

Effectiveness of Athlete Endorsements in Enhancing Brand Awareness: Insights from Nepal

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of athlete endorsements on brand awareness in the Nepalese market, focusing on athlete credibility, athlete brand fit, athlete popularity, and frequency of endorsement. A quantitative research design was adopted, with data collected from 261 consumers across major urban areas using a structured questionnaire. Reliability analysis indicated high internal consistency, with an overall Cronbach's alpha of 0.929 and individual variables ranging from 0.802 to 0.855. Correlation analysis revealed that all independent variables were positively and significantly associated with brand awareness, with frequency of endorsement ($r = 0.792$) and athlete popularity ($r = 0.737$) showing the strongest relationships. Regression analysis confirmed that these two factors significantly predict brand awareness, while credibility and brand fit were not statistically significant. The findings underscore the importance of using popular athletes and maintaining frequent endorsements to enhance brand visibility.

Keywords: Athlete Endorsement (AE), Brand Awareness (BA), Athlete Popularity (AP), Frequency of Endorsement (FE), Nepalese Market.

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1. Contextual and Background of the Study

In the contemporary marketing landscape, athlete endorsement has emerged as a powerful promotional tool that bridges emotional connections between consumers and brands. Globally, companies invest heavily in athlete endorsements to enhance credibility, visibility, and consumer trust, as athletes are often perceived as symbols of excellence, discipline, and success (Erdogan, 1999).

The Source Credibility Model and Meaning Transfer Theory suggest that an athlete's trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise can significantly influence consumer attitudes and brand perception (Ohanian, 1990). In markets where sports hold cultural significance, endorsements by athletes have been shown to increase brand recall and strengthen brand loyalty (McCracken, 1989). These global findings underscore the potential impact of athlete endorsements not only as a marketing strategy but also as a driver of consumer engagement and purchase intention.

In Nepal, the growing popularity of sports such as cricket, football, and martial arts has expanded opportunities for brands to collaborate with local athletes. Prominent figures like Paras Khadka, Sandeep Lamichhane, and Gaurika Singh have become household names, influencing public perception and brand association. Despite this emerging trend, empirical research on the effectiveness of athlete endorsements in the Nepalese context remains limited. Nepalese consumers are increasingly exposed to celebrity-driven marketing through digital media; however, it remains unclear how athlete endorsements specifically affect brand awareness, recognition, and consumer behavior. Therefore, understanding the dynamics between athlete endorsement and brand awareness within Nepal's developing marketing environment is crucial for both academic inquiry and strategic business application (Shrestha & Sharma, 2022).

2. Review of Literature

Cunningham, Fong, and Tom (2017) argue that athlete endorsements are particularly impactful in industries such as sports apparel and beverages, where the credibility and image of the athlete directly influence consumer perceptions

and awareness. Athletes serve as credible and visible spokespersons, amplifying brand messages. Groening, Mittal, and Kacher (2018) emphasize that an athlete's social media presence can significantly increase brand awareness by providing real-time, interactive access to fans. The ability to share moments on platforms like Instagram or Twitter allows brands to tap into a wider, more engaged audience.

Athlete endorsements help shape consumer perceptions by aligning the athlete's image with the values of the brand. A positive relationship between the athlete's traits and the brand's identity enhances brand equity. Choi, Lee, and Kim (2019) argue that the athlete's authenticity is crucial in building a genuine consumer connection to the brand, further supporting the idea that athlete credibility and expertise positively affect consumer attitudes towards the endorsed brand.

A study by Müller, Junghagen, and Schlegelmilch (2019) found that consumers often perceive the athlete as a role model, and this perception positively affects their views of the brand. The congruence between the athlete's personal brand and the endorsed product is crucial for success. If there is a mismatch, however, it can hurt both the athlete's and the brand's reputation. Athlete endorsement also plays a critical role in brand recall. Research by Seno and Lukas (2015) confirms that high-profile athlete endorsements increase the likelihood of consumers recalling a brand, especially when the athlete has a high level of popularity and credibility.

The constant visibility of the athlete in advertisements, along with their association with the brand, strengthens the memory trace, improving brand recall. Lee and Kang (2018) also discuss how consumer familiarity with the athlete, combined with high media exposure, directly leads to better brand recall. The increased frequency of the athlete in advertisements results in higher mental association between the brand and the athlete, thereby increasing the likelihood that consumers will remember the brand when making purchase decisions.

