

**THE EFFECT OF ATHLETE ENDORSEMENTS ON STUDENTS' PURCHASE
DECISIONS OF SPORTSWEAR: A CASE STUDY OF NIKE AND ADIDAS**

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NOVEMBER, 2025
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**A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING,
FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN
CITY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT FOR THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
AWARD OF BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (B.Sc) DEGREE IN MARKETING.**

NOVEMBER, 2025

DECLARATION

I, **Deborah Omoikhua JEGEDE**, hereby declare that this project is undertaken by me in the department of Marketing, faculty of Management Sciences, University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State under the supervision of Dr. Ebun O. Imuokhome

This project has not been previously submitted for the award of bachelor of science degree in Marketing

All ideas and views are products of my personal research and that of others have been duly referenced, appreciated and acknowledged.

Any litigation or liability arising from the work is to be wholly borne by me and not the supervisor.

Deborah Omoikhua JEGEDE

DATE

CERTIFICATION

We certify that **Deborah Omoikhua JEGEDE**, with the matriculation number MGS2104983 submitted this research work to the department of Marketing, Faculty of Management Sciences, University of Benin, Benin city.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to God Almighty, my creator, my strong pillar, my source of inspiration, wisdom, knowledge and understanding.

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ABSTRACT

The study examines the effect of athlete endorsements on students' purchase decisions of Nike and Adidas sportswear, focusing on athlete credibility, popularity, endorsement frequency, and athlete-brand congruence. The research adopts a descriptive survey design and is conducted among undergraduate students of the University of Benin. A total of 385 respondents are selected through purposive sampling, and data are collected using structured questionnaires. The data are analyzed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis.

The findings reveal that athlete credibility and athlete-brand congruence significantly influence students' purchase decisions, while athlete popularity and frequency of endorsement exert moderate but positive effects. The study concludes that athlete endorsements serve as a powerful marketing strategy capable of shaping students' perceptions and purchase behavior toward sportswear brands. It recommends that sportswear companies such as Nike and Adidas should prioritize partnerships with credible, relatable athletes whose image aligns with the brand's identity to strengthen consumer trust, brand loyalty, and purchase intention.

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

In the rapidly evolving world of modern marketing, athlete endorsements have served as a potent tool for sportswear brands to connect with their target market. This win-win situation between sportswear brands and athletes has formed a multi-billion-dollar market where athletes leverage their popularity, success, and charisma to promote products that resonate with their fans and followers.

According to Kim & Kim (2022), sportsperson endorsements significantly contribute to the behaviors and opinions of consumers towards their brands. The influence of athletes extends well beyond their on-pitch accomplishments. Sportspeople are presently cultural icons who inspire millions of individuals worldwide with their talents, passion, and perseverance. As a result, sportswear firms have leapt on this power by partnering with sportspeople to promote their services and merchandise

Nike and Adidas, two of the largest sportswear brands in the world, have been at the forefront of this phenomenon. They have partnered with some of the world's most successful and popular sportspersons to drive their business and services. The partnerships have benefited not just to drive brand awareness and sales but also to contribute towards building a strong brand image that resonates with their consumers. To students, who are presently a major target group for sportswear companies, athlete

endorsements hold immense weight in their buying decisions. According to Wang & Zhang (2023), students take great notice of what peers and icons believe and do.

Despite the popularity of athlete endorsements in sportswear adverts, little is known about the specific effect of the endorsements on the purchasing habits of students. This study aims to answer this by looking into the link between athlete endorsements and students' preference, trust, loyalty, and willingness to pay premium for sportswear brands.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

Athlete endorsement has become one of the most strategic marketing tools in influencing consumers' perceptions and purchase intentions, particularly in the sportswear industry. However, despite the growing use of famous athletes in brand campaigns, there remains a lack of empirical evidence explaining how and why specific elements of athlete endorsement drive students' purchase decisions. Understanding these dimensions is especially important within the context of Nigerian universities, where students are active consumers of sportswear brands but are also heavily influenced by social media visibility and peer perception. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the problem across five critical components of athlete endorsement that may determine purchase behavior.

The first problem arises from the credibility of the athlete used in endorsements. While numerous studies have confirmed that credible endorsers enhance consumer trust, there is still uncertainty regarding whether university students—who are often skeptical and highly informed—perceive athlete credibility as a deciding factor when purchasing sportswear. In an age of influencer marketing and online hype, the challenge lies in

determining whether students differentiate between authentic athlete endorsements and commercialized promotions. Hence, this study aims to explore the extent to which athlete credibility shapes student trust and influences their purchase decisions regarding sportswear products.

The second issue stems from athlete popularity, which often drives brand visibility but may not necessarily translate into actual purchase behavior. Many sportswear companies invest heavily in popular figures believing that fame alone guarantees consumer interest. However, popularity may result in overexposure, brand fatigue, or shallow consumer connection. Among students, it remains unclear whether admiration for an athlete's fame or social media presence truly leads to the purchase of endorsed products. Therefore, the study investigates whether athlete popularity independently predicts purchase decision among university students.

Another critical concern is the frequency of endorsement exposure. Continuous exposure to athlete endorsements can either strengthen brand recall or cause advertisement wear-out, where consumers become less responsive due to repetition. In the university environment, students are frequently exposed to athlete content on multiple media platforms—television, social media, and live events. Yet, it is unclear whether repeated encounters with endorsed messages increase their intent to buy or lead to disengagement. This study thus examines how the frequency of exposure to athlete endorsements influences students' sportswear purchasing decisions.

The fourth issue involves athlete-brand congruence fit, which refers to the perceived compatibility between an athlete's image and the brand's identity. While congruence is known to improve message credibility and consumer trust, many sportswear campaigns still feature athletes whose personality, sport type, or lifestyle do not align with the brand they represent. Such mismatches can confuse or alienate consumers. Among university students, whose purchase behavior is shaped by symbolic meaning and identity association, the level of athlete-brand fit could play a major role in determining brand preference. Hence, the study seeks to investigate the impact of athlete-brand congruence on students' purchase decisions.

Finally, emotional connection with the athlete remains a deeply underexplored factor in endorsement effectiveness. Students who admire or feel inspired by an athlete may develop emotional bonds that influence their brand choices subconsciously. Yet, existing studies have focused more on cognitive aspects such as trust and awareness, neglecting the emotional dimension that often drives impulse or loyalty-based purchases. This study therefore aims to determine whether students' emotional attachment to athletes significantly predicts their decision to purchase endorsed sportswear products.

1.3 Research Questions

For the purpose of this study, the following research questions will guide the research:

- i. How does the credibility of athlete endorser's influence students' sportswear purchase decision?

- ii. What effect does athlete popularity have on students' purchase decision toward Nike and Adidas sportswear?
- iii. What is the effect of frequency exposure to athlete endorsement and purchase decision?
- iv. How does perceived fit between athlete and brand affect students' intention to purchase Nike and Adidas sportswear?
- v. What role does emotional connection with athlete endorsers play in students' purchase decisions of sportswear brands?

1.4 Research Objectives

The main objective of the study is to determine the effect of athlete endorsements on sportswear purchase decision; while the specific objectives were to:

- i. Examine the influence of endorser's credibility on students' purchase decision of Nike and Adidas sports wears
- ii. Assess the impact of athlete popularity on students' purchase decision
- iii. Determine how the frequency of exposure to athlete endorsements affects students' purchase decision of Nike and Adidas products.
- iv. Evaluate the effect of athlete-brand congruence on students' perception and students' purchase decision, and
- v. Explore how emotional connection with athlete endorsers influences students purchase decision Nike and Adidas sportswear.

1.5 Research Hypotheses

On the basis of the research objectives, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H0₁: There is no significant relationship between endorser's credibility and students' purchase decision of Nike and Adidas sportswear.

H0₂: Athlete popularity does not significantly influence students' decision on Nike and Adidas sportswear.

H0₃: Frequency of exposure to athlete endorsements does not significantly affect students' purchase decision endorsed sportswear products.

H0₄: There is no significant effect of athlete-brand congruence on students' purchase decision of Nike and Adidas products.

H0₅: Emotional connection with athlete endorsers does not significantly influence students' decision to purchase sportswear.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is relevant to different stakeholders, including marketing experts, sport brands, and researchers of consumer behavior. Through an examination of the impact of athlete sponsors on student consumption habits, this study will provide actionable insights for Nike and Adidas about how to adjust their marketing strategies in order to engage the student cohort more effectively.

The findings of this research will enable sportswear firms to better understand the nuances of student consumer behavior, enabling them to individualize their marketing efforts according to the particular needs and preferences of this consumer base. For instance, how the study determines the dynamics of athlete endorsement and student

choice and how these can be employed to better customize marketing campaigns for efficacy and precision.

Moreover, this present research will be contributing to celebrity endorsement literature, providing better insight into athlete endorsement effects on student consumer behavior, i.e., in the sportswear segment. The research will be finding out the psychological processes behind the effectiveness of athlete endorsements, i.e., emotional bonding, social identity, and cognitive variables that influence student consumer purchasing decisions.

For students and young adults, who form a significant part of the sportswear brand market, determining what influences their taste and shopping behavior is important. This group is at a stage where fashion, peer approval, and identity formation are closely linked to the brands they wear. By understanding the role of athlete endorsements in shaping their purchase choices, the study provides valuable insight into how marketing communication can resonate with this unique demographic. Such knowledge does not only benefit the students themselves, by making them more aware of how endorsements affect their decisions, but also helps marketers and brand managers design campaigns that are more authentic, relatable, and effective in connecting with young consumers.

In addition, the study's findings will be useful for marketing practitioners as it seek to develop effective endorsement strategies targeting student consumers. Through the identification of determinants of student consumers' purchasing behavior, the study will

become more meaningful to brands that seek to optimize their marketing mix and improve their image among young consumers.

Overall, the study will improve a better understanding of the complex athlete endorsement, consumer purchase decision and sportswear brand dynamics, ultimately informing more effective marketing strategies that drive business growth and brand achievement.

Furthermore, this study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by enriching the literature on athlete endorsement and consumer behavior, particularly within the Nigerian university context. It provides valuable empirical evidence that can serve as a reliable reference point for future researchers who may wish to conduct more in-depth investigations into similar or related topics in sports marketing, brand management, and consumer psychology.

1.7 Scope of the Study

This study is specifically focused on finding the impact of sponsorship of athletes on shopping behavior of students, with special interest on two sportswear brands highly ranked and praised Nike and Adidas. This research will be conducted among undergraduate students of University of Benin (UNIBEN) to analyze how endorsements by athletes influence their liking, belief and loyalty to brand.

But to ensure the timeliness and richness of responses, the research will purposely approach students with reasonable exposure to sport culture and athlete sponsorship.

Examples of these are students who frequently participate in sporting or fitness activities,

students in the Department of Human Kinetics, members of sporting clubs or groups, and those who are regular consumers or followers of Nike, Adidas, or athlete personalities. The employment of judgmental (purposive) sampling allows the researcher to focus on students who are most likely to comprehend and meaningfully respond to the topic of athlete endorsements and sportswear advertising.

Although the findings will be primarily based on some UNIBEN students' experiences, which are relevant to them, they can also give insights that can be applied to such student populations in other Nigerian universities or young urban youth with high digital engagement and inclination towards sportswear brands. By targeting informed and interested subjects within a specific university environment, the study aims to gain a deeper, more accurate understanding of athlete endorsement and student consumption behavior.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

Despite the fact that the study has concentrated on gaining significant insights into the impact of sportsmen's sponsorship on students' purchasing habits, it has several limitations that need to be mentioned.

Firstly, the geographical scope of the study is confined to the students at the University of Benin and hence may be limiting its broader generalizability across other regions or countries with diverse cultural, social, or economic contexts.

Further, the reliance on self-reported data in the study might lead to sampling bias, as the students' responses can potentially be influenced by their own prejudices, particularly

when it comes to their favorite brands or athletes. Further, the study lacks sufficient time, and hence the study will not examine long-term brand loyalty or endorsements over a prolonged duration of time, which could be missing the dynamic dimension of consumer behavior.

Secondly, the findings of research on Nike and Adidas may not be representative of other sportswear brands, and the results could not be applied to other product lines or sponsorship contexts.

Finally, the research design may fail to account for all the nuances of consumer behavior, and the findings must be interpreted with care in light of these limitations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter includes the conceptual review, where the independent and dependent variables were discussed alongside some definitions: the theoretical review that consist the theories that serves as the bedrock for the study; the empirical review that consist of some empirical work in the areas of athlete endorsement and consumer purchase decision; and lastly, the gap of the study.

2.1 Conceptual Review

This section provides an in-depth discussion of the core concepts related to both the independent variable; athlete endorsement and the dependent variables; purchase decision. By looking into these ideas, this section helps to examine how each concept shapes the overall relationship being investigated in this study.

2.1.1 Purchase Decision

Purchase decision is the process by which consumers select and purchase a product or a service. Schiffman and Wisenblit (2025) have described purchase decision as "the process of making a buying decision, which includes recognizing the need, searching for information, evaluating alternatives, and making a purchase." It involves a series of steps that consumers take to make a final purchase decision.

The buying process is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon caused by many factors, including personal, social, and environmental. Marketers need to comprehend consumer purchase decisions in order to develop marketing strategies that cater to the needs of the target market, as argued by Kotler and Keller (2025).

2.1.1.1 The Buying Process

- i. **Need recognition:** The customer has a need or problem that needs to be addressed.
- ii. **Information search:** The consumer conducts information search about potential solutions to the problem.
- iii. **Evaluation of alternatives:** The consumer conducts an evaluation of the alternatives and selects the best alternative.
- iv. **Purchase decision:** The consumer makes a purchase decision from the evaluation of alternatives.

- v. **Post-purchase evaluation:** The consumer conducts an evaluation of the purchase decision upon purchase.

2.1.1.2 Aspects of Purchase Decision

Purchase decisions relate to several aspects, including preference, trust, loyalty, and willingness to pay more.

2.1.1.2.1 Preference

Preference is the level to which consumers like or dislike a specific brand or product. According to Aaker (2025), brand preference is "the degree to which a consumer favors one brand over another." Consumer preference is a key factor in buying decision as it has the capacity to influence consumers' choice and loyalty towards a brand.

Consumer choice can be influenced by a variety of factors, including word-of-mouth, social media, and advertising. Keller (2025) posits that brand meaning can influence consumer choice and purchasing behavior. For example, a customer who associates Nike as a high-quality sports apparel may choose Nike over other brands.

