
Introduction: A synopsis of the advances in sport advertising and sponsorship effectiveness research

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1 Introduction

Within the global sport industry, advertising and sponsorships remain areas of interest at all levels of sport because of the revenue stream for sport organisations. In 2015, the projected global spending on sponsorships was \$57.5 billion, of which \$14.9 billion were sport sponsorships in North America alone (IEG, 2015). According to *Advertising Age* (Crupi, 2015), the 'Big Four' television networks (ABC, NBC, CBS, and Fox) in the USA generated \$8.47 billion in sales on their sports programming in 2014–2015. Sports advertising accounted for 37% of overall revenue for the Big Four, and that was a 35% increase over the previous five year span when sports programming generated \$6.27 billion for the networks. Athlete endorsement is also a significant contributor to the sponsorship and advertising domain. Annually, \$1.1 billion is spent on the endorsement of athletes with the top 100 earners accounting for 70% of the total (IEG, 2015). These numbers suggest that corporations are continuing to invest in different forms of sponsorship and advertising in the sports industry as a means to develop, enhance, or solidify their brands. As the global sport environment becomes increasingly

commercialised and cluttered, there needs to be a consistent examination of the impact of sponsorship and advertising on the industry and how to optimise these organisational investments.

Based on the spending data, there is a call for research to further explore these areas of marketing communication. This special issue covers a range of advertising and sponsorship types, including event and team sponsorships, athlete endorsement, activation of sponsorships via new media, as well as business-to-business approaches. The various platforms and sport levels utilised as research settings in this special issue include a Korean baseball league, the National Basketball Association, and the Olympics. The studies in the issue examined two main perspectives with respect to understanding the effectiveness of sponsorship or advertising –

- 1 the consumer perspective, which is focused on how consumers respond to the sponsorship and advertising
- 2 the organisational perspective, which is focused on shaping the means through which organisations are advertising and sponsoring to determine effectiveness.

2 Consumer response

Consumer behaviour literature often examines the bottom line of purchase behaviour, and the factors that may impact this behaviour (Bishop and Barber, 2014). The goals and outcomes of advertising and sponsorship typically follow consumer behaviour steps of cognition, affect, conation, and behaviour as measured through exposure, attitude formation or change, and behavioural change of intention to purchase or actual purchase of the brand/product/service (Gwinner, 1997; Lavidge and Steiner, 1961). Research in this area focuses on these desired goals and outcomes related to the consumer to understand the marketing effectiveness.

The first study in this special issue utilised the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) to explain the consumer perspective of purchasing from mega-event sponsors. The study, ‘Predicting decisions to purchase from sponsors of the Vancouver 2010 Olympics’, by Luke R. Potwarka, Ron E. McCarville, and Kyriaki Kaplanidou aimed to understand motivational factors associated with peoples’ decisions to purchase products/services from Olympic sponsors. Factors related to the individual consumer, including attitude toward the behaviour, subjective norms, descriptive norms, and past behaviour, emerged as significant predictors of purchase intention. Intention, in turn, predicted self-reported purchase behaviour. This article was unique in its theoretical approach because TPB can offer sponsorship researchers a sound theoretical model for understanding purchase decisions, which is often an end goal of sponsorships.

There are many factors which may impact purchase intentions of a sponsor’s product and the second study by Woo-yeul Baek, Kevin K. Byon, Charles W. Jones, and Young-hwan Choi’s research on ‘Determinants of purchase intention toward sponsoring product: mediating role of sponsor identification in Korean professional baseball games’ focused on team attributes, sponsorship identification, and purchase intentions. They showed that multi-dimensional team attributes, such as team attractiveness, team similarity, and team awareness, positively affected team identification, and that sponsor identification fully mediated the relationship between team identification and purchase intention. These findings extend previous studies on sponsorship effectiveness and

provide empirical support for the relationships between team identification, sponsor identification, and purchase intention.

