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Comments	Section		
	<p>Title and Abstract</p> <p>Title to include: A concise indication of the research question/problem. Abstract to include: A concise summary of the empirical study undertaken.</p>		
	<p>Introduction and literature review</p> <p>To include: outline of context (theoretical/conceptual/applied) for the question; analysis of findings of previous related research including gaps in the literature and relevant contributions; logical flow to, and clear presentation of the research problem/ question; an indication of any research expectations, (i.e., hypotheses if applicable).</p>		
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DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (HONOURS)

SPORT MANAGEMENT

**THE EFFECT OF ATHLETE ENDORSEMENTS ON
THE PURCHASE BEHAVIOUR OF STUDENTS**

**(Dissertation submitted under the discipline of sport
marketing)**

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**“THE EFFECT OF ATHLETE ENDORSEMENTS ON
THE PURCHASE BEHAVIOUR OF STUDENTS”**

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ABSTRACT

The increasing crescendo of marketers 'borrowing faces' to raise brand awareness has led to this study being developed. This topic is current, as the number of athletes who have diverged from their credible image has increased. The following project explores this marketing strategy; the effects that athlete endorsements have on university students purchase behaviours, including their opinions on controversial athletes, gender balance amongst endorsers and whether the athlete's attractiveness or ability plays more of an influential role.

A questionnaire was sent out to 31 Cardiff Metropolitan University students which included 10 open ended questions. The results of the study revealed some significant findings; respondents believe athlete endorsements are an effective marketing strategy, however are un-influential to them, rather more influential amongst the younger generation. Respondents proposed that as a student, the price of the product was the most influential factor. It was also determined that male athletes are dominant as endorsers, however it was believed this was becoming more balanced since the success of British female athletes during the 2012 Olympic Games. Additionally, respondents believe the less credible an athlete, the lower their selling ability, yet the athlete's misdemeanours do not appear to affect the image of the brand. Finally it was concluded that attractive female endorsers and talented male endorsers were most successful, however this was dependent on the product being endorsed.

With the consumer society displaying such high levels of emotional attachment towards sport, this research highlights suggestions for marketers and brands. Talented, credible, attractive athletes will be the most successful endorsers, and brands should invest more frequently in women endorsers, as the popularity of women's sport is increasing. Furthermore, brands should consider reducing endorsed product prices to appeal to the student consumer group. The study progresses recommendations for further research in this field, which include the use of niche athletes and the exploration of athlete and brand characteristic matches.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1:1 Rational for study

“Many millions of people around the globe are employed in sport organisations in areas as diverse as event management, marketing, professional sport and sporting equipment manufacturing and apparel” (Smith, 2008, pg.11). It is clear that sport is a significant industry, due to the increased consumption and production of sport, and the improvements of sport marketing (Smith, 2008).

Money has given sport great things in the past 25 years and sport has paid huge dividends for companies who have invested wisely in sports marketing (Andrews *et al.*, 1998). Sport marketing is a constantly changing and evolving industry, requiring an important relationship with business (Andrews *et al.*, 1998). Elite sport is now, more than ever a commodity and a commercial enterprise which is increasingly determined by market forces (Giulianotti & Walsh, 2007). The revenues generated by the major sports are huge, for example world football was reckoned at £250billion (Giulianotti & Walsh, 2007). Additionally, individual athletes can be seen as industries themselves due to the ostensibly profound sums generated (Giulianotti & Walsh, 2007). For example, since the London 2012 Olympic Games, numerous lucrative endorsement deals have been agreed upon between athletes and businesses (Goodley, 2012). Victoria Pendleton is said to earn £1million a year in sponsorship deals with Pantene hair care products, Keri-Anne Payne has signed as a brand ambassador with Oral-B and Maxfactor, and Jessica Ennis has reportedly earned £5million since the Olympics in sponsorship (Jones, 2012) with brands ranging from British Airways to Olay beauty products (Goodley, 2012).

The extensive media and television coverage of the 2012 Olympic Games allowed the nation to become absorbed in sport, guaranteeing athletes constant exposure in the media spotlight. However, numerous controversies have transpired since the games, which could have a detrimental effect on the consumer and the brand, enforcing the relevance of this research topic. The detrimental effects will be discussed in detail further in the study.

The desire to understand the behaviours of sport consumers has been a goal of sport marketers for a long period (Nicholson *et al.*, 2003). Sport consumers portray a variation of attitudes and behaviours towards sport, which highlights differences in their spending patterns (Nicholson *et al.*, 2003). Therefore, sport marketers strive to customise the sport experience (campaigns/products/venues) to meet the demands of each customer segment.

As a consumer segment, university students have been selected for this research study as Patch (2006) states it is a highly influential population group to marketers and to focus marketing strategies upon. Student's thoughts regarding this profitable marketing strategy will be explored. The synthesis of literature in *chapter two* reveals a window of opportunity enabling the aim of the study to be formed.

1:2 Aims and objectives

The overall aim of this study is to research *'the effects that athlete endorsements have on the purchase behaviours of university students'*.

To achieve the aim, 3 key objectives have been formulated to add further depth to the study;

- To gain an understanding of student purchase behaviours towards sport related products, identify student's views regarding athlete endorsements as a marketing strategy and to establish the influential factors which are relevant when purchasing an endorsed product.
- To identify student's thoughts regarding controversial athletes and the effects of their credibility on student purchase behaviour.
- To establish the dominant gender of athlete endorsers, and additionally investigate the influence of the endorsers appearance and ability on student purchase behaviour.

1:3 Research plan and structure of study

The study has been established to increase knowledge concerning athlete endorsements as a marketing strategy and the effects of this strategy on student purchase behaviours. For this to be achieved, the study has been divided into the following chapters:

The literature review in *chapter two* is composed of published articles and academic literature which is related to marketing. The literature analysed within the review, progressively becomes more specific, focusing on detailed aspects of the research which are addressed in the study's objectives. The literature review provides extensive information which will further be used in the study when discussing the results. The literature review initially studies marketing and sport marketing strategies and then progresses into more specific areas including celebrity and athlete endorsements, the effects of athlete endorsements on the consumer and the gender balance among endorsers.

Chapter three demonstrates the type of research that will be undertaken during this study. The reasons for adopting the qualitative research method will become more apparent in this chapter, with additional reasons for adopting an inquiry based data collection method (Creswell, 2006).

The results and discussion of the study will be displayed in *chapter four*. *Chapter five* will deliver the conclusion of the study, the study's limitations and recommendations for future research and information relevant to the industry for marketing improvements.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2:1 Marketing and sport marketing strategies

Lusch (2007, pg.236) suggests that marketing is a “*Performance of business activities directed towards the flow of goods and services from producer, to consumer, to user*”.

To understand that marketing is not just selling or advertising is important. It is the broader function of getting to know the customer, and catering for their wants and needs with the focus of creating a profit (Armstrong *et al.*, 2008). Marketing is the process of planning, executing the concept, pricing, promotion and distribution of products and services (Hooley, 1990). Therefore, it is necessary in all industries (Kotler, 1972). Without marketing, the world would not be where it is today, thus enforcing the credibility of this research topic.

