

MAKE IT COUNT: EXAMINING OUTCOMES OF ACTIVATION AND ADVERTISING-LIKE EVENT SPONSORSHIP

NATALIYA [BREDIKHINA](#)  AND THILO [KUNKEL](#) 

School of Sport, Tourism and Hospitality Management, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA, USA

Empirical investigations on an effective sport event sponsorship format have remained sparse. The purpose of this research is to compare the outcomes of activation and advertising-like event sponsorship, explaining the factors that drive change in sponsor brand attitudes among event attendees. We propose that 1) activation should lead to a significantly stronger increase of sponsorship perceptions and sponsor brand attitudes than advertising-like sponsorship, 2) changes in sponsorship perceptions should influence changes in sponsor brand attitudes, and 3) self-congruity with the sponsor should play a mediator role in the relationship between consumers' sponsorship perceptions and attitudes toward sponsor. To test our assumptions, we conducted a field experiment at an international sport event with two waves of surveys (before/after the event). We compare longitudinal changes in sponsor–event fit, sponsorship authenticity, sponsor brand attitude, and self-congruity with the sponsor for two brands: one pursuing activation and the other one pursuing advertising-like sponsorship. Hypotheses were tested using paired samples *t* tests and partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). Findings reveal that for activating sponsor, improvements in sponsorship perceptions were significantly stronger and explained more variance in changes of sponsor brand attitudes. Self-congruity with the sponsor was a mediator between sponsorship perceptions and sponsor brand attitudes. The study contributes to event sponsorship literature by longitudinally demonstrating that activation is more effective than advertising-like sponsorship in brand promotions and highlights the mediating role of self-congruity in the relationship between sponsorship inferences and sponsor brand outcomes.

Key words: Event sponsorship; Activation; Consumer engagement; Self-congruity

Introduction

When staging an event sponsorship, brands have an important decision to make: they need to choose an optimal sponsorship format. Sponsorship

activation represents one of the available sponsorship format options and is defined as a type of sponsorship-linked marketing communication that enables audiences to “interact or in some way become involved with the sponsor” (Weeks et al.,

Address correspondence to Nataliya Bredikhina, School of Sport, Tourism and Hospitality Management, Temple University, 338 Speakman Hall, 1810 N. 13th St., Philadelphia, PA 19122, USA. E-mail: nataliya.bredikhina@temple.edu

2008, p. 638). For example, during the 2018 FIFA World Cup, smartphone producer VIVO activated their event sponsorship by staging brand experience pavilions at stadiums, creating engaging fan programming with DJ performances, and hosting fan contests (VIVO, 2018). Sponsorship activation contrasts with passive sponsorship tactics such as the advertising-like sponsorship, a subset of promotional strategies similar to traditional advertising that include passive sponsor promotions, public relations initiatives, commercials, or logo displays (Cornwell, 2019; Weeks et al., 2008). An example of advertising-like sponsorship is often observed in the context of auto racing (e.g., at Formula One or NASCAR events), where many brands limit their sponsor presence at the event to logo signage on team race cars (Howell, 2018).

Despite scholars' claims that engaging activations are a more effective means of communicating sponsorship relationships than advertising-like sponsorship, practitioners often continue to think of sponsorship as advertising (Cornwell & Kwon, 2020), and sponsor brands have historically underutilized the potential of sponsorship activation (Cornwell, 2019; O'Reilly & Horning, 2013). At the same time, Cornwell (2019) stated: "Sponsorship's greatest potential is likely not delivered as logos in stadiums, titles of concert series, or sponsor names listed in programs" (p. 49), while suggesting that sponsorship activation results in more authentic consumer engagement, and calls for more research into its effectiveness. Wakefield (2012) directly linked the extent to which sponsors can engage the audience through activation with increased levels of perceived concreteness and distinctiveness of sponsor brands, positive consumer attitudes, and word of mouth. Nevertheless, empirical research that can testify to the benefits of activation over advertising-like sponsorship and explains factors contributing to consumer attitude change to inform academics and marketers has been lacking.

The comparison of outcomes and nuances of activation versus advertising-like sponsorship is particularly relevant when considering the costs of sponsorship leverage (i.e., all sponsorship activities beyond the fee for sponsorship rights; Weeks et al., 2008). Reports suggest that in the recent years, for each \$1 spent on sponsorship right fees,

approximately \$2.20 were spent on leveraging sponsorships (EIG, 2018), whereas O'Reilly and Horning (2013) remarked that right fees/leverage ratios can be as "aggressive" as the 1:7 to 1:7.5 mark (p. 434). Brands may invest millions in sponsorship fees. For example, Swiss luxury watchmaker Longines has paid \$130 million for its current deal with Fédération Équestre Internationale (Blackford, 2017). Yet, sponsors have to invest at least twice more in sponsorship leverage (EIG, 2018; O'Reilly & Horning, 2013). Understanding how different types of sponsorship work could increase the return on investment in sponsorship. Given the increased number of brands exploring sponsorship as a marketing strategy, category exclusivity packages become less available, and brands are looking for effective ways to stand out (Bai et al., 2021). These examples, along with the gap in scholarly knowledge, stress the timeliness and relevance of exploring the potential advantages of activation as a sponsorship strategy.

The purpose of this research is to compare consumer responses to these two types of sponsorship: sponsorship activation and advertising-like sponsorship and explain the factors that drive change in consumer attitude toward sponsors. Building on extant literature, we hypothesize that information that consumers receive about the sponsor–event combination during the event affects the way consumers connect with sponsor brands on the symbolic level and change their attitudes toward sponsors because of the event. We propose that activation is more powerful for increasing attendees' self-congruity with the sponsor and positive attitudes toward the sponsor because of the more appealing experiential component. We test our assumptions in the context of a large international sporting event by comparing attendees' responses to two sponsors: one sponsor pursuing activation as a leverage strategy and the other one pursuing an advertising-like sponsorship. Our findings highlight that sponsorship activation yields greater improvement in perceptions of sponsor–event fit and sponsorship authenticity, as well as allowing brand managers to exercise greater control over customers' feelings of congruity with sponsor and sponsor brand attitudes. We outline contributions, directions for future research, and implications for brand managers based on these findings.

Literature Review

Sponsorship

Sponsorship is defined as “an investment, in cash or kind, in an activity, in return for access to the exploitable commercial potential associated with that activity” (Meenaghan, 1991, p. 36). Thus, sponsorship establishes strategic brand ties between the sponsoring entity and the sponsored entity, such as sporting events, causes, art, or people, which allows to disguise the promotional intent behind the effort of contributing to social good (Cornwell, 2019). Sponsorship is built through synergy and reciprocity between the sponsoring entity and the sponsored entity, where the sponsoring entity supports the sponsored entities in their pursuit of organizational goals (Bai et al., 2021). For instance, in the sports context, these goals may include supporting the development of athlete careers (Carrillat & d’Astous, 2014), promoting environmentalism (Habitzreuter & Koenigstorfer, 2021), or helping stage premier customer experiences for attendees at the event (Michellini et al., 2017).

Successful sponsorship benefits the sponsor through exposure, such as brand recognition (Greenhalgh & Greenwell, 2013), and association with the sponsee, such as improved brand attitudes and behavioral intentions (Woisetschläger et al., 2017). To explain why sponsorship works, scholars have relied on Heider’s (1958) balance theory, suggesting that consumers perceive a closeness or association between the sponsor brand and the sponsee: due to the natural human tendency to seek a sense of balance and harmony, consumers transfer their positive associations from the sponsor to sponsee (Dean, 2002). Liking and identifying with the sponsee heightens positive attitudinal outcomes and behavioral intentions toward the sponsor brand (Madrigal, 2000, 2001). This emotional component is further underscored by possible negative outcomes of sponsorship resulting from spillover effects of negative consumer attitudes toward sponsees; for example, in the conditions of sports rivalry when sports fans are faced with sponsors of a rival team (Grohs et al., 2015).

The inference of goodwill and transfer of positive associations makes sponsorship inherently different from traditional advertising (Meenaghan, 2001). Specifically, whereas advertising may be an effective vehicle to deliver information about

brands to customers, its ability to affect consumer attitudes and behaviors may be hampered by consumers’ tendency to infer selfish advertising motives, leading to psychological resistance to persuasion (Kelly et al., 2017). In contrast, sponsorship can overcome such limitations by disguising commercial intent. Therefore, to maximize sponsorship benefits, sponsorship should be positioned as different from advertising (Cornwell, 2019). This implies that effective sponsorship campaigns should activate their sponsorship.

Both scholars and practitioners have pointed out that when sponsorship entertains and engages the consumer, it helps create a memorable experience and gives sponsor brands an edge (e.g., Rosen & Minsky, 2011; Weeks et al., 2008). Activation can help achieve those goals by offering a variety of creative leverage formats from which to choose, such as on-site consumer interaction and giveaways (O’Reilly & Horning, 2013; Papadimitriou et al., 2008), corporate social responsibility initiatives (Habitzreuter & Koenigstorfer, 2021), or appealing physical (Su & Kunkel, 2020) or online (Weeks et al., 2008) sponsorship spaces. This contrasts with advertising-like sponsorship activities such as logo display that are passive and lack an experiential component. Yet, prior research has provided little guidance on the differences in consumer responses to activation and advertising-like sponsorship (Cornwell, 2019) to empirically confirm the superiority of activation in yielding better sponsorship outcomes. Moreover, a longitudinal perspective on how responses to sponsorship and sponsor brands change over time (Cornwell & Kwon, 2020) has been lacking. The examination of these questions in the current research is guided by schema theory.

Schema Theory

The process by which an association between an event and sponsor is established in consumers’ minds can be explained by schema theory (Anderson et al., 1978). According to schema theory, consumers organize their knowledge of market elements (e.g., products, services, brands, and advertisements) into memory-stored units of information (i.e., consumer schemas; Brown, 1992). A relevant schema is activated with each new experience related to a market element, and individuals match

new information to preconceived notions (Halkias, 2015). As a result, consumers' schema structures influence how new stimuli are interpreted but also change with new information (Halkias, 2015). Likewise, one goal of sponsorship marketing is to deliver novel information about the sponsor brand to positively stimulate the formation of sponsor brand schemas in consumers' minds.

