



Fame or Performance?

An Experimental Investigation into the Role of Football Players' Performance and Celebrity Status in Shaping Club Brand Equity

Bastian Knappmann

Dissertation written under the supervision of professor João Pedro Niza
Jacinto Braga

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of requirements for the MSc in
Management with Specialization in Strategic Marketing, at the Universidade
Católica Portuguesa, September 8th, 2025.

Title: Fame or Performance? An Experimental Investigation into the Role of Football Players' Performance and Celebrity Status in Shaping Club Brand Equity

Author: Bastian Knappmann

Abstract

In professional football, players contribute to a club's brand not only through their sporting achievements but also through their celebrity status. This study investigates how these two factors, on-field performance and off-field celebrity status, affect the six core dimensions of team brand equity: brand awareness, brand image, perceived quality, brand reputation, brand loyalty, and brand value.

To examine these relationships, two experimental online surveys were conducted with approximately 65 participants each. Study 1 captured real-world perceptions of player fame and performance, while Study 2 manipulated performance statistics to create controlled conditions. The results demonstrate that both performance and celebrity status significantly shape brand equity, but celebrity status exerted the broader influence: it was significant across all six brand equity dimensions, whereas performance effects were consistently observed on all dimensions except brand image and brand loyalty. Consequently, fame emerged as the more powerful and wide-reaching driver of brand equity in this context. Interaction effects between performance and fame were also tested but proved largely inconsistent across studies, suggesting that the two factors influenced brand equity mostly independently.

These findings highlight the dual importance of both performance and celebrity status in football brand management. Theoretically, the study extends existing brand equity frameworks by disentangling the distinct contributions of performance and fame across multiple brand dimensions. From a managerial perspective, it underlines the need for clubs to balance the appeal of celebrity players with performance-driven narratives to strengthen credibility, reputation, and long-term brand value.

Keywords: Sports Marketing, Brand Equity, Athlete Brand, Brand Management

Título: Fama ou Desempenho? Uma Investigação Experimental sobre o Papel do Desempenho e do Status de Celebridade de Jogadores de Futebol na Construção do Brand Equity dos Clubes

Autor: Bastian Knappmann

Sumário

No futebol profissional, os jogadores contribuem para a marca de um clube não apenas pelo desempenho esportivo, mas também pelo status de celebridade. Este estudo investiga como esses dois fatores – desempenho em campo e celebridade fora de campo – afetam seis dimensões centrais do brand equity das equipes: notoriedade, imagem, qualidade percebida, reputação, lealdade e valor da marca.

Para analisar essas relações, foram realizados dois inquéritos experimentais online com cerca de 65 participantes cada. O Estudo 1 captou percepções reais de fama e desempenho, enquanto o Estudo 2 manipulou estatísticas de desempenho para criar condições controladas. Os resultados mostram que ambos os fatores moldam significativamente o brand equity, mas a celebridade exerceu influência mais ampla: foi significativa em todas as seis dimensões, enquanto o desempenho afetou todas, exceto imagem e lealdade. Assim, a fama emergiu como o motor mais forte e abrangente de brand equity. Efeitos de interação entre desempenho e fama também foram testados, mas revelaram-se inconsistentes, sugerindo que influenciam o brand equity de forma em grande parte independente.

Esses resultados destacam a importância conjunta do desempenho e do status de celebridade na gestão de marcas no futebol. Teoricamente, o estudo amplia os modelos de brand equity ao distinguir as contribuições específicas de cada fator. Do ponto de vista prático, sublinha a necessidade de os clubes equilibrarem o apelo de jogadores celebridades com narrativas de desempenho, a fim de reforçar credibilidade, reputação e valor de marca a longo prazo.

Palavras-chave: Marketing Esportivo, Brand Equity, Marca de Atleta, Gestão de Marca

Acknowledgements

As this dissertation marks the end of an exciting chapter in my academic journey, I would like to take a moment to thank those who have supported me throughout the past months.

First and foremost, I am deeply grateful to my parents for their constant love, encouragement and belief in me throughout my entire academic career.

Furthermore, I would like to thank my professor, João Pedro Niza Jacinto Braga, for his valuable support and mentorship during the course of this dissertation.

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1 Introduction

Football is more than just a sport, it is a global cultural phenomenon. With five billion fans worldwide, it captures the attention of audiences across continents, uniting people from different backgrounds through passion, identity, and emotion (FIFA, 2021). At the same time, football represents one of the most commercialized industries in the world, generating billions in annual revenues. Within this environment, players have become the most visible and marketable assets of the game.

Clubs today invest staggering sums in star athletes. Transfer fees exceeding 100 million euros and annual salaries in the tens of millions are no longer exceptions but part of a competitive reality (Begley, 2025; Rudling, 2024). Yet these investments are not only justified by what players achieve on the pitch. Superstars such as Lionel Messi or Cristiano Ronaldo demonstrate that a player's value extends far beyond goals scored or trophies won (Norton, 2021; Gates, 2021). Their presence alone can increase shirt sales overnight, attract lucrative sponsorships, and expand a club's fanbase to entirely new regions of the world. When Cristiano Ronaldo joined Juventus Turin in 2018, the effect was immediate: within 24 hours, the club gained over five million new social media followers, first-season revenues jumped by nearly €60 million, and shirt sales more than doubled. His arrival also secured significantly improved sponsorship deals which underscores how a single player can reshape a club's commercial landscape.

This dual role of athletes, both as sporting performers and influential celebrities, plays a key role in modern football. Players are not only judged by their athletic excellence but also by their symbolic appeal, lifestyle, and visibility off the field (Arai et al., 2013). For clubs, this creates both opportunities and challenges: while performance can bring success on the pitch, fame can secure long-term visibility, financial stability, and global reach. But which of these forces is ultimately more important? Does performance drive the reputation of a club, or is it the celebrity aura that makes a team's brand truly powerful?

Building on this foundation, the concept of brand equity provides a useful lens for understanding the broader implications of players' influence on football clubs. While the following chapter will review this concept in greater detail, this dissertation focuses on how individual athletes shape consumer perceptions of club brands. The central research question is therefore: *What has the greater influence on the brand equity of football clubs – on-field performance or off-field celebrity status?*

To address this question, the dissertation is structured as follows: Chapter 2 reviews the relevant literature, beginning with the foundations of brand equity before turning to its application in sport and, more specifically, the role of individual athletes. Building on this review, Chapter 3 outlines the research design and methodology employed to examine the influence of on-field performance and off-field celebrity status. Chapter 4 presents the empirical results, which are then analyzed and discussed in Chapter 5. Chapter 6 draws out the theoretical contributions and managerial implications of the findings, while Chapter 7 addresses limitations and avenues for future research. Finally, Chapter 8 concludes the dissertation by summarizing its central insights.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Foundations of Brand Equity

2.1.1 The Meaning and Function of Brands

Brands are widely acknowledged as one of the most important sources of competitive advantage in modern markets. They do not merely identify a product or organization through a name, slogan, or logo but represent the bundle of associations, expectations, and meanings that consumers attach to an offering (Wood, 2000; Keller, 1993). In this way, brands transform ordinary goods and services into carriers of value that extends beyond functional utility.

From a managerial perspective, brands are regarded as long-term assets that strengthen an organization's position in the market. They enable firms to stand out from competitors and to build enduring connections with consumers. In this sense, strong brands operate as strategic resources that translate marketing activities into sustainable value for the organization (Aaker, 1991; Kapferer, 2012).

From the consumer perspective, brands provide orientation and help simplify decision-making in complex markets. They reduce uncertainty by signaling a consistent level of quality and reliability (Keller, 1993; Erdem & Swait, 1998). Beyond these functional benefits, brands also carry symbolic meaning. They allow individuals to express aspects of their identity and to associate themselves with certain values or communities (Kapferer, 2012; Keller, 1993). In this way, brands operate on both a practical and an emotional level, shaping how consumers relate to products and organizations over time.

They are central to how organizations create value, yet their impact cannot be understood by definitions alone. While it is clear that brands differentiate, build trust, and foster loyalty, the challenge lies in capturing how these diverse functions translate into measurable and enduring value. This gap between the meaning of brands and their actual contribution to organizational success has made the concept of brand equity a major area of interest in both academic research and business practice.

2.1.2 The Development of Brand Equity

Once the role of the brand as a differentiator is established, the concept of brand equity becomes central to understanding how brands create value in the eyes of consumers. Among the wide range of contributions in this field, two frameworks stand out as particularly influential.

In a marketing context, Aaker (1991, 2013) was among the first to clearly define brand equity, describing it as a range of intangible brand elements, tied to a particular brand name or logo that can enhance or reduce the value perceived by consumers. His framework emphasized five key components which allow to assess the strength of a brand: brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, brand loyalty, and proprietary brand assets. Brand Awareness describes how well consumers can identify or remember a brand, while brand associations reflect the thoughts, emotions, and beliefs that individuals connect to it. Perceived quality captures the customer's judgment of a brand's overall strength or appeal, and brand loyalty refers to the strength of consumer attachment and repeat preference.

Keller (1993) extended this concept by introducing the Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model, which shifted the focus from the company to the consumer. In contrast to Aaker, Keller located the origin of brand equity not in corporate assets, but in consumer perceptions. He defined brand equity as "the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand" (Keller, 1993, p. 1). Central to his model are two key components: brand awareness, referring to the extent to which a brand is recognized and recalled from memory, and brand image, which encompasses the associations consumers form through personal experiences, marketing efforts, and broader cultural context. Through this framework, Keller highlights the psychological and perceptual processes that drive brand value.

Taken together, these two perspectives are complementary rather than contradictory. Aaker highlights brand equity as a strategic resource for firms, while Keller frames it as a cognitive construct in consumers' minds. Combined, they underline that brand equity is multidimensional

and dynamic: Awareness establishes familiarity, which, when paired with favorable associations, evolves into a positive brand image. These perceptions influence judgments of quality and relevance, which in turn drive brand loyalty as consumers repeatedly choose the brand over alternatives (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993; Shank & Lyberger, 2014).

The significance of these frameworks lies in their wide applicability across industries. They have been used to explain value creation in fields as diverse as services, finance, and automotive, illustrating the importance of intangible brand-related assets for long-term success (Voss et al., 2008; Taylor et al., 2007; Tolba & Hassan, 2009). Their continued relevance forms the foundation for applying brand equity theory to contexts where emotional attachment and symbolic meaning play a central role. The following section therefore turns to professional sport, where the unique dynamics of fan identity and loyalty require a more specific perspective on how brand equity is built and maintained.

2.2 Brand Equity in Professional Sports

2.2.1 Components of Brand Equity in Sports Organizations

The transfer of brand equity theory into sport was driven by the recognition that existing marketing models could not fully capture the particular dynamics of professional teams and leagues. While the general concept of brand equity provided a valuable foundation, scholars in sport management highlighted the need to account for structural, cultural, and market-related specificities that distinguish sport organizations from traditional consumer brands. In 1998, Gladden et al. introduced one of the first frameworks tailored to sport, laying the groundwork for subsequent research in this area.

Following the early contributions, sport brand equity came to be understood as a complex and multidimensional construct. Scholars moved beyond the direct transfer of general marketing models and began to design sport-specific frameworks that reflected the unique character of clubs and leagues. These approaches integrated elements such as sporting success, team history, visual symbols, and fan identification into the analysis of brand value (Gladden & Milne, 1999; Gladden & Funk, 2002; Ross et al., 2006). In doing so, the literature established that sport brand equity requires dedicated conceptual models to capture the institutional and cultural dimensions of sport organizations.

Building on these conceptual foundations, subsequent studies tested whether such frameworks could be empirically validated. Bauer et al. (2008), for instance, demonstrated that the brand

image of a football club strongly predicts fan loyalty, highlighting the explanatory power of sport-specific brand equity models. Similarly, Villarejo-Ramos and Martín-Velicia (2007) found that perceptions of club image and organizational characteristics significantly contribute to overall brand strength. These findings underline that sport brand equity is not only a theoretical adaptation of general concepts but also a robust tool for explaining consumer behavior and long-term support in professional sport.

Among these contributions, the framework by Pifer et al. (2015) represents a key development, as it explicitly incorporates the influence of individual athletes on team brand equity. By distinguishing between on-field stardom and off-field stardom, their model acknowledges that athlete performance and celebrity status are central factors in shaping consumer perceptions of club brands. Although their research focused on American football, the six-dimensional brand equity model they propose can be transferred across professional team sports due to its emphasis on both consumer perceptions and organizational attributes. In addition to the commonly used dimensions of brand awareness, brand image, perceived quality, and brand loyalty, their model incorporates brand value and brand reputation, two constructs aimed at capturing broader assessments of a club's market worth and public standing. While these latter dimensions were not conceptually defined in detail, their inclusion allows for a more comprehensive assessment of brand equity, making the model a fitting conceptual foundation for examining how athlete characteristics shape perceptions of football club brands.

2.2.2 Managing Brand Equity in Sports

Brand equity has evolved into a central strategic asset for professional football clubs, where competitive advantage depends not only on sporting results but also on a club's ability to build and sustain a powerful, enduring brand (Naik & Gupta, 2013). Over recent decades, the sport has undergone a dramatic transformation from regionally rooted institutions to globally commercialized entertainment properties, shaped by international fanbases, foreign investment, and the financial power of expansive broadcasting rights (Villarejo-Ramos & Martín-Velicia, 2007). This shift has increased the pressure on clubs to operate more like modern entertainment brands. While tradition and historical identity remain essential, these must now be balanced with marketing strategies that resonate across cultures and regions (Naik & Gupta, 2013).

