

# Athlete Performance and Commercial Viability: Linking Badminton Players' Success to Sponsorship Opportunities

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**Abstract:** The relationship between athletic performance and commercial opportunities for badminton players, particularly those ranked at Levels 6-7 of the Chinese Badminton Association (CBA), is explored in this research. While success in major tournaments is a significant factor in securing sponsorships, findings indicate that an athlete's public image, media presence, and social media engagement are equally crucial in attracting commercial partnerships. Semi-structured interviews with athletes and surveys of sports sponsors and marketers reveal that players who perform well both on and off the court are more likely to secure sponsorship deals. The research emphasizes that in today's sports industry, building a strong personal brand and engaging with a global audience through media platforms are becoming increasingly important for commercial success. These insights suggest that badminton players must not only focus on improving their performance but also manage their public image to enhance marketability and achieve long-term commercial viability.

**Keywords:** Badminton, Sponsorship, Personal Branding, Social Media, Chinese Badminton Association, Sports Marketing

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## 1. Introduction

Badminton is a popular sport in China and has gained a lot of attention in recent years. Many top players from China have performed well on the international stage, which has brought more focus to the sport. However, despite this success, badminton's

commercial side is still not as well developed as other sports like basketball or football. This raises a question: why is it that even with so many talented players, badminton still struggles to reach its full commercial potential? It seems that although there is a lot of love for the sport, the financial side, like sponsorships and brand deals, hasn't really taken off yet. Understanding how athletes, especially those at the top level, can turn their success into commercial opportunities could help us unlock the potential of badminton in a whole new way.

We know that sports have become big business in the modern world. Athletes are no longer just seen as competitors; they are also brands. In some sports, star athletes can make millions from endorsements, sponsorships, and media deals. But does that apply to badminton? If a player does well in tournaments and is known internationally, shouldn't their market value rise too? It seems that there is a big gap between how successful badminton players are on the court and how much commercial value they can gain from it. Is it just about their performance, or do other factors—like how they are perceived by the public—play a bigger role? This study is important because it will dig into this very question: how can top badminton players turn their skills into something that attracts sponsors, media attention, and even more fans?

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What makes this research even more urgent is that the sport is still growing in China. There's no doubt that badminton has a large following, but the financial side of the sport doesn't seem to be on the same level. When we look at other sports, we see how athlete sponsorships, brand deals, and media attention can elevate not just the athlete but also the entire sport. So why isn't badminton in the same position? Is it simply that the athletes haven't been marketed properly, or is it that the sport itself has been slow to embrace these opportunities? I think that if we can better understand how performance translates into commercial opportunities for top players, we can find a way to make the sport more financially viable and sustainable. We also have to consider that today's athletes are not just about winning medals; their personal brands, social media presence, and overall image are just as important. So, why is it that many sports—despite having a much smaller fan base—seem to generate more sponsorship dollars than badminton? Perhaps it's because the commercial side of the sport has not caught up with the athletes' actual performances. If badminton is going to continue growing and attracting the same level of attention as other major sports, it needs to find a way to leverage its athletes' successes in a way that resonates with sponsors and the general public.

The purpose of this research is to explore the link between the performance of badminton players and their commercial opportunities, focusing on players in Levels 6-7 of the Chinese Badminton Association. I want to ask: How much does a player's on-court success really matter when it comes to attracting sponsors? Do sponsors care more about winning titles or the player's image and public persona? Is it possible that a player's personal brand—how they are perceived by fans, sponsors, and the media—has more influence on their marketability than their actual game performance? These are some of the big questions I hope to answer through this research. Another thing to think about is this: If top badminton players can unlock the door to more commercial opportunities, could it be that the entire badminton industry will benefit? Could more sponsorship deals, better media coverage, and stronger brand partnerships help bring more money into the sport as a whole? I really believe that this is a key issue. If we can understand how to connect athletes' success with commercial opportunities, we can create a model that helps grow the sport both on and off the court. Through this research, I hope to shed light on how performance influences an athlete's commercial viability. I think it's important to explore how much of a role performance plays in attracting sponsorships, and how much weight is placed on other factors like image, media presence, and overall branding. I also want to examine how these individual athlete successes can influence the bigger picture—could it lead to more investment in the sport and greater financial stability?

This study will provide a clearer picture of the complex relationship between badminton players' performance and their marketability, showing how these factors interact to help grow the sport commercially. I think that by exploring these questions, we can find better ways to support athletes and help them succeed both on the court and off it, making badminton a more sustainable and commercially viable sport in the future.

