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Sport Celebrity Scandal: Consumer Attitude towards the Sponsoring Brand

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Sport Celebrity Scandal: Consumer Attitude towards the Sponsoring Brand

by

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A THESIS

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Abstract

Adding to previous research grounded in sport celebrity scandal, this study used an experimental design to focus on consumer attitude following an athlete's involvement in scandal. Specifically, consumer attitude towards a brand following the post-scandal decision to continue or terminate the relationship with the athlete was examined. Athlete loyal consumers were the main focus of the study. Brand loyalty and severity of the scandal's impact on consumer attitude after the sponsor's decision were also studied. Four hypotheses were grounded in theory and tested using ANOVA. Results demonstrated that athlete loyal consumers had a significantly more positive attitude when the decision was to terminate the relationship. Brand loyal consumers reported a more positive attitude towards the brand regardless of the sponsor's relationship decision, and severity of the scandal did not have a significant impact. Results provide insight on what relationship decision fosters a more positive attitude towards the brand.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my Mom, who taught me that real strength comes from the will to never give up.

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Chapter One: Introduction

On November 25, 2009, the supermarket tabloid The National Enquirer published a story claiming that Tiger Woods had an extramarital affair. The story about Woods's infidelity began to attract media attention when he had a car accident a day and a half later, on November 27, as he left his Orlando-area home around 2:30 am in his SUV. Woods was treated for minor facial lacerations and cited for careless driving. He refused to speak to the police and the accident fanned intense speculation for two days, until Woods released a statement on his website taking blame for the crash and adding that it was a private matter; he also praised his wife.

Interest in the story grew and a waitress publicly claimed in the gossip magazine that she had a two-and-a-half-year affair with Woods. Woods released an apology on the day that the story was published, expressing regret for "transgressions" and saying, "I have let my family down." Woods was not specific about the reason for the apology and requested privacy. After over a dozen women claimed in various media outlets to have had affairs with Woods, media pressure increased. On December 11, Woods released another statement admitting to infidelity, offering another apology, and announcing an indefinite hiatus from professional golf. Almost all of Tiger's sponsors, including Accenture, AT&T, Gatorade, Gillette and Golf Digest, immediately terminated their relationship with him.

In less than a month, one of the most influential and seemingly successful examples of sports sponsorship became an ideal example of the impact of sport celebrity scandal and demonstrated that no athlete is immune to the consequences.

The Tiger Woods case may be considered an extreme example but it is not an isolated incident of sponsorship gone wrong. Sponsorship is defined as an investment in return for access to the commercial potential associated with an athlete (Meenaghan, 1991). The relationship is beneficial for both parties involved, making it a positive public relationship offering a unique form of marketing that provides a company with the ability to differentiate itself from its competitors. The assumption is that the athlete's positive attributes and image will transfer to the brand during sponsorship, creating a positive association in the mind of the consumer. This can lead to many brand benefits, including a more positive brand meaning and brand image, and a consumer developing an emotional relationship with the brand (Crompton, 2004; Duncan, 2005).

The uniqueness of sport celebrity sponsorship is that it is founded in the development of a relationship between sponsor and consumer or its emotional appeal. It also offers access to highly targeted "loyal" or "committed" fans (Cornwell & Coote, 2005; Gwinner & Swanson, 2003; Mahony, Madrigal, & Howard, 2000). Sponsors design messages to generate an intimate and emotionally involved relationship with a target audience (Crompton, 2004). Ideally, the brand meaning consumers attach to the athlete can be transferred to the sponsoring brand (Duncan, 2005). The consumer gains self-esteem by associating with an athlete who has the characteristics that they want to incorporate into their own identity, and the brand expects that this emotional association is transferred through sponsorship. This theory is the most impactful for fans of the athlete or athlete-loyal consumers. Long before the brand decided to start sponsoring the athlete, the loyal consumer had already developed a profound positive emotional connection to the athlete

that the brand could capitalize on through sponsorship. The athlete-loyal consumer would be the most likely to transfer their positive attitude towards the brand when they started sponsoring a favoured athlete. When a brand decides to start sponsoring an athlete, they enter into a positive public relationship with the athlete that provides all of the above mentioned benefits for the sponsoring brand.

However, there has been less consideration of the impact of a sport celebrity scandal on the consumer attitude when the athlete, and not the sponsoring brand, is involved in a transgression off the field of play. When a scandal transpires, the positive public relationship between the athlete and the brand turns into a negative one and there have been many documented cases of high-profile celebrities getting involved in an off-field transgression that had a direct impact on their sponsorship deals. Examples include Kobe Bryant, Michael Phelps, and Michael Vick. The athletes mentioned above are only a few of the numerous scandals involving sport celebrities. The rise in athletic sponsorship combined with the emergence of social media providing increased access to athletes generates conditions where sport celebrity scandal goes viral at an accelerated pace.

When the publicity suddenly focuses on the negative behaviour of the athlete, the positive public association between a brand and a sponsored athlete is quickly overturned. The brand's sponsorship of the athlete is now a negative public relationship and it is up to the brand to make a decision: do they continue or do they terminate sponsoring the athlete? Do they stay committed to the athlete or do they try to stop any association between the brand and the athlete in the mind of the consumer by ending the relationship?

The decision is critical for the sponsoring brand because it is the same athlete-loyal consumers that they attracted to the brand through the initial sponsoring that will now be directly impacted by the relationship decision regarding the athlete. Will the consumer have a higher consumer attitude if the brand stays loyal to the athlete and continues the sponsorship? Or will the consumer lose all trust in an athlete after involvement in a scandal and want the athlete to be disciplined through the sponsor terminating the relationship?

Once an athlete is involved in a scandal, the once positive public relationship between the brand and the athlete becomes a negative one and the brand must decide to continue or terminate the sponsorship. How the sponsor's relationship decision will impact consumer attitude toward the brand is essential for the brand because the wrong decision could be damaging to the very brand image they are trying to better. Providing insight into what post-scandal relationship decision would lead to a more positive consumer attitude towards the brand will be the main focus of this study.

Sport creates fanship that is more intense and enduring than it is for other forms of entertaining social activities without direct participation in the spectated event (Zillmann & Paulus, 1993). Capitalizing on the loyal consumer is a reason that brands are increasing their expenditures on sponsorships, and more specifically sponsoring a sport celebrity. When a brand begins sponsoring an athlete, they enter into a positive public relationship with the athlete. The goal of the relationship is to transfer the positive feelings consumers have towards the athlete to the brand in order to increase brand awareness, brand equity, and strengthen brand image (Fink, Trail, & Anderson, 2002; Shuart, 2007). There has been

a great deal of literature of the benefits of a positive public relationship between a brand and a sponsored athlete.

Little research has looked at the consequences of a negative public relationship on consumer attitude. This decision is crucial for the brand; however, “sponsorship research on consumer perceptions of off-field behaviours of sportspeople is currently very limited” (Bloxsome, Voges & Pope, 2011, p. 141). This research also takes into account athlete loyalty, brand loyalty, and severity of the scandal.

Insight into what action is best received by consumers after a negative event holds importance for any corporation sponsoring or considering sponsoring a sport celebrity.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Sponsorship

Sponsorship is defined as an investment, in cash or kind, in an activity, in return for access to the exploitable commercial potential associated with that activity (Meenaghan, 1991). The relationship is beneficial for both parties involved, making it a unique form of marketing that provides a company with the ability to differentiate itself from its competitors. As a result, sponsorship is a primary communication vehicle for thousands of corporations (Howard & Crompton, 1995).

There are particular differences between traditional marketing communication and sponsorship. Meenaghan (1991) stated that unlike advertisements, sponsorship is likely to elicit a “good will” response from consumers. The uniqueness of sponsorship is a result of the biggest difference between it and traditional advertising: the development of a relationship between sponsor and consumer. Sponsors design messages to establish an intimate and emotionally involved relationship with consumers (Crompton, 2004). It is where sponsorship excels and becomes a focal point of academic research.

Sponsorship has become one of the most significant promotional considerations for organizations (Séguin, 2007) and has spread exponentially with worldwide spending reaching \$44 billion (IEG, 2010). Because of the increased (and increasing) amounts of communication clutter (Meenaghan, 1991; Quester & Thompson, 2001), it has become crucial for a company to stand out. Sponsorship has and will continue to be capitalized on across industries, and the sport industry is no exception.

2.2 Sport Sponsorship

With the United States having more than 200 million estimated sports fans, the popularity of sport cannot be denied (Trail & James, 2008). Economically, the industry's growth has also been significant and it's estimated worth is between 168 and 208 billion dollars (Milano & Chelladurai, 2011). The worth of the industry was estimated by the *SportsBusiness Journal* to be 213 billion dollars, twice as large as the auto industry and seven times larger than the movie industry (Pedersen, Miloch, & Laucella, 2007). It becomes no surprise that globally, sport sponsorship accounts for between 68% and 84% (Fenton, 2009) of all sponsorship spending. Sport sponsorship and its benefits will be expanded on below.

Sport has achieved popularity across North America and has become a significant social, cultural, and economical feature of any country around the world. Fan affiliation with a specific athlete or team has helped strengthen the bonds between groups of people, regardless of their backgrounds, ethnicities, religions, or economic status (Prettyman & Lampman, 2010).

Generally, sport sponsorship involves purchasing the rights to a sport organization or sport celebrity (athlete), which permits the organization the opportunity to employ various marketing strategies to leverage the sponsorship. Leveraging is defined as collateral communication of a brand's relationship with a property (Cornwell, Weeks, & Roy, 2005).

Because of the popularity of sports, they have become one on the main forms of sponsorship worldwide and the benefits are numerous.

2.3 Sport Sponsorship Benefits

Why has sport sponsorship become so appealing? Bloxsome, Voges, and Pope (2011) argue that sport is a popular sponsorship instrument because it is capable of providing access to mass markets (Slater & Lloyd, 2004). It also offers access to highly targeted “loyal” or “committed” fans (Cornwell & Coote, 2005; Gwinner & Swanson, 2003; Mahony et al., 2000).

There are many reasons for a company to sponsor a sports team or athlete, and a number of companies have done so with the hope that ideally it will increase sales. Meenaghan (2001) noted that sponsorship is a marketing strategy with the ultimate purpose of increasing the bottom line.

A distinctive feature of sports sponsorship is the emotional appeal. Bloxsome et al.’s (2011) research reflected on the impact of season ticket holders, which encouraged behavioural loyalty through an emotional attachment to the respective team. This would provide a company considering sports sponsorship a strong incentive to focus on sport because it has the ability to capitalize on emotional appeal (Bloxsome et al., 2011).

Earl Warren once said, “I always turn to the sports section first. The sports page records people's accomplishments; the front page has nothing but man's failures.” In today’s day and age it isn’t surprising that sports and athletes have become so wildly popular. Sports have an implicit pull for fans all over the world. A fan will go to great lengths to prove their loyalty to a particular team or athlete to the outside world. They will go to great lengths to connect themselves to their team or athlete of choice in any way possible.

Sport sponsorship or “marketing through sports” includes both marketing through the sport itself or through a sports club (team). It can involve sponsorship, corporate events and boxes, licensed merchandise, names, and images, also known as “endorsements”. Advertising includes broadcaster advertising, ground signage, clothing, equipment advertising, or promoting games (Beech & Chadwick, 2006). Finally, sport marketing involves the promotion of a team or athlete through the use of endorsement, and this is where the importance of a sport celebrity is impactful. One element endorsement takes advantage of is that sponsored athletes are considered brand loyal to the sponsoring brand, and fans tend to be loyal to their favourite athletes and teams. Once an athlete receives monetary compensation to wear or use the brands products, their fans can develop a loyalty to the products and the brand (Beech & Chadwick, 2006). This not only adds value to the brand but also gives a fan the opportunity to associate with their preferred athlete. The significance of that association will be discussed below.

As mentioned above, a subset of sport sponsorship as a whole, worth examining further, is an athlete or sport celebrity (the terms athlete and sport celebrity will be used interchangeably) endorsement. The purpose of this review is to provide insight into the recent and ongoing trend (within sport sponsorship) of capturing the consumer with a sport celebrity. A thorough examination of the movement towards marketing with athletes (sports celebrities), what the marketers are trying to accomplish from such use, and what athlete endorsement can provide a company will be analyzed.

2.4 Sport Celebrity Sponsorship

Sponsorship of a sport celebrity is based on the belief that the positive image that consumers attach to the athlete can be transferred to the sponsoring brand (Duncan, 2005). The consumer gains self-esteem by associating with an athlete who has the characteristics that they want to ascribe to their own identity. Fink, Trail and Anderson (2012) stated that a person becomes identified with a brand when they embody the attributes they credit to their organization into their own self-concept. This has led to a substantial amount of research that has been done on the athlete or sport celebrity endorsement and its effectiveness or lack thereof. In-depth analysis of this research and its findings is essential for a comprehensive understanding of athlete endorsement.

2.4.1 Sport Celebrity Sponsorship Benefits

Athlete endorsements are at an all-time high. With the millions of dollars that companies are pouring into sponsorships, and specifically athlete endorsements, the questions then become: is the pay-off worth the cost? Does the use of sports celebrities actually influence the consumer and increase sales, and to what extent?

Professional athletes have been used as sponsors for many years. One of the pioneers of this practice was Gatorade, who entered into an endorsement deal with Michael Jordan. The classic "Be Like Mike" commercial originally aired in 1992 and centered around the idea that to be just like Michael Jordan, a consumer should drink Gatorade. The decision to enter a \$13-million contract with basketball superstar Michael Jordan was a defining moment for Gatorade. At the time, the extravagant endorsement was criticized by many in the advertising community until the "Be Like Mike" commercials hit, improving the

fortunes of both Gatorade and Jordan (Rovell, 2006). The greatest evidence of the power of the marketing campaign could be found with consumers. Kids across the nation almost immediately echoed the sentiments of the commercial; they too wanted to "Be Like Mike." Gatorade tapped into the emotional bond fans felt to Jordan. Drinking Gatorade allowed them to connect with Michael Jordan and the positive emotions attached to him. Ever since, organizations have continued to buy sponsorship rights hoping to capitalize on the emotional connection consumers have with a favourite property (Madrigal, 2001). It is this relationship between entities that separates sponsorship from traditional advertising (Meenaghan, 1996). A sports team or athlete provides an infinite amount of consumers which sponsors hope to reach emotionally by capitalizing on the consumer-team-sponsor or consumer-athlete-sponsor relationship.

Many companies followed Gatorade's footsteps and the trend of using athletes as endorsers became widespread and continued to grow, which resulted in professional athletes building endorsements into their anticipated income streams (Rovell, 2006). There is a general positive feeling and "swagger" dynamic associated with athletes and the products they represent. Essentially, it is this positive attitude that the company wants to transfer to the brand being endorsed. A company wants to capture the intense passion and adoration associated with athletes. They want fans to feel connected to the athlete (or exceptional talent) through their product, which will enhance self-esteem effects and lead to a better brand image.

2.4.2 Sport Celebrity Brand Image

Brand image is defined as the combined result of brand associations formed in the consumer's mind and includes three types of associations: brand attributes, benefits, and attitudes (Keller, 1993). Keller's (1993) model has been applied in numerous studies involving sports marketing (Bauer, Stokburger-Sauer, & Exler, 2008; Gladden & Funk, 2002). In this model a sport celebrity's brand image may contain a number of brand attributes (assigned by the consumer) that may lead to a number of benefits for that same consumer, which in turn influences the consumer's attitude towards both the celebrity and their sponsoring brands. The key to sponsorship is the brand image of the celebrity as the sponsor organizations depend on the transfer between the two brands in the mind of the consumer (Gwinner & Bennett, 2008). The process of positive brand image being transferred during sponsorship is highly effective in sport marketing due to the emotional orientation of sport consumption (Mahony & Moorman, 2000). The essence of an endorsement strategy consists of creating an emotional tie between the consumer and the athlete, thus increasing both brand and product awareness and improving the image of the company (Cornwell, 1995).

2.4.3 Sport Celebrity Brand Attributes

Celebrity brand image is composed of the attributes which the celebrity represents (D. A. Aaker, 1996). Keller (1998) describes attributes as the descriptive characteristics of the brand and include product-related and non-product-related attributes. Product-related attributes are necessary for performing the product or service and non-product attributes are external characteristics of the product that relate to its purchase consumption (Keller,

1998). An example would be the stability of Nike's Michael Jordan shoes (product-related) versus the fact that Jordan himself wears them (non-product related). An athlete's brand image is a combination of his or her non-product and product-related attributes.

An athlete's product-related attributes are the factors that contribute to their performance (Bauer et al., 2008). A sponsoring brand can be attracted to an athlete because of their performance on the field of play, which is a combination of their knowledge, ability, and experience.

The attractiveness of a celebrity relies on the similarity, familiarity, and likeability of that celebrity by consumers (Erdogan, 1999; Erdogan, Baker, & Tagg, 2001; Maddux & Rogers, 1980). If a sport consumer perceives themselves as similar to the athlete, the athlete then has a much stronger impact on the consumer's attitude (Simons, Berkowitz, & Moyer, 1970). Familiarity refers to a consumer's knowledge of the sport celebrity through continued exposure (Sassenberg & Johnson Morgan, 2010). Likeability is the fondness for the athlete due to their physical appearance, behaviour and personality (Charbonneau & Garland, 2005a; Erdogan, 1999; McCracken, 1989; Ohanian, 1990).

