

HOMETOWN SPONSORSHIPS: A SUSTAINABLE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE FOR  
BUILDING BRAND AMBASSADORS

by

GREGORY ANDREW RICH

(Under the Direction of Billy Hawkins)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this dissertation was to investigate the phenomenon of corporate sport sponsorship from a hometown context. Two studies were conducted that examined hometown sponsorship with a social identity approach (Turner, 1999); applying the complementary theories of self-categorization and social identity to develop frameworks. The first study attempted to develop an understanding for why corporations engaged in sport sponsorship, and how hometown sport sponsorships were perceived to function when considering the more general context. Ten interviews with eleven sponsorship professionals—a sample that consisted of corporate managers, agency consultants, and property representatives—were analyzed using a constant comparative method (Charmaz, 2014). Coding occurred at three levels: initial, focused, and theoretical (Charmaz, 2014). From data analysis procedures, two conceptual models were derived for each context explored. The second study sought to investigate similarities and differences in sponsorship effects between a hometown sponsor and its direct competitor. Additionally, perceived community investment was examined as a possible sponsorship outcome. Popular soft drink brands Coca-Cola and Pepsi were used as manipulator variables in a pseudo-experimental, 2 SPONSOR (i.e. Coca-Cola, Pepsi) x 2 TEAM (Falcons, Braves) factorial design survey study. Three dependent variables (i.e. purchase intention, positive word-of-mouth, and perceived

community investment) and three covariates of group identification (city, sponsor, team) were included in the model. Data were collected using an online survey (N = 148). While these two studies serve as initial investigations on this sponsorship context, findings from both studies suggest the possibility of corporations implementing hometown sponsorship to establish a competitive advantage in their local markets. The potential for a *sustainable* competitive advantage (Amis, Pant, & Slack, 1997) appears to be possible given proximal location associations between corporations and their local markets; encouraging anthropomorphic relationships between local consumers and brands. Future research that examines the development of hometown sponsorship effects longitudinally is recommended to test for this potential hometown sponsorship benefit.

INDEX WORDS: sponsorship, hometown, social identity, self-categorization, city identification, team identification, constant comparative, brand ambassador, competitive advantage, community investment

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## **DEDICATION**

First, I dedicate this dissertation to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Any good that I contribute to this world is through Him. I pray that any opportunities that are made possible through this achievement bring You honor and glory. This dissertation is also dedicated to my grandmothers, who saw me begin my doctoral studies but passed away before they were completed. I hope they can watch my hooding while with my Lord. Lastly, and with the utmost love and gratitude, I dedicate this dissertation to my parents, whose unconditional love and support helped make this achievement possible.

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“My child, when you come to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for trials. Be sincere of heart and steadfast, and do not be impetuous in time of adversity. Cling to Him, do not leave Him, that you may prosper in your last days. Accept whatever happens to you; in periods of humiliation be patient. For in fire gold is tested, and the chosen, in the crucible of humiliation. Trust in God, and He will help you; make your ways straight and hope in Him” (Sirach 2: 1-6; NABRE).

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

For decades, given its importance as a marketing vehicle, sponsorship has received considerable attention from scholars (see Cornwell & Maignan, 1998; Walliser, 2003; Walraven, Koning, & van Bottenburg, 2012). During that time, numerous sponsorship models have been proposed to explain its various effects (Alexandris & Tsotsou, 2012; Gwinner & Swanson, 2003; Madrigal, 2001; Meenaghan, 2001; Poon & Prendergast, 2006; Speed & Thompson, 2000). Yet, none of these models have received wide-spread consensus (Walraven et al., 2012), nor are any considered to be a comprehensive representation of sponsorship. Rather, scholars have recently stated that there is an incomplete understanding of how sponsorship works within extant literature (Meenaghan, McLoughlin, & McCormack, 2013; Cornwell, 2008). Table 1 provides a summary of prominent sponsorship frameworks.

Many of the existing sponsorship models propose process mechanisms that derive from, or relate in some manner to, Keller's (1993) associative network theory. Three of these models (Alexandris & Tsotsou, 2012; Madrigal, 2001; Poon & Prendergast, 2006) emphasize a hierarchy of effects, though the ordering of these effect hierarchies differ from one another. Thus, when considering these models collectively, there is reason to suggest that sponsorship effects involve—in some sequence—cognitive, affective, and conative processes that lead individuals to create associations between themselves and sponsors. These associations allow for the transference of images (Gwinner, 1997; Gwinner & Eaton, 1999) from one or more associated entities (e.g. team,

Table 1: Sponsorship Models and Frameworks

Articles	Process Mechanisms	Effectiveness Factors	Outcome(s)	Empirical Basis
Speed & Thompson (2002)	-Classical conditioning ( <i>perceived attitudinal similarity between sponsor and property</i> )	-Event factors ( <i>personal liking, perceived status</i> ) - Sponsor factors ( <i>attitude toward sponsor, sincerity of sponsor, ubiquity of sponsor</i> )	-Interest ( <i>attention to sponsor and its other promotions</i> ) - Favor ( <i>favorability toward the sponsor</i> ) - Use ( <i>willingness to consider sponsor's offerings</i> )	-Yes ( <i>Qualitative: manager interviews and graduate student focus groups</i> ) ( <i>Quantitative: classroom survey to students</i> )
Madrigal (2001)	-Social identity theory -Hierarchy of effects ( <i>belief-attitude-intentions</i> )	-Perceived belief in sponsor behaviors -Attitude toward sponsor behaviors -Sponsor behaviors -Team identification	-Purchase Intentions	-Yes ( <i>Quantitative: Regression analyses--telephone survey</i> )
Meenaghan (2001)	-Mere exposure theory -Categorization theory -Image transfer -Halo effect -Fit/Congruence -Affective transfer -Balance theory	-Proposes four tenets of sponsorship: (1) Goodwill (2) Image (3) Fan involvement (4) Consumer response	-increased goodwill toward sponsor -increased fan involvement -actual purchase of sponsor product or service offerings	-Yes ( <i>Qualitative: interviews and focus groups</i> )
Gwinner & Swanson (2003)	-Social identity theory	-Perceived prestige, -Domain involvement, -Fan association, -Team identification		

Table 1 (Cont...)

Articles	Process Mechanisms	Effectiveness Factors	Outcome(s)	Empirical Basis
Cornwell, Weeks, & Roy (2005)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Mere exposure</li> <li>-Low-level processing</li> <li>-Reactivation</li> <li>-Matching/Congruence</li> <li>-Articulation</li> <li>-Balance/Meaning transfer</li> <li>-Identification</li> <li>-Classical conditioning</li> <li>-Prominence heuristic</li> <li>-Attribution theory</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Market factors (<i>brand equity, clutter, competitor activities</i>)</li> <li>-Individual &amp; group factors (<i>past experience, knowledge, involvement, arousal, social alliance</i>)</li> <li>-Management factors (<i>sponsorship policy, activation/leverage</i>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Cognitive (<i>awareness, image</i>)</li> <li>-Affective (<i>liking, preference</i>)</li> <li>-Behavioral (<i>purchase intent, purchase commitment, purchase</i>)</li> </ul>	-No ( <i>conceptual framework</i> )
Poon & Prendergast (2006)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Hierarchy of effects (<i>cognition-affect-conation</i>)</li> <li>-Image transfer</li> <li>-Affective transfer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Perceived quality</li> <li>-Brand attitudes</li> <li>-Integrated product relevance (<i>image-based and function-based similarity</i>)</li> </ul>	-Purchase intention	-No ( <i>conceptual framework</i> )
Alexandris & Tsiotsou (2012)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alt. hierarchy of effects (<i>affect-cognition-conation</i>)</li> <li>-Image transfer</li> <li>-Affective transfer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Involvement (<i>centrality, attraction</i>)</li> <li>-Attachment</li> <li>-Image</li> <li>-Attitude</li> </ul>	-Behavioral Intentions	-Yes ( <i>Quantitative: SEM model comparison to Gwinner &amp; Swanson (2003) model</i> )
Kim, Stout, & Cheong (2012)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Information processing theory (<i>holistic and analytic processing</i>)</li> <li>-Balance theory</li> <li>-Associative network theory</li> <li>-Categorization theory</li> <li>-Signal theory</li> <li>-Attribution theory</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Sponsorship image (<i>possessing affective and cognitive components</i>)</li> <li>-Sponsorship knowledge</li> <li>-Consumer processing resources (<i>motivation, ability, opportunities</i>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Cognitive image (<i>consumer beliefs regarding corporate ability and CSR</i>)</li> <li>-Affective image (<i>attitude, feelings, and personality perceptions</i>)</li> </ul>	-No ( <i>conceptual framework</i> )

city, state) onto the sponsor. The relationships between individuals and these associated entities influence their overall social identity.

Social identity is “that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his [or her] knowledge of his [or her] membership of a social group [e.g. hometown community], together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (Tajfel, 1978, p. 63). Individuals may emphasize various social identities throughout the course of a day (Reynolds & Turner, 2006); depending on which groups are most salient for establishing a positive self-concept relative to their environment (Turner & Oakes, 1986). Also, when various social groups are closely associated with one another, and individuals perceive themselves to possess membership in one of those groups, they will seek to cognitively associate themselves with the other associated groups to maintain their psychological balance (Heider, 1958). Therefore, considering the influence individuals’ social groups possess upon one another, and the overall associative nature of sponsorship effects, there is a need to better understand these social group dynamics within various sponsorship contexts and how they influence individuals’ associations with sponsors.

One reason for why there is a non-comprehensive understanding of how sponsorship functions may be related to what is, to date, a narrow epistemological examination of the phenomenon. Much of the existing sponsorship research attempts to broadly generalize effects, without much consideration to the various sponsorship contexts. More specifically, a plethora of sponsorship research follows positivistic epistemological thought and quantitative methodologies. Consequently, there may be an implicit assumption that sponsorship effects can be broadly generalized across a multitude of contexts, when this may not be true. And if such implication is justified, and many sponsorship effects are capable of being generalized across a multitude of contexts, then maybe the greater concern with such narrow epistemological practices revolves



around an unwillingness to function outside the publication norms established for sponsorship research. Such self-imposed restrictions prohibit scholarly creativity and exploration, both of which are essential for knowledge discovery.

A criticism by Mintzberg (2005) when speaking about what he believes to be the prevalent mindset of researchers, is that “We have altogether too many geniuses in research and not enough ordinary, open minds” (p. 23). He elaborates on his view by noting that the creativity issue is less about the capability of researchers to be creative, but attributes it to becoming “blocked,” by a fear of—or, at minimum, a cautiousness related to—being perceived as “correct” in the publication process (Mintzberg, 2005, p. 23). Moreover, he claims that much of the research is often driven by theory that is fashionable within academia at that time; warning that when scrutinized under “single lenses, organizations look distorted” (Mintzberg, 2005, p. 18). He concludes his thoughts on the topic by recalling the “rule of the tool”:

“[Y]ou give a little boy a hammer and everything looks like a nail. Narrow concepts are no better than narrow techniques. Organizations don’t need to be hit over the head with either” (Mintzberg, 2005, p. 18).

Subsequently, with sponsorship literature predominantly following one epistemological means of social inquiry, there is reason to suggest that the current understanding of sponsorship available in extant literature may be distorted by a narrow lens of inquiry. Generally, quantitative research is considered to be inherently confirmatory and deductive, with qualitative research being more exploratory and inductive:

“In brief, the quantitative paradigm is said to have a positivistic, hypothetico-deductive, particularistic, objective, outcome-oriented, and natural science world view. In contrast, the qualitative paradigm is said to subscribe to a phenomenological, inductive, holistic,

subjective, process-oriented, and social anthropological world view” (Reichardt & Cook, 1979, pp. 9-10).

Thus, qualitative methodologies that follow different epistemological and ontological frames of social inquiry than quantitative methodologies may be necessary and more suited to expand upon the existing base of knowledge found in sponsorship literature. Qualitative methods are more appropriate for initially examining why and how sponsorship works within different contexts, considering that such methods are more regularly thought to examine phenomena with a greater emphasis on context, and typically follow an epistemological belief that perceives truth as subjective and—at least in part—a social construction.

Reichardt and Cook (1979) argue that other than possibly tradition, there is no reason why researchers cannot mix and match “the attributes from the two paradigms [i.e. quantitative and qualitative] to achieve the combination most appropriate for the research problem and setting at hand” (p. 18). Moreover, as technology and the emergence of social media enables sponsors to leverage and activate sponsorships in new and creative ways—changing the manner in how consumers engage and interact with sponsors through property relationships as fans (Meenaghan, et al., 2013)—the nature of how sponsorship functions is evolving. Thus, while a traditional research focus is conceiving a generalizable understanding of sponsorship through positivistic frameworks, a more pragmatic epistemological approach to understanding various sponsorship effects is warranted; attempting to find the truth for now—it being considered true only to the degree that it works (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Following Mintzberg’s (2005) caution about succumbing to a single lens of social inquiry, scholars researching sponsorship effects should utilize a more expansive set of research tools and possess a broader, more open mindset; examining the phenomenon in more methodologically

holistic contexts. At worst, introducing additional methods and paradigms for examining sponsorship encourages more boldness and creativity in their research designs and knowledge pursuits. If scholars are tasked with advancing knowledge, then to discourage the use of the resources available to them for achieving such ends are folly. With a broader lens of inquiry in sponsorship, contexts that have largely been ignored may finally receive warranted attention.

Hometown sport sponsorship is one such sponsorship context that has thus far been neglected by extant literature through its generalized inclusion with other types of sponsorship. At the time of this research, only four studies (Cousens & Slack, 1996; Meng-Lewis, Thwaites, & Pillai, 2013; 2014; Woisetschläger, Eiting, Haselhoff, & Michaelis, 2010) are known to examine sponsorship effects with consideration to individuals' location associations. Studies by Meng-Lewis, Thwaites, and Pillai (2013; 2014) investigate consumer responses to foreign sport sponsors from a Country of Origin (COO) context. Yet, COO research considers location effects at a level of abstraction further removed from individuals than that of their hometowns. Moreover, both studies examine Olympic sponsor COO effects in Beijing, China—a cultural context much different than that being examined by this research.

A professional journal article by Woisetschläger, Eiting, Haselhoff, and Michaelis (2010) examines five determinants of sponsorship fit: (1) Perceived benefits, (2) regional identification, (3) sincerity, (4) provision of autonomy, and (5) ubiquity. Collecting online survey data from fans of German first-division football club, FC Cologne, their findings support perceived benefits and regional identification as strong determinants of sponsor fit; both influencing attitudinal (i.e. brand attractiveness) and intentional (i.e. word-of-mouth) outcomes.

Cousens and Slack (1996) is the only study known to specifically examine hometown sponsorship; focusing on the Quick Service Restaurant (QSR) industry. The researchers conducted

16 interviews with QSR managers—eleven franchisees, four regional representatives, and one national representative—from 11 different fast food companies in a local market. Through these interviews, and supplemented by available “corporate documents, newspaper articles and trade literature,” three decision-making approaches for entering local sport sponsorships were identified: an independent approach, a communal approach, and a controlled approach (Cousens & Slack, 1996, p. 174). These approaches aligned with three market penetration strategies identified by Hoffman and Preble (1991) for use by business format franchises. Structural and cultural factors strongly influenced which market penetration strategies and corresponding decision-making approaches were adopted by each QSR.

Hence, a question emerges: Why has there been an absence of hometown sponsorship research for more than two decades? Companies in North America are projected to spend \$16.37 billion on sport sponsorship (IEGSR, 2017). With annual growth rates above four percent, corporate sport sponsorships are established marketing platforms (IEGSR, 2017).

What about corporate, hometown sport sponsorships? Do they still exist? A Google word search for “hometown sport sponsorships” will provide numerous examples of corporations engaging in hometown sport sponsorships; articulating its hometown association to the sport property it is sponsoring within its messaging. Whether it is the Denver Bronco’s Sport Authority Field at Mile High (Zaas, 2011), Blue Cross Blue Shield’s sponsorships of the Minnesota Gophers and Minnesota Wild (“Blue Cross Sponsorships,” 2015), or American Airlines sponsorship of the Dallas Cowboys (“American Airlines Newsroom,” n.d.)—there is evidence suggesting that hometown sport sponsorship is common practice.

Ultimately, when considering corporate investments toward hometown sport sponsorships, its prevalence, and its likely relevance in meeting corporate marketing objectives, the necessity to

conduct research further examining corporate sport sponsorship from a hometown context becomes apparent.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Considering its prevalence, the absence of an explanation in extant literature for why many prominent corporations engage in hometown sponsorship is curious. While it is a common phenomenon, to this author's knowledge, only one study in academic literature (Cousens & Slack, 1996) specifically examines hometown sponsorship. Furthermore, no study examines the possible corporate benefits or strategic relevance of sponsoring properties within its "hometown." For instance, do hometown sponsorships possess any distinct or, at minimum, nuanced sponsorship effects when compared to other types of sponsorship? Thus, hometown sponsorship research is necessary for understanding the phenomenon better and determining its viability in meeting various corporate objectives.

### **Research Purpose**

The purposes for conducting the two studies within this dissertation are outlined below:

#### **Purpose of Study 1**

The purpose of this study was to develop a holistic understanding for why corporations conduct sponsorship, and how hometown sponsorships are perceived to function within their overall sponsorship strategies; examining hometown sport sponsorship from a sponsorship practitioner (managerial) perspective within a specific, local market.

#### **Purpose of Study 2**

The purpose of this study is twofold. First, the study examines whether sponsorship outcome effects (i.e. purchase intention, positive word-of-mouth) for a hometown sponsor and its direct competitor differ among "sports hometown" residents. Second, the study seeks to determine

whether hometown sport sponsorship influences individuals' perceptions of sponsors' investments in their community.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided these studies:

#### **Research Questions Guiding Study 1**

1. What do sponsorship managers perceive to be common sponsorship objectives? How do these objectives function with one another when applying a social identity approach?
2. When asking sponsorship managers to narrow their focus to consider hometown sponsorship objectives and effects, what are distinctive or nuanced differences in sponsorship strategy that emerge?

#### **Research Questions Guiding Study 2**

1. What influence does an individuals' associations between their hometown and their hometown teams' sponsors possess on sponsorship outcome effects (i.e. purchase intention, positive word-of-mouth)?
2. What influence does sport sponsorship have on individuals' perceptions of sponsor investment in their community?

### **Significance of the Studies**

The first study seeks to understand the most primal question regarding a phenomenon: Why does it exist? More aptly, as sponsorship is inherently a social construction within a data-driven business environment, the question becomes: why do it?

Through an immersive process of qualitative inquiry, the first study provides an explanation for why corporations engage in hometown sponsorships. An initial analysis examines sponsorship objectives from a broad, general context. Then, the focus is narrowed to better identify

and delineate any distinctive objectives and nuanced characteristics that managers perceive to be present within hometown sponsorships. Such exploratory analyses are appropriate for identifying and describing common characteristics of new, or under-studied, phenomena. By identifying and outlining intended objectives and common characteristics of hometown sponsorships in relation to sponsors' overall sponsorship strategies, a conceptual starting point for model development and testing of hometown effects in subsequent studies is established.

The second study examines the associative relationship between city identification and sponsor identification in a hometown context, while considering its possible influences on residents' perceptions of sponsors' investments in their community. Understanding possible differences that hometown sponsorships may exhibit versus alternative sponsorship options would assist managers in making decisions pertaining to the acquisition and allocation of their marketing resources. More specifically, such knowledge is particularly important for managers as they develop strategies for constructing their sponsorship portfolios and leveraging their sponsorships.

Sponsorships are recognized by scholars as valuable resources that can become distinctive competencies for corporations (Amis, Slack, & Barrett, 1999). Adopting a resource-based view (RBV) of the firm (Wernerfelt, 1984), these scholars propose that the effective utilization of these resources enables sponsors to establish sustainable competitive advantages in their markets (Amis, Pant, & Slack, 1997; Fahy, Farrelly, & Quester, 2004). To date, only qualitative methods—case studies (Amis et al. 1997; Amis et al., 1999)—offer support for this stance. Findings from this second study will offer insights as to whether a well-designed hometown sponsorship strategy affords sponsors a sustainable competitive advantage in their hometown markets; elaborating upon the discussions initiated by these earlier studies.

As a theoretical lens of inquiry, both dissertation studies apply a social identity approach—a complementary combination of social identity theory and self-categorization theory. Several sponsorship studies develop models and test effects through a theoretical lens of social identity (Alexandris & Tsiotsou, 2012; Garry, Broderick, & Lahiffe, 2008; Gwinner & Swanson, 2003; Madrigal, 2001). This dissertation, through its two studies, extends the contextual applications of social identity theory to hometown sponsorship; furthering the theory’s ability to explain how social group identification influences sponsorship effects.

Collectively, these studies initiate the process of addressing the paucity of hometown sport sponsorship research within literature. Different methodological approaches are applied in these studies, and each study focuses on different stakeholder perspectives (i.e. managers, consumers); examining hometown sponsorship at different levels of inquiry (i.e. group, individual). The methodological and measurement unit differences between these studies arise from an American pragmatist (herein “pragmatist”) mindset that encourages a broad lens of social inquiry. By applying a social identity approach as the theoretical perspective for both studies, their collective findings are anticipated to provide contextual shape to the phenomenon; allowing for the development of a more comprehensive and holistic representation of hometown sponsorship in future research.

### **Paradigmatic Stance: American Pragmatism**

American Pragmatism (herein “pragmatism”) is the paradigmatic stance from which this research is being conducted. Pragmatism encourages a holistic examination of the phenomenon of interest. With research questions seeking to understand the “why,” “what,” and “how,” of hometown sponsorship, pragmatism encourages a research approach that examines anything possibly relevant for understanding this nascent phenomenon of inquiry; whereas, the nature of



other frameworks may encourage omission of either the physical (e.g. constructivism) or subjective (e.g. objectivism) elements within or surrounding it.

Epistemologically, pragmatism views truth as a process rather than a destination, believing that current truth is provisional—being considered true to the degree that it currently works (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). In other words, truth is determined through the interaction or transaction between the physical, external world and the subjective constructions of individuals'; being “contextual, temporal, and related to action” (Greene, 2007, p. 84). Subsequently, theories are viewed as instruments that are as valuable—or representative of truth—as they are contextually applicable (Greene, 2007). Accepting knowledge as being both objective and constructed (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004), a pragmatist perspective lends itself to “solving practical problems in the ‘real world’” (Feilzer, 2010, p. 8).

Ontologically, pragmatism recognizes both the physical and constructed worlds as real and meaningful. Rosenthal (2011) notes that in following a pragmatist perspective, “There is an inseparable relationship between the human biological organism bound to a natural environment and the human knower who through meanings constitutes the world” (p. 6). Subsequently, approaching reality as both constructed (subjective) and physical (objective), there is a need to acknowledge both worlds within research as relative to the phenomenon being studied.

Pragmatism, however, should not be confused with approaching research questions from an a-paradigmatic stance, ignoring philosophical assumptions when determining methods of inquiry:

“Rather, a pragmatic paradigm signals attention to transactions and interactions; to the consequential, contextual, and dynamic nature of character of knowledge; to knowledge as action; to the intertwinement of values with inquiry; and so forth” (Greene, 2007, p. 85).

Thus, following a pragmatic paradigmatic stance encourages a contextual and dynamic examination of hometown sport sponsorship that acknowledges both truth and knowledge as conceived through the interaction of the objective organism with the subjective interpretation of the environment; thereby, considering findings true on the basis of how well they work to currently address the question.

### **Definition of Terms**

This section provides definitions for key terms used in this dissertation. Subsequently, these terms revolve around sponsorship, group identities, brand terminology, and sport properties

#### **Sponsorship(s)**

Sponsorships are defined as “a cash and/or in-kind fee paid to a property (typically sports, entertainment, non-profit event or organization) in return for access to the exploitable commercial potential associated with that property” (IEG, 2012).

#### **Sponsor(s)**

Sponsors are defined as corporations that compensate a property for access to the exploitable commercial potential associated with it.

#### **Property/Properties**

Properties are defined as entities—typically sports, entertainment, non-profit event, or organization—that inherently possess affinities with certain groups. Due to these group affinities, corporations will partner with these entities to foster associations with them and to benefit from their group affiliations.

#### **Agency/Agencies**

Agencies are defined as businesses that are hired by corporations to assist them in certain operations of their businesses. In context of this dissertation, agencies are typically businesses that

are hired by corporations to aid them in certain *marketing* activities (e.g. advertising agency, sponsorship agency, digital agency, experiential agency, media evaluation agency, etc.).

### **Cross-Functional Team(s)**

Cross-functional teams are defined as groups of people who possess various functional areas of expertise, working together towards a common goal, objective, or project. Relative to the first study, cross-functional teams consist of individuals from a corporations' different departments and agencies working towards achieving company-based sponsorship objectives.

### **Hometowns, Hometown Properties, and Hometown Corporations**

As defined in these studies, the closest metropolitan area to possess a professional sport franchise or franchises from the Big Four sport leagues—Major League Baseball (MLB), the National Basketball Association (NBA), National Hockey League (NHL), and National Football League (NFL)—in relation to individuals' residences is considered their “hometown.” Properties within these metropolitan areas would be considered “hometown properties.” Additionally, athletic programs from public state universities, whether within the boundaries of that metropolitan area, would also be considered “hometown properties.”

For example, if individuals live in New Hampshire, their “hometown” for purposes of this study would generally be the “Boston Metropolitan Area” in Massachusetts. Subsequently, the Boston Red Sox would be considered a “hometown property.” Yet, the athletic program at the University of New Hampshire is also considered a “hometown property” for individuals who live in the state of New Hampshire.

From a corporate perspective, this study assumes that corporations' international, national, or regional headquarters functions like individuals' residences; making the metropolitan areas where these offices are located their “hometowns.”

**Hometown Sport Sponsorships**

Hometown sport sponsorships are defined as sponsorships between hometown corporations and hometown sport properties.

**Sponsorship Portfolio(s)**

Sponsorship portfolios are defined as corporations' collections (i.e. "portfolios") of sponsored properties.

**Sponsor Portfolio(s)**

Sponsor portfolios are defined as properties' collections (i.e. "portfolios") of sponsoring corporations.

**Sponsorship Fit/Congruence**

Sponsorship fit (or congruence) is defined as the psychological association individuals' exhibit between a sponsor and property. Proposed heuristics that individuals use to establish these associations include relatedness, prominence (Johar & Pham, 1999), image-based, function-based (Gwinner & Eaton, 1999), native-fit, and created-fit (Becker-Olsen & Simmons, 2002).

**Sponsorship Leveraging**

Sponsorship leveraging "refers to the additional investment and activity in a sponsorship beyond the rights fee spent to initially acquire a property" (O'Reilly & Horning, 2013, p. 2).

**Sponsorship Activation**

Activation is defined as a subset of leveraging, "where the potential exists for audiences to interact or in some way become involved with the sponsor" (Weeks et al., 2008, p. 638).

**Return-On-Objective (ROO)**

Return-On-Objective (ROO) is defined as a form of event measurement that occurs pre-event. This measurement approach can include quantitative and qualitative defined objectives that are set to be achieved through the event.

**Return-On-Investment (ROI)**

Return-on-Investment is defined as a quantitative measurement approach that corporations implement to determine the profitability of specific investments (e.g. sponsorships, endorsements, product launch campaigns, etc.). This approach establishes a financial return versus financial cost ratio. Sponsorship ROI practices often involve quantifying “soft” measures –qualitative attributes that are assigned monetary value (e.g. brand impressions)—with “hard” measures (e.g. sales, subscriptions, etc.) to determine sponsorship returns. ROI can be treated as an ROO measurement objective, or treated independent of ROO.

**Group Identity**

Group identity describes a relation between individuals and their surroundings; however, does not include elements of individuals’ identities that arise from personal attributes. The term “group identity” has neutral contextual connotations, but is often used interchangeably with more contextually descriptive terms such as social identity, organizational identity, and collective identity (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

**Social Identity**

Social identity is defined as “that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his or her knowledge of their membership in a social group or groups together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (Tajfel, 1981, p. 255).

**City Identification**

City identification is defined as the level of psychological attachment felt by individuals towards a metropolitan area.

**Team Identification**

Team identification is defined as the level of psychological attachment felt by sports fans towards their favorite team (Branscombe & Wann, 1992).

**Sponsor Identification**

Sponsor identification is defined as the psychological attachment felt by individuals towards a team's sponsor. Sponsor identification has been found to be an antecedent for positive image transfer (Gwinner 1997; Gwinner & Eaton 1999), positive attitude towards the sponsor (McDaniel 1999; Speed & Thompson, 2000), and purchase intention (Madrigal 2001; McDaniel 1999).

**Hometown Sponsor Identification**

Hometown sponsor identification is defined as the psychological attachment felt by individuals towards a team's hometown sponsor.

**Positive Word-Of-Mouth (WOM)**

Positive Word-Of-Mouth (WOM) is defined as a positive, "informal, person-to-person [or social media] communication between a perceived noncommercial communicator and a receiver regarding a brand, a product, an organization, or a service" (Harrison-Walker, 2001, p. 63). Positive WOM is considered an indicator of brand loyalty (Tsiotsou, Alexandris, & Cornwell, 2014; Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996).

### **Purchase Intention**

Purchase intention is defined as the purchase-related loyalty towards a sponsor's brand product.

### **Perceived Community Investment**

Perceived community investment is defined as individuals' perceptions of a company meeting its obligation towards the economic commitment to the community.

### **Brand(s)**

Brands are defined as types of products manufactured or services offered by particular companies under particular names.

### **Anthropomorphizing/Anthropomorphism (i.e. noun) /Anthropomorphic (i.e. adjective)**

Anthropomorphizing (i.e. verb), is defined as attributing human characteristics to anything that is not human, such as a brand.

### **Brand Personality**

Brand personality is defined as "the set of human characteristics associated with a brand" (Aaker, 1997, p. 347). While this study ascribes to the definition for brand personality in Aaker (1997), it does not restrict brand personality traits to those identified in its multi-dimensional scale. Rather, this study believes any trait could be ascribed by individuals to brands, following logic provided in Heere (2010):

"...the scale as developed lacks validity at the conceptual level, based on the notion that a brand cannot possess personality traits. Claiming a brand has a personality, is an anthropomorphism. A brand can only be given traits by people, and main originates as a result of the marketing approach of the managers within the company. The anthropomorphic associations consumers have of the brand are caused by marketing

strategies of the organization...The argument that the consumers' perception of the brand personality is manipulated by marketers is supported within the study of Johar, Sengupta, and Aaker (2005). They examined the effects of an experiment (marketing strategies) on the consumers' perception of the brand personality and acknowledge that those perceptions only alter after exposure to new brand information" (p. 18).

### **Brand Credibility**

Brand credibility is defined as "the believability of the product information contained in a brand, which requires that consumers perceive that the brand have the ability (i.e., expertise) and willingness (i.e., trustworthiness) to continuously deliver what has been promised" (Erdem & Swait, 2004, p. 192).

### **Brand Integrity**

Brand integrity is defined as the consistency in the brand's marketing and management; allowing individuals to form and ascribe it a similar and enduring brand personality.

### **Brand Love**

Brand love follows the grounded theory study of Batra, Ahuvia, and Bagozzi (2012) and is defined as a multi-dimensional construct that possesses seven core elements: self-brand integration, passion-driven behaviors, positive emotional connection, long-term relationship, positive overall attitude valence, attitude certainty and confidence (strength), and anticipated separation distress. When individuals love a brand, it "becomes part of the consumer's identity and provide intrinsic benefits" (Batra et al., 2012, p. 12).

### **Brand Ambassador(s)**

This dissertation uses two definitions for brand ambassadors, with the definition used depending on context. Brand ambassadors can be paid representatives of a corporation that



champion its brand's or brands' products and services; referring to all types of paid event staff (e.g. trade show hosts, in-store promotional team members, street team members, etc.). They can also be uncompensated consumers who strongly identify with the brand. Brand ambassadors—whether they are compensated—use their brand's product(s) or service(s), speak positively about their brand with others, and defend their brand against criticisms; being fiercely loyal. These individuals strongly identify with the brand to where it represents part of their social identity.

Compensated brand ambassadors should not to be confused with celebrity spokespersons. Celebrity spokespersons serve as the face and/or the voice for companies (and/or brands), but may not be as personally invested as brand ambassadors.

### **Brand Ambassadors for Life**

The term “brand ambassadors for life” is applied in the first study to collectively refer to *all* individuals who strongly identify with the brand; possess brand love; and have integrated the brand into their lifestyles. The relationship these individuals possess with their brand is anthropomorphic. Based on interview analysis in the first study, building brand ambassadors for life was found to be a primary objective of corporate sponsorships.

### **Sponsor/Brand Image**

Sponsor (or brand) image is defined as the image individuals form about a sponsor/brand based on their associations with it. These image associations, as proposed by Keller (1993) are (1) attributes, (2) benefits, and (3) attitudes. Sponsor/brand image have been found to influence positive word-of-mouth (WOM) towards the sponsor/brand (Tsioutsou & Alexandris, 2009).

### **Perceived Community Investment**

Perceived community investment is defined as individuals' perceptions about corporations' contributions to the economic development of the region (Öberseder, Schlegelmilch, Murphy, & Gruber, 2014).

### **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)**

This study adheres to Brown and Dacin (1997) that defines corporate social responsibility (CSR) as “the organization’s status and activities with respect to its perceived societal obligations” (p. 68).

### **National College Athletic Association (NCAA)**

The National College Athletic Association (NCAA) is a national governing body for collegiate athletics in the United States. More than 1,100 college and university athletic programs are members. The NCAA manages its 90 national championships, and is tasked with preserving the competitive balance and academic integrity of its member institutions and student-athletes.

### **NCAA Division I**

NCAA Division I is defined as a NCAA Division of member institutions that sponsor a minimum 14 sports (meeting established sport minimums by gender), and primarily compete against other NCAA Division I opponents, while providing student-athletes financial aid within NCAA established limits (both minimum and maximum). This division represents the highest competition level governed by the NCAA.

**March Madness**

March Madness is defined as the NCAA Division I Men's Basketball Tournament that occurs throughout the month of March, and determines the NCAA national champion. The tournament currently invites 68 Men's Division I college basketball teams to participate.

**Major League Baseball (MLB)**

Major League Baseball (MLB) is a professional baseball league that is comprised of thirty teams, divided equally within the American League (AL) and the National League (NL). MLB teams play 162-game regular seasons each Spring/Fall, with five teams advancing to a four-round playoff. The two league (i.e. AL and NL) champions compete against each other in a best-of-seven games MLB championship, called the World Series.

**Major League Soccer (MLS)**

Major League Soccer is a men's professional soccer league that is sanctioned by U.S. Soccer; representing the highest competition-level for the United States and Canada. The league is comprised of 22 teams, with 19 teams located in the U.S. and three teams in Canada. MLS teams play 34-game regular seasons each Spring/Fall, with 12 teams advancing to the playoffs. The playoffs conclude with the league championship game, called the MLS Cup.

**National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing (NASCAR)**

The National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing (NASCAR) is a governing body for auto racing events. NASCAR sanctions more than 1,500 races annually, in the U.S. and Canada.