Scholars have adopted schema theory to explain the formation and evolution of consumers' sponsorship-, sponsee-, and sponsor-related perceptions and attitudes (e.g., Cobbs et al., 2016; Roy & Cornwell, 2003). Scholars argue that as consumers learn about the sponsor–event relationship, they establish mental links between sponsor- and event-related schemas in their minds, subsequently influencing sponsorship outcomes (Koo & Lee, 2019). However, most research on audiences' responses to sponsorship has been cross-sectional. Meanwhile, the formation of mental schema structures depends heavily on the frequency of schema activation (Mandler, 1984) and the environment in which new information is acquired (Gnyawali & Stewart, 2003). Factors related to the event environment likely affect attendees' consumption experiences and knowledge of the sponsor–event relationship (Su & Kunkel, 2019, 2020). Information acquired at the event will impact consumer judgment about sponsor brands (Speed & Thompson, 2000).

Therefore, we predict that it is not merely the brand association with an event that shapes the formation of consumers' sponsor brand schemas. Rather, consumers' perceptions of and attitudes toward sponsorship and the sponsor brand are likely to change during an event due to emotional and informational stimuli that activate and enrich consumers' schemas. As schemas are sensitive to informational and emotional stimuli (Anderson et al., 1978), schema theory forms the basis for the following hypotheses regarding the influence of activation and advertising-like sponsorship communication on changes in consumers' evaluations of sponsor brands based on event attendance.

Hypothesis Development

We propose that activation yields more positive sponsorship outcomes than advertising-like sponsorship by invoking a greater positive change in sponsorship perceptions and sponsor brand attitudes. Figure 1 summarizes our research model. We outline our hypotheses in the following sections.

Changes in Sponsor–Event Fit

Sponsor–event fit is defined as the extent to which consumers perceive the sponsor–event pairing as compatible (Speed & Thompson, 2000).

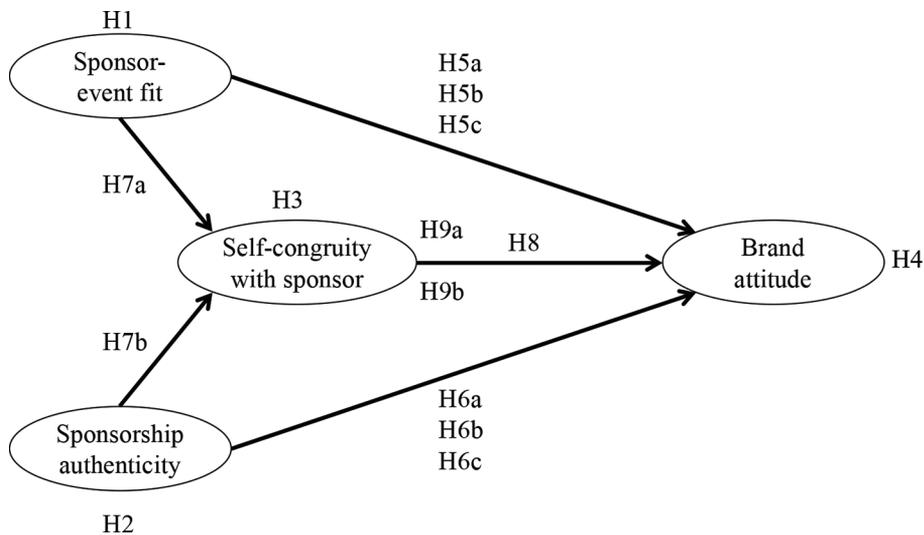


Figure 1. Hypothesized model. FIT, sponsor–event fit; SA, sponsor brand attitude; SC, self-congruity with sponsor; BA, sponsor brand attitude.

When consumers consider an event and sponsor as well-matched, sponsor–event fit is high; conversely, when consumers struggle to connect the event and sponsor, sponsor–event fit is low (Speed & Thompson, 2000). High sponsor–event fit is critical for the sponsoring brand because it leads to more positive sponsor brand evaluations (e.g., Close Scheinbaum & Lacey, 2013; Papadimitriou et al., 2016). Given that mental schemas are dynamic and evolving (Gilboa & Marlatt, 2017) and sponsor-related information acquired at an event is bound to the event environment, event attendees are more likely to discern a stronger association between an event and sponsor after the event rather than before. Further, sponsorship leverage through activation can be presented in many memorable formats and can incorporate creative and emotional appeals (O’Reilly & Horning, 2013). As brand engagement through activation heightens the levels of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral activity in consumers (Cornwell, 2019), it entices consumers to evaluate the activating brand in relation to the event (Su & Kunkel, 2020). It also strengthens their consumer schemas beyond that of the traditional advertising-like format that lacks experiential components. Thus, activation is likely to have a stronger impact on the sponsor–event schema than advertising-like sponsorship would.

Hypothesis 1: Activation leads to a greater increase in consumers’ sponsor–event fit perceptions than advertising-like sponsorship.

Changes in Sponsorship Authenticity

Sponsorship-linked marketing can effectively communicate sincerity and involvement in what matters to the customer, a perception that is important for brands to cultivate (Alhouthi et al., 2016; Beverland, 2005). The extent of genuineness within the sponsor–sponsee relationship perceived by consumers is conceptualized as sponsorship authenticity (Cornwell, 2019) and is an essential component of sponsorship alliance image. Based on defining authentic brands as original, credible (Beverland, 2005), exhibiting high morals, and caring about the customer (Morhart et al., 2015), we infer that authentic sponsorship is an alliance built on the values mentioned above.

The differentiating advantage of activation sponsorship over advertising-like sponsorship is the former’s ability to overcome the apparent selfishness of traditional advertising (Meenaghan, 2001). Mere signage and logo display at a sponsored event are unlikely to render sponsorship authentic (e.g., Cornwell, 2019), whereas brands that activate their sponsorship through experiential offerings can contribute to consumers’ event experiences (Su & Kunkel, 2019). Therefore, consumers are more likely to appreciate the activating sponsor’s commitment to what matters to them (Napoli et al., 2014) and view the sponsorship as more authentic. Hence, we expect that the leverage format will influence a sponsor’s ability to communicate sponsorship authenticity.

Hypothesis 2: Activation leads to a greater increase in consumers’ perceptions of sponsorship authenticity than advertising-like sponsorship.

Changes in Consumers’ Self-Congruity With Sponsor

Consumers’ self-identity and consumption attitudes are closely linked (Donvito et al., 2020). Through consumption, individuals seek to express who they are by choosing the brands they feel connected to (Donvito et al., 2020). The mechanism underlying consumers’ association with brands can be explained through the process of self-congruity, where consumers compare their actual self-concept with their perceptions of brand personality or the image of a typical user of that brand. Both the process and outcome of that comparison are defined as self-congruity (Sirgy, 1982, 2018). Self-congruity leads to more positive consumer brand evaluations and a stronger likelihood of consumers purchasing the brand (Sirgy, 1982), which may be further promoted by sponsorship that offers customers high symbolic value (Dreisbach et al., 2018).

Consumers’ self-congruity with an event influences their attitudes toward sponsoring brands (Mazodier & Merunka, 2012; Sirgy et al., 2008). However, the mechanisms behind changes in self-congruity with a sponsor lack theoretical and empirical inquiry. It appears intuitive that new sponsor brand information and experiences encountered by consumers at an event will likely

affect how consumers connect with sponsors. As in human interaction, where the positive valence of an encounter affects one's sense of familiarity with and positive assessments of other individuals (e.g., Reis et al., 2011), sponsorship increases consumers' familiarity and sense of connection with brands; that is, sharing experiences with others increases one's perceived psychological closeness with them (e.g., Kreilkamp, 1984).

Furthermore, experiential offerings through activation are likely to serve as additional stimuli in establishing consumers' self-congruity with a brand. The sponsorship space has the potential to create an immersive brand experience and deliver meaning to consumers through interactions with brands, brands' personnel, and other potential brand buyers (Donvito et al., 2020). Hence, compared to advertising-like communication, activation is likely to create richer experiential and interaction opportunities, evoking a stronger sense of psychological closeness and self-congruity with the sponsor brand than advertising-like sponsorship.

Hypothesis 3: Activation leads to a greater increase in consumers' self-congruity with the sponsor than advertising-like sponsorship.

Changes in Consumers' Sponsor Brand Attitudes

Generally, event sponsorship has been deemed an effective means of influencing consumers' attitudes toward sponsor brands (e.g., Speed & Thompson, 2000). Brand attitude is defined as an "enduring, unidimensional summary evaluation of [a] brand" (Spears & Singh, 2004, p. 55) and is an essential component of brand equity (Keller, 1993). Enticing consumers to develop positive brand attitudes toward a sponsor represents the main sponsorship objective (Ko et al., 2017) because it serves as a predictor of consumer behavior (Mazodier & Merunka, 2012). One way sponsorship affects consumers' attitudes toward sponsors is by repeatedly exposing consumers to sponsor-related stimuli (Speed & Thompson, 2000). Positive emotions experienced by attendees, and their appreciation for sponsor brands' involvement at an event, evoke positive consumer attitudes toward event sponsors (Speed & Thompson, 2000). Therefore, we expect an improvement in consumer attitudes toward

sponsor brands before and after the event. Further, consumption is driven by individuals' quest for fun and entertainment (Howard & Gengler, 2001), and effective promotional strategies are those that satisfy consumers' desire for pleasure and enjoyment (Schmitt, 1999). Thus, creating a sponsorship space that enables consumers to engage in entertainment-based activities and physically interact with a brand and its products is likely to be a source of additional attitudinal benefits for the activating sponsor. Given that sponsorship through activation allows consumers to interact with the sponsor brand and engage in memorable consumer experiences (in contrast to passive advertising-like sponsorship), we hypothesize that the change in sponsor brand attitudes will be greater for activation than for advertising-like sponsorship.

Hypothesis 4: Activation leads to a greater increase in consumers' sponsor brand attitudes than advertising-like sponsorship.

