

FIT OF SPONSORSHIP AND ATTITUDE TOWARD SPORTS COMMERCIALIZATION AS PREDICTORS OF ATTITUDE TOWARD SPONSORING COMPANIES

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ABSTRACT

This quasi-experimental study tested the relationship between audience attitude toward sports commercialization and the resulting attitude toward sponsoring companies. An additional variable, “fit” or similarity between the sponsor and sporting team, was also tested for effects on spectator attitude. The theories of balance and context effects are presented for a theoretical framework. It is theorized that those with a lower attitude toward the commercialization of sports will have a higher resulting attitude toward the sponsor when exposed to a good use of sponsorship. This study involved 299 undergraduate students and found no contrast effects. A three-way interaction between the independent variables, attitude toward commercialization, type of sponsorship and the fit between the sponsor and sponsored event, influenced spectators’ resulting attitude toward the sponsor. The fit between the sponsor and sporting team was also found to play a significant role under certain conditions.

INTRODUCTION

Companies are beginning to realize the importance of not only having a good product or service, but also a positive corporate image, something they have found difficult to achieve with traditional marketing practices. Corporate sponsorship has been the result. Sponsorship has grown to be a multi-billion-dollar, business expenditure each year in the world. Sponsorship activities vary greatly from major sporting and cultural events to local community plays and little league teams. With this rapid growth, researchers are curious and companies are demanding to know the effectiveness of this promotional practice. The current research will focus on the spectator’s response to certain kinds of sponsorship at sporting events, thus giving companies a greater understanding of their target audience and assisting marketing and public relation practitioners in developing effective sponsorships.

In recent times, sponsorship has also grown in importance because of the rapid rise of advertising costs, recent tax breaks for subsidies, and governmental banning of certain advertising such as that imposed upon the tobacco industry (as cited in Wise & Miles, 1993/1994). Not only did sponsorship become a necessity as other mediums became more regulated, but the industry was ready for a new approach. In a professional survey of marketing practitioners, 75 percent desired to increase the use of sponsorship as a marketing tool (Lardinoit & Quester, 2001). Sponsorship has begun to form its own identity as a viable marketing and public relations tool. U.S. sponsorship expenditures have seen substantial growth in the past two decades. In 1985, American companies spent \$850 million on sponsorship, which increased to \$5.4 billion by 1996. Overall, global spending on sponsorship has grown from \$2 billion to \$13 billion in the same period (Meenaghan, 1996).

If companies are going to collectively spend \$13 billion trying to get their product or service some exposure to their target audience by using sponsorships, they have both a right and a duty to measure its effectiveness. However, bottom-line sales may not be the best yardstick to measure sponsorship success. While such an approach provides a tempting format of quick evaluation and results, sponsorship differs from many of its marketing siblings because its effects on less-objective, more long-term results. Rather than looking at bottom-line sales, perhaps management should be asking such questions as, “What effect does sponsorship have on the long-term feelings and attitudes of consumers towards my company and brand?” and “Will this sponsorship help improve the corporate image as a whole and not just improve current sales?” The vast majority of research conducted on corporate sponsorship has taken the marketing perspective and has thus been measured accordingly. However, the current study takes a PR approach to sponsorship, looking for audience responses, feelings, and attitudes.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

DEFINITIONS AND ASPECTS OF SPONSORSHIP

D’Astous and Bitz (1995) defined sponsorship as an element of organizational communication where the organization, provides some financial support to an individual, an organization or a group, “to allow this entity to pursue its activities and, at the same time, benefit from this association in terms of global image and consumer awareness of the firm’s market offerings” (6).

From D’Astous and Bitz’s (1995) definition, two main forms of sponsorship emerge: philanthropic and commercial. In a literal definition, a philanthropic type of sponsorship would consist of the company providing financial or other support to the event or organization without any expectation of benefits to themselves. This has also been called an altruistic sponsorship. However, even when working with philanthropic-type sponsorships, such as charities, companies often have the dual-goal of portraying itself as fulfilling the role of the “community responsible,” (Meenaghan, 1996) as well improving the bottom line of sales and services.

The second type, commercial sponsorship, has been defined as, “A business relationship between a provider of funds, resources or services, and an individual event or organization that in turn offers rights and association for commercial advantage” (Cordiner, 2002, p. 14). In a typical commercial sponsorship, the sponsor will pay a fee or provide other support in products or services to the sponsee and the sponsee then allows the sponsor to be associated with the event

(Meenaghan, 1996). This underwriting of expenses from the company lowers the amount that the events or organization must generate on its own to cover expenses (Freedman & Feldman, 1998). The sponsor then gains certain rights to the event, such as the right to be the official soft drink, the right to have their logo on a program, and simply the right to be known as an official sponsor (Meenaghan, 1996).

