performance. This integration of judgments could lead individuals to lower their evaluation of performance, and may also negatively affect attitudes toward the athlete and endorsed brand.

According to Hughes and Shank (2005), the incidents related to on-field transgressions can be referred to transgressions which directly violate the integrity of sport, such as cheating on performance and point shaving. On the other hand, off-field transgressions can be understood as types of misconducts that are unrelated to the performance of celebrity athletes and the integrity of the sport.

Taking the above findings and theorizations into account, the following hypotheses have been developed.

H2-1. Transgression type will moderate participants' choice of moral reasoning

strategy: in the on-field condition, consumers will choose MC most often, while in the off-field condition, consumers will more often choose MD.

H2-2. Consumers who choose MC will report weaker attitude toward an athlete, compared to other consumers who select MD and MR.

In regard to an influential relationship between a troubled athlete and an associated brand, associative learning theory is applicable. As discussed earlier, according to this theory, an association link may be established between a troubled athlete and an endorsed brand. Through the link, feelings or attitudes about the athlete would be transferred to the endorsed brand (Till & Shimp, 1998). Taking this into account, it is plausible to propose that a negative attitude toward an athlete elicited by MC reasoning might also evoke negative attitudes toward the associated brand. Finally, following the attitude-behavior consistency paradigm (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2000), it can be expected that the attenuated attitudes toward a brand could lower purchase intention.

H2-3. Consumers who choose MC will report weaker attitudes toward a brand and lower purchase intention, compared to other consumers who select MD and MR.

Functional Fit between Athlete and Brand

Along with the type of transgression, the moderating impact of functional fit between athlete and brand deserves more attention. Fit has become one of the most investigated issues in sponsorship and endorsement research (Olson & Thjømmøe, 2011). The principle of fit is the conception that a congruence between characteristics evident in the athlete and brand increases the effectiveness of marketing campaigns. In sport sponsorship and endorsement contexts, this effect has been known to occur when a brand has either functional-based or image-based fit with a sporting event or an athlete (Gwinner, 1997).

In particular, functional fit refers to the extent to which usage of an endorsed brand is related to an athletes' actual performance level. A stronger association from greater functional fit helps facilitate transfer of affects or images (Gwinner & Bennett, 2008). Therefore, it is plausible that functional fit can determine the amount of thought and attention that consumers pay to the

association between an athlete and an endorsed brand (Becker-Olsen, 2003). Moreover, McCracken (1989) emphasized the important role of “essential similarity” (p. 314), such that functional fit, in transferring images from spokesperson to brand.

Previous studies have examined the significant role of functional fit. For instance, Kamins (1990) found that ads combining a physically attractive celebrity and a brand that is consumed to enhance one’s attractiveness elicits a more positive reaction to the advertisement. This implies that in advertising messages, a brand, such as a cosmetic, that functions to improve a spokesperson’s focal attribute (e.g., beauty) is more effectively imprinted on the minds of individuals. In addition, according to Pham and Johar (2001), consumers tend to regard a brand as a more appropriate sponsor of an event if some relationship exists between the product and the event (e.g., a golf equipment brand/golf tournament) than if no such relationship exists (e.g., a farming company/a golf tournament).

According to the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM; Petty, Cacioppo, & Schumann, 1983), a high level of personal involvement is known to activate central route processing core information, while low involvement tends to lead individuals to use peripheral route in processing additional cues. Another line of research (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2000; Lutz & Bettman, 1977; Troutman & Shanteau, 1976) has provided evidence indicating that consumers are likely to integrate product-relevant attributes and beliefs into overall evaluation processes. Furthermore, attitudes induced by taking into account product-relevant attributes (e.g., central route) are regarded as relatively more enduring than the attitudes formed via the peripheral route.

Given the discussions and findings above, it could be speculated that a functional fit between an athlete and a brand can moderate the negative impacts of athlete transgressions on sport consumer attitudes toward the brand. It may then be plausible that high functional fit

brands would generate more resistant attitudes toward the brand, which will, in turn, protect the brands from negative information about athlete endorsers, than low functional fit brands. The following hypothesis addresses this possibility.

H2-4. Level of functional fit between athlete and brand will moderate the impacts of the athlete transgression on consumer brand perception: in the low-fit condition, the transgression will have greater negative impacts on consumer brand perceptions than the high-fit condition.

The research framework of Study 2 is illustrated in Figure 5.

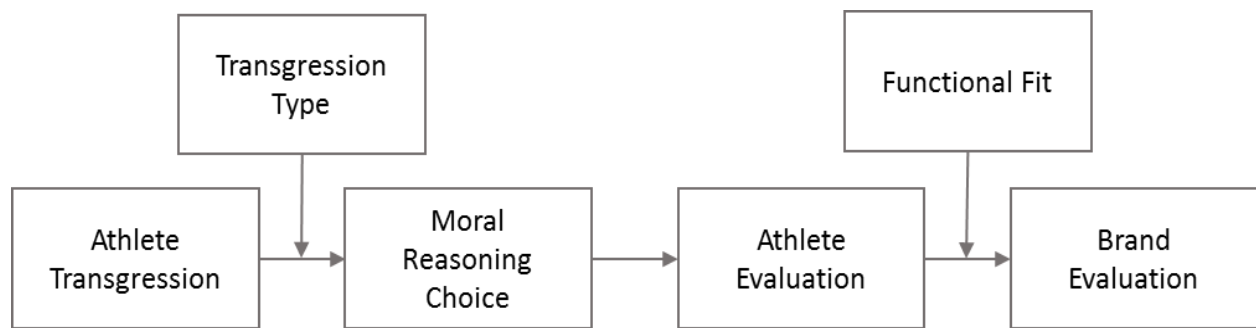


Figure 5. Research framework of Study 2

Research Design and Overview

Study 2 presented a 3 (transgression type: on- vs. off-field vs. control) x 2 (functional fit: high vs. low) between-subject design experiment intended to test the potential association between transgression type and moral reasoning choice, as well as to examine the subsequent impact of moral reasoning choice on consumer perceptions of an unethical athlete and an endorsed brand. Transgression type (on-field vs. off-field transgression), and functional fit between athlete and brand (high fit vs. low fit) were manipulated by creating scenarios based on a pretest result. The measures include moral reasoning choice, attitude toward athlete, attitude

toward associated brand, and purchase intention. For the first set of analyses, Chi-square analysis was conducted for the purposes of examining the potential association between transgression type and consumers' moral reasoning choice (*H2-1*). In the second analysis, an ANCOVA focusing on personal involvement with sport, was performed to test the effects of moral reasoning choice on attitude toward a troubled athlete (*H2-2*). Finally, in order to investigate the effects of moral reasoning choice and functional fit between athlete and brand, a set of two-way ANCOVAs utilizing personal involvement level as a covariate was conducted (*H2-3, H2-4*).

Methods

Stimuli Development

From the results of the pretest in Study 1, two different transgression types were identified and used. In relation to on-field transgression, 61 out of 98 responses (62%) identified doping as the transgression most associated with an athlete. On the other hand, fraud was identified as the most recalled off-field transgression (35 responses out of 107, 33%). Regarding functional fit, following the definition of functional-based similarity (Gwinner, 1997, p. 152), "product is actually used by participants (endorsers) during the event (competition)", a sport drink brand was utilized.

Fictitious scenarios describing a long-distance runner's outstanding performance, transgressions, and endorsement deal were developed. The current experiment used a fictitious athlete (i.e., Ted Franklin) and a drink brand (i.e., CoolpisTM) to prevent potential confounding effects from familiarity and preexisting attitudes (Till & Shimp, 1998). The scenarios consisted of a brief description of a long-distance runner's outstanding athletic record, and fictitious publicity (i.e., SI.com) about the athlete's transgression. In order to prevent confounding effects

from the length of articles, the same numbers of words (word count = 197) were used in each article (see Appendix D).

Participants and Procedures

A total of 218 participants were recruited using an online survey panel service (Amazon Mturk.com). Males accounted for 58% ($n = 126$) of the sample, and the mean age of the participants was 31.4 years old ($SD = 10.0$). The major ethnicities of participants were Caucasian (68%), Asian (18%), and African-American (6%). Participants were randomly assigned to one of six different conditions and asked to read articles illustrating a fictitious athlete's career records and transgression. Each condition was presented with its own fictitious scenario and article, while all other elements, such as questions asked, presentation order, were constant across conditions. After reading the first scenario, participants completed a questionnaire (moral reasoning choice and attitude toward athlete). With regards to the moral reasoning choice, participants were provided with three statements illustrating each moral reasoning strategy and a n/a option. They were then asked to select one of four options (e.g., MC, MD, MR, and n/a) that best reflected their thoughts and feelings based on the articles about the athlete's career record and transgression. The participants then read another article describing an endorsed drink brand, and completed the rest of survey that addressed their attitude toward brand, and purchase intention. All the survey questions were randomized in order to avoid bias created by survey question order.

Instruments

Moral reasoning choice. In order to identify the moral reasoning choice of participants, four options were provided: 1) Ted Franklin's actions should change the way we view his job performance (MC); 2) Judgments of Ted Franklin's job performance should remain separate from judgments of morality (MD); 3) Ted Franklin's action is not as bad as some of the other

horrible things people do (MR); and 4) Not applicable. These moral reasoning statements were adopted from a previous study (Bhattacharjee et al., 2013). Among these four options, participants were asked to freely choose the moral reasoning strategies that best reflected their personal thoughts and beliefs.

Attitude toward the athlete (A_{Ath}) and the brand (A_{Brd}). Three items measuring participants' attitude toward the athlete (A_{Ath}) and the brand (A_{Brd}) described in the scenario were adapted from existing marketing and advertising literature (MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989; MacKenzie, Lutz, & Belch, 1986; Mitchell & Olson, 1981). The items used a 7-point semantic differential measurement (*bad—good, unfavorable—favorable, and negative—positive*; ranging from 1 to 7). The lowest scores (1) indicated negative valences (e.g., bad, unfavorable, and negative) whereas the highest scores (7) indicated positive valences (e.g., good, favorable, and positive). All scores were summed and averaged in order to create composite attitude scores.

Purchase intention (PI). To measure the participants' intention to purchase the brand endorsed, three Likert items were employed from Yi (1990). The participants were asked to rate their purchase intention based on the question "How likely would you be to purchase the sports drink endorsed by the athlete in the scenario?" Three items featuring a 7-point semantic difference were utilized: *unlikely—likely, impossible—possible, and improbable—probable* (ranged 1 through 7).

Personal involvement level. In order to address personal involvement level with sport in the scenarios, the participants' personal involvement with track and field was measured employing four items from Zaichkowsky's (1985) Personal Involvement Inventory (PII): 1) For me, Track and Field is important; 2) Track and Field matters to me; 3) I am interested in Track

and Field; and 4) Track and Field is significant for me. All items were measured using a 7-point Likert scale (1: *strongly disagree*; 7: *strongly agree*).

Manipulation check. In order to ensure that the type of transgression was manipulated as intended, participants were provided with a single item asking whether the transgression committed by the athlete is a serious violation of sport integrity using a 7-point Likert scale. If a group of consumers in the on-field condition reports higher scores than the off-field group, the manipulations can be deemed to be successful. Likewise, three items relating to the functional fit between an athlete and a brand were adapted from existing marketing literature (Gwinner & Eaton, 1999) and modified to suit the purpose of the current experiment. The items included 1) it is likely that Ted Franklin drinks Coolpis™ for his performance; 2) it is likely that Coolpis™ is used by Ted Franklin for Track and Field competitions; and 3) Coolpis™ is a product that Ted Franklin in Track and Field competitions would consider using. All scores were summed and averaged to create composite scores. As with transgression type, manipulations regarding functional fit are considered successful if the high-fit group exhibits a higher score than the low-fit group.

Results

Descriptive Results and Manipulation Check

Examinations of Cronbach's alpha showed acceptable levels of internal consistency in each scaled measure: A_{Ath} ($\alpha = .97$), A_{Brd} ($\alpha = .97$), PI ($\alpha = .93$), personal involvement with track and field ($\alpha = .98$), and functional fit ($\alpha = .89$). On the basis of the alpha levels, all scaled measures were deemed reliable for the participants. To test whether the intended manipulations worked properly, a set of one-way ANOVAs was performed. Table 3 shows that both manipulations worked as intended: type of transgression ($F(2, 215) = 155.22, p < .01$) and functional fit between athlete and brand ($F(1, 216) = 35.52, p < .01$).

Table 3. Manipulation check results

	Transgression Type			Functional Fit Level	
	On-field (<i>n</i> = 64)	Off-field (<i>n</i> = 75)	Control (<i>n</i> = 79)	High (<i>n</i> = 117)	Low (<i>n</i> = 101)
Mean	5.94 ^a	4.65 ^b	1.76 ^c	4.76 ^d	3.61 ^e
SE	.18	.17	.17	.13	.14

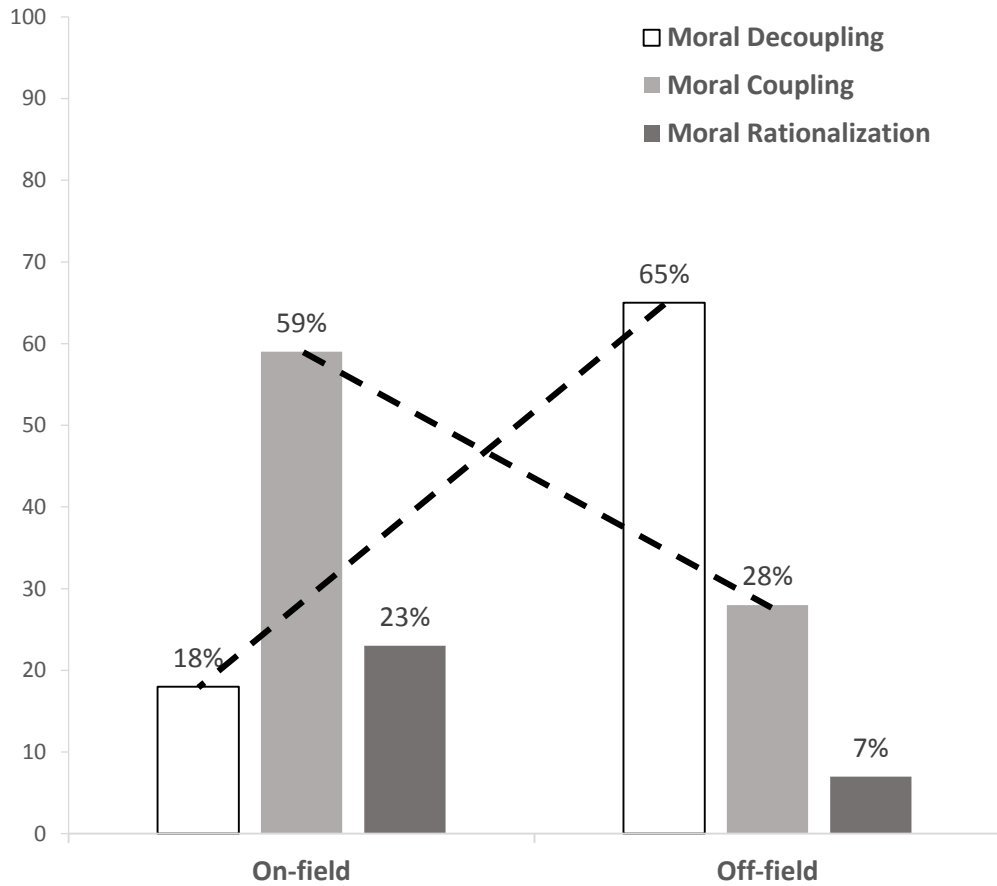
Note. Different superscript letters under each manipulated variable indicate significant mean differences ($p < .01$).

Hypotheses Test

Moral reasoning choice. Before conducting a Chi-square test, the participants' choice of moral reasoning strategy was coded into four choices based on the participants' selections: MC, MD, MR, and not-applicable. After excluding the not-applicable option from the data, Chi-square analysis ($n = 204$) was performed in order to test the potential association between transgression types and moral reasoning choice (see Table 4). The test revealed a significant relationship between transgression type and moral reasoning choice ($\chi^2(4) = 66.194, p < .01$) (see Figure 6). Participants in the on-field transgression condition were more likely to select the MC statement ($n = 36$ out of 61; 59%) relative to the MD ($n = 11$; 18%) and the MR ($n = 14$; 23%). Likewise, in the off-field condition consumers tended to choose the MD statement ($n = 49$ out of 75; 65%) over the MC ($n = 21$; 28%) and the MR ($n = 5$; 7%): *H2-1 supported*.

