

Sport Marketing and Sponsorship

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Introduction

At least 48 articles can be identified across the pre-selected journals for the sport marketing and sponsorship section (some articles are included here to avoid duplication of presentation) for the second half of 2023. These publications come from 5 different journals, and IJSMS remains the journal with the most publications (19) followed by ESMQ (16) and SMR (5). Additionally, both JSM and JGSM have four publications respectively.

Advances in Sport Marketing and Sponsorship

Table 1 captures the variety of topics and themes addressed by the 48 articles and it can be seen that the majority of these publications (34) are about sport marketing related topics, and the rest about sport sponsorship. In line with previous issues, consumer and fan behaviour remain the most focused topics in sport marketing research with at least ten articles devoted to fan behaviour studies and another 8 to general sport consumer behaviour. With respect to sport sponsorship, while sponsorship mechanisms and effectiveness continues to garner scholarly attention, human brand and endorsement effectiveness has become a new burgeoning research area. In addition, at least 7 articles from the marketing area are also about athlete branding, making human branding and endorsement the most prominent niche area for this issue. Accordingly, five articles on this topic area have been selected and reviewed in detail.

Table 1. Selected Publication in Sport Marketing and Sponsorship

Areas	Topics	Author(s)	Quantity
Sport marketing (34)	League product development	Fujak, Ewing, Newton & Altschwager	1
	Digital marketing	Stegmann, Nagel & Ströbel	1
	Consumer behavior	Yoshida, Sato, Pizzo & Kuramasu	8

		Papadimitriou, Apostolopoulou & Patrick	
		Temerak & Winklhofer	
		Hussain & Cunningham	
		Chang, Lim, Kim & Oh	
		Pedragosa, Biscaia, Naylor, Hedlund & Dickson	
		AbouRokbah & Salam	
		Ock & Hwang	
	sports advertisement	Lee, Potter & Han	3
		Lee	
		Ni, Kuo, Chang, Wu & Chen	
	Media promotion	Hu, Cottingham, Shapiro & Lee	2
		Wang	
	Fan behavior	Sveinsona, Deliaa, Mansfieldb & Calow	10
		Yağız & Özer	
		Kościótek	
		Wang, Mao & Smith	
		Kim & Gower	
		Behnam, Dickson, Delshab, Gerke & Nikou	
		Statz, Bogina, Schmult & Gordon	
	Stegmann, Matyas & Ströbel		
	Cornwell, Pappu & Setten		
	Schlimm & Breuer		
Athlete branding	Bredikhina, Sveinson, Taylor & Heffernanc	7	
	Mogaji & Nguyen		
	Noh, Ahn & Anderson*		

		Bredikhina, Gupta & Kunkel*	
		Cocco, Kunkel, Baker*	
		Hu, Siegfried, Cho & Cottingham	
		Lee & Bang	
	<i>Sports fashion and sustainability</i>	Kopplin	1
	Nation branding through events	Rookwood & Adeosun	1
Sport sponsorship (14)	Gambling sponsorship	Hing, Rockloff & Matthew Browne	1
	Sponsorship effectiveness and mechanism	Chang & Kwak	4
		Herold, Breuer	
		Centracchio, Popp, Jensen	
		Mondt, Lee, Shapiro & Morse	
	Sponsorship strategy	Siegfried	1
	Human brand and endorsement effectiveness	Frank & Mitsumoto	5
		Su, Guo, Wegner, Baker*	
		Dunn & Nisbett	
		Sato, Ko, Kim & Lee*	
Williams & Heo			
Sponsorship communication	Beek, Hoecke & Derom	1	
Sponsorship drivers	Abdolmaleki, Mohammadi, Babaei, Soheili, Dickson & Funk	1	
Charity event sponsorship	Fechner, Filo, Reid & Cameron	1	
Total		48	

Note: * refers to articles reviewed in detail.

Beginning July 1, 2021, National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) student-athletes across the US obtained the right, through state laws and institutional policies, to profit from the commercial use of their name, image, and likeness (“NIL”). This historical NIL rule heralded a new era of collegiate athletes marketability in the States, changing the landscape of NCAA sports business forever. It is estimated that collegiate athlete NIL deals during the second year of the NIL era were worth \$1.14 billion (Opendorse, 2022). The new wave of collegiate athlete endorsement also served as the background for the recent burgeoning academic interest in athlete branding. In the first paper, Cocco et al. (2023) examined the effects of personal branding factors and institutional factors on the potential social media NIL value of men’s and women’s college basketball athletes. Through a linear regression analysis with data collected from the Instagram accounts of the athletes prior to the start of the NIL era in college athletics, the study confirmed positive associations between competitive level of play, strength of the university brand, playing men’s (vs. women’s) basketball, number of posts on Instagram, and verified account status with the social media NIL value of collegiate athletes. There is no relationship between the quality of an athlete’s Instagram biography or local market factors and athletes’ social media NIL value. The study extends the concept of college sport brand relationships into the wider sport brand ecosystem and environment, and provides an enhanced understanding of sport brand architecture and athlete influence on personal brand value.

