

**Corporate sponsorship of intercollegiate women's athletics: A case study of Texas Woman's University**

*Kuo-Wei Lee, Texas Woman's University*

*Yin-Feng Chen, Texas Woman's University*

*Bettye Myers, Texas Woman's University (Advisor)*

**Marketing  
Session 9**

**Thursday, May 29, 2008  
4:00 PM - 5:00 PM**

**Poster  
Abstract 55**

Sport sponsorship is one of the fastest growing areas of marketing (Lough & Irwin, 2001; Speed & Thompson, 2000). Although the sponsorship market is much smaller than professional sports levels, collegiate sport sponsorship has had a dramatic increase in recent decades (Covell, 2001; McAllister, 1998). Revenue from sponsorship can be a big source of income to cope with increasing financial pressures and help achieve collegiate sports managers' goals. Also, sponsor's goals are achieved through the sponsorship process (Covell, 2001).

As increasing numbers of women have more income to spend, and as the numbers of American women in decision-making roles have increased, corporate sponsors have become more and more interested in this previously neglected market segment (Lough & Irwin, 2001). Although the women's sport market provides a unique and targeted audience that a corporation can tap into (Rubel, 1995; Shaw & Amis, 2001), women's sport is still more difficult than men's sport to find corporate sponsors (Lough & Irwin, 2001).

Exchange theory has been used to explain many marketing exchanges. The sponsorship relationship is the process of exchange (McCarville & Copeland, 1994). The basic assumption of exchange theory is that individuals enter into new associations because they expect doing so will be rewarding. Individuals continue relations with old associates and expand their interaction with them because they actually find doing so to be rewarding (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Sponsorship exchange relationships are characterized by interrelated conditions. The resources exchanged may be financial, physical or intangible, and they must be of value to the reciprocating partner (McCarville, & Copeland, 1994).

Although there is a large volume of literature and research pertaining to sport sponsorship, most previous research has focused on men and high competitive level sports (Lough & Irwin, 2001). There is still little known about the factors and corporate attitudes which may influence the attainment of the collegiate women's sport sponsorship. The collegiate women's sports are unique sponsorship market segments. Adapting the research results of different competitive levels regarding sponsorship objectives and benefits to sport sponsorship in collegiate women's athletics is inappropriate, because several differences exist between the concepts in terms of the size and the type of the sport organization or event. In accordance with this need, this study will use exchange theory to analyze the collegiate women's sports sponsorship by examining the reasons and decision-making procedures in which sponsors engage in the sponsorship exchange process. The study also will identify the differences in perceptions between the collegiate women's sport marketers and the corporate sponsors.

Due to the lack of background information on this topic, and in order to get detail data of sponsor s that invest in women's sport, qualitative methodology is appropriate for this study. This study will focus on one unit, Texas Woman's University (TWU). TWU has 5 women's intercollegiate sports at the NCAA Division II level, and hosts over 35 sports events each year (TWU, 2007). There are no intercollegiate sports offered for men. Interviews will be arranged with representatives from the TWU Athletic Department and its corporate spon\*sors, in order to answer these research questions: (1) What are the reasons companies sponsor the TWU athletic program? (2) What are the decision-making procedures used by companies involved in the sponsorship exchange process with TWU athletics? (3) How do the perceptions of the TWU athletic program marketers differ from those of the corporate sponsors with respect to the exchange process? The qualitative data gathered from these interviews will be organized and analyzed using a qualitative software package, NVivo 7. Data verification and analysis will be used to identify main themes and sub themes that help to examine sponsorship reasons and the decision-making procedures and how this might affect sponsorship.

This study will benefit scholars, corporations, and university administrators. It will provide scholars with a stronger understanding of the sports sponsorship exchange process. Corporations will understand the benefit of the investing in collegiate level women's sports, and use it to achieve their goals. University administrators will understand the factors, attitudes and perceptions influencing the sponsor's decision. Knowing this information will enhance their understanding of the exchange process and increase their ability to negotiate and maintain successful sponsorship.

## **2008 North American Society for Sport Management Conference (NASSM 2008)**

### References:

- Covell, D. (2001). The Role of Corporate Sponsorships in Intercollegiate Athletics. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 10(4), 245.
- Cropanzano, R., & Mitchell, M. (2005). Social Exchange Theory: An Interdisciplinary Review. *Journal of Management*, 31(6), 874-900.
- Lough, N., & Irwin, R. (2001). A Comparative Analysis of Sponsorship Objectives for U.S. Women's Sport and Traditional Sport Sponsorship. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 10(4), 202.
- McCarville, R., & Copeland, R. (1994). Understanding Sport Sponsorship Through Exchange Theory. *Journal of Sport Management*, 8(2), 102-114.
- McAllister, M. (1998). College Bowl Sponsorship and the Increased Commercialization of Amateur Sports. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 15(4), 357.
- Rubel, C. (1995). Women's sports in the spotlight as corporations become sponsors. *Marketing News*, 29(11), 2-13.
- Shaw, S., & Amis, J. (2001). Image and Investment: Sponsorship and Women's Sports. *Journal of Sport Management*, 15(3), 219.
- Speed, R., & Thompson, P. (2000). Determinants of Sports Sponsorship Response. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 28(2), 227-238.