Relationship Between Changes in Consumers' Sponsorship Perceptions and Sponsor Brand Attitudes

Consumers' sponsorship-related inferences affect their evaluations of the brands involved in such alliances (e.g., Mazodier & Merunka, 2012; Sirgy et al., 2008). Sponsor–event fit is linked to sponsor brand attitude, and when consumers perceive a sponsor–event pairing as congruent, they express more favorable sponsor brand evaluations (Close Scheinbaum & Lacey, 2013; Koo & Lee, 2019). Similarly, consumers positively evaluate sponsor brands when their involvement with a cause is perceived as authentic (Alhouti et al., 2016). Thus, changes in consumers' perceptions of an authentic brand relationship underlying sponsorship are likely to affect consumers' attitudes (Woisetschlager et al., 2017).

Furthermore, the strength of the relationship between changes in consumers' sponsorship perceptions and sponsor brand attitudes will likely not be the same for activation and advertising-like sponsorship. Through rich experiential stimuli, activation communicates richer information about sponsor–event collaboration that will be salient in sponsor brand evaluations compared to advertising-like

sponsorship (Cornwell, 2019). Consequently, we anticipate that changes in sponsor–event fit and authenticity will lead to changes in consumers' sponsor brand attitudes. We also expect to observe differences based on sponsorship types.

Hypotheses 5a, b: Changes in sponsor–event fit are positively associated with changes in consumers' sponsor brand attitudes for (a) advertising-like sponsorship and (b) activation sponsorship.

Hypothesis 5c: The effects of changes in sponsor–event fit on changes in consumers' sponsor brand attitudes are significantly stronger for activation sponsorship than for advertising-like sponsorship (Total effect: $\beta_{\text{activation}} > \beta_{\text{ad}}$).

Hypotheses 6a, b: Changes in sponsorship authenticity are positively associated with changes in consumers' sponsor brand attitudes for (a) advertising-like sponsorship and (b) activation sponsorship.

Hypothesis 6c: The effects of changes in sponsorship authenticity on changes in consumers' sponsor brand attitudes are significantly stronger for activation sponsorship than for advertising-like sponsorship (Total effect: $\beta_{\text{activation}} > \beta_{\text{ad}}$).

Mediating Effects of Changes in Consumers' Self-Congruity With Sponsor

Brand perceptions are affected by brand alliances and partnerships (e.g., Maehle & Supphellen, 2015), and consumers make inferences about brand personalities based on these alliances (Kim et al., 2018). Therefore, a brand involved in a sponsorship that appears well-matched, genuine, and relevant to the consumer will likely appeal to the consumer and enhance the congruity between consumers' self-schema and the brand schema. Conversely, if altruistic motives or the logic of a brand partnership draw skepticism, consumers may struggle to connect with a brand's personality and feel the brand does not reflect who they are. Therefore, changes in consumers' sponsorship perceptions, such as sponsor–event fit and sponsorship authenticity, should lead to changes in consumers' self-congruity with the sponsor brand.

Hypotheses 7a, b: A significant positive relationship exists between changes in (a) sponsor–event fit and changes in consumers' self-congruity with

the sponsor; (b) changes in sponsorship authenticity and changes in self-congruity with the sponsor.

Following previous research across branding contexts, we presume that consumers will use information about brand partnerships to evaluate brand personality (e.g., Maehle & Supphellen, 2015), which will, in turn, affect how consumers connect with brands (Sirgy, 1982). Therefore, we expect that changes in consumers' sponsorship perceptions will be positively related to changes in their self-congruity with the sponsor brand. In addition, consumers should evaluate a brand more favorably once they establish self-congruity with the brand and when the brand reflects their self-concept (Sirgy, 1982). We anticipate a positive relationship between changes in consumers' self-congruity with a sponsor and changes in sponsor brand attitudes based on related literature. We expect that changes in consumers' self-congruity will partially mediate the relationship between changes in sponsorship perceptions and changes in sponsor brand attitude.

Hypothesis 8: A significant positive relationship exists between changes in consumers' self-congruity with the sponsor and changes in sponsor brand attitudes.

Hypotheses 9a, b: The relationship between changes in (a) sponsor–event fit and changes in consumers' sponsor brand attitudes is partially mediated by changes in self-congruity; (b) sponsorship authenticity and changes in consumers' sponsor brand attitudes is partially mediated by changes in self-congruity.

Methodology

Context

This study entailed a field experiment and assessed longitudinal changes in consumers' perceptions of sponsor–event fit and sponsorship authenticity, self-congruity with the sponsor, and sponsor brand attitudes resulting from attending an event. Data were collected by surveying spectators at a 3-day international tennis event in Europe in relation to two luxury sponsor brands. Both brands were in the top sponsor category for the event and

represented different product categories. The brands were listed next to each other and/or had their logos displayed in the same size next to each other at the venue and on communications and marketing materials, including tickets, e-mail, and website. One brand incorporated activation into its sponsorship strategy, which featured a large and visible sponsorship space in the center of the fan zone and included an interactive product display as well as games, entertainment, and activities to promote experiential consumer engagement. The other brand leveraged sponsorship only through a logo display, classified as a passive advertising-like sponsorship (Cornwell, 2019). Comparison of the chosen sponsor brands was deemed appropriate for two reasons. First, both brands are originally from Europe, well-established in their respective product categories, widely promoted, distributed across international markets, and commonly perceived as luxury brands. Second, the brands share a similar track record in terms of their longevity and scope of sponsorship involvement in tennis, the focal sport in this study.

Process

We collaborated with the event organizer to recruit respondents by sending an e-mail to all spectators who purchased tickets online through the event's official website. The e-mail contained an invitation to participate in a two-wave longitudinal study for a chance to enter a prize draw for an autographed piece of tennis memorabilia valued at approximately \$300. We hosted the pre- and postevent surveys on Qualtrics. We sent an e-mail with a link to the preevent survey 7 days before the event, and the postevent survey was conducted 7 days after the event. Surveys included questions about respondents' perceptions of sponsorship and attitudes toward both sponsors, along with questions on participants' sport following and general demographic information. Surveys were designed in collaboration with the industry partner (i.e., the event management team) and included questions related to other event attributes not relevant to this study per the partner's request.

Measures

Survey items assessed the constructs of sponsor–event fit, sponsorship authenticity, consumers'

self-congruity with the sponsors, and consumers' sponsor brand attitudes. All items were adapted from the literature. We used single-item measures for all constructs to create more concise surveys and avoid internal inconsistency in data resulting from participants' boredom and fatigue, which tends to be a challenge in longitudinal studies (Fuchs & Diamantopoulos, 2009). The construct of sponsor–event fit was measured with an item adopted from Gwinner and Bennett (2008): "There is a close fit between [brand] and the event." We modified a measure of corporate social responsibility authenticity from Alhouti et al. (2016) to examine sponsorship authenticity: "[Brand's] sponsorship of the event is authentic." Sponsorship attitude was measured with the item "I like the [brand]" from Gwinner and Bennett (2008). Self-congruity was measured using an item adopted from Sirgy et al. (1997): "This [brand] reflects who I am." We chose items with the highest validity construct for all measures based on prior literature that reflected constructs at the global level instead of focusing on distinct aspects of constructs (Diamantopoulos et al., 2012). All items were scored on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*; 5 = *strongly agree*), which has often been used in prior research to evaluate each of the four constructs included in this study.

Participants

A total of 2,946 individuals were invited to complete the surveys: 1,587 individuals (response rate: 53.9%) took part in the study, and 581 individuals responded to both the pre- and postevent surveys. Data cleaning consisted of the following steps: (1) excluding incomplete responses; (2) dropping responses with a survey completion time below the average completion time of the researchers who were familiar with the study; and (3) checking for consistency of responses and eliminating responses demonstrating "straight-lining" via the "careless" package in R (Yentes & Wilhelm, 2018). Only responses from individuals who participated in the pre- and postevent surveys were kept given the study's focus on longitudinal changes in consumers' sponsor brand perceptions and attitudes. After data cleaning, 375 responses were retained (useable response rate: 12.7%), which is in line with previous research employing online surveys to assess

sponsorships (e.g., Su & Kunkel, 2020). Our sample exceeded the minimum sample size threshold of 199 respondents for detecting a small effect size with a nominal statistical power of 80% for paired-samples *t* tests established through a power analysis with G*Power 3.1 software (Kock & Hadaya, 2018). The sample also surpassed the threshold of 124 respondents for partial least squares-based structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) according to the minimum R^2 method (Hair et al., 2016).

The sample reflected the event audience well. Nearly half (47.9%) of the participants were women. Participants were between the ages of 19 and 76 ($M = 43.8$, $SD = 13.1$) and reported high levels of education (85.3% graduated from college, and 48.8% held a postgraduate degree) and annual household income (54.9% earned an income above \$100,000, and 19.7% earned more than \$200,000). Based on income and education levels, the sample accurately represents the target market of luxury brands researched (Deloitte, 2019). Most respondents resided in Europe (76.3%), North America (14.2%), or Asia (6.2%). Moreover, 75.5% of respondents indicated that following tennis was a central component of their lifestyle. Almost all respondents (93.1%) attended all 3 days of the event. Chi-square tests were performed to verify the representativeness of the panel sample relative to the overall sample of respondents who completed one of the two surveys (cf. Woisetschlager & Michaelis, 2012) and revealed no significant differences for age, $\chi^2(65, N = 840) = 65.46, p = 0.461$; gender, $\chi^2(1, N = 844) = 1.22, p = 0.269$; education, $\chi^2(5, N = 841) = 3.27, p = 0.659$; income, $\chi^2(15, N = 727) = 23.01, p = 0.084$; and sport following, $t(844) = 1.14, p = 0.255$. Hence, the longitudinal sample closely reflected the overall sample.

Analysis

Data analysis was conducted via IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 and SmartPLS 3.2.7. We evaluated the normality of variables' data distribution by calculating skewness and kurtosis. Items' discriminant validity was evaluated by examining interitem correlations (Kline, 2016), and collinearity was examined based on the variance inflation factor (Hair et al., 2019). Paired-samples *t* tests were used to test Hypotheses 1–4. These tests compare the means of changes in

brand metrics at the pre- and postevent stages and the means of changes in these metrics for activation and advertising-like sponsorship.