Also focusing on social media value of athletes, the second article seeks to examine the factors that influence athlete brand growth on social media during a high-profile non-league event. Following the sport brand ecosystem framework (Kunkel & Biscaia, 2020), Bredikhina et al. (2023) conducted a multiple linear regression analysis with longitudinal behavioral data, namely social media following and tagging behavior of athletes in the context of tennis Laver Cup, and constructed a sociogram to visualize brand networking of athletes and the event. The study indicated that athletes’ pre-existing following size, the event’s social media activities, and athletes’ ‘coopetitive’ relationships with other participating athletes were predictors of athletes’ follower growth. This research highlights the importance of non-league sport events with representative teams as strategic opportunities for athletes to grow their social media brands through vertical and horizontal brand relationships.

In the third article, Noh et al. (2023) applied Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique (ZMET) with data collected through in-depth, unstructured interviews from 24 individuals to explore consumers' perceptions of two athletes' engagements in social and political advocacy. The authors concluded that lifestyle, relationship effort, and role model make a difference in creating unique brands. The study also generated three categories for athletes' engagements in advocacy: (a) views toward advocacy, (b) sport as platforms for advocacy, and (c) ambassadors. The findings provide additional conceptual insights into athlete brand image, demonstrating the feasibility of ZMET in sport consumer studies.

In a related study, Dunn & Nisbett (2023) seeks to examine how consumers respond to social statements made by both companies and sports celebrities and how those reactions influence consumer perceptions of associated brands. The authors utilized a pre-test/post-test experimental design to gather responses to pro-social messages from both athletes associated with a brand and messages directly from the brands. The results showed that messages from celebrities were evaluated as being more important than similar messages directly from the company. Meanwhile, para-social relationships between the consumer and the celebrity endorser were found to increase brand support and favorable message evaluation. Additionally, while para-social relationships did not directly influence feelings of reactance, the effects on message evaluation did lead to a decrease in reactance to pro-social messages.

In the final article, drawing from cognitive dissonance theory and associative memory network model, Sato et al. (2023) examined how pre-scandal associations and scandal types interactively influence consumer judgment and negative electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) through online experiments. The study revealed that when performance-related scandals emerged, consumers made more negative blame judgment of athletes with salient performance association, relative to pro-social association. Inversely, when performance-unrelated scandals occurred, athletes with salient pro-social association were more likely to be blamed. Regarding eWOM, consumers generate more negative eWOM when athletes with pre-performance associations are involved with performance-related scandals. The findings highlighted the importance of understanding the cognitive dissonance that consumers may experience in the cases of athlete scandals, and provided practical implications for managers and agencies of athlete celebrities.

Despite the relative long tradition of athlete endorsement practice and a significant body of work about it, there is still limited understanding of endorsement effectiveness, contributing factors as well as underlying mechanism. The arrival of NIL era along with social media and digital transformation as well as the ever-changing social and political environment only adds further complexity to athlete endorsement, providing particularly fertile ground for research.

Reference

Opendorse. (2022). N1L: One year of name, image and likeness.
https://opendorse.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/N1L_Full_063022_3.pdf

Kunkel, T., & Biscaia, R. (2020). Sport brands: Brand relationships and consumer behavior. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 29(1), 3–17.
<https://doi.org/10.32731/SMQ.291.032020.01>

Annotated bibliography

Noh, Y., Ahn, N. Y., & Anderson, A. J. (2023). Do consumers care about human brands?: A case study of using Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique (ZMET) to map two athletes' engagements in social and political advocacy. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 23(6), 1732-1758.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/16184742.2023.2273351>

The collaborative study by scholars from Seoul National University, Bournemouth University, and Texas A&M University investigated how athlete engagements in various forms of advocacy contribute to leveraging their distinctive image. The authors conducted 24 in-depth, unstructured interviews about two NFL athlete brands, Michael Bennett and Jason Pierre-Paul, and draw upon Keller's consumer-based brand equity, Arai et al.'s athlete brand image models, and the Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique (ZMET) to capture the deep-seated emotions of consumers. The findings revealed that athletes' actions in athletic performance, attractive appearance, and marketable lifestyle contributed to improving their brand image. Athlete attention to lifestyle, relationship efforts, and role models emerged as crucial factors in creating unique athlete brands. Additionally, three themes of views toward advocacy, sports as platforms for advocacy, and ambassadors were identified in athletes' active involvement in social

and political movements. They also uncovered that the metaphors of Michael Bennett included a microphone and sports drink, while iron or metal indicated Jason Pierre-Paul's metaphors. However, the study acknowledged limitations regarding sample size feasibility and transferability of ZMET in a sports context. The authors recommend subsequent researchers employ the ZMET procedure on a larger participant pool to examine consumers' sentiments and attitudes toward potential athletes' engagement in advocacy.