Unlike in traditional consumer industries, football branding is complicated by the emotional and symbolic intensity of fan relationships. Such connections are rarely transactional in nature, instead, they are shaped by generational ties, cultural narratives, and a shared sense of identity

that stays regardless of on-field results (Hasaan et al., 2016). For this reason, managing brand equity in football requires more than promotional campaigns: it involves reinforcing meaning, trust, and emotional connection, even during periods of weak on-field results (Javani & Jabbar Abdel-Milaji, 2024).

In this context, the symbolic and emotional aspects of brand equity often outweigh functional or infrastructural factors, as Pifer et al. (2015) highlight. Fans may overlook stadium upgrades or administrative decisions, but their perceptions of the club are strongly shaped by those who represent it most visibly: the players. Athletes serve as highly visible brand representatives who can enhance or damage a club's image through both their sporting performance and public behaviour. As such, understanding the mechanisms by which athlete-driven factors - specifically, sporting performance and celebrity status - influence perceptions of brand equity is critical to evaluating how football brands maintain strength in an increasingly competitive and emotionally driven marketplace.

2.3 Star Power in Professional Athletes

2.3.1 Star Power in Athlete Branding

In contemporary football, athletes have become central not only to the development of their own personal brands but also to the brand equity of the clubs they represent. While teams once dominated brand narratives, the rise of human brands has shifted this dynamic. Increasingly, athletes actively shape their public image to appeal to broad, international audiences (Arai et al., 2013; Sotiriadou et al., 2025).

Today, some players enjoy greater international visibility than their clubs. For many fans, they represent the most direct and emotional point of contact with a team's brand. Through their performance, public image, and media presence, athletes help shape how clubs are perceived worldwide and help attracting sponsorship, driving engagement, and influencing fan loyalty.

Their impact goes well beyond the pitch. The combination of athletic achievement and personal storytelling has turned players into powerful branding assets. As a result, they are no longer seen just as athletes but as key brand figures with the potential to enhance, or even redefine a club's image across markets and platforms.

2.3.2 On-Field Performance as a Brand Driver

On-field performance is one of the strongest signals of an athlete's sporting ability and credibility, two qualities at the core of perceived quality and trust in brand relationships (Gladden et al., 1998; Pifer et al., 2015). When athletes achieve consistent success on the pitch, they build reputations based on excellence, professionalism, and competitiveness. Moreover, a player's credibility also enhances the public image of the club they represent, boosting its legitimacy and increasing its appeal to fans, sponsors, and other stakeholders (Schofield, 1983; Hasaan et al., 2016).

The influence of performance is further amplified by the role of media. Strong individual displays are not only seen live, but also replayed, analyzed, and discussed across various platforms, turning them into widely shared stories that shape how both the player and the team are perceived globally (Hattula, 2018; Javani & Jabbar Abdel-Milaji, 2024). A single outstanding performance, such as a decisive goal or a game-winning save, can become a lasting reference point that fans remember, and media continue to highlight. These narratives strengthen the athlete's credibility and help define what successful performance looks like in the public eye. To understand this process more clearly, it is useful to examine the performance indicators through which on-field contributions are typically assessed.

Within sport marketing and performance analysis, a football player's on-field contribution can be measured using a wide range of indicators, which often vary by playing position. Forwards, for example, are typically evaluated through outputs such as goals, assists, and shot efficiency, as well as advanced analytics like expected goals and expected assists that account for the quality and context of scoring chances (Corsaro et al., 2025; Bryson et al., 2009; Franck & Nüesch, 2012). Midfielders, by contrast, are often assessed through metrics like key passes, ball recoveries, and pass accuracy, while defenders are judged on measures such as tackles, and aerial duels. While these position-specific measures provide a better understanding of performance, traditional metrics like games played, goals scored, and assists made, remain the most widely recognized and easily communicated, especially for attacking players.

Beyond measurable indicators, athletic performance also holds symbolic and emotional value in the eyes of fans and stakeholders (Arai et al., 2014). One important dimension is expertise: athletes who demonstrate high-level skill, consistent success, and notable achievements build credibility and come to represent sporting excellence (Braunstein-Minkove & Zhang, 2005; Gladden et al., 1998). However, it is not just what athletes achieve that matters, since how they

play also carries meaning. A distinctive playing style, marked by creativity or flair, can energize spectators and strengthen identification with both the player and the club they represent (Ross et al., 2006; Trail et al., 2003). This emotional connection is further reinforced through sportsmanship. When athletes display fairness, integrity, and respect, they not only enhance their own image, but also contribute to a perception of professionalism that reflects positively on the team as a whole. In addition, rivalries add a narrative layer to performance. Matches framed by historical or regional conflict become emotionally charged events that go beyond sport, shaping how athletes and teams are perceived over time (Richelieu & Pons, 2006). Taken together, these aspects, expertise, style, conduct, and rivalry, highlight the complex ways in which performance contributes to brand meaning. They offer more than just statistical value, they function as powerful brand signals that shape attitudes, influence stakeholder perceptions, and build symbolic capital as a key component of long-term brand equity.

2.3.3 Off-Field Celebrity Status and Athlete Marketability

Off-field celebrity status has become an increasingly central element of athlete branding, particularly in today's media-saturated and globalized sport environment. It is not the result of competition, but of how athletes make themselves visible and meaningful: curated social media, lifestyle narratives, and brand collaborations shape a public persona that extends beyond the pitch (Arai et al., 2013; Summers & Johnson Morgan, 2008; Taniyev et al., 2022).

This visibility is rarely accidental. Athletes today act as deliberate brand managers, often supported by professional PR teams, while also producing their own content to maintain direct control over their image. The strongest personal brands combine visibility with authenticity, as Wise (2025) emphasizes. Authenticity is essential because it makes fans perceive messages as credible rather than staged, ensuring that visibility translates into trust. Players such as Marcus Rashford or Hector Bellerín illustrate this principle well: their platforms are not used solely for commercial promotion but also to communicate values, social causes, and aspects of personality that resonate deeply with supporters. Research supports this dynamic. Magano et al. (2024) as well as Javani and Jabbar Abdel-Milaji (2024) show that lifestyle-focused content does more than increase visibility. It fosters meaningful emotional investment, strengthens attachment to the athlete, and ultimately enhances fan loyalty to the associated club brand.

For clubs, these dynamics have tangible and lasting implications. Athletes who transcend their sport extend visibility to entirely new audiences, particularly casual fans and culturally engaged followers who might otherwise remain outside the core supporter base. Empirical evidence

confirms the commercial value of this dynamic. Carlson and Donovan (2013) demonstrate that endorsements are especially effective when an athlete's image aligns with brand values, while misalignment can even damage perceptions. Similarly, Taniyev et al. (2022) highlight that a strong off-field presence does more than create short-term buzz. It can drive merchandise sales, attract long-term sponsorship deals, and foster sustained digital engagement by embedding athletes within broader cultural conversations. In this sense, off-field celebrity is not simply a by-product of sporting success but a strategically cultivated asset that plays a central role in shaping club brand equity.

2.3.4 The Interplay Between Performance and Celebrity

In professional football, elite on-field performance and strong off-field celebrity status often go hand in hand. Players like Cristiano Ronaldo or Lionel Messi, who have consistently delivered exceptional results at the highest level tend to attract significant media coverage, lucrative endorsements, and global fan followings (Anderson et al., 2019). In these cases, sporting excellence naturally fuels celebrity visibility, and both forces reinforce each other in shaping how athletes and their clubs are perceived (Arai et al., 2013; Taniyev et al., 2022).

However, the two dimensions do not always align perfectly. Some athletes become globally recognizable and commercially influential despite delivering more modest on-field results, or not even being on the pitch at all, while others achieve sustained competitive success without cultivating a high public profile. David Beckham, a retired footballer, is a prime example of the former. While celebrated for his skill and achievements on the pitch, his enduring global visibility has been driven largely by off-field branding power. Partnerships with Adidas, Boss, and Tudor, among others, position Beckham as a cultural icon whose influence extended far beyond football (O'Grady, 2024; Smart, 2024). For the clubs he represented, this translated into heightened brand awareness, expanded commercial opportunities, and sustained relevance in markets beyond their traditional fan base, even after his career as a footballer ended.

Yet there are elite athletes who maintain club brand equity exclusively through sporting value rather than celebrity. Rodri presents a compelling example. Widely viewed as one of the world's top defensive midfielders, he has achieved consistent success, including the Champions League title with his current team Manchester City, the Euros with Spain, and most importantly, the 2024 Ballon d'Or, the most valuable award an individual player can win in football (Lowe, 2024). Despite his career, Rodri maintains no public social media presence, keeps his private life away from media attention, and rarely participates in commercial endorsements. For his

clubs, his value lies in reinforcing perceptions of sporting excellence, professionalism, and competitive strength. Attributes that contribute to credibility and long-term sporting legitimacy rather than lifestyle-driven appeal (Boon, 2021).

This contrast makes it harder to determine how each factor contributes to a club's brand equity, since consumer perceptions are shaped by both trackable on-field achievements and the symbolic appeal athletes project (Pifer et al., 2015). To understand the full scope of athlete-driven brand influence in modern football, it's important to see how these two forces work individually but also combine to shape how players and clubs are perceived.

2.4 Research Gaps and Study Rationale

While athlete branding has received growing attention in sport marketing, much of the literature remains fragmented. Many studies tend to focus on either athletic performance or celebrity-related attributes in isolation, without fully exploring their combined influence on brand outcomes. Conceptual frameworks by Arai et al. (2013, 2014) and exploratory analyses by Hasaan et al. (2016) have advanced our understanding of how athlete characteristics shape consumer perceptions. However, these contributions remain largely descriptive and do not empirically link performance and celebrity status to consumer-based brand equity. Franck and Nüesch (2012) take a more differentiated view by separating player talent from popularity, but their focus is on individual player market value, not on how these characteristics affect the brand equity of the clubs they represent.

Pifer et al. (2015) move the discussion forward by integrating both on-field and off-field stardom into a team brand equity framework, testing their individual impacts across six core brand equity dimensions. However, in this model, performance and celebrity are treated as separate predictors, leaving the interaction between these two forces empirically unexamined. This limits our understanding of whether one dimension can amplify, compensate for, or even undermine the other in shaping consumer brand perceptions.

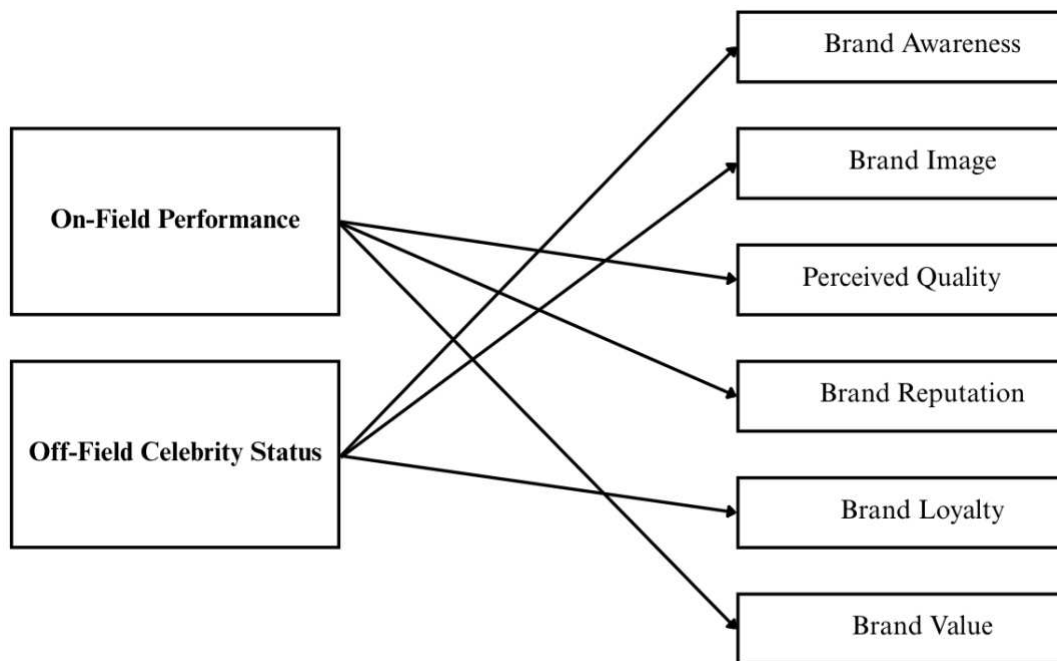
Such a gap is particularly relevant in professional football, where commercial success depends not only on whether athletes perform or are famous, but on how these attributes interact in the eyes of consumers, as it was just discussed in the previous section. Especially since the paper by Pifer et al. (2015) is already ten years old, addressing this issue allows for a better understanding of athlete-driven brand equity in today's age and provides practical insights for clubs and sponsors managing investments in star players.

2.5 Hypotheses

Based on the reviewed literature, this study examines how on-field performance and off-field celebrity status of professional football players influence the brand equity of football clubs in terms of the six dimensions adapted to the sport context: brand awareness, brand image, perceived quality, brand reputation, brand loyalty, and brand value (Pifer et al., 2015).