**National Basketball Association (NBA)**

The National Basketball Association (NBA) is a professional basketball league in North America that is comprised of thirty teams, divided equally within the Eastern Conference and Western Conference. NBA teams play 82-game regular season each Winter/Spring, with eight

teams advancing to their respective conference playoffs. The conference playoff champions play for the NBA championship in a best-of-seven game series, called the NBA Finals.

### **National Football League (NFL)**

The National Football League (NFL) is a professional football league in the U.S. that is comprised of 32 teams, divided equally within the American Football Conference (AFC) and National Football Conference (NFC). NFL teams play 16-game regular seasons each Fall/Winter, with six teams from each conference advancing to the playoffs. The two conference champions (i.e. playoff winners) compete against each other in the league championship, called the Super Bowl.

### **National Hockey League (NHL)**

The National Hockey League is a professional ice hockey league that is comprised of 30 teams in the U.S and Canada. There are currently 23 teams located in the U.S. and seven teams located in Canada. The league has two conferences. The Eastern Conference consists of 16 teams, while the Western Conference consists of 14 teams. Eight teams from each conference advance to the playoffs. The two conference champions play in a best-of-seven game series, called the Stanley Cup Finals.

### **The Big Four**

The Big Four, as defined in this study, refer to the four-leading major professional sport leagues in North America: the MLB, NBA, NFL, and NHL.

## **Delimitations**

### **Delimitations of Study 1**

One delimitation of this study is its focus on the sport sponsorship environment of a specific metropolitan area in the Southeastern United States. A related delimitation is that the sample

consists of sponsorship managers for hometown corporations and sport properties, and locally-based agencies within that specified area. Subsequently, sponsorship managers for prominent art and entertainment properties are not interviewed, as this study focuses on hometown sport sponsorships.

Lastly, this study is delimited to qualitative inquiry that employs social identity as its theoretical lens. Therefore, quantitative methods for analysis are not conducted to confirm the study's qualitative findings and insights, and theoretical frameworks outside of social identity theory are not implemented in its analysis; limiting its transferability.

### **Delimitations of Study 2**

A delimitation of this study is its focus on the corporate, sport sponsorship environment in Atlanta, Georgia's metropolitan area. Consequently, the sample is delimited to Georgia residents. Furthermore, data collection is delimited to an anonymous, online survey that is distributed through a snowball sampling technique (i.e. convenience sample); therefore, eliminating the possibility of respondent follow-up.

The study's research design is delimited to examine the associations between two real brands (i.e. Coca-Cola, Pepsi) with two Atlanta professional teams (i.e. Atlanta Braves, Atlanta Falcons). Coca-Cola and Pepsi are used in this study because of their recognizability and the availability and accessibility of their soft drinks; establishing the industry being studied as another delimitation. Further, these brands are active corporate sport sponsors. By using real brands and teams, the study is delimited to include individuals' existing associations with each entity.

All variables are previously identified in academic literature as being influenced, or potentially being influenced, by sponsorship effects. Additionally, all variables are delimited to existing scale measures.

Lastly, as a cross-sectional analysis, this study is delimited to capture one moment in time; thus, its inability to be used to determine causality or changes over time, among the variables tested.

### **Limitations**

The following presents anticipated limitations of this research:

#### **Limitations of Study 1**

While this study's sample includes sponsorship managers in corporate, agency, and property roles—and possesses interview participant representation from every major property in the researched area—there are two factors that limit corporate sponsorship manager interview participation: (1) Existing policies regarding research participation, and (2) the inability to secure in-person interviews due to their managerial time-constraints. The two corporate sponsorship managers that serve as interview participants, however, manage large sponsorship portfolios for two Fortune 500 corporations; offering valuable insight into hometown sponsorship. Unfortunately, to allow for the inclusion of the second corporate sponsorship manager and a fourth agency consultant, two phone interviews are included in the sample; reducing the interviewer's access to participant social cues and environment.

Another possible limitation in this study may include the researcher's subjectivity, who previously worked as an agency consultant and was already experienced with many of the properties that are represented in the interview participant sample. Researcher subjectivities are expected to introduce bias during the study's data collection and analysis phases.

#### **Limitations of Study 2**

While still producing a convenience sample, the study's use of a snowball technique is intended to increase the sample's geographic reach; creating a broader representation of state

residents. The researcher, however, did not include a survey question to confirm this assumption (e.g. asking for mailing zip code). Additionally—as is generally the case with convenience samples—the sample’s race demographics are skewed when compared to the population. Based upon available state census information, there is over-representation of Asians and Caucasians, and under-representation of all other minority groups. With poor sample representation of minority groups, there is not enough statistical power to reliably examine possible race effects using quantitative analysis methods.

### **Summary**

Chapter One presents concerns with the near absence of hometown sponsorship research in extant literature. This chapter developed the argument for greater methodological and paradigmatic variety to encourage creativity and broader inquiry in the research stream. Specifically, the chapter offers the recommendation that sponsorship researchers start examining different sponsorship contexts, considering sponsorship as phenomena rather than a phenomenon. These current studies seek to initiate the process of addressing the need for hometown sponsorship research.

## CHAPTER 2

### GENERAL OVERVIEW OF SPONSORSHIP RESEARCH

Sponsorship is defined as “a cash and/or in-kind fee paid to a property (typically sports, entertainment, non-profit event or organization) in return for access to the exploitable commercial potential associated with that property” (IEG, 2012). It is commonly thought that the B2B relationship established between corporations and properties in a sponsorship functions best in a long-term arrangement (Farrelly, Quester, & Burton, 2006), where both parties mutually benefit (Farrelly & Quester, 2005; Olkkonen, 2001). In recent years, corporations’ expectations of the sponsored properties’ commitments to these partnerships have grown (Farrelly, Quester, & Burton, 2006), as the internal and external competencies of both corporations and properties are important to sponsorship success (Cousens, Babiak, & Bradish, 2006; Westberg, Stavros, & Wilson, 2011).

As a management tool, Chadwick and Thwaites (2004) outline four types of objectives corporations can achieve through sponsorship: (1) marketing communications (i.e. using as a promotional tool), (2) relationship marketing (i.e. building relationships with consumers), (3) networking (i.e. building strategic partnerships with other related organizations), and (4) resourcing (i.e. allocating resources to achieve a competitive advantage). Amis et al. (1999) suggest that large corporations, such as “McDonalds, Nike, Anheuser-Busch, and Coca-Cola,” treat sponsorship as a distinctive competence, which “is capable of providing, either on its own or in combination with other resources, a position of sustainable competitive advantage” (p. 252). Moreover, securing category exclusivity and integrating sponsorship communications within the



overall marketing strategies of corporations is recommended to improve sponsorship effectiveness (Amis et al., 1997; Amis et al., 1999).

Sponsorship is capable of enhancing corporate image (Cornwell, 1995; Cornwell, Roy, & Steinard, 2001); brand awareness (Grohs, Wagner, & Vsetecka, 2004), brand image (Gwinner & Eaton, 1999; Zdravkovic & Till, 2012), brand attitude (Gwinner, 1997; McDaniel, 1999); and generating positive purchase intention and word-of-mouth in the marketplace (Speed & Thompson, 2000; Tsiotsou & Alexandris, 2009); thus, allowing brands to command a price premium (Michell, King, & Reast, 2001).

Increasing brand loyalty in the marketplace has been noted by corporations as a primary objective for sponsorship (Levin, Beasley, & Gamble, 2004). By establishing strong brand loyalty in the market place, corporations could ultimately see increases in sales through retention of existing consumers allowing them to expand market share with the addition of new consumers (Meenaghan, 1996).

While more research has been conducted on corporations' motives for engaging in sponsorships than for properties (Lee, Sandler, & Shani, 1997; Olkkonen, Tikkanen, & Alajoutsijärvi, 2000), three property-based motives for securing sponsorships are identified in extant literature. These three motives are (1) increasing revenues through sponsorship fees, (2) increasing brand exposure, and (3) generating added-value to its product offerings through their sponsors' resources (Farrelly et al, 2006; Urriolagoitia, & Planellas, 2007).

### **Sponsorship Fit/Congruence**

A construct that is frequently acknowledged in sponsorship literature (Cornwell, Weeks, & Roy, 2005) for its influence to positively affect sponsorship effects is fit, or congruence, between a sponsor and a property (Becker-Olsen & Simmons, 2002; Rifon, Choi, Trimble, & Li., 2004;

Speed & Thompson, 2000). As a less overt marketing communication than traditional advertising, scholars have attributed the increased sponsorship effects obtained by good fit to consumer's exhibiting less resistance—with less questioning of sponsor motives (Becker-Olsen & Simmons, 2002; Cornwell et al., 2005; Rifon et al., 2004; Simmons & Becker-Olsen, 2006; Woisetschlager, Haselhoff, & Backhaus, 2014). Fit has been applied in various sponsorship contexts (Olson 2010), examining its effects on a number of sponsorship effects—such as image transfer (Gwinner & Eaton; 1999), sponsor attitude (Roy & Cornwell; 2003; Martensen, Grønholdt, Bendtsen, & Jensen, 2007; Speed & Thompson, 2000), and purchase intentions (Madrigal, 2001; Martensen et al., 2007). With terms of fit and congruence being interchangeable in the sponsorship literature, the term “fit” will be used throughout the remainder of this study.

While examined frequently, Olson (2010) notes multiple external validity limitations regularly present within sponsorship fit studies. He argues that these studies often possess extremely limited causal relationships, and examine these relationships with a univariate approach; rather than simultaneously with a multivariate approach (Olson, 2010). There is also a concern with sample representation and research design. Many of the studies use convenience samplings of college students (Cornwell, Humphreys, Maguire, Weeks, & Tellegen, 2006; Gwinner & Eaton, 1999; Roy & Cornwell, 2003, 2004; Ruth & Simonin, 2003; Simmons & Becker-Olsen, 2006) and fictional sponsorships where respondents view fabricated press releases (Cornwell et al., 2006; Johar & Pham, 1999; Olson & Thjømmøe, 2011; Roy & Cornwell, 2003, 2004), magazine advertisements (Gwinner & Eaton; 1999; Ruth & Simonin, 2003), or news clippings (Becker-Olsen & Simmons, 2002; Simmons & Becker-Olsen, 2006) to generate fit perceptions. While not exhaustive, Table 2 provides summaries of relevant studies regarding sponsorship fit.

Table 2: Fit/Congruence Dimension Conceptualizations

Articles	Fit/Congruence Consideration	Justifications for Fit Considerations	Sponsorship Presentation Form	Sample Information
Johar & Pham (1999)	-Relatedness -Prominence -Event type ( <i>physical vs. mental</i> )	-Categorization theory -Subjective diagnostic value in the marketplace	-Press releases	-Number of subjects
Gwinner & Eaton (1999)	-Image-based -Function-based	-Associative network theory -Match-up hypothesis	-Magazine advertisements	-College students ( <i>United States</i> )
Speed & Thompson (2000)	-Perceived sponsor-event fit -Image	-Classic conditioning	-Participants self-selected sponsor-event matches from available pool of sponsors and events	-College students ( <i>Australia</i> )
Becker-Olsen & Simmons (2002)	-Native fit -Created-fit	-No justifications were formally cited	-News clippings -Non-profit corporate communications	-No sample data
Ruth & Simonin (2003)	-Complementary/Relatedness -Nationality -Controversy	-Image transfer -Stereotyping -Stigma theory	-Advertisements "in development stages"	-College students and staff ( <i>United States</i> )
Roy & Cornwell (2003)	-Brand equity (awareness and image) as a facilitator of sponsor-event schemas determining congruence	-Associative network theory -Stigma theory -Match-up hypothesis	-Press releases	-College students from two universities
Rifon, Choi, & Trimble (2004)	-Altruistic vs exploitive cognitive inferences of congruence	-Attribution theory -Discounting principle	-Website banner advertisements	-College students ( <i>United States</i> )

Table 2 (Cont...)

Articles	Fit/Congruence Consideration	Justifications for Fit Considerations	Sponsorship Presentation Form	Sample Information
Roy & Cornwell (2004)	-Brand-equity and consumer expertise influence perceived fit/congruence	-Associative network theory -Expertise-based info proc. -Match-up hypotheses	-Press releases	-College students
Cornwell, Humphreys, Maguire, Weeks, & Tellegen (2006)	-Image-based -Function-based	-Associative network theory -Match-up hypothesis	-Magazine advertisements	-College students ( <i>United States</i> )
Simmons & Becker-Olsen (2006)	-Native-fit -Created-fit	-Associative network theory	-News clippings -Non-profit corporate communications	-College students
Martensen, Grønholdt, Bendtsen, & Jensen (2007)	-Global approach to fit	-No justifications cited	-Interviews about sponsor pre- and post-event	-Participating golfers
Fleck & Quester (2007)	-Relevancy -Expectancy	-Associative network theory -Categorization theory -Match-up hypothesis	-Sponsor-event dyads were used that respondents were asked to evaluate	-Consumer panel ( <i>French</i> ) -College students ( <i>Australia</i> )
Weeks, Cornwell, & Drenman (2008)	-Leveraging and activation viewed as facilitators of enhanced fit and consumer attitude	-Practitioner terminology and a study by Sneath, Finney, and Close (2005)	-Websites designed specifically for study	-College students
Olson & Thijmøe (2009)	-Exposure time -Knowledge of the brand -Consumer's affective interest in the sponsored property -Relatedness	-Mere exposure effect -Experiential testing of overall target population to develop conversion rate justification	-Nine short films made about handball specifically for the study	-2,333 Norwegian citizens recruited from large consumer panel

Table 2 (Cont...)

Articles	Fit/Congruence Consideration	Justifications for Fit Considerations	Sponsorship Presentation Form	Sample Information
Olson (2010)	-Attitudinal similarity -Ability to integrated knowledge of brand into support for (or resistance to) the sponsorship	-Classical conditioning -Info integration theory -Balance theory	-Online survey regarding two (real) major sponsorships for each of two large Scandinavian firms (beer/financial services)	-1,149 Norwegian and Danish citizens from large, consumer panel
Olson & Thjørmøe (2011)	Tested six dimensions of fit: (1) Use (2) Size (3) Audience (4) Geographic location (5) Attitude (6) Image	-Associative network theory -Categorization theory -Cognitive consistency	-Content analysis ( <i>study 1</i> ) -Press releases ( <i>study 2</i> ) -Conjoint cards ( <i>study 3</i> )	-College students ( <i>study 1</i> ) -Norwegian citizens ( <i>study 2</i> ) -Managers ( <i>study 3</i> )

### **Sponsorship/Sponsor Portfolio Fit**

While research on sponsorship fit traditionally focuses on the dyadic relationship between a sponsor and property, more recent studies are now examining the associative fit effects that are caused upon sponsoring brands by their sponsorship portfolios (Chien, Cornwell, & Pappu, 2011), and upon sponsored properties by their sponsor portfolios (Groza, Cobbs, & Schaeffers, 2012; Ruth & Simonin, 2003, 2006).

Examining consumer assessments of perceived fit of a brand's sponsorship portfolio by sponsorship category relatedness (SCR) and event personality fit (EPF) using associative network theory, Chien, Cornwell, and Pappu (2011) created sponsorship portfolios of actual events for fictitious brands. Results from the study's MANCOVA analyses suggest that when a brand's sponsorship portfolio consists of categorically related sponsorships—versus a portfolio with categorically unrelated sponsorships—consumers exhibit higher brand meaning consistency and clarity (Chien, Cornwell, & Pappu, 2011).

Findings in Groza, Cobbs, and Schaeffers (2012), which examines sponsor portfolio effects, suggest that properties need to consider image congruence, or fit, between themselves and potential sponsors (i.e. sponsor portfolio). Poor brand image fit between properties and their sponsor portfolios can cause detrimental spillover effects upon properties' brand images. Additional findings from the study, however, provides evidence that the negative effects attributable to a poorly fitting sponsor within properties' sponsor portfolio can be attenuated by increasing the number of sponsors that exhibit good fit characteristics with the property (Groza et al., 2012).

Cobbs, Groza, and Rich (2015) examines whether there are brand spillover effects between sponsors within a property's sponsor portfolio. Findings from the study suggest the presence of an

interaction effect between sponsors' brands in a sponsor portfolio. Sponsors with brand images incongruent to the sponsored property benefit from an improved brand perception when they are either included in a small sponsor portfolio including another incongruent co-sponsor, or a larger portfolio including sponsors more congruent with the sponsored property.

Another way to enhance sponsorship effects is through leveraging of the sponsorship (Grohs, Wagner, & Vsetecka, 2004; Quester & Thompson; 2001). The following section will delineate the differences between sponsorship leveraging and activation, as well as elaborate on its importance to sponsorship success.

### **Leveraging and Activation**

Sponsorship leveraging “refers to the additional investment and activity in a sponsorship beyond the rights fee spent to initially acquire a property” (O’Reilly & Horning, 2013, p. 2). While leveraging and activation are often considered synonymous in literature, Weeks, Cornwell, and Drennan (2008) suggest that activation is a subset of leveraging. It defines activation as leveraging “where the potential exists for audiences to interact or in some way become involved with the sponsor” (Weeks et al., 2008, p. 638).

Using these definitions, in-venue signage—such as an electronic ribbon board articulating sponsors' relationship to the property—would be an example of leveraging, given that there are no opportunities for the audience (e.g. fans) to interact and become involved with sponsors. If, however, sponsors use that same electronic ribbon board to communicate promotions that interact with fans through calls-to-action, such as ‘Text PLAY to WIN (946),’ these leveraging implementations would be considered sponsorship activations. Another example of sponsorship activation would be the recent social media campaign that Coke Zero employed to interact with fans of its college football properties. Using Facebook and Twitter, Coke Zero strategically

‘surprises and delights’ fans commenting about college football, sending them gifts related to their comments; such as “a signed football, helmet or game tickets”—assets the brand can access through its various college football sponsorships (Smith, 2012, October 15). Fans often responded to the surprise gift by posting photos and comments of what they had received from Coke Zero, interacting with and promoting the brand to others as “unofficial ambassadors” (Smith, 2012, October 15).

Leveraging and activation can take many forms and be implemented across multiple communication channels. In consumer-focused sponsorships, leveraging typically takes the form of sponsorship-linked marketing (Cornwell et al., 2006; Cornwell et al., 2005), which is “the orchestration and implementation of marketing activities for the purpose of building and communicating an association to a sponsorship” (Cornwell, 1995, p. 15). Within sponsorship-linked marketing exists sponsorship-linked advertising (Kelly, Cornwell, Coote, & McAlister, 2012), which is advertising that is thematically tied to a sponsorship (Cornwell et al., 2005). Crimmins and Horn (1996) addressed the benefit of sponsorship-linked advertising, stating that advertising can help create a link between the sponsor and property if it is implemented to articulate the relationship.

Advertising during corporations’ sponsorships, whether linked or unlinked to the sponsorship through articulation of the relationship, is often considered an important value element that increases sponsor awareness (Herrmann, Walliser, & Kacha, 2011; Quester & Thompson, 2001) and brand image (Olkkonen et al., 2000; Zdravkovic & Till, 2012). Additionally, recent trends, such as Coke Zero’s activation of its college football sponsorships, support the utilization of non-traditional and creative media vehicles in communicating sponsorships, creating differentiation from other sponsors via messaging (Dahlén, 2005).



Scholars suggest that a sponsorship should not be entered into if there is no leveraging investment to communicate the partnership (Cornwell & Maignan, 1998; Crimmins & Horn, 1996). Leveraging and activating sponsorships in a creative manner can breakthrough sponsor clutter (DeGaris, West, & Dodds, 2009), which has increased in accordance with sponsorship's prevalence (Cornwell et al., 2005). Further, as sponsorship clutter increases, it has been suggested by scholars that the investment in leveraging should also increase (Quester & Thompson, 2001). In recently proposing a sponsorship activation (leveraging) decision framework, O'Reilly and LaFrance Horning (2013) provides the recommendation that an appropriate leveraging-to-rights fee ratio for sponsorships should range from 1:1 to 7:1.

Extant literature supports a positive relationship between sponsor leveraging and sponsor image (Crimmins & Horn, 1996; Grohs et al., 2004; Quester & Thompson, 2001). As fans are presumed to be more focused on the property's activities than those of its sponsors, initial awareness of the sponsor is assumed to typically occur "with little attention, low involvement, and certainly in a peripheral way" (Christensen, 2006, p. 63). However, this less overt alternative to traditional advertising appears to lower consumer defense mechanisms to persuasion (Meenaghan, 2001), presenting a form of competitive advantage if sponsorship leveraging is implemented strategically (Amis et al., 1997; Cornwell et al., 2001; Herrmann et al., 2011).

Where earlier sponsorship research focuses on a more traditional marketing mix approach (refer to Cornwell & Maignan, 1998; Olkkonen et al., 2000; Walliser, 2003), scholars are now noting that the characteristics of sponsorship—strategic relationships, focusing long-term, and incorporating interactive marketing communications—align with a relationship marketing approach (Grönroos, 1994). Subsequently, it is anticipated that effective leveraging of consumer-focused sponsorships by corporations will emphasize developing relationships with those who

associate with its sponsored properties—most notably, fans. A potential way for corporate sponsors to establish deep and meaningful associations with its consumers, and its sponsored properties' fans (who, ideally, are also a corporation's consumers), is through corporate social responsibility (CSR).

### **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Sponsorship**

CSR is defined as “the organization’s status and activities with respect to its perceived societal reputation” (Brown & Dacin, 1997, p. 68). The concept of CSR is distinguishable from cause-related marketing in that it engenders a relationship to a social or environmental cause without a sales association. Cause-related marketing involves corporate giving that is associated to consumer purchases (Dean, 2003). For instance, an example of cause-related marketing would be Wendy’s “Father’s Day Frosty Weekend” campaign, where the franchise donates 50 cents to the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption” every time a consumer purchases a Frosty treat over Father’s Day weekend (“Dave Thomas Foundation,” 2012); whereas, UPS’s commitment to reduce its gas emissions through utilizing a fleet of more than 2,700 alternative fuel vehicles in its operations represents a CSR initiative (“Environmental Responsibility,” 2012) .

Similar to the indirect effects corporate sponsorships can have on brands, research shows that CSR possesses the capabilities to strengthen consumers’ images, attitudes, and loyalties to corporations over the long-term (Brown & Dacin, 1997; Forehand & Grier, 2003; Hill & Moran, 2011; Murray & Vogel, 1997; Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001); suggesting strategically implemented CSR may potentially serve as a competitive advantage for corporations. Moreover, corporations actively engaging in CSR initiatives are positioned better to minimize damage to reputations when receiving negative publicity (Brown & Dacin, 1997; Till & Nowak, 2000).

It is commonplace with professional sport organizations in the United States to engage in CSR that possesses congruence to its sport, or sport in general (Walker, Kent, & Vincent, 2010). Examples of such CSR would be the NFL's "Play 60" campaign, the NBA's "Basketball Without Borders" program, and NASCAR's "Drive for Diversity" initiative. Sport sponsoring corporations are also engaging in CSR initiatives that are congruent to its operations. Nike's "Reuse-A-Shoe" program collects shoes—of all brands, not just its own—and turns them into sport surfacing for parks, courts, and tracks. The program, which began in 1990, claims to have recycled 28 million pairs of shoes into sport surfacing for more than 450,000 locations worldwide ("Reuse-a-shoe," 2013).

Other corporations are using sport sponsorships as leveraging platforms for CSR. During the 2007/08 Football Association Challenge Cup (FA Cup) season, a number of its sponsors leveraged their sponsorship with the FA Cup to promote a CSR campaign (Kemp, 2007, December 19). E.ON, an energy company, launched a website, carbonfootprint.com, as a forum for fans to communicate their pledges to help reduce the carbon footprint of the FA Cup. Based on more than 160,000 fan pledges, it is estimated that E.ON's CSR initiative saved the atmosphere from 22,000 tons of carbon dioxide emissions ("CRed," 2008).

Given the similar function and employment of CSR to sponsorship—and most notably sport sponsorship—it is anticipated that more corporations will follow the direction of E.ON and others by aligning with CSR and sponsorship initiatives that possess high-fit with its image and function, integrating CSR initiatives within its sponsorships as leveraging/activation elements whenever possible, and incorporating both CSR and sponsorship into its overall marketing strategy.

While leveraging and CSR initiatives can support synergies and brand image congruence between corporations and sponsored properties, the practice of ambush marketing by its competitors can have the opposite effect. In the following section, a description of what constitutes ambush marketing is provided. In addition, common ambush marketing strategies are discussed, as well as counteractive measures taken by sponsors to protect their sponsorships. Both ethical viewpoints of ambush marketing are acknowledged.

### **Ambush Marketing**

Ambush marketing is “a planned effort (campaign) by an organization to associate themselves indirectly with an event in order to gain at least some of the recognition and benefits that are associated with being an official sponsor” (Sandler & Shani, 1989, p. 11). Also known as parasite marketing (Payne, 1998), ambush marketing is detrimental to the sponsorship effects received by the official sponsors of event properties (Byon & Zhang, 2009; Cornwell et al., 2006; Meenaghan, 1996). It is not uncommon to find competitors of a high-profile event’s sponsors, doing some form of marketing or advertising implicitly tying them to the event (Byon & Zhang, 2009; Kelly et al., 2012). With the mass media exposure and social media attention such events garner, many studies on ambush marketing focus research around mega-events like the Olympics and FIFA World Cup (Lee et al., 1997; McDaniel & Kinney, 1998; Payne, 1998; Sandler & Shani, 1989; Shani & Sandler, 1998).

Crompton (2004) identifies six common ambush marketing strategies that non-sponsor corporations employ. These strategies are to (1) become a broadcast partner of the event; (2) sponsor a sub-category of the event; (3) secure advertising time during an event; (4) purchase advertising spaces in close proximity to the event location; (5) employ theme advertising; and (6) create counter attraction through involvement in another event at the same time. Ambushers are

known to adopt one or more of these strategies when ambushing its competitors' sponsorships (Crompton, 2004).

To offset the effectiveness of non-sponsor corporations employing ambush strategies during the 2012 Summer Olympics, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) established a blackout period from July 15, 2012 to August 15, 2012, not allowing non-sponsor corporations to use its Olympic athletes within advertising. Any violations of the blackout would be enforced on the individual athlete, with penalties as severe as disqualification from events (Blair, 2012; "WIPR," 2012). Regardless, leading up to the 2012 Olympics, Subway employed thematic advertising by using Olympic athlete endorsers—most notably, Michael Phelps—and then purchased advertising time during the Games (Jessop, 2012). In addition, as the 2012 Olympics were nearing, Internet and media trend tracking company, The Global Language Monitor (GLM), indicated that both Subway and Pizza Hut, non-sponsors, were more brand affiliated to the Olympics than its actual sponsor, McDonald's ("GLM," 2012, May 4-6).

Shani and Sandler (1998) claim the blame for the effectiveness and prevalence of ambush marketing is partially that of the properties/organizations being sponsored. The study recommends that properties/organizations need to better establish and consistently maintain its sponsor categories, impart more controls on media coverage, and educate consumers about sponsor programs (Shani & Sandler, 1998).

While scholars continue to write about ambush marketing negatively, its prevalence also suggests that practitioners do not necessarily hold a similar view of the phenomenon. In an article, Jim Andrews, the Senior Vice President of Content Strategy for International Events Group (IEG), suggests that the concept of Ambush marketing is "deeply flawed" (Andrews, 2012, August 3). He defends the practice by asserting that what many claim as ambush marketing "does not cross

trademark and other legal boundaries;” leveraging its own assets (Andrews, 2012, August 3). Instead, he recommends that sponsors and rights holders invest more focus and investment into their own leveraging to minimize ambush marketing effectiveness (Andrews, 2012, August 3).

For instance, Michael Phelps and other Olympic athletes are year-round endorsers of Subway. Yet, is it appropriate that Subway cannot utilize its compensated endorsers over a month’s time because of the recent Olympics-mandated policy? Could an argument not be made that in signing agreements with a national governing body, a national team, or an athlete affiliated with the Olympics, corporations “do possess a connection” to the Olympics?

Results from Shani and Sandler (1998) suggest that as long as corporations incorporate legal ambush marketing tactics, the public—even fans—are apathetic to the call to protect sponsors. Subsequently, ambush marketing will continue to be a factor that corporations should consider when sponsoring properties. There is, however, one component of sponsorship that may be more important than all others in determining the future practice of sport sponsorship—measuring sponsorship performance.

This next section speaks to the various measurement practices that have been used to measure sponsorship effectiveness and the inherent challenges in accurately measuring sponsorship performance at this juncture.

### **Sponsorship Performance/Measurement**

Sponsorships are measured through numerous methods, such as brand awareness (Sandler & Shani, 1989), brand image/exposure (Gwinner & Eaton, 1999), brand attitude (Christensen, 2006), return-on-objective (Meenaghan, McLoughlin, & McCormack, 2013), and return-on-investment (ROI) (Haines, 2008; Maestas, 2009; Pearsall, 2010). Of these measures, ROO and

ROI draw the greatest focus from practitioners (Maestas, 2009; Pearsall, 2010), with ROO as a broader measure and ROI a narrower one (Meenaghan et al., 2013).

While it is easier to isolate and identify some of the “soft measures” that occur earlier in the sponsorship process, such as awareness and image, it is much harder to identify actual product/service consumption values from existing sponsorship metrics (Maestas, 2009; Meenaghan et al., 2013). How can corporations determine a “true” ROI when sponsorship is often integrated with several communication vehicles, serving multiple business objectives? Maestas (2009) attributes a major challenge of measuring sponsorship ROI to the difficulty, and often inability, of isolating sponsorship effects from other marketing or advertising effects. Fortunately, the recent trend toward using technology-centered activations such as texting, Bluetooth proximity marketing (Haines, 2008), and social media (Meenaghan et al., 2013; Pearsall, 2010; Weeks et al., 2008) may eventually allow for better isolation of sponsorship effects.

Yet, Javalgi, Traylor, Gross, and Lampmann (1994) suggest that practitioners may be reluctant to examine the effects of sponsorship. Given the amount of money that is being committed to sponsorships, the authors express concern that practitioners may fear that the findings of such an examination could result in negative implications for them. For instance, if the dollars currently invested in corporate sponsorships were found to be unwarranted, numerous agencies involved in the negotiation and leveraging of sponsorships could lose its business market. Not surprisingly, as the costs of sponsorships increase, the pressure to measure sponsorship effects has grown (Chudy, 2008; Maestas, 2009; O’Keefe, Titlebaum, & Hill, 2009; Verhoef & Leeflang, 2009).

## **Summary**

Chapter Two presents a general overview of sponsorship research to date. This chapter shares optimal conditions and known managerial objectives associated with sponsorship; highlighting associative sponsorship effects; best practices for leveraging and activation; possible synergistic benefits between sponsorship and CSR; perceived detrimental effects of ambush marketing; and challenges in measuring sponsorship performance. As this dissertation seeks to begin addressing the need for hometown sport sponsorship research in the literature, this literature review offers a known, contextual reference point of comparison.



**CHAPTER 3**

**IDENTIFYING MANAGERIAL SPONSORSHIP OBJECTIVES FROM BOTH A  
GENERAL AND HOMETOWN CONTEXT (STUDY 1) <sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Rich, G., Hall, J., & Hawkins, B.J. To be submitted to *Journal of Sport Management*.

### **Abstract**

This study employed a constant comparative method (Charmaz, 2014) that explored how sponsorship works—both from an overall perspective, and within a hometown context. A social identity approach was used as a theoretical lens of inquiry. Data analysis procedures were conducted on ten sponsorship manager interviews, with coding occurring at three levels: initial, focused, and theoretical (Charmaz, 2014). Thematic objectives that emerged from data analysis procedures—when placed into a social identity approach framework—revealed conceptual models for each sponsorship context investigated. These models provided explanations for how corporations may implement sponsorship to develop relationships with target audiences. Further, findings suggested that hometown sponsorship likely offers a natural competitive advantage for hometown sponsors in their local markets.

### **Introduction**

Sponsorship has been defined “as the provision of assistance either financial or in-kind to an activity by a commercial organization for the purpose of achieving commercial objectives” (Meenaghan, 1983, p. 9). According to Gardner and Shuman (1988), sponsorship can be implemented to “support corporate objectives (e.g. enhancing corporate image) or marketing objectives (e.g. increasing brand awareness)” (p. 44). Moreover, through securing category exclusivity in sponsorships, and integrating them within their overall marketing strategies, companies are believed capable of establishing distinct and sustainable competitive advantages in their markets (Amis, Pant, & Slack 1997; Amis, Slack, & Barrett, 1999; Fahy, Farrelly, & Quester, 2004).

Consequently, companies continue to invest resources towards securing sponsorships. Global sponsorship spending in 2017 is expected to reach \$62.8 billion, with North American spending to represent 37% of that projection (IEGSR, 2017). Moreover, sponsorship spending is anticipated to continue increasing. Over the past four years, global spending for sponsorships has grown at an approximate annual rate of 4.3% (IEGSR, 2017).

As company investments into sponsorships increase, marketing expenditure accountability has received greater managerial emphasis (Verhoef & Leeflang, 2009). Yet, the characteristic that arguably produces sponsorship's importance within the marketing mix—its integration with other marketing mediums—creates challenges in effectively isolating and measuring its returns (Pearsall, 2010). While there has been question as to whether practitioners truly desire to understand sponsorship returns (Javalgi, Traylor, Gross, & Lampman, 1994), some scholars (Cornwell, 2008; Meenaghan, McLoughlin, & McCormack, 2013) suggest that measurement difficulties may be attributable to an incomplete understanding of their effects.

Furthermore, sponsorship leveraging practices are continually evolving with the emergence of social media and other new technologies (Meenaghan et al., 2013). In 2016, to support its partnership with NCAA March Madness, and create brand interaction with college students, Reese's created a multi-platform, social media campaign. The candy manufacturer posted content on Twitter and Facebook that utilized streaming videos and cleverly positioned copy that engaged fans with entertaining commentary throughout the tournament. These social "chatter" initiatives were coupled with an Instagram contest and a Snapchat promotion (Social Media Fuze, 2016).

As an activation in support of its NBA partnership, American Express allowed fans to experience the signature moves and personal stories of four NBA players using interactive digital

video. During NBA All-Star Weekend in New York, fans could pivot around life-size digital representations of John Wall, Anthony Davis, LaMarcus Aldridge, and Mason Plumlee as they performed passes, dunks, and drives; allowing fans the ability to experience the players from vantage points of their own preference (O'Loughlin, 2016).

These opportunities for consumer brand interaction through social media and emerging technologies continue to increase. With new tools and resources for leveraging and activating sponsorships—creating opportunities for sponsors to engage and interact with individuals in new and different ways—the phenomenon of sponsorship itself may be changing.

This evolution is reflected in academic literature. Earlier investigations of the phenomenon generally adopted a traditional marketing mix approach (refer to Cornwell & Maignan, 1998; Olkkonen, Tikkanen, & Alajoutsijärvi, 2000; Walliser, 2003); whereas, scholars now acknowledge that sponsorship's common elements—fostering strategic, long-term relationships and incorporating interactive marketing communications—align more with relationship marketing practices (Cousens, Babiak, & Bradish, 2006; Grönroos, 1994). Therefore, the frequently-cited challenges of obtaining objective, quantitatively-calculated, and transactional returns (Pearsall, 2010) is likely to continue as companies use their sponsorships as interactive, relationship management platforms. In other words, measurement challenges may reflect (1) a misalignment between sponsorship objectives and sponsorship leveraging; (2) a misalignment between sponsorship objectives and their measurement practices; or, (3) that measurement practices inadequately capture sponsorship leveraging practices.

