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Master's Thesis of Global Sport Management

Athlete personal branding in Kazakhstan

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Abstract

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The rapid development of social networks and their growing role in our daily lives is difficult to underestimate. As part of the entertainment industry, sport is no exception. Working on social media accounts has become an important aspect of an athlete's career development and a tool for building a personal brand. A well-chosen strategy for the development of a personal brand allows an athlete to achieve impressive results in terms of financial earnings and future career after retirement.

This work commended with a purpose of discovering the factors forming the athlete personal brand in the modern reality of Kazakhstan society. At the same time, it was aimed at providing suggestion for personal brand development of Kazakhstani athletes, taking into account the discovered socio-cultural factors.

The literature review assisted to obtain the concept of the model of the athlete brand image. Further, the interview with 40 leading experts in Kazakhstan sports field were conducted for getting the model with the local social and cultural specificity. The role the bilingualism and also religion was found out to have a certain role in athlete brand management in Kazakhstan. The quantitative research was aimed at discovering the most influential factors from the obtained sub-dimensions.

In general, the study has raised societal problems in Kazakhstan about language and personal branding. Future study on this problem, using empirical methods and data, may produce objective results that will be valuable in the future. Indeed, Kazakhstani bilingualism might be a highly valuable and intriguing issue for further investigation and development for scholars.

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Keyword: sports, personal brand, brand management, Kazakhstan
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I. Introduction

1. Study background

A brand is defined as 'a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or combination of them which is intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors' (Kotler, 1991, p. 442). While the term has historically been used for entities, products, and services, it has also been applied to any popular identity who was a part of marketing communication strategies (Thomson, 2006). Athletes, artists, politicians, researchers, social media bloggers, and executives are examples of human brands, which are one of the operationalizations of the larger brand category (Thomson, 2006).

Celebrities, for example, are also called brands because they can be properly handled and share the same associations and characteristics as conventional brands (Arai et al., 2014; Thomson, 2006). For instance, many athletes who reached a status of a superstar like Tiger Woods or Cristiano Ronaldo are perceived as human brands. Previously in the business, companies have utilized celebrity partnership to link their products to popular athletes. This converted the influence, prestige, strength and other attractive qualities of chosen human brands to their own (Carlson & Donavan, 2013).

The athlete brand is based on a special name, presence and other personal characteristics such as image that makes him or her different from the other competitors (Parmentier and Fischer 2012; Williams et al. 2015).

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On the other hand, sport stars are often considered different from other celebrities. The Olympic charter and the values of the Olympic movement sets a high standard for athletes and officials in terms of social behavior. Because of this and high media exposure, athletes sometimes are treated as superhuman or sacred. In case of Kazakhstan, certain standards of behavior are expected from athletes in financial support from government and quasi-governmental organizations. As a result, there is a lot of expectation to be exceptional (Arai, Ko, and Kaplanidou 2013). On the other hand, unacceptable actions such as drinking, physical harm and etc. will harm an athlete's reputation (Cashmore 2000).

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familiarity, likeability, and/or similarity) (McGuire 1985). Furthermore, depending on their results, athlete brand can be influenced by either positive or negative mental associations (Cortsen 2013). (for instance, victories often give positive effects while incorrect behavior may lead to negativity). Several of these considerations and obstacles may not be relevant to conventional product management, posing significant challenges when managing the athlete's business.

For this reason, athlete branding is a critical priority in modern world since an athlete's potential reputation is heavily reliant on their ability to retain and foster a consistent public image (Hodge et al. 2014; Hodge and Walker 2015). It can also serve to improve the athlete's brand lifetime, making it more beneficial in terms of personal income (Schweizer and Dietl 2015).

2. Purpose of study

The purpose of this study is identifying the underlying mechanism in forming the athlete personal brand in the modern Kazakhstan society. At same time, it will also be aimed to contribute to the development of sports public relations industry by making new suggestion for athlete brand development.

Current situation in Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan started competing at the Olympics Games as an

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independent country starting from 1994 Lillehammer Winter Olympic Games took place. Ever since, Kazakhstani athletes were present in each edition of summer and winter Olympic Games. In total, athletes from Kazakhstan achieved to win 15 gold, 21 silver and 36 bronze medals in Summer Olympics (1996-2020) and 1 gold, 3 silver and 4 bronze medals in Winter Olympics (1994-2018).

It must be said that the country significantly benefited from the Olympic medals, especially at the initial stage of the independence. The flag and the anthem of the country at the world's biggest sport event improved the international image of the country. The government of the newly independent country was seeking to use every opportunity to promote the country in order to attract foreign long-term investors. As a result, the government continued the full support of the sports in the country, especially the high-performance sports.

Creating the national identity and developing the national brand became a priority. Further in 2007, the professional cycling team Astana was created. The main sponsors were national companies of Kazakhstan such as KazMunaiGaz, Kazzinc, Kazakhstan Railways, Kazakhmys and etc. The team was formed based on the success of Alexander Vinokourov – the greatest cyclists from Kazakhstan who previously competed for German

T-Mobile team. The success of the team allowed the country to become more recognizable in the world because of a wide audience of Tour de France, Vuelta and Giro d'Italia cycling races. The worldwide broadcast and victories of Kazakhstani athletes opened many opportunities for further development in this direction. As a result, by the initiative of the President Nazarbayev, the President's Professional Sports Club "Astana" was formed. The club accepted the best sports teams of Kazakhstan, such as Astana Cycling Team, Astana Football Club, Barys Ice Hockey club, Astana Arlans professional boxing team and Astana Dakar rally racing team. At the same time, the club supported outstanding athletes from individual sports.

Aforementioned briefly describes how the country tried to manage the country image on the international level. However, at the same time, no attention had been paid to athlete individual brand. The scandalous doping cases of 2008 Bejing and 2012 London when Kazakhstan was stripped in total 5 gold, 2 silver and 2 bronze medals (weightlifting and wrestling) had a huge impact on the country and personal image of athletes. Such a blow to the image forced government officials to look for different path with far more economically efficient decisions.

The further boom of the internet and the social media opened many opportunities for athletes to develop and promote their personal brand. In

many developed countries athletes and their representatives successfully used this opportunity. On contrary, Kazakhstani athletes still have a lot of space for improvement in this relatively new aspect of professional career.

The success of Gennadiy Golovkin has indicated that the success of an individual athlete multiplied by the excellent personal brand development may be a new option for Kazakhstan. The professionalism of American promoters has made Gennadiy Golovkin, who used to be known only as a silver medalist of 2004 Athens Summer Olympic Games a worldwide superstar. Thanks to the personal brand of Golovkin also known as GGG, the image of Kazakhstan experienced a huge improvement.