USES, PURPOSES, AND CONCERNS OF SPONSORSHIP

Sponsorships differ in the amount of funding provided, participants involved, and what type of exposure they give the company (Mack, 1999). The use of sponsorship is highly regarded among companies as a tool to improve corporate communications and to enhance corporate identity, awareness, and image (Meenaghan, 1996). If companies are able to integrate sponsorship into their other business activities, the sponsorship has been found to be more effective (Cordiner, 2002).

With an increase in sponsorship possibilities, more companies are using sponsorship to fill a variety of corporate objectives. A 1996 study found that 93 percent of companies were spending money on building deeper relationships with their consumers with marketing practices such as sponsorship. Also, 89 percent of the businesses polled were seeking to improve their image and reputation while half of the respondents were looking to increase sales (as cited in Freedman & Feldman, 1998). A survey of top marketing managers ranked brand image enhancement, breaking free from traditional media clutter, and increasing brand awareness as the top purposes for commercial sponsorship. Although sponsorship is used to gain leverage with decision makers, government regulators, and employees, the overall goal of commercial sponsorship is a gradual, long-term effort to create brand awareness and improve company image in the eyes of consumers. Nevertheless, there are times when companies only seek to achieve bottom-line sales (Clark, Cornwell, & Pruitt, 2002; Javalgi, Traylor, Gross, & Lampman, 1994; Meenaghan, 1996). An increase of public goodwill (Wise & Miles, 1993/1994) and even an improvement in employee morale (Mack, 1999; Mason, 1992) are also goals of sponsorship.

Though more companies are now seeing sponsorship as a viable and potentially effective means of promotion, many are finding that the road to effective sponsorship isn't an easy one. The increased growth of sponsorship has resulted in sponsorship clutter (Meenaghan, 1996). This clutter makes it difficult for companies to distinguish themselves and for consumers to perceive the sponsorship. Even when sponsors are given adequate exposure, doubt remains as to sponsorship's effectiveness in reaching target audiences and improving that audience's perception of the brand and company. One study conducted by Crimmins and Horn (1996) found that, "most sponsorship investments go to waste" (p. 11). Reasons for inefficiency have been found to lie in the lack of clear objectives, not making the sponsorship part of the overall marketing plan, and not maximizing the sponsorship to its full value (Cordiner, 2002). Finally, "corporate sponsorship may have a novelty effect initially, but the effect may diminish over time" (Javalgi, et al., 1994, p. 55). Thus, sponsoring companies may see immediate gains, but that serious doubts have arisen as to the long-term benefits provided by sponsorship.

ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE SPONSOR AND CORPORATE IMAGE

However, some long-term benefits of sponsorship have been found. One of the long-term effects is the impression left on consumers following the sponsorship. This resulting attitude towards the sponsor makes up part of what is referred to as the “Corporate Image.” One of the main purposes for companies to use corporate sponsorship is to establish and improve the image of the brand and company. In fact, a survey of managers of companies involved in sponsorship found that, 54% did so with an objective to improve corporate image (Javalgi et al., 1994), making this a useful and vital topic of study.

While research conducted directly on the relationship between sponsorship and image is scant, one image related study conducted by Javalgi (1994) suggests that companies that do use sponsorship as a marketing tool have a better public image than companies that do not. The change is seen as gradual rather than immediate and as previous studies have found, companies with a good or neutral image can enhance that image by using sponsorship.

THE VARIABLE OF FIT

An additional possible component in explaining the relationship between sponsor and sponsored event is the similar values and characteristics shared by the company and the event being sponsored, called the “fit” between the two. D’Astous & Bitz (1995) held that the amount of association between the company and event is what makes sponsorship attractive in the first place. Sponsors look for events that have strong associations with their brand or company, and then use a positioning strategy to form a link between the two (Sponsors, 2002).

A major component determining the strength of a link is the similar values and characteristics shared by the company and the event being sponsored. If a company can tie in its core business into an event, the fit is strengthened and it can increase the image of the company being a responsible corporate citizen (Mason, 1992). This variable of fit between sponsor and sponsored event has yet to be tested to its effects on spectator response in a controlled environment when exposed to different forms of good and bad sponsorship.