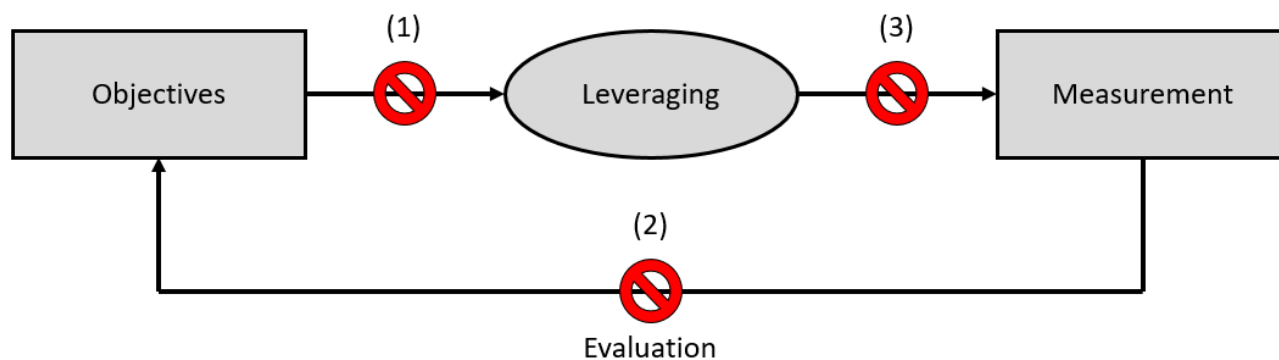


Figure 1: Areas for Sponsorship Evaluation Misalignment

Sponsorship objectives are chiefly important because they generally serve as the basis for how companies develop their leveraging practices and evaluate sponsorship success. (Chadwick & Thwaites, 2004). In short, sponsorship objectives are the foundation of sponsorship management and evaluation processes. Additionally, given their foundational importance, it is reasonable to assume that companies' sponsorship decision makers use selection criteria that reference back to these objectives.

### **Research on Sponsorship Objectives and Selection Criteria**

Generally, research on sponsorship objectives possess similar findings (Cornwell & Maignan, 1998; Walliser, 2003). These studies regularly reference increasing brand awareness (Abratt, Clayton, & Pitt, 1987; Crowley, 1991; Quester, Farrelly, & Burton, 1998), enhancing brand or product image (Milahik, 1984; Polonsky et al., 1995), and entertaining clients (Scott & Suchard, 1992) as primary sponsorship objectives.

Sponsorship selection criteria heavily mirror these objectives. Common criteria that are identified in research include the ability to provide media coverage (Abratt, Clayton, & Pitt, 1987; Crowley, 1991), access to on- and off-site audiences (Irwin, Asimakopoulos, & Sutton, 1994; Meenaghan, 1991), and offering the ability to reach specific target markets (Irwin et al., 1994;

Thwaites, Aguilar-Manjarrez, & Kidd, 1998). Sponsorship costs and sponsor-property fit are also considerations (Irwin et al., 1994; Meenaghan, 1991).

Now, with companies using sponsorships more as integrated and interactive relationship management platforms, the ability of their sponsorships to reach *specific* target markets may possess even greater importance. From a relationship management perspective, developing strong relationships with groups that associate with these sponsored properties—most notably fans—determines whether companies' sponsorships succeed; for these fans ideally represent existing consumers and/or target markets (Crowley, 1991).

### **Delineating Sponsorship Objective Categories**

Cornwell and Maignan (1998), in their literature review on sponsorship, emphasize that many sponsorship objective studies are descriptive in nature, and are conducted by “giving sponsors a pool of objectives and asking them to rank the goals that explained their involvement in sponsorship” (p. 12). When considering concerns previously highlighted with this article—(1) a difficulty isolating and measuring sponsorship effects from other marketing mediums (Pearsall, 2010), and (2) an incomplete understanding of how sponsorship works (Cornwell, 2008; Meenaghan et al., 2013)—the question becomes whether the sponsorship objectives that are stated within literature are, in actuality, stating marketing-level or corporate-level objectives (refer to Figure 2). This is important, because to further academic understanding of how sponsorship functions, and its subsequent effects, researchers must first ensure that they possess an accurate understanding of its objectives.

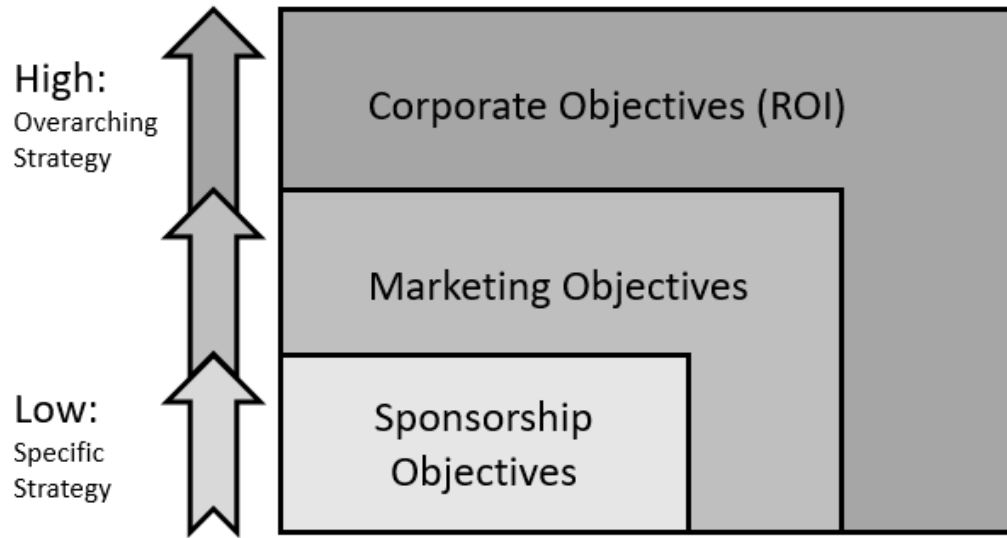


Figure 2: Objectives

Many of the studies that examine sponsorship objectives do provide categorical distinctions. For instance, two studies categorize sponsorship objectives into being corporate-related or product/brand-related (Irwin & Asimakopoulos, 1992; Irwin & Sutton, 1994). Sandler and Shani (1993) applies three categories: Broad corporate objectives, marketing objectives, and media objectives. The categories from these studies are primarily determined by authority-level. Further, a more recent study by Chadwick and Thwaites (2004) outlines four categories that are delineated more by function: Marketing communication objectives (i.e. strategic promotions), relationship marketing objectives (i.e. building relationships with consumers), network objectives (i.e. collaborating with related organizations), and resource objectives (i.e. allocating sponsorship resources to establish a competitive advantage).

This researcher adopts the approach from earlier studies on sponsorship objectives (Irwin et al., 1994; Shani & Sandler, 1993), believing that they should be associated with the structures and authorities that institute them. Consequently, conceptual categories for objectives at the corporate, marketing, and sponsorship levels are acknowledged in this study. Higher-level

objectives (i.e. corporate) are expected to be more overarching, while those at a lower-level are likely more specified towards function (i.e. marketing, sponsorship).

However, with sponsorship leveraging practices evolving into more relational applications (Olkkonen et al., 2000), and with greater emphasis on interactive activations (Meenaghan et al., 2013), sponsorship objectives should be framed in relational contexts. Olkkonen et al. (2000) argues that earlier sponsorship research follows narrow theoretical and methodological perspectives; demonstrating a concerning lack of theory development. This may explain why sponsorship objectives in previous studies are often generalized to the degree that they are conceptually ambiguous. Moreover, considering the medium integration and relational complexity to which sponsorship leveraging has currently evolved, more attention should be ascribed to the many environmental contexts in which individuals may engage with sponsorships (Cornwell, 1995).

Focusing on the relational attributes as they pertain to sponsorship objectives, a social identity approach serves as this study's theoretical lens of inquiry. Both theories have previously been applied within sponsorship contexts (see Alexandris & Tsiotsou, 2012; Cobbs, Groza, & Rich, 2015; Cornwell & Coote, 2005; Gwinner & Swanson, 2003; Madrigal, 2000; 2001).

### **A Social Identity Approach**

A social identity approach applies the theories of self-categorization and social identity to explain group association and intergroup behavior respectively. Finding meaning in their environments, individuals will accentuate differences between—and similarities within—social categories (Haslam, Oakes, Turner, & McGarty, 1995). Through the psychological process of stereotyping, individuals categorize themselves (i.e. self-stereotyping) and others into groups (Turner & Oakes, 1986). There are innumerable social identities into which individuals may self-



categorize themselves throughout the day (Reynolds & Turner, 2006), with these social identities likely residing at different levels of abstraction (e.g. individual, city citizen, state resident, national citizen, etc.). From this theoretical perspective, the self is perceived as both “personal and collective,” with changes in how individuals self-categorize themselves influencing their judgments of others (Reynolds & Turner, 2006, p. 233).

Individuals engage in social behavior that can reflect interpersonal or intergroup behaviors, as they fluctuate along a continuum of self- and social-group orientation (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Desiring to maintain a positive self-concept (i.e. positive distinctiveness), social identity theory asserts that individuals exhibit an assortment of strategies towards this end. While several strategies exist within the theory’s framework, many of these strategies are predicated upon individuals’ perceptions of legitimacy, stability, and permeability associated with these groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Groups into which individuals identify themselves as members are referred to as in-groups, with all other groups—those in which these individuals do not identify as members—being referred to as out-groups.

Two strategies that individuals may employ to maintain positive distinctiveness are in-group favoritism and out-group derogation (Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). By employing these strategies to either perceive the in-group positively or out-group negatively, individuals are believed to strengthen their social self-esteem. These identity-maintenance strategies are thought to be employed by individuals when they feel strong group identification or receive negative group feedback (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Hogg & Abrams, 1988).

A social identity approach is anticipated to offer explanation for how fans of sport properties, through sponsorship leveraging and activation, self-categorize themselves into groups with their teams’ sponsors. Once associated with sponsoring brands, social identity theory is

believed capable of providing explanations for fans' behaviors towards those brands and their competitors.

### **Examining Hometown Sponsorship**

A sponsorship context that has currently been neglected within extant literature is hometown sport sponsorship. This context warrants examination, considering the emotional connections many individuals likely possess for their hometowns and local teams. Also, many corporations possess large employee bases within their hometowns; therefore, many low abstraction groups—based on geographic location and their related affiliations—are present in hometown contexts. These group associations (i.e. city resident, fan, employee) represent social identities. If adhering to a social identity perspective, these group synergies suggest an ability for hometown corporations to employ their local sponsorships as means for achieving sustainable competitive advantages in their local markets. Thus far, no research—to the author's knowledge—is known to have examined hometown sponsorship objectives.

Based on the lack of research in this area, a study exploring sport sponsorship's common objectives from a relational perspective was conducted. This study focuses on identifying and examining hometown sponsorship objectives in relation to the phenomenon's more common objectives. This study is intended to better capture any nuances and distinctions that may exist between the two contexts.

### **Method**

The purpose of this study was—from a managerial perspective—to identify key objectives of sponsorship in two contexts. First, the common objectives of corporate sport sponsorship were identified and examined from a relationship management perspective using a social identity approach as a theoretical lens of inquiry. Then, using similar methods, the context of corporate

hometown sport sponsorship was examined. Given these aims, the following research questions guide this study:

1. What do sponsorship managers perceive to be common sponsorship objectives? How do these objectives function with one another when applying a social identity approach?
2. When asking sponsorship managers to narrow their focus to consider hometown sponsorship objectives and effects, what are distinctive or nuanced differences in sponsorship strategy that emerge?

### **Site Selection**

Rivendell (a pseudonym) is a metropolitan area in the southeastern United States with nearly 5.5 million residents. A center of trade and commerce, it is home to 18 Fortune 500 companies. Many of these companies possess large, national (and some international) sponsorship portfolios. Additionally, the area has a diverse selection of sport and entertainment options, with many sport teams, music venues, museums, and festivals present. Five major professional sport properties, and two major collegiate athletic programs reside in Rivendell.

### **Participants and Sampling**

The eleven participants (N=11) in this study consisted of sponsorship managers who represented sport properties (n=5), agencies (n=4), and corporations (n=2) headquartered in Rivendell (see Table 3). Every major property in the metropolitan area had managerial representation in the sample. The average experience participants had managing corporate sport sponsorships was approximately 14 years; ranging from two years to 25 years.

Typical case sampling, a purposeful sampling strategy (Patton, 2002) was employed in this study. Participants had to meet the following criteria: 1) Be involved in the management, negotiation, and/or leveraging of hometown sponsorships now or within the past year; 2) work for

major sport properties (i.e. property representative), national marketing/sponsorship agencies (i.e. agency consultant), or sponsorship-active corporations (i.e. corporate sponsorship manager) located in Rivendell. To collect data that captured perspectives from all three roles, it was deemed necessary to have all roles represented in the sample (see Appendix A for recruitment correspondence).

To be considered a major sport property, the property had to receive regular regional and national media coverage. Agencies with participants in the study operated nationally. Their clients were either large corporations with international or national sponsorship portfolios, and/or major sport properties with international and/or national reach. For purposes of this study, sponsorship-active corporations needed to have an international or national sponsorship portfolio.

### **Participant Interviews**

Ten semi-structured interviews were conducted with the eleven participants, as two requested to be interviewed together. The two participants were property representatives who worked for the same property. The participant who held the more senior role was the primary speaker during this interview, with the participant in the less senior role interjecting when asked; demonstrating deference to the senior manager.

Participant interviews were conducted between July, 2016 and February, 2017. Prior to their interviews, participants signed consent forms (see Appendix B). Participant interviews averaged one hour in length, with the shortest interview being 35 minutes and the longest being one hour and 38 minutes. Typed transcriptions from interview recordings totaled 180 pages (in Times New Roman, 12-font, single-space, normal margins). Table 3 provides a breakdown of interview data (i.e. recording time) by participant and role.

Nine of the 11 interviews were conducted in-person. The last two interviews were conducted by phone after multiple attempts to schedule an in-person interview were unsuccessful. Based on experiences from the earlier interviews performed, there were minimal concerns regarding the interview participants' question sensitivities, or the interviewer's need to observe participants' physical cues during their interviews. Moreover, by the eighth interview, there was a noticeable decrease in new data captured. Following the two phone interviews—given the lack of new data/insights captured—it was determined that data saturation was achieved.

Table 3: Interview Data

<b>Participant Pseudonyms</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Title (Level)</b>	<b>Interview Time</b>
Penelope Cornwell	Female	Director	1:12:47
Eyan Joseph	Male	Vice President	0:35:04
Clint Castleberry	Male	Vice President	1:38:47
Theo Carey	Male	Director	1:24:02
<b>AGENCY</b>			Total 4:50:40
			Average 1:12:10
Nick Gunter	Male	Director	0:55:04
Herman Depp	Male	Vice President	0:54:04
<b>CORPORATE</b>			Total 1:49:08
			Average 0:54:34
Janet Bird	Female	Director	0:45:03
Mark Wall	Male	Manager	0:53:46
Rita Bell	Female	Vice President	1:01:13
Bobby Jones	Male	Vice President	0:55:07
Donny Bones	Male	Director	3:35:09
<b>PROPERTY</b>			0:53:45
			<b>Total</b> 10:14:57
			<b>Average</b> 1:01:30

## **Analysis Procedure**

The constant comparative method (Charmaz, 2014) was used to conduct an analysis of participant interviews. Coding occurred at three levels: 1) initial, focused, and theoretical (Charmaz, 2014). Coding involves “categorizing segments of data with a short name that simultaneously summarizes and accounts for each piece of data” (Charmaz, 2014). Following the recommendation of Charmaz (2014), initial codes were short, and designed to capture meanings and actions. Per her recommendations, these codes were generally designed to start with gerunds. Focused codes were built from the initial codes, through identification of initial codes that frequently arose and/or possessed more meaning than other codes. These codes were designed to focus and condense the data (Charmaz, 2014). Given the intentions of this study, focused codes were generally structural-functional (Glaser, 1998) in nature.

Theoretical codes were created to reintegrate the data. Focused codes were weaved into theoretical conceptualizations; providing stronger explanation of the data (Charmaz, 2014). Focused codes were weaved into theoretical conceptualizations; then, compared these theoretical codes within a conceptual framework using a social identity approach to find emergent trends and to examine consistencies and inconsistencies identified during coding and framework development.

After an initial reading of interview transcripts, NVIVO software was used to conduct initial coding, as it was determined to be an effective tool for 1) retrieving data assigned to these codes, and 2) organizing initial codes with either a general (S) or hometown (H) context classification. Focused and theoretical codes were developed on a Microsoft Excel worksheet, allowing for easier manipulation and reorganization of data. Coding examples can be found in Appendix C.

Memo-writing was utilized to encourage increased engagement in the data and assist in coding analysis—particularly during its early stages (Charmaz, 2014). Three memo categories were used in the study for (1) reflections (e.g. thoughts from interviews), (2) applications (e.g. rationale for directions taken within the study), and (3) feedback. Reflection memos were used to organize thoughts following interviews with participants; application memos were used to document rationale for directions taken in the study; and feedback memos were used to document committee feedback pertaining to the study.

During and immediately after interviews, the interviewer's notes were used as a methodological journal; documenting their "methodological dilemmas, directions, and decisions" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 165). Later, these journal notes were often refined and elaborated upon in memos.

### **Data Management**

Semi-structured interviews were recorded using an audio recorder. These recordings were stored in an encrypted, password protected, data folder, and were destroyed following the study's completion. In an effort to ensure interview participant confidentiality, participants were assigned pseudonyms, which were applied to all documents. Given the small population (i.e. Rivendell sponsorship managers) sampled for this study, certain information was not provided (i.e. employer names), generalized (i.e. occupational title) or documented within the study as a collective summary—unassigned to a specific participant (i.e. years of experience). Any identifiable information (e.g. company's name, employee's name) provided within participant interviews were removed and replaced with appropriate, more generalized terms. A pseudonym list with identifying information was stored on an encrypted, password protected, data folder during the study, and was destroyed following the study's completion.

## **Establishing Trustworthiness**

To strengthen the credibility and confirmability of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1986), member checking and an audit trail were employed. When developing the interview guide, an informal interview with a senior sponsorship manager with property, agency, and corporate experience was conducted to assess contextual relevance (Kirkhart, 1995). Then, following the informal interview, the interview guides were reviewed with the same sponsorship manager to assess the intelligibility of their questions. Lastly, following revisions, a fellow researcher reviewed the interview guides and provided feedback (Fowler, 2002).

The first two interviews were conducted in July and August of 2016 as a pilot, from which minor revisions were made to the interview guide. These revisions included adding several role specific questions, and providing a definition (with example) of hometown sponsorship that was used in the study. Each interview participant confirmed that they understood and accepted the definition provided during the interview upon having it read to them. The pilot interviews were with individuals with backgrounds in multiple sponsorship roles, and both were qualified candidates for the study. Based on these revisions, a formal interview introduction (see Appendix D) and three interview guides—modified to reflect the roles of the interview participants—were used in the study (see Appendix E).

**Confirming definitional boundaries of “sponsorship.”** Given that sponsorship is in many aspects an abstraction, interview participants were asked to provide the interviewer with their definitions for it. The purpose for this exercise was twofold. First, it helped ensure that interview participants possessed a similar sponsorship conceptualization, and that their responses were referring to the same phenomenon. Second, it provided the interviewer a means for establishing practical boundaries (i.e. what “is sponsorship” versus what “is not sponsorship”)



when developing a conceptual sponsorship framework; considering that scholars have yet to agree upon a theoretical definition for the phenomenon (Cornwell & Maignan, 1998; Dolphin, 2003; Hoek, Gendall, Jeffcoat, & Orsman, 1997).

Following this exercise, responses were found to be similar and in agreement with one another, while helping the researcher identify four core aspects of sponsorship as perceived by the study's participants. Per participants, sponsorship (1) creates associations between a company and a property; (2) allows for emotional connection to a company's target audience; (3) encourages changes in normative behaviors through its leveraging; and, (4) offers business-related benefits. These definitional elements of sponsorship were considered when developing the conceptual sponsorship framework in this study.

### **Personal Subjectivity Statement**

My personal interest in exploring the hometown sport sponsorship dynamics from a managerial perspective is derived from my previous experience as a sponsorship consultant. While employed as a sponsorship consultant for a nationally-recognized sponsorship agency, my two primary clients were leaders in their respective industries: telecommunications (internationally) and home improvement (nationally). My experiences serving in that role have strongly influenced my perspectives on what constitutes a positive work environment and how to “do” sponsorship.

My personal background—as it relates to this study—serves as a double-edged sword. Having been successful as a sponsorship consultant, and still possessing relationships with industry professionals, my experiences should help me navigate any tenuous circumstances that could arise with study participants. Yet, I must also be careful of granting my experiences privilege over my participants.

I knowingly possess a strong sense of accomplishment from my years as a consultant. If not careful, I could become leading in my questioning; influencing participant interview feedback to reflect that which I believe matters, rather than encouraging them to share their perspectives. Further, I could alienate my participants if I either assume or attempt to claim “insider” status. Therefore, I anticipate that some of my bias as a former agency consultant will be included within data analysis.

I will more likely be considered an outsider by corporate sponsorship managers (client) and corporate sales managers (i.e. property representatives) that I interview—and if they do not hold an existing relationship with me, it is possible that they will perceive me as threatening. Again, as a former agency consultant, I anticipate that my perspectives may align more with current agency consultants than they will with the other two managerial roles being interviewed. I could unintentionally encourage these participants to assume that there would be intentional bias in my research agenda; resulting in defensive or combative responses.

### **Findings**

The data analysis procedure for this study revealed a descriptive framework for how sponsorship objectives may function towards meeting an overarching marketing-level goal, which in turn provided support for an overarching company-level goal. Further, from this framework and a hometown-focused examination of managers’ perceptions towards sponsorship, three themes emerged for how hometown sponsorship may function within companies’ overall sponsorship objectives. Findings from this study were presented in the order in which they were identified.

## **Managerial Objectives Associated with Sponsorship**

During their interviews, participants were asked to provide a list of common sponsorship objectives. Then, participants were asked to prioritize these objectives. Prior to analyzing participants' interviews, these objectives were then consolidated—based on their functional similarities—into a set of five general managerial objective categories associated with sponsorship:

1. Generating a positive return-on-investment (ROI)
2. Engaging consumers (e.g. activation)
3. Increasing customer visibility (e.g. leveraging)
4. Investing in the community (e.g. non-profit leveraging extensions)
5. Engaging employees (e.g. employee recognition and appreciation tie-ins)

These findings served as an initial starting point for developing a framework, as they collectively reflected the interview participants' general perceptions of what constituted the phenomenon's "common" objectives. As depicted, these findings provide broadly-stated functions or outcomes; offering little explanation for how sponsorship works.

Following analysis of participants' interviews, a structural hierarchy for managerial objectives was discovered. "Generating a positive ROI" emerged as an overarching company-level objective; whereas, the remaining four managerial objectives identified by interview participants were found to be at the sponsorship-level. When considered collectively, these sponsorship-level objectives revealed an overarching thematic objective at the marketing-level: "Building brand ambassadors for life."

As sponsorship and its associated marketing activities primarily function as corporate relationship management platforms, sponsorship- and marketing-level objectives were relationally

thematized to better reflect their organizational functions. These thematic sponsorship objectives—and overarching marketing objective—were derived following the earlier stated qualitative analysis protocols. Consequently, although four thematic sponsorship objectives were revealed through this analysis, these thematic objectives—while capturing sponsorships’ general functions—do not perfectly correspond with the managerial objectives stated earlier. Furthermore, “Generating a positive ROI” was not thematized given its function as a quantitative metric of overall company performance.

To address the first research question, descriptions and supporting evidence for thematic objectives and their related sub-themes were provided. Then, these thematic objectives were applied into a theoretical framework that adhered to a social identity approach, and a conceptual framework for corporate sponsorship was presented.

To address the second research question, two thematic objectives specific to hometown sponsorship were presented from a secondary analysis of data. This analysis only examined data that was specifically relevant to a hometown sponsorship context. During interviews, the following definition for, and explanation of, hometown sponsorship was provided to participants prior to asking questions specific to hometown sponsorship:

“For purposes of this study, the closest metropolitan area to possess a professional sport franchise or franchises from the Big Four sport leagues—MLB, NBA, NFL, and the National Hockey League (NHL)—in relation to an individual’s residence is considered their “hometown.” Properties within these metropolitan areas would be considered “hometown properties.” Additionally, athletic programs from public state universities, whether within the boundaries of that metropolitan area, would also be considered ‘hometown properties.’

For example, if individuals in New Hampshire, their “hometown” for purposes of this study would be the “Boston Metropolitan Area” in Massachusetts. Subsequently, the Boston Red Sox would be considered a ‘hometown property.’ Yet, the athletic program at the University of New Hampshire would also be considered a ‘hometown property’ for individuals who live in the state of New Hampshire.

From a corporate perspective, this study assumes that corporations’ international, national, or regional headquarters functions like individuals’ residences; making the metropolitan areas where their offices are located their ‘hometowns.’”

Each interview participant confirmed that they understood and accepted the definition provided during the interview upon having it read to them.

### **Thematic Sponsorship Objectives (General Context)**

The data analysis procedure used in this study revealed four common, thematic sponsorship objectives:

1. Meeting people where their passions live
2. Fostering brand love
3. Committing to communities
4. Empowering employees

Descriptions and supporting evidence for these thematic objectives and their related sub-themes were provided below.

**Joining people where their passions live.** A thematic sponsorship objective that emerged from the analysis was “meeting people where their passions live,” which involved corporations identifying their brands’ target audiences’ passions, and anthropomorphically situating their brands within environments that connected to those passions. To this end, corporations have

partnered with sport properties to develop associations with their fans' and their passions, as nearly 70 percent of all sponsorship spending in North America ties back to sport (IEGSR, 2017). The following comment from Herman summarized this thematic objective:

“Yeah. the beauty of sponsorships—particularly the big ones—is if you do it the right way, *you're targeting the right consumer segment from a brand perspective, and they're super passionate about these spaces,*<sup>2</sup> so they're more in tune with commercial messaging” (Herman, Corporation).

Nick highlighted aspects of this thematic objective when he provided an example of what he perceived to be an exemplar sponsorship:

“...I look at Home Depot and its partnership with College Gameday as a rather unique partnership...I think that it was a really unique way to take something that Home Depot was already doing with purchasing media on ESPN and *target home improvement customers*—making it more personal—and *tying it to this brand of college football*, which was really, *really growing from an affinity standpoint*” (Nick, Corporation).

Three sub-themes were captured within the thematic sponsorship objective “meeting people where their passions live”: (1) Creating associations to specific audiences' social identities, (2) embracing a consistent brand personality, and (3) pursuing organic relationships. These three sub-themes represented common strategies, that together can successfully help brands “meet people where their passions live.”

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<sup>2</sup> Italics are used to emphasize key elements of interviewees' quotes that align with study findings.

***Creating associations to specific audiences' social identities.*** Corporations' brands associated themselves with properties that were central to the social identities of their target audiences' passions; encouraging in-group inclusion and emotional connectedness. In other words, brands strategically positioned themselves in environments that promoted them being positively stereotyped by their target audiences. The following comment from Eyan captured the belief that these emotional connections between fans and properties led to positive outcomes for properties' sponsors through associative inclusion:

“...fans have an affinity for their products' sponsors—their teams' sponsors...*if you're a big follower of a NASCAR driver, and he uses a Tide car, you're going to go buy Tide, because you'd like to support him.* Same thing with college sports, so that's why you have long-term sponsors. We want to build affinity with these fans...they're die-hard fans, they're passionate...” (Eyan, Agency).

Janet touched on this thematic objective from a negative positioning; expressing the importance of corporations partnering with properties that reach their target audiences:

“You know, you don't want to partner with a brand that doesn't reach your audience. And so, *making sure you do sponsorships that are relevant to the audience you're targeting is really important,* because, you know, sponsorship is proven to amplify marketing objectives. But at the same time, if you're not aligned with the right brand, you're not going to amplify, because you're targeting an audience that's not yours” (Janet, Property).

***Reinforcing a consistent brand personality.*** Corporations' actively attempted to reinforce their brands' intended personality characteristics among targeted audiences. This was functionally enacted by monitoring consumer brand personality perceptions relative to sponsorship leveraging and activation; then, adjusting strategies to manipulate target audiences' perceptions as necessary-

reflecting these brand personality characteristics. Additionally, interview participants commented on the importance of further managing these personality perceptions through the construction of their brands' sponsorship portfolios. The following discourse from Nick provided support for this sub-theme:

“Do people see us as innovative? Do people see us as faster than the competition? Do people see our people as smarter than the competition. You know, those sorts of things. There's a long list of them. And *we try and look and see if there are differences in the trends we're seeing at the macro marketing and communications level, and ones at the sponsorship level. And we talk about what we're doing to kind of influence some of those things*” (Nick, Corporation).

Clint expressed the need for corporate brands to reflect the personalities of the target audiences that they were intending to reach. One of his “pet-peeves” involved when sponsors failed to recognize the successes of their sponsored teams or players:

“...*if you're a sponsor, you're supposed to be a fan. And it's a partnership, and you're supposed to take pride and have a rooting interest in it. And so...if you're not going to be a fan of the team, then what's the point?*” (Clint, Agency).

Penelope commented on how corporations in the same industry would often develop their own market niches through their sponsorship portfolios; promoting unique brand personality characteristics through these portfolios:

“Everyone kind of has their niche. T-Mobile does a lot with the NBA. Verizon traditionally has the NFL. AT&T traditionally has the NCAA. *For example, AT&T was the collegiate brand, and they have a huge portfolio in collegiate sports when compared to their*



*competitors*, especially considering that Verizon was very focused on the NFL” (Penelope, Agency).

***Pursuing organic relationships.*** Once associations were developed, corporations utilized communication channels that reached their target audiences’ in social contexts; attempting to establish anthropomorphic and archetypal brand characteristics that mirrored their target audiences’ in-group members. As social media evolved, and more individuals engaged in its use, sponsorship activations involved the platform to interact with their target audiences. Both Rita and Penelope emphasized the importance of social interactions with potential consumers adopting an organic communication approach:

“We try to stay a lot more organic with our [social media] posts. *We don’t like to push a sponsor’s posts.* Like, “Come out and buy my [product]. I’m [a sponsor]. You’re not driving someone to buy their products...[it’s] very indirect. Because, really when it comes down to it, you’re getting to the point where you’re going to bog so many peoples’ social media feeds down, they don’t even want to see what you’re posting anymore...a lot more of our posts are organic ...*just trying to engage people more, instead of constantly pushing sales messages down their throat*” (Rita, Property).

“...but really, [social media activation] is about *organic interactions and not forced interactions.* Giving people content or experiences that they want and tying your brand to that in an organic way is probably, I guess, the best explanation” (Penelope, Agency).

Theo felt that an element of “pursuing organic relationship” involved the frequency and timing of communications. Moreover, he thought that brands should focus on making these social interactions fun, and something that was capable of going viral:

“I think timeliness is the key. I think that [if social media communications are] too frequent, it’s overkill...that’s the primary thing with social media—and to make it relevant. *Not to make [social media posts] a corporate message, but rather something that’s fun, and people want to interact with it, and want to share.* I think too many times you get corporate messaging through social, where the corporation thinks, ‘Okay, we’ve got to get this message out there,’ but they’ve got to find a fun way to do it to make people want to share it” (Theo, Agency).

An advocate of social activation as a sponsorship leveraging element, Janet believed that sponsorship managers must stay relevant with trends. Her rationale was that staying relevant with trends allowed sponsorship managers to effectively develop organic communications through whatever medium was appropriate for reaching their desired target audience—which, for her property, was often millennials:

“I tell the folks working for me, as soon as you become too old for a medium, you age yourself out of being relevant in this industry. So, I listen to music that I’m not necessarily interested in. I have apps on my phone that I don’t necessarily use that much, but I’m aware of them, because *if you’re not staying current, you’re not going to be able to speak to the needs that your clients are looking for*” (Janet, Property).

**Fostering brand love.** Another thematic sponsorship objective that emerged from the analysis was “fostering brand love” Corporations attempted to foster brand love with individuals in their target audiences. Brand love, as defined in this study, is a construct that consists of seven dimensions: (1) self-brand integration, (2) passion-driven behaviors, (3) positive emotional connection, (4) long-term relationship, (5) positive overall valence, (6) attitude certainty and confidence (strength), and (7) anticipated separation distress (Batra, Ahuvia, & Bagozzi, 2012).

This thematic objective involved both pursuing anthropomorphic relationship with, and creating unique and exclusive experiences for, individuals of the brands' target audiences. These consistent social and experiential interactions were intended to make brands more central to their target audiences' self-identities. Theo was a major proponent of experiential activation as a means for fostering brand love:

“A commercial might in that moment [make an impression], but someone actually *experiencing a product or service—hands on, can make that person a customer for life.* And I 100 percent believe in that. And that's why companies have also gone that route, because *you just have more impact when you're there in front of, and you're able to see it, touch it, feel it, and truly get immersed in whatever your product or service is*” (Theo, Agency).

Clint shared his thoughts on how to enhance that experience for brands' target audiences, believing that the experience brands intend to offer these individuals should align with their sources of fandom:

“the best practice that I would say is don't just do it because that's how it's always been done, but really think about the event type; where fans are going to be; what they're going to do; why are they there; *why they're a fan of that team; what makes that team unique; and really insert your brand there*” (Clint, Agency).

Lastly, when Nick spoke to the importance of creating unique and memorable experiences, he also mentioned the need for these experiences to be “unreplicable” by competitors; allowing corporations to develop a unique relationship with their consumers:

“And then, finally, I would say hospitality is a big part of what we do. Entertaining customers. [It’s] more than just a ticket, but providing them with kind of a complete end-to-end experience, where we kind of maximize all the touch points that we have. Influence those events with intellectual property and the assets we can, whether it be appearances, or something as simple as putting a logo on an invitation, but *making that experience unique and unforgettable, and unreplicable by our competition*” (Nick, Corporation).

**Committing to communities.** This thematic sponsorship objective involved corporations fulfilling their perceived societal commitments through corporate social responsibility (CSR)-linked sponsorship activations or charity extensions; encouraging cognitive consistency between their brands’ intended personalities and those of their targeted audiences’ social groups. Further, these community investments were amplified through their relationships with—and the resources of—sport properties. Support for “committing to communities” was provided through the following interview participant discourse:

So, overall, my perspective on it is most of the companies that we do business with do a lot of stuff in the community, whether it’s involved with us or not. They’re going to do stuff, usually from a community perspective...as a property, [we] can be a mouthpiece for what they’re doing in the community. *But they’re doing stuff well above and beyond [what the public sees them do with properties], that probably gets lost*” (Bobby, Property).

Herman’s thoughts mirrored Bobby’s:

“...if you're a big company that has a big presence in a market, *there's an expectation that you are giving back to your community*. So, we're obviously involved in a lot of different areas that may look like a sponsorship, but *go far beyond that*” (Herman, Corporation).