This case became an inspiration for current thesis work. The lack of understanding of athlete personal branding and underlying mechanisms are hindering the potential of our athletes. Including the financial opportunities. I consider it necessary to demonstrate the lack of professionalism on this subject by providing the data in the following table:

**Table 1. Number of Instagram followers
of leading Kazakhstani athletes**

#	Athlete	Sport	Achievement	Instagram followers
1.	Gennadiy Golovkin	Boxing (amateur and professional)	World Champion 2003, Silver medal at 2004 Olympics Current IBF and IBO pro boxing champion	4 100 000
2.	Ilya Iliyn	Weightlifting	World Champion 2005,2006,2011, 2014	483 000

			Stripped of gold medals 2008,2012 Olympics	
3.	Yeleussinov Daniyar	Boxing (amateur and professional)	World Champion 2013, Olympic Champion 2016 Current IBF Inter-Continental pro boxing champion	436 000
4.	Yeldos Smetov	Judo	Silver and bronze medals at 2016 and 2020 Olympics	181 000
5.	Alexandr Vinokurov	Road Cycling	Silver and gold medal at 2000 and 2012 Olympics, Winner of Vuelta 2006 General Classification. Winner of Tour de France 4 individual stages	51 400
6.	Olga Rypakova	Athletics (triple jump)	Silver, gold and bronze medals at 2008,2012 and 2016 Olympics	33 200
7.	Dmitriy Balandin	Swimming	Olympic Champion 2016	15 900
8.	Milad Karimi	Artistic Gymnastics	5th place at 2020 Olympics (floor exercices)	11 900
9.	Serik Sapiyev	Boxing (amateur)	World Champion 2005,2007 Olympic Champion 2012	9 907
10.	Yuliya Galysheva	Freestyle mogul	Bronze medal at 2018 Olympics Gold and silver medals at 2019 and 2021 World Championships	4 426
11.	Darkhan Assadilov	Karate (WKF)	Silver and bronze medal at 2008 and 2018 World Championships Bronze medal at 2020 Olympics	3303

None of the mentioned athletes, except professional boxers have a representative or an image maker responsible for the work with the social media. The data indicates the fact that sports results do not always affect the popularity of an athlete. For this reason, further research on this subject will be conducted.

Research objective

The purpose of this research is to discover the athlete brand image model for Kazakhstan, taking into account the specific socio-cultural and political environment in present times.

Research question

The following identifies the questions planned to be addressed in the research:

RQ1: How the model of athlete brand image (MABI) will look like with the specificity of Kazakhstan industry?

RQ2: How much the sub-dimensions influence the athlete brand image in Kazakhstan?

II. Literature Review

1. Brand and branding

A competitive brand is a name, emblem, style, or other combination that distinguishes a specific organization's "product" as having a durable differential advantage (Doyle, 1992). In American marketing, a brand is described as a "name, word, sign, logo, or design, or a combination of them, intended to distinguish the products and services of one seller or group of sellers and to distinguish them from those of competition." Macrae, Parkinson, and Sheerman (1995) have a slightly richer definition of a brand, in that it encompasses consumer experience rather than primarily manufacturer perception. They hypothesize that a brand represents a singular combination of features and additional qualities, both functional and non-practical, that have taken on a related sense that is inextricably linked to the brand, awareness of which may be cognitive or instinctive. Lynch and de Chernatony (2004) offer a common perspective, describing brands as clusters of practical and emotional values that promise a special and welcome experience between a customer and a seller.

Brands, clearly, do not exist in a bubble, and in order to be successful,

they must efficiently coincide with the prevailing spirit of the times. Solid labels are guided and inspired by popular society and trends in the group (Roll, 2006). n the other side, brand building has seen a surge of activity in recent years, owing to the abandonment of the distinguishing component of a commodity (Montana, Guzman, & Moll, 2007). Brand has been a long-term asset for many institutions, and it continues to loom over the goods or services that they "help recognize." Brands are companies' long-term strategy platforms for collaborating with their customers (Urde, 1999). According to Knox and Bickerton's (2003) study, a corporate identity is the visual, verbal, and behavioral representation of an organization's distinct business model. Customer-based brand equity is formally characterized as the differential impact that a brand's brand awareness has on customer reaction to that brand marketing (Keller, 1991).

Brands are recognized as one of the most valuable intangible assets that companies hold (Keller, 2006). The recorded economic value of the most important brands, as well as the amounts that strong brands fetch when sold in the mergers and acquisitions market, provide compelling proof of brand relevance (M'zungu, Merrilees, & Miller, 2010). The primary aim of branding is to achieve customer-focused brand justice (Supphellen, 2000). Establishing and developing a strong brand of incredible equity provides a company with

a plethora of potential benefits, such as (1) better expectations of product performance, (2) increased consumer satisfaction, (3) less exposure to competitive marketing behavior or marketing problems, (4) wider margins, (5) more beneficial customer reaction to price changes and decreases (6) greater collaboration and assistance from traders or intermediaries, (7) enhanced marketing communication efficiency, (8) new license opportunities, and (9) increased brand extension possibilities (Keller, 2003).

The value of brand equity as a concept to advertisers is largely determined by how they use it (Keller, 1991). Branding is important in contemporary marketing because it integrates all of the strategic elements into one effective equation. Brands in common and corporate brands particularly are considered as the foundation for the strategic achievement of corporates and institutions (Aaker, 1996). In the other hand, while analysts and researchers have put in a lot of effort to theorize brand equity, less effort has been put into how the brand can be treated and delivered to customers in order to build and retain brand equity (M'zungu et al., 2010).

2. Personal brand

Why will a sport brand be associated with individual personality traits? Animism and anthropomorphism theory can be used to explain brand personality phenomenon in the light of consumers' perceptual mechanism of

imbuing human traits on non-human subjects such as products (Avis, 2012; Puzakova, Kwak, & Rocereto, 2009). Animism and anthropomorphism are characterized as ''giving life to the nonliving" and ''giving human characteristics to the nonhuman," respectively (Avis, 2012; Guthrie, 1993, p. 52). While animism and anthropomorphism have been used interchangeably in the marketing literature, Puzakova et al. (2009) concluded that "social psychologists clearly distinguish between the two psychological processes" (p. 413). According to Epley, Waytz, and Cacioppo (2007), ''anthropomorphism entails more than merely attributing existence to the nonliving (i.e., animism)' (p. 865). In the sense of brand marketing, customers' psychological mechanism of imbuing individual personality characteristics into products can not be associated with simply imbuing the brands with life (Avis, 2012; Freling & Forbes, 2005; Puzakova et al., 2009). In addition, ''brands are routinely being perceived as some kind of animate humanlike entities by consumers'' (Avis, Aitken, & Ferguson, 2012, p. 313). Anthropomorphic theory enables sport brand personality researchers to answer the question of why sport consumers attribute human personality traits to their sport brands (Avis, 2012; Freling & Forbes, 2005; Puzakova et al., 2009).