Table 4. Transgression type and moral reasoning choice cross-tabulation

Transgression Type			Choice			Total
			MC	MD	MR	
On-field	Count		36	11	14	61
	%		59.0	18.0	23.0	100.0
Off-field	Count		21	49	5	75
	%		28.0	65.3	6.7	100
Control	Count		2	43	23	68
	%		2.9	63.2	33.8	100
Total	Count		59	103	42	204
	%		28.9	50.5	20.6	100



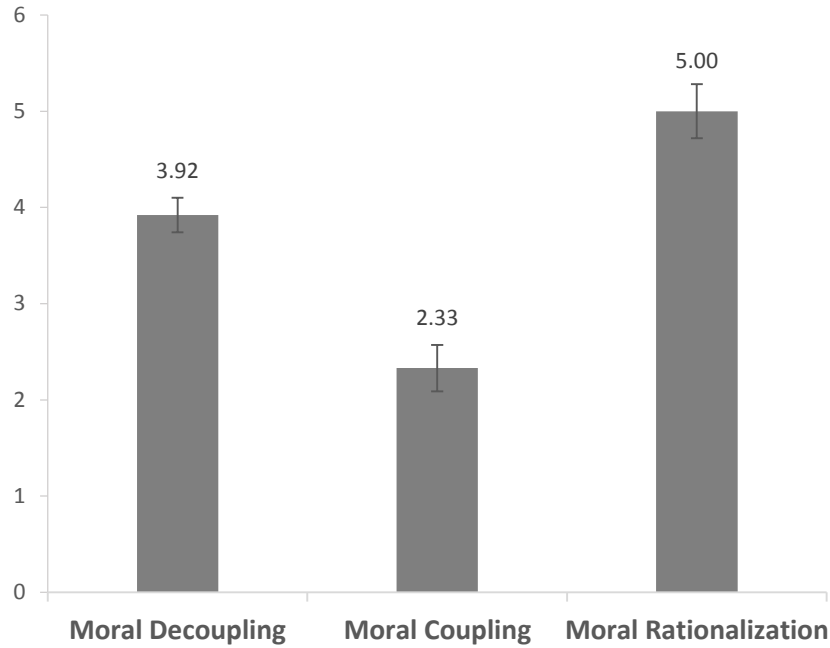
Note. Dotted lines indicate significant differences ($p < .05$).

Figure 6. Moral reasoning choice based on transgression type

Attitude toward athlete (A_{Ath}). An ANCOVA ($n = 204$) using personal involvement with track and field as a covariate revealed the significant effect of reasoning choice on A_{Ath} ($F(2, 200) = 28.37, p < .01, \eta^2 = .22$). Follow-up contrasts (see Figure 7) indicated that consumers who select the MC strategy showed more negative attitude ($M = 2.34, SE = .24$) relative to other consumers who selected the MD ($M = 3.92, SE = .18; p < .01$) and the MR strategies ($M = 5.00, SE = .28; p < .01, H2-2 supported$).

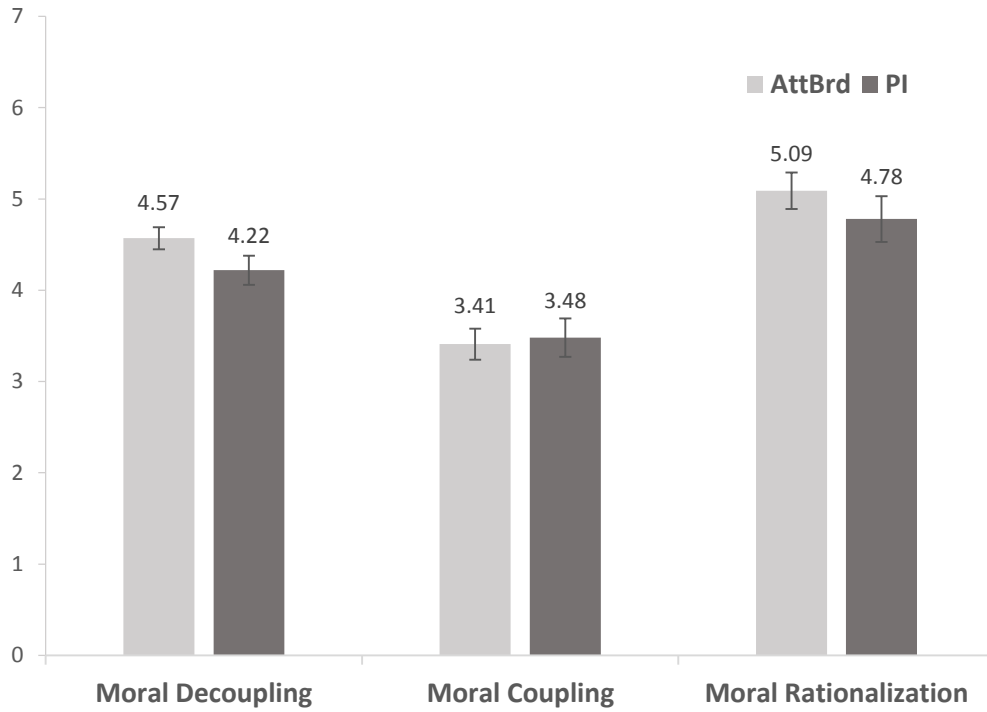
Brand evaluations. A set of two-way ANCOVAs ($n = 204$), utilizing personal involvement level as a covariate, was conducted to test a 3 (moral reasoning choice: MC vs. MD vs. MR) x 2 (functional fit between an athlete and a brand: high vs. low) between-subjects design. The results showed significant effects of reasoning choice on A_{Brd} ($F(2, 197) = 24.78, p < .01, \eta^2 = .20$) and PI ($F(2, 197) = 8.24, p < .01, \eta^2 = .08$; see Figure 8). According to follow-up comparisons, participants who selected the MC strategy exhibited more negative brand attitude ($M = 3.41, SE = .17$) than others who chose the MD ($M = 4.57, SE = .12; p < .01$) and the MR ($M = 5.09, SE = .20; p < .01$) strategies. Furthermore, participants who chose the MC reasoning strategy demonstrated a lower level of PI ($M = 3.48, SE = .21$) compared to others who selected the MD ($M = 4.22, SE = .16; p < .01$) and the MR ($M = 4.78, SE = .25; p < .01$): *H2-3 supported*.

However, there were no significant effects of functional fit on A_{Brd} ($p = .71$) and PI ($p = .71, H2-4 rejected$). Moreover, any significant interactions between the choice and the fit on the A_{Brd} ($p = .17$) and the PI ($p = .61$) were not detected.



Note. Error bars denote standard errors.

Figure 7. Attitude toward athlete based on moral reasoning choice



Note. Error bars denote standard errors.

Figure 8. Brand evaluations based on moral reasoning choice

Discussion

Study 2 was intended to examine consumers' moral reasoning choice and subsequent evaluations of a transgressed athlete and an associated brand. The results illustrate that a transgression perceived as highly relevant to an athlete's performance leads consumers to integrate immorality and performance judgments (MC). On the other hand, when the transgression is less related to an athlete's performance, consumers tend to dissociate their immorality evaluations from performance evaluations (MD). These results provide empirical evidence that consumers are likely to choose a certain moral reasoning strategy in response to certain circumstances. These findings suggest that the extent to which the transgressions are relevant to an athlete's performance level is actually negatively associated with consumer separation of judgments (MD) and positively associated with consumer integration of judgments (MC).

In addition to the association between level of job-relevance and moral reasoning choice, the results also revealed negative impacts of MC reasoning on brand attitude and purchase intention. It can thus be understood that negative attitude toward athlete influenced by MC reasoning evokes more negative brand attitude and a lower level of purchase intent. It is worth noting that consumers' MC reasoning choice could decrease brand attitude and purchase intention as well as attitude toward athlete.

These findings contribute insights to the moral judgment literature by demonstrating that sport consumer moral reasoning choice is directly related to transgression type (Bhattacharjee et al., 2013). When a transgression is related to an athlete's athletic performance, sport consumers seem to find it difficult to separately process morality and performance judgment, or to justify unethical conduct. Given the fact that people are generally motivated to enhance and maintain

positive self-regard and view themselves as morally upstanding (e.g., Baumeister, 1998), transgressions that violate the integrity of sport would be less forgivable than transgressions that are not relevant to the athlete's performance on the field. The findings also suggest that individuals processing an athlete's performance-relevant transgression are more likely to choose moral coupling strategies. In contrast, when the transgression is not closely related to overall game results and records, individuals tended to engage in a moral decoupling process. These findings are in line with the belief that moral decoupling is easier to justify and involves less risk to moral standards than moral rationalization (Bhattacharjee et al., 2013).

The findings of Study 2 also show that different moral reasoning processes can lead to different evaluations of the athlete and the brand. The findings contribute significant insights to the sport marketing literature by confirming that it is not the athlete transgression itself that negatively affects the brand, but rather that the moral reasoning strategies which the sport consumers activate to process negative publicity play critical roles in understanding and predicting consumer evaluations. Study 2 demonstrated that depending on the moral reasoning strategy the sport consumer engages in, the same transgression can result in different types of consumer evaluations of the athlete and the brand. This addresses the limitations of previous studies that employ the associative memory network approach, which have yielded inconsistent findings (e.g., Enrico, 1995; Lear, Runyan, & Whitaker, 2009; Lohneiss & Hill, 2014; Till & Shimp, 1998). The findings of Study 2 imply that the mixed findings of previous studies may be partially due to insufficient attention to the consumer's reasoning process. Without understanding the results of multifaceted reactions to a transgressor in the moral transgression context, research findings and their values will remain of limited use. In this sense, Study 2

clearly demonstrates that consumers' moral reasoning choices shape the valence of their evaluations of a troubled athlete and an associated brand.

The findings of this study also offer important marketing implications for brand managers. First, the results provide empirical evidence regarding the circumstances under which marketing managers should continue or discontinue their relationship with a troubled athlete in an effort to minimize potential damage from the athlete endorser's immoral behavior. The findings demonstrate that brand support is predicted by consumers' moral reasoning choices. The implication is that consumers engaging in the moral coupling process not only condemn the immoral athlete but also negatively respond to the associated brand, whereas consumers who choose moral decoupling strategies tend to support the athlete and the endorsed brand. Based on these findings, brand managers can conduct periodic market research in order to monitor the moral reasoning tendencies of consumers among key consumer segments. For example, when brand managers are contemplating signing, resuming, or discontinuing endorsement associations with athletes, the managers can be informed by the results of this market research. The results of this market research would enable brand managers to make informed decisions that would maximize the effectiveness of endorsement by controversial athlete endorsers. If key consumers are more likely to engage in moral coupling strategies, brands should avoid a transgressed athlete because the morally contaminated athlete would negatively affect brand evaluations. However, if target consumer segments tend to use moral decoupling or rationalization strategies, the athlete transgression would be less likely to have an adverse impact on brand evaluations.

Moreover, these empirical findings could be used to implement targeted marketing communication campaigns that encourage moral disengagement processes in response to athlete transgressions. As the results show, the choice of moral disengagement processes (e.g., moral

decoupling and rationalization) will not have negative impacts on brand evaluations. For instance, after the Tiger Woods' scandal, Nike launched the 'Winning takes care of everything' campaign that emphasized the golfer's athletic performance. Although the campaign might have triggered a raging controversy, the ad attempted to remind people why they are in awe of the golfer – his ability to consistently make tough shots (Martinez, 2013).

To sum up, the findings of Study 2 confirm the existence of MC reasoning strategy in the minds of consumers, and that it functions differently from other moral disengagement processes in predicting athlete and brand evaluations. These findings also show how the different moral reasoning choices of sport consumers could have different impacts not only on attitudes toward athlete, but also on perceptions about associated brand. Future studies that examine the relationships among moral reasoning choice, attitudes toward athlete and brand, and purchase intention would provide more comprehensive knowledge about how sport consumers make moral decisions in the athlete endorsement context.

CHAPTER 4

Study 3

Impacts of sociocultural background on moral reasoning choice

Introduction

Sport is considered a universal language that transcends culture, and unifies human society (Sambira, 2014). However, the ways sport is consumed across cultures are different. As a result of globalization, consumer demands and tastes have converged on a global scale (Erdogan, 1999; Kaikati, 1987; Taylor & Johnson, 2002). Despite some observed convergences among consumers around the world, however, fundamental cultural values still vary across cultures (Choi, Lee, & Kim, 2005). These various sociocultural values are known to evoke different and unique aspects of psychological reasoning processes in given circumstances. Therefore, marketing managers should consider the potential cultural influences on the effectiveness and persuasiveness of any uniform marketing campaign strategy that deploys a global celebrity spokesperson.

The existing body of literature has paid a great deal of attention to examining the influence of sociocultural background on consumer psychology (Shavitt, Lalwani, Zhang, & Torelli, 2006). In regard to the persuasion context, research has found that the cultural backgrounds of individuals have significant impacts on their responses to advertising (Alden, Hoyer, & Lee, 1993; Choi & Miracle, 2004; Han & Shavitt, 1994; Kim & Markus, 1999). The studies have argued that use of certain kinds of advertising can appeal more effectively to some

cultures than others. For example, using sports shoes as an advertised product, Choi and Miracle (2004) found that in Western culture (i.e., the United States), advertising campaigns containing direct descriptions that highlight the benefits and superiorities of products appeal more effectively to audiences, while in Eastern culture (i.e., Korea) audiences are attracted by advertising components that evoke affective responses. In addition, other studies have found that individual differences across cultures, such as individualism vs. collectivism, as well as different self-construal across cultures (e.g., independent self vs. interdependent self), have significant impacts on consumer information processing and advertising persuasiveness (e.g., Gardner, Gabriel, & Lee, 1999; Lee, Aaker, & Gardner, 2000; Wang, Bristol, Mowen, & Chakraborty, 2000). As for the different evaluation tendencies across cultures, Markus and others (2006) suggest significant theoretical frameworks (dis- and conjoint models of agency) designed to improve understanding of consumers' different information processing across cultures. According to the models, individuals in Western culture are more likely to evaluate target persons by focusing narrowly on their focal attributes rather than surrounding factors. In contrast, individuals in the Eastern culture tend to evaluate others by dispersing their attentions between both focal attributes and surroundings, and taking a more holistic approach.

Despite this extensive attention to the influence of sociocultural background on consumer behavior, sponsorship and endorsement studies have paid only limited attention to the impacts of sociocultural background on consumer responses toward campaigns (Choi et al., 2005). Likewise, in the context of athlete endorsement, researchers do not appear to have investigated the potential impacts of consumer sociocultural background on consumers' moral reasoning processes and choices. Taking the discussions and findings above into account, it can be speculated that individuals in Western culture, where individualism and independent self-

construal are dominant, can separate several cognitions (e.g., athlete performance levels and moralities) when they evaluate and judge other people (e.g., athlete endorsers). Furthermore, it is also plausible that individuals in Eastern culture, where collectivism and interdependent self-construal are dominant, take into account other factors, such as personal background, family history, other people, and the subjective state surrounding a target person (an athlete endorser) in evaluating him/her.

Study 3 aims to examine impacts of sport consumers' sociocultural backgrounds on their processing of an athlete endorser's scandalous transgressions. In particular, this study focuses on two different sociocultural construals: independent self-culture (American sport consumers in Western culture) vs. interdependent self-culture (Korean sport consumers in Eastern culture).

Theoretical Background

Sociocultural Background

As corporate marketing campaigns have become globalized, the impacts of consumer cultural backgrounds have also been investigated. Over the past few decades, a great deal has been learned about the significant role of sociocultural background on individuals' psychological processes (Choi, Nisbett, & Norenzayan, 1999; Lee, Hallahan, & Herzog, 1996; Miller, 1984; Morris & Peng, 1994; Shavitt et al., 2006). In particular, researchers have paid attention to specific cultural orientations as theoretical frameworks to explain the impact of sociocultural background (e.g., cultural-orientation: individualism vs. collectivism; self-construal: independent vs. interdependent).

Individualism vs. collectivism. There are two competing cultural orientations: individualism and collectivism. Hofstede (1980) defines individualism as a focus on self-oriented attributes (e.g., personal rights above duties, concern for oneself and immediate family, emphasis on self-fulfillment, and personal accomplishments). This conceptualization emphasizes the

personal (e.g., personal goals, personal uniqueness, and personal control) more than the social (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Sampson, 1988; Triandis, 1995). In light of these discussions, judgment, reasoning, and causal inference within the individualistic culture of the West are generally oriented towards the individuals rather than the situational or social surroundings (Choi et al., 1999; Miller, 1984; Morris & Peng, 1994). In other words, individualism promotes a decontextualized reasoning process that separates information from social contexts (Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002).

