

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/372868626>

The New Wave of Influencers: Examining College Athlete Identities and the Role of Homophily and Parasocial Relationships in Leveraging Name, Image, and Likeness

Article in *Journal of Sport Management* · September 2023

DOI: 10.1123/jism.2022-0192

CITATIONS

3

READS

784

4 authors, including:



Yiran Su

University of Massachusetts Amherst

23 PUBLICATIONS 505 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

The New Wave of Influencers: Examining College Athlete Identities and the Role of Homophily and Parasocial Relationships in Leveraging Name, Image, and Likeness

Yiran Su,¹ Xuan Guo,² Christine Wegner,³ and Thomas Baker²

¹University of Massachusetts Amherst, Amherst, MA, USA; ²University of Georgia, Athens, GA, USA; ³University of Florida, Gainesville, FL, USA

This article brings together scholarship on communication theory, influencer marketing, and personal branding to examine a new type of social media influencer—the college athlete influencer. Previous research in the field of sports has not specifically explored the distinct characteristics of college athletes that contribute to their effectiveness as marketing influencers. By adopting a sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of the source of college athletes' influence via social media. Quantitative results indicate that projecting an athletic identity on social media enhances the influencer's credibility and increases the likelihood of consumers purchasing the products they endorse. Furthermore, qualitative findings indicated that the shared school identity acts as the ultimate impetus for the bond between the influencer and the consumer, which subsequently impacts the consumer's purchasing decisions. This study provides actionable implications for schools, colleges, and brands seeking to build compelling sponsorships in the name, image, and likeness era.

Keywords: NIL, influencer marketing, credibility, athlete branding, sport marketing

For the first time in >100 years, college athletes are now permitted to profit from the commercial use of their name, image, and likeness (NIL). A combination of state NIL laws and the Supreme Court's decision in *National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA) v. Alston* (2021) has influenced the NCAA to allow college athletes to generate income through the license of their NIL rights (Holden et al., 2022). In particular, the NCAA lost in *Alston* (2021) the presumption of validity for its amateurism rules that insulated NIL-focused regulation from antitrust scrutiny. As a result of that decision and several new state NIL laws, the NCAA changed its policy, and college athletes are now permitted to enter endorsement deals with product brands and other commercial entities. As social media becomes an influential tool for self-promotion, college athletes are becoming social media influencers and monetizing their personal brands. Within the extant literature, researchers have identified commercial value inherent to the identities of college athletes by analyzing the engagement of athletes' social media posts (Baker et al., 2014; Cocco & Moorman, 2022; Kunkel et al., 2021). However, the actual catalyst for the target market to make a purchase decision is seldom discussed when college athletes act as social media influencers for brands.

When positioning themselves as influencers on social media, college athletes may benefit from the multiple roles they hold (i.e., student, athlete, and social media influencer). In theory, each of these roles possesses the potential to serve as an identity the athlete may leverage in influencing consumers on social media (Smith & Sanderson, 2015). In looking at each one of these roles, the first examination involves the college athlete's student identity. College athletes assume academic responsibilities like any other college student, and their social media presence reflects that the


athletes socialize, study, and stress over exams the same as any other student (Browning & Sanderson, 2012).

Second, college athletes possess athletic identities that include their athletic or sport expertise. For example, social media activity from college athletes regularly includes sport-related content such as the athlete's daily training regime and recent performances in NCAA-sponsored sport events. Third, some college athletes may qualify as microinfluencers, which are defined as influencers with 5,000–50,000 followers (Janssen et al., 2022), because they attract a relevant number of followers due to their athletic performance and their projected persona on social media.

The college athlete's involvement on social media is what serves as a basis for them functioning as influencers (Browning & Sanderson, 2012). In addressing the sponsoring brand's desire for a return on investment, marketers need to better understand the multiple identities (i.e., athlete, student, and social media influencer) belonging to college athletes to discern which is the most influential when it comes to driving consumer purchase intention. In the current study, we define projected influencer identity as enacting admirable lifestyles in social media content to elicit a following or purchase intention from a target market. Existing research on athletes and social media has predominantly highlighted athlete identity as the more salient component of one's brand persona (Doyle et al., 2022; Smith & Whiteside, 2021). Few discussions have been devoted to the effectiveness of multiple identity projection in the relatively new marketing channel of influencer marketing. Further, practitioners have suggested that the return on college athlete endorsements mostly depends on school location and the type and size of the athlete's social media presence (Rosenblatt, 2021); there is an expectation that these athletes will represent themselves and the university at large in a "responsible" way. Therefore, a comprehensive examination of college athletes' identity-based social media presence is beneficial.

Accordingly, we examine the relationship among college athletes' identities based on established factors in influencer

Wegner  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6189-1754>

Su (yiransu@isenberg.umass.edu) is corresponding author,  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9650-2798>

marketing, such as parasocial relationship (PSR), credibility, and homophily. Our research focuses on college athlete endorsers because prior NCAA policy prohibited college athletes from making commercial use of their NIL. College athletes are directly connected influencers for college student consumers based on their shared connection as students at the same school. Therefore, we anticipate that the relationship between students and college athletes will be helpful to marketers seeking to break into the college sports space and advance theories of influencer marketing. Using a mixed-methods approach, this study examines college athletes' marketability as seen from a consumer behavior perspective.

Conceptual Background and Hypothesis Development

College Athlete Influencer Marketing and Model of Communication

The implementation of NIL use for college athletes allows brands to choose from a larger pool of potential ambassadors to reach audiences such as college students, alumni, and fans (Cocco & Moorman, 2022). College athletes are seen as aspirational in their ability to balance schoolwork and athletic training (Krane et al., 2011). Furthermore, the connection between college athletes and their schools is another powerful touchpoint for consumers who share a similar school identity with the athlete (cf. Boyle & Magnusson, 2007). Given that college athlete influencer marketing is a new phenomenon, brands seeking to reach these emerging markets will need to develop effective marketing strategies. The communication model provides a tool for gauging effectiveness, suggesting three important elements of marketing communications: (a) message sender, (b) message content, and (c) message receiver (Leung et al., 2022). Figure 1 illustrates the communication model based on Shannon and Weaver (1948) and further developed by Narula (2006). This model highlights the information transformation process as a result of the coding process by the sender and the decoding process by the receiver, and as a consequence of the noise that is interposed between the two processes (Hall, 1979).

Influencer marketing is unique from conventional marketing that relies on celebrities or models because its effectiveness is largely based on not only how the product is presented but also on consistently projected identities on the influencer's social media profiles that lay the foundation for consumers to follow. It hinges on the connection between the influencer (i.e., the sender) and the audience (Saima & Khan, 2020). To fully realize the marketability

of college athletes, practitioners must better understand what makes college athletes unique as influencers and how consumers respond to them. Specifically, there is a need to better understand the source of college athlete influence, as well as what motivates their fans to consume what the athlete endorses. In what follows, we provide a comprehensive framework that examines the drivers of college athlete influencer marketing by considering influencer marketing principles and the characteristics that make college athletes distinct.

In our conceptual model (Figure 2), the first block mirrors the unique aspects of a college athlete's personal brand. The second and third blocks of the model have established elements of influencer marketing that are relevant to the current research context. The next block develops hypotheses for all direct and indirect relationships in the model. We contend that the projected identities as athletes, students, and influencers constitute college athletes' personal brand persona on social media. We posit that the presentation of multiple identities, and their corresponding brand associations constitute the source of a college athlete's influence, which in turn impacts consumer perceptions of the influencer, their relationship with the influencer, and ultimately, drives consumer purchasing behavior:

Research Question 1: How does a college athlete's projected identity on social media influence college students' perceptions of the athlete in an influencer marketing context?

Research Question 2: What are the factors that influence college students' purchase intentions toward products endorsed by college athletes?

Gender Differences

Sport marketing researchers have found that female and male consumers behave differently when it comes to sport spectatorship motivations (Wann et al., 1999), associations with sport brands (Koch & Wann, 2016), and word-of-mouth intentions (Asada & Ko, 2019). Scholars in digital marketing have found that female consumers and male consumers respond differently to digital marketing campaigns and social media influencer activity, and that the response is impacted by the influencer's gender (Hudders & De Jans, 2022). For example, in the context of fitness influencers, Su et al. (2021) showed that women are less likely than men to purchase products endorsed by a male influencer who conspicuously displays a masculine physique. When studying athlete branding, scholars have examined gendered self-presentation of athletes on social media (e.g., Geurin-Eagleman & Burch, 2016). However, less understanding exists as to how male and female consumers

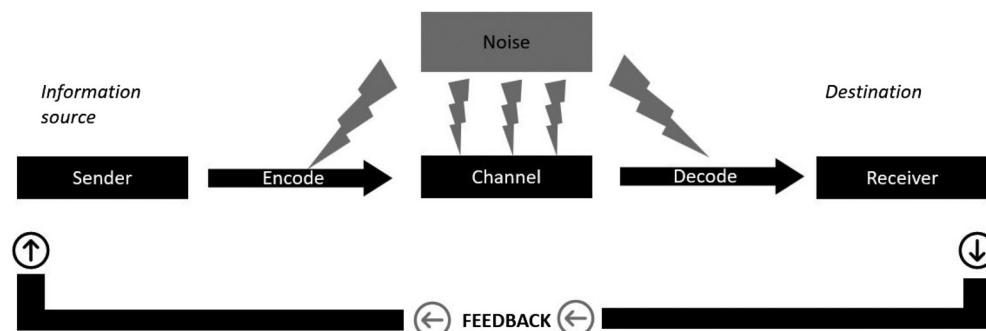


Figure 1 — Model of communication. Adapted from Hall, 1979; Narula, 2006; and Shannon & Weaver, 1948.

