

## **Attitudes Towards Public Figure Endorsements of Athletic Apparel**

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### **Abstract**

The world of athletic apparel is full of product endorsers that influence brand attitude. This study seeks to illuminate how the public perceives brands according to their endorsers. The research team developed a survey to poll 109 college students from the University of Florida, a premier public university in the southeastern United States that holds both academia and sports to the utmost of standards. In addition to questions pertaining specifically to this study, participants were asked general demographic questions to give perspective to the findings. In-depth interviews were conducted with six individuals to gain a qualitative perspective in order to add further dimension to the aforementioned survey data. The study found that in general, respondents (n=75) highly favored (68%) an athlete as an athletic apparel product endorser, compared to a celebrity endorsing the same product. Responses indicate participants found 'product relevance' to be the most important factor when weighing the appropriateness of an endorser with a certain product (n=76, 69%). When asked to rank a number of factors concerning the user's own preferences in athletic apparel, 48% of participants (n=52) listed 'brand' as the least important factor. However, interview data suggests that brand may have a much more significant effect on purchase decision than survey data would report. A thorough discussion of the results and their implications follows, including areas for improvement and areas for further research.

*Keywords: celebrity, athlete, endorsement, brand recall, brand attitude*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of the study is to examine the effects of a celebrity endorsement versus an athlete endorsement and how the more positive endorsement affects favorability toward a company. According to Dr. Karla McCormick of Florida State University (2009), "In 2010, U.S. companies paid nearly \$17.2 billion to leagues, teams, athletes, coaches, and sports personalities to endorse their goods and services."

Similarly, extremely well known personality, Beyoncé, signed a contract with Pepsi worth \$50 million for promotional deals (Forbes, 2013).

In earlier research on the topic, researchers have attempted to assert the ideas that the attractiveness of a celebrity/athlete who endorses a product is directly correlated to the attractiveness of the product itself. As research progressed, the ideas of expertise and legitimacy became possible factors in the choosing of celebrity/athlete endorsers. These dimensions, utilized in two experiments, provided results stating that a

spokesperson's attractiveness is not nearly as important as their expertise concerning the product (Till & Busler, 2000).

The purpose of this study, however, is to determine whether celebrities or athletes are more favorable endorsers in the mind of an athletic-wear consumer. Using the data found from a specifically designed Qualtrics survey, as well as the performance of in-depth interviews, conclusions have been drawn to determine a consumer's endorsement preferences, as well as the role of consumer preferences in relation to brand favorability.

The need for this information circulates back to the athletic apparel companies themselves. As stated previously, celebrity and athlete endorsements are expensive. If there is no correlation between the endorser and the success of the brand, there is an opportunity to use those funds on other advertising avenues. On the other hand, if the endorser does positively affect brand favorability, companies will have the opportunity to budget accordingly, knowing that they payoff will be worth the expense.

Firms also need to highlight specific endorser and product attributes to engage their target market in the most favorable way. Consumers favor specific personality traits of public figures and athletic wear companies should capitalize on the positive associations created between intrinsic qualities and purchase intent. The same applies for consumer preferences in athletic wear. To achieve the most successful consumer response of a product, athletic wear companies must highlight specific product features.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Athlete Endorsement**

An athlete can be defined as a person who is proficient in sports and other forms of physical exercise. The increasing

popularity of sports in pop culture, specifically since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, has transformed athletes into, not only experts in their respective sports, but idolized public figures. Certain athletes are utilized by brands as endorsers of their products because of the celebrity status gained by these athletes as a result of their success in their chosen sports (Simmers, 2015, 53). The use of athletes as endorsers is a valuable component of modern advertising practices, due to the associations created between the athlete, their successes, and the advertised brand. Athlete endorsers are popular in their use as they provide both free publicity and testimony for the product or the service they endorse, especially when the product is anticipated to have contributed towards their performance, e.g. sports shoes and equipment (Cianfrone & Zhang, 2006; Stone, Joseph, & Jones, 2003). Wu (2015) states that athlete endorsement exists in order to more effectively control the advertising effect.

According to McCormick (2009), athletes are among the most popular endorsers and, unlike other types of endorsers; performance statistics for athletes are readily available to consumers. Both consumers and firms, to understand the relationship between an athlete's success and the positive associations created by the athlete's appearance in brand-specific advertising, can analyze these performance statistics. Consumers recognize a product and assess product quality through the connection as symbolized by athletes (Wu, 2015 p. 235). Research has consistently shown that athletic endorsements have direct economic impact on the firm (McCormick, 2009). If used appropriately, athletic endorsers in advertising can serve a valuable role in enhancing a firm's competitive position by not only contributing to building a favorable brand image, but also by having

direct economic influence on the firm (McCormick, 2009, p. 3).

Athletes as endorsers can be a liability to the brand and the firm utilizing their public identity. As much as favorable athlete attributes can positively affect brand image, negative information about an athlete endorser is also likely to transfer to the brand image endorsed, achieving either decreased or negative brand image (White et al., 2009). Consumers process negative information about an athlete endorser at different levels within memory (Hill & Lohneiss, 2014, p. 193). Regardless of the depth of a consumer's memory processes, negative information has always decreased the positive associations of using an athlete in advertising. When negative information surrounds athlete endorsers, transference of this negative information was found to decrease purchase intent (Murray & Price, 2012). Companies attempt to transfer the positive associations with the athletic star to the product; in turn consumers will buy the product because they like the athlete endorsing the product (McCormick, 2009, p. 23). The more positive the image of the athlete and the more the consumer "likes" the athlete, the more likely the consumer will want to learn more about them and the products they endorse, leading to increased consumption of the products they endorse (McCormick, 2009, p. 35).