The direct and indirect effects outlined in Hypotheses 5a, 5b, 6a, 6b, 7, 8, and 9 were tested using PLS-SEM with nonparametric bootstrapping and the recommended size of 5,000 subsamples (Hair et al., 2011) in SmartPLS. The PLS-SEM models' predictive validity was assessed using the blindfolding-based cross-validation sample reuse technique with an omission distance of $k = 7$ (Hair et al., 2019). PLS-SEM was chosen for two reasons: (1) it has been deemed optimal for the robust modeling of relationships between constructs measured using single-item measures (Hair et al., 2019); and (2) it maximizes the explained variance of a model, which enabled us to find a balance between offering well-grounded causal explanations (Sarstedt et al., 2017) and providing predictive insight (Hair et al., 2019). These justifications were crucial for the current study, given our focus on a phenomenon that has been underexplored in academic research and is highly relevant for industry practitioners. Hypotheses 5c and 6c were tested by identifying the significance of differences between path coefficient estimates in PLS path modeling based on the basic bootstrap confidence interval procedure proposed by Rodriguez-Entrena et al. (2018). In particular, we assessed the significance of differences as follows: based on type I error, if the confidence interval for the difference between two path coefficients includes zero, then the significance of the difference cannot be assumed. Basic bootstrap confidence intervals were constructed as follows: $[2\Delta\hat{\beta} - \hat{F}_{\Delta\beta}^{-1} 2\Delta\hat{\beta} - \hat{F}_{\Delta\beta}^{-1} \left(\frac{a}{2}\right)]$, where $\hat{F}_{\Delta\beta}^{-1} \left(1 - \frac{a}{2}\right)$ and $\hat{F}_{\Delta\beta}^{-1} \left(\frac{a}{2}\right)$ are the $\left(1 - \frac{a}{2}\right)$ and $\left(\frac{a}{2}\right)$ quantiles of the empirical sample distribution of $\hat{\beta}$ (Rodriguez-Entrena et al., 2018).

Results

Assessment of Measures

For all brand-related variables (including those collected in the study's pre- and postevent waves) and variables representing a change in consumers' brand perceptions and attitudes, skewness values ranged between -0.993 and 0.276 , falling

within the recommended ranges for *t* tests in SPSS (between -1.0 and 1.0; Leech et al., 2014) and SEM (between -3.0 and 3.0; Kline, 2016). Kurtosis ranged between -0.686 and 2.727, falling within the range of -3.0 to 3.0 necessary to consider data normally distributed (Tabachnick et al., 2007). Thus, the normality of the distribution was supported. An inspection of interitem Pearson correlation matrices revealed that correlation coefficients ranged from 0.470 to 0.745, below the cut-off of 0.80 (Kline, 2016) and reflecting discriminant validity between items. The variance inflation factor was below the threshold of 3.0 for all predictor items; as such, no collinearity issues were detected (Hair et al., 2019).

Results of Paired-Samples t Tests

Hypotheses 1–4 were tested using paired-samples *t* tests with findings presented in Table 1.

Changes in consumer perceptions of sponsor–event fit were significantly higher for activation than for advertising-like sponsorship; therefore, Hypothesis 1 was supported. Changes in sponsorship authenticity were significantly higher for activation than for advertising-like sponsorship, supporting Hypothesis 2. Self-congruity increased significantly for advertising-like sponsorship and activation sponsorship. The increase in self-congruity was slightly higher for activation sponsorship; however, the difference between longitudinal changes in self-congruity toward both brands was not significant. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 was not supported. Finally, we observed a significant increase in consumers’ sponsor brand attitudes for both advertising-like sponsorship and activation sponsorship. Although the change in consumers’ brand attitudes was slightly larger for activation sponsorship, the difference between changes in brand attitudes toward

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics and Results of Paired-Samples *t* Tests

Variable/Pairs	MD	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Hypothesis	Supported?
Sponsor–event fit						
T _{Ad-1} to T _{Ad-2}	3.99	0.86	-0.84	0.400	1	Yes
T _{Act-1} to T _{Act-2}	3.70	0.89	1.50	0.134		
Δ _{Act} to Δ _{Ad}	0.07	0.93	2.43*	0.016		
T _{Ad-1} to T _{Act-1}	3.77	0.92				
T _{Ad-2} to T _{Act-2}	3.77	0.92				
Δ _{Act} to Δ _{Ad}	-0.04	0.86				
Sponsorship authenticity						
T _{Ad-1} to T _{Act-1}	4.10	0.82	-0.40	0.692	2	Yes
T _{Ad-2} to T _{Act-2}	4.08	0.82	2.37*	0.018		
Δ _{Act} to Δ _{Ad}	0.10	0.81	3.12**	0.002		
T _{Ad-1} to T _{Ad-2}	3.76	0.78				
T _{Act-1} to T _{Act-2}	3.86	0.82				
Δ _{Act} to Δ _{Ad}	-0.02	0.78				
Self-congruity						
T _{Ad-1} to T _{Act-1}	3.31	1.14	3.55***	<0.001	3	No
T _{Ad-2} to T _{Act-2}	3.47	1.11	4.01***	<0.001		
Δ _{Act} to Δ _{Ad}	0.20	0.93	0.72	0.471		
T _{Ad-1} to T _{Ad-2}	3.13	1.15				
T _{Act-1} to T _{Act-2}	3.32	1.10				
Δ _{Act} to Δ _{Ad}	0.17	0.90				
Brand attitude						
T _{Ad-1} to T _{Act-1}	3.86	0.92	5.27***	<0.001	4	No
T _{Ad-2} to T _{Act-2}	4.06	0.88	4.76***	<0.001		
Δ _{Act} to Δ _{Ad}	0.23	0.83	0.73	0.466		
T _{Ad-1} to T _{Ad-2}	3.69	0.96				
T _{Act-1} to T _{Act-2}	3.91	0.90				
Δ _{Act} to Δ _{Ad}	0.20	0.79				

Note. T₁ and T₂ indicate measurements taken 7 days before and 7 days after the event. Δ indicates the longitudinal change in measurements from T₁ to T₂. *N* = 375.
p* < 0.05; *p* < 0.01; ****p* < 0.001.

both brands was not significant. As such, Hypothesis 4 was not supported.

Results of PLS-SEM Total Effects Model

Hypotheses 5a, 5b, 6a, and 6b were tested by examining the total effects model for each brand. Model results are listed in Table 2. R^2 was examined to assess the model's in-sample explanatory power (Hair et al., 2019). The model explained 13.8% of the variance in the change in consumers' brand attitudes for the activating brand and 4.6% of the variance for the brand pursuing advertising-like sponsorship. The cross-validated redundancy measure Q^2 (Stone, 1977) was 13.45% for activation and 2.71% for advertising-like sponsorship, exhibiting meaningful small predictive relevance (above 0; Hair et al., 2019) in both cases. Thus, the explanatory power and predictive relevance of the model were higher for activation than for advertising-like sponsorship. A significant positive relationship was found between changes in sponsor–event fit and changes in consumers' sponsor brand attitudes for advertising-like sponsorship and activation sponsorship. Thus, Hypotheses 5a and 5b were supported. Furthermore, whereas the relationship between changes in sponsorship

authenticity and changes in brand attitude was not significant for advertising-like sponsorship, the association was significant and positive for activation sponsorship. Therefore, Hypothesis 6a was not supported but Hypothesis 6b was.

Hypothesis 5c and Hypothesis 6c were tested by assessing the statistical significance of the difference between models' parameter estimates (Rodríguez-Entrena et al., 2018). Results showed that the confidence interval for the difference between path coefficients of the relationship between changes in sponsor–event fit and changes in consumers' sponsor brand attitudes contained zero; accordingly, parameter estimates for advertising-like sponsorship and activation sponsorship did not differ significantly from each other, and Hypothesis 5c was not supported. However, results indicated that the path coefficient reflecting the relationship between changes in sponsorship authenticity and changes in consumers' sponsor brand attitudes was significantly larger for activation sponsorship than for advertising-like sponsorship because the confidence interval for the difference between path coefficients was above zero. Thus, Hypothesis 6c was supported. Results for the total effects model and analysis of the difference between path coefficients appear in Table 2.

Table 2
Path Coefficients, Indicator Weights, and Explained Variance of PLS-SEM Total Effects Model

Path	Advertising-Like Sponsorship					Activation				
	β	t	f^2	LLCI	ULCI	β	t	f^2	LLCI	ULCI
FIT → BA	0.216*	3.405	0.047	0.089	0.338	0.233*	4.152	0.052	0.122	0.341
SA → BA	0.030	0.429	0.001	-0.108	0.168	0.213*	3.885	0.043	0.104	0.318
Total Effects Difference										
Path coefficient				Differential Effect $\Delta\beta = \hat{\beta}_{Act} - \hat{\beta}_{Ad}$		Basic Bootstrap 95% CI for $\Delta\beta$				
	$\hat{\beta}_{Act}$	$\hat{\beta}_{Ad}$				LLCI	ULCI			
FIT → BA	0.233	0.216		0.017		-0.151		0.183		
SA → BA	0.213	0.030		0.183		0.007		0.360		
Explained variance: BA				Adj. $R^2 = 0.046$					Adj. $R^2 = 0.138$	
Predictive relevance: BA				$Q^2 = 0.027$					$Q^2 = 0.135$	

Note. β , beta weight; t , t -value; f^2 , effect size; LLCI, lower-level confidence interval; ULCI, upper-level confidence interval; FIT, change in sponsor–event fit; SA, change in sponsorship authenticity; BA, change in sponsor brand attitude. $\hat{\beta}_{Act}$ and $\hat{\beta}_{Ad}$ are parameter estimates of the original sample for activation and advertising-like sponsorship, respectively.

*Significance at the 0.05 level.