Since a brand, like an individual, may be identified with human

personality traits, brand personality studies can take a lexical approach or adopt a lexical hypothesis, which assumes that personality variations appear to become embedded in human personality traits (Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003;

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and behaviors; (c) social functions, social judgments, interactions, and consequences; and (d) exclusion categories. According to Azoulay and Kapferer (2003), Aaker's (1997) definition of brand personality "requires measurements conceptually distinct from the sole concept of personality" (p. 151). Azoulay and Kapferer describe brand personality as "the distinctive collection of human personality characteristics both applicable and important to brands" (p. 153). Aaker's (1997) description of brand personality, according to Azoulay and Kapferer (2003), "includes measurements conceptually distinct from the sole concept of personality" (p. 151). Brand identity, according to Azoulay and Kapferer, is "the distinct set of human personality traits that are both applicable and essential to brands" (p. 153). Despite its consistency in the conception of brand identity, the present research followed Azoulay and Kapferer's philosophical description of brand personality and the lexical approach in the study of personality structure. This methodological foundation requires measures to classify a representative group of human personality characteristics that are both acceptable to and relevant to sport brands (Bosnjak, Bochmann, & Hufschmidt, 2007).

3. Athlete branding

Creating a brand entails creating a variety of perceptions and

comparisons that customers remember (Evans and Berman, 1992; Keller, 1993). Preece (2015), for example, observed that the interpretation of credibility may play a significant role in creating the ideal celebrity brand story and, as a result, affect its profile. According to Mullin et al. (2014), there are several associations related with an athlete's name. This distinct emotions and expectations associated with an athlete's playing style and personality off the field result in the development of a distinct brand profile (Arai et al., 2014; Evans and Berman, 1992; Mullin et al., 2014). According to Arai et al. (2014), an athlete brand is "a public persona of an individual athlete who has created their own symbolic significance and importance in the market utilizing ones name, face, or other identifying features" (p. 98). Thomson (2006) asserted that these people, labeled human brands, are more readily recognized, presenting a rare advantage for advertisers in terms of advertising efforts.

David Beckham, according to Keller (2008), perfectly illustrates a branded product because he owns various brand components such as name, logo, and style. Similarly, Arai et al. (2014) argued that all athletes should be regarded as brands with a clear public value for customers due to their distinct identity, name, and personality-related brand connections. Some researchers suggested that professional athletes should be seen as social symbols in light of the views of sports stars who play a role in peoples' daily cultural

experiences (Gilchrist, 2005; Guest and Cox, 2009; Rojek, 2006).

When an athlete's brand name transcends his sport, he or she gains the status of a cultural symbol (Arai et al., 2014; Gilchrist, 2005; Hasaan et al., 2016). Despite playing a team sport, Michael Jordan was sold as an athlete and reinterpreted the definition of "player as product," immortalizing his first name mononym, last name, and number with a remarkable brand empire that extended well beyond his successful, active playing years (Mullin et al., 2000). High-profile professional athletes develop market loyalty and, as a result, increase their profits by being able to establish clear brand connections for their followers (Arai et al., 2014; Mullin et al., 2014). Prior research has identified two ways for star athletes to build brand relationships. To start, athletes use memorable sporting achievements, styles of play, and signature movements to create indelible associations (Arai et al., 2014). Off-court activities help to solidify an athlete's reputation and increase his marketability (Arai et al., 2014).

Indeed, some scholars have suggested that professional athletes' reach reaches beyond the arena, placing these entities as cultural figures capable of affecting social change and cultures (Gilchrist, 2005; Summers and Johnson Morgan, 2008). Recognizing this market stability and image-based supremacy, sport associations (e.g., teams) leverage athlete brand names and

associated attributes to distinguish themselves from the competition (Shank, 2001). Similarly, an athlete brand's partnerships reinforce a memorable impression, which encourages supporter recruiting and target market growth (Mullin et al., 2014).

4. Branding and social media

Social networking is described as "the tools, networks, and applications that enable consumers to interact, communicate, and collaborate with others" (Williams & Chinn, 2010, p. 422). Social media includes a broad variety of online, word-of-mouth forums, including blogs and microblogs, company-sponsored message boards, and social networking platforms (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), with additional resources being introduced on a daily basis. The global number of social media users hit almost 2.51 billion in 2017 and is expected to rise to 2.95 billion by 2020. (Statista, 2017). Individuals can use the sites to share knowledge and socialize, while businesses can prosper from growing market recognition and marketing their products (Hambrick et al., 2010; Kassing & Sanderson, 2010; Pegoraro, 2010). Because of the volume of daily interactions, a vast amount of brand-related information is generated, which affects the views of all online users (Smith, 2009).

Social networking provides organizations with a direct contact

connection to customers, allowing them to convey a particular brand message and form brand relationships (Wallace et al., 2011). (Yan, 2011). As a result, social media can play an important role in instilling desirable expectations and behaviors in a consumer's mind, which is needed for the creation of a successful brand Indeed, organizations from a wide range of economic sectors have incorporated social media into their market models as part of their engagement and branding strategies. (Anagnostopoulos, Gillooly, Cook, Parganas, & Chadwick, 2016; Bruhn, Schoenmueller, & Schaefer, 2012; Kim&Ko, 2012; Parganas et al., 2015; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2015; Shen & Bissell, 2013).

Today's users are becoming more interested in online worlds, wanting to partake in higher degrees of engagement and interactivity with businesses (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011). Customer engagement, described as a customer's degree of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral participation in particular brand experiences (Hollebeek, 2011), specifically accounts for the engaging brandrelated complexities of customers (Brodie, Hollebeek, Juric, & Ilic, 2011). The psychological idea of 'interactive experience,' which underpins the interaction concept, is also central to social media. Social media users in brand communities can participate in interactive behaviors (using features provided by online tools), such as commenting on

the brand, voicing support or disapproval, and sharing information with social connections (Gummerus, Liljander, Weman, & Pihlström, 2012).

5. Athlete Personal Brand and social media

Instagram is a social media tool that uses images as the main contact medium (Graham, 2013) and is rapidly gaining attention among athletes and sports organizations worldwide (Clavio, 2013). Instagram has drawn over 700 million daily users since its debut in October 2010, making it more than double the size of Twitter (Constine, 2017) and the best outlet for brands (Koetsier, 2013). More than 95 billion photographs have been posted and shared as of the second quarter of 2017, contributing in more than 4.2 billion regular interactions. Apps, like most social media tools, can register for free and then instantly post images, follow other daily members, and view their shared photographs. Recently introduced features include the ability to exchange videos and images with specific users using direct messaging (Baig, 2013; Miners, 2013). Furthermore, many business experts have highlighted Instagram's widespread acceptance by global brands for brand recognition and brand management purposes (Shively, 2014; Clearly Calculated, 2013), revealing 32% rises in ad recall rates and 10% increases in brand message recall (Truong, 2014).

