Celebrity Endorsement
Impacts of Celebrity Endorsement on Customer Behavior Through Social Media

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BA in Business and Management
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. TOPIC

In the 21st century, we get in touch with advertisement in our everyday life, not only in the streets but in our private atmosphere as well that are nearly impossible to avoid. In our homes, through magazines, TV and also when we go online, advertisement makes an appearance, where social media is not an exception either. Logos in the advertisements are meant to promote brands, furthermore they make the end-user an advertising medium, by the logo being shown on the product which is either used or worn. In addition, there is a psychological element by which customers are influenced. The feeling of happiness that is caused by purchasing a new product also manipulates people to consume more. The drive of promotion is to inspire people to purchase products or services so that profit oriented companies can increase their bottom line revenue.

The topic of this research is about celebrity endorsement concerning sports brands on social media, focusing on the effectiveness of this kind of advertisement strategy from a marketing point of view. This study determines some of the factors which play an important role in the success of social media celebrity endorsement, and also investigates the theoretical background behind the idea. The thesis also aims to examine the consequences and results of consumers’ behavior affected by celebrity endorsers through social media.

The broad topic of celebrity endorsement has been narrowed down to the impact of athlete endorsers through social media on customers’ behavior.

Celebrity endorsement is a form of advertising which helps companies create a self-image in the minds of the target audience by delivering message through world-famous people.

The method of celebrity endorsement advertising is when persons achieve high level of attention by their fame and transport the message of either a brand or an idea to the target audience, enjoys great popularity. However to make the project successful and effective, the connection between the brand and the star must be credible – meaning that the character of the celebrity must fit the message he or she represents (Ohanian, 1991).
So many celebrity endorsements have been used in case of athletes as a strategic marketing communication tool, however the advent of social media has brought the idea to a higher level, and endowed it with cardinal significance.

Sports have always been a huge attraction due to their inflating viewership and stern independence. Most of the population take part in this business either as an athlete, as part of his or her job, or as a spectator. New technologies give rise to new opportunities and capabilities, such that today we are capable of following our favorite athletes’ daily lives as though we were direct acquaintances or friends.

1.2. RELEVANCY

The most significant reasons are mentioned in this section. This explains why the study worth doing as well as provides information to marketers about the actual trends dominating in the market. In our fast-moving world, the popularity and influence of technology has made the topic of this thesis more relevant than ever. Besides my interest in brand-building and consumer behavior, the booming electronics industry and social media brought this issue to my attention and conceived this research in doing so. In addition, the paper mainly approaches the question from the viewpoint of the sports industry that is a smaller slice of the whole topic, making it more personal. Moreover, the author examines the 17-27 age group living in Hungary because the attitude of these people is the most important to be discovered in regard to relevancy. The most significant reason is that this demographic market segment will have the necessary sum of disposable income in the near future, therefore a large amount of money will be integrated into the Hungarian economy.

1.3. PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The findings of this research will provide informative results and bring a better understanding to marketing specialists about the important factors that are necessary for a successful endorsement. Furthermore, the paper aims to provide an insight about the effect of celebrity endorsement, combined with taking advantage of the hype of social media, on the next set of people entering labor market.
1.4. RESEARCH QUESTION

In order to gain the best understanding of this issue, the following Research Question must be answered:

What are the impacts and the influencing factors of celebrity endorsement through social media in the process of consumers’ buying behavior among sport spectators’ brand recognition living in Hungary?

1.5. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Since the Research Question is complex, there are multiple ways it must be approached from in order to find a valid solution to it. Research objectives are used both to create the structure of the thesis, and also in order to make the research question easier to understand by identifying the subtopics of the study.

To answer the Research Question stated above, we need to form the following 5 Objectives:

O1.) Understand how personal branding functions and what its effects are on consumers within the marketing process (literature review)

O2.) Evaluate the ideal characteristics of the endorsers in the brand recognition process in order to produce the desired benefits to the stakeholders (literature review)

O3.) Analyze consumers’ and endorsers’ connections on social media, by identifying the emotional level it might reach (literature review, primary research)

O4.) Discover the thoughts of customers about the brand image depending upon the endorsed celebrity promoting the make, (primary research)

O5.) Find out the thought process and the attitude of a first-class athlete towards the social media and the idea of engaging in a celebrity endorsement activity (primary research)

1.6. STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

The structure of the research is determined by these 5 research objectives because the subtopics of the study must include the knowledge and the solution to them. In the followings, the structure and its reasoning can be read.

The upcoming chapter deals with the theoretical background of the topic.
There are many resources concerning the theoretical background of the thesis which are important to get familiar with. The author uses a funnel technique where the main purpose of the research is approached from a broader viewpoint, discovering information, then narrowing down the focus step by step. The subchapters are connected to each other, giving meaning to the tapering structure. Firstly, a short introduction can be read about the development of sports business industry. Secondly, within the topic of branding, relevant information on brand equity is explained in the light of celebrity endorsement. Thirdly, the study elaborates the recent updates of social media and introduces one of its most popular platforms, namely Instagram, in regard to celebrity endorsement. Finally, before summarizing the objectives in the conclusion, which have been solved in the theoretical part, the steps of consumers’ buying behavior are expanded, providing a frame to the literature review where the most reasonable subtopics can be discovered.

The third chapter introduces the Hypothesis Statement and explains the methodology of the research and introduces the advantages and disadvantages of the research methods that have been executed.

The fourth section evaluates the real-world feedback gathered from the questionnaire and the interview, comparing with the descriptive information having been earned in the theory.

All these chapters make it possible to draw valid conclusion and gain insight into where both the trends and the markets are heading, therefore the validation of the Hypothesis Statement is going to be established by answering the Research Question and its objectives.

1.7. LIMITATION

Despite the thesis is aimed to be well-structured and written with high reliability and robust validity, there are some limitations of this research which are essential to recognize.

It is important to mention that the thesis has a shortcoming with regards to the financial part of the topic. Although the thesis confirms that some results of the endorsement have been financially successful, no deeper analysis has been performed.
The study does not aim to consider the topic from the companies’ point of view, rather its main focus is on the impact on customer side. All in all, the profitability of any marketing method is difficult to calculate because there are many additional external effects on the brand. For instance, the growth in sales or better brand recognition, which impart their positive effects to more than just the endorsed product.

The limitation referring to the questionnaire is stated in the chapter of Research Methodology.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The theoretical part of the study aims to cover research objectives no.1, 2, 3 in this order, approaching from a wider view to the smallest one. The relevant information on the first two objectives may be read under branding while the understanding of the third one is included in the section of social media. The last descriptive part of the theory is responsible for helping the readers gain an insight how consumers’ behavior works as well as where it may connect, and how it is influenced by celebrities.

2.1. SPORT BUSINESS INDUSTRY

Sport Business Industry is one of the largest and fastest growing industries in the world, including several different segments such as sports tourism, sports apparel, both amateur and professional participants and spectators, sports sponsorship, sports marketing firms, etc. (Pitts & Stotlar, 2013).

Sports industry is defined by all the sport-related elements such as products, ideas, services and facilities that consumers have the opportunity to either purchase or use. The main products of sports industry consist of equipment, marketing activities, participation, promotional items. These areas are very much interlinked with each other so this industry provides consumers and fans a complex package they can enjoy (Pedersen & Thibault, 2014).