In contrast, the prime assumption of collectivism is that individuals are bound to groups and societies. Collectivistic societies are often recognized as communal societies characterized by diffuse and mutual expectations based on individual status (Schwartz, 1990). In these societies (e.g., Eastern culture), the individual is generally regarded simply as a component or a part of a society (Oyserman et al., 2002). As a result, an individual's traits are often valued based on the extent to which their goals reflect the goals of collectivistic societies, such as harmonizing with other members and sacrifice for the common good (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Oyserman, 1993; Triandis, 1995). Likewise, regarding judgment and causal reasoning, people in collectivistic societies are more likely to take into account their social roles and status when they judge information (Miller, 1984; Morris & Peng, 1994).

Independent self vs. interdependent self. Markus and Kitayama (1991) provide two important construals of the self as another framework to understand sociocultural differences associated with individuals' cognitions and motivations: independent self vs. interdependent self. Western culture, given its independent perspective, assumes that individuals are independent of one another (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Previous studies contend that the concept of independent self derives from a belief in the uniqueness of each individual's internal attributes

(Johnson, 1985; Sampson, 1988; Waterman, 1981). According to Markus and Kitayama, an independent self-construal can be referred to “individualist, egocentric, separate, autonomous, idiocentric, and self-contained” (p. 226). In societies where an independent self-construal is prevalent, individuals’ personal factors are likely to play significant roles in regulating behaviors. From this perspective, in societies where independent self-construal is dominant, several personal factors such as reasons, goals, histories, and surrounding circumstances may not be taken into account when explaining individual intentional behaviors (Markus et al., 2006). Previous studies have pointed out that individuals in Western culture are more likely to allocate attention narrowly to target inner attributes relative to other attributes surrounding them when they evaluate and judge the target person (Bagozzi, Wong, & Yi, 1999; Kitayama, Duffy, Kawamura, & Larsen, 2003; Masuda & Nisbett, 2001). According to these studies, in Western culture, people often tend to focus their attention specifically on a target person’s current attributes and understand agency as disjoint when they process and understand the target person’s intention and motivation to behavior. Markus and others (2006) illustrate this reasoning phenomenon by suggesting the disjoint model of agency (see Figure 9). This model argues that individuals in the society where independent self-construal is dominant are more likely to exclude a target person’s personal experiences and histories when they evaluate the target person. Given this, it can be expected that Western consumers may tend to select MD reasoning strategy than Eastern consumers.

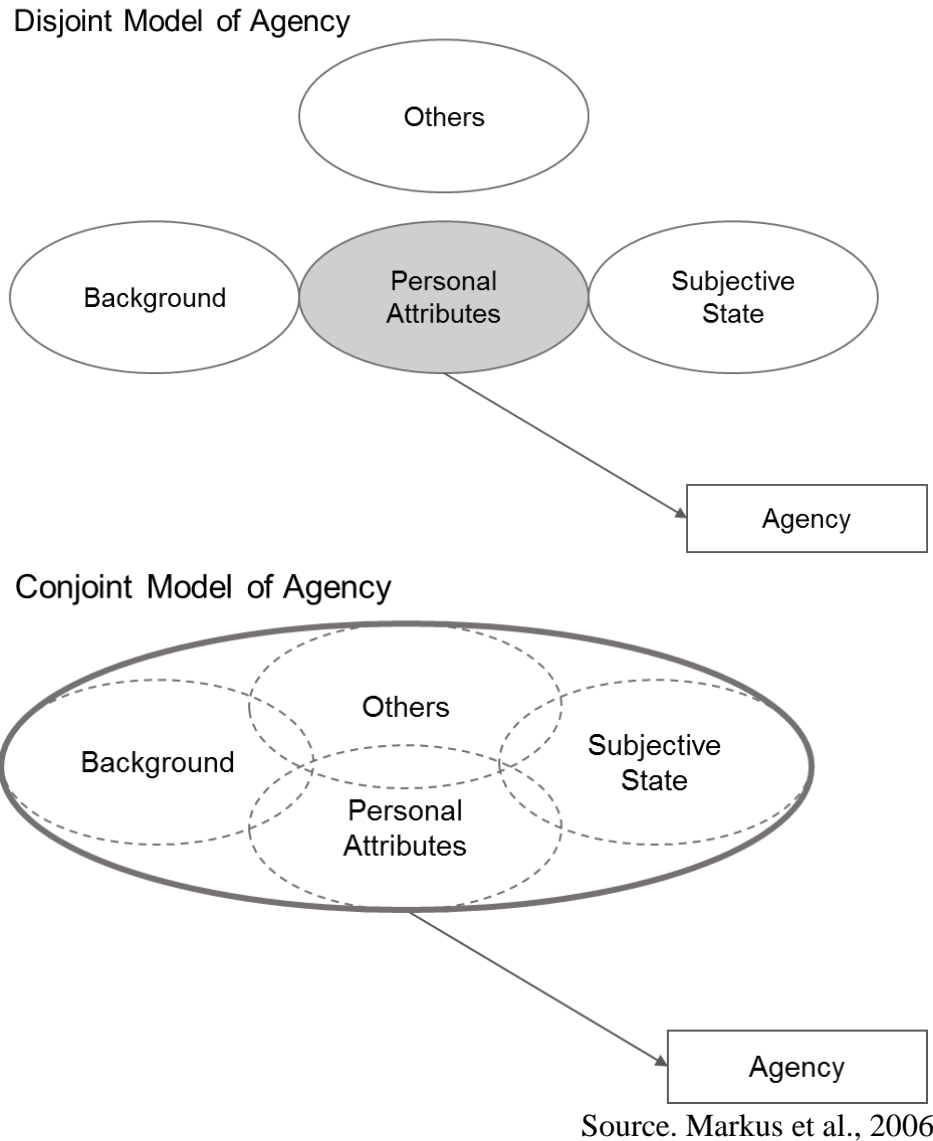


Figure 9. Disjoint and conjoint models of agency

In contrast, an interdependent self, emphasizing the collective connection and conformation between group members, is dominant in Eastern culture (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). This construal views an individual and relationships between the individual and others such that the individual is not separate from the social surroundings, but more connected to them and to others. According to Markus and Kitayama, the concept of interdependent self-construal

is interchangeable with “sociocentric, holistic, collective, allocentric, ensembled, constitutive, contextualist, connected, and relational”. This perspective encompasses several distinct psychological representations from independent self-construal (e.g., social norms, group memberships, and others’ opinions: Kühnen, Hannover, & Schubert, 2001; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). These representations, in turn, are linked to the motivation to maintain harmony within societies (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Taking these conceptualizations, the aforementioned personal factors, which would not be taken into account in explaining a person’s intentional behavior in societies where independent self-construal is dominant, should be considered as influential factors affecting the reasoning tendencies by which people process the intentional behaviors of others. In fact, previous studies (Bagozzi et al., 1999; Kitayama et al., 2003; Markus et al., 2006; Masuda & Nisbett, 2001) assert that in East Asian contexts, individuals often tend to disperse their attention between both the focal object and the surroundings with a more holistic approach. For instance, Markus et al. (2006) argue that perceivers often distribute their attention more conjointly across other people’s lives (e.g., past experiences, current subjective statuses, and the actions of other surrounding people) when the perceivers judge and evaluate the target persons’ intentional behaviors (see Figure 9). It means, in societies where interdependent self-construal is dominant, people are more likely to reason and understand others’ intentional behaviors by integrating several given circumstances and information in the conjoint manner (Markus et al., 2006). Given this, it can be predicted that Eastern consumers are more likely to select MC reasoning strategy than Western consumers.

The current study replicates and extends Study 2 by incorporating sociocultural background as a culture-specific boundary condition in the athlete endorsement context. The results of Study 2 showed that a transgression with higher relevance to an athlete’s performance

(i.e., on-field transgression) tends to lead sport consumers to choose a MC reasoning strategy. Given the findings, it can be suggested that when a transgression is closely related to an athlete's job performance, Eastern consumers would be expected to choose MC reasoning more frequently than Western consumers. On the other hand, when a transgression is less relevant to the athletic performance, Western consumers are expected to select MD reasoning more than other reasoning strategies, while Eastern consumers will still select MC most frequently. Given previous discussions and conceptualizations, I propose the following hypotheses and the research framework below (see Figure 10).

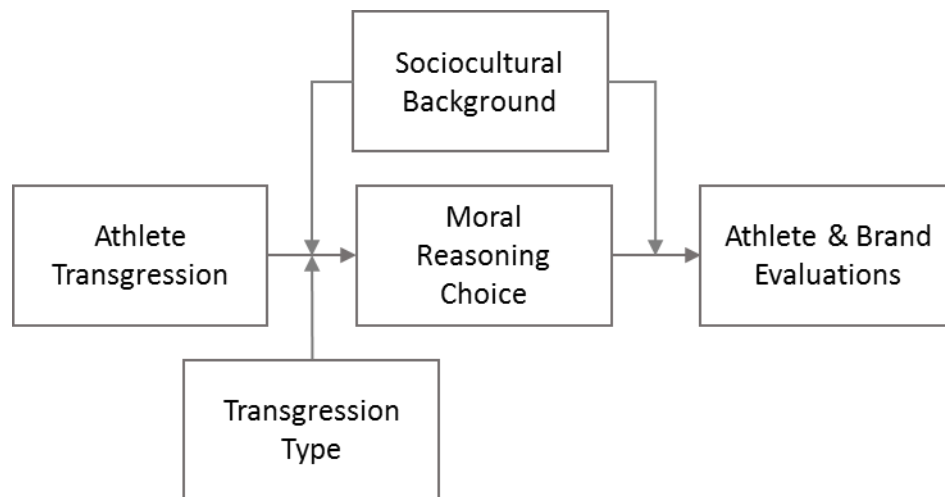


Figure 10. Proposed research framework of Study 3

H3-1. Sociocultural background will be associated with consumers' moral reasoning choice: in Eastern culture, consumers will choose MC most, while in Western culture, consumers will choose MD most.

H3-2. Eastern consumers will select MC most regardless of transgression type, while Western consumers will select MD most only when a transgression is not related to an athlete's performance.

The influence of moral reasoning choice on consumers' attitudes toward athletes and perceptions of brand can be predicted based on the results of Study 2. With respect to sport consumer perceptions about athlete and brand, it can be expected that Eastern consumers will exhibit lower levels of athlete attitude, brand attitude, and purchase intention than Western participants because they are more likely to choose a MC reasoning strategy. Based on the above conceptualizations, the following hypotheses are proposed.

H3-3. Consumers in Eastern culture will report a lower level of attitude toward a troubled athlete, compared to consumers in Western culture.

H3-4. Consumers in Eastern culture will report a lower level of attitude toward a brand and purchase intention, compared to consumers in Western culture.

Methods

Pretests and Stimuli Development

In order to identify transgression type, sport category, and brand category, two pretests were conducted in the U.S. and in Korea. A total of 129 participants (U.S. = 61; Korea = 68) were recruited in return for financial payment, using online panel services in each country. Participants were asked to freely recall two transgressions for each transgression type (on-field and off-field) that they could easily associate with an athlete. Participants were then asked to recall three sports in their daily lives wherein athletes might appear in endorsement campaigns. Finally, the participants were asked to recall three brand categories that were most often associated with athlete endorsers. From the pretests, unsportsmanlike violent play was identified as the most recalled on-field transgression (U.S. = 59 times out of 120, about 49%; Korea = 47

times out of 90, about 52%) (see Table 5). In relation to off-field transgression, DUI was identified as one of the top-three most recalled as the transgression with low relevance to athletic performance (U.S. = 11 times out of 104, about 11%; Korea = 14 times out of 83, about 17%). Although other off-field transgressions, such as murder and drug abuse, were recalled more than DUI among the U.S. samples, those transgressions were excluded because they rarely happen in Korea. In addition, soccer was identified as one of top-four most frequently recalled sports categories (U.S. = 19 times out of 164, about 12%; Korea = 53 times out of 186, about 28%). Although football and baseball were recalled more frequently than soccer in the U.S. samples, soccer was selected because Korea does not have an American football league. In addition, the sport of soccer has become a worldwide popular sport phenomenon that features a periodic global mega-event (FIFA World Cup), and both domestic and international matches attract viewers both in the U.S and Korea. Lastly, a sportswear brand was identified as the most recalled brand category (U.S. = 93 times out of 180, about 52%; Korea = 66 times out of 177, about 37%).

Table 5. Descriptive results of pretests

	The U.S. (n = 61)			Korea (n = 68)		
	120 responses total	count	%	90 responses total	count	%
On-field Transgression	Unsportsmanlike violent play	59	49	Unsportsmanlike violent play	47	52
	Fighting	30	25	Fighting	15	17
	Doping	15	13	Match fixing	13	14
	Regulation violation	8	6.5	Others	15	17
	Others	8	6.5			
		104 responses total	count	%	83 responses total	count
Off-field Transgression	Murder	20	19	Abusive behavior	17	20
	Drug abuse	15	14	DUI	14	17
	DUI	11	11	Sex scandal	8	10
	Abusive behavior	9	9	Illegal gambling	6	7
	Domestic violence	8	8	Binge drinking	6	7
	Others	41	39	Others	32	39
	164 responses total	count	%	186 responses total	count	%
Sport category	Football	46	28	Soccer	53	28
	Basketball	44	27	Baseball	47	25
	Baseball	23	14	Figure skating	25	13
	Soccer	19	12	Basketball	21	11
	Hockey/Golf	8	5	Swimming	9	5
	Others	24	15	Others	31	17
	180 responses total	count	%	177 responses total	count	%
Brand category	Sportswear	93	52	Sportswear	66	37
	Equipment	18	10	Home appliance	26	15
	Sport drink	16	9	Food	21	12
	Nutrition product	12	7	Sport drink	15	8
	Others	41	23	Others	49	27

Based on the results of the pretests, fictitious scenarios describing a soccer player's outstanding performance, along with brief information about an endorsement deal with a sportswear brand and the athlete's transgression (unsportsmanlike violent misconduct as on-field transgression and DUI as off-field transgression) were developed (see Appendix E). In particular, unlike the scenarios used in Study 2, the scenarios in this study did not specify the athlete's name and nationality in order to rule out unintended confounding effects. Moreover, the transgression information was not presented as a news article in order to control unintended effects from specific media sources in different countries. Following Bhattacharjee et al., (2013), the scenarios were developed to ask participants to imagine an athlete, an endorsement deal, and a transgression involving the athlete. After developing the scenarios in English, the scenarios were translated by two bilingual persons.

Participants and Procedures

A total of 223 participants ($n = 109$ from Korea; $n = 114$ from the U.S.) were recruited via online survey panel services (Amazon Mturk.com in the U.S and Researchpanelasia.com in Korea). Overall procedures replicated the steps of Study 2. Participants in each country were randomly assigned to one of three different transgression conditions (on-field, off-field, and control), and then asked to imagine a real domestic soccer player with an outstanding athletic career, as well as a situation involving the athlete that was based on given scenarios. After reading the scenarios, participants were told to complete the survey. Across the conditions, except for the fictitious scenarios, all other elements (e.g., questions asked, presentation order) were presented identically.

Instruments

The measurement items were adopted from existing marketing and advertising literature, as was done in Study 2.

Moral reasoning choice. Four options were provided to identify participants' moral reasoning choice: 1) The athlete's actions should change the way we view his job performance (MC); 2) Judgments of the athlete's job performance should remain separate from judgments of morality (MD); 3) The athlete's action is not as bad as some of the other horrible things people do (MR); and 4) Not applicable. The statements were adapted from a previous study (Bhattacharjee et al., 2013). Participants were asked to choose which one of four options best reflected their thoughts and personal beliefs.

Attitude toward the athlete (A_{Ath}) and the brand (A_{Brd}). Based on previous marketing and advertising literature, three items assessing individuals' attitudes toward the athlete (A_{Ath}) and the brand (A_{Brd}) used in the scenario were employed (MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989; MacKenzie et al., 1986; Mitchell & Olson, 1981; Yi, 1990). A 7-point semantic differential measurement was used for these items (i.e., *bad—good, unfavorable—favorable, and negative—positive*; ranging from 1 to 7). The lowest scores (1) reflect negative valences whereas the highest scores (7) reflect positive valences. All the scores were summed and averaged to create composite attitude scores.