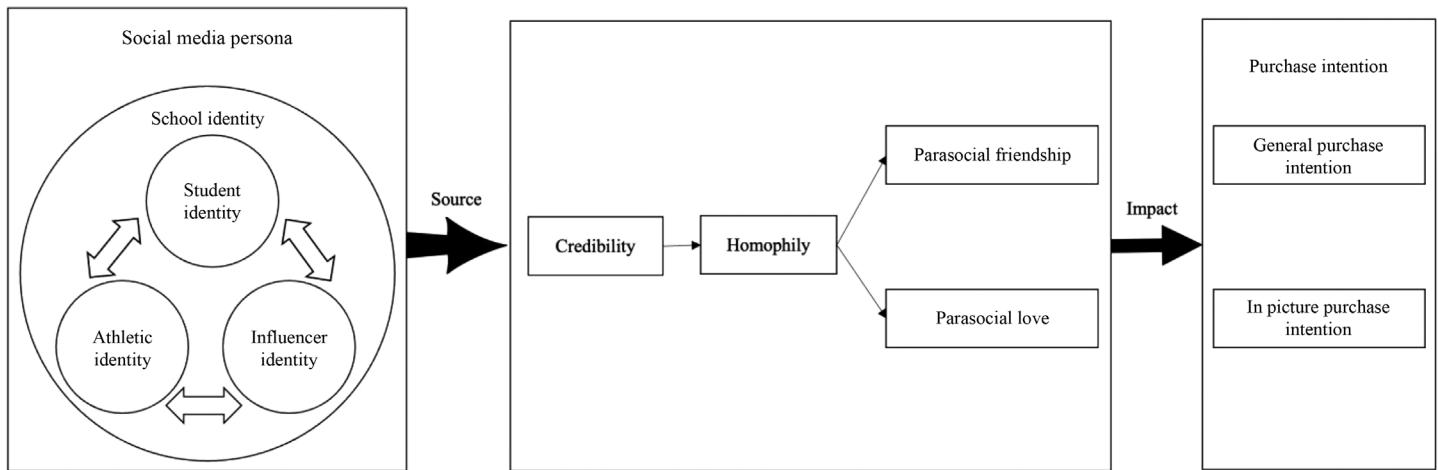


Figure 2 — Conceptual model.

respond to college athletes' projected identities and whether these responses differ by influencer gender. Attention to gender differences is vital to identifying variations in college athlete influencer marketing and providing a more tailored approach to help college athletes leverage their brands more effectively. Consequently, we seek to provide a deeper understanding of the college athlete influencer by exploring gender differences in consumers' perception of the college athletes and purchase intention:

Research Questions 3: How do male and female consumers react to the projected identities of female and male college athletes?

Projected Identity and Perceived Identity of College Student Influencer

A curated personal brand persona represents a key aspect of influencer marketing, where companies select, collaborate with, and reward social media influencers to leverage their unique resources for boosts in product sales (Leung et al., 2022; Su et al., 2021). From a message sender perspective, social media enables athletes to express their multifaceted identities and emphasize the specific role identity they play that would have remained obscured via traditional media. In this regard, the identities projected on social media represent the use of symbolic meanings that include a set of unique brand associations related to that identity (Johns & English, 2016). Professional athletes, for example, often post about their off-field lives, building closeness with their fans by highlighting their role identity as parents or children (Arai et al., 2014; Doyle et al., 2022). Meanwhile, college athletes conspicuously display their identities as students and athletes on social media through posts about studying hard for exams or training diligently for competitions. Their projected student and athletic identities are integral to their brand image for appealing to their fans who deem them role models (Park et al., 2020). Under the new NIL policy, college athletes who actively seek sponsorship opportunities or have worked with the endorsed brands will also assume a new influencer identity as they strategically position themselves as influencers (Nuss, 2022).

Based on the model of communication, projected identities are one part of the whole communication spectrum (Kim & Lehto, 2013). The way that the target audience perceives the various

identities online determines how well the marketing message is received (Terras et al., 2015). Thus, the online presence of college athletes determines the way in which their social media audience connects with these newly minted influencers and impacts their intention to purchase products they endorse (Janssen et al., 2022). Scholars have spotted the gap between the projected brand image and perceived brand image in the online setting (Kim & Lehto, 2013). In sum, the meaning of a projected identity, or how a receiver interprets the projected identities of a college athlete in a marketing communication system, depends on more than just the interactions between the influencer and the audience and extends to include the greater academic community in which both the audience and athlete are situated. In the following sections, we will discuss factors that influence college athletes' influencer marketing communication system.

Purchase Intention in Influencer Marketing

Purchase intention refers to consumers' intent to plan for the purchase of branded products (Spears & Singh, 2004). Both practitioners and scholars consider two key methods in the selection of influencers (Jin & Muqaddam, 2019; Su et al., 2021). The first method involves the selection of influencers based on their popularity and credibility. The product endorsed by the influencers benefits from the athlete brand's strong, positive brand associations. In this case, the athlete's position places them as a macro-influencer. In the second method, influencer-created content and influencer-sponsored advertising are used to promote a specific product. For this approach, an influencer would likely need to be featured with the product in the same post (Jin & Muqaddam, 2019). The strengthened connection between the influencer and the product in a branded post will boost customers' attitudes and purchase intention toward the product (Su et al., 2021).

Given the positive impact of athlete identity on social media followers' attitudes (Doyle et al., 2022), we posit that athletic identity, as compared to projected student identity and influencer identity, may significantly enhance consumer purchase intention and perceived credibility of the athlete. We base this on the knowledge that athlete identity is the most salient identity an audience develops when contemplating a college athlete as an influencer. If what the athlete projects through their post is in line

with their athletic expertise, then consumers will assign enhanced levels of credibility to their marketing message, which makes that message more compelling for the purpose of influencing purchase intention (Saima & Khan, 2020).

Source Credibility

Source credibility is an important antecedent of the persuasiveness of a message (Hovland & Weiss, 1951). The credibility of social media influencers refers to how consumers perceive them as a reliable expert for a particular product or service (Reinikainen et al., 2020). The more credible the source, the greater the persuasiveness of the marketing message will have on the target consumers, leading to a greater level of purchase intention (Saima & Khan, 2020). Influencer marketing researchers adopt a three-dimensional (trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness) measure of credibility (Ohanian, 1990) reflecting the evolution of a media environment that places more emphasis on visual effects in communicating information about a brand. Communication theory suggests that the source attributes will also affect the relationship between the message sender and receiver. The audience is more likely to align with people whom they believe as credible and trustworthy (Yuan & Lou, 2020). This is especially true in the context of college athlete influencer marketing because the target market is likely to have a similar background (i.e., current or previous student; Nuss, 2022). As a result, the credibility of college athletes will play a major role in deciding whom consumers choose as “my athlete” to follow and support (Cunningham & Bright, 2012).

Hypothesis 1a (H1a): Projected athlete identities on social media will elicit greater levels of purchase intention for the product endorsed by the influencers (college athletes) than student and influencer identities.

H1b: Projected athlete identities on social media will elicit greater levels of perceived credibility than student and influencer identities.

H2: Perceived credibility of college athletes will have a positive impact on the purchase intentions of the products endorsed by the influencers (college athletes).

Perceived Homophily and PSR

We propose two additional factors that impact college athlete marketing, homophily, and the PSR. Both constructs are found to positively impact followers' purchase intention in influencer marketing (Yuan & Lou, 2020). Homophily refers to the degree of similarity among people's beliefs, education, and social status (Eyal & Rubin, 2003). The more similar two people are, the more efficient the communication will be between them (Frederick et al., 2012). In influencer marketing, homophily is shown to impact purchase intention through the parasocial relations between the influencer and the audience (Farivar et al., 2021). The perceived similarity of the audience to the influencer affects how they construct an imagined relationship with the influencer, affecting whether they purchase the product recommended.

As a distinct and significant construct in digital marketing, PSR involves audiences' imaginary relations with celebrities, influencers, or popular culture characters (Horton & Richard Wohl, 1956). Tukachinsky (2010) proposed a theorization of dividing PSR into parasocial love (PSL) and parasocial friendship (PSF). While both refer to the level of affection between the audience and the media personae, PSL refers to the subject's psychological attachment to the media figure. Whereas PSF is the

term that represents individuals who perceive the celebrity as their friend with whom they share communication and support. Research on peer endorsement emphasizes the importance of relational factors such as perceived closeness between peers and audiences in driving audiences to purchase from a peer endorser over an elite endorser (Munnukka et al., 2016). In this research, we propose that homophily and PSR are important relational mediators that impact the perception of college athletes that consumers have (i.e., credibility) on their purchase intention. We assert that these relational factors are not directly impacted by a specific identity projected on social media (Narula, 2006). Instead, we assert that both are influenced by the holistic profile or brand persona of the influencer (Yuan & Lou, 2020). Since relational variables are positively related to purchase intention, the closer the consumer feels to an influencer, the more likely they are to purchase the endorsed products.

H3: Homophily and PSRs between influencers (college athletes) and their audiences will mediate the relationship between perceptions of influencer credibility and audience purchase intentions for influencer-endorsed products.

We present in the following sections detailed descriptions of the methods and findings of two studies.

Study 1: Quantitative Stage

In Study 1, we first investigated the impacts of three college athletes' projected identities (student vs. athletic vs. influencer) on consumers' perception of the college athletes (i.e., credibility, homophily, and PSR) and purchase intention using an experimental design. We further explored the relationship between credibility, homophily, PSR, and purchase intention using structural equation model.

Stimuli

The stimulus consisted of a profile photo for male and female college athletes, modified Instagram posts that included picture and text content related to each identity, and the pictures contained endorsement products aligned with three identities. We conducted a pretest among college students from a Division I university in the southeastern part of the United States, with a highly successful college athletics program housed within a Power 5 conference.