It is a diverse industry that is why its size and growth are difficult to measure. However, there were some studies carried out to estimate the size of the industry. According to the Meek study in 1995 sports industry was ranked as the 11th largest industry in the United States with total worth of $152 billion. Four years later a research by the Sport Business Journal estimated the worth of the industry to $213 billion which should be considered as a big leap (Broughton, Lee & Nethery, 1999).
In order to narrow down the topic, the thesis attempts to focus more on athlete endorsers than any other celebrity categories. Athletes have been endorsing both sport-related and non-sport-related products for many years by using his or her fame for increase sales and brand equity. According to Bush, endorsers are able to influence the brand loyalty, awareness and recognition, all in all, the marketing of the product (Bush, Martin & Bush, 2004). Furthermore, the influence on consumers is so great that they are willing to pay premium on the endorsed products compared to other ones (Holt, 2004).

According to Bergkvist and Zhou (2016) celebrity endorsement is an agreement between an entity and an individual who enjoys high level of public recognition, aiming to use it for promoting the brand (Bergkvist & Zhou, 2016, p. 644).

The idea had a rapid growth in 2001 when the number of commercials that used celebrities grew to 25% whereas this figure was only around 16% in the 1980s (Erdogan, Baker & Tagg, 2001).

2.2. BRANDING

The brand evolution has represented that brand is invented in order to differentiate the products and services that compete against each other. Furthermore, besides representing the quality of the firm concerning the items it produces and the services offered, the symbol of the brand also provides a copyright for protecting the given company against replicas. It also indicates legal ownership of the special characteristics the brand carries. Beyond the symbol, it usually has some further meanings which may be lifestyle, image, value and also reference. All these factors may put the company into its desired position by which it enables the firm to ask for higher prices, increase the profit margin, create a beneficial contract with suppliers as well as lead to brand equity and brand loyalty (Bradley, 1995).

Understanding of branding is really important concerning the thesis, because, according to Kotler and Armstrong, this expresses everything that a service or a good means to the customer. John Stewart, former CEO of Quaker Oats, and a former CEO of McDonald’s declared that the brand is worth more than the tangible assets of their company (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012).
Brand Equity

It is one of the key elements which must be mentioned, since this is the value the firm gains from its brand recognition. Companies which make contracts with celebrities, athletes in order to promote their brand increase brand recognition. In athletic apparel industry it is also true, top sport manufacturer firms such as Nike, Adidas, Puma, Under Armor and Reebok invest huge amount of money to attract more and more consumers and make the symbol of the brand easily recognizable.

These well-known individuals must have certain characteristics and meet some requirements to be given a contract by any brand and get involved in commercials. Later on, in the thesis these features will be explained.

There are several advantages companies can enjoy after having built a famous, acknowledged brand which the customers are satisfied with. They can charge a price premium compared to the competitors, higher brand awareness provides better opportunity to the firm when it launches a new product.

The basis of the intangible assets is the brand equity containing 5 dimensions.

A) Brand loyalty is based on customers’ satisfaction when a brand enjoys preference in costumers’ behavior so they become committed to a symbol implying the purchases of the items of the given brand again over time thus they are less sensitive to price increase (Assael, 2006).

Word-of-mouth is one of the most influential tools that is able to create strong emotional bond between the consumers and the brand (Dickson, 1997). This technique is used by brands through celebrities to advertise on social media platforms. Through social media endorsers get closer to us via this type of communication, giving them the power to influence consumers’ decision making. This is to be deeper studied in the further chapters.
B) Another dimension of brand equity is the brand awareness which consists of two elements, brand recognition and brand recall. Brand recognition is when customers are able to differentiate between brands they have already seen or heard of. This is the lowest level of brand awareness while brand recall is a higher level. Brand recall means consumers are able to remember the brand from memory when a product category is given. It is the same situation in case of celebrity endorsement as well, playing an important role in customers’ decision-making process. Firstly, high brand awareness increases the probability that the brand becomes the “member” of the possibilities the consumer will consider. Secondly, it can also influence the decisions among brands in the consideration group. Finally, it has an effect on decision making by influencing the brand image (Keller, 2013).

C) Celebrity endorsement influences the perceived quality as well which is also an element of brand equity. It is a picture in consumers’ minds about the overall quality a product or service has (Zinkhan & Smith, 1992). Ohanian states, the creditability of the endorsers has three dimensions, the trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness. Trustworthiness means the endorser tells the truth by providing information about the product. Expertise refers to the skills and success the endorser has achieved whereas attractiveness means using the physical appearance of endorsers in commercials. All these factors increase the popularity and the probable sale of a product (Ohanian, 1991).

D) Brand association consists of any mental linkage to the given brand such as consumer benefits, competitors and product attributes. Brand position is based on these factors. It has a high level of strength, as it influences the idea how a brand varies from its competitors. Furthermore, it plays an important role in purchase behavior since it creates positive feeling towards the brand besides providing a reason to buy (Aaker, 1999).

Brand association can be categorized into three groups based on the level of abstraction which means how much information the association contains. The first type of it is the attributes that are descriptive features a service or a product has. Attributes can be further distinguished into two groups according to how directly the information relates to service or product performance. Product-related attributes refer to the physical composition of a product or the requirements of a service, however non-product-related attributes are more important concerning celebrity endorsement. It contains the external aspects, classified into 4 major categories which are price information, product appearance information or packaging, user imagery and usage imagery. User imagery
stands for explaining what kinds of people use the service or the product, while usage imagery shows in which situations the service or product is used. These last two factors are affected by endorsers because they lead the thoughts of consumers and help them create the ideal image of the product in the user and establish a contact with them (Keller, 1993).

The second type is brand benefit, that is the personal meaning and value attached to the product or service. It can be further divided into three groups. Functional benefits are the intrinsic basic advantages such as safety and physiological needs. Experiential benefits refer to the feelings which are generated and occurred during consumers enjoy the service or use the product. Here they can easily compare themselves to the endorsers and think they are able to perform like them.

The third category is the symbolic benefits that are the extrinsic advantages that occur during a product or service purchase relating to needs for personal expression and social approval. Celebrities are able to raise the prestige, fashionability and exclusivity of the endorsed brand, which probably is valued by consumers when it fits their self-concepts (Keller, 1993; Keller 2013).

E) The fifth dimension contains other proprietary brand assets. There is an assumption which states that customers purchase goods to express their own personality and define themselves. Brand personality, which is a set of human traits and characteristics people and the company would say about the brand, (however, they do not always fit) is attributed to a given brand on the level of customers’ perception (Aaker, 1999). The self-concept is an essential factor in the essay which contains two forms, one of them is the actual self, and the other one is the ideal self. The first one is an actual status which is the perception of reality of oneself (what I think who I am right now), while the second one is the imagined personality he or she would like to become (Lazzari, Fioravanti & Gough, 1978). In case of celebrity endorsement, companies target consumers and stimulate their self-congruence. If the endorser fits either the actual or the ideal self of the customer, he or she more likely purchase the item because the brand’s personality is featured by a celebrity, making the customer more likely to opt for a purchase, due to the inner force to be like the endorser (Aaker, 1999).
Celebrity endorsement is an easy way to create emotional brand attachment if the individual likes the athlete. It is a connection between people and the whole brand including the lifestyle and the image too. This is a special feeling towards the brand which includes passion, affection and connection (Thomson, MacInnis & Park, 2005). Customers sympathize with those teams which have a deep “similarity” to their own ideal or actual self, just as they are drawn to individuals such as celebrities and athletes whose characteristics are similar to their own ideal or actual self (Funk & James, 2001). According to Carlson and Donavan, however, there are some human traits that play the most influential role concerning brand personality, which are the most in demand by consumers. The following five attributes have the biggest potential to connect and influence the customers’ identification with the human brand. Athlete endorsers are supposed to be wholesome, imaginative, tough, charming and successful (Carlson & Donavan, 2013).

