

# The Heterogeneous Impact of the Age of Sports Star Spokespersons on Brand Promotion and Its Underlying Mechanism: From the Perspective of Age Differences

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**Abstract.** Athletes play an important role in the business market, and their signings influence fans' attention to brands. The main goal of cooperation is mutual benefit and win-win, and the interests of both parties are the primary consideration. Players' behavior and popularity growth will directly affect brand reputation and market response. Young players have room to develop but receive lower salaries, while older players are valued for their experience and impact. Brands need to be cautious when choosing spokespersons, including age, image, etc. Research shows that spokespersons have a significant impact on brand equity and consumer attitudes. There are differences in the choice of spokespersons between the two brands, reflecting different brand strategies. The age of sports stars has a profound impact on brands. Young stars can attract more attention and recognition, while older spokespersons have a mature and stable image. Companies need to carefully consider spokesperson selection and crisis management, establish diversified marketing strategies, and ensure healthy brand development. With the rapid spread of social media, the image and reputation of the spokesperson determine the success of the brand, so it is crucial to reduce the risk of relying on a single spokesperson and comprehensively plan the strategy.

## 1 Introduction

The influence of athletes plays an important role in the business market. The brand they signed has attracted wide spread attention from fans. Most of the cooperation between the two parties is for mutual benefit and win-win results, so interests related will be the primary factor considered by both parties. In this process, as their popularity increases, society will pay more attention to them, so players are bound by interests. Finally, various behaviors will have an impact on the brand. Whether it is the current market response or the brand's reputation and fame in the future, it can well explain whether the choice made by the brand at the beginning was wise and correct. Young players tend to have higher room for development, and players in this range will not be very well-known, which also means that the salary they match is relatively low, so this is related to the future development of the players. It is also worth thinking about for brands. Older players may be valued because of their experience, maturity and influence. Players who can be signed in this age group will undoubtedly have very high commercial value and status in the league, and their salaries will also be very high. So will age become an important factor affecting the economics of a player signing with a brand? Will brands be more inclined to sign young players with more room for development or older players with more influence and mat

urity? The following three parts of research will be what this paper mainly discuss today [1]. Research on the impact of brand spokespersons on brand equity: As a part of the brand, spokespersons can increase the value of brand equity [2,3]. Spokespersons can help brands create a unique brand image, increase brand influence, and enhance the value of brand assets. An empirical study on the impact of celebrity endorsements on consumers' brand attitudes: Celebrity endorsements have a significant impact on consumers' brand attitudes. The image and credibility of celebrities will be transformed into consumers' favorability towards the brand, thereby affecting consumers' purchasing decisions. Research on the impact of brand spokesperson credibility on brand relationship quality: The spokesperson's credibility has a significant impact on brand relationship quality. When consumers perceive the endorser to be credible, they are more likely to trust the brand, thereby improving the quality of the brand relationship. The credibility of the spokesperson can enhance consumer loyalty to the brand and brand image [4]. Current research on the impact of brand spokespersons on brands is relatively rich, but on the one hand, there is a lack of discussion on sports stars, and on the other hand, there is a lack of targeted interpretation of the age of the spokesperson.

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## 2 Case analysis of young players

### 2.1 Nike

#### 2.1.1 Chris Paul

He was a basketball player who was in his mid-30s when he signed with Nike. He had a good reputation in the NBA at the time and was considered a good point guard. First of all, as a high-profile NBA star player, Chris Paul himself has considerable influence and popularity. By signing him, Nike will be able to leverage his influence in sports and pop culture to effectively increase brand awareness and image. Secondly, Chris Paul is a well-respected and popular basketball player who displays excellent skills and leadership skills on the court. His professionalism and passion for the game inspire young people and win him a wide following of supporters. This makes him an ideal spokesperson to help convey the ethos and values that Nike stands for. Third, as Paul is an excellent athlete, his cooperation will also help Nike strengthen its market share in the basketball field. Among fans who love basketball, Chris Paul's personal image and brand recognition are very high, which will attract more consumers to buy Nike's basketball shoes and sports equipment, thus increasing the company's revenue and profits. In addition, Chris Paul is also a philanthropist who actively participates in various charity activities and social affairs. As an internationally renowned brand, Nike will help enhance its brand image and convey positive energy by cooperating with such a public-spirited spokesperson. At the same time, it can also jointly carry out some public welfare projects to give back to the society and improve corporate social responsibility. Overall, Chris Paul's signing with Nike is not just a business cooperation, but a mutually beneficial partnership. His influence, professionalism and social responsibility can bring more attention and recognition to Nike, further consolidate the brand's position in the sports industry, and establish closer ties with consumers.