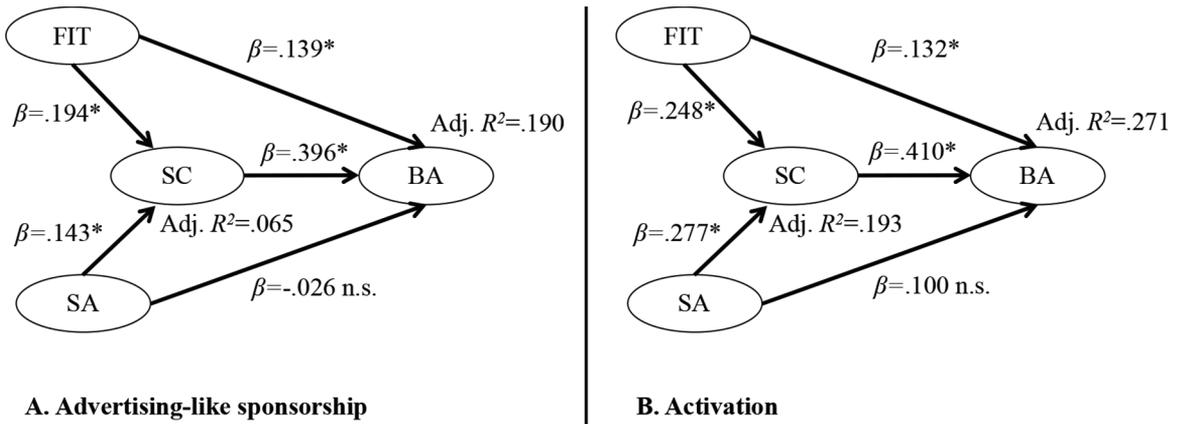


Figure 2. PLS-SEM model presenting the mediating effects of consumers' self-congruity with sponsor between sponsorship perceptions and sponsor brand attitudes. FIT, sponsor-event fit; SA, sponsor-brand attitude; SC, self-congruity with sponsor; BA, sponsor brand attitude. *Significance at the 0.05 level.

Results of PLS-SEM Mediation Model

Hypotheses 7–9 were tested by assessing each brand's mediation model; findings are illustrated in Figure 2 and presented in Table 3. In relation to the change in consumers' self-congruity with the sponsor, the model explained 6.5% of the variance for advertising-like sponsorship and 19.3% of the

variance for activation. The Q^2 value for change in self-congruity was 0.066 for advertising-like sponsorship and 0.197 for activation, exhibiting meaningful small predictive relevance (Hair et al., 2019) in both cases. In terms of the change in consumers' sponsor brand attitudes, the model explained 19.0% of the variance for advertising-like sponsorship and

Table 3
Path Coefficients, Indicator Weights, and Explained Variance of PLS-SEM Mediating Effects Model

Path	Effect	Advertising-Like Sponsorship					Activation				
		β	t	f^2	LLCI	ULCI	β	t	f^2	LLCI	ULCI
FIT → BA	Direct	0.139*	2.407	0.022	0.029	0.253	0.132*	2.381	0.018	0.023	0.240
FIT → SC	Direct	0.194*	3.118	0.038	0.067	0.312	0.248*	4.595	0.063	0.137	0.350
SA → BA	Direct	-0.026	0.383	0.001	-0.158	0.107	0.100	1.909	0.010	-0.001	0.203
SA → SC	Direct	0.143*	3.074	0.021	0.053	0.235	0.277*	5.495	0.078	0.174	0.371
SC → BA	Direct	0.396*	5.770	0.182	0.253	0.523	0.410*	7.387	0.187	0.294	0.511
FIT → BA	Total	0.216*	3.400		0.090	0.337	0.233*	4.038		0.120	0.344
FIT → SC → BA	Indirect	0.077*	3.085		0.028	0.127	0.102*	3.968		0.052	0.153
SA → BA	Total	0.030	0.428		-0.106	0.170	0.213*	3.867		0.101	0.319
SA → SC → BA	Indirect	0.057*	2.790		0.020	0.099	0.114*	4.337		0.062	0.165

Explained variance

SC Adj. $R^2 = 0.065$
 BA Adj. $R^2 = 0.190$

Adj. $R^2 = 0.193$
 Adj. $R^2 = 0.271$

Predictive relevance

SC $Q^2 = 0.066$
 BA $Q^2 = 0.163$

$Q^2 = 0.197$
 $Q^2 = 0.266$

Note. β , beta weight; t , t -value; f^2 , effect size; LLCI, lower-level confidence interval; ULCI, upper-level confidence interval; FIT, change in sponsor-event fit; SA, change in sponsorship authenticity; SC, change in self-congruity with sponsor; BA, change in sponsor brand attitude.

*Significance at 0.05 level.

27.1% for activation. The Q^2 value for the change in brand attitude was 0.163 for advertising-like sponsorship and 0.266 for activation, exhibiting meaningful small (i.e., above 0) and medium (i.e., above 0.25) predictive relevance (Hair et al., 2019), respectively. Results also revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between changes in sponsor–event fit and changes in self-congruity with the sponsor for both advertising-like sponsorship and activation, offering support for Hypothesis 7a. Changes in consumers' sponsorship authenticity were significantly and positively related to changes in self-congruity with the sponsor for advertising-like sponsorship and activation sponsorship, supporting Hypothesis 7b. Moreover, changes in self-congruity were found to positively influence changes in sponsor brand attitude for advertising-like sponsorship and activation sponsorship, substantiating Hypothesis 8. Findings further showed that changes in sponsor–event fit affected changes in consumers' sponsor brand attitudes through a significant positive direct effect as well as a significant positive indirect effect mediated by changes in self-congruity with the sponsor; these patterns provide support to Hypothesis 9a. Changes in sponsorship authenticity shaped changes in sponsor brand attitude through a significant indirect effect mediated by changes in self-congruity; however, the direct effect was not significant for both brands. Therefore, changes in self-congruity with the sponsor fully mediated changes in sponsorship authenticity and changes in sponsor brand attitude rather than serving as a partial mediator as predicted in Hypothesis 9b. As such, Hypothesis 9b was partially supported.

Discussion

This research empirically investigated whether sponsorship leveraged through activation yields higher sponsorship outcomes than traditional advertising-like sponsorship. We compared outcomes for two types of sponsorship leverage: passive advertising-like sponsorship that featured a logo display (Weeks et al., 2008) and activation that integrated experiential offerings for consumers (Cornwell, 2019). Findings indicate that the format of sponsorship leverage matters because event-induced changes in consumers' perceptions

of sponsor–event fit and sponsorship authenticity increased more for the activating sponsor than for the sponsor pursuing advertising-like sponsorship. Furthermore, for the activating sponsor, consumers' sponsorship perceptions more strongly predicted changes in brand attitudes than for the sponsor pursuing advertising-like sponsorship. This study bridges a gap in research on sport sponsorship (Cornwell, 2019), offering a fresh perspective on activation effectiveness compared to advertising-like sponsorship and highlights the role of self-congruity in the relationship.

With respect to Hypothesis 1, findings demonstrated that sponsorship activation was generally more effective than advertising-like sponsorship in influencing event attendees' perceptions of sponsorship fit and authenticity. We observed a significant positive net difference between changes in sponsor–event fit for activation and advertising-like sponsorship. Notably, this difference was observed despite no significant longitudinal change in consumers' ratings for sponsor–event fit for either brand. The lack of longitudinal change could be associated with high initial ratings of sponsor–event fit for both brands. High initial ratings of sponsor–event fit signaled that attendees perceived the pairings well-matched even before the event, which makes sense for both sponsors as reputable brands with high brand equities and a rich tradition of supporting the sport. This pattern may have already inspired attendees to infer a sponsor–event match prior to the event (Roy & Cornwell, 2003; Woisetschläger et al., 2010). Consumers' prior brand knowledge suggests that their mental schemas are less apt to change with new stimuli (Peracchio & Tybout, 1996). Still, the net difference in changes in sponsor–event fit for activation and advertising-like sponsorship points to the effectiveness of activation in maximizing sponsorship outcomes (Cornwell, 2019; Weeks et al., 2008), underscoring an advantage of activation sponsorship over advertising-like sponsorship in communicating sponsor–event fit.

Addressing Hypothesis 2, findings showed that activation was more effective than advertising-like sponsorship in influencing consumers' ratings of sponsorship authenticity. The event led to a significant increase in authenticity for activation sponsorship as well as a significant net difference between

the two brands. These findings provide empirical support for scholars' contention that traditional advertising approaches fail to mask the promotional intent of sponsorship campaigns, therefore compromising perceptions of sponsorship genuineness (Meenaghan, 2001). Findings also highlight the role of consumer experiences in establishing the coveted aura of brand authenticity (Cornwell, 2019). These findings extend prior research indicating that activation through consumer engagement can help brands stand out (O'Reilly & Horning, 2013; Su & Kunkel, 2020). In our case, we found that sponsorship activation also plays a crucial role in fostering consumers' perceptions of sponsorship authenticity.

Regarding Hypothesis 3, findings indicated that, unlike we hypothesized, the activating sponsor did not outperform the sponsor pursuing advertising-like sponsorship as measured by longitudinal improvement in consumers' self-congruity with the brand. For both sponsors, consumers' ratings of self-congruity grew because of the event, but the difference in changes between both sponsors was not significant. Although consumer experiences are supposed to foster consumers' connections with brands (e.g., Moliner et al., 2018), other factors related to the event environment could trigger the activation of mental schemas (Gnyawali & Stewart, 2003) and facilitate spillover of positive emotions evoked by the sports environment onto the sponsor brand. In this way, consumers should feel more connected to both sponsors. Furthermore, self-congruity with a brand can be established through a match between self-image and brand user image (Sirgy, 2018). Shared experiences with other individuals from the sponsors' target market could hence influence attendees' inclination to self-identify with sponsor brands' user image. Together, a familiar sports environment and shared experiences with the audience representative of typical users from the brands' target market may have affected attendees' perceptions of the alignment between self-concept and sponsor brand concept, boosting consumers' self-congruity for both brands. Relative to this boost, the bonus associated with the consumer experience through activation sponsorship may have been less evident. An important takeaway from this finding is the capacity of a sport event to positively influence consumers' self-congruity with

sponsor brands, which is an imperative predictor of favorable consumption attitudes and behavior (Fas-toso & González-Jiménez, 2018).