Purchase intention (PI). The participants' purchase intention was measured using three Likert items adopted from Yi (1990). The question reads: How likely would you be to purchase the brand endorsed by the athlete in the scenario? Three items employing a 7-point semantic difference that ranged from 1 to 7 (*unlikely—likely, impossible—possible, and improbable—probable*) measured participants' purchase intent. The results were then summed and averaged.

Personal involvement level with sport (Inv). In order to incorporate participants' personal involvement levels with sport as a covariate in the scenarios, four items assessing

personal involvement level, based on Zaichkowsky's (1985) Personal Involvement Inventory (PII), were measured. The items included: 1) For me, soccer is important; 2) Soccer matters to me; 3) I am interested in soccer; and 4) Soccer is significant for me. A 7-point Likert scale was used to measure participants' personal involvement levels. All scores were summed and averaged to create composite scores.

Personal identification with an athlete (ID). In order to control unexpected confounding effects from personal identification with an imagined soccer player, personal identification level was incorporated as another covariate. The identification was measured using three items adopted from Team Identification Index (Trail & James, 2001). The items used 7-point Likert scales. Three items were: 1) "Being a fan of the soccer player is very important to me"; 2) "I am a committed fan of the soccer player"; and 3) "I consider myself to be a 'real' fan of the soccer player" (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). All measured scores were summed and averaged for composite scores.

Manipulation check. In order to check whether the intended stimuli were actually manipulated, a manipulation-check item was included. In order to address manipulation related to transgression type, a single item asking whether the transgression committed by the athlete is a serious violation of sport integrity (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree) was provided.

Results

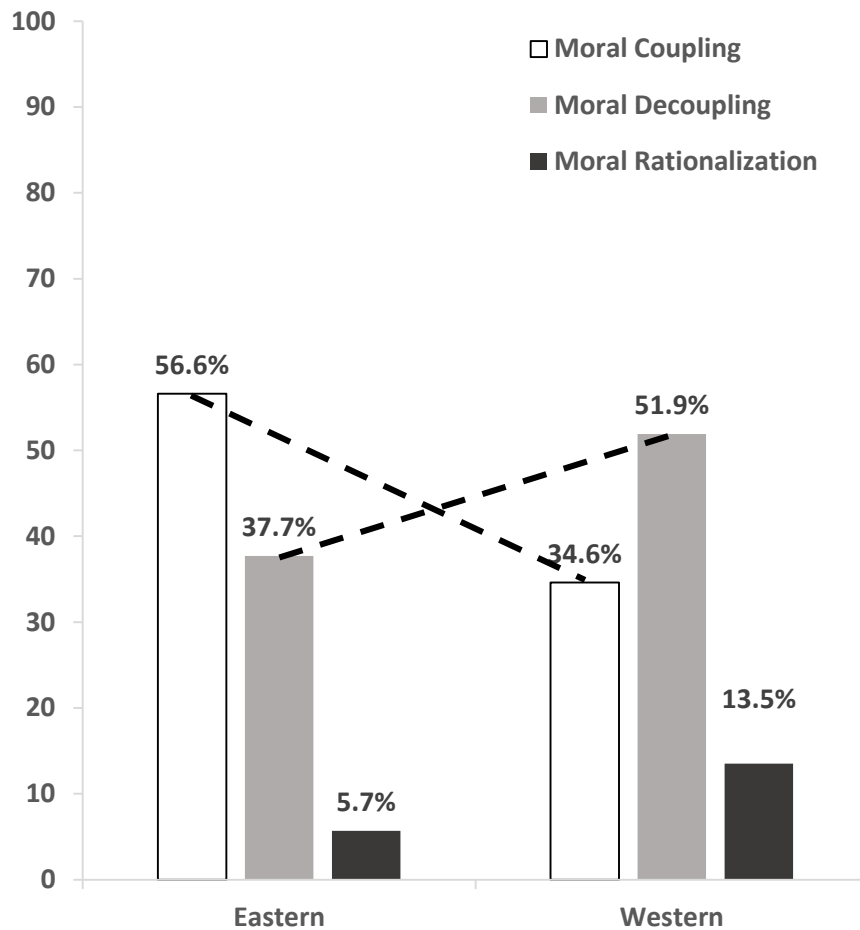
Descriptive Results and Manipulation Check

First, Cronbach's alpha levels were examined to test the reliability of the scaled measures: A_{Ath} ($\alpha = .93$), A_{Brd} ($\alpha = .97$), PI ($\alpha = .95$), Inv ($\alpha = .97$), and ID ($\alpha = .95$). The alpha levels were deemed reliable to assess each construct. After checking scale reliabilities, ANOVA was conducted to test whether the manipulation worked as intended: participants' beliefs about whether the on-field transgression (unsportsmanlike misconduct-stomping on an opponent

player's leg during a match) is a more serious violation of sport integrity than the off-field transgression condition. The results showed that the manipulation worked properly ($F(1, 211) = 43.78, p < .001$). Follow-up contrasts showed that participant exposed to the on-field transgression ($n = 106; M = 5.86, SD = 1.07$) believed that the misconduct more seriously violates sport integrity than those exposed to the off-field transgression (DUI; $n = 107; M = 4.58, SD = 1.67$).

Hypotheses Test and Expected Results

Moral reasoning choice. Following the re-grouping procedures utilized in Study 2, the participants were re-grouped based on their moral reasoning strategy selections: MC, MD, MR, and not-applicable. The not-applicable samples ($n = 13$; 3 from Eastern and 10 from Western samples) were excluded from a series of Chi-square analyses that aimed to test the potential association between sociocultural backgrounds and moral reasoning choice. The results showed a significant relationship between cultural backgrounds and moral reasoning choice ($\chi^2(2) = 11.262, p < .01$) (see Figure 11). In general, participants in the Eastern culture were more likely to choose the MC reasoning ($n = 60$ out of 106; 56.6%; $p < .05$) relative to the MD ($n = 40$; 37.7%) and the MR ($n = 6$; 5.7%). However, Western participants tended to select the MD reasoning ($n = 54$ out of 104; 51.9%; $p < .05$) over the MC ($n = 36$; 34.6%) and the MR ($n = 14$; 13.5%): *H3-1 supported*.



Note. Dotted lines indicate significant differences ($p < .05$).

Figure 11. Moral reasoning choice based on cultural background

In addition, a chi-square test examined the potential association between the sociocultural backgrounds of consumers and moral reasoning selections across different transgression types (on- vs. off-field). For the on-field transgression ($n = 78$), the results indicated that there is no significant association between the cultural background and moral reasoning choice ($p = .29$) (see Figure 12). However, there exists a significant association between consumers' cultural background and moral reasoning choice among participants under the off-field transgression condition ($n = 70$) transgression ($\chi^2(2) = 6.481, p < .05$) (see Figure 13). Post hoc testing showed

that Eastern participants tend to choose the MC reasoning strategy ($n = 14$ out of 34; 41.2%) significantly more often than Western participants ($n = 6$ out of 36; 16.7%) when they were exposed to an athlete's DUI information ($p < .05$). Interestingly, even in the control condition ($n = 62$), there exists significant association between cultural backgrounds and moral reasoning choices ($\chi^2(2) = 19.032, p < .001$). Results revealed that Eastern participants were more likely to select MC reasoning ($n = 18$ out of 33; 54.5%; $p < .05$) than the MD and the MR reasoning strategies. However, Western participants chose the MD reasoning more often ($n = 18$ out of 29; 62.1%; $p < .05$) than other reasoning strategies: *H3-2 supported* (see Figure 14).

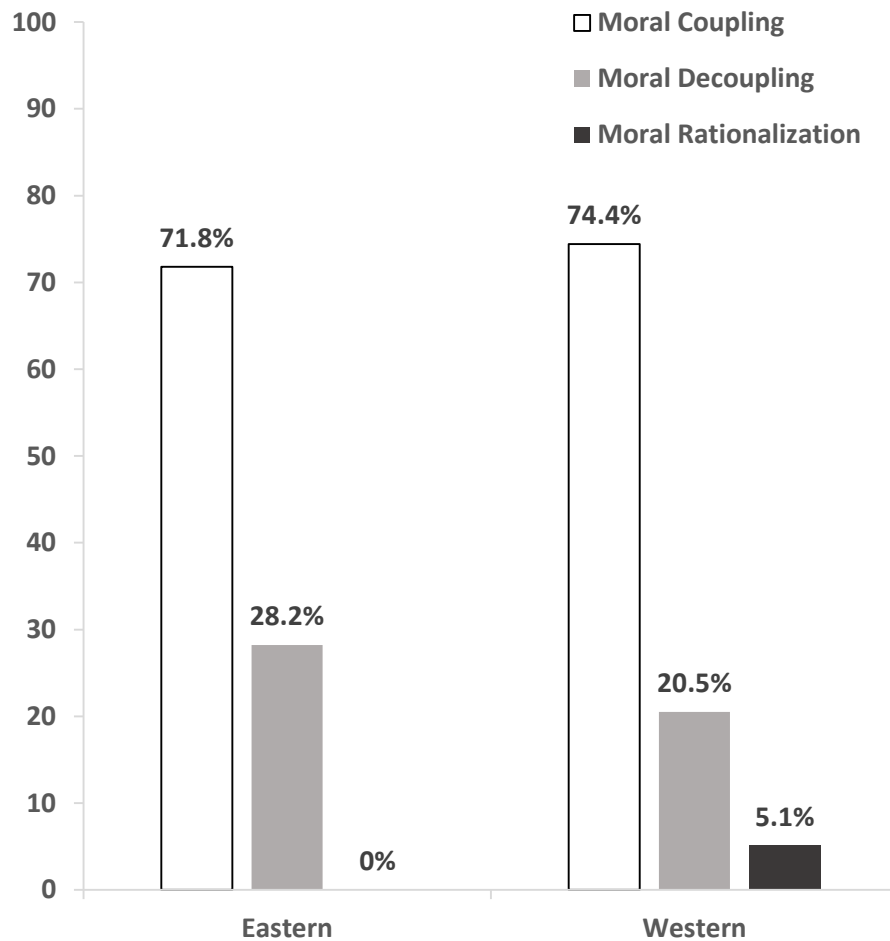
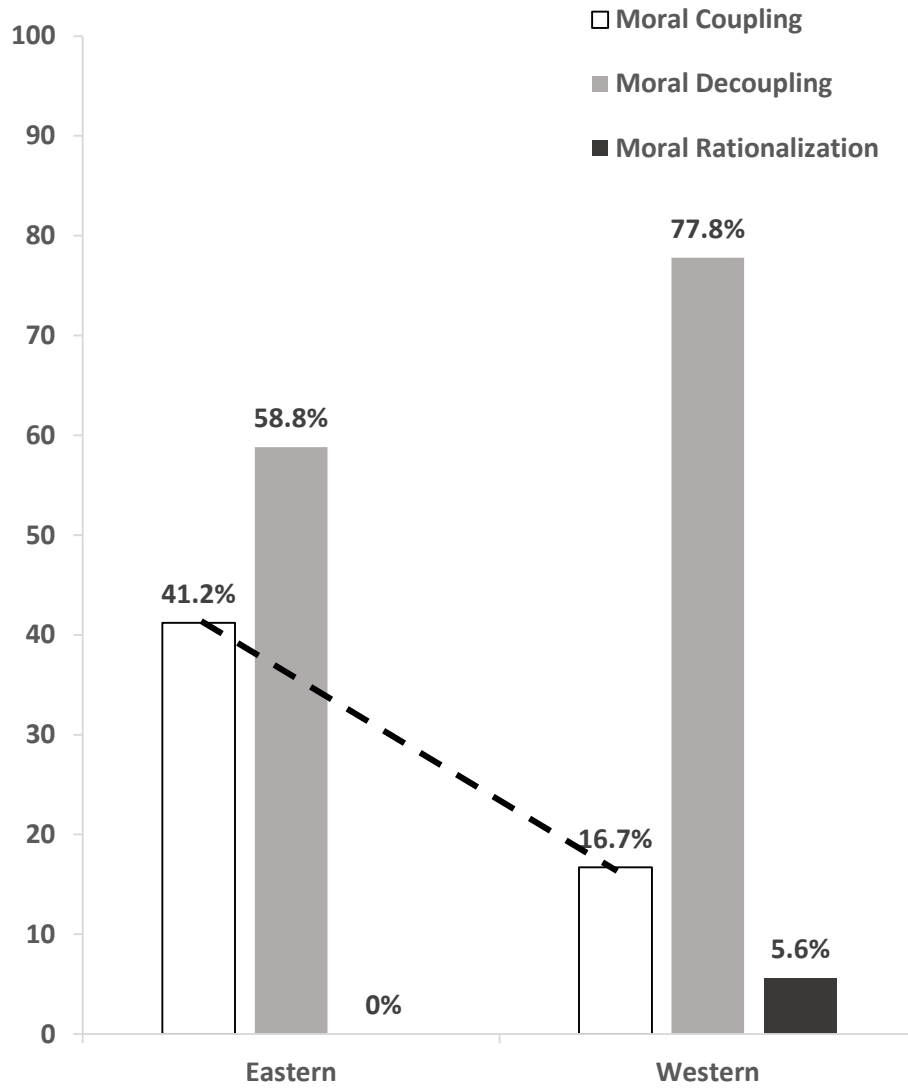
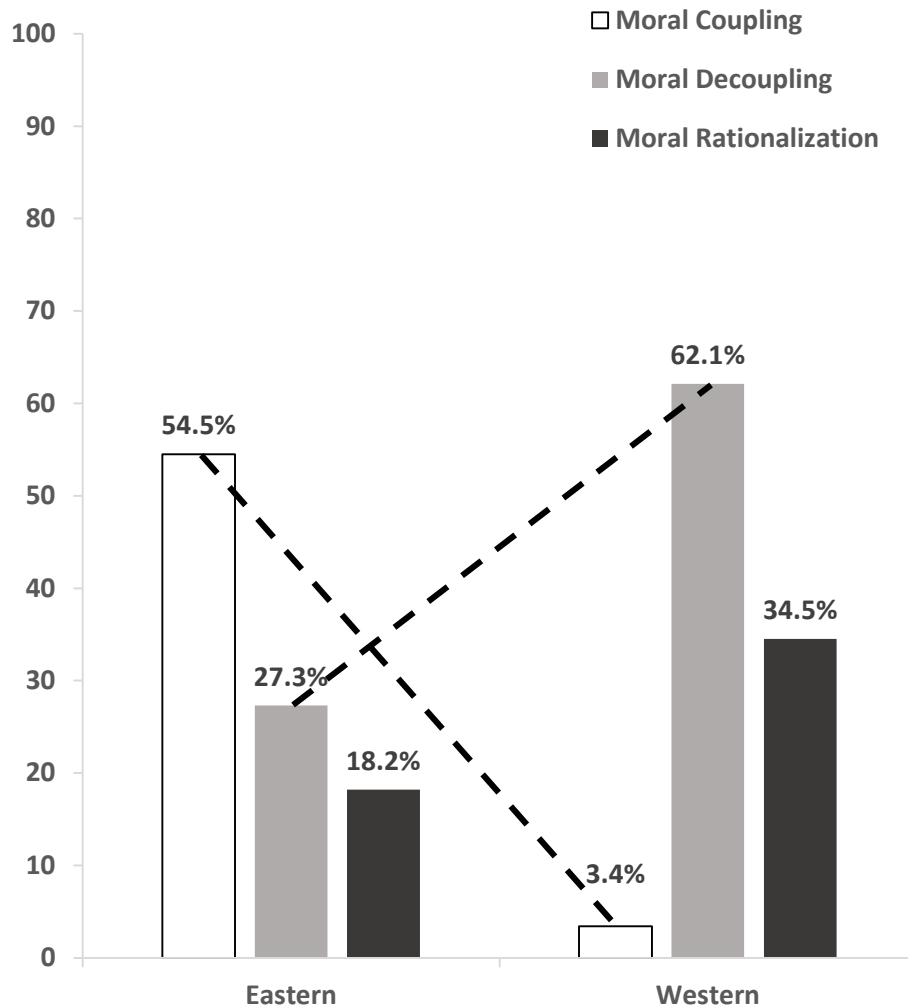


Figure 12. Moral reasoning choice with the on-field transgression



Note. Dotted line indicates significant difference ($p < .05$).

Figure 13. Moral reasoning choice with the off-field transgression



Note. Dotted lines indicate significant differences ($p < .05$).