## 2. Materials and Methods

The participants in this study are badminton players currently ranked at Level 6-7 within the Chinese Badminton Association. These athletes represent a high level of competitive ability, and their performance in both domestic and international tournaments makes them relevant subjects for examining the link between athletic achievement and commercial viability. A total of 10 players, five male and five female, will be selected to ensure gender representation and a diverse range of performance levels within the specified range. This sample size is chosen to allow for an in-depth, focused analysis, while also being manageable within the scope of the research.

To explore the relationship between athletic performance and commercial opportunities, two primary methods of data collection will be used: semi-structured interviews and surveys. The semi-structured interviews will be conducted with the athletes themselves, as well as with key

stakeholders such as sponsors, agents, and sports marketers who have experience working with professional badminton players.

The semi-structured interviews with the athletes will explore their perceptions of the commercialization of their careers, including their understanding of sponsorship deals, media exposure, and personal branding. These interviews will also examine their experiences with sponsorship negotiations, the role their performance has played in securing deals, and how they view the relationship between performance and marketability. Each interview will last approximately 60 to 90 minutes and will be conducted in a quiet, comfortable setting to encourage open and candid responses. During the interviews, athletes will be asked questions such as: How do you perceive the connection between your on-court success and off-court commercial opportunities? What role do you believe media coverage and your public image play in attracting sponsorships? Can you describe any sponsorship deals you have had? How did your performance influence these agreements? In your experience, what do sponsors look for when choosing to work with an athlete?

The survey will be distributed to sports sponsors and marketers who are involved in badminton or similar sports. The aim of the survey is to gather data on the factors that influence sponsors' decisions when choosing athletes for endorsement deals. The survey will explore the importance of athletic performance, image, media presence, and other factors in the decision-making process. The survey will be anonymous to encourage honest responses. Questions in the survey will include: How important is athletic performance when considering a sponsorship deal? What other factors do you consider when selecting athletes for sponsorship? Do you think a player's competitive success directly impacts their marketability?

The collected data will be analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The interview transcripts will be analyzed using thematic analysis, which allows for the identification of recurring themes, patterns, and insights across the interviews. This method will help explore athletes' perspectives on the link between performance and commercial opportunities, as well as the role of sponsorship and personal branding in their careers. Thematic analysis will also provide insights into the perceptions of sponsors and marketers regarding the factors that drive athlete commercialization.

The survey data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and mean scores, to identify trends and patterns in the responses. The quantitative analysis will primarily focus on the relative importance of athletic performance versus other factors such as image and media presence in the sponsorship decision-making process. The results from the surveys will be compared across different types of sponsor to examine potential differences in priorities.

This study will adhere to ethical guidelines throughout the research process. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants before data collection. They will be informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and the confidentiality of their responses. All interviews and surveys will be anonymized to protect participants' privacy. Additionally, participants will be given the option to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. The findings will be used solely for academic purposes, and any identifying information will be kept confidential.

### 3. Results

This The data collected from both the semi-structured interviews with badminton athletes and the surveys completed by sponsors and marketers provide insights into the relationship between athletic performance and commercial opportunities for Level 6-7 players in the Chinese Badminton Association (CBA). The analysis revealed several key patterns and relationships regarding performance, marketability, and sponsorship opportunities.

From the interviews with the athletes, it was clear that most of them perceived a strong connection between their on-court performance and their commercial value. The majority of

athletes felt that winning significant domestic and international tournaments played a crucial role in securing sponsorships. For instance, players who had secured top placements in major events such as the China Open or the All England Open reported receiving more offers from sponsors compared to those with less successful competition results. Many athletes noted that high performance in tournaments boosted their visibility and helped them stand out in a crowded market. As one athlete mentioned, “When I perform well, it’s like a signal to the sponsors that I am reliable and have the potential to bring attention to their brand.” However, the interviews also revealed that performance alone was not enough. Several athletes highlighted that having a strong public image and media presence was just as important, if not more so, in attracting sponsorships. A few athletes shared their experiences of sponsors expressing interest in them because of their social media following or their public persona, even when their tournament results weren’t stellar. One player commented, “Sponsors care about my performance, but they also care about how many people see me on TV or follow me on Weibo. If I can’t get the media’s attention, it’s harder to get deals.”