In terms of Hypothesis 4, findings revealed that sport event sponsorship can be an effective vehicle for influencing consumers' sponsor brand attitudes, as indicated in earlier literature (e.g., Speed & Thompson, 2000). Yet, activation did not lead to a significantly higher improvement in sponsor brand attitudes than advertising-like sponsorship, as sponsorship outcomes can be influenced by an array of factors. For instance, when an event's atmosphere is highly entertaining, it benefits sponsors (Alexandris et al., 2007). In addition, sponsors' brand image may be influenced by factors that are not directly related to sponsorship strategy or the event environment (Grohs, 2016). A combination of such factors could cause the benefits derived from the activation of brand attitudes to be less pronounced. At first glance, it might appear that activation did not yield noticeable benefits in improving consumers' sponsor brand attitudes in comparison to advertising-like sponsorship; however, results of our subsequent analyses suggest that when sponsorship is leveraged with activation rather than advertising-like messages, event-induced shifts in consumers' sponsorship perceptions are stronger predictors of changes in sponsor brand attitudes.

For Hypotheses 5 and 6, we found that the role of changes in consumers' perceptions of fit on changes in sponsor brand attitudes was just as important for advertising-like sponsorship as for activation sponsorship. This result extends cross-sectional research focused on the relationship between sponsor–event fit and sponsor brand attitudes (e.g., Koo & Lee, 2019) and demonstrates that sponsor brand attitudes can be influenced by longitudinal changes in consumer perceptions of sponsor–event fit during an event. As scholars seek to understand consumers' responses to different promotional formats (e.g., Cornwell, 2019), our findings show that perceptions of sponsor–event fit affect sponsor brand attitudes for both activation and advertising-like sponsorships.

Results also uncovered differences between activation sponsorship and advertising-like sponsorship in terms of how changes in consumers' perceptions of sponsorship authenticity influenced their sponsor brand attitudes. Whereas the total effect was not

significant for advertising-like sponsorship, it was significant for activation. Furthermore, the strength of the relationship between changes in sponsorship authenticity and sponsor brand attitude was significantly higher for activation than for advertising-like sponsorship. Our findings provide empirical support for the previously conceptualized potential of activation as a sponsorship leverage strategy (O'Reilly & Horning, 2013; Su & Kunkel, 2020), and the role of sponsor genuineness and intent in sponsorship outcomes (Napoli et al., 2014; Woitschläger et al., 2017). Results also showed that activation improved authenticity perceptions and cultivated greater salience of change in consumers' authenticity perceptions relative to sponsor brand evaluations.

Overall, a comparison of total effects models for activation and advertising-like sponsorships revealed that the explanatory power and predictive ability were each higher for activation sponsorship. Brand attitudes toward an activating sponsor are more susceptible to change because of event-induced shifts in sponsorship perceptions (i.e., fit and authenticity) than attitudes toward a sponsor pursuing advertising-like sponsorship. Hence, sponsors who choose to leverage their sponsorship through activation exercise greater control over sponsorship outcomes than sponsors opting for advertising-like messages.

In regard to Hypotheses 7, 8, and 9, the mediating effects model showed that effects of longitudinal shifts in consumers' sponsorship perceptions on the change in sponsor brand attitudes were mediated by the change in consumers' self-congruity with the sponsor. In relation to the effects of changes in sponsor–event fit, the mediation was partial for both activation and advertising-like sponsorships; for the effects of changes in sponsorship authenticity, the mediation was full for both brands. Thus, the significant indirect effects of changes in sponsorship perceptions on sponsor brand attitudes through self-congruity with a sponsor indicated that changes in self-congruity accounted for some of the variance in changes in consumers' sponsor brand attitudes. Essentially, as consumers made judgements about brand partnerships, these evaluations affected how consumers connected with and subsequently assessed the brands (cf. Maehle & Supphellen, 2015). The indirect-only mediation

between changes in sponsorship authenticity and changes in sponsor brand attitudes indicated that shifts in sponsorship authenticity did not directly influence sponsor brand attitudes. Instead, a combination of improved perceptions of sponsorship authenticity and rising self-congruity with the sponsor was required to enhance consumers' sponsor brand evaluations. These findings signal the importance of customers' perceptions of sponsor–event fit and sponsorship authenticity in persuading consumers to feel that a sponsor brand reflects the values they share (cf. Cornwell, 2019; Speed & Thompson, 2000). A greater sense of self-match with a sponsor inspired positive sponsor brand evaluations. Accordingly, this study extends prior work around the roles of brand relationships in informing consumers' brand attitudes (Kim et al., 2018; Maehle & Supphellen, 2015) by demonstrating that a well-orchestrated sponsorship affords consumers a stronger sense of self-congruity with the sponsor brand and further affects the formation of brand attitudes.

Theoretical Contributions

The study contributes to extant research on sponsorship-linked marketing in three ways: it highlights the capacity of an event for changing attendees' attitudes toward sponsor brands; it draws a comparison of attitudinal outcomes for activation and advertising-like sponsorship that are common types of sponsorship leverage; and it elaborates on the link between the inferences on sponsorship and attitudes toward the sponsor. First, whereas longitudinal designs in sponsorship studies are rare (Cornwell & Kwon, 2020) and the impacts of an event on attendees' responses to sponsorship remain under-investigated (Su & Kunkel, 2020), the current study reveals that sport events can invoke longitudinal changes in attendees' sponsorship perceptions and attitudes toward sponsors. These findings draw on schema theory (Anderson et al., 1978) and show that this theory can be applied to explain longitudinal changes in consumers' sponsorship responses. During an event, consumers acquire new information about the sponsorship, which influences the brand-related schemas in their minds.

Second, the study demonstrates that the format of sponsorship leverage matters. Compared

to passive advertising-like sponsorship, activation can provide more informational stimuli about sponsor–event collaboration through consumers’ experiences (cf. Cornwell, 2019). Thus, the study fills a gap in research on the effectiveness of sponsorship activation (Cornwell & Kwon, 2020) by suggesting that activation through experiential promotions is more effective in eliciting positive sponsorship responses from consumers than traditional advertising-like sponsorships. In brief, activation entices consumers to develop more favorable sponsorship perceptions of sponsorship fit and particularly sponsorship authenticity that, in turn, play more salient roles in changes in consumers’ sponsor brand attitudes.

Third, the study introduces a perspective on self-congruity with sponsor brand as a mediator between inferences about sponsorship and sponsor brand attitudes. Previous research on predictors of positive sponsorship outcomes primarily examines self-congruity in relation to the sponsee (Sirgy et al., 2008), whereas our study extends that perspective showing that self-congruity with the sponsor plays a role in sponsorship as a promotional medium. Consumers’ perception of match between their self and a sponsor brand acts as an underlying mechanism linking attendees’ sponsorship perceptions and sponsor brand attitudes, further extending theoretical understanding on the role of sponsorship as a source of symbolic capital when promoting sponsor brands (Dreisbach et al., 2018). These results help explain the psychological mechanism underlying links between consumers’ sponsorship perceptions and sponsor brand evaluations, enriching scholarly understanding of the antecedents of sponsor brand attitude formation (e.g., Ko et al., 2017; Koo & Lee, 2019).

Managerial Implications

A major takeaway for practitioners managing sponsor brands is that activation is more effective than advertising-like sponsorship. Between the two, activation allows to exercise greater control over sponsorship outcomes, manifested through better sponsorship perceptions and a stronger association between changes in sponsorship perceptions and formation of sponsor brand attitudes. In this way, our results provide empirical evidence to

conceptual claims and equip marketers with guidance when making decisions on how to invest their sponsorship budget. Marketers should seek to integrate activation campaigns in their sponsorship mix and make sponsorship more “tangible,” appealing to the consumer in a variety of creative ways and formats, such as entertainment and giveaways (O’Reilly & Horning, 2013), stepping away from the traditional passive forms of advertising-like sponsorship.

In the context of the current study, consumers’ perception of the activating brand’s sponsorship authenticity grew because of the event, which implies that consumers recognize the brand’s genuineness of intentions and care about customer over purely commercial intent (Beverland, 2005). The lack of a similar trend for advertising-like sponsorship in our study likely implies that consumers did not recognize the sponsor’s contribution to their experience at the event (Su & Kunkel, 2019). This highlights the importance of sponsor contribution to customer experience for maximizing the impact of sponsorship. Thus, we recommend that sponsors explore different strategies for making their presence visible during consumer experience touchpoints. Beyond helping sponsors increase their effectiveness, these findings also have implications for event organizers who could require sponsors to contribute meaningfully to the event experience and thus enhance attendee satisfaction. Sponsor contribution to consumer experience could be exhibited through auxiliary experiences. For instance, sponsors could set up booths with informational and entertainment offerings inside and nearby the event zone. Such spaces would directly contribute to the event attendees’ experience and entice positive sponsorship perceptions (Su & Kunkel, 2020). Further, a sense of gratitude for sponsor contribution at the event could be fostered by distributing giveaway items or discounted offerings, which would stimulate consumer interest toward the brand; or sponsoring event upgrades, such as tickets to the VIP area; or experiences with participating athletes, such as meet and greets or personalized video calls.

Finally, sponsor–event fit was examined as an important tenet of sponsorship-linked marketing (Close Scheinbaum & Lacey, 2013). Our results indicate that a single event may not have a noticeable influence on event attendees’ perceptions of

sponsor–event fit, particularly for well-known sponsors with a track record of sponsorship in the sport. This suggests that marketers should pursue other avenues to communicate sponsor–event fit to consumers that have proven to be effective. For instance, strategies could include consistent support for the sport manifested through programmatic sponsorship approaches (Woisetschläger et al., 2010). For instance, beyond sponsoring professional events, sponsors could also explore supporting events of other levels in that sport, including amateur, youth, and events for individuals with disabilities, which would help highlight consistency and a long-term commitment to support the sport. Additionally, prior research has shown that beyond on-site activations, sponsors can effectively achieve visibility online (Kaushik et al., 2020). Therefore, to help increase consistency and perceived fit of their sponsorship campaigns, sponsoring brands are encouraged to highlight the sponsor–event collaboration in the online environment and engage event attendees on an ongoing basis.

Limitations and Future Research

The current study has several limitations that offer opportunities for future research. First, our research focused on two brands at a single sport event. The study should be replicated and cross-validated in other conditions to ensure that the findings can be interpreted with confidence. As a follow-up, experiments in lab-controlled settings could utilize a single brand with sponsorship leverage in different formats across settings. This could elucidate the generalizability of the findings to non-sport sponsorship contexts (e.g., whether experiential offerings would affect sponsorship outcomes in a similar manner at art exhibits or charity events). In addition, the study could be replicated in other cultural contexts. Whereas the current sample comprised mostly individuals from Western cultures, the meaning of brands may vary across cultural contexts, resulting in distinct expectations and behavior among consumers (Meng-Lewis et al., 2013).