### **Celebrity Endorsement**

In 2006, between two and three billion dollars were spent on celebrity advertising in the USA alone, and 14%-19% of all U.S. advertisements feature an endorsement (McCormick, 2009, p. 3). McCracken (1989) defines the celebrity endorser "as any individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement." In fact, Boorstin (1961) refers to celebrities as human pseudo-events,

claiming that the omnipresent print and broadcast media have provided a "...means of fabricating well-knownness (p. 47)." In an era of media fragmentation, a credible celebrity may be able to break through the clutter and directly facilitate long-term relational ties with a brand's consumers (A. Dwivedi et al., 2014, 498). While celebrities, including athletes, can separate and distinguish certain brands they advertise, their public image, including their character style, is always under the scrutiny of the media (McCormick, 2009, p. 25).

Celebrity endorsers possess symbolic and aspirational associations (Escalas 2004) that are readily transferred to brands that they endorse (Elliott and Wattanasuwan 1998). Celebrity endorsements have shown to improve consumers' emotional engagement with an endorsed brand, culminating in stronger consumer relationships with the endorsed brand (Yelin and Kinnear 2012). Since the relationship between a consumer's attitudes toward a celebrity and the positive correlation with that brand, it is especially important that a celebrity has attributes favorable to a consumer. The celebrity/athlete is more effective when he/she is easy to recognize, likeable and friendly (McCormick, 2009, p. 24). Similarity, familiarity, and liking of celebrity endorsers primarily determine their effectiveness (Simmers et al., 2009, p. 53).

With this in mind, it must be noted that a celebrity utilized in an endorsement must display relevance to the specific brand or product advertised. Celebrities develop their image from the way they behave within a society, and how they are portrayed in media (Hill & Lohneiss, 2014, p. 173). For an endorsement to become successful, products must match well with the bundle of meanings or overall image of celebrity endorsers rather than with the element of attractiveness or expertise alone (Simmers et al., 2009, p. 55). Endorser credibility is

likely to have direct influence on relationship quality, as well as indirectly via impacting a self-brand connection (Dwivedi et al., 2014, 488). The credibility of a celebrity endorser may play a crucial role in strengthening the quality of the relationship between the consumer and the brand (Dwivedi et al., 2014, 500).

### **Branding**

Brand image is typically defined as the perceptions or brand associations that consumers hold about a brand and it is regarded as an important key determinant of consumer-based brand equity (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990; Keller, 1993). Celebrity endorsements facilitate brand recall by creating an image that can be easily recognized by consumers. From a theoretical standpoint, development of a consumer relationship with brands serves the purpose of providing functional and emotional benefits such as enabling consumers to look and feel better, as well as providing an opportunity to behave consistently with valued ideology (MacInnis et al. 2009). Consumers use celebrities as reference groups for constructing and redefining their desired self-identities (Escalas and Bettman 2005). When consumers learn of messages from advertisements, they will determine product image based on the image of advertising endorser (Wu, 2015, 236).

Celebrity Endorsement is a way to get the brand noticed amidst the rush that is there in the market place (Zipporah & Mberia, 2014, p. 181). Endorsements pump up a brand's sales by \$10 million a year, on average, and increase short-term return on equity (0.25%) (McCormick, 2009, p. 11). Haung (2010) indicated that consumers have the ability to easily recognize products, evaluate product quality, reduce the perceived risks of purchase and confirm the differential perception and satisfaction obtained from brands through the brand

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

Any event that improves the endorser's reputation (notable achievement by an athlete) should provide consumers with further reassurance about the quality of the endorsed brand (McCormick, 2009, p. 11). When athletes have success in their respective sport, wearing the endorsed brand, it strengthens both the image of the brand and the athlete, labeling them a "winner" (McCormick, 2009, p. 12). The positive associations prove to be desirable to a consumer; consumers believe that they will be labeled a "winner" and seen in the positive light as the athlete in the endorsement. The benefit of a good fit also spills over onto the endorser, as it increases the endorser's believability and attractiveness (McCormick, 2009, p. 13).

Negative information about an athlete on athlete endorsement has mixed results in terms of brand image and purchase intent (Hill & Lohneiss, 2014, p. 191). Negative elemental market effects on brand image were outweighed by positive purchase intent found across all groups which would be more beneficial to organizations, considering it involves sales and revenue (Hill & Lohneiss, 2014, p. 191). Brands appear to be more resilient to decreased effects from negative information about an athlete endorser when well-known athletes were engaged (Hill & Lohneiss, 2014, p. 172). Consumers recognize the mistakes and negative connotations made by athletes; when it comes to well-known athletes, consumers can often sympathize with them and forgive their actions due to the personal

relationship they believe to have with the athlete's portrayal in the media. Thus, consumers think that they can relate to the athlete because they believe that they know them on a personal level. Processing of negative information surrounding an athlete endorser does not always lead to negative consequences on brand image and purchase intent (Hill & Lohneiss, 2014, p. 193).