While admitting that CSR-linked sponsorship was likely underutilized by corporations, he felt that it was becoming an area of greater consumer focus:

“I think like everybody *we could do [CSR-linked sponsorship] a little bit more*. I think particularly with the millennial audience; corporate social responsibility is becoming a much more important part of how people conduct business. Like, *what’s your social profile? ...people want to do business with people that kind of match their own*”

(Nick, Corporation)

**Empowering employees as ambassadors.** This thematic sponsorship objective was focused on corporations incorporating their employees in their sponsorships. Corporations considered how they could incorporate their employees into their various sponsorship arrangements, often desiring to instill a sense of pride and emotional connection with them—to encourage passion and commitment towards their corporations and their brand(s). Corporations were encouraging their employees to make the brand a central element of their self-identities. Consequently, employees were empowered to become their brands ambassadors and evangelists. Property representatives, such as Rita, mentioned these types of employee-inclusive leveraging practices being executed by their clients regularly:

“Companies use [event sponsorship hospitality] as *rewards for their employees*, or to entertain clients. Those are super easy, and *are included in almost any deal that we do*”

(Rita, Property).

Both corporate sponsorship managers extolled the importance of emotionally connecting and empowering their employees through sponsorship. When asked about whether his company engaged their employees through sponsorship, Herman answered:

“Yeah, definitely! Yeah. And *we have incentives and opportunities to bring these [sponsorship] assets to the employees. It’s a big part of what we do*, for sure...and we do that across everything—from global partnerships, to national partnerships, to local. You’ll always see us communicating with our internal employees because it gives them a sense of pride.” (Herman, Corporation).

When interviewed, Nick also discussed employee engagement through sponsorship; alluding to the thematic objective of “empowering employees as ambassadors”:

“...employees are usually a huge part of how a company presents itself, so how do you get them engaged and involved in the partnership? And not just excited about it, but use it to influence their behavior? We have [hundreds of thousands of] employees. *How do we get them excited and engaged, and wanting to help spread the brand message?*” (Nick, Corporation).

This employee-oriented, thematic objective strongly related to an overarching thematic objective that was identified at the marketing-level through data analysis.

### **Building Brand Ambassadors: An Overarching Marketing-Level Objective**

From an analysis of the four thematic sponsorship objectives, and how they collectively functioned together, an overarching marketing-level, thematic objective emerged: “building brand ambassadors for life.”

The term “brand ambassadors for life” collectively referred to all individuals who strongly identified with their brands; possessed brand love; resisted negative criticisms of their brands from others; and had integrated their brands into their lifestyles. The relationship these individuals maintained with their brands were anthropomorphic and possessed a strong degree of centrality in their self-identities. This thematic marketing objective was perceived to be the sponsorship

outcome sought by interview respondents from a relationship management context, with Clint referring specifically to this objective as a desired end outcome:

“...And that’s *how you make a brand ambassador for life*. That’s *what everyone does nowadays*... They (consumers) can’t tell the story about going to the game that they weren’t going to go to [because] they got tickets last minute, without saying that a brand is the one that reached out to them and said, ‘Hey, I see that you’re a fan of this team and you don’t have tickets. We’re going to hook you up because we love the same team that you do’” (Clint, Agency).

This marketing level objective, while not generally able to be directly measured in terms of ROI, is believed to directly lead to behaviors that generate revenues and profits for companies:

“I would say sales [is a sponsorship objective], but it’s funny. Out of so many clients that say, ‘Well, sponsorships have to sell.’ You know, you have to be able to show me that I sold more widgets because I sponsored this team or league. It’s really hard to do. It’s really hard to quantify. And, I’m not so sure that’s what sponsorship—my personal opinion is that’s not why you do sponsorship. You can—*I think you can sell more products because of sponsorship, but it’s not a direct*, “I sponsored this; therefore, I sold ten percent more widgets.” I think there’s more to it than that” (Clint, Agency).

### **Generating a Positive ROI: An Overarching Company-Level Objective**

Furthermore, through analysis procedures, it was determined that the managerial objective “generate a positive ROI” was not a sponsorship objective, but rather a company-level objective. Throughout interviews, participants took relational elements and regularly discussed the challenges into converting those measures to ROI. Eyan spoke to the traditional challenges associated with evaluating signage:

“People are seeing my sign at the stadium, but *how many are actually looking at it?* And if I were to do a post-event study, and I said, “name five signs,” would my sign be one of them? So, you know your sign’s there; you know that there’s 95,000 people in the stadium; you know that they’re being seen, but *what’s the level of engagement that they’re having with my sign?*” (Eyan, Property).

Penelope commented about the more recent challenge of converting social media metrics—an ROO—into quantifiable, ROI measures:

“Well, here’s the thing. My ROO is that I want to reach 200,000 Instagram users, and have at least 50 people attend my event—and those were my objectives. I can measure that—versus, a ROI that is quantified with dollar signs: What I spent versus what I got back. ROOs are much easier to measure than ROI. *So, if you don’t actually have the math to get your ROI, you could fluff it and argue, “We got a return on our investment!”—based on whatever your objectives were*” (Penelope, Agency).

Measurement challenges, such as those stated by Eyan and Penelope, have led to corporations developing ad hoc reporting practices:

“[Measuring practices for sponsorship are] *all across the board*” (Bobby, Property).

These measurement practices were questioned by several interview participants holding property or agency roles. While they often acknowledged the internal pressures that corporate managers had placed upon them to provide sponsorship ROI metrics, participants questioned the accuracy and general validity of these practices:

“When companies are spending based upon specific metrics, it’s to help them justify spends internally. And, I’m not from a client perspective. I understand that analytics and all that should play a part in all that. But if that’s your end all, be all...*it’s probably not*



*going to do you a lot of good. Because you're going to be looking at something in a very specific, isolated case—when, it's probably a much bigger conversation...than what you're trying to evaluate” (Bobby, Property).*

Corporate managers also acknowledged the challenges associated with measuring many of sponsorships' relationship-oriented functions through a financial prism. Herman referred to the process as being both “an art and a science”:

What are property metrics? Are they trending up? Trending down? Are they flat? So we consider all those different methodologies to evaluate whether or not we renew. And then there's also the art behind the exercise too. *It's an art and a science, as you probably know. There's a lot of gray areas and emotions and other factors that influence your decisions”* (Herman, Corporation).

Nick, who acknowledged the need for corporations to more accurately measure sponsorship ROI, was hopeful that emergent technology would eventually allow for better information capture and measurement of their sponsorships' values:

“I think we're bad as an industry at [measurement]. To me, *I've always looked to measurement as a microcosm of the broader marketing organization. We should be following in line with what the broader organizational goals are, and trying to measure against those, as opposed to creating our own thing.* I think, you know, this movement towards getting more digital and more targeted will allow us to kind of do that, and do it in real-time too. And make real-time decisions” (Nick, Corporation).

### **A Structural Hierarchy Based on Authority-Level**

The functions associated with these two higher-level objectives— “building brand ambassadors for life,” and “generating a positive ROI”—were regularly stated as prioritized

managerial objectives during conversations with interview participants. Some participants mentioned the marketing-level function ahead of the company-level function, while others adopted a top-down approach in stating objectives. The ordering of these objectives was often delineated by interview participants' managerial roles:

“Definitely, *advertising has got to be number one. And then, number two is sales. And then depending on the company, both client entertainment as well as employee engagement*” (Bobby, Property).

“I think overall they are. They focus on the main buckets of what you should get out of sponsorship...*revenue, consumer engagement, and growing your base*...Obviously, every person should put those down for you” (Theo, Agency).

“Our two main ones [objectives] at our broadest level are *driving consumer awareness and sentiment— 'brand love' as it's referred to. And driving sales of our product. I mean, those are the two core objectives*...” (Herman, Corporation).

Therefore, the conceptual model that emerged from this study's analysis considered this stated structural hierarchy—sponsorship-level objectives, marketing-level objectives, and company-level objectives—within its framework, applying the objectives in hierarchical levels as now provided. Further, given the relationship management orientation of the phenomenon, the conceptual framework that emerged from this study focused on the integration of the sponsorship-level and marketing-level thematic objectives, with “generating a positive ROI” included in the model as an overall, end outcome.

### Conceptualizing Sponsorship as A Highly-Integrated Social Framework

Thematic sponsorship objectives were integrated within a conceptual framework that provided an explanation for how they function together to:

1. Achieve the overarching marketing thematic objective (building brand ambassadors)
2. Support the overarching company objective (generating a positive ROI)

Analysis procedures revealed that the functions associated with these objectives were highly-integrated with one another. These levels of integrated functionality were evidenced during interviews with the two corporate managers—both of whom stated that their roles regularly involved the coordination and management of cross-functional teams:

“You work cross-functionally across the marketing organization...there’s *a lot of cross-functional aspects* to the marketing mix that goes into activating these large properties” (Herman, Corporation).

“[My strength is] integrated marketing. I pride myself on kind of understanding the dynamics of what makes sponsorship work. And *what makes sponsorship work is your ability to collaborate with fellow stakeholders within the company to leverage those partnerships*” (Nick, Corporation).

Consequently, a visualized representation of the conceptual framework that emerged from the data was developed (see Figure 3). This conceptual framework represents a theoretical interpretation—using a social identity approach—of how sponsorship, generally functions from a relationship management perspective. Based on analysis procedures, the thematic sponsorship objectives of “committing to communities” and “empowering employees,” while important, were determined to be secondary thematic objectives, while “joining people where their passions live” and “fostering brand love” served in primary functions.

“Committing to communities” and “empowering employees” were deemed secondary sponsorship thematic objectives given their generally smaller scale and leveraging scope. Moreover, their contributions towards “generating a positive ROI” for their corporations were more difficult to quantify than the other two thematic sponsorship objectives.

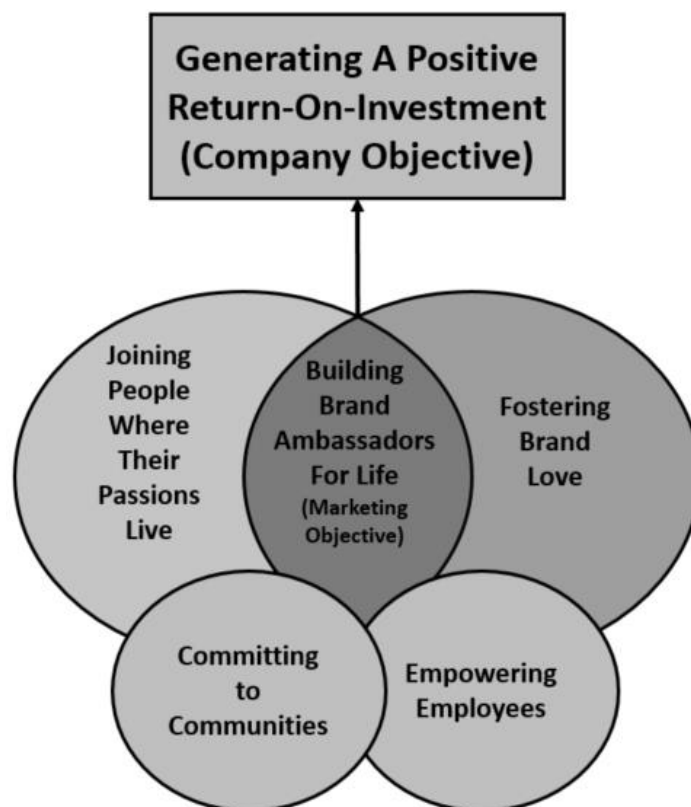


Figure 3: Sponsorship Conceptual Framework (General Context)

“Joining people where their passions live” and “fostering brand love” were found to function as primary thematic sponsorship objectives; directly reaching their brands’ specific target audiences. Their leveraging and activation elements were the primary drivers for “building brand ambassadors for life.” Consequently, these thematic sponsorship objectives were used to establish ROI justifications that supported their sponsorships.

Once a conceptual framework was developed for explaining how sponsorships generally functioned in support of marketing-level and corporate-level objectives, thematic objectives more focused on hometown sponsorships were sought. A secondary data analysis that solely focused on interview discourse related to hometown sponsorship contexts was conducted.

### **Thematic Sponsorship Objectives (Hometown Context)**

When sponsorship was examined from a hometown context, two dominant thematic objectives emerged:

1. Weaving into the local fabric
2. Winning where you live

Descriptions and supporting evidence for these thematic objectives and their related sub-themes were provided below.

**Weaving into the local fabric.** This thematic sponsorship objective involved corporations reinforcing their in-group associations with their local communities. When “weaving into the local fabric” of their hometowns, corporations focused on leveraging and activation opportunities that were not commercially motivated—or minimally so. A common strategy related to this thematic objective was for corporations to integrate their prominent, hometown sport sponsorships with local charity and grassroots initiatives. Janet summarized this thematic objective well:

“...there is the belief that *if you are a local sponsor, you should be invested in the local properties in your hometown. And there is that expectation from the citizens...* I think they want a little bit more than you’re a partner of that team...they would like to see how you are partnering with that team to help this community. I think that’s *where you get the real win...partnering with your hometown team and doing something great for the community that’s an actual event*” (Janet, Property).

Expanding upon the thematic hometown objective of “weaving into the local fabric,” Theo commented on the perception of authenticity that he believed hometown corporations garnered when they included smaller properties, such as local festivals, into their sponsorship portfolios:

“I think it depends. *I think a good mix because your larger properties are going to resonate with the consumers in the market place, but some of the smaller ones are going to touch the consumer.* Those are the ones that feel more like a hometown sponsorship to me...There’s some authenticity to sponsoring a local festival...I think your smaller festivals and things like that—I think that’s where you’re interacting with consumers, and that’s when the visibility to consumers changes...You don’t view it as, ‘Oh yeah, they’re in my hometown.’ [It’s more like], ‘Okay, look it. *They’re actually integrated into my community, and supporting local events.*’” (Theo, Agency).

Herman acknowledged that his company were highly involved with the local community through their sponsorship portfolio. The sole objective of one sponsorship, a golf tournament, was to tie into, and give back, to the local community:

“We are a sponsor of the [Golf Tournament] out at [Hometown]. And that’s part of a broader relationship with the [Golf Organization]. That is overtly and purposeful in helping to drive awareness and funds for the [Hometown Charity]. *That’s the focus, and giving back to our local hometown community.* That is *the* objective of that relationship” (Herman, Corporation).

sport sponsorships were noted by interview participants as opportunities for corporate visibility within their hometowns, with sponsorships functioning like beacons—at times through naming rights—that communicated their hometown associations:

“I think companies want to—*they want people to know that’s where they’re headquartered and that’s where they’re based.* Yes. So, without a doubt, that plays into most of the hometown teams—sponsoring the hometown teams” (Bobby, Property).

“That may not necessarily be the goals and objectives for the out-of-market sponsorships that you do, but when you do hometown sponsorships—this is your home base...the people here are dear to you. *So, you want to make sure that you’re visible, and that they see you*” (Penelope, Agency).

“If you watch a Seattle Mariners game, you’ll see a large Boeing sign on the thing. Boeing doesn’t need to advertise to Seattle Mariners’ fans. No fans are going to bring their two kids, sit down, and go buy a Boeing plane. But they are a part of Seattle. *They want to showcase that “we support the community. We’re here in Seattle.” That’s what sponsorships should be about—to some level*” (Eyan, Agency).

With many of their employees located within their hometowns, corporations were capable of executing large, employee-focused activations around their sport sponsorships that also tied back to their communities. Many interview participants thought that these initiatives were effective resources for improving employees’ attitudes towards their employers—instilling pride, while further reinforcing existing in-group associations:

“[Sponsor] has a strong employee base here in Rivendell. It’s their hub. And anything that they do with us in the community is not only to tie into the community—*they always try to tie employee engagement into that as well.* So, we’ll do a [weekend event] as an example. And, they’ll bring the employees out to work the various events that we do surrounding that weekend. Having them in uniforms, so you get the connection to them, but also [to] have your employee base knowing, ‘Hey, [sponsor] is out there doing solid stuff in our

community.’ And so, I think it works both ways. *Both from an internal employee perspective, but also externally for their customer base*” (Bobby, Property).

“...employees are usually a huge part of how a company presents itself, so how do you get them engaged and involved in the partnership? And not just excited about it, but use it to influence their behavior? We have [hundreds of thousands of] employees. How do we get them excited and engaged, and wanting to help spread the brand message?” (Nick, Corporation).

**Winning where you live.** Another thematic hometown objective that emerged from the data was “winning where you live.” Where the thematic hometown objective of “weaving into the local fabric” focused more on reinforcing in-group associations through less commercially-driven endeavors, “winning where you live” involved corporations’ openly attempting to establish sustainable competitive advantages against their competitors in their hometowns. From a social identity perspective, this involved strategies that reflected and encouraged managerial behaviors of in-group favoritism and out-group derogation by prominent hometown corporations and sport properties. One interview participant, Clint, compared the rationale for corporations engaging in this thematic hometown objective to in-state, college sports recruiting:

“I mean—it’s very similar to college football recruiting, or college basketball recruiting—any major college sport recruiting. *You’ve got to win where you’re [located]*. If you’ve got a great sports or entertainment property in your hometown, and you’re in the mindset of doing team deals, then you should probably look to take care of your own town for a multitude of reasons, but primarily because you don’t want your CMO going to the game and seeing your competitor’s messaging running everywhere; coming back and saying, “What are we doing in sponsorships?” So, it’s protecting that home turf” (Clint, Agency).



During his interview, Mark, spoke directly to the emotional motivations for corporations to adopt this thematic hometown objective:

“I think, by nature, and probably for many things, *the closer you are to something, the more intimate you are with it*. And it means more. You want to be more involved. You want to know more. You want to be a part of it more. So, that’s why a hometown sponsorship has more value. And in addition to that, you can look at it reversely, and *you don’t want to lose that to a competitor*. So, yes, they’re very intimate with it” (Mark, Property).

To that end, corporations were seen by interview participants as investing more into hometown sport properties than they would for similar properties elsewhere:

“Honestly, I would say that *there’s more of a financial investment in your hometown [sponsorships]*, because—not just us at the agency—but the corporate stakeholders want that to look as good as possible to their higher ups. They don’t want something to look bad that their CEO is going to...that reflects bad on them” (Theo, Agency).

“Without a doubt, *you will see hometown companies do more, and probably spend more on local partnerships than they otherwise would*—I think they look at it very differently” (Nick, Corporation).

A predominant sub-theme for “winning where you live” was identified in the data: (1) forming hometown alliances. This sub-theme represented a strategy for achieving this thematic hometown objective that corporations’ non-local competitors were unable to perfectly imitate (i.e. imperfect imitability) or adopt (i.e. imperfect mobility).

***Forming hometown alliances.*** Prominent hometown corporations—particularly B2C companies—regularly sought to partner with prominent hometown sport properties. This sub-theme/strategy often allowed these corporations to form alliances with both the hometown sport

properties they sponsored and the other hometown sponsors of those properties. Theo and Bobby acknowledged possible sponsor portfolio effect from these alliances:

‘I do think when you look around and you see [Hometown Sponsor 1], and [Hometown Sponsor 2], and [Hometown Sponsor 3], and [Hometown Sponsor 4], and [Hometown Sponsor 5]—I do think that there is a little bit of a reminder that, “Oh yeah, they’re based out of here in Rivendell.” Does some of that—would some of that spill over if, like, [Non-Local Sponsor], were sponsoring? Maybe, but most people recognize the big companies that are based in Rivendell, and I do think there’s a little bit of, “Okay, that’s right. They’re based out of here’ (Theo, Agency).

“There’s definitely value to that. I think there’s more value to the mid-tier company than there is to the large fortune 500 company. So, yes. *Companies spend money with us, because not only do they want that association with the team, but they also know and want to see themselves in the same lights of a [Hometown Sponsor 1], a [Hometown Sponsor 2], a [Hometown Sponsor 3], and those types of companies.* And yes, we have people that spend money with us, because they want to be in that same neighborhood, if you will” (Bobby, Property).

Pertinent to this thematic strategy, Mark referred to the “natural” associative benefits among hometown sport properties and prominent hometown corporations. He spoke about his property’s community activism, and how they often partnered with their sponsors. During his interview, he mentioned that while many sponsors—including non-local sponsors—have partnered with his property on community initiatives, hometown partners were preferred; resonating better with the local community:

“We’re finding ways to, really, what does community mean to us, and what does it mean to the community? —to link all those together, and find the right partners that would integrate with that naturally and want to be a part of it...*The natural fit is going to be a hometown company.* If we took one of their competitors and we went to market with [a community initiative], it probably isn’t going to feel as good for the community, or the client, or us...*You’re going to get a better [sponsorship effects] amplification if you’re a hometown corporation doing something for the community with the right sports team that has the right fit and the right idea for your brand, than taking a competitor and putting it in that same campaign.* If you looked at those two campaigns, I guarantee you that the value amplification that the hometown company is getting is more than the competitor” (Mark, Property).

These preferences were regularly alluded to by interview participants, and they suggested that hometown community members (i.e. a central social group) generally preferred hometown sponsorships—and conversely, that sponsorships between hometown properties and the competitors of those local corporations were discouraged. In some situations, interview participants expressed the belief that sponsorships among some of the more prominent hometown corporations and sport properties were almost mandatory—for both the corporations and sport properties. Bobby admitted that there were a few hometown sponsors that were almost mandatory for sport properties to maintain as their sponsors:

“[Hometown Sponsor] is a great example of one *that would be almost impossible not to do a deal with them. And it would almost be impossible for them not to do a deal with us.* So, do we want to be offering anything but [Hometown Sponsor] in our venue? No. Our fans would not be happy if we were offering [Hometown Sponsor’s Competitor]. Would

[Hometown Sponsor] want to have a property of our magnitude in Rivendell with [large numbers of] people coming through, that was offering a product other than theirs? They wouldn't" (Bobby, Property).

When the alternative to the "mandatory" hometown sponsorship mentioned above was brought to the attention of Theo, he found it unthinkable:

I was thinking, what if [Non-Local Competitor] sponsored something here in Rivendell—like, unheard of. Me as a consumer and working in the industry—that's my perception. So, *you could imagine that people out there would probably be shocked if you went to the [Hometown Football Team's] game and they only had [Non-Local Competitor]? I'm trying to think if there's anybody that's every really done that"* (Theo, Agency).

Clint possessed a slightly different perspective than Bobby. He suggested that properties were regularly entering sponsorship conversations with multiple prospects simultaneously. In such scenarios, he believed that properties were proactive to communicate with hometown corporations when they were engaged in conversations with their competitors; reaching out to them as a local courtesy:

"I've seen companies strategically do team deals where they don't have corporate presence, whether it be national, regional, international—but lo-and-behold, one of their competitors does. And so, I do think that happens. *And I think in the negotiation process too, properties are well aware of who the primary competitors are, and even maybe not primary competitors, but maybe those brands that really irritate the other brands.* And they certainly, if they're talking to both, they let them know that. And I would too, if I were in their shoes" (Clint, Agency).

### **Hometown Sponsorship: An Effective Testing Ground**

While there was not substantial evidence for treating this finding as a thematic objective of hometown sponsorship, an important insight was offered by one of the corporate managers interviewed in this study that warranted inclusion. He noted that hometown sponsorship can serve as a safe environment and testing ground for new sponsorship leveraging and activation practices:

“[Hometowns are] a great testing ground and it’s easy for you to be there and see that without having to jump on a plane to see it. So yes. You tend to see more of that...*testing control and best practices developed with things you do at the local level*. Plus, usually those partnerships are big enough for you to actually get a little bit more creative with them...I think it’s also an opportunity—particularly if you’re trying to recruit B2B customers—for you to use that as a local tool to entertain them with your executive audience in attendance. So, it’s *capable of showcasing your brand in a positive light within a safe environment*...so, I think it’s a great opportunity.” (Nick, Corporation).

This insight, when considering the greater financial investments made towards individual sponsorships, the alliances and strong relationships forged through in-group associations, and the heightened emphasis towards secondary functions of sponsorship, provided support for the possibility of both a sustainable and dominant competitive advantage within corporations’ hometown communities.

### **Discussion**

The following research questions guided the current study: 1a) What do sponsorship managers perceive to be common sponsorship objectives? 1b) How do these objectives function with one another when applying a social identity approach? And 2) When asking sponsorship

managers to narrow their focus to consider hometown sponsorship objectives and effects, what are distinctive or nuanced differences in sponsorship strategy that emerge?

### **Building Brand Ambassadors Through Sponsorships**

The first research question sought to identify common sponsorship objectives and construct a framework using a social identity approach that explained how these common objectives functioned together. From data analysis procedures, four inter-related thematic sponsorship objectives were revealed: 1) Joining people where their passions live, 2) fostering brand love, 3) committing to communities, and 4) empowering employees as brand ambassadors. When applied into a social identity framework—particularly self-categorization theory—these thematic objectives provided a general explanation for how corporate sponsorship functioned relationally to influence social groups and its members.

**How sponsorship generally functions—a relationship context.** Interview participants spoke to the importance of corporations identifying their brands' target audiences, and through sponsorship placing their brands in those environments—“joining people where their passions lived.” These environments were strategically chosen to reinforce consistent perceptions of their brands' personalities within their target audiences' social groups.

This also entailed corporations leveraging these sponsorships in a manner than promoted their target audiences to positively stereotype their brands as anthropomorphic members of their social groups. This was often accomplished through the application of social media as a sponsorship activation element. Social media communications allowed for organic interaction with target audiences that engaged them on a human level; creating brand narratives and call-to-actions that were positioned more like friendly conversations than sales pitches.

Another important sponsorship function identified through analysis of participant interviews was “fostering brand love,” where corporations sought to increase the brands’ centrality within the self-identities of individuals in their target audiences. Where social media activations were generally used to establish anthropomorphic social relationships, corporations also created experiential activations for target audience members to emotionally connect with their brands on a deeper level; engaging these individuals through unique and exclusive experiences. In other words, from a relationship context, corporations first established a friendship (i.e. anthropomorphic in-group association), then they pursued romance (i.e. brand love).

As secondary objectives, corporations both leveraged their sponsorships with community/charity extensions (i.e. “committing to the community”), and regularly used their sponsorship resources on employees to encourage their emotional commitment towards them and their brands (i.e. empowering employees as ambassadors). These practices encouraged cognitive consistency in their brands’ personalities with target audiences; presenting them as both authentic and credible.

In summary, from this study’s findings, corporations generally used sponsorship as an integrated, relationship management platform, with its mechanisms intended to encourage target audiences (and employees) to develop anthropomorphic personality associations with their brands; ultimately motivating them to self-categorize themselves into what this study termed as brand ambassadors for life.

“Building brand ambassadors for life” represented the logical culmination of the thematic sponsorship objectives that were identified through data analysis. For these individuals, their brands were expected to exhibit strong degrees of centrality in their self-identities, and influence their normative behaviors. Consequently, brand ambassadors for life were defined in this study as

consumers who strongly identified with their brands; possessed brand love; resisted negative criticisms of their brands from others (i.e. demonstrated in-group favoritism); and highly-integrated their brands into their lifestyles.

**Connections with extant literature.** Findings that emerged from this study aligned within a social identity approach framework, suggesting that corporations were using their sponsorships to create beneficial social group associations by manipulating target audiences' perceptions. In addition, many of the framework's proposed mechanisms agreed with extant sponsorship and brand literature.

A key foundational element of the conceptual framework for determining sponsorship effectiveness involved establishing a good sponsor-property fit in the minds of target audiences, which has been noted by scholars in numerous sponsorship fit operationalizations (Becker-Olsen & Simmons, 2002; Cornwell, Humphreys, Maguire, Weeks, & Tellegen, 2006; Johar & Pham, 1999; Olsen & Thjømmøe, 2011; Ruth & Simonin, 2003). Further, the importance ascribed to developing sponsorship portfolios strategically positioned to present consistent brand images/personalities (i.e. good sponsorship-sponsorship fit) supported findings from Chien, Cornwell, and Pappu (2011). These high-fit associations are likely to encourage local consumers to include sponsoring hometown brands of their hometown teams as members of their in-group.

Corporations were found to encourage consumers anthropomorphizing (Levy, 1985; Plummer, 1985) with their brands through activation strategies allowing for social interactions and meaningful consumer-brand relationships (Fournier, 1998; Fournier & Alvarez, 2012). With the proliferation of social media (Walsh, Clavio, Lovell, & Blaszk, 2013) and emergent, interactive technologies, opportunities for greater reciprocity between consumers and brands were possible—a key element of human relationships (Giddens, 1991). Additionally, Kim and McGill (2011)



found that products were more likely to be anthropomorphized by consumers in situations where the products' behaviors aligned with the normative behaviors they sought. Their findings supported the conceptual framework's functionalism that involved aligning intended brand personalities towards specific, target audiences. Lastly, brand relationship and brand product attributes were found capable of influencing brand love and behaviors similar to those expected from this study's "Brand ambassadors for life" (Albert & Merunka, 2013).

### **Hometown Sponsorships: Amplifying a Natural Advantage**

When the data was examined from a hometown context, interview participants shared perspectives that suggested that corporations focused significant attention towards reinforcing their "hometown" social identities and corresponding in-group associations (i.e. local business-city, local employer-employee, and hometown sponsor-property).

These associations were reinforced both within commercial and non-commercial contexts. Corporations "weaved themselves into the local fabric" by creating non-commercial philanthropic and grassroots extensions around their larger sponsorship properties. Employees were actively incorporated into their sponsorships, with these employee-oriented leveraging elements actively reinforcing quadratic hometown employer-employee-team-community associations.

From a direct, commercial perspective, corporations allocated additional resources towards "winning where they lived," and established visible alliances with other local corporations and properties (in-group favoritism). While findings from this analysis failed to support that hometown sport property representatives exhibited behaviors of out-group derogation towards direct competitors of their city's prominent hometown corporations, there was evidence of normalized in-group favoritism by managers of both hometown sport properties and hometown corporations.

Through interview participant discourse, however, members of the local community may be prone to exhibit *both* positive distinctiveness strategies of in-group favoritism and out-group derogation.

Sponsorships (in general) have been proposed as being capable of providing corporations a sustainable competitive advantage (Amis et al., 1997). While in agreement with their position, findings from this study would expand upon theirs, suggesting that hometown sponsorships provide optimal associative conditions for local corporations to establish sustainable competitive advantages within their home markets (see Figure 4).

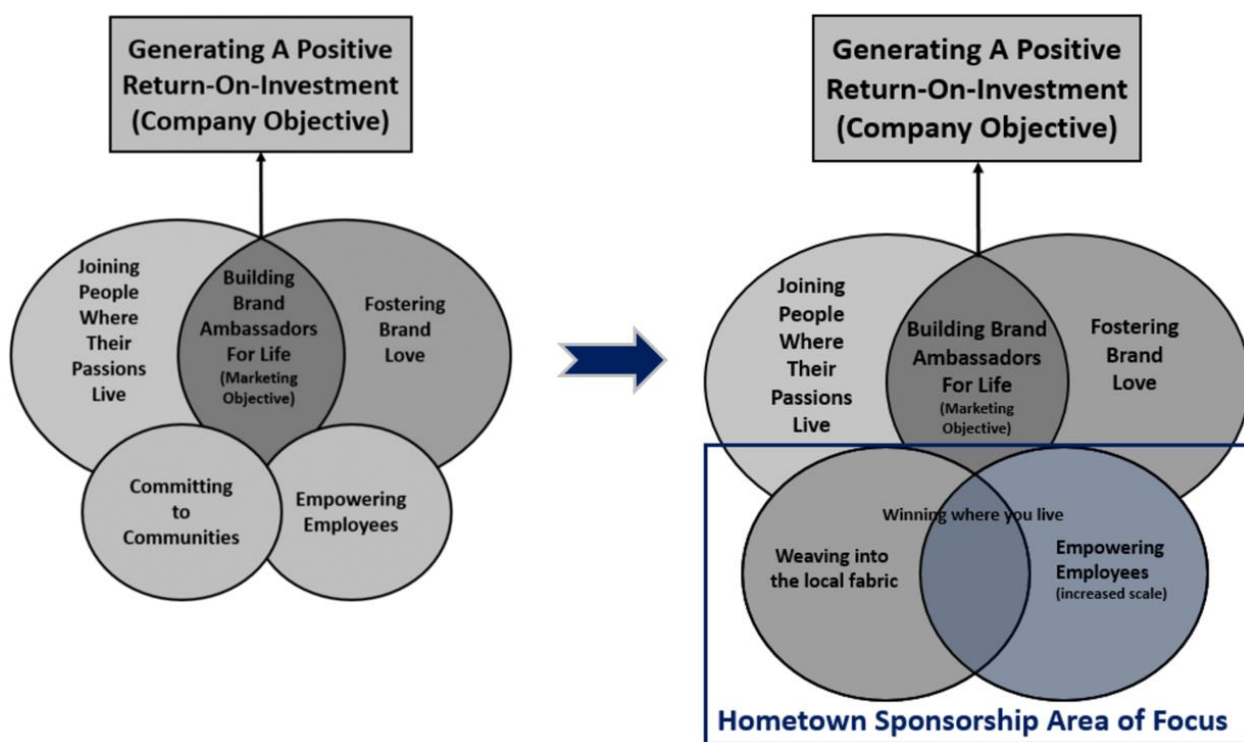


Figure 4: Hometown Sponsorship's Natural Competitive Advantage

### Managerial Implications

The major implication from this study is that sponsorship managers must first know their target audiences to effectively manage their sponsorships. This target audience understanding

should be based on more than demographics, but include a meaningful understanding of their passions, preferences, and behaviors—especially communication behaviors. When selecting properties to sponsor—and when leveraging and activating upon these sponsorships—managers should attempt to create brand personalities that resonate closely to their target audiences to promote social group identification and encourage behaviors of brand favoritism.

A related implication for managers is to focus on sponsorship's ability to create brand relationships with consumers and their social groups, and be cautious when linking direct revenue generation initiatives to sponsorships. Rather, as managers attempt to create connections with communities where they sponsor, they may want to consider leveraging their sponsored sport properties with CSR-linked sponsorship initiatives (Walker & Kent, 2009); particularly if their brands do not have an inherently high associative fit with the community (Uhrich, Koenigstorfer, & Groeppel-Klein, 2014).

For managers, whose corporations have only recently begun using sponsorship as a strategic resource, findings from this study suggest that the creation of a formal, hometown sponsorship strategy may serve as a safe, initial entry point and foundation for developing their corporate sponsorship portfolio. Formation of a strong hometown sponsorship portfolio is expected to 1) protect what is likely an already advantageous product/service market; 2) develop strong in-group associations with the community; 3) instill a sense of pride in employees, encouraging emotional investment and commitment; 4) create networking opportunities and brand alliances with other hometown sponsors; and 5) provide a testing ground for developing sponsorship best practices.

**An explanation for sponsorship measurement challenges.** During interviews with participants, a managerial pattern emerged that provided some explanation for sponsorship's oft-

noted measurement challenges. Corporations generally establish sponsorship objectives and develop their strategies for achieving them internally. Then, agencies are often empowered by their clients to manage the sponsorship leveraging and activation of these sponsorships. Measurement is regularly a shared responsibility between agencies and corporations, applying *ad hoc* reporting practices. Final sponsorship evaluation, however, is conducted by corporate leadership.