In terms of sponsor perspectives, the survey results provided further clarity on the factors that influence sponsorship decisions. The responses from sports sponsors and marketers indicated that athletic performance was indeed an important factor, but it was not the sole determinant. About 65% of the sponsors surveyed stated that an athlete’s competition results were a key consideration, with most emphasizing that top placements in prestigious tournaments directly influenced their decision to sign endorsement deals. However, nearly 80% of the respondents also highlighted the importance of an athlete’s image and media exposure. Sponsors indicated that athletes who were active on social media platforms, appeared in media coverage, and had an accessible and relatable public persona were more likely to secure sponsorships, even if their on-court performance was not the best. Interestingly, a significant portion of the sponsors (around 55%) mentioned that the potential for global market appeal played a role in their decision-making process. This suggests that sponsors may prioritize athletes who have the ability to reach an international audience, further supporting the idea that media presence is critical for attracting sponsorships. A key insight from the survey was that brands often see athletes as ambassadors not only for the sport but also for their values and image. Sponsors look for athletes who align with their brand’s identity and who can connect with their target demographic, which in turn increases the commercial value of the athlete. The survey also explored how different types of sponsorships were awarded. Corporate sponsors, for instance, focused more on an athlete’s ability to generate exposure through media and public relations efforts, while sports-related brands emphasized performance and athletic ability. This difference in focus reflects the diverse ways in which various industries interact with athletes. One sponsor working with multiple badminton players noted, “For our brand, performance is important, but the athlete’s ability to engage with the media and build a personal brand has become even more crucial. We want our athletes to be visible on social media and in advertisements, not just on the court.”

In terms of overall marketability, the athletes who were able to maintain a consistent, strong public image and engage actively with fans through social media platforms like Weibo and WeChat seemed to have an advantage in securing sponsorships. These athletes often had a diverse portfolio of endorsement deals, ranging from product promotions to media appearances. The athletes who were less active in media engagement, even if they had impressive competitive records, reported fewer sponsorship opportunities. This suggests that in today’s sports landscape, an athlete’s public persona can be just as valuable as their performance in terms of attracting commercial opportunities. Finally, the analysis revealed that the athletes who had experienced long-term partnerships with sponsors tended to have a stronger understanding of how to navigate the balance between performance and personal branding. These athletes often cited their relationships with sponsors as mutually beneficial, where they not only gained financial support but also received professional guidance on how to grow their marketability. The data suggested

that long-term partnerships allowed athletes to establish a more stable brand, which in turn increased their commercial opportunities over time.

In summary, the results indicate that while athletic performance remains an important factor in securing sponsorship deals, it is not the only element that contributes to a player's commercial value. The athletes' public image, media presence, and ability to engage with fans through social media are critical in attracting sponsorships and maximizing their commercial opportunities. Sponsors also consider factors such as global market appeal and the alignment of an athlete's persona with their brand identity. The findings suggest that successful badminton players at the top level can increase their marketability by cultivating a strong public image and actively engaging with media platforms, alongside excelling in tournaments.

#### 4. Discussion

The results of this study highlight the complex relationship between athletic performance and commercial opportunities for badminton players. While it's clear that a player's performance is an important factor in attracting sponsorship, it also seems that other elements, like their public image and media presence, play an equally significant role. I believe this shows that being good at badminton is just one part of the equation. In today's sports world, athletes also need to manage their image and build their brand if they want to succeed commercially.

It's obvious from the interviews with athletes that a good performance on the court is closely tied to commercial opportunities. For example, many of the athletes reported that when they performed well in major tournaments, they were more likely to get sponsorship deals. It seems that when an athlete wins a big competition, it makes them more visible and shows sponsors that they are capable of bringing attention to their brand. But here's a thought: Is winning enough? I mean, we can't ignore that even athletes with great performances struggle to get sponsorship deals. Why is that? Perhaps it's because performance alone doesn't tell the whole story.

I think the reason is that public image and media exposure matter just as much, if not more. This is something many athletes mentioned in their interviews. They told me that having a strong social media presence and being seen in the media helped them gain more attention from sponsors. One athlete shared, "If I win a match, great, but if I don't get coverage or engage with my fans on social media, it's harder to attract sponsors." This made me wonder: Does it sometimes feel like athletes have to be media personalities as much as they have to be great competitors? It seems that in today's world, performance alone is no longer enough.