While recent research suggests that athletes on social media can participate in backstage promotions that provide insights into their everyday and private lives, Marshall (2010) noted that success is important to a public figure's reputation, which is confirmed by Lebel and Danylchuk's (2014) findings. Instagram, like its social media rivals Facebook and Twitter, has intriguing consequences for brand engagement and the subsequent growth of brand value through self-presentation and success. Keller (1993) described brand equity as the "differential impact of brand recognition on customer reaction to brand marketing" (p. 1), and it is made up of brand perception and brand equity. Keller (1993) described brand equity as the "differential impact of brand recognition on customer reaction to a brand's marketing" (p. 1), and it is made up of brand identity and brand image. Brand image is important in terms of athlete social media use since it is heavily influenced by social media (Bruhn, Schoenmueller, & Schaefer, 2012). While typical brands is characterized by the characteristics associated with a specific product or service (Keller, 1993), a "person brand" (Parmentier & Fischer, 2012, p. 107), consists of the attributes one ascribes to a specific person, and is a common term in the sport industry. Chadwick and Burton (2008) explained that while individuals are special in their distinctiveness and features, their products cannot be repeated. Furthermore, Arai, Ko, and Ross (2014) described

"athlete brand" as "a public persona of an individual athlete who has created their own symbolic sense and value in the market using their name, face, or other brand elements.' (p. 98). They developed a model of athlete brand image, which includes the dimensions of athletic performance, attractive appearance, and marketable lifestyle. There is a strong need for today's athletes to build their brands strategically (Arai et al., 2014), and social media is one tool that can be used to accomplish this.

Parmentier and Fischer (2012) concluded from an analysis of athletes' identity-building strategies that it is possible to create brand value through the development of a positive professional profile even though the athlete does not gain mass media exposure. Since social media enables individuals to develop and choose content and display personalities of their choice, athletes can effectively cultivate their public profile and establish brand value by self-presentation by using platforms such as Instagram. However, Thompson, Martin, Gee, and Eagleman (2014) observed that in order to create and retain a positive brand presence across social media, sport companies must be able to devote considerable time to these brand-building activities.

The posting by athletes on social media allows for contact with viewers that may be both social and parasocial (i.e., one directional one mediated), with both ways eliciting constructive participation from

individuals (Frederick, Lim, Clavio, & Walsh, 2012). To stimulate dialogue, interactive communication can be augmented by the exchange of images and videos (Marshall, 2010). Individuals can use the online environment to selectively choose content and view different identities (Bullingham & Vasconcelos, 2013), as well as to "build an aura of authenticity" (Bullingham & Vasconcelos, 2013). (Pegoraro & Jinnah, 2012, p. 88). Individuals will consciously choose content and display various personalities in the online world, as well as ''create an atmosphere of legitimacy" (Bullingham & Vasconcelos, 2013). (Pegoraro & Jinnah, 2012, p. 88). Furthermore, it has been discovered that people who focus their self-esteem on audience reviews are more strategic in their online self-presentation management (Rui & Stefanone, 2013), and athletes can fall into this group.

According to Karg and Lock (2014), while social media channels do not explicitly produce sales, they do encourage sport organizations to create fan trends that contribute to other beneficial outcomes such as increased consumption, sponsorship opportunities, and brand recognition. Likewise, Pegoraro and Jinnah (2012) observed that athletes who successfully create an online brand will transform their fans into more loyal brand customers. Furthermore, Hambrick and Kang (2014) observed that social media can be used successfully as a relationship-marketing mechanism because of its

potential to foster ongoing relationships based on collaboration, interactivity, and interaction – all of which contribute to brand loyalty. Thus, by participating in the online environment through various social media platforms and engaging in interactivity with fans, athletes have a tool to build their own personal brand and deliver it straight to consumers. This is in contrast to historically mediated portrayals by the mainstream media, which often included a variety of representations, some of which were dependent on gender.

Athlete and celebrity endorsing study has sought to investigate the 'look' that affects celebrities and athletes' success as product endorsers. Ohanian (1991), for example, investigated the effect of celebrity spokespersons' perceived appearance on customers' intent to buy endorsed goods. Ohanian's (1990) Source Credibility Model provides a theoretical foundation for athletes to establish their brands. Ohanian (1990) proposed dimensions (attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise) that could be applicable for athlete brand image because the study also dealt with celebrity spokespersons' perceived image. Choi and Rifon (2007) expanded the dimensions of celebrity appearance to include genuineness, integrity, enthusiasm, and sociability. Those measurements, beauty, trustworthiness, and experience, were verified as distinct from Ohanian's reputation indices.

Braunstein and Zhang (2005) expanded and updated the endorser's characteristics literature in the sports sense by developing the athletic star force model for sports stars. Star power was described as a person's ability and distinguishing characteristics that make him or her "star worthy" (French & Raven, 1959). Based on the four endorser effectiveness frameworks: the Source Attractiveness Model (McGuire, 1985), Source Credibility Model (McGuire, 1968), the Meaning Transfer Model (McCracken, 1989), and the Product Match-Up Hypothesis (Kamins, 1990), Braunstein and Zhang (2005) the exploratory data analysis approach was used to identify five athletic star strength variables (professional trustworthiness, likeable personality, athletic expertise, social beauty, and signature style).

6. "Model Athlete Brand Image"

In terms of personal branding, self-presentation is used to create a marketable self-image that includes talents, qualities, and personal ideals, allowing individuals to positively place themselves in an intensely competitive environment (Shepherd, 2005). Athlete identity dimensions, such as on-field and off-field qualities, influence how audiences interact with the athlete and associated individuals, such as the athlete's team or sponsor (Kunkel et al., 2020). Arai and colleagues (2013, 2014) created the MABI to help explain the main components of athlete brands. The MABI explains how

athlete brands are a combined consequence of how they are viewed in both frontstage and backstage environments. According to the MABI, customer expectations of athlete brands are informed by perceptions of an athlete's: (1) Athletic Performance, (2) Attractive Appearance, and (3) Marketable Lifestyle.

1) Athletic performance corresponds to an athlete's associations with sporting performance and is further subdivided into ***athletic expertise, competition style, sportsmanship***, and ***rivalry.***

Athletic expertise refers to an athlete's individual athletic accomplishments and strengths (e.g., winning, skills, and proficiency in their sport). According to Gladden et al. (1998), success is most likely the most significant producer of brand relationships and brand value over time. However, achievement in athletics also requires more than just the players' winning records. Winning does not have to be steady success; however, it may be outstanding records that identify their brands as competitive (Richelieu & Pons, 2006). Furthermore, as we described in the introduction, building athlete brands exclusively focused on winning is dangerous because failing is unavoidable. As a result, the element emphasizes experience. According to Trail, Robinson, Dick, and Gillentine (2003), there are various styles of followers, each of whom sees popularity in a particular way. One type of fan

closely identifies with the team and is obsessed with winning, while another type of fan is merely a spectator looking for a well-played, back-and-forth game. Those fans are more inspired by the athletes' talents and experience than by winning.