SPONSORSHIP OF SPORTING EVENTS

Of all the possible venues for sponsorship, one of the biggest attractors of sponsors around the world each year is sporting events. Sports make up over two-thirds of total sponsorship revenue (Cordiner, 2002). One reason for sports sponsorships is that they offer a less cluttered setting as compared to the more traditional forms of marketing. Additionally, the sports fan is emotionally involved with teams, athletes, or events and the sports fans are a captive audience that is likely to be receptive to messages (Cordiner, 2002).

Additional benefits from a sporting audience include a large internal audience to the sponsorship and no limit to the social classes it may appeal to (Abratt, Clayton, & Pitt, 1987). Being the leading industry in sponsorship, sporting events make an effective example for research. In particular, the concept of an active and receptive group of spectators, differing from audiences of other sponsorships, makes them a proper sample for the current study.

RESEARCH ON ATTITUDES TOWARD SPORTS SPONSORSHIP

Previous studies have found that spectator responses to these sponsorships can be both positive and negative (Lee, Sandler, & Shani, 1997). It has been suggested by some that the fast-paced growth of sports sponsorship may lead to a negative attitude toward the sponsor by those who see sports as becoming more about money than athletics. These individuals see the commercialization as taking away from the actual event (Gwinner, 1997; Lee et al., 1997). Other studies find that when the sponsorship is seen as making an event possible, lowering ticket prices, or allowing more media coverage, the resulting attitude toward the sponsor will be positive (McDonald, 1991). The previous literature would lead us to believe that those holding a more positive attitude toward commercialization in sports would hold attitudes that are more positive toward the brand.

However, two recent studies have found results that contradict this conventional wisdom. Two separate studies of the Philadelphia Eagles show an inverse relationship between attitudes toward commercialization of sport and resulting attitudes toward sponsors (Eaton, Gwinner, Larson, & Swanson, 2001; Gwinner, Larson, Swanson, 2003). The researchers collected 612 questionnaires between the two studies of Eagle's fans at a sponsored pre-game event. Contrary to their expectations, both studies found that those with *negative* attitudes toward commercialization in sports had attitudes that were more *positive* towards the sponsor, were *more likely* to purchase from the sponsor, and were *more likely* to spread positive word-of-mouth information about the sponsor.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The surprising sponsorship effects on the audience found in the Eagles studies can begin to be understood by looking at the theoretical frameworks used in seeking to explain spectator response to sponsorship. A variety of theoretical frameworks and models have been used to accomplish the goals of sponsorship research.

BALANCE THEORY

The conventional belief about spectator response to sponsorship can be attributed to a simple balance theory. The basic model for balance theory involving social interactions was developed by Newcomb (1959, 1953) in a study of the interaction process of communication. Called the ABX model, this theory contains the following components: a communicative act, orientation, co-orientation, and system strain. Boswell and Dodd (1994) describe the relationship as "A communicative act in its simplest form involves transmission of information from one person (A) to another person (B) about something (X)" (p. 104). The term orientation refers to an attitude toward someone or something. Co-orientation is the balancing act one must do with A's interdependence on its attitude towards both B and X. System strain occurs when A's attitude toward B differs from A's attitude toward X. When system strain occurs, A will seek to bring the two attitudes into agreement, seeking cognitive consistency (Newcomb, 1953).

While balance theory was originally developed to explain interpersonal relationships, it has proven to be an effective tool when looking at the relationship between corporations and their consumers. The theory suggests that consumers value harmony in their perceptions and that any

incongruence between two perceptions causes disharmony that the consumer will seek to eliminate by reconciliation (Dean, 2002, p. 77).

Therefore, the balance theory can be applied to the sponsorship situation. Such a theory could look at a traditional sponsorship situation as three entities: the spectator (A), the sponsor (B), and the event being sponsored (X). Rather than apply the more complex interaction model, we simply look at spectators' attitudes toward the sponsored event and the sponsor. If a spectator attends an event, it can likely be assumed that the spectator has a positive attitude toward the event, especially in the case where a ticket must be purchased to attend.

Companies often use a simplistic view of the balance theory to decide which events to sponsor. For example, if a company finds that consumers have good feelings towards a charity and the company then supports that charity, the consumer should gain an improved perspective of the company. However, certain corollaries exist in congruity theory, stating that when two dissimilar entities are connected in the mind of the individual, the primary entity will draw the weaker one towards it (Dean, 2002).