### HYPOTHESES

The hypotheses were crafted in order to determine three factors that influence a consumer's perception on effective endorsements in the athletic apparel industry. The first hypothesis aims to identify which of the two, a celebrity or an athletic endorser, works best within an athletic apparel endorsement. In regards to the second hypothesis, the trustworthiness and relevance of a brand/product endorser seemed to be the biggest influences in a meaningful endorsement to consumers. The third hypothesis claims that brand and appearance matter the to consumers, upon the viewing of a given brand/product endorser.

H1: Consumers prefer athletic endorsers compared celebrity endorsers when endorsing athletic apparel brands.

H2: Consumers weigh trustworthiness and relevance to the endorsement as the most important characteristic trait in any endorser.

H3: Brand and appearance matter the most to consumers when deciding purchase intent on athletic apparel.

### METHODS

#### Research Design

Since the research conducted was rather exploratory in nature, it was difficult to define strict variables. Information gained from previously stated research questions

provides sufficient enough data to assign baseline variables. The independent variable being tested is the differentiation of endorsers for an athletic apparel product, either an athletic endorser or celebrity endorser. The dependent variable being measured is the participant's attitude toward the product based on the endorser being featured in the advertisement. Another potential variable set, based on a proposed research question, would be whether or not a brand endorser's relevance to the advertised product affects the consumer's impression of the brand. The study included a survey for quantitative data, as well as six in-depth interviews to also provide a qualitative perspective.

#### Sample and Procedure

Both undergraduate and graduate students ( $n = 109$ ) from across the United States voluntarily participated in this study. Participants were informed that they would be asked about their attitudes and feelings concerning various athletic brands and the endorsers that the brands utilize. A survey featuring 13 questions was created using the software Qualtrics and was distributed to participants through various social media platforms. These 109 participants answered the survey without any missing or compromised data. The age of the survey participants ranged from 18 to 27, with 20 as the mean age. Reported household income per year was very evenly distributed, with a low variance (2.22).

#### Stimulus Material

The research team constructed the Qualtrics survey. With input from each member, the survey was drafted multiple times to ensure the quality and consistency of each question, in regards to the study's research objectives. An original survey design included visuals to prompt the respondent according to a specified

question. However, the research group concluded questions of this nature would be too difficult to gain meaningful results on, due to the subjectivity of the images' contents. Specifically, depicting a certain athlete or celebrity could skew results, as there are no perfectly centered endorsers. This is to say that any and every endorser has specific traits and qualities that may affect a respondent's attitude toward that endorser. To add depth to the quantitative data, a number of questions employed the use of a Likert scale. The Qualtrics survey consisted of 13 questions total, with nine pertaining specifically to the study and the remaining four set aside for general demographic questions. Included in the nine study-specific questions were a variety of multi-dimensional questions to gain a full breadth of consumer's attitudes toward differentiating endorsers.

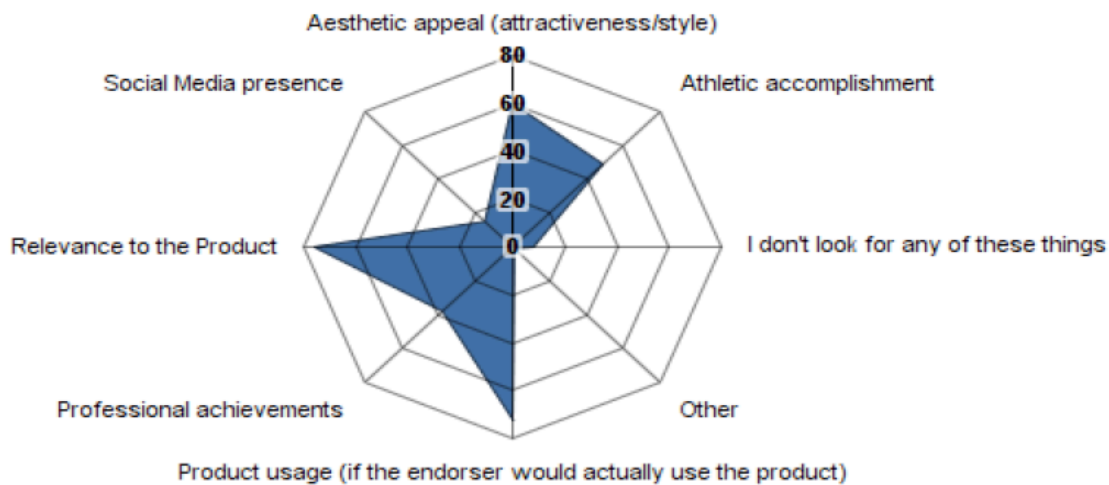
The research team, with multiple revisions and amendments to the final interview template containing nine unique questions, also developed in-depth interview questions. These questions aimed to explore the deeper rationale concerning a number of criteria, such as how a brand and endorser's relation to that brand affects the user, as well

## RESULTS

After careful analysis of the study's findings, the research team found pertinent information to answer the research questions and hypotheses posited. Upon the third question of the given survey, participants (n=109) overwhelmingly favored an athlete endorser of athletic wear over a celebrity endorser of athletic wear. The question asked, "Which would you tend to prefer as a product endorser?" The three options available were:

1. Celebrity
2. Athlete
3. No Preference

The results indicated that 68% of respondents preferred an endorser of athletic apparel to be an athlete, which included 75 responses out of the 109 possible. The second highest response, with 24% of respondents (26 responses) favoring this option, was "no preference." Only 8%, 9 of the total 109 responses obtained chose the first option, stating that their endorser preference lies with celebrity endorsers. These results support Hypothesis 1 (H1): athletic endorsers are indeed preferred by



as why specific brand plays an important role in purchase decision.

the sample group.