Expertise has been described as an important trait of endorsers. Hovland, Janis, and Kelley (1953) discovered that ''expertness" and ''trustworthiness" are major dimensions of endorser source reliability, and Ohanian (1990) described the competence dimensions as expert, experienced, competent, trained, and skilled. Furthermore, according to an athlete sponsorship report, sporting knowledge is most effective in rendering athletes famous in a consumer market (Braunstein & Zhang, 2005).

refers to an athlete's attractive external appearance and is defined by physical ''trademark'' for athlete brands. Attractiveness can be any arbitrary, aspect of a trademark (e.g., image right) and how to develop a secondary meaning the consumers attach to a trademark have been major issues (Cohen, 1986). The physical attractiveness, symbol and body fitness are the

fundamental factors that work as "trademark" for athlete brands.

Physical attractiveness has become an important dimension of source credibility (Ohanian, 1991). Specifically, consumers tend to form positive stereotypes about attractive people, and research has shown that physically attractive communicators are more successful in changing beliefs than unattractive communicators (Ohanian, 1991). Symbol refers to an athlete's attractive personal style, fashion or any outward unique features of the athletes; athletes often utilize their personal style to express their personality or character. This dimension is as important as name, logo, and team color of team sport (e.g., Gladden & Funk, 2001; Ross et al., 2006). For example, Brett Favre of the National Football League (NFL) was known for having a rugged fashion sense, while former National Basketball Association (NBA) star Dennis Rodman is recognized for wearing outlandish clothes at public appearances. For individual athletes, the athlete's name and fashion style have public meaning apart from their real name and true fashion sense. For example, professional golfer Tiger Woods' signature red or black golf apparel often worn during competitions provides a point of differentiation.

Body fitness refers to how physically fit an athlete is in a given sport. Because these individuals are athletes, not fashion models, their attractiveness can be evaluated in terms of the fitness of their body. Braunstein and Zhang

(2005) star power dimensions included the body fitness in the social attractiveness factor mixed with other attractive social characteristics (e.g., physical attractiveness, media exposure and entertainment). In this study, Body Fitness is identified as an independent factor as it is unique and essential for athlete brands. Previous research (e.g., Lau, Cheung & Ransdell, 2008) has examined the relationship between body image and self-esteem, and an athlete's body fitness could be viewed as a symbolic message of self-esteem and self-concept. Perhaps most importantly, the Body Fit influences the consumers' perception toward opposite sex athletes (Daniels, 2009). Therefore, the body fitness of athletes can be an athletic specific brand association factor.

3) Marketable life style refers to an athlete's off-field marketable features that could be indicative of his or her value and personality.

Life story refers to an appealing, interesting off-field life story about an athlete and may include a message that reflects the athlete's personal values. Jowdy and Mcdonald (2002) suggested that one unique episode about an athlete can increase the value of that athlete. For example, famed cyclist Lance Armstrong's battle with cancer provided a foundation for the set of associations with the Armstrong brand. Escalas (2004) argued that a brand becomes more meaningful when it is closely linked to the consumer, and

narrative processing of the brand information helps consumers to connect themselves to the brand. According to Escalas (2004), "as a result of the meaning arising from the structure of narratives, people are able to make evaluations and form judgments by constructing stories." Therefore, the life stories that can connect the athletes to consumers are critical associations for athlete brands.

Role model refers to an athlete's ethical behavior that the society has determined to be worth emulating. These behaviors could be related to the athlete's active participation and contribution to society, conformance to societal norms, and/or exhibition of virtuous behavior. This dimension is identified based on the credibility model (Ohanian, 1991); however, it is differentiated from sportsmanship in that it refers to the off-field activities of the athletes. "People need role-models and idols. . .they offer essential help and orientation, for children and adolescents in particular" (Biskup & Pfister, 1999, p. 199).

Relationship effort refers to an athlete's interactions with fans. Thomson (2006) suggested that fulfilling fans' need for relatedness by offering athletes' online spaces such as blogs or chat rooms where fans can have direct contact with the athlete, can assist with the development of fan attachment. For example, NFL star Chad Ochocinco has achieved significant

attention for his use of Twitter to connect with fans. Thus, those fan services are included in this dimension and have been identified as an organizational attribute in team branding research (Ross et al., 2006).

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III. Method

n   The purpose of this part is to clarify the research methodology that will be used in this research. The chapter contains the basic information regarding the method, data collection, interview/survey and etc.

Overview of the research method

M   My research contains the both qualitative and quantitative methods depending on investigating the research questions (RQ1 and RQ2). Firstly, the research is focused on identifying the MABI model applied to Kazakhstan sports industry. This part will rely on the interpretation and suggestions given by the respondents. Based on the results, it is planned to form an adapted

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MABI for Kazakhstan. Interview is considered to be the most suitable method for given part because it is necessary to develop an overall understanding and collecting suggestions on athlete personal branding from direct contact with the professionals of the industry.

Second part of the research will be quantitative and focus on discovering how the sub-dimensions (factors) will influence the obtained MABI model for Kazakhstan industry.

1. Qualitative research

1.1 List of interviewees

I had a sample size of 40 persons with professional level of awareness of the current sports industry conditions and the images of the athletes. To group was formed from the press secretaries (PR managers) of 20 leading Olympic federations and 20 reporters from leading sports news sites,

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s   ### 1.2 The questionnaire

p   The interview was planned to assist the research in discovering the

professional opinion on MABI model applied to Kazakhstan modern society:

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Taking into account the specific social and cultural norms, what sub-dimensions could be included into the system?

1.3 Interview plan and procedure

I conducted the interviews by having personal meetings (online and offline), with the question already sent to the respondent beforehand. For better understanding, the respondents received Kazakh or Russian translated version of brief MABI explanation. The schedule of the meetings was drawn up after receiving a confirmation and suggested time and date from each respondent.

I have used the method of semi-structured interview for receiving better feedback from the respondents. The questions were formed in such a way that it did not have any directions or suggestions. The objective discovering the true explanation and professional opinion.

The study was constructed from qualitative and quantitative parts. Firstly, the

1.4 Findings

Table 2. Respondent answers on first question of the interview

Respondent number	Respondent answer
1	Speaking both Kazakh and Russian languages
2	Expressing personal opinion on political issues
3	Creating content on all of the famous social media platforms (Instagram, facebook, tiktok)
4	Speaking both Kazakh and Russian languages
5	None
6	Expressing personal opinion on political issues, speaking both Kazakh and Russian languages
7	Religious views
8	None
9	Speaking both Kazakh and Russian languages
10	Speaking both Kazakh and Russian languages
11	None
12	None

13	Speaking both Kazakh and Russian languages
14	Speaking Kazakh, Russian languages
15	Speaking both Kazakh and Russian languages
16	Speaking both Kazakh and Russian languages
17	Religious views
18	Speaking both Kazakh and Russian languages
19	None
20	Speaking both Kazakh and Russian languages
21	Speaking both Kazakh and Russian languages
22	Speaking both Kazakh and Russian languages
23	Speaking both Kazakh and Russian languages
24	Speaking both Kazakh and Russian languages
25	Speaking both Kazakh and Russian languages
26	None
27	Speaking both Kazakh and Russian languages
28	Religious views
29	None
30	None
31	Speaking both Kazakh and Russian languages
32	Speaking both Kazakh and Russian languages
33	Expressing personal opinion on political issues
34	None
35	Speaking both Kazakh and Russian languages
36	None
37	Speaking both Kazakh and Russian languages
38	Speaking both Kazakh and Russian languages
39	Speaking both Kazakh and Russian languages
40	Speaking both Kazakh and Russian languages

The aim of this part the work is to provide information on the findings from the interviews. Firstly, it must be mentioned that all the interviewees preferred to keep the personal information undisclosed. All of the respondents expressed their positive evaluation of MABI as a tool to understand the athlete brand.

