Investigating the Spillover Effect on Sponsorship Effectiveness in the Context of Multiple Sponsors: A Perspective of Perceived Sponsor-Event Fit

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Previous research generally reported that increasing the perceived sponsor-event fit would help improve overall sponsorship effectiveness (Becker-Olsen & Simmons, 2002; Cornwell, Weeks, & Roy, 2005; McDaniel, Speed & Thompson, 2000); however, a majority of these studies were focused on a particular pairing of one sponsor and property. When major sporting events are sponsored by more than one brand for an extended period of time, sponsorship targets might perceive a high fit between sponsor and property due to other sponsor’s investment in the context of multiple sponsors. This potential spillover effect refers to one sponsor’s investment influences a perceived sponsor-event fit of other brands that are not part of the sponsor, which is derived conceptually from research in communication and marketing (Ahluwalia, Unnava, & Burnkrant, 2001), and has not been thoroughly examined in sponsorship research yet. The purpose of this study was to address this void by investigating the impact of multiple sponsors on sponsorship effectiveness in terms of perceived sponsor-event fit.

The NBA was selected as the property of interest for its significant growth in sponsorship (IEG, 2018). As for sponsors, the Kumho Tire, “the official tire of the NBA,” and Goodyear were deemed appropriate for this study because the former is relatively unfamiliar to the U.S. consumers while the latter has sponsored various sports for more than 60 years and its recent jersey sponsorship with the NBA’s Cleveland Cavaliers is widely considered one of the top performers in sponsorship effectiveness (Kleps, 2018). Thus, the spillover effect from Goodyear to Kumho tire was expected to exist. Data was collected from students in a southeast university (N = 675). To investigate the effect of perceived sponsor-event fit on sponsorship effectiveness variables, a multiple regression analysis was conducted. After controlling for four compounding variables (i.e., team identification, familiarity of sponsor and property, and product involvement), perceived sponsor-event fit explained a significant amount of the variance both in sponsor recognition (R-square change =.072, F(5, 669) = 94.75, p < .001) and in purchase intention to sponsor product (R-square change = .102, F(5, 669) = 34.41, p < .001). A post hoc, independent-samples t-test was then conducted to compare the perceived sponsor-event fit of the Kumho Tire for the participants who could recall Goodyear’s sponsorship in the NBA and those who could not. There was not a significant difference in the scores for the participants who could recall (M = 2.43, SD = 1.22) and those who could not (M = 2.39, SD = 1.25; t(673) = .364, p = .714), indicating the presence of a confusion, namely a spillover effect. Overall, the findings supported the hypothesized spillover effect on sponsorship effectiveness. Replication studies are suggested to further explore the interaction between sponsors in the context of multiple sponsors.