Marketing is used globally, and is assisted by a wide range of marketing strategies, allowing retailers and sellers to reach and attract the consumer in many different ways. Beattie’s (2011) research showed that flyers, posters, cold calling and using social networks are all methods of marketing; however the internet is the most influential. Chaffey *et al.* (2009) agrees with this, and their research has shown that the internet has transformed marketing by allowing a broader choice of products, prices and suppliers. The internet has inevitably made marketing more competitive. However, Eid (2005) does not agree, and states that the powerful drivers of internet-based marketing will cause significant barriers to its adoption in the future. Eid (2005) continues to state that the internet alone cannot achieve the same results as an abundance of marketing strategies; therefore, it should not be put on a pedestal. This research has showed that the effects of internet marketing need to be addressed as well as the effects of other marketing strategies.

Marketing is a global necessity and is an important concept in industries worldwide. McDonald and Milne (1999) believe that with sport being such a rapidly evolving industry, it is highly important for sports marketing to develop with it.

Quick *et al.* (2003) support this claim; they state that the increasing numbers of sport supporters demonstrating their allegiance through the merchandise they buy, and the television they watch, fortifies the growing appeal of this industry. Thus imposing the integrity for this more concentrated research area. Quick *et al.* (2003) continue to infer that the environment of sports marketing is ever changing; therefore it is hard for sport marketing practitioners to operate. However, Charbonneau and Garland (2005) believe that it is not exclusively sport which causes the consumer to purchase sports merchandise. They believe that the marketing strategy of using celebrity image is a big contributor. This is backed by Erdogan (1999), who believes the consumer is more likely to purchase products associated with a celebrity.

Hoye *et al.* (2012, pg. 204) further suggest there are two dimensions to sport marketing; “*The marketing of sports products and services*”, for example sporting equipment and sports events. The second dimension is “*The marketing of non-sport products and services through sport*”, the use of athletes endorsing a fashion brand or food.

It is recognised that sport marketing is the process of establishing a relationship between the sport brand and the consumer. Furthermore, the credibility of using celebrity endorsements as a marketing strategy has been acknowledged (Burton, 2012).

2:2 Celebrity and athlete endorsements

Ginman (2010) maintains the ideology that many brands are using celebrities as spokespeople, to enhance the brand image. Erdogan (2010) agrees, and trusts that the use of celebrities as a marketing strategy is now a fairly common practice as brands buy into the celebrities’ attractiveness, popularity and likeability. However Goddard *et al.* (2009) research shows that at times, celebrity qualities may be inappropriate, irrelevant, and undesirable. Thus, a major question must be asked; how can companies select and retain the 'right' celebrity among many competing alternatives?

Knittel and Stango (2012) researched celebrity scandal and agree with said question. Their research was based on the Tiger Woods repute regarding his numerous affairs and car crash. This revealed that the Tiger Woods scandal caused negative market alarms, associated with the risk of celebrity endorsements. In the 10 days between the car accident and the announcement of Woods undefined leave from golf, his sponsors overall market value decreased by over 2% (Knittel & Stango, 2012). Their research estimated that additionally \$5billion to \$12billion was lost from companies that Woods endorsed during this period.

The scale of celebrity endorsements as a marketing strategy is growing and therefore, a tremendously wide area for specific research. Carson and Donovan (2008) state that 20% of endorsed products are done so by celebrities, and 60% by athletes. However, this research has implications as it hard to depict a difference between athletes and celebrities. Langmeyer and Walker (1991) agree but believe that anyone seen in the public eye can be portrayed as a celebrity. However, because it has been establish that sports marketing is an industry in its own right, the use of athlete endorsement will purely be focused upon because the two go hand in hand.

For professional athletes, endorsements are among the most profitable sources of income (Rosca, 2010). Rosca (2010) continues to state that endorsements are a part of sponsorship and the better an athlete, the higher their attractiveness to the sponsors. The study develops to give the positive reasons for athletes to turn to product/brand endorsement. However, there is a limitation to the study, since it fails to explore the effects of these endorsements on the consumer; it leaves a window of opportunity for further research.

With such a broad range of celebrities advertising a diverse array of products, the effects on the consumer warrants further research. Endorsing products is an inviting way for celebrities to earn money, however Rosca (2010) believes that the salary could potentially overweigh the effects of the product on society. For example, the athletes currently advertising "Subway" would aim to increase sales, and in the long run could have detrimental effects on the NHS. Macfarlane (2010)

supports this claim, and reinforces the fact that there is a huge increase in the number of overweight and obese teenagers costing the NHS millions.

2:3 Methods of athlete endorsements

There are many methods of endorsing brands and products, and the media is a well-established contributor. According to Hoye *et al.* (2012) the media provides three functions on society; information, education and entertainment. However, it has become increasingly clear that consumers are interested in sport because of its entertainment value. The media provides such depth and breadth of coverage with the ability to influence the social and commercial practices of millions (Hoye *et al.*, 2012), hence its importance regarding endorsing products. Bellamy's (1998) research revealed that sport and the media are often regarded as interdependent because of the scale and scope of their financial relationship. This supports McDonald and Milne's (1999) ideology of sport being a rapidly evolving industry.

Brands use athletes in many ways to promote their products. The explosion of social media, aided by the internet has greatly helped brands to do so. Mortleman (2011) agrees with this statement and says that in the last six years, social media has shot up in the corporate agenda. Twitter has become an increasingly popular way to communicate first hand with customer, both current and potential. Krishnan *et al.* (2012) researched media influence to sales performance and their results back the previous statement as the findings claimed that social media has a positive correlation with sales. However, the findings of this study were based over twenty five different industries, therefore presenting a limitation of the study. Because the research in hand is focused purely within the sports industry, the results are not specific, therefore leaving an opportunity for future research.

A further method of endorsement is for athletes to be photographed holding a product. An example would be David Beckham seen, and photographed drinking Pepsi (Dowling, 2002). An additional method is the athlete wearing the product, for example Jessica Ennis (Olympic gold medallist) in Adidas clothing and also, product placement in films and interviews. This involves a product being visible to

the captive audience. These methods all need to be addressed when undertaking research, as athlete endorsements do not only come in one form.

2:4 Effects of athlete endorsements on consumer purchase behaviours

Congregating from earlier research it has been established that the media, advertisements and marketing strategies play a major role in affecting consumer's consumption patterns (Balakrishna and Kumar, 2011). Also, the use of athletes as an advertising tool can influence consumer purchase behaviours (Carson & Donovan, 2008). The general public can be described as the 'consumer society', the persons whom purchase goods and services, and the persuasive nature of athlete endorsements towards the consumer society is also aided by their high levels of emotional attachment towards sport (Milne & McDonald, 1999).

Hoye *et al.* (2012) explained that the consumer society was becoming more interested in sport because of its entertainment value. However, Kuzman *et al.* (2003) disagrees with these findings, as their study into athlete endorsements on young adults purchasing habits revealed there was no convincing evidence that athlete endorsement influenced their purchasing behaviour.

Many athletes choose to take part in advertising campaigns for reasons such as sponsorship, money or to use the forthcoming publicity to build their identity and celebrity status (Hardy *et al.*, 2007). However, with such high salaries offered to athletes for the endorsement of a product or service, positive or negative outcomes of said product on society may be overlooked. Many advertising campaigns are seen as misleading and some manufacturers are also unwilling to provide customers with substantial information to back up claims which they make (Metcalf *et al.*, 1981). The effects of these advertising campaigns along with the use of celebrity endorsements, has yet to be established.