Bredikhina, N., Gupta, K., & Kunkel, T. (2023). Superboosting the athlete social media brand: events as an opportunity for follower growth. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 23(6), 1819-1842. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16184742.2022.2074497>

This comprehensive research by scholars from Temple University examined what factors influenced athlete brand growth on social media during the Laver Cup, a high-profile non-league event with representative teams. They collected longitudinal behavioral data on Instagram and utilized a multiple linear regression with a wild-cluster bootstrap-SE and the sports brand ecosystem framework to test and explain relationships. The findings underscored the significance of pre-existing follower size and user tagging with athletes and events for follower growth, highlighting strategic opportunities for social media brand architecture in non-league sports contexts. Although posting frequency and competition days showed no positive associations with athlete following on social media, future research could re-investigate the boundary conditions of such effects. This study contributes to sports brand theory and practice, emphasizing the instrumental role of brand networking in athlete social media growth.

Cocco, A. R., Kunkel, T., & Baker, B. J. (2023). The influence of personal branding and institutional factors on the name, image, and likeness value of collegiate athletes' social media posts. *Journal of Sport Management*, 37(5), 359-370. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsm.2022-0155>

These three authors from the University of Louisville and Temple University came together to examine the effects of personal branding factors and institutional factors on the potential social media name, image, and likeness value (i.e., NIL

value) of men's and women's college basketball athletes from the State of California. They collected 907 Instagram accounts and used linear regression to estimate the associations. The findings showed positive associations between competitive level of play, strength of the university brand, playing men's (vs. Women's) basketball, number of posts on Instagram, and verified account status with the social media NIL value of collegiate athletes. There was no relationship between the Instagram biography of athletes, the local market population and competition, and the social media NIL value of athletes. The study contributes new insights into factors associated with the social media brand value and extends knowledge related to the sports brand ecosystem and environment. However, future research remains to expand the geographic and sports scope to explore the impact of conference and sports affiliation on the social media NIL value for avoiding selection bias.

Schartel Dunn, S., & Nisbett, G. S. (2023). When celebrity endorsements collide with social activism: exploring athlete celebrity endorsements, social issues and brand perception. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, 24(3), 558-569. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSMS-01-2023-0010>

In this collaborative study, researchers from Winona State University and the University of North Texas investigated consumer responses to social statements from companies and sports celebrities and examined their impact on perceptions of associated brands. They utilized a pre-test and post-test experimental design with 253 participants and found that consumers encountering messages on social issues they deem significant experienced reduced psychological reactance and formed more positive brand perceptions. Notably, messages from sports celebrities carried more weight than those directly from the brand. Consumers with higher levels of para-social relationships with the message source led to more positive evaluations, resulting in diminished psychological reactance and enhanced brand perceptions. While the study offered guidance for brands in pro-social messaging, given the use of real athletes and information in this experiment, the pure effects of research relationships remain to be further explored by scholars.

Sato, S., Ko, Y. J., Kim, D., & Lee, J. S. (2023). The effects of pre-scandal associations of athlete endorsers and scandal types on consumer blame and

eWOM. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, 24(4), 814-833. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSMS-07-2022-0139>

In this cooperative study, researchers from Waseda University, University of Florida, Pukyong National University, and Yonsei University delved into the interactive effects of pre-scandal associations and scandal types on consumer judgment and negative electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). Guided by cognitive dissonance theory and the associative memory network model, the authors used fictitious materials to conduct two online experiments for testing hypotheses. In the first experiment, the authors analyzed 146 data with a t-test and confirmed varying levels of dissonance across conditions. In the second experiment, employing Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA) and PROCESS Model 8 with 189 data, the authors revealed that in performance-related scandals, consumers made more negative blame judgments of athletes with salient performance associations, but in performance-unrelated scandals, athletes with pro-social associations were more likely to be blamed. Moreover, consumers generated more negative eWOM when athletes with pre-performance associations were involved in performance-related scandals. The study underscores the nuanced dynamics of consumer judgment and eWOM in the context of athlete scandals and emphasizes the need for practitioners to understand cognitive dissonance and its implications. However, the examination of pre-scandal associations in this study was independent. Therefore, future research can explore interactive effects between associations on consumers' information processing and judgment.