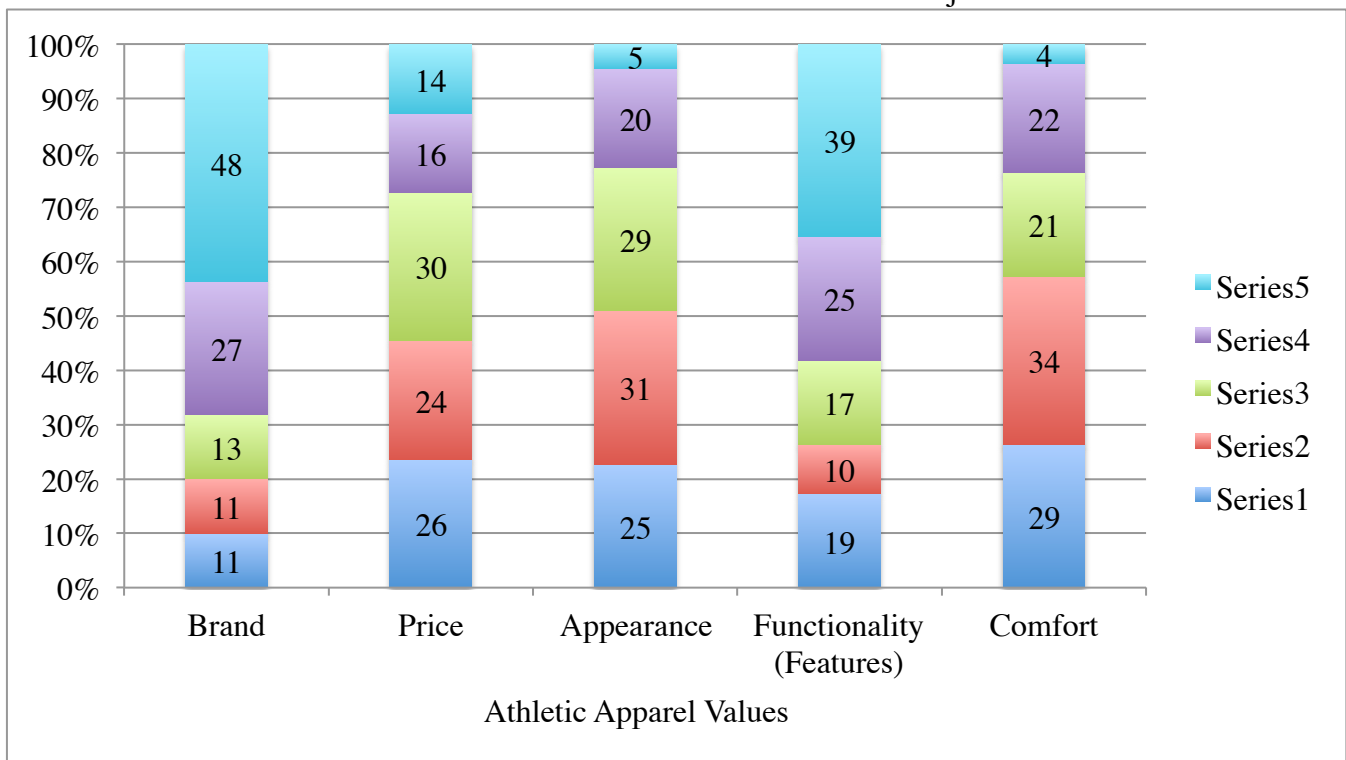
The eighth question of the study asked, “What do you look for in a product endorser?” Participants (n=109) had eight options to choose from, ranging from product relevance to social media presence to aesthetic appeal. The top performing answer was, “relevance to the product,” with 69% (n=76) of the participants selecting this option. A close second choice was, “product usage (if the endorser would actually use the product).” This option received 65% (n=72) of the participant’s response. Professional accomplishments (35%, n=38), athletic accomplishments (45%, n=49) and aesthetic appeal (55%, n=60) made up the options that were taken into consideration when analyzing a product endorser, but were much less popular than product relevance and usage.

Question 4 asked participants to, “Rank the following options in order, according to what you value in your athletic apparel.” The participants were given five attributes to choose from: price, functionality, comfort, brand and appearance. According to the data, the least valued attribute of athletic

apparel happens to be the brand. Within the brand answer set, 48% of respondents ranked brand as the least valued variable in athletic apparel and 27% ranked it as the second to last valued variable. On the contrary, comfort proved to be the most important attribute to consumers; 29% of participants ranked it as the most important attribute and 34% ranked comfort as the second most important value. The second most important value was appearance, followed by price, and then functionality.