Selection of the Athletes

In the stimuli, one male athlete and one female athlete were used. In a pretest, 60 sport management students submitted their most familiar male and female athletes at the university. When we selected the most mentioned male and female college athlete influencers, we checked their social media accounts to ensure they have a presence. The male athlete is a football player, and the female athlete is a tennis player. Each has achieved considerable athletic success and been nominated or won national awards for player of the year. The social media following of the male athlete (5,000–10,000) is higher than that of the female athlete (1,000–10,000). The number reflects the disparity in the number of followers on social media between male and female athletes at the university. Given that the participants were students from the school, this stimulus will add context to understanding how college students respond to college athletes from their own school. Actual photos were modified from the chosen athletes' Instagram accounts to relate to each of the three identities. For the student identity

posts, the college athletes both wore academic regalia. For athletic identity posts, participants were provided with images of college athletes participating in games for their respective sports. Finally, participants were shown social media posts and images that reflect the athletes' status as influencer.

Selection of the Product

For student identity, we used the graduate medal as the product. The statement is "If XXX (the name of the athlete) endorsed the graduate medal as shown below, please indicate your level of agreement, from extremely likely to not at all likely with each statement." The items were "The likelihood that I would purchase this product he/she endorsed is," "My willingness to purchase this product he/she endorsed is," and "The likelihood that I would recommend this product he/she endorsed to others is." For athlete identity, we used a sport towel featured in social media posts. The statements were "If XXX endorsed the towel as shown in his post, please indicate your level of agreement, from strongly disagree to strongly agree, with each statement." For influencer identity, we used sunglasses for the athlete, which were featured in social media posts. The statements were "If XXX endorsed the sunglasses shown in his post, please indicate your level of agreement, from strongly disagree to strongly agree, with each statement."

We also pretested the fit between each product and the projected identity, and the mean score is all above 5.5 on a scale of 1–7. No significant differences were observed across the three pairs of identity–product. In the survey, we asked participants three questions (items) about general purchase intentions and the in-picture purchase intention for each identity. We asked participants "If XXX signed a NIL endorsement deal, please indicate your level of agreement, from extremely likely to not at all likely with each statement." And the items were "The likelihood that I would purchase the products he endorsed is," "My willingness to purchase the products he/she endorsed is," and "The likelihood that I would recommend the products he endorsed to others is" (Su et al., 2021). For the in-picture purchase intention, we provided the products shown in the posts according to each identity.

Procedure and Participants

Our experimental design combined elements of a within-group and a between-subject design (Charness et al., 2012). An online survey was used to collect data from students of a Division I university (18 years old and above). College students, a young generation of consumers, are the primary target of influencer marketing (Eastman et al., 2020). The undergraduate and graduate student service office sent out an email to their listserv. Therefore, the participants comprised a mixed of all the students from a large—approximately 32,000 students—public, research university that is located in the Southeast part of the United States. A total of 399 subjects completed the questionnaire, and 357 subjects (89.5%) were useable. There were 179 male participants (50.1%) and 178 female participants (49.9%) with an average age of 21 years (see Appendix A for demographic information).

The participants answered the same set of questions about male and female athletes, whose order of appearance was randomized. A profile photo of the athlete was first presented to participants, who were asked if they could recognize the participants. If they were not recognized, participants were provided biographical information on the athlete. Participants were then randomly

assigned to one of three conditions (student identity vs. athletic identity vs. influencer identity) and asked to answer questions regarding their general purchase intention, in-picture purchase intention, and other constructs. Finally, participants answered personal demographic questions about gender, race, and income.

Measures

Latent construct measures were obtained from prior research in consumer behavior and influencer marketing, ensuring their content validity. All the scales also achieved appropriate Cronbach's α levels. We measured the constructs using a 7-point Likert scale verified by previous studies. To adapt survey items to the college athlete context, we made small modifications. At implementation, three items were used to measure the general purchase intention of any product endorsed by the athlete and three items asked about participants' purchase intention for the product featured in the picture (Su et al., 2021).

To measure PSRs, we employed 19 items to assess sub-constructs of PSF and PSL. All the items for the four dimensions were adopted from scales used by Tukachinsky (2010). Credibility was measured by six items (Ohanian, 1990); four items were used to measure homophily (Kim & Kim, 2021). Based on this process, the scale achieved high levels of reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .98$; Cronbach, 1970). Scale items exhibited good reliability, exceeding the .80 threshold for acceptable internal consistency reliability (see Appendix B for detailed information about measurements).

To confirm the dimensional structure of the scales, we used confirmatory factor analysis with robust maximum likelihood. The factor loadings of the confirmatory model were statistically significant (at 0.01) and >0.5 . The confirmatory factor analysis results revealed PSRs were gauged by measuring two distinctive subfactors: PSF ($\alpha_{\text{male}} = .893$, $\alpha_{\text{female}} = .913$) and PSL ($\alpha_{\text{male}} = .952$, $\alpha_{\text{female}} = .947$) after deleting four items to increase the scale's reliability. We also obtained acceptable levels of convergence, R^2 values, and model fit for both the male athlete ($\chi^2 = 1,644.198$, $df = 545$, $p < .000$; comparative-fit index [CFI] = .882; root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA] = .075; standardized root mean square residual [SRMR] = .071) and female athlete ($\chi^2 = 1,645.850$, $df = 545$, $p < .000$; CFI = .898; RMSEA = .075; SRMR = .060). The RMSEA and SRMR values were less than .08, so the two models were considered a good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999; MacCallum et al., 1996). The composite reliability values exceeded the suggested minimum of 0.65 and average variance extracted values were greater than 0.5 in support of convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), and each construct shared more variance with its own measures than with the other constructs in the model, in support of discriminant validity. For each construct, the square root of the average variance extracted was greater than its correlations with other constructs. Tables 1 and 2 report the discriminant validity for the male athlete condition and female athlete condition, respectively.

Manipulation Check

To check our manipulation of projected identity, participants were asked to describe the features and identities in the content of the posts they viewed through open-ended questions. Those who had incorrect recall were excluded from the sample. Over 97% of participants recognized the identity they observed in the experiment.

Table 1 Discriminant Validity of the Constructs for the Male Athlete

	Credibility	Homophily	Parasocial love	Parasocial friendship	General purchase intention	In-picture purchase intention
Credibility	0.84					
Homophily	0.19	0.92				
Parasocial love	0.06	0.64	0.82			
Parasocial friendship	0.22	0.64	0.67	0.81		
General purchase intention	0.39	0.32	0.39	0.49	0.94	
In-picture purchase intention	0.18	0.38	0.51	0.58	0.59	0.96

Note. Bold values refer to the diagonal elements, which are the square root of the average variance extracted for each construct.

Table 2 Discriminant Validity of the Constructs for the Female Athlete

	Credibility	Homophily	Parasocial love	Parasocial friendship	General purchase intention	In-picture purchase intention
Credibility	0.88					
Homophily	0.20	0.93				
Parasocial love	0.11	0.59	0.85			
Parasocial friendship	0.24	0.64	0.75	0.82		
General purchase intention	0.23	0.43	0.53	0.58	0.89	
In-picture purchase intention	0.21	0.34	0.45	0.59	0.65	0.96

Note. Bold values refer to the diagonal elements, which are the square root of the average variance extracted for each construct.

Results

Between-Subject Results

After viewing the profile photo of the athletes, participants were asked to name the athletes they had just viewed. 53.78% of participants recognized the male athlete, and 24.93% recognized the female athlete. A 3 (projected identity: student identity = 0, athletic identity = 1, influencer identity = 2) \times 2 (participant gender: male = 0, female = 1) between-subject analysis of variance was conducted to assess the impact of conditions on credibility and purchase intention.

The data reflected the difference in three identities on general purchase intention for the male athlete, $F(2, 351) = 4.484, p = .012$. Participants expressed greater general purchase intention in the athlete identity ($M = 4.563$) than in the student identity ($M = 4.133, t = 2.129, p = .034$) and influencer identity ($M = 3.963, t = 2.900, p = .004$). Participants' gender was also significant, $F(1, 351) = 7.281, p = .007$. Male participants ($M = 4.445$) expressed greater general purchase intention than female participants ($M = 3.995, t = 2.695, p = .007$). There was no interaction effect between identities and participant gender on general purchase intention for the male athlete, $F(2, 351) = 0.238, p = .788$. For the in-picture purchase intention, we observed no main or interaction effects.

For the female athlete, no main effect interaction was observed between identity and gender on general purchase intention. However, the data reflected a difference in three identities on in-picture purchase intention, $F(2, 351) = 3.468, p = .032$. Participants expressed greater general purchase intention in the athlete condition ($M = 4.367$) than in the student condition ($M = 3.801, t = 2.700, p = .021$) and influencer condition ($M = 3.806, t = 2.249, p = .025$). There was no gender difference on in-picture purchase intention, $F(1, 351) = 2.870, p = .091$. The interaction effect between identity and gender was also insignificant, $F(1, 351) = 1.670, p = .190$.

We tested credibility using analysis of variance. For the male athlete condition, projected identity was significant, $F(2, 351) = 6.950, p = .001$; the athlete identity elicited a greater level of perceived credibility ($M = 5.680$), as anticipated, compared to student identity ($M = 5.308, t = 2.369, p = .018$) and influencer identity ($M = 5.091, t = 3.681, p < .001$). Gender was also significant, $F(1, 351) = 5.491, p = .020$. Male participants ($M = 5.511$) rated the male athlete higher on credibility than female participants ($M = 5.209, t = 2.341, p = .02$). There was no interaction effect between identity and gender, $F(2, 351) = 1.257, p = .286$.

For the female athlete condition, projected identity was significant, $F(2, 351) = 7.577, p = .001$; the athlete identity elicited a greater level of perceived credibility ($M = 5.977$), as anticipated, compared to student identity ($M = 5.661, t = 2.10, p = .027$) and influencer identity ($M = 5.411, t = 3.681, p < .001$). There was no main effect for the participant gender, $F(1, 351) = 0.526, p = .469$ and no interaction effect between identity and gender, $F(2, 351) = 1.079, p = .341$.