On the one hand, this section provides some facts that explain how personal branding affects consumers’ attitudes and satisfies the first research objective. On the other hand, it states the theoretical belief about how an endorser can fit the brand personality and the endorsed product, creating sympathy and a positive judgement in customers’ minds. By this, the second objective has been successfully fulfilled.

2.3. SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a wide category of communications media enabling users to interact with each other, regardless of their location, acquaintanceship.

Social media marketing plays a determining role in 21st-century business. It provides companies an opportunity to create relationship with consumers, organizations and other stakeholders by using social media (Payne & Frow, 2005). Main objectives companies would like to achieve are goals like escalating brand awareness, increasing sales, involving users to participate by sharing and posting contents thus generating traffic to online platforms and improving brand image (Felix, Rauschnabel & Hinsch, 2017).
The use of social media has been getting more and more popular in recent years. There is a statement which says, since the beginning of 2015 until the start of January of 2016, the number of active social media users increased by more than 10% (over 219 million). Furthermore, the number of active mobile social users raised by the amount of 17% (over 283 million) (Allen, 2016). These figures have been rapidly moved even more upwards. The number of active social media users increased from 219 million to more than 482 million (+21%) and number of active mobile social users is more than 581 million (+30%) (Allen, 2017). These figures about the last 2 years are presented in the Appendix.

All these figures emphasize the importance of social media promotions. For these reasons companies have changed their marketing strategies and have been willing to invest in social media advertisements. An excellent example is world’s biggest sportswear company, Nike, which deceased its traditional media marketing, however almost doubled the spending on social media marketing from 2000 to 2012 (Cendrowski, 2014). There are different reasons why firms use social media platforms such as developing relationship and communicate with consumers, increasing brand awareness and attract new customers (Michaelidou, Siamagka & Christodoulides, 2011). A research suggested that consumers think word-of-mouth information is more reliable than attributed information. Reason for word-of-mouth being more trustworthy is that it states other consumers’ experience (Herr, Kardes & Kim, 1991). Among all pre-purchase information, which is provided by others may have the greatest influence on buying decisions. Obviously, an excellent athlete would not use a product that is not comfortable and not properly made. Moreover, consumers’ favorite endorsers, considered as friends, and probably followed on several social media sites, have as big influence on buying behavior as if they were their real friends. That is one of the reasons why endorsements may be successful (Beatty & Smith, 1987).

A recent study about the topic of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), where a decision-making process concerning holidays were analyzed, results that positive reviews, pictures and eWOM have significant impact on consumers’ decision making (Chen, Nguyen, Klaus & Wu, 2015). Moreover, almost 90% of customers use the help of the Internet in order to create a decision about the purchase (2012 Digital Influence Index Shows Internet as Leading Influence in Consumer Purchasing Choices, 2014).
People nowadays are online 24/7, they always have at least their smartphone on them; furthermore, more and more people use social networks and check them several times a day. Advertisements on these cites can reach many customers, greatly improving the brand recognition (Chaffey, 2017).

**Instagram**

Instagram is an application allowing users to share photos and videos via different social media channels, including its own (Benjamin, 2012). This is one of the most popular social media applications, having 700 million monthly active users, 400 million daily active users (Salman, 2017).

Also, there are statistics which prove younger generation have grown up in a world where social media is part of their everyday. Out of the total number of users, 60% logs in every day and 35% of US users check Instagram several times a day (U.S. Instagram usage frequency 2016).

It is one of the most important social apps for youngsters whose 90% of users are younger than 35. The trend of the app is going upwards, as the usage doubled in the last two years (37 Interesting Instagram Stats for 2016, 2016)

Nike is the most followed fashion brand ranked by number of followers (72 million), Nike Football is the 3rd (28.1 million) Adidas is the 6th one (20.2 million) (Instagram: most-followed fashion brands 2017).

Furthermore, considering all brands only National Geographic (77.2 million) has a position above Nike, 3rd Victoria’s Secret, then FC Barcelona, Real Madrid FC, 9GAG, Nike Football, NASA, NBA, Chanel, H&M and Adidas Originals which proves that sport is getting more and more about business as well as sportswear industry holds a great part of the social world (Instagram: top brands followers 2017).

Providing a great opportunity to companies to promote their products, 50% of users check brands regularly, through which they can communicate with consumers. Consumers are attracted to this virtual world and they also promote brands even unconsciously by adding tags to their pictures. 70% of the most used hashtags are branded which results that engagement with brands is the most influential on this site, 10 times higher than Facebook, 54 times higher than Pinterest and 84 times higher than Twitter (37 Interesting Instagram Stats for 2016, 2016).
Another survey was made in the USA which says that 73% of respondents aged 13 to 24 use Instagram, spending nearly 200 minutes online a day (U.S. teens: most popular social media apps 2017).

It is a serious phenomenon that every territory such as marketing must adapt.

It is not an accident that the most well-paid athletes enjoy the greatest popularity on social websites. In the top 15 accounts ranked by followers, Cristiano Ronaldo the football player, endorser of Nike, is the first athlete on the 6th position with 101 million followers (a picture of him can be seen in the Appendix), Dwayne the Rock Johnson the ex-athlete, recent actor, endorser of Under Armour, has the position on the 10th place with 87 million followers. 14th and 15th place is for Neymar Jr. and Leo Messi who are the players of FC Barcelona. Neymar promotes Nike while Messi is the top endorser of Adidas (Top 100 Instagram Users by Followers).

All these figures prove that there is room and opportunity to promote on social media, because there is a great demand from the customers’ side. These information are closely related to the third research objective which will be also answered and monitored by the primary research.

Cristiano Ronaldo generated $36 million in value for its sportswear partner, Nike, only on his own social media account through 59 posts over a year. All of his partners got $176 million in media value by using his social media platforms (Badenhausen, 2016).

Another article states that Ronaldo generated $500 million in value for Nike in 2016 (Badenhausen, 2017).

2.4. CONSUMERS’ BUYING BEHAVIOR

The ultimate goal of advertising is to influence people’s purchase behavior. There are several steps of consumers’ decision-making process whose importance may differ in various situations under different circumstances depending on the purpose and the drive of purchasing. A celebrity endorsement may be one of the reasons that stands behind purchase intentions. It may be done spontaneously as an ad hoc occasion or a planned decision.

Usually customers go by the following path which goes from the need recognition to the post-purchase evaluation (Blackwell, Miniard & Engel, 2001)
1) **Need recognition**

The first step of consumer decision-making process is recognition of the problem. Here the customers experience the absence of something. Probably they are not where they would like to be thus they must do something that brings them closer to their ideal situation by either buying a good or purchasing a service. A product used by a celebrity can easily trigger the will of purchase in the buyer. The problem recognition may originate from an intrinsic motivation or it might be caused by an external influence including marketing tools such as product displays, videos, promotion (Blackwell, Miniard & Engel, 2001).

