

Consumer Perceptions of NIL Athletes, Social Media Influencers, and Celebrities as Endorsers in Social Media Marketing/Advertising



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Introduction & Background

Purpose
• There is a lack of research directly comparing social media influencers and NIL athletes to traditional celebrity endorsers. This study investigates differences in perceived trust and credibility across these three endorser types and explores how these perceptions influence consumer purchase intention.

Background
• When followers (consumers) perceive a strong influencer-brand match, they also perceive the influencer as more credible, trustworthy, and persuasive¹
• Limited research on NIL athletes due to recent 2021 emergence. NIL shows personal branding and institutional factors impact the social media NIL value of collegiate athletes²
• Ohanian³ developed and validated a widely used source credibility scale that measures celebrity endorser credibility across three variables: expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness.

Research Questions
• **RQ 1: Are social media influencers and NIL athletes as endorsers deemed to have the same levels of credibility and trustworthiness as traditional celebrity endorsers?**
• **RQ 2: How do consumers' perceptions of social media influencers, NIL athletes, and celebrities influence purchase intention?**

Methods

Participants
• Final participant size of 49 participants
• 9 male participants and 40 female participants
• Majority reported attending/attend a Southeastern Conference (SEC) school
• Ages ranged from 19 to 36 years old
• Included undergraduate students, graduate students, and recent graduates
• Every participant reported using social media every day

Measures
• Qualitative data was analyzed through color-coding themes found
• Quantitative data was measured by taking the summated averages of participants' questions for each dimension within a scale, and for the entire scale
• t-Tests to find any significance in the mean differences in endorser types
• Source Credibility Scale³:
• Dimensions: trust, credibility, and attractiveness
• ADTRUST scale⁵, adapted for social media advertising: perceptions of the information conveyed in social media advertisements
• Dimensions: reliability, usefulness, affect, and willingness to rely on
• Engagement scale⁴: social media engagement with each endorser type and overall
• Dimensions: consumption, contribution, and creation

Results

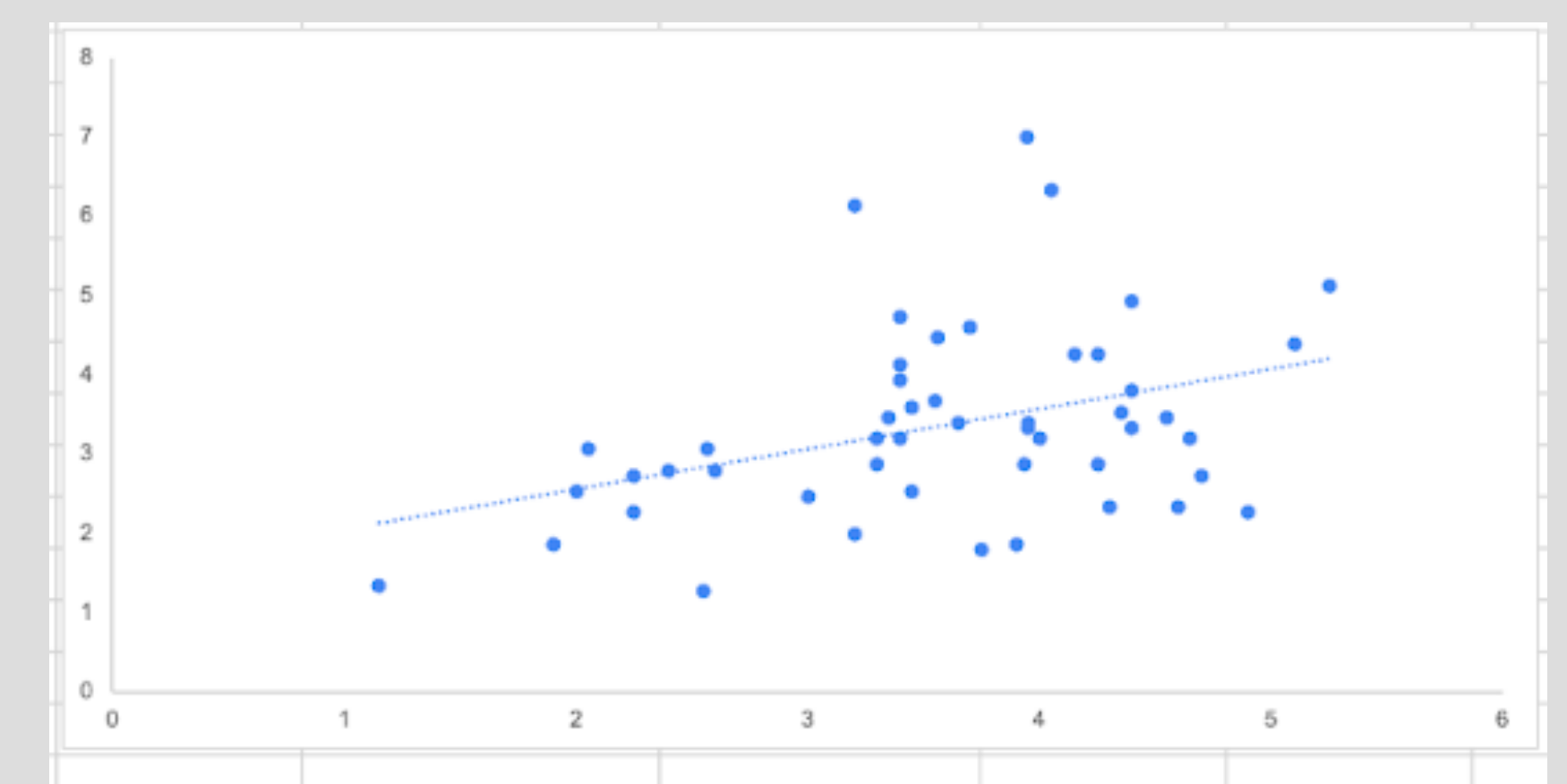
t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
	NILtrstsum5	Celbrtrstsum5
Mean	3.289795918	2.926530612
Variance	1.608435374	1.282823129
Observations	49	49
Pearson Correlation	0.522754395	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	48	
t Stat	2.157245626	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.018011197	
t Critical one-tail	1.677224196	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.036022394	
t Critical two-tail	2.010634758	