The current study differentiates between performance-related and celebrity-related influences and assigns them to the specific brand equity dimensions they are most logically and empirically associated with. The following rationale outlines how each brand equity component is expected to align with either of them, based on both theoretical reasoning and prior empirical insights (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework



On-field performance, as discussed, is conceptualized as a signal of athletic excellence and sporting legitimacy. Consistently high performance enhances perceptions of professionalism, competence, and competitive strength, which are traits that directly shape fans' and stakeholders' evaluations of a club's quality and credibility (Gladden & Funk, 2002; Hasaan et al., 2016). Accordingly, perceived quality and brand reputation are expected to be primarily performance-driven. Furthermore, strong on-field output contributes to brand value through its influence on league success, media visibility, prize money, and sponsorship potential (Pifer et al., 2015; Hattula, 2018). These tangible performance-based outcomes provide long-term

financial and reputational benefits, anchoring brand value in athletic success. This leads to the first hypothesis:

H1: High performance leads to greater perceived quality, brand reputation and brand value than low performance, regardless of the celebrity status.

Off-field celebrity status, in contrast, is shaped by an athlete's public persona, lifestyle appeal, media presence, and marketability. These symbolic cues enhance fan relatability and increase a club's emotional appeal, especially among younger or international audiences (Arai et al., 2013, 2014; Carlson & Donovan, 2013). Celebrity athletes elevate brand awareness through extensive exposure and help craft a more distinct, emotionally resonant brand image for the club. Additionally, off-field fame is a key driver of affective loyalty, as fans increasingly form attachments based on personal affinity with the athlete rather than team success alone (Pifer et al., 2015; Taniyev et al., 2022). These dynamics reflect a shift in how fans engage with clubs in highly commercialized football environments, where symbolic identification can supplement or even override traditional performance-based loyalty. This informs the second hypothesis:

H2: High fame leads to greater brand awareness, brand loyalty and a better brand image than low fame, irrespective of on-field performance.

Beyond their independent effects, prior research also indicates that celebrity status can change how performance influences brand perceptions. Highly visible athletes often sustain fan engagement, sponsorship interest, and media attention despite inconsistent or weaker on-field achievements (Magano et al., 2024; Taniyev et al., 2022). This suggests that the impact of performance on the brand equity dimensions may depend on the player's fame level, with performance playing a greater role when celebrity visibility is low and becoming less critical when fame is high. Consequently, the last hypothesis states:

H3: The positive effect of on-field performance on brand equity dimensions is stronger when off-field celebrity status is low, and weaker when celebrity status is high.

3 Methodology

The study followed a three-phase experimental design: a pre-test and two main studies. The pre-test served to select and validate four football players representing the conditions of a 2 (performance: high vs. low) \times 2 (celebrity: high vs. low) design.

Study 1 examined how naturally occurring differences in these characteristics influence brand equity perceptions. Study 2 then introduced manipulated performance statistics to test their independent effect while celebrity status remained constant. This design allowed for a comparison of naturalistic and controlled conditions.

3.1 Pre-Testing

A pre-test with 28 participants was conducted through an online survey (see questionnaire in Appendix 1). The survey consisted of three sections covering football involvement, performance evaluation, and player assessment.

First, participants reported their general involvement with football, which served as control information. In the second part, they evaluated anonymized statlines of eight forwards from Europe's top leagues to establish which performance levels were perceived as high or low and in the third section, the corresponding eight players were revealed and rated on perceived performance and celebrity status. Both sections were evaluated on a 5-point Likert scale.

Concerning the choice of players: Performance was determined by season statistics (games played, goals, assists), distinguishing between players with standout attacking records and those with lower output (transfermarkt, n.d.). Celebrity status was assessed through global media visibility and social media presence, separating widely recognized players from those with more limited public profiles (Instagram, n.d.; Facebook, n.d.).

Based on these evaluations, four players were selected to represent the conditions of the 2 (high vs. low performance) \times 2 (high vs. low celebrity) design for the subsequent studies.

3.2 Study 1

3.2.1 Participants

A total of 64 participants responded to the survey questionnaire (see Appendix 2). They were recruited through personal connections, social media, in particular Instagram, and surveyswap, a platform explicitly created to find survey respondents.

The demographic profile of the sample reveals a larger number of male respondents (82.8% of the total respondents) which is predictable given that men are more involved in the topic of football (Apostolou et al., 2014). Regarding the participants' age, the average is 28.06 years old (SD = 7.84), ranging from 18 to 62.

The majority of respondents are German, accounting for approximately 76.6% of the sample. Other nationalities include participants from the United States (7.8%), Poland (3.1%), and Italy (3.1%). Smaller groups of respondents come from Ireland (1.6%), Brazil (1.6%), Canada (1.6%), the United Kingdom (1.6%), the Netherlands (1.6%), and Spain (1.6%). This is in line with the choice of language as 60.9% of participants opted for German, whilst the rest chose English.

Regarding their football involvement, respondents reported a moderate level of engagement. On a five-point scale, the overall mean score across the three involvement items was 3.62 (SD = 1.07), indicating that participants follow football to a fair extent.

3.2.2 Materials

Independent Variables

As previously discussed, the two independent variables manipulated in this study were: on-field performance and off-field celebrity status, each with two levels (high vs. low).

The four selected players were: Erling Haaland, who was assigned to the high-performance, high-celebrity condition, while Mateo Retegui represented high-performance, low-celebrity. Thomas Müller was selected for the low-performance, high-celebrity condition, and Lee Kang-In for the low-performance, low-celebrity condition.

Just like in the pre-testing survey, on-field performance was operationalized using each player's actual statistics from the 2024/25 season, specifically the number of games played, goals scored, and assists made. Celebrity status was not explicitly manipulated within the stimuli but was embedded through player selection, as the pre-test had empirically confirmed substantial variation across the chosen athletes.

Dependent Variables

The dependent variables were the six dimensions of brand equity, adopted from the conceptual frameworks by Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993), and consistent with prior research by Pifer et

al. (2015). The dimensions included: Brand Awareness, Brand Image, Perceived Quality, Brand Reputation, Brand Loyalty, and Brand Value. All answers were measured using a 5-point Likert scale, and each construct's internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha during the analysis phase to verify reliability. Additionally, several control variables were included to account for participant-related and player-specific variance.

3.2.3 Procedure

Before starting the survey, participants were informed that they would be taking part in a study examining how professional football players contribute to the image and value of the clubs they represent. They were assured that participation was entirely voluntary and anonymous, and that the questionnaire was available in both German and English.

Identical to the pre-testing, the survey began with a section on football involvement, where participants answered four questions related to their football interest, viewing frequency, self-perceived knowledge, and club support.

Next, participants were introduced to the player evaluation task. They were shown the four professional football players along with their seasonal performance statistics (games played, goals scored, assists). The athletes were displayed one at a time in randomized order.

For each player, participants completed a series of evaluations. First, they rated the player on familiarity, perceived performance, fame, and sympathy. Later, they evaluated their impact on their respective club across six brand equity dimensions using two items per dimension. (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993; Pifer et al., 2015). This structure was repeated identically for all four players.

Finally, demographic information was collected, including age, gender, and current country of residence. Upon completion, a small debrief about the study was presented at the end.

3.2.4 Design

The study followed a 2 (on-field performance: high vs. low) \times 2 (off-field celebrity status: high vs. low) within-subjects experimental design.

This structure was chosen to examine both main effects and potential interaction effects of the two independent variables on brand equity outcomes. A within-subjects approach allowed each

participant to serve as their own control, improving statistical power and reducing error variance related to individual differences

3.3 Study 2

3.3.1 Participants

A total of 62 participants responded to the survey questionnaire (see Appendix 3). They were recruited, once again through personal connections, social media, in particular Instagram, and surveyswap, a platform explicitly created to find survey respondents.

The demographic profile of the sample reveals a larger number of male respondents (83.9% of the total respondents) with participants' average age being 27.87 years old ($SD = 7.94$), ranging from 14 to 60.

The majority of respondents are German, making up approximately 71.0% of the sample. Other nationalities represented include the United Kingdom (6.5%), Portugal (4.8%), the United States (4.8%), and Italy (4.8%). Smaller groups of respondents come from Australia (1.6%), Hong Kong (1.6%), Vietnam (1.6%), Nigeria (1.6%), and India (1.6%). This is in line with the choice of language as 50% of participants opted for German, whilst the others chose English.

Participants displayed a moderately strong interest in football overall. Using a five-point scale, the combined average of the three involvement items was 3.81 ($SD = 0.80$), suggesting that most respondents are quite engaged with the sport.

3.3.2 Materials

Independent Variables

Study 2 manipulated the independent variable on-field performance, while holding celebrity status constant across the four players used in Study 1.

The manipulation was based on performance statlines (games played, goals scored, assists), which were adapted from the pre-test results. Specifically, players previously perceived as high-performing were shown weak statlines, and those previously rated as low-performing were shown strong statlines. This inversion allowed performance to be isolated and tested as an experimental factor, independent of prior public perception or actual season outcomes.

Celebrity status remained embedded in the player identity and was not altered from Study 1. As a result, the experimental structure allowed for the observation of whether manipulated performance alone could shift brand equity perceptions, regardless of celebrity status.

Dependent Variables

The dependent variables and control variables were identical to those in Study 1.

3.3.3 Procedure

The procedure of Study 2 was identical to that of Study 1 in terms of survey sequence, stimuli format, and measurement instruments.

To ensure participants engaged with the manipulated performance statistics as intended, a short instruction preceded each player profile, asking them to “please consider the following stats concerning this athlete’s performance during this period.”

In addition, a manipulation check was included at the end of the questionnaire to assess the believability of the revised statistics. Participants indicated how easy or difficult it was to imagine that each player’s displayed performance was actually true, using a five-point Likert scale. This step served to control for potential believability biases that could compromise the effectiveness of the manipulation.

3.3.4 Design

Like the previous study, a 2 (celebrity status: high vs. low) × 2 (performance: high vs. low) within-subjects design was adopted.

4 Data Analysis & Results

4.1 Pre-Testing

The pretest served two purposes: first, to identify four suitable athletes for Study 1, and second, to determine the manipulated stat lines for Study 2. Participants reported a mean football involvement score of 3.96 (SD = 0.57) on a five-point scale, suggesting a sufficient level of expertise and knowledge to provide reliable evaluations.

4.1.1 Validation of Player Selection for Experimental Conditions

This section focuses on the four athletes selected for the experimental conditions: Erling Haaland, Mateo Retegui, Thomas Müller, and Lee Kang-In. While the remaining four players

were also evaluated during pretesting, they were not included in the final design due to statistical dissimilarities or practical constraints.

Participants' ratings of player performance and celebrity status were analyzed by calculating mean values across the respective items and conducting paired-samples t-tests. Full descriptive statistics and test results are reported in Appendix 4.

Performance Analysis

Mean ratings showed a clear separation between high- and low-performing players. Haaland (M = 4.69, SD = 0.38) and Retegui (M = 4.63, SD = 0.33) were consistently evaluated as strong performers, whereas Müller (M = 1.99, SD = 0.48) and Kang-In (M = 1.92, SD = 0.22) received much lower scores. Statistical tests confirmed that these differences between high and low performers were highly significant, while no significant differences emerged within the two performance groups.

Celebrity Analysis

The same pattern appeared for celebrity status. Haaland (M = 4.63, SD = 0.36) and Müller (M = 4.58, SD = 0.43) were rated as highly famous, while Retegui (M = 1.46, SD = 0.32) and Kang-In (M = 1.42, SD = 0.60) scored considerably lower. Again, the differences between high- and low-celebrity players were statistically significant, but no significant variation was found within each fame group.

These results confirm the suitability of the four selected players for the experimental conditions: Haaland (high performance, high celebrity), Retegui (high performance, low celebrity), Müller (low performance, high celebrity), and Kang-In (low performance, low celebrity).

4.1.2 Derivation of Manipulated Performance Statlines

Further, the pretest showed a clear separation in the evaluation of performance statlines. The two high-performance profiles: 41 games/27 goals/6 assists (M = 4.29, SD = 0.32) and 48/28/8 (M = 4.30, SD = 0.33) were rated significantly higher than the two low-performance profiles 44/6/6 (M = 1.71, SD = 0.31) and 45/6/6 (M = 1.71, SD = 0.31), confirming a reliable distinction between performance levels (see Appendix 4). Within each group, no significant differences emerged which supports internal consistency.

4.2 Study 1

4.2.1 Reliability of the Measures

The initial step of the main experiment's data analysis consists of conducting a scale reliability analysis to assess the internal consistency of the dependent variables' measurement scales used in the study (see Appendix 5). This analysis evaluates the reliability of the constructs composing each dependent variable per experimental condition, as described in the previous methodology section. It involves calculating the Cronbach's alpha which indicates the extent to which constructs within a scale consistently measure the same underlying concept. Typically, this value is considered to be high when above 0.70, indicating strong internal consistency and suggesting that the items in the scale are reliable and can be used as a composite measure of the intended concept. This assessment ensures that the data collected using these scales are robust and valid for further analysis and interpretation in the study. The investigation revealed that all items are consistent and valid, with Cronbach's alpha varying from 0.71 to 0.90.

4.2.2 Controls

Because Study 1 relies on participants' perceptions of football players, it is essential to verify that the differences between the stimuli are perceived as intended. In particular, the key characteristics of interest, on-field performance and off-field fame, must align with the theoretical design, otherwise, the subsequent effects on brand-equity dimensions could not be meaningfully interpreted. Therefore, just like in the pre-testing, participants' ratings of performance and fame were examined by conducting paired samples t-tests, as well as additional controls regarding familiarity and player sympathy, to rule out unintended biases and ensure a valid basis for interpreting the main study results (see Appendix 6 for full statistical results).

Performance ratings were significantly higher for Haaland ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 0.74$) and Retegui ($M = 4.17$, $SD = 0.79$) compared to Müller ($M = 2.77$, $SD = 0.79$) and Kang-In ($M = 2.72$, $SD = 0.74$), with no meaningful differences within groups.