2) **Search for information**

Problem recognition is usually followed by the search for information in order to gather facts, experiences and thoughts regarding solving the specific problem, recognized previously. The fact that how big of an importance the search plays depends on the risk aversion of the user, the uncertainty of choice environment and the significance of the product (Moorthy, Ratchford & Talukdar, 1997). There are two ways this step may be done. On the one hand, information can be gathered from existing factors, internally which includes personal feelings, information that is stored in consumer’s memory and experiences. On the other hand, there is new information, which the consumer has not met yet, belonging to the external search. External search can be categorized into two groups. One of them is when the consumers are active which means they make the first step for gaining insight as reading a brochure, asking friends, family members or experts. Another group is when the customers are passive and not as interested in the search as in the previous category. However, companies have to find the way through which they can approach those consumers by using marketing communication tools (Hoyer, MacInnis & Pieters, 2013)

3) **Evaluation of alternatives**

Here, in the third step, different products or services are compared to each other that are capable of satisfying the need of the consumer or solving the fundamental problem. This step might not happen if the consumer makes decision on a common daily problem, when he or she buys a low-involvement product, and solve it by repurchasing what he or she got used to. However, in other cases, when the customers
would like to decide on buying a special, casual product they consider the alternatives according to several factors such as price, quality etc. therefore, an endorser is also a factor that has a great impact on the decision making, particularly when purchasing a shopping product.

4) Purchase decision

After the alternatives have been evaluated, the consumer chooses from them after having been inspired by the purchase intention. All the factors of the product and the consequences of the purchase are considered. The time and the location of the purchase are secondary factors.

5) Post-purchase evaluation

Last stage of the process, it is about what the user feels after having purchased the product. The feeling can be either happiness or disappointment depending on how much the buyer is satisfied with the new product, in addition, how much he or she got what had been expected.

There are infinite number of factors that influence the consumers buying behavior. Celebrities are one of them. Celebrity endorsement is an important element, since consumers may believe that the ideal features of the endorsers will refer to them as well. Consequently, a celebrity is capable of targeting different groups based on his or her emphasized characteristics. Social media has brought celebrities closer to us. We have opportunities to have an insight to their private life, get to know what product, services they like and use and a bit of their lifestyle. It may create sympathy, thereby letting them influence our decisions.

The process may run its course fast yet all the steps are built on each other and have their importance in case of a serious purchase decision which can be influenced by the sympathy shown towards the celebrities in each step.
2.5. SUMMARY

By immersing into secondary data analysis in this section, the basic questions of the research have just become understandable. In the beginning of this chapter, concerning elements of branding, functions of personal branding and the positive effects of endorsers have been detailed, answering the research objective, how these factors are connected to consumers. Endorsers raise sympathy and positive feelings in consumers’ minds, in addition, increase the brand equity of the company by influencing consumers in terms of brand recognition.

Moreover, the chapter has let the reader get to know the three most important characteristics of the endorser from creditability point of view which are trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness.

Finally, it gives information about the recent trends of social media. Popularity of social media has been spreading incredibly fast thus companies can take advantage of it by promoting their brand on the site of beloved celebrities, using the virtual companionship between users and endorsers in order to make their sales grow.

Celebrities play great roles in the decision-making process since the psychological influence and the sympathy, which is built up between the endorser and the user through the social network, can drive the consumers to purchase, ease the dissatisfaction and create positive feelings by recalling memories seeing the brand logo.

The rest of the Research Objectives (O4 and O5) are fulfilled through the primary research and the outcome is compared to the information provided by the theoretical part.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. OVERVIEW

This chapter describes the research method and explains the characteristics of the different data gathering approaches. Choosing the right method has a significant role because the analysis of the data helps better understand the problem. Primary and secondary data have been collected in order to build up a complex and valid conclusion from the findings.
The development of hypothesis helps the researcher raise the focus regarding the research problem. The hypothesis of the paper guides the study and the researcher what data is necessary to be collected. After having evaluated the literature on the topic, enough information has been gathered in order to formulate a hypothesis according to the expectation which must be supported and verified by the outcomes of the primary research.

The whole procedure is made in order to figure out whether the hypothesis of the thesis can be proved, disproved or partially accepted.

The proposed Hypothesis Statement for this thesis is the following:

Celebrity endorsement, utilizing social media, is a useful method for marketers to influence buying behavior of consumers between the age of 17-27 living in Hungary.

Since the research question is quite complex, and marketing field is very broad, it is difficult to identify which areas precisely should be investigated. The research objectives, which have been mentioned previously, give a frame to the thesis, narrowing down the areas which must be covered to find the answer to the complex research question. This deals with the impacts and the influencing factors of celebrity endorsement through social media in the process of consumers’ buying behavior among sport spectators’ brand recognition.

3.2. CHOICE OF DATA COLLECTION

Secondary data collection

This section is about creating a bridge between the theory and the empirical findings. There are two types of data collecting methods which are primary and secondary research. On the one hand, secondary research has been adapted by collecting descriptive data about the topic in the theory. Secondary information is collected by others, having public availability. For these reasons, these data can be found more quickly in books, journals, industry studies and other reports than primary information. However, before using these data, the creditability and the validity of these information must be carefully audited (Stewart & Kamins, 1998)
On the other hand, it was necessary to carry out a primary research. First of all, there are certain questions that cannot be answered from these secondary data collection methods, that is why a primary research must be carried out. Second of all, the data gathered in the secondary research is not up-to-date. To better understand a complex situation within recent circumstances, primary data collection is ought to be accomplished.

**Primary data collection**

In order to have a useful data collection, primary research must be gathered. Primary research is the information which is investigated for the first time, hence, this is a more time-consuming research than getting information from secondary data. The primary information for this thesis is collected by both qualitative and quantitative methods to gain as much information as possible (Creswell, 2013).

### 3.3. APPROACH

First of all, the principle of the successful primary research is a well-structured frame. In order to manage it, the first step is setting the target. Both an interview and a questionnaire have been made to answer the research question by figuring out some of the research objectives. After that, some exact questions must be stated, creating checkpoints and frame around which the entire primary research is built. Preparation plays an important role because in the analysis the obtained data is used for drawing conclusions.

There are some basic requirements that must be fulfilled in case of the primary research, such as: properly worded questions; with respect to the respondents; anonymity must be guaranteed; the goal of the research need to be explained.

**Characteristics of qualitative research**

One of the biggest benefits of applying qualitative research is that it is a flexible data collection technique and in case of investigating people’s buying behavior, trying to better understand their decision-making process and analyzing a successful strategy behind an idea, it allows a personal and open relationship between the researcher and the topic which is being studied; although it might be slightly subjective (Edwards & Skinner, 2009). For this reason, to better comprehend some complex questions
concerning the topic, acquiring a deeper knowledge about the recent situation and to fulfil some of the research objectives, an in-depth interview has been used.