These components are extremely influential and are a large component of what sponsors hope is transferred to their brand through sponsorship. An athlete can influence the lives of consumers who value them by shaping their values and behaviours (Wann, Melnick, Russell, & Pease, 2001). The loyalty and emotional connection that a fan has with an athlete is strong, enduring, and personal (Sassenberg & Johnson Morgan, 2010). Using famous and adored athletes as a strategy to transfer meaning suggests that consumer perceptions of athletes (i.e., success, attractiveness, invincibility, etc.) can be transferred to

the product with the athlete. In other words, we like Nike because we like Mike (Stone, Joseph, & Jones, 2003).

A sport celebrity endorsement is effective if the consumer has a high level of trust in the athlete (Erdogan, 1999; Erdogan et al., 2001; Maddux & Rogers, 1980). An athlete is trustworthy if they are perceived as having a high level of likeability, honesty, integrity, and believability (Friedman & Friedman, 1978).

Another benefit of using athlete endorsements is that athletes can provide both free publicity and testimony for a product or service, particularly when the product has contributed to their performance (Dyson & Turco, 1998). Athletes contribute to brand name recognition, create positive associations by transferring qualities, and assist in the development of distinct and credible brand personalities (Kamins, Brand, Hoeke, & Moe, 1989; Ohanian, 1990). It is also important to point out the added benefit of the ability of athlete endorsers to break through media clutter and hold viewers' attention (Erdogan & Baker, 2000).

Many previous models have attempted to explain the ability of a sports celebrity to have such a positive impact on a company's brand. The Source Credibility Model (Shank, 2002) suggests that message effectiveness depends on the endorser's perceived credibility, which combines both expertise and trustworthiness. Credible sources influence consumer beliefs, attitudes, and behaviour. Athletes are believed to be particularly persuasive relative to sports-related products due to their skill and expertise (Brooks & Harris, 1998). An example of this would be when John McEnroe changed his style of tennis shoe to achieve

more ankle support, resulting in a sales jump for that style of shoe from thousands to over 1.5 million (Stone et al., 2003).

The Source Attractiveness Model (Shank, 2002) proposes that the message will be effective if there is similarity between the source and receiver, the source is likeable (physical appearance), and the source is familiar through repeated media exposure. Kamins et al. (1989), note that the use of attractive celebrities is appropriate when marketing “attractiveness” products, perhaps explaining Anna Kournikova’s popularity with clothing manufacturers, considering the fact that the tennis star has never won a major title. One of the most powerful quotes comes from Ewen’s (1999) book whereby he suggests that with professional athletes: people not only find a piece of themselves, but also a piece of what they strive for. This is the concept that consumers would buy a product that an athlete endorses in order to get a “piece” or attach themselves to the athlete. Consumers who strive to be just like the sports celebrity they admire or adore would want to consume a product that the athlete is associated with (Ewen, 1999).

The Product Match-up Hypothesis states that effective advertising results when the messages conveyed by celebrity image are compatible with the product image (Pornpitakpan, 2003). The product needs to be congruent in the mind of the consumer with the athlete endorsing it. An obvious example would be the high product congruency between Tiger Woods and golf clubs. Finally, The Meaning Transfer Model maintains that athletes (celebrity endorsers) bring their own symbolic meanings to the endorsement process, as well as the cultural meanings attached to the celebrity such as status, class, and lifestyle transfer to products (McCracken, 1989). Schaff’s (1995) research on athlete

endorsements indicates that the marketability of an athlete depends on both the tangible and intangible factors possessed by the athlete. The tangible factors referred to by the author would include the athlete's skill level and his/her level of success in the sport. The intangibles factors include consumer perceptions of skill level and success, and individual characteristics such as image, charisma, physical appearance, and personality (Schaaf, 1995). The image created by the sport celebrity transfers from the celebrity to the product and then from the product to the consumer.

Most practitioners' opinions on the effectiveness of athlete endorsements think that it could be very effective if there is an appropriate fit between the athlete, the brand, the message, and the target audience. An important similarity among numerous previous studies is the importance of this match-up. If the athlete-target audience and product match-up does not fit then: it lacks credibility, and if it lacks credibility then it lacks persuasiveness (Charbonneau & Garland, 2005b). Moreover, source credibility is at or near the top of the list of athletes representing their respective sports, particularly in terms of possession of the sort of athletic skills needed to compete at the highest levels, as well as having some record of success.

Source credibility is also a commonality amongst the academic research being analyzed. In addition, a significant amount of research suggests that the athlete should also possess desirable personal characteristics (Stone et al., 2003). They should have likable personalities, as well as projecting a charismatic and trustworthy image to consumers. Stone et al also note that the combination of athleticism and basketball skills is what made Michael "Air" Jordan a superstar, combined with his dynamic personality, he turned his

association with Nike into a sports business euphemism for a “perfect fit” (Amis, Pant, & Slack, 1997).

In addition to creating favourable impressions of the brand, Agrawal and Kamakura (1995) have demonstrated that celebrity athletes, serving as product endorsers, often favourably impact the stock prices of the companies they represent. The stock price of the five companies that Michael Jordan represented while playing in Chicago moved by 2.9 billion two weeks before the 1995 season began (Agrawal & Kamakura, 1995). The rise in stock price was based simply on the rumour that Jordan would be returning to basketball after his brief retirement the previous season (Crawford & Niendorf, 1999). Because of its extensive use and numerous benefits noted above, sport celebrity sponsorship has been studied extensively.

2.5 Sport Celebrity Research & Studies

Charbonneau and Garland’s (2006) research purpose was to assist sports marketing managers and advertising agencies in matching athletes with products. The author used Ohanian’s (1990) 15-item source-credibility scale and the constant-sum scale to measure potential endorsement fit. Ohanian’s scale incorporates two themes from the existing literature: source credibility (expertise and trustworthiness) and source attractiveness (familiarity, likeability, and similarity). The authors concluded that the multi-item approach provided by the Ohanian scale provides advertising agencies with insights into how to present celebrity athletes. The research demonstrated that scales such as Ohanian’s and constant-sum can be useful as testing instruments for use with the general public when

evaluating a range of athletes as potential endorsers (Charbonneau & Garland, 2006; Ohanian, 1990).

Shuart (2007) noted that the use of celebrities, and particularly athletes, to influence consumers and sell products is not a new practice, but one that is gaining considerable steam in the sports marketplace. However, many academics and practitioners have long questioned the means by which celebrity endorsement is measured and evaluated (Shuart, 2007). Much corporate research still relies on Q-Score ratings (a research tool quantifying a celebrity's performance and likeability), which although popular and easy to assess, are problematic in many ways (Burton, Farrelly, & Quester, 2000). A sponsor may need to look beyond the simplicity of a consumer liking an athlete for his or her looks, on-field performance, or image (Burton et al., 2000). It may be more essential for an athlete to appear "true" to his or her values (Burton et al., 2000).

In response to scholars who have questioned the utility and accuracy of Q-scores, Burton et al. (2000) presented improved models for the assessment of athletes as endorsers. The author used validation surveys and the Celebrity-Hero Matrix (CHM) to conclude that being labeled a "heroic" athlete does have tremendous power for marketers and provides endorsement clout for an athlete. Heroic qualities of the endorser prove to be the strongest predictor and contributor to intent-to-purchase an endorsed product (Shuart, 2007, p. 128). The Celebrity-Hero Matrix has four quadrants, which rates athletes as high or low on the celebrity and hero scale. A celebrity is defined as a "famous person" and a hero is defined as a "distinguished person, admired for their ability, bravery, or noble qualities, and worthy of emulation" (Shuart, 2007, p. 128). Based on their scores, they are

placed in one of the four matrixes. The author clarifies and expands upon some of the concepts that Chalip (1997) proposed. Chalip's contention—that heroism depends on celebrity, but an individual does not need to be a hero to become a celebrity—is not only accurate but is the basis upon which American mediated celebrity rests (Chalip, 1997).

Shuart's research is particularly interesting in light of Brooks & Harris (1998), who asked the further question: does a (sport) hero have more cultural meaning than a (sport) celebrity? The results of Shuart's (2007) study and others (Burton et al, 2001; Ohanian, 1991) confirmed the belief that someone who is known as both a hero and a celebrity will prove to be the most effective spokesperson for a product.

Shuart's (2007) study also contributes to a redefinition of the sport hero and his data can be used to help redefine modern heroism. The main goal of the author's research is to bridge the gap between classic hero worship literature and modern consumer perceptions of heroes and celebrities in the sports realm.

The significance of the "Be Like Mike" campaign by Gatorade cannot be overemphasized. Marketers correctly assumed two things about their future consumers: "hero-worshipping children and young adults would want to drink Michael Jordan's brand, and incorporate his successful image as a winner," (Burton et al., 2000, p. 325). Most knew that they would never reach Jordan's level of basketball skill, but it was a way in which they could vicariously identify with their hero, simply by drinking Gatorade (Shuart, 2007). A point of interest that Shuart notes is that future research should try to explore the different factors that make athletes so effective as endorsers of products. As suggested by Agrawal

and Kamakura (1995), an attempt to link endorsement with economic value (i.e. contribution to the bottom line) should be made.

This link was accomplished in a very recent study that wanted to actually measure the pay-off of endorsements with athletes. Elberse and Verleun (2012) wanted to examine the impact of a company's decision to sign an athlete endorser, and any subsequent major achievements (winning a major tournament) by the athlete. They measured both the firm's stock market valuation and sales of the endorsed brand, and that of competing brands. They wanted to know if relying on athlete endorsers was "a winning marketing strategy." The research was novel because they studied whether endorsement announcements and endorser achievements positively impact sales for the endorsed brand, as well as negatively impact sales for competing brands. The authors used a comprehensive data set covering 180 athletes, 95 firms, and 347 endorsement deals announced between 1990 and 2008, as well as 124 endorser achievements that materialized between 1996 and 2008. The results proved that the stock market responds favourably to both the decision to sign an athlete and the athlete's major achievements. The company's stock market valuation increased with an average of 0.23% when it recruited an athlete endorser, and 0.14% each time one of its athlete endorsers achieved a major career milestone. In addition, sales significantly increased following a company's decision to sign an athlete endorser. The monthly sales for the endorsed brands increased around 4% over the first six months, and the sales for the competing brands did not change substantially. However, the research also found that major athlete achievements did not significantly improve the endorsed brand's sales relative to rival brands' sales. There was no significant correlation between how the

stock market reacts to an endorsement announcement and how future sales for the endorsed brand develop. Further analyses found that a significant driver of the effects on stock returns and/or sales was the athlete's historical athletic performance, which positively predicted the effect of endorsements on both returns and sales (Elberse & Verleun, 2012).

Paying a premium (higher sponsorship price) for athletes with a winning record tends to be associated with even higher sales levels. The company needs to build and maintain a "winning" brand image around their athlete's "winning" image. This correlates with past research that the athlete's performance leads to both source credibility and being labeled as a hero. Elberse and Verleun (2012) also concluded that a company needs to analyze their brand and category's penetration among fans of various sports as well as find an athlete with a good fan base, but with significant room for growth in the category. They therefore concluded that athlete endorsements appear to be an effective marketing strategy, as on average they significantly increase firm valuation and sales if the company carefully matches the endorsers to the brand.

The attractiveness of a celebrity (similarity, familiarity, and likeability) is one of the main reasons sponsorship of an athlete is so successful. The sponsor hopes to transfer that same attractiveness to their brand. To enhance the brand's image, the right associations have to be transferred from the athlete to the brand, more specifically that the right message is sent and interpreted in the mind of the consumer. Media in sport has given athletes increased visibility (Brown, 2012). Treating an athlete like a celebrity began in the 1920s, when the media began creating "larger-than-life" images of the achievements of

sports figures (Smart, 2005). This coverage has only increased with the expansion of mass media to our televisions and computers. The Internet has further amplified the visibility of athletes with the formation of websites and blogs solely dedicated to covering sports and athletes' use of social media to create a personal connection with their fans, and this visibility creates a need for athletes to protect their image (Brown, 2012).

The flip side of that coin is that consumer perception of people is prone to change—sometimes rather quickly (Jones & Schumann, 2004). That could not be truer than for contemporary society where the flow of information has sped up exponentially with technology. As a result, using a sport celebrity for secondary associations (defined as the image of the sport celebrity changing or supplementing the image of a brand through transfer) is a major risk for companies, as they basically hand over control of one of their most valuable assets (Uggla, 2004).

The rewards of sport sponsorship and sport-celebrity sponsorship are relatively clear and can be measured. Audience reach, attendance, and television ratings can be measured and controlled through a variety of marketing tactic (Bloxsome et al., 2011). The positive emotion and attachment sport consumers feel is well known and well researched, so much so that companies are constantly trying to take advantage of it. However, the proven benefits associated with sport celebrity endorsement come with apparent risks. Bloxsome et al. (2011) note that “the risks are less easy to anticipate, the impact is harder to measure, and they are often far outside of the sponsors' control” (p. 137).

2.6 Sport Celebrity Sponsorship Risks

The aforementioned research examined the positive benefits that sponsoring an athlete can provide if they are matched properly. However, with these benefits come risks. Stone et al. (2003) note that virtually every athlete possesses a level of athleticism and skill in their chosen sport and therefore aren't lacking in source credibility. However, as previously discussed, skill level alone does not necessarily make an athlete a good candidate to become a successful celebrity endorser. Studies have identified that athlete endorsement could harm a corporate brand.

Langmeyer and Shank (1993) have noted that consumer perceptions of non-profit organizations are negatively impacted when paired with celebrities perceived as having a negative image. Tripp, Jensen, and Carlson (1994) indicate that multiple endorsements by the same celebrity reduce the credibility and increase the liability of the individual celebrity. Similar research discusses how celebrities endorsing multiple products risk overexposure, lessening the impact and distinctiveness of each product relationship, and diminishing consumer perceptions of celebrity credibility and likeability (Garland & Ferkins, 2003; James & Ryan, 2001; Langmeyer & Shank, 1993; Tripp, Jensen, & Carlson, 1994). Increased celebrity attention may lead to brand overshadowing (Erdogan & Kitchen, 1998). Furthermore, Till and Shimp (1998) indicate that negative information about a celebrity tends to have a negative impact on perceptions about a brand, particularly when negative information about the celebrity has been declared prior to a pairing with a brand (Till & Shimp, 1998). Negative publicity generated by the bad behaviour of well-known celebrities, particularly when associated with ad campaigns, is harmful because consumers

tend to pay more attention to the bad behaviour than to the positive publicity associated with endorsers (Ahluwalia, Burnkrant, & Unnava, 2000).

Similarly, controversy involving the endorser can lead to corporate embarrassment and transfer of negative attitudes to the brand (Pornpitakpan, 2003; Till, 2001). Past research has noted that because of the increased level of risk associated with using celebrity endorsers, advertisers have begun using more animated characters and the images of deceased celebrities. Unlike live celebrities, these images are immune to bad publicity (Callcott & Lee, 1994; Pollay & Lavack, 1993; Scott, 1994). A final additional risk is that celebrity athletes face the constant risk of injury, which reduces visibility and performance, and thereby endorsement potential (Irwin, Sutton, & McCarthy, 2002).

Personal characteristics of the athlete being endorsed have become an issue of interest in recent years. Of particular concern for advertisers has been the rash of negative publicity prompted by the uncivil, and often illegal, behaviour of well-known professional athletes (Stone et al., 2003). The media is quick to publish stories exposing football players involved in weapons or murder charges; basketball players committing adultery; baseball players using banned substances; and many other athletes acting in a socially unacceptable or illegal manner. Advertisers fear the type of negative publicity that is now all too commonly associated with some of today's leading sports figures, and this bad publicity has resulted in fewer long-term athlete endorsement contracts (Shevack, 1998). Advertisers are justifiably concerned about the personal characteristics of the individual they select to represent them.

Babe Ruth is revered today but definitely was not considered much of a hero back in his day. Rather, he was considered a drunken, womanizing, out-of-shape ballplayer. With the passage of time, his negative behaviour has been forgotten while the positive has been glorified. However, at the time that the negative publicity takes place, Burton et al. (2000) assert that although negative publicity for athletes is not necessarily bad, it is also an inconsistent and unpredictable force which can adversely affect the endorser's ability to do what they do best, which is to help companies sell products.

The risks associated with sponsoring an athlete and sport-celebrity scandals seem to be growing exponentially, resulting in an in-depth analysis of research concerning this very subject being of great interest to researchers and brands alike. For that reason, research in sports scandal is beneficial to any firm engaging in athletic endorsement now or in the future.

2.7 Sport Celebrity Scandal

While the research concerning the benefits of athlete endorsement is widespread, there is much less information on the impact of a scandal involving an athlete. How does it affect not only the athlete, but the corporate brand itself? As sponsorship deals have reached new financial heights, there has been increasing scrutiny of sport celebrities' behaviour, particularly when they transgress (Sassenburg & Johnson Morgan, 2010).

An athlete's words or actions are directly linked to the franchise for which he or she plays for (Doyle, 2001). When an athlete is involved in a scandal off the field of play, it could result in the player being released from the team they play for (Brown, 2012). Adam "Pacman" Jones was traded from the Tennessee Titans because of numerous criminal

incidents (Wyatt, 2008). Terrell Owens was deactivated for a season and ultimately released from the Philadelphia Eagles because of comments made toward the management and quarterback during his contract negotiation (Associated Press, 2005, 2006). After being involved in a scandal, both men had considerably smaller contracts with other teams as a result, and suffered a significant financial loss (Brown, 2012).