Mediation Analysis of Credibility for the Experiment

From the analysis of variance, we found athlete identity significantly elevated the perception of credibility across both the male athlete and the female athlete. We also found athlete identity boosted the general purchase intention for the male athlete and the in-picture purchase intention for the female athlete. We further conducted mediation tests to check whether perceived credibility mediated the effect from the projected athlete identity to purchase intention.

Hayes PROCESS Model 4 with 5,000 bootstrapped samples (Hayes, 2017) was used to test credibility as a mediator between identities (X : student identity = 0, athletic identity = 1, influencer identity = 2) and purchase intention (Y). Macro includes an option

to specify the independent variable as multicategorical, which automatically re-coded the three experimental conditions into two dummy coded variables, $X1$ and $X2$, such that the error condition became the baseline ($X1$ student identity = 0, athletic identity = 1, and $X2$ student identity = 0, influencer identity = 1).

For the male athlete, the results showed identity significantly impacted credibility, $X1$ ($\beta = 0.359$, $SE = 0.157$, $t = 2.279$, $p = .023$). Credibility significantly impacted general purchase intention ($\beta = 0.456$, $SE = 0.064$, $t = 7.090$, $p = .000$). The indirect effects ($X1 \geq \text{credibility} \geq \text{general purchase intention}$) were also significant, $X1$ ($\beta = 0.164$, $\text{BootSE} = 0.746$, 95% confidence interval [0.29, 0.322]). The data support credibility as mediator, as the 95% confidence intervals do not span zero.

For the female athlete, the results showed that identity significantly impacted credibility, $X1$ ($\beta = 0.310$, $SE = 0.142$, $t = 2.176$, $p = .030$). Credibility significantly impacted in-picture purchase intention ($\beta = 0.326$, $SE = 0.089$, $t = 3.639$, $p = .003$). The indirect effects ($X1 \geq \text{credibility} \geq \text{in-picture purchase intention}$) were also significant, $X1$ ($\beta = 0.101$, $\text{BootSE} = 0.050$, 95% confidence interval [0.015, 0.215]). The results indicated that the athlete identity significantly drives the in-picture purchase intention for the female athlete through perceived credibility.

Within-Subject Results

While we did not hypothesize the within-subject effect, we compared how participants responded to male college student influencers and female college student influencers, respectively. Participants rated greater general purchase intention to the male athlete compared with the female athlete, $M = 4.22$ vs. $M = 4.02$; $F(1, 356) = 4.993$, $p = .026$. Further, participants rated greater in-picture purchase intention to the female athlete compared with the male athlete, $M = 3.98$ vs. $M = 3.67$; $F(1, 356) = 10.321$, $p = .001$. Third, participants rated higher credibility to the female athlete compared with the male athlete, $M = 5.68$ vs. $M = 5.36$; $F(1, 356) = 29.212$, $p < .001$. Last, participants rated higher homophily to the female athlete compared with the male athlete, $M = 3.60$ vs. $M = 3.25$; $F(1, 356) = 21.776$, $p < .001$.

SEM Results

Lastly, we estimated two structural equation modeling (SEM) models using the whole data set for testing the male and female athletes' models. SEM was performed by R. As stated before, the

variables of interest were credibility, homophily, PSF, PSL, and two purchase intentions. The goodness-of-fit statistics of the model were all acceptable: for the male athlete model, $\chi^2 = 1,022.131$, $df = 534$, $\chi^2/df = 1.914$, $p < .000$, Tucker–Lewis index (TLI) = 0.942; CFI = .934; RMSEA = .051; SRMR = .068; for the female athlete model, $\chi^2 = 1,128.304$, $df = 534$, $\chi^2/df = 2.112$, $p < .000$, TLI = 0.938; CFI = .944; RMSEA = .056; SRMR = .054.

For the male athlete, credibility exerted a positive influence on homophily ($\beta = 0.235$, $p < .01$), which positively affected general purchase intention ($\beta = 0.475$, $p < .001$) and in-picture purchase intention ($\beta = 0.170$, $p < .05$) through PSF and PSL. Furthermore, homophily exerted a positive influence on PSF ($\beta = 0.536$, $p < .001$), which positively affected general purchase intention ($\beta = 0.528$, $p < .001$) and in-picture purchase intention ($\beta = 0.768$, $p < .001$). Homophily also exerted a positive influence on PSL ($\beta = 0.566$, $p < .001$), which positively affected general purchase intention ($\beta = 0.231$, $p < .05$) and in-picture purchase intention ($\beta = 0.403$, $p < .05$). Figure 3 reports the path results for male athlete.

For the female athlete, credibility also exerted a positive influence on homophily ($\beta = 0.252$, $p < .01$), which positively affected general purchase intention ($\beta = 0.189$, $p < .01$) through PSF and PSL. Credibility did not have a significant influence on in-picture purchase intention ($\beta = 0.170$, $p > .05$). In addition, homophily exerted a positive influence on PSF ($\beta = 0.604$, $p < .001$), which positively affected general purchase intention ($\beta = 0.496$, $p < .001$) and in-picture purchase intention ($\beta = 0.958$, $p < .001$). Homophily also exerted a positive influence on PSL ($\beta = 0.324$, $p < .001$), which positively affected general purchase intention ($\beta = 0.490$, $p < .01$). Figure 4 reports the path results for the female athlete.

The estimated model also implied indirect effects of credibility and homophily on general purchase intentions and in-picture purchase intentions through PSF and PSL. For the male athlete, the results affirmed the indirect effects of credibility on general purchase intention through PSF (indirect effect = 0.283, $p < .01$) and through PSL (indirect effect = 0.054, $p < .05$). The results also affirmed the indirect effects of homophily on general purchase intention through PSF (indirect effect = 0.283, $p < .001$) and through PSL (indirect effect = 0.131, $p < .05$). In addition, we observed the indirect effects of homophily on in-picture purchase intention through PSF (indirect effect = 0.411, $p < .001$) and through PSL (indirect effect = 0.228, $p < .01$). Table 3 reports the direct, indirect, and total effects of the SEM model on the male athlete condition.

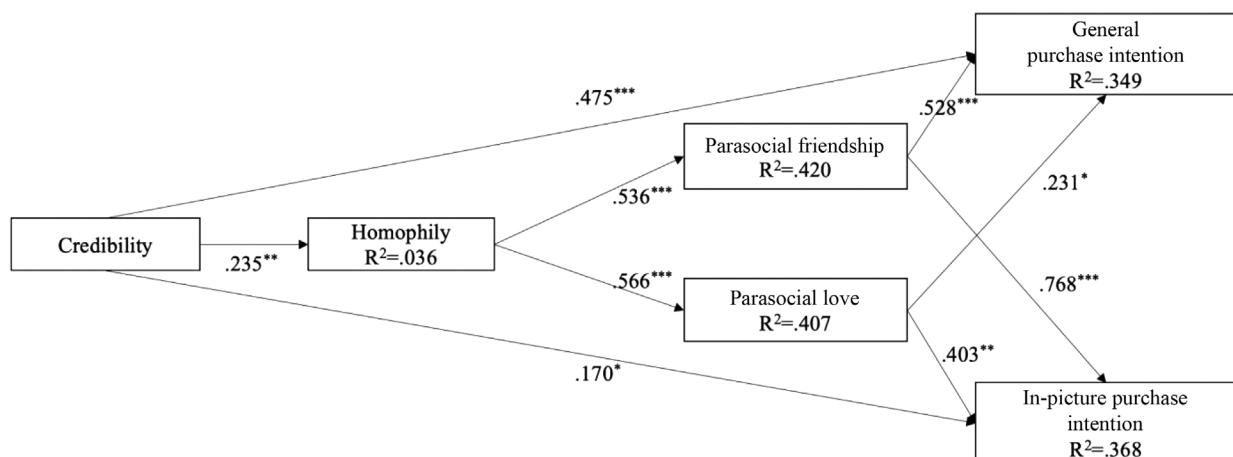


Figure 3 — Path results for the male athlete ($N = 357$). $^*p < .05$, $^{**}p < .01$, $^{***}p < .001$.

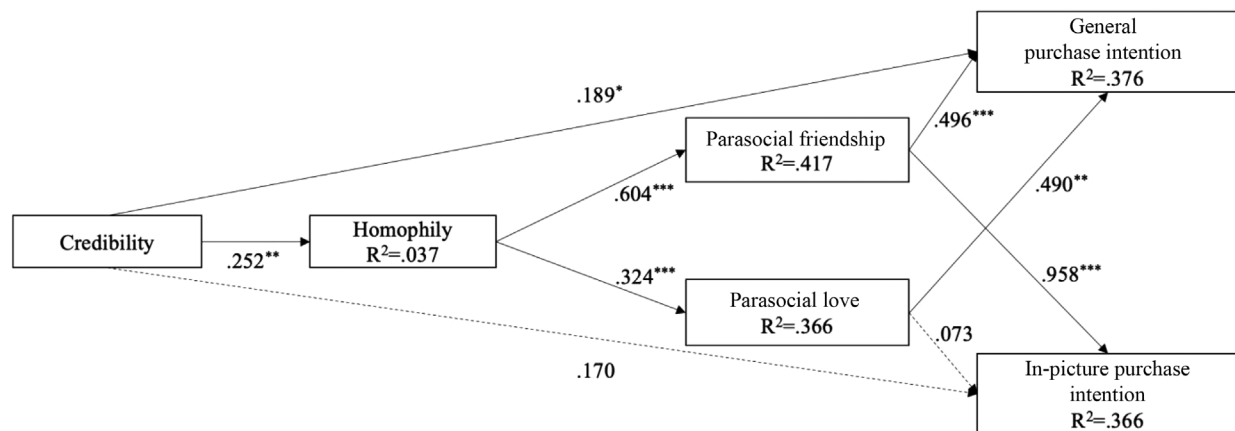


Figure 4 — Path results for the female athlete ($N = 357$). * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 3 Male Athlete Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects (Study 1)

Effect of ...	On	Direct	Indirect		Total
			Parasocial friendship	Parasocial love	
credibility	homophily	0.235**			0.235**
	general purchase intention	0.475***	0.283***		0.106*
	general purchase intention	0.475***		0.054*	0.106*
	in-picture purchase intention	0.170*	0.082		0.164*
	in-picture purchase intention	0.170*		−0.040	0.164*
homophily	general purchase intention	−0.108	0.283***		0.306***
	general purchase intention	−0.108		0.131*	0.306***
	in-picture purchase intention	−0.120	0.411***		0.532***
	in-picture purchase intention	−0.120		0.228**	0.532***

* $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$. *** $p \leq .001$.