Figure 14. Moral reasoning choice without transgression

Attitude toward athlete (A_{Ath}). In order to test the main effects of participants' cultural backgrounds on A_{Ath} , a one-way ANCOVA was conducted, using personal involvement with the sport in the scenario (soccer), identification level with the athlete, age, and gender as covariates. There was only marginal impacts of the cultural backgrounds on A_{Ath} ($p = .41$), *H3-3 rejected* (see Table 6).

Attitude toward brand (A_{Brd}) and purchase intent (PI). Another ANCOVAs, incorporating A_{Brd} and PI as outcome variables, revealed that there exist significant effects of

cultural background on A_{Brd} ($F(1, 207) = 23.60, p < .001, \eta^2 = .10$) and PI ($F(1, 207) = 11.27, p < .01, \eta^2 = .05$) (see Table 6). The follow-up contrasts uncovered that Eastern participants ($M = 3.51, SE = .13$) reported a lower level of A_{Brd} than Western participants ($M = 4.42, SE = .13; p < .001$). Moreover, Eastern participants reported a lower level of PI ($M = 3.43, SE = .14$) than Western participants ($M = 4.09, SE = .14; p < .01$). Regarding covariates, personal involvement with soccer was significant regarding A_{Brd} ($F(1, 207) = 7.13, p < .01, \eta^2 = .004$) and PI ($F(1, 207) = 6.43, p < .05, \eta^2 = .03$), and identification with the athlete showed significant impacts on A_{Brd} ($F(1, 207) = 19.10, p < .01, \eta^2 = .08$) and PI ($F(1, 207) = 18.89, p < .01, \eta^2 = .08$). However, follow-up contrasts revealed different brand evaluations across cultures were not caused by the transgression itself because brand evaluations did not differ across transgression types. This could also be seen in the relatively lower levels of A_{Brd} and PI among Eastern consumers compared to the U.S. sport consumers. The predicted differences between brand evaluations across cultures presumed that the transgression will adversely affect A_{Brd} and PI. However, since transgression did not cause any differences among Eastern consumers, the hypothesis regarding brand evaluations cannot be determined to be fully supported: *H3-4 partially supported*.

Table 6. Athlete and brand evaluations across cultures and transgression types

Sociocultural background									
	A _{Ath}			A _{Brd}			PI		
	Eastern	Western		Eastern	Western		Eastern	Western	
Mean	3.43 ^a	3.61 ^a		3.51 ^b	4.42 ^c		3.43 ^d	4.09 ^e	
SE	.15	.15		.13	.13		.14	.14	

Transgression type (Eastern culture)									
	A _{Ath}			A _{Brd}			PI		
	On-field	Off-field	Ctrl	On-field	Off-field	Ctrl	On-field	Off-field	Ctrl
Mean	3.14 ^a	3.39 ^a	4.00 ^b	3.49 ^c	3.53 ^c	3.69 ^c	3.41 ^d	3.57 ^d	3.55 ^d
SE	.20	.21	.22	.19	.20	.21	.20	.21	.22

Transgression type (Western culture)									
	A _{Ath}			A _{Brd}			PI		
	On-field	Off-field	Ctrl	On-field	Off-field	Ctrl	On-field	Off-field	Ctrl
Mean	2.33 ^a	3.27 ^b	5.56 ^c	3.70 ^d	4.12 ^d	5.55 ^e	3.43 ^f	3.83 ^f	4.99 ^g
SE	.19	.20	.22	.21	.22	.25	.24	.25	.28

Note. Different superscript letters under each evaluation indicate significant mean differences ($p < .05$).

Discussion

Study 3 examined the impact of sociocultural backgrounds on consumers' moral reasoning choice, attitude toward the athlete, and affiliated brand evaluations. The results indicated that the cultural backgrounds of sport consumers (Eastern vs. Western) are significantly associated with the consumers' moral reasoning choices. When exposed to athlete transgression information, in Eastern culture — where interdependent self-construal is dominant

and thus people evaluate a target person in conjoint manner — sport consumers are more likely to choose MC reasoning, while those in Western culture — where independent self-construal and disjoint manner of evaluation is dominant — consumers more often select the MD strategy. More specifically, there are no sociocultural differences when the transgression is performance-related (on-field transgression). In this situation, both Eastern and Western sport consumers tend to select the MC reasoning due to an inability to separate the transgression from athletic performance and game results. However, when exposed to performance-unrelated misconduct information (off-field transgression), Eastern sport consumers are still more likely to activate MC reasoning than Western consumers. Interestingly, when consumers are not exposed to any transgression information, Eastern sport consumers seem to be predisposed to view an athlete endorser from a conjoint perspective (MC reasoning), while Western sport consumers view an athlete endorser more from a disjoint perspective (MD reasoning).

The findings of Study 3 further expand the cross-cultural consumer literature by demonstrating the critical role of sociocultural background in processing negative publicity surrounding an athlete endorser in the context of consumer moral judgment. This study incorporated the model of agency (Markus et al., 2006), which proposes different evaluation tendencies across cultural backgrounds (Western vs. Eastern culture). The findings revealed that cultural difference significantly affects sport consumers' selection of moral reasoning strategies. This study demonstrated that in Eastern culture sport consumers are more likely to choose their moral coupling routes in response to conjoint types of information processing, similar to the notion of inseparable nature in moral coupling strategy. In contrast, Western consumers tend to select their moral decoupling routes due to disjoint manners of processing, similar to the fundamental tendencies of moral decoupling. In regard to transgression type, however, when

transgression is performance related, consumers' moral reasoning choice (MC) did not differ across cultures. This means that when the transgression affects sport integrity, consumers in different cultural contexts are more likely to be motivated to view an athlete in negative light. However, when consumers learn about transgression that are not related to athlete's performance, Eastern consumers utilize a conjoint approach to view the immoral action as part of an athlete evaluation, while Western consumers separate the scandal from evaluating the athlete's performance. Taking into account all the above, the findings suggests that, due to the conjoint manner of evaluations in the Eastern culture, Eastern sport consumers are more likely to engage in a moral coupling strategy than Western consumers.

The current study also offers several practical implications for brand managers. First of all, the findings provide empirical evidence regarding different consumer evaluation tendencies across cultures (Eastern vs. Western). The findings demonstrate that Eastern sport consumers are more likely to choose their moral coupling strategy regardless of transgression type, while Western consumers choose moral coupling only when exposed to a performance-related transgression. In particular, in the absence of negative publicity, Eastern consumers more frequently selected a moral coupling strategy than Western consumers, while Western consumers more frequently chose moral decoupling than Eastern consumers. The implication is that Eastern consumers are more conservative in their evaluations of athlete endorser immoral behavior regardless of transgression types than Western consumers, who are more forgiving in cases where the transgressions are unrelated to performance. Another implication from the findings is that brands that target different cultural markets (Eastern and Western culture) should take different approaches in selecting athlete endorsers. For instance, when brands target an Eastern market, marketing managers should be aware that, in Eastern culture, consumers are more likely

to evaluate athlete endorsers in a conjoint manner in which a scandal would have more adverse impacts on brand evaluations than in Western culture. Thus, when a brand is contemplating the implementation of athlete endorsement, the brands should choose an athlete spokesperson by carefully scrutinizing the athlete's on- and off-field images.

Despite several significant findings and implications, the current study has obvious limitations. The study utilized only a domestic player, but not a globally recognized athlete. Although the present study aimed to control unexpected confounding effects from an athlete's nationality and the location of the league in which the athlete plays, in reality, brands tend to employ globally recognized athletes to enhance the effectiveness of endorsement campaigns. In addition, although sport consumers' identification level was incorporated in this study as a covariate, there still exist a need to investigate the potential role of identification in the moral reasoning processes of consumers. Finally, regarding the experimental design of present study, it cannot be clearly concluded that participants in each culture actually processed the athlete transgression information in different manners (conjoint vs. disjoint). More specifically, although data were collected from two different cultures (Korea as a collectivistic culture and the U.S. as an individualistic culture), the current study did not establish whether participants evaluate the transgressed athlete by processing incoming information either in conjoint or in disjoint manner, respectively. This limitation could be addressed by priming participants with individualism or collectivism (e.g., Oyserman & Lee, 2008).

In summary, the findings of this study provide empirical evidence that sport consumers from different cultural backgrounds (Eastern vs. Western) process athlete transgression information in different ways. Eastern sport consumers are more likely to integrate athlete endorsers' morality judgment with performance judgment when evaluating athlete endorsers,

regardless of transgression type. On the other hand, Western sport consumers tend to separate their morality judgment from performance judgment when transgression is not related to athletes' performance.

CHAPTER 5

Study 4

Impacts of fan identification and moral emotions on moral judgment process

Introduction

Individuals with strong emotional bonds toward a public figure often tend to motivate themselves to maintain a positive viewpoint toward spokespersons even though the public figure is engaged in ethical misconduct (Bhattacharjee et al., 2013). For example, people tend to justify and condone the misbehaviors of public figures, which, threatening the individual moral standards (Bandura, 1991, Bandura et al., 1996). In the context of sport, examples of this biased cognition process can be easily observed. For instance, sport fans often support misbehaved celebrity athletes by compromising their own moral baselines in order to justify of the immoral conduct. As mentioned earlier, although Tiger Woods admitted his extramarital scandal, many fans still supported him (Wheeler, 2009). Likewise, Kobe Bryant's jersey maintained the top-selling position in 2010 (Associated Press, 2010) even though he was accused of sexual assault. From these examples, diehard fans who have already formed deep and rich emotional attachment toward celebrity athletes seem indifferent to others viewing them as an immoral person.

With regard to this biased reasoning, sport fans' identification with a troubled athlete seems to provide an appropriate theoretical framework to understand this phenomenon. Sport fan identification can be defined as "the personal commitment and emotional involvement customers have" (Sutton, McDonald, Milne, & Cimperman, 1997, p. 15). This kind of fan identification,

and its impact on sport fans' behavioral outcomes, has been extensively investigated. Highly identified sport fans exhibit deep emotional attachments and high levels of commitment to their favorite athletes. With respect to sport consumer reasoning processes, highly identified fans will engage in reasoning processes that support their affinity with the athlete. Although not examined in the moral decision context, previous studies have found that highly identified sport fans are more resistant to counterattitudinal information about their favorite players or teams (Funk & Pritchard, 2006; Kwak, et al., 2010; Tormala & Petty, 2004). Therefore, how identification affects the moral reasoning approaches of individuals should be investigated.

Given the fact that exposure to the violation of moral standards evokes negative affective reactions in the consumers' minds intuitively and automatically (Grappi et al., 2013; Haidt, 2001; Lee & Kwak, 2015), consumers' moral emotions also deserve research attention. Moral psychologists have showed that individuals (consumers) simultaneously and intuitively experience negative moral emotions at the moment of exposure to the immoral behaviors of target persons (celebrity endorsers) (e.g., Greene & Haidt, 2002; Haidt, 2001). These simultaneously triggered emotional responses then play a critical role in evaluating and reacting to the wrongdoer. Although moral psychology has long investigated how individuals cognitively process incoming negative information, recent evidence indicates that processing moral judgment is more about affective intuition than deliberate reasoning (Greene & Haidt, 2002). Taking all these into account, negative moral emotions are expected to further our understanding of the moral judgment processes of sport consumers. In particular, given the above discussions regarding sport fans' biased cognitive processes and experience of negative moral emotions, it may be plausible that fan identification and negative moral emotions work together to affect moral decision making processes in sport consumers.

Study 4 investigates causal relationships between sport fan identification, consumers' moral emotions, and moral reasoning strategies in the process of moral judgment. However, sport fan identification cannot be fully tested by using fictitious figures and transgressions in laboratory settings, as previous studies have done (Till & Shimp, 1998). Therefore, Study 4 utilizes an actual transgression case (that of Ray Rice, a former National Football League player who experienced a domestic violence scandal in 2014) in order to examine impact of sport fan identification on the moral judgment process. By using the actual scandal, this study seeks to address the question of 'how' sport consumer identification would affect negative moral emotions in the process of moral judgment. Taking into account all the above, the main purpose of Study 4 was to test potential causal relationships between fan identification, moral emotions, moral reasoning choice, and brand evaluations.

Theoretical Background

Sport Fan Identification

Regarding sport fans' biased cognitive processing, fan identification has provided a crucial framework in which to explain the resistant tendency. The concept of identification is deeply rooted in social identity theory, focusing on an individual's emotional attachment to and knowledge of a social group (Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000; Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995; Tajfel, 1982). The concept of identification has long been applied to the context of sport at several levels (e.g., team identification, sport identification, etc.). Among several definitions, Mael and Ashforth (1992) provide a broad concept of identification as a oneness with or belongingness with an entity where the individual defines him or herself in terms of the entity to which he or she is a member (p. 104). In particular, identification has been broadly accepted and applied to explain sport consumer attitudinal and behavioral consequences. For example, the PCM (Psychological Continuum Model; Funk & James, 2001) explains sport fans' connection to sport

based on four different psychological stages: awareness, attraction, attachment, and allegiance. Identification is a primary attribute of the 'attachment stage'. This implies that sport fans with deep and rich psychological attachment toward certain sports entities are more likely to become loyal fans.

Over recent decades, the sport management research community has extensively investigated the role of fan identification in explaining sport consumers' various consumption behaviors (e.g., sponsorship, license goods, spectatorship, etc.). For example, several previous studies (e.g., Gwinner & Swanson, 2003; Levin, Beasley, & Gamble, 2004) revealed that a high level of fan identification positively affects sport consumers' perceptions of sponsors. In particular, Levin et al. (2004) conducted an empirical study in the context of NASCAR, and showed that highly identified fans are more likely to report greater levels of brand loyalty toward the sponsor brand.

Identification and biased reasoning process

Diehard fans have been known to resist a counterattitudinal message (e.g., negative information about one's favorite athlete or team; Kwak et al., 2010). When fans are exposed to negative messages about their favorite athlete or team, they tend to resist the message by bolstering their initial attitudes (e.g., I love the player/my team no matter what happens), creating counterarguments (e.g., I don't like it!), or disparaging the message source (e.g., I don't believe the source of message!). A previous study (Tormala & Petty, 2004) provided empirical evidence that such resistance occurs more frequently when an individual (e.g., sport fan) has established a rich attitudinal connection with a message target (e.g., favorite athlete or team).

In regard to the biased moral judgment described above, the literature has indicated that identification significantly impacts the consumer evaluations of wrongdoers. For example, Johnson (2005) demonstrated that individuals who highly identified with a transgressed celebrity

endorser are more likely to believe that the wrongdoer is innocent, while people with a low level of identification tend to believe the transgressor is guilty. In addition, another study (Ahluwalia, Burnkrant, & Unnava, 2000) showed that low-commitment consumers often tend to process negative information with a more diagnostic approach that emphasizes the negative information, while high-commitment consumers consider positive information to be more diagnostic.

This insensitivity to undesirable information in the context of sport had been examined by Funk and James (2001), who argue that loyal fans with high levels of identification demonstrate a “tendency to resist change in response to conflicting information or experience” (p. 136). This implies that when highly identified fans are exposed to negative information (e.g., a favorite athlete’s transgression) the fans would resist the counterattitudinal information and maintain their existing attitudes. In addition, Kwak and others (2010) found that highly identified fans are more likely to engage in biased cognitive processing when exposed to a counterattitudinal information by denigrating the credibility of the message source. In summary, identification leads sport consumers to biased cognitive processes, enabling them to resist negative information inconsistent with their preexisting attitude toward the troubled athlete and to keep supporting the wrongdoer.

Moral emotions: Contempt, Anger, and Disgust

Exposure to the violation of moral standards is known to evoke negative affective reactions in the consumers’ minds both intuitively and automatically (Grappi et al., 2013; Haidt, 2001). The affective responses then play a critical role in evaluating and reacting toward the wrongdoer. Moral psychology has long investigated how individuals cognitively reason or process incoming negative information. However, recent evidence suggests that moral judgment is more a matter of emotion and affective intuition than deliberate reasoning (Greene & Haidt, 2002). More specifically, research on moral judgment has suggested that before executing a

conscious mental activity (moral reasoning) that is intentional, effortful, and controllable (Bargh, 1994), moral emotions as significant driving force of the cognitive reasoning process involve intuitive judgments (Greene & Haidt, 2002; Haidt, 2007). Neuroimaging studies have also confirmed that certain brain regions associated with moral emotions are spontaneously activated by certain moral dilemmas (Greene & Haidt, 2002; Greene, Sommerville, Nystrom, Darley, & Cohen, 2001; Moll, de Oliveira-Souza, Bramati, & Grafman, 2002; Moll, Zahn, de Oliveira-Souza, Krueger, & Grafman, 2005).