A sport celebrity transgression is followed by a great deal of negative publicity that is fuelled by the technologies of the information age (Sassenburg & Johnson Morgan, 2010). In order to establish how a sport celebrity scandal impacts not only the sponsoring brand but also consumer attitudes, it is necessary to examine previous research done on athletic scandal. In 2003 Stone et al. (2003) wrote this in their research article:

“Tiger Woods has surpassed Jordan as the world’s premier athlete endorser. Before he is through with his already remarkable career, Tiger Woods will have set an extremely high new standard for what it means to be a product endorser. Woods appears to be in abundant possession of both source credibility and desirable personal characteristics. While there are many athletes who one might reasonably argue possess approximately the same level of source credibility in their respective sports, very few appear to measure up to his standards of character off the field” (p. 97).

A separate author expressed that Tiger Woods is a marketer’s dream: no company has capitalized on the appeal of the good-looking, clean-cut, articulate, scandal-free golf whiz more than Nike (DiCarlo, 2004). A separate paper could be written detailing the

benefit Nike has received through its association with Woods, and in fact has been (Ginman, 2010).

Reading the above-mentioned quotes in the present provides an ideal example of how the benefits of sponsorship can change in a blink of an eye. It becomes apparent now that even one of the most influential and seemingly successful examples of sports sponsorship can be impacted by scandal. The Tiger Woods adultery scandal is a distinctive example of an athlete whose popularity with fans and value to sponsors was due to his trustworthiness, integrity, and honesty (Sassenburg, & Johnson Morgan, 2010). His complete success and domination on the field of play was admired by consumers who desired a psychological connection with him in some way. What company would not want to attach themselves to Woods?

That was up until 2009, when his extramarital affairs with several women were made public. Prior to information concerning his indiscretions became public knowledge, a full 92% of Tiger Woods' earnings came from endorsements rather than sports achievements (Freedman, 2009). The golfer's transgressions were covered extensively by the media and it resulted in polar-opposite reactions from his sponsors. The responses varied from continuous support to a complete termination of the sponsorship relationship. Gatorade, AT&T, Accenture, Tag Heuer, and Gillette distanced themselves immediately from Woods, while Nike and EZ Sports continued to support him.

The Tiger Woods scandal indicates that corporations involved in sport celebrity sponsorship increasingly have to make difficult decisions about whether or not to continue their involvement with an athlete involved in a scandal. Sassenburg and Johnson Morgan

(2010) note that corporations have little or no real understanding of how the consumer will perceive the sport celebrity's transgression and if any negative associations assigned by consumers will extend to their brands. Did Tiger's sponsors base their decisions on any real evidence of how the scandal impacted the attitude of their consumers?

Tiger Woods is one of many sports stars that have recently been involved in scandal, and many athletes have had their relationship with a sponsor terminated as a result of misbehaviour in their personal life. Kobe Bryant lost several deals because of rape charges in 2003 and Michael Phelps lost his deal with Kelloggs after he was photographed smoking marijuana. On the other hand, John Terry was reported as having a relationship with his teammate's wife, and although he lost his title of captain with the England soccer team he retained the majority of his endorsements. Sponsoring an athlete is a gamble and it is crucial that companies tie their brand to the right external source and associations because the wrong decision could be damaging to the very brand image they are trying to better.

Michael Vick's relationship with Nike was terminated after his involvement in a dog-fighting ring. It was not until a successful comeback with the Philadelphia Eagles that Nike decided to resign him to an endorsement deal in 2011 (Associated Press, 2011). Kobe Bryant is another example. His situation demonstrated the potential risk that corporate sponsors face. Bryant's major sponsors, including McDonalds, Sprite, and Nike, have all experienced some type of negative impact on their brands from Bryant's scandal (Hughes & Shank, 2005). Nutella and Ferrero U.S.A. severed ties and failed to renew their contracts with Bryant over the incident. In the end, the total personal cost to Bryant is projected to be over \$100 million in lost future endorsement opportunities (Hughes & Shank, 2005).

In 2005 Dalakas and Levin did an interesting study with the National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing (NASCAR) fans. They found that not only did the fans like the brands sponsored by their favourite drivers, but they also had negative attitudes toward the sponsors of their least favourite drivers. This research would lend to the idea that an athlete involved in a scandal that led to a negative opinion of that athlete by its fans could lead to negative attitudes toward sponsors (Dalakas & Levin, 2005). A sport scandal can also impact interest and consumption of sports among fans. Reed (2012) used the example of the brawl between the Indiana Pacers and the Detroit Pistons on November 19, 2004, as the Pacers have annually suffered low attendance figures, which is an issue they still face into the 2011-2012 NBA season (Reed, 2012). Another example is the Tiger Woods infidelity scandal: the PGA Tour suffered declining attendance figures and TV ratings in 2010 (McCarthy, 2010). The various examples given above have led to academic research studying sport celebrity scandal.

2.8 Sport Celebrity Scandal Research & Studies

Till and Shrimp (1998) found that a lowered evaluation of an endorser (from negative information about the endorser) would eventually lower a brand's evaluation by consumers. Interestingly, the authors also found that the timing and release of negative information also affected consumers' evaluation of the brand. Specifically, negative information about the celebrity had greater impact on the evaluation of the brand when the celebrity was evaluated prior to the brand than it does when the celebrity is evaluated after the brand. The authors explained the results by reasoning that evaluating the celebrity first

would prime the negative information and link it with the endorsed brand immediately prior to the evaluation of the brand (Till & Shimp, 1998).

Louie, Kulik and Jacobson (2001) did an investigation of the impact on a company's financial performance (measured by stock market return) when a celebrity endorser (athlete) becomes involved in unpleasant events. The authors found that stock market return was negatively impacted when this occurred. In addition, when the endorser is completely to blame for the event, the firm was also valued negatively (Louie et al., 2001).

On the other hand, if the endorser was not at all to blame for the event, the overall effect on firm value was positive. The reason these results are interesting is because they suggest that not all bad events are necessarily negative for the sponsors. The results demonstrate that consumers have sympathy for endorsers who are involved in undesirable events not of their doing. It actually results in greater visibility and affection for the endorser and products they sponsor. From a marketing perspective, if a sponsor did get involved in a scandal, the best outcome would be achieved if actions were taken to absolve the individual of all fault. Essentially, if the focus on the blame is not on the sponsor, it could end up being a positive experience for the company.

Louie and Obermiller (2002) examined the relationship between the degree of endorser blame for bad events, and the company evaluation. Adding to the research by Louie et al. (2001) they discovered that companies should associate with endorsers who have low levels of blame for negative events. The authors also noted that the financial performance of companies increased when companies released endorsers with high blameworthiness for an event and kept those endorsers with low blameworthiness. They

also furthered Louie et al.'s (2001) finding that companies can actually benefit from associating with endorsers who have experienced low blame events. The authors found that the positive impact comes from consumers who generally show appreciation to companies that pay an endorser that has gone through a rough, but unwarranted, set of bad circumstances (Louie & Obermiller, 2002).

Going in a different direction, Fisher and Wakefield (1998) looked into why fans of losing sports teams, alumni of poorly ranked educational systems, and patrons of charities rocked by scandal continued to maintain or even increase their support. The authors found that, in pursuit of positive self-definition, members of both successful and unsuccessful groups identify with their groups for different reasons. Successful groups use performance as the dominant factor in their group association. Unsuccessful groups focus on aspects of the group and its members, things like individual group member attractiveness and group domain association that were beneficial to their view of self and ignored information about their group's poor performance (Fisher & Wakefield, 1998).

Research is beginning to come forward that examines off-field risks that impact the sponsor directly. Interest in non-sport influences on the sponsor's brand has been approached from a managerial perspective (Hughes & Shank, 2005, 2008; Kahuni, Rowley, & Binsardi, 2009; Wilson, Stavros, & Westberg, 2008). It has been approached in relation to celebrity brand DNA, which is defined as the components that provide a sport celebrity with a unique identity and personality (Johnson Morgan, Summers, & Sassenberg, 2008; Sassenberg & Johnson Morgan, 2010), the influence of team identification on consumer perception (Fink, Parker, Brett, & Higgins, 2009; Parker, 2007), and from a public relations

perspective (Brazeal, 2008; Dimitrov, 2008; Fortunato, 2008). All of these papers have made significant strides in sport celebrity scandal research.

Hughes and Shank (2005, 2008) provide the earliest insights into sponsorship scandal by interviewing 10 sponsors and media representatives. Their respondents expressed concerns about criminality of behaviours, sports integrity, impact of the play of the game, and the level of sport at which the scandal occurred (professional versus amateur) (Hughes & Shank, 2005).

Hughes and Shank's (2005) study was intended to build on the context around scandal and extend the literature in the area of celebrity endorsers in three ways. First, the authors attempted to incorporate context into the evaluation of negative information events by examining the influence of certain contextual aspects on how the media and corporate sports sponsors' perceive a scandal. In addition, they investigated the impact of scandals exclusively in the area of sports, not just a general class of celebrities. Sport celebrities have a wealth of negative-related events surrounding this group of celebrities. The authors wanted to study whether the impact of a player's on-the-field performance diminished the perception of scandal in any way. They also provided a framework of characteristics that can be used to assess the degree of scandal.

Hughes and Shank (2005) identified two primary reasons something was represented as a scandal in the minds of the respondents: the situation was characterized by either illegal or unethical behaviour on the part of the sport celebrity. They also noted that the performance of the sport celebrity on the field of play does appear to directly impact the perception of whether an event is scandalous or not. The respondents indicated

that their perception of whether an event was scandalous in the sport was influenced by the extent to which an event impacted the performance of the individual on the field of play. Respondents generally identified four consistent characteristics that made an event in athletics scandalous or not. Included were an action that was either illegal or unethical, involved multiple parties over a sustained period of time, and whose impact affected the integrity of the sport with which they were associated.

An article written in 2006 discussed the question: what happens when a pro athlete or team falls from grace due to unethical behaviour while under the umbrella of a brand's sponsorship? The author noted that brands are investing because it is the closest they can come to providing consumer experiences that he or she can't experience in everyday life, and that it is essentially hero worship (de Mesa, 2006). The author also noted that the risks associated with sponsorship are high and something, or someone, can always cause problems. This was further explained with the example of Floyd Landis, a pro cyclist who made a dramatic comeback in the Tour de France to win it and become only the third American to capture the title. Landis was sponsored by a Swiss hearing-aid maker, Phonak, that could have translated his victory into a full-sized promotional campaign. However, Landis was stripped of the title after testing positive for illegally high testosterone use, and Phonak withdrew from professional sports sponsorships.

After the Landis scandal, it was widely reported that Phonak team members faced charges of illegal drug use by its team members, and in August 2006 they announced the termination of their cycling team (de Mesa, 2006). This scandal adds evidence to Hughes and Shank's (2005) study identifying that when a scandal involves the integrity of the sport

and is on-going, it is recognized as very serious. Mesa went on to say that contracts with athletes that contain clauses that precisely define ethical contact are now the rule.

Hughes and Shank furthered their work in 2008 assessing the impact of NCAA scandals. The authors analyzed the impact of athletic scandals in men's football and basketball programs in 15 universities, on charitable giving, athletic giving, the number of freshman applications, and overall enrolment. The results were from the 1998-1999 season to 2005-2006. They indicated that athletic scandal does negatively impact overall charitable giving and overall enrolment, and that the impact is long-term in nature. The authors (Hughes & Shank, 2008) analyzed the data by using a trend analysis for charitable support and enrolment in the pre- versus post-year of the scandal for the 15 universities, and then creating a percentage increase or decrease for each of the relevant variables. Overall charitable contributions decreased by 75% and overall enrollment decreased by 31% (Hughes & Shank, 2008). However, contrary to what they expected, athletic scandal had a positive impact on alumni athletic contributions, corporate athletic contributions, and total freshman applications. The results of this study also indicated that corporations appear to be less sensitive to negative publicity generated by a scandal compared to overall university contributors.

Kahuni, Rowley and Binsardi (2009) completed a content analysis of news coverage relating to allegations of spying in Formula 1 by the Vodafone McLaren-Mercedes F1 team. The media reported or "framed" the coverage by using the Vodafone McLaren-Mercedes' name when discussing the spy allegations (Kahuni et al., 2009). The author's results illustrated that while title sponsorship presents a credible risk to sponsor's brands when a

negative event occurs, Vodafone's lack of public outrage could be construed as team support and their strategy interpreted as "business as usual" (Kahuni et al., 2009). Research supporting the "business as usual" strategy was also done by Wilson et al. in 2008. The authors interviewed Australian sport marketing executives and concluded that: sponsors want teams to provide full and fast admission of on- and off-field transgressions and programs to manage player behaviour are being regarded as increasingly important (Wilson et al., 2008). They also noted that the media coverage of transgressions is regarded as a powerful persuader on public and target market opinion (Wilson et al., 2008).

The very things that make a sport celebrity attractive as a marketing tool for firms—their high levels of media exposure, the highly emotional, almost "god-like" (Johnson Morgan et al., 2008) adoration by their fans, and their ability to lead a lifestyle that that most individuals can only aspire to—also considerably increases the risk for a potential scandal that could lead to very negative publicity.

Many scandals within the sport industry have been reported over the years including allegations of physical and sexual abuse (J. Summers & Johnson Morgan, 2008), match fixing, allegations of drug abuse (Canning, 2007), and bribery (Kidd, 2008). Individuals expect their sporting heroes to not only excel in their sport but to also demonstrate high levels of behaviour and moral conduct (Johnson Morgan et al., 2008).

Johnson Morgan et al. wanted to extend on that knowledge and investigate whether the type of scandal (and ensuing negative publicity) impacts the brand DNAs of the sport celebrity, the sponsor, and the sport team. Brand DNA can be defined as the components of a brand that gives it a unique identity and personality. It is based around five basic

components: category, character, benefits, difference, and credibility (Johnson Morgan et al., 2008). The difference between a sport and non-sport related scandal and the degree and impact of negative publicity that follows is likely to have different impacts on the credibility, trustworthiness, and likeability of an athlete and their perceived brand DNA. (Johnson Morgan et al., 2008) When organizations use athletes to endorse their products or associate with their brand, consumer attitudes towards the athletes will be essential to the success of the endorsement.

Johnson Morgan et al. also examined the “sport team” brand DNA (Johnson Morgan et al., 2008). Sport team images are not static and there is the risk of image change or loss of public favour (Charbonneau & Garland, 2005a), furthermore the members of a sports team and the way they are perceived impacts the image of the team as a whole (Duncan, 2005). The authors asked the question: “What will happen to the image of a sport team when the credibility, trustworthiness, and likeability of one of its members is impacted by negative publicity?” (Johnson Morgan et al., 2008). Morgan et al. are going to complete an exploratory study with a series of experiments where various sport and non-sport scandals will be presented to sport consumers. Perceptions of brand DNA toward the sponsor, the athlete, and the athlete’s team prior to and after the experiment will be assessed.

Votola and Unnava (2006) studied the conditions in which the sponsor’s alliance with a spokesperson was impacted by negative behaviour, calling it the spillover effect. They concluded that if the negative information regarding the spokesperson pertained to a moral failure (relating to ethics and principles), the result would be a less-positive attitude towards the corporate partner (Votola & Unnava, 2006).

Sassenburg and Johnson Morgan (2010) argued that if the sport celebrity transgression impacts the degree to which a consumer trusts the athlete; this could negatively affect the consumer's attitude and damage the effectiveness of the sponsorship. They also proposed that the degree to which a transgression impacts consumers' attitudes towards the sport celebrity may depend on the characteristics of the transgression, the consumers' expectations of that celebrity and the attributes initially valued by the consumer. Furthermore they proposed that the impact of the sport celebrity transgression on consumers' attitudes towards their sponsors brands will depend on the degree to which the transgression relates to the attributes which define the sponsorship "fit" between the celebrity and the sponsoring brand (Sassenburg & Johnson Morgan, 2010).

Sassenburg and Johnson Morgan (2010) also noted that the scandal surrounding Tiger Woods could be an example of sponsors deciding to continue or terminate a relationship with an athlete who has transgressed based on the fit between the athlete and the sponsor. Sponsors whose associations with Tiger were based on his "non-product" attributes (integrity, reliability, honesty) swiftly terminated their relationship with him. The companies who sponsored Woods based on the golfer's product-related attributes (how successful of a golfer he is) maintained their relationship (Sassenberg & Johnson Morgan, 2010). Did the sponsors make their decisions based on real substance (academic research) or a gut feeling?

Sassenberg and Verreynne (2010) stated that while the positive benefits of sport sponsorship have been well researched, the potentially damaging effect of sport celebrity scandal on their own brand image and the image of their sponsors has been largely

ignored. The author's research explained that sport sponsorship relies on positive brand image transfer and asked how a negative transgression might impact the brand image of the sport celebrity and consequently their sponsors (Sassenberg & Verreynne, 2010). Prior research has found that negative consumer attitudes toward sport celebrities or athletes can lead to negative attitudes towards brands associated with the specific athlete (Fink, Cunningham, & Kensicki, 2004; Till & Shimp, 1998). As the value of a sport celebrity is defined by consumers' attitudes towards the celebrity, it seems logical that research in this area should look to consumer research to further our understanding. (Sassenberg & Verreynne, 2010).

Bloxsome et al. (2011) suggested that not only has consumer research been a very small area for research and that this should change, but that sponsorship research on consumer perceptions of off-field behaviours of sportspeople is currently very limited. Parker (2007) and Fink et al. (2009) offer the only research studying consumer responses to off-field behaviours. Parker (2007) researched the effect of sponsor misbehaviour on low- and high-identified fans. More specifically, the sport consumers' team identification scores and attitude towards the sponsor post-scandal were measured (Parker, 2007). Using balance and identification theory, Parker (2007) found that highly identified fans had higher attitudes towards the misbehaving sponsor than fans with lower identification. The study also found that after negative sponsor information, the team identification scores did not change (attitude towards the team did not change) but the negative information did influence attitude towards the sponsor (Parker, 2007).