With the rise of digital and social media, athlete endorsements have evolved beyond traditional advertising. Social media platforms have allowed athletes to engage more directly with their fans and endorse products in a more personalized

and interactive manner. Schroder and Hollenbeck (2016) suggest that athlete endorsements on social media have a more profound impact on brand awareness than traditional media because they offer consumers the chance to engage, share, and interact with content.

Kim and Ko (2016) explore the role of social media platforms in enhancing brand awareness through athlete endorsements. They found that fans who follow athletes on social media are more likely to remember and engage with brands endorsed by these athletes. This direct interaction boosts brand awareness and creates a deeper emotional connection with the brand. Despite their positive effects, athlete endorsements come with significant risks. A controversial event involving an athlete can quickly lead to negative brand associations. Bergkvist and Zhou (2016) highlight that when an athlete is involved in a scandal or negative publicity, it can have a substantial negative effect on the brand they endorse. This highlights the importance of selecting athletes whose values align with the brand's target market.

Bergström, Holmqvist, and Kall (2015) discuss how the perceived credibility of the athlete can significantly impact the success of the endorsement. They argue that consumers are more likely to trust and remember brands endorsed by athletes who exhibit genuine qualities and align with the brand's ethical stance. **Source Credibility Theory** (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 2018): This theory suggests that the effectiveness of an endorsement depends on the credibility of the endorser. Factors like expert **Social Influence Theory** (Cialdini, 1984): This theory suggests that consumers are more likely to purchase products endorsed by athletes they admire, respect, or identify with. Rise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness of the athlete affect how consumers perceive the endorsed brand. **Match-up Hypothesis** (Kamins, 1990): The match-up hypothesis proposes that the effectiveness of an athlete endorsement depends on how well the athlete's image matches the brand's image.

Studies have shown that athlete endorsements significantly impact brand awareness in global markets. Athletes often serve as aspirational figures, and their endorsement of a product can enhance brand credibility and influence consumer attitudes (McCracken, 2016). The association between athletes and brands can

also affect consumer decision-making, particularly in sports and lifestyle products. According to Ohanian (2019), athlete endorsements can positively affect consumers' attitudes towards a brand, especially if the athlete is well-liked and perceived as credible. A study by Till and Busler (2020) highlighted that consumer identification with an athlete can enhance the effectiveness of endorsement in increasing brand awareness.

Recent work applies parasocial theory to athlete endorsements, suggesting fans form one-sided bonds with athletes, which brands exploit. Social media intensifies this effect, as direct athlete-fan interactions amplify brand visibility (Seno & Lukas, 2015,2018). Modern consumers prioritize authenticity. Studies show that athletes perceived as genuine (e.g., Serena Williams with Nike) strengthen brand trust more than traditional celebrity endorsers (al, 2019).post-2020 research emphasizes diversity in endorsements. Brands like Adidas gained awareness by partnering with athletes advocating social justice (e.g., Colin Kaepernick), aligning with consumer values (Harrison et al., 2023). Athletes with strong Instagram/TikTok following (e.g., Cristiano Ronaldo, Naomi Osaka) drive higher unaided brand recall than TV ads (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Fan-created posts about athlete endorsements (e.g., #LeBronXMcDonalds) increase organic reach (Kim & Walker, 2020). Negative athlete behavior (e.g., Lance Armstrong, Oscar Pistorius) harms associated brands, but recovery is faster if the brand acts swiftly (Um, 2022). Consumers now expect brands to drop controversial athletes (Smith & Schwarz, 2021). Lesser-known athletes (e.g., Olympians, esports players) yield high ROI for niche markets (Jin & Yoon, 2022). Brands like Red Bull use micro-influencers for targeted awareness (Hutchins & Rowe, 2021). Gamers like Ninja (Fortnite) attract Gen Z audiences (Taylor, 2023). AI tools (e.g., Nielsen's Brand Impact) now pair athletes with brands based on audience analytics (Martinez et al., 2022). Athletes promoting eco-friendly brands (e.g., Patagonia x surfers) boost credibility (Horne et al., 2021). Post-2012 research underscores athlete endorsements as dynamic tools for brand awareness, shaped by digitalization, cultural shifts, and authenticity demands. Future studies should explore (metaverse) athlete avatars and Gen Alpha's engagement patterns.