However, more relevant to the current study is the changing of the X variable from the sponsored event to the consumers' held attitudes towards the commercialization of sports. Most spectators likely have a somewhat formed attitude towards the use of sponsorship in sports that has been formed by previous experience. If a spectator with a negative attitude towards the commercialization of sports then perceives a sponsorship that is done well, system strain will occur. The resolution of this strain is the subject of this study. Balance theory simply predicts that the spectator will adjust one or both attitudes to regain balance and reduce system strain, but does not predict the direction of the change.

CONTEXT EFFECTS THEORY

To predict the outcome of the resolution between a spectator's incongruent attitudes towards the commercialization of sports and the current sponsorship, another theory is needed. This same theory is also needed to explain more fully the inverse relationship found in the Philadelphia Eagles and other studies. The context effects theory, used in 1961 by Sherif and Hovland in their study on attitude change, suggests that when an individual encounters a new object, their judgment of it is influenced and distorted by previously held conceptions and perceptions. These perceptions are the ruler against which new objects are measured.

One type of context effects is a contrast effect, which occurs when the perception of the new object does not match the previously held perception of that variety of object. The resulting attitude toward the object can be drastically different than that which occurs when a positive attitude already exists (Brown & Dacin, 1997).

In applying the context effects theory to the Eagles studies, it is suggested that those spectators with a more negative attitude towards the commercialization of sports had a contrast effect when they perceived the sponsorship as "good." A "good" sponsorship as defined in the Eagles study as well as for the purpose of this study is one that is perceived as benefiting the team, fans, community and not overshadowing the event. A "bad" sponsorship is perceived as being self-serving to the company with the company being more interested in making money than

benefiting the event. Such a dramatic contrast led spectators with a negative attitude towards the commercialization to have an overall higher attitude toward the sponsorship than those that already had favorable attitudes.

However, the data from the Eagles research only supports the theoretical predictions of contrast effects. The test was not designed to test for its occurrence. It didn't measure whether these sponsorships were perceived as "good" or "bad." A controlled experiment with predetermined types and fits of sponsorship is necessary to test for these effects.

STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PURPOSE

The present study will test for similar attitudes towards sports commercialization and its effects on individual's views of specific sponsorship activities, controlling for type and fit of relationship between the sponsor and sponsored event. The following two hypotheses provide the framework for the study:

H1: When the sponsorship is perceived as "good," those holding negative attitudes towards commercialization in sports will have higher resulting views of the sponsoring company or brand than those with a more positive attitude toward commercialization in sports, thus resulting in a contrast effect (see Figure 1).

H2: When the sponsorship is perceived as "bad," those holding negative attitudes towards commercialization in sports will have lower resulting views of the sponsoring company or brand than those with a more positive attitude toward commercialization in sports (see Figure 1).

Both hypotheses make up the relationship predicted. This reverse relationship is the essence of the context effects theory and the findings of the Eagles studies. It predicts that those with a negative attitude towards the commercialization of sports will have a steeper change in attitude when they view a good as opposed to a bad form of sponsorship (see Figure 1).

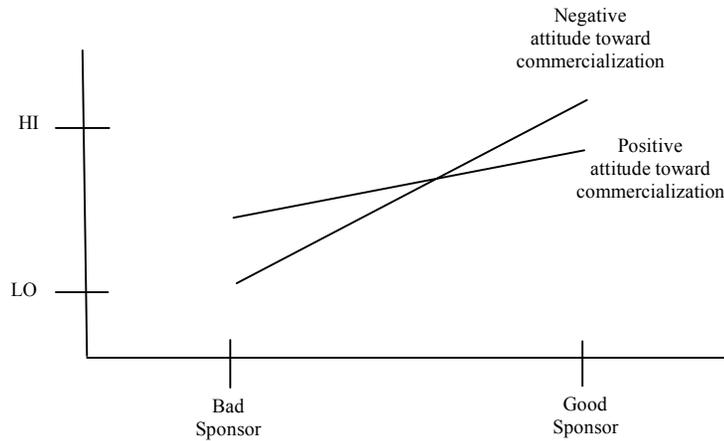


FIGURE 1. EXPECTED CONTEXT EFFECT RELATIONSHIP

ATTITUDE TOWARD THE SPONSOR

H3: A good “fit” between the sponsor and sponsored event will result in participants having a higher resulting attitude towards the sponsor than in the case of a poor fit.