Fink et al., (2009) specifically studied the negative off-field behaviours of athletes and how they influenced identification with the athlete's team. The authors' studied high- and low-identified fans, and a weak or strong leadership (management) response by the team after the athlete was involved in a scandal (Fink et al., 2009). The results of the research showed that levels of identification for low team-identification subjects do not change significantly from pre- to post-test given a negative information stimulus. However, highly identified fans produced mixed results (Fink et al., 2009). When team managers acted quickly, condemned poor behaviour and acted openly (strong leadership response), team identification scores were stable (Fink et al.,2009). The interesting results took place when a weak leadership response by the management team was researched. When the team had a slow response, denied responsibility, and didn't discipline the athlete, there was a significant fall in team-identification scores (Fink et al., 2009). Bloxsome et al. (2011) noted that these results confirm public relations theoretical approaches to crisis management that promote speed, transparency, and public apology (Fortunato, 2008).

Understanding consumer responses to the off-field behaviours of athletes has been researched and described above. (Parker 2007, Fink et al., 2009). However, the research did not consider the implications for sponsors or address any effects on sponsor's brands. The authors recommended that there was the potential for considerably more research in this important area (Bloxsome et al., 2001). The implications for a brand sponsoring an athlete post-scandal is vital information for any brand currently or considering sponsoring an athlete, and will be the main focus of this research.

2.9 Contributing to Past Research

Following the growing trend of athlete popularity, there is an increasing use of sponsorships and athletic endorsements as companies are trying to influence consumers by aligning their products and services with a popular athlete. Logically, with the increase of athletic endorsers, the opportunity for an athlete to be involved in a scandal increases as well and sport celebrity scandals are becoming more and more prevalent.

Presently, a brand has a limited amount of time after an athletic scandal takes place to decide if they want to continue or terminate their relationship with the athlete. Once the scandal occurs, the media and social media in current society will provide consumers with information regarding the scandal instantaneously. Post-scandal, the relationship decision becomes crucial for the brand because the consumer will form an attitude towards the brand based on what they decide. Will the brand stand behind the athlete and continue the relationship, or will the athlete's behaviour contradict the brand's image and result in the brand terminating the relationship.

From a managerial perspective, that very information is what becomes crucial for any brand involved in sport celebrity sponsorship. After a scandal, how will the sponsor's decision to either continue or terminate its relationship with the brand influence or change consumer attitude towards their brand? How will it ultimately impact the brand's image? This research will study how a sport celebrity scandal shapes consumer attitude towards the sponsoring brand after a relationship decision has been made. The following section will describe the study's model and hypotheses in detail.

Chapter Three: Model Development

A sport celebrity scandal becomes widespread in a matter of days. Combine media fascination over a scandal, social media's ability to break a story in a matter of seconds, and the general lure of athletes, and its impact can be far-reaching and consequential.

The sports industry is a multibillion-dollar industry and its social and cultural significance is becoming increasingly evident across the world. The highest levels of professional athletes are well known even among individuals who do not follow their sport. Inevitably, there is an increasing use of sponsorships and athletic endorsements as companies are trying to influence consumers by aligning their products and services with a popular athlete. With the increase of athletic endorsers, the likelihood for a sponsored athlete to be involved in a scandal increases. Kudlac (2010) argues that media attention devoted to covering the criminal transgressions of athletes has increased because the public believes that athletes, due to their financial success and celebrity status, should adopt appropriate behaviours (Kudlac, 2010).

As a result, sport celebrity scandal raises a number of important issues: How does a scandal impact consumer attitude? How does a sport celebrity scandal directly impact consumer attitude towards not only the individual athlete but the brand sponsoring the athlete as well?

When an athlete is involved in a scandal off the field of play, the sponsoring brand must decide whether to continue or terminate its relationship with the athlete. The question addressed in this research is: How would such a decision impact consumer attitude towards the brand?

3.1 Attitude Towards The Brand

A brand can be explained as a set of intangible mental associations that add to its perceived value (Kapferer, 2008). Further, those psychological associations are grounded in the attitudes of the consumer. Developing and increasing overall consumer attitude is essential for brand management to build equity and foster loyalty. One way this can be accomplished is through the use of a sport celebrity endorser. The positive attributes and image an athlete has created over time establishes the athlete as a brand. Endorsement pairs a brand to an athlete, thus creating a positive public relationship. This merging of brands not only creates positive equity but can also increase a consumer's overall attitude towards a brand.

Addressing consumer attitude towards a brand is not only essential to this research, but the central element of it. Previous research has identified several different features that characterize consumer attitude. The specific components of attitude will be defined in further detail below, along with how consumer attitude will be measured and used here.

An attitude is defined as: a relatively enduring overall evaluation of objects, products, services, issues or people (Babin, Harris, & Murray, 2014). A distinction between the numerous components of attitude needs to be made to understand consumer attitude as it relates to this study.

The ABC approach to attitudes suggests that consumer attitude is comprised of three components: affect, behaviour, and cognitions (or beliefs) (Babin et al., 2014). Behaviour is concerned with one's behaviour regarding the product, and cognitions convey the consumer's belief about the usefulness of a product (Babin et al., 2014). Affect is a

hedonic characteristic of consumer attitude concerned with the pleasurable and agreeable associated feelings the product or service provides (Batra & Ahtola, 1991; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Millar & Tesser, 1986; Triandis, 1977), and will be the specific component of consumer attitude focused on.

There are many different ways a brand can develop consumer affect. As a result of the affective component associated with a brand being directly influenced by the individuals associated with the brand (J. Aaker, 1997), many companies use sport celebrity sponsorship as a means to increase positive attitude. Previous research has suggested that the greater the match between the characteristics that describe an individual's actual or ideal-self and those that describe the brand (through the use of a sport celebrity), the greater the preference for the brand (Malhotra, 1988; Sirgy, 1982). Sport celebrities assist in creating affect towards a brand. It is important to study because of the three components, affect is the part of overall consumer attitude that enables a consumer to express their core values, self-concept, and beliefs to others (Babin et al., 2014).

When a brand starts sponsoring an athlete they want to build brand loyalty by attracting consumers who have already established loyalty to the athlete in the hopes that it will transfer to the brand. Athlete-loyal consumers already had an affective attachment to the athlete pre-sponsorship; the athlete's attributes already represented the consumer's self-concept and beliefs. Ideally, for the brand, the athlete's attributes would transfer to the brand itself once the sponsorship began. A brand begins sponsoring an athlete to capitalize on fan loyalty to the athlete, resulting in a higher attitude towards the brand. The brand has

now created a positive public relationship between themselves, the athlete, and the consumers.

An example of a brand gaining affect through athlete loyal consumers found in past research is another example of the aforementioned “Be Like Mike” campaign, which made use of the popularity and personality of Michael Jordan. He represented many consumers’ ideal-self and Gatorade capitalized on this. By identifying with Gatorade, the consumer could identify with Jordan, who represented an image and personality the consumer wanted to internalize (Shuart, 2007). The consumer gains self-esteem (positive affect) by attaching himself or herself to an athlete who has characteristics that they want to integrate into their own identity. When a consumer identifies with an organization (through the athlete) they embody the characteristics they attribute to their organization into their own self-concept (Fink et al., 2002), which creates a positive affect or emotion towards the brand.

The positive publicity relationship between the brand and an athlete can change very quickly when the athlete the brand is sponsoring is involved in a scandal. A scandal is primarily characterized as unethical behaviour off the field of play that challenges the integrity of the sport (Hughes & Shank, 2005). A more scandalous event would involved multiples parties and would be sustained over a long period of time (Hughes & Shank, 2005). A scandal can also be described as negative publicity. When one occurs, any positive value or equity that the brand accrued through sponsoring the athlete is lost if the positive brand attributes are overshadowed by publicity that is highlighting negative athlete attributes. When the public relationship between the brand and the athlete shifts from

positive to negative through involvement in a scandal, consumer attitude will likely change to some degree towards both the athlete and the brand itself. It would be of value to examine the attitude of a consumer who was athlete-loyal before and after the athlete was involved in a scandal.

3.2 Model Development

This section will generate the overall model and hypotheses that will be used to provide an answer to the proposed research question. Each hypothesis will highlight and influence the main focus of the study, consumer attitude towards the brand, and will be supported by past literature.

3.2.1 Brand's Relationship Decision

The decision to sponsor an athlete is clear: the brand wants to experience all of the benefits sport celebrity sponsorship has to offer. One of these benefits is a more positive consumer attitude toward a brand once they sponsor an athlete. Ideally, the meaning consumers attach to the athlete can be transferred to the sponsoring brand (Duncan, 2005). Unfortunately, not all athletes live up to the behavioural expectations of the sponsor and/or the consumers, especially when involved in a scandal. Exploring consumer attitude towards the brand further, an interesting issue is raised: how does the brand's post-scandal decision regarding its relationship with the athlete (to continue or terminate sponsorship) influence consumer attitude towards the brand? Should the athlete become involved in some form of negative publicity, such as a scandal, the brand has to make another decision regarding sponsorship: either continue the sponsorship or disassociate from the athlete completely.

The relationship decision is crucial: are they going to sever all ties with the athlete or provide support through the fallout from the scandal? Once the scandal occurs, the media and social media in current society will provide consumers with information regarding the scandal instantaneously. In the past, the sponsor's relationship decision (post-scandal) has been made in a relatively short period of time (Houston, 2011). Houston (2011) noted that when the Tiger Woods infidelity scandal first broke, at least three of his major sponsors immediately terminated their relationship with him. A consumer forms an attitude or opinion fairly quickly, and the brand sponsoring an athlete involved in a scandal needs a swift response in order to impact consumers' opinions and overall attitude.

From a managerial perspective, that very information is what becomes crucial for any brand involved in sport celebrity sponsorship. After a scandal, how will the brand's decision to either continue or terminate its relationship with the athlete influence or change consumer attitude towards their brand?

The aim is to provide evidence for a brand that finds itself sponsoring an athlete who is involved in a scandal and needs to make a decision to either continue or terminate its relationship with the athlete. How a sport celebrity scandal shapes consumer attitude towards the sponsoring brand after a relationship decision has been made will be the study's independent variable.

3.2.2 Scope of Study – Athlete-Loyal Consumers

To identify the impact of the brand's relationship decision, the focus will be on a specific and important group of consumers who are highly motivated and whose attitude is crucial to a brand sponsoring an athlete: the athlete-loyal consumer.

Because of being highly identified or loyal to the athlete before the brand started the sponsorship, athlete-loyal fans may be the most reactive to the relationship decision made by the brand. The brand's decision would have clear implications for an athlete-loyal consumer's attitude towards the brand.

By sponsoring the athlete, the brand's intention is to attract consumers to their brand through the athlete. The brand anticipates that the positive values the consumer associates with the athlete will translate into positive values the consumer associates with the brand (capturing additional brand loyalty). That reasoning would be the most accurate for the athlete-loyal consumer. The athlete-loyal consumer can be defined as the consumer who has internalized the values of the athlete and whose personal identity is directly influenced by the athlete. They are highly identified with the athlete and not only feel connected to the athlete, but spend a lot of time and energy cultivating the connection. Because the consumer has conformed to the values of the athlete, they have positive attitudes towards the athlete (Kahle & Homer, 1985; Trail, Anderson, & Fink, 2005). Understandably, when the brand sponsors that athlete, the consumer will now unite the athlete's values and the brand's values and will form a similar bond with the brand. As a result, after the internalized athlete is involved in a scandal off the field of play, the athlete-loyal consumer will be the most sensitive to the sponsor's relationship decision.

3.2.3 Athlete-Loyal Consumers

The athlete-loyal consumer would be highly motivated to have a more positive attitude towards the brand when it started sponsoring a favoured athlete. Consequently, would also be the most surprised if that same athlete was involved in a scandal. When a

scandal occurs, the athlete-loyal consumer's attitude will be the most likely to change after the brand decides to continue or terminate its relationship with the athlete.

Previous research done on the highly identified fan or athlete-loyal consumer has had mixed results when it comes to consumer attitudes. There is a body of research (Fink et al., 2002; Hunt, Bristol, & Bashaw, 1999; Wann & Branscombe, 1990; Wann & Dolan, 1994; Wann, Hunter, Ryan, & Wright, 2001) that concludes that highly identified fans will be loyal to the athlete no matter what. Fans are more willing to defend the athlete's behaviour with the purpose of maintaining their connection with the athlete. Athlete-loyal fans perceive the athlete as an extension of themselves and the immediate reaction will be to defend the athlete's (and their own) self-image. As a result, when the brand terminates its relationship with the athlete, the athlete-loyal consumer's attitude towards the sponsor will become more negative.

Other research has found evidence to the contrary (Gladden, Milne, & Sutton, 1998; McCracken, 1989; Parker, 2007; Sassenberg, Verreynne, & Johnson Morgan, 2012). When a highly identified fan internalizes the sport celebrity's brand image, they will experience positive attitudes directly connected with the athlete (Sassenberg et al., 2012). Once an athlete is involved in a scandal and no longer projects positive values, the consumer will feel unbalanced because he or she can no longer trust the athlete. The consumer will regain a sense of balance if the brand terminates its relationship with the athlete. It makes it clear to the athlete-loyal consumer that their negative feelings are confirmed by the brand punishing the athlete. Consumer attitude towards the brand will be more positive when the brand terminates its relationship with the athlete.

This raises a significant issue when studying the athlete-loyal consumer's attitude: two competing bodies of research. The next section will explore the past research for both theories and provide evidence for this study's main hypothesis.

3.2.4 Main Effect Hypothesis

The consumer who is a highly identified fan or athlete loyal will have a very different attitude towards the post-scandal decisions made by the brand. A highly identified fan will not only feel connected to the athlete, but spends a lot of time, energy, and money on the object of interest (Reysen & Branscombe, 2010). A consumer who is athlete loyal has a personal or social identity with the athlete.

An important aspect of athlete loyalty is being a fan. Fanship is defined as a personal connection with an object the individual identifies with. That identification is the extent to which a fan feels psychologically connected to an athlete. Fandom is defined as the identification a consumer feels with other fans because of the shared connection with the object (Reysen & Branscombe, 2010). For a deep fan, sport provides a means of identification, celebration, expression, and interpretation of social life (Hunt et al., 1999). Hunt et al. (1999) concluded that more fanatical fans who are athlete loyal will stay with their players (regardless of nefarious activities) and the products they endorse (Hunt et al., 1999).

Fink et al.'s (2002) research focused on motives for identification and identified eight: achievement, acquisition or knowledge, aesthetics, social interaction, drama/eustress, escape, family, and physical skill of participants. A consumer will attach

himself or herself to an athlete to obtain self-esteem through the athlete's characteristics that they want to internalize into their own identity.

Highly identified fans react much differently than low-identified fans when it comes to the performance of an athlete on the field of play. They are more likely to bask in reflected glory following an athlete being successful. Basking in reflected glory strengthens and builds the consumer's self-esteem through the success of the athlete (Parker, 2007). Low-identified fans are more likely to cut off reflected failure following a loss or a disappointing season (Wann & Branscombe, 1990). The consumer will try to distance themselves from the athlete, unlike highly identified fans who bask in reflected failure (Campbell Jr, Aiken, & Kent, 2004). Even if the athlete is not successful, the consumer celebrates their relationship with the athlete. The consumer continues to derive self-esteem from the athlete through loyalty and a shared connection with other fans.

Wann and Dolan (1994) completed research on high- versus low-identified fans by measuring the relationship between identification and attributional bias, and their research found differences between highly identified and low-identified fans perceptions of athletic competitions. Highly identified fans view positive outcomes as a result of internal factors (skill of team, coaching, fan support). On the other hand, negative outcomes are viewed as a result of bad officiating or cheating by the opposing team (external factors) rather than as a product of poor performance, while low-identified viewers attributed the negative outcome to poor team play (Wann & Dolan, 1994).

Wann et al. (2001) found that highly identified fans have shown a greater willingness to illegally help their team, including helping the athletes cheat, bribing

officials, stealing playbooks, falsifying drug tests, supplying drugs, and giving illegal funding. If a highly identified fan is willing to act immorally or scandalously, it could be presumed that the highly identified fan would side with the athlete who is involved in a scandal that isn't even on the field of play.

When a consumer is athlete loyal and has no relationship with the brand, they will stay loyal to the athlete to receive all the aforementioned benefits. Therefore, the previous research suggests that if the brand terminates their relationship with the sport celebrity after the scandal, the loyal fan would have more negative attitudes towards the sponsor.

Founded by two mutually inclusive theories: sport celebrity brand image and balance theory, more recent research and studies have shown the opposite theory to be true: the athlete-loyal consumer would have a more positive attitude towards the brand if they terminated the relationship with the athlete.

3.2.5 Sport Celebrity Brand Image

Many consumers associate a sport celebrity with the products they endorse, and an attack to the athlete's image can subsequently hurt the brand's image that he or she represents (Jones & Schumann, 2004). Ultimately, an athlete's endorsement power is dependent on their image (Brazeal, 2008). Doling (2003) found that negative news coverage of an athlete endorser can negatively impact the purchase intentions and attitudes of consumers toward the product they endorse, which is why in order to avoid damaging their brand image, companies tend to terminate their relationship with the athlete when they are involved in a scandal (Doling, 2003). Would the same results be found for athlete-loyal consumers?

The Brand Image Transfer Model (McCracken, 1989) shows that the sport celebrity's brand image transfers to the sponsor during celebrity sponsorship. Sassenberg et al. (2012) wanted to further this research by identifying the most important brand attributes and benefits of the sport celebrity brand image. The authors developed a model that focuses on the impact of a sport celebrity or athlete in a sport context (Sassenberg et al., 2012). When the consumer associates with the athlete, it causes consumers to experience symbolic and experiential benefits (Gladden et al., 1998; Trail et al., 2005), resulting in the affective dimension of consumer attitudes (Sassenberg et al., 2012).