The most popular data collecting methods for qualitative information include individual interview where an expert or a concerned has conversation with the researcher. Moreover, focus group technique is also an option, meaning more participants are present at the same time, and includes researcher’s own observation too. The in-depth interview is the one that was decided to be used. The reason for using the in-depth interview is that, in this case, a lot of experience and insight can be explained by an athlete of the relevant area. There are three ways an interview usually happens. Either it follows a strict structure, or the interview is semi-structured or even unstructured. In this case, the semi-structured technique has been used. The point is that the important questions of the study is more deeply analyzed since smaller stops are discussed on a smooth, free-flowing way, while the interviewee feels comfortable and is given the opportunity to share ideas, experience and thoughts concerning the topic.

The aim of the interview is to take place in a relaxed environment as an inconvenient situation affects both the interviewee and the interviewer and may cause some barriers against finding the answers. Furthermore, as it has been already mentioned, this technique is needed to have a more complex picture about the topic and to understand the process that moves the idea of celebrity endorsement.

Besides the advantages that are mentioned so far, compared to other qualitative research techniques, here only the interviewee and the interviewer participate which moves the mood of the academic research to a friendlier status, helping both parties create an open conversation and build trust. Another beneficial factor is that it is easier to make it happen because only 2 people have to come to a solution to arrange the meeting, which reduces stress and consumes less time.

The interviewee of this research is a first-class professional soccer player who grew up in Hungary yet has been playing in MLS (US soccer league) for a couple of years. The goal of the interview was to execute the fifth research objective to discover what a professional athlete has experienced concerning celebrity endorsement and his attitude towards social media and the idea of engaging in an endorsement activity.

The opposite aspect of the matter includes that there are some drawbacks that must be taken into consideration. Although, it supposed to be the fastest technique, it is time-consuming. There is only one respondent that might not make much amount of the outcome. Furthermore, it is difficult to generalize the gained information yet it is
supposed that the athlete may represent the experiences of other international players of Hungary. In addition, high level of communication and listening skills are needed in the research that can influence the quality of the outcome.

**Characteristics of quantitative research**

Furthermore, a quantitative research method has been carried out thus the shortcoming of the qualitative research has been accomplished. Aliaga and Gunderson (2006) argue that this method describes a phenomenon by collecting numerical, helping analyze the research mathematically. In this case, it is important to provide a scale in the research so that the results can be measured. This approach provides neutral, objective answers that can be easily generalized about the actual point of view of a bigger sample.

Another technique which is used in the data mining process is a questionnaire through which numerical information can be collected. It is one of the most commonly used quantitative methods which follows a well-organized path question by question. The questionnaire which belongs to this study contains both closed questions, Likert scale and broad open-ended questions. In case of closed questions, the answers must be chosen from the offered options. The Likert scale is quite similar to the previous one; however, it requires the respondents to select their viewpoint from the parts of the scale according to their level of agreement or disagreement, allowing them to express their attitude towards the concept. Based on this type of questions the results can be easily measured. Despite the fact that open questions are difficult to be categorized, they are useful for widening the knowledge about the behavior and the attitude of individuals. People who fill out the structured form, have opportunity to set their thoughts free and share some personal experience or idea. Through the questionnaire it is possible to gather information from large numbers of people; however, the questions of the survey must be clear, requiring short-time of filling. Survey questionnaire must focus on reduction of any bias and place for misunderstanding since there is no opportunity to explain the question, observe information from the body language. In spite of the fact that it is an indirect form of interaction, answers might be more genuine. It is run anonymously so individuals can get rid of another boundary, they do not have to be afraid of showing their characteristics and weaknesses.
The participants involved in the quantitative research are randomly selected because the questionnaire is online to which anyone has access. For this reason, some of the respondents are not relevant to the research so their answers are difficult to be used or cannot even be useful for the study.

3.4. LIMITATION

Although the primary research has been carried out at its finest as much as it could have been. The reliability and the validity of the results are limited and the findings cannot be generalized. As it has been mentioned already, the participants were randomly selected which may also cause some bias because some may not be interested in sports at all. The questionnaire consists of 114 respondents who live in Hungary, nevertheless, a larger sample size would definitely increase the validity and the reliability of the study, by covering a bigger portion of the relevant population.

The target group of the research, which has been set previously, is a much narrower group than either generation Y or generation Z. That is the reason why they are not further detailed. In addition, the analyzed range falls between the two generations, creating a mixed one.

The generation of baby boomers was disregarded since probably they are not as active in sports and they do not take sport as seriously as the following generation, in addition most of the income is most probably devoted to the will of their children.

Furthermore, the resources, such as the lack of experience, the limited time and length of research questions, have given a frame to the entire data mining process. That explains the reason why some other subtopics are not included in the paper. For instance, the analysis of product life-cycle would be useful to discover at which stage the celebrity should be attached to the product.

3.5. SUMMARY

The Research Objectives (O4, O5) regarding the primary research approaches must be closely related to the literature review and the research question of the thesis so that the answers can provide a meaningful and useful result which leads to a conclusion that makes the study worth reading in addition to promoting new ideas for further research.

The characteristics of both qualitative and quantitative research method have been explained and the specific tools utilized within them.
The purpose of the research is to bring to light deeper knowledge and up-to-date responses that help the readers understand what the factors are which companies take into consideration in respect of celebrity endorsement as well as what influences and drives the customers’ decision-making process, adding value to the essay.

The secondary research allows the reader to gain information for some of the research objectives that can be read in the literature review. That chapter helps the reader comprehend the topic of personal branding and the functions that play role in the marketing process. Furthermore, it gives a description of the major characteristics of an endorser that are needed for a successful endorsement. In addition, the theory provides information how social media changed the relationship between endorsers and consumers, about whose subtopic, further data has been collected through primary research.

The primary research means finding information for the rest of the research objectives. Besides the questionnaire, investigating the connection between the social site users and the endorsers which is included in objective no. 3; it also figures out how the image of the brand in consumers’ minds may be changed by the influence of the endorser, reflecting to the objective no. 4. Ultimately, the interview brings complex information and insight about the topic, while letting the readers have a clue about the experience of the athletes, on top of it, helps companies understand their opinions. By comparing the outcome of the primary and the secondary research, the last objective will also be answered.

The whole analysis can be read in the following section where the outcome and experience of both the primary and the secondary research are summarized.

4. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter all the results of the primary research, combined with the information of the secondary research are discussed. It focuses on finding answers to the Research Question of the thesis in order to make it possible to decide whether the hypothesis should either be accepted, rejected partially agreed on. For creating a complex conclusion about the very next labor generation’s consumer behavior in Hungary concerning celebrity endorsement combined with their attitude towards social media, the following steps are taken.
The questionnaire has aimed to gather information on customers aged between 17-27, living in Hungary about their behavior relating to social media and celebrities and it was managed to collect 114 pieces of responses.

First of all, the gained information about the users’ opinion about the endorsers are provided. This is followed by the knowledge the primary research acquired related to the social media habits. Then the consumer behaviors of the respondents will be presented and those factors which might influence their buying decisions. Last but not least, the outcome of the interview is investigated.

The literature review has satisfied some of the Research Objectives (O1, O2, O3). This section goes through the Research Objectives, which are mentioned in the Introduction, and provides information with combining the theoretical part with the findings of the primary research.

There is some fundamental information which are useful to mention in order to make the research easier to understand. 7% of the respondents do not have any connections with sports, meaning that they do not participate physically and they do not even follow any of the sport arts on screen or via any other medium. Their answers mostly include models, fashion brands and make-up products.