Among various moral emotions, “other-critical” emotions (i.e., contempt, anger, and disgust; Rozin, Lowery, Imada, & Haidt, 1999, p. 575) have been known to be triggered when individuals experience ethical and social transgressions that violate moral standards (e.g., Haidt, 2001, 2007; Tangney, Stuewig, & Mashek, 2007). Contempt, as a negatively valenced emotion, can be characterized by disapproval of someone’s actions, which results in an individual feeling morally superior to wrongdoers (Haidt, 2003; Romani, Grappi, & Bagozzi, 2013). The experience of contempt results in a variety of behavioral responses such as urges to move away from a wrongdoer, and the exclusion of the wrongdoer from one’s relationship (e.g., Fischer & Roseman, 2007). In this sense, contempt has a destructive effect on social relationships. In addition, anger, so called righteous-anger, has been known to be experienced when one is aware of, or witnesses, a situation that involves interpersonal harm (e.g., physical mistreatment, and violation of the freedom or human dignity of other person; Romani et al., 2013). In particular, righteous-anger can be invoked without personal experiences, but upon indirectly experiencing moral violations aimed at a third party. Anger also has action tendencies aiming at punishing or attacking the wrongdoer, including indiscriminant urges to injure (e.g., Goldberg, Lerner, & Tetlock, 1999; Kuppens, van Mechelen, Smits, & de Boeck, 2003). However, unlike contempt,

anger is a more constructive emotion, aiming to correct wrongdoing and improve the relationship with the wrongdoer. Finally, disgust as an emotional response toward social violation is defined by Lazarus (1991) as the feeling that people may experience when “taking in or standing too close to — metaphorically speaking — an indigestible (idea)” (p. 826). The action tendency of disgust is often pro-social. People experiencing disgust are willing to punish the wrongdoer while expecting to prevent morally contaminated behaviors in the future (Haidt, 2003).

These moral emotions (contempt, anger, and disgust: CAD) have been known to occur individually or jointly to express different types of disapproval for the actions of other people, when those actions violate moral standards. As discussed earlier, CAD can be evoked in different situations in which moral violations occur, and can also lead to different response tendencies. Although whether these moral emotions function dis- or conjointly is still under debate (Grappi et al., 2013), Izard (1977) proposed that CAD are rooted in common origins. In addition, Shaver, Schwartz, Kirson, and O’Connor (1987) found that CAD clustered together, falling under a basic emotional category, such as anger. Empirical studies support this commonality among CAD (e.g., Grappi et al., 2013; Hwang, Pan, & Sun, 2008). In particular, Grappi and others (2013) employed a second-order confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and demonstrated how CAD adversely affect consumers’ behavioral responses (e.g., negative word of mouth and protest toward the morally tarnished corporation). Thus, the present study takes Grappi et al.’s (2013) approach to represent both the commonality and uniqueness of people’s expression of the three emotions that naturally occur in the moral judgment context.

In regard to the relationship between identification and experience of moral emotions, identification level will affect the experience of CAD. This is because identification is formed and developed over time. In contrast, moral emotions are evoked and experienced in the moment

of exposure to a violation of moral norms. This means identification can be considered as more of a trait, while the emotions are more of a state influenced by one's predisposed identification with the target. In addition, the impact of identification on negative moral emotion experiences has been addressed in the literature on psychological defense mechanism, which have provided adequate theoretical concepts. The literature has shown that people may either instinctively or deliberately activate defense mechanisms, such as the suppression of unpleasant feelings, when their social identity is threatened (Cramer, 2000; Dalton & Huang, 2014). Previous studies have provided empirical evidence that such suppression mechanisms are more likely to be triggered when an incoming message threatens an individual's central self-representation (Cramer, 1991, 1998; Grzegolowska-Klarkowska & Zolnierczyk, 1988). When consumers who highly identify with a celebrity athlete endorser encounter counterattitudinal messages about the athlete, their identification with the athlete will motivate them to suppress negative emotions. Given the above empirical findings, it is expected that sport fan identification will lead to reduced expression of negative emotions, which indirectly enables them to maintain their support for their athlete.

Hypotheses Development

Sport fan identification is generally established over time, based on accumulated affectively fulfilling experiences, such as the success of a favorite team (Fisher & Wakefield, 1998; Funk & James, 2001), and is considered as a personal trait. This personal psychographic variable will in turn affect the individual's psychological processes, such as experiencing emotions or processing incoming information. As discussed earlier, threats to an individual's identity have been known to activate psychological defense mechanisms, suppressing the experience of negative affective responses. Thus, it is plausible that sport consumer identification might also suppress negative moral emotions (CAD) when a consumer is exposed to negative information about a celebrity athlete endorser with whom the consumer is highly identified.

H4-1. Sport fan identification with a transgressed athlete will be negatively associated with the expression of negative moral emotions (CAD).

Considering the aforementioned biased psychological processes, it becomes apparent that highly identified consumers are often predisposed to resist negative information (i.e., transgressions) and support celebrity endorsers they admire. For example, one of Tiger Wood's fans showed steadfast support, despite the golfer's marital infidelity, commenting on Tiger Woods' official website, "I have been a fan of yours and will continue to be a fan because I believe that you are a great golfer." (Wheeler, 2009). This example shows how sport fans may emphasize the troubled golfer's on-field performance rather than the golfer's tainted morality, as the theories of moral decoupling suggest. Resistance to counterattitudinal information resulting from their identification will motivate moral disengagement reasoning processes, such as moral decoupling (MD) or moral rationalization (MR). From a moral coupling (MC) perspective, if sport fans highly identify with an athlete, the fans will become more defensive, in order to protect their preexisting attitudes, and will then be less motivated to use a MC strategy that would damage their perception of the athlete.

H4-2. Sport fan identification will have a positive effect on MD and MR reasoning.

H4-3. Sport fan identification will have a negative effect on MC reasoning.

As discussed earlier, negative moral emotions have been known to have negative impacts on behavioral tendencies. In particular, moral psychology literature has found that people experience negative moral emotions when exposed to incidents that violate their ethical standard, and then deliberately activate certain reasoning strategies in response to certain circumstances (e.g., Bargh, 1994; Greene & Haidt, 2002; Haidt, 2007). Given the nature of negative moral emotions, one may argue that negative moral emotions are positively associated with MC, which

negatively affects consumer evaluations. There could also exist negative associations between moral emotions and moral disengagement routes—MD and MR, which result in positive responses to a troubled athlete and an endorsed brand.

H4-4. CAD will have a negative effect on MD and MR reasoning.

H4-5. CAD will have a positive effect on MC reasoning.

With respect to the relationships between a moral reasoning strategy and its subsequent effects on attitude toward a troubled endorser and an associated brand, it has been found that consumers engaging in MC reasoning exhibit the lowest levels of endorser attitude (Lee & Kwak, 2015). Moreover, individuals who utilize MD and MR reasoning reinforce favorable evaluations of troubled public figures (Bhattacharjee et al., 2013). Finally, considering the basic premise of the attitude-behavior consistency paradigm (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2000), it can be speculated that attitudes toward a transgressed endorser evoked by each moral reasoning strategy will positively affect associated brand attitude. Therefore, the hypotheses are proposed as below.

H4-6. MD and MR reasoning will have a positive effect on attitude toward the transgressed athlete.

H4-7. MC reasoning will have a negative effect on attitude toward the transgressed athlete.

H4-8. Attitude toward the athlete will have a positive effect on attitude toward the endorsed brand.

Finally, taking all the above into account, the mediating effects of negative moral emotions on the relationships between sport fan identification and a moral reasoning strategy can be predicted.

H4-9. Sport fan identification will have positive indirect impacts on the MD and the MR reasoning through CAD.

H4-10. Sport fan identification will have negative indirect impact on the MC reasoning through CAD.

Based on the above hypotheses, a conceptual model is proposed (see Figure 15).

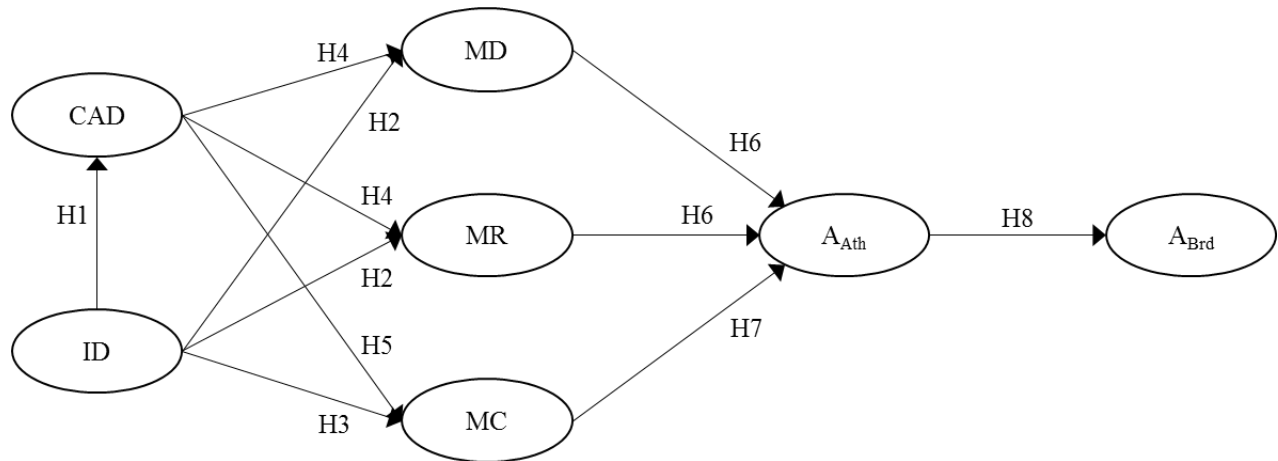


Figure 15. Proposed structural model of sport consumer's moral reasoning process

Methods

Participants and Procedures

A total of 297 participants (68.1% male; mean age = 31.9) were recruited. In particular, since Study 4 utilizes the case of Ray Rice's domestic violence to investigate the impact of a preexisting psychographic individual trait (i.e., sport fan identification), data was collected from two different target participants: one group of participants ($n = 187$; 63.9% male) using an online survey panel service (Amazon Mturk.com); and the other group of participants ($n = 110$; 75% male) from a large public university located in the Baltimore—Washington metropolitan area, where the team (the Baltimore Ravens) of the troubled athlete played is based. This targeted sampling was intended to reach populations that follow the specific player of interest.

Once participants agreed to take part in the study, they were asked to rate their prior identification level with Ray Rice before the outbreak of his scandal. In particular, participants were told to report their identification level prior to the exposure to captured images from a video clip involving Ray Rice and his former fiancée (and current wife). By doing so, the study aimed to control potential confounding effects that could be caused by the order of survey items and manipulation stimuli. More specifically, if participants are exposed to the captured images before they report their identification levels, their identification level could be affected by social desirability bias created by previous exposure to the images, which reflects the tendency of survey respondents to answer questions in a manner that will be viewed favorably by others. Thus, after rating their identification level with the former football player, participants viewed the visual images that show the moment of domestic violence, captured from a video clip released to the public (see Appendix F). Participants were then asked to report negative moral emotions (contempt, anger, and disgust) triggered by viewing the images. Immediately after reporting their moral emotions, they were asked to report moral reasoning strategies (MC, MR, and MD). Finally, attitudes toward the athlete and the brand endorsed by the athlete were assessed. After completing the survey, participants were thanked and debriefed on the purposes of the research.

Instruments

Sport fan identification (ID). In order to measure participant identification levels with prior to the scandal, the survey included a question asking about participants' previous thoughts and feelings about the troubled athlete: "Please take a moment to think about each of the given statement about Ray Rice and mark the answer which best reflects your previous thought and feeling that you had prior to his recent scandal." Three items of the Team Identification Index (TII; $\alpha = .98$, see Table 7) were adopted from Trail & James (2001). The items used 7-point

Likert scales. Three items were: 1) “Being a fan of Ray Rice is very important to me”; 2) “I am a committed fan of Ray Rice”; and 3) “I consider myself to be a ‘real’ fan of Ray Rice” (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree).

Moral emotions (CAD). Three negative emotions (contempt; anger; disgust) were adopted from Grappi et al. (2013). Three items were used for each emotion dimension to measure negative feelings provoked from the scandal using 7-point Likert scales: 1) Contempt ($\alpha = .93$): contemptuous, scornful, and disdainful; 2) Anger ($\alpha = .92$): mad, anger, and very annoyed; and 3) Disgust ($\alpha = .95$): disgusted, feeling distaste, and feeling revulsion (1 = very weak; 7 = very strong).

Moral reasoning strategies. In order to measure each moral reasoning construct, measurement items were adopted from moral judgment literature. Instead of asking participants to select a specific moral reasoning choice, these multi-item scales allowed participants to rate the extent to which they agree or disagree with each item. For moral decoupling, three items ($\alpha = .92$) were employed from Bhattacharjee et al. (2013). The items were: 1) “Ray Rice’s misconduct does not change my assessment of his performance”; 2) “Judgments of Ray Rice’s performance should remain separate from judgments of morality”; and 3) “Reports of wrongdoing should not affect our view of Ray Rice’s achievements.” For moral rationalization, five items ($\alpha = .84$) were selectively adopted from Bandura et al. (1996): 1) “Ray Rice’s transgression is not as bad as some other horrible things that people do”; 2) “Ray Rice’s behavior was alright if his fiancée belittled him”; 3) “It is important to take into account that the athlete’s action does not really do much harm”; 4) “It’s unfair to blame just Ray Rice because there must be his fiancée’s fault”; and 5) “Ray Rice should not be at fault for the scandal because the pressures of modern relationships are so high.” Lastly, two items assessing moral coupling

strategy were selectively adapted from Lee and Kwak (2015). The items ($\alpha = .82$) were: 1) “People need to let their view of Ray Rice’s misconduct affect their assessment of the athlete’s performance” and 2) “It is important to take into account Ray Rice’s misconduct when assessing his job performance.” All items were measured using 7-point Likert scales.

Attitude toward the athlete and brand (A_{Ath} & A_{Brd}). Three items for each attitude scale ($\alpha s = .96$ and $.97$ respectively) were employed from marketing literature (MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989). The items were measured based on a 7-point semantic differential scale (i.e., unfavorable–favorable, bad—good, positive—negative). In relation to participants’ attitudes toward endorsed brands, participants were asked to report their attitude toward any brands endorsed by Ray Rice.

Results

Before testing the proposed structural model, a second-order confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to evaluate the appropriateness of measurements with the theoretical constructs (i.e., identification, CAD, moral coupling, moral rationalization, moral coupling, attitude toward athlete and endorsed brand). The second-order measurement model showed an acceptable level of fit: S-B χ^2/df ratio $584.56/326 = 1.79$, $p < .001$; CFI = .97; NNFI = .97; RMSEA = .05; SRMR = .059 (Hu & Bentler, 1999), and slightly better fit compared to a first-order measurement model (S-B χ^2/df ratio $566.932/314 = 1.81$, $p < .001$; CFI = .97; NNFI = .97; RMSEA = .05; SRMR = .059). As reported earlier, all scaled measures in the measurement model met acceptable Cronbach’s alpha levels, ranging from .82 to .97. Likewise, the correlations between latent factors ranged from $-.79$ to $.65$ (see Table 8), lower than .85 as Kline (2005) suggested, and all construct AVE estimates were also larger than the corresponding squared interconstruct correlation (SIC) estimates. Thus, the scaled measurements could be deemed to reach a satisfactory level of discriminant validity. Taken together, the measurement model demonstrated

good psychometric properties. In particular, following Grappi et al.'s (2013) second-order approach to negative moral emotions (CAD), whether measures of contempt, anger, and disgust are hierarchically organized under a second-order CFA model was tested. Nine factor loadings on three first-order factors (contempt; anger; disgust) ranged from .75 to .96, and the three factor loadings relating to the higher order factor (CAD) of the first three order factors were .83, .92, and .97, respectively. Given the acceptable model fit and factor loadings, it is reasonable to create a negative moral emotion latent factor identified by three first-order factors of CAD to include within the conceptual model explaining consumer's moral reasoning processes (Grappi et al., 2013). Furthermore, the theoretical constructs in the model showed acceptable levels of average variance extracted (see Table 7), greater than .50 (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2005).