2.1.1.2.2 Trust

Trust refers to how much the consumers believe in the fact that the brand is reliable and honest. Morgan and Hunt (2025) have defined trust as "a key component of relationship marketing and is essential for building long-term relationships with customers." Trust is a

highly significant factor in purchase decision, as it can make consumers loyal and retained.

One can build trust through various avenues, including consistency of quality, transparency, and customer service. Garbarino and Johnson (2025) explain that trust can grow into customer loyalty and retention. For example, a customer who is able to trust a sportswear company will tend to continue buying from the company and also recommend them to others.

2.1.1.2.3 Loyalty

Loyalty refers to the degree to which consumers are committed to a given product or brand. For Oliver (2025), loyalty is "a deeply held commitment to rebuy or make repeat purchase a preferred product or service consistently in the future." Loyalty is a major component of the buying decision since it can influence repeat buying and loyalty among consumers. Loyalty may be motivated by various factors including satisfaction, trust, and perceived value. Reichheld (2025) believes that loyalty is the key to business success, with repeat business and word-of-mouth driven by loyal customers.

Finally, buying decision is a complex and multi-dimensional phenomenon that entails several aspects, including preference, trust, loyalty, and willingness to pay additional amounts. Identification of these aspects is significant for marketers to develop successful marketing strategies that resonate with their target consumers.

2.1.1.3 Factors Influencing Purchase Decisions

Purchase decisions are influenced by several factors, which may be broadly classified into several types, including personal, social, cultural, and economic factors.

2.1.1.3.1 Personal Factors

Age and Stage in Life: Age is a significant determinant of consumer preference and purchasing behavior. Every age group has diverse tastes, and the strategies can be tailored to reach a specific age group. For instance, young generations prioritize trendy and modern products, while older consumers would opt for traditional products (Kotler & Keller, 2025).

Occupation and Income: Occupation and income level can significantly impact buying decisions. People with higher incomes like to use luxury brands and high-end products, while people with lower incomes focus on value for money (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2025).

Lifestyle: Lifestyle, ethics, and origin can affect purchase decisions. Marketers can take advantage of this by being aware of the values and preferences of their target market (Solomon, 2025).

Personality and Self-Concept: Personality and self-concept can determine consumer needs and purchase behavior. Brand personalities can be created by marketers to appeal to their target audience (Aaker, 2025).

2.1.1.3.2 Social Factors

Social Influence: Family, peer groups, and social media could play a significant role in shaping purchase behavior. Social proof and influencer marketing can be applied by marketers to reach their customer base (Bearden & Etzel, 2025).

Cultural Factors: Cultural beliefs, values, and background may impact consumer purchase behavior and buying habits. Marketers need to understand such cultural dimensions in terms of creating successful marketing strategies (McCracken, 2025).

2.1.1.3.3 Economic Factors

Income and Disposable Income: Income level and disposable income could significantly impact purchasing behavior. Marketers need to understand the economic constraints and priorities of their target audience (Monroe, 2025).

Economic Conditions: Economic conditions, such as recession or inflation, might influence consumer buying behavior and purchase decisions (Kotler & Keller, 2025).

2.1.1.3.4 Other Factors

Product Information and Quality: Product information, quality, and specifications might have a significant role in purchase decisions. Transparency and high-quality products should be the marketers' priorities (Garvin, 2025).

Convenience and User Experience: A smooth and ease-to-use experience can be a deciding factor in buying decisions. Marketers need to prioritize ease of use and convenience (Nielsen, 2025).

Ethical and Sustainability Concerns: Shoppers increasingly consider sustainability and ethics when making buying choices. Marketers need to highlight their brand's concentration on these points (Kotler & Lee, 2025).

Relevance of Understanding Sportswear Purchase Decisions

It is necessary to comprehend purchase decisions in sportswear marketing as this guides brands on how to properly craft marketing strategies that resonate with their target audience. The comprehension of the variables influencing purchase decisions guides sportswear brands to:

Personalize their marketing strategies: By comprehending the personal, social, cultural, and economic variables influencing their target audience, sportswear brands are able to craft purposeful marketing campaigns that drive conversions (Kotler & Keller, 2025).

Build meaningful products: Based on consumer desire and requirement knowledge, sportswear brands can create products that meet the desire and requirement, which will increase customer satisfaction and loyalty (Aaker, 2025).

Build brand loyalty: Based on highlighting transparency, quality, and sustainability, sportswear brands are able to gain trust and loyalty to their customers, which will create repeat business and word-of-mouth (Reichheld, 2025).

In short, buying behavior is critical to sportswear marketing. Once the drivers of buying behavior are known, sportswear firms can create effective marketing campaigns that drive conversions, build brand loyalty, and ultimately succeed in business.

2.1.2 Athlete Endorsements

To understand the concept of athlete endorsements, it's essential to break down the term into its constituent parts.

Athlete: An athlete is someone who participates in sporting events, professionally or otherwise. An athlete is "a person who is trained or skilled in exercises, sports, or games requiring physical strength, agility, or stamina" as per Merriam-Webster (2025). Athletes, where endorsement is concerned, are likely to be seen as influencers or role models capable of affecting purchasing decisions (Kim & Na, 2025).

Endorsement: Endorsement refers to public support or recommendation of a service, product, or brand. Shimp (2025) describes endorsement as "a form of marketing communication that involves a celebrity or other influential person advocating for a product or service." There are numerous types of endorsements, including verbal or visual endorsement, testimonials, or open recommendations.

Athlete Endorsement: When combined, athlete endorsement is the process of working with athletes to promote a brand or product, leveraging their popularity, integrity, and influence in order to reach target markets. Athlete endorsement, as Lee and Kim (2025) articulate, is "a marketing strategy that uses athletes as spokespersons for promoting a brand or product." Athlete endorsements have special ability to generate brand awareness, shape attitudes among consumers, and drive sales (Park & Lee, 2025).

2.1.2.1 Characteristics of Athlete Endorsement

Athlete endorsements possess several significant characteristics that make them effective.

These include:

The characteristics of athlete endorsements can be described in terms of several significant elements. One, credibility is a significant characteristic of athlete endorsements. Athletes who have been regarded as credible and dependable individuals can significantly enhance the brand's reputation and attractiveness (Hovland & Weiss, 2025). When sporting personalities are considered to be experts in their respective realms, they can give the brand credibility and enhance consumer trust. For example, a sports brand endorsed by a professional sportsperson can make the brand more attractive to those consumers who seek expertise and authenticity.

Physical attractiveness is one of the most important qualities of sportsperson endorsements. Physically attractive or charming sportspeople can capture the interest of target consumers and link the brand in a positive way (McCracken, 2025). Physical attractiveness also increases the credibility of the sportspeople and the success of the endorsement. In addition, sportspeople with very high personality or charm can establish an emotional bond with the consumers and make the brand memorable and tangible.

Athlete-brand alignment is also a critical characteristic of athlete endorsements. The athlete's values, personality, and image need to match the values, personality, and image of the brand to provide a consistent and believable endorsement (Kamins & Gupta, 2025). High alignment between the brand and the athlete will see the endorsement perform in creating a positive association with the brand. For example, a sportswear brand that upholds sustainability may sponsor an athlete known for their activism for environmental causes.

Aside from attractiveness, credibility, and fit, athlete endorsements can also be defined in terms of the ability to create an emotional connection with consumers. Athletes can generate emotions such as admiration, respect, or inspiration that can subsequently be transferred to the brand (Aaker, 2025). If consumers can emotionally identify with an athlete, then they will most likely have a positive attitude toward the brand.

2.1.2.2 Types of Athlete Endorsements

Athlete endorsements can occur in a number of different forms, each with its own unique characteristics and benefits. Some of the most common types of athlete endorsements are:

2.1.2.2.1 Celebrity Endorsements

Celebrity endorsements involve working with popular athletes who have a large following and immense influence (Shimp, 2025). These athletes are often known for being highly successful at what they do and have a massive fan following. By engaging with celebrity athletes, businesses can tap into their vast following and establish brand awareness, promote brand image, and increase sales (Kim & Na, 2025). Nike's partnership with Cristiano Ronaldo is a classic case of celebrity endorsement. Ronaldo's vast following and popularity have helped Nike gain brand awareness and increase sales.

Celebrity endorsement is highly effective in terms of targeting a large public and creating brand recognition. Celebrity endorsement has been known to increase recall and recognition of the brand, especially among young people (Lee & Kim, 2025). Celebrity

endorsement can also be expensive, however, and the costs may outweigh the benefits (Till & Busler, 2025).

2.1.2.2.2 Expert Endorsements

Expert endorsements involve partnering hands with sportsmen who are experts in their field and can provide true word of mouth of the brand's products (Till & Busler, 2025). These sportsmen understand and know sports well and are capable of firmly expressing views about the brand's products. With partnership with expert sportsmen, brands are able to establish credibility and trust within their target audience. For example, a sports equipment company can partner with a renowned sportsperson known for his or her expertise in a particular game.

Master endorsements are extremely effective in gaining the trust and credibility of target markets. Hovland and Weiss (2025) have discovered in their studies that expert endorsements can increase consumer confidence and loyalty, especially if the sportsperson is viewed as credible and trustworthy.

Endorsements by experts are also cheaper than endorsements by celebrities, as the athlete's fee may be small (Shimp, 2025).

2.1.2.2.3 Influencer Endorsements on Social Media

Influencer endorsements on social media involve partnering with sportspeople who have a huge social media fan base and can promote the products of the brand to their social media followers (Freberg, Graham, McGaughey, & Freberg, et al., 2011). The sportspeople tend to have a large fan base and use social media platforms such as

Instagram, Twitter, or YouTube. Collaboration with social media influencers is also a way that brands attempt to connect with young consumers and create buzz around their products. For example, an athletic wear brand can partner with a popular fitness influencer on Instagram to market its new athletic wear.

Influencer endorsements on social media can prove to be extremely effective in reaching young consumers and creating awareness about the brand. Social media influencer endorsements can increase brand recognition and engagement, especially among younger consumers, as noted in a study by Kim and Lee (2025). However, social media influencer endorsements could also be risky as the digital presence and activities of the athlete can influence the brand reputation (Till & Busler, 2025).

2.1.2.2.4 Other Types of Athlete Endorsements

Aside from celebrity, expert, and social media influencer endorsements, there are other types of athlete endorsements that brands can consider. Brands, for example, can endorse emerging athletes who are growing in popularity and have a good following (Park & Lee, 2025).

Brands can also partner with sportspersons who are known to work for charity or engage in social activism and can thereby promote the brand and garner socially conscious consumers as well (Aaker, 2025).

Typically, the type of athlete endorsement that a business chooses will depend on its advertising objectives, target market, as well as budget. Having this information on the

different types of athlete endorsements, businesses can make informed decisions on their advertising strategies and maximize the benefits of athlete endorsements.

2.1.2.3 Advantages and Disadvantages of Athlete Endorsements

Athlete endorsements are a potent marketing device for organizations, but like all other marketing techniques, it possesses advantages and disadvantages.

2.1.2.3.1 Advantages

Athlete endorsements help brands in several ways. One of the primary advantages is that they increase awareness for the brand. According to Kim and Na (2025), athlete endorsements can increase brand recall and recognition, especially among youth. Athletes endorsing a brand are able to call attention to the brand and have people discussing its products. For example, Nike's sponsorship of Colin Kaepernick in 2018 caused a huge media stir and increased brand awareness.

Enhanced brand reputation is also a advantage of athlete endorsements. Athletes can strengthen the reputation of a brand through endorsement, and they can also draw target audiences (Aaker, 2025). Through alliances with athletes, brands can get to share the strong qualities that athletes have, such as credibility, trust, and expertise. For instance, a brand that collaborates with a highly visible professional athlete who also engages in philanthropic work may be able to tap into the good reputation of the athlete.

Athlete endorsements also yield sales. Athlete endorsements, according to research by Lee and Kim (2025), can support consumer purchase intentions and yield sales. When

athletes endorse a brand, they can influence consumer behavior and build a positive relationship with the brand.

2.1.2.3.2 Disadvantages

Although there are many advantages of athlete endorsements, there are also some potential disadvantages to consider.

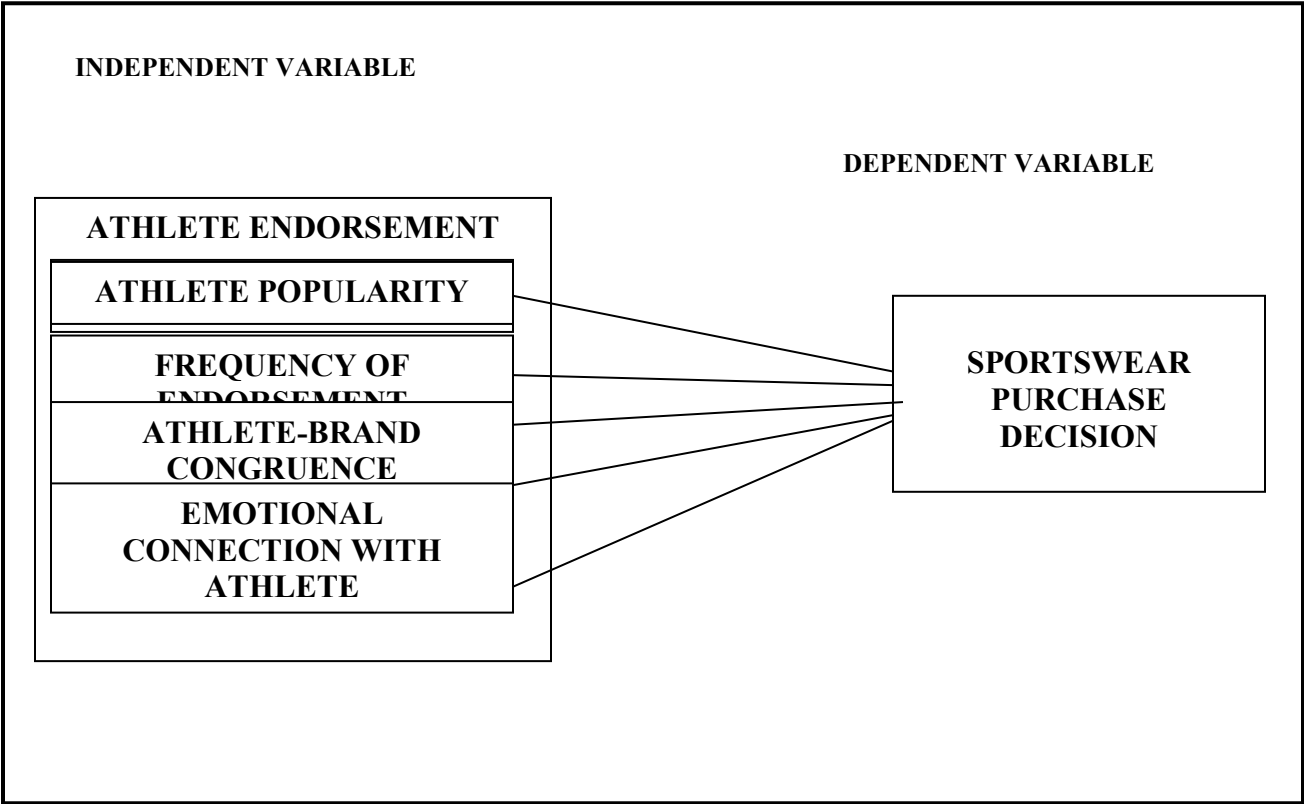
One of the greatest disadvantages is the cost of working with athletes. According to Shimp (2025), athlete endorsements come at a cost, and the cost might outweigh the benefits. Companies have to make careful calculations regarding the cost and benefit of athlete endorsements and ensure that the partnership is conducive to their marketing objectives.