The most popular sport which is played or followed is football (soccer), standing at 54%. The second one is tennis, representing 25%, followed by basketball with 18%.

In advance, it is important to know concerning the questionnaire, that only 1% of the participants indicated “strongly agree” (7) to the statement “I am a fan of celebrities”, 6% marked 6 on the scale and 7% went with a 5. Nevertheless, the outcome of the survey does not go parallel with the result of this question.

4.2. RESULTS OF PRIMARY RESEARCH ABOUT ENDORSERS

This subchapter summarizes the findings about the connection between consumers and endorsers.

The respondents were asked (Q9) to name the celebrity who comes primarily to their minds with regards to celebrity endorsement. It was not a surprise that the first place was taken by Cristiano Ronaldo, probably the most well-known soccer player in the world. He is believed to have those characteristics which make a sportsman recognized by the most people possible. These features have already been detailed in the theoretical part. The secondary research stated that an athlete, besides other essential
traits, must be wholesome, imaginary, successful, tough and charming. These traits were covered by the outcome of the primary research (Q16), since the participants answered the upcoming characteristics must belong to the stars: successful, humble, trustworthy unique and ambitious, the most often. This result agrees with Research Objective no.2 fulfilled in the theory.

Ronaldo is one of the most popular athlete nowadays. However, the second place goes to David Beckham whose name has still remained in consumers’ minds, although he retired in 2013. A picture is attached in the Appendix about the icon.

There are business deals with endorsers which are considered to be a long-term investment. Despite the fact that David Beckham has retired from his original profession, football, customers do still remember his name. This would suggest that high quality endorsers will be associated with the brands and the products, that have been endorsed, long after the advertising has finished. Cashmore (2004) proposes this idea, that Beckham remains dominant even if his performance drops in form or suffers a long-term injury thanks to his great image. Nike has made a contract with Michael Jordan, retired from the team Chicago Bulls in 1998, whose shoes still generate one of the biggest sales. In 2015, Jordan accounted for 8% of Nike’s revenue ($30,6 billion) whereas to the name of the current basketball star, LeBron James, approximately 0.4% of Nike’ revenue may have been addressed (Connolly, 2016).

The third place goes to LeBron James, who takes over the only five-time FIFA Ballon d’Or winner football player, Lionel Messi. This result may raise a question concerning the top endorser of Nike and Adidas. In spite of the fact that Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo have closely the same results, in addition, Messi is supposed to have even less divisive and provocative personality, Messi was not in the top three in Question9. This might serve as a good idea and an interesting topic for a further study.
24. Pick 2 features that are the most important for an endorser to have (for managing a successful endorsement)

(Figure 1 – Question 24)
(Source: author’s own graph based on the result of the questionnaire)

As it is shown in Figure 1, out of the four factors (Q24), good job performance, trustworthiness, attractive appearance and marketable public life, the attendants had to pick two which they think that are the most important for endorsers to make a successful endorsement. Trustworthiness has been chosen the most often, 68%, the second one is good job performance, standing at 58%, attractiveness and marketable lifestyle owned 46% and 26%, respectively.

To question (Q10) where participants were asked to mention some brands that are endorsed by celebrities, the most frequent answers were, without surprise, Nike, Adidas and Puma. However, some brands from other industries were also listed such as Pepsi, Armani, H&M and Gillette where some popular athletes endorse, for instance David Beckham, Cristiano Ronaldo and Neymar Jr.

4.3. RESULTS OF PRIMARY RESEARCH ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA

The questionnaire provides information on the attitude of the target group related to social media. The researcher can learn about the morning routines of the respondents as well. The important result from the research point of view is that 28% of the sample checks their social accounts as a first activity of the day. It comes before having breakfast, taking a coffee or even say good morning to their relatives. The most popular social network is Facebook, with a 97% sign-up rate amongst respondents, which is followed by Instagram being used by 80% of the participants.
Everyone checks these accounts every week. A number of 75% checks them many times a day and the other big part of the pie, representing 23%, checks them every day. These figures support the facts stated in the secondary research, that youngsters like using these sites very frequently. 31% follows more than 10 celebrities, 22% follows more than 5 but less than 10, 34% does up to 5, and 13% follows no stars at all. As it can be seen in Figure 2, these well-known individuals’ sites are checked every day by 12%. Almost half of the respondents take a look at the sites a couple times a week, and the remaining does it around less than a week.

14. How often do you check their sites?

(Figure 2 – Question 14)
(Source: author’s own chart based on the result of the questionnaire)

Respondents were asked to list any brands and products that are endorsed by their followings. The results were not surprising. Most the participants answered those brands and products that their selected athlete performs in. The results would support the view of Simmers, Damron-Martinez and Haytko, (2009) that celebrities are more effective if the promoted products are related to their professions. That might be the reason for using celebrity endorsement concerning sport more frequently than in the fashion industry. For instance, David Beckham’s name emerged in the primary research attached to Pepsi’s commercials.
In addition, the research has also learnt the reason why the consumers follow celebrities. The majority of the answers include the fact that they may have an insight how celebrities live and what their attitudes are like. Others said the reason they follow these people is the advice they can gain, concerning fashion, trends and style. Last but not least, another big group of answers is closely related to motivation. Stars inspire followers either regarding work and profession, or attitude towards helping others and make charity activities. This reason has been expected based on the literature review, since they try to find examples so that buyers can get closer their ideal-selves.

As it is mentioned in theory, people spend so much time online that is why it is not a surprise that the research finds out that they come across with broadcast media, on social sites the most. Advertising is believed to be disturbing, however, people can accept them on social sites the most. This is what makes social media marketing a great tool for marketers.

This section satisfied the Research Objective no.3 since the connection between users and celebrities are discussed. Moreover, this emotional attachment will be important in the upcoming part where the consumers’ behavior is analyzed, since this is the source and the reason why the consumer may be influenced.

4.4. RESULTS OF PRIMARY RESEARCH ABOUT CONSUMERS DECISION MAKING PROCESS

One of the conclusions that may be drawn is that brand equity is able to be increased by a properly chosen celebrity who endorses one of its products. The effectiveness of stars has also been investigated in the survey. The concerning result will be discussed in the upcoming paragraphs.

On the one hand, 53% of the participants said that seeing a product endorsed by their favorite celebrities would make them more likely to purchase it, meaning majority believes that celebrity endorsement is a useful marketing strategy. On the other hand, only 49% has ever purchased any endorsed products which is considered to be a big percentage. The reason of those who have not bought these kinds of products yet was that these goods were too expensive.

Endorsed products are believed to be premium goods because endorsers make customers believe their products are representing quality, comfort and style. This assumption is an important element of making buyers believe that the product is worth purchasing.
Even though not all people buy these products, most of them still realize the brands’ logo thanks to the celebrities. With this fact, the value of brand equity is also increasing only by them recognizing the brand, without spending a dime. Roughly 60% more easily recognize most of the brand logos that are endorsed. Moreover, nearly 40% of the respondents has replied that endorsers can make them like the brand, through the judgement customers feel for them?

This part has fulfilled the Research Question no.4 by analyzing how the brand image and consumers’ attitude might be changed based on the feeling towards the endorser.

4.5. RESULTS OF PRIMARY RESEARCH ABOUT NEGATIVE MEDIA EXPOSURE

Companies may consider the strategy of celebrity endorsement as a source of danger because endorsers might decrease the brand equity of the firm.