Table 7. Measures, factor loadings (λ), reliability coefficients (α), and average variance extracted (AVE)

Variables & Items	λ	α	AVE
Sport fan identification		.98	.94
Being a fan of Ray Rice is very important to me	.94		
I am a committed fan of Ray Rice	.99		
I consider myself to be a 'real' fan of Ray Rice	.98		
CAD		.96	.83
Contempt		.93	.81
Contemptuous	.84		
Scornful	.93		
Disdainful	.94		
Anger		.92	.80
Mad	.96		
Anger	.96		
Very annoyed	.75		
Disgust		.95	.86
Disgusted	.93		
Feeling distaste	.93		
Feeling revulsion	.93		

Moral decoupling		.92	.80
Ray Rice's misconduct does not change my assessment of his performance	.89		
Judgments of Ray Rice's performance should remain separate from judgments of morality	.90		
Reports of wrongdoing should not affect our view of Ray Rice's achievements	.90		
Moral rationalization		.84	.60
Ray Rice's transgression is not as bad as some other horrible things that people do	.46		
Ray Rice's behavior was alright if his fiancée belittled him	.84		
It is important to take into account that the athlete's action does not really do much harm	.84		
It's unfair to blame just Ray Rice because there must be his fiancée's fault	.82		
Ray Rice should not be at fault for the scandal because the pressures of modern relationships are so high	.82		
Moral coupling		.82	.70
People need to let their view of Ray Rice's misconduct affect their assessment of the athlete's performance	.80		
It is important to take into account Ray Rice's misconduct when assessing his job performance	.94		
Attitude toward athlete		.97	.91
Unfavorable—Favorable	.95		
Bad—Good	.94		
Positive—Negative	.97		
Attitude toward brand		.97	.96
Unfavorable—Favorable	.97		
Bad—Good	.97		
Positive—Negative	.99		

Table 8. Interconstruct correlations

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Mean	SD
1 ID	--							1.99	1.47
2 CAD	-.35	--						5.54	1.22
3 MD	.40	-.43	--					3.56	1.74
4 MR	.37	-.58	.33	--				2.07	.97
5 MC	-.28	.38	-.79	-.17	--			4.15	1.67
6 AAth	.60	-.59	.54	.62	-.41	--		2.11	1.31

7 ABrd	.47	-.40	.50	.37	-.39	.65	--	2.92	1.59
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After testing the measurement model incorporating all constructs, the proposed structural model was tested (see Figure 16). With regard to the structural model, most model fit indices met satisfactory levels on the basis of suggested criteria (i.e., S-B $\chi^2/df = 668.014/333 = 2.01$; CFI = .97; NNFI = .96; RMSEA = .06; SRMR = .08). Results showed that ID has negative impacts on CAD (standardized $\gamma = -.35, p < .001$; *H4-1 supported*) and MC (standardized $\gamma = -.17, p < .01$; *H4-3 supported*), and positive impacts on MD (standardized $\gamma = .29, p < .001$) and MR (standardized $\gamma = .21, p < .001$; *H4-2 supported*). In addition, CAD has negative impacts both on MD (standardized $\gamma = -.33, p < .001$) and MR (standardized $\gamma = -.52, p < .001$; *H4-4 supported*), and a positive impact on MC (standardized $\gamma = .32, p < .001$; *H4-5 supported*). As predicted, MD and MR have positive impacts on A_{Ath} (standardized γ s = .36 and .12 respectively, all p s < .001; *H4-6 supported*). However, expected negative impact of MC on A_{Ath} was not significant ($p = .62$; *H4-7 rejected*). Lastly, A_{Ath} affects A_{Brd} in a positive way (standardized $\gamma = .65, p < .001$; *H4-8 supported*).

Before testing mediation impacts between ID, CAD, and moral reasoning strategies, a chi-square difference test was conducted to ascertain whether the conceptual model includes full or partial mediations. As a rival model, another model, without the direct causal paths from ID to each moral reasoning strategy (MD, MR, MC), was tested. The rival model, with fewer parameters, also fits the data well (i.e., S-B $\chi^2/df = 705.952 = 2.10$; CFI = .96; NNFI = .96; RMSEA = .06; SRMR = .11). However, the chi-square difference was significant ($p < .01$), indicating that the initially proposed model, which assumed partial mediations, fits better than the rival model. Thus, a bootstrapping method (Cheung & Lau, 2008) was performed to examine the partial mediating effect of CAD on the relationship between ID and moral reasoning

strategies. The results revealed that the relationships between ID and each moral reasoning strategy were partially mediated by CAD. The mediation effects ($ID \rightarrow CAD \rightarrow MD/MR/MC$; standardized indirect effects were .12, .19, and -.11, respectively) were all significant (all $ps < .01$; *H4-9 and 10 supported*). Therefore, the results showed there exist partial mediating relationships between ID and moral reasoning strategies through negative moral emotions (CAD).

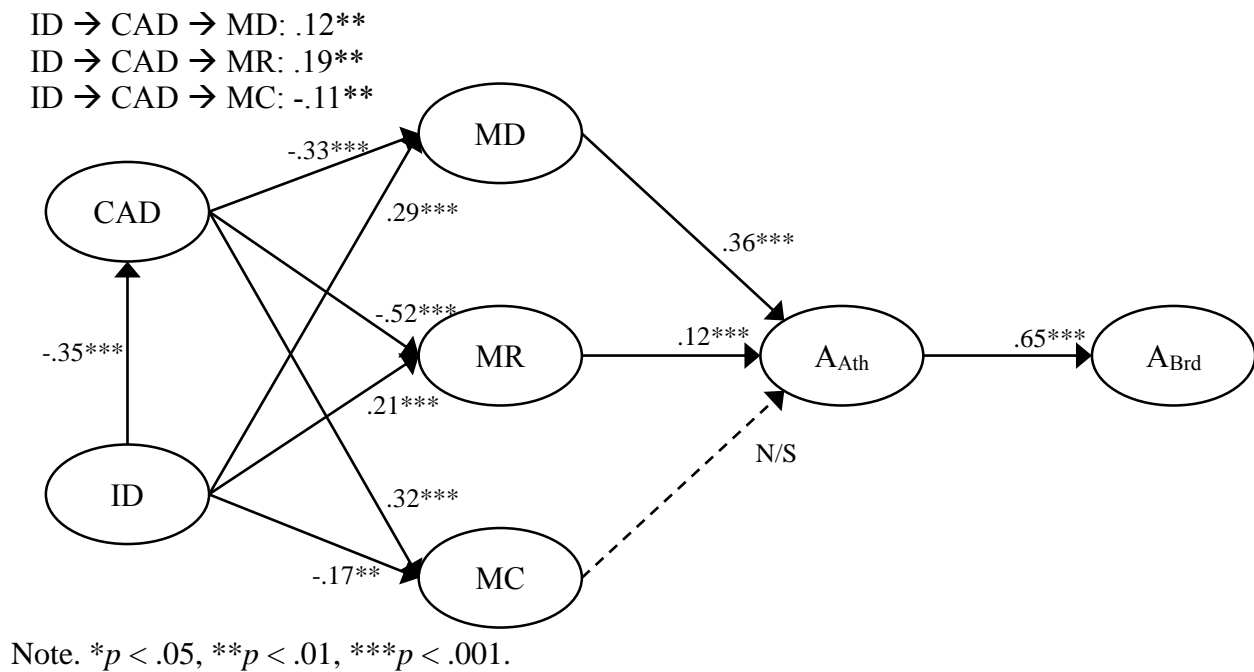


Figure 16. Standardized path coefficients

Discussion

Study 4 was designed to test causal relationships between sport fan identification, moral reasoning strategies, and consumer evaluations by conducting a field study using a real athlete scandal (the Ray Rive domestic violence case in 2014). By incorporating negative emotion as a mediator in the relationships between fan identification and moral reasoning strategies, this study

considers how affective responses (moral emotions), and cognitive processes (moral reasoning), work collaboratively in consumer moral judgment processes. The results indicate that sport fans' identification suppresses the experiences of negative moral emotions in their minds, as predicted. This finding suggests that a highly identified sport consumer is less likely to experience and express negative moral emotions when exposed to an admired athlete's scandal. This result is in line with the previous findings in psychological defense mechanism literature: the suppressing mechanism is activated when an individual's identity is threatened by counterattitudinal negative information (e.g., Cramer, 1991, 1998, 2000; Dalton & Huang, 2014; Grzegolowska-Klarkowska & Zolnierczyk, 1988). In addition, the results show that sport fans' identification also impacts their moral reasoning strategies. The findings suggest that highly identified fans are more likely to activate moral decoupling and moral rationalization (moral disengagement processes), enabling them to be more forgiving, and resulting in more favorable responses to both a troubled athlete endorser and their affiliated brands. Moreover, highly identified sport consumers were less likely to use moral coupling strategies that might result in negative responses to a troubled athlete and an affiliated brand.

Regarding the relationships between moral emotions and moral reasoning strategies, the results show that the negative moral emotions evoked by negative publicity surrounding an athlete endorser hinder consumers from engaging in moral decoupling and rationalization. However, strong negative moral emotions motivate sport fans to utilize moral coupling strategies, which adversely impact evaluations of a wrongdoer. The results of the current study contribute to the moral judgment literature by examining the relationship between sport fan identification, moral emotions, and moral reasoning processes. The findings suggest sport fans'

identification directly influences their moral reasoning processes, and indirectly impacts the reasoning strategies through the evocation of negative moral emotions.

This study also contributes to moral emotion literature, as well as sport marketing literature, by demonstrating that consumers with low identification level will feel negative emotions (contempt, anger, disgust) about unethical behaviors, which will motivate them to engage in moral coupling, and to negatively view the wrongdoer; while highly identified consumers will experience lower levels of negative emotions that enable them to support the wrongdoer. Prior studies have noted that identification aids consumers in resisting counterattitudinal information about a target object to which the consumers have established emotional attachment (e.g., Ahluwalia et al., 2000; Johnson, 2005; Kwak et al., 2010). However, by utilizing a moral reasoning approach, the findings provide empirical evidence of how sport fan identification may enable consumers to show steadfast support of the troubled endorser by engaging in moral disengagement processes (i.e., moral decoupling and rationalization). Moreover, the results suggest that a sport fan with a high level of identification is less likely to engage in the moral coupling strategies that were found to cause negative responses toward a troubled public figure.

Moreover, the findings contribute to moral reasoning literature by demonstrating that a consumer's moral reasoning strategy is a direct function of negative moral emotions (i.e., contempt, anger, and disgust: CAD) provoked by transgression information about celebrity endorsers. This study responds to a recent call for research on employing moral emotions (Lee & Kwak, 2015), and expands upon moral reasoning literature, given the notion that, as moral psychologists have contended (e.g., Greene & Haidt, 2002; Greene et al., 2001; Haidt, 2001, 2007; Moll et al., 2002), moral reasoning is based first on automatic emotional reactions to moral

transgressions in the form of negative moral emotions. More specifically, this study, by including negative moral emotion (CAD) as a mediator, shows how emotions interact with consumer cognitive reasoning processes. This confirms that consumer responses to a celebrity spokesperson's transgressions are outcomes generated out of a mixture of both affective responses and cognitive information processes. When moral emotions are triggered by negative publicity about a celebrity spokesperson, consumers seem to experience difficulties in activating their moral disengagement processes (i.e., moral decoupling and rationalization), while the emotions motivate consumers to engage in moral coupling processes. As a result, the negative moral emotions indirectly elicit more negative evaluations of a wrongdoer and a brand endorsed by the troubled athlete. These findings suggest that moral emotions play significant roles in consumer moral judgment processing of an endorser's immoral behavior.

Finally, the findings also demonstrate the suppressing effects of fan identification on negative moral emotions. Consumers who highly identify with an athlete endorser are less likely to experience negative feelings about that endorser's immoral conduct. This provides empirical evidence that (sport) consumers with affective attachment to a target person (athlete endorser) easily come to resist any negative publicity that threatens their preexisting attitude toward the athlete. Identification is known to play a critical role in advertising and marketing literature (Chernev, Hamilton, & Gal, 2011; Lam, Ahearne, Hu, & Schillewaert, 2010; Stokburger-Sauer, Ratneshwar, & Sen, 2012). However, to date, in the context of athlete endorsement, relatively little is understood about the effect of identification on consumer's affective responses in processing negative information. By investigating mediating relationships between identification and moral reasoning strategies through negative moral emotions, the current study broadens our understanding of the impact of identification on biased sport fan responses. The findings suggest

that sport fan identification, as a significant psychographic trait, directly and indirectly impacts moral emotions and cognitive moral reasoning strategies.

The findings of this study also have several marketing and managerial implications. The findings show that an increase in negative emotions negatively impacts moral disengagement activation (moral decoupling and rationalization), which elicits positive consumer responses (e.g., Bhattacharjee et al., 2013; Lee & Kwak, 2015). This suggests ways that marketers could minimize damages after consumers learn of an endorser's unethical behavior. Marketing managers have little control over automatically triggered affective responses to endorsers' unethical conduct. However, affective responses could be regarded as psychological 'states' rather than 'traits'. Therefore, by creating marketing communication (such as capitalizing a tarnished endorser's previous good deeds) that could evoke the opposite valence of emotions (e.g., gratitude) compared to negative ones, brands could be protected from marketing turmoil. For example, Romani and other colleagues (2013) suggested that conducting a targeted communication highlighting good deeds (e.g., Corporate Social Responsibility, CSR) could foster positive feelings in consumers' minds. This effort might neutralize negative affective responses, and would in turn facilitate consumer moral disengagement processes. In particular, Michael Vick has been engaged in various types of prosocial activities, such as running charitable foundations for helping at-risk youths, and giving support to youths, educating children to prevent dogfighting, and donating money to fix a football field in town (Gonzalez, 2014; Knight, 2011). These good deeds could rehabilitate his image, which was damaged in the dogfighting scandal, and may also neutralize the public's negative emotional responses to him.

In addition, the results of this study confirm the findings of previous studies that highly identified consumers tend to become more resistant to negative information than those with a

lower level of identification. In particular, the current study demonstrates how effectively identification can protect brands endorsed by troubled spokespersons (celebrity endorsers). As discussed earlier, identification exhibited suppressing effects on intuitive negative moral emotions, and enabled consumers to continue to support the troubled endorser. This suggests that marketing efforts designed to generate and foster sport fan identification with celebrity endorsers within selected target markets could protect brands from unexpected events. For example, national brands could implement selective endorsement campaigns by choosing specific athlete endorsers for certain market segments. More specifically, the brands may leverage endorsement deals by either targeting market segments deemed favorable to an athlete endorser, or avoiding the markets with lower level of identification, such as markets that may be loyal to rival teams.

In summary, the findings of this study provide empirical evidence showing that sport consumer identification plays a significant role in the process of consumer moral judgment. Also, the findings suggest highly identified sport consumers tend to experience lower levels of negative moral emotions than those with lower levels of identification. In addition to the role of fan identification, this study also reveals that negative moral emotions, which influence moral reasoning strategies as predictors, play a significant role in consumer moral judgment processes. Finally, this study, by incorporating sport fans' identification and moral negative moral emotions, provides empirical evidence of *how* sport fans process negative publicity surrounding an athlete whom they follow, and reach moral decisions through both emotional and cognitive processes.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusions

Summary

Despite the ubiquitous nature of athlete transgression, a lack of appropriate theoretical background to explain sport consumers' multifaceted responses to associated brands has caused managerial dilemmas, and this in turn has confused brand managers. Moreover, relatively little is known about the judgment processes by which consumers handle negative publicity surrounding a celebrity athlete endorser. In order to address the aforementioned gaps in the literature, this dissertation aims to achieve two main research objectives: 1) to further extend sport marketing literature in order to better understand how sport consumers process negative information about athlete endorsers; and 2) to examine potential boundary conditions that impact sport consumers' moral judgment processes and the subsequent effects on consumer evaluations (transgression type, functional fit between an athlete and a brand, sport consumers' sociocultural background, sport fan identification, and moral emotions).

In Study 1, drawing on cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957), Study 1A examined whether sport consumers experience cognitive tension, which is evidenced by negative affective responses, when they come to hold an inconsistent information set (e.g., an athlete's outstanding athletic records vs. the athlete's transgression information). The results show that when sport consumers are exposed to information regarding an outstanding athlete's transgression, they exhibit negative emotional responses. This evidence of cognitive dissonance is known to motivate people to activate moral reasoning processes in order to cope with

uncomfortable tension in their minds. Study 1B then explored the existence of the moral coupling strategy by conducting a priming experiment. The results reveal that, depending on the moral reasoning strategies (i.e., moral decoupling, rationalization, and coupling) that consumers activate, they show different evaluation tendencies in relation to morality and performance judgment.

