

Sponsor: Dr. Kathryn Zeno Readers: Dr. Tammi Redd and Mr. Brian Goldberg

**Abstract:**

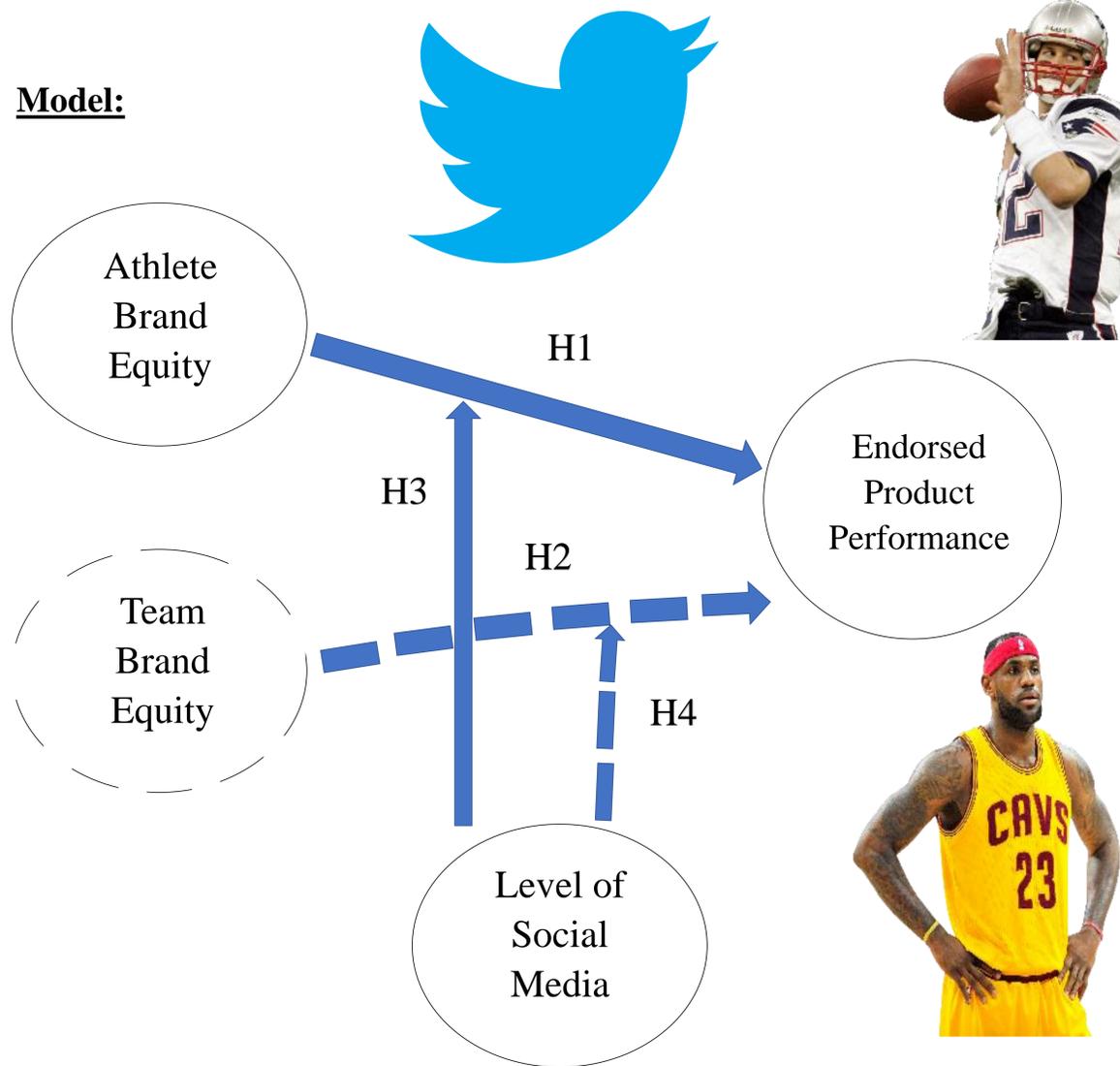
Social media has paved the way towards increased fan-athlete interaction and heightened volatility between the endorsed brand-athlete relationship. While these areas have been examined extensively, there is a gap in the literature. This study will examine the impact of the level of the athlete's social media on the athlete's brand equity and endorsed product performance.

**Background:**

The rise of sports as a focal point of pop-culture has been well documented over the past half century. As mainstream media outlets such as the television and the Internet rapidly became cultural staples, athletes were able to showcase their abilities and communicate with a wider audience. This technological burgeoning of society has allowed athletes to appear as larger-than-life figures and secure major endorsements. Hiring celebrity athletes as endorsers is beneficial to a company's financial success (Elberse, Verleun, 2012). There have been many research studies that have demonstrated the positive relationship between the value of the athlete's brand and brand/company financial success. Television and public relations are effective communication methods but the level of social media communication by athletes has not been analyzed in terms of the effect on a company's financial performance.



**Model:**



\*dotted lines in the model reflect future research that can be done

**Hypotheses:**

- H1:** The level of an athlete's brand equity is positively related to endorsed product performance
- H2:** The presence of social media will enhance the positive effects of an athlete's brand equity on endorsed product performance.

**Operationalization of Variables:**

- Athlete Brand Equity: Total Athlete Earnings
- Social Media Variable: Number of Twitter followers that the athlete has
- Endorsed Product Performance: Sales Volume; Sales Revenue

**Expected Findings:**

The hypotheses are expected to be validated in this study. Athletes in the study with the highest brand equities should possess the strongest positive relationships with endorsed product performance. The presence of social media should strengthen the positive relationship between athlete brand equity and endorsed product performance.

**Future Research:**

Another potential variable that may have an impact on endorsed product performance is the brand equity of the team that the athlete plays on. Future research can be done to examine the impact of a team's brand equity on an endorsed product's financial performance.