Consequently, agencies develop leveraging and activation practices based on corporate objectives provided to them. For these leveraging and activation practices to occur, they must receive approval from corporate managers. From this study's analysis, considering the leveraging and activation practices discussed within the data, these sponsorship objectives are focused on developing meaningful brand relationships with consumers; whereas, the corporations' evaluation processes consistently prioritize the quantification of direct, financial returns (see Figure 5).

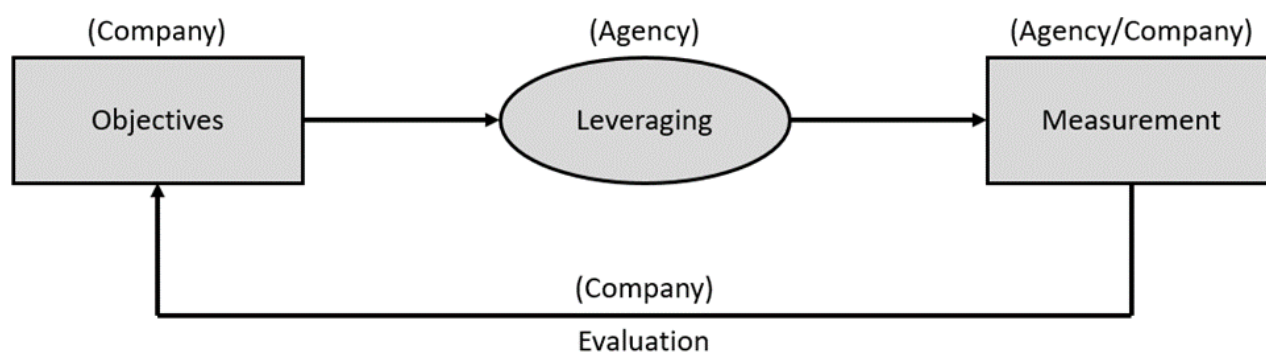


Figure 5: Common Management Responsibilities

When sponsorship measurement directly focuses on ROI measures, corporations are likely conflating their overarching corporate (ROI-focused) objectives into their overarching marketing (i.e. brand-focused) objectives. Little evidence was found in the data to suggest sponsorship leveraging and activation generates substantial and direct financial returns. Rather, from managers' perceptions, sponsorship effects appear to establish meaningful consumer relationships that

*indirectly* generate significant financial returns over prolonged time periods. Therefore, when trying to evaluate sponsorship effectiveness with financial measures (i.e. ROI), corporations may be performing their evaluations with an inappropriate unit of measure.

**And a sponsorship measurement suggestion.** Findings from this study suggest that companies should focus on measuring sponsorship effectiveness by improving consumer behavior measurement practices that tie directly into sponsorship's relationship-oriented objectives. Such an approach would be expected to capture sponsorship effects better. For instance, being able to track normative behavior changes throughout sponsorship exchanges—and comparing these metrics with overall corporate financial performance—may be a more accurate indicator of sponsorship's overall impact on corporations' financial health over time.

### **Theoretical Implications**

Using a social identity approach, findings from this study suggest the possibility for corporations to exploit their community associations to establish sustainable competitive advantages through sponsorship; thereby, extending the theoretical contributions of social identity theory and self-categorization theory into competitive advantage research. Previous research that examined competitive advantage and sponsorship (Amis et al., 1997; Amis et al., 1999; Fahy et al., 2004) used a resource-based view (RBV) of the firm as an inquisitive lens.

Further, this study is the first known to examine how sponsorship works from a hometown sponsorship context. Therefore, findings from this study can serve as a conceptual starting point for model development and testing of hometown effects in subsequent studies.

### **Future Research**

Based on their inherent associative relationships, hometown sponsorships may be able to provide both a sustainable *and* dominant competitive advantage in corporations' local

communities. Future studies should attempt to identify hometown market share and profitability for large (i.e. regional, national, and multi-national) corporations in relation to their hometown sponsorship investments; examining these sponsorships longitudinally.

Findings from this study also suggest that hometown companies invest more into community initiatives than they would otherwise. One property representative who participated in this study went so far as to suggest that hometown sponsors saw more benefits from their community initiatives than non-local sponsors. Future studies should examine CSR-linked sport sponsorship benefits among these two contexts.

Lastly, during interviews, patterns in managerial perspectives were noticeable based on sponsorship's managerial roles. Greater investigation should be conducted on how this triadic (i.e. corporation-agency-property) sponsorship management structure functions, and its influence on sponsorship leveraging and activation.

### **Limitations**

While this study's sample included sponsorship managers in corporate, agency, and property roles—and possessed interview participant representation from every major property in the researched area—there were two factors that limited corporate sponsorship manager interview participation: (1) Existing policies regarding research participation, and (2) the inability to secure in-person interviews due to their managerial time-constraints. For instance, multiple corporate managers were unable to participate in the study due to corporate policies prohibiting research collaboration outside of approved vendors. Additionally, to allow for the inclusion of the second corporate sponsorship manager and a fourth agency consultant, two phone interviews were included in the sample; reducing the interviewer's access to participant social cues and environment. The two corporate sponsorship managers that served as interview participants,

however, managed large sponsorship portfolios for two Fortune 500 corporations; offering valuable insight into hometown sponsorship.

Another limitation in this study included the researcher's subjectivities, who previously worked as an agency consultant and was already experienced with many of the properties that were represented in the interview participant sample. It is believed that these researcher subjectivities introduced bias during the study's data collection and analysis phases.

Lastly, this study is not generalizable to other hometown contexts, as it solely employs qualitative methods of inquiry. Consequently, transferability of findings are limited to corporate hometown sponsorships within the United States that adhere to the hometown sponsorship definition applied by this study.

**CHAPTER 4****WHEN IN ATLANTA, DRINK COKE: THE INTERACTION OF CITY  
IDENTIFICATION AND SPONSOR IDENTIFICATION (STUDY 2)<sup>3</sup>**

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<sup>3</sup> Rich, G., Hulland, J., & Hawkins, B.J. To be submitted to *International Journal of Sport Marketing and Sponsorship*.



### **Abstract**

A quasi-experiment was conducted using two, popular soft drink brands, Coca-Cola and Pepsi. These brands were used as manipulation variables in a pseudo-experimental, 2 SPONSOR (i.e. Coca-Cola, Pepsi) x 2 TEAM (Falcons, Braves) factorial design. Three dependent variables (i.e. purchase intention, positive word-of-mouth, and perceived community investment) and three covariates of group identification (city, sponsor, team) were included in the model. Data were collected using an online survey (N = 148). Results from MANCOVA found a statistically significant relationship between city identification and sponsorship outcomes (i.e. purchase intention, positive WOM). Further, sponsor identification was found to positively moderate the relationship between city identification and sponsorship outcomes. While perceived community investment was not found to be directly influenced by sponsorship effects, there was an indirect relationship through sponsorship outcomes.

### **Introduction**

Their marketplace competition is referred to as the “Cola Wars.” Coca-Cola (herein “Coke”) and Pepsi are universally recognized brands, whose advertising and marketing campaigns have, since the 1980s, often targeted their chief competitor—one another. According to Forbes, they are the two strongest beverage brands in the world (“The World’s Most,” 2016), with Fortune recently ranking the competition between Coke and Pepsi the greatest business rivalry of all time (“The 50,” 2013).

Both companies spend billions on advertising each year. In 2014, Coke committed nearly \$3.5 billion towards their advertising, while Pepsi spent \$2.3 billion (“A Look At,” 2016). Closely

mirroring their advertising budgets, Coke holds a 42.5% overall market share in the U.S., with its Coca-Cola Classic brand owning 17.7% of the market (“Statistics and Facts on the Coca-Cola,” n.d.); whereas, Pepsi’s brands hold 30% of the U.S. market share (“Coke Vs. Pepsi,” 2014), with its Pepsi name-brand beverage representing 8.6% of the market (“Statistics and Facts on PepsiCo,” n.d.).

Yet, in Brand Keys’ 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Customer Loyalty Engagement Index, Pepsi recently usurped Coca-Cola Classic as the soft drink ranked highest in U.S. consumer brand loyalty (Team, 2016). This was the first time in the past four years that a soft drink brand other than Coca-Cola had received top ranking (Team, 2016). And while Coke contributes more of its budget to advertising, Pepsi’s financial commitments into sponsorships surpass those of all other U.S. companies. Their \$370 (to \$375) million spent on sponsorship in 2015 was nearly \$100 million more than their rival, whose \$275 (\$280) million in sponsorship investments ranked third (“Lowdown,” 2016).

Moreover, Pepsi has recently invested much of those sponsorship dollars to position its brands in mainstream sports. With its 2015 league deal with the National Basketball Association (NBA), Pepsi now holds exclusive category rights for advertising and promotion with all four major North American professional sport leagues (Heitner, 2015).<sup>4</sup>

As national leaders in sponsorship spending—highly active in sport sponsorship—possessing powerful brands, brand personalities, and presence in nearly every gas station,

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<sup>4</sup> During the time in which this study was conducted, Pepsi was still involved with Major League Baseball (MLB). However, as of March 10, 2017, the media announced that the company is ending its soft drink category sponsorship. The company still has a relationship with MLB, however, with its Gatorade brand (Lefton, 2017).

convenience store, and restaurant worldwide, Coke and Pepsi are ideally positioned to serve in this survey study examining hometown sponsorship effects.

### **The Prevalence of Hometown Sponsorship**

To the author's knowledge, scholars have yet to conduct research that specifically focuses on hometown sponsorship effects. This omission is curious, as the visible prevalence of hometown sponsorships suggests a perceived importance to sponsorship managers. For example, the venue naming rights for the San Antonio Spurs (AT&T Arena), New England Patriots (Gillette Stadium), Los Angeles Lakers (Staples Arena), Minnesota Twins (Target Field), and the Atlanta Braves (SunTrust Park) are all hometown sponsorships. Furthermore, a large corporate presence—determined by the number of corporate headquarters—is recognized as an important characteristic in determining professional sport franchise sustainability within cities (Brown, M. T., Rascher, D. A., Nagel, M. S., & McEvoy, C. D., 2010).

Table 4 further illustrates the significance of hometown sport sponsorship; providing a snapshot of local sponsorship involvement by prominent Atlanta, GA corporations.

### **Defining “Hometown” Sport Sponsorship**

With major North American sport properties centralized around large metropolitan areas, the definition for what constitutes a sport “hometown” within this study differs from the traditional use of the word.

For purposes of this study, the closest metropolitan area to possess a professional sport franchise or franchises from the Big Four sport leagues—MLB, NBA, NFL, and the National Hockey League (NHL)—in relation to an individual's residence is considered their “hometown.” Properties within these metropolitan areas would be considered “hometown properties.”

Table 4: Hometown Sponsorships with Major Sport Properties (accurate as of March 2017)

Hometown Sponsor	Atlanta (Metropolitan Area) Sport Properties					
	Braves (MLB)	United (MLS)	Hawks (NBA)	Falcons (NFL)	UGA (NCAA)	GA Tech (NCAA)
	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue		
	Red		Red			
	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
	Blue		Blue		Blue	Blue
	Red		Red	Red	Red	Red
	Orange	Orange		Orange		
	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue		
			Brown			

Additionally, athletic programs from public state universities, whether within the boundaries of that metropolitan area, would also be considered “hometown properties.”

For example, if individuals live in New Hampshire, their “hometown” for purposes of this study would be the “Boston metropolitan area” in Massachusetts. Subsequently, the Boston Red Sox would be considered a “hometown property.” Yet, the athletic program at the University of

New Hampshire would also be considered a “hometown property” for individuals who live in the state of New Hampshire.

From a corporate perspective, this study assumes that corporations’ international, national, or regional headquarters function like individuals’ residences; making the metropolitan areas where their offices are located their “hometowns.”

### **Considering Hometown Sport Sponsorship as a Perceived Community Investment**

In 2011, when announcing their stadium naming rights sponsorship—introducing Sports Authority Field at Mile High—representatives for both the National Football League’s (NFL) Denver Broncos and hometown sporting goods retailer, Sports Authority, spoke to how their partnership represented a community investment (Zaas, 2011). The following excerpt is from the Broncos’ official announcement:

“Pairing the Broncos with Sports Authority further demonstrates the team's commitment to the city of Denver and the entire Rocky Mountain Region. Sports Authority and the Denver Broncos both share a vested interest in the local community and combining their resources allows for more opportunities to give back to the fans that support both the Broncos and Sports Authority” (Zaas, para. 4).

While representatives for Sports Authority and the Broncos perceived—or at least communicated—their partnership to be a hometown community investment, did the community? Does a hometown sponsorship represent corporate social responsibility?

While earlier sponsorship literature clearly delineates sponsorship and CSR by sponsorship’s commercial intent (Meenaghan, 1983; Polonsky & Speed, 2001) and CSR’s corporate expectation of little or no financial return (Javalgi, Traylor, Gross, & Lampman, 1994; Speed & Thompson), perceptions regarding these distinctions have recently become blurred

(Plewa & Quester, 2011). Consequently, there has been growing research examining potential relationships between sponsorship and CSR (Flöter, Benkenstein, & Uhrich, 2016; Pope, 2010; Uhrich, Koenigsorfer, Groeppel-Klein, 2014; Watt, 2010). Much of this research is tied to the topic of CSR-linked sponsorship (Flöter et al., 2014; Uhrich et al., 2016), with companies leveraging their sponsorships through CSR activities. Both Coca-Cola (“Giving Back,” n.d.) and Pepsi (“Global Citizenship,” n.d.) have contributed hundreds of millions of dollars to the communities in which they operate through their respective foundations. Many of these CSR initiatives are grassroots and sustainability focused. But would local sport sponsorships have an impact on how community members perceive these investments in their communities? Would hometown communities?

The purpose of this study is twofold. First, sponsorship outcomes (i.e. purchase intention, positive word-of-mouth) are examined for a hometown sponsor and its direct competitor to identify similarities or differences in sponsorship effects among “sport hometown” residents. Second, perceptions of a company’s community investments are examined from a hometown sport sponsorship context to assess whether local community members’ associations with them as a hometown sponsor influences community investment perceptions. Thus, the following research questions guide this study:

- RQ1: What influence does an individuals’ associations between their hometown and their hometown teams’ sponsors possess on sponsorship outcome effects (i.e. purchase intention, positive word-of-mouth)?
- RQ2: What influence does sport sponsorship have on individuals’ perceptions of sponsor investment in their community?

### **A “Balancing” Social Identity Approach**

This study applies a “balancing” social identity approach as its theoretical framework. A social identity approach—a combination of self-categorization theory and social identity theory—explains how individuals categorize themselves into associated groups, enacting behaviors that they consider to be social group norms (i.e. the “in-group”). Balance theory helps explain how individuals develop particular positive (or negative) associations to one object (group) given positive associations they possess with another object (group) indirectly related to it. These theories are explained further in the following sections.

#### **Self-Categorization Theory**

Self-categorization theory focuses on how individuals categorize themselves psychologically into groups (Turner & Oakes, 1986); making inferences of other individuals within a group context (i.e. stereotyping). The theory asserts that individuals can categorize themselves at varying levels of abstraction (Turner, 1985). For instance, outside of seeing themselves as individuals, people can associate with groups as part of the “we”—a social identity. Further, this “we” could be viewing the self as a member of a business organization, a member of an underrepresented group, a citizen of a city, etc. There are innumerable self-categories for an individual to perceive himself or herself representing throughout the course of a day (Reynolds & Turner, 2006).

Individuals find meaning in their environment, and accentuate differences between social categories, as well as similarities within social categories (Haslam, Oakes, Turner, & McGarty, 1995). Individuals then categorize themselves and others into these social categories through stereotyping (Tajfel, 1981). Self-stereotyping can be seen as an outcome of depersonalization—when a person views himself or herself as a model representation of his or her associated in-group;

redefining his or her self-concept in terms of group membership (McGarty, 1999). Self-categorization theory views the self as both “personal and collective,” and changes in how one self-categorizes himself or herself creates “qualitative shifts in judgments of oneself and others” (Reynolds & Turner, 2006, p. 233).

### **Social Identity Theory**

Social identity theory applies the concept of social identity as a means for explaining intergroup behavior (Turner, 1999). Social identity refers to the component of self-concept an individual possesses as result of a perceived inclusion within a relevant social group (Turner & Oakes, 1986). Individuals will engage in social behavior that fluctuates along a continuum between intergroup and interpersonal behavior—with absolute intergroup and interpersonal behavior being unlikely (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The theory assumes that individuals intrinsically desire to maintain a positive self-concept—referred to as achieving positive distinctiveness (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). While several strategies exist within the framework of the theory, many of these strategies are predicated by the perceived permeability of group boundaries (i.e. can an individual pass from a low status to high status group?) and the perceived stability on the intergroup hierarchy (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

Social identity theory has been used in sponsorship frameworks (Alexandris & Tsiotsou, 2012; Gwinner & Swanson, 2003; Madrigal, 2001) to explain in-group associations that a property’s fans create with a property’s sponsors. The most recent of these frameworks using social identity theory (Alexandris & Tsiotsou, 2012), applied the theory to justify its hypothesis that team attachment would have a direct and positive influence on sponsor image—which was empirically supported.



## **Balance Theory**

Balance theory helps explain how individuals develop particular positive (or negative) associations to one object given positive associations they possess with another object indirectly related to it. The theory suggests that if person A (e.g. fan) is closely associated to object B (e.g. city or team), and object C (e.g. sponsor) is closely associated to object B (e.g. city), then person A (fan) will cognitively desire to justify a close association between himself/herself and object C (e.g. sponsor). This cognitive processing mechanism by person A is initiated to maintain psychological balance (Heider, 1958). Within the proposed model—which examines how individuals identify with multiple social groups within a hometown sport sponsorship context—balance theory addresses how individuals maintain psychological balance in varying ways. For instance, individuals may strongly identify with the city and the state; thus, already strongly identify with the hometown sponsor because of their close associations to both the city and the state. In this instance, the may team serve more as an amplifier of geographic association. However, individuals may also strongly identify with hometown sponsors if they strongly identify with only the team and city. As Heere, James, Yoshida, and Scremin (2011) notes, “every person identifies with multiple groups, and the relationships between different groups are almost endless” (p. 619).

## **Group Identification and Sponsorship Congruence**

The following research studies consider group associations and local or regional sponsorship fit associations.

Heere et al (2011) examined whether university identity possessed a direct effect on an individual’s (college football) team identity. Additionally, the researchers assessed whether city identity and state identity had indirect effects on team identity. Findings from the study supported

that university identity had a strong and significant impact upon team identity; whereas, city and state identities—while significant—possessed low and moderate impact respectively (Heere et al., 2011).

Woisetschläger, Haselhoff, and Backhaus (2014) investigated fan resistance to stadium naming rights sponsorships using social identity theory and balance theory in development of their hypotheses. The study surveyed 798 soccer fans of German club Borussia Dortmund, whose stadium name had been changed from “Westfalenstadion,” which translates to “Stadium of Westphalia,” to “Signal Iduna-Park,” after the club’s insurance industry sponsor (Woisetschläger et al., 2014). The researchers sought to identify factors that influenced fan resistance. Findings from the study found that sponsorship fit and fans’ perceived benefits of the sponsorship mitigated fan resistance, while high levels of fan and regional identification—as well as negative attitudes towards commercialization—encouraged fan resistance (Woisetschläger et al., 2014).

Lastly, Woisetschläger, Eiting, Haselhoff, and Michaelis (2010) examined various determinants of sponsorship fit (i.e. perceived benefits, regional identification, sincerity, provision of autonomy, and ubiquity) for fans of German football club FC Cologne. When assessing these determinants in a model with sponsorship outcomes (i.e. brand attractiveness, positive WOM), two proposed sponsorship fit determinants—perceived benefits and regional identification—were found to have strong positive effects on sponsorship-fit (Woisetschläger et al., 2010).

Therefore, with consideration to relevant group identification sponsorship research pertinent to local and regional sport associations, the following hypotheses for city identification are made:

H1a: City identification will have a direct effect upon purchase intentions when controlling for team identification.

H1b: City identification will have a direct effect upon positive WOM when controlling for team identification.

H1c: City identification will have a direct effect upon perceived community investment when controlling for team identification.

### **Possible Tribal Support Motivations in Hometown Sport Sponsorship**

Garry, Broderick, and Lahiffe (2008) considered possible tribal motivations for sponsorship; defining a tribe as “a network of heterogeneous person linked by a shared passion or emotion (Cova & Cova, 2002, p. 602).” A relevant example of a tribe falling under this definition would be Atlanta sport fans. The researchers applied a social identity approach to explore these possible tribal motivations; conducting eight in-depth interviews with individuals that represented sponsors of the British Super Bike Championship. Focused on developing a contextual understanding of tribal motivations within sponsorship, the study’s analysis found support for the existence of tribal motivations within some—but not all—of the interviews. The researchers concluded that there was substantial variation and complexity in why decision-makers entered sponsorships, and how sponsorship influenced corporate identity (Garry et al., 2008).

Therefore, when including considerations towards possible “hometown” tribal association motivations, regional associations, and social identity in-group and out-group effects, the following hypotheses for sponsor identification are made:

H2a: Sponsor identification will moderate the relationship between city identification and purchase intention positively for the hometown sponsor (i.e. Coca-Cola).

H2b: Sponsor identification will moderate the relationship between city identification and positive WOM positively for the hometown sponsor (i.e. Coca-Cola) and negatively for its competitor (i.e. Pepsi).

H2c: Sponsor identification will moderate the relationship between city identification and perceived community investment positively for the hometown sponsor (i.e. Coca-Cola), and negatively for its competitor.

### **Community Investment and Sponsorship**

Dean (2002) examined whether a charitable event sponsorship (i.e. Special Olympics) had a positive effect on a sponsor’s (i.e. Food Lion) corporate communications, with its hypothesis developed with balance theory underpinnings. Findings were in supported of the hypothesis, and suggested that sponsoring charitable events leave individuals more likely to have a favorable perceptions of their sponsors’ community relations (Dean, 2002).

Additionally, Lii (2011) conducted research that further explored consumer responses to CSR initiatives within the contexts of sponsorship, cause-related marketing (CRM), and philanthropy. Test results from a between-subjects design suggested that participants more positively identified with companies that engaged in philanthropic endeavors. These findings supported arguments that Polonsky and Speed (2001) had made a decade earlier, claiming that companies should be concerned with how they employ their CSR initiatives, because different

CSR types elicit different company perceptions. Moreover, results from a similar study (Lii & Lee, 2012) substantiated Lii's (2011) findings, and recommended that for companies to build strong identification with consumers, they should first engage in purely philanthropic initiatives; then consider sponsorship and CRM initiatives respectively.

Therefore, the following hypothesis for perceived community investment is made:

H3: Perceived community investment will have a direct effect on both purchase intention and positive WOM.

### **Method**

Coke and the city Atlanta, GA served as the study's "hometown sponsor" and "hometown" respectively, with Pepsi serving as a direct, non-local competitor. Two hometown, professional sport teams—the Atlanta Braves and Atlanta Falcons—were included in the manipulation to allow for eventual data testing of within effects while controlling for team identification. The following methodology sections provide descriptions on instrument design, construct definitions and operationalizations, data collection and analysis procedures.

### **Instrument**

An online survey (73 questions) was developed (see Appendix F) that consisted of seven sections: (1) participant consent/vetting (2) demographic information, (3) city identification (Atlanta metropolitan area), (4) team identification, (5) perceived community investment, (6) positive word-of-mouth, (7) sponsor identification, and (8) participant debriefs. All construct measures apart from perceived community investment and positive WOM had previously been adapted for use in sponsorship research. As these items were adapted from scales that were applied in past studies that were deemed relevant, reliable, and valid, the scales were not pre-tested (see Table 5). The operationalizations and scale origins for each construct are provided below.

Table 5: Construct Reliabilities and Sources

Construct	# Items	Alpha	Source
City Identification	8	0.92	Fisher (1998)
Sponsor Identification	6	0.92	Mael & Ashforth (1992)
Team Identification	8	0.96	Fisher (1998)
Purchase Intention	6	0.93	Chaudhuri & Holbrook (2001)
P. Community Investment	2	0.86	Öberseder, Schlegelmilch, Murphy, & Gruber (2014)
Positive WOM	1	NA	Brown, Barry, Dacin, & Gunst (2005)

**City identification and team identification.** City identification is defined as the level of psychological attachment felt by individuals towards a metropolitan area. In a similar vein, team identification is defined as the level of psychological attachment felt by sports fans towards their favorite team (Branscombe & Wann, 1992). Eight items from a group identification scale were adapted from Fisher (1998) to measure both constructs. These items were previously modified for use within a sponsorship context by Kim and Kim (2009).

**Sponsor identification.** Sponsor identification is defined as the psychological attachment felt by individuals towards a team's sponsor. Six items were adapted from Mael and Ashforth (1992) to measure the construct, which had been previously modified for use within a sponsorship context by Kim and Kim (2009).

**Purchase intention.** Purchase intention is defined as the purchase-related loyalty towards a sponsor's brand product. Two items that measured purchase-related loyalty were adapted from Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) for measuring the construct, which had been previously modified for use within a sponsorship context by Levin, Beasley, & Gamble (2004).

**Perceived community investment.** Perceived community investment is defined as individuals' perceptions of a company meeting its obligation towards the economic commitment

to the community. Six items were adapted from a consumer-perceived corporate social responsibility (CPCSR) from Öberseder, Schlegelmilch, Murphy, and Gruber (2014) to measure this construct.

**Positive WOM.** Positive WOM is defined as a positive, “informal, person-to-person [or social media] communication between a perceived noncommercial communicator and a receiver regarding a brand, a product, an organization, or a service” (Harrison-Walker, 2001, p. 63), and considered an indicator of brand loyalty (Tsiotsou, Alexandris, & Cornwell, 2014; Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996). One item from Brown, Barry, Dacin, & Gunst (2005) was adapted to measure the construct. Correlations among constructs are provided in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Construct Correlations

	City Identification	Sponsor Identification	Team Identification	Purchase Intention	Positive WOM	Perceived Community Investment
City Identification	1	0.162*	0.410**	0.001	-0.045	0.061
Sponsor Identification	.162**	1	0.161	0.493**	0.433**	0.435**
Team Identification	0.410**	0.161	1	-0.032	-0.062	-0.001
Purchase Intention	0.001	0.493**	-0.032	1	0.878**	0.623**
Positive WOM	-0.045	0.433**	-0.062	0.878**	1	0.590**
Perceived Community Investment	0.061	0.435**	-0.001	0.623**	0.590**	1

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

**Procedure.** Four versions of the online survey were designed to capture within and between effects respondents for two of the four possible testing conditions: (1) Coca-Cola-Braves, (2) Coca-Cola-Falcons, (3) Pepsi-Braves, and (4) Pepsi-Falcons. For instance, if respondents' first testing scenario involved Pepsi and the Braves, then their second scenario would be Coca-Cola and the Falcons (i.e. the alternative scenario). The announcement script used to communicate these scenarios was the following:

“The Atlanta [Braves or Falcons] will be moving to [SunTrust Park or Mercedes-Benz Stadium] with the start of the 2017 [Major League Baseball (MLB) or National Football League (NFL)] season. The team is currently in the process of signing an “Official Soft Drink Provider.” The two companies that had reached the final stages of the [Braves or Falcons] selection process were Coca-Cola and Pepsi. Only recently have the [Braves or Falcons] chosen to enter into a three-year partnership with [Coca-Cola or Pepsi] as it begins play at [SunTrust Park or Mercedes Benz Stadium]. The sponsorship is expected to be announced as soon as the formal contract is finalized and signed.”

The survey conditions were counter-balanced, and the versions automatically randomized by the Qualtrics software platform on which the surveys were located (see Figure 6). During the time the online survey was being distributed, all testing conditions were falsified scenarios. This was a unique situation, as both Atlanta teams that were used as controls in this survey were moving into new venues, and all their existing sponsorship deals were to conclude the season prior.



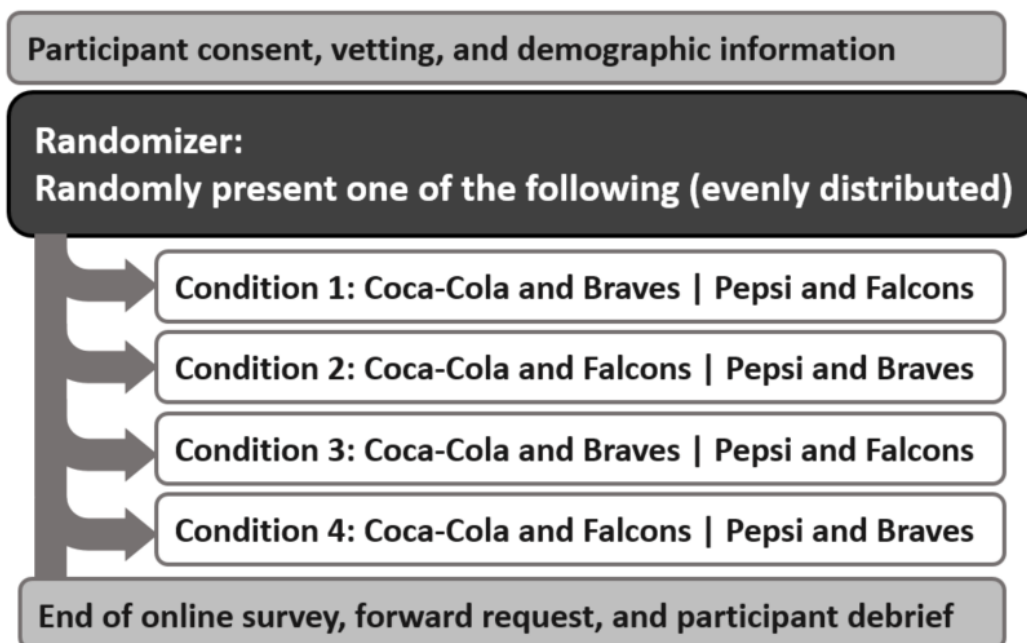


Figure 6: Survey Distribution and Flow

### Data Collection

The survey was made available during a seven-month period in 2016 using an online snowball technique. An anonymous link to the survey was provided to sport management students and researcher acquaintances—intentionally chosen for their various demographic backgrounds—to initiate the process. The population being sampled were Georgia state residents over the age of 18. To ensure respondent eligibility, and following the initial consent page, vetting questions were used to prevent ineligible respondents from completing the survey. With the survey presenting falsified scenarios as true, respondents were taken to a debriefing page immediately upon its completion.

A total of 148 usable surveys were collected for the analysis. When compared to the most recent United States' census data for the state of Georgia (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), there was an over-representation of White (78.4%), Asian (10.1%) and male (58.1%) respondents in the

sample. Black (4.7%) and Hispanic (2.7%) respondents were significantly under-represented. The average age for respondents in the sample was 26 years, with ages ranging from 19 to 60 years.

### **Data Analysis**

Hypotheses were tested in a 2 SPONSOR (Coca-Cola vs. Pepsi) X 2 TEAM (Braves vs. Falcons) between-subjects factorial design. SPONSOR and TEAM effects were measured on purchase intention, positive WOM, and perceived community investment. Identification (sponsor, team, and city) effects functioned as covariates. A MANCOVA was used to analyze the study's pseudo-experimental design, given its significant correlations between dependent variables.<sup>5</sup>

### **Results**

Results from data analysis provide partial support for H1 and H2, and support H3. The following sections discuss the results for each hypothesis in order.

#### **First Hypothesis (City Identification Main Effects)**

The first hypothesis predicted a statistically significant main effect for city identification on all three dependent variables. The MANCOVA showed a statistically significant multivariate effect for all dependent variables (Wilk's  $\lambda = .932$ ,  $F_{3, 139} = 3.364$ ,  $p = .021$ ). When examining the influence of city identification on dependent variables individually, city identification was found to possess a statistically significant effect on both purchase intention ( $F_{1, 141} = 6.923$ ,  $p = .009$ ) and positive WOM ( $F_{1, 141} = 8.466$ ,  $p = .004$ ), but not perceived community investment ( $F_{1, 141} = .017$ ,  $p = .895$ ). Therefore, results from the data analysis supported H1a and H1b, but failed to support H1c.

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<sup>5</sup> A preliminary regression analysis was initially conducted to test the model and examine relationships among constructs. There were statistically significant correlations between all three dependent variables.

## Second Hypothesis (Sponsor Identification Moderator Effects)

The second hypothesis predicted that sponsor identification would moderate effects between city identification and on all three dependent variables. MANCOVA results showed a significant multivariate effect for SPONSOR (Wilk's  $\lambda = .516$ ,  $F_{3, 139} = 43.423$ ,  $p = .00$ ) on all three dependent variables. Univariate tests confirmed that SPONSOR possessed a statistically significant effect on purchase intention ( $F_{1, 141} = 93.719$ ,  $p = .00$ ), positive WOM ( $F_{1, 141} = 125.309$ ,  $p = .00$ ), and perceived community investment ( $F_{1, 141} = 25.966$ ,  $p = .00$ ). The main effect for TEAM was not significant (Wilk's  $\lambda = .977$ ,  $F_{3, 139} = 1.070$ ,  $p = .285$ ). A follow-up contrast (see Figure 7) between sponsors produced showed that purchase intention (a) and positive WOM (b) for Coke (i.e. hometown sponsor) were significantly higher than Pepsi (i.e. direct competitor).

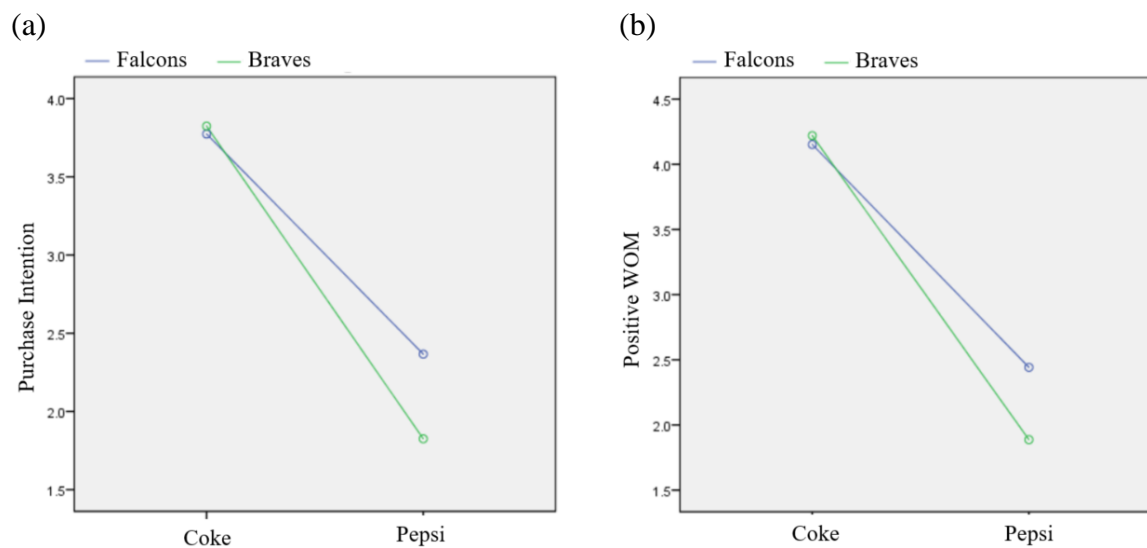


Figure 7: Coke and Pepsi Contrast Effects

While an analysis of main effects for sponsor identification (Wilk's  $\lambda = .975$ ,  $F_{3, 139} = 1.178$ ,  $p = .311$ ) and team identification (Wilk's  $\lambda = .999$ ,  $F_{3, 139} = .041$ ,  $p = .989$ ) were not found to be statistically significant, there was a statistically significant sponsor identification x city

identification (Wilk's  $\lambda = .945$ ,  $F_{3, 139} = 2.714$ ,  $p = .047$ ) interaction on purchase intention and positive WOM.