**Discussion**

This study looks deeper into attitudes regarding endorsers of athletic wear, and the favorable outcomes that accompany whether the endorsers are athletes or non-athletic celebrities. After an analysis of the quantitative data collected, the survey, and the qualitative data, in-depth interviews, it was concluded that athletes were the preferred endorser. Upon the completion of the in-depth interviews, it was discovered that the preference for athletes as endorsers of athletic wear occurs for a variety of reasons. The subjects who were interviewed



preferred athletes as endorsers of athletic wear because athletes were more dependable and more likely to actually use the product that they were endorsing. Further psychosocial research could be performed on this topic to uncover consumer motives and the impact of certain attributes and how those attributes play a role in a consumer's self-conception.

The first conclusion drawn helps to delve more in-depth on other conclusions proven by the study; consumers want an endorser who is relevant to the product, someone who is likely to often utilize the product and its advantages. In layman's terms, it is unreasonable for a swimmer to endorse a pair of basketball shoes, but if Michael Jordan endorsed the same exact pair of basketball shoes, people would discount his name, fame and success as driving forces to make him a credible source. Evidence shows that it is likely that a consumer who is also a player of a specific sport is more likely to relate to an endorser who is a professional of that sport.

It is a well-known notion that attractive people are more successful in selling products; the data collected from this study provides more evidence to back up this claim. Data analysis reveals that 55% of survey respondents take aesthetic appeal of a product into account upon purchase decisions. This conviction can help firms in their decision of who should be endorsing their products.

Upon completion of the survey, respondents revealed that brand mattered very little when it came to the attributes that drive their purchasing decisions. In fact, 40% of respondents stated that brand was the least valued attribute and 23% of respondents stated brand was the second least valued attribute. In regards to athletic wear, consumers prefer comfort and appearance to any other attribute. This was

corroborated in interviews as well. When asked what attributes participants valued in athletic apparel, comfort, or a variation of comfort, was always the attribute stated first or emphasized as the most important. A slight juxtaposition in the most valued attributes was discovered when comparing the survey and interview results. Survey respondents emphasized appearance as a more important attribute, while interviewees proved to be more concerned with a product's price.

Results from the in-depth interview provided the most interesting findings. While the survey and in-depth interviews both shared that an athlete would be a better athletic wear endorser, celebrity endorsers, did not impress consumers. Consumers believe that the opinions of the celebrities being utilized in the endorsement were fabricated; their opinions resulted from the payment and publicity being provided from the advertising campaign, rather than legitimate knowledge and usage of the product.

When asked who was more relatable, celebrities or athletes, opinions were very split. There was a correlation between consumers who considered themselves more active and athletes; athletes were more relatable than celebrities. The lesser active of respondents related more to celebrities. Firms can use this information to their advantage and use certain public figures to target their desired market. If trying to sell casual leggings, an "athleisure" company may use a celebrity who is more relatable to their target market. Consequently, a company selling highly specialized athletic footwear should utilize an athlete, preferably one who would regularly utilize the footwear being advertised, to receive the highest degree of purchase intent.



### **Implications/Issues**

Several implications and issues were present that hindered the results from being perfectly conclusive. These issues mainly sprouted from a time constraint and lack of a budget. Majority of the sample was pooled from students at the University of Florida. Upon the survey being released through social media, only those directly connected had immediate access; a bias was created from this. Majority of the survey respondents were white, middle- to upper-class females. Since the demographic schema of the sample size was quite narrow in breadth, responses were extremely similar. This issue was slightly counter-acted in the in-depth interviews; about half of our interviewees were male.

Another issue arose from the use of an online survey. Although the survey was distributed to people who were considered trustworthy, there is no indication of effort and, quite frankly, care in survey respondents. There is a large chance that respondents did not think in-depth about the

questions being asked. The survey posed other problems as well. There was a possible skew in the results if a respondent was not with certain athletes or celebrities that were mentioned.

It has been concluded that consumers respond to an athlete in an advertisement and recall the athlete's appearance in said advertisement, but consumers often have difficulty recalling the brand featured in the advertisement; the athlete overpowers the brand. A solution to this problem could be the creation of a relationship between an endorser and a brand, providing consumers with a cognitive link between the athlete and the brand. For this to be successful, repetition is key. For instance, Nike's strong, ongoing relationship with Michael Jordan allows for brand recall, instead of a one-shot endorsement from an athlete.

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## INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Kelsey's Interview

K: This interview is for a project related to athletic apparel and endorsements. What is your favorite athletic apparel brand?

C: I would say Nike

K: Why would you say Nike?

C: I think it's known for having good quality and I feel legit when I wear it. I feel like it sends a message when you're wearing Nike clothes that you know what you're doing.

K: Tell me about your athletic background

C: I played softball when I was younger but didn't really play sports in high school or now in college.

K: Do you exercise regularly?

C: Mmmmm, I would say no. I exercise probably about once a month.

K: What kind of activities do you do when you exercise?

C: I run, or lift arm weights, or do the rowing machine or elliptical.

K: Would you say that when you're working out, you're most likely to be wearing Nike?