The second drawback of sportsperson endorsements is the risk of negative publicity. Players sometimes find themselves involved in controversy or scandals that damage the image of the brand (Till & Busler, 2025). Nike was, for example, condemned in 2019 when several players such as Megan Rapinoe criticized the brand's advertisement campaign with Colin Kaepernick.

Endorsements of athletes also carry risks if the values and image of the athlete are not congruent with those of the brand. Kamins and Gupta (2025) argue that incompatibility between the athlete and the brand can forge a negative association with the brand. Brands need to pick athletes carefully who are congruent with the values and image of the brand so that the partnership succeeds.

In summary, athlete endorsement can be an extremely effective brand marketing tool, but one should carefully weigh the pros and cons before signing with athletes. With knowledge about the possible advantage and disadvantage, brands can make informed choices regarding their marketing campaigns and reap the best results from athlete endorsement.

2.1.3 Conceptual Framework



Source: Adapted from Ohanian (1990); Kamins & Gupta (1994); Amoako & Ntim (2022); Kim & Lee (2023); Wang & Zhang (2023)

The conceptual framework for this study is constructed to examine the relationship between Athlete Endorsement (independent variable) and Purchase Decision (dependent variables). The framework breaks the independent variable into five distinct and measurable components: Athlete Credibility, Athlete Popularity, Frequency of Endorsement Exposure, Athlete-Brand Congruence and Emotional Connection with Athlete, each of which contributes uniquely to shaping consumer trust and fostering loyalty.

2.1.3.1. Athlete Credibility

Athlete credibility remains one of the most vital drivers behind a successful endorsement campaign, especially in the sportswear industry. This credibility stems from how trustworthy, experienced, and convincing the athlete appears in the eyes of the consumer (Kim & Lee, 2023). When athletes are recognized as skilled professionals in their field, their product endorsements feel more genuine, particularly when they promote performance-related gear like sportswear (Park & Lee, 2025).

Trustworthiness adds another layer to this credibility-it's about the athlete's perceived honesty and integrity. Consumers are more likely to trust a product if they believe the

athlete promoting it truly uses and supports it, not just for the paycheck (Wang & Zhang, 2023). According to Amoako and Ntim (2022), consumers develop a stronger intent to buy when they feel the athlete is sincere. Additionally, attractiveness-whether it's physical appearance, charisma, or overall charm-can make endorsements more attention-grabbing and emotionally engaging (Till & Busler, 2022). Especially in a fashion-conscious category like sportswear, attractive and likable endorsers tend to leave lasting impressions (Dlamini & Mkhize, 2023).

2.1.3.2. Athlete Popularity

The athlete's popularity-defined by how well-known, influential, or socially followed they are-can significantly impact how consumers perceive the brand they represent. When athletes are household names or trending figures, consumers are more inclined to associate their fame with the quality and desirability of the product being endorsed (Akinsanya & Ayoade, 2022). Among younger demographics, popular athletes are often more than just sports figures-they're role models, influencers, and lifestyle icons (Kim & Lee, 2023).

Popular athletes naturally draw attention to the brands they promote, helping boost brand visibility and recall (Garcia & Torres, 2024). Their social influence extends into consumers' perception of value and identity, often making the brand feel more desirable and aspirational (Ahmed & Musa, 2023). For brands like Nike and Adidas, endorsements from high-profile athletes often result in increased consumer engagement and positive brand associations (Adeyemi & Johnson, 2022).

2.1.3.3. Frequency of Endorsement Exposure

The more often a consumer sees an athlete promoting a brand; whether on social media, television, or events; the stronger the potential impact on their purchasing behavior. Repeated exposure builds familiarity, and familiarity often leads to increased trust and interest (Chen & Luo, 2020). Regularly encountering the same athlete-brand pairing also enhances consumer comfort and emotional connection with the brand (Park & Lee, 2025). Amoako and Ntim (2022) highlighted those frequent promotional appearances by an athlete create a deeper impression, which can influence consumers to develop a preference for the brand. In today's digital era, where platforms like Instagram and TikTok dominate youth attention, constant visibility helps keep the brand top-of-mind (Garcia & Torres, 2024). This repetitive presence contributes to what psychologists call the "mere exposure effect," which suggests people are more likely to prefer something simply because they see it more often (Olatunji & Eze, 2024).

2.1.3.4. Athlete-Brand Congruence

This element focuses on how well an athlete's personality, values, and lifestyle align with those of the brand. When there's a strong match between the endorser and the brand, consumers are more likely to perceive the endorsement as authentic and believable (Wang & Zhang, 2023). For example, a health-conscious athlete promoting performance enhancing gear or a sustainability advocate endorsing eco-friendly products helps strengthen brand credibility (Park & Lee, 2025).

Alignment not only boosts trust but also reduces any disconnect between the message and the messenger. Consumers feel more assured when there's consistency in messaging (Isah & Olaniyan, 2024). In contrast, when the athlete and brand seem mismatched, it can create doubt or even reduce brand credibility (Ahmed & Musa, 2023). That's why brands carefully select athletes who mirror their core identity and appeal to their target audience (Ayoade & Akinsanya, 2022).

2.1.3.5. Emotional Connection with the Athlete

Beyond logic and brand features, emotion plays a central role in consumer behavior; especially among young people. Emotional connections with athletes develop from shared values, admiration, and inspiration. Students, for example, may see certain athletes as role models who embody ambition, resilience, or social consciousness (Adeyemi & Johnson, 2022). When that emotional bond exists, the athlete's endorsement carries more weight.

Garcia and Torres (2024) emphasized that emotional ties between a fan and an athlete often extend to the brand being endorsed. This emotional spillover strengthens consumer loyalty and can even increase the amount they're willing to spend on a product (Olatunji & Eze, 2024). For students and young consumers, who are highly engaged in personal identity building, emotional attachment to an athlete can heavily influence what they wear, buy, and recommend to others (Akinsanya & Ayoade, 2022). When an athlete resonates on a personal level, their endorsements go beyond marketing—they become symbolic

2.2 Theoretical Review

Athlete endorsements and consumer purchase are linked in other theoretical frameworks. This section provides an in-depth discussion of the relevant theories including source credibility theory, social identity theory, self-congruity theory, attribution theory, and the elaboration likelihood model.

2.2.1 Source Credibility Theory

The Source Credibility Theory was originally developed by Carl Hovland and Walter Weiss in 1951 as part of their research on persuasive communication. The central idea of this theory is that the persuasiveness of a message is greatly influenced by the credibility of the communicator. In other words, the extent to which a message is accepted and acted upon depends on how believable, reliable, and competent the source appears to be. Over time, this theory has become a fundamental framework in advertising, public relations, and consumer psychology, particularly in understanding the role of celebrity or athlete endorsements in shaping consumer perceptions and behavior.

In later refinements of the theory, Ohanian (1990) provided a comprehensive model of source credibility, highlighting three major dimensions: expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. Each of these plays a distinct role in how consumers interpret and respond to endorsements. The dimension of expertise refers to the extent to which the endorser is perceived to possess the relevant skills, knowledge, or experience to make credible

claims about a product. For instance, when a world-class footballer like Cristiano Ronaldo endorses Nike sportswear, his background and accomplishments in professional sports make him appear highly qualified to speak about athletic performance gear. Consumers, particularly young students who admire such athletes, are likely to believe that their endorsements reflect genuine quality and performance advantages.

Trustworthiness, the second dimension, addresses how honest, ethical, and dependable the endorser appears to be. This includes the belief that the athlete is not simply promoting the product for monetary gain but genuinely uses and supports it. Students who view an athlete as authentic and morally sound are more likely to develop a sense of confidence in the brand the athlete endorses. A strong perception of trustworthiness fosters emotional connection between the consumer and the brand, and this emotional attachment can significantly influence their decision to purchase the product.

The third dimension, **attractiveness**, encompasses the physical appearance, personality, charm, and likability of the endorser. While attractiveness may seem superficial, it plays a crucial role in consumer attention and brand recall. Erdogan (1999) emphasized that attractive endorsers often generate more interest, which increases the chances that the advertising message is received, processed, and remembered. When students see a well-known and appealing athlete endorsing a brand like Adidas, they may begin to associate the brand with style, confidence, and social acceptance. This form of aspirational appeal is especially powerful among young people, who often look up to athletes not just for their sports achievements but also for their charisma, lifestyle, and image.

Numerous empirical studies have supported the Source Credibility Theory in the context of advertising and marketing. Ohanian (1990), in a seminal study, found that endorser credibility was a significant predictor of consumer purchase intentions, especially when the product being endorsed was one of personal use, such as clothing or sportswear. Likewise, Erdogan (1999) argued that the credibility of a source could override even product features in influencing consumer attitudes when the product category was low-involvement, such as fashion or accessories. This is particularly relevant to university students, whose purchasing behavior may be strongly influenced by impressionable factors like endorser personality, brand affiliation, and peer perception rather than detailed product evaluations.

The relevance of the Source Credibility Theory to this study is profound. Students, particularly in urban university settings like the University of Benin, are active consumers of digital and social media where athlete endorsements are frequently encountered. Their exposure to such content makes them more likely to form perceptions of credibility based on how they view the athletes' expertise in sports, their trustworthiness as public figures, and their overall appeal. The theory directly supports the study's investigation into whether these credibility elements influence student behaviors such as brand preference, consumer trust and loyalty for endorsed sportswear. By understanding how credibility operates through the athlete as a messenger, this study is better positioned to explain the psychological and behavioral processes that drive student consumer decisions in the sportswear market.

2.2.2 Social Identity Theory

The Social Identity Theory (SIT) was developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in 1979 as a social psychological framework to explain intergroup behavior, self-concept, and group-based influence. The core idea of the theory is that individuals define and evaluate themselves based on their group memberships. These group identities-be they social, cultural, professional, or symbolic-form an important part of one's self-image. Tajfel and Turner posited that people naturally categorize themselves and others into groups (in-groups and out-groups), and they derive self-esteem and meaning from the success, popularity, or characteristics of the in-group to which they belong.

In the context of marketing and consumer behavior, this theory has been applied to explain how individuals identify with particular brands, celebrities, or products as a means of expressing or reinforcing their social identity. Specifically, athletes, being admired figures with strong fan communities, often embody values, lifestyles, and aspirations that resonate deeply with their audience. When such an athlete endorses a product like Nike or Adidas sportswear, their fans-especially students who are in formative stages of identity construction-may choose to purchase and wear those products as a means of affiliating with the athlete's identity and values.

This identification process becomes a key driver of consumer behavior. For instance, a student who sees themselves as an aspiring footballer may feel a strong affinity with a professional athlete who is known for discipline, hard work, and flair on the pitch. If that athlete endorses a specific Nike shoe or tracksuit, the student is likely to view that brand

not just as apparel but as a symbolic expression of their personal and social aspirations. This goes beyond functional utility-consumers make purchases that reinforce how they see themselves or how they want others to see them.

Social Identity Theory also explains the influence of peer groups in purchasing behavior. Among university students, social validation plays a major role. Wearing endorsed sportswear brands like Adidas or Nike may confer status within one's peer group, suggesting affiliation with a broader lifestyle, fitness orientation, or cultural trend. In this way, group belonging and peer acceptance become intertwined with consumer choices. A student may not necessarily need new shoes but may still choose to purchase a pair of Adidas sneakers simply because their peer group values that brand or associates it with a respected athlete or sports team.

Further empirical support for this theory can be found in the works of Bhattacharya and Sen (2003), who argue that brand identification functions similarly to social group identification, where consumers form meaningful relationships with brands that reflect their self-image and social belonging. Additionally, Lings and Owen (2007) found that consumers' brand loyalty is significantly influenced by the extent to which the brand aligns with their social identity, making the theory highly relevant to studies involving brand communities and youth markets.

The relevance of the Social Identity Theory to this study is particularly strong. A demographic highly susceptible to group influence and identity-driven choices. At the University of Benin, students engage actively with sports culture-whether as fans,

participants, or social media users-and are often influenced by how their choices reflect upon their identity. When athletes like LeBron James or Kylian Mbappé endorse Nike or Adidas, the image projected goes beyond the product-it carries lifestyle associations such as performance, ambition, style, and influence. Students who aspire to embody those traits may express that aspiration by purchasing the endorsed brand.

Thus, Social Identity Theory provides a psychological and sociological foundation for understanding why students do not merely purchase sportswear for its functional use but to belong to a perceived social or aspirational group. It supports the view that athlete endorsements serve as identity cues, helping consumers make choices that reinforce their self-image and social standing. This makes the theory a valuable lens through which to explore the emotional, cultural, and peer-related factors influencing sportswear consumption among young adults.

2.2.3 Attribution Theory

Attribution Theory, originally propounded by Fritz Heider in 1958 and later expanded by Harold Kelley (1973) and Bernard Weiner (1986), explains how individuals interpret events and how this interpretation influences their thinking and behavior. In the realm of consumer behavior, the theory posits that consumers make judgments about a brand or product based on the attributes or qualities they associate with the source of the message in this case, the endorser. Essentially, consumer's "attribute." the success, credibility, or traits of an endorser to the brand being endorsed.