The model suggested that the stronger and more positive a consumer's association with the sport celebrity's personal related attributes, the more positive the perceived brand benefits. The authors went on to say that trust was one of the athlete's personal attributes that the consumer could relate to (Sassenberg et al., 2012). Trust can be defined as: the expectation of ethically justifiable behaviour—morally correct decisions and actions based upon ethical principles of analysis (Hosmer, 1995; Sassenberg et al., 2012). In sports sponsorship, trust would include the expectation of the sport fan that the athlete's actions should be ethically justifiable and not detrimental to the consumer's own image (Sassenberg et al., 2012). When the athlete seems to have a high level of trust, it leads to a positive consumer attitude (Friedman & Friedman, 1978).

The article also notes that two types of symbolic benefits represent a positive sport celebrity brand image: fan identification (Maddux & Rogers, 1980) and fan internalization (Kamins et al., 1989). Identification is the consumer's close attachment to the celebrity and is impacted by the consumer's level of commitment (Madrigal, 2000; Wann & Branscombe,

1990), which leads to positive attitudes towards the athlete. Internalization happens when the consumer's values conform to the values of the sport celebrity (Sassenberg et al., 2012).

It is assumed that an athlete-loyal consumer has internalized the values of the athlete. Because the consumer has conformed to the values of the athlete, they have positive attitudes towards the athlete (Kahle & Homer, 1985; Trail et al., 2005). The athlete-loyal consumer also trusts that the athlete would never act in a way that was harmful to the consumer's own image and values. Consequently, when the athlete is involved in a scandal, the consumer can no longer trust the athlete; the athlete's values are no longer congruent with the values of the consumer, which will lead to the consumer viewing the athlete differently.

The authors hypothesize that once a transgression had taken place, the consumer will need to reconcile their negative feelings towards the athlete with their feelings towards the sponsoring brand to relieve the imbalanced state. The author's state that the break of trust and unmatched values that result from an athlete's transgression lead the consumer to have a more positive attitude towards the brand when they terminate their relationship with the athlete, because it maintains a sense of balance for the consumer (Sassenberg et al., 2012). This concept is also known as balance theory (Heider, 1958).

3.2.6 Balance Theory

Balance theory maintains that individuals strive to maintain a sense of balance in their lives. It is described as: a harmonious state, one in which the entities comprising the situation and the feelings about them fit together without stress (Heider, 1958). This paper theorizes that when an athlete is involved in a scandal, the consumer can no longer trust

the athlete. This results in a negative attitude towards the athlete and something must be done to balance the situation.

Balance theory was also examined by Parker (2007), who expanded on Heider's (1958) theory. Heider (1958) suggested a balanced state between a perceiver, another person, and an issue would take place if all three relationships were positive. All three relationships being positive is not the only way a balanced state occurs. Two negative relationships and one positive relationship can also create a balanced state. For example, if a perceiver and another person see an issue as negative, there is still a sense of balance between them (Heider, 1958; Parker, 2007).

This theory was examined by Dalakas and Levin (2005). The authors found that a positive relationship between a fan and a team, and a positive relationship between a team and a sponsor, produced a more positive relationship between a fan and a sponsor (Dalakas & Levin, 2005).

Fink et al. (2009) extended the literature on balance theory by examining the effects of an off-field transgression by an athlete on the team they were associated with. The study used Heider's (1958) balance theory to explain the interaction between fan identification level and the leadership response post-scandal. The authors theorized that when an athlete is involved in a scandal, the highly identified fan (towards the team) has negative feelings about said athlete that he or she needs to balance with their positive feelings towards the brand (Fink et al., 2009). The authors went on to say that if the team management had a firm and swift response, it would allow for greater "balance" in the minds of the consumers. More specifically, the consumer would feel that management was also upset about the

athlete's behaviour and a "punishment" was given that fit the scandal, and the consumer would feel better about the team as a whole (Fink et al., 2009). Oppositely, if the management team did nothing to "punish" the athlete after he or she was involved in a scandal or failed to denounce the act itself, it becomes difficult for the highly identified fan of the team to maintain a balance (Fink et al., 2009). With no response, the fans of the team will no longer feel that their values are congruent with the values of the team and no longer represent their personal identities.

For an athlete-loyal fan, when said athlete is involved in a transgression that breaks the trust between the athlete and the consumer and results in the athletes' values no longer matching the values of the consumer, will it affect consumer attitude towards the brand based on their leadership response?

If the sponsor also has negative feelings towards the athlete, made apparent by their decision to terminate their relationship, will that restore a sense of balance for the fan that leads to positive feelings towards the brand?

Balance has to be maintained for a fan, athlete, and sponsor. Past research has shown that the athlete-loyal fan will have positive feelings towards the brand that sponsors the athlete (Cornwell & Coote, 2005; Gwinner & Swanson, 2003; Madrigal, 2000). Balance theory could be used to explain the positive feelings towards the brand. The athlete-loyal consumer has positive feelings towards the athlete so the same consumer must have positive feelings towards the brand sponsoring the athlete in order to maintain a sense of balance.

As discussed above, the sport celebrity brand image theory purports that the athlete-loyal consumer (who has internalized the athlete) has to trust that the athlete will not be involved in a transgression or scandal off the field of play that will challenge the values that attracted the consumer to the athlete in the first place (Sassenberg et al., 2012). Once the athlete no longer projects the values that the consumer wanted to internalize (by being involved in a scandal), that will cause dissonance for the athlete-loyal consumer that will produce negative feelings towards the athlete. The consumer is now in an unbalanced state. If the sponsor's relationship decision is to continue its relationship with the athlete, the consumer's negative feelings were not justified and the athlete did not get punished for breaking the consumer's trust. As a result, to maintain a sense of balance, the athlete-loyal consumer will feel negatively towards the sponsor that continues its relationship with the athlete. If the sponsor terminates its relationship with the athlete, the sponsor is producing a strong leadership response (punishing the athlete). This will create a negative relationship between the sponsor and the athlete that maintains the balance for the consumer.

The resulting hypothesis for athlete-loyal consumers becomes: the brand continuing its relationship with the athlete could be seen as a weak leadership response that will not maintain balance for the consumer. As a result, the consumer attitude towards the brand will be more negative. The vice versa is also true: if the sponsor decides to terminate its relationship with the athlete (a strong leadership response), balance will be restored for the consumer and consumer attitude towards the sponsor will become more positive.

H1. In the event of a negative publicity scandal, a decision by the sponsor to terminate the relationship with the athlete will lead to more a positive attitude towards the brand than a decision to continue the relationship.

3.3 Brand Loyalty

Focusing on athlete-loyal consumers brings up another interesting topic: brand-loyal consumers. Consumer loyalty is not just unique to a sport celebrity. Brand loyalty is also an extremely important aspect of consumer attitude towards the brand and a copious amount of past research has been completed to expand academic and managerial knowledge on the subject. In order to consider athlete-loyal consumers, it is necessary to include brand-loyal consumers in the equation. Brands' are relying on the theory that a consumer's association with an athlete will transfer to the brand once they begin sponsorship, improving consumer attitude. However, before the brand sponsored the athlete, they already had a significant amount of brand-loyal consumers, whose attitudes are essential to the brand. How would these consumers react to the brand's decision to continue or terminate its relationship with the athlete once a scandal occurred? After an athlete is involved in a scandal: how does brand loyalty impact the athlete-loyal consumer's attitude towards the brand?

3.3.1 Brand-Loyal Consumers

A brand is described as a set of intangible mental associations that add to the perceived value of a product or service (Kapferer, 2008).

The most significant asset of a company is their brand. "Brands offer instant recognition and identification, promising consistent, reliable standards of quality, taste,

size or even psychological satisfaction” (Kaynak, Salman, & Tatoglu, 2007, p. 338). Brand loyalty indicates a measure of attachment that a customer has to a brand (Aaker, 1991). Aaker (1991) also states in his paper that brand loyalty is unique because it cannot exist prior to purchase because it is closely tied to the use experience. Brand loyalty requires a deeper attitudinal attachment in the mind of the consumer (Keller, 2003). Consumers who are brand loyal show both psychological and affective commitments in addition to repurchase consistency. An individual is only considered truly loyal when mediated by a high degree of affective and cognitive brand conviction and attitude strength (Lin, 2010).

3.3.2 Brand and Sport Celebrity Relationship

When a brand starts sponsoring an athlete, the image or the associations that the athlete (that the brand is sponsoring) conveys in the mind of the consumer has to match the brand’s identity. For this to occur, the personality traits of the sport celebrity should be similar to those of the brand so that the brand can strengthen their image. The athlete’s values have to be equivalent to the brand’s values and that has to be communicated to the consumers.

Strategically, it is a risky move to place some control of the brand image in the hands of an outsider (Keller, Apéria, & Georgson, 2008), especially when that sponsored outsider is involved in a scandal. Parker (2007) noted that brand loyalty to the team sponsor could prove to be an important variable in consumers’ response to negative information. Brand-loyal consumers could have a different reaction to the post-scandal decision by the brand to either continue or terminate its relationship with the athlete. Because of a brand-loyal

consumer's psychological and affective commitment to the brand, the hypothesis is that they will.

H2. Regardless of the sponsor's relationship decision, brand-loyal consumers will maintain a higher attitude towards the brand than consumers who are not loyal to the brand.

3.3.3 Brand Loyalty & Relationship Decision

Expanding even further on brand loyalty, the hypothesis is that the consumer who is brand loyal will want the sponsor to terminate its relationship with the athlete because the athlete is no longer associated with positive brand attributes and benefits. As a result, the athlete is not associated with a higher consumer attitude towards the brand, and in fact goes against the benefits the brand provides the consumers. A brand-loyal consumer will have a more positive attitude towards the brand if they terminate their relationship with the athlete.

H3. Brand loyalty moderates the effect of the sponsor's decision on attitude. The effect of the sponsor's decision on consumer attitude will be stronger for brand-loyal consumers than for consumers who are not loyal to the brand.

3.4 Scandal Severity

The definition of scandal used in this study is an act by the athlete off the field of play that is opposed to a consumer's moral code and does not include illegal acts. Previous research suggests that the type of transgression or scandal is an important consideration when looking at the results of a sport celebrity scandal and how it influences consumer attitudes. Would that also be accurate for consumer attitudes toward the brand?

Not every scandal is the same and past research has found that the type of scandal or the scandal's characteristics is impactful on consumer attitudes. Hughes and Shank (2005) noted that a consumer's perception of whether an event was scandalous was influenced by the extent to which an event impacted the performance of the athlete on the field of play. In addition, consumers identified four consistent characteristics that made an event in athletics scandalous or not. Included were an action that was either illegal or unethical, involved multiple parties over a sustained period of time, and whose impact affected the integrity of the sport with which they were associated.

Expanding on Hughes and Shank's (2005) theory, a low- and high-level scandal were created from the four characteristics found. Four separate scandals were created with the four characteristics deeming an event scandalous used to create two of the four scandals. The two other scandals were created in contrast to the four characteristics Hughes and Shank (2005) described and were deemed low-level scandals. Hughes and Shank's (2005) theory was confirmed and from the four scandals created based on their scandal characteristics, one was chosen as a low-level scandal and one was chosen as a high-level scandal.

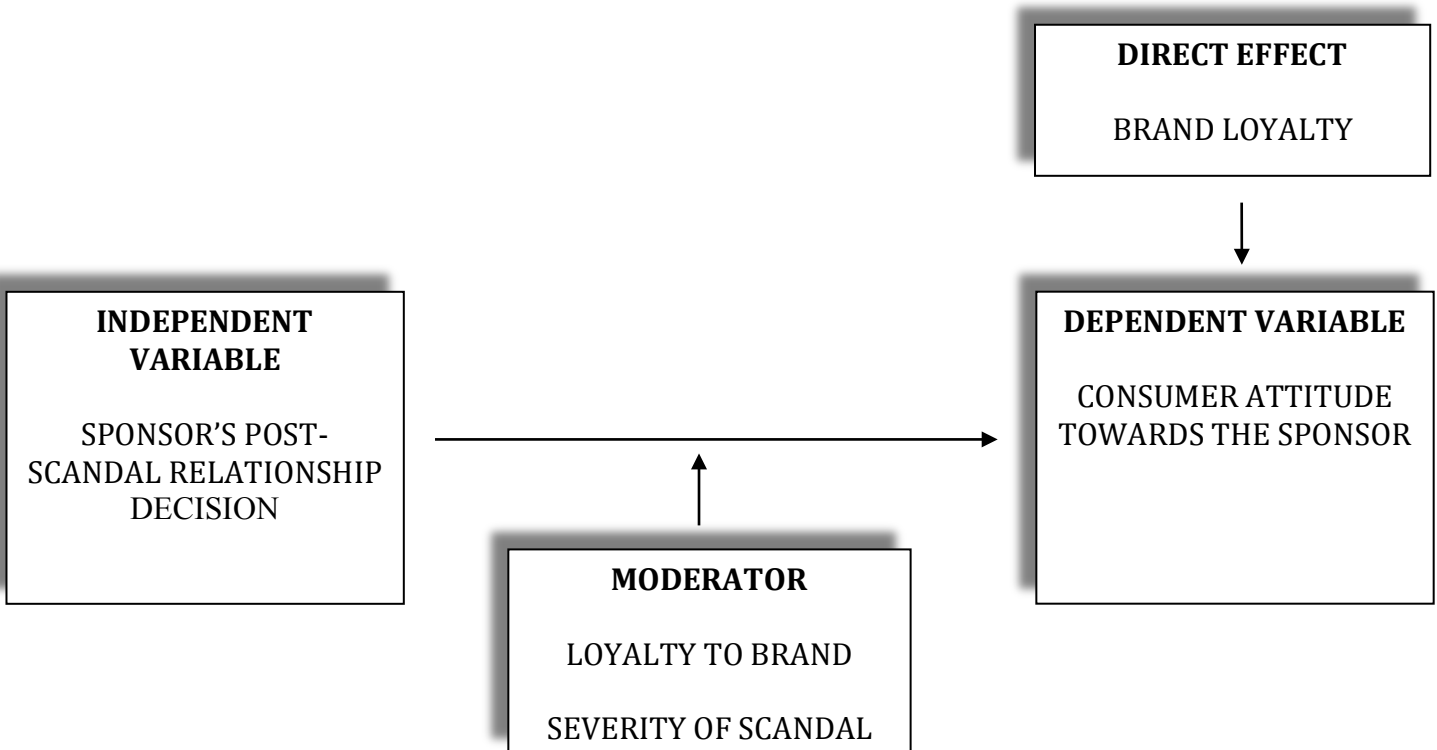
Past research theorizes that the level of the scandal will impact consumer attitudes (Brown, 2012; Hughes & Shank, 2005, 2008; Knittel & Stango, 2012). As a result, this paper hypothesizes that the type or level of the scandal will moderate the effect of the sponsors' decision on consumer attitude.

If the athlete's scandal is highly unethical, or referred to as a high-level scandal for the purpose of this research, the consumer will have a positive attitude towards the brand if the company decides to terminate their relationship with the athlete.

H4. Severity of the scandal moderates the effect of the sponsor's decision on attitude. The effect of sponsor's decision on consumer attitude will be stronger when the severity of the scandal is high than when it is low.

Figure 3-1 Overall Model

Athlete-Loyal Consumers



Chapter Four: Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methodology used to test the research hypotheses described earlier. The section will be organized into the following subsections:

Research Design

Selection of Population & Sample

Variables

Survey Development & Design

Data Collection Procedures Methods

Data Analysis Procedures Analysis

4.1 Research Design

An experimental research design was most appropriate for this research. It is defined as “a scientific investigation in which the researcher manipulates one or more independent variables, controls any other relevant variables, and observes the effect of the manipulations on the dependent variable (s)” (Ary et al., 2010, p. 265). There are three necessary components in experimental research: control, manipulation, and observation. These components provide “the most convincing evidence of the effect one variable has on another” (Ary et al., 2010, p. 265).

This experiment was designed to measure consumer attitudes following an incidence where an athlete was involved in a scandal and the sponsoring brand made a decision to either continue or terminate its relationship with the athlete. The experimental design consisted of a 2 (athlete loyalty: loyal vs. indifferent) x 2 (brand loyalty: loyal vs.

indifferent) x 2 (relationship decision: continue vs. terminate) x 2 (scandal severity: high vs. low) mixed design, with scandal severity as the only factor manipulated within-subjects.

4.2 Selection of Population & Sample

A simple random sample was used. Random sampling is a method of selecting a sample from a population in which all the items in the population have an equal chance of being chosen in the sample (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2010). A sampling frame is defined as the actual set of units from which a sample has been drawn, and in a simple random sample all units from the sampling frame have an equal chance to occur in the sample (Ary et al., 2010).

The population of interest had a well-established attitude towards an athlete and was also socialized as a consumer through buying products of interest and forming attitudes towards brands. The sampling frame chosen was individuals between the ages of 18-65 years living in North America, who were recruited through an online research-only panel company (Qualtrics) that specializes in marketing research. Individuals aged 18-65 were deemed to have the characteristics of the population of interest.