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
	NILatrvsum5	Celbatrvsum5
Mean	3.959183673	4.302040816
Variance	1.484965986	1.890204082
Observations	49	49
Pearson Correlation	0.693426948	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	48	
t Stat	-2.340303528	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.011736245	
t Critical one-tail	1.677224196	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.02347249	
t Critical two-tail	2.010634758	

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
	SMatrvsum5	Celbatrvsum5
Mean	3.902040816	4.302040816
Variance	1.445204082	1.890204082
Observations	49	49
Pearson Correlation	0.529529789	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	48	
t Stat	-2.224044118	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.015442084	
t Critical one-tail	1.677224196	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.030884169	
t Critical two-tail	2.010634758	

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
	NILexprtsum5	SMexprtsum5
Mean	3.644897959	3.07755102
Variance	1.885442177	1.664693878
Observations	49	49
Pearson Correlation	0.263285645	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	48	
t Stat	2.454847822	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.008884927	
t Critical one-tail	1.677224196	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.017769855	
t Critical two-tail	2.010634758	

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
	NILexprtsum5	Celbexprtsum5
Mean	3.644897959	3.016326531
Variance	1.885442177	1.474727891
Observations	49	49
Pearson Correlation	0.471818683	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	48	
t Stat	3.291780809	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.000936059	
t Critical one-tail	1.677224196	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.001872117	
t Critical two-tail	2.010634758	



	adscsum20	esavg
adscsum20	1	
esavg	0.37806106	1

Quantitative

- Statistically significant difference in trust between NIL athletes and celebrities ($t = 2.16, p = 0.036$)
- Higher trust in NIL athletes as endorsers and a lesser trust in celebrities as endorsers, with social media influencers not being significantly more or less trustworthy than NIL athletes.
- Statistically significant difference in attractiveness between celebrities and NIL athletes ($t = -2.34, p = 0.023$)
- Significant difference between celebrities and social media influencers ($t = -2.22, p = 0.031$)
- Celebrities were perceived as more attractive endorsers compared to both NIL athletes and social media influencers.
- Statistically significant difference in expertise between NIL athletes and celebrities ($t = 3.29, p = 0.002$)
- Significant difference between NIL athletes and social media influencers ($t = 2.45, p = 0.018$)
- Higher expertise seen in NIL athletes as endorsers when compared to celebrities and social media influencers.

- Correlation between ADTRUST and Engagement scales
- Positive insignificant correlation ($r = 0.378$).

Qualitative

- Q1: What qualities make you trust an endorser in an advertisement?
 - Findings: Endorser reputation, credibility paired with expertise, and honesty paired with trust.
- Q2: Do you perceive influencers, college athletes (NIL), and celebrities differently as endorsers? How so?
 - Findings: Being older in age was often related to perceived expertise, promotion within a niche correlated to perceptions (relating to NIL athletes), and reputation regarding the endorsers' personal concern with perceived appearance (relating to celebrities).
- Q3: Can you describe a time when an endorser influenced your opinion about a product or brand? Was the endorser an influencer, celebrity, or NIL athlete?
 - Findings: Mainly social media influencers, and around a third of celebrities mentioned were high-profile athletes. Responses related to earlier themes found in Q1, if social media influencers actually show use of a product, then consumers are more likely to trust them.

Conclusion & Implications

- Implications**
- NIL athletes can be considered a distinct endorsement category, rather than grouped with social media influencers.
 - NIL athletes are effective in fostering trust and credibility.
 - Influencers can be effective, but require authenticity to avoid perceptions of insincerity.
 - Celebrities may generate visibility due to attractiveness and personal branding, but lower trust levels may limit their influence on purchase decisions.

- Future Research**
- Explore whether fan loyalty to athletes or teams influences perceptions of NIL athletes as endorsers.
 - Expand to larger and more diverse samples across gender, age, and universities to improve generalizability.
 - How do different product categories affect the effectiveness of different endorser types?

Key References & Acknowledgments

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