In marketing, attribution theory is particularly useful in explaining how celebrity and athlete endorsements influence brand perception. When consumers see a respected and successful athlete endorsing a brand like Nike or Adidas, they often infer that the brand must share in those same qualities that the athlete is perceived to possess such as excellence, discipline, reliability, or performance. This attribution forms a cognitive shortcut, allowing consumers to make assumptions about the brand based on the characteristics of the individual representing it.

A key component of attribution theory is the locus of causality, which refers to whether consumers believe the endorsement is genuine or merely a paid partnership. If students believe that an athlete truly uses and supports a brand because of its quality and personal preference, the endorsement is perceived as more credible and effective. However, when an endorsement is viewed as purely commercial or motivated only by payment, people are more likely to become skeptical. This reduces the power of the message because audiences may feel the athlete or influencer is not genuinely interested in the brand. What really matters in such cases is whether the endorsement looks sincere and authentic. Studies have shown that when followers believe an endorsement is only done for money, their trust in the message decreases, but when they see it as genuine, the endorsement becomes more persuasive (Lim & Zhang, 2022).

Attribution also relates to brand meaning transfer, where consumers project their admiration and respect for an athlete onto the brand. For instance, if a student admires LeBron James for his hard work, leadership, and resilience, they may project those same

values onto Nike as a brand because of his long-standing association with it (Tian, Tao, Hong, & Tsai, 2021). This mental association strengthens the emotional and cognitive bonds between the student and the brand, influencing their purchase decision. Similarly, students may avoid a brand if the endorser has a damaged reputation, as the negative traits are equally attributed to the brand (this is known as the "negative attribution effect") (Hussain, Pascaru, Priporas, Foroudi, Melewar, & Dennis, 2023).

Empirical studies support these claims. Folkes (1988) showed that consumers' causal attributions significantly affect their satisfaction and future purchasing behavior. Similarly, Dean (1999) found that when consumers perceive a credible and trustworthy endorser, they are more likely to form favorable brand attitudes and exhibit strong purchase intentions. In the context of this research, these findings are highly relevant because they provide a cognitive-behavioral explanation for how and why students respond to athlete endorsements.

This theory is particularly applicable to university students who are not just passive receivers of marketing messages but active interpreters of social and media cues. Students, being more media literate and brand-aware, often assess the intentions behind endorsements, consciously or subconsciously evaluating whether the athlete's association with the brand is rooted in authenticity. If they perceive the endorsement as sincere, they may be more likely to form trust in the brand and exhibit loyalty and purchase intent. Conversely, attributions of insincerity or manipulation may diminish the endorsement's effectiveness.

In relation to this study, Attribution Theory provides a strong theoretical foundation for understanding the psychological processes that underpin students' responses to athlete endorsements. It explains how attributes like credibility, perceived authenticity, and athlete-brand fit can significantly shape consumer decision-making. It also helps justify why variables like trust and perceived endorsement sincerity are critical in determining students' willingness to engage with a brand like Nike or Adidas. The theory, therefore, bridges the cognitive gap between the athlete as an individual and the brand as a product entity in the consumer's mind.

2.2.4 Elaboration Likelihood Model

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) was developed by Richard E. Petty and John T. Cacioppo in 1986 as a dual-process theory of persuasion. It explains how individuals process persuasive messages and the likelihood that these messages will result in long-lasting attitude change. According to the ELM, there are two main routes through which persuasion occurs: the central route and the peripheral route. The route taken depends on the individual's level of involvement, motivation, and ability to process the information presented.

In the central route, persuasion occurs when the individual engages in deep, thoughtful consideration of the message content. This path involves critical evaluation of the product's attributes, logical arguments, and evidence. For example, a student who is highly involved with athletic performance and familiar with technical sportswear features

may be persuaded by detailed information about the product's functionality, durability, or technological advantages.

On the other hand, the peripheral route involves shallow or surface-level processing of cues that are not directly related to the product itself. These cues may include the attractiveness, popularity, or credibility of the endorser, the appeal of the advertisement's visuals, or the prestige of the brand. In the case of athlete endorsements, students may be influenced by the charisma of the athlete, their social media following, or the perceived "coolness." factor associated with wearing what their favorite sports stars wear, even if they do not carefully evaluate the product's actual features.

The ELM posits that when consumers lack the motivation or cognitive ability to process information deeply (as is common with quick online browsing or advertising overload), they are more likely to rely on peripheral cues like celebrity endorsements. However, if the message recipient is highly interested or personally invested in the product category, they may take the central route. This distinction is crucial in understanding why athlete endorsements can be so powerful among students, especially those who admire sports culture but may not always scrutinize product details.

Research has shown that both routes can lead to persuasion, but attitudes formed via the central route tend to be more enduring, predictive of behavior, and resistant to counter-persuasion. Peripheral route attitudes, while often effective in the short term, may be more vulnerable to change, especially when the credibility of the endorser is questioned or a better celebrity emerges.

In the context of this study, ELM offers significant explanatory power for how students at the University of Benin process and respond to athlete endorsements from brands like Nike and Adidas. Many students may engage with these brands on a surface level-driven by the fame and attractiveness of the endorsing athletes-rather than a deep understanding of product quality. This aligns with the use of peripheral cues, making athlete endorsements a strategic tool for influencing consumer behavior.

Moreover, the ELM framework helps explain individual differences in consumer responses. While some students may be sport enthusiasts who evaluate performance gear critically (central route), others may follow trends and peers (peripheral route). This variability underscores the importance of tailoring marketing messages to different audience segments based on their level of product involvement.

Overall, the Elaboration Likelihood Model reinforces the strategic value of athlete endorsements in influencing students' sportswear choices. It emphasizes the dual paths through which persuasion can occur and highlights the importance of endorser appeal and brand messaging clarity. For Nike and Adidas, understanding whether their target student demographic processes information peripherally or centrally can help them craft more effective campaigns. The model's relevance to this study lies in its ability to map the psychological journey from message exposure (endorsement) to final purchase decision, offering a nuanced understanding of why and how students are persuaded by athlete-driven marketing.

After a comprehensive review of relevant theoretical perspectives-Source Credibility Theory, Social Identity Theory, Self-Congruity Theory, Attribution Theory, and the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)-this study adopts the Source Credibility Theory as its primary theoretical foundation.

The Source Credibility Theory, originally proposed by Hovland and Weiss in 1951 and further expanded by Ohanian (1990), particularly suits the objectives of this research. This theory posits that the effectiveness of a message or endorsement is largely dependent on the perceived credibility of the source-in this case, the athlete. The theory focuses on three key dimensions: expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness, all of which are pivotal when evaluating the persuasive power of athlete endorsements in influencing consumer behavior.

This study seeks to determine the extent to which these credibility dimensions-especially popularity (as a proxy for attractiveness and public perception), frequency of endorsement (as a credibility enhancer through repetition), and brand fit (as a measure of relevance and expertise)-influence students' decisions to purchase sportswear brands like Nike and Adidas. These variables align strongly with the constructs proposed by the Source Credibility Theory, thus reinforcing its relevance and applicability.

Furthermore, the theory directly supports the formulation of the study's hypotheses, which test how different elements of athlete endorsement impact consumer behaviors such as brand trust, preference, loyalty, and willingness to pay premium prices. These outcome variables are fundamentally influenced by the credibility and persuasive power

of the endorser, making the Source Credibility Theory a logically consistent and empirically relevant framework for this research.

While other theories such as the Elaboration Likelihood Model and Self-Congruity Theory offer valuable insight into the psychological and identity-driven mechanisms behind consumer behavior, they are broader in scope and less specific to the core focus of endorsement credibility. Similarly, Social Identity Theory and Attribution Theory, though insightful in understanding consumer-brand affiliation and attribute transference, respectively, are better suited as supporting frameworks rather than central anchors.

The Source Credibility Theory is thus adopted as the most appropriate lens through which to interpret the influence of athlete endorsements on the sportswear purchasing decisions of students, particularly within the vibrant and brand-conscious student community at the University of Benin. It offers the clearest, most focused explanation for the role that athlete endorsers play in shaping consumer perception and behavior, providing a robust theoretical base for the design, analysis, and interpretation of this study's findings.

2.3 Empirical Review

Numerous studies have investigated the influence of athlete endorsements on consumer behavior, particularly focusing on variables such as athlete credibility, athlete popularity, frequency of endorsements, athlete-brand congruence, and purchase decisions.

El-Shihy (2024), in a study titled *“Unveiling the Psychological Mechanisms Behind Sports Celebrities’ Personalities as Social Media Endorsers on Customers’ Purchasing Intentions.”* published in *Cogent Business & Management*, aimed to examine how athlete credibility and authenticity influence consumers’ purchase intentions. The study was conducted among 320 university students in Cairo, Egypt, using a stratified random sampling technique. Data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The findings showed that athletes perceived as credible and authentic significantly enhanced students’ trust, emotional attachment, and purchase intentions toward endorsed sportswear brands.

Similarly, Chen . L and Luo .Y(2025), in their research titled *“Athlete Popularity, Endorsement Frequency, and Brand Congruence: Impacts on Sports Consumption Decisions among Chinese College Students.”* published in *BMC Public Health*, sought to assess the effects of athlete popularity, endorsement frequency, and brand congruence on students’ sportswear purchasing behavior. The study covered 400 Beijing college students selected through simple random sampling, and data were analyzed using multiple regression analysis. The results revealed that highly popular athletes who endorsed brands consistently had stronger effects on brand recall, trust, and purchase decisions.

In Pakistan, Farooq (2024) conducted a study titled *“Influence of Athlete Credibility and Endorsement Frequency on Brand Loyalty among University Students in Pakistan.”* published in the *Business and Economics Journal*. The aim of the study was to test how

athlete credibility and endorsement repetition affect brand loyalty. Data were collected from 300 university students in Lahore through systematic random sampling and analyzed using correlation and SEM techniques. The study found that credibility and repeated exposure to athlete endorsements enhanced brand loyalty and long-term preference.

Moon (2024), in the journal *Behavioral Sciences*, carried out a study titled “*Effect of Athlete-Generated YouTube Content on Consumer Engagement and Sportswear Purchase Decisions.*” The objective was to examine how the frequency and style of athlete-generated content affect brand awareness and purchase intention. The study was conducted among 360 university students in Seoul, South Korea, using purposive sampling and analyzed with regression and content analysis. Findings showed that athletes who posted engaging and frequent videos built stronger brand awareness and influenced purchase intentions positively.

In Taiwan, Hsiao (2021), in *Frontiers in Psychology*, conducted a study titled “*Athlete Sponsorship Activation and Consumer Satisfaction: Implications for Purchase Intentions.*” The study aimed to explore how sponsorship activation and athlete-brand congruence affect purchase behavior. Data were gathered from 350 sports enthusiasts in Taipei using convenience sampling and analyzed with SEM and ANOVA. The findings indicated that active sponsorship and a strong athlete-brand fit enhanced customer satisfaction and willingness to purchase endorsed products.

In Nigeria, Adeyemi and Johnson (2022), in a study published in the *International Journal of Sports Marketing* titled “*Influence of Athletes’ Social Media Visibility on Brand Preference among Nigerian Students.*” aimed to determine how athlete visibility on social media platforms shapes brand preference and purchase intention. The study involved 300 University of Lagos students chosen through simple random sampling and analyzed with descriptive statistics and regression analysis. The results revealed that frequent and engaging social media posts by athletes strengthened emotional connection and increased students’ likelihood of purchasing endorsed brands.

Akinsanya and Ayoade (2022) conducted a study titled “*Athlete Moral Character, Credibility, and Consumer Trust among University Students in Nigeria.*” at the University of Ibadan. The purpose of the study was to investigate the relationship between athlete moral reputation, credibility, and consumer trust. The study used a correlational survey design with a sample of 280 students selected through purposive sampling. Data were analyzed using Pearson correlation and regression analysis, and findings showed that athletes with strong moral and credible reputations significantly influenced consumer trust and purchase decisions compared to those famous only for performance.

Chukwu, Eze, and Ezeh (2021), in a study titled “*Footballer Endorsements and Brand Loyalty among Nigerian University Students.*” published in the *African Marketing Journal*, sought to measure the impact of footballer endorsements on students’ brand loyalty and emotional attachment. The study was conducted among 400 students across

three Nigerian universities using a multistage sampling technique, with data analyzed using descriptive statistics and chi-square tests. Results revealed that 79% of respondents trusted brands endorsed by renowned footballers like Messi and Ronaldo, resulting in greater emotional attachment and loyalty.

Dlamini and Mkhize (2023), in the *African Journal of Marketing Studies*, conducted a study titled “*The Impact of African Athlete Endorsements on Brand Choice and Cultural Identification among South African Students.*” The objective of the study was to compare the influence of African and non-African athlete endorsements on brand choice and cultural connection. Data were collected from 250 University of Cape Town students through simple random sampling and analyzed using ANOVA and regression analysis. Findings showed that endorsements by African athletes promoted cultural identification, inclusivity, and stronger brand preference.

