

DO NOT BET YOUR CREDIBILITY: CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT AND THE STIGMATIZATION OF SPORTS BETTING PLATFORMS

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Resumo

This study investigates the effects of celebrity endorsement on consumer behavior and endorser reputation in the context of sports betting websites. Drawing on social exchange theory and the constructs of source credibility and celebrity trait transference, the research explores how endorsements by sports commentators, particularly those with a background as former athletes, shape both the intention to engage with betting services and the social perception of the endorsers themselves. A survey of 142 Brazilian football fans was conducted using experimentally designed vignettes and validated multi-item scales. Results indicate that sports betting is a socially stigmatized practice in Brazil despite recent regulatory advances. Former athletes' endorsement significantly increased consumers' intention to engage with betting services. However, such endorsements also led to a measurable decline in the perceived credibility of the commentator. These findings highlight the reputational risks for public figures endorsing stigmatized services and contribute to the literature by demonstrating the bidirectional dynamics of endorsement, where endorsers influence brand perception and absorb symbolic costs. The study underscores the need for clearer regulatory and communicative boundaries in the evolving relationship between sports, media, and gambling.