Through separate slope analyses (see Figure 8), a simple effect of sponsor identification on city identification was found for both purchase intention (a) and positive WOM (b). The gradient for the low sponsor identification line on purchase intention was .124 ( $t = 1.18$ ,  $p = .24$ ); whereas, the gradient for high sponsors identification was .478 ( $t = 2.20$ ,  $p = .03$ ). Similarly, the gradient for the low sponsor identification line on positive WOM was .078 ( $t = .739$ ,  $p = .461$ ); whereas, the gradient for the high sponsor identification was .438 ( $t = 2.02$ ,  $p = .045$ ). Therefore, results from these data analyses supported H2a and H2b, but failed to support H2c.

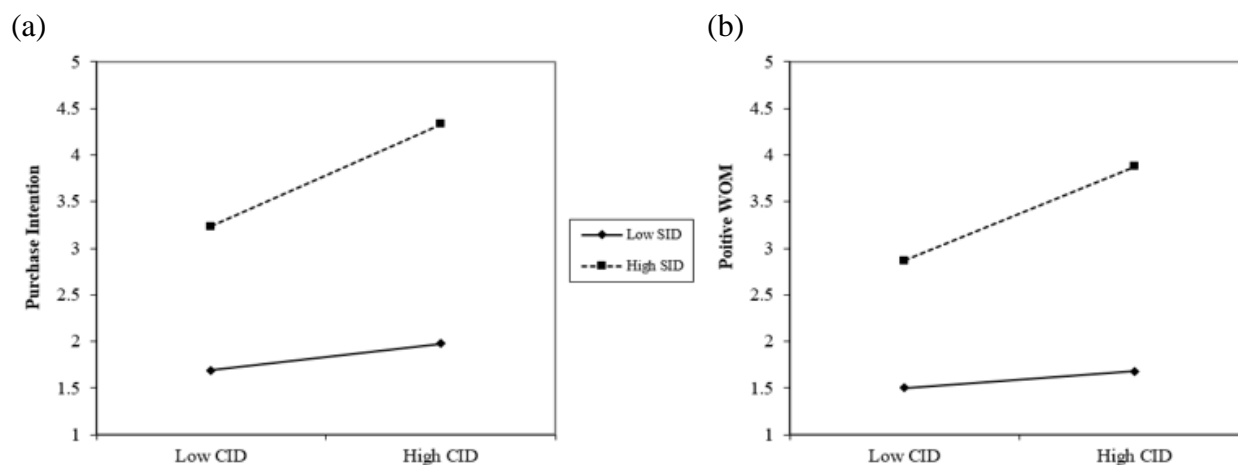


Figure 8: Significant Sponsor Identification (SID) x City Identification (CID) Effects

### Hypothesis 3 (Perceived Community Investment Effects)

The third hypothesis predicted that perceived community investment would have statistically significant relationships with both purchase intention and positive WOM. A bivariate analysis found statistically significant correlations between the three dependent variables (see Table 6). Perceived community investment and purchase intention shared a .62 correlation ( $p = <$

.001); perceived community investment and positive WOM shared a .59 correlation ( $p < .001$ ); and purchase intention and positive WOM shared a .88 correlation ( $p < .001$ ). Thus, results from data analysis supported H3. The empirical relationships among constructs are represented visually in Figure 9.

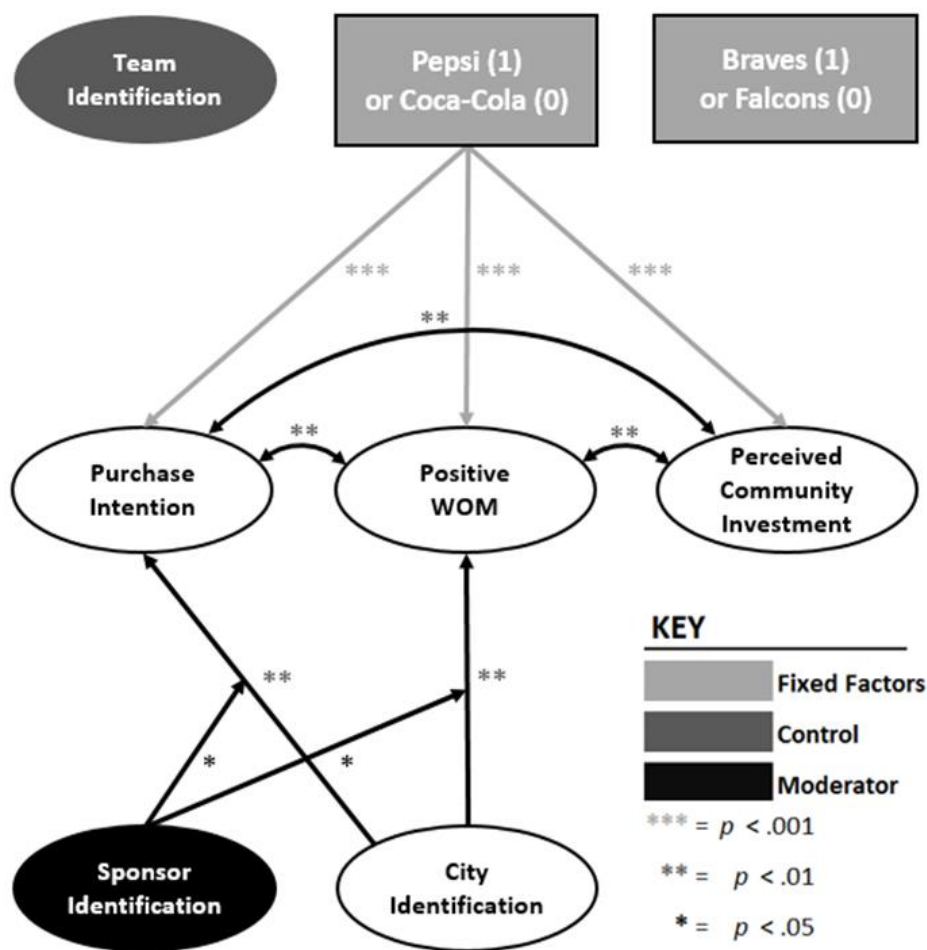


Figure 9: Empirical Model (Significant Paths Shown)

## Discussion

The purpose of this quasi-experiment was to explore potential differences in sponsorship outcomes between a hometown sponsor (i.e. Coke) and its direct competitor (i.e. Pepsi). Key social identities involved within sport sponsorships (i.e. sponsors, teams, community) were considered

in the theoretical framework, which was developed using a “balancing” social identity approach. Additionally, with recent literature looking at relationships between corporate sponsorship and CSR (Flöter et al., 2014; Lii 2011; Lii & Lee, 2011; Uhrich et al., 2016), this study sought to understand whether there were possible relationships between hometown sport sponsorships and community members’ perceptions of sponsors’ perceived community investments. The data analyses from this survey study provided interesting findings.

Findings from the study suggest that there is a relationship between city identification and sponsorship outcomes (i.e. purchase intention, positive WOM). Further, sponsor identification positively moderates the relationship between city identification and sponsorship outcomes; supporting previous research that proximal location associations (i.e. regional, local) influence sponsor-property fit (Woisetschläger et al., 2010).

The relationship between hometown sponsorships and community members’ perceptions of sponsors’ community investment still warrants further clarification. Findings suggest that hometown sponsorship does not directly influence community members’ perceptions of sponsors’ local investments. There is, however, a statistically significant relationship between community members’ perceptions of sponsors’ community investment and their intentions to purchase, and speak positively about, their brands.

When examining contrasts of difference between these sponsors, the results suggest that sponsorship outcomes are much more positive for a hometown sponsor (i.e. Coke) than for its direct competitor (i.e. Pepsi). Therefore, the hometown sponsor (i.e. Coke) is perceived to be more invested in the community, with community members more likely to purchase, and speak well about, its brand. With the analyses in this survey study following a cross-sectional design—

capturing a moment in time—a determination of directionality (cause-and-effect) for these relationships was not possible.

### **Practical Implications**

There are three key takeaways from this study for sponsorship managers to consider. First, a strong determinant of sponsorship-property fit may be proximal location association (Woisetschläger et al., 2010). Second, perceived community investment may not be directly associated with hometown sport sponsorships, but it likely influences sponsorship outcomes. Third, community members' responses to hometown sponsors are anticipated to be much more positive than their responses to hometown companies' direct competitors sponsoring a local sport team.

When considering these three takeaways collectively, there is reason to believe that an effectively managed hometown sport sponsorship portfolio would provide companies a competitive advantage in their hometown markets over their competitors. An interesting strategy, however, for mitigating the magnitude of that competitive advantage may be for competitors to make philanthropic investments into the community. Perceived community investment influences community members' intentions for purchasing, or speaking well about, a company's brand (Lii, 2011; Lii & Lee, 2011). Therefore, if community members are aware of a non-local competitor investing in the community, that competitor is expected to improve their market returns.

### **Theoretical Implications**

This study serves to help fill the gap in hometown sponsorship studies within extant sponsorship literature. Further, this study extends the use of a social identity approach to the context of hometown sport sponsorship; further supporting the approach's ability to theoretically explain how social group identification influences sponsorship effects.

## **Limitations and Future Research**

This quasi-experiment serves as an exploratory investigation into hometown sponsorship effects, leaving many opportunities for further investigation. This study focused on a specific hometown sponsor (i.e. Coke) and competitor (i.e. Pepsi) within a specific sponsorship category (i.e. soft drink beverages). Future studies should examine multiple hometown sponsors in different sponsorship categories for a specific sport property. By evaluating different hometown sponsors of the same sport property, scholars would be able to attain a more comprehensive understanding for how sponsors' brands are affected by other brands in a hometown sponsorship portfolio (Cobbs, Groza, & Rich, 2015). They can also examine possible differences in sponsorship category effects.

As mentioned earlier, the implementation of a cross-sectional design prohibited a determination of directionality (cause-and-effect). Therefore, while it appears that hometown corporations can utilize sponsorships to establish a sustainable competitive advantage within their local markets, future studies are needed that examine hometown sponsorships (and hometown sponsorship portfolios) longitudinally to provide stronger support for such a position.

Further, Coke is an established brand with long-standing relationships with sport properties throughout Atlanta; including the two used in this study. Therefore, this survey study was presumed to represent a "best-case scenario" for effective management of hometown sponsorship utilization; offering evidence of hometown sponsors being able to use sponsorships to establish sustainable competitive advantages. Consequently, results should only be considered generalizable within a best-case, late sponsorship cycle context.

As can occur with convenience samples, the sample's race demographics were skewed when compared to the population. Based upon available state census information, there was over-



representation of Caucasians, Asians, and males. All other minority groups were under-represented. With poor sample representation of minority groups, there was not enough statistical power to reliably examine possible race effects using quantitative analysis methods. Future studies are encouraged to examine differences in sponsorship effects by race and gender; allowing sponsorship managers to develop strategies that more effectively communicate with their target markets.

Additionally, this study sought to identify differences between a hometown sponsor and a direct competitor. This study does not address, however, situations where a non-local company sponsors a sport property in a city where there is not a direct hometown competitor. How do the sponsorship effects associated with these types of sponsorships compare to hometown sponsors—or direct competitors? Such information would help sponsorship managers better determine whether their sponsorship portfolios should be more centralized or decentralized than currently constituted. This too, is an area that warrants future research.

Lastly, this study examined perceived community investment within a hometown sponsorship context to understand if a relationship was present. While an indirect relationship was found between perceived community investment and CSR, future research should consider how these two company initiatives specifically influence one another. Further clarification of their influences upon one another can help managers determine how to best introduce such initiatives into the market.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

Two studies were conducted for this dissertation. A social identity approach was applied as a theoretical lens for both studies. The purpose for these studies was to learn more about a specific context of sponsorship: corporate hometown sport sponsorship.

#### Discussion

This discussion is separated into three parts. The first two sections offer specific discussion on each of the studies conducted in this dissertation. These studies are discussed sequentially. The third section collectively discusses the two studies.

#### Study 1

The following research questions guided the first study: 1a) What do sponsorship managers perceive to be common sponsorship objectives? 1b) How do these objectives function with one another when applying a social identity approach? And 2) When asking sponsorship managers to narrow their focus to consider hometown sponsorship objectives and effects, what are distinctive or nuanced differences in sponsorship strategy that emerge?

**Building brand ambassadors.** The first research question sought to identify common sponsorship objectives and construct a framework that explained how these objectives functioned with one another. Four inter-related thematic sponsorship objectives emerged from data analysis procedures: 1) Joining people where their passions live, 2) fostering brand love, 3) committing to communities, and 4) empowering employees as brand ambassadors. When applied into a social

identity framework, these thematic objectives provided a relationally-driven explanation for how corporate sponsorship influenced social groups and its members.

*Creating the relationship.* The sponsorship managers who were interviewed for this study spoke to the necessity of corporations identifying their brands' target audiences, and positioning their brands in environments where those audiences were emotionally-connected—“joining people where their passions lived.” These environments reinforced desired perceptions of their brands' personalities within their target audiences' social groups (Kim & McGill, 2011). Sponsorship-property fit (Becker-Olsen & Simmons, 2002; Cornwell, Humphreys, Maguire, Weeks, & Tellegen, 2006; Johar & Pham, 1999; Olsen & Thjømmøe, 2011; Ruth & Simonin, 2003) and sponsorship portfolio fit (Chien, Cornwell, & Pappu (2011) appeared as likely facilitators of this process.

Sponsorship managers sought to leverage these sponsorships in a manner than encouraged their target audiences to positively stereotype their brands as anthropomorphic members of their social groups. This was often accomplished through the application of social media as a sponsorship activation element (Walsh, Clavio, Lovell, & Blaszkas, 2013). Social media communications were designed to promote organic interactions with target audiences that engaged them on a human level; creating brand narratives and call-to-actions that were positioned more like friendly conversations than sales pitches.

Another important sponsorship function identified through analysis of participant interviews was “fostering brand love,” where corporations sought to increase their brands' centrality in the self-identities of individuals situated within their target audiences. Where social media activations were generally used to establish anthropomorphic social relationships, corporations also created experiential activations for target audience members to emotionally

connect with their brands on a deeper level; engaging these individuals through unique and exclusive experiences relevant to them (Kim & McGill, 2011). While interpersonal love and brand love are different, extant brand literature suggests that loved brands can evoke emotions in consumers as intense and as similar as that for a close friend (Langner, Schmidt, & Fisher 2015).

As secondary objectives, sponsorship managers would leverage their sponsorships with community/charity extensions (i.e. “committing to the community”), and regularly committed sponsorship resources for employee engagement to encourage emotional commitment towards corporations and their brands (i.e. “empowering employees as ambassadors”). Further, these practices encouraged cognitive consistency in their brands’ personalities with target audiences, with intentions to present them as both authentic and credible. Recent research has found that CSR promotes brand credibility (Hur, Kim, & Woo, 2014), offering support to this strategy.

In summary, based on sponsorship manager interview data, sponsorships generally functioned as an integrated, relationship management platform, with its mechanisms intended to encourage target audiences (and employees) to develop anthropomorphic personality associations with their brands, with a long-term motive of building what this dissertation terms “brand ambassadors for life.”

“Building brand ambassadors for life” represented the logical culmination of the thematic sponsorship objectives from analysis. Brand ambassadors for life would be expected to possess strong degrees of centrality in their self-identities, which would influence their normative behaviors. Possessing brand love—fostered by establishing strong brand identification and brand credibility/trust (Albert & Merunka, 2013)—these individuals would exhibit brand loyalty and positive WOM, while resisting negative criticisms of their brands from others (Batra, Ahuvia &

Bagozzi, 2012). They would also be willing to pay a price premium for their loved brand (Albert & Merunka, 2013).

**Hometown sponsorship as a natural competitive advantage.** From a hometown context, sponsorship managers thought that corporations focused greater attention towards community and employee tie-ins to reinforce their “hometown” social identities and corresponding in-group associations (i.e. local business-city, local employer-employee, and hometown sponsor-property).

Commercial and non-commercial activations were used to reinforce these associations. Employing non-commercial philanthropic and grassroots extensions around their larger sponsorship properties, corporations attempted to ‘weave themselves into the local fabric.’ With larger employee bases in their hometown market, the scale of employee activations were larger, which encouraged a strong quadratic employer-employee-team-community association.

Commercial activation elements were more focused on corporations “winning where they lived.” Moreover, hometown corporations established visible alliances with other local corporations and properties. While findings from this analysis failed to support that hometown sport property representatives exhibited behaviors of out-group derogation towards direct competitors of their city’s prominent hometown corporations, there was evidence of normalized in-group favoritism by managers of both hometown sport properties and hometown corporations. The overarching objective of generating a positive ROI—as well as the small market of large corporations from which to secure substantial sponsorship fees—is anticipated to have strongly discouraged out-group derogation behavior. Sponsorship managers, however, suggested that members of the local community were prone to exhibit *both* in-group favoritism and out-group derogation. The possible willingness of community members to exhibit out-group derogation towards a hometown sponsors’ competitors—whereas properties’ representatives do not—is likely

due to properties' representatives' livelihoods being linked to revenues generated through their properties' sponsor portfolios.

Sponsorships have been proposed as being capable of providing corporations a sustainable competitive advantage (Amis et al., 1997). While in agreement with their position, findings from this study suggest that hometown sponsorships are inherently structured to offer corporations' a sustainable competitive advantage through proximal location (i.e. community) associations. With a the large brand-loyal employee base (i.e. heterogeneity), significant and natural tie-ins to the local community (i.e. imperfect imitability, imperfect mobility), preferences for property associations with local partners (i.e. imperfect mobility), and the presence of many synergistic social group identities (i.e. hometown, hometown team, hometown corporation), hometown sponsorships may allow for the establishment of faster associations and benefits incurred—a safer investment for corporations to sponsor when considering internal pressures that require positive returns on their investments. With these advantages, direct competitors may concede the market rather than risk investing heavily in a market where they are at a disadvantage (i.e. ex-ante limits). With property representatives in this study acknowledging that they would prefer to partner with local corporations when possible, these corporations would likely possess both a sponsorship “market” advantage and a “brand product market” advantage (Fahy et al, 2004).

## **Study 2**

The following research questions guided this study: 1) What influence does an individuals' associations between their hometown and their hometown teams' sponsors possess on sponsorship outcome effects (i.e. purchase intention, positive word-of-mouth)? And 2) What influence does sport sponsorship have on individuals' perceptions of sponsor investment in their community?

**Coke vs. Pepsi.** To address the aforementioned research questions, two highly-competitive, industry rivals—Coca-Cola (“Coke”) and PepsiCo (“Pepsi”)—were used in a survey study that explored potential differences in sponsorship outcomes between a hometown sponsor (i.e. Coke) and its direct competitor (i.e. Pepsi). These two companies are the two strongest beverage brands in the world (“The World’s Most,” 2016) and among the top three spenders on sponsorships in the U.S. annually (“Lowdown,” 2016).

For this type of research, real companies were necessary because sponsorship effects are believed to develop over time (Speed & Thompson, 2000), with both brand familiarity and brand personality serving as important determinants of brand image (Tsotsou, Alexandris, & Cornwell, 2014). Further, research has shown that brand effects are generally stronger for established, consumer product brands than for early life-cycle, service brands (Eisend & Stokburger-Sauer, 2013). Therefore, given their long-standing history of utilizing sponsorships and their powerful, established consumer product brands, Coke and Pepsi were considered ideal brands for this survey study. With the survey study’s cross-sectional data collection—and considering Coke’s existing and long-term sponsorships with the hometown sport properties used in this study—data analysis procedures were presumed to capture long-term sponsorship effects of an effectively managed hometown sponsorship (i.e. “best case” scenario). For this introductory foray into hometown sponsorship, understanding possible best-case outcomes were desirable for determining whether future studies would be warranted.

**CSR and sponsorship.** With practitioners occasionally positioning hometown sponsorship as a form of CSR—and the recent literature suggesting that the two are now becoming blurred (Plewa & Quester, 2011)—this study sought to identify where there may be possible relationships

between them. Recent research has begun to investigate connections (Flöter et al., 2014; Uhrich et al., 2016) and differences (Lii 2011; Lii & Lee, 2011) between the two.

**Identification associations.** Following a social identity approach, key social identities involved within sport sponsorships (i.e. sponsors, teams, community) were included in data analyses. Findings from analysis procedures supported a statistically significant relationship between city identification and sponsorship outcomes (i.e. purchase intention, positive WOM). Further, sponsor identification positively moderated the relationship between city identification and sponsorship outcomes. This identification association supported earlier research by Woisetschläger et al (2010) that found that shared regional associations between a sponsor and a property served as a strong determinant of sponsorship fit. Purchase intention and positive WOM outcomes were significantly more positive for Coke (i.e. hometown sponsor) than Pepsi (i.e. direct competitor) when community members possessed high city identification.

While hometown sponsorship and perceived community investment were both associated with sponsorship outcomes of purchase intention and positive WOM, cause and effect relationships were not possible from this initial study.

An interesting finding involved team identification, which did not possess a statistically significant relationship to any of the other constructs examined in the model. In previous sport sponsorship studies, team identification was found to create negative perceptions of rival teams' sponsors (Grohs, Reisinger, & Woisetschläger, 2015), influence sponsor recognition (Gwinner & Swanson, 2003), sponsor credibility (Wang, Cheng, Purwanto, & Erimurti, 2011), sponsor satisfaction, and sponsor patronage (Gwinner & Swanson, 2013)—among other outcomes. While team identification was intended to function as a control in this survey study, it is still surprising to see no relationship between it and the other social identification types. This could suggest that



a dominant, long-term, hometown sponsorship creates associations that makes team identification a less influential determinant of sponsorship effects. A possible explanation could be that—among community members who participated in the study—Coke’s association as a hometown company with the city of Atlanta is stronger than either of the team’s associations. Future research is necessary and warranted to understand these relationships within this and other sponsorship contexts.

## General Discussion

When considered collectively, the findings from this dissertation’s two studies complemented one another (see Figure 10).

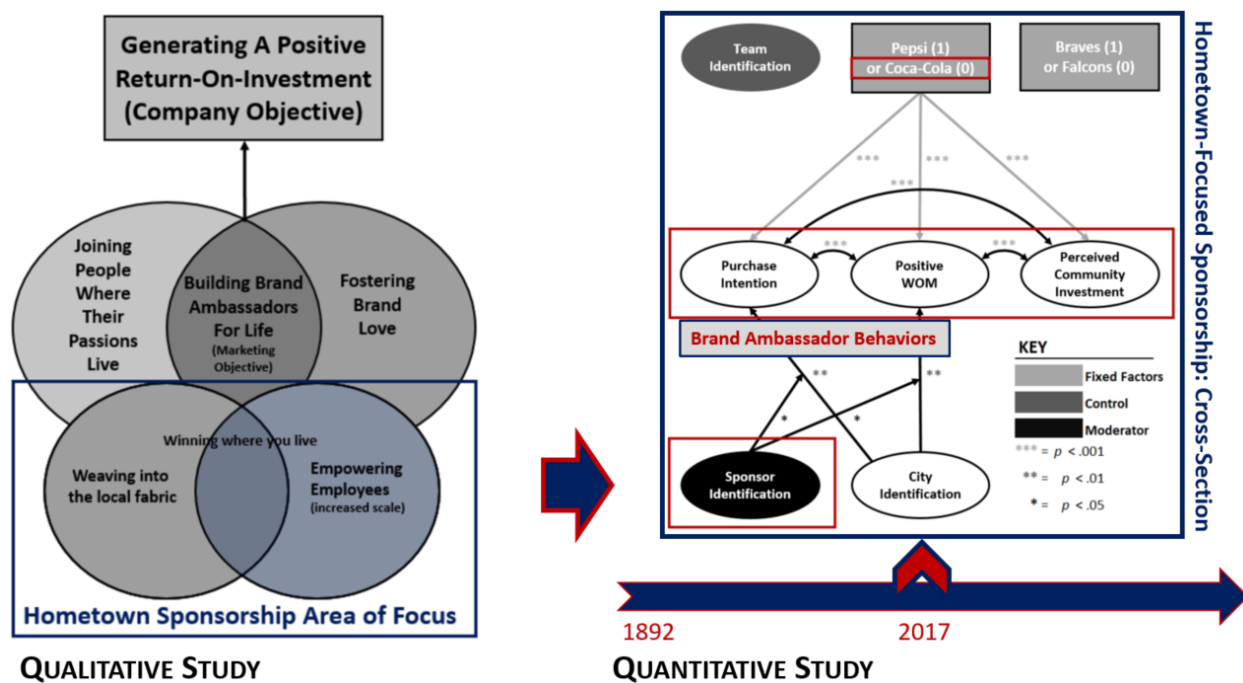


Figure 10: Model Comparison

The first study identified thematic objectives—created from analyzing sponsorship managers’ perspectives—that helped explain how sponsorship functions in developing

relationships with specific audiences targeted by corporations. From its highly-integrated nature, sponsorships aided brands in becoming “friends” with consumers—brands then being integrated into their lives as such. When the context of hometown sponsorship was explored, natural associative advantages were revealed; allowing for more comprehensive and authentic brand involvement with employees and the community.

The second study supported hometown sponsorship conclusions derived from the first study. The proximal location association (i.e. hometown) between the sponsor (i.e. Coke) and the city (i.e. Atlanta) supports the likelihood that hometown sponsorships benefit hometown sponsors more than their direct competitors (i.e. Pepsi). The thematic objective of “joining people where their passions live” from the first study provides explanation for this market advantage. As hometown sponsors can more easily create an emotional connection with local residents as a fellow “community member” than a non-local competitor. Using hometown sponsorship to develop anthropomorphic in-group associations with local communities and their employees, corporations’ brands are expected to benefit from in-group favoritism in the market. Conversely, the competitors of hometown sponsors are expected to experience consumer behaviors of out-group derogation within the market.

Further, perceived community investment possessed an indirect relationship with hometown sponsorship effects; suggesting that greater community involvement— “weaving into the local fabric”—could enhance sponsorship outcomes. As stated in the first study by sponsorship managers, hometown corporations are perceived to invest more into their local communities. Again, with a large employee base, and with an expectation that their local community knowledge would surpass the functional expertise of outsiders, this additional community investment element

only reinforced the likelihood of a competitive advantage in the market for hometown corporations (e.g. Coke).

Lastly, the types of relationships sought through sponsorship were long-term and committed; exhibiting similar normative behaviors towards loved brands (i.e. brand loyalty, positive WOM, willingness to pay a price premium, resistance to brand criticism) as would be expected with close friends (Albert & Merunka, 2013; Batra, Ahuvia, & Bagozzi, 2012). As a long-time sponsor of its hometown sport properties, results from the second study's quasi-experiment most likely reflect the best-case scenarios hometown sponsors (e.g. Coke) could hope to experience from their sponsorships; aligning with the overall marketing objective of "Building Brand Ambassadors for Life" that was identified in the first study.

The findings from these studies suggest that sponsorships can be used to make brands more central in consumers' self-identities; particularly hometown sponsorships (see Figure 11). This could be attributable to sponsorship's ability to create brand salience through multiple social identities at varying levels of abstraction.

As Mark, a property representative that participated in the first study, shared:

*"I think, by nature, and probably for many things, the closer you are to something, the more intimate you are with it. And it means more. You want to be more involved. You want to know more. You want to be a part of it more. So, that's why a hometown sponsorship has more value. And, in addition to that, you can look at it reversely, and you don't want to lose that to a competitor. So, yes, they're very intimate with it"* (Mark, Property).

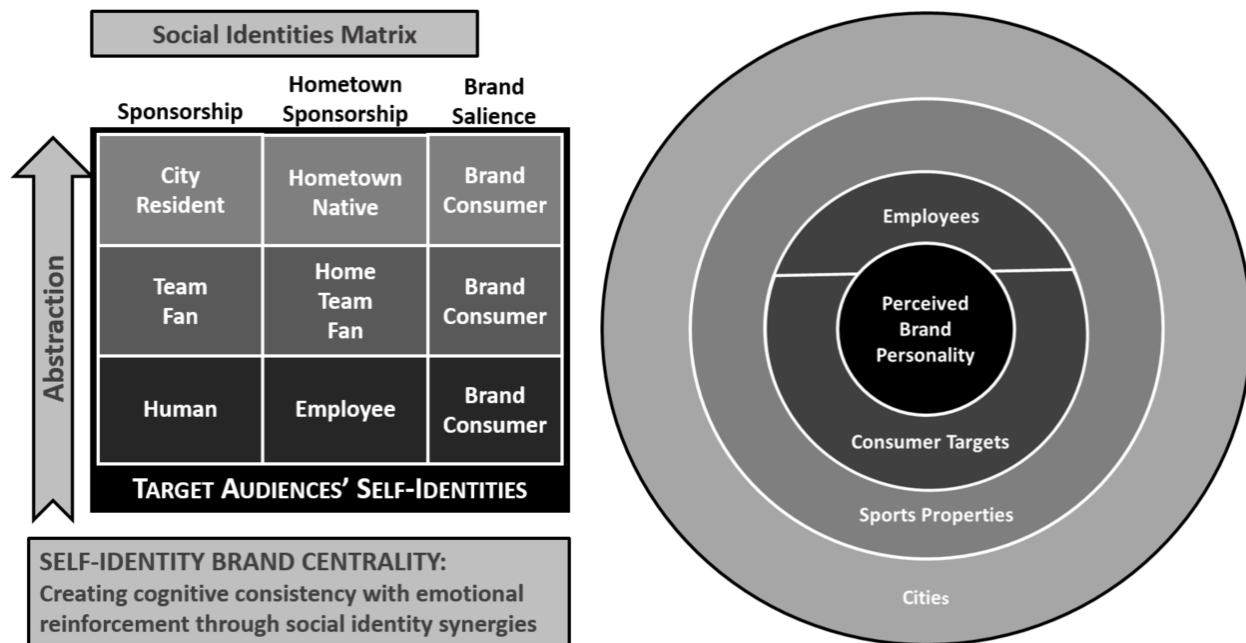


Figure 11: Brand Centrality Through Brand Social Identity Salience Effects

In summary, hometown sponsorships mean more to hometown corporations than their direct competitor, because they are inherently closer to it. And conversely, hometown corporations likely mean more to local community members than their direct competitors. Following this logic, and considering the similarities between brand love and interpersonal relationships, maybe hometown corporations should heed the following advice from *Hitch* (Zee & Tennant, 2005):

“When you're wondering what to say or how you look, just remember, she's already out with you. That means she said yes when she could have said no. That means she made a plan when she could have just blown you off. So that means it's no longer your job to make her like you. It's your job not to mess it up.”

### Conclusions and Future Implications

Collectively, these studies served to address the paucity of hometown sponsorship research within the literature. Both studies used similar theoretical frameworks, but paradigmatically

different methodologies (i.e. qualitative vs. quantitative). Both demonstrated the importance of social identities within sponsorship frameworks; emphasizing relationships over transactions. And both studies offered findings that suggest the potential for hometown sponsorship to be used by companies to establish a dominant and sustainable competitive advantage within their local communities. These studies also highlighted gaps in the literature—or stated differently, opportunities for future research.

**Leveraging and activation.** Research discusses leveraging and activation with broad brushes, rarely examining specific types of leveraging and activation practice—with some exceptions (DeGaris, West, & Dodds, 2009; Kelly, Cornwell, Coote, & McAlister, 2012; Weeks, Cornwell, & Drennan, 2008). Regardless, sponsorship leveraging and activation practices are constantly changing as new technologies are introduced and consumer behaviors change (Meenaghan et al., 2013); requiring constant investigation of these practices within multiple contexts.

One aspect of leveraging and activation that should also be addressed in these future studies is developing consistent terminology and construct definitions to capture leveraging and activation effects. This is a visible challenge in extant sport management literature (cf. Kim & Kim, 2009; Wakefield & Bennett, 2010); creating difficulties in conducting meta-analyses.

**Interdisciplinary collaborations.** Further, when considering the integrated nature of the phenomenon, researchers who specialize in fields of advertising, marketing, brand research, consumer behavior, sport sociology, and sport sponsorship should collaborate more on sponsorship studies. With each of these fields offering valuable insights relevant to sponsorship; collaborative efforts would help strengthen future research and potentially develop a more consistent lexicon within the area of study.

**Relationships between CSR and sponsorship.** While recent literature exists that examines the communication of CSR initiatives communicated through sponsorship channels (Flöter et al., 2014; Uhrich et al., 2016) and differences in effects between the two (Lii, 2011; Lii & Lee, 2011), future research is needed that specifically examines how companies can strategically implement these initiatives together or as complements.

**Sponsorship management dynamics.** Lastly, sponsorship literature has thus far ignored the involvement of agencies in the corporate sponsorship management process. A better understanding of how the triadic (i.e. corporations—agencies—properties) relationships work may offer deeper insights into existing sponsorship strategies and practices.

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**APPENDIX A****RECRUITMENT CORRESPONDENCE (STUDY 1)**

(Phone/Email/Person)

Hello [Person's Name]:

My name is Gregg Rich. I am a doctoral student in the University of Georgia's Department of Kinesiology under the advisement of Dr. Billy Hawkins. [Referrer's Name] provided me with your information, believing that you might be interested in participating in our study entitled "Exploring Managerial Reasons for Hometown Sport Sponsorship." The purpose of this study is to develop a holistic understanding for why corporations conduct hometown sport sponsorship, and how these sponsorships are perceived to function within its overall sponsorship strategies—examining hometown sport sponsorship from a managerial perspective. You're eligible to be in this study because you are someone who has been involved in the management, negotiation, and/or execution of hometown sponsorships either now or within the past year; working for a sport property, marketing/sponsorship agency, or corporation.

Your participation will involve an interview that should take about an hour. During the interview, you will be asked to share your perspectives on multiple aspects of hometown sponsorship (and sponsorship in general). There are not any foreseeable risks anticipated from participating in this study, and a more comprehensive understanding for how managers are utilizing hometown sponsorships in practice may be obtained.

If you would like additional information about this study, please feel free to call me at (770) 789-7819 or e-mail me at richga@uga.edu.

Thank you for your consideration!

Sincerely,

Gregg Rich

(For Emails) P.S. If you would not like to participate in our study, and to prevent follow-up communication, please reply to this email, declining our invitation.

## APPENDIX B

### CONSENT LETTER (STUDY 1)

#### EXPLORING MANAGERIAL REASONS FOR HOMETOWN SPORT SPONSORSHIP

We are asking you to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. This form is designed to give you the information about the study so you can decide whether to participate. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information. When all your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called “informed consent.” A copy of this form will be given to you.