For the female athlete, the results affirmed the indirect effects of credibility on general purchase intention through PSF (indirect effect = 0.145, $p < .05$) and on in-picture purchase intention through PSF (indirect effect = 0.148, $p < .05$). The results also affirmed the indirect effects of homophily on general purchase intention through PSF (indirect effect = 0.299, $p < .001$) and through PSL (indirect effect = 0.159, $p < .01$). We also observed the indirect effects of homophily on in-picture purchase intention through PSF (indirect effect = 0.574, $p < .001$). Table 4 reports the direct, indirect, and total effects for the SEM model for the female athlete's condition.

Study 1 Discussion

Findings revealed that athletic identity significantly elevates purchase intention through the mediating role of perceived credibility (supporting H1). Interestingly, the effect of athletic identity worked on the general purchase intention for male college athletes, yet it worked on the in-picture purchase intention for female college athletes. This pattern may be explained by the fact that the female athlete was less recognized by the participants. As a result, when the female athlete was included in the post with the product, the participants formed a stronger brand association between the female athlete's identity and the product, which led to purchase intention. As expected, all the relational variables (i.e., homophily and PSRs) were not impacted by the athlete's projected identities.

The SEM results showed a positive relationship between credibility, homophily, PSR, and purchase intention, supporting both H2 and H3. While credibility was positively associated with homophily, the low R-squared result of homophily indicated that a substantial portion of this construct has yet to be explained. These results suggest that something beyond projected identity and perceived credibility may be driving the perceived similarity between the influencer and the audience. Perceived homophily, however, played a vital role in how students built PSRs with college student-athletes that resulted in greater purchase intentions. While insightful, these results highlight the need for a qualitative investigative stage to further disentangle the relationships among the projected identities of a college athlete and to generate a better understanding of the sources of college athlete credibility and homophily from a message receiver's perspective.

Study 2: Qualitative Stage

The sequential, explanatory strategy allows for quantitative data collection analysis followed by qualitative data collection and analysis to help explain the quantitative results (Ivankova et al., 2006). Following Creswell's (2003) suggestion, priority has been given to the quantitative part of the paper. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the importance of qualitative data in its ability to

explain the “why” behind consumer behavior surrounding college athlete influencers. In what follows, we provide detailed account of the methodology and analysis of the qualitative study.

Data Collection

Eighteen semistructured interviews were conducted as a supplement to the quantitative analysis. Semistructured interviewing facilitates gaining “deep” and “rich” information (Andrew et al., 2011). The survey participants had the option to be recruited to the interview stage. Students who expressed their willingness to participate were purposefully chosen based on their gender, age, and year of enrollment, as well as the manipulation they were presented. This sampling strategy allowed us to compare participants exposed to different experiment stimuli, which contributed to credibility in our findings. Table 5 provides information on the demographic information.

After completing the survey, participants were contacted and interviewed within 2 weeks. Our interview guide was developed based on the quantitative study results and theoretical concepts from prior literature, then adjusted as needed after four interviews (Creswell, 2014). The interview starts with general questions about their perception and purchase intention of the college athlete influencers such as “What will make you want to purchase a product endorsed by a college athlete?” They were then shown the pictures they saw in the experiment and asked about how this post impacted their purchase intention. After this, the participants were presented pictures of the other two conditions and asked their perception regarding the college athletes’ different projected identities (i.e., student, athlete, and influencer). In-depth interviews ranged from 30 to 60 min and were recorded and transcribed. All the interviews were conducted by Zoom (Zoom Video Communications, Inc).

Table 4 Female Athlete Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects (Study 1)

Effect of . . .	On	Direct	Indirect		Total
			Parasocial friendship	Parasocial love	
credibility	homophily	0.252**			0.252**
	general purchase intention	0.189*	0.145**		0.203**
	general purchase intention	0.189*		0.006	0.203**
	in-picture purchase intention	0.170	0.148**		0.271**
	in-picture purchase intention	0.170		−0.000	0.271**
homophily	general purchase intention	0.052	0.299***		0.510***
	general purchase intention	0.052		0.159**	0.510***
	in-picture purchase intention	−0.108	0.574***		0.491***
	in-picture purchase intention	−0.108		0.024	0.491***

* $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$. *** $p \leq .001$.

Table 5 Demographic Information of the Interviewees

No.	Gender	Age	Race	Year in school
1	Male	19	Black or African American	Junior
2	Female	22	Black or African American	Senior
3	Male	20	White	Junior
4	Female	22	White	Senior
5	Male	21	Black or African American	Junior
6	Female	21	White	Junior
7	Male	23	Black or African American	Graduate
8	Female	20	White	Senior
9	Male	21	White	Senior
10	Female	20	White	Senior
11	Male	23	Black or African American	Graduate
12	Male	21	White	Junior
13	Female	21	Black or African American	Senior
14	Male	19	White	Junior
15	Male	20	Black or African American	Junior
16	Female	21	Black or African American	Senior
17	Female	20	White	Junior
18	Female	24	Asian	Graduate

Data Analysis

A phenomenologically informed approach was used in which two researchers read the entire transcript for overall content understanding. Phenomenological reduction is accomplished by horizontalizing the data, which means the authors explore all pieces of data equally (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). We followed the thematic analysis procedure proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), aligning with the explanatory mixed-methods design, implementing a combination of inductive and deductive thematic analysis. Instead of solely analyzing our data inductively, we also consider known theoretical frameworks that guided our quantitative phase (Gehman et al., 2018). The hybrid approach achieves greater rigor since many researchers believe pure induction, which excludes preconceptions and prior knowledge completely, is not viable (Braun & Clarke, 2012; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Both open coding and axial coding were used in this study, which began with two researchers immersing themselves in the transcripts and reading them repeatedly. The open coding process involved creating code names based on words and phrases of the transcription. The axial coding process was then used to define and explore connections between open codes, and those with similar characteristics were arranged under axial codes. The axial codes were then grouped into themes, which were continuously revised and refined. A 96% intercoder reliability was met on the emergent identified themes. Trustworthiness was ensured by following the phases of thematic analysis outlined by Nowell et al. (2017). Specific steps involved prolonged engagement with data, reflexive journaling, peer debriefings, audit trail, researcher triangulations, diagramming themes, member checks, and thick description. We also considered Motulsky's suggestions (2021) regarding member checking. We enlisted four participants from diverse backgrounds to review their respective interviews and a summary of the themes across cases. This process was aimed at validating our interpretations that reflect the participants' experiences, consistent with the phenomenologically informed approach.

Findings

Our analysis revealed three major themes that are grounded empirically in the data and supported by evidence gathered from participant narratives. These themes are explored in detail in this section by utilizing power quotes from the narratives obtained during the interviews, which help explain the narrative and demonstrate significant themes that emerged (Pratt, 2009).

Shared School Identity as Key Driver

One key theme that emerged from the interview was the impact of school identity as a driver above and beyond the three identities displayed in social media (i.e., student, athlete, and influencer). According to the participants' responses, the athletes' affiliation with the same university as the participants was identified as the overarching factor driving their purchase intention of the products endorsed by college athletes. Participants believed the athletes served and contributed to the university; thus, a shared school identity had a significant effect on purchasing decisions. For example, Participant 3 exemplified the importance of the athlete's athletic identity and connection to the school by describing his own opinions of the athlete-endorsed products:

I think we have some sort of subconscious connection just because he's still a student at University X. And what I meant by like that connection is, I would be way more likely to buy a

product from University X, student-athlete endorses, rather than University Y.

Participants also referenced school identity as the main factor in measuring college athletes' credibility. Participants note that they could more closely trust an endorser from the same university, as compared with general influencers. The feeling of belonging to the same school as an athlete created a sense of trust for the participants. Finally, the shared school identity also contributed to the PSRs between students and college athletes.

Athletic Identity as the Most Desired Projected Identity

The second theme that emerged involved the important role of athletic identity in attracting followers and provoking purchase behavior. When asked to compare the three identities, the majority agreed that presenting the athletic identity is the most prominent source of being an "influencer" and claimed college athletes are best suited to endorse athletic products. Participant 4 mentioned:

I think it's because the athlete identity is where everyone recognizes them that's what separates them from just being a normal student. Then their influencer identity comes from being an athlete. So kind of the same way if they didn't, if they weren't athletes, they wouldn't be an influencer.

As shown by our analysis, athletic identity and student identity were intertwined in the minds of the audience, which may have an impact on their evaluation of what product categories are suitable for college athletes as influencers. For college students specifically, the evaluation was largely impacted by the expertise of the college athlete as an athlete, as well as the affordability of the product and the authenticity of the endorsement. As Participant 2 indicated:

Because I see this person at the same level as myself. Therefore, if the product works for them, then it might work for me. For professional athletes, it's not necessarily that they'll use the product they endorsed.

College Athlete Influencers: Pros and Cons

There was a mixed response from the students about college athletes becoming social media influencers under the new NIL policy. In college, students' attitudes toward a peer athlete who becomes a product endorser are influenced by their role expectations of a college athlete as a student and an athlete. Participants expressed their support and empathy toward the college athlete, and one participant argued that:

I feel happy for them to be able to profit from their NIL. It's because their lifestyle in college is tough, their athletic training in college, they need to wake up at 5 am, and they workouts, and go to class every day, their lifestyle is insane. With them supporting it and endorsing a product, I feel like it feels more real just every day that they have this product.