Fame ratings followed the same pattern: Haaland ($M = 4.53$, $SD = 0.67$) and Müller ($M = 4.59$, $SD = 0.79$) scored well above Retegui ($M = 2.52$, $SD = 0.84$) and Kang-In ($M = 2.47$, $SD = 0.84$) without a significant difference in between the two.

Familiarity ratings aligned with these patterns, as Haaland ($M = 4.36$, $SD = 1.04$) and Müller ($M = 4.56$, $SD = 0.87$) were more familiar than Retegui ($M = 2.52$, $SD = 1.28$) and Kang-In ($M = 2.42$, $SD = 1.23$) with no meaningful differences within groups. This seems reasonable, since humans are usually more familiar with more famous people compared to less famous ones. Importantly, all players mean values scored above the scale midpoint, indicating sufficient recognition among participants.

Sympathy ratings showed a generally neutral baseline, though clear differences were present: Müller ($M = 4.19$, $SD = 1.04$) was rated more sympathetically than Haaland ($M = 3.23$, $SD = 0.96$), Retegui ($M = 2.52$, $SD = 1.04$), and Kang-In ($M = 2.30$, $SD = 0.90$). Haaland was, in turn, evaluated more sympathetically than both Retegui and Kang-In, while Retegui received slightly higher ratings than Kang-In.

Together, these results confirm that players were perceived in line with the intended performance and fame conditions. While the differences in sympathy highlight some variation in affective evaluations, they do not invalidate the experimental design. Instead, they should be acknowledged as a minor limitation.

4.2.3 Main Results

After confirming the validity of the manipulations and the reliability of the measurement scales, the hypotheses were tested using SPSS. To examine the effects of on-field performance and off-field fame on the six brand equity dimensions, a series of repeated-measures analyses of variance were conducted using a 2 (Performance: high vs. low) \times 2 (Fame: high vs. low) ANOVA, which allowed the investigation of both main effects and interaction effects.

In cases where significant interaction effects emerged, follow-up paired-samples t-tests were carried out to further explore the direction and nature of these effects. This procedure was repeated for each of the six dependent variables: brand awareness, brand image, perceived quality, brand reputation, brand loyalty, and brand value.

Brand Awareness

The ANOVA displayed a significant main effect of performance ($F(1, 63) = 18.41$, $p < .001$), indicating that high-performing players were associated with higher levels of brand awareness than low-performing players (see decriptives in Table 1).

Table 1. Main effects of Performance on Brand Awareness (Study 1)

	M	SD
High Performance	3.43	0.84
Low Performance	3.00	0.89

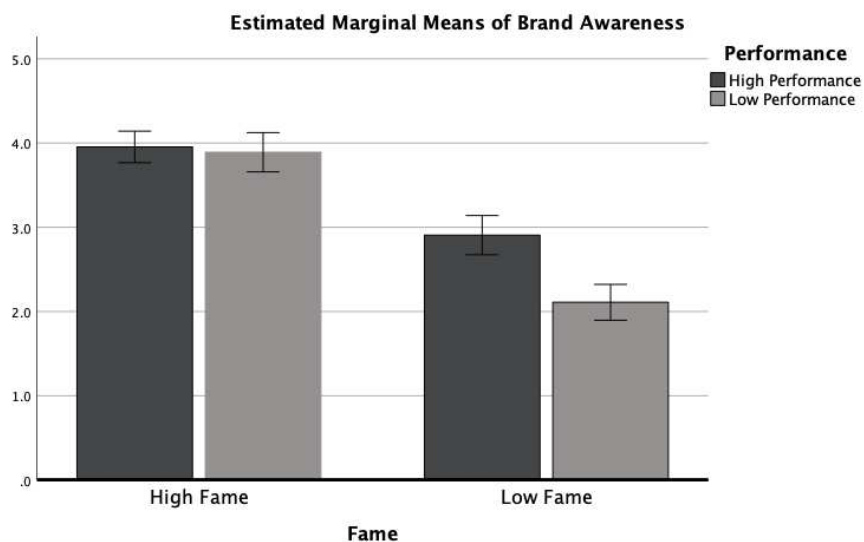
A significant main effect of fame was also observed ($F(1, 63) = 167.87, p < .001$), showing that highly famous players generated greater brand awareness compared to low-fame players (see descriptives in Table 2).

Table 2. Main effects of Fame on Brand Awareness (Study 1)

	M	SD
High Fame	3.92	0.84
Low Fame	2.51	0.89

In addition, the analysis identified a significant interaction between performance and fame ($F(1, 63) = 18.20, p < .001$). As seen in Figure 2, examination of the estimated means showed that high-performing players seem to be rated higher in brand awareness both when fame was high as well as when fame was low, where the difference appears to be even larger. This indicates that the effect of performance on brand awareness differed depending on fame, a point that will be further examined through the analysis of paired samples t-tests.

Figure 2. Brand Awareness according to level of Performance and Fame (Study 1)



A paired samples t-test confirmed that under low fame conditions, the high-performing player was associated with significantly higher brand awareness than the low-performing one, $t(63) = 5.46, p < .001, d = 0.68$. In contrast, under high fame conditions, no significant difference was found between the high- and low-performing players, $t(63) = 0.54, p = .594, d = 0.07$.

Brand Image

The ANOVA demonstrated no significant main effect of performance ($F(1, 63) = 1.51, p = .224$), indicating that on-field performance alone did not influence perceptions of brand image.

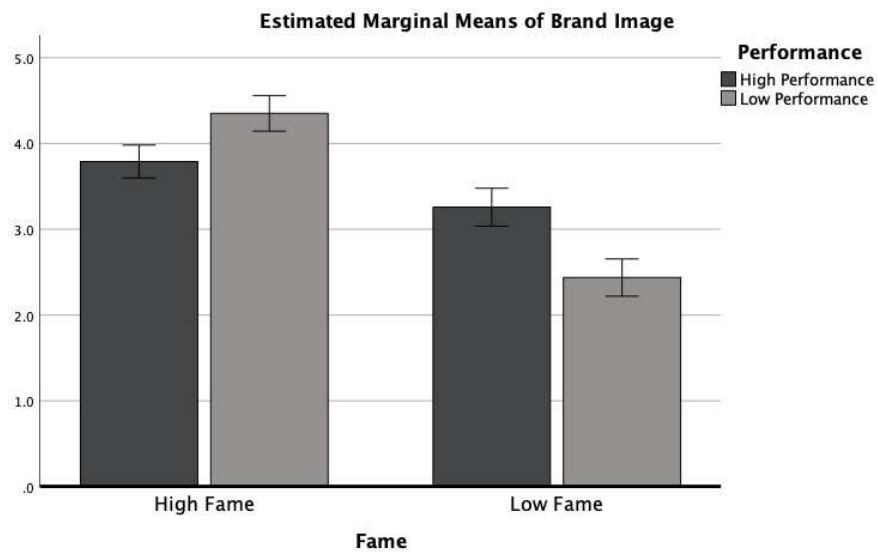
However, a significant main effect of fame ($F(1, 63) = 116.72, p < .001$) signaled that highly famous players were associated with a substantially more positive brand image compared to low-fame players (see descriptives in Table 3).

Table 3. Main effects of Fame on Brand Image (Study 1)

	M	SD
High Fame	4.07	0.80
Low Fame	2.85	0.88

Moreover, the analysis suggested a significant interaction effect between performance and fame ($F(1, 63) = 56.74, p < .001$). As illustrated in Figure 3, the influence of performance on brand image varied depending on the level of fame. Under conditions of low fame, the high-performing player gives the impression of being rated more positively than the low-performing player. In contrast, when fame was high, the performance effect was reduced and indicates a reversed tendency, with the low-performing but highly famous player achieving higher brand image evaluations. This pattern suggests that the relationship between performance and brand image depended on fame, a point that will be examined more closely through paired-samples t-tests in the subsequent analysis.

Figure 3. Brand Image according to level of Performance and Fame (Study 1)



A paired samples t-test validated that under low fame conditions, the high-performing player was associated with significantly higher brand image than the low-performing one, $t(63) = 5.69$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.71$. Under high fame conditions, the high-performing player was rated with a significantly lower brand image than the low-performing one, $t(63) = -4.17$, $p < .001$, $d = -0.52$.

Perceived Quality

The ANOVA presented a significant main effect of performance, $F(1, 63) = 36.62$, $p < .001$, indicating that high-performing players were associated with higher perceived quality ratings than low-performing players (see descriptives in Table 4).

Table 4. Main effects of Performance on Perceived Quality (Study 1)

	M	SD
High Performance	3.67	0.81
Low Performance	3.10	0.90

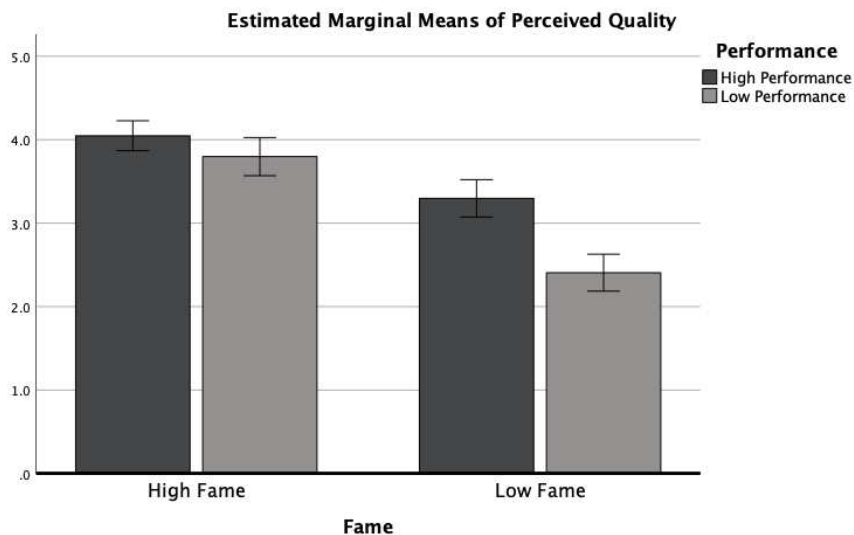
A significant main effect of fame ($F(1, 63) = 84.27$, $p < .001$) highlighted that highly famous players generated greater perceptions of quality compared to low-fame players (see descriptives in Table 5).

Table 5. Main effects of Fame on Perceived Quality (Study 1)

	M	SD
High Fame	3.92	0.82
Low Fame	2.85	0.89

Further, the analysis found a significant interaction between performance and fame, $F(1, 63) = 11.63$, $p = .001$. As illustrated in Figure 4, the difference in perceived quality between high- and low-performing players shows signs of being markedly greater when fame was low compared to when fame was high. This suggests that the influence of on-field performance on perceived quality depended on fame. The interaction pattern will be further examined in the subsequent paired samples t-test analysis.

Figure 4. Perceived Quality according to level of Performance and Fame (Study 1)



A paired samples t-test verified that under low fame conditions, the high-performing player was associated with significantly higher perceived quality than the low-performing one, $t(63) = 6.24$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.78$. Same under high fame conditions, the high-performing player was rated with a significantly higher perceived quality than the low-performing one, $t(63) = 2.04$, $p = .045$, $d = 0.26$.

Brand Reputation

The ANOVA pointed out a significant main effect of performance, $F(1, 63) = 13.94$, $p < .001$, indicating that high-performing players were associated with higher levels of brand reputation compared to low-performing players (see descriptives in Table 6).

Table 6. Main effects of Performance on Brand Reputation (Study 1)

	M	SD
High Performance	3.69	0.74
Low Performance	3.33	0.84

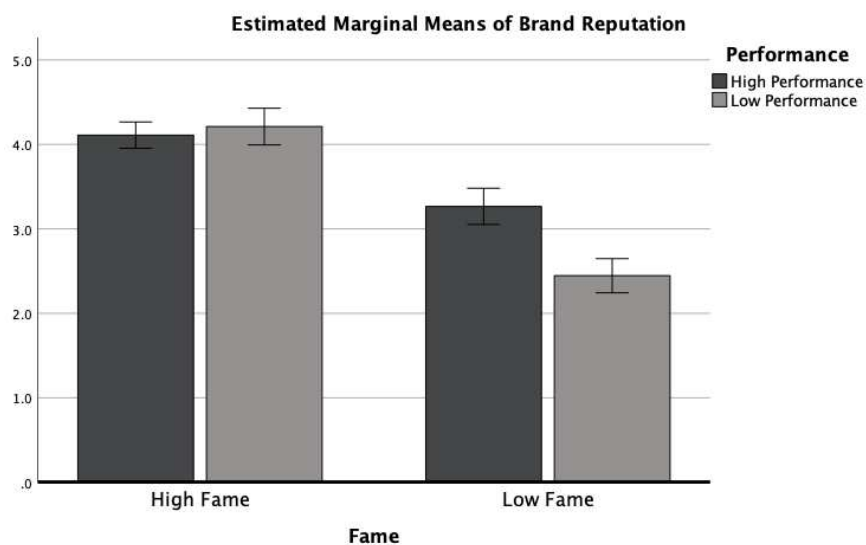
A significant main effect of fame ($F(1, 63) = 132.16, p < .001$) discovered that highly famous players generated greater brand reputation compared to low-fame players (see descriptives in Table 7).