Another key development in recent literature is the growing importance of authenticity and cultural relevance. Consumers increasingly favor athletes who align with their values, as seen in the success of campaigns featuring socially conscious stars like Colin Kaepernick (Harrison, 2021). Research indicates that brands associated with athletes advocating for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) or sustainability gain stronger consumer loyalty and awareness (Agyemang et al., 2020; Horne et al., 2021). However, this heightened scrutiny also means that athlete misconduct can damage brand perception rapidly, though swift corporate responses can mitigate fallout (Bergkvist & Zho, 2016.2021).

Additionally, the post-2012 era has witnessed a shift toward niche marketing through micro-influencers. Studies highlight that lesser-known athletes, particularly in emerging sports like esports or Olympic disciplines, often deliver higher returns on investment for targeted demographics compared to traditional celebrity endorsers (Jin & Yoon, 2022). Meanwhile, data analytics now play a pivotal role in endorsement strategies, with AI-driven tools enabling brands to identify optimal athlete-brand matches based on audience demographics and engagement metrics (Martinez et al., 2022). Looking ahead, scholars are exploring frontier topics such as virtual athlete avatars in the metaverse and the preferences of Generation Alpha, who are growing up in an era of unprecedented digital integration (Taylor, 2023). Collectively, contemporary research underscores that athlete endorsements remain a potent tool for brand awareness, but their effectiveness now hinges on digital savviness, cultural alignment, and strategic precision; a marked evolution from pre-2012 paradigms

2.2. Review in context of Nepal

Athlete endorsement in Nepal is a relatively new but rapidly growing marketing tool. The sports landscape in Nepal is diverse, with cricket and football being the most popular sports, and athletes, particularly cricketers and footballers, have become key figures for endorsement. Shrestha and Sharma (2019) suggest that athletes with widespread recognition, like cricketers Paras Khadka and Shakti Gauchan, play a crucial role in raising brand awareness. Their visibility in advertising campaigns significantly boosts the recognition of the brands they endorse.

Athlete endorsements are particularly influential in Nepal, as sports celebrities often serve as role models, and their endorsement is a powerful tool for influencing consumer behavior. Khadka, Adhikari, and Shrestha (2020) argue that in the Nepali market, the endorsement effect of athletes is intensified by their status as icons, making their association with a brand an effective tool for spreading brand awareness. For Nepali consumers, the athlete's local fame and reliability to the cultural context are key in strengthening brand recognition.

Athlete endorsements have been shown to significantly impact brand recall in Nepal. Bhattarai, Shah, and Adhikari (2021) suggest that the visibility of athletes in television commercials and print media helps in creating a strong association between the athlete and the endorsed brand. Cricketers and footballers, whose faces are commonly featured in advertisements, often lead consumers to recall the brand during purchase decisions. Nepal's market is unique due to cultural differences, lower levels of disposable income, and a growing interest in sports. Athlete endorsements in Nepal typically revolve around cricket (especially the national cricket team) and football, where local stars hold significant sway.

Cricket is the most popular sport in Nepal, with athletes like Paras Khadka and Shakti Gauchan becoming key endorsers for brands. Research has shown that when popular cricketers endorse products, there is a significant increase in brand awareness, particularly among the youth demographic (Bhattarai, 2022). While cricket dominates, football is gaining popularity. Nepalese brands are increasingly looking towards football players for endorsement deals. A study by Subedi and Adhikari (2017) found that the endorsement of sports goods by football players has led to an increase in brand recognition among young consumers. Studies suggest that local athletes have a stronger emotional connection with the audience, which can lead to more effective brand recall (Shrestha, 2019). However, international athletes may carry a sense of prestige, especially for premium brands targeting a specific market segment (Adhikari, 2017).

In Nepal, consumers' perception of athlete endorsements is shaped by local cultural values. The influence of traditional media and the rise of social media

platforms like Facebook and Instagram have made athlete endorsements more pervasive. Consumers in Nepal often value athletes who demonstrate humility and community-oriented behavior. A study by Sharma (2020) indicates that traditional media (TV, newspapers) still plays a vital role in promoting athlete endorsements, though digital media is becoming increasingly influential, especially among younger generations. In Nepal, factors such as the athlete's personal background, success, and ability to connect with local values influence the success of endorsements. Products that are associated with national pride or identity (e.g., Nepalese sportswear brands) are more likely to succeed with local endorsements (Aryal, Local vs international athletes, 2016).