Study 2 incorporated two potential moderating variables (types of transgression [on-field vs. off-field] and functional fit between athlete and endorsed brand [high vs. low]) in order to investigate consumers' moral reasoning choices, and the subsequent perceptual outcomes regarding an athlete endorser and an endorsed brand. The results show that when a transgression is closely related to a troubled athlete's athletic performance, sport consumers are more likely to select the moral coupling strategy that enables them to integrate morality and performance judgments, resulting in negative responses to the misbehaved athlete and an endorsed brand. However, functional fit between the athlete and the brand (sport drink) did not play a significant role in consumers' brand evaluations.

Study 3, using the disjoint and conjoint models of agency (Markus et al., 2006) as a theoretical framework, examined the impacts of sport consumers' sociocultural background (i.e., Western vs. Eastern culture) on moral reasoning choice and its subsequent impacts. The results indicate that, in general, Eastern sport consumers are more likely to use a moral coupling perspective when they evaluate an athlete endorser, while Western consumers more often utilize a moral decoupling approach. When exposed to a performance-related transgression (unsportsmanlike misconduct during a match), consumers in both cultures used their moral coupling strategy, in line with the results of Study 2. However, when exposed to performance-

unrelated transgression (DUI), Eastern consumers still tend to select the moral coupling strategy more often than Western consumers.

Finally, a conceptual model illustrating sport consumers' moral judgment processes incorporating sport consumers' identification, negative moral emotions, moral reasoning strategies, and consumer evaluations was proposed and tested. The results show that there exist negative causal impacts of sport consumer identification on negative moral emotions (contempt, anger, and disgust), suggesting that identification suppresses negative moral emotions (e.g., Cramer, 2000; Dalton & Huang, 2014). It can be understood that highly identified sport fans experience lower levels of negative moral emotions toward the unethical conduct of athlete with whom the fans identify. In addition, the results reveal that identification impacts sport fans' moral reasoning strategies in ways that elicit more favorable responses to a troubled athlete and an endorsed brand. However, negative moral emotions affect sport consumers' moral reasoning strategies in ways making the consumers negatively respond to the wrongdoer and the associated brand.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Despite evident contributions and implications, this dissertation obviously has several limitations that future research can address. First of all, although this dissertation validated the existence of the moral coupling strategy and explored its boundary conditions, only limited types of transgressions were incorporated, such as doping, fraud, tax evasion, unsportsmanlike misconduct, DUI, and domestic violence. However, as sport consumers have encountered in their real lives, there still exist numerous types of transgressions, such as drug abuse, illegal gambling, sex scandals, theft, match fixing, and even murder. These various transgressions are evaluated in the minds of sport consumers with different subjective severity levels (Sassenberg & Johnson-Morgan, 2010). Individuals have different moral standards, even regarding the same unethical

incident. Due to these subjective variables, sport consumers may experience different levels of severity in response to the same transgression. As a result, one might argue that different levels of subjective severity may evoke different levels of moral emotion, and trigger different moral reasoning strategies. In addition, as discussed briefly, the existing psychology and anthropology literature (e.g., Rozin et al., 1999; Shweder, Much, Mahapatra, & Park, 1997) has proposed two different categories of transgressions in human society: ethical (violating the freedom or human dignity of others), and social transgression (violating expected norms of communities).

Investigating the impact of more diverse transgressions on sport consumers' moral emotions and reasoning strategies is another interesting avenue for future research that can expand upon the findings of this dissertation.

Moreover, although this dissertation demonstrated impacts of transgression type on sport consumers' moral reasoning choice, the results did not show any significant impact of the functional fit between the troubled athlete and the endorsed brand. However, congruency (e.g., image-based and function-based fit) has been particularly highlighted because of its significant impact on successful endorsement campaigns. Thus, the impact of brand attributes in situations where endorser is surrounded by negative publicity should receive more attention from the research community. In addition to the fit issue, although studies have attempted to investigate the subsequent impact of athlete endorser transgression on endorsed brands, either a fictitious brand (in Study 2 and 3) or an anonymous brand (Study 4) was utilized. Till and Shimp (1998) contended that athlete endorsers' transgressions cannot damage well-known brands because already established rich cognitive structures could immunize those brands against negative publicity. Therefore, investigating the potential impact of sport consumers' moral reasoning strategies on actual brands merits future research.

In addition, following Grappi et al.'s (2013) moral emotion approach, this dissertation incorporated negative moral emotions (contempt, anger, and disgust) as a second-order factor in consumer moral judgment process. Although empirical findings (e.g., Grappi et al., 2013; Hwang et al., 2008; Shaver et al., 1987) have demonstrated these three emotions can be clustered and share commonality, the research community has not concluded whether the emotions militate independently or jointly (Grappi et al., 2013). As mentioned earlier, each moral emotion is known to evoke subtly different behavioral tendencies. Thus, more in-depth investigations exploring differential impacts of each emotion in processing negative information surrounding celebrity endorser is warranted.

Furthermore, while this dissertation utilized only the negative moral emotions, there also exist other-praising moral emotions such as gratitude, awe, and admiration (Algoe & Haidt, 2009; Haidt, 2003; Ortony, Clore, & Collins, 1988). Considering strategic brand marketing practices such as corporate social responsibility (CSR), or philanthropic efforts conducted by commercial brands, one might argue that positive emotions triggered by the pro-social endeavors could have either in- or direct impacts on sport consumer moral judgment processes when brands (including personal brands as athlete endorsers) face negative publicity. This also could be interesting research topic that would improve understanding of sport consumers' emotions in the moral judgment context. In addition, given the fact that transgressed public figures or brands are often involved in pro-social activities (e.g., CSR) after experiencing scandals, how perceived trust in consumers' minds can be restored effectively could be further researched.

Appendix A. Scenarios used for Study 1A

The following article describes an athlete. Please make sure to read the article before you move on to next pages.

Pierre Varnay is a 26-year-old French Olympic cyclist. He is specialized in the opening lap of the team sprint. He joined the France junior sprint team in 2002. Since he became World Champion in the Junior (17–18 years) team sprint discipline, he has won 5 National Championships titles (in 2004, 2005, 2007, 2008, and 2010) and 2 World Championships titles (in 2009 and 2011) in track cycling. Currently, he is on a 4-year-long endorsement contract with Avenix, a leading cycle manufacturer in French market, ending in 2014.

(Doping condition)

According to Cycling Weekly magazine, in January 2012 World Anti-Doping Agency announced that he received a backdated 12 month suspension for failing doping tests. This means that all his results for 2011 were nullified. This elevated Britain's Jason Kenny to gold medal position in the Sprint event at the 2011 World Championships, and giving the German Team Sprint team the gold medal in the same meet.

(Fraud condition)

According to Cycling Weekly magazine, in January 2012 the National Police, the main civil law enforcement agency of France, announced that the cyclist has been engaged in several financial investment frauds since 2009. The investigation reported that he illegally attracted investments abusing his fame as one of world top class cyclist by promising more shares with less money. French Cycling Federation suspended him for 12 months.

(Control condition)

According to People magazine, Pierre Varnay seems to enjoy speed not only on the track but on the road. He owns a silver grey colored Piaggio Mp3 250 scooter. This model is a slanting three-wheeled scooter from famous Italian motorbike manufacturer Piaggio which was first brought to market in 2006. Dissimilar to other scooters this one has two wheels in front and one at the back.

Appendix B. Priming materials for Study 1B

Please read carefully the following statements.

(Moral Coupling condition; Bhattacharjee et al., 2013)

As a society, we often fail to let our view of someone's immoral actions affect our view of their value to society.

People who achieve great things should not be given a free pass if their personal actions are highly immoral.

It is important to take into account someone's personal actions when assessing their job performance.

(Moral Decoupling condition; Bhattacharjee et al., 2013)

As a society, we are often too quick to let our view of someone's immoral actions affect our view of their value to society.

Even if someone acts in a highly immoral manner, we should not let this cloud our judgment of their great achievements.

It is inappropriate to take into account someone's personal actions when assessing their job performance.

(Moral Rationalization condition; Bandura et al., 1996)

As a society, we often fail to consider that small indiscretions are not as bad as some other horrible things that people do.

People should not always be at fault for immoral actions because situational pressures are often so high.

It is important to take into account that some immoral personal actions are okay because they really don't do much harm.

(Control condition)

As a society we often fail to consider the importance of having a sense of humor.

People should always be able to laugh at themselves and their actions.

It is important to not take everything too seriously when dealing with conflict.

Appendix C. Scenarios used for Study 1B

Imagine that a long-distance runner with outstanding winning records has captivated the public and the media for years. The athlete led the US Track & Field team to win the World Championship in Athletics in the 3,000 meter competition in 2011 and 2012. The athlete has also won the US Indoor Track & Field Championships in the 3,000 meter competition 5 times (in 2006, 2008, 2009, 2011, and 2012). Currently, the athlete is on a 4-year endorsement contract with a sports drink company.

Now imagine that the athlete is involved in a tax fraud case. The athlete is accused of scamming \$650,000 in taxes in 2010-2012. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) confirmed that the athlete failed to file multiple tax returns.

Appendix D. Articles and scenarios in Study 2

(Athlete description)

Ted Franklin is a 26-year old long-distance runner on the US Olympic Track and Field team.

He is specialized in 3,000 meters competition.

Since he qualified for the USATF National Junior Olympic Track and Field Championships in 2002, he has won the USA Indoor Track and Field Championships in 3,000 meters competitions 5 times (in 2004, 2005, 2007, 2011, and 2012).

Currently, he is on a 4-year long endorsement contract with Coolpis™, an isotonic sports drink (or a carbonated soft drink) company, ending in 2014.

(On-field transgression: Doping)

(SI.com)

Posted: Monday April 15, 2013 9:22 AM; Updated: Monday April 15, 2013 12:19 PM

(Associated Press)

The US Anti-Doping Agency announces that American national team member Ted Franklin has been banned for one year for doping.

The ban annuls all his results since March 3, 2012.

This means the 26-year old Franklin will lose the gold medal he won for finishing first in the 3,000 meters at the 2012 USA Indoor Track and Field Championships.

The USADA says tests showed an abnormal hemoglobin profile in his biological passport.

Bans on the runner went into effect last Friday, February 1, 2013.

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(Off-field transgression: Fraud)

(SI.com)

Posted: Monday April 15, 2013 9:22 AM; Updated: Monday April 15, 2013 12:19 PM

(Associated Press)

Ted Franklin, 26-year old Team USA long-distance runner, had been charged on 43 counts that included grand theft and false statements, according to court documents.

Ted Franklin's arrest warrant indicated that he accepted investments to his companies - TF Investments - without a license.

An investigation of Ted Franklin's accounts found he solicited large sums of money from investors, many of whom were over the age of 65, according to the arrest warrant.

Investigators identified 28 people who invested with Franklin, the document says.

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(Control: Hobby)

(SI.com)

Posted: Monday April 15, 2013 9:22 AM; Updated: Monday April 15, 2013 12:19 PM

(Associated Press)

Ted Franklin, 26-year old Team USA long-distance runner, seems to enjoy speed both on the track and the road.

Unlike many athletes, Franklin owns a Piaggio Mp3 250 scooter.

This model is a slanting three-wheeled scooter from a leading manufacturer of Italian motorbike market, Piaggio, which was first brought to market in 2006.

Dissimilar to other scooters this one has two wheels in front and the other at the back.

Franklin owns a silver grey color scooter in which he is often spotted riding.

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(High functional fit brand: Sports drink)

According to the LA Times, in January 2011 Coolpis™, a California based endurance enhancing drink company, announced that the company signed a contract with a long-distance runner, Ted Franklin, for a 4-year long endorsement deal.

While details of the contract are not disclosed to the public, the contract is known to include several conditions about advertising, media events, and so on.

About Coolpis™

Coolpis™ was found in 1992 as a family company in Porterville, California.

The company has now become one of the most popular isotonic sports drinks on the West Coast in the US.

They blend natural minerals to enhance consumers' endurance during their sports activities.

Coolpis™ is planning to extend their USA market to the Midwestern region in 2013 and the Southern region in 2014.

(Low functional fit brand: Carbonated soft drink)

According to the LA Times, in January 2011 Coolpis™, a California based carbonated soft drink company, announced that the company signed a contract with a long-distance runner, Ted Franklin, for a 4-year long endorsement deal.

While details of contract are not disclosed to the public, the contract is known to include several conditions about advertising, media events, and so on.

About Coolpis™

Coolpis™ was found in 1992 as a family company in Porterville, California.

The company has now become one of the most popular carbonated soft drinks on the West Coast in the US.

They blend natural fruit juices to enhance flavor and taste of drinks.

Coolpis™ is planning to extend their USA market to the Midwestern region in 2013 and the Southern region in 2014.

Appendix E. Scenarios used in Study 3

US version

(on-field)

Imagine a U.S. soccer player that has captivated the public and the media for years with his outstanding skills and athleticism. The athlete has won MVP several times and, currently, the soccer player is on a 4-year endorsement contract with a sportswear brand.

Now imagine that the soccer player provokes controversy over his recent unsportsmanlike conduct during a game. The soccer player was confirmed to intentionally stomp on the opponent's key player's ankle causing a severe injury that requires over three weeks for recovery.

(off-field)

Imagine a U.S. soccer player that has captivated the public and the media for years with his outstanding skills and athleticism. The athlete has won MVP several times and, currently, the soccer player is on a 4-year endorsement contract with a sportswear brand.

Now imagine that the soccer player provokes controversy over his recent DUI (driving under the influence). The soccer player was arrested for drunk driving after crashing his car into another car, causing the driver a severe injury that requires over three weeks for recovery. The DUI test showed the soccer player had a blood-alcohol content of .206%, which is more than twice the legal limit of .08%.

(control)

Imagine a U.S. soccer player that has captivated the public and the media for years with his outstanding skills and athleticism. The athlete has won MVP several times and, currently, the soccer player is on a 4-year endorsement contract with a sportswear brand.

The soccer player has been known to enjoy his motorbike on the road as his off-season hobby. He was recently photographed riding his three-wheeled bike with his friends.

Korean version of scenarios used Study 3

(on-field)

귀하의 마음속에 뛰어난 기량으로 대중에게 잘 알려져 있는 국내 축구 선수를 한 명 떠올려 보십시오. 그 선수는 수 차례 리그 최우수 선수상을 수상한 유명한 선수입니다. 현재 그 선수는 유명 스포츠웨어 브랜드와 4년 간의 광고 계약을 맺고 있습니다.

이번에는 귀하의 마음속에 그 축구 선수가 시합 중 비신사적인 행위를 저질러 논란이 되고 있는 상황을 떠올려 보십시오. 그 선수는 최근 시합 중 고의적으로 상대팀 핵심 선수의 발목을 밟아 전치 3주 이상의 심각한 부상을 입힌 것으로 밝혀졌습니다.

(off-field)

귀하의 마음속에 뛰어난 기량으로 대중에게 잘 알려져 있는 국내 축구 선수를 한 명 떠올려 보십시오. 그 선수는 수 차례 리그 최우수 선수상을 수상한 유명한 선수입니다. 현재 그 선수는 유명 스포츠웨어 브랜드와 4년 간의 광고 계약을 맺고 있습니다.

이번에는 마음속으로 그 축구 선수가 음주운전을 저질러 논란이 되고 있는 상황을 떠올려 보십시오. 그 선수는 최근 술에 만취해 운전을 하던 중 주행 중이던 타 승용차에 충돌하여 운전자에게 전치 3주 이상의 부상을 입히고 경찰에 연행되었습니다. 음주 측정 결과 혈중 알코올 농도는 .206%로, 면허 취소의 법적 기준인 .1%의 두 배 이상의 수준이었습니다.

(control)

귀하의 마음속에 뛰어난 기량으로 대중에게 잘 알려져 있는 국내 축구 선수를 한 명 떠올려 보십시오. 그 선수는 수 차례 리그 최우수 선수상을 수상한 유명한 선수입니다. 현재 그 선수는 유명 스포츠웨어 브랜드와 4년 간의 광고 계약을 맺고 있습니다.

그 축구 선수는 비 시즌 중 취미로 모터사이클을 즐기는 것으로 알려져 있습니다.

최근에는 지인들과 함께 교외에서 모터사이클을 타고 있는 사진이 매스컴에 공개되었습니다.

Appendix F. Images used in Study 4



Note. Images were captured from a video clip released by TMZ, an entertainment news source that first released the controversial clip to the public.

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