Table 7. Main effects of Fame on Brand Reputation (Study 1)

	M	SD
High Fame	4.16	0.75
Low Fame	2.86	0.83

Beyond, the analysis exhibited a significant interaction between performance and fame, $F(1, 63) = 31.12, p < .001$. The estimated marginal means (Figure 5) indicate that under conditions of low fame, higher performance led to substantially greater brand reputation than lower performance. Under high fame, however, the difference between high and low performance appears to be reversed, as brand reputation appears to be slightly lower for the high-performance level compared to the low-performance level. This proposes that fame influences the effect of performance on brand reputation. To further clarify this interaction, paired-samples t-tests were conducted to compare performance differences within each level of fame.

Figure 5. Brand Reputation according to level of Performance and Fame (Study 1)



A paired samples t-test revealed that under low fame conditions, the high-performing player was associated with significantly higher brand reputation than the low-performing one, $t(63) = 6.43$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.80$. Under high fame conditions, no significant difference was found between the high- and low-performing players, $t(63) = -0.81$, $p = .424$, $d = -0.10$.

Brand Loyalty

The ANOVA showed no significant main effect of performance on brand loyalty, $F(1, 63) = 2.57$, $p = .114$. This indicates that perceived loyalty did not systematically differ between high- and low-performing players.

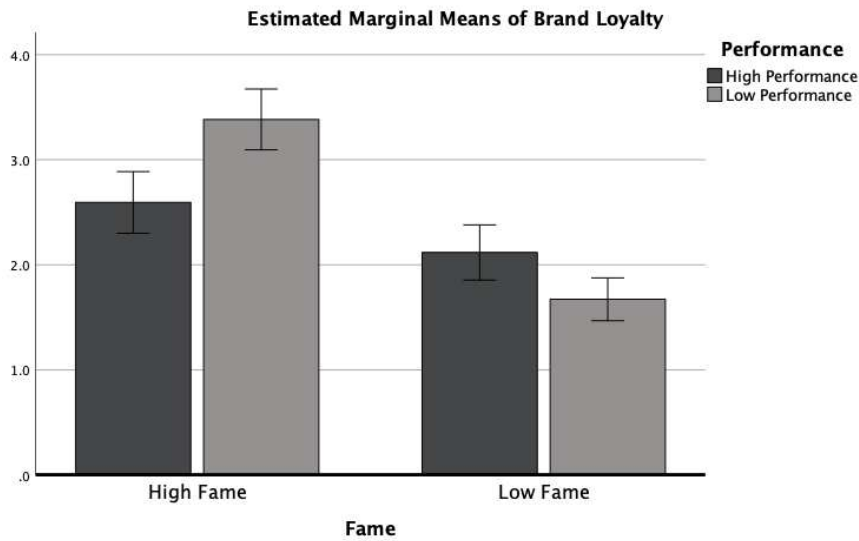
In contrast, a significant main effect ($F(1, 63) = 86.62$, $p < .001$) implied that highly famous players were associated with considerably higher levels of brand loyalty compared to less famous players (see Table 8).

Table 8. Main effects of Fame on Brand Loyalty (Study 1)

	M	SD
High Fame	2.99	1.17
Low Fame	1.90	0.94

Furthermore, the analysis illustrated a significant interaction effect between performance and fame, $F(1, 63) = 41.38$, $p < .001$. As shown in Figure 6, the impact of performance on brand loyalty depended on fame: under high fame, the low-performing player seems to be rated higher in loyalty than the high-performing player, whereas under low fame, the opposite pattern emerged. This indicates that the effect of performance on brand loyalty depended on fame. To further examine this effect, paired-samples t-tests will be conducted.

Figure 6. Brand Loyalty according to level of Performance and Fame (Study 1)



A paired samples t-test proved that under low fame conditions, the high-performing player was associated with significantly higher brand loyalty than the low-performing one, $t(63) = 3.59$, $p = .001$, $d = 0.45$. Under high fame conditions, the high-performing player was rated with significantly lower brand loyalty than the low-performing one, $t(63) = -4.89$, $p < .001$, $d = -0.61$.

Brand Value

The ANOVA displayed a significant main effect of performance, $F(1, 63) = 34.95$, $p < .001$, indicating that high-performing players were associated with greater brand value than low-performing players (see Table 9).

Table 9. Main effects of Performance on Brand Value (Study 1)

	M	SD
High Performance	3.75	0.75
Low Performance	3.13	0.92

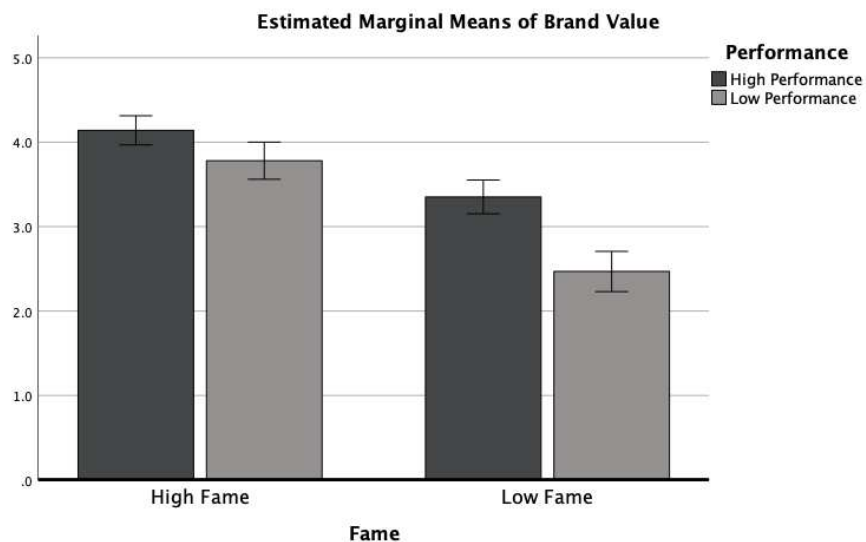
A significant main effect of fame ($F(1, 63) = 76.40$, $p < .001$) observed that highly famous players generated higher levels of brand value compared to low-fame players (see Table 10).

Table 10. Main effects of Fame on Brand Value (Study 1)

	M	SD
High Fame	3.96	0.78
Low Fame	2.91	0.88

Besides, a significant interaction effect between performance and fame was identified, $F(1, 63) = 9.04$, $p = .004$. As depicted in Figure 7, the difference between high and low performance appears to be larger when fame was low than when fame was high. This pattern suggests that fame influenced the strength of the performance effect on perceived brand value. To further examine these interaction patterns, paired-samples t-tests will be conducted.

Figure 7. Brand Value according to level of Performance and Fame (Study 1)



A paired samples t-test confirmed that under low fame conditions, the high-performing player was associated with significantly higher brand value than the low-performing one, $t(63) = 6.31$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.78$. Under high fame conditions, the high-performing player was rated with significantly higher brand value than the low-performing one, $t(63) = 2.70$, $p = .009$, $d = 0.34$.

4.3 Study 2

4.3.1 Reliability of the Measures

For the second study, the reliability analyses indicated that all measurement scales achieved acceptable levels of internal consistency (see Appendix 7). Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.71 to 0.93, exceeding the commonly recommended threshold of 0.70 and confirming

that the scales are reliable. This assessment ensures that the data collected using these measures are robust and suitable for subsequent statistical analyses and interpretation within the study.

4.3.2 Controls and Manipulation Check

To ensure the validity of the manipulations and rule out potential confounds, participants' ratings of performance, fame, familiarity, and sympathy were analyzed using paired-samples t-tests (see Appendix 8 for full statistical results).

Performance ratings reflected the manipulation as intended: Haaland ($M = 2.35$, $SD = 0.89$) and Retegui ($M = 2.31$, $SD = 0.86$) were evaluated as low performers, while Müller ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 0.69$) and Kang-In ($M = 4.26$, $SD = 0.83$) were rated as high performers. Players within each level did not differ meaningfully, while both high performers scored significantly above both low performers. In addition, the believability check showed that participants generally considered the manipulated statistics as easier to imagine, with all players receiving ratings above the scale midpoint (Müller: $M = 4.19$, $SD = 0.92$; Retegui: $M = 4.06$, $SD = 0.90$; Kang-In: $M = 3.82$, $SD = 0.92$; Haaland: $M = 3.34$, $SD = 1.12$). However, Haaland's manipulated stats were significantly harder to believe compared to the ones of the residual three players as well as Müller's stats being significantly easier to believe than Kang-In's.

Fame ratings remained consistent with real-world prominence and Study 1. Haaland ($M = 4.58$, $SD = 0.69$) and Müller ($M = 4.53$, $SD = 0.54$) were rated similarly and significantly higher than Retegui ($M = 2.48$, $SD = 0.78$) and Kang-In ($M = 2.53$, $SD = 0.82$), who also did not differ within their group.

Familiarity ratings aligned with these patterns: Haaland ($M = 4.44$, $SD = 0.76$) and Müller ($M = 4.47$, $SD = 0.90$) were more familiar than Retegui ($M = 2.89$, $SD = 1.03$) and Kang-In ($M = 2.87$, $SD = 1.06$) with no significant differences within groups. Importantly, all players scored above the scale midpoint, confirming that participants were sufficiently familiar with each to provide reliable judgments.

Sympathy ratings indicated a generally neutral baseline but revealed some variation. Müller ($M = 3.76$, $SD = 1.10$) was rated more sympathetically than Haaland ($M = 3.18$, $SD = 1.11$), Retegui ($M = 2.81$, $SD = 1.02$), and Kang-In ($M = 2.85$, $SD = 1.13$). Haaland was considered as more sympathetic than Kang-In, while no meaningful difference emerged between Retegui, and both Kang-In as well as Haaland.

Together, these results confirm that participants perceived the manipulations and player characteristics as intended. Once again, some variation in sympathy remained, this does not undermine the validity of the experimental design and can be considered a minor limitation.

4.3.3 Main Results

Brand Awareness

The ANOVA demonstrated a significant main effect of performance ($F(1, 61) = 89.96, p < .001$), indicating that high-performing players were associated with greater brand awareness compared to low-performing players (see descriptives in Table 11).

Table 11. Main effects of Performance on Brand Awareness (Study 2)

	M	SD
High Performance	3.57	0.80
Low Performance	2.71	0.88

A significant main effect of fame ($F(1, 61) = 65.07, p < .001$) signaled that players with high celebrity status generated substantially higher levels of brand awareness than players with low celebrity status (see descriptives in Table 12).

Table 12. Main effects of Fame on Brand Awareness (Study 2)

	M	SD
High Fame	3.56	0.82
Low Fame	2.72	0.86

However, the analysis did not reveal a significant interaction between performance and fame ($F(1, 61) = 0.28, p = .601$).

Brand Image

The ANOVA presented a significant main effect of performance ($F(1, 61) = 71.17, p < .001$), indicating that high-performing players were evaluated more positively than low-performing players (see descriptives in Table 13).

Table 13. Main effects of Performance on Brand Image (Study 2)

	M	SD
High Performance	3.81	0.81
Low Performance	2.86	0.84

A significant main effect of fame was found too ($F(1, 61) = 63.57, p < .001$), showing that highly famous players received more favorable brand image evaluations compared to low-fame players (see descriptives in Table 14).

Table 14. Main effects of Fame on Brand Image (Study 2)

	M	SD
High Fame	3.70	0.78
Low Fame	2.97	0.87

Once again, the analysis did not reveal a significant interaction effect between performance and fame ($F(1, 61) = 0.32, p = .572$).

Perceived Quality

The ANOVA pointed out a significant main effect of performance ($F(1, 61) = 79.40, p < .001$), indicating that high-performing players were consistently associated with higher perceived quality compared to low-performing players (see descriptives in Table 15).

Table 15. Main effects of Performance on Perceived Quality (Study 2)

	M	SD
High Performance	3.84	0.79
Low Performance	2.89	0.86

A significant main effect of fame was also discovered ($F(1, 61) = 38.34, p < .001$), showing that players with high celebrity status were perceived to have higher quality than those with low celebrity status (see descriptives in Table 16).

Table 16. Main effects of Fame on Perceived Quality (Study 2)

	M	SD
High Fame	3.66	0.82
Low Fame	3.07	0.83

Another time, the interaction between performance and fame did not reach significance ($F(1, 61) = 3.38, p = .071$).

Brand Reputation

The ANOVA showed a significant main effect of performance ($F(1, 61) = 70.05, p < .001$), indicating that high-performing players were rated with a substantially more favorable brand reputation than low-performing ones (see descriptives in Table 17).

Table 17. Main effects of Performance on Brand Reputation (Study 2)

	M	SD
High Performance	3.75	0.78
Low Performance	2.90	0.83

A significant main effect of fame ($F(1, 61) = 107.97, p < .001$) implied that highly famous players were associated with a considerably stronger brand reputation compared to low-fame players (see descriptives in Table 18).

Table 18. Main effects of Fame on Brand Reputation (Study 2)

	M	SD
High Fame	3.83	0.77
Low Fame	2.82	0.84

Again, the analysis did not reveal a significant interaction effect between performance and fame ($F(1, 61) = 0.26, p = .612$).

Brand Loyalty

The ANOVA displayed a significant main effect of performance ($F(1, 61) = 21.86, p < .001$), showing that high-performing players were associated with higher levels of brand loyalty compared to low-performing players (see descriptives in Table 19).

Table 19. Main effects of Performance on Brand Loyalty (Study 2)

	M	SD
High Performance	2.64	0.97
Low Performance	2.17	0.99

A significant main effect of fame was also observed ($F(1, 61) = 46.19, p < .001$), indicating that highly famous players were evaluated more positively in terms of brand loyalty than their low-fame counterparts (see descriptives in Table 20).