This hypothesis is supported by previous findings, suggesting that the formation and strength of a “link” between sponsor and sponsored event is greatly increased when there is a high level of fit. Strong links have been shown to continually improve the effectiveness of a sponsorship (Harvey, 2001). Balance theory predicts this relationship as well. It is assumed that if an individual buys a ticket and attends a sporting event, that individual generally has a positive attitude toward the event. The more the sponsor is able to link with the event, the greater the chance the positive feelings of the spectator towards the event will be transferred to the sponsor (Mason, 1992).

Balance theory suggests that the stronger of the two attitudes will pull the weaker attitude towards it. Attitude toward the event will likely be the stronger of opinions, thus pulling the spectators attitude toward the sponsor in a positive direction. However, if the link between the sponsor and event is weak, such as would be the case in a poor fit, the attitude will not be affected.

METHODOLOGY

PARTICIPANT SELECTION

Participants were Kansas State University undergraduate students recruited from a variety of classes in the marketing and mass communications departments. Nearly one-half of participants came from a large, entry-level mass communications class in an attempt to gain participants with a variety of backgrounds and demographic characteristics. The only difference desired in the sample was their preconceived attitudes towards the commercialization of sports. Such a

difference in attitude was found among the participants, thus making them a valid sample for the purposes of this study.

INSTRUMENTATION

The instruments used in the study consisted of three questionnaires: two used in actual testing and a preliminary questionnaire designed to test the validity of material to be used in the other two questionnaires.

In the pretesting of possible questionnaire material, a pretesting instrument was developed that consisted of one of two hypothetical sponsorship scenarios similar to the scenarios in the questionnaire used in actual testing. The difference in the pretest scenario from those used in the final testing was that the element of “fit” was left out and thus when the scenario talked about the sponsor, a generic corporate name not suggesting one genre of product, “Merkley Partners, Inc,” was used. Pretests with a separate set of participants, similar in characteristics to the experimental group, were used to determine “good” and “bad” sponsorship scenarios as well as scenarios representing good and bad “fit” between sponsor and sponsored event.

The questionnaires used in the final experiment were made up of questions previously used in published research in measuring attitude toward the sponsor, assessment of fit, attitude toward the brand, and others used in unpublished research but highly relevant to this study. Questions on attitude toward commercialization were based on Lee et al.’s Olympic questionnaire (p. 165,1997) that was used to test attitudes towards Olympic sponsorship and was then adapted to fit the purposes of this study (Cronbach alpha = .68). In addition, some new items developed to test participants previously held attitudes towards the commercialization of sports were added to the instrument. To test the fit of sponsor and attitude toward sponsor, questions were based on Speed and Thompson’s (2000) questions measurement scale of fit (alpha = .95) and attitude toward sponsor (alpha = .97). These measuring instruments have showed to be both reliable and valid in Gwinner et al.’s (2003) previous research with sponsorship and the Philadelphia Eagles.

Part 1 of the final questionnaire asked the respondents about their attitudes toward corporate sponsorship of sporting events. Part 2 of the questionnaire consisted of one of four possible scenarios involving a news story about a fictional minor league baseball team and a fictional possible corporate sponsor of their baseball park. It was assumed that participants in the study would have pre-conceived attitudes about existing companies and sporting teams and that these pre-conceived opinions may contaminate this type of study which is looking to isolate the effect of sponsorship, thus the sponsoring companies and baseball team were imaginary. The use of fictional sponsors and team with which the participants had no previous knowledge controlled for these confounding variables.

The four scenarios used in Part 2 were made up of one of four possible combinations of sponsorship type and sponsor fit: Good Sponsor/Good Fit, Good Sponsor/Poor Fit, Bad Sponsor/Good Fit, Bad Sponsor/Poor Fit. Below the hypothetical sponsorship scenario are four questions that determine attitudes toward the sponsor and the fit. Following these questions, there are two sets of questions, consisting of three questions each, one set asking for an overall opinion of the sponsor and one set asking for the opinion towards the baseball team. Each set of

three questions was combined to establish an overall attitude toward the sponsor and team for the dependent variable.

VARIABLES

In this study, the dependent variable was the resulting attitude of the participant toward the sponsor (Att2Spon) or sponsored team (Att2Team) following the reading of a fictional sponsorship. The principle independent variable in this study was the preexisting attitudes held by respondents towards the commercialization of sports (Att2Comm). Other independent variables were the existence of “bad” vs. “good” sponsorships (Type) as well as the strength of fit relationship between the sponsor and sponsored event (Fit) as described in the questionnaires used.

EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN

In the first half of testing, participants were given the Part 1 questionnaire to determine their preexisting attitude towards the sponsorship of sporting events (Att2Comm). Names were collected only so that part 1 and part 2 of the questionnaire could be combined. For 4 of the 5 classes of participants, there was a 1-week interlude between Part 1 and Part 2 questionnaires. For the final class, the interlude was 1 hour, because the class was added to increase the number of participants. However, the researchers determined that there was little if any possibility of participant learner effects between the two questionnaires and, thus, it was decided that the length of interlude had no effect on the results of the study.

The interlude was used to calculate the scores in Part 1 and to assign participants to scenario groups. The participants from all classes were treated as a whole, and the four scenarios were assigned out evenly according to the negative and positive Att2Comm results. Thus while individual classes may not have had equal distribution of scenarios, each of the scenarios made up roughly 25% of the Part 2 questionnaires given out to the total sample. At this point, all participants who completed Part 1 were assigned a Part 2 questionnaire. The cutting out of the middle part of the sample to have a high and low group in attitude toward commercialization was not done until the analysis phase, after all data had been collected. This was done to gather as much data as possible before determining which participants would be used in the final analysis.

Any Part 2 questionnaires received that were found not to have a corresponding Part 1 were set aside. Upon completion of the data entry, a search was done for participant mortality. From the original sample consisting of the first four classes, the researchers found an overall mortality of 51 participants, or 18% of the 279 individuals who completed Part 1. To ensure the most complete data set possible, clean-up efforts were initiated. Mortality or “Incomplete” lists for each class were compiled and questionnaires with the names of the missing participants written on them were created. Participants on the incomplete lists were then “tracked down” and asked to complete the missing questionnaire. A large percentage (46 of the 51 incomplete questionnaires) was completed reducing the mortality rate to 2%.

DATA ANALYSIS

A variety of methods were tested to determine which analysis would provide the clearest picture of the interactions occurring among the variables. It was determined that a two-way ANOVA with three between-group factors using SAS statistical software would best illustrate the interactions.

The final sample consisted of 299 participants who had completed both Part 1 and Part 2 questionnaires. To place participants in proper categories on the Att2Comm variable, a factor analysis was conducted on the Part 1 questionnaire. Two groups of questions emerged as testing similar factors. However, one group consisted of a larger number of questions that focused on an overall attitude toward corporate sponsorship in sports as opposed to the second group of questions that focused more on the sponsor's motivations. The first group also performed better at illustrating the significant interactions of the variables; thus, this group of questions was selected to distinguish a participant's Att2Comm. Summing the numbered answers that were given to each question created an index score of Att2Comm.

The participants' Att2Comm index scores, were used divide the sample into thirds and the middle third of the sample was removed, leaving 217 participants in the sample. This left a clear distinction of Att2Comm between the remaining two groups. Those in the top third were classified as having a NEGATIVE Att2Comm while those in the bottom third were classified as having a POSITIVE Att2Comm. This then allowed participants to be classified into treatment groups made up of the three variables: Att2Comm (Negative, Positive), Sponsorship Type (Good, Bad), and Fit (Good, Poor). Each treatment cell had a minimum of 21 participants, a sufficient number to run the necessary analyses (Stevens, 1992). The breakdown of participants per treatment cell is shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1. TREATMENT GROUP DISTRIBUTION

	Good Fit		Poor Fit	
	Good Type	Bad Type	Good Type	Bad Type
Neg. Att2comm	38	21	34	22
Pos. Att2comm	27	23	24	28

A two-way ANOVA with three between-group factors was then run on the resulting data. The results were viewed for significant two- and three-way interactions among the variables. These significant effects were then further tested with individual ANOVAs to find simple effects in an effort to gain the best understanding of the interactions.

In summary, the data gathered from the sample of participants was cleaned and organized according to the participants' Att2Comm score. The middle third of the sample was then removed to establish a clear distinction between the scores of those classified as having positive and negative attitudes towards the commercialization of sports. The Att2Comm variable was then added to the Type and Fit variables to view the resulting number participants in each treatment cell made up of the three independent variables. This then allowed the variables to be tested for interaction effects between and among the variables, broken down into simple effects.

This structure or organization of analysis allowed for several significant relationships and interactions to be found.