C: Yes, or an off-brand of Nike. I don't necessarily care about looking too legit because I'm not a hardcore athlete.

K: Do you have any feelings about a celebrity endorser of athletic-wear compared to an athlete endorser?

C: I feel like it's more appealing when an athlete is the spokesperson because the product is athletic clothing, the endorser seems to know what they're doing and their opinion has a heavier value than a random celebrity, unless said celebrity was super athletic. If the celebrity was super fit, I might take their opinion into account the same way.

K: Describe, using adjectives, your ideal athletic wear endorser.

C: Female, because I'm a girl and look at females as an example. Fit, but not too fit, still normal and relatable. Personable, if they're a spokesperson I feel they should be able to talk about the product.

K: Do you find that it would make you more likely to buy a product if the wearer or endorser has a relevance to the product, like MJ endorsing basketball shoes?

C: Yeah, I think so. I think it adds a cool factor. It adds some effect, I feel like if you see athletic clothes and you like them, and you've heard good things about the brand, whether you like the celebrity or not, you're gonna buy it. But I definitely think a celebrity helps a little bit.

K: Do you find yourself relating more to athletes or celebrities? Are you more likely to look in a magazine and say "That person is like me" about an athlete or a celebrity?

C: I guess now that you put it that way, it would be more relatable to look at a normal celebrity rather than an athlete because athletes, at least for me as someone who isn't really athlete, that realm is a little more foreign than say, a normal celebrity. I think it's probably, the athlete is more knowledgeable, but a celebrity may be more relatable.

K: What kind of attributes or benefits are you looking for when buying athletic apparel?

C: Comfort, style, moveability and flexibility of material, it doesn't ride up or move around where it's not supposed to, light and not too heavy duty, breathable.

K: How important would you say price is when buying athletic apparel?

C: For me, it's pretty important because I'm not really super athletic so I don't pay too much attention to the quality. If I like it and think it's comfortable, I'll buy it as long as it's in my price range, so price definitely factors into the equation.

K: do you find yourself ever relying on an endorsement from an athlete or celebrity when purchasing athletic wear?

C: I don't think so, really.

K: Have you ever felt let down after purchasing athletic wear based on a recommendation or endorsement?

C: I've never really been felt down, I don't think. I think I'm a pretty conscientious buyer, so I really think through my purchases anyways.

Interviewee: Cassidy K, a hospitality major, female, white, 20.

### Mark's Interview

Mark: Ok so let's kick things off. What is your name?

John: I'm John McDermott.

M: And what year in school are you John?

J: I'm a Junior at UF

M: What are you studying?

J: I'm studying Business Administration with an area of specialization in pre-law.

M: Very interesting. So today we're going to talk with you about athletic apparel brands and your attitude about them as well as how the brand interacts with celebrity and athletic endorsers. So our first question is which athletic apparel brand is most favorable to you and why?

J: I tend to wear mostly Nike. Honestly over the years I've worn plenty of brands, I just feel Nike's stuff seems like a higher quality and generally fits better. The fit is definitely a big thing, but also I see a lot of people wearing Nike, it's very recognizable. Most of my favorite athletes wear Nike, and it's always cool to wear what your favorite player is wearing.

M: tell me about your athletic background. What sports did you play in high school? Or what do you still do today that keeps you active?

J: So in high school I played football, basketball and lacrosse. Currently I still play basketball as well as tennis here and there, those are the top two.

M: Ok, good stuff. So how do you feel about a celebrity athletic apparel endorser versus an athlete endorser?

J: I'm a big sports fan so any time I see an athlete, that's about as big of a celebrity as they can get for me. Additionally, if it's an athletic brand, I mean if I see LeBron James dunking in Nike shoes and apparel than I would if I just see Leo DeCaprio wearing Nikes, I just don't know how Nikes contribute to that.

M: Nice. What do you value most in *your* athletic apparel? So when you're buying something, what's the most important thing you are looking for?

J: Well price is an important factor for me. However, comfort is probably the biggest thing. As I said, Nikes tend to fit me better. If someone offers me a shirt or shoe that just fits me for naturally then I might go with that, but, as someone who does enjoy Nike, if I find two products to be generally comparable or maybe the other brand outperforms them in a few places, just

having that recognizable Nike logo, people not having to ask me what I'm wearing on the court, I'll lean toward Nike.

M: Interesting. Can you describe your ideal athletic apparel product endorser? Who is that person?

J: An ideal endorser should be Derek Jeter; someone who is both recognizable on the field doing his craft, as well as off the field. He's one of the best baseball players ever in my opinion, so what he does on the field speaks for itself but he's also got a pretty active put of work lifestyle, dating supermodels, going to charity events, always looking good, and generally in tailored suits or in his Jordan-branded clothing.

M: Have you ever felt let down after purchasing a product based on a recommendation or endorsement?

J: For my high school we had team shoes for the basketball team during my senior year. A few players got to try a few different pairs of shoes and review them to the coach or if they had them in the past, give their reviews to the coach. Based on that, the shoes that were ultimately decided on... they didn't really live up to what I am looking for in a basketball shoe. They certainly looked good and for some people they offered what they need, but for me specifically I wanted a shoe that would be more durable, last a little longer, as well as offer a little more protection and comfort for me. So since then I have not gone back to that shoe.

