The Influence of Title Sponsor’s Philanthropy on Sport Team Authenticity, Team Identification, and Citizenship Behavior

Inje Cho, University of Florida
Minseong Kim, University of Florida
Kyriaki Kaplanidou (Advisor), University of Florida

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Introduction
As a discretionary business practice, corporate social responsibility (CSR) needs a firm’s commitment to allocate resources to improve societal welfare (Bhattacharya, Korschun, & Sen, 2009). The CSR activities enable firms to reach to customer fulfillment and build a positive moral capital, leading to success in the long-term (Ahn & Park, 2016). The roles of CSR initiatives have also been spotlighted in the sport industry as invaluable resources that sport can bring to firms: enthusiastic customers; various stakeholders; and communication power (e.g., Plewa, Carrillat, Mazodier, and Quester, 2016). Utilizing these advantages, many firms have already sponsored sport teams and made attempts to develop a CSR centered sport sponsorship (Plewa & Quester, 2011). To explain and predict the outcomes of collaboration between a title sponsor and a sport team, more attention should be paid to understanding the influence of CSR initiatives of the title sponsoring corporation on a fan’s perceptions and behaviors toward the sport team. Thus, this study investigates the relationship between a sport fan’s perceptions of a title sponsor’s philanthropic behavior and a sport team’s authentic value/team identification, and citizenship behaviors.

Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses Development
According to Kotler (2000), “the societal marketing concept calls upon marketers to build social and ethical considerations into their marketing practices” (p. 14). The social marketing is depicted as a bridging mechanism between possession of basic knowledge and its implementation to benefit society (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971). In this manner, the concept of philanthropy has been increasingly used as a form of promoting a firm value through high-profile sponsorship (Porter & Kramer, 2002). Several approaches were made to explore the relationship between corporate sponsors and sport teams with high reciprocity between two concepts: how a fan’s perception of sport entities transfers to his/her attitudes toward sponsors (e.g., Kim & Kim, 2009). However, there is a shortage of research on the impact of title sponsor’s behaviors of fans’ perceptions.

A brand authenticity is conceptualized as congruency, consistency, and fan-orientation (Eggers, O’Dwyer, Kraus, & Guldenberg, 2013). Brand authenticity functions as an effective remedy to team devaluation and can be a vital determinant to succeed in sport industry (Brown, Kozinets, and Sherry, 2003). Similarly, derived from the identification of an overlap between the fans’ personal traits and their perception of sport team’s identity (Lichtenstein, Drumwright, & Braig, 2004), team identification positively contributes to the sport team (e.g., revisit intention, Lee & Kang, 2015). This self-group categorization as a member of the team affects one’s motivation to serve the group as a citizen and to exhibit loyalty and extra-role behaviors (Haslam, Powell, and Turner, 2000). Based on the significance of these constructs in sport business setting, this study examined the impact of philanthropy on each construct. To conduct an independent sample t-test, this study divided the participants into two groups: fans with a higher perception (HP) and a lower perception (LP) of titles sponsor’s corporate philanthropy. Based upon identified literature, the following hypotheses were developed:

H1: A significant difference in a level of perceived sport team authenticity (H1), team identification (H2), and citizenship behavior (H3) will exist between HP and LP.

Method and Results
Unlike common professional sport teams, which titled those names as a combination of the name of the city and mascot (e.g., Denver Broncos, Seattle Mariners), teams in Korean Baseball Organization (KBO) league have a distinctive organizational feature (e.g., New York Red Bulls, Bayer 04 Leverkusen). In turn, this unique style of title
sponsorship, which combined the name of the sponsor and city can generate a continuous marketing exposure to the customers. The study sample was collected from the Korean baseball team Samsung Lions (SL) online fan community. For this study, the Hanyang Sport Industry and Marketing Center was hired for collecting data via a web-based survey. A total of 2,300 survey questionnaires were distributed to online customer community consisted of SL customers. Among the 415 responses received, a total of 383 were used for data analysis. Sport team’s brand authenticity was measured with three dimensions of Eggers et al.’s (2013) 13 items. Sport team identification was measured with three items utilized by Lee and Kang (2015), the sport team citizenship behavior construct was measured with a three-component model developed by Nyadzayo et al. (2015) including 9 items. Lastly, title sponsor's philanthropy was measured with three items adapted from Lee, Choi, Moon, and Babin’s (2014) study. The CFA results suggest a good measurement model fit: $\chi^2=686.836$, d.f.=322 ($\chi^2$/d.f.=2.133), p<.001, NFI=.932, IFI=.962, TLI=.956, CFI=.962, RMSEA=.054 (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, and Black, 1998). All standardized factor loadings did exceed .50 (p<0.01), signifying evidence of convergent validity, after the purification process. Discriminant validity was tested by comparing the square of the coefficients, which represents the correlation with other variables to the proportion of variance extracted (AVE) in each construct (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Cronbach’s Alphas ranged from .87 to .94. The results from the t-tests yield significant differences in all of the constructs for HP and LP (congruency: t=-2.99, p<.001; consistency: t=-9.46, p<.001; fan-orientation: t=-11.43, p<.001; team identification: t=-16.37, p<.001; enthusiasm: t=-14.56, p<.001; endorsement: t=-16.31, p<.001; helping behavior: t=-16.17, p<.001). Therefore, the group of baseball fans with a high perception of a title sponsor’s philanthropic behavior also perceived high levels of team’s brand authenticity, team identification, and citizenship behaviors.

Conclusions/Discussions
This study provides some implications on how both title sponsors and sport team can be merged to affect customer’s attitudes. Most importantly, this study contributed to the existing literature by investigating the impact of a title sponsor’s philanthropic behavior on a sport fan’s perceptions of team authenticity, team identification, and citizenship behaviors. This finding extends the existing literature regarding the role of CSR in sport business settings (e.g., Chang, Ko, Connaughton, & Kang, 2016 explored antecedents of team pride and identification; Kim, Kwak, & Babiak, 2015 explored drivers of team attitude and loyalty) and provides an advanced point of view for the linkage among a sponsor’s CSR initiatives, a team authenticity, and its fans’ behaviors. This study points out another necessity that the sport team should consider sponsor company’s previous philanthropic behavior to determine its future influences on fan’s perceptions and behaviors. Thus, sport team needs to develop appropriate management structures associated with a title sponsor’s plan on philanthropic behavior, which reinforces sport customers team identification and value perceptions of a sport team.