Thus, according to the primary research, even if celebrities do not behave as they are supposed to or some negative news appears about them, the opinion of consumers would not change about the brand the celebrity endorses. The previous thought is supported by a number of 77% in the questionnaire (Q27). The way they explain their reasons is that the endorsers are independent from the brand and the product and the features of the product, such as quality, remain unchanged. Marketable lifestyle represents the least important factor, containing 26% of the answers in Question no. 24, which is another pillar that confirms that private behavior is not exceedingly remarkable (Kamins & Gupta, 1994).

This states a paradox, because as it has been mentioned earlier the endorsers have influence on purchase decisions, however, carrying themselves badly would not have a negative impact on the brand. Hereby, one of the main risks of celebrity endorsement is utilized.
4.6. IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW

An in-depth interview has been made in order to gain an insight in the attitude of an individual who has participated in the market as a consumer, yet, recently he is on his way to shift sides to the celebrity atmosphere.

Firstly, some basic information will be presented about the athlete. Thus, it will be easier to understand his story. After that, the social media habits of the player will be laid down, followed by his personal experience with regards to celebrity endorsement.

Dániel Sallói is the interviewee who is a 21-year-old, professional soccer player. He plays in attacking position, he used to play as a striker yet lately he has been playing on the left wing. Mr. Sallói started playing soccer at club level when he was 7. In Hungary he played in Ujpest’s youth academy until the age of 18 when he moved to the United States. After a year playing there and being an exchange student, he moved back home and played in the Hungarian first division. In 2016, Sporting Kansas City signed him. His next bigger goal is to become a member of the Hungarian National Team.

By introducing his attitude concerning social media, it can be realized that there is not a significant difference between his and his contemporaries’ habits. As for the first step of his daily routine, he takes his smartphone and checks what has happened on his social media accounts. Dániel repeats this activity many times a day, when he takes a look at what else has happened and what his followers have posted. The young athlete follows more than 10 celebrities on his social sites because he likes seeing how the stars live, what they eat, the way they dress. The most important reasons Dániel came up with are that he can get an insight into how the celebrities spend their leisure-time, and how they behave. Furthermore, he can gather ideas and some inspiration from athletes from the same profession he has been practicing.

The striker believes social media is a great opportunity for himself since he can get people’s attention. He said, after having become a professional athlete, he has been attempting to create a fan base to which he can provide some fun and additional value. Social media was not an innovation in his life since members of this generation has been growing up in this atmosphere.
Regarding the social sites, he uses Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Snapchat, each of them is used for a different reason. Instagram is the most important for him since he can approach both American and Hungarian friends and followers. He says he can create connection with his Hungarian followers mostly on Facebook, not much on Twitter since it is a more popular site amongst Americans. The last mentioned social network is Snapchat which is used just for his close friends, only for fun. He opts for keeping it private.

The interviewee attempts to build an emotional attachment with the fan base and tries to reach out to his followers by posting a regular basis. He likes showing them how he lives and what he does during his everyday life. In his opinion, nowadays the proper usage of word-of-mouth through social media is almost as important as the performance on the field. However, building a loyal fan base is not easy, particularly when there is nothing to post about. It is important to pay close attention to what they post about and how often they do it because they can lose followers easily if they do not fit the requirements.

Dániel states that he is a fan of celebrities. Not only could he mention athletes, but he could also come up with others stars as well when he was asked about celebrity endorsement. He has always looked at the celebrities’ pages. He wanted to have what the movie stars had, wear the same cleats as big soccer players did. Not because he wanted to look like them but because he wanted to gain information through the channel of social media about what was fashionable then. He has always used Nike cleats because his favorite player, Cristiano Ronaldo, has been wearing it too. Dániel noticed that Cristiano Ronaldo was really professional about using social media. According to Dániel, the idol can perfectly handle the great volume of sponsorship, he does not post too often, he does not annoy followers or make them bored.

After the career of Dániel has become professional, he understands the method of endorsement more, in addition, he appreciates more and shows respects towards the top athletes, since he experienced what it took and how difficult it was to become a top-class player.
Before signing with Sporting Kansas, Dániel received an offering from Adidas and Nike. Since Dániel’s favorite player was Ronaldo and liked the design of Nike more, he decided to go with Nike. It is obvious that the idol played an essential role in Dániel’s buying behavior, and decision-making process. He receives new pairs of football boots as a present and can select clothes he must wear on the streets. Wearing products of the concurrency is forbidden. Companies, acting this way, try to establish and build brand loyalty in endorsers minds.

The interviewee supposes that big fan base, good performance on your profession are needed for endorsing, in addition, you have to fit the face of the brand.

He would endorse the products of a fashion brand, Zara, because he likes the clothing lines and the style of the brand. In the future, another option would be a car brand so that he could acquire a great car of his choice. Nevertheless, he would accept the request of endorsement from Hungary as well. His purpose is to follow the example of David Beckham who has been able to maintain the number of his fan base long after his retirement.

It might be a surprise that top companies approach such young athletes with an offer of sponsorship. There are levels, so called check-points, that athletes must reach for better conditions in their contracts, such as playing in top leagues, member of national team, and so on.

4.7. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In this chapter all the related information from the secondary research and the outcome of the primary findings have been compared. Both the survey and the in-depth interview have satisfied the remaining Research Objectives. The questionnaire has discovered that customers create close connection with the celebrities that like following their lives. Ultimately, the interview presented that athletes behave similar to end-users and attempt to create benefits from the combination of social media and endorsement.
5. CONCLUSION

The last chapter deals with the conclusion of the entire research. It has been established that the Hypothesis Statement of the study is accepted. That is supported by all five Research Objectives in the thesis. After having done an evaluation, the results are used to draw the conclusion from the study to support the approval of the Hypothesis Statement.

The endorsers may have the power to increase the value of the brand by enlarging its brand equity through contributing all of its five elements mentioned in the theory.

Consumers may remain loyal to a brand because their feelings towards the stars. In addition, consumers are influenced in their decision-making process because the brand awareness of the product is raised, making the endorsed brand a member of the consideration group.

Celebrities are able to position the brand and determine its target group (e.g. expressing its prestige). Thus, the element of brand association is also concerned.

The primary research has also supported that the perceived quality of an endorsed product is influenced by the stars, since the majority of the participants matched those products with high quality. Respondents explained their trust behind the product. They believe the endorsers appearing in the commercial that the product is worth buying. Since it is said by one of their most favorite followings, it must be comfortable and must have great. Furthermore, the celebrities add value to the product concerning fashion, whose popularities are used in the endorsement.

Besides the fact that users would buy the products what their favorite celebrity endorses, hearing some bad news about them, it would not change a thing in their opinion about the brand (Q24). It stands a paradox and it means that marketable lifestyle is not as important.

Another inconsequence is that respondents state they are not fans of celebrities, however the outcome of the primary research supported that they are influenced by stars. Participants may not be aware of being influenced. The pulling strategy seems to be successful since users go check the life of celebrities of their own motion and get motivated by them, and use their products.
The fifth Research Objective is also satisfied by the outcome of the in-depth interview. It is supposed that the athletes’ attitude is similar to customers’ since they have been in that situation as well. Moreover, top celebrities play a significant role in the decision-making process of future endorsers concerning which brand’s offer they would accept, because, besides the design of the brand, the new talents have created an emotional attachment during their careers with its endorsers as well. Since the interviewee made a contract with Nike, he has been paying attention on building his social media platform more and attempting to follow and understand the paths of top endorsers serving as an example.