3. Theoretical Framework

This study draws upon contemporary extensions of the Source Credibility Model and Meaning Transfer Theory, which remain central to understanding the effectiveness of athlete endorsements in modern marketing. Recent studies emphasize that an athlete's trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness continue to shape consumers' perceptions of endorsed brands in the digital era (Ohanian, 1990). Moreover, the expansion of social media has amplified the role of athlete credibility and personal branding in enhancing consumer trust and engagement. The Match-Up Hypothesis has also evolved, suggesting that endorsements are most effective when there is strong consistency between an athlete's personal image and the brand's identity (McCracken, 2021). These frameworks collectively provide a foundation for examining how athlete characteristics influence brand awareness and consumer attitudes in emerging markets like Nepal.

In the Nepalese context, where the influence of sports personalities is rapidly growing, these theories are particularly relevant for understanding consumer-brand relationships. The Meaning Transfer Theory has been revisited in recent research to explain how athletes transfer symbolic meanings, such as hard work, national pride, and aspiration to the products they endorse (Yadav, 2018). When consumers internalize these meanings, the association enhances brand recognition and loyalty. Applying these modern theoretical perspectives, this study seeks to explore how Nepalese athletes' credibility, attractiveness, and alignment with brands contribute to increasing brand awareness and shaping consumer behavior in Nepal's evolving marketing environment.

One relevant theory for this study is the Source Credibility Theory, which posits that the effectiveness of an endorser depends on their trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness. According to this theory, consumers are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward a brand if they perceive the endorser as credible. It explains how athlete characteristics can influence brand perception and consumer behavior. The theory is widely applied in marketing research to evaluate celebrity and athlete endorsements. In the context of Nepalese consumers, source credibility helps understand why popular and trustworthy athletes can enhance brand awareness (Aryal, Local vs international athletes, 2016).

4. Methodology

This study employs a descriptive research design to examine the impact of athlete endorsements on brand awareness in the Nepalese market. The population comprises consumers in major urban areas such as Kathmandu, Pokhara, and Biratnagar, while a sample of 250 respondents will be selected using convenience sampling. The data will include both primary and secondary sources. Primary data will be gathered through a structured questionnaire adapted from previous studies on endorsement credibility and brand perception (Yoon, 2022). Secondary data will be obtained from journals, marketing reports, and online publications. The data collection procedure will involve both online and in-person surveys to ensure diverse participation. Collected data is analyzed using SPSS, employing descriptive statistics, correlation, and multiple regression analysis to determine the relationship between athlete endorsement attributes and brand awareness (Taylor, 2023).

5. Data Analysis

The reliability analysis shows that the overall questionnaire (24 items) has excellent internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha of 0.929. Among the variables, athlete credibility (0.802), athlete brand fit (0.830), athlete popularity (0.815), and frequency of endorsement (0.855) all demonstrate good reliability. These results indicate that the measurement items are consistent and suitable for further analysis of athlete endorsements' impact on brand awareness in the Nepalese market.

a. Model specification

This research examines brand awareness after purchases affect various independent factors like athlete credibility, athlete brand fit, athlete popularity and frequency of endorsement. In this study, brand awareness is the dependent variable. The regression model is utilized to examine the relationship between independent and dependent variables. This study's regression model is:

$$BA = \beta_0 + \beta_1 AC + \beta_2 ABF + \beta_3 AP + \beta_4 FE + \epsilon$$

i. **Dependent Variable:**

- BA= Brand awareness

ii. **Independent Variables**

- AC= Athlete Creditability
- ABF= Athlete brand fit
- AP= Athlete popularity
- FE= Frequency of endorsement
- ϵ = Error

6. Results and Discussion

The data and information collected from the respondents are presented, interpreted and analyzed. The questionnaire was presented in a purposive manner to obtain the data. The data was entered into SPSS for further analysis. Frequency table, cross tabulation, correlation and reliability analysis are presented and interpreted.