Table 20. Main effects of Fame on Brand Loyalty (Study 2)

	M	SD
High Fame	2.77	1.07
Low Fame	2.03	0.89

The interaction effect between performance and fame did not reach statistical significance ($F(1, 61) = 2.42, p = .125$)

Brand Value

The ANOVA exhibited a significant main effect of performance ($F(1, 61) = 36.91, p < .001$), indicating that high-performing players were rated with a more positive brand value compared to low-performing players (see descriptives in Table 21).

Table 21. Main effects of Performance on Brand Value (Study 2)

	M	SD
High Performance	3.73	0.85
Low Performance	3.08	0.88

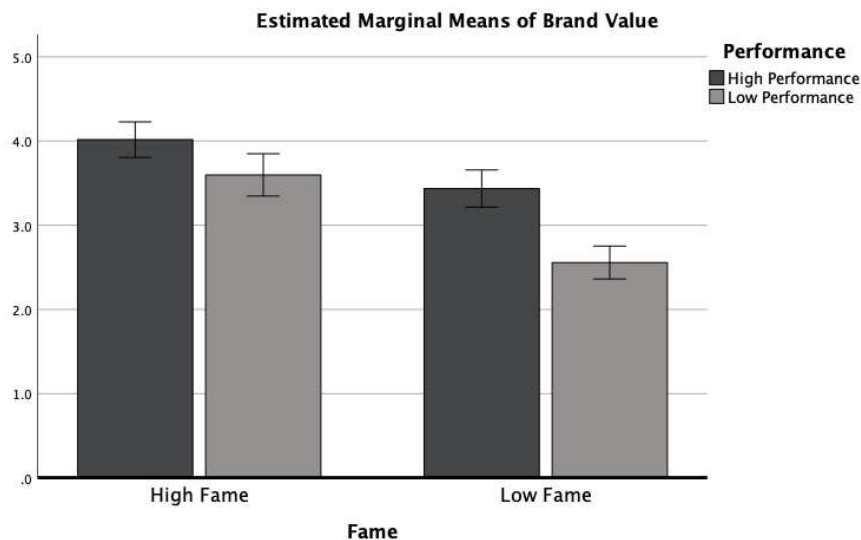
A significant main effect of fame ($F(1, 61) = 55.10, p < .001$) showed that highly famous players were associated with a higher brand value than low-fame players (see descriptives in Table 22).

Table 22. Main effects of Fame on Brand Value (Study 2)

	M	SD
High Fame	3.81	0.91
Low Fame	3.00	0.82

Additionally, the analysis highlighted a significant interaction effect between performance and fame ($F(1, 61) = 5.25, p = .025$). As illustrated in Figure 13, the difference between high and low performance appears to be larger when fame was low than when fame was high. This pattern suggests that fame influenced the strength of the performance effect on perceived brand value. To further examine these interaction patterns, paired-samples t-tests will be conducted.

Figure 8. Brand Value according to level of Performance and Fame (Study 2)



A paired-samples t-test validated that under low fame conditions, the high-performing player was associated with significantly higher brand value than the low-performing one, $t(61) = 6.23, p < .001, d = 0.79$. Under high fame conditions, the high-performing player was rated with significantly higher brand value than the low-performing one, $t(61) = 2.76, p = .008, d = 0.35$.

5 Discussion

In order to explore how on-field performance and off-field celebrity status impact football clubs' brand equity, the two studies provide relevant and insightful data.

Turning first to the role of on-field performance, Hypothesis 1 predicted that high-performing players would lead to more favorable evaluations of perceived quality, brand reputation, and brand value compared to low-performing players. This assumption was consistently supported in both studies, as players presented as high performers were rated significantly higher on these three dimensions, thereby confirming H1.

Looking at Study 1, performance effects were additionally evident on brand awareness, while the results for brand image and brand loyalty did not reach statistical significance. Study 2

yielded an even clearer pattern. Here, the main effects of performance were significant across all six dimensions of brand equity, indicating that when performance differences are stressed, they strongly shape brand-related perceptions.

Taken together, the findings underline that performance has its strongest and most reliable influence on competence-related brand dimensions such as perceived quality, brand reputation, and brand value, which emerged consistently across both studies. At the same time, the broader pattern observed in Study 2 suggests that performance is not just limited to shaping competence judgments alone. When the performance stats were pointed out, strong performance can also enter into more affective dimensions such as brand image and brand loyalty, reinforcing identification and attachment to the club. This dual impact highlights the fundamental role of performance as both a rational and emotional driver of brand equity, making it a key factor for how clubs are perceived and valued in the marketplace.

Next, about the effects of fame on a football club's brand equity: Hypothesis 2 stated that high-fame players would generate higher levels of brand awareness, brand loyalty, and brand image compared to low-fame players. This expectation was strongly supported in both studies. Across all analyses, fame produced significant main effects on every brand equity dimension, consistently showing that highly famous players were evaluated more positively than low-fame players.

Overall, the consistency of these results underlines that celebrity status represents a particularly stable determinant of brand equity. Unlike performance, which influenced only selected dimensions and depended on how strongly it was emphasized, fame exerted broad and uniform effects across all measures. This finding underscores the central role of celebrity status in shaping brand-related perceptions and suggests that fame may outweigh performance as a bigger driver of brand equity.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that the positive effect of on-field performance on brand equity dimensions would be stronger under low fame conditions and weaker under high fame conditions. This assumption was based on the idea that highly famous players may overshadow performance-related signals, thereby weakening the relative weight of sporting achievements in shaping perceptions.

The results of Study 1 only provided partial support for this hypothesis. While some dimensions such as brand awareness and brand reputation only showed stronger performance effects under

low fame, other outcomes deviated from the expected pattern: In the cases of brand image and brand loyalty, the relationship was even reversed, with low-performing but highly famous players receiving more favorable evaluations. One possible explanation lies in the halo effect of celebrity status, which suggests that a single highly salient attribute, such as fame in this case, can dominate perceptions and create a generalized positive impression (Kahle & Homer, 1985). This may help explain why weak performance was not consistently penalized when players were highly famous. However, the reversed effects observed for brand image and brand loyalty are more difficult to account for solely through the halo effect. These dimensions are strongly tied to emotional attachment and identification, which may lead fans to evaluate famous players more positively regardless of performance, or even in spite of it. Nonetheless, it is the overall inconsistency across the six brand equity dimensions that suggests the moderating role of fame not being stable and that performance effects may depend on the specific nature of the evaluated brand equity outcome.

Study 2 produced a different picture. Here, only brand value revealed a significant interaction effect, indicating that under manipulated performance conditions, the impact of performance was more pronounced when fame was low than when it was high. For all other dimensions, no significant interaction effects emerged, meaning that performance and fame influenced evaluations largely independently. Although this single result aligns with the theoretical assumption of Hypothesis 3, the lack of a consistent pattern across the other dimensions prevents a general confirmation of the third hypothesis. This divergence from Study 1 can be understood in terms of the salience of performance cues. As Keller (1993) and Shank and Lyberger (2014) note, the accessibility and prominence of performance-related information critically determine its impact on brand-related perceptions. In Study 2, performance statistics were experimentally manipulated and explicitly presented, making performance differences more notable. This could have amplified performance effects across all dimensions and reduced the moderating influence of fame. By contrast, in Study 1, where participants relied on their prior knowledge, performance cues were less prominent, leaving more room for fame to shape brand perceptions.

Taken together, these results illustrate that the interaction between performance and fame is not stable across contexts. Rather, the relative weight of each factor depends on whether individuals rely on heuristic shortcuts such as fame or more so on systematic processing of explicit information like performance stats.

6 Theoretical and Managerial Implications

This research contributes to the growing body of literature on sport brand equity by reinforcing the multidimensional nature of how athlete characteristics shape brand-related outcomes. Building on the frameworks of Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993) as well as sport-specific adaptations such as Gladden and Funk's (2002) team-association model, the findings provide further evidence that both on-field performance and off-field celebrity status are essential, yet distinct, drivers of brand equity.

In line with previous sport marketing research, the results confirm that both on-field performance and off-field celebrity status significantly influence club-related brand equity evaluations. Prior studies have repeatedly demonstrated that athlete reputation, performance statistics, and celebrity cues transfer onto team brands (e.g., Arai et al., 2013, 2014; Hassan et al., 2016; Magano et al., 2024).

A particularly relevant comparison can be drawn with the multidimensional framework of Pifer et al. (2015). They found that brand awareness, brand image, and perceived quality were jointly predicted by on-field and off-field attributes, while loyalty depended only on off-field ones, reputation and value only on on-field ones. The present findings provide partial support for this framework: fame was indeed consistently significant, but unlike in their model, it extended to all six dimensions. Performance, on the other hand, was broadly influential across dimensions when cues were emphasized (Study 2), but weaker and more selective when judgments relied on participants' existing knowledge (Study 1), as results proved to be non-significant for brand image and brand loyalty. Taken together, this indicates that while the segmentation of performance- versus fame-driven dimensions by Pifer et al. is a useful starting point, the actual influence of performance may be more context-dependent than previously assumed. And contrary to his results, this research came to the conclusion that celebrity status is the bigger driver of a football club's brand equity, and not performance.

Finally, this research also contributes to theory by exploring the interplay of performance and celebrity status. Unlike earlier models that primarily considered additive main effects, this thesis examined interaction effects and revealed that fame can moderate the role of performance. While the evidence for such moderation was inconsistent across dimensions, the results demonstrate that interactions matter and cannot be ignored. Such insight suggests that sport brand equity is shaped not only by independent contributions of performance and fame

but also by the way these factors interact under different conditions. Future theorizing should therefore expand existing frameworks by integrating interactive mechanisms, particularly in contexts where the salience of one factor may expand or diminish the effect of the other.

From a managerial perspective, the results underline the dual importance of both on-field performance and off-field celebrity status for shaping club brand equity. For managers in professional football, this means that branding strategies cannot rely solely on sporting success but must also leverage the marketability and fame of individual players.

As the results show that player performance plays a particularly strong role in shaping perceptions of brand awareness, perceived quality, brand reputation, and brand value. Clubs can thus leverage athletic success directly in their brand communication, for example by emphasizing recent achievements, highlighting player statistics, or showcasing outstanding performances in promotional content. Even less famous players can strengthen brand equity if their on-field performance is effectively communicated. This aligns with prior research emphasizing the link between athletic performance and consumer judgments of quality and credibility (Gladden & Funk, 2002; Pifer et al., 2015). Managers should therefore not overlook the branding potential of emerging talents whose fame may be limited but whose sporting impact is considerable.

Celebrity status, in turn, demonstrated a consistently significant effect across all six brand equity dimensions. In particular, brand image, and brand loyalty were shaped more strongly by fame than by performance. This highlights the value of globally recognized players whose reputations extend beyond the pitch and into popular culture. Marketing strategies can harness this potential by featuring such players prominently in campaigns, merchandise, and international market expansion. However, this influence also comes with strategic risks: as Kahle and Homer (1985) noted, celebrity-driven perceptions can sometimes overshadow objective performance, meaning that clubs may become overdependent on a player's off-field appeal rather than their sporting contribution.

For sustainable brand management, clubs should therefore pursue a balanced portfolio strategy. While famous players provide broad and reliable impact across brand equity dimensions, integrating strong performance cues ensures credibility and guards against reputational risks if sporting results decline. Moreover, in line with what Pifer et al. (2015) highlight, combining both attributes, performance and fame, may offer the most powerful long-term effects. Yet

given the high costs and risks associated with recruiting celebrity players, managers should carefully evaluate the expected brand equity return on such investments and complement them with performance-based narratives around less famous players, ensuring that brand equity is not overly dependent on either factor alone.

7 Limitations and Future Research

As for any academic research, this thesis entails certain limitations that must be acknowledged. At the same time, these limitations provide valuable opportunities for future investigations.

One of the major strengths of this thesis lies in the use of two complementary research designs, as study 1 is based on real-world player knowledge, and Study 2, employs manipulated performance statistics. However, each design brings specific limitations. Study 1 may have been subject to biases such as unequal media exposure, prior attitudes, or cultural familiarity with certain players, potentially skewing evaluations. Study 2, while offering stronger control, created a more artificial evaluation context that may not fully mirror real-world judgments. Future research could build on this work by combining real and manipulated player information within the same study, or by including repeated measurements over time to see whether performance and celebrity effects remain stable. This would help bring together the strengths of both approaches – realism and control – without requiring overly complex designs.

A further limitation concerns the potential presence of demand effects in the measurement of brand equity. Participants were explicitly asked to evaluate how much they liked the team given the presence of a specific player. While this framing ensured that the hypothesized effects of performance and fame could be directly tested, it also made the task less conservative, as it encouraged participants to consciously attribute their team evaluations to the player in question. This design choice thus maximized the chances of detecting an effect, but it may also overstate the strength of the relationship compared to more natural settings in which consumers are not prompted to link their judgments about a team to a single athlete. Future research could therefore adopt more indirect measurement approaches, assessing brand equity without explicit reference to individual players, in order to test whether the observed effects also emerge spontaneously under more ecologically valid conditions.

Another limitation is about the sample. Although the number of participants per study (~65) was sufficient for the applied statistical analyses, larger samples would allow for greater generalizability and more robust statistical power. Moreover, the two samples were

independent, meaning the same participants did not take part in both studies. This limited comparability may partly explain differences in outcomes across the two studies. Additionally, the geographic concentration of participants (primarily from Germany) likely influenced player evaluations. For instance, Thomas Müller consistently received the highest sympathy ratings, which may reflect national familiarity rather than global player perceptions.