Language

Twenty five percent (10 out of 40) of the respondents thought of

MABI as a complete model for Kazakhstan market and would not change it. At the same time, sixty percent (24 out of 40) would add a sub-dimension "speaking both Kazakh and Russian" to the MABI model in Kazakhstan. Most of the respondents highlighted the fact that this specific point would be very important in building up a fan base in the country.

It must be mentioned that the state language in Kazakhstan is Kazakh, while the Russian language keeps its official status alongside (Kazakhstan Const. sec. I., art.7). For this reason, the Russian language obtained a status of peace and friendship (Baiteliyeva, 2015)

In the recent research, Sharipova (2020) found out that 59% of the respondents consider the Kazakh as a mother tongue, while for 30% the mother tongue is Russian. Moreover, some Kazakh people may consider Russian as a mother tongue. It is also discovered that out of all the respondents involved in the research, 21 percent read Kazakh newspapers and books, 40 read Russian and 36 use both.

Based from the aforementioned, it could be said that an athlete would receive much more attention from the fans if he or she speaks the language of the different auditory.

Religious views

Three respondents would add a sub-dimension of "religious views"

which is only 7.5 percent of the overall respondents. This point is also understandable in Kazakhstan society, since the country is experiencing a rise in the number of Muslims who are actively involved in providing the information about the religion in the social media.

The same number of respondents would add a sub-dimension of "political views". The booming development of the social media have provided the athletes a platform to discuss anything with their fans. However, the athletes who are fully financed by the government usually do not express their opinion on politics.

Being present on all the social media platforms

Lastly, one respondent would add a separate sub-dimension of "Creating content on all of the famous social media platforms (Instagram, facebook, tiktok)", which was clarified during the interview as "being present at all the trending social media platforms". Even though the respondent was aware of the fact that this point is part of the "relationship effort" sub-dimension of the MABI.
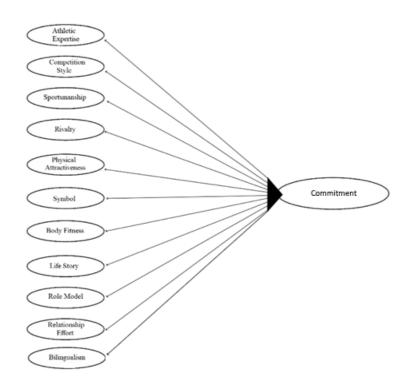
Table 3. Suggested MABI sub-dimensions statistics

#	Suggested sub-dimensions	Quantity of respondent	Percentage

		suggestions	
1	Speaking both Kazakh and Russian languages	24	58.6
2	None	10	24.4
3	Expressing personal opinion on political issues	3	7.3
4	Religious views	3	7.3
5	Creating content on all of the famous social media platforms (Instagram, facebook, tiktok)	1	2.4
	Overall	41	100

The table above demonstrates the data obtained from the conducted interviews. Since 58.6 percent of the respondents suggest adding a "speaking both Kazakh and Russian languages" sub-dimension for a MABI model adapted for Kazakhstan sports industry. Overall, with the inclusion of this suggestion the MABI for Kazakhstan will look as following:

Figure 1. MABI adapted for Kazakhstan

2. Quantitative research

The basis for the research in this part of the work is based on the result obtained in the qualitative section. The MABI for Kazakhstan consists from sub-dimensions such as athletic expertise, competition style, sportsmanship, rivalry, physical attractiveness, symbol, body fitness, life story, role model, relationship effort and speaking both Kazakh and Russian (hereinafter – bilingualism). The mentioned sub-dimensions are the independent variable while the commitment to athlete is the dependent variable.

2.1. Hypothesis

The hypothesis will be as following:

H1: athletic expertise will have a significant effect on commitment.

H2: competition style will have a significant effect on commitment.

H3: sportsmanship will have a significant effect on commitment.

H4: rivalry will have a significant effect on commitment.

H5: physical attractiveness will have a significant effect commitment.

H6: symbol will have a significant effect on commitment.

H7: body fitness will have a significant effect on commitment.

H8: life story will have a significant effect on commitment.

H9: role model will have a significant effect on commitment.

H10: relationship effort will have a significant effect on commitment.

H11: bilingualism will have a significant effect on commitment.

2.2 Method

In this part of the research, the objective is to find the answer for the RQ2 - what is the most influential factor to the athlete brand image in Kazakhstan.

Participants

The target sample was 250 random casual sports fans. The previous

respondents were not included into this sample for the exclusion of the possible bias. The respondents who would only be required to provide information on their gender and age will be answering the questions by giving scores from 1 to 7, from the Likert scale method.

The first survey was held from November 16th to December 1st 2021. A total of 253 results were obtained. However, due to the identified error in AMOS 21.0, it was necessary to run another survey. It was held from December 6th to 10th 2021. A total of 242 were obtained and used in the research.

Materials and procedure

The survey items were developed based on review of existing sports and marketing related articles. Questionnaire was fully translated and provided both in Kazakh and Russian languages for better understanding of the respondents and with the aim of receiving more sincere answers.

Athletic expertise

The variable was measured by items which were developed based on articles of Braunstein and Zhang (2005), Arai et al (2013).

Table 4. Measured development of athletic expertise

Variable	Survey item
Athletic expertise	Athletic expertise is the most important factor in creating brand equity over time
	My connection to an athlete is influenced by his/her

	success
	I am more likely to follow the winner after the match I have just watched

Competition style

The variable was measured by items which were developed based on articles of Lobries et.al. (2016).

Table 5. Measured development of competition style

Variable	Survey item
Competition style	I prefer watching athlete performance with distinctive style
	The athletes I follow on social media have a distinctive style
	Popular athletes of present time are ones with distinctive competition style

Sportsmanship

The variable was measured by items which were developed based on articles of Arai et al (2014).

Table 6. Measured development of sportsmanship

Variable	Survey item
Sportsmanship	I am more likely to follow athletes who behave according to fair play principles
	I prefer when athletes follow the instructions of the referee/judge
	I admire athletes who admit breaking the rules to the referees/judges

Rivalry

The variable was measured by items which were developed based

on articles of Arai et al (2014).

Table 7. Measured development of rivalry

Variable	Survey item
Rivalry	I enjoy watching sporting events with historical context
	The matches with principal rivals represent the era of the sport at the given time
	I am more emotional when my favorite athlete win the historical opponent

Physical attractiveness

The variable was measured by items which were developed based on articles of Bagozzi (2018).