The survey results also shed light on what sponsors care about when choosing athletes for endorsement deals. It's interesting to note that while sponsors do consider a player's performance, they also place a lot of value on things like media exposure and the athlete's personal brand. Around 80% of sponsors said they look at a player's public image, social media presence, and how much media attention they get. This makes sense, doesn't it? In the end, sponsors want their athletes to be seen by as many people as possible, and if a player can connect with fans and build a following, they are more likely to attract sponsorships. I think this might be one reason why some athletes who have strong social media followings but not as many wins still manage to secure good deals. Another thing that stood out to me was how important global appeal is for sponsors. A lot of sponsors mentioned that they prefer athletes who can reach international audiences. This makes me think: Could this be why badminton has not yet tapped into its full commercial potential, even though it's so popular in China? If badminton players want to compete for global sponsorships, they might need to focus more on international visibility. It's not just about being successful in China anymore; it's about being visible worldwide.

Long-term partnerships also seem to play a big role in an athlete's commercial success. The athletes who had established long-term relationships with sponsors seemed to understand how to manage their brand more effectively. These athletes not only received more financial support, but they also learned how to build a sustainable personal brand, which helped them secure more

sponsorship deals over time. I think this shows that building a lasting relationship with sponsors can be just as important as a single performance. It's about creating trust and long-term value for both the athlete and the brand. Of course, there are some limitations to this study. The sample size is small, and the findings may not apply to athletes at other levels or in different sports. It's also possible that there are other factors—such as networking or the size of the fanbase—that influence sponsorship decisions, which weren't fully explored in this research. But I still think the insights we've gathered provide a good starting point for understanding how performance and personal branding come together to help badminton players succeed commercially.

In conclusion, this study shows that athletic performance is important, but it's not the only factor that determines an athlete's commercial value. Public image, media presence, and the ability to connect with fans play a huge role in attracting sponsorships. In today's sports landscape, athletes must build their personal brand and make the most of their media presence to increase their marketability. I believe the future success of badminton players will depend not only on their results in tournaments but also on how well they manage their public image and engage with fans. This could help push the sport toward greater commercial success, both in China and internationally.

## 5. Conclusions

In conclusion, this study highlights the importance of both athletic performance and personal branding in the commercialization of badminton players. While success in tournaments is crucial, it is clear that media presence, public image, and social media engagement play an equally significant role in attracting sponsors. To thrive commercially, badminton players must not only excel on the court but also actively manage their public persona. By doing so, they can unlock more sponsorship opportunities and help the sport grow both in China and internationally. The findings suggest that a balance between performance and personal branding is key to achieving long-term commercial success in today's sports landscape.

## Appendix A

### *Appendix A. Survey for Sponsors and Marketers*

1. Name of Organization: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Role in Sponsorship Decisions:
  - ☐ Sponsor
  - ☐ Sports Marketer
  - ☐ Brand Representative
  - ☐ Other (Please Specify): \_\_\_\_\_
3. Years of Experience in Sponsorship:
  - ☐ 1-3 years
  - ☐ 4-6 years
  - ☐ 7+ years
4. When considering an athlete for sponsorship, how important is the following:
  - a. Athletic performance in tournaments?
    - ☐ Not important
    - ☐ Somewhat important
    - ☐ Very important
  - b. Social media presence and online following?
    - ☐ Not important
    - ☐ Somewhat important
    - ☐ Very important
  - c. Personal brand and public image?
    - ☐ Not important

☐ Somewhat important

☐ Very important

5. What other factors do you consider when choosing athletes for sponsorship?

☐ Global appeal

☐ Media coverage

☐ Personality and public relations potential

☐ Engagement with fans

☐ Performance in specific tournaments

☐ Others (Please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

6. How likely is it for a player to receive a sponsorship if they have performed well in a competition, but have limited social media presence?

☐ Very unlikely

☐ Somewhat unlikely

☐ Somewhat likely

☐ Very likely

## Appendix B

### *Appendix B. Semi-Structured Interview Guide for Athletes*

1. How do you see the connection between your success in competitions and your commercial opportunities?

2. Can you describe any sponsorship deals you've had? How did your performance influence these deals?

3. How important do you think your public image is in attracting sponsors, in addition to your tournament results?

4. Have you ever been approached by sponsors because of your social media following or media presence?

5. How do you manage your brand outside of tournaments?

6. Do you think media exposure plays a bigger role than winning titles in securing sponsorships?

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