6.1. Descriptive Analysis

The correlation analysis presented in Table 1 shows the relationship between brand awareness (BA) and four independent variables: athlete credibility (AC), athlete brand fit (ABF), athlete popularity (AP), and frequency of endorsement (FE). The results reveal that all variables are positively and significantly correlated with

brand awareness at the 0.01 level, indicating strong associations. Among them, frequency of endorsement (FE) has the highest correlation with brand awareness ($r = 0.792$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that frequent exposure to athlete endorsements substantially enhances consumers' awareness of a brand. This is followed by athlete popularity (AP) ($r = 0.737$, $p < 0.001$) and athlete brand fit (ABF) ($r = 0.620$, $p < 0.001$), showing that the perceived popularity and congruence between athlete and brand also play important roles. Athlete credibility (AC), while positively correlated ($r = 0.574$, $p < 0.001$), exhibits the weakest relationship, implying that while trustworthiness matters, repeated and well-matched endorsements are more influential in driving brand awareness

The table presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents based on gender, age, education, and occupation. The results show that most of the respondents are male (53.6%), while females make up 46.4% of the sample, indicating a fairly balanced gender distribution. In terms of age, most respondents fall within the 26–35 age group (42.1%), followed by those aged 18–25 (34.5%), suggesting that the survey was dominated by young adults. Smaller proportions of respondents are aged 36–45 (14.2%), 46–55 (6.5%), and 55 and above (2.7%).

Variables	Category	Percent
Gender of respondents	Male	53.6
	Female	46.4
Age of respondents	18-25	34.5
	26-35	42.1
	36-45	14.2
	46-55	6.5
	55 above	2.7
Education level of respondents	High school level	11.5
	Bachelor	51.3
	Master's Degree	37.2
Occupation of respondents	Employed	45.2
	Self-employed	26.8
	Unemployed	28.0

Table 1: Descriptive analysis of the variables

Regarding educational attainment, more than half of the respondents (51.3%) hold a bachelor's degree, 37.2% have a master's degree, and only 11.5% completed high school, showing that most participants are highly educated. In terms of occupation, 45.2% of the respondents are employed, 26.8% are self-employed, and 28.0% are unemployed. Overall, the data suggests that most respondents are young, well-educated, and actively engaged in the workforce, with a relatively balanced gender distribution.

Variables	Determinants	Percent
Athletes endorsing brands because of their expertise in their sport	Strongly Disagree	5
	Disagree	6.9
	Neutral	23.7
	Agree	48.5
	Strongly Agree	16
Athletes genuinely use or support the product they are endorsing	Strongly Disagree	6.5
	Disagree	14.1
	Neutral	26.3
	Agree	43.1
	Strongly Agree	9.9
The athlete's endorsement of brands makes me believe the brand is reliable and trustworthy.	Strongly Disagree	3.4
	Disagree	14.1
	Neutral	20.6
	Agree	48.1
	Strongly Agree	13.7

I feel confident in the brand's quality because of the athlete's endorsement.	Strongly Disagree	4.6
	Disagree	14.5
	Neutral	21.8
	Agree	47.7
	Strongly Agree	11.5
The athlete's images usually align well with the brand they are endorsing	Strongly Disagree	5
	Disagree	8.8
	Neutral	19.5
	Agree	50.8
	Strongly Agree	16
The athlete's values are in line with the values of the brand they represent.	Strongly Disagree	3.4
	Disagree	11.9
	Neutral	18.4
	Agree	50.2
	Strongly Agree	16.1
The athletes are usually a good representative of the brand they endorse.	Strongly Disagree	3.1
	Disagree	8.4
	Neutral	15.3
	Agree	53.1
	Strongly Agree	20.2
The athlete's personality makes the brand more attractive to me.	Strongly Disagree	3.8
	Disagree	7.6
	Neutral	15.3
	Agree	55.7
	Strongly Agree	17.6

I am usually familiar with the athlete endorsing their brand	Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree	3.4 5.7 18.7 54.6 17.6
I frequently see or hear about athletes in the media.	Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree	3.1 8.4 13.4 55.3 19.8
The athlete's popularity influences my opinion about the brand they are endorsing.	Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree	3.8 8.8 17.6 51.9 17.9
I am more likely to purchase a product if the athlete endorsing it is popular.	Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree	5 9.5 16.4 50.4 18.7
I frequently see advertisements featuring athletes endorsing various brand.	Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree	1.9 6.9 15.6 56.5 19.1

The more I see the athlete endorsing the brand, the more familiar I become with the brands.	Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree	3.1 6.9 14.5 56.5 19.1
The regularity of the athlete's endorsement makes the brands stand out more to me.	Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree	2.3 6.5 19.5 53.1 18.7
I feel that the brands are more prominent because the athletes endorse it frequently	Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree	2.7 7.3 22.1 52.3 15.6
I am usually aware of the brand that the athlete endorses	Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree	2.7 9.5 14.9 56.9 16
I can easily recall the name of the brand when I think about the athlete endorsing it	Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree	1.9 8.8 15.3 57.6 16.4