In addition to selecting an appropriate sampling technique and frame, sample size was also estimated using a general rule of thumb. There were eight surveys created based on the study's experimental design (which will be discussed further in the next section). Sample size was 400 individuals, 50 for each survey administered. A panel of 3076 randomly selected individuals who fit the criteria (from millions of members) were invited by e-mail to complete the online survey. Four hundred and forty-three surveys were completed (12-13% response rate), which resulted in 50-61 participants completing one of

the eight surveys. All members in Qualtrics database had an equal chance to be of being emailed (occur in the sample). For the scope of this study, the main focus was athlete-loyal consumers (n=221). The remaining surveys (n=222) were used as a comparison and a manipulation check to ensure a difference between athlete-loyal and athlete-indifferent consumer.

4.3 Variables

Operationalizing a variable is described as defining “a concept or variable in such a way that it can be measured or identified” (Vogt, 1999). As defined by Ary et al. (2010, p. 36), an operational definition provides “meaning to a construct by specifying operations that researchers must perform to measure or manipulate the construct”. The operational definitions of the variables in this study are provided below, along with previous reliability scores.

The model tested in this research included three independent variables: sponsor’s relationship decision, brand loyalty, and scandal severity, as well as one dependent variable: consumer attitude towards the brand. The model focuses on a specific group of consumers: the athlete-loyal consumers. Athlete loyalty was defined as a consumer who not only feels psychologically connected to the athlete, but spends a lot of time and energy on the object of interest (Reysen & Branscombe, 2010) and was manipulated by asking participants, prior to reading the scandal scenario, to identify an athlete towards whom they felt either loyal or indifferent. The loyalty check consisted of a four item scale (= .90) adapted from the work of Trail and James (2001) and Parker (2007). The items “Regardless of whether the athlete wins or loses, I will continue to support him,” “I would experience a

loss if I had to stop being a fan of the athlete,” “Being a fan of the athlete is very important to me,” and “I consider myself to be a real fan of the athlete,” were measured on a seven-point scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree (Parker, 2007; Trail & James, 2001).

Consumer attitude towards the brand was the dependent variable. Attitude was defined as: an enduring overall evaluation of objects, products, services, issues or people (Babin et al., 2014). Affect is the hedonic characteristic of consumer attitude and was defined as the pleasurable and agreeable associated feelings the product or service provides (Batra & Ahtola, 1991; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Millar & Tesser, 1986; Triandis, 1977). A semantic differential scale is a technique for measuring the connotative meaning of concepts by rating each concept on a series of graduated scales, each scale defined by a pair of polar adjectives, as good–bad or strong–weak (G. Summers, 1970). The affective component of consumer attitude towards the brand was operationally defined as the mean score of a three item semantic differential scale ($= .92$), following the work of Roy and Cornwell (2003). The questionnaire asked the participant to describe overall feelings about the brand on a seven-point scale from “unlikeable/likeable”, “bad/good”, and “unfavourable/favourable” (Roy & Cornwell, 2003).

The sponsor’s relationship decision was the independent variable in this study. It was described as the decision the sponsor would make to either continue or terminate its relationship with the athlete once a scandal has occurred. The participant was asked to read two passages involving a scandal with an athlete (a low- and high-level scandal) and

was then told that the brand sponsoring the athlete was aware the scandal occurred and decided to either continue or terminate its relationship with the athlete.

Brand loyalty was hypothesized as having a direct effect on consumer attitude towards the brand and moderating the effect of the brand's relationship decision on consumer attitude towards the brand. It was defined as a deeper attitudinal attachment in the mind of a consumer towards a brand, closely tied to experience (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 2003). Brand loyalty was manipulated by asking respondents to identify a brand towards which they felt either loyal or indifferent. The manipulation check consisted of a four-item scale adapted from previous research (Davidson, Yantis, Norwood, & Montano, 1985; Knox & Walker, 2001; Krosnick, Boninger, Chuang, Berent, & Carnot, 1993). The item, "How important would you say the brand is to you personally?" was measured on a seven-point scale ranging from not very important to strongly very important. The item, "How knowledgeable do you feel you are about the brand?" was measured on a seven-point scale ranging from not very knowledgeable to very knowledgeable. The item, "When buying the brand, how committed are you to buying this brand, rather than an alternative brand?" was measured on a seven-point scale ranging from not very committed to very committed. Finally, the item, "If you could not find the brand at the store where you normally shop would you..." was measured with four different response options: "Happily buy a different brand," "Reluctantly buy a different brand," "Not buy the product until the next time you shopped," or "Try a different store."

Scandal severity included two levels, low and high. Each individual was presented with both a low- and a high-level scandal. A severe scandal was defined as an event which

was immoral (unethical) in type, sustained over a long period of time, involved multiple parties, and impacted the integrity of the sport (Hughes & Shank, 2005). The high- and low-severity scandals were selected on the basis of a pretest, in which participants rated the perceived severity of several scandalous scenarios. The scenarios with the highest and lowest means (low severity $M=2.92$, high severity $M=5.48$, $t=-11.79$, $p<0.001$) were included in the main study.

4.4 Validity & Reliability Measures

Content validity refers to the actual content of the instrument and its “relationship to the content it is intended to measure,” (Ary et al., 2010, p. 226). Content validity is present when an instrument is determined to be representative of the domain it is attempting to measure. Face validity refers to the appearance of the instrument and if, “on the face of it, does the test appear to be valid?” (Ary et al., 2010, p. 229).

To establish content and face validity, two experts were selected and asked to analyze the instrument (questionnaire) for relevance, completeness, and appearance. The two individuals were faculty members (professors) with experience in the area of study: sports marketing and consumer behaviour. In addition, the faculty members also have a recognized level of experience in marketing research and the creation of valid instruments. The comments made were used to change and fine-tune the questionnaire to assure that it made logical sense and measured according to the study’s intention.

After completing all revisions, a small field test was completed. A small group (10) of individuals with the characteristics of the proposed sample frame were asked to complete the questionnaire and comment on how clear the questions were, the ease of

completing the questionnaire, and if they had any questions. The comments and evaluations were taken into consideration and applicable changes were made to the questionnaire.

When the experimenter deliberately manipulates a variable, it is meant to affect the outcome or dependent variable (Ary et al., 2010). However, it is very important to ensure that the manipulated variable is significantly different from the variable prior to manipulation. The following manipulation checks were completed to ensure the levels of the variable were distinct from one another to make sure it was measuring what the experimenter intended it to measure.

There were eight treatment groups. Participants in treatment groups one, three, five, and seven were asked to name an athlete they were loyal to. As a manipulation check for validity, athlete-loyalty questions were then asked to compare the responses of athlete-loyal participants to those who were asked to name an athlete they were indifferent to (treatment groups two, four, six, and eight). An independent T-test was performed and there was a significant difference in the means of the athlete-loyalty questions between the two groups ($p < 0.001$). Reliability estimates for all athlete-loyal questions were tested and Cronbach's alpha was ($\alpha = .90$).

Participants in treatment groups one, two, five, and six were asked to name a brand they were loyal to. As a manipulation check for validity, brand-loyalty questions were then asked to compare the responses of brand-loyal participants to those who were asked to name a brand they were indifferent to (treatment groups three, four, seven, and eight). An independent T-test was performed and there was a significant difference in the means of

the brand-loyalty questions between the two groups ($p < 0.001$). Reliability estimates for all brand-loyal questions were tested and Cronbach's alpha was ($\alpha = .82$).

The results of the manipulation checks confirmed a significant difference between the variable before and after the manipulation the experimenter executed, thus deeming the manipulations reliable for this experiment.

4.5 Survey Development & Design

There were a total of 61 participants in treatment group one (sponsor continued relationship, athlete loyal, brand loyal), 58 participants in treatment group two (sponsor continued relationship, athlete indifferent, brand loyal), 56 participants in treatment group three (sponsor continued relationship, athlete loyal, brand indifferent), and 55 participants in treatment group four (sponsor continued relationship, athlete loyal, brand loyal), 50 participants in treatment group five (sponsor terminated relationship, athlete loyal, brand loyal), 58 participants in treatment group six (sponsor terminated relationship, athlete indifferent, brand loyal), 53 participants in treatment group seven (sponsor terminated relationship, athlete loyal, brand indifferent), and 55 participants in treatment group eight (sponsor terminated relationship, athlete loyal, brand loyal).

Table 4-1 Participants by questionnaire

Questionnaire	Number of Participants	Sponsors Decision	Athlete Loyalty	Brand Loyalty	Severity
1	61	Continue	Loyal	Loyal	Low & High
2	58	Continue	Indifferent	Loyal	Low & High
3	56	Continue	Loyal	Indifferent	Low & High
4	55	Continue	Indifferent	Indifferent	Low & High
5	50	Terminate	Loyal	Loyal	Low & High
6	58	Terminate	Indifferent	Loyal	Low & High
7	53	Terminate	Loyal	Indifferent	Low & High
8	55	Terminate	Indifferent	Indifferent	Low & High

There were eight surveys (treatment groups) created for a total of 443 participants who filled out one of the eight questionnaires. Before the study began, the participants read and signed an ethics consent form. It included the purpose of the study: to increase the understanding of the impact of sport scandals on consumers and sponsors. It is anticipated that this study will provide a sponsor with useful information when they are sponsoring an athlete involved in a scandal. The participants were asked to voluntarily fill out a questionnaire and informed that the information was anonymous and confidential. As a result of the questionnaire being filled out online, participants were told that submitting the questionnaire would indicate consent.

Each questionnaire began with four general questions in regards to the participant's sport consumption, brands they purchase and athletes they favour. At this point, treatment group one, three, five, and seven were asked to choose a male athlete towards whom they had a high attitude, and treatment group two, four, six, and eight were asked to choose an athlete they were indifferent to. All eight treatment groups were then asked four athlete-

loyalty questions to confirm a significant difference between loyal and non-loyal consumers.

Treatment group one, two, five, and six were then asked to choose a brand towards which they had a high attitude, and treatment group three, four, seven, and eight were asked to choose a brand they were indifferent to. All eight treatment groups were then asked four brand-loyalty questions to confirm a significant difference between loyal and non-loyal consumers.

All of the participants in each treatment group received a questionnaire with both a low-level and a high-level severity scandal included. All of the participants were asked to read two passages (low- and high-level scandal) and told that the athlete and brand that they had chosen would be used in the passages. More specifically, the athlete chosen would be the athlete involved in the scandal described and the brand chosen would be the brand sponsoring the athlete and choosing to either continue or cancel their relationship with the athlete.

Treatment groups one to four included participants who received a questionnaire in which the brand continued the relationship with the athlete after being informed of scandal involvement in both the high and low level scandals. There were a total of 61 participants in treatment group one (sponsor continued relationship, athlete loyal, brand loyal), 58 participants in treatment group two (sponsor continued relationship, athlete indifferent, brand loyal), 56 participants in treatment group three (sponsor continued relationship, athlete loyal, brand indifferent), and 55 participants in treatment group four (sponsor continued relationship, athlete loyal, brand loyal).

Treatment groups five to eight included participants who received a questionnaire in which the sponsor terminated the relationship with the athlete after being informed of scandal involvement in both the high- and low-level scandals. There were a total of 50 participants in treatment group five (sponsor terminated relationship, athlete loyal, brand loyal), 58 participants in treatment group six (sponsor terminated relationship, athlete indifferent, brand loyal), 53 participants in treatment group seven (sponsor terminated relationship, athlete loyal, brand indifferent), and 55 participants in treatment group eight (sponsor terminated relationship, athlete loyal, brand loyal). The sponsor continues relationship group included 230 of the participants and the sponsor terminated relationship group included 213 of the participants.

After both scandals and the brand's relationship decision in each treatment group, the participant was asked three questions measuring consumer attitude towards the brand. Finally, the participant was asked demographic questions: sex, age in years, highest education completed, and income range. The debriefing statement reminded the participants of their anonymity, consent when submitting the questionnaire and the purpose of the study.

4.6 Data Collection Procedures

Approval from the University of Calgary's Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board was obtained before the commencement of data collection procedures. Following committee approval, the researcher collected data from 443 online participants through an online research company (Qualtrics). Each participant was randomly assigned to one of

the eight online questionnaires. The completed questionnaires were then sent to the researcher to be analyzed.

4.7 Data Analysis Procedures

The data for this experiment were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Procedures and formulas were used which examined the data to determine if the following hypotheses were supported or unsupported:

4.8 Hypotheses

H1: In the event of a negative publicity scandal, a decision by the sponsor to terminate the relationship with the athlete will lead to a more positive attitude towards the brand than a decision to continue the relationship.

H2. Regardless of the sponsor's relationship decision, brand-loyal consumers will maintain a higher attitude towards the brand than consumers who are not loyal to the brand.

H3. Brand loyalty moderates the effect of the sponsor's decision on attitude. The effect of the sponsor's decision on consumer attitude will be stronger for brand-loyal consumers than for consumers who are not loyal to the brand.

H4. Severity of the scandal moderates the effect of the sponsor's decision on attitude. The effect of sponsor's decision on consumer attitude will be stronger when the severity of the scandal is high than when it is low.

4.9 Analyses

Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviations, and frequencies) were run to describe the variables of concern. As a result of athlete-loyal consumers being the focus of the research, the researcher selected the cases where the participant was athlete loyal and proceeded with testing the hypotheses using a general linear model.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that if the sponsor decided to terminate its relationship with a scandalous athlete, athlete-loyal consumers would have a more positive attitude towards the brand than consumers who were athlete indifferent. It was tested using a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), where the brand's decision was the independent variable and consumer attitude towards the sponsor was the dependent variable. A one-way ANOVA is used when comparing mean scores of several different groups and the dependent variable is a continuous method (Pallant, 2010).

Hypothesis 2 predicted that brand-loyal consumers would have a higher attitude towards the brand than consumers who are not loyal to the brand. It was tested using a two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), where the brand's relationship decision and brand loyalty were the independent variables and consumer attitude towards the sponsor was the dependent variable. The advantage of a two-way ANOVA is that not only does it test for main effects (the overall effect of each independent variable) but also for an interaction effect between the two independent variables (Pallant, 2010), thereby controlling for the brand's relationship decision when looking at the impact of brand loyalty. Because two-way ANOVA tested for an interaction between the brand's relationship decision and brand loyalty, it was also used to assess Hypothesis 3. It predicted that the effect of the sponsor's decision on consumer attitude would be stronger for brand-loyal consumers than for consumers who are not loyal to the brand.

Hypothesis 4 predicted that the effect of the sponsor's decision on consumer attitude would be stronger if the severity of the scandal was high than if it was low. It was tested using a two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), where the brand's relationship

decision and scandal severity were the independent variables and consumer attitude towards the sponsor was the dependent variable.

Table 4-2 Hypotheses and variables

Hypothesis	Independent Variable(s)	Dependent Variable
H1. In the event of a negative publicity scandal, a decision by the sponsor to terminate the relationship with the athlete will lead to a more positive attitude towards the brand than a decision to continue the relationship.	Sponsor's relationship decision	Consumer attitude towards the brand
H2. Regardless of the sponsor's relationship decision, brand-loyal consumers will maintain a higher attitude towards the brand than consumers who are not loyal to the brand.	Sponsor's relationship decision Brand loyalty	Consumer attitude towards the brand
H3. Brand loyalty moderates the effect of the sponsor's decision on attitude. The effect of the sponsor's decision on consumer attitude will be stronger for brand-loyal consumers than for consumers who are not loyal to the brand.	Sponsor's relationship decision Brand loyalty	Consumer attitude towards the brand
H4. Severity of the scandal moderates the effect of the sponsor's decision on attitude. The effect of sponsor's decision on consumer attitude will be stronger when the severity of the scandal is high than when it is low.	Sponsor's relationship decision Severity of the scandal	Consumer attitude towards the brand

Chapter Five: Results

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the results of the study. It will describe the sample characteristics as well as correlations, means, and standard deviations for all variables of interest. Further, it will provide the results of the analyses used to test the hypotheses. The section will be organized into the following subsections:

General Sample & Statistical Information (Descriptives)

Hypothesis Testing

Summary

5.1 General Sample & Statistical Information

Data was collected from 443 participants aged 16 to 65, with a mean age of 41.73 years (SD: 12.81) and 51.2% of the total participants were female. Income range varied from less than 50,000 dollars to more than 100,000 dollars annually. 50.8 percent made less than 50,000, 37.0% made in between 50,000 and 100,000 dollars, and the remaining 12.2% of participants made over 100,000 dollars. The participants highest education completed ranged from high school graduate to a completed degree(s). 26% of participants were high school graduates, 31.2% had some incomplete university, college, trade, or technical school education and 42.9% had completed one degree or more.

The participants were asked how many days a month they watched a sporting event. 35.9% said less than two days, 36.1% answered between two and seven days, and the remaining 28% said more than seven days.

5.2 Reliability Measures

Pallant (2010) notes that for reliability estimates or Cronbach's alpha, "values above 0.7 are considered acceptable; however, values above 0.8 are preferable," (Pallant, 2010 p.

100). Reliability estimates for all multi-item scales were above the preferred 0.80 recommended cutoff. Cronbach's alpha for the scales were as follows: athlete loyalty (= .90), brand loyalty (= .92), and consumer attitude towards the sponsor (= .82). While data was collected for athlete-loyal and athlete-indifferent consumers (n= 443), athlete-loyal consumers (n= 221) were the only ones of interest for this study. Consequently, the remainder of this chapter will discuss analyses from just that group of consumers.

5.3 Hypothesis Testing

5.3.1 Hypothesis 1 - Athlete-Loyal Consumers

Hypothesis 1 predicted that consumers would have a more positive attitude towards the brand that decided to terminate its relationship with the athlete after involvement in a scandal. Testing this hypothesis: after reading a passage where the athlete the participant is loyal to is involved in a scandal, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to compare means of participants in the terminate and continue relationship group. Any differences in attitude toward the sponsor could be attributed to the independent variable. The brand's relationship decision was used as the independent variable and consumer attitude towards the brand was the dependent measure.