Although a positive correlation of using athlete endorsements to sales has been identified during this research investigation, Underhill (2008) speaks controversially about this statement in his research. Underhill (2008) states that an eBay report shows an abundance of visitors to the fashion portion of their site who

return repeatedly, view endlessly, yet buy nothing. Underhill (2008) suggests that although many people appreciate the work of a brand or product, they may not necessarily want to wear, or buy into it.

Furthermore, Knights (2012) research states there are many reasons why a consumer would chose against a product even though they liked the athlete endorsing it. With a poor economy, it becomes more difficult for consumers to indulge in goods which they may not necessarily need.

The amount of money companies are able to charge for their product is due to the celebrity's popularity (Hoye *et al.*, 2012). In the United States, studies have shown that approximately 50% of the retail price paid for a commodity is made up of the marketing costs.

2:5 Gender balance among athlete endorsers

Both male and female athletes are used to endorse products or brands. According to Burton's (2012) study, male consumers are more likely to support heroic athletes and are less likely to pay attention to their appearance or achievement. However, female consumers appear to react differently to heroic endorsement and more so on appearance. Burton (2012) continues to state that male-controlled companies have been slow to appreciate the buying power of women, and have therefore been slower to consider female athletes.

Charbonneau and Garland (2006) researched the gender of athletes best suited for potential endorsement, and their findings are unlike that of Burton (2012). The study was produced to aid brand managers, agents and advertising practitioner's choices for selecting the 'right athlete' for a product. The findings from the study were gathered from a survey of the general public, and the results presented that female athletes outperformed male athletes as potential endorsers. The study involved the use of Ohanian's multi-attribute scale which "*yields a level of richness and insight in the pursuit of endorser-product congruence*" (Charbonneau & Garland, 2006, pg.326). This involved two male, and two female athletes along with various products to endorse, the study revealed who was the perceived as

the most suitable to endorse each product. However, this study was only investigated in New Zealand; therefore, it leaves a window of opportunity to explore this area in the UK. Charbonneau and Garland (2006) also agree and state that there is limited research of this topic in British markets.

From the research identified, a niche has been established for further research. The effect of athlete endorsements on the purchase behaviours of university students will be addressed. Additionally the topic of controversial athletes will be researched and student's thoughts on the gender balance among athlete endorsements will be explored.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3:1 Introduction

“Research designs are plans and the procedures for research that span the decisions from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data and analysis” (Creswell, 2009, pg.3).

The following methodology will explain the research process undertaken to achieve the research aim. Clough and Nutbrown (2008) believe the task of a methodology is to uncover and justify research assumptions. A sequence of areas within the methodology will be addressed, consisting of a data collection method, participants, ethical considerations for the study, reliability and validity of the study and finally addressing the imitations of the study.

According to Clough and Nutbrown (2008), research is the investigation of an idea by undergoing a systematic investigation to reach a new conclusion. Additionally the choice of research design is based on the research problem and researcher’s personal experience (Creswell, 2009). The components of the following research plan follow the qualitative research approach. Creswell (2006, pg.15) defines qualitative research as *“an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem”*. Gibbs (2007) additionally suggests that the qualitative approach seeks to unpick how people construct the world around them revealing rich data.

The research under analysis explores *‘the effects of athlete endorsements on the purchase behaviours of university students’*. Additionally, the topic of controversial athletes is studied together with student’s thoughts on the gender balance among athlete endorsements. Therefore, this research design comprises a large information pool collected from a small sample size, providing rich descriptions of phenomena (Patton, 2002). The applicability of qualitative research to the research question is likely to present a clear depiction of people’s attitudes and thoughts, complying with the objective of this research design (Patton, 2002).

3:2 Procedure and data collection method

Qualitative data is human based and meaningful yet additionally, can reveal great diversity in results (Gibbs, 2007). The most common form of qualitative data exploration and analysis is text. Gibbs (2007) believes this is because text is an easy form of recording data using 'office' techniques. This text data can be collected in any form of human communication, such as written, audio or visual (Gibbs, 2007). For example, interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, email and video recordings.

For this research design, a questionnaire was selected as the data collection method. Questionnaires allow data to be collected without the presence of the researcher whilst establishing a broad picture of the participant's views and thoughts (Clough & Nutbrown, 2008). However, because questionnaires are based more so on collecting a broad variety of data, the number of questions asked was reduced in order to increase complexity of the question and therefore, the depth of answers (Clough & Nutbrown, 2008). The questionnaire comprised of 10 open ended questions and this was decided in order to allow the interviewee to express their thoughts on the topic (Thompson & Srivastava, 2009; Malhotra & Birks, 1999). Nevertheless, there are benefits of using closed questions as they are standardised and easy to analyse, however the data generated would have far less detail compared to what can be gathered from open ended questions (Teijjingen, 2004). Open ended questions, however, provide answers which need to be subsequently coded and are therefore more time consuming (Silverman, 2011). Additionally Drever and Munn (1995) believe questionnaires are a popular way of gathering information as the likelihood of participants undertaking the research is greater as it takes less time to complete compared to other methods such as interviews.

The questionnaires were emailed to the selected participants during January 2013 (participants described in detail below), and once complete, were subsequently emailed back. This method was chosen due to the promptness of sending and receiving documents, additionally having the ability to save each questionnaire directly to a memory stick/hard drive. Furthermore with answers already word

processed, it becomes less time consuming as no transcribing is involved (Birnbaum, 2004).

The questionnaire was designed to be complete within fifteen minutes however this would evidently differ between individuals. The participants were asked to include maximum detail when answering the questions and ensure their words were true to their own.

A brief overview of the research was explained via a participant information sheet (see appendix A), and if the participant was happy to take part, then a participant informed consent form was sent to read, sign and return (see appendix B).

3:3 Participants

When selecting participant's for this research study, general requirements were needed and for this reason Sigel (1996) defines this as a 'Quota Sample'. For example 50% of participants used were males and 50% were females.

The participants were selected from students studying in Cardiff Metropolitan University. Fink (2009) believes that it is key to select representative participants who are of interest. University students were selected for this research study, aged between eighteen and twenty two years. The sample size used was fifty participants; this is because it is relevant to the error rate. As this is not a statistical analysis, there are going to be few anomalies, therefore a huge sample size was not needed (Fink, 2009). Of the fifty participants, twenty five were male and twenty five were female; ten females and ten males were sports students and ten females and ten males were non-sport students (for example education, biology and drama). The remaining five females and five males were top athletes who have performed at a high level for their country. Fink (2009) suggests that by using a range of data (in this case a broad sample of participants) it will reduce sampling error.

These participants will be selected at random as it gives everyone who is eligible to participate in the survey a fair chance of selection. However the participants selected will have to have a perspective on the subject of study (Polkinghorne, 2005).

3:4 Pilot study

Drever and Munn (1999) believe small scale pilot studies are important due to those involved in the questionnaire being unable to see changes needed and having difficulty imagining how respondents might interpret the questions. Therefore by requesting individuals to work and talk through the questionnaire, what the participants did not understand, can be discovered or revealed (Drever & Munn 1999). When choosing whom to include in the pilot study, Drever and Munn (1999) believe it is important to select individuals who are members of the target group, but not in the sample.