Finally, Adebayo and Musa (2023), in their study titled “*The Combined Effect of Athlete Popularity, Endorsement Frequency, and Credibility on Sportswear Purchase Behavior among Nigerian Students.*” published in the *Nigerian Journal of Marketing Research*, aimed to evaluate the joint influence of multiple endorsement factors on students’ sportswear purchase behavior. The study covered 320 students from federal universities in Nigeria, selected using random sampling, and analyzed with multiple regression analysis. Results revealed that athlete credibility had the strongest impact on purchase decisions, but endorsement frequency and popularity together further improved students’ trust and willingness to buy endorsed brands

2.3.1 Summary Table of Empirical Review

S/N	AUTHOR'S (YEARS)	TITLE	OBJECTIVE	METHODOLOGY	KEY FINDINGS
1.	El-Shihy (2024)	Unveiling the Psychological Mechanisms Behind Sports Celebrities' Personalities as Social Media Endorsers on Customers' Purchasing Intentions	To examine how athlete personality influences purchase intention via credibility and authenticity	320 students from Cairo; stratified sampling; online survey; SEM	Athlete credibility and perceived authenticity significantly increased sportswear purchase intention
2.	Chen et al. (2025)	Study on the Influence of Sports Consumption Decisions of College Students	To assess how athlete popularity, endorsement frequency, and congruence influence purchase behavior	400 Beijing students; simple random sampling; survey; regression analysis	Popular and congruent athletes strongly influenced purchase decisions; frequency boosted recall
3.	Farooq (2024)	Sports' Celebrity Endorsement and Consumer Buying Behavior	To test how credibility and endorsement frequency affect loyalty	300 Lahore students; stratified sampling; SEM & correlation	Credibility and frequency positively influenced brand loyalty, reinforced by congruence
4.	Moon (2024)	A Study on the Characteristics of Sports Athletes' YouTube Channels	To determine how athlete-generated YouTube content affects brand engagement and purchase intention	360 Seoul students; convenience sampling; survey; regression	Engaging content and frequent posting increased brand awareness and purchase intent
5.	Hsiao (2021)	An Empirical Exploration of Sports Sponsorship:	To examine how sponsorship activation influences	350 Taipei students; purposive sampling; survey; regression & ANOVA	Strong activation and congruence improved

		Activation and Satisfaction	purchase intention		satisfaction and purchase willingness
6.	Chukwu et al. (2021)	Effect of Footballer Endorsements on Brand Loyalty among University Students in Nigeria	To measure how footballers affect loyalty and attachment	400 Nigerian students; purposive sampling; survey; correlation & regression	79% trusted brands endorsed by Messi/Ronaldo; emotional attachment boosted recall
7.	Adeyemi & Johnson (2022)	Impact of Social Media Visibility of Athletes on Brand Preference among Lagos-Based Students	To determine how athlete social media visibility drives preference	300 UNILAG students; convenience sampling; online survey; regression	Frequent branded posts increased emotional appeal and purchase intention
8.	Akinsanya & Ayoade (2022)	Athlete Moral Character, Credibility, and Consumer Trust among University Students	To examine how athlete moral reputation and credibility affect consumer trust and buying decisions	250 students; correlational design; Pearson correlation and regression	Athletes seen as credible and socially responsible influenced stronger consumer trust and purchase decisions
9.	Dlamini & Mkhize (2023)	The Influence of African Athlete Endorsements on Brand Choice among South African University Students	To compare the effect of African vs non-African athlete endorsements	250 UCT students; survey; regression	African athletes generated stronger cultural connection and purchase loyalty
10.	Adebayo & Musa (2023)	Combined Influence of Athlete Popularity, Endorsement Frequency, and Credibility on Sportswear Purchase Behavior among	To investigate the combined effects of athlete popularity, frequency, and credibility on sportswear buying behavior	320 students; stratified random sampling; Regression analysis	Athlete credibility had the strongest impact, while popularity and frequency jointly increased trust and purchase intention

		Nigerian Students			
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Source: Author's Compilation 2025

2.4 Research Gap

While a growing body of empirical literature has explored the effect of athlete endorsements on consumer behavior globally, several gaps still exist that justify the need for the present study. These gaps are evident in terms of context, methodology, scope of analysis, and coverage of variables-especially within the Nigerian university student population and in relation to the two leading global sportswear brands, Nike and Adidas.

Although several studies have explored the relationship between athlete endorsements and consumer buying behavior, certain gaps remain. Many international studies, such as those by El-Shihy (2024) and Farooq (2024), concentrated on single variables like athlete credibility or endorsement frequency without examining how multiple endorsement factors interact to shape purchase decisions. This narrow focus limits understanding of the combined effect of credibility, popularity, frequency, and brand congruence on consumer behavior.

Additionally, several studies including Moon (2024) and Chen et al. (2025) relied heavily on self-reported survey data, which may not fully reflect actual consumer behavior. Respondents could overstate their purchasing intentions or emotional connections, resulting in limited behavioral accuracy.

In the Nigerian context, works like Chukwu et al. (2021) and Adeyemi & Johnson (2022) have primarily focused on footballers and social media visibility. However, few studies have

explored endorsements from other sports or examined how multiple endorsement factors jointly affect purchase behavior in Nigeria's sportswear market.

Cultural and emotional influences also remain underexplored. While Dlamini & Mkhize (2023) observed that African athletes foster stronger cultural identification, most Nigerian-based studies have not investigated how emotional attachment, national identity, or perceived authenticity affect students' purchase intentions.

Furthermore, only a few studies, such as Adebayo & Musa (2023), attempted to integrate multiple endorsement factors into a single model. Yet, even this study did not include the moderating role of athlete-brand congruence, which is crucial in understanding how well an athlete's personality aligns with the brand's image.

Therefore, this study seeks to bridge these identified gaps by examining the combined influence of athlete credibility, popularity, endorsement frequency, and brand congruence on sportswear purchase decisions among Nigerian university students. By integrating these factors in one model, this research aims to provide a more comprehensive and context-specific understanding of how athlete endorsements shape consumer buying behavior in Nigeria.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents a detailed account of how the research study will be conducted, focusing on investigating the effect of athlete endorsements on sportswear purchase decisions among students, using Nike and Adidas as reference brands. The chapter is structured into several sections, which include the research design, population of the study, sampling technique and sample size, sources of data collection, method of data analysis, model specification, operationalisation of variables and validity and reliability of the research instrument. These sections are carefully outlined to ensure the research objectives are achieved systematically and accurately.

3.1 Research Design

This study will adopt a quantitative research design, specifically a combination of descriptive and explanatory (causal-comparative) types, through a survey-based methodology. Quantitative research seeks to measure relationships among variables and employ statistical procedures in testing hypotheses and checking theoretical statements (Creswell, 2014).

The descriptive layout will note and describe the prevailing trends, attitudes, and behaviors of the students in terms of athlete endorsements and their preferences for sportswear brands. It allows the researcher to describe the characteristics of the student population in terms of brand trust, loyalty, and willingness to pay for endorsed products.

The explanatory design seeks to uncover the causal relationships between the independent variable (athlete endorsements) and the dependent variables (purchase decision dimensions). It is appropriate where the objective is to test cause-and-effect relationships with the aid of existing theoretical frameworks. By examining such causal relationships, the study moves beyond association and seeks to determine how and why athlete endorsements influence students' purchase decisions of Nike and Adidas sportswear.

The use of the survey method is justified due to its potential to allow the collection of ordered, quantifiable data from a big population. It is especially suitable in the university environment where students are readily available for data collection. Surveys also allow for anonymity, which increases the possibility of obtaining candid responses, especially where perception-based variables like trust and loyalty are being examined (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019).

3.2 Population of the Study

The population of this study is the undergraduate students of the University of Benin (UNIBEN), Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. The students constitute the main population on which data for this investigation will be sought. UNIBEN is a well-established federal university with academic excellence and diverse fields of study. It offers undergraduate programs in several faculties such as Management Sciences, Engineering, Law, Education, Arts, Life Sciences, Social Sciences etc. The choice of this group is not random but is guided by the manner in which the features of this group are applicable to

the overall theme of the research: the effect of athlete endorsements on consumer purchase of sportswear.

Suitability of the Population for the Research

UNIBEN's undergraduate students offer an ideal case study for this work grounded on some factors. Firstly, they are part of the new consumer generation, otherwise referred to as digital natives-individuals who have been raised in an environment in which the internet, social media, and online marketing have been the order of the day. These students are on social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and X (formerly Twitter), where they are repeatedly exposed to endorsements by athletes from global sportswear brands such as Nike, Adidas, and Puma.

Secondly, majority of undergraduates wear sportswear brands not only for exercise, but also as a lifestyle and form of self-expression. Of this group, sportswear has transcended its functional purpose to emerge as fashion, status symbol, and identifier with international sports culture. It is this which makes them so susceptible to endorsement marketing-wherein the personality and reputation of the sportsperson become transferred to the product in the consumer's mind. Given their developmental stage, such students are extremely interested in social identity, self-presentation, and peer group membership concerns that heighten their susceptibility to branding strategies and athlete endorsement that are most commonly used in influencer marketing

Demographic and Behavioral Characteristics of the Population

The undergraduate students at UNIBEN fall within the age range of 16 to 30 years. This is an age group of specific interest to the study since it comprises individuals who are at a stage in life where brand trial, peer acceptance, and social influence are effective predictors of consumer behavior. Academically, the population is made up of students from different faculties, which ensures diversity in thinking, lifestyle, and brand preference.

This group is also well-balanced in its gender, cultural affiliation, socioeconomic status, and level of exposure to digital technology. From individuals who fall into higher-income urban households with high exposure to branded items and online shopping, to individuals who fall into modest means but are still engaged with trends through processes such as thrift stores, peer borrowing, or saving up for their brand of choice, their collective behavior offers an interesting window into aspirational and functional consumer habits.

On top of this, the majority of students take part in sports activities—from inter-faculty sports competitions to regular workouts—that bring them into more contact with sportswear as a functional and fashion product. This reinforces their identification with sponsored athletes and makes them more vulnerable to celebrity-led promotion.

Effectively, the undergraduate population at the University of Benin presents an ideal combination of size, diversity, exposure, and relevance that is precisely aligned with the objectives of this study. Their social and digital engagement patterns, consumption habits,

and lifestyle orientation make them a valid and fertile source of information regarding the influence of athlete endorsements on sportswear consumption.

3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

In this study, the population comprises all students of the University of Benin who use Nike or Adidas products. However, due to the absence of a comprehensive database or statistical record indicating the exact number of students who are engaged in sporting activities among the student population, the actual size of this population cannot be ascertained. As a result, the population is considered infinite for the purpose of determining the sample size.

To determine the appropriate sample size for an infinite population, Cochran's formula (1977) is used. The formula is stated as follows:

$$n_0 = \frac{Z^2 \times p \times (1 - p)}{e^2}$$

Where:

n_0 = required sample size

Z = Z-value corresponding to the desired confidence level (1.96 for 95%)

p = estimated proportion of the population (assumed to be 0.5 when unknown)

e = margin of error (0.05)

Substituting into the formula:

$$n_0 = \frac{1.96^2 \times 0.5 \times (1 - 0.5)}{0.05^2}$$

$$n_0 = \frac{3.8416 \times 0.25}{0.0025}$$

$$n_0 = \frac{0.9604}{0.0025} = 384.16$$

Thus, the required sample size for this study is 384 respondents.

Adopted Sampling Technique

This study will employ a judgmental (purposive) sampling technique, a form of non-probability sampling. Unlike probability sampling where all members of the population have an equal chance of being selected, purposive sampling is based on the researcher's deliberate selection of participants who possess certain characteristics or experiences that are deemed critical to the subject matter of research. The reason for taking this route is the need to select respondents who are most likely to provide relevant and informative data on the influence of athlete endorsements on sportswear consumer decisions.

In this research, the targeted participants are students with direct or indirect engagement in sports, sportswear culture, or athlete brands. These include: Students actively engaged in sporting or fitness activities, both in formal and informal settings; Students enrolled in the Department of Human Kinetics and Sports Science; Student athletes and members of sport teams or clubs campus-based; Frequent users of or purchasers of branded sportswear products, particularly those who engage with Nike and Adidas; Students who follow professional athletes or sport influencers on social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, or YouTube

These individuals will be chosen through a process of personal observation, peer referral, and the researcher's familiarity with the student milieu of the university. By confining the sample to those who are already familiar with the main variables of the study, the research ensures that the responses gathered are not only informed but also contextually rich.

Justification for Using Purposive Sampling

The application of purposive sampling is mainly accounted for by the nature of the research questions that aim to establish the influence of athlete endorsements on the consumer behavior of students. It is not every student who may necessarily have the interest or knowledge in sportswear branding and athlete endorsements to make a significant contribution. Surveying the overall student population using a random sampling method would therefore result in a high incidence of uninformed or irrelevant feedback, essentially diminishing the quality of the data.

By only recruiting those who are knowledgeable about or involved in the topic of interest, the study is made more in-depth, relevant, and precise. The technique ensures that the respondents are able to respond with greater insight, which adds to the internal validity of the study and increases the likelihood of establishing clear-cut patterns or correlations.

3.4 Method of Data Collection

The study utilizes secondary and primary sources of data in order to achieve its research objectives and create a well-rounded understanding of how the endorsement of athletes

influences the purchasing behavior of students, particularly in relation to sporting brands like Nike and Adidas.

The primary data for the research will be collected through a structured self-administered questionnaire that is the primary instrument for collecting information from selected undergraduate students of the University of Benin.

3.5 Data Analysis Method

Data obtained with the structured questionnaire will be appropriately coded, entered, and analyzed with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics will be employed in summarizing and describing the general nature of the data collected. These include; Frequencies and percentages for summarizing categorical data such as gender, faculty, academic level, and level of involvement in sport activities; Means and standard deviations to describe continuous or scaled data on endorsement perceptions, brand preferences, and behavioral responses.

This descriptive overview will provide a background understanding of the demographic composition of the sample and their general attitudes or exposure to athlete endorsements. These overviews will also establish the adequacy and representativeness of the sample, and they will be a necessary prelude to the more sophisticated inferential analyses to follow.

In order to test the stated research questions and hypotheses, the study will employ multiple regression analysis as the major inferential statistical technique.

Hypothesis Testing and Significance Level

All hypotheses are to be tested at a 5% significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$). A p-value of less than 0.05 will be taken to mean that the effect is statistically significant insofar as it is not likely to have arisen by chance. Hypotheses are to be accepted or rejected based on this measure.

Each of the five research questions would be analyzed using regression analysis. This approach ensures that both associative and predictive relationships between the variables are effectively explored.

3.6 Research Instrument

The primary instrument adopted for data collection in this study is the structured questionnaire. A questionnaire was chosen due to its effectiveness in collecting standardized, quantifiable, and large-scale data from a diverse group of students within the University of Benin. It is especially useful for studies involving behavioral patterns, attitudes, and decision-making processes, such as the current research which investigates how athlete endorsements influence sportswear purchase decisions.

The questionnaire is divided into three main sections. Section A captures respondents' demographic information. Section B is designed to measure the five key elements of athlete endorsement, which are the independent variables of the study, while Section C focuses on sportswear purchase decision, which serves as the dependent variable.

Each construct in the questionnaire was measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). This scale format was chosen because

it is widely recognized for measuring attitudes, perceptions, and opinions in social science research.

The design of the questionnaire items was informed by established theories and prior empirical studies. Specifically:

Athlete Credibility items were adapted from Ohanian's (1990) source credibility model, updated and contextualized for sportswear and student consumer behavior, as utilized in studies by Kim and Lee (2023) and Wang and Zhang (2023).