As predicted, consumer attitude towards the brand was significantly higher when they terminated versus continued the relationship with the athlete ($M_{\text{terminate}} = 5.00$ vs. $M_{\text{continue}} = 4.26$, $(F_{(1,436)} = 26.15, p < .001)$). Consumers who were athlete loyal felt more favourably towards the brand when the decision was to terminate the relationship with the athlete. Consequently, hypothesis 1 was supported.

Table 5-1 Means and standard deviations of attitude towards brand after relationship decision

Relationship Decision	Dependent Variable	N	Mean	SD
Continue	Consumer Attitude	234	4.26	1.53
Terminate	Consumer Attitude	206	5.00	1.49

5.3.2 Hypotheses 2 & 3

Hypothesis 2 predicted that brand-loyal consumers would have a higher attitude towards the brand than consumers who were not loyal to the brand, no matter what the relationship decision was. Additionally, hypothesis 3 predicted that brand loyalty would interact with the sponsor's relationship decision and impact consumer attitude towards the brand. More specifically, the effect of the sponsors' decision on consumer attitude would be stronger for brand-loyal consumers than for consumers who were not loyal to the brand. To test hypotheses 2 and 3, a two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to compare means of participants deemed brand loyal and participants deemed indifferent to the brand. Brand loyalty and brand's relationship decision served as the independent variables and consumer attitude towards the brand was the independent variable.

There were significant main effects for brand's relationship decision ($F_{(1,436)} = 27.59, p < .001$) and brand loyalty ($F_{(1,436)} = 8.08, p = .005$), and most importantly, a significant brand decision x brand-loyalty interaction effect ($F_{(1,436)} = 3.77, p = .05$). When the sponsoring brand decided to continue the relationship with the athlete, there was no significant difference between participants who were brand loyal and participants with no

brand loyalty ($M_{\text{brand loyal}} = 4.32$ vs. $M_{\text{brand indifferent}} = 4.19$, ($F_{(1,436)} = 0.415$, $p = .52$). However, as predicted, the brand-loyal consumer had a significantly higher attitude than the brand-indifferent consumer when the sponsoring brand decided to terminate the relationship with the athlete. ($M_{\text{brand loyal}} = 5.35$ vs. $M_{\text{brand indifferent}} = 4.67$, ($F_{(1,436)} = 25.99$, $p < .001$). In others words, as expected, brand-loyal consumers, in comparison to the consumer that was indifferent, had a considerably higher attitude towards the brand when the brand terminated the relationship with the athlete following involvement in a scandal. Accordingly, both hypotheses 2 and 3 were supported.

Figure 5-1 Brand loyalty and relationship decision

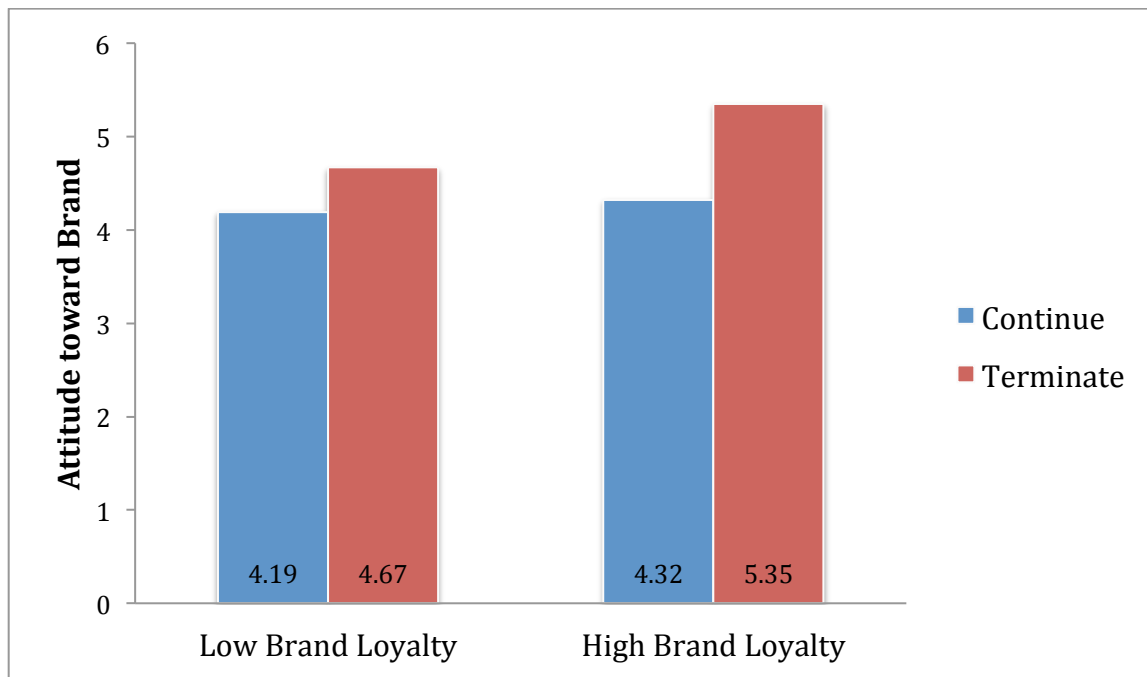


Table 5-2 Means and standard deviations for brand loyalty and relationship decision

Brand Loyalty	Relationship Decision	Dependent Variable	N	Mean	SD
No Brand Loyalty	Continue	Consumer Attitude	112	4.19	1.50
Brand Loyalty	Continue	Consumer Attitude	122	4.32	1.55
No Brand Loyalty	Terminate	Consumer Attitude	106	4.67	1.40
Brand Loyalty	Terminate	Consumer Attitude	100	5.35	1.50

5.3.3 Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis 4 predicted that the sponsor's relationship decision, to either continue or terminate its relationship with the athlete would have a greater impact when severity of the scandal was included in the model. More specifically, when the severity of the scandal was high, what relationship decision the brand made would impact consumer attitude more than when the severity of the scandal was low.

To test hypothesis 4, a two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to compare consumer attitude means when the scandal the athlete was involved in was a low- or high-severity scandal. Severity and brand's relationship decision served as the independent variables and consumer attitude towards the brand was the independent variable.

There were a significant main effect for brand's relationship decision ($M_{\text{continue}} = 4.26$ vs. $M_{\text{terminate}} = 5.00$, $(F_{(1,436)} = 26.19, p < .001)$). However, there was no significant main effect for severity of the scandal ($M_{\text{low scandal}} = 4.56$ vs. $M_{\text{high scandal}} = 4.65$, $(F_{(1,436)} = .556, p = .456)$) and no interaction effect between relationship decision and severity of scandal ($(F_{(1,436)} = 2.181, p = .140)$). Severity of the scandal did not influence consumer scandal nor did it moderate the brand's relationship decision. Thus, hypothesis 4 was not supported.

Figure 5-2 Severity and relationship decision

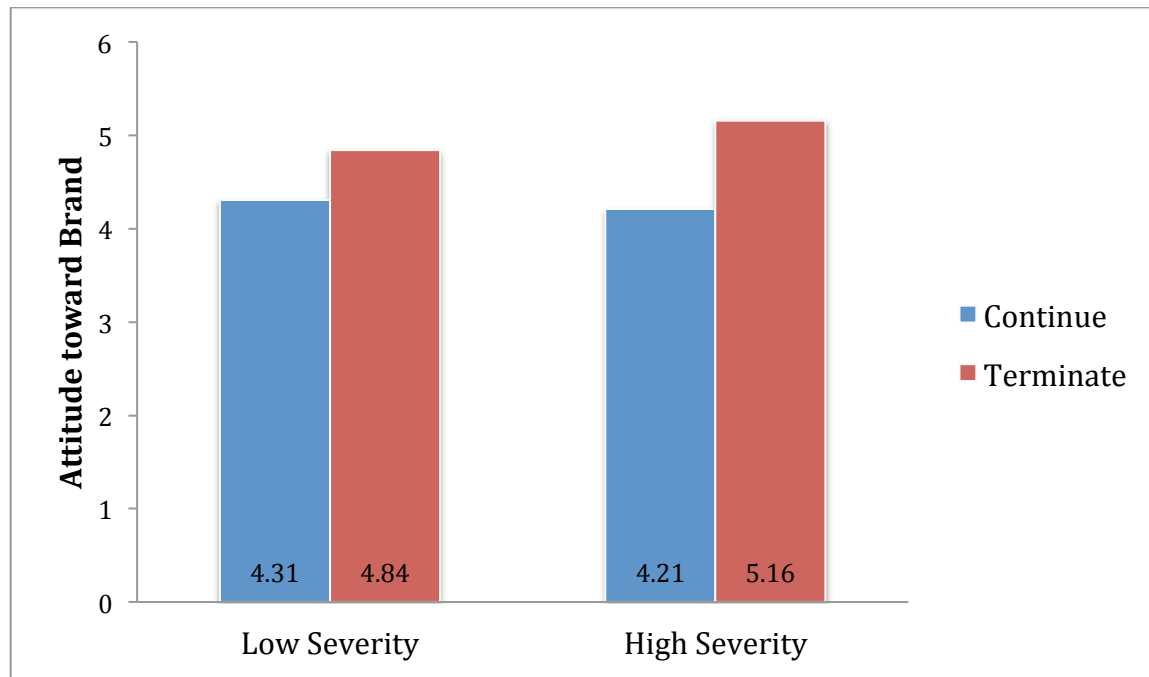


Table 5-3 Means and standard deviations for severity and relationship decision

Severity	Relationship Decision	Dependent Variable	N	Mean	SD
Low Level	Continue	Consumer Attitude	117	4.31	1.45
High Level	Continue	Consumer Attitude	117	4.21	1.61
Low Level	Terminate	Consumer Attitude	103	4.84	1.61
High Level	Terminate	Consumer Attitude	103	5.16	1.35

5.4 Summary

In sum, data analysis supported three out of the four proposed hypotheses. Hypothesis 1 was supported and analyses revealed that athlete-loyal consumers, as opposed to those who were indifferent to the athlete, felt more positive when the sponsor decided to terminate its relationship with the athlete. Hypotheses 2 and 3 were also supported and it was discovered that brand-loyal consumers felt more positive towards the

sponsor in both the continue and terminate relationships, but felt the most positive when the sponsor terminated its relationship with the athlete after involvement in a scandal. Hypothesis 4 was not supported as analyses indicated that the severity of the scandal (low versus high) not only did not significantly alter participant consumer attitude towards the brand scores, but also did not significantly moderate the sponsor's relationship decision. These results and their implications will be discussed further in chapter 6.

5.5 Further Analysis

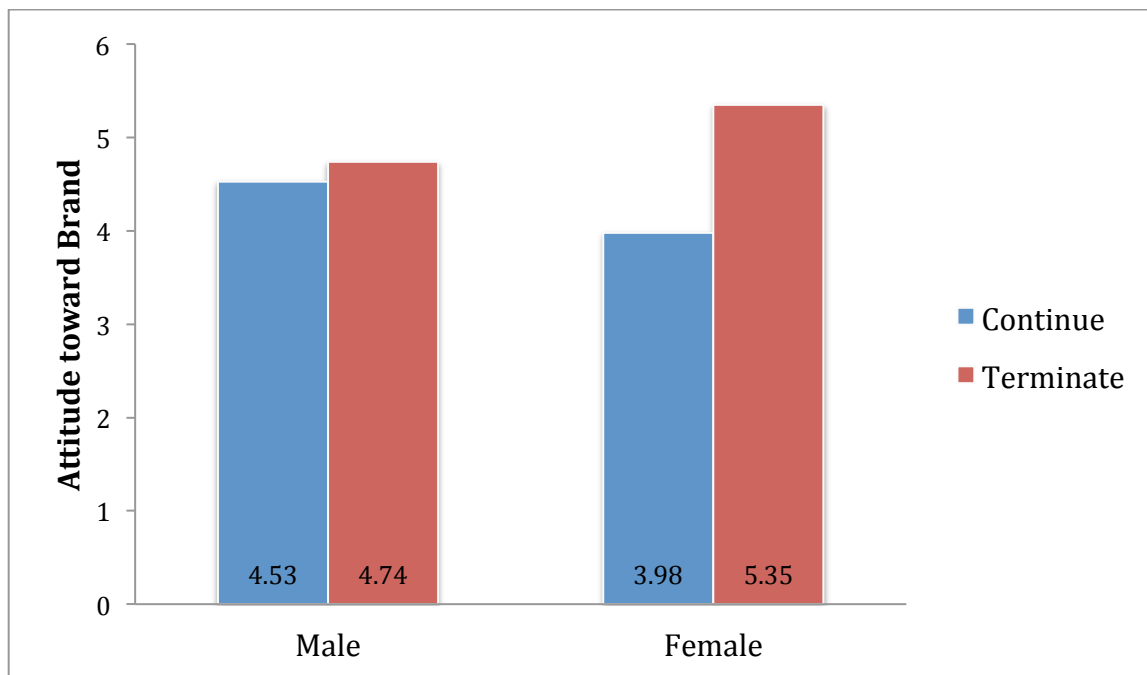
Additional analyses were completed by including the descriptive variables into the model to examine if there would be a statistically significant relationship with the variables in the model. An interesting result was worth noting here: the gender effect on consumer attitude after the brand's relationship decision.

To test the gender effect, a two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to compare consumer attitude means of females versus males. The sponsor's relationship decision and sex served as the independent variables and consumer attitude towards the brand was the independent variable.

There were significant main effects for brand's relationship decision ($F_{(1,436)} = 23.66, p < .001$), but not for sex of the participant ($F_{(1,436)} = .169, p = .681$). However, there was a significant brand's relationship decision x sex interaction effect ($F_{(1,436)} = 11.68, p = .001$). For males, there was no significance when the brand decided to continue versus terminate the relationship with the athlete ($M_{\text{continue}} = 4.53$ vs. $M_{\text{terminate}} = 4.74, (F_{(1,436)} = .954, p = .329)$). Conversely, for females, there was a significant difference in attitude when the brand decided to continue versus terminate the relationship with the athlete (M_{continue}

= 3.98 vs. $M_{\text{terminate}} = 5.17$, ($F_{(1,436)} = 37.93$, $p < .001$). Males were indifferent to the decision of the sponsor regarding its relationship with the athlete. On the other hand, females had a significantly higher attitude towards the brand when it terminated their relationship with the athlete after involvement in a scandal.

Figure 5-3 Gender and relationship decision



The findings are inconclusive, however further research could focus on how gender impacts consumer attitude towards both the athlete and the sponsoring brand after an athlete is involved in a scandal.

Chapter Six: Discussion

There is a growing body of literature that has focused on the effects of being loyal to a sports celebrity and the image transfer that occurs when a brand begins a positive public relationship with that same athlete. When a negative public scandal occurs, the sponsor's relationship decision and how it impacts consumer attitude towards the brand would enhance existing literature. The current study adds to this literature and provides further insight into the consumer-athlete-sponsor relationship by studying the effect of the brand's post-scandal relationship decision on consumer attitude towards the brand. This chapter will discuss the main findings, as well as the limitations of the study and potential avenues for future research.

6.1 Athlete Loyalty & Relationship Decision

A central finding of this study is that, following a scandal, consumers expressed a more positive attitude towards a brand that decided to terminate its relationship with the athlete, than a brand that decided to continue its relationship with the athlete.

This finding can be explained by considering both sport celebrity brand image (Sassenberg et al., 2012) and balance theory (Heider, 1958).

Prior to sponsorship, an athlete had created a brand image that a highly identified fan has internalized. More specifically, the consumer had conformed to the values of the athlete and had a strong, positive association with the sport celebrity's related attributes that translated to brand benefits when the brand began sponsoring the athlete. A main attribute of a sport celebrity's image is trust, or the expectation that the athlete's actions should be ethically justifiable and not detrimental to the consumer's own image

(Sassenberg et al., 2012). When the athlete was involved in a scandal, the consumer could no longer trust the athlete and therefore had negative feelings towards the sponsor that needed to be reconciled. This imbalanced state and its consequences can be explained by balance theory (Heider, 1958), which maintains that individuals strive to maintain a sense of balance in their lives.

When the sponsorship began, the consumer had positive feelings towards the athlete and the brand had entered into a positive public relationship with the athlete, thus the consumer now had positive feelings towards the brand as well. However, once the athlete was involved in a scandal and no longer projected the positive values that attracted the consumer to the athlete initially, the consumer could no longer trust the athlete and had negative feelings towards the athlete that created an unbalanced state. After a negative publicity scandal, in order for the consumer to regain a balanced state, the brand had to terminate its relationship with the athlete, confirming to the consumer that they also had negative feelings towards the athlete. This strong leadership response justified the consumer's negative feelings and attitude towards the athlete and the decision by the sponsor to terminate the relationship did lead to more positive attitude toward the brand than a decision to continue the relationship.

Sponsoring organizations benefit a great deal from a positive public relationship with an athlete. However, if a negative public relationship occurs due to a scandal being exposed, the brand has to consider how its relationship decision would impact the loyal consumers who were initially attracted to the brand when the sponsorship began. The results of this study indicate that it is in the brand's favour to terminate its relationship

with the athlete. However it would be of value to study if a relationship modification would be enough to reconcile the consumer's negative feelings after a scandal. If the brand wanted to maintain a relationship with the athlete, consumers would need the athlete to be punished in some way to counteract the loss of trust. Examples of this could be through a public admittance or apology, donating or forgoing some or all of the sponsoring earnings and only continuing the sponsorship where certain conditions have to be met that are seen as penalizing the athlete.