#### 2.1.2 Kylian Mbappe

He was a football player who was around 20 years old when he signed with Nike. Mbappe's signing with Nike has brought significant impact and value to Nike in many aspects. Mbappe is one of the most promising young players in football today, and his popularity extends far beyond football. By collaborating with him, Nike has gained wider exposure, not only in football, but also in more popular culture and fashion circles. Mbappe is a representative figure who is positive and hardworking, and his image fits well with the Nike brand slogan. This positive image helps improve Nike's brand awareness and favorability in the minds of consumers. Mbappe has attracted much attention around the world, especially in the European and Asian markets. By cooperating with him, Nike can better penetrate these markets and improve its competitiveness in the international market. To sum up, Mbappe's signing with Nike has brought multiple values to Nike such as increased global visibility, improved brand image, product promotion and sales growth, international market ex-

pansion, and innovative technology cooperation. Such cooperation will definitely bring long-term business benefits and strategic value to Nike and consolidate its leading position in the sporting goods industry.

### 2.2 Li Ning

#### 2.2.1 Li Na

She was once a representative player of the Chinese tennis team and later became an outstanding professional tennis player. She signed a contract with Li Ning around the age of 30. Li Na's signing with Li Ning has had a huge impact and many benefits on the Li Ning brand. As a famous Chinese tennis player, Li Na's joining has injected more vitality and popularity into Li Ning Company. She is the first Asian player to win a singles championship in a Grand Slam event, so her image is widely recognized and loved, and she has become an idol in the hearts of countless people. This positive image not only enhances the reputation of the Li-Ning brand in the sports world, but also helps attract more young consumers to pay attention to and purchase Li-Ning products. By partnering with Li Na, Li Ning will be able to leverage her influence on the international stage to further expand the brand's global visibility. Li Na's successful performance in international sports events has made her a high-profile sports star around the world, which has benefited the Li-Ning brand. Signing a contract with Li Na not only brings greater exposure to Li Ning, but also provides the brand with broader market opportunities, which in turn promotes Li Ning's development and growth in the international market. In addition, the cooperation between Li Na and Li Ning has also injected more innovative elements into the Li Ning brand. As an excellent athlete, Li Na has unique insights and needs for the design and function of sporting goods. Through her professional opinions and suggestions on products, Li Ning can better understand the actual needs of athletes, improve and innovate product designs, and produce high-quality sports equipment that better meets athletes' requirements. This design concept that combines the actual needs of athletes not only enhances the competitiveness of the product, but also establishes a more professional and reliable image for the Li-Ning brand. To sum up, the signing between Li Na and Li Ning is not only a brand cooperation, but also a mutually beneficial strategic cooperation between both parties. Li Na's joining has brought Li Ning greater visibility, a broader market and more innovative inspiration, and promoted Li Ning's development and growth in the international market. This cooperation not only benefits both brands, but also injects new impetus and vitality into the comprehensive development of China's sports industry.