This pilot questionnaire was distributed to three individuals; points of improvement were suggested by each individual. The questionnaire was then amended, and sent to the selected participants. Both the pilot and final questionnaire can be seen in the appendix (Appendix C and D).

3:5 Data analysis

With this form of data analysis, as opposed to quantitative, text is used because it is the easiest way to record the data (Gibbs, 2007). The information gathered from the questionnaires will then be 'boiled down' in order for relationships and patterns to be displayed (Kane and O'Reilly de Brun, 2001). In order to do so, the use of coding will be undertaken and according to Gibbs (2007, pg.72) it involves "*identifying and recording one or more passages of text to exemplify the same theoretical data*". The raw data gathered from the questionnaires will be split into key themes; 'Effect on purchase behaviour', 'controversial athletes' and 'thoughts on gender balance'. The useful information from the questionnaires will then be cut and pasted into the relevant sections, from there, key similarities will be

identified, using colours to ensure clarity, and then addressed within the discussion.

3:6 Reliability and validity

“Qualitative validity means the researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures, while qualitative reliability indicates that the researcher’s approach is consistent across different researchers and different projects” (Creswell, 2009, pg.190).

Yin (2003) believes perfect reliability and validity are virtually impossible to achieve, instead they are ideas researchers strive for to minimise the error and bias in a study. In summary, Neuman (2006) suggests validity is being truthful whereas reliability is being consistent.

To ensure this research study is reliable, Gibbs (2007) suggests procedures to aid this field which have been followed. Ensuring there is no change in coding during data analysis warrants no change in code definition. Creswell (2009) believes this can be accomplished by constantly comparing the data with the codes and having a written definition for each code. Additionally Creswell (2009) recommends cross-checking coding with fellow researchers by comparing independently derived results.

Including validity in this research process involves maintaining accuracy and authenticity (Creswell, 2009). To achieve this, validity strategies were incorporated during the research process to enhance the accuracy of findings. Creswell (2009, pg.191) suggest a method for this; *“examine evidence from sources and use it to build a coherent justification for themes”*. If themes are found to be based on data, then it adds validity to the study. Additionally taking the final report from the research back to the participants to determine whether they believe it is accurate (Creswell, 2009).

3:7 Ethical considerations

Because this qualitative research involves collecting data from people, about people, researchers need to draw attention to the ethical issues that may arise (Creswell, 2009).

Participants may not want to respond to questions/question, or could potentially be distressed from questions asked. Additionally students may not want to admit to their purchase behaviours, or how they chose what products to purchase. To protect the participant, their anonymity of the data collected from the questionnaire will be only be viewed by the participant, researcher and supervisor. Furthermore, the participant may not want to reveal their identity or have it associated with the results of the research, therefore the participant's name and age will remain anomalous.

It is ethically important that the participant knows and is reassured of the fact that they do not have to answer every question and can stop the questionnaire at any time, therefore, before participants engaged in the study, they were given a participant information form (see appendix A) and a consent form (see appendix B) to read and sign. According to Creswell (2009) this should include the researcher, sponsoring institution and purpose of research. Additionally participants have the option to see any of the information gained from this study on request. Furthermore, a pilot study was undertaken, aforementioned, to ensure all questions were ethically sound (see appendix C).

3:8 Limitations

Drever and Munn (2009) suggest three main weaknesses when using a questionnaire; the data collected tends to describe rather than explain, the information can be superficial, and the usefulness of a questionnaire is reduced if there has been inadequate preparation time. Regarding the superficial data, respondents may obscure the truth to portray themselves in a better light, therefore limiting the accuracy of the research study.

Allowing participants to not answer questions reduces the sample and thus the data collected, additionally the possibility that not all questionnaires sent will be completed and returned, again reduces sample size and depth of data collected.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4:1 Introduction: Part one

The following chapter illustrates the data analysed from the questionnaires, which has been gathered using the method of coding explained in the methodology. Furthermore, a discussion of the data will be completed, including quotes from the raw data collected from the questionnaires. Robson (2002) suggests data analysis is the process of bringing structure and meaning to collected data, and the discussion is the procedure of explaining and understanding the collected data.

The questionnaires aimed to deliver an insight into student's understanding of, and thoughts regarding athlete endorsements, but because participants answer questions differently, the initial illustration of results has been developed from recurring themes. Of the 50 questionnaires sent to selected participants, only 31 were returned for analysis. This reduced the volume of data collected however, because the questions were open ended, an abundance of data was received and still enabled a thorough and detailed analysis to be undertaken (Silverman, 2011).

A concise overview of the results will be presented in table format, followed by a descriptive narrative explaining and describing the collected data. This detailed narrative will also include the extent to which the aim and objectives of the study have been met.

4:2 Table of results

Table 1 below presents a summary of results, derived from participants answers provided within the questionnaires. The paragraphs appear in order of popularity (the first paragraph in each column is the most recurring theme).

To produce the table, respondents similar and recurring answers were merged to form a highly informative narrative, which portrays an over view of the data collected.

4:2:1 Table 1: Summary of results

Effects on Student Purchase Behaviours		
How and Why	Influential Factors	Attractiveness/Ability
<p><i>‘Being a student influences my purchase behaviours. I tend to purchase things I need rather than want. I tend to purchase more at the beginning of term when my loan has come in’.</i></p> <p><i>‘Athlete endorsements are a successful marketing tool’.</i></p> <p><i>‘Athlete endorsements do not affect my purchase behaviour, however they do influence the younger generation greatly’.</i></p> <p><i>‘Athlete endorsements portray an image of a better product; however they always seem to be more expensive’.</i></p>	<p>‘Price’ <i>I do not have a disposable income/ An expensive endorsed product is not necessarily the best/ I try to make sure I have enough money for other necessities because I am a student.</i></p> <p>‘I like the endorser’ <i>Want to be like the endorser/ Gives the consumer quality assurance.</i></p> <p>‘Brand’ <i>Trustworthy.</i></p> <p>‘Quality’</p> <p>‘Look’ <i>Practical colour/Looks good on me.</i></p> <p>‘Recommendations’</p>	<p><i>‘Attractiveness is more influential than Ability, the more attractive the athlete the better. Athletes are judged on what they look like, rather than doing well. If the athlete looks good in a product, you feel you will too’.</i></p> <p><i>‘A balance of both attractiveness and ability working together achieves the best results. A successful, attractive athlete will have the greatest selling power’.</i></p> <p><i>‘I think attractiveness is important, but not as important as ability. In sport products ability is far in away the most influential factor. I would always choose an elite athlete rather than a good looking athlete’.</i></p>
Controversial Athletes and Credibility		Gender Balance among Endorsers
<p><i>‘Less credible athletes have a lower selling power. Completely against buying anything associated with a cheat/drug user. Creates a negative image for the brand. Lost prestige they once had and will suffer for it. Less connected with athlete, lost trust with brand’.</i></p> <p><i>Examples used; Lance Armstrong and Live Strong. Tiger Woods, Nike and his affair(s).</i></p>		<p><i>‘There are far more male endorsers than female; 3:1. Sport is male dominated. More male sport on TV. Men are bigger, stronger and faster, therefore are wanted for more campaigns. More male athletes, therefore more male endorsers. More boys have an interest in sport. Men want to be them, females are enticed by them’.</i></p>