Meanwhile, posts leveraging the influencer identity were perceived as more "informative" about the athletes' private lives and therefore helped connect the participants with the athlete. However, they also expressed concerns that "influencer identities" might conflict with other identities. For example, Participant 12 said:

Being an influencer and representing the student identity might be problematic because, for example, they are still students,

and they want to do the things that college students do, but some of them do not really post things that should be broadcasted as an influencer.

This concern is consistent with prior research on college athletes' role identity (Browning & Sanderson, 2012). From a marketing receiver's perspective, college athletes should display a sense of responsibility toward both themselves and the university. Additionally, our findings highlight the importance of being recognized as a college athlete in an influencer marketing campaign. That is, visibility and popularity have an impact on the effectiveness of the projected identities. This may explain why athletic identity is effective for boosting general purchase intention for male athletes, whereas for female athletes, the athlete identity will elevate the purchase intention only when the participants see them in the image with the product.

General Discussion

The twin purposes of this study were to explore how the projected identities of college athlete influencers are perceived by consumers and to learn how those identities influence consumer purchase intention. Our findings contribute to understanding how communication models function for college influencer marketing. College athletes have multiple identities to leverage for marketing messages, but consumers decode each identity differently and may be more inclined to purchase items based on the preferred identity. Further, our findings that school identity plays a vital role in college influencer marketing shed light on how athlete influencers can cut through the noise in marketing communication when competing against other types of influencers.

Our quantitative results highlight the importance of athletic identity in the decision-making purchase process. This finding supports and extends previous literature showing the value of college athletes' brand persona (Cocco & Moorman, 2022; Kunkel et al., 2021) by emphasizing the direct influence of athletic identity on purchase intention. Projecting one's athletic identity is seen as a kind of expertise that promotes credibility. However, our qualitative findings reveal an even deeper shared source for purchase intention in that the power of the projected athletic identity depended on a shared school identity.

Previous scholars have established the importance of credibility for influencers: The more credible the source, the greater the persuasiveness of the marketing message for the target consumers (Janssen et al., 2022). Our findings affirm this importance. Credibility stemmed from the athlete's perceived athlete identity to a greater extent than their other perceived identities. Previous research has suggested a multifaceted space in which a college athlete exists—as a student, an athlete, and in other personal identities (e.g., van Rens et al., 2019). Our study found that the most salient part of their persona for potential college student consumers is identity as an athlete. Our finding is in line with the research in sport management indicating that athlete identity is the most important aspect of an athlete's brand in the social media space (Doyle et al., 2022; Smith & Whiteside, 2021).

Our results also suggest that stronger homophily might result from the projection of one's shared social identity with others, rather than personal or role identities (e.g., as a student, as an athlete, or as an influencer). It is possible that college athletes view their own student identity as synonymous with their school identity. However, the findings from this study reveal that those identities are distinctly different for participants/consumers.

Participants felt a shared identity around a school but not necessarily in their shared status as students. Identities can overlap in different ways through social identity complexity, ranging from completely merged to completely compartmentalized (Roccas & Brewer, 2002). Less studied, however, is the effect of varying overlap across identities. In the influencer–follower relationship, the perception of a shared identification is essential for consumption; this leaves the power of the identification process in the reaction of the consumer rather than in the projection of the influencer. These findings are consistent with existing research suggesting an inconsistency between the intended marketing message and the perceived marketing message (Malär et al., 2012).

Furthermore, we found that homophily and PSRs are essential in priming purchase behavior. Influencers previously unknown to online consumers work to construct a sense of homophily between themselves and their followers. However, in the college athlete context, existing commonalities provide opportunities for a shared social identification and relationship, which can be leveraged to drive purchases. In other words, the saliency of the preexisting relationship creates a potentially stronger path to drive consumption, at least for college student consumers.

Our findings noted some gender differences between both male and female participants, as well as male and female athletes, addressing Research Question 3. First, female participants rated female athletes more highly in credibility than male athletes. There was no difference for male participants. A recent study highlighted the greater importance that female consumers place on both trust and the social experience in online shopping (Su et al., 2021). It is possible that shared gender identity creates an additional sense of homophily for the female participants, resulting in greater purchase intention. Meanwhile, the purchase intention for goods promoted by female athletes was much more dependent on the athlete being in the picture. The female athlete in the manipulation, despite being one of the most popular athletes on campus, was still considered less recognizable than the male athlete, who was not the most well-known athlete in his sport. While scholars are still working to understand potential differences between male and female influencers in general, Toffoletti and Thorpe (2018) have posited that the perception of female athletes on social media is informed by followers' expectations of body appearance and explicit sporting visibility. Our study supports and extends their work, as it suggests that consumption beyond mere followership may be affected by this visualization.

Theoretical and Methodological Contribution

Our study is the first to investigate the mechanisms of how college athlete influencer marketing communication affects consumers, providing a comprehensive theoretical framework to guide the empirical investigation. The proposed model extends the knowledge of marketing communication (Narula, 2006) and influencer marketing by highlighting the unique characteristics of the college athlete (i.e., multiplicity of identities) and the importance of relational factors in impacting purchase behavior. Contextually, the application of the model of communication to NIL research responds to calls for more research on consumers' response to this new business opportunity (Kunkel et al., 2021).

The findings also contribute to the knowledge of identity and brand theory in revealing the prominent role of shared school identity in sport influencer marketing. Identification with a school has been shown to help fans build a connection to their team and as

an important socialization agent for the fandom (Boyle & Magnusson, 2007). However, the role of shared school identity in influencing consumers' perception regarding college athlete influencers has been less studied. Our research highlights the need to examine identities within a network of intersecting and overlapping identities. The need for parsimony in a research study can drive a design to focus on a single identity. However, the findings of this study and others like it highlight the need to recognize the interdependence of one identity with others in driving consumption (Heere & James, 2007; Heere et al., 2011). By filling a gap between the ever-changing practices of innovative marketing and the paucity of existing research, this study contributes to the growing athlete branding literature. It also serves as a basis for future empirical research in college athlete influencer marketing.

Lastly, our findings also highlight the need for more mixed-methods investigations in sport brand research. Mixed-methods allow researchers to fill in the gaps and uncover something that quantitative or qualitative methods could not have found alone (van der Roest et al., 2015). We chose to examine three different (but related) projected identities quantitatively as a way of recognizing multiple identities. Even so, qualitative findings found the importance of an additional identity driving other types of identification. Identity as a construct is complex and fluid, and for this reason, many scholars suggest the utility and necessity of its examination through multiple methods to create a more robust story (Wegner et al., 2021).

Recommendations for Future Research, Managerial Practice, and Policy

This study's limitations point to fertile research topics for future investigation. First, only one university was included in the manipulation stimuli. The school utilized for this study has a commercially and competitively successful athletic program that competes in the NCAA's Division I. Future studies should consider replicating our study across all three NCAA divisions, as consumer interest and response may vary. Second, this study used a student sample (ages 18–24 years) for model testing. As the data are derived from students, it does not represent all consumer cohorts in the United States. It would be fruitful to investigate the role identity and homophily and PSRs between athletes and alumni, and faculty across age groups. Third, the data collected for this study were cross-sectional and took place 1 year following the NCAA's adoption of its new NIL policy. Accordingly, a longitudinal study that investigates the influence of college athlete NIL influence will provide more understanding of what was learned from this study. Future research on influencer marketing may also include observing its effects on other important variables such as brand equity, brand loyalty, and brand recall.

Recommendations for Practice

The findings produce several practical implications for the management of NIL. First, college athletes should consider schools with strong brand reputations and that have large alumni and fan followings. Second, college athletes should forge a strong relationship with their schools in order to best leverage the school's commercial influence for the athlete's benefit. For this reason, college athletes should get involved in promotional activities that pair them with the school in the minds of consumers. College athletes should also build within their public and social media

profiles a strong connection to their school (e.g., a profile picture featuring the athlete in uniform).

Unfortunately, not all college sports are regularly televised for national markets and not all sports receive the same degree of promotional and media-related attention. In fact, women college athletes are disproportionately disadvantaged when it comes to building brand awareness with their schools via traditional media. To counter, we advise women and other college athletes who participate in lower profile sports to be particularly proactive by participating in as many school-related promotional activities as possible (e.g., alumni events, pep rallies, images on billboards, and posters) to strengthen their association with the school in the minds of consumers.

Furthermore, the importance that consumers place on the athlete's association with the school leads us also to the suggestion that college athletes should prefer to build brand relationships with product brands that also serve as official sponsors for the athlete's school. By building brand associations with their school's brand partners, the athlete might benefit from preexisting associations that consumers hold that link the school the product. While additional studies are needed for confirmation, theoretical support exists for the inference that repeated pairings with the school's official sponsors have the potential for strengthening the athlete's association with the school in the minds of consumers who link the branded product with the school (Baker et al., 2017). In addition, we suggest that brands that are unable to build an official partnership with a specific school may still benefit from association with the school through sponsorship of college athletes who are (already) highly identified with a particular school. Accordingly, NIL partnerships with college athletes create opportunities for building associative links between a brand and a school that otherwise would not exist.

Finally, our findings suggest that product brands should align with college athletes who possess strong brand associations with their schools. For this reason, product brands should select athletes who have prior athletic success at their schools rather than invest in high school recruits or freshman or transferring athletes who are new to campus. In addition, our findings suggest that college athletes who already have strong brand associations with their current schools should carefully consider decisions to enter the transfer portal. Athletes who have successfully constructed a strong brand alliance with a school-based on athletic performance risk losing the goodwill/brand equity built from their preexisting associations with the school by transferring to another school.