RESULTS

The data analysis conducted looked for several areas of statistical significance in order to support the hypothesis and to check for any significant interactions that had not been expected. The primary area of interest was the way respondents of differing Att2Comm would respond to both bad and good forms of sponsorship, hoping to find a contrast effect in the respondents' resulting Att2Spon. This was first done by looking at the Att2Spon and Att2Team means of the two Att2Comm groups (negative/positive) along all conditions of Sponsorship Type and Fit. The differences noted were then checked for significance using a two-way ANOVA. The other variable's influence that would be looked for was fit.

H1: When the sponsorship is perceived as "good," those holding negative attitudes towards commercialization in sports will have higher resulting views of the sponsoring company or brand than those with a more positive attitude toward commercialization in sports, thus resulting in a contrast effect.

H2: When the sponsorship is perceived as "bad," those holding negative attitudes towards commercialization in sports will have lower resulting views of the sponsoring company or brand than those with a more positive attitude toward commercialization in sports.

The initial two-way ANOVA produced a set of means that illustrated the differences between participant's Att2Comm and the two resulting dependent variables. Table 2 illustrates the means of the resulting Att2Sponsor and Table 3 shows the means of the participant's Att2Team. In each case, those with a positive Att2Comm had a higher Att2Spon and Att2Team than those with a negative Att2Comm, thus showing no contrast effect. This was a significant finding, showing that the effect of the interaction between Att2Comm and Type on resulting Att2Spon and Att2Team was the opposite of what was predicted in the hypotheses.

TABLE 2. ATTITUDE TOWARD THE SPONSOR GROUP MEANS

	Good Fit		Poor Fit	
	Good Type	Bad Type	Good Type	Bad Type
Neg. Att2comm	16.13	10.6	14.59	11.14
Pos. Att2comm	17.11	13.78	17.38	12.64

TABLE 3. ATTITUDE TOWARD THE TEAM GROUP MEANS

	Good Fit		Poor Fit	
	Good Type	Bad Type	Good Type	Bad Type
Neg. Att2comm	16.61	13.19	14.25	14.41
Pos. Att2comm	16.67	14.96	15.67	15.58

However, Table 4A and 4B illustrate a significant three-way interaction among the three independent variables and the dependent variable Att2Spon. This interaction would be broken down into simple effects in the next phase of analysis.

H3: A good “fit” between the sponsor and sponsored event will result in participants having a higher resulting attitude towards the sponsor than in the case of a poor fit. Table 4A and 4B illustrate that the variable of fit had some potential simple effects in interactions with the other independent variables as part of the three-way interaction.

TABLE 4A. ATTITUDE TOWARD THE SPONSOR

Source	DF	F Value	Pr > F
Att2Comm	1	25.02	<.0001
Type	1	102.49	<.0001
Fit	1	1.35	0.2464
Att2Comm*Type	1	0.26	0.6102
Att2Comm2*Fit	1	0.01	0.9062
Type*Fit	1	0.13	0.7167
Att2Comm*Type*Fit	1	4.15	0.0429

TABLE 4B. ATTITUDE TOWARD THE TEAM

Source	DF	F Value	Pr > F
Att2Comm	1	6.69	0.0104
Type	1	8.94	0.0031
Fit	1	0.79	0.3756
Att2Comm*Type	1	0.74	0.3891
Att2Comm2*Fit	1	0.19	0.6647
Type*Fit	1	9.29	0.0026
Att2Comm*Type*Fit	1	1.31	0.2533

DISCUSSION

The results will first be discussed in connection with the established hypotheses and research question of this study to determine if each was supported, rejected, or answered.

Hypotheses and Research Questions Findings

H1: When the sponsorship is perceived as “good,” those holding negative attitudes towards commercialization in sports will have higher resulting views of the sponsoring company or brand than those with a more positive attitude toward commercialization in sports, thus resulting in a contrast effect.

This was not found to be true. No contrast effects were found and the findings contradict that found in the Eagles studies. In fact, the exact opposite was found to be true. Context effects were found to be occurring and the previous held Att2Comm did have an effect on Att2Spon, but not

in the direction expected. It was found that those who come into a sponsorship scenario with a positive attitude towards sponsorship generally will leave with a more favorable opinion of the sponsor than will someone with a preexistent negative attitude, regardless of whether the sponsorship is “good” or “bad.” This finding supports balance theory, suggesting that a strong Att2Comm pulls Att2Spon as opposed to the other way around. Rather than challenge the conventional wisdom of sponsorship, it statistically supports it. Similar findings have been found by Mack (1999), Harvey (2001) and Meenaghan (1996).