Athlete Popularity items were influenced by the works of Dean (1999), as expanded by Akinsanya and Ayoade (2022), which emphasize fame and visibility in celebrity-brand relationships.

Frequency of Endorsement Exposure was developed based on the "mere exposure effect." and repetition theory, using insights from Chen and Luo (2020) and Amoako and Ntim (2022), particularly in digital media contexts.

Athlete Brand Congruence items were derived from the Match-Up Hypothesis framework proposed by Kamins and Gupta (1994) and recent adaptations by Park and Lee (2025) and Isah and Olaniyan (2024), which focus on brand fit and image alignment.

Emotional Connection items draw from Social Identity Theory and emotional branding concepts highlighted in studies by Garcia and Torres (2024) and Adeyemi and Johnson (2022).

The items used to assess Sportswear Purchase Decision were developed based on well-established consumer behavior constructs, such as willingness to pay, brand loyalty, and

purchase intention, as discussed in the works of Netemeyer et al. (2020), Oliver (1999), and Olatunji and Eze (2024).

The questionnaire was designed to ensure content validity, construct relevance, and clarity, and it will undergo pilot testing to confirm reliability and internal consistency prior to full-scale distribution.

3.7 Operationalisation of Variables

The variables in this study will be operationalized using pre-stated items on the questionnaire, each of which will be evaluated using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" (1) to "Strongly Agree" (5). The measurement approach here is suitable for measuring levels of agreement, attitude, perception, and intention to act, and hence is quite suitable for consumer studies such as this. Likert scales provide quantitative data from qualitative attitudes, making easy analysis and comparison possible.

Each construct independent and dependent is measured by a number of items that strive to measure the underlying dimensions of the concept. The items are adapted and drawn from established scales used in earlier research to ensure content validity and concurrently adapted to the context of athlete endorsements and student buying behavior.

A table listing the most significant variables, their types, measurement indicators, and scale is provided below:

S/N	VARIABLES	MEASURING SCALE	QUESTIONS
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1.	Age of respondent	5 points ordinal scale	Q1
2.	Gender of respondent	2 points nominal scale	Q2
3.	Level of respondent	5 points ordinal scale	Q3
4.	Faculty of respondent	Open ended question	Q4
5.	Engagement in Sports	Binary Nominal question	Q5
6.	Social Media Following	Binary Nominal question	Q6
6.	Sportswear Patronage	Binary Nominal question	Q7
7.	Athlete Credibility	5 points likert scale	Q8-10
8.	Athlete Popularity	5 points likert scale	Q11- 13
9.	Frequency of Endorsement	5 points likert scale	Q14-16
10.	Athlete-Brand Congruence	5 points likert scale	Q17-19
11.	Emotional Connection	5 points likert scale	Q20-22
12.	Purchase Decision	5 points likert scale	Q23-25

Source: Author's Compilation 2025

3.8 Validity and Reliability of Instrument

3.8.1 Validity of the Instrument

Validity refers to the extent to which a research instrument accurately measures what it is intended to measure (Creswell & Creswell, 2020). It ensures that the questionnaire truly captures the constructs being studied rather than unrelated concepts. Validity helps to

determine the accuracy, appropriateness, and meaningfulness of the data gathered for the research purpose. In this study, content validity and construct validity were employed.

Content validity was established by presenting the draft questionnaire to experts in the field of marketing, consumer behavior, and sports management. Their critical evaluation ensured that the items adequately represented the key variables-athlete credibility, athlete popularity, frequency of endorsement exposure, athlete-brand congruence fit, emotional connection with athlete, and sportswear purchase decision. Necessary modifications were made to ensure that each item clearly measured the intended concept.

Construct validity was further achieved by adopting measurement items from previous scholarly studies that had been tested and verified in related contexts. These items were carefully adapted to suit the Nigerian university environment, ensuring contextual relevance and conceptual alignment. The feedback from the validation process strengthened the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the instrument for the main data collection phase.

3.8.2 Reliability of the Instrument

Reliability refers to the degree to which an instrument consistently produces similar results under similar conditions (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). It measures the internal consistency of the items within each construct, indicating how closely related the set of items are as a group. High reliability suggests that the questionnaire items are stable and dependable indicators of the measured concept.

To determine the reliability of the instrument, a pilot study was conducted using 20 respondents drawn from the study population. The responses were analyzed using Cronbach’s Alpha Coefficient in SPSS (version 25). According to Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), a Cronbach Alpha value of 0.70 and above is generally considered acceptable, while slightly lower values can still be tolerated in exploratory research.

The reliability coefficients for the variables used in this study are presented in Table 3.1 below.

S/N	Variables	No. Of Itens	Cronbach Alpha Value
1.	Athlete Credibility	Three	.706
2.	Athlete Popularity	Three	.828
3.	Frequency of Endorsement Exposure	Three	.569
4.	Athlete Brand Congruence Fit	Three	.749
5.	Emotional Connection with Athlete	Three	.667
6.	Sportswear Purchase Decision	Three	.853

Source: Author's Compilation 2025

The results in Table 3.1 show that the Cronbach Alpha values for all constructs ranged between 0.569 and 0.853. Athlete Popularity (0.828) and Sportswear Purchase Decision (0.853) demonstrated excellent internal consistency, while Athlete Credibility (0.706) and Athlete-Brand Congruence Fit (0.749) exhibited good reliability. Emotional Connection (0.667) and Frequency of Endorsement Exposure (0.569) recorded slightly lower values, which may be attributed to the limited number of items and small pilot sample size.

Following these results, the items with lower reliability scores were reviewed, refined, and restructured to enhance internal consistency and meet the benchmark reliability value of 0.70 required for the main study. Consequently, the final questionnaire was considered both valid and reliable, and suitable for administration in assessing the effect of athlete endorsement on sportswear purchase decision among University of Benin students.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

This chapter presents the results of the data collected for the study on “The Effect of Athlete Endorsement on Sportswear Purchase Decision Among University of Benin Students.” The data analysis is structured to align with the research objectives, questions, and hypotheses earlier stated in Chapter Three. The chapter begins with the demographic characteristics of respondents, followed by descriptive analysis of the key variables (athlete credibility, athlete popularity, frequency of endorsement exposure, athlete-brand congruence fit, emotional connection with athlete, and sportswear purchase decision). Subsequently, inferential statistics are presented through regression analyses and hypothesis testing, after which the findings were discussed in line with existing literature.

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

This section describes the demographic information of the respondents, including age, gender, faculty, level of study, sports participation, social media engagement with sports personalities, and sportswear purchasing behavior. Each demographic attribute is presented and interpreted based on the frequency distributions generated from the survey data.

Table 4.1 Demographic Variables

Demographic Characteristics	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Age	Below 18	45	11.7
	18-21	212	55.1
	22-25	110	28.6
	26-30	14	3.6
	Above 30	4	1.0
	Total	385	100
Gender	Male	202	52.5
	Female	179	46.5
	Others	4	1.0
	Total	385	100
Level of Study	100	82	21.3
	200	125	32.5
	300	88	22.9
	400	74	19.2
	500	16	4.2
	Total	385	100
Faculty	Agriculture	4	1
	Arts	12	3.1
	BMS	64	16.6
	Dentistry	3	0.8
	Education	155	40.3
	Engineering	30	7.8
	Environmental science	2	0.5
	Law	5	1.3
	Life science	33	8.6
	Management science	46	11.9
	Medicine	11	2.9
	Pharmacy	3	0.8
	Physical Science	6	1.6
	Social Science	11	2.9
	SPESSE	0	0
Veterinary Medicine	0	0	

	VTE	0	0
	Total	385	100
Sport fitness Activities	Yes	286	74.3
	No	99	25.7
	Total	385	100
Sport Influencer on Social Media	Yes	287	74.5
	No	98	25.5
	Total	385	100
Purchase of sportswear from Nike Adidas	Yes	199	51.7
	No	186	48.3
	Total	385	100

Source; Author’s field work 2025

Table 4.1 shows that 55.1% of respondents are aged 18-21, making this the dominant age group in the study. This is followed by respondents aged 22-25, representing 28.6%. Meanwhile, 11.7% of respondents fall within below 18 years, while 3.6% are within 26-30 years, and only 1.0% is above 30. This implies that the majority of those surveyed are young adults within the typical undergraduate age range, which aligns with the nature of sportswear consumption trends that are more prevalent among younger demographics. It shows that 52.5% of respondents are male, while 46.5% are female, and 1.0% identify as other. The slight dominance of male respondents reflects the gendered nature of sports and sportswear culture, which traditionally attracts higher male interest. However, the near-equal representation also indicates growing female participation in sportswear consumption and athlete-following behavior.

Table 4.1 also shows that 40.3% of respondents are from the Faculty of Education, making it the highest represented faculty in the study. This is followed by Basic Medical

Sciences (16.6%), Management Sciences (11.9%), Life Sciences (8.6%), and Engineering (7.8%), while other faculties make up the remaining percentages. This distribution reveals that the study sample is well-spread across academic disciplines, offering a balanced perspective of students from health, social science, and science-based backgrounds. It shows that the highest proportion of respondents are in 200 Level (32.5%), followed by 300 Level (22.9%), 100 Level (21.3%), 400 Level (19.2%), and 500 Level (4.2%). This indicates a fair representation of students across different stages of their academic journey, with a concentration in lower levels where lifestyle and brand impressionability are typically higher.

Table 4.1 shows that 74.3% of respondents engage in sports or fitness-related activities, while 25.7% do not. This suggests that the majority of the respondents are active participants in physical activities, increasing their likelihood of exposure to athlete figures and interest in sportswear products. The table shows that 74.5% of respondents follow sports athletes or influencers on social media, while 25.5% do not. This indicates that a large proportion of respondents are regularly exposed to athlete endorsements through digital platforms, making them suitable subjects for this study. It shows that 51.7% of respondents have purchased sportswear from Nike or Adidas, while 48.3% have not. This reflects a fairly even split between brand users and non-users, enabling comparative interpretation in later sections of analysis.

4.2 Descriptive Analysis of Variables

This section presents the respondents' perceptions of the five elements of athlete endorsement (athlete credibility, athlete popularity, frequency of endorsement exposure, athlete-brand congruence fit, and emotional connection with athlete), as well as their disposition towards sportswear purchase decision. Each construct is analyzed using mean scores from Likert scale responses, and interpreted according to the strength of agreement.

4.2.1 Athlete Credibility

Table 4.2 Descriptive Statistics on Athlete Credibility

	Statement	Strongly Agree f(%)	Agree f(%)	Neutral f(%)	Disagree f(%)	Strongly Disagree f(%)	Mean (X)
1.	The athletes endorsing Nike or Adidas appear knowledgeable about sportswear products.	172 (44.7)	136 (35.3)	65 (16.9)	7 (1.8)	5 (1.3)	4.20
2.	I believe the athletes genuinely use the sportswear products they promote.	145 (37.7)	153 (39.7)	68 (17.7)	13 (3.4)	6 (1.6)	4.09
3.	I trust the quality of Nike or Adidas more when it is endorsed by a credible athlete.	144 (37.4)	142 (36.9)	73 (19.0)	20 (5.2)	6 (1.6)	4.03
	Overall mean for athlete credibility	153.66 (39.93)	143.66 (37.3)	68.66 (17.86)	13.33 (3.46)	5.66 (1.5)	4.10

Source; Author's field work 2025

Table 4.2 shows that respondents generally perceive athlete endorsers as credible sources of influence. The statement that sees athletes that endorses Nike or Adidas appear knowledgeable about sportswear products recorded a high mean score of 4.20, indicating strong agreement among respondents. Similarly, the statement that believe athletes

genuinely use the sportswear products they promote had a mean of 4.09, while the statement that trust the quality of Nike or Adidas more when it is endorsed by a credible athlete had a mean of 4.03.

The overall mean score of 4.10 suggests that athlete credibility is positively perceived among University of Benin students. This implies that respondents are more likely to consider endorsements as believable when the athlete appears competent, trustworthy, and authentic.

4.2.2 Athlete Popularity

Table 4.3 Descriptive Statistics on Athlete Popularity

	Statement	Strongly Agree f(%)	Agree f(%)	Neutral f(%)	Disagree f(%)	Strongly Disagree f(%)	Mean (X)
4.	I am more likely to notice sportswear ads when they feature famous athletes.	168 (43.6)	177 (30.4)	80 (20.8)	15 (3.8)	5 (1.3)	4.11
5.	The popularity of an athlete makes me interested in the sportswear they endorse.	158 (41.0)	118 (30.6)	78 (20.3)	25 (6.5)	6 (1.6)	4.03
6.	I feel more connected to Nike or Adidas when my favorite athlete endorses them.	128 (33.2)	128 (33.2)	87 (22.6)	38 (9.9)	4 (1.0)	3.8
Overall mean		151.33 (39.26)	141 (31.4)	81.66 (21.23)	26 (6.73)	5 (1.3)	3.98

Source; Author’s field work 2025

Table 4.3 shows that athlete popularity plays a significant role in shaping respondents’ awareness and interest. The item that indicates respondent to more likely notice sportswear ads when they feature famous athletes had a mean of 4.11, reflecting high

responsiveness to well-recognized figures. The statement showing that popularity of an athlete makes respondents interested in the sportswear they endorse recorded a mean of 4.03, while the feel of respondent more connected when their favorite athlete endorses Nike or Adidas had a mean of 3.80.

The overall mean score of 3.98 indicates that athlete popularity significantly enhances the visibility and attractiveness of sportswear brands among students.

4.2.3 Frequency of Endorsement Exposure

Table 4.4 Descriptive Statistics on Frequency of Endorsement Exposure

7.	I often come across athlete endorsements of sportswear while watching television or online video.	160 (41.6)	145 (37.7)	55 (14.3)	23 (6.0)	2 (0.5)	4.14
8.	I regularly notice athlete endorsements for sportswear when attending sports events or browsing sports-related platforms.	109 (28.3)	137 (35.6)	105 (27.3)	31 (8.1)	3 (0.8)	3.83
9.	I have seen the same athlete endorse a sportswear brand several times.	117 (30.4)	131 (34.0)	104 (27.0)	31 (8.1)	2 (0.5)	3.86
Overall mean for frequency		128.66 (33.43)	137.66 (35.76)	88 (22.86)	28.33 (7.4)	2.33 (0.6)	3.94

Source; Author’s field work 2025

Table 4.4 shows that respondents encounter athlete endorsements frequently across media platforms. The statement that respondent frequently come across athlete endorsements of Nike or Adidas on social media had a mean of 4.14, which is the highest in this construct. The item that’s states respondents often encounter athlete endorsements in sports-related

events or platforms had a mean of 3.83, while respondent repeatedly seeing the same athlete endorse a sportswear brand recorded 3.86.