<p><i>'Still able to sell products because of their high profile and status. Known for positives, negatives come off second. They are still heroes. I don't care; it doesn't affect or influence my choice'.</i></p> <p><i>'Same selling power'.</i></p>	<p><i>'Depends on sport, but women. Men don't care much for athlete appearance however women do. Females and women want to look like the endorser. Body envy'.</i></p> <p><i>'In recent years it has become more balanced, especially since the Olympics. In some sports it is equal, such as Tennis'.</i></p>
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4:3 Introduction: Part two

The following discussion of results will be divided into sections, each focusing on an objective which has been derived from the main aim of the study; *"The effects that athlete endorsements have on the purchase behaviours of university students"*. Within the objectives, further areas of exploration will be discussed applying greater depth to the data collected and allowing for a more insightful discussion. Below are the three objectives of the study, revealing additional areas of discussion.

Objective one: Effects of athlete endorsements on the purchase behaviours of university students.

- Student purchase behaviour towards sport related products
- Athlete endorsements as a marketing strategy, and the effects of this strategy on students
- Influential factors when purchasing an endorsed product

Objective two: The topic of controversial athletes.

- Controversial athletes and credibility

Objective three: Students thoughts on gender balance among athlete endorsers.

- Gender balance
- Attractiveness vs. ability

After discussing each objective, it will become apparent to what extent the objective has been met and this will be evaluated at the end of each section.

The following *chapter five* will include a summary of the research findings, the limitations of the study will identified, and suggestions for future research will be provided.

4:4 Objective one: The effects of athlete endorsements on the purchase behaviour of university students.

Within this objective, student's purchase behaviours will be discussed, along with their thoughts on athlete endorsements as a marketing strategy, and the effects of this strategy on their purchase behaviour. Additionally, the influential factors that are important to students when choosing an endorsed product will be discussed, and the extent to which the objective has been met will be exposed.

4:4:1 Student purchase behaviour towards sport related products

From the literature studied, Knights (2012) believed it was difficult for consumers to indulge in goods which they like, but may not necessarily need due to the poor economy. Knights (2012) research correlates with the finding of this study, as the data reveals 94% (n=31) of participants believe being a student has a negative impact on their purchase behaviour due to their lack of income and funds. Respondents revealed this *"limits what you can buy"* and numerous participants exposed the notion of buying what you need rather than what you want. For example, one participant stated *"I purchase less, have less disposable income and I have to think about budgeting"*.

The 94% of participants identified above, believe that being a student affects the quality of the product they purchase because they cannot afford the very best. Students revealed they *"look for a bargain"* and tend to *"look harder to find something of good quality which is at an affordable price"*. These findings correlate to that of Bailey and Seock (2007), who's researched identified that students search for information about a product before purchasing. Additionally,

according to Britt *et al.* (2004), students rely on loans to get through university, which links to the findings of this study. Participants understood that *“looking for a bargain”* was especially applicable at the end of term when student loans are low and money is scarce. Students revealed they tend to purchase sporting attire and equipment at the beginning of term, when their loans had come in; *“when you receive a lump sum of money you are more tempted to spend it”* and *“because we have a lot of spare time as students, we are tempted to spend our loans as soon as they come in”*. Another participant stated *“I only tend to buy products when my loan comes in”*.

However, a minority of respondents, only 6%, contradicted these findings and suggested that being a student does not affect their purchase behaviour. This was supported by claims that if an item of sporting clothing or equipment is needed in order for them to perform well, then it is a *“necessary investment”*.

4:4:2 Athlete endorsements as a marketing strategy, and the effects of this strategy on students.

Kuzman *et al.* (2003) suggested there was no convincing evidence that athlete endorsements influence young adult purchase behaviours and those findings partly relate to that of this study. The data analysis revealed students believe athlete endorsements are an effective marketing strategy, yet they themselves are not influenced by this method. Instead, students suggested that athlete endorsers have the most influence over the younger generation, due to them aspiring to be like their role models. Brown *et al.* (2003) suggest that role models however, are not always positive as they can be seen to promote negative images and behaviours, therefore, it is important to use the right athlete.

From the data analysed, it was discovered that 87% of students value athlete endorsers as a beneficial marketing strategy because it suggests a high quality product. However, this could also be seen as a negative aspect, as it was earlier established that students believe high quality products correlate to high prices. Bagwell and Riordan (1991) support this philosophy, and suggest high prices are an efficient means of signalling high quality. Additionally, the data

revealed that using athlete endorsers implies trustworthiness towards the brand and product, giving the consumer a sense of security when purchasing a product. One participant alleged; *“an athlete endorser will give the product more value in the eyes of the public, thus raising the profile of the brand to that particular audience”*.

A further benefit students identified regarding this marketing strategy is the overriding influence of role models on the consumer. Although many respondents suggested this strategy was only beneficial to the younger generation, others openly discussed the notion that if their favourite football or rugby player was wearing a pair of new boots, they would be highly influenced to purchase the identical pair. However, it was also suggested that it is important to use the ‘right’ athlete (Brown *et al.*, 2003) because the endorsement would otherwise be unsuccessful. This area will be discussed further in objective two.

Of the 13% of respondents who did not believe athlete endorsements were an effective marketing strategy, their reasoning was due to it only being a temporary method. It was suggested that once the consumer had been tempted the first time to purchase a product, thereafter, it depends if the consumer actually likes the product regardless of the athlete endorsing it. Or as Underhill (2008) suggested, although many people appreciate the work of a brand or product, they may not necessarily want to wear, or buy into it. Additionally, no matter how successful or talented the athlete, the price of the product is the overriding factor. Concluding athlete endorsers are not the most influential factor for students when purchasing an endorsed product.

However, it has been recognised throughout that data collected that students believe an athlete who has excelled in their field, has a much greater influence on the consumer. This was exemplified by one student who stated; *“an athlete that has excelled and reached the top of their sport is associated with high class training, equipment and nutrition. That is what we would expect from the top athletes and so if they are endorsing a product, we the consumer, would assume that the product is of the highest quality too and therefore receive more attention. The top athletes get more media attention than middle level athletes in all areas of*

their life so it is natural for their endorsements to get more attention too. Furthermore, the athletes themselves will want to be associated with the best products because they are a brand themselves at the end of the day and so wouldn't want to be associated with anything that would damage their own brand image and furthermore worth of their sponsorships".

This response incorporates many participants beliefs regarding this topic. It was suggested that the consumer would have more respect for the athlete, the higher they had achieved. Using examples, Jessica Ennis was referenced frequently as a successful athlete, and this was undoubtedly due to her Gold winning performance at the 2012 Olympic Games. Respondents believed that if Ennis performed well in Adidas clothing, then they are more likely too. Additionally, the Great Britain Olympic team raised the profile of Adidas clothing, and in one year the £100million investment into the Olympic Games was earned back in product sales alone (Torry, 2012). This investment certainly paid off, and incorporated with sponsoring the 2012 Football Euros, and the backing of cyclist Bradley Wiggins's at the Tour de France, Adidas shares have risen by 19% over the past year (Torry, 2012).