Table 8. Measured development of physical attractiveness

Variable	Survey item
Physical attractiveness	I think that physical attractiveness effects athletes career success
	I prefer cheering for more attractive athletes
	Physically attractive athletes have more social media followers

Symbol

The variable was measured by items which were developed based on articles of Gladden & Funk (2001), Ross et.al. (2006).

Table 9. Measured development of symbol

Variable	Survey item
Symbol	Athletes fashion style has public meaning apart from his/her name and achievements
	Athletes with better fashion sense have more fans
	I prefer cheering for athletes with a better fashion style

Body fitness

The variable was measured by items which were developed based on articles of Lau et.al. (2008).

Table 10. Measured development of body fitness

Variable	Survey item
Body fitness	I think that body fitness effects athletes career success
	I usually support athletes who are in shape that fit the sport
	Athletes with better body conditioning in their sport usually have more social media followers

Life story

The variable was measured by items which were developed based on articles of Jowdy & McDonald (2002).

Table 11. Measured development of life story

Variable	Survey item
Life story	I know more about personal life of the celebrity athletes rather than average athletes
	The life story may increase the value of an athlete in terms of marketing
	Sharing the lifestory of an athlete increases his/her connection to the fans

Role model

The variable was measured by items which were developed based on articles of Ohanian (1991).

Table 12. Measured development of role model

Variable	Survey item

Variable	Survey item
Role model	I prefer cheering for athletes who are more socially responsible
	Athletes who actively contribute to the development of the society off the field tend to have more supporters
	It is necessary for our society to have athletes who may become role models for the youth

Relationship effort

The variable was measured by items which were developed based on articles of Arai et al (2014).

Table 13. Measured development of relationship effort

Variable	Survey item
Relationship effort	Athletes who are active on social media have more fans
	Regular posts on social medias provide conditions for fans to connect to an athlete as a person
	I tend to follow athletes who make a guest appearance on famous youtube interview shows

Bilingualism

The variable was measured by items which were developed as a result of consultancy with survey participants of the qualitative part of the research due to the lack of existing literature on a given topic.

Table 14. Measured development of bilingualism

Variable	Survey item
Bilingualism	I would expect a famous athlete to address his fans both in Kazakh and Russian languages
	Bilingual athletes tend to have more TV coverage compared to other athletes

Commitment

Based on the previous works on the given topic, the psychological commitment was chosen as a predictive variable due to the fact that researches suggested that it is one of the most crucial parts of the loyalty of the fans (Gladden & Funk, 2001). The variable was measured by items which were developed based on articles of Mahmoudian et. al. (2020).

Table 15. Measured development of commitment

Variable	Survey item
Commitment	I will not change my affiliation from the favorite athlete to other athletes because of the mainstream opinion
	There is nothing that could change my commitment to my favorite athlete

2.3 Procedure

IBM SPSS and AMOS 21.0 were used to carry out the testing the hypothesis stated in this paper.

Later, the research carried out the descriptive analysis, reliability analysis and confirmatory factor analysis.

Descriptive statistics like measured of central tendency and measures of variability were carried out on SPSS 22.0 to find out the demographic characteristics of the survey participants. AMOS 22.0 was used to carry out confirmatory factor analysis

IV. Results

Descriptive Statistics

Demographic characteristics of the participants (N=242) are presented in Table 14. The male and female participants' percentages were 52.1% and 47.9%. The detailed data on age groups are presented in the table 14 below.

Table 16. Demographic variables

Variable	Group	N	Percentage
Gender	Male	126	52.1%
	Female	116	47.9%
	15-18	32	13.2%
	19-25	111	45.9%
Age	26-31	73	30.2%
	32-36	18	7.4%
	37 and more	8	3.3%

Reliability analysis

The Cronbach's Alpha method was adapted to calculate the reliability. The following table contains the values of Cronbach's Alpha of the variables. The items can be considered reliable since the values vary from 0.745 to .917.

Table 17. Reliability test result

Variable	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha value
Athletic expertise	3	.827
Competition style	3	.745
Sportsmanship	3	.875
Rivalry	3	.786
Physical attractiveness	3	.825
Symbol	3	.813
Body fitness	3	.817
Life story	3	.786
Role Model	3	.917
Relationship effort	3	.746
Bilingualism	3	.902

Commitment	3	.879

Confirmatory factor analysis and structured equation modelling

Following the reliability analysis, confirmatory analysis was carried out to calculate the intensiveness of the items.

However, the confirmatory analysis as well as the structured equation modelling could not be finished to the error received in AMOS 21.0 stating "the sample moment matrix is not positive definite". In order to fix the possible survey error, the survey was conducted for the second time, however, unfortunately leading to the identical result.

Table 18. Factor loadings Result of the Research Model

Factors and items	Factor Loading	CR	α	AVE
Athletic expertise		.83	.82	.71
Athletic expertise is the most important factor in creating brand equity over time	.77			
My connection to an athlete is influenced by his/her success	.91			
Sportsmanship		.89	.88	.73
I am more likely to follow athletes who behave according to fair play principles	.85			
I prefer when athletes follow the instructions of the referee/judge	.99			
I admire athletes who admit breaking the rules to the referees/judges	.71			
Physical attractiveness		.91	.91	.84
I prefer cheering for more attractive athletes	.98			
Physically attractive athletes have more social media followers	.85			
Symbol		.81	.81	.60
Athletes fashion style has public meaning apart from his/her name and achievements	.69			
Athletes with better fashion sense have more social media followers	.88			
I prefer cheering for athletes with a better fashion style	.74			
Life story		.85	.85	.74
I know more about personal life of the celebrity athletes rather than average athletes	.89			
The life story may increase the value of an athlete in terms of marketing	.83			
Role model		.92	.92	.81
I prefer cheering for athletes who are more socially responsible	.97			
Athletes who actively contribute to the development of the society off the field tend to have more supporters	.98			
It is necessary for our society to have athletes who may become role models for the youth	.73			
Bilingualism		.88	.90	.72
I would expect a famous athlete to address his fans both in	.79			

Kazakh and Russian languages				
Bilingual athletes tend to have more TV coverage compared to other athletes	.94			
Bilingual athletes have more direct interaction with fans compared to other athletes	.82			
Commitment		.88	.88	.71
I will not change my affiliation from the favorite athlete to other athletes because of the mainstream opinion	.90			
There is nothing that could change my commitment to my favorite athlete	.87			
I am very committed to my favorite athlete	.76			

The results of the confirmatory factor analysis were χ^2 = 278.978, df=162, p =.000, χ^2/df = 1.722, TLI = .955, CFI = .965, RMSEA = .055.

