Good Beer is Hard to Not Purchase (in the NFL)

Joshua Lupinek, University of Alaska Fairbanks
Rui Biscaia, Coventry University
Noni Zaharia, Flagler College

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This study presentation is in conjunction with a 2018 Janet B. Parks NASSM Research Grant award. The purpose of this study is to examine a sport sponsorship “not purchase” model including the variables of team loyalty, sponsorship exclusivity, sponsorship fit, attitude toward the sponsor, intentions not to purchase rival sponsors’ products, and actual purchases for the National Football League’s (NFL) “official beer sponsor of the NFL” (i.e., league-wide sponsorship) in Bud Light. This study aims to be the first to develop an understanding of the “not purchase” impact for those fans who live in multi-franchise markets and for displaced fans. In short, this research aims to identify the impact of those who have chosen not to purchase Bud Light because the product was branded with the logo of their rival team.

This research further discusses brand alienation, through the “not purchase” impact, as effective sponsorship of a particular team may alienate fans from opposing teams (Amorim & Almeida, 2015; Davies, Veloutsou, & Costa, 2006). This study creates a better understanding of “not purchase” intentions and behaviors in the rivalry context of sport sponsorship (Biscaia, Correia, Rosado, Ross, & Maroco, 2013; Gwinner & Bennett, 2008). A theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) lens was utilized for this research as the development of a favorable attitude toward a sponsor brand is suggested to be a pivotal factor for sponsorship effectiveness (Alexandris, Tsiotsou, & James, 2007; Chen & Zhang, 2011; Speed & Thompson, 2000).

Data collection consisted of participants (N=366) living in in multi-franchise media markets (NYC/CT, Baltimore/D.C. & Bay Area) who are 21+ years of age, drink Bud Light, and claim fandom to an NFL team with a 59 item Qualtrics online survey (12.6 min. average response time). Data collection timing was purposefully aligned with Week 7-8 of the 2018 NFL season as Anheuser-Busch annually releases team logoed Bud Light Cans during Week 1 that remain in stores through the first couple months of the regular season. As such, Bud Light drinking NFL fans have likely experienced team branded cans recently preceding survey completion.

Detailed study results, including standardized regression coefficients of the structural model and correlation matrix, will be provided during the presentation as data collection just completed the day prior to abstract submission (data analysis in-progress). Preliminary results show a fit to the “not purchase” model variables above (via 7-point Likert style scale items) and participants indicated that they are “less likely to buy Bud Light beer that displays the logo of a rival team” (M=4.11). Participants also yielded qualitative responses such as, “The fact that Bud Light sponsors other teams doesn’t bother me at all, but I would NOT buy Bud Light with the other team’s logo on it.” Study results aid sponsors in better understand product-branding strategies (Gürhan-Canli, Hayran, & Sarial-Abi, 2016) in multi-franchise media markets and study researchers suggest that “official sponsors of the NFL” should use the NFL logo on their product over specific team logos in these markets.