**Primary Research Contact:** Gregg Rich, Ph.D. Candidate  
Department of Kinesiology  
326 Ramsey Center, 330 River Road, Athens, GA 30602  
E: [richga@uga.edu](mailto:richga@uga.edu) C: (770) 789-7819

**Principal Investigator:** Dr. Billy J. Hawkins  
Department of Kinesiology  
367 Ramsey Center, 330 River Road, Athens, GA 30602  
E: [bhawk@uga.edu](mailto:bhawk@uga.edu) O: (706) 542-4427

#### Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to develop a holistic understanding for why corporations conduct hometown sport sponsorship, and how these sponsorships are perceived to function within its overall sponsorship strategies—examining hometown sport sponsorship from a managerial perspective.

You are being invited to participate in this study because you have been identified as someone who is involved in the management, negotiation, and/or execution of hometown sponsorships now or within the past year; working for a sport property, marketing/sponsorship agency, or corporation (corporate sponsor).

#### Study Procedures

If you agree to participate, you will be interviewed for 45 minutes to an hour on the topic of hometown sponsorship. The interview will focus on a multiple aspects of hometown sponsorship (and sponsorship in general), trying to answer (but not limited to) the following questions:

- Why do corporations engage in hometown sport sponsorships? In what ways do hometown sport sponsorships get used in corporate business strategies?
- What corporate objectives are hometown sport sponsorships intended to meet?
- How do corporations determine which hometown sport properties to sponsor?
- How do corporations leverage hometown sponsorships? How does leveraging of hometown sport sponsorships differ, if at all, from other types of corporate sponsorship?

**Risks or Discomforts**

We do not anticipate any physical, emotional, or financial risks from participating in this research. If there is any question that makes you uncomfortable, you have the right not to answer. The researcher will provide you with the opportunity to check that the information obtained from the interview is accurate before submitting research from this study for publication.

**Benefits**

A possible benefit in participating in this study is that you may be able to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of hometown sport sponsorship from the research conducted.

To the researchers' knowledge, there is no research within the academic literature that attempts to examine hometown sponsorship. This exploratory study intends to serve as a foundation for designing future hometown sponsorship studies.

**Incentives for Participation**

No monetary incentives will be provided for participation. However, as a participant, the researchers will share any key findings obtained upon completing the study.

**Audio/Video Recording**

Audio recording will be used to allow for interview transcription. After the interview is transcribed, the interview will be kept indefinitely for use in future studies (if applicable). If you inform the researchers that you are uncomfortable with your interview recording being kept for future studies, they will destroy the recording a year following the publication of this initial research.

**Privacy/Confidentiality**

Pseudonyms (that you and the researcher agree upon) will be used to protect your identity within the research study. The researchers will keep your name, employer, position title, and e-mail address on file, which will only be accessible to the researchers. Following the study, this data will be kept in an encrypted folder (or destroyed). Please note that the project's research records may be reviewed by departments at the University of Georgia responsible for regulatory and research oversight.

Researchers will not release identifiable results of the study to anyone other than individuals working on the project without your written consent unless required by law.

**Taking Part is Voluntary**

Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to withdraw from the study, the information that can be identified as yours will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed, unless you make a written request to remove, return, or destroy the information.



**If You Have Questions**

The main researcher conducting this interview is Gregg Rich, a Ph.D. Candidate at the University of Georgia under the advisement of Dr. Billy J. Hawkins. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Gregg Rich at richga@uga.edu or at (770) 789-7819. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chairperson at 706.542.3199 or irb@uga.edu.

**Research Subject's Consent to Participate in Research:**

To voluntarily agree to take part in this study, you must sign on the line below. Your signature below indicates that you have read or had read to you this entire consent form, and have had all of your questions answered.

---

Name of Researcher

---

Signature

---

Date

---

Name of Participant

---

Signature

---

Date

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.

## APPENDIX C

### CODING EXAMPLES

Three types of coding conventions were used in this dissertation's first study:

#### Initial Codes

Following the recommendation of Charmaz (2014), initial codes were short, and designed to capture meanings and actions. Per her recommendations, these codes were generally designed to start with gerunds. Following the intentions of Study 1, most codes captured specific structural-functional actions. NVIVO was used to associate codes to specific transcription content, and organize codes into two classifications (i.e. General Sponsorship Objectives and Hometown Sponsorship Objectives). Examples of initial codes documented within NVIVO are presented below:

Sponsorship Objectives (General)
Name
Changing the Brand Narrative (S)
Communicating a Brand Message (S)
Create Sponsor Marketplaces at Events (S)
Creating a Brand Narrative (S)
Creating a Competitive Advantage Through Exclusive Experience (S)
Creating Brand Awareness (S)
Creating Brand Loyalty (S)
Creating Brand Recognition (S)
Creating Compelling Content through IP Rights (S)
Creating Organic (i.e. Natural), Experiential Brand Interactions with Target Audiences (S)
Creating Organic, Social Brand Interactions in the Digital Space (S)
Creating Own Apps as Communication Mediums - Property (S)
Creating Sponsorship Portfolio Coverage Across Markets (S)
Developing B2B Relationships (S)
Developing Integrated Marketing Initiatives (S)
Developing Seasonal Marketing Platforms (S)
Drive Store Traffic (S)
Driving Consumer Awareness and Sentiment - Brand Love (S)
Emotionally Engaging Your Target Audience - Tying into Passions (S)
Encouraging Employee Commitment - Positive Brand Attitude (S)
Engaging Consumers (S)
Enhancing Specific Attributes of Brand to Specific Audiences (S)
Entertaining Clients (S)
Establishing a Marketing Niche through Portfolio Strategy - Property Synergies (S)

Hometown Sponsorship Objectives
Name
Amplifying Community Investments (H)
Being Perceived Positively in Hometown (H)
Benefitting From Brand Spillover (Associations with Prominent Hometown Corporations) (H)
Creating a Competitive Advantage through Category Exclusivity (S)
Engaging Employees (H)
Entertaining Employees (H)
Entertaining Potential B2B Customers with Executive Audience Present (H)
Establish Perception as Authentic Community Partner (H)
Fulfilling a Social Obligation (H)
Giving Back to the Community (H)
Increasing Hometown Brand Visibility (H)
Instilling Employee Pride (H)
Investing in the Local Community (H)
Merging CSR with Sponsorship (H)
Partnering with a Local Charity (H)
Perceiving Hometown Sponsorship as Necessity (H)
Preventing Competitor Presence (H)
Recruiting Employees (H)
Responding to Political Influences (H)
Serving as Trial Grounds (Establishing Best Practices - Testing Grounds) (H)
Showcasing Brand in Safe Environment (H)
Supporting Local Teams (H)
Trialing Innovative Leveraging or Activations (i.e. Best Practices Training Ground) (H)

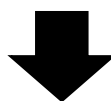
Some initial codes were raised to focused codes given their frequency and perceived strategic importance to sponsorship objectives noted by interview participants (e.g. driving store traffic).

### Focused Codes

Initial codes were transferred into a Microsoft Excel worksheet, where they were organized by their structural-functions. Focused codes meaningfully condensed initial codes by structural-function.

Perceived Sponsorship Objectives (General)			
Focused Codes	Sources references		Secondary Associations
<b># Generating a Positive ROI</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	
1 34 Getting Business Back	4	4	
1 40 Increasing Subscriptions	1	1	
1 41 Increasing Market Share	2	3	
1 52 Securing New Business	1	1	
1 42 Increasing Revenue	2	2	
1 43 Drive Sales	4	5	
2 23 Driving Store Traffic	2	2	
2 32 Generate Leads	1	1	
2 53 Selecting Between Properties Based on Budgets	5	7	

<b># Meeting People Where They Are</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	
1 1 Advertising Associated with Property	1	1	
1 2 Benefiting from Brand Spillover (Associations with Prominent Hometown Corpor.	4	4	
1 31 Aligning with Sponsorship Portfolio Brand Strategy - Property Synergies	3	5	
1 5 Association with Prominent Properties	3	3	
1 20 Creating Sponsorship Portfolio Coverage Across Markets	2	5	
1 48 Partnering Based on Brand Goals and Objectives (Marketing Positioning)	5	12	
1 30 Establishing a Market Niche through Portfolio Development Strategy - Differentia	2	3	
1 2 Amplifying Brand Messaging through Partner Association - Both Parties	3	7	
1 4 Association with Fan Base	1	1	
3 <b># Influencing Specific Customer Segments</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	
3 <b>7 Changing the Brand Narrative</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	
3 <b>8 Establish Perception as Authentic Community Partner</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	
3 <b>3 Being Perceived Positively in Hometown</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	
3 <b>1 Amplifying Community Investments</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	
3 <b>12 Increasing Hometown Brand Visibility</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>14</b>	
3 <b>21 Showcasing Brand in Safe Environment</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	
2 51 Reaching Your Target Audience(s)	7	18	
2 16 Creating Compelling Content through Intellectual Property (IP) Rights	2	3	
2 17 Creating Organic, Experiential Interactions with Target Audience(s)	9	29	
2 50 Providing Hospitality	2	2	
2 21 Developing B2B Relationships	6	10	
2 7 Entertaining Potential B2B Customers with Executive Audience Present	1	1	
2 29 Entertaining Clients	6	7	
2 18 Creating Organic, Social Interactions with Target Audience(s) in Digital Space	6	13	
2 19 Creating Apps for Controlled Marketing Communications	1	1	
2 25 Emotionally Engaging Your Target Audience - Tying Into Passions	2	4	
2 45 Developing Integrated Marketing Initiatives	6	9	
2 46 Lifestyle Engagement	3	3	



Sponsorship Themes (Brand-Side)			
Focused Codes	Sources references		Secondary Associations
<b># Generating a Positive Return On Investment</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	
FC 1 Generating Business	4	4	
FC 2 Creating Business Opportunities	8	10	
<b># Meeting People Where Their Passions Live (Self-Categorization)</b>			
FC 1 Creating Associations to Group Identities of Specific Audiences (Joining the Group)	22	38	
FC 1 <b>Consistent Brand Personality / Message</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>33</b>	
FC 2 Pursuing Organic Relationship	51	100	

## Theoretical Codes

Focused codes were weaved into theoretical conceptualizations. These theoretical codes were compared within a conceptual framework using a social identity approach to find emergent trends and to examine consistencies and inconsistencies identified during coding and framework development.

### Lower Order Themes (Sponsorship)

<b>27 Meeting People Where They Are (Self-Categorization and Group Reinforcement)</b>				
1	Creating Associations to Group Identities of Specific Audiences (Joining the Group)	22	38	
1	Creating A Consistent Brand Personality	24	33	
2	Pursuing Organic Relationship	51	100	
<b>24 Fostering Brand Love (Reinforcing Group Identities)</b>				
1	Experiential Pursuit	25	40	
1	Not For Everyone (Out-Group Bias) - Challenging Competitors' Integrity	9	17	
<b>NA Committing to Communities</b>				
1	Giving Back	24	46	
2	Fulfilling Societal Obligations	15	20	
<b>5 Engaging Employees as Brand Ambassadors</b>			3	4
19	Recruiting Employees	2	3	
6	Entertaining Employees	4	5	
13	Instilling Employee Pride	5	9	
26	Encouraging Employee Commitment - A Positive Brand Attitude	1	1	

### Overarching Marketing Theme

<b>47 Building Brand Ambassadors</b>			3	3
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### Overarching Company Theme

<b>33 Generating a Positive Return On Investment</b>			1	1
1	Generating Business	4	4	
2	Creating Business Opportunities	8	10	

## **APPENDIX D**

### **INTERVIEW INTRODUCTION (STUDY 1)**

Thank you \_\_\_\_\_ for allowing me to talk with you. As you recall, the purpose of this research is to understand hometown sponsorship—its relative importance and its applications—in context with other corporate sponsorships, there will be questions focused on understanding hometown sponsorships throughout the interview.

This interview is intended to capture the various perspectives sponsorship managers hold related to their discipline. The first few questions will ask about your professional background. Then, there will be several questions pertaining to the relationship dynamics between the parties involved in sponsorship's management. After discussing sponsorship management dynamics, I will then ask several questions focused on sponsorship purpose and strategy.

I encourage you to share from your experience; including any personally-held opinions that you have formed during your time working with sponsorships. Pseudonyms will be used for your name and for any information that can directly be tied back to you. Any information that I intend to include in my formal study will be shared with you prior. This is done to ensure that I am protecting your identity, and that the study is using accurate information.

Do you have any questions before we start?

Are you ready to proceed with the interview?

## APPENDIX E

### INTERVIEW GUIDES (STUDY 1)

Agency	Interview Questions	What I Want to Know
Initial Open-Ended	<b>Background</b>	
	<p>Tell me about your professional work background.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What degrees do you possess?</li> <li>• What's your employment history—both related, and unrelated—to sport and sponsorship?</li> </ul> <p>Could you share with me how you began working with sponsorships?</p> <p>How would you describe your expertise pertaining to sponsorships?</p> <p>Are they any property types with whom you prefer to work? For example, some property types could be the NFL, NBA, MLB, NHL, MLS, Colleges Athletic Program, Conferences, Leagues, Music Festivals, Music Venues, etc.?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could you elaborate on why you prefer working on these types of sponsorships?</li> <li>• Are there any sport property types that you believe lend themselves to meeting a broader scope of possible corporate objectives than others?</li> </ul>	<p><i>I want to know the interviewee's background to better understand their experiential work context.</i></p> <p><i>I want to understand the interviewee's personal sponsorship preferences relative to their experiences</i></p>
Intermediate Questions	<b>Relationship Dynamics</b>	
	<p>I would now like to ask some questions that will help me better understand how sponsorship professionals from corporations, agencies, and properties function in the sponsorship management process. Therefore, the questions will be function driven. It is my hope that these questions will help in delineating—from your perspective—the typical role responsibilities, involvement levels, and communication practices of each party. Are you ready?</p> <p>From your experience, can you describe for me how the different roles—those of corporate manager, agency consultant, and property representative—typically function in the evaluation process for entering and/or renewing sponsorships?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How much time is normally devoted to the evaluation of large sport properties as a potential sponsorship partner? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ When do evaluations take more time?</li> <li>○ When do evaluations take less time?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• What types of formal documents are typically developed by each party during this process (POVs, proposals, etc.)?</li> <li>• How often would you say that all three parties are on a call, or meeting together? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How often would you say that only two of the three parties are communicating? Which ones?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><i>I want to understand the relationship/power dynamics that function within the management of sponsorships.</i></p> <p><i>I want to understand how agency consultants perceive their roles, and those of corporate managers and property representatives, to function within and throughout the sponsorship management process</i></p>

- Outside of the three parties mentioned above, is any other party involved in the evaluation process? If so, who?
  - What is their role?

**Would you be willing to share your experience of how the different parties function within the negotiation process?**

- What do you consider key elements of effectively conducted negotiation?
- When negotiations go poorly, what—from your experience—were causes?

**Once formalized, how are the three roles typically involved in the leveraging, or activation, of the sponsorship?**

- From your experience, which party is most often responsible for sponsorship fulfillment or execution?
  - What factors lead to this being the case?
- Which party is most often responsible for capturing the data used for measuring sponsorship performance?
  - Why do you think this is?
- How often are the property representatives included in post-event recaps and evaluations?
  - (If the answer above is not ALWAYS) When are they excluded from these evaluations?

**When multiple agencies are involved in a sponsorship, how would you generally characterize the relationships existing among these agencies?**

- How is it determined which agency runs point, and takes lead on specific sponsorship tasks?
  - Are these relationships formalized, or is what you're describing an informal arrangement?
  - (if informal) What are your thoughts on how these dynamics developed?
- Would you say that the dynamics you just described are ideal, or would you say that there is likely a better approach? Why?
  - (if NO) What would you suggest to be a better approach? Why?

*I want to know where conflicts of interest exist among the various stakeholders? In what situations do power dynamics break down?*

**Have there been situations where you or one of your colleagues have experienced conflicts with other agencies in the management of a sponsorship?**

- Could you share an instance where this occurred?
- What was the issue?
- Do you have thoughts on some possible underlying issues that could have instigated the conflict?

From your experience, how would you describe your relationships with most property representatives (i.e. “your point-of-contact”)?

- Can you share a story of an unusually strong relationship between you and the property representative?
  - Why do you think this relationship was so strong?
- Could you share a story where the relationship was a struggle, and your thoughts on why that was?

Have there been instances—where you were either directly involved, or you were aware of the situation—when the relationship with the sponsored property, or one of its representative agencies, led to a corporation exiting its sponsorship with a property?

- Could you share one of these instances (remember, pseudonyms will be used to protect the identities of those involved)?
- What do you believe were the driving factors for the relationship breakdown?

For this study, given its heavy focus on sport sponsorships, the definition of hometown sponsorship considers the closest metropolitan area to possess a professional sport franchise or franchises from the Big 4 sport leagues (NBA, NFL, NHL, MLB)—in relation to an individual’s residence—as representing their “hometown.” Further, athletic programs from public state universities, whether within the boundaries of that metropolitan area, would also be considered “hometown.”

*Provides the study’s definition for sponsorship.*

As an example, if I lived in New Hampshire, my “hometown” for purposes of this study would generally be the “Boston metro area” in Massachusetts. Yet, I could also consider the University of New Hampshire to be a “hometown” sponsorship, because I live in the state of New Hampshire.

From a corporate perspective, the same rules apply, as this study assumes that a corporation’s international, national, or regional headquarters function like an individual’s residence.

Now, please take a moment and reflect on the hometown sponsorships that you’ve helped manage. Have there ever been noticeable differences in the level of involvement by the you, the corporate manager, or the property

*I want to identify possible differences in how the various entities manage hometown sponsorships, and how these differences may influence the perceived effectiveness of these sponsorships*



## General Strategy

representative in its management—in particular, the corporate manager?

- (if NO) So, just to both clarify and to verify, there is no difference in how much time the corporate manager spends in on-site meetings, or in their physical presence at meetings in general?
  - (if YES) could you provide some approximation for how much more presence you would expect from a corporate manager when managing a hometown sponsorship versus a non-local sponsorship?
  - (if YES) with greater presence, are the relationships between the corporate managers generally better or worse?
    - Can you elaborate, maybe share an example?
- (if YES) Could you elaborate? Why do you think this is? Do you think it could it be anything else?

These next set of questions will focus on general, strategic elements and practices of corporate sponsorship. As the foundation for our discussion, could you please share with me your definition for sponsorship?

*I want to understand agency perceptions regarding the working definition and direction of sponsorship.*

[Hand interviewee a sheet of paper] Now, reflecting on the many sponsorship strategy conversations that you've had with clients over the years, would you be willing to take a minute and list for me as many sponsorship objectives as come to mind?

- From the sponsorship objectives that you've listed, could you tell me which ones are the most common?
  - Do you usually have clients regularly pair certain objectives together?
- Are there different, or possibly additional, stated business objectives being sought by your clients through their hometown sponsorships?

*I want to understand how strategic objectives for hometown sport sponsorship may differ from other types of sponsorship.*

Could you share with me some popular sponsorship leveraging strategies—in other words, what do you see as currently representing sponsorship best practices?

- Have these strategies replaced other practices or are they in addition to them?
  - [if YES] Would you be willing to share what practices have been replaced by these new leveraging practices?
- What do you believe has led to the popularity of these practices (e.g. big data, anecdotal feedback, copy-cat strategies, etc.)?

*I want to see if there are isomorphic effects occurring within the industry.*

**When developing and/or implementing leveraging strategies with your clients, in what ways do they attempt to integrate their sponsorship leveraging (or activation) into their other marketing initiatives? Or do they?**

- Could you share some client examples of marketing executions that you believe effectively integrated their sponsorships?
- Are there any current, integrated leveraging or activation trends that you have noticed?
- When incorporating sponsorships into an integrated marketing plan is a priority, what are common ways for corporations to do it?
- (if NO) How do they implement their sponsorships in isolation from their other marketing initiatives?

*I want to understand how sponsorship leveraging and/or activation is (or may) be integrated into a corporation's overall marketing strategy*

**While discussing integration, do any of your clients try to integrate Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) or Charitable/philanthropic elements into their sponsorships?**

- (if YES) Do they do this with all their sponsorships?
- (if YES) How do they do this?
  - Could you share an example?
- Do you find this strategy effective? (Why or why not?)
- Do you consider hometown sport sponsorships a form of CSR? (Why or why not?)

*I want to know how sponsorship may function as a form of CSR—or, as a platform for CSR*

**How have you seen social media implemented in the leveraging and/or activation of sponsorships?**

- Which social media platforms do you believe are utilized most effectively in sponsorship leveraging/activation?
  - Could you share some examples?

*I want to understand the different ways that social media is used in the leveraging and activation of sponsorships*

**Are relationship marketing practices incorporated into any of your clients' sponsorships?**

- (if YES) How? Could you elaborate?
- (if NO) Why not? Could you elaborate?

**Do you or your agency have an opinion or general rule for what represents an appropriate sponsorship activation ratio? (if needed: a sponsorship activation ratio is "sponsorship leveraging investment relative to the sponsorship fee")**

- How was this activation ratio determined?
- (if NO) Could you share, from your experience, some key factors that you believe influence what an appropriate activation ratio should be for a sponsorship?

*I seek to understand how agencies determine appropriate leveraging investments for a given sponsorship*

And while we're speaking about ratios, can you share with me current and common trends for measuring sponsorship performance (e.g. ROO/ROI)?

- How important is it to your clients that the performance of their sponsorships are quantifiable?
  - Could you share with me different ways your clients try to capture ROI?
  - What are common ways of capturing this data?
- Are there any industry or category specific trends?

*I want to understand the various ways that corporations and their agencies are measuring and evaluating sponsorship performance*

Lastly, before we get to our next set of questions: How do you see, if at all, sponsorship strategy evolving in the future [e.g. next five years]?

- Tell me, how do you see, if at all, sponsorship objectives changing in the future [e.g. next five years]?
- Tell me, how do you see, if at all, sponsorship management evolving in the future [e.g. next five years]?

*I want to know what managers see as future changes in sponsorship management*

Now we're going to revisit the topic of sponsorship evaluation and selection. These questions, however, focus on property evaluation and selection in the context of sponsorship portfolio development. May we proceed?

*I want to understand how agencies evaluate sponsorships with considerations to a corporation's sponsorship portfolio*

Do any of your clients utilize your agency to evaluate properties as potential sponsorships?

- Based on your experience, how common is it for clients to evaluate sponsorships without any agency's involvement?

What are common criteria used in clients' property evaluations?

- Do you or your client typically develop the evaluation criteria?
- How much of your evaluation is driven by your clients' existing sponsorship portfolios? Why?
  - Does a property's existing sponsor portfolio ever affect evaluations? (if YES) How?
  - How concerned are you with sponsor clutter?
    - Can you elaborate on why (or why not)?
- What do you think are major considerations when helping a client develop its sponsorship portfolio?
  - How important is a property's geographic location? (e.g. fit market footprint, just local?)
- What role do you see hometown sponsorships playing in a client's sponsorship portfolio, if any?
- Conversely, what role do you see non-local sponsorships playing in a client's sponsorship portfolio?

*I want to know whether agencies try to diversify its sponsorship portfolio to align with its geographic footprint, or does it enact a different strategy?*

Do any of our clients possess a formal, hometown sponsorship strategy?

- (if YES) What is their rationale?
- How do they determine which hometown properties to sponsor? What are key factors?

Do you think there are situations where it is strategically wise for your clients to significantly invest in sponsorships with properties located in a primary competitor's hometown?

- (if YES or NO) Could you elaborate?
- (if NO) Then, I was curious on why it seems that so many corporations invest heavily in hometown sponsorships, given that there may not be a threat of competitors securing those sponsorships. Could you share your thoughts?

*I want to understand the visible emphasis corporations place on securing hometown sponsorships, especially if competitors are unlikely to sponsor in their hometown—and, if competitors are perceived willing to sponsor heavily in a competitor's hometown, that provides input too.*

When evaluating a new client's sponsorship portfolio, what are you looking for? How do you determine a strong sponsorship portfolio from a weak one?

- Could you share with me which companies—including some that are not your clients—do sponsorship well, and have developed strong sponsorship portfolios?
  - What, in your opinion, makes [COMPANY'S] sponsorship portfolio strong?
- When you see weak sponsorship portfolios, are there any problematic commonalities that you've identified?
  - What do you think led to the development of these weak portfolios?

*I want to know what are considered sponsorship portfolio best practices*

(Only if not stated yet by interviewee) How important do you consider Category Exclusivity when evaluating properties?

- (if YES) Could you please elaborate on why you believe that category exclusivity is important?
  - Are there situations where category exclusivity becomes less important?
- (if NO) Could you please elaborate on why you believe that category exclusivity is not important?

*I want to understand possible issues faced when trying to develop corporate sponsorship portfolios*

*I want to understand how category exclusivity affects the property evaluations, and whether there are factors that increase or decrease its importance in evaluations*

## Competition

Now, in this part of the interview, we will be discussing sponsorship competition. These questions focus on competitor-driven strategies and tactics within sponsorship, such as category exclusivity and ambush (or guerilla) marketing. I strongly encourage you to use specific examples whenever possible. May I begin?

**From your experience, would you say that there is a “copy-cat” aspect to how businesses do sponsorship; particularly companies in the same industries?**

- (if YES) I understand that it may take you a moment to reflect on this question, but what do you think encourages companies to imitate one another?
- (if NO) I understand that it may take you a moment to reflect on this question, but what do you think encourages companies to imitate one another?
- (if IT DEPENDS) Could you elaborate? (Could you provide examples for each?)

*I want to see if there are isomorphic effects occurring within the industry.*

**We spoke earlier about category exclusivity. Some research studies suggest that category exclusivity, under certain conditions can be implemented as a type of sustainable competitive advantage. Would you agree or disagree with their suggestion?**

- Why (or why not)? Could you elaborate?

**Do you ever (or, are there conditions) where you recommend non-exclusive sponsorship opportunities to clients?**

- (If YES) Could you elaborate? (Or, could you share an example?)

*I want to understand how agencies view the function of category exclusivity*

**How would you define ambush or guerilla marketing?**

- Are you for it, or against it? Why?

*I want to know the interviewee’s opinion on ambush marketing*

**Can you recollect a highly-effective ambush marketing initiative done by a client or one of its competitors?**

- What was it specifically, in your opinion, that made it so effective?
- When would you most likely expect to see ambush marketing employed by a client’s competitor?

*I want to know when the interviewee believes that ambush marketing is effective*

**When have you even seen ambush marketing tactics backfire on a company?**

- (if YES) Could you provide an example?

What are strategies employed by your clients, if any, to discourage or prevent competitors from ambush marketing their sponsorships?

- Do you find these strategies effective (why or why not)?

*I want to learn whether the interviewee considers hometown sponsorships resilient to ambush marketing*

Would you ever consider trying to ambush market a competitor's hometown sponsorship? (Why or why not?)

- Have you seen companies do this? How did it work out?

As we near the end of this interview, I want to ask you a series of questions that will both help summarize and clarify earlier questions pertaining to hometown sponsorship.

To understand the prevalence of hometown sponsorship, from your experience, could you provide me with a best guess percentage of existing corporate sport sponsorships that, based on my earlier definition, would classify as hometown sponsorships?

- Could you elaborate on how you arrived at that percentage? Why such a high/low percentage?
- (if HIGH %) Why do you think that corporations regularly engage in hometown sport sponsorships?

*To obtain an agency understanding of hometown sponsorship's potential prevalence*

What types of corporate objectives do you think hometown sport sponsorships are most commonly intended to achieve? (e.g. brand image, brand identity, brand loyalty, CSR, purchase intention, marketshare retention, employee morale, employee recruitment, etc.)

*I want to know whether hometown sport sponsorships are secured with specific and different strategic objectives explicitly stated*

How do you generally view hometown sport sponsorships functioning within a corporations' overall sponsorship strategy plan?

- How much focus do your clients place on securing hometown sport sponsorships?
  - Why do you think that is?

How do corporations determine which hometown sport properties to sponsor? Especially when budgets require selectivity?

*I want to know what, other than its hometown association, makes hometown sponsorships more valuable in the minds of their sponsors.*

**How are hometown sport sponsorships leveraged?**

- Do your clients articulate the hometown association in their messaging?
- Do they incorporate leveraging that aligns with their CSR initiatives?
- Do they use sponsorship resources for employee appreciation or B2B hosting?

*I want to know if any implicit objectives for hometown sponsorships can be ascertained from possible leveraging practice differences.*

**Is there something else that might not you not have thought about before this interview that has since occurred to you? Something additional you would like to share regarding a past question?**

*If there is anything that the manager may now be more willing to share related to a past question.*

**Is there something else not discussed in this interview that you think I should know to better understand sponsorship? Particularly, hometown sponsorships relative to other sponsorships?**

*Checking to see if there is something that may be valuable to know that I may have not asked.*

**Do you have any questions? Is there anything that you would like to ask me?**

Corporate	Interview Questions	What I Want to Know
Initial Open-Ended	<p><b>Background</b></p> <p>Tell me about your professional work background.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What degrees do you possess?</li> <li>• What's your employment history—both related, and unrelated—to sport and sponsorship?</li> </ul> <p>Could you share with me how you began working with sponsorships?</p> <p>How would you describe your expertise pertaining to sponsorships?</p> <p>Are they any property types, or is there a specific property, with whom you prefer to work? For example, some property types could be the NFL, NBA, MLB, NHL, MLS, Colleges Athletic Program, Conferences, Leagues, Music Festivals, Music Venues, etc.?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could you elaborate on why you prefer working on these types of sponsorships (or, with this property)?</li> <li>• Are there any sport property types that you believe lend themselves to meeting a broader scope of possible corporate objectives than others?</li> </ul>	<p><i>I want to know the interviewee's background to better understand their experiential work context.</i></p> <p><i>I want to understand the interviewee's personal sponsorship preferences relative to their experiences</i></p>
	Intermediate Questions	<p><b>Relationship Dynamics</b></p> <p>I would now like to ask some questions that will help me better understand how sponsorship professionals from corporations, agencies, and properties function in the sponsorship management process. Therefore, the questions will be function driven. It is my hope that these questions will help in delineating—from your perspective—the typical role responsibilities, involvement levels, and communication practices of each party. Are you ready?</p> <p>From your experience, can you describe for me how the different roles—corporate manager, agency consultant, and property representative—typically function in the evaluation process for entering and/or renewing sponsorships?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How much time is normally devoted to the evaluation of large sport properties as a potential sponsorship partner? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ When do evaluations take more time?</li> <li>○ When do evaluations take less time?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• What types of formal documents are typically developed by each party during this process (POVs, proposals, etc.)?</li> <li>• How often would you say that all three parties are on a call, or meeting together?</li> </ul>



- How often would you say that only two of the three parties are communicating? Which ones?
- Outside of the three parties mentioned above, is any other party involved in the evaluation process? If so, who?
  - What is their role?

**Would you be willing to share your experience of how the different parties function within the negotiation process?**

- What do you consider key elements of effectively conducted negotiation?
- When negotiations go poorly, what—from your experience—were causes?

**Once formalized, how are the three roles typically involved in the leveraging, or activation, of the sponsorship?**

- From your experience, which party is most often responsible for sponsorship fulfillment or execution?
  - What factors lead to this being the case?
- Which party is most often responsible for capturing the data used for measuring sponsorship performance?
  - Why do you think this is?
- How often are the property representatives included in post-event recaps and evaluations?
  - (If the answer above is not ALWAYS) When are they excluded from these evaluations?

**Have there been situations where you or one of your colleagues have experienced conflicts with an agency in the management of a sponsorship?**

- Could you share an instance where this occurred?
- What was the issue?
- Do you have thoughts on some possible underlying issues that could have instigated the conflict?

*I want to know where conflicts of interest exist among the various stakeholders? In what situations do power dynamics break down?*

**From your experience, how would you describe your relationships with most property representatives?**

- Can you share a story of an unusually strong relationship between you and the property representative?
  - Why do you think this relationship was so strong?
- Could you share a story where the relationship was a struggle, and your thoughts on why that was?

Has there ever been an instance—where you were either directly involved, or where you were aware of the situation—when the poor relationship with the sponsored property, or one of its representative agencies, led to your company exiting its sponsorship with them?

- Could you share one of these instances (remember, pseudonyms will be used to protect the identities of those involved)?
- What do you believe were the driving factors for the relationship breakdown?

For this study, given its heavy focus on sport sponsorships, the definition of hometown sponsorship considers the closest metropolitan area to possess a professional sport franchise or franchises from the Big 4 sport leagues (NBA, NFL, NHL, MLB)—in relation to an individual’s residence—as representing their “hometown.” Further, athletic programs from public state universities, whether within the boundaries of that metropolitan area, would also be considered “hometown.”

*Provides the study’s definition for sponsorship.*

As an example, if I lived in New Hampshire, my “hometown” for purposes of this study would generally be the “Boston metro area” in Massachusetts. Yet, I could also consider the University of New Hampshire to be a “hometown” sponsorship, because I live in the state of New Hampshire.

From a corporate perspective, the same rules apply, as this study assumes that a corporation’s international, national, or regional headquarters function like an individual’s residence.

Now, please take a moment and reflect on the hometown sponsorships that you’ve managed. Have there ever been noticeable differences in the level of involvement by the you, the agency, or the property representative in its management—I am especially interested in your level of involvement as the corporate manager?

- (if NO) So, just to both clarify and to verify, there is no difference in how much time you spend in on-site meetings, or in how often you can be physically present at meetings?
  - (if YES) could you provide some approximation for how much more of a presence you are with hometown sponsorships versus non-local sponsorships?

*I want to identify possible differences in how the various entities manage hometown sponsorships, and how these differences may influence the perceived effectiveness of these sponsorships*

- (if YES) with greater presence, is your relationship with the property representative generally better or worse?
  - Can you elaborate, maybe share an example?
- (if YES) Could you elaborate? Why do you think this is? Do you think it could be anything else?

These next set of questions will focus on general, strategic elements and practices of corporate sponsorship. As the foundation for our discussion, could you please share with me your definition for sponsorship?

*I want to understand corporate management perceptions regarding the working definition and direction of sponsorship.*

[Hand interviewee a sheet of paper] **Would you be willing to take a minute and list for me as many sponsorship objectives as come to mind?**

- From the sponsorship objectives that you've listed, could you tell me which ones are the most common?
  - Are any of these objectives regularly paired together?
- Are there different, or possibly additional, stated business objectives being sought by you through your hometown sponsorships?

*I want to understand how strategic objectives for hometown sport sponsorship may differ from other types of sponsorship.*

**Could you share with me what you currently consider to be key sponsorship best practices?**

- Have these strategies replaced other practices or are they in addition to them?
  - [if YES] Would you be willing to share what practices have been replaced by these new leveraging practices?
- What do you believe has led to the popularity of these practices (e.g. big data, anecdotal feedback, copy-cat strategies, etc.)?

*I want to see if there are isomorphic effects occurring within the industry*

**When developing and/or implementing leveraging strategies, in what ways do you attempt to integrate your sponsorship leveraging (or activation) into your other marketing initiatives? Or do you?**

*I want to understand how sponsorship leveraging and/or activation is (or may) be integrated into a corporation's overall marketing strategy*

- Could you share some examples of marketing executions that you believe effectively integrated sponsorships?
- Are there any current, integrated leveraging or activation trends that you have noticed across sponsorship categories?
- (if NO) How do you implement their sponsorships in isolation from your other marketing initiatives? What is your rationale for keeping your sponsorship leveraging separate from other marketing initiatives?