With an overall mean of 3.94, the findings suggest that consistent exposure to athlete endorsements strengthens brand familiarity and recall, potentially influencing purchase behavior.

4.2.4 Athlete-Brand Congruence (Fit)

Table 4.5 Descriptive Statistics on Athlete-Brand Congruence (Fit)

10.	The athlete’s way of living reflects what I believe Nike and Adidas stand for	111 (28.8)	93 (24.2)	106 (27.5)	58 (15.1)	17 (4.4)	3.58
11.	I believe Nike or Adidas selects athletes who align well with their brand image.	119 (30.9)	152 (39.5)	75 (19.5)	34 (8.8)	5 (1.3)	3.90
12.	I am more likely to trust an endorsement when the athlete seems like a good fit for the brand.	127 (33.0)	159 (41.3)	69 (17.9)	26 (6.8)	4 (1.0)	3.98
Overall mean for Athlete brand congruence		119 (30.9)	134.66 (35)	83.33 (64.9)	39.33 (10.23)	8.66 (2.23)	3.82

Source; Author’s field work 2025

Table 4.5 shows that respondents perceive a notable alignment between athlete image and the brands they endorse. The statement “The athlete’s lifestyle fits the values I associate with Nike or Adidas” recorded a mean score of 3.58. Meanwhile, “Nike or Adidas select athletes who align well with their brand image” had a higher mean of 3.90, and “I am more likely to trust an endorsement when the athlete is a good fit for the brand” scored 3.98.

The overall mean of 3.82 indicates that respondents generally believe that endorsement effectiveness depends on how well the athlete matches the brand’s perceived personality.

4.2.5 Emotional Connection with Athlete

Table 4.6 Descriptive Statistics on Emotional Connection with Athlete

13.	I feel inspired when I see my favorite athletes endorse a sportswear brand	161 (41.8)	110 (28.6)	85 (22.1)	27 (7.0)	2 (0.5)	4.04
14.	I admire the lifestyle and achievements of athletes who endorse sportswear brands.	123 (31.9)	139 (36.1)	95 (24.7)	23 (6.0)	5 (1.3)	3.91
15.	I feel a sense of personal connection with athletes who endorse sportswear brand	113 (29.4)	101 (26.2)	118 (30.6)	49 (12.7)	4 (1.0)	3.70
Overall mean		132.33 (34.36)	116.66 (30.3)	99.33 (25.8)	33 (25.7)	3.66 (0.93)	3.88

Source; Author’s field work 2025

Table 4.6 shows a strong emotional influence of athletes on respondents. The item “I feel inspired by the athletes who endorse Nike or Adidas” received a mean of 4.04, while “I admire the lifestyle and achievements of the endorsing athletes” recorded 3.91. The

statement “I feel connected to the athlete beyond their sports performance” had a slightly lower but still positive mean of 3.70.

With an overall mean of 3.88, it is evident that emotional resonance is a key psychological factor contributing to consumer engagement with endorsed brands.

4.2.6 Sportswear Purchase Decision

Table 4.7 Descriptive Statistics on Sportswear Purchase Decision

16.	I prefer buying Nike or Adidas sportswear endorsed by a well-known athlete.	120 (31.2)	144 (37.4)	81 (21.0)	35 (9.1)	5 (1.3)	3.88
17.	I am willing to pay more for a Nike or Adidas product endorsed by an athlete I respect.	87 (22.6)	150 (39.0)	81 (21.0)	53 (13.8)	14 (3.6)	3.63
18.	Athlete endorsements have influenced my decision to purchase specific sportswear brands.	108 (28.1)	140 (36.4)	69 (17.9)	56 (14.5)	12 (3.1)	3.72
Overall mean		105 (27.3)	144.66 (37.6)	77 (19.96)	48 (12.46)	10.33 (2.66)	3.74

Source; Author’s field work 2025

Table 4.7 shows that athlete endorsements are influential in determining sportswear purchase intention. The item “I prefer to buy Nike or Adidas sportswear endorsed by a well-known athlete” recorded a mean of 3.88, while “I am willing to pay more for products endorsed by an athlete I respect” had 3.63. The statement “Athlete endorsements have influenced my decision to purchase specific sportswear brands” scored 3.72.

The overall mean score of 3.74 implies that athlete endorsement plays a meaningful role in shaping students’ sportswear purchase decisions.

4.3 Regression Analysis

This section presents the regression analysis conducted to determine the influence of the five elements of athlete endorsement on sportswear purchase decision among University of Benin students. Both simple linear regression (individual influence of each variable) and multiple regressions (combined influence) were analyzed. Since regression output tables are not reproduced here, they are referenced based on the SPSS output in the analysis document.

4.4.1 Simple Linear Regression Results

H0₁: There is no significant relationship between endorser’s credibility and students purchase decision of Nike and Adidas sportswear.

Table 4.8.1 Model Summaryb

	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.432 ^a	.187	.184	.77268	1.669

a. Predictors: (Constant), Athlete Credibility
b. Dependent Variable: Purchase Decision

Source; Author’s field work 2025

Table 4.8.1 reveals $R^2 = 0.187$ (18.7%), the coefficient of determination. This implies that 18.7% of purchase decision is determined by athlete credibility, while the remaining 81.3% represents residual, which can be determined by the variables that are not captured in the model. Also, $R = 0.432$, indicating that athlete credibility has relationship with purchase decision.

Table 4.8.2 ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	52.437	1	52.437	87.830	.000 ^b
	Residual	228.662	383	.597		
	Total	281.098	384			

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase Decision
b. Predictors: (Constant), Athlete Credibility

Source; Author’s field work 2025

The ANOVA Table 4.8.2 shows that the F-statistic is significant since the ANOVA significance of .000 is less than the alpha level of .05; meaning the model is fit.

Table 4.8.3 Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics
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	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	1.409	.252		5.590	.000		
AthleteCredibility	.568	.061	.432	9.372	.000	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase Decision

Source; Author's field work 2025

The coefficient Table 4.8.3 shows an overall significant value of 0.000, which is less than the P value of 0.05; this implies that there is a significant effect of athlete credibility on purchase decision. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. The beta values of 0.432(43.2%), indicates that a change or improvement in athlete credibility will lead to a 43.2% increase in purchase decision.

H0₂: Athlete popularity does not significantly influence students' preference and loyalty toward Nike and Adidas sportswear.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.509 ^a	.259	.257	.73752	1.647

a. Predictors: (Constant), Athlete Popularity
b. Dependent Variable: Purchase Decision

Source; Author's field work 2025

Table 4.8.4 reveals $R^2 = 0.259(26\%)$, the coefficient of determination. This implies that 26% of purchase decision is determined by athlete popularity, while the remaining 74% represents residual, which can be determined by the variables that are not captured in the model. Also, $R = 0.509$, indicating that athlete popularity has a strong relationship with purchase decision

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	72.772	1	72.772	133.787	.000 ^b
	Residual	208.327	383	.544		
	Total	281.098	384			

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase Decision
b. Predictors: (Constant), Athlete Popularity

Source; Author’s field work 2025

The ANOVA Table 4.8.5 shows that the F-statistic is significant since the ANOVA significance of .000 is less than the alpha level of .05; meaning the model is fit.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	1.453	.201		7.212	.000		
AthletePopularity	.571	.049	.509	11.567	.000	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase Decision

Source; Author's field work 2025

The coefficient Table 4.8.6 shows an overall significant value of 0.000, which is less than the P value of 0.05; this implies that there is a significant effect of athlete popularity on purchase decision. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. The beta values of 0.509(51%), indicates that a change or improvement in athlete credibility will lead to a 51% increase in purchase decision.

H0₃: Frequency of exposure to athlete endorsements does not significantly affect students' willingness to purchase endorsed sportswear products.

Table 4.8.7 Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.532 ^a	.283	.281	.72541	1.735

a. Predictors: (Constant), Frequency
 b. Dependent Variable: Purchase Decision

Source; Author's field work 2025

Table 4.8.7 reveals $R^2 = 0.283$ (28.3%), the coefficient of determination. This implies that 28% of purchase decision is determined by athlete popularity, while the remaining 72% represents residual, which can be determined by the variables that are not captured in the model. Also, $R = 0.532$, indicating that frequency of endorsement has a strong relationship with purchase decision

Table 4.8.8 ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	79.558	1	79.558	151.189	.000 ^b
	Residual	201.541	383	.526		
	Total	281.098	384			

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase Decision
 b. Predictors: (Constant), Frequency

Source; Author's field work 2025

The ANOVA Table 4.8.8 shows that the F-statistic is significant since the ANOVA significance of .000 is less than the alpha level of .05; meaning the model is fit.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	1.037	.223		4.649	.000		
Frequency	.687	.056	.532	12.296	.000	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: Purchasedecision

Source; Author’s field work 2025

The coefficient Table 4.8.9 shows an overall significant value of 0.000, which is less than the P value of 0.05; this implies that there is a significant effect of frequency of endorsement on purchase decision. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. The beta values of 0.532(53.2%), indicates that a change or improvement in frequency of endorsement will lead to a 53.2% increase in purchase decision.

H0₄: There is no significant effect of athlete-brand congruence on students’ purchase intention of Nike and Adidas products.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.610 ^a	.372	.370		.67884	1.827

a. Predictors: (Constant), Athlete Brand-Congruence
b. Dependent Variable: Purchase Decision

Source; Author’s field work 2025

Table 4.8.10 reveals $R^2= 0.372(37.2\%)$, the coefficient of determination. This implies that 37.2% of purchase decision is determined by athlete brand congruence, while the remaining 62.8% represents residual, which can be determined by the variables that are not captured in the model. Also, $R =0.610$, indicating that athlete brand congruence has a strong relationship with purchase decision

Table 4.8.11 ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	104.602	1	104.602	226.987	.000 ^b
	Residual	176.497	383	.461		
	Total	281.098	384			

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase Decision
b. Predictors: (Constant), Athlete Brand-Congruence

Source; Author’s field work 2025

The ANOVA Table 4.8.11 shows that the F-statistic is significant since the ANOVA significance of .000 is less than the alpha level of .05; meaning the model is fit.

Table 4.8.12 Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	1.141	.176		6.476	.000		
Athletebrandcongruence	.681	.045	.610	15.066	.000	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: Purchasedecision

Source; Author’s field work 2025

The coefficient Table 4.8.12 shows an overall significant value of 0.000, which is less than the P value of 0.05; this implies that there is a significant effect of athlete brand congruence on purchase decision. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. The beta values of 0.610(61%), indicates that a change or improvement in frequency of endorsement will lead to a 61% increase in purchase decision.

H0₅: Emotional connection with athlete endorsers does not significantly influence students' decision to purchase sportswear.

4.8.13 Model Summary^b					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.624 ^a	.389	.388	.66957	1.686
a. Predictors: (Constant), Emotional Connection					
b. Dependent Variable: Purchase Decision					

Source; Author's field work 2025

Table 4.8.13 reveals $R^2 = 0.389(39\%)$, the coefficient of determination. This implies that 39% of purchase decision is determined by emotional connection with athlete, while the remaining 61% represents residual, which can be determined by the variables that are not captured in the model. Also, $R = 0.624$, indicating that emotional connection with athlete has a very strong relationship with purchase decision

4.8.14 ANOVA^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	109.391	1	109.391	244.000	.000 ^b
	Residual	171.708	383	.448		

Total	281.098	384			
a. Dependent Variable: Purchase Decision					
b. Predictors: (Constant), Emotional Connection					

Source; Author’s field work 2025

The ANOVA Table 4.8.14 shows that the F-statistic is significant since the ANOVA significance of .000 is less than the alpha level of .05; meaning the model is fit.

4.8.15 Coefficients ^a							
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	1.118	.171		6.516	.000		
Emotionalconnection	.676	.043	.624	15.620	.000	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase Decision

Source; Author’s field work 2025

The coefficient Table 4.8.15 shows an overall significant value of 0.000, which is less than the P value of 0.05; this implies that there is a significant effect of emotional connection with athlete on purchase decision. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. The beta values of 0.624(62.4%), indicates that a change in the emotional connection with athlete will lead to a 62.4% increase in purchase decision.

4.4.2 Multiple Regression Results

Table 4.8.16 Model Summary ^b						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson

1	.710 ^a	.505	.498	.60619	1.735
a. Predictors: (Constant), Emotional connection, Athlete Credibility, Athlete Popularity, Frequency, Athlete Brand-Congruence					
b. Dependent Variable: Purchase Decision					

Source; Author's field work 2025

Table 4.8.16 reveals $R^2 = 0.505$ (51%) the coefficient of determination. This implies that 51% of purchase decision is determined by Emotional connection, Athlete Credibility, Athlete Popularity, Frequency, Athlete brand congruence, while the remaining 49% represents residual, which can be determined by the variables that are not captured in the model. Also, $R = 0.710$, indicating that Emotional connection, Athlete Credibility, Athlete Popularity, Frequency, Athlete brand congruence have a very strong relationship with purchase decision.

4.8.17 ANOVA^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	141.828	5	28.366	77.192	.000 ^b
	Residual	139.270	379	.367		
	Total	281.098	384			
a. Dependent Variable: Purchase decision						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Emotional connection, Athlete Credibility, Athlete Popularity, Frequency, Athlete Brand-Congruence						

Source; Author's field work 2025

The ANOVA Table 4.8.17 shows that the F-statistic is significant since the ANOVA significance of .000 is less than the alpha level of .05; meaning the model is fit.

4.18 Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	-.200	.229		-.871	.384		
AthleteCredibility	.082	.058	.062	1.404	.161	.670	1.492
AthletePopularity	.110	.053	.098	2.062	.040	.576	1.736
Frequency	.205	.061	.159	3.342	.001	.576	1.735
Athletebrandcongruence	.308	.055	.276	5.566	.000	.532	1.878
Emotionalconnection	.304	.056	.280	5.438	.000	.492	2.033

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase Decision

Source; Author’s field work 2025

The coefficient Table 4.8.18 shows an overall significant value of 0.384, which is greater than the P value of 0.05; this implies that there is no significant effect of athlete endorsement on purchase decision in the over all. However, looking at the individual effects of each of the variable representing the independent variable; only athlete credibility is not significant with the sig level of 0.161 but athlete popularity, frequency of endorsement, athlete brand congruence, and emotional connection with athlete are significant at 0.04, 0.001, 0.000, and 0.000 respectively.

