

**Unraveling Lower-Level Sponsorship Effect in Mega Events: Influencing Factors on Intention to Purchase US Team Sponsors' Products in the World Cup**

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The amount of money spent on sport sponsorship has grown exponentially. In 2011, the total amount of money spent on sponsorship in the North American exceeded \$18 billion and 69% (\$12.38 billion) of that amount was spent in sport sponsorship (IEG, 2012). Studies found that the influencing factors on sponsorship include fan identification (Branscomb & Wann, 1993), length of sponsorship (Howard & Crompton, 2004), congruency between sponsors and sponsored entity (Cornwell, Humphreys, Maguire, Weeks, & Tellegen, 2006), and attitude toward event (Bhat, In-press) and so on.

Companies enter sponsorship to increase awareness, enhance image, reach new markets, increase sales and so forth (Meenaghan, 2001a; Pitts & Slattery 2004; Pope & Voges, 2000) and fan identification plays an important role in sponsorship in achieving these sponsorship goals (Branscomb & Wann, 1993; Pitts, 1998; Pope & Voges, 2000). In fact, fan identification is a common underlying factor in the theories of mere exposure effect (Zajonc, 2001), extension of goodwill (Meenaghan, 2001b), and social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) which are used to explain why and how sponsorship works.

Usually there are three parties that are directly involved in sponsorship: sponsor, sponsee (e.g., sport event or sport team) and fan. However, in case of international events such as Olympics and World Cup, the sponsorship structure is a bit different since there are four parties involved: the overarching event, the team you are identified with (usually the national team of your country), sponsor, and fan. Considering this structure, the current study aimed to find out how fans' attitude and identification with the other three parties influence the effectiveness of lower level sponsors (i.e., team sponsors) in mega events. More specifically, this study examined the effect of US National team sponsorship in 2012 World Cup. Therefore, three variables of 1) attitude toward the World Cup, 2) attitude toward the sponsors of US National team, and 3) identification with the US National team were selected as predictor variables. As a criterion variable, "intention to purchase sponsor's product" was selected among many objectives of sponsorship, since sales is often regarded as the ultimate goal of sponsors. Intention to purchase sponsored product was measured instead of actual sales due to the difficulty of measuring behavior itself (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993).

The questionnaire was comprised of five sections: attitude toward the World Cup, and attitude toward the sponsors of US National team were measured using attitudinal construct by Lee, Sandler, and Shani (1997). Identification with the US team was measured using Trail and James' (2001) Team Identification Index (TII). The items to measure "intention to purchase" were developed by the panel of experts. All constructs were measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. Lastly, participant's demographic information including gender, age, and ethnicity was measured.

The data were collected prior to the kick-off of the 2010 FIFA World Cup. Students in the classes in the department of sport sciences at a large division I school in the United States were asked to complete the pencil and paper questionnaire on a voluntary-base during class hours. A total of 467 individuals completed the survey of which 455 students were American while 12 students (2.56%) were international. Since this study aimed to examine the sponsorship effectiveness of US national team, international students were deleted from the further analyses. Of the 455 respondents, 76% were male and 88.8% were Caucasians (88.8%). The average age of respondents was 20.89 (SD= 2.63).

The internal consistency estimates (Cronbach's alpha) for four constructs were computed to examine the reliability, and the results confirmed that all constructs were well above .70 minimum required level (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). A multiple regression analysis was conducted using the enter method, to find out the extent to which the three variables (attitude toward the World Cup, attitude toward the US sponsors, and identification with the US

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team) predict for 'purchasing intention' toward the products of US team's sponsors. The results showed that the three factors explains a significant amount of 'purchasing intention' for US national team's sponsored products ( $F(3, 451) = 169.39, p < .001, R^2 = .728, \text{adjusted } R^2 = .527$ ). More specifically, the level of identification with the national team was the most important predictor ( $\beta = .55$ ) followed by attitude toward the sponsors ( $\beta = .30$ ). However, attitude toward the World Cup ( $\beta = -.003$ ) was not an influencing factor on the participant's intention to purchase the sponsors' products. The result of this study might indicate that the attitude toward the overarching event might not have much influence on the effectiveness of individual team sponsors. Implications of the study will be discussed.