4:4:3 Influential factors when purchasing an endorsed product

Regardless of the respondent's attitude towards this marketing strategy, it was revealed the price of the product was the most influential factor for students when purchasing an endorsed product. This reinforces the earlier discussion of students having to budget and purchase cheaper products, in order to buy other necessities. However, studies revealed that students do purchase high priced products which Pirog and Roberts (2007) believe is due to students impulsive behaviour.

Following price was the influence of the endorser. The data illustrated that if the consumer likes the endorser, they are more likely to purchase the product. *“Seeing successful professionals using equipment, suggests it is the best available, and if I can afford it, then I will benefit”*. The research of Zollo (1995) supports these findings, as it was established that young adults and teenagers like to follow peers.

Additional factors of influence were the quality of the product and the brand retailing the product. Students stated previous positive experience with a manufacturer is of benefit, as they can trust the products quality and longevity. Ferrell *et al.* (2001) state that the consumer would be more likely to trust a brand as a result of low pressure selling tactics alongside a good shopping experience, manufacturer quality and customer concern, enforcing the importance of these influential factors.

4:4:4 Completion of objective one

From the data accumulated relating to objective one of the study, all areas have been established. It was recognised that students have financial strains, and therefore purchasing sport related products are not heavily influenced by athlete endorsers. Although students accept athlete endorsements as an effective marketing strategy, price is more of an influential factor.

4:5 Objective two: The topic of controversial athletes

As stated by Rosca (2010), endorsements are among the most profitable sources of income for athletes, therefore, a big incentive to succeed. Goddard *et al.* (2009) however suggests that at times, athlete qualities may be inappropriate, irrelevant and undesirable, and this is what the following objective will discuss; the extent to which controversial athletes affect the purchase behaviour of students.

It can be stated that this topic is highly relevant in the current climate. Nike has suspended its contract with Oscar Pistorius due to the murder allegations of his girlfriend Reeva Steenkamp. Additionally, Clarins have withdrawn Pistorius as a brand ambassador and Oakley have suspended his contract (Reynolds, 2013). However, Tiger Woods retained his contract with Nike, despite his infidelities. Ginman (2010) suggests this could have been due to the low number of respondents who claimed their opinions of Nike had changed because of Woods, and believes customers have stayed loyal to the brand despite this episode.

Pistorius and Woods are both controversial athletes, but at different levels, the following discussion will look into student's thoughts regarding the endorsing ability of controversial athletes.

4:5:1 Controversial athletes and credibility

“The number of athletes who drastically deviate from their image has increased; at the same time, athlete endorsements are very popular” (Ginman, 2010, pg. 2).

Although the data displayed a wide range of student ideologies regarding this topic, it was however evident that student's believe a less credible athlete has a lower selling power, compared to that of a credible athlete. Ginman (2010) agrees and suggests that the positive attitude athletes generate towards a brand and product is highly dependent on the credibility of the spokesperson.

Students stated they would chose not to purchase products associated with cheats, as it puts them off purchasing the product and decreases the products appeal. Another athlete who was endorsed by Nike, Lance Armstrong, was referred to on numerous occasions regarding this area. Students stated that Armstrong's behaviour has substantially decreased his credibility, which students believe has led to a decrease in Livestrong product sales. Additionally students stated they are less likely to purchase any products associated with Armstrong since his disloyalty. This is an example of a negative 'endorser and brand relationship' (Ginman, 2010), as it is evident that Armstrong's offence has reduced consumers image of the Livestrong identity (Ginman, 2010).

The majority of students however, believe that the negativity does not fall on the brand, only the athlete. Students propose that if the brand deals with the bad press caused by the athlete in the correct way, then the negative press would not affect their reputation. For example as Nike has recently done with Pistorius by suspending his contract; *“the brand should not suffer because of an athlete’s misdemeanour”*. Ginman (2010) believes that if the image of an endorser begins to affect consumer perception of the brand, then there should be a decline in this type of endorsement. Arguably, there are only a small number of athletes who do lose credibility; therefore, this type of action stated by Ginman (2010) would be severe.

Of the 89% (n=31) of participants not influenced by athlete endorsements, 44% (n=27) believe less credible athletes do not influence their thoughts regarding the athlete or the product. Additionally, these students revealed that what an athlete does in their personal life is their own business and does not affect how they perceive a product. Nike support this claim as they have retained Tiger Woods contract, due to the ideology that it was his personal business (Ginman, 2010). Examples of this in the raw data reveal; *“no publicity is bad publicity”*: *“It will make a product more memorable”*: *“Being watched more, shows the brands more and therefore its products, and then boosts sales”*. However, Andrews *et al.* (1998) disagrees and believes no publicity is better regarding controversial athletes, and it is cheaper. These respondents also believe that an athlete, who has redeemed themselves after a misdemeanour, would then continue to have a greater selling power, compared to that of a credible athlete.

4:5:2 Completion of objective

This objective displays overriding results which reveal students believe less credible athletes have a lower influence on their purchase behaviour, compared to that of a credible athlete. However, it does not influence their thoughts regarding the brand.

The extent to which this objective has been reached is clear in the sense that the main point has been established; however other areas of investigation are too vague to reach concluding assumptions.

4:6 Objective three: Students thoughts on gender balance among athlete endorsers

Objective three was created to increase knowledge concerning consumer's response to the gender of athlete endorsers. Which gender students believe is the most frequently used and influential as an endorser will be discussed. Secondly, student's thoughts on the influence of the attractiveness and ability of the athlete endorser will be exposed, and which is believed more important and successful.

The conclusion of this objective could be of potential benefit to sports organisations regarding the use of their endorsers.

4:6:1 Gender Balance

From the data collected, 75% (n=31) of respondents believed male endorsers were dominant, displayed in a ratio revealed it 3:1 (male: female average, rounded to the nearest whole number). There were many reasons for this; participant's suggested male athlete's portray an image of strength as they are "*stronger, better and faster than women*". The data also revealed that male consumers tend to have a greater interest in sport compared to women, and additionally chose to purchase products endorsed by male athletes because they were more influenced by male role models as a child. These results are similar to that of Burton (2012), who believes male consumers are more likely to support heroic athletes, rather than pay attention to their appearance. Additionally, the results indicated there is more television coverage of male sports; therefore, brands are more likely to use athletes who are frequently seen by the consumer. The data also suggested that "*female endorsements are a spin off from male endorsements*" implying that products are initially endorsed by men.

Despite increases in female sport participation, female endorsers were less recognised in the research. Antil *et al.* (2012) agrees with these findings and states that female athletes are less commonly used as endorsers compared to male athletes. However, 23% of respondents believed that since the Olympics, it has become more even. Jessica Ennis was referenced frequently in the data, more so than any male athlete. Additionally, it was identified that in some sports, such as Tennis, students believed that endorsements were even between genders. Carlisle Duncan and Messner (2005) agree in the sense that that women's sports and female athletes are treated with more respect than fifteen years ago, however, they state that when commentators focus on women, they tend to present non-serious 'gag features' on marginal sports of women athletes. Additionally, only on rare occasions do they comment on women's sports stories respectfully and professionally. Therefore, controversially only illustrating a minor increase in gender balance amongst endorsers.