6.2 Brand Loyalty & Relationship Decision

Loyalty is not only unique to a sport celebrity and past research on brand loyalty is widespread, resulting in this study including brand-loyal consumers. Past research indicated that not only would brand-loyal consumers maintain a higher attitude towards the brand regardless of the relationship decision but also that the effect of the sponsor's decision on consumer attitude would be stronger for brand-loyal consumers.

This can be explained by the deeper attitudinal attachment that the brand-loyal consumer experiences towards the brand (Keller, 2003). Overall, brand-loyal consumers exhibited more positive attitudes towards the brand than non-loyal consumers because of their affective commitment to the brand. The brand-loyal consumer had built a trust that afforded the brand the ability to rely on the support of the consumer if they continued or terminated the relationship with the athlete.

However, after a scandal the brand was involved in a negative public relationship and although the consumer supported the sponsor's decision either way, they preferred if the brand disassociated with the athlete by terminating the relationship. The consumer

was loyal to the brand because of the positive attributes and image of the brand, and when the athlete no longer represented what attracted the loyal consumer to the brand initially, attitude was higher when there was no longer a relationship between the two.

The results of this study are encouraging for a brand considering sponsorship or already sponsoring an athlete. The brand can be assured that the loyal consumers accumulated in the past through brand equity and brand image will continue to support the brand for both relationship decision conditions. If the brand continues or terminates the relationship with the athlete, the trust built with the brand-loyal consumer is maintained and allows the brand the ability to consider both alternatives.

However, the conclusions from this study also indicated that brand-loyal consumers preferred if the brand terminated the relationship with the athlete. If the brand decides to continue the relationship, it would be in the brands best interest to demonstrate to its loyal consumers, through public statements, that it is fully committed to reversing the public relationship with the athlete back to a positive one. This will ensure the loyal consumers that the positive brand image they have come to expect will be maintained.

6.3 Severity of the Scandal & Relationship Decision

Previous research in sport celebrity scandal has studied the characteristics of a scandal and found that the level of scandal impacts consumer attitude (Brown, 2012; Hughes & Shank, 2005, 2008; Knittel & Stango, 2012). Based on Hughes & Shank's (2005) definition and characteristics of a scandal, two scandals were chosen as a low- and high-level severity scandal. It was hypothesized that the effect of the sponsor's relationship

decision on consumer attitude would be stronger when the severity of the scandal is high than when it is low.

The findings of this study were unexpected, as severity of the scandal did not directly impact consumer attitude and did not effect the sponsor's relationship decision on consumer attitude. The results could be explained by the study focusing on athlete-loyal consumers, for whom the severity of the scandal may have had less impact on attitude. If the loyal consumer had negative feelings towards the athlete after involvement in a scandal, the severity of the scandal could become less important because either way, the athlete has lost the consumer's trust.

Another explanation is that with the numerous and growing amount of athletes involved in scandal coupled with the increased media coverage of sport celebrities, consumers are becoming desensitized to the level of severity. Because this study did not include illegal acts, the definition of a low- and high-level severity scandal could have been interpreted as both being on the lower side of severity, based on what the consumer has perceived from current sport celebrities in the media. Perhaps a consumer's definition of what is morally acceptable may have changed since the definition created by Hughes & Shank in 2005.

Finally, the pre-test used had four separate scandals, two considered low-level severity and two considered high-level severity. The two scandals chosen have significantly different levels of severity but it is possible that the low-level scandal needed to be less severe or that the high-level scandal needed to be more severe.

Based on the results of this study, once an athlete whom the brand is sponsoring is involved in a scandal, the severity of the scandal seems less important than the consideration of any loyalty the consumer has to either the brand or the athlete. In this study, consumer loyalty had a significant impact on the attitudes of the consumer and severity did not. If a brand is sponsoring an athlete who is involved in a scandal that is not illegal, the brand's focus should not be on how severely the act opposed a consumer's moral code but on the specific types of consumers that the scandal will impact and how they can mitigate the negative attitudes they may be feeling.

6.4 Limitations and Future Research

One limitation of this study was the use of an online survey where only individuals in the Qualtrics database were able to complete the survey. The results of the study might not be generalizable to individuals without access to the Internet. However, in order to reach a large enough sample of individuals aged 18-65, approximately half male and half female, who would have involvement with athletes and brands, an online survey was deemed necessary.

Another important factor that needs to be considered was the questionnaire asking the participant to name an athlete they were loyal or indifferent to, and to name a brand they were loyal or indifferent to. It could be possible that the consumer had a bias or difficulty imagining that the chosen athlete or brand was involved in a scandal based on a pre-established positive emotional attachment or attitude. However, the questionnaire also confirmed that there was a significant difference in consumer attitude towards loyal versus indifferent athletes and brands chosen, and if a fictitious athlete or brand was used then the

participant may not have identified or felt any loyalty to either. Using believable, real-life examples of athletes and brands added identification and credibility to the research. Not only did it enhance external validity but also allowed the participant to have an existing relationship and loyalty to either the athlete or the brand.

Another limitation was that the study was conducted over a short period of time. Participants were given the negative information to read and then immediately asked their attitudes. It is possible that the participants had a stronger reaction because it was instant and if given time to process, attitudes would change. The participant was also told that the athlete had not commented on the allegations. Future research could analyze consumer attitude after an extended period of time had elapsed since the scandal and after the athlete had done some form of reparation. It also would be of value to compare consumer attitude after a period of time with the athlete being successful or unsuccessful on the field of play post-scandal. Future research could also look at what actions taken by the athlete would alleviate the negative feelings of loyal consumers but also allow the sponsor to continue its relationship.

It was also a limitation that this research asked the participants to name a male athlete, excluding female athletes from the study. However, it was decided that the main focus of the study was the brand's relationship decision, and to control for gender influencing consumer responses, only male athletes would be used.

Finally, to narrow the scope of the study, it was determined that the focus would be athlete-loyal consumers whose attitude would be the most likely to be influenced by the brand's relationship decision.

This research extended on previous research in sport celebrity sponsorship, scandal in sport, and loyal consumers. Specifically, this research examined the impact of a sponsor's relationship decision on consumer attitude once a scandal had occurred. Two types of consumer loyalty as well as severity of a scandal were taken into consideration. For athlete-loyal consumers, the sponsor's decision to either continue or terminate the relationship with the athlete did influence attitude towards the brand. In addition, brand loyalty had a significant impact on consumer attitude after the sponsor's relationship decision.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire Pre-test

SCANDAL 1 –

Sources reported that a picture was leaked of Athlete A involved in some unethical behavior. In the picture Athlete A is in a hotel room with a large group of people. Many of the women in the picture are only dressed in bikinis and seem to be intoxicated. There is open liquor scattered on the hotel room floor and one of the scantily clad women is sitting on Athlete A's lap. Although blurry, Athlete A's hand seems to be holding alcohol. Since the media broke the story, Athlete A has not released a statement and won't answer any questions.

Please read each statement carefully and circle the response that best represents how you feel about that statement. Sometimes you may feel as though you have had the same item before on the questionnaire. This will not be the case so do not look back and forth through the items. Do not try to remember how you checked similar items earlier in the questionnaire. Make each item a separate and independent judgment. Work at a fairly high rate of speed. It is your immediate feeling that we want. On the other hand, please do not be careless, because we want your true impressions.

1) How do you view the athlete's behavior in this article?

Not Negative Extremely Negative

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

2) How much damage or harm is caused by the events in this article?

Not Harmful Extremely Harmful

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

3) Regardless of what other people might think, how do you think these events are?

Not Wrong Extremely Wrong

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

4) How severe do the events in this article seem to you?

Not Severe Extremely Severe

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

5) Where would you rate the events in this article?

Least Scandalous Most Scandalous

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

SCANDAL 2 –

Three months ago sources reported that Athlete B was involved in numerous gambling incidences over the past year. It has been claimed that Athlete B was betting on games in his field of play when he was participating in the game. It is not clear if he played any differently based on the bets he made. To make matters worse, the female who leaked the story has claimed that not only did she participate with him by placing bets for him, but she was in an affair with the married Athlete B. She also has claimed that she has the text messages and pictures to prove it. Since the media broke the story, Athlete B has not released a statement and won't answer any questions.

Please read each statement carefully and circle the response that best represents how you feel about that statement. Sometimes you may feel as though you have had the same item before on the questionnaire. This will not be the case so do not look back and forth through the items. Do not try to remember how you checked similar items earlier in the questionnaire. Make each item a separate and independent judgment. Work at a fairly high rate of speed. It is your immediate feeling that we want. On the other hand, please do not be careless, because we want your true impressions.

1) How do you view the athlete's behavior in this article?

Not Negative Extremely Negative

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

2) How much damage or harm is caused by the events in this article?

Not Harmful Extremely Harmful

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

3) Regardless of what other people might think, how do you think these events are?

Not Wrong Extremely Wrong

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

4) How severe do the events in this article seem to you?

Not Severe Extremely Severe

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

5) Where would you rate the events in this article?

Least Scandalous Most Scandalous

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

SCANDAL 3 –

Sources have reported that Athlete C has tested positive for performance enhancing drugs during his last mandatory and routine drug test. This is a shocking development because Athlete C has never tested positive before however Athlete C has been performing extremely well in the past 6 months. Since the story broke, Athlete C's nutritionist has put out a statement claiming that the Athlete was taking a combination of vitamin and mineral substances to achieve optimal performance but alleges the substances were absolutely not illegal. Since the media broke the story, Athlete C has not released a statement and won't answer any questions.

Please read each statement carefully and circle the response that best represents how you feel about that statement. Sometimes you may feel as though you have had the same item before on the questionnaire. This will not be the case so do not look back and forth through the items. Do not try to remember how you checked similar items earlier in the questionnaire. Make each item a separate and independent judgment. Work at a fairly high rate of speed. It is your immediate feeling that we want. On the other hand, please do not be careless, because we want your true impressions.

1) How do you view the athlete's behavior in this article?

Not Negative Extremely Negative

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

2) How much damage or harm is caused by the events in this article?

Not Harmful Extremely Harmful

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

3) Regardless of what other people might think, how do you think these events are?

Not Wrong Extremely Wrong

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

4) How severe do the events in this article seem to you?

Not Severe Extremely Severe

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

5) Where would you rate the events in this article?

Least Scandalous Most Scandalous

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Scandal 4 –

Sources are reporting that Athlete D was involved in an incident involving the police late last night. It's claiming that Athlete D was seen drinking alcohol at a dance club late into the night and there is photographic evidence of him holding what looks like a cigarette, which the photographer is claiming was marijuana. Later that night Athlete D drove a BMW convertible into a parked car and the police have stated that they believe there was alcohol involved. Athlete D was booked and the photos have been leaked on numerous websites. Since the media broke the story, Athlete D has not released a statement and won't answer any questions.

Please read each statement carefully and circle the response that best represents how you feel about that statement. Sometimes you may feel as though you have had the same item before on the questionnaire. This will not be the case so do not look back and forth through the items. Do not try to remember how you checked similar items earlier in the questionnaire. Make each item a separate and independent judgment. Work at a fairly high rate of speed. It is your immediate feeling that we want. On the other hand, please do not be careless, because we want your true impressions.

1) How do you view the athlete's behavior in this article?

Not Negative Extremely Negative

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

2) How much damage or harm is caused by the events in this article?

Not Harmful Extremely Harmful

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

3) Regardless of what other people might think, how do you think these events are?

Not Wrong Extremely Wrong

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

4) How severe do the events in this article seem to you?

Not Severe Extremely Severe

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

5) Where would you rate the events in this article?

Least Scandalous Most Scandalous

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Appendix B: Sample Questionnaire

Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this study is to increase the understanding of the impact of sport scandals on consumers and sponsors. It will also provide a sponsor with useful information when they are sponsoring an athlete involved in a scandal.

Please read each statement carefully and circle the response that best represents how you feel about that statement. Sometimes you may feel as though you have had the same item before on the questionnaire. This will not be the case so do not look back and forth through the items. Do not try to remember how you checked similar items earlier in the questionnaire. Make each item a separate and independent judgment. Work at a fairly high rate of speed. It is your immediate feeling that we want. On the other hand, please do not be careless, because we want your true impressions.

Please list your favourite sport:

How many days a month do you watch a sporting event?

- a. Less than 2 days
- b. 2-7 days
- c. More than 7 days

List no more than three companies or brands whose products you buy on a regular basis.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Please list three of your favourite athletes.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

For the statements below, athletes will be discussed. Please read each statement carefully and circle the response that best represents how you feel.

Athlete Loyalty Condition

Choose a male athlete towards whom you have a high attitude and strong positive feelings:

OR

Athlete Indifferent Condition

Choose a male athlete that you are indifferent to (no strong feelings toward positively or negatively) but you believe to be popular in his or her field of sport:

Please answer the questions below, the athlete that you chose will now be referred to as the athlete.

1) Regardless of whether the athlete wins or loses, I will continue to support him.

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

2) I would experience a loss if I had to stop being a fan of the athlete?

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

3) Being a fan of the athlete is very important to me.

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

4) I consider myself to be a "real" fan of the athlete.

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

1 2 3 4 5 6

For the statements below, brands will be discussed. Please read each statement carefully and circle the response that best represents how you feel.

Brand Loyal Condition

Choose a brand towards which you have a high attitude and strong positive feelings:

OR

Brand Indifferent Condition

Choose a male athlete that you are indifferent to (no strong feelings toward positively or negatively) but you believe to be popular in his or her field of sport:

Please answer the questions below, the brand that you chose will now be referred to as the brand.

1) How important would you say the brand is to you personally?

Not very important Very important

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

2) How knowledgeable do you feel you are about the brand?

Not very knowledgeable Very knowledgeable

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

3) When buying the brand, how committed are you to buying this brand, rather than an alternative brand?

Not very committed Very committed

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

4) If you could not find the brand at the store where you normally shop, would you:

- (1) Happily buy a different brand
- (2) Reluctantly buy a different brand
- (3) Not buy the product until the next time you shopped
- (4) Try a different store

Directions: Please read the following passage and each question carefully, and then circle the response you feel is most appropriate. The subjects used in this passage are the athlete and brand you previously chose.

Sources reported that a picture was leaked of the athlete involved in some unethical behavior. In the picture the athlete is in a hotel room with a large group of people. Many of the women in the picture are only dressed in bikinis and seem to be intoxicated. There is open liquor scattered on the hotel room floor and one of the scantily clad women is sitting on the athlete's lap. Although blurry, the athlete's hand seems to be holding alcohol. Since the media broke the story, the athlete has not released a statement and won't answer any questions.

Brand Continues Relationship Condition

The brand (the sponsor) that is sponsoring the athlete is aware of the situation and decides to continue its relationship with the athlete.

OR

Brand Terminates Relationship Condition

The brand (the sponsor) that is sponsoring the athlete is aware of the situation and decides to terminate its relationship with the athlete.

Please describe your overall feelings about the brand.

Do you feel the brand is?

Unlikeable Likable

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

How do you feel towards the brand?

Bad Good

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

How do you feel towards the brand?

Unfavorable Favorable

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

During my next purchase I will buy this brand.

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

I am very committed to buying this brand rather than an alternative brand?

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

How do you feel about the sponsors' decision to continue its relationship with the athlete?

Unfavorable Favorable

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Bad Good

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Negative Positive

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Directions: Please read the following passage and each question carefully, and then circle the response you feel is most appropriate. The subjects used in this passage are the athlete and brand you previously chose.

Three months ago sources reported that the athlete was involved in numerous gambling incidences over the past year. It has been claimed that the athlete was betting on games in his field of play when he was participating in the game. It is not clear if he played any differently based on the bets he made. To make matters worse, the woman who leaked the story has claimed that not only did she participate with him by placing bets for him, but she was in an affair with the married athlete. She also has claimed that she has the text messages and pictures to prove it. Since the media broke the story, the athlete has not released a statement and won't answer any questions.

Brand Continues Relationship Condition

The brand (the sponsor) that is sponsoring the athlete is aware of the situation and decides to continue its relationship with the athlete.

OR

Brand Terminates Relationship Condition

The brand (the sponsor) that is sponsoring the athlete is aware of the situation and decides to terminate its relationship with the athlete.

Please describe your overall feelings about the brand.

Do you feel the brand is?

Unlikeable Likable

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

How do you feel towards the brand?

Bad Good

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

How do you feel towards the brand?

Unfavorable Favorable

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

During my next purchase I will buy this brand.

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

I am very committed to buying this brand rather than an alternative brand?

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

How do you feel about the sponsors' decision to continue its relationship with the athlete?

Unfavorable Favorable

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Bad Good

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Negative Positive

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

PART II

Directions: Please circle the correct response.

Sex:

- a. Male
- b. Female

Age: _____ (years)

Highest Education Completed:

- a. High School Graduate
- b. Some University, College, Trade or Technical School (incomplete)
- c. Completed Degree(s)

Income range:

- a. Less than 50,000
- b. 50,000 – 100,000
- c. More than 100,000

Appendix C: Model Hypotheses

Main Effect:

H1. In the event of a negative publicity scandal, a decision by the sponsor to terminate the relationship with the athlete will lead to more a positive attitude towards the brand than a decision to continue the relationship.

Direct Effect:

H2. Regardless of the sponsor's relationship decision, brand-loyal consumers will maintain a higher attitude towards the brand than consumers who are not loyal to the brand.

Moderation:

H3. Brand Loyalty moderates the effect of the sponsor's decision on attitude. The effect of the sponsor's decision on consumer attitude will be stronger for brand-loyal consumers than for consumers who are not loyal to the brand.

H4. Severity of the scandal moderates the effect of the sponsor's decision on attitude. The effect of sponsor's decision on consumer attitude will be stronger when the severity of the scandal is high than when it is low.