Second, we relied on single-item measures to accommodate our industry partner and optimize the completion rate in both study waves, and the surveys focused on the core of our chosen constructs.

However, by using global single-item measures that reflected the focal constructs in this longitudinal study, we managed to access a unique research setting and mitigate the effects of respondent fatigue while preserving the integrity of our data (Fuchs & Diamantopoulos, 2009). Even so, we recommend that researchers investigate the nuances of the explored dimensions with multiitem measures (Diamantopoulos et al., 2012).

Third, we compared sponsorship responses to activation and advertising-like sponsorship without examining respondents' experiences with activation and how those experiences were perceived. Activation can occur in different formats (O'Reilly & Horning, 2013). Therefore, future research should consider consumers' experiences in relation to sponsorship space, activities, service quality, and personnel to consider the effectiveness of different activation formats and extend the understanding of optimal sponsorship leverage tactics. In addition, brands can combine different strategies; for example, use both passive sponsorship in the physical event space or on traditional media and creative activation in the online environment (Weeks et al., 2008). Digital activations may become particularly relevant as consumption shifts toward digital offerings due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In response, research should focus not only on investigation of activation and advertising-like sponsorships separately but also the impacts of combined strategies, particularly with attention to the online environment.

Finally, the current study focused on attitudinal constructs to make assumptions about sponsorship outcomes. However, the literature has shown that attitudes and intentions are not necessarily reflective of consumers' actual behavior (Su & Kunkel, 2020). Although measuring consumers' behavioral responses to sponsorship may be impractical in a luxury brand context, it would be interesting to replicate this study in other settings (e.g., apparel brands or fast-moving consumer goods) where measuring behavioral responses is more feasible.

Conclusion

We found that integrating activation through consumer engagement and entertainment activities in the sponsorship promotion mix allows marketers

to exercise greater control over sponsorship outcomes. Through a two-wave longitudinal field experiment, we compared changes in consumers' sponsorship perceptions and sponsor brand attitudes for two sponsors—one pursuing activation and another pursuing advertising-like sponsorship. Findings showed that sponsorship activation engenders greater improvements in consumers' perceptions of sponsorship than advertising-like sponsorship, and these perceptions are stronger predictors of positive changes in sponsor brand attitudes. We also found the relationship between changes in consumers' sponsorship perceptions and sponsor brand attitudes is mediated by changes in consumers' self-congruity with the sponsor, uncovering a mechanism linking consumers' inferences about sponsorship with their sponsor brand evaluations. These results contribute to marketing research, showing that sponsorship activation through consumer experiences maximizes sponsorship effectiveness compared to passive advertising-like sponsorship. Our work also offers a useful perspective for practitioners working in the sponsorship sector by highlighting the potential of activation in augmenting sponsorship outcomes.

Acknowledgments

The authors are grateful to the Sport Industry Research Center at Temple University for support with this research. They also thank Keshav Gupta at Temple University and Dr. Yiran Su at the University of Georgia for support with data collection and analysis.

ORCID

Nataliya Bredikhina: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7097-4327>

Thilo Kunkel: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1607-0148>

References

- Alexandris, K., Tsaousi, E., & James, J. (2007). Predicting sponsorship outcomes from attitudinal constructs: The case of a professional basketball event. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 16(3), 130–139.
- Alhouti, S., Johnson, C. M., & Holloway, B. B. (2016). Corporate social responsibility authenticity: Investigating its antecedents and outcomes. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(3), 1242–1249. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2015.09.007>
- Anderson, R. C., Spiro, R. J., & Anderson, M. C. (1978). Schemata as scaffolding for the representation of information in connected discourse. *American Educational Research Journal*, 15(3), 433–440. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1162496>
- Bai, Y., Yim, B. H., Breedlove, J., & Zhang, J. J. (2021). Moving away from category exclusivity deals to sponsorship activation platforms: The case of the Ryder Cup. *Sustainability*, 13(1), 1151. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13031151>
- Beverland, M. B. (2005). Crafting brand authenticity: The case of luxury wines. *Journal of Management Studies*, 42(5), 1003–1029. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6486.2005.00530.x>
- Blackford, L. (2017, June 01). *Rolex drops title sponsorship of Rolex Kentucky Three Day Event*. Lexington Herald Leader. <https://tinyurl.com/5n6e9thn>
- Brown, T. J. (1992). Schemata in consumer research: A connectionist approach. In J. J. Sherry Jr., & B. Stemthal (Eds), *NA - Advances in Consumer Research*, 19, 787–794.
- Carrillat, F. A., & d'Astous, A. (2014). Power imbalance issues in athlete sponsorship versus endorsement in the context of a scandal. *European Journal of Marketing*, 48(5/6), 1070–1091. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-11-2011-0688>
- Close Scheinbaum, A., & Lacey, R. (2013). Fit matters? Asymmetrical impact for effectiveness on sponsors and event marketers. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 22(2), 71–82.
- Cobbs, J., Groza, M. D., & Rich, G. (2016). Brand spill-over effects within a sponsor portfolio: The interaction of image congruence and portfolio size. *Marketing Management Journal*, 25(2), 107–122.
- Cornwell, T. B. (2019). Less “sponsorship as advertising” and more sponsorship-linked marketing as authentic engagement. *Journal of Advertising*, 48(1), 49–60. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2019.1588809>
- Cornwell, T. B., & Kwon, Y. (2020). Sponsorship-linked marketing: Research surpluses and shortages. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 48, 607–629. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-019-00654-w>
- Dean, D. H. (2002). Associating the corporation with a charitable event through sponsorship: Measuring the effects on corporate community relations. *Journal of Advertising*, 31(4), 77–87. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2002.10673687>
- Deloitte. (2019). *Global powers of luxury goods 2019: Bridging the gap between the old and the new*. <https://tinyurl.com/245tna2u>
- Diamantopoulos, A., Sarstedt, M., Fuchs, C., Wilczynski, P., & Kaiser, S. (2012). Guidelines for choosing between multi-item and single-item scales for construct measurement: A predictive validity perspective. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 40(3), 434–449. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-011-0300-3>
- Donvito, R., Aiello, G., Grazzini, L., Godey, B., Pederzoli, D., Wiedmann, K.-P., Halliburton, C., Chan, P., Tsuchiya, J., Skorobogatykh, I. I., Oh, H., Singh, R., Ewing, M.,

- Lee, Y., Fei, L., Chen, C. R., & Siu, N. Y.-M. (2020). Does personality congruence explain luxury brand attachment? The results of an international research study. *Journal of Business Research*, *120*, 462–472. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.06.047>
- Dreisbach, J., Woisetschlager, D. M., Backhaus, C., & Cornwell, T. B. (2018). The role of fan benefits in shaping responses to sponsorship activation. *Journal of Business Research*, *124*, 780–789. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.11.041>
- EIG. (2018). *What sponsors want and where dollars will go in 2018*. <https://tinyurl.com/2p8mbut8>
- Fastoso, F., & Gonzalez-Jimenez, H. (2018). Materialism, cosmopolitanism, and emotional brand attachment: The roles of ideal self-congruity and perceived brand globalness. *Journal of Business Research*, *121*, 429–437. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.12.015>
- Fuchs, C., & Diamantopoulos, A. (2009). Using single-item measures for construct measurement in management research: Conceptual issues and application guidelines. *Die Betriebswirtschaft*, *69*(2), 195–210.
- Gilboa, A., & Marlatte, H. (2017). Neurobiology of schemas and schema-mediated memory. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, *21*(8), 618–631. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2017.04.013>
- Gnyawali, D. R., & Stewart, A. C. (2003). A contingency perspective on organizational learning: Integrating environmental context, organizational learning processes, and types of learning. *Management Learning*, *34*(1), 63–89. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350507603034001131>
- Greenhalgh, G. P., & Greenwell, T. C. (2013). Professional niche sports sponsorship: An investigation of sponsorship selection criteria. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, *14*(2), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJMSMS-14-02-2013-B002>
- Grohs, R. (2016). Drivers of brand image improvement in sports-event sponsorship. *International Journal of Advertising*, *35*(3), 391–420. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2015.1083070>
- Grohs, R., Reisinger, H., & Woisetschlager, D. M. (2015). Attenuation of negative sponsorship effects in the context of rival sports teams’ fans. *European Journal of Marketing*, *49*(11/12), 1880–1901. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-01-2013-0010>
- Gwinner, K., & Bennett, G. (2008). The impact of brand cohesiveness and sport identification on brand fit in a sponsorship context. *Journal of Sport Management*, *22*(4), 410–426. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jism.22.4.410>
- Habitzreuter, A. M., & Koenigstorfer, J. (2021). The impact of environmental CSR-linked sport sponsorship on attitude toward the sponsor depending on regulatory fit. *Journal of Business Research*, *124*, 720–730. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.11.040>
- Hair, J. F., Hult, G. T. M., Ringle, C. M. & Sarstedt, M. (2016). *A primer on partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM)*. Sage.
- Hair, J. F., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2011). PLS-SEM: Indeed a silver bullet. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, *19*(2), 139–152. <https://doi.org/10.2753/MTP1069-6679190202>
- Hair, J. F., Risher, J. J., Sarstedt, M., & Ringle, C. M. (2019). When to use and how to report the results of PLS-SEM. *European Business Review*, *31*(1), 2–24. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EBR-11-2018-0203>
- Halkias, G. (2015). Mental representation of brands: A schema-based approach to consumers’ organization of market knowledge. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, *24*(5), 438–448. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-02-2015-0818>
- Heider, F. (1958). *The psychology of interpersonal relations*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Howard, D. J., & Gengler, C. (2001). Emotional contagion effects on product attitudes. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *28*(2), 189–201. <https://doi.org/10.1086/322897>
- Howell, S. (2018, July 5). *Formula 1 sponsorship is moving up a gear – but who makes Slingshot’s Sponsors’ Podium?* Slingshot Sponsorship. <https://tinyurl.com/7y7x9b5>
- Kaushik, K., Mishra, A., & Dey, S. (2020). ‘The tweeting sponsor’: Effect of a sponsor’s SNS message articulation/interactivity on consumers’ online response. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16184742.2020.1776748>
- Keller, K. L. (1993). Conceptualizing, measuring, and managing customer-based brand equity. *Journal of Marketing*, *57*(1), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002224299305700101>
- Kelly, S., Coote, L., Cornwell, T. B., & McAlister, A. (2017). Mellowing skeptical consumers: An examination of sponsorship-linked advertising. *International Journal of Sport Communication*, *10*(1), 58–84. <https://doi.org/10.1123/ijsc.2016-0099>
- Kim, P., Vaidyanathan, R., Chang, H., & Stoel, L. (2018). Using brand alliances with artists to expand retail brand personality. *Journal of Business Research*, *85*, 424–433. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2017.10.020>
- Kline, R. B. (2016). *Principles and practice of structural equation modeling*. The Guilford Press.
- Ko, Y. J., Chang, Y., Park, C., & Herbst, F. (2017). Determinants of consumer attitude toward corporate sponsors: A comparison between a profit and nonprofit sport event sponsorship. *Journal of Consumer Behavior*, *16*(2), 176–186. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cb.1622>
- Kock, N., & Hadaya, P. (2018). Minimum sample size estimation in PLS-SEM: The inverse square root and gamma-exponential methods. *Information Systems Journal*, *28*(1), 227–261. <https://doi.org/10.1111/isj.12131>
- Koo, J., & Lee, Y. (2019). Sponsor-event congruence effects: The moderating role of sport involvement and mediating role of sponsor attitudes. *Sport Management Review*, *22*(2), 222–234. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2018.03.001>
- Kreilkamp, T. (1984). Psychological closeness. *American Behavioral Scientist*, *27*(6), 771–784. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000276484027006008>
- Leech, N. L., Barrett, K. C., & Morgan, G. A. (2014). *IBM SPSS for intermediate statistics: Use and interpretation*. Routledge.