H2: When the sponsorship is perceived as “bad,” those holding negative attitudes towards commercialization in sports will have lower resulting views of the sponsoring company or brand than those with a more positive attitude toward commercialization in sports.

Those with negative Att2Comm were found to have a lower Att2Sponsor than those with a positive Att2Comm when exposed to both “bad” and “good” forms of sponsorship. Thus, this particular hypothesis is supported and the null hypothesis can be rejected. However, with simply a context effect but not a contrast effect found in Att2Spon when a “good” sponsorship is used, the significance of this finding is weakened. Once again, simply a lower level of Att2Spon from someone with a low Att2Comm is to be expected and again reinforces conventional wisdom.

H3: A good “fit” between the sponsor and sponsored event will result in participants having a higher resulting attitude towards the sponsor than in the case of a poor fit.

This hypothesis was found to be true in certain two and three-way interactions illustrated by simple effects. Some significant “fit” effect was found in a two-way interaction on Att2Team and in a three-way interaction in Att2Sponsor. Not considering the Att2Comm of the individuals being exposed to the sponsorship, fit had a significant effect on Att2Team when a good sponsorship was used. We can take this to mean that when teams are looking for potential sponsors, getting a philanthropic sponsor that cares about the team and community is not enough. The way the team will be viewed because of the sponsorship depends on how good of fit there is between the sponsor and the team. It also suggests that, even if a team finds a great fit in a potential sponsor, if the sponsorship is not done well, the effect on the Att2Team will be the same as if a bad fit sponsor had been used. Teams must then look for a good sponsor that fits well with the team to enhance Att2Team in the eyes of the spectators.

When it comes to fit’s effect on the spectators’ Att2Spon, the combination of a good sponsor and good fit had a larger effect on those who had a negative Att2Comm than those with an incoming positive Att2Comm. Thus, even though those with a negative Att2Comm will have an overall lower Att2Spon, that attitude can be influenced more in a positive direction when a sponsorship is done well and there is a good fit between the sponsor and team.

While Fit may not have been the most influential independent variable on the dependent variables, it becomes clear that in certain situations, a good sponsorship can be greatly enhanced when it is done by a sponsor that has a good fit with the event. This should lead to teams and sponsors seriously considering the fit between them when considering a potential sponsorship deal.

OTHER FINDINGS

The most significant single factor in the three-way interaction was that of sponsorship type. Regardless of the type of fit or Att2Comm of the spectator, a participant's resulting Att2Spon will be increased when a sponsorship is done well. The key to this finding for potential sponsors is to understand what a "sponsorship done well" means and then implement those principles into their current and future sponsorships. General principles of a "Good" sponsorship included the sponsor caring more for the team and community than for their bottom-line profits. A good sponsor was one that was perceived as trying to support a good cause and not being in it "just for the money" (D'Astous & Bitz, 1995; Meenaghan, 1996). The best sponsors were seen as those that stayed in the background, not trying to turn the event into a commercial for their goods or services. Thus, it is not enough for a company to simply sponsor an event if it wishes to increase spectators' Att2Spon. The sponsorship must be done well to provide the desired benefits to the company.

In summary, while no contrast effects were found, it was evident that a clear distinction between good and bad sponsorships exists in the minds of spectators and that when a sponsorship is done well, the resulting attitude of spectator towards the sponsor and the sponsored team can be greatly enhanced. Also, even though spectators with negative Att2Comm have lower resulting Att2Spon and Att2team a good sponsorship can be improved in the eyes of the negative when a good fit exists between the sponsor and sponsored team.

CONCLUSION

Companies spend millions of dollars to have their names associated with various sporting events. Such a large financial investment is making company management concerned that these practices are efficient in promoting company goods and services in the eyes of the sports spectator. While a context effect on Att2Comm was not found among participants in this study, certain basic principles of effective sponsorship were reinforced and are thus useful for potential sponsors and sporting teams to consider. One principle for both sponsors and teams to consider is the need for a good fit in sponsorship. A good fit can greatly enhance the effects of a good sponsorship for both company and team, especially among those spectators who may be against sponsorship in the first place.

The primary principle that should be learned from this study is the need for a sponsor to approach the sponsorship in the right frame of mind. A desire for a quick buck in increasing bottom-line sales can lead to spectators having low attitudes towards the sponsoring company, seeing them as selfish and only interested in making money. However, a sponsor who is willing to put the needs of the sporting team and serving its community first can reap the long-term benefits of positive attitudes toward their company and brand from spectators of all opinions about sponsorship for years to come.

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