The beta values of 0.062, 0.098, 0.159, 0.276, and 0.280 for athlete credibility, athlete popularity, frequency of endorsement, athlete brand congruence, and emotional

connection with athlete respectively indicates that a change in each of these contents will lead to a 0.6%, 10%, 16%, 28%, and 28% increase in student's purchase decision respectively.

4.6 Discussion of Findings

In this section, the empirical findings of the study are presented. A total number of 385 questionnaires were distributed to the target participants and used for analysis. The following paragraph outline the outcomes of research based on the data provided by the respondents.

The first hypothesis investigated the effect of athlete credibility on students' sportswear purchase decision. The model summary shows $R = 0.432$ and $R^2 = 0.187$, indicating that athlete credibility accounts for 18.7% of the variance in purchase decision. The correlation coefficient ($r = 0.432$) suggests a positive relationship, and the regression returned $p = 0.000$ ($p < 0.05$), supporting the hypothesis that athlete credibility significantly influences purchase decision. This outcome is consistent with earlier studies that emphasize the central role of credibility in endorsement effectiveness: El-Shihy (2024) found that athletes perceived as credible and authentic increase students' trust and purchase intentions, while Akinsanya and Ayoade (2022) reported that moral reputation and perceived credibility strengthen consumer trust and purchase propensity. Similarly, Adebayo and Musa (2023) reported credibility as a key determinant of purchase behaviour among Nigerian students, reinforcing the present finding.

The second hypothesis examined athlete popularity and its influence on purchase decision. The model produced $R = 0.509$ and $R^2 = 0.259$, meaning athlete popularity explains 25.9% of the variance in purchase decision. The correlation coefficient ($r = 0.509$) indicates a substantial positive relationship, and the effect was statistically significant ($p = 0.000$). These results echo Chen and Luo (2025), who reported that highly popular athletes with consistent endorsements increase brand recall and students' consumption decisions, and Moon (2024), whose work on athlete-generated content noted that popular, visible athletes drive awareness and purchase intent. The present finding also aligns with Adebayo and Musa (2023) who observed combined effects of popularity and other endorsement factors in Nigerian student samples.

The third hypothesis assessed frequency of endorsement exposure. Results show $R = 0.532$ and $R^2 = 0.283$, indicating that exposure frequency explains 28.3% of the variance in purchase decision. The correlation ($r = 0.532$) shows a strong positive relationship and the model significance ($p = 0.000$) supports the hypothesis that frequent exposure to athlete endorsements significantly affects students' buying behaviour. This result is consistent with Farooq (2024) and Moon (2024), both of whom found that repeated and well-timed exposure—especially on social and video platforms—reinforces familiarity, brand recall, and subsequent purchase actions among university populations. Chen and Luo (2025) also noted frequency as a reinforcement mechanism that boosts the impact of athlete popularity and congruence.

The fourth hypothesis explored athlete-brand congruence (fit). The regression yielded $R = 0.610$ and $R^2 = 0.372$, implying that congruence accounts for 37.2% of the variance in purchase decision. The correlation ($r = 0.610$) denotes a strong positive association, and statistical testing returned $p = 0.000$, indicating a significant effect. This finding mirrors the results of Hsiao (2021) and Boydston (2023), who reported that strong athlete-brand fit increases perceived authenticity and consumer acceptance of endorsements. It also resonates with Dlamini and Mkhize (2023), who found that culturally and contextually aligned endorsers produce stronger brand preference—an effect that likely amplifies congruence benefits among students who seek identity and symbolic meaning from brands.

The fifth hypothesis investigated the emotional connection with the athlete. The output shows $R = 0.624$ and $R^2 = 0.389$, which means emotional connection explains 38.9% of the variance in purchase decision. The correlation ($r = 0.624$) indicates the strongest positive relationship among the five elements, and the model is significant ($p = 0.000$). This suggests that emotional attachment and admiration for athletes substantially influence students' purchase decisions. The finding is supported by El-Shihy (2024), Adeyemi and Johnson (2022), and Chukwu, Eze, and Ezeh (2021), each of whom demonstrated that emotional resonance—arising from perceived authenticity, inspirational narratives, or cultural identification—strengthens brand affinity and willingness to purchase endorsed sportswear.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents a summary of the study, restates the key findings, draws conclusions based on empirical evidence, and offers recommendations to stakeholders. It also suggests areas for further research to extend the understanding of athlete endorsement effects on consumer behavior in academic contexts.

5.1 Summary of Findings

The main objective of this study is to examine the effect of athlete endorsement on sportswear purchase decision among University of Benin students.

In order to provide direction and sharpen the focus of this study, research questions were raised and five null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. Survey research design was adopted because the researcher collected information from a sample of respondents and generalized it to the entire population. The sample of the study comprised of 385 respondents, selected through proportionate sampling technique. The data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to three hundred and eighty-five (385) respondents, all of which were valid and used for analysis.

The summary of the results for the objectives revealed that;

i. $R = 0.432$, $R^2 = 0.187$, $t = 9.372$, $B = 0.432$, $P\text{-value} = 0.000$ (Athlete Credibility). This implies that there is a significant effect of athlete credibility on sportswear purchase decision.

ii. $R = 0.509$, $R^2 = 0.259$, $t = 11.567$, $B = 0.509$, $P\text{-value} = 0.000$ (Athlete Popularity). This implies that there is a significant impact of athlete popularity on sportswear purchase decision.

iii. $R = 0.532$, $R^2 = 0.283$, $t = 12.296$, $B = 0.532$, $P\text{-value} = 0.000$ (Frequency of Endorsement Exposure). This implies that there is a significant impact of frequency of endorsement exposure on sportswear purchase decision.

iv. $R = 0.610$, $R^2 = 0.372$, $t = 15.066$, $B = 0.610$, $P\text{-value} = 0.000$ (Athlete-Brand Congruence). This implies that there is a significant impact of athlete-brand congruence on sportswear purchase decision.

v. $R = 0.624$, $R^2 = 0.389$, $t = 15.620$, $B = 0.624$, $P\text{-value} = 0.000$ (Emotional Connection with Athlete). This implies that there is a significant impact of emotional connection with athlete on sportswear purchase decision.

The results here showed that there is a strong positive correlation between athlete endorsement and sportswear purchase decision. Since the p-value of 0.000 is less than the level of significance ($p < 0.05$), the null hypotheses were rejected and the alternative hypotheses accepted. This therefore implies that there is a significant effect of athlete endorsement of sportswear on purchase decision among University of Benin students.

5.2 Conclusion

As regards the various data collected and analyzed, the study has shed light on the effect of athlete endorsement of sportswear on purchase decision among University of Benin students. The study concludes that;

The study demonstrates that athlete credibility significantly affects students' purchase decision toward sportswear products. This indicates that when athletes are perceived as knowledgeable, trustworthy, and authentic, consumers are more inclined to purchase the sportswear they endorse, showing that credibility enhances brand trust and consumer confidence.

There is a significant impact of athlete popularity of sportswear on purchase decision. The findings affirm that the fame and public recognition of athletes draw attention to endorsed products and increase purchase interest, showing that the visibility and popularity of an athlete can effectively drive brand awareness and influence consumer choice.

There is a significant impact of frequency of endorsement exposure of sportswear on purchase decision. The analysis confirms that repeated exposure to athlete endorsements across media channels enhances familiarity and recall, thereby increasing students' intention to purchase the endorsed sportswear brands.

There is a significant impact of athlete-brand congruence of sportswear on purchase decision. The study establishes that when there is a strong alignment between the athlete's image and the brand's personality, consumers perceive the endorsement as authentic and credible, which strengthens their willingness to buy the product.

There is a significant impact of emotional connection with the athlete on sportswear purchase decision. The research underscores that emotional attachment and admiration for athletes create deeper psychological connections that influence purchasing behavior, reinforcing the power of emotional appeal in driving consumer decisions.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were put forward:

- i. Given the significant effect of athlete credibility on purchase decision, it is recommended that sportswear companies should select athletes who are perceived as

trustworthy, competent, and authentic. Brands should avoid endorsers involved in controversies to maintain consumer confidence and uphold brand reputation.

- ii. In light of the significant impact of athlete popularity, it is advised that marketers should collaborate with athletes who possess strong public appeal and visibility, as their popularity can enhance brand recognition and stimulate purchase intention among young consumers.
- iii. Considering the substantial effect of frequency of endorsement exposure, it is recommended that brands should ensure consistent and repeated exposure of athlete endorsements across various media platforms-television, social media, and sporting events-to reinforce consumer recall and influence purchase decisions.
- iv. Given the significant influence of athlete-brand congruence on purchase behavior, it is advisable that brands should ensure a strong fit between the athlete's image, lifestyle, and the brand's identity. Endorsers should embody the brand's values and communicate the brand's personality effectively to the target audience.
- v. Finally, in view of the strong effect of emotional connection with athletes on purchase decisions, it is recommended that sportswear companies design emotionally driven campaigns that highlight athletes' stories, achievements, and challenges. This emotional storytelling will inspire admiration, create identification, and foster long-term consumer loyalty toward the brand.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Research

The study was limited to students of the University of Benin; therefore, future research may:

- i. Replicate the study across multiple universities or regions to compare endorsement influence across cultural or institutional contexts.
- ii. Examine gender-based differences in response to athlete endorsement, as male and female consumers may prioritize different endorsement attributes.
- iii. Investigate the role of social media engagement metrics (e.g., likes, shares, interaction levels) as mediators between endorsement exposure and purchase decision.
- iv. Expand the model to include negative endorsements or athlete scandals, to understand how controversies affect brand perception.

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APPENDIX I
QUESTIONNAIRE
DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING
FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN

*“The Effect of Athlete Endorsement on Sportswear Purchase Decision Among
University of Benin Students”*

Dear Respondents,

This questionnaire is designed for academic research and seeks to assess the Effects of Athletes Endorsement on Sportswear Purchase Decisions by Among University of Benin Students. Your responses are confidential and will only be used for research purposes. Please answer honestly.

A. Demographic Profile

Please tick (✓) the option that best applies to you:

1. Age: Below 18 18-21 22-25 26-30 Above 30

2. Gender: Male Female Prefer not to say

3. Level of Study: 100 200 300 400 500

4. Faculty: (Write your faculty) _____

5. Do you engage in regular sports or fitness activities? Yes No

6. Do you follow athletes or sports influencers on social media? Yes No

7. Have you purchased sportswear from Nike or Adidas in the last 12 months?

Yes No

INSTRUCTIONS

Please rate each item as to the extent in which you agree to the statements on the effect of athlete endorsement on Sportswear Purchase Decision below using the following scale

	Core Subject Area	Strongly Agree [5]	Agree [4]	Neutral [3]	Disagree [2]	Strongly Disagree [1]
A.	ATHLETE CREDIBILITY					
8.	The athletes endorsing Nike or Adidas appear knowledgeable about sportswear products.					
9.	I believe the athletes genuinely use the sportswear products they promote.					

10.	I trust the quality of Nike or Adidas more when it is endorsed by a credible athlete.					
B.	ATHLETE POPULARITY					
11	I am more likely to notice sportswear ads when they feature famous athletes.					
12.	The popularity of an athlete makes me interested in the sportswear they endorse.					
13..	I feel more connected to Nike or Adidas when my favorite athlete endorses them.					
C.	FREQUENCY OF ENDORSEMENT EXPOSURE					
14.	I often come across athlete endorsements of sportswear while watching television or online videos.					
15.	I regularly notice athlete endorsements for sportswear when attending sports events or browsing sports-related platforms.					
16.	I have seen the same athlete endorse a sportswear brand several times.					
D.	ATHLETE-BRAND CONGRUENCE (FIT)					
17.	The athlete’s way of living reflects what I believe Nike or Adidas stand for.					
18.	I believe Nike or Adidas selects athletes who align well with their brand image.					
19.	I am more likely to trust an endorsement when the athlete seems					

	like a good fit for the brand.					
E.	EMOTIONAL CONNECTION WITH THE ATHLETE					
20.	I feel inspired when I see my favorite athlete endorsing a sportswear brand.					
21.	I admire the lifestyle and achievements of athletes who endorse sportswear.					
22.	I feel a sense of personal connection with athletes who endorse sportswear brands.					
F.	PURCHASE DECISION					
23.	I prefer buying Nike or Adidas sportswear endorsed by a well-known athlete.					
24.	I am willing to pay more for a Nike or Adidas product endorsed by an athlete I respect.					
25.	Athlete endorsements have influenced my decision to purchase specific sportswear brands.					

ThankYou.

APPENDIX II

VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY RESULT

ATHLETE CREDIBILITY

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	20	100.0

	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	20	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.706	3

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
VAR00001	7.5500	2.261	.405	.754
VAR00002	7.8000	2.274	.514	.634
VAR00003	7.6500	1.503	.688	.378

ATHLETE POPULARITY

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	20	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	20	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.828	3

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
VAR00004	7.2500	2.618	.547	.909
VAR00005	7.9000	2.411	.825	.629
VAR00006	7.7500	2.513	.710	.737

FREQUENCY OF ENDORSEMENT EXPOSURE

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	20	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	20	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.569	3

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
VAR00007	7.8000	1.747	.316	.584
VAR00008	7.3000	1.695	.492	.292

VAR00009	7.2000	2.063	.348	.515
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ATHLETE-BRAND CONGRUENCE FIT

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	20	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	20	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.749	3

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
VAR00010	7.9500	1.734	.648	.619
VAR00011	7.2000	3.221	.504	.758
VAR00012	7.3500	2.450	.659	.576

EMOTIONAL CONNECTION WITH THE ATHLETE

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	20	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	20	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.667	3

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
VAR0001 3	7.5500	1.839	.513	.526
VAR0001 4	7.7000	1.695	.536	.497
VAR0001 5	6.8500	2.766	.442	.647

SPORTSWEAR PURCHASE DECISION

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	20	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	20	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.853	3

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
VAR0001 6	6.7500	2.724	.849	.711
VAR0001 7	7.0500	2.261	.767	.754
VAR0001 8	7.1000	2.621	.603	.916