M: That's a good personal story, very applicable here. How much do you rely on endorsements when you're purchasing athletic wear?

J: I wouldn't say it's the first thing that I rely on when evaluating athletic wear, but certainly plays a role. I'm not going to lie, I'll spend an extra five dollars on something because it's got Kobe's name on it or LeBron's name on it. If it's an identical Nike product but it's got that logo on it, I'll pay a little more for it, just because people then don't see you as someone who's wearing a Nike shirt but they're wearing a LeBron shirt or a CP3 shirt. It's something a little more stylish as well as differentiating yourself and your athletic wear to your liking.

M: Ok, so this is our final question, and I think I have an inkling into what your answer might be, but here it is. Who do you find more relatable: celebrities or athletes, and why?

J: Definitely athletes just because I can go out on a basketball court and try to emulate what I see Kobe doing, LeBron doing, what Steph Curry does. Whereas celebrities... I mean, I'm not a comedian, actor--I don't get to live in a reality show, so I can't relate to what they do as closely as I can to athletes.

M: Thanks for your time John!

J: Thank you Mark.

Interviewee: John M, business major, male, white, 21.

### Maxwell's Interview

Max: Which athletic apparel is your favorite and why?

Cassia: Nike, I guess. When I was a diver, Nike sponsored our team, so they sent us our suites and warm-up jackets. I think it was my freshman year, where we had a different-off brand. When you're diving you want you suite to be extremely tight. Before we had Nike our suites were loose which created drag when competing. Also, you get really cold during competition, so the warm up jackets from Nike were significantly better when we had to wait for 20 plus minutes.

M: Tell me more about your athletic background?

C: I dove for 4 years, and I dove for my high school team from freshman to senior year, and a club team as well where we traveled over summer. I started running when 10, and I was originally a sprinter. But once I started high school I became a long distance runner. I also did gymnastics from 7-10 years old.

M: How do you feel about an athletic endorser vs. a celebrity endorser for athletic apparel? When buying athletic apparel?

C: I would trust an athlete more so than a celebrity. I would think they would have a better opinion on the athletic gear than a celebrity considering they use it.

M: What do you value in your athletic apparel?

C: I look for quality and comfort for warmth, because I'm from Michigan. When I ran track, our conditioning was in the winter so we would have to wear 3 layers and it was miserable. Also, on the pool deck it was freezing, it was usually just as cold inside the pool as outside.

M: How active are you currently?

C: Well I try to run still, definitely in the Fall I ran more. I haven't been able to run as much this semester, but I do love running around campus. I guess now I don't wear warm clothing, I look for more breathable clothing in Florida.

M: Explain to me your ideal product endorser for athletic apparel?

C: I'm drawn towards to strong woman athletes. Like those commercials for the Olympics where Gabby Douglas is being awesome, if she told me to buy something I probably would.

M: So why would you listen to Gabby Douglas, is it because she's a great athlete or trustworthy or another quality?

C: Its because she's a strong female figure, and I am a female. So I am drawn to that.

M: There are many strong female athletes, specifically why does Gabby Douglas connect with you?

C: I like athletes that have broken some type of barrier. She was the first black gymnast to win an Olympic gold medal, so I find that to be impressive.

M: Have you ever felt let down by a product you have purchased based upon an endorsement?

C: Yeah, so Nike actually sponsored my track team in high school. We all got these Nike distance shoes and my coach definitely encouraged them. I ended up getting two pulled hamstrings and shin splints that season. I later learned from a different coach that Nike shoes actually aren't the best shoes for distances runners. The next year my coach recommended Asics and they were much better. The sole and shoe from Asics was much better.

M: How much do you rely on endorsements when purchasing athletic gear?

C: Not very much. I usually rely on coaches and the information they gave me.

Interviewee: Cassia, UF student, 19, female, white.

### Mallory's Interview

M: Thank you so much for being here with me today and helping me conduct this research. Let's get started. What's your name?

A: My name is Alexa Cohn.

M: What year are you in school and what are you studying here at UF?

A: Well, I'm a junior and I'm studying microbiology and cell science here at UF.

M: Wow, that's a lot. Okay, so I'm interviewing you today to help understand consumer's attitudes towards celebrity endorsement in advertising vs. athlete endorsement in advertising. We're also studying the effects on the brand and product desire vs. the two types of advertising practices. First things first, which athletic brand is most favorable to you and why?

A: I would have to say Nike. I literally am always wearing Nike running shorts; I own thirteen pairs. Even when it comes to sports bras and shoes, I'm also a big Nike fan. For me, they're the most comfortable, reliable, and multi-purpose for the different types of activities I do.

M: Speaking of the activities you do, tell me about your athletic background. What sports have you played in the past and do you currently play any sports?

A: So, I've been playing soccer for a long time, 8 years, and I played in high school and still play on the intramural team for my sorority. I also cheered in high school and played lacrosse for 2 years.

M: Interesting. So, when it comes to advertising, how do you feel about a celebrity athletic apparel endorser versus an athlete endorser?

A: For me when it comes to athletic wear, I typically favor athlete endorsement vs. celebrity endorsement. To me, athletes seem more relevant to be endorsing or promoting athletic wear. I can trust them, like I know they're going to be using the athletic wear. Like, I love Kanye, but I'd much rather buy something endorsed by John Carlos Stanton.