- Madrigal, R. (2000). The influence of social alliances with sports teams on intentions to purchase corporate sponsors' products. *Journal of Advertising*, 29(4), 13–24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2000.10673621>
- Madrigal, R. (2001). Social identity effects in a belief–attitude–intentions hierarchy: Implications for corporate sponsorship. *Psychology & Marketing*, 18(2), 145–165. [https://doi.org/10.1002/1520-6793\(200102\)18:2<145::AID-MAR1003>3.0.CO;2-T](https://doi.org/10.1002/1520-6793(200102)18:2<145::AID-MAR1003>3.0.CO;2-T)
- Maehle, N., & Supphellen, M. (2015). Advertising strategies for brand image repair: The effectiveness of advertising alliances. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 21(6), 450–462. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527266.2013.866594>
- Mandler, G. (1984). *Mind and body: Psychology of emotion and stress*. Norton.
- Mazodier, M., & Merunka, D. (2012). Achieving brand loyalty through sponsorship: The role of fit and self-congruity. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 40(6), 807–820. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-011-0285-y>
- Meenaghan, T. (1991). The role of sponsorship in the marketing communications mix. *International Journal of Advertising*, 10(1), 35–47. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.1991.11104432>
- Meenaghan, T. (2001). Sponsorship and advertising: A comparison of consumer perceptions. *Psychology & Marketing*, 18(2), 191–215. [https://doi.org/10.1002/1520-6793\(200102\)18:2<191::AID-MAR1005>3.0.CO;2-C](https://doi.org/10.1002/1520-6793(200102)18:2<191::AID-MAR1005>3.0.CO;2-C)
- Meng-Lewis, Y., Thwaites, D., & Pillai, K. G. (2013). Consumers' responses to sponsorship by foreign companies. *European Journal of Marketing*, 47(11/12), 1910–1930. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-06-2010-0347>
- Michellini, L., Iasevoli, G., & Theodoraki, E. (2017). Event venue satisfaction and its impact on sponsorship outcomes. *Event Management*, 21(3), 319–331. <https://doi.org/10.3727/152599517X14942648527536>
- Moliner, M. Á., Monferrer-Tirado, D., & Estrada-Guillén, M. (2018). Consequences of customer engagement and customer self-brand connection. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 32(4), 387–399. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JSM-08-2016-0320>
- Morhart, F., Malär, L., Guèvremont, A., Girardin, F., & Grohmann, B. (2015). Brand authenticity: An integrative framework and measurement scale. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 25(2), 200–218. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcps.2014.11.006>
- Napoli, J., Dickinson, S. J., Beverland, M. B., & Farrelly, F. (2014). Measuring consumer-based brand authenticity. *Journal of Business Research*, 67(6), 1090–1098. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2013.06.001>
- O'Reilly, N., & Horning, D. L. (2013). Leveraging sponsorship: The activation ratio. *Sport Management Review*, 16(4), 424–437. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2013.01.001>
- Papadimitriou, D., Apostolopoulou, A., & Dounis, T. (2008). Event sponsorship as a value creating strategy for brands. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 17(4), 212–222. <https://doi.org/10.1108/10610420810887563>
- Papadimitriou, D., Kaplanidou, K. K., & Papacharalampous, N. (2016). Sport event-sponsor fit and its effects on sponsor purchase intentions: A non-consumer perspective among athletes, volunteers and spectators. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, 31(2), 247–259. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JBIM-09-2014-0187>
- Peracchio, L. A., & Tybout, A. M. (1996). The moderating role of prior knowledge in schema-based product evaluation. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 23(3), 177–192. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2489770>
- Reis, H. T., Maniaci, M. R., Caprariello, P. A., Eastwick, P. W., & Finkel, E. J. (2011). Familiarity does indeed promote attraction in live interaction. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 101(3), 557–570. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0022885>
- Rodríguez-Entrena, M., Schuberth, F., & Gelhard, C. (2018). Assessing statistical differences between parameters estimates in Partial Least Squares path modeling. *Quality & Quantity*, 52(1), 57–69. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-016-0400-8>
- Rosen, W., & Minsky, L. (2011, July 28). Six steps to successful sponsorships. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2011/07/six-steps-to-getting-sponsorsh>
- Roy, D. P., & Cornwell, T. B. (2003). Brand equity's influence on responses to event sponsorships. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 12(6), 377–393. <https://doi.org/10.1108/10610420310498803>
- Sarstedt, M., Ringle, C. M., & Hair, J. F. (2017). Partial least squares structural equation modeling. In C. Homburg, M. Klarmann, & A. Vomberg (Eds.), *Handbook of market research* (pp. 1–40). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-05542-8_15-1
- Schmitt, B. (1999). Experiential marketing. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 15(1–3), 53–67. <https://doi.org/10.1362/026725799784870496>
- Sirgy, M. J. (1982). Self-concept in consumer behavior: A critical review. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 9(3), 287–300. <https://doi.org/10.1086/208924>
- Sirgy, M. J. (2018). Self-congruity theory in consumer behavior: A little history. *Journal of Global Scholars of Marketing Science*, 28(2), 197–207. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21639159.2018.1436981>
- Sirgy, M. J., Grewal, D., Mangleburg, T. F., Park, J.-O., Chon, K.-S., Claiborne, C. B., Johar, J. S., & Berkman, H. (1997). Assessing the predictive validity of two methods of measuring self-image congruence. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 25(3), 229–241. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0092070397253004>
- Sirgy, M. J., Lee, D.-J., Johar, J. S., & Tidwell, J. (2008). Effect of self-congruity with sponsorship on brand loyalty. *Journal of Business Research*, 61(10), 1091–1097. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2007.09.022>
- Spears, N., & Singh, S. N. (2004). Measuring attitude toward the brand and purchase intentions. *Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising*, 26(2), 53–66. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10641734.2004.10505164>
- Speed, R., & Thompson, P. (2000). Determinants of sports sponsorship response. *Journal of the Academy*

- of *Marketing Science*, 28(2), 226–238. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0092070300282004>
- Stone, M. (1977). An asymptotic equivalence of choice of model by cross-validation and Akaike's criterion. *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, Series B (Methodological)*, 39(1), 44–47. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2517-6161.1977.tb01603.x>
- Su, Y., & Kunkel, T. (2019). Beyond brand fit: The influence of brand contribution on the relationship between service brand alliances and their parent brands. *Journal of Service Management*, 30(2), 252–275. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JOSM-02-2018-0052>
- Su, Y., & Kunkel, T. (2020). The significance of a sponsored event on lesser-known brands in a competitive environment. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 30(4), 579–593. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-07-2019-2468>
- Tabachnick, B. G., Fidell, L. S., & Ullman, J. B. (2007). *Using multivariate statistics* (Vol. 5). Pearson.
- VIVO. (2018, June 15). Vivo kicks off the celebration of 2018 FIFA World Cup(TM) in style. *PR Newswire*. <https://tinyurl.com/53vnxked>
- Wakefield, K. L. (2012). How sponsorships work: The sponsorship engagement model. *Event Management*, 16(2), 143–155. <https://doi.org/10.3727/152599512X13343565268384>
- Weeks, C. S., Cornwell, T. B., & Drennan, J. C. (2008). Leveraging sponsorships on the Internet: Activation, congruence, and articulation. *Psychology and Marketing*, 25(7), 637–654. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.20229>
- Woisetschläger, D. M., Backhaus, C., & Cornwell, T. B. (2017). Inferring corporate motives: How deal characteristics shape sponsorship perceptions. *Journal of Marketing*, 81(5), 121–141. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jm.16.0082>
- Woisetschläger, D. M., Eiting, A., Haselhoff, V. J., & Michaelis, M. (2010). Determinants and consequences of sponsorship fit: A study of fan perceptions. *Journal of Sponsorship*, 3(2), 169–180.
- Woisetschläger, D. M., & Michaelis, M. (2012). Sponsorship congruence and brand image: A pre-post event analysis. *European Journal of Marketing*, 46(3/4), 509–523. <https://doi.org/10.1108/03090561211202585>
- Yentes, R. D., & Wilhelm, F. (2018). *Careless: Procedures for computing indices of careless responding*. R package version 1.1.3.