Study number three was 'Consumer responses to on-site Olympic sponsorship activation: the impact of interactivity, emotions, and perceived image fit on brand attitude formation' by Ari Kim and Kyriaki Kaplanidou. The purpose of this study was to investigate factors that drive consumers' attitudes toward on-site activation at the mega-sport event. In particular, the study examined the structural relationships among interactivity, emotions, fit between on-site sponsorship activation and event, attitude toward on-site sponsorship activation, and attitude toward sponsor brand. The result of surveying London Olympics' attendees suggested that interactivity is a significant predictor of arousal, and in turn, arousal is a significant predictor of pleasure. Pleasure and fit influence attitude towards on-site sponsorship activation, which eventually influences attitude towards sponsor brand. The relationship between fit and attitude towards brand was mediated by attitude towards on-site sponsorship activation. It is important for organisations to consider emotional elements of consumers, as well as the fit of the sponsorship activation with the event, because these factors play a role in the effectiveness.

Shifting to another form of sponsorships, the next study assessed athlete endorsements. 'The extended match-up hypothesis model: the role of self-referencing in athlete endorsement effects' by Seungae Lee, Wonyoung Kim and Euy-jin Kim added to the current literature on athlete endorsement by evaluating the association between a celebrity endorser (i.e., a female athlete endorser) and a consumer in the match-up hypothesis model, using the concept of self-referencing. Previously, research had focused on the athlete-product relationship and not the consumer, which extends the research in this important area. The results indicated that self-referencing with an athlete endorser serves a significant role in predicting athlete endorsement effects.

3 Organisational perspective

The final two articles focused on aspects pertaining to the organisational perspective of sponsorship and advertising. Two elements of sponsorship that relate to organisational performance which necessitate greater attention from sport management researchers are activation and business-to-business marketing. Specifically, the rise in social media has led to a growing concern for strategies to improve advertising and sponsorship messages with regards to social media content (Bayne and Cianfrone, 2013; Dees, 2011). Business-to-business marketing is a final organisational area that is rising in sponsorship research, as a tertiary outcome of sponsorships may be that the corporations desire building relationships with other sponsors.

As such, the fifth study examined the effects of a sponsoring organisation's social media efforts in order to understand the effectiveness of this platform. The study, 'Alcohol, sponsorship, and new media activation: an investigation of Molson Canadian and the 2014 Olympic Games', was authored by Andrea N. Geurin and Sarah Gee. This paper explored the use of social media by a Canadian team sponsor, Molson Canadian (MC), with respect to Canadian teams and athletes who competed at the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics. A content analysis of MC's Facebook page and Twitter account was conducted during the Games. MC's posts/tweets were significantly more focused on reporting informational and promotional content than posts/tweets of an interactive

nature. This indicates that MC did not exclusively prompt customer interaction during their Olympic sponsorship, a key finding based on the existing literature on this social media effectiveness.

The final article, 'Sponsorship network portfolio of corporate partners in the National Basketball Association', by Amy Chan Hyung Kim, Hyun-Woo Lee and Yukyoum Kim examined sponsorships from a business-to-business perspective. The sponsorship network portfolio (SNP) for the NBA was explored at the team level via social network analysis to understand the relationships among the sponsoring corporations. After examining three types of centrality, 19 sponsoring corporations formed a central cohesive group. The authors suggest using social network analysis as an evaluative tool to aid those organisations with an ancillary goal of improving their business relationships or establishing partnerships with other sponsors from a business-to-business approach.

4 Final considerations

Advertising and sponsorship continue to be integral to the global sport industry and the six articles add to the literature assessing mega-event sponsorship (Olympics), league and team sponsorships (Korean baseball league and NBA), sponsorship activation, and athlete endorsement from both theoretical and practical standpoints. The studies applied different theories and introduced analyses, such as structural equation modelling and social networking analysis, to explain the effects of advertising and sponsorship. Sport organisations rely upon media contracts and sponsorship deals to fund events, and brands utilise the large integrated communications platform sport provides to market their products and services. This ongoing relationship between sports and business will continue to create a need for relevant sponsorship and advertising research to address issues and challenges in this area. Greater focus from academicians on both perspectives – consumer and organisational – will enhance the sport experience for fans, as well as the financial effectiveness of sport sponsorship and advertising for businesses investing in the industry. In closing this special issue, we would like to thank the reviewers, the *IJSM* editors and staff, and the researchers who submitted work to this issue.

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