M: Now that we've covered what you look for in athletic wear endorsement, what do you value the most when it comes to the purchasing of athletic wear?

A: Definitely comfort! I love being comfy. Since I wear athletic wear on a daily basis and I'm not always being super active, I like being comfortable. Working out sucks when you're uncomfortable so I like to make sure that I'm never in this situation. I'm also a college student so like, price is also a big deal for me. Yeah, LuLu Lemon leggings might be nicer in quality, but I'd rather feed myself for 2 weeks then look super hip and trendy at the gym.

M: You mentioned that you typically wear athletic wear but aren't always active. How active would you say you are and what activities do you participate in?

A: Well, I think I'm pretty active. I'm not a potato but I'm definitely not an Olympian. Like I said before, I'm on my sorority's intramural soccer team. I also walk everywhere on campus and most of my classes are in HPNP so that's a bit of a trek. I go to the gym pretty frequently because I love the way I feel after I exercise. I wear my FitBit religiously and usually win the Daily Showdown among my friends, so I guess I'm pretty active. I walk over 10,000 steps on a lazy day.

M: Wow, that's pretty impressive. Can you describe to me your perfect athletic wear product user?

A: Sure! My perfect athletic wear product endorser wouldn't be a specific person but a type of person with certain traits. Like, I want someone who would definitely use the product that they're endorsing. First hand, they represent the product and also are the most reliable because they're actually going to use it. Like, it's stupid for me to see Michael Phelps promoting a certain bathing suit and then he's seen training in another, you know what I mean? I guess I'm just looking for reliability.

M: I understand what you're trying to say. Have you ever been let down after purchasing a product based on a recommendation or certain attribute highlighted in an endorsed advertisement?

A: I don't think I have. Like I said earlier, price is a big thing for me when purchasing athletic apparel and sometimes I've been let down, but I've gotten what I've paid for. I also don't really



branch far out. Like, I know that I like Nike running shorts, so I don't venture from them. Don't fix what isn't broken, right?

M: Well, that pretty much answers my next question. Finally, who do you find more relatable, celebrities or athletes, and why?

A: I definitely think celebrities are more relatable. When it comes to athletes, it's difficult to relate to them because of their rigorous training and athleticism. And also, a lot of celebrities are famous but aren't talented. Like yeah, I'm definitely like Kylie Jenner when I'm lazy because she doesn't necessarily do anything, but Olympians are training every day for years and years on end. Also, I'm pretty sure I am Nicki Minaj and that would mean I'm a celebrity.

M: Okay, awesome! Thank you so much for letting me interview you. Have a great day!

Interviewee: Alexa C, microbiology major, female, white, 20

## SURVEY QUESTIONS

Link: [https://ufl.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_bvK458xhA85x4iN](https://ufl.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_bvK458xhA85x4iN)

1. What athletic brand is most favorable to you?
  - Nike
  - Adidas
  - Puma
  - Reebok
  - Under Armor
  
2. What sport(s) have you played or currently play?
  - Football
  - Softball
  - Baseball
  - Soccer
  - Basketball
  - Golf
  - Tennis
  - Other
  - I don't play any sports.
  
2. Which would you tend to prefer as a product endorser?
  - Celebrity
  - Athlete
  - No preference

Rank the following options in order according to what you value in your athletic apparel.

- Brand
- Price
- Appearance
- Functionality (Features)
- Comfort

How active are you?

Not active at all   Little activity   Somewhat active   Moderately active   Very active   Extremely active

If you saw \_\_\_\_\_ wearing a particular brand of athletic shoes, how much more likely would to be to purchase shoes from that brand?

	A great deal more likely	Moderately more likely	A little more likely	Neither more likely nor less likely	A little less likely	A moderate amount less likely	A great deal less likely
Lebron James							
Alex Morgan							
Serena Williams							
Tom Brady							
Bryce Harper							
Jordan Speith							

If you saw \_\_\_\_\_ wearing a particular brand of athletic shoes, how much more likely would to be to purchase shoes from that brand?

	A great deal more likely	Moderately more likely	A little more likely	Neither more likely nor less likely	A little less likely	A moderate amount less likely	A great deal less likely
Kanye West							
Kylie Jenner							
Channing Tatum							
Nicki Minaj							
Jennifer Lopez							
Barack Obama							

What do you look for in a product endorser?

- Relevance to the Product
- Social Media presence
- Athletic accomplishment
- Professional achievements
- Product usage (if the endorser would actually use the product)
- Aesthetic appeal (attractiveness/style)
- Other
- I don't look for any of these things in a product endorser

How much would you be willing to spend on \_\_\_\_?

- Athletic shoes?
- Athletic top?
- Athletic bottoms?

- Athletic bag?

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

What is your age?

- Under 18
- 18-20
- 21-23
- 24+

What is your race?

- White/Caucasian
- Black/African American
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Hispanic/Latino
- Prefer not to say
- Other

What was your household income in the last 12 months?

- Under \$24,999
- \$25,000 - \$74,999
- \$75,000 - \$124,999
- \$125,000 - \$199,000
- Over \$200,000