Table 19. Significance Test Result of the Research Model

Structural path	Coefficients	SE	t	p
Athletic Expertise → Commitment	-.17	.16	1.0	P=.28
Sportsmanship → Commitment	-.34	.10	3.2	P<.05
Physical attractiveness → Commitment	.05	.05	1.0	P=0.3
Symbol → Commitment	-.13	.06	-2.0	P<.05
Life story → Commitment	-.01	.07	-0.1	P=.9
Bilingualism → Commitment	.05	.12	0.4	P=.6
Role model → Commitment	.04	.06	0.7	P=.5

Research Hypothesis test.

To test the hypothesis of the test, the standardization path coefficient and significance test of the structural model were calculated. The results are indicated in the respective tables provided.

The provided negative information in table 19 indicate the results which do not reflect the reality, showing the negative relationship between

the athletic expertise and commitment, sportsmanship and commitment, symbol and commitment.

The reason for this could be one of survey biases. Mainly, it could be careless responding, which is identified to be a significant threat to the survey data validity (Grau et.al, 2019). At the same time, it also could be because of acquiescence – a tendency to rather agree than disagree without depending on the content of the given question (Cronbach, 1946).

As a result, the stated hypothesis could not be tested due to the lack of variability of the data. Consequently, the absence of base makes it impossible to answer the RQ2 in the quantitative part of the research.

V. Conclusion

1. Summary of findings

The study was mainly designed to develop the athlete brand image applied to case of Kazakhstan, considering the specific political and socio-cultural conditions.

Conducting interviews for this research allowed to discover that specific language environment. The Presidential decree on the Concept of language from 1996 is aimed to expand the scope of Kazakh as a state language while also keeping the Russian in the status of official. The objective of the Concept is to achieve the status of international communication for

Kazakh language.

At the same time, it could be said that modern Kazakhstan has developed the national type of bilingualism (Zhanpeisova, 2006). There is also a notable stratification in the language relation in the city and areas with motley ethnic structure. Often the Russian language is used by Kazakh people to communicate with people of different ethnicity. Bilinguals become the bridge between multilingual citizen group.

The athletes who are able to keep the dialogue with Kazakhstani fans in both Kazakh and Russian language have more opportunities to develop their personal brand. The responds given by the professionals in their field allowed to develop the athlete brand image model applied to Kazakhstan.

On the other hand, the interview results also allowed to discover another socio-cultural specificity of the society – religion. It does not have the same scope as the question of language, but during the last decade it has become more actual in the modern Kazakh society.

As in any state that became independent after the collapse of the Soviet Union, religion have made a rapid return to the life of Kazakhstan citizens. Due to the demographic specificity, the Sunni Islam and Orthodox Christianity have started to restore the past positions. The growing role of the religion in the modern society has led to the need of organizing a new ministry

in 2016 – Ministry of Religious and Civil Society. Expressing the religious views could also be considered as an important factor for a specific auditory, but due to the time constraint and high sensitivity of the issue, the research would not be continued further in this direction.

2. Implications of study

The study assisted to indicated factors in developing Kazakhstan modern athletes' personal brands. One should be aware that modern athlete has a huge potential to develop a personal brand that might create a significant income based on the marketing in social media platforms. The modern Kazakh athletes, even those who are not as successful as Olympic champions could get the attention of the audience with the properly constructed brand image. The bilingualism may be one of the factors that may contribute to achieving the status of a super star and obtaining the much-desired financial opportunities.

It also must be said that the previous government policy on investing in huge national sports projects became less effective after the recent rapid development of the internet and the social media. The modern society is more focused on personalities also known as influencers, who could literally adjust the popular opinion. The recent case of the famous Gennady "GGG" Golovkin gave the country the international awareness like never before. For

this reason, Kazakhstan government and national federations could earn significant benefit by moving the focus to the development of personal brands of the athletes.

3. Limitations and future research

The research was delimited the quantity of respondents willing to take the survey for two times in the quantitative part of the work. Even though it exceeded 200 persons, bigger sample size could have brought more informative value.

Significant obstacle was the lack of professionals in sports PR and marketing who could read the given information in the original English version. Moreover, during the conducting interviews I realized that all of the respondents prefer it to be anonymous without stating the reason for it.

The quantitative part of the work could not be carried out as planned due to the lack of variability in the data. Once again, the reason for it could be the careless responding or acquiescence. At the same time, there is a possibility of biased opinion in the qualitative part due to the selection of interviewees and interpretation of the results.

During the preparation and reviewing the literature, I faced a problem of lack of research on sports branding, sport marketing and sport management in general applied to Kazakhstan. This could be linked to the absence of

modern sport management schools in Kazakhstan universities.

Overall, the study has opened the social questions regarding the language and personal branding in Kazakhstan. Future research on this topic with empirical method and valid data could show objective outcome that could be useful in the future. In fact, the bilingualism in Kazakhstan itself could be a very useful and interesting topic for further work and development for the researchers.

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국문초록

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소셜 네트워크 서비스의 발전과 사용량 증가로 인해 일상생활에서 소셜 네트워크 서비스가 차지하는 역할이 증가하고 있다. 이는 스포츠 산업 역시 엔터테인먼트 산업의 일부로서 많은 영향을 받고 있다. 소셜 미디어 계정을 통해 자신을 드러내는 것은 운동선수의 경력 개발의 중요한 측면이 되었으며, 개인 브랜드를 구축하기 위한 도구가 되었다. 선수 개인의 브랜드를 개발하기 위해 선택된 체계적인 전략은 운동선수가 은퇴 후 재정적 수입과 미래 직업 측면에서 안정적인 결과를 얻을 수 있도록 한다. 그러므로, 선수들은 보다 나은 선수 개인의 브랜드를 구축할 필요가 있다.

이 연구는 카자흐스탄 사회에서 선수 브랜드를 형성하고 있는 요인을 파악하기 위해 진행되었다. 또한, 도출된 요인과 카자흐스탄의 사회 문화적 상황을 반영한 선수 개인 브랜드 개발을 위한 전략을 제공하는 것이 목적이었다.

다양한 분야의 문헌 검토를 통해 선수 브랜드 이미지를 구체적으로 개념화하였다. 나아가 카자흐스탄 스포츠 분야 대표 전문가 40여명을 대상으로 현지 사회·문화적 특수성을 갖춘 모델을 얻기 위한 인터뷰를 진행했다. 인터뷰 결과 이중언어 및 종교가 카자흐스탄에서 선수 브랜드 관리에 일정한 역할을 하는 것으로 나타났다. 정량적 연구는 얻어진 하위 차원들에서 가장 영향력 있는 요소들을 발견하는 것을 목표로 했다.

이 연구는 카자흐스탄에서 이중언어 사용과 종교적 이슈가 보다 중요한 요인이라는 것을 밝혔다. 추후 연구에서는 경험적 방법과 데이터를 사용하여 미래에 가치 있는 객관적인 결과를 도출하면 의미 있을 것이다. 실제로 이중언어사용은 국가정체성과 대립됨에도 불구하고 더 나은 선수 브랜드를 형성한다는 점에서 학자들에게 가치 있고 흥미로운 문제일 수 있다.