A common challenge for corporations engaging in sport sponsorship activities lies in the evaluation of these activities. Some of the struggle lies in the multitude of objectives that can be pursued through developing sponsorship relationships. Typical objectives include increasing brand awareness and recognition (Cornwell, Humphreys, Maguire, Weeks, & Tellegen, 2006), increasing sales (Choi, Stotlar, & Park, 2006) accessing specific target markets (Doherty & Murray, 2007), developing goodwill (Meenaghan, 2001), and positioning the brand (Ferreira, Hall, & Bennett, 2008). With so many differing objectives, it can be difficult to identify and/or develop standard rules, measurement scales, or generally accepted techniques that guide sport properties and corporate sponsors in their efforts to measure sponsorship effectiveness (Shanklin & Kuzma, 1992; Thwaites, 1994). Despite the inherent challenges in doing so, this study examined the activation strategies employed by one Minor League Baseball team and three of its game night title sponsors as they pursued increased awareness, purchase intentions, and sales.

Various studies show the effectiveness of different promotions in an effort to achieve sponsorship goals. This is true with regard to the pertinent sponsorship objectives of interest in the current study (brand awareness, purchase intentions, and actual sales). Specifically, O’Reilly, Nadeau, Seguin, and Harrison (2004) found that 82% of fans at a Canadian Football League Grey Cup game could accurately recall branded content of a video board commercial without assistance. With regard to the development of purchase intentions, Cornwell and Coote (2005) found that identification with a sporting event is positively related to sponsorship-linked purchase intentions. Similarly, Dees, Hall, Tsuji, and Bennett (2010) showed that fan loyalty and goodwill are also positively related to the development of purchase intentions. However, there appears to be a dearth of literature regarding the relationship of sponsorship activation strategies and purchase intentions. Finally, concerning the third sponsorship objective of increasing sales, DeGaris, West and Dodds (2009) recently argued that NASCAR-linked sales promotions increase spectator favorability of NASCAR sponsorships and actually drive sales of sponsors’ products. However, those authors readily admit the legendary loyalty with which NASCAR fans support corporate sponsors. The current study examines the pursuit of this goal in a new context and in specific relation to on-site activation strategies. Several years ago, McDonald and Rascher (2000) investigated promotions in a similar baseball context, but focused on the goal of ticket sales rather than developing intentions to purchase sponsors’ products.

As sponsorship evaluation continues to be a struggle for corporations, it may be important to consider which activation strategies are effective in attaining certain objectives. As such, the research question driving this study was: “Are activation strategies helping title night sponsors achieve objectives at Minor League Baseball games in the Southeastern United States?” This study was an attempt to estimate whether the title night sponsors of a Minor League Baseball team met their objectives. More specifically, this research examined which activation strategies (signage, discounted entrance, coupon redemption, video board commercials, and public address announcements) were effective in achieving awareness, purchase intentions, and sales objectives.

Participants in the study were spectators of a Minor League Baseball team in the Southeastern United States. A total of 530 usable questionnaires were collected over three separate nights when the three different companies were title sponsors. The gender representation was pretty evenly distributed between male (50.8%) and female (49.2%). The majority of respondents were Caucasian (85.1%), had a college degree (40.9%), income between $25,001 and $50,000 (25.2%), and were aged between 18 and 30 years (37.7%). Results show the majority of respondents were Cau...
The results of the current research undertaking suggest mixed levels of success for corporate sponsors in achieving goals of brand awareness, purchase intentions, and actual sales. Potential reasons for the mixed results as well as a full compliment of managerial implications will be discussed.