#### 2.2.2 Roger Federer

He is a famous Swiss tennis player who signed a contract with Li Ning when he was around 30 years old. He is recognized as one of the greatest players in tennis history. This cooperation has enhanced Li Ning's international reputation. Roger Federer is one of the most famous and su-

Successful athletes in today's tennis. His brilliant record and elegant style on the tennis court have made him a global sports icon. Through the cooperation with Federer, the Li-Ning brand can further expand overseas markets, enhance brand awareness, and deepen global consumers' understanding of the Li-Ning brand. Roger Federer as a partner has injected more sportsmanship and professionalism into Li-Ning. Federer's countless achievements in the field of tennis demonstrate his passion for sports and competition. His attitude of constantly pursuing excellence will also establish a more positive image for the Li-Ning brand. Through the cooperation between Federer and Li-Ning, the Li-Ning brand can combine the power and professionalism of world-class top athletes to give its products a new image a higher level of value. In addition, this cooperation has also opened up broader business opportunities for Li-Ning. As a sports star and commercial spokesperson, Roger Federer will attract more fans and customers to pay attention to the Li-Ning brand and promote sales growth. At the same time, during the cooperation process, both parties can also carry out more cooperation projects and promotion activities to further enhance brand influence and market share. Overall, Roger Federer's signing with Li-Ning has brought Li-Ning an increase in international visibility, an injection of sportsmanship and professionalism, and broader business opportunities. This strategic cooperation will help consolidate Li-Ning's position in the international market, expand new development space, and lay a solid foundation for the brand's future development.

Most of the stars signed by Nike are young and promising athletes or athletes at the peak of their careers. They have high commercial value and social influence and can attract young consumers. Most of the stars signed by Li-Ning are veterans who are well-known in their sports fields. Although they are past their peak, they are still famous and influential, which helps to enhance the brand image and the inheritance of traditional values. Nike covers multiple mainstream sports fields, demonstrating the brand's diversity and global vision. Li-Ning covers major sports fields such as tennis, with a preference for tennis, which is consistent with the brand's history and local culture. They combine brand image with their popularity and influence, which can increase brand awareness on a global scale. These stars have a huge fan base that can reach all age groups, better expand the market, and attract more consumers to pay attention to and purchase the brand's products [5]. These stars are successful enough and represent a positive spirit. Cooperating with them can enhance the brand's image and make the brand more competitive in the market [6]. Some of the signed stars are internationally renowned athletes, and cooperation with them can help the brand further expand overseas international markets and develop globally.

To sum up, although both brands enhance their brand image and market influence by signing well-known athletes, there are differences in their brand positioning, characteristics of signed star players, and timing choices, which reflect their differences in brand strategy and market positioning. Young sports stars have already achieved considerable success early in their careers, and their signings can bring more attention and recognition to

both brands. As time goes by, in the process, their potential is continuously tapped, and the influence of these young stars may continue to increase, which will help promote and establish the brand in the market. Young sports stars usually attract more attention from the same age group, and their signings can help brands attract more attention and purchase desires from young consumers. At the same time, as sports stars grow and develop, the brand images they represent will also develop to better meet the needs of consumers of different ages. The success and efforts of sports stars in their youth can often inspire and infect more people. Their positive images and values can inject positive energy into the brand and enhance the brand's image and reputation. Therefore, cooperation with young sports stars can help brands establish a positive and uplifting image and win the recognition and trust of consumers.

### 3 Case analysis of older players

#### 3.1 Lionel Messi

Older spokespersons may have certain influence at different age levels and can attract a wider range of consumer groups. But when someone collapses a house, many brands will be implicated. The recent controversy over Messi's absence continues to ferment. Among them, the newly signed Chishui River Wine has become the focus of public opinion. The brand launched a signature blessing model endorsed by Messi on JD.com, and launched a supporting marketing campaign to buy wine and get a jersey signed by Messi. However, as Messi's absence came to light, Chishui River Wine also had to respond. Currently, the brand's products have been removed from the JD.com platform, and searches for "Chishui River Wine" no longer display related products. This move undoubtedly brought a big blow to the brand image of Chishui River Wine. In addition to Chishui River Wine, another express delivery company with a market value of more than 100 billion Hong Kong dollars, Jitu Express, has also been affected. Some netizens left a message on a stock market forum saying that if Jitu does not change its spokesperson Messi, he will choose to change the courier company. Although Jitu Express later clarified that the information publisher was not the company's official account and his remarks did not represent the company's position, the stock price still fell sharply, with the maximum drop of nearly 26% [7].