Lastly, the scope of this thesis did not extend to analyzing additional moderating variables such as team identification, fan involvement, or contextual factors, even though descriptive statistics for these measures were collected. While the descriptive results indicated that basic assumptions held true, these variables were not systematically integrated into the main analyses. Future research could build on this by incorporating such moderators to provide a richer understanding of how individual fan characteristics or contextual influences shape the relationship between athlete attributes and brand equity outcomes.

8 Conclusion

The aim of this dissertation was to examine how on-field performance and off-field celebrity status of football players influence the brand equity of the clubs they represent. Results indicate that both performance and celebrity status significantly influence brand equity, though in different ways. Performance primarily enhanced perceptions of brand awareness, perceived quality, brand reputation, and brand value, while fame exerted broader effects across all six brand equity dimensions. Interaction effects between the two were largely absent, suggesting that performance and celebrity status operate as independent drivers. Overall, the results highlight fame as the more consistent factor, but also confirm the enduring importance of performance in shaping credibility and trust.

This study contributes to the literature by offering a novel and comprehensive investigation of athlete influence on team brand equity. While prior work, such as Pifer et al. (2015), highlighted links between star player attributes and specific brand outcomes, this thesis extends the discussion by adopting an experimental design across two studies and directly testing the main- and interaction effects of performance and celebrity status on all six brand equity dimensions. In doing so, it provides a more differentiated and contemporary understanding of how athletes contribute to the branding power of their clubs.

For the academic community, these findings underline the importance of continuing to explore the athlete–team brand relationship with refined models and across different contexts. While

further research is needed to address remaining inconsistencies and to incorporate additional moderating factors, this thesis establishes a clear foundation and demonstrates the significance of both performance and fame in shaping team brand equity.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Pre-test Questionnaire

Welcome Page

Welcome to this study!

Thank you for your participation in this survey. As a master's student at Católica Lisbon School of Business & Economics, I am conducting a study that explores how football players are perceived based on their performance and public profile.

Your input will help us better understand how different athlete characteristics influence team image and fan interest. There are no right or wrong answers – just your honest opinion.

The survey takes about 5 minutes to complete.

Feel free to reach out to s-bknappmann@ucp.pt for any comments or concerns.

Thank you for your time and contribution!

Let's get started!

Section 1: Football Involvement

Firstly, you are asked a few questions about your football involvement.

1. How closely do you follow professional football?
 - 1 = Not at all
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5 = Extremely closely
2. How often do you watch football matches (live or highlights)?
 - 1 = Never
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5 = Very frequently
3. How knowledgeable do you consider yourself about football?
 - 1 = Not knowledgeable at all
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5 = Extremely knowledgeable
4. Do you support a specific football club?
 - Yes: [please specify]
 - No

Section 2: Performance Stats Judgement

You will now evaluate players based only on their performance statistics - they are all playing for a club in one of Europe's top 5 leagues – and all play the position of a forward.

Forwards are typically responsible for scoring goals, creating offensive opportunities, and contributing to their team's attacking play.

Please review the stats provided and answer based on how you perceive each player's performance.

1. If a forward had the following stats (this season), how would you rate his performance level? (1 = not good at all, 5 = extremely good)
2. How important do you think this player is to their team's success? (1 = not important at all, 5 = extremely important)
3. Would you consider this player as one of the best forwards in European football? (1 = not at all, 5 = absolutely)
4. Would these stats justify a move to a top club or national team call-up? (1 = not at all, 5 = absolutely)

The same response scale was used for all four questions, as shown below:

	1	2	3	4	5
43 games – 30 goals – 4 assists	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
50 games – 20 goals – 16 assists	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
41 games – 27 goals – 6 assists	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
48 games – 28 goals – 8 assists	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
36 games – 8 goals – 4 assists	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
44 games – 6 goals – 6 assists	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
45 games – 6 goals – 6 assists	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
43 games – 9 goals – 5 assists	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Section 3: Player Judgement

In this section, you will see the names of 8 professional football players and their performance statistics from the 2024/25 season.

Please answer the following questions based on your personal knowledge and opinion of each athlete.

1. How do you rate their current performance level? (1 = very poor, 5 = world class)
2. How important do you think this player's performance is to their team's success? (1 = not important at all, 5 = extremely important)

3. Would you currently consider this player as one of the best forwards in European Football? (1 = not at all, 5 = absolutely)
4. How often do you see these athletes in media like TV, social media, sponsorships etc.? (1 = never, 5 = constantly)
5. How much public interest do you think there is in this athlete (e.g fan following, media coverage, popularity)? (1 = very little interest, 5 = extremely high interest)
6. To what extent do you consider this athlete a celebrity, beyond being an athlete? (1 = not a celebrity at all, 5 = absolutely a celebrity)

The same response scale was used for all questions, as shown below:

	1	2	3	4	5
Erling Haaland (43 games – 30 goals – 4 assists)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Vini Jr (50 games – 20 goals – 16 assists)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Alexander Isak (41 games – 27 goals – 6 assists)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mateo Retegui (48 games – 28 goals – 8 assists)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Paulo Dybala (36 games – 8 goals – 4 assists)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Thomas Müller (44 games – 6 goals – 6 assists)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lee Kang-In (45 games – 6 goals – 6 assists)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Takumi Minamino (43 games – 9 goals – 5 assists)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Thank you

Thank you for your time spent taking this survey.

Your response has been recorded.

Appendix 2: Study 1 Questionnaire

Welcome Page

Welcome to this study!

Thank you for your participation in this survey. As a master's student at Católica Lisbon School of Business & Economics, I am conducting a study that explores how football players are perceived based on their performance and public profile.

Your input will help us better understand how different athlete characteristics influence team image and fan interest. There are no right or wrong answers — just your honest opinion.

The survey takes about 9 minutes to complete.

Feel free to reach out to s-bknappmann@ucp.pt for any comments or concerns.

Thank you for your time and contribution!

Let's get started!

Section 1: Football Involvement

Firstly, you are asked a few questions about your football involvement.

1. How closely do you follow professional football?
 - 1 = Not at all
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5 = Extremely closely
2. How often do you watch football matches (live or highlights)?
 - 1 = Never
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5 = Very frequently
3. How knowledgeable do you consider yourself about football?
 - 1 = Not knowledgeable at all
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5 = Extremely knowledgeable
4. Do you support a specific football club?
 - Yes: [please specify]
 - No

Section 2: Player Evaluation

In the following section, you will evaluate four professional football players, all being currently active in one of Europe's top five leagues.

Each player will be presented alongside his performance statistics from the 2024/25 season.

Based on the information shown, please indicate to what extent each player influences your perception of the club he plays for - not necessarily their current team, but a professional team in general.

RANDOMIZATION

The four players – Erling Haaland, Thomas Müller, Mateo Retegui,

Player 1 – Example Erling Haaland

This section is about Erling Haaland, currently playing for Manchester City in the English Premier League. In the present season he played 43 GAMES, in which he scored 30 GOALS and further ASSISTED 4.

1. Erling Haaland (43GP – 30G – 4A) increases how much attention I pay to the club he plays for.
 - 1 = Not at all
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5 = Absolutely
2. Erling Haaland (43GP – 30G – 4A) improves the image of the club he plays for.
 - 1 = Not at all
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5 = Absolutely
3. Erling Haaland (43GP – 30G – 4A) enhances the perception of his club as high-performing and professional.
 - 1 = Not at all
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5 = Absolutely
4. Erling Haaland (43GP – 30G – 4A) contributes to the strong reputation of the club he plays for.
 - 1 = Not at all
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5 = Absolutely

5. Erling Haaland (43GP – 30G – 4A) strengthens my commitment to the club he plays for.
 - 1 = Not at all
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5 = Absolutely
6. Erling Haaland (43GP – 30G – 4A) adds value to the brand of the club he plays for.
 - 1 = Not at all
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5 = Absolutely
7. Erling Haaland (43GP – 30G – 4A) makes his club more noticeable to me.
 - 1 = Not at all
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5 = Absolutely
8. Erling Haaland (43GP – 30G – 4A) contributes to a more attractive and favorable impression of the club he plays for.
 - 1 = Not at all
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5 = Absolutely
9. Erling Haaland (43GP – 30G – 4A) increases the overall quality impression of the club he plays for.
 - 1 = Not at all
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5 = Absolutely
10. Erling Haaland (43GP – 30G – 4A) adds to the external credibility and recognition of his club in football.
 - 1 = Not at all
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5 = Absolutely
11. Erling Haaland (43GP – 30G – 4A) increases my willingness to stay loyal to the club he plays for.
 - 1 = Not at all
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5 = Absolutely

12. Erling Haaland (43GP – 30G – 4A) makes his club more marketable and commercially appealing.

- 1 = Not at all
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 = Absolutely

Controls

1. How familiar are you with Erling Haaland

- 1 = Not familiar at all
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 = Very familiar

2. How would you rate Erling Haaland's performance level this past season 2024/25?
(43GP – 30G – 4A)

- 1 = Not good at all
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 = Very good

3. How well-known or famous do you consider Erling Haaland?

- 1 = Not famous at all
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 = Very famous

4. How much do you sympathize with Erling Haaland?

- 1 = Not at all
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 = A lot

(THE SAME QUESTIONS WERE ASKED ABOUT THE RESIDUAL 3 PLAYERS)

Section 3: Demographics

Lastly, please answer a few short questions about yourself. This information helps to better interpret the results of this study. All responses are anonymous and will be used for research purposes only.

1. What is your age?

- _____

2. What is your gender?
 - Male
 - Female
 - Other: _____
3. What country do you currently live in?
 - Germany
 - Portugal
 - United States
 - Other: _____

Thank you

Thank you for your time spent taking this survey.

Your response has been recorded.

Appendix 3: Study 2 Questionnaire

Welcome Page

(same as in study 1)

Section 1: Football Involvement

(same as in study 1)

Section 2: Player Evaluation

In the following section, you will evaluate four professional football players, all currently active in one of Europe's top five leagues.

Player 1 – Example Erling Haaland

This section focuses on Erling Haaland, who currently plays for Manchester City in the English Premier League.

Please consider the following statistics as representative of his performance during last season:

- Played 44 matches
- Scored 6 goals
- Delivered 6 assists

Based on these stats, please evaluate the extent to which each player could influence how a football club is perceived.

(THE QUESTIONS BEING ASKED WERE THE EXACT SAME AS IN STUDY 1 – JUST WITH THE MANIPULATED STATLINES CONSIDERING EACH PLAYER)

Controls

1. How familiar are you with Erling Haaland
 - 1 = Not familiar at all
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5 = Very familiar
2. Considering the performance stats presented (44GP – 6G – 6A), how would you rate Erling Haaland's performance level this past season 2024/25?
 - 1 = Not good at all
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5 = Very good
3. How well-known or famous do you consider Erling Haaland?
 - 1 = Not famous at all
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5 = Very famous
4. How much do you sympathize with Erling Haaland?
 - 1 = Not at all
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5 = A lot
5. How much do you sympathize with Erling Haaland's current club, Manchester City?
 - 1 = Not at all
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5 = A lot

(THE SAME QUESTIONS WERE ASKED ABOUT THE RESIDUAL 3 PLAYERS)

Section 3: Manipulation Believability

- How easy or difficult was it for you to imagine that the following players had the respective stats?

	Very difficult	2	3	4	Very easy
Erling Haaland (44GP – 6G – 6A)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Thomas Müller (41GP – 27G – 6A)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mateo Retegui (45GP – 6G – 6A)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kang-in Lee (48GP – 28G – 8A)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Section 4: Demographics

(same as in study 1)

Thank you

(same as in study 1)

Appendix 4: Pre-test Results

Athlete Performance:

		Paired Samples Test						Significance		
		Paired Differences			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper				
Pair 1	Haaland_Performance – Retegui_Performance	.059523810	.497347461	.093989836	-.133327403	.252375022	.633	27	.266	.532
Pair 2	Haaland_Performance – Müller_Performance	2.70238095	.343538662	.064922705	2.56917057	2.83559134	41.625	27	<.001	<.001
Pair 3	Haaland_Performance – Kang-In_Performance	2.77380952	.480513883	.090808588	2.58748569	2.96013336	30.546	27	<.001	<.001
Pair 4	Retegui_Performance – Müller_Performance	2.64285714	.678466993	.128218210	2.37977511	2.90593918	20.612	27	<.001	<.001
Pair 5	Retegui_Performance – Kang-In_Performance	2.71428571	.359632708	.067964194	2.57483471	2.85373672	39.937	27	<.001	<.001
Pair 6	Müller_Performance – Kang-In_Performance	.071428571	.516056134	.097525442	-.128677107	.271534250	.732	27	.235	.470

Athlete Celebrity Status/ Fame:

		Paired Samples Test							Significance	
		Paired Differences								
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
					Lower	Upper				
Pair 1	Haaland_Fame – Retegui_Fame	3.16666667	.475749355	.089908177	2.98219033	3.35114301	35.221	27	<.001	<.001
Pair 2	Haaland_Fame – Müller_Fame	.047619048	.251976315	.047619048	-.050087167	.145325263	1.000	27	.163	.326
Pair 3	Haaland_Fame – Kang-In_Fame	3.21428571	.770945044	.145694919	2.91534443	3.51322699	22.062	27	<.001	<.001
Pair 4	Retegui_Fame – Müller_Fame	-3.11904762	.582419289	.110066900	-3.34488624	-2.89320900	-28.338	27	<.001	<.001
Pair 5	Retegui_Fame – Kang-In_Fame	.047619048	.741005244	.140036828	-.239712790	.334950885	.340	27	.368	.736
Pair 6	Müller_Fame – Kang-In_Fame	3.16666667	.699794208	.132248675	2.89531480	3.43801853	23.945	27	<.001	<.001

Performance Stats Evaluation:

		Paired Samples Test							Significance	
		Paired Differences								
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
					Lower	Upper				
Pair 1	41/27/6 – 48/28/8	-.01786	.06557	.01239	-.04328	.00757	-1.441	27	.081	.161
Pair 2	41/27/6 – 44/6/6	2.58036	.30470	.05758	2.46221	2.69851	44.812	27	<.001	<.001
Pair 3	41/27/6 – 45/6/6	2.58036	.30470	.05758	2.46221	2.69851	44.812	27	<.001	<.001
Pair 4	48/28/8 – 44/6/6	2.59821	.31431	.05940	2.47634	2.72009	43.741	27	<.001	<.001
Pair 5	48/28/8 – 45/6/6	2.59821	.31431	.05940	2.47634	2.72009	43.741	27	<.001	<.001

Appendix 5: Study 1 Reliability Analysis Results

Dimension	Player	Experimental Condition	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Brand Awareness	Erling Haaland	High performance/ high fame	2	.802
	Thomas Müller	Low performance/ high fame	2	.710
	Mateo Retegui	High performance/ low fame	2	.761
	Lee Kang-in	Low performance/ low fame	2	.836
	Erling Haaland	High performance/ high fame	2	.780
Brand Image	Thomas Müller	Low performance/ high fame	2	.848
	Mateo Retegui	High performance/ low fame	2	.744
	Lee Kang-in	Low performance/ low fame	2	.791
Perceived Quality	Erling Haaland	High performance/ high fame	2	.801
	Thomas Müller	Low performance/ high fame	2	.793
	Mateo Retegui	High performance/ low fame	2	.833
	Lee Kang-in	Low performance/ low fame	2	.887
Brand Reputation	Erling Haaland	High performance/ high fame	2	.778
	Thomas Müller	Low performance/ high fame	2	.785
	Mateo Retegui	High performance/ low fame	2	.828
	Lee Kang-in	Low performance/ low fame	2	.802
Brand Loyalty	Erling Haaland	High performance/ high fame	2	.845
	Thomas Müller	Low performance/ high fame	2	.719
	Mateo Retegui	High performance/ low fame	2	.884
	Lee Kang-in	Low performance/ low fame	2	.834
Brand Value	Erling Haaland	High performance/ high fame	2	.820
	Thomas Müller	Low performance/ high fame	2	.755
	Mateo Retegui	High performance/ low fame	2	.837
	Lee Kang-in	Low performance/ low fame	2	.897

Appendix 6: Study 1 Control Analysis Results

Athlete Performance:

		Paired Samples Test							Significance	
		Paired Differences			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper				
Pair 1	Performance Haaland – Performance Müller	1.437500000	1.067187373	.133398422	1.170924526	1.704075474	10.776	63	<.001	<.001
Pair 2	Performance Haaland – Performance Retegui	.031250000	.925284169	.115660521	-.199879109	.262379109	.270	63	.394	.788
Pair 3	Performance Haaland – Performance Kang-In	1.484375000	1.023411467	.127926433	1.228734422	1.740015578	11.603	63	<.001	<.001
Pair 4	Performance Müller – Performance Retegui	-1.406250000	1.204736025	.150592003	-1.70718411	-1.10531589	-9.338	63	<.001	<.001
Pair 5	Performance Müller – Performance Kang-In	.046875000	1.060543250	.132567906	-.218040822	.311790822	.354	63	.362	.725
Pair 6	Performance Retegui – Performance Kang-In	1.453125000	1.053033223	.131629153	1.190085127	1.716164873	11.040	63	<.001	<.001

Athlete Celebrity Status/ Fame:

		Paired Samples Test							Significance	
		Paired Differences			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper				
Pair 1	Fame Haaland – Fame Müller	-.062500000	.73192505	.09149063	-.24532944	.12032944	-.683	63	.249	.497
Pair 2	Fame Haaland – Fame Retegui	2.015625000	1.119696494	.139962062	1.735933138	2.295316862	14.401	63	<.001	<.001
Pair 3	Fame Haaland – Fame Kang-In	2.062500000	1.11091268	.13886409	1.78500227	2.33999773	14.853	63	<.001	<.001
Pair 4	Fame Müller – Fame Retegui	2.078125000	1.199268130	.149908516	1.778556734	2.377693266	13.863	63	<.001	<.001
Pair 5	Fame Müller – Fame Kang-In	2.125000000	1.14780674	.14347584	1.83828641	2.41171359	14.811	63	<.001	<.001
Pair 6	Fame Retegui – Fame Kang-In	.046875000	1.090066075	.136258259	-.225415404	.319165404	.344	63	.366	.732

Athlete Familiarity:

		Paired Samples Test							Significance	
		Paired Differences			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper				
Pair 1	Familiarity Haaland – Familiarity Müller	-.203125000	.962465213	.120308152	-.443541657	.037291657	-1.688	63	.048	.096
Pair 2	Familiarity Haaland – Familiarity Retegui	1.843750000	1.335934962	.166991870	1.510043375	2.177456625	11.041	63	<.001	<.001
Pair 3	Familiarity Haaland – Familiarity Kang-In	1.937500000	1.331844407	.166480551	1.604815166	2.270184834	11.638	63	<.001	<.001
Pair 4	Familiarity Müller – Familiarity Retegui	2.046875000	1.577919944	.197239993	1.652722325	2.441027675	10.378	63	<.001	<.001
Pair 5	Familiarity Müller – Familiarity Kang-In	2.140625000	1.401441293	.175180162	1.790555381	2.490694619	12.220	63	<.001	<.001
Pair 6	Familiarity Retegui – Familiarity Kang-In	.093750000	1.094267168	.136783396	-.179589806	.367089806	.685	63	.248	.496

Athlete Sympathy:

		Paired Samples Test							Significance	
		Paired Differences			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper				
Pair 1	Sympathy Haaland – Sympathy Müller	-.953125000	1.200921439	.150115180	-1.25310625	-.653143750	-6.349	63	<.001	<.001
Pair 2	Sympathy Haaland – Sympathy Retegui	.718750000	1.075982386	.134497798	.449977597	.987522403	5.344	63	<.001	<.001
Pair 3	Sympathy Haaland – Sympathy Kang-In	.937500000	1.152980954	.144122619	.649493927	1.225506073	6.505	63	<.001	<.001
Pair 4	Sympathy Müller – Sympathy Retegui	1.671875000	1.501900251	.187737531	1.296711480	2.047038520	8.905	63	<.001	<.001
Pair 5	Sympathy Müller – Sympathy Kang-In	1.890625000	1.346567506	.168320938	1.554262445	2.226987555	11.232	63	<.001	<.001
Pair 6	Sympathy Retegui – Sympathy Kang-In	.218750000	.786165094	.098270637	.022371802	.415128198	2.226	63	.015	.030

Appendix 7: Reliability Analysis Results Study 2

Dimension	Player	Experimental Condition	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Brand Awareness	Erling Haaland	Low performance/ high fame	2	.727
	Thomas Müller	High performance/ high fame	2	.719
	Mateo Retegui	Low performance/ low fame	2	.705
	Lee Kang-in	High performance/ low fame	2	.738
Brand Image	Erling Haaland	Low performance/ high fame	2	.738
	Thomas Müller	High performance/ high fame	2	.828
	Mateo Retegui	Low performance/ low fame	2	.881
	Lee Kang-in	High performance/ low fame	2	.885
Perceived Quality	Erling Haaland	Low performance/ high fame	2	.867
	Thomas Müller	High performance/ high fame	2	.866
	Mateo Retegui	Low performance/ low fame	2	.871
	Lee Kang-in	High performance/ low fame	2	.835
Brand Reputation	Erling Haaland	Low performance/ high fame	2	.808
	Thomas Müller	High performance/ high fame	2	.775
	Mateo Retegui	Low performance/ low fame	2	.846
	Lee Kang-in	High performance/ low fame	2	.909
Brand Loyalty	Erling Haaland	Low performance/ high fame	2	.925
	Thomas Müller	High performance/ high fame	2	.882
	Mateo Retegui	Low performance/ low fame	2	.911
	Lee Kang-in	High performance/ low fame	2	.863
Brand Value	Erling Haaland	Low performance/ high fame	2	.933
	Thomas Müller	High performance/ high fame	2	.882
	Mateo Retegui	Low performance/ low fame	2	.882
	Lee Kang-in	High performance/ low fame	2	.895

Appendix 8: Control Analysis Results Study 2

Athlete Performance (Manipulation):

		Paired Samples Test					Significance			
		Paired Differences			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper				
Pair 1	Performance Haaland – Performance Müller	-1.95161290	1.10775832	.140685448	-2.23293084	-1.67029496	-13.872	61	<.001	<.001
Pair 2	Performance Haaland – Performance Retegui	.048387097	.998809445	.126848926	-.205263008	.302037202	.381	61	.352	.704
Pair 3	Performance Haaland – Performance Kang-In	-1.90322581	1.19712329	.152034810	-2.20723820	-1.59921341	-12.518	61	<.001	<.001
Pair 4	Performance Müller – Performance Retegui	2.00000000	1.04017653	.132102551	1.73584462	2.26415538	15.140	61	<.001	<.001
Pair 5	Performance Müller – Performance Kang-In	.048387097	.894929604	.113656173	-.178882468	.275656661	.426	61	.336	.672
Pair 6	Performance Retegui – Performance Kang-In	-1.95161290	1.24699533	.158368565	-2.26829042	-1.63493538	-12.323	61	<.001	<.001

Manipulation Believability:

		Paired Samples Test					Significance			
		Paired Differences			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper				
Pair 1	Haaland_Believability – Müller_Believability	-.854838710	1.15725472	.146971497	-1.14872638	-.560951038	-5.816	61	<.001	<.001
Pair 2	Haaland_Believability – Retegui_Believability	-.725806452	1.42770428	.181318625	-1.08837545	-.363237454	-4.003	61	<.001	<.001
Pair 3	Haaland_Believability – Kang-In_Believability	-.483870968	1.28983333	.163808997	-.811427301	-.156314635	-2.954	61	.002	.004
Pair 4	Müller_Believability – Retegui_Believability	.129	1.248	.158	-.188	.446	.814	61	.209	.419
Pair 5	Müller_Believability – Kang-In_Believability	.371	1.244	.158	.055	.687	2.347	61	.011	.022
Pair 6	Retegui_Believability – Kang-In_Believability	.242	1.082	.137	-.033	.517	1.761	61	.042	.083

Athlete Celebrity Status/ Fame:

		Paired Samples Test					Significance			
		Paired Differences			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper				
Pair 1	Fame Haaland – Fame Müller	.048387097	.755903961	.095999899	-.143576566	.240350759	.504	61	.308	.616
Pair 2	Fame Haaland – Fame Retegui	2.09677419	1.03559087	.131520171	1.83378336	2.35976503	15.943	61	<.001	<.001
Pair 3	Fame Haaland – Fame Kang-In	2.04838710	1.09285938	.138793280	1.77085278	2.32592141	14.759	61	<.001	<.001
Pair 4	Fame Müller – Fame Retegui	2.04838710	.982259345	.124747062	1.79893993	2.29783426	16.420	61	<.001	<.001
Pair 5	Fame Müller – Fame Kang-In	2.00000000	.940875072	.119491254	1.76106247	2.23893753	16.738	61	<.001	<.001
Pair 6	Fame Retegui – Fame Kang-In	-.048387097	1.04689109	.132955302	-.314247654	.217473461	-.364	61	.359	.717

Athlete Familiarity:

		Paired Samples Test							Significance	
		Paired Differences			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper				
Pair 1	Familiarity Haaland – Familiarity Müller	-.032258065	.904773170	.114906308	-.262027427	.197511298	-.281	61	.390	.780
Pair 2	Familiarity Haaland – Familiarity Retegui	1.54838710	1.32661803	.168480658	1.21148920	1.88528499	9.190	61	<.001	<.001
Pair 3	Familiarity Haaland – Familiarity Kang-In	1.56451613	1.32592025	.168392040	1.22779543	1.90123682	9.291	61	<.001	<.001
Pair 4	Familiarity Müller – Familiarity Retegui	1.58064516	1.42055620	.180410817	1.21989144	1.94139889	8.761	61	<.001	<.001
Pair 5	Familiarity Müller – Familiarity Kang-In	1.59677419	1.37256106	.174315428	1.24820895	1.94533944	9.160	61	<.001	<.001
Pair 6	Familiarity Retegui – Familiarity Kang-In	.016129032	1.26091218	.160136007	-.304082704	.336340768	.101	61	.460	.920

Athlete Sympathy:

		Paired Samples Test							Significance	
		Paired Differences			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper				
Pair 1	Sympathy Haaland – Sympathy Müller	-.580645161	1.38550325	.175959088	-.932497104	-.228793218	-3.300	61	<.001	.002
Pair 2	Sympathy Haaland – Sympathy Retegui	.370967742	1.46246895	.185733743	-.000429831	.742365315	1.997	61	.025	.050
Pair 3	Sympathy Haaland – Sympathy Kang-In	.322580645	1.46851317	.186501359	-.050351872	.695513162	1.730	61	.044	.089
Pair 4	Sympathy Müller – Sympathy Retegui	.951612903	1.68335554	.213786368	.524120640	1.37910517	4.451	61	<.001	<.001
Pair 5	Sympathy Müller – Sympathy Kang-In	.903225806	1.66654327	.211651207	.480003061	1.32644855	4.268	61	<.001	<.001
Pair 6	Sympathy Retegui – Sympathy Kang-In	-.048387097	.965425573	.122609170	-.293559286	.196785092	-.395	61	.347	.694