The athlete's endorsement has made me more aware of the various brand.	Strongly Disagree	2.7
	Disagree	6.5
	Neutral	13.7
	Agree	60.7
	Strongly Agree	16.4
After seeing the athlete's endorsement, I immediately remember the brand they represent	Strongly Disagree	2.7
	Disagree	8
	Neutral	16.4
	Agree	55
	Strongly Agree	17.9

The results of the study reveal a consistently positive perception toward athlete endorsements across all indicators. For expertise and authenticity, 48.5% agreed and 16% strongly agreed that athletes endorse brands because of their expertise, while only 5% strongly disagreed and 6.9% disagreed; similarly, 43.1% agreed, and 9.9% strongly agreed that athletes genuinely use the products they endorse, with only 6.5% strongly disagreeing. Trust toward brands was also reinforced by athlete endorsements, as 48.1% agreed and 13.7% strongly agreed that endorsements make brands seem reliable, while 47.7% agreed and 11.5% strongly agreed that endorsements increase confidence in brand quality. In terms of image alignment, 50.8% agreed and 16% strongly agreed that athletes' images match the brands they represent, while 50.2% agreed and 16.1% strongly agreed that athletes' values align with brand values. Likewise, 53.1% agreed and 20.2% strongly agreed that athletes are good representatives of the brands they endorse.

The attractiveness of brands through athlete personalities was also notable, with 55.7% agreeing and 17.6% strongly agreeing. Familiarity with athletes was high, as 54.6% agreed and 17.6% strongly agreed that they were aware of endorsing athletes, and 55.3% agreed with 19.8% strongly agreeing that they frequently encountered athletes in the media. Athlete popularity also influenced consumer perception: 51.9% agreed, and 17.9% strongly agreed that popularity affected their

view of the brand, while 50.4% agreed and 18.7% strongly agreed that they were more likely to purchase a product endorsed by a popular athlete. Exposure frequency further strengthened brand visibility; 56.5% agreed, and 19.1% strongly agreed that they frequently saw athlete advertisements, 56.5% agreed, and 19.1% strongly agreed that repeated exposure increased brand familiarity, and 53.1% agreed with 18.7% strongly agreeing that regular endorsement made brands stand out more.

Brand awareness and recall were also strongly influenced, as 56.9% agreed and 16% strongly agreed that they were aware of athlete-endorsed brands, 57.6% agreed, and 16.4% strongly agreed that they could easily recall the brand, and 60.7% agreed, and 16.4% strongly agreed that athlete endorsements increased their overall awareness of various brands. Finally, 55% agreed, and 17.9% strongly agreed, that they immediately remember the brand after seeing an athlete endorsement. Overall, these results clearly show that athlete endorsements significantly enhance consumer trust, familiarity, attractiveness, brand prominence, and recall, with consistently high agreement levels across all variables.

The regression analysis examined the influence of Athlete Credibility (AC), Athlete-Brand Fit (ABF), Athlete Popularity (AP), and Frequency of Endorsement (FE) on the dependent variable. The constant value ($B = 0.401$, $p = .008$) indicates a significant baseline level of the dependent variable even without the predictors. Athlete Credibility ($B = .069$, $t = 1.497$, $p = .136$) was not a significant predictor, as its significance value exceeded the .05 threshold, suggesting that credibility alone does not strongly contribute to predicting the outcome. Athlete-Brand Fit ($B = .049$, $t = .945$, $p = .346$) also showed no significant effect, with a high p-value indicating that alignment between athlete and brand is not independently influential in the model. In contrast, Athlete Popularity ($B = .261$, $t = 4.320$, $p < .001$) significantly predicted the dependent variable, meaning that higher athlete popularity leads to a meaningful increase in consumer response. Frequency of Endorsement ($B = .523$, $t = 9.103$, $p < .001$) emerged as the strongest predictor, indicating that repeated exposure to athlete endorsements has the largest positive impact on the dependent variable.

Regression

Multicollinearity diagnostics show acceptable VIF values: AC (1.889), ABF (2.373), AP (3.040), and FE (2.545), all below the standard threshold of 10, indicating no multicollinearity concerns. The model presents a statistically significant overall fit, with an F-value of 135.161 and a significance level of $< .001$, confirming that the set of predictors collectively explains a significant portion of the variance. The R^2 value of 0.674 indicates that 67.4% of the variation in the dependent variable is explained by the model, demonstrating strong explanatory power. The Durbin–Watson value of 1.973 is close to 2, suggesting no presence of autocorrelation in the residuals. Overall, the model shows that Athlete Popularity and Frequency of Endorsement significantly influence consumer responses, while Athlete Credibility and Athlete-Brand Fit do not have a significant independent effect.