#### 3.2 Luis Suarez

Luis Suarez is a high-profile soccer star who has been punished for numerous in-game biting incidents. These actions seriously affected his image and reputation, which in turn affected the brands they cooperated with, such as Nike. Suarez's misconduct as a footballer has attracted widespread attention in the past. One of the most famous incidents was the biting incident that occurred during the 2014 World Cup. This behavior not only violated sports ethics and professional ethics, but also had a great negative impact on his personal image. The public generally believes that this kind of crude and uncivilized behavior is co

mpletely unacceptable. As a spokesperson, the character and values Suarez displays directly affect the image of the brand he endorses. Consumers are very sensitive to the recognition and behavior of spokespersons, so any inappropriate behavior may become a stumbling block to the brand image. As a brand that promotes sportsmanship and healthy image, Nike is very cautious when choosing its spokespersons. The brand's image is built on positivity, professionalism and reliability, and bad behavior like Suarez's is contrary to what it advocates. From a communication perspective, the image of a partner spokesperson often directly affects the brand itself. If a spokesperson is involved in negative news or controversy, it will have a certain impact on the brand image. For Nike, Suarez's misconduct could cause damage to the brand's reputation, especially as consumers begin to question whether the brand is consistent with its values. Nike faces some challenges when it comes to working with a controversial spokesperson like Suarez. First, brands need to carefully consider how to respond to the pressure of public opinion to avoid damaging the brand's reputation due to the behavior of spokespersons. Second, brands may need to re-evaluate partnerships to ensure that working with endorsers does not harm their image and market performance. Most importantly, Nike must convey the brand's values and stance to consumers through transparent and committed communication, emphasizing its commitment to sportsmanship and ethics. Only through active brand management and crisis public relations can Nike effectively resolve the possible negative impacts of cooperation and maintain the stability and credibility of the brand image.

To sum up, in today's era of social media and rapid information dissemination, the success of brand marketing strategies often depends on the image and reputation of the spokesperson. Especially when it comes to superstar endorsers such as well-known sports stars such as Messi, brands often expect to use their influence to drive sales and enhance brand image. However, as recent events have shown, the fate of a brand is inseparable from the turmoil of its endorsers. Refer to this article. Chishui River Wine and Jitu Express, two seemingly unrelated companies, faced similar difficulties when Messi was absent. Chishui River Wine had to make quick adjustments and remove products from shelves to avoid further negative publicity that would affect its brand reputation. For Jitu Express, although the remarks in the stock market forum are not official positions, they still have a great impact on the company's stock price, highlighting the importance of the spokesperson's image to the brand in the minds of investors and consumers [8,9]. Comprehensive analysis of these situations, it is not difficult to conclude that brands should choose spokespersons carefully, establish more diversified marketing strategies, and reduce the risks caused by a single spokesperson[10]. Suarez's biting incident cast a negative light on him and the brands he works with. This case highlights the need for brands to carefully consider a candidate's public image and behavioral record when selecting spokespersons to avoid adverse effects on the brand's image and reputation.

## 4 Conclusions

The age of sports stars has a great impact on brands. Young sports stars usually bring more attention and recognition to brands, and at the same time can resonate with most consumers, which helps the brand expand the market and create a positive image. However, older spokespersons also have certain influence at different age levels and can attract a wider range of consumer groups. The poise, experience and maturity they display may impress, especially in areas such as luxury goods or health and wellness. When it comes to endorsement scandals, brands can be negatively impacted regardless of the age of the endorser. When selecting spokespersons, companies should carefully consider the overall image, reputation and potential risks of the candidates. Establishing a more diversified marketing strategy and crisis public relations plan is also a key step to ensure the steady development of the brand. In today's age of social media and rapid dissemination of information, the key to a brand's success often lies in the image and reputation of its spokesperson, regardless of their age. After comprehensively analyzing these situations, companies need to work hard to reduce the risks caused by relying on a single spokesperson, while establishing a comprehensive strategic plan to adapt to rapid market changes and ensure that the brand can maintain healthy development under various circumstances.

## Authors Contribution

All the authors contributed equally and their names were listed in alphabetical order.

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