Policy Implications

The findings from this study also produced implications to be considered by NCAA stakeholders in setting NIL policy within intercollegiate sport. Specifically, the importance that consumers place on strong brand connections with the school puts female athletes at a commercial disadvantage in the competition for NIL deals. This disadvantage needs to be addressed through policy that creates more public opportunities for female athletes to build strong brand associations with their schools. For example, schools should invest in promotional activities for women's sports that create as many public pairings between them and their athletes as possible. While NCAA member institutions likely already engage in promotional activities for women's sports and other low-profile college sports, our findings suggest that schools should feature/center female college athletes within the promotion in ways that strengthen the athlete's public association with the school.

References

- Andrew, D.P., Pedersen, P.M., & McEvoy, C.D. (2011). *Research methods and design in sport management*. Human Kinetics.
- Arai, A., Ko, Y.J., & Ross, S. (2014). Branding athletes: Exploration and conceptualization of athlete brand image. *Sport Management Review*, 17(2), 97–106. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2013.04.003>
- Asada, A., & Ko, Y.J. (2019). Perceived influence of word-of-mouth recommendation on sport-watching behavior: A gender difference perspective. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 28(3), 135–147. <https://doi.org/10.32731/SMQ.283.092019.02>
- Baker, T.A., Byon, K.K., Cianfrone, B.A., & Grady, J. (2014). Conceptualizing and measuring the use of student-athlete likeness in EA's NCAA football. *Journal of Sport Management*, 28(3), 281–294. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jism.2012-0257>
- Baker, T.A., Edelman, M., & Watanabe, N.M. (2017). Debunking the NCAA's myth that amateurism conforms with antitrust law: A legal and statistical analysis. *Tennessee Law Review*, 85, 661–674.
- Boyle, B.A., & Magnusson, P. (2007). Social identity and brand equity formation: A comparative study of collegiate sports fans. *Journal of Sport Management*, 21(4), 497–520. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jism.21.4.497>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp0630a>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2012). Thematic analysis. In H. Cooper (Ed.), *APA handbook of research methods in psychology, Vol 2: Research designs: Quantitative, qualitative, neuropsychological and biological* (pp. 57–71). American Psychological Association.
- Browning, B., & Sanderson, J. (2012). The positives and negatives of Twitter: Exploring how student-athletes use Twitter and respond to critical tweets. *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 5(4), 503–521. <https://doi.org/10.1123/ijsc.5.4.503>
- Charness, G., Gneezy, U., & Kuhn, M.A. (2012). Experimental methods: Between-subject and within-subject design. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 81(1), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2011.08.009>
- Cocco, A.R., & Moorman, A.M. (2022). Untapped potential: An examination of name, image, and likeness earnings estimates for community college athletes. *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics*, 15, 256–271.
- Cresswell, J.W. (2003). A framework for design. In J.W. Cresswell (Ed.), *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (pp. 3–26). SAGE.
- Creswell, J.W. (2014). *A concise introduction to mixed methods research*. SAGE Publications.
- Cronbach, L.J. (1970). *Essentials of psychological testing* (3rd ed.). Harper & Row.
- Cunningham, N., & Bright, L.F. (2012). The Tweet is in your court: Measuring attitude towards athlete endorsements in social media. *International Journal of Integrated Marketing Communications*, 4(2), 73–87.
- Doyle, J.P., Su, Y., & Kunkel, T. (2022). Athlete branding via social media: Examining the factors influencing consumer engagement on Instagram. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 22(4), 506–526. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16184742.2020.1806897>
- Eastman, J.K., Shin, H., & Ruhland, K. (2020). The picture of luxury: A comprehensive examination of college student consumers' relationship with luxury brands. *Psychology & Marketing*, 37(1), 56–73. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.21280>
- Eyal, K., & Rubin, A.M. (2003). Viewer aggression and homophily, identification, and parasocial relationships with television characters. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 47(1), 77–98. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15506878jobem4701_5
- Farivar, S., Wang, F., & Yuan, Y. (2021). Opinion leadership vs. parasocial relationship: Key factors in influencer marketing. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 59, Article 102371. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2020.102371>
- Fereday, J., & Muir-Cochrane, E. (2006). Demonstrating rigor using thematic analysis: A hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5(1), 80–92. <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690600500107>
- Fornell, C., & Larcker, D.F. (1981). Structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error: Algebra and statistics. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 18(3), 382–388. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002224378101800313>
- Frederick, E.L., Lim, C.H., Clavio, G., & Walsh, P. (2012). Why we follow: An examination of parasocial interaction and fan motivations for following athlete archetypes on Twitter. *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 5(4), 481–502. <https://doi.org/10.1123/ijsc.5.4.481>
- Gehman, J., Glaser, V.L., Eisenhardt, K.M., Gioia, D., Langley, A., & Corley, K.G. (2018). Finding theory–method fit: A comparison of three qualitative approaches to theory building. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 27(3), 284–300. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1056492617706029>
- Geurin-Eagleman, A.N., & Burch, L.M. (2016). Communicating via photographs: A gendered analysis of Olympic athletes' visual self-presentation on Instagram. *Sport Management Review*, 19(2), 133–145. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2015.03.002>
- Hall, S. (1979). Culture, the media and the 'ideological effect.' In J. Curran, M. Gurevitch, & J. Woollacott (Eds.), *Mass communication and society* (pp. 315–348). Edward Arnold.
- Hayes, A.F. (2017). *Introduction to mediation, moderation, and conditional process analysis: A regression-based approach*. Guilford publications.
- Heere, B., & James, J.D. (2007). Stepping outside the lines: Developing a multi-dimensional team identity scale based on social identity theory. *Sport Management Review*, 10(1), 65–91. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1441-3523\(07\)70004-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1441-3523(07)70004-9)
- Heere, B., James, J.D., Yoshida, M., & Scremin, G. (2011). The effect of associated group identities on team identity. *Journal of Sport Management*, 25(6), 606–621. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jism.25.6.606>
- Holden, J.T., Edelman, M., Baker, T., & Shuman, A.G. (2022). Reimagining the governance of college sports after Alston. *Florida Law Review*, 74, Article 427.
- Horton, D., & Richard Wohl, R. (1956). Mass communication and parasocial interaction: Observations on intimacy at a distance. *Psychiatry*, 19(3), 215–229. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00332747.1956.11023049>
- Hovland, C.I., & Weiss, W. (1951). The influence of source credibility on communication effectiveness. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 15(4), 635–650. <https://doi.org/10.1086/266350>
- Hu, L.T., & Bentler, P.M. (1999). Cutoff criteria for fit indexes in covariance structure analysis: Conventional criteria versus new alternatives. *Structural Equation Modeling: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, 6(1), 1–55. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10705519909540118>
- Hudders, L., & De Jans, S. (2022). Gender effects in influencer marketing: An experimental study on the efficacy of endorsements by same-vs. other-gender social media influencers on Instagram. *International Journal of Advertising*, 41(1), 128–149. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2021.1997455>
- Ivankova, N.V., Creswell, J.W., & Stick, S.L. (2006). Using mixed methods sequential explanatory design: From theory to practice.