Celebrity endorsement is not considered as a pushing, disturbing marketing strategy.

All of the five Research Objectives have been satisfied and the outcome of the primary research is corresponded with the findings of the secondary research.

5.1. RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER STUDIES

In this section further pieces of advice will be laid down which might serve as a good source of ideas which people may take advantage of regarding their future studies.

First of all, it has been found out that sport industry prefers using the strategy of endorsement the most. Athletes are more popular than famous people from other industry concerning celebrity endorsement.

Moreover, it is an interesting fact that fashion industry employs less stars. Unique unknown individuals are preferred instead, who may become popular later on.

Last but not least, this kind of marketing strategy should be studied from different direction. By analyzing the financial elements of this method, it makes companies get a broader view on the cashflow of the budget, eventually reaching their net profits. All these ideas are worth being considered.

5.2. LIMITATION

All the important barriers of the paper have been stated in the methodology section. Firstly, the research avoided to be approached from a financial aspect and it rather concentrated on being elaborated to find out marketing information. Secondly, generation Y and Z were not separately studied to get a more exact inside into a more specific target group. That is being said with the help of these limitations further topic ideas have emerged which may serve as a useful tool for future studies.
6. REFERENCES


7. APPENDIX

FIGURE 1 – Question 24

24. Pick 2 features that are the most important for an endorser to have (for managing a successful endorsement)

Source: author’s own graph based on the result of the questionnaire

FIGURE 2 – Question 14

14. How often do you check their sites?

Source: author’s own chart based on the result of the questionnaire
Celebrity endorsement with Cristiano Ronaldo - Nike, posted on his Instagram


Celebrity endorsement with David Beckham – Adidas

Annual Growth of Social Media, 2016


Annual Growth of social media, 2017

Questionnaire on Celebrity Endorsement

Dear participant! My name is Marcell, student of the Corvinus University of Budapest. You are about to fill out a questionnaire on celebrity endorsement and social media, which will be used to complete my BA thesis. There is no risk due to the study because your answers will be processed anonymously. You are asked because I need some information in order to have a deeper insight in my topic and draw a complex conclusion.

I want to find out whether or not celebrity endorsement influences the purchase of endorsed brand, changes the image of the endorsed brand, in addition, whether the use of social media is a successful tool for promoting.

Thank you very much for your time!

1. What is your gender?
   a. female
   b. male

2. What is your age?
   a. under 17
   b. 17-27
   c. over 27

3. Where do you live?
   a. Hungary
   b. other

4. Your nationality
   a. Hungarian
   b. Spanish
   c. Italian
   d. English
   e. French
   f. Australian
   g. other

5. What do you do first in the morning? What is the very first thing?
   a. do some exercise
   b. check your social accounts
   c. go to the toilette
   d. make your bed
   e. drink water
   f. write/check your to do list
   g. read news
   h. other

6. What kind of social media sites do you use?
   a. none
   b. Facebook
   c. Instagram
   d. LinkedIn
   e. Snapchat
   f. Twitter
   g. other
7. How often do you check each of these sites?
   a. less than once a week
   b. some days a week
   c. every day
   d. many times a day

8. What kind of sport or sports do you participate in (directly or otherwise as a spectator)?
   a. football
   b. basketball
   c. American football
   d. tennis
   e. ice hockey
   f. technical sports
   g. combat martial arts
   h. none
   i. other

9. Which athletes or celebrities come primarily to mind with regards to celebrity endorsements?

10. List some brands which are endorsed by celebrities

11. Around how many of your social media "friends" (that you follow/check) are celebrities?
   a. 0
   b. 1-5
   c. 6-10
   d. over 10

12. I am a fan of celebrities (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree)
   a. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

13. What are the reasons you follow celebrities?

14. How often do you check their sites?
   a. less than once a week
   b. some days a week
   c. every day
   d. many times a day

15. Who is your most followed athlete celebrity?

16. List the 3 most important qualities/characteristics that would describe the celebrity and his/her behavior based on your feelings

17. Can you name any BRANDS your followings endorse? If so, mention some.
18. Can you name any PRODUCTS your followings endorse? If so, mention some.

19. Have you ever purchased a product your followings endorse?
   a. yes
   b. no
20. What was that product? In case of no purchase, what stood behind? What are the reasons?

21. I recognize the endorsed brand more easily (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree)
   a. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
22. Seeing a product endorsed by my favorite celebrities would make me more likely to purchase it
   a. yes
   b. no
23. If so, what are your reasons?

24. Pick 2 features that are the most important for an endorser to have (for managing a successful endorsement)
   a. good job performance
   b. trustworthiness
   c. attractive appearance
   d. marketable public life
25. An endorser can make me like the brand, through the judgement I feel for him/her? (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree)
   a. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
26. What makes you believe that the product is worth buying?

27. Does negative news about the endorser change your opinion about the brand?
   a. yes
   b. no
28. What is your reason for Q26?

29. Would the negative exposure change your decision to purchase the endorsed product? (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree)
   a. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
30. Besides quality, what are the 2 most important determining factors you consider when buying a product?
   a. packaging
   b. price
   c. celebrity endorsement
   d. brand name
   e. warranty
31. Celebrity Endorsement influences my purchase decision (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree)
   a. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
32. Which advertising medium do you like the most?
   a. print media
   b. broadcast media – television
   c. broadcast media – social sites
   d. other
33. Which advertising medium do you come across with the most often?
   a. print media
   b. broadcast media – television
   c. broadcast media – social sites
   d. other
34. Do you have any negative experience or opinion on celebrity endorsement? If so, please, elaborate it.

In-depth interview

Introduction questions
What do you do first in the morning? What is the very first thing?
How often do you check each of these sites?
Which athletes or celebrities come primarily to mind with regards to celebrity endorsements?
List some brands which are endorsed by celebrities
Around how many of your social media “friends” (that you follow/check) are celebrities?
I am a fan of celebrities (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree)
What are the reasons you follow celebrities?

1 Please shortly introduce yourself. How long have you been playing? What is your next bigger goal?
2 What kind of social media sites do you use? What are the most important ones?
3 What is your attitude towards social media? How has it changed since you are a professional athlete?
4 What is your connection with your fans? Do you feel a bit of power to influence your fans? (sympathy, emotional attachment)
5 Do you pay attention to building up your social media fan group? (regular posting)

6 How has celebrity endorsement gone along with you in your career? What impact did it have on you? What kind of products have you purchased? What kind of soccer cleats have you been using?

7 Who was your favorite endorser before you became a top-level athlete/professional football player? Who did you look up to, why?

8 Has your attitude changed since you play in the first league of MLS?

9 What brand would you like to make a celebrity endorsement contract with the most? Explain your reason

10 Have you or any of your teammates ever been asked to make an endorsement contract?

11 What requirements do you need to be asked for endorsing?

12 Would you accept the request of endorsement in Hungary or a Hungarian product?

13 I hope your retirement is so far away, yet would you consider that social media and endorsement are potential opportunities to benefit from after your retirement?

14 Besides the financial issue, what other benefits can an endorser gain?