Variable	B	T	Sig	Collinearity Statistics VIF	F	Sig	R ²	DW
(Constant)	.401	2.662	.008					
AC	.069	1.497	.136	1.889				
ABF	.049	.945	.346	2.373	135.161	$< .001^b$	0.674	1.973
AP	.261	4.320	$< .001$	3.040				
FE	.523	9.103	$< .001$	2.545				

Correlation

The correlation table shows strong, positive, and statistically significant relationships among all five variables: BA, AC, ABF, AP, and FE. Each Pearson correlation coefficient is positive, indicating that as one variable increases, the others tend to increase as well. BA has particularly strong correlations with AP ($r = .737$, $p < .001$) and FE ($r = .792$, $p < .001$), suggesting close relationships among these constructs. AC is also positively related to all other variables, with correlations ranging from moderate to strong ($r = .574$ to $.629$, all $p < .001$).

ABF shows strong associations with AP ($r = .714$, $p < .001$) and FE ($r = .645$, $p < .001$). Additionally, AP and FE have a very strong correlation ($r = .759$, $p < .001$). Since all significance values are below $.001$ and the sample size is consistent at

N = 261, these results indicate robust and highly reliable relationships. Overall, the table demonstrates that the variables are strongly interconnected, with no negative or weak correlations present

Correlations						
		BA	AC	ABF	AP	FE
BA	Pearson Correlation	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)					
	N	261				
AC	Pearson Correlation	.574**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001				
	N	261	261			
ABF	Pearson Correlation	.620**	.629**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001			
	N	261	261	261		
AP	Pearson Correlation	.737**	.619**	.714**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001		
	N	261	261	261	261	
FE	Pearson Correlation	.792**	.590**	.645**	.759**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	
	N	261	261	261	261	261
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).						

Hypothesis Testing

The hypothesis testing results show mixed findings regarding the relationships between the variables and brand awareness in Nepal. For H1, the obtained p-value (.136) is greater than the 0.05 threshold, indicating that the relationship between athlete credibility and brand awareness is not statistically significant; therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, meaning the expected relationship is not supported. Similarly, H2 shows a p-value of .346, also exceeding 0.05, meaning athlete brand fit does not significantly influence brand awareness, and the null hypothesis is again rejected. In contrast, H3 yields a p-value of <.001, which is below the 0.05 level, demonstrating a significant relationship between athlete popularity and brand awareness; thus, the hypothesis is accepted. Likewise, H4 reports a significant p-value (<.001), confirming that the frequency of athlete endorsements has a significant impact on brand awareness, leading to the acceptance of this hypothesis. Overall, the results indicate that while athlete credibility and brand

fit do not show significant effects, athlete popularity and endorsement frequency play a meaningful role in shaping brand awareness in Nepal.

Code	Hypothesis	Obtained p- Value	Threshold p- Value	Result
H1	H1: There is no significant relationship between athlete credibility and brand awareness in Nepal	.136	P-Value >0.05	Rejected
H2	H2: There is no significant relationship between athlete brand fit and brand awareness in Nepal	.346	P-Value >0.05	Rejected
H3	H3: There is a significant relationship between athlete popularity and brand awareness in Nepal	<.001	P-Value <0.05	Accepted
H4	H4: There is a significant relationship between the frequency of athlete endorsement and brand awareness in Nepal	<.001	P-Value <0.05	Accepted

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that athlete endorsements play a significant role in enhancing brand awareness within the Nepalese market. While athlete credibility and brand fit show positive associations with brand awareness, they do not independently predict consumer responses. Instead, athlete popularity and the frequency of endorsements emerge as the strongest determinants, indicating that Nepalese consumers are most influenced by well-known athletes and repeated exposure to endorsements. With 67.4% of the variance in brand awareness explained by the model, the findings highlight the strategic value of leveraging popular athletes and maintaining consistent endorsement campaigns. As Nepal's sports culture continues to grow, brands can achieve greater visibility and consumer recall by prioritizing athlete popularity and frequent promotional engagement in their marketing efforts.

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