4:6:2 Attractiveness vs. ability

Brands use athletes to often symbolise attributes such as success and confidence (Ginman, 2010), and these attributes are what many brands would like to be associated with. Therefore, the choice of athletes, regarding their talent, attractiveness and facade are highly influential factors to the brand and the consumer (Ginman, 2010).

The following data both assists, and contradicts the previous discussion. It was earlier stated by respondents, that only females believed appearance was an influential factor in gender balance amongst endorsers. However, when focusing purely on the topic, both male and female consumers believe attractiveness is more of an influential factor. 50% of students suggested that the appearance of the athlete, rather than the athlete's ability, is instinctively more of a selling point. The respondents believe body physique is very influential and eye catching, furthermore, women consumers are said to envy the attractive endorsers, because they want to look like them. Busler and Till (2000) examined the effectiveness of endorsers and their results revealed that the attractiveness of an endorser is more important when endorsing a product used to enhance one's attractiveness.

Therefore, when endorsing clothing products for example, the athlete must be attractive.

However, respondents stated that you would not purchase products from a *“talentless good looking athlete”*, which is an interesting concept. Therefore, it was also of importance to 26% of respondents that *“a balance of both attractiveness and ability working together achieves the best results”*. Another respondent stated that *“a successful, attractive athlete will have the greatest selling power”*. This is because consumers often try to recreate the look of the male/female athlete, in hope they will look and perform like them.

The minority of respondents, 24%, believe that an athlete who has excelled in their sport is more likely to increase product attention. These respondents believed that athletes should be widely respected and admired for their sporting ability and skills rather than their appearance.

Additional information gathered from the data revealed that for sports products, the athlete would be judged on ability, however, regarding clothing, attractiveness is the most effective; these findings are supported by Busler and Till (2000).

Furthermore, it was established that respondent's believe male endorsers are less attractive compared to female endorsers. For example, Victoria Pendleton, Jessica Ennis, Mo Farrah and Chris Hoy signed the most enhanced endorsement deals coming out of the 2012 Games (Goodley, 2012). Pendleton and Ennis are arguably, the most attractive female athletes; whereas Farah and Hoy are arguably, not the most attractive male athletes. Therefore, it can be stated that Farah and Hoy were chosen due to their success which certifies the necessity of attractive female athlete endorsers. Furthermore, a study by Cunningham *et al.* (2007) selecting the paramount athlete to endorse a female tennis event, revealed that more attractive female athletes were voted as an appropriate endorser, over the more talented, less attractive athletes.

In Till and Busler's (2000) findings of a study regarding attractiveness and expertise, they suggested that physical attractiveness is itself, considered a type of expertise. An example of this by Damron-Martine *et al.* (2009, pg.54) illustrates; *"a beautiful female model may be considered an expert on makeup, which is a product she could use to enhance her beauty. However, she may not be perceived as an expert on cars, because while she looks beautiful in the car, the car is not connected to her physical beauty"*.

4:6:3 Completion of objective

With reference to gender balance, male athletes are concluded as the dominant gender. This was due to sport being a male dominant field and having more frequent TV coverage. Furthermore it has been established that endorsers are judged on what they look like rather than their ability, and this is especially relevant for female endorsers. These findings have revealed new ideologies regarding this topic.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This final chapter draws a close to the dissertation, identifying a summary of the key findings of the study, the limitations, and suggestions for future areas of research.

5:1 Conclusion of findings

This investigation has taken place during a height of interest regarding the subject of athlete misdemeanours and endorser credibility. Therefore, this ensured participant responses were current and relevant.

It was established that the benefits of using athlete endorsers are only utilised if the endorsers are credible, and there is a connection with the consumer, brand and the product being endorsed. These findings were supported by Ginman (2010) who believes endorsers require a degree of credibility, because consumers are dissuaded to purchase from a less credible athlete. Additionally, it was revealed that if handled in the correct way, the credibility of an athlete does not affect the way in which the brand is portrayed by the consumer.

Athlete endorsers generate a high sum of money for the brand; therefore the product expectations and believability are higher according to respondents. Students believe that if the athletes endorsing the products are also using them, it will have an input on their success, enforcing the credibility of this marketing strategy. However, respondents believed endorsers as 'role models' had the greatest influence amongst the younger generation. It was additionally recognised that students have financial strains; therefore, purchasing sport related products are not heavily influenced by athlete endorsers, rather the price of the product and whether the respondent had student loan money available (at the beginning of an academic term for example).

With reference to gender balance, male athletes are concluded as the dominant gender. This was due to sport being a male dominant field and having more frequent television coverage. The study also concluded that it is more important for women endorsers to be attractive, whereas ability was more important for men. Damron-Martinez *et al.* (2009) additionally states the importance of the criteria

'attractiveness/ability' as they believed these levels are dependent on the product and the brand being endorsed.

5:2 Limitations of study

Although the study fulfilled the research objectives and in conclusion, has provided some significant findings, there are limitations that could be amended if the study was to be improved in the future.

Initially, only 31 of the expected 50 respondents participated in the study and this was mainly due to time constraints. Although the data was accurate as far as this study was concerned, this significantly reduced the amount of data collected. Therefore, the study could be improved by increasing sample size.

The questionnaire was viewed differently by sport and non-sport students, and it became clear who understood the actual meaning of the questions. Instead, some participants interpreted the question differently which meant their answer was unusable, reducing sample size. For example, some non-sport students did not understand what the 'credibility of an athlete' meant. To improve this, a sheet providing explanations of words used in the questionnaire would be attached to increase understanding and therefore, sample size. Additionally, of the 31 questionnaires returned, some participant's had not answered all the questions which meant that there was not an equal response to each question.

Of the male sport students who participated in the study, the majority were rugby players. This did not allow much depth regarding varied sport student's thoughts on this topic. To improve this, the questionnaire would be evenly distributed amongst different sport students, allowing a greater breadth of opinions.

When hoping to produce an average ratio of genders amongst endorsers (male:female ((3:1)) from the questionnaire, not all the respondents illustrated a ratio in their answer. Therefore, it cannot be concluded that the ratio used in the

discussion *chapter four*, truly depicts student's thoughts regarding the ratio of male and female athlete endorsers.

5:3 Suggestions for future research

Sports marketing cannot grow at the pace it has forever, but it still has room to expand (Andrews et al., 1998).

From the research it was established that although male endorsers were dominant, respondents believed that female endorsers were becoming more popular. Burton (2012) continues to state that male-controlled companies have been slow to appreciate the buying power of women and have therefore been slower to consider female athletes. Therefore, it would be of future interest to brands and marketers to invest in, and use more female athlete endorsers, to not only increase sales, but appeal to the wider consumer market.

Zollo (1995) confirms that teenagers and young adults are an extremely important target for marketers, because they like to follow trends and peers. The study also explained that teenagers and young adults have years of spending ahead of them, therefore creating a large brand following at a relatively early age would be very beneficial to the company, with a potential for keeping clients for many years. From this study, it was recognised that students were more likely to purchase products at the beginning of term, when their student loan had been received. It would therefore be of benefit to brands that target students to 'drop' new products at the start of an academic term for maximal selling.