In what ways, if any, do you think that sponsorship influences your company's brand?

- e.g. brand identity, awareness, reputation, loyalty

While discussing integration, do you attempt to integrate Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) or Charitable/philanthropic elements into your sponsorships?

- (if YES) Do they do this with all your sponsorships?
- (if YES) How do you do this?
  - Could you share an example?
- Have you found this strategy effective? (Why or why not?)
  - Do you have any data to support this view?
- Do you consider hometown sport sponsorships a form of CSR? (Why or why not?)

*I want to know how sponsorship may function as a form of CSR—or, as a platform for CSR*

How have you seen social media implemented in the leveraging and/or activation of sponsorships?

- Which social media platforms do you believe are utilized most effectively in sponsorship leveraging/activation?
  - Could you share some examples?

*I want to understand the different ways that social media is used in the leveraging and activation of sponsorships*

Are relationship marketing practices incorporated into any of your sponsorships?

- (if YES) How? Could you elaborate? (if NO) Why not?

Do you or your company have an opinion or general rule for what represents an appropriate sponsorship activation ratio? (if needed: a sponsorship activation ratio is “sponsorship leveraging investment relative to the sponsorship fee”)

- Can you share how this activation ratio determined?
- (if NO) Could you share, from your experience, some key factors that you believe influence what an appropriate activation ratio should be for a sponsorship?

*I seek to understand how corporate managers determine appropriate leveraging investments for a given sponsorship*

And while we're speaking about ratios, can you share with me the different methods that you're currently using to measure sponsorship performance (e.g. ROO/ROI)?

- How important is it for you to be able to quantify sponsorships performance?
  - How do you capture this data?
- Have you noticed any industry or category specific trends?

*I want to understand the various ways that corporations are measuring and evaluating sponsorship performance*

Lastly, before our next set of questions: How do you see, if at all, sponsorship strategy evolving in the future ?

- Tell me, how do you see, if at all, sponsorship objectives changing in the future [e.g. next five years]?
- Tell me, how do you see, if at all, sponsorship management evolving in the future [e.g. next five years]?

*I want to know what managers see as future changes in sponsorship management*

## Portfolio Development

Now we're going to revisit the topic of sponsorship evaluation and selection. These questions, however, focus on property evaluation and selection in the context of sponsorship portfolio development. May we proceed?

Would you be willing to share the number of sponsorships in your company's portfolio, and its annual budget for sponsorships?

Do you utilize your agency to evaluate properties for potential, new sponsorships?

- Do you ever evaluate sponsorships without any agency involvement?

What criteria is used by your company when evaluating properties as potential sponsorships?

- How did your company develop its evaluation criteria?
  - How do you determine whether there is a "fit" between your company and the property?
- When evaluating properties as new sponsors, how much, if any of it, is dependent on your existing sponsorship portfolios? (Can you elaborate on why (or why not))?

Does a property's existing sponsor portfolio ever affect evaluations?

- (if YES) How?
- Also, how concerned are you with sponsor clutter?
  - Can you elaborate on why (or why not)?

Are you familiar with the brands that generally sponsor the same sport properties as yours?

- Do you think the associations with these fellow sponsors impacts your brand?
  - (if YES) How?
  - (if NO) Why not (there is research that says otherwise)?
- Could you name some of those brands for me?
- Why do you think leads this pattern?
- Would you consider most of the brands that sponsor alongside yours to be hometown sponsors?

What do you believe should be major considerations for companies when developing their sponsorship portfolio?

- How important do you believe a property's geographic location is in the process? (e.g. fit market footprint, just local?)
- Do you consider your company to be centralized or decentralized in nature?

*I want to understand how agencies evaluates sponsorships with considerations to a corporation's sponsorship portfolio*

*I want to understand possible issues faced when trying to develop corporate sponsorship portfolios*

*I want to know whether corporations try to diversify its sponsorship portfolio to align with its geographic footprint, or does it enact a different strategy?*

*I want to know what are considered sponsorship portfolio best practices*

- That being said, what role, if any, do you see hometown sponsorships playing in corporate sponsorship portfolios?
- Conversely, what role do you see non-local sponsorships playing in a sponsorship portfolio?

**Does your company possess a formal, hometown sponsorship strategy?**

- (if YES) Are you willing to share its strategy with me?
- What are your key selection criteria for determining which hometown properties to sponsor?

**Would you significantly invest, or have you significantly invested, in sponsorships with properties in your primary competitor's hometown?**

- (if YES or NO) Could you elaborate?
- (if NO) Then, I was curious on why it seems that so many corporations invest heavily in hometown sponsorships, given that there may not be a threat of competitors securing those sponsorships. Could you share your thoughts?

**[Only if not stated yet by interviewee] How important do you consider Category Exclusivity when evaluating properties?**

- (if YES) Could you please elaborate on why you believe that category exclusivity is important?
  - Are there situations where category exclusivity becomes less important?
- (if NO) Could you please elaborate on why you believe that category exclusivity is not important?

*I want to understand the visible emphasis corporations place on securing hometown sponsorships, especially if competitors are unlikely to sponsor in their hometown—and, if competitors are perceived willing to sponsor heavily in a sponsor's hometown, that provides input too.*

*I want to understand how category exclusivity affects the property evaluations, and whether there are factors that increase or decrease its importance in evaluations*

Now, in this part of the interview, we will be discussing sponsorship competition. These questions focus on competitor-driven strategies and tactics within sponsorship, such as category exclusivity and ambush (or guerilla) marketing. I strongly encourage you to use specific examples whenever possible. May I begin?

**From your experience, would you say that there is a “copy-cat” aspect to how businesses do sponsorship; particularly companies in the same industries?**

- (if YES) I understand that it may take you a moment to reflect on this question, but what do you think encourages companies to imitate one another?
- (if NO) I understand that it may take you a moment to reflect on this question, but what do you think encourages companies to imitate one another?

*I want to see if there are isomorphic effects occurring within the industry.*

- (if NO) I understand that it may take you a moment to reflect on this question, but what do you think encourages companies to imitate one another?
- (if IT DEPENDS) Could you elaborate? (Could you provide examples for each?)

We spoke earlier about category exclusivity. Some research studies suggest that category exclusivity, under certain conditions can be implemented as a type of sustainable competitive advantage. Would you agree or disagree with their suggestion?

*I want to understand how agencies view the function of category exclusivity*

- Why (or why not)? Could you elaborate?

Do you ever (or, are there conditions) where you enter non-exclusive sponsorships?

- (If YES) Why?
- Could you elaborate? (Or, could you share an example?)

How would you define ambush or guerilla marketing?

- Are you for it, or against it? Why?

*I want to know the interviewee's opinion on ambush marketing*

Can you recollect a highly-effective ambush marketing initiative you've done?

*I want to know when the interviewee believes that ambush marketing is effective*

- What was it specifically, in your opinion, that made it so effective?
- In what sponsorship leveraging situations would you anticipate to see ambush marketing employed by one of your competitors?

When have you seen, or heard of, someone's ambush marketing tactics backfiring?

- (if YES) Could you provide an example?

What are strategies to you employ to discourage or prevent competitors from ambush marketing your sponsorships?

- How effective have you found these strategies to be? (why or why not)?

Would you ever consider trying to ambush market a competitor's hometown sponsorship? (Why or why not?)

- Have you seen companies do this? How did it work out?

*I want to learn whether the interviewee considers hometown sponsorships resilient to ambush marketing*

As we near the end of this interview, I want to ask you a series of questions that will both help summarize and clarify earlier questions pertaining to hometown sponsorship.

Could you share with me how many of the sponsorship in your sponsorship portfolio are hometown sponsorships? Out of how many total sponsorships in your portfolio?

- (if HIGH %) Why do you think that corporations regularly engage in hometown sport sponsorships?

What types of corporate objectives do you think hometown sport sponsorships are most commonly intended to achieve? (e.g. brand image, brand identity, brand loyalty, CSR, purchase intention, marketshare retention, employee morale, employee recruitment, etc.)

How do you view hometown sport sponsorships functioning within your overall sponsorship strategy plan?

- How much emphasis do you place on securing hometown sport sponsorships?
  - Why do you think that is?

How do you determine which hometown sport properties to sponsor? Especially when budgets require selectivity?

How are hometown sport sponsorships leveraged?

- Do you typically articulate your hometown association in your messaging?
- Do you incorporate leveraging that aligns with your CSR initiatives?
- Do you ever use sponsorship resources for employee appreciation or B2B hosting?

How do you believe hometown sponsorship could specifically influence: brand awareness, brand identity, brand reputation, brand loyalty, etc.?

- [If interviewee is uncertain where they should start, request brand loyalty and brand identity]

Is there something else that might not you not have thought about before this interview that has since occurred to you? Something additional you would like to share regarding a past question?

*To obtain an understanding of hometown sponsorship's potential prevalence*

*I want to know whether hometown sport sponsorships are secured with specific and different strategic objectives explicitly stated*

*I want to know what, other than its hometown association, makes hometown sponsorships more valuable*

*I want to know if any implicit objectives for hometown sponsorships can be ascertained from possible leveraging practice differences.*

*If there is anything that the manager may now be more willing to share related to a past question.*



Is there something else not discussed in this interview that you think I should know to better understand sponsorship? Particularly, hometown sponsorships relative to other sponsorships?

*Checking to see if there is something that may be valuable to know that I may have not asked.*

Do you have any questions for me?

Property	Interview Questions	What I Want to Know
Initial Open-Ended	Background	
	<p>Tell me about your professional work background.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What degrees do you possess?</li> <li>• What's your employment history—both related, and unrelated—to sport and sponsorship?</li> </ul> <p>Could you share with me how you began working with sponsorships?</p> <p>How would you describe your expertise pertaining to sponsorships?</p>	<p><i>I want to know the interviewee's background to better understand their experiential work context.</i></p>
Intermediate Questions	Relationship Dynamics	
	<p>I would now like to ask some questions that will help me better understand how sponsorship professionals from properties, agencies, and corporations function in the sponsorship management process. Therefore, the questions will be function driven. It is my hope that these questions will help in delineating—from your perspective—the typical role responsibilities, involvement levels, and communication practices of each party. Are you ready?</p> <p>From your experience, can you describe for me how the different roles—property representative, agency consultant, and corporate manager—typically function in the evaluation process for entering and/or renewing sponsorships?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How much time is normally devoted to the evaluation of your property?</li> <li>• What types of formal documents, that you are aware of, are typically developed by each party during this process (POVs, proposals, etc.)?</li> <li>• How often would you say that all three parties are on a call, or meeting together? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How often would you say that you speak to the corporate manager without the agency present?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Outside of the three parties mentioned above, is any other party involved in the evaluation process? If so, who? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What is their role?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Would you be willing to share your experience of how the different parties function within the negotiation process?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you consider key elements of effectively conducted negotiation?</li> <li>• When negotiations go poorly, what—from your experience—were causes?</li> </ul>	<p><i>I want to understand the relationship/power dynamics that function within sponsorship management.</i></p> <p><i>I want to understand how the interviewee perceives their roles, and those of agency consultants and corporate manager, to function within and throughout the sponsorship management process</i></p>

Once formalized, how are the three roles typically involved in the leveraging, or activation, of the sponsorship?

- From your experience, which party is most often responsible for sponsorship fulfillment or execution?
  - What factors lead to this being the case?
- Which party is most often responsible for capturing the data used for measuring sponsorship performance?
  - Why do you think this is?
- How often do your sponsors include you in post-event recaps and evaluations?
  - What is your general role in these meetings?

Have there been situations where you or one of your colleagues have experienced conflicts with an agency in the management of a sponsorship?

- Could you share an instance where this occurred?
- What was the issue?
- Do you have thoughts on some possible underlying issues that could have instigated the conflict?

*I want to know where conflicts of interest exist among the various stakeholders? In what situations do power dynamics break down?*

From your experience, how would you describe your relationships with most agency representatives?

- Can you share a story of an unusually strong relationship between you and the agency representative?
  - Why do you think this relationship was so strong?
- Could you share a story where the relationship was a struggle, and your thoughts on why that was?

Has there ever been an instance—where you were either directly involved, or where you were aware of the situation—when the poor relationship with the corporate manager, or one of its representative agencies, led to your property exiting its sponsorship with them?

- Could you share one of these instances (remember, pseudonyms will be used to protect the identities of those involved)?
- What do you believe were the driving factors for the relationship breakdown?

For this study, given its heavy focus on sport sponsorships, the definition of hometown sponsorship considers the closest metropolitan area to possess a professional sport franchise or franchises from the Big 4 sport leagues (NBA, NFL, NHL, MLB)—in relation to an individual's residence—as representing their "hometown." Further, athletic programs from public state universities, whether within the boundaries of that metropolitan area, would also be considered "hometown."

*Provides the study's definition for sponsorship.*

## General Strategy

As an example, if I lived in New Hampshire, my “hometown” for purposes of this study would generally be the “Boston metro area” in Massachusetts. Yet, I could also consider the University of New Hampshire to be a “hometown” sponsorship, because I live in the state of New Hampshire.

From a corporate perspective, the same rules apply, as this study assumes that a corporation’s international, national, or regional headquarters function like an individual’s residence.

Now, please take a moment and reflect on your hometown sponsors? Is there any noticeable difference in the corporate manager’s involvement level with these sponsorships?

- (if YES) Could you elaborate? Why do you think this is? Do you think it could be anything else?
- (if NO) So, just to both clarify and to verify, there is no difference in how much time they spend in on-site meetings, or in how often they’re physically present at meetings or activations?
  - (if YES) could you provide some approximation for how much more of a presence they exhibit compared to non-local sponsorships?
  - (if YES) with greater presence, would you say that these relationships are better or worse?
    - Can you elaborate, maybe share an example?

*I want to identify possible differences in how the various entities manage hometown sponsorships, and how these differences may influence the perceived effectiveness of these sponsorships*

These next set of questions will focus on general, strategic elements and practices of corporate sponsorship. As the foundation for our discussion, could you please share with me your definition for sponsorship?

[Hand interviewee a sheet of paper] **Would you be willing to take a minute and list for me business objectives that you believe can be met from sponsorship?**

- From the objectives that you’ve listed, could you tell me which ones do you believe are the most common?

*I want to understand corporate management perceptions regarding the working definition and direction of sponsorship.*

*I want to understand how strategic objectives for hometown sport sponsorship may differ from other types of sponsorship.*

Could you share with me what you currently consider to be key sponsorship best practices for your property's sponsors?

- Have these strategies replaced other practices or are they in addition to them?
  - [if YES] Would you be willing to share what practices have been replaced by these new leveraging practices?
- What do you believe has led to the popularity of these practices (e.g. big data, anecdotal feedback, copy-cat strategies, etc.)?

*I want to see if there are isomorphic effects occurring within the industry*

In what ways, if any, do you think that sponsorship can influence a sponsor's brand?

- e.g. brand identity, awareness, reputation, loyalty

While discussing integration, have you seen any of your sponsors attempt to integrate Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) or Charitable/philanthropic elements into their activations?

- (if YES) How do they do this?
  - Could you share an example?
- Have you found this strategy effective? (Why or why not?)
- Do you consider hometown sport sponsorships a form of CSR? (Why or why not?)

*I want to know how sponsorship may function as a form of CSR—or, as a platform for CSR*

How have you seen social media implemented in the leveraging and/or activation of sponsorships?

- Which social media platforms do you believe are utilized most effectively in sponsorship leveraging/activation?
  - Could you share some examples?

*I want to understand the different ways that social media is used in the leveraging and activation of sponsorships*

Are relationship marketing practices incorporated into any of your sponsors' activations?

- (if YES) How? Could you elaborate? (if NO) Why not?

Do you have an opinion or general rule for what represents an appropriate sponsorship activation ratio for sponsors leveraging your property? (if needed: a sponsorship activation ratio is "sponsorship leveraging investment relative to the sponsorship fee")

- Can you share how this activation ratio determined?
- (if NO) Could you share, from your experience, some key factors that you believe influence what an appropriate activation ratio should be for a sponsorship?

*I seek to understand how properties determine appropriate leveraging investments for a given sponsorship*

And while we're speaking about ratios, can you share with me the different methods that you've been seeing sponsors use to measure sponsorship performance (e.g. ROO/ROI)?

- How important is it for sponsors to be able to quantify sponsorships performance?
  - How do you capture this data? Or do they generally capture this data on their own?
- Have you noticed any industry or category specific trends?

*I want to understand the various ways that corporations are measuring and evaluating sponsorship performance*

Would you be willing to tell me how many sponsors you have, and their general ranges of investment into your property?

- Are there any B2B relationships established through these sponsorships?
- Are any of your deals Value-in-Kind (VIK)?

In your opinion, what are the most common factors for why a company signs on as a sponsor of your property?

Lastly, before we get to our next set of questions: How do you see, if at all, sponsorship strategy evolving in the future [e.g. next five years]?

- Tell me, how do you see, if at all, sponsorship objectives changing in the future [e.g. next five years]?
- Tell me, how do you see, if at all, sponsorship management evolving in the future [e.g. next five years]?

*I want to know what property representative see as future changes in sponsorship management*

Now we're going to revisit the topic of sponsorship evaluation and selection. These questions, however, focus on property evaluation and selection in the context of sponsor portfolio development. May we proceed?

Do you, the corporation, or an agency generally initiate the evaluation process for new partnerships?

- How often do you work with a corporation through this process without any agency involvement?

*I want to understand how agencies evaluates sponsorships with considerations to a corporation's sponsorship portfolio*

What criteria do you use to assess whether you would want to have an interested company as a sponsor?

- How did you develop your evaluation criteria?
  - How do you determine whether there is a "fit" between your property and the company?
  - What are the most common ways that you seem to "fit" with companies?
- When evaluating companies as new sponsors, how much, if any of it, is dependent on your existing sponsors?
  - (if YES or NO) Can you elaborate?

*I want to understand possible issues faced when trying to develop a property's sponsor portfolio*

From what you've experienced, does a company's existing sponsorship portfolio ever influence their evaluations of your property? Your evaluations of them as a partner?

- (if YES) How?
- Also, how concerned are you with sponsor clutter?
  - Can you elaborate on why (or why not)?

How many of your sponsors would you consider hometown sponsors?

- Why do you think that is?

Everything else equal, would you prefer to sponsorship with a hometown sponsor?

- Why is that?
- (if YES) Are there ever hometown discounts for hometown companies?

Do you currently have any sponsors that are major competitors to a large, locally-based corporation? For example, a Krispy Kreme trying to sponsor the Patriots in Massachusetts?

- (if YES or NO) Why do you think this is?
- (if NO) Then, I was curious on why it seems that so many corporations invest heavily in hometown sponsorships, given that there may not be a threat of competitors securing those sponsorships. Could you share your thoughts?

*I want to understand the visible emphasis corporations place on securing hometown sponsorships, especially if competitors are unlikely to sponsor in their hometown—and, if competitors are perceived willing to sponsor heavily in a sponsor's hometown, that provides input too.*

Now, in this part of the interview, we will be discussing sponsorship competition. These questions focus on competitor-driven strategies and tactics within sponsorship, such as category exclusivity and ambush (or guerilla) marketing. I strongly encourage you to use specific examples whenever possible. May I begin?

From your experience, would you say that there is a "copy-cat" aspect to how businesses do sponsorship; particularly companies in the same industries?

- (if YES) I understand that it may take you a moment to reflect on this question, but what do you think encourages companies to imitate one another?
- (if NO) I understand that it may take you a moment to reflect on this question, but what do you think encourages companies to imitate one another?
- (if IT DEPENDS) Could you elaborate? (Could you provide examples for each?)

*I want to see if there are isomorphic effects occurring within the industry.*

Some research studies suggest that category exclusivity, under certain conditions can be implemented as a type of sustainable competitive advantage. Would you agree or disagree with their suggestion?

- Why (or why not)? Could you elaborate?

*I want to understand how agencies view the function of category exclusivity*

How often does the topic of category exclusivity come up when have discussions with new sponsors?

- (if OFTEN) Could you please elaborate on why you believe that category exclusivity comes up so often?
- (if RARELY) Do you have any sponsors that are direct competitors? How do these sponsors leverage their sponsorships with you (e.g. differently, or same)?

*I want to understand how category exclusivity affects the property evaluations, and whether there are factors that increase or decrease its importance in evaluations*

How would you define ambush or guerilla marketing?

*I want to know the interviewee's opinion on ambush marketing*

How do you feel about companies employing ambush or guerilla marketing tactics?

- (if NEGATIVELY) Are there any situations where you think it is appropriate?
- (if POSITIVELY) When would you say it went too far?

Can you recollect a highly-effective ambush marketing initiative you've experienced?

- What was it specifically, in your opinion, that made it so effective?
- In what sponsorship leveraging situations would you anticipate to see ambush marketing employed by one of your competitors?

*I want to know when the interviewee believes that ambush marketing is effective*

When have you seen, or heard of, someone's ambush marketing tactics backfiring?

- (if YES) Could you provide an example?

What are strategies that you employ to discourage or prevent competitors from ambush marketing your sponsors?

- How effective have you found these strategies to be? (why or why not)?

Have you seen a hometown sponsorship ambush marketed?

- Can you provide an example? How did it work out?

*I want to learn whether the interviewee considers hometown sponsorships resilient to ambush marketing*

How competitive is the sponsorship landscape in [insert city or state name here]?

- Do you think that many of the major sport properties secure a full roster of sponsors?

*I want an understanding of the property competition landscape, and how properties differentiate from one another*



- What makes your property a better sell than other major sport properties in the area? What differentiates you?

As we near the end of this interview, I want to ask you a series of questions that will both help summarize and clarify earlier questions pertaining to hometown sponsorship.

Could you share with me how many of the sponsors in your sponsor portfolio are hometown companies?

- Out of how many total sponsorships in your portfolio?
- (if HIGH %) Why do you think that corporations regularly engage in hometown sport sponsorships?

*To obtain an understanding of hometown sponsorship's potential prevalence*

What types of corporate objectives do you think hometown sport sponsorships are most commonly intended to achieve? (e.g. brand image, brand identity, brand loyalty, CSR, purchase intention, marketshare retention, employee morale, employee recruitment, etc.)

How do you view hometown sport sponsorships functioning within a sponsors' overall marketing strategy?

- Why do you think that is?

*I want to know the reasons properties attribute for companies securing hometown sport sponsorships*

What are common ways for hometown companies to leverage their sponsorships?

- Do they typically articulate their hometown association in their messaging (i.e. proud sponsor of the [insert property here])?
- Do they incorporate leveraging that aligns with their CSR initiatives?
- Do they ever use sponsorship resources for employee appreciation or B2B hosting?

*I want to know if any implicit objectives for hometown sponsorships can be ascertained from possible leveraging practice differences.*

How do you believe hometown sponsorships influence a brand's awareness, identity, reputation, consumer loyalty?

- [If interviewee is uncertain where they should start, request brand loyalty and brand identity]

Is there something else that might not you not have thought about before this interview that has since occurred to you? Something additional you would like to share regarding a past question?

*If there is anything that the manager may now be more willing to share related to a past question.*

Is there something else not discussed in this interview that you think I should know to better understand sponsorship? Particularly, hometown sponsorships relative to other sponsorships?

*Checking to see if there is something that may be valuable to know that I may have not asked.*

Do you have any questions for me?

## APPENDIX F

### SURVEY (STUDY 2)

#### Participant Consent

You are invited to participate in a research study focusing on local, professional sport sponsorships. The study is being conducted by doctoral candidate, Gregg Rich (richga@uga.edu), under the supervision of his dissertation committee Principal Investigator: Dr. Billy J. Hawkins. For this study, they will be asking Georgia natives and residents to share their perceptions regarding two impending sponsorship deals involving local sport teams. Both teams are moving into new playing venues shortly, and all sponsorships with these two teams will contractually end in conjunction with those moves. Subsequently, each team will either be renewing its existing sponsorships or replacing those sponsorships with new sponsors.

The purpose of this study is to better understand how residents and fans identify with the sponsors of their local, professional sport teams. The information generated from this study will be solely used for research purposes. There are no direct benefits to you for participating. In order to make this study a valid one, some information will be held until after you complete the survey.

Confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used. Specifically, no guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the Internet by any third parties. We will not collect IP addresses or any other identifying information from you for research purposes. We do not foresee any risks or discomforts associated with your participation in this study.

The survey should only take about 5 to 10 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary and you can refuse to participate at any time without giving any reason, and without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you have any concerns or questions about this survey, please do not hesitate to contact: Gregg Rich, Telephone: (770) 789-7819, E-mail: richga@uga.edu.

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to: The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, The University of Georgia, Telephone: (706) 542-3199; E-mail: IRB@uga.edu.

If you understand the statements above, are at least 18 years old, and freely consent to be in this study, click on the NEXT Page button to begin the online survey.

Next

Vetting Question: Do you work for either Coca-Cola or Pepsi?

Yes

No

## Demographic Information

Before we ask you questions on some impending sponsorships, we would like to know a little bit more about you:

1. What is your age?

2. What is your gender?

 Female

 Male

3. What is your race?

 Asian

 Black

 Hispanic

 White

 Other

4. Are you a Georgia native?

 Yes

 No

5. Are you a current Georgia resident?

 Yes

 No

**Directions (Questions 6 - 13):** Please respond by indicating the extent to which you are in agreement with the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5. (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree)

6. There aren't too many days where I don't think of Atlanta

 1

 2

 3

 4

 5

7. Supporting the city of Atlanta is important to me

 1

 2

 3

 4

 5

8. I love being from the metro Atlanta area

 1

 2

 3

 4

 5

9. If asked who I am, one thing that I'll say is that I am from metro Atlanta

 1

 2

 3

 4

 5

10. I am an Atlantan

 1

 2

 3

 4

 5

11. The city of Atlanta is an important part of my life

 1

 2

 3

 4

 5

12. Being a supporter of Atlanta is part of who I am

 1

 2

 3

 4

 5

13. The city of Atlanta is a part of me

 1

 2

 3

 4

 5

## The Braves at SunTrust Park

**Background:** The Atlanta Braves (Braves) will be moving to SunTrust Park with the start of the 2017 Major League Baseball (MLB) season. The team is currently in the process of signing an "Official Soft Drink Provider." The two companies that reached the final stages of the Brave's selection process were Coca-Cola and Pepsi. Only recently have the Braves chosen to enter into a three-year partnership with Pepsi as it begins play at SunTrust Park. The sponsorship is expected to be announced as soon as the formal contract is finalized and signed.

**Directions (Questions 14 and 15):** Please answer either YES or NO to the following four questions:

14. Do you consider Pepsi to be a hometown company?

 Yes No

15. Do you consider the Braves to be your hometown team?

 Yes No

**Directions (Questions 16-18):** Please fill in the blank with the most appropriate numeric answer

16. How many years have you been a fan of the Braves (if not a fan, enter 0)

17. How many Braves games did you attend in the past season?

18. How many Braves games did you watch on TV this past season?

**Directions (Questions 19 - 26):** Please respond by indicating the extent to which you are in agreement with the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5.

(1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree)

19. There aren't too many days during the season that I don't think of the Braves

<input type="text" value="1"/>	<input type="text" value="2"/>	<input type="text" value="3"/>	<input type="text" value="4"/>	<input type="text" value="5"/>
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20. Supporting the Braves is important to me

<input type="text" value="1"/>	<input type="text" value="2"/>	<input type="text" value="3"/>	<input type="text" value="4"/>	<input type="text" value="5"/>
--------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------

21. I love being a fan of the Braves

<input type="text" value="1"/>	<input type="text" value="2"/>	<input type="text" value="3"/>	<input type="text" value="4"/>	<input type="text" value="5"/>
--------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------

22. If asked who I am, one thing that I'll say is that I am a fan of the Braves

<input type="text" value="1"/>	<input type="text" value="2"/>	<input type="text" value="3"/>	<input type="text" value="4"/>	<input type="text" value="5"/>
--------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------

23. I am a Braves fan

<input type="text" value="1"/>	<input type="text" value="2"/>	<input type="text" value="3"/>	<input type="text" value="4"/>	<input type="text" value="5"/>
--------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------

24. The Braves are an important part of my life

<input type="text" value="1"/>	<input type="text" value="2"/>	<input type="text" value="3"/>	<input type="text" value="4"/>	<input type="text" value="5"/>
--------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------

25. Being a Braves supporter is part of who I am

<input type="text" value="1"/>	<input type="text" value="2"/>	<input type="text" value="3"/>	<input type="text" value="4"/>	<input type="text" value="5"/>
--------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------

26. I think of myself as part of the Braves

<input type="text" value="1"/>	<input type="text" value="2"/>	<input type="text" value="3"/>	<input type="text" value="4"/>	<input type="text" value="5"/>
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Next

**Directions (Questions 27 - 32):** Please respond by indicating the extent you perceive the following statements to be true on a scale from 1 to 7.

(1 = completely untrue 7 = completely true)

27. Pepsi contributes to the economic development of the region

28. Pepsi preserves jobs in the region

29. Pepsi creates jobs for people in the region

30. Pepsi sources products and raw materials locally

31. Pepsi respects regional values, customs, and culture

32. Pepsi communicates openly and honestly with the local community

**Directions (Question 33):** Please respond by indicating how likely you would do the following on a scale from 1 to 7. (1 = definitely would not, 7 = definitely would)

33. If a friend were shopping for a soft drink, how likely is it that you would recommend a Pepsi brand?

Next

**Directions (Questions 34 - 43):** Please respond by indicating the extent to which you are in agreement with the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5.

(1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree)

34. Criticism of Pepsi feels like a personal insult

35. I am very interested in what others think about Pepsi

36. Compliments of Pepsi feel like a personal compliment

37. If the media criticised Pepsi, I would feel embarrassed

38. Pepsi's successes are my successes

39. When someone praises Pepsi, it feels like a personal compliment

40. I am committed to the Pepsi brand

41. I would be willing to pay a higher price for Pepsi soft drink over other soft drink brands

42. I will buy the Pepsi brand the next time I buy a softdrink

43. I intend to keep purchasing Pepsi soft drinks

Next



## The Falcons at Mercedes Benz Stadium

**Background:** The Atlanta Falcons (Falcons) will be moving to Mercedes Benz Stadium with the start of the 2017 National Football League (NFL) season. The team is currently in the process of signing an "Official Soft Drink Provider." The two companies that reached the final stages of the Falcon's selection process were Pepsi and Coca-Cola. Only recently have the Falcons chosen to enter into a three-year partnership with Coca-Cola as it begins play at Mercedes Benz Stadium. The sponsorship is expected to be announced as soon as the formal contract is finalized and signed.

**Directions (Questions 44-45):** Please answer either YES or NO to the following four questions:

44. Do you consider Coca-Cola to be a hometown company?

45. Do you consider the Falcons to be your hometown team?

**Directions (Questions 46-48):** Please fill in the blank with the most appropriate numeric answer

46. How many years have you been a fan of the Falcons (if not a fan, enter 0)

47. How many Falcons games did you attend in the past season?

48. How many Falcons games did you watch on TV this past season?

**Directions (Questions 49 - 56):** Please respond by indicating the extent to which you are in agreement with the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5.

49. There aren't too many days during the season that I don't think of the Falcons

<input type="text" value="1"/>	<input type="text" value="2"/>	<input type="text" value="3"/>	<input type="text" value="4"/>	<input type="text" value="5"/>
--------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------

50. Supporting the Falcons is important to me

<input type="text" value="1"/>	<input type="text" value="2"/>	<input type="text" value="3"/>	<input type="text" value="4"/>	<input type="text" value="5"/>
--------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------

51. I love being a fan of the Falcons

<input type="text" value="1"/>	<input type="text" value="2"/>	<input type="text" value="3"/>	<input type="text" value="4"/>	<input type="text" value="5"/>
--------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------

52. If asked who I am, one thing that I'll say is that I am a fan of the Falcons

<input type="text" value="1"/>	<input type="text" value="2"/>	<input type="text" value="3"/>	<input type="text" value="4"/>	<input type="text" value="5"/>
--------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------

53. I am a Falcons fan

<input type="text" value="1"/>	<input type="text" value="2"/>	<input type="text" value="3"/>	<input type="text" value="4"/>	<input type="text" value="5"/>
--------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------

54. The Falcons are an important part of my life

<input type="text" value="1"/>	<input type="text" value="2"/>	<input type="text" value="3"/>	<input type="text" value="4"/>	<input type="text" value="5"/>
--------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------

55. Being a Falcons supporter is part of who I am

<input type="text" value="1"/>	<input type="text" value="2"/>	<input type="text" value="3"/>	<input type="text" value="4"/>	<input type="text" value="5"/>
--------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------

56. I think of myself as part of the Falcons

<input type="text" value="1"/>	<input type="text" value="2"/>	<input type="text" value="3"/>	<input type="text" value="4"/>	<input type="text" value="5"/>
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Next

**Directions (Questions 57 - 62):** Please respond by indicating the extent you perceive the following statements to be true on a scale from 1 to 7.

(1 = completely untrue 7 = completely true)

57. Coca-Cola contributes to the economic development of the region

58. Coca-Cola preserves jobs in the region

59. Coca-Cola creates jobs for people in the region

60. Coca-Cola sources products and raw materials locally

61. Coca-Cola respects regional values, customs, and culture

62. Coca-Cola communicates openly and honestly with the local community

**Directions (Question 63):** Please respond by indicating how likely you would do the following on a scale from 1 to 7.

(1 = definitely would not, 7 = definitely would)

63. If a friend were shopping for a soft drink, how likely is it that you would recommend a Coca-Cola Brand?

Next

**Directions (Questions 64 - 73):** Please respond by indicating the extent to which you are in agreement with

64. Criticism of Coca-Cola feels like a personal insult

65. I am very interested in what others think about Coca-Cola

66. Compliments towards Coca-Cola feel like personal compliments

67. If the media criticized Coca-Cola, I would feel embarrassed

68. Coca-Cola's successes are my successes

69. When someone praises Coca-Cola, it feels like a personal compliment

70. I am committed to the Coca-Cola brand

71. I would be willing to pay a higher price for a Coca-Cola soft drink over other soft drink brands

72. I will buy the Coca-Cola brand the next time I buy a softdrink

73. I intend to keep purchasing Cola soft drinks

Next

Thank you for your participation in this research study. For this study, it was important that we withhold some information from you about some aspects of the study. Now that your participation is completed, we will describe the withheld to you, why it was important, answer any of your questions, and provide you with the opportunity to make a decision on whether you would like to have your data included in this study.

**What you should know about this study**

In this study, you are informed that we are examining how Georgia natives and residents respond to sponsors of their local teams. What we did not share earlier is that this study more specifically examines differences in how consumers perceive hometown sponsors from non-hometown sponsors. This was deemed necessary to prevent response bias. We believed that some respondents may have exaggerated the differences they viewed between hometown corporations.

Additionally, the scenarios provided in the survey are hypothetical situations presented as real. This is done to encourage responses that incorporate emotional considerations for identifying with the sponsors.

Please do not disclose research procedures and/or purpose to anyone who might participate in this study in the future as this could affect the results of the study.

**If you have questions**

The main researcher conducting this study is Gregg Rich, Ph.D. Candidate at the University of Georgia's Department of Kinesiology. You may reach out to him with any questions that you have at richga@uga.edu or (770) 789-7819. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chairperson at 706.542.3199 or irb@uga.edu.