- Field Methods*, 18(1), 3–20. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X05282260>
- Janssen, L., Schouten, A.P., & Croes, E.A. (2022). Influencer advertising on Instagram: Product-influencer fit and number of followers affect advertising outcomes and influencer evaluations via credibility and identification. *International Journal of Advertising*, 41(1), 101–127. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2021.1994205>
- Jin, S.V., & Muqaddam, A. (2019). Product placement 2.0: Do brands need influencers, or do influencers need brands? *Journal of Brand Management*, 26(5), 522–537. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41262-019-00151-z>
- Johns, R., & English, R. (2016). Transition of self: Repositioning the celebrity brand through social media—The case of Elizabeth Gilbert. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(1), 65–72. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2015.07.021>
- Kim, D.Y., & Kim, H.Y. (2021). Trust me, trust me not: A nuanced view of influencer marketing on social media. *Journal of Business Research*, 134, 223–232. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2021.05.024>
- Kim, S., & Lehto, X.Y. (2013). Projected and perceived destination brand personalities: The case of South Korea. *Journal of Travel Research*, 52(1), 117–130. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287512457259>
- Koch, K., & Wann, D.L. (2016). Team identification and sport fandom: Gender differences in relationship-based and recognition-based perceived antecedents. *Journal of Sport Behavior*, 39(3), 278–300.
- Krane, V., Ross, S.R., Miller, M., Ganoe, K., Lucas-Carr, C., & Sullivan Barak, K. (2011). “It’s cheesy when they smile:” What girl athletes prefer in images of female college athletes. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 82(4), 755–768. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02701367.2011.10599812>
- Kunkel, T., Baker, B.J., Baker, T.A., III, & Doyle, J.P. (2021). There is no nil in NIL: Examining the social media value of student-athletes’ names, images, and likeness. *Sport Management Review*, 24(5), 839–861. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14413523.2021.1880154>
- Leung, F.F., Gu, F.F., & Palmatier, R.W. (2022). Online influencer marketing. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 50(2), 226–251. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-021-00829-4>
- MacCallum, R.C., Browne, M.W., & Sugawara, H.M. (1996). Power analysis and determination of sample size for covariance structure modeling. *Psychological Methods*, 1(2), 130–149. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1082-989X.1.2.130>
- Malär, L., Nyffenegger, B., Krohmer, H., & Hoyer, W.D. (2012). Implementing an intended brand personality: A dyadic perspective. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 40(5), 728–744. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-011-0251-8>
- Merriam, S.B., & Grenier, R.S. (Eds.). (2019). *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and analysis*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Motulsky, S.L. (2021). Is member checking the gold standard of quality in qualitative research? *Qualitative Psychology*, 8(3), 389–406. <https://doi.org/10.1037/qup0000215>
- Munnukka, J., Uusitalo, O., & Toivonen, H. (2016). Credibility of a peer endorser and advertising effectiveness. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 33(3), 182–192. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCM-11-2014-1221>
- Narula, U. (2006). *Communication models*. Atlantic Publishers & Dist.
- Nowell, L.S., Norris, J.M., White, D.E., & Moules, N.J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940691773384>
- Nuss, O.E. (2022). *The future of name, image, and likeness in advertising* [Master’s Theses]. Louisiana State University. Graduate School at LSU Digital Commons. https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_theses/5592
- Ohanian, R. (1990). Construction and validation of a scale to measure celebrity endorsers’ perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. *Journal of Advertising*, 19(3), 39–52. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.1990.10673191>
- Park, J., Williams, A., & Son, S. (2020). Social media as a personal branding tool: A qualitative study of student-athletes’ perceptions and behaviors. *Journal of Athlete Development and Experience*, 2(1), 51–68. <https://doi.org/10.25035/jade.02.01.04>
- Pratt, M.G. (2009). From the editors: For the lack of a boilerplate: Tips on writing up (and reviewing) qualitative research. *Academy of Management Journal*, 52(5), 856–862. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2009.44632557>
- Reinikainen, H., Munnukka, J., Maity, D., & Luoma-Aho, V. (2020). ‘You really are a great big sister’—Parasocial relationships, credibility, and the moderating role of audience comments in influencer marketing. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 36(3–4), 279–298. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2019.1708781>
- Roccas, S., & Brewer, M.B. (2002). Social identity complexity. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 6(2), 88–106. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327957PSPR0602_01
- Rosenblatt, K. (2021, July 11). Collegiate athletes look to become influencers after NCAA rule change. *NBC NEWS*. <https://www.nbcnews.com/pop-culture/pop-culture-news/collegiate-athletes-look-become-influencers-after-ncaa-rule-change-n1273394>
- Saima, S., & Khan, M.A. (2020). Effect of social media influencer marketing on consumers’ purchase intention and the mediating role of credibility. *Journal of Promotion Management*, 27(4), 503–523. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10496491.2020.1851847>
- Shannon, C.E., & Weaver, W. (1948). *The mathematical theory of communication*. University of Illinois Press.
- Smith, A.B., & Whiteside, E. (2021). From taped up to mic’d up: Experiences of former athletes and the meaning of athletic identity in sports media spaces. *Communication & Sport*, 9(2), 220–242. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2167479519858611>
- Smith, L.R., & Sanderson, J. (2015). I’m going to Instagram it! An analysis of athlete self-presentation on Instagram. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 59(2), 342–358. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2015.1029125>
- Spears, N., & Singh, S.N. (2004). Measuring attitude toward the brand and purchase intentions. *Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising*, 26(2), 53–66. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10641734.2004.10505164>
- Su, Y., Kunkel, T., & Ye, N. (2021). When abs do not sell: The impact of male influencers conspicuously displaying a muscular body on female followers. *Psychology & Marketing*, 38(2), 286–297. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.21322>
- Terras, M.M., Ramsay, J., & Boyle, E.A. (2015). Digital media production and identity: Insights from a psychological perspective. *E-Learning and Digital Media*, 12(2), 128–146. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2042753014568179>
- Toffoletti, K., & Thorpe, H. (2018). Female athletes’ self-representation on social media: A feminist analysis of neoliberal marketing strategies in “economies of visibility”. *Feminism & Psychology*, 28(1), 11–31. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353517726705>
- Tukachinsky, R. (2010). Para-romantic love and para-friendships: Development and assessment of a multiple parasocial relationships scale. *American Journal of Media Psychology*, 3, 73–94.
- van der Roest, J.W., Spaaij, R., & van Bottenburg, M. (2015). Mixed methods in emerging academic subdisciplines: The case of sport management. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 9(1), 70–90. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1558689813508225>

- van Rens, F.E., Ashley, R.A., & Steele, A.R. (2019). Well-being and performance in dual careers: The role of academic and athletic identities. *The Sport Psychologist*, 33(1), 42–51. <https://doi.org/10.1123/tsp.2018-0026>
- Wann, D.L., Carlson, J.D., & Schrader, M.P. (1999). The impact of team identification on the hostile and instrumental verbal aggression of sport spectators. *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality*, 14(2), 279–286.
- Wegner, C.E., Baker, B.J., & Jones, G.J. (2021). Organizational identity development in sport volunteers. *Journal of Sport Management*, 35(4), 325–337. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsm.2020-0042>
- Yuan, S., & Lou, C. (2020). How social media influencers foster relationships with followers: The roles of source credibility and fairness in parasocial relationship and product interest. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 20(2), 133–147. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2020.1769514>

Appendix A: Demographic Information of Participants

Variable	Categories	<i>N</i>	%
Gender	Male	179	50.1
	Female	178	49.9
Race	White	251	70.30
	Black or African American	62	17.36
	American Indian or Alaska Native	17	4.76
	Asian	18	5.04
	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	6	1.68
	Other	4	1.12
Income	Less than \$10,000	49	13.9
	\$10,000–\$19,999	19	5.4
	\$20,000–\$29,999	19	5.4
	\$30,000–\$39,999	16	4.5
	\$40,000–\$49,999	20	5.7
	\$50,000–\$59,999	20	5.7
	\$60,000–\$69,999	27	7.7
	\$70,000–\$79,999	25	7.1
	\$80,000–\$89,999	23	6.5
	\$90,000–\$99,999	20	5.7
	\$100,000–\$149,999	44	12.5
	More than \$150,000	70	19.9

Appendix B: Factor Loadings (β), Cronbach's α , Composite Reliability, and AVE (Male and Female Athletes)

Constructs	Items	β	α	ω	AVE
Male athletes					
Parasocial friendship			.89	0.94	0.65
	I could have disclosed negative things about myself honestly and fully (deeply) to X.	0.839			
	I could have disclosed a great deal of things about myself to X.	0.865			
	Sometimes, I wish I knew what X would do in my situation.	0.850			
	While watching the scenario, I tried to understand the sponsors' decision.	0.739			
	I could have disclosed positive things about myself honestly and fully (deeply) to him.	0.758			
	If I know X in real life, I would be able to count on X in times of need.	0.738			
	If I know X in real life, I would give him/her emotional support.	0.865			
	If I know X in real life, I could have a warm relationship with him.	0.777			
	I want to promote the well-being of X.	0.788			
Parasocial love			.96	0.95	0.67
	I find X very attractive physically.	0.879			
	X is very sexy looking.	0.853			
	X fits my ideal standards of physical handsomeness.	0.870			
	I want X physically, emotionally, and mentally.	0.835			
	For me, X could be the perfect romantic partner.	0.658			
	Sometimes I think that X and I are just meant for each other.	0.791			
	I wish X could know my thoughts, my fears, and my hopes.	0.843			
	X influences my mood.	0.869			
	I adore X.	0.743			
	I idealize X.	0.808			
Credibility			.92	0.94	0.71
	Attractive to unattractive	0.734			
	Classy to not classy	0.815			
	Sincere to insincere	0.882			
	Trustworthy to untrustworthy	0.897			
	Expert to not an expert	0.871			
	Experienced to inexperience	0.862			
Homophily			.94	0.96	0.85
	In general, X thinks like me.	0.900			
	In general, X behaves like me.	0.921			
	In general, X is similar to me.	0.931			
	In general, X is like me.	0.938			
General purchase intention			.94	0.96	0.89
	The likelihood that I would purchase the products he endorsed is	0.951			
	My willingness to purchase the products he endorsed is	0.939			
	The likelihood that I would recommend the products he endorsed to others is	0.940			
In-picture purchase intention			.96	0.97	0.92
	The likelihood that I would purchase the products he endorsed in the picture is	0.972			
	My willingness to purchase the products he endorsed in the picture is	0.957			
	The likelihood that I would recommend the products he endorsed in the picture to others is	0.952			

(continued)

(continued)

Constructs	Items	β	α	ω	AVE
Female athletes					
Parasocial friendship			.92	0.91	0.67
	I could have disclosed negative things about myself honestly and fully (deeply) to X.	0.856			
	I could have disclosed a great deal of things about myself to X.	0.896			
	Sometimes, I wish I knew what X would do in my situation.	0.856			
	While watching the scenario, I tried to understand the sponsors' decision.	0.760			
	I could have disclosed positive things about myself honestly and fully (deeply) to her.	0.788			
	If I know X in real life, I would be able to count on X in times of need.	0.709			
	If I know X in real life, I would give him/her emotional support.	0.823			
	If I know X in real life, I could have a warm relationship with her.	0.788			
	If I know X in real life, I would be able to count on X in times of need.	0.814			
Parasocial love			.95	0.94	0.72
	I find X very attractive physically.	0.899			
	X is very sexy looking.	0.783			
	X fits my ideal standards of physical beauty.	0.812			
	I want X physically, emotionally, and mentally.	0.859			
	For me, X could be the perfect romantic partner.	0.728			
	Sometimes I think that X and I are just meant for each other.	0.879			
	I wish X could know my thoughts, my fears, and my hopes.	0.900			
	X influences my mood.	0.897			
	I adore X.	0.848			
	I idealize X.	0.858			
Credibility			.94	0.95	0.77
	Attractive to unattractive	0.811			
	Classy to not classy	0.883			
	Sincere to insincere	0.911			
	Trustworthy to untrustworthy	0.898			
	Expert to not an expert	0.862			
	Experienced to inexperience	0.88			
Homophily			.94	0.96	0.86
	In general, X thinks like me.	0.881			
	In general, X behaves like me.	0.944			
	In general, X is similar to me.	0.940			
	In general, X is like me.	0.934			
General purchase intention			.94	0.92	0.79
	The likelihood that I would purchase the products she endorsed is	0.889			
	My willingness to purchase the products she endorsed is	0.888			
	The likelihood that I would recommend the products she endorsed to others is	0.891			
In-picture purchase intention			.96	0.98	0.93
	The likelihood that I would purchase the products she endorsed in the picture is	0.970			
	My willingness to purchase the products she endorsed in the picture is	0.964			
	The likelihood that I would recommend the products she endorsed in the picture to others is	0.958			

Note. AVE = average variance extracted.