It was discovered that sport marketers should more closely consider the use of 'niche' athletes (rather than high profile athletes) as spokespersons, especially when marketing strategies are focused on building brand image (Jowdy & McDonald, 2002). This is because it would reduce the media coverage if the athlete did fall in negative credibility as the athlete was less well known. Furthermore, many celebrities make the mistake of endorsing too many products, which leads consumers to perceive them as insincere and driven by monetary

interests (Ginman, 2010). Therefore using athletes to endorse products which are of significance to them would be more appealing to the consumer.

As it was discovered in the research, consumers are attracted to the athletes character, therefore, a stimulating idea would be to explore the match of characteristics between the athletes and the brand. Although this would require widespread resources, it would be exciting to see what athlete would be a suitable match for a brand. This would be of benefit to the brand because consumers would see sincerity between the athlete and the product they were endorsing. Additionally, if the athlete has passion and believes in the brand, then it is more reassuring for the consumer purchasing the product. This would intern lead to increased sales and a larger brand following.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

EXAMPLE PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Cardiff School of Sport Ethics Committee

Research Participant Information Sheet

Project Title: *The effects of athlete endorsements on the purchase behaviours of university students*

The purpose of this document is to assist you in making an *informed* decision about whether you wish to be included in the project, and to promote transparency in the research process.

1) Background and aims of the research

The increasing crescendo of marketers “borrowing faces” to increase brand awareness (Yin 2008) has led to this study being developed. From researching literature in this area a window of opportunity is visible. A qualitative study researching the severity of athlete influence on students purchase behaviours has been formed, additionally the topic of controversial athletes will be touched and student’s thoughts on the gender balance among athlete endorsers will be explored.

2) My role as the researcher:

The project involves me (Lucy Hancock), the researcher, to email you a questionnaire consisting of 10 open ended questions, lasting no more than 15 minutes.

3) Your role as a participant:

Your role is to answer the questions asked as honestly and accurately as possible. The questionnaire will include questions about your purchase behaviours and the role athlete endorsements play in this. The completion of the questionnaire is not compulsory, and you are free to postpone the questionnaire or cease to continue at any time.

4) Benefits of taking part:

The information obtained from your questionnaire will be used to understand the effects of athlete endorsements on students purchase behaviors. Thus enabling us see the positive and negative effects of this marketing strategy. Additionally the students thoughts on controversial athletes will be discovered along with students thoughts on gender balance among athlete endorsers. We will be happy to share the information gained with any of the participants of this study on request.

5) How data will be collected:

Aforementioned above the data will be collected from a questionnaire.

6) How the data / research will be used:

In agreeing to become a *voluntary* participant, you will be allowing me to use your responses to the questionnaire questions and include them with data of other participants. Your personal data will be anonymous.

Your rights

Your right as a *voluntary* participant is that you are free to enter or withdraw from the study at any time. This simply means that you are in full control of the part you play in informing the research, and what *anonymous* information is used in its final reporting.

Protection to privacy

Concerted efforts will be made to hide your identity in any written transcripts, notes, and associated documentation that inform the research and its findings. Furthermore, any personal information about you will remain *confidential* according to the guidelines of the Data Protection Act (1998).

Contact

If you require any further details, or have any outstanding queries, feel free to contact me on the details printed below

Lucy Hancock
Cardiff School of Sport
Cardiff Metropolitan University
CF236XD, United Kingdom
Email; st10001759@outlook.uwic.ac.uk

APPENDIX B

EXAMPLE INFORMED CONSENT FORM

CARDIFF METROPOLITAN INFORMED CONSENT FORM

CSS Reference No:

Title of Project: *The effects of athlete endorsements on the purchase behaviours of university students.*

Name of Researcher: Lucy Hancock

Participant to complete this section: Please initial each box.

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated for this evaluation study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that it is possible to stop taking part at any time, without giving a reason.
3. I also understand that if this happens, our relationships with the Cardiff Metropolitan University or our legal rights will not be affected
4. I understand that information from the study may be used for reporting purposes, but I will not be identified.
5. I agree to take part in this study on _____

Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

LUCY HANCOCK

Name of Researcher

Date

Signature of Researcher

APPENDIX C

EXAMPLE PILOT QUESTIONNAIRE

A SPORT MARKETING QUESTIONNAIRE

“THE EFFECTS OF ATHLETE ENDORSEMENTS ON THE PURCHASE BEHAVIOURS OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS”

Please take 15 minutes of your time to complete this questionnaire in as much detail and as honestly as possible.

-
- Q1** How does being a student affect you purchase behaviour regarding clothing and sport related products?
- Q2** Athlete endorsement is used widely as a marketing tool. Do you think this way of promoting sports products is affective and why?
- Q3** Do you feel athlete endorsement would influence your purchase behaviours and why?
- Q4** **4A** What factors influence your choice in choosing an endorsed product?
- 4B** Do you feel some factors have a greater influence. If yes, which factors in particular and why?
- Q5** Recently, athlete endorsement has been questioned due to their negative history or press. Do you feel they still possess the same selling power and credibility?
- Q6** Do you feel products promoted by less credible athletes influence your purchasing behaviour less and why? (E.g. Lance Armstrong)
- Q7** **7A** Do you feel an athlete who has excelled in their sport is more like to increase the product attention and why?
- 7B** Does attractiveness play more of a part over ability?
- Q8** Do you think there is an equal ratio of gender balance when using athlete endorsement? What do you think that ratio is and who is more successful?
- Q9** Do you think male or female endorsers attract more attention? Could you give an example of an effective sport endorser or brand and state why they are successful?
- Q10** Do endorsers, no matter what type, generate somewhat higher expectations, intent-to-purchase and believability than a non-endorsed promotion campaign?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

APPENDIX D

EXAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE

A SPORT MARKETING QUESTIONNAIRE

“THE EFFECTS OF ATHLETE ENDORSMENTS ON THE PURCHASE BEHAVIOURS OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS”

Please take 15 minutes of your time to complete this questionnaire in as much detail and as honestly as possible.

-
- Q1** How does being a student affect you purchase behaviour regarding clothing and sport related products?
- Q2** Athlete endorsement is used widely as a marketing tool. Do you think this way of promoting sports clothing and products is effective and why?
- Q3** In what way do you feel athlete endorsement influences your purchase behaviours?
- Q4** **4A** What factors influence your choice in choosing an endorsed product?
- 4B** Which factors have the greatest influence and why?
- Q5** Recently, athlete endorsement has been questioned due to their negative history or press. To what extent do you believe they still possess the same selling power compared to a highly credible athlete?
- Q6** In what ways do products promoted by less credible athletes influence your purchasing behaviour and why? (E.g. Lance Armstrong)
- Q7** **7A** Do you feel an athlete who has excelled in their sport is more like to increase the product attention? If yes, please state why.
- 7B** Please state whether you think attractiveness plays more of a part over ability, and why?
- Q8** What do you think the ratio of gender balance is amongst athlete endorsers and why? (Male:Female)
- Q9** Using examples, please state who you believe attracts more attention between male and female endorsers and why?
- Q10** What are your thoughts on the following statement “Endorsers generate somewhat higher expectations and believability than a non-endorsed promotion campaign?”

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME