
SPORT SPONSORSHIP & PURCHASE INTENTION: EXAMINING THE ROLES OF SPONSOR'S ALTRUISM, RECOGNITION AND TEAM ACHIEVEMENT

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Abstract

AIM OF ABSTRACT/PAPER - RESEARCH QUESTION

Sponsorship can be defined as “an investment, in cash or in kind, in an activity, in return for access to the exploitable commercial potential associated with that activity” (Meenaghan, 2001). Sport sponsorship, a main type of sponsorship, involves sponsoring sport associations, teams, athletes, leagues etc (Tsiotsou & Alexandris, 2009). Regardless of the evident importance of sponsorship, relatively few attempts have been made to measure and understand its effects (Meenaghan, 2001). This study examines the impact of sponsor identification, perceived sponsor's altruism and the sponsored team's success on purchase intention. In addition, consistent with sponsorship literature, the antecedents of domain involvement and team attachment were investigated, for predicting sponsor recognition among football fans.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Following the sponsorship literature, it is important to investigate whether sponsorship activity produces the desired outcomes, as well as, to explore the factors that influence them. Team attachment and domain involvement, are among the main antecedents factors which play a crucial role in the formation of sponsorship outcomes and by extension in sponsorship effectiveness (Tsiotsou & Alexandris, 2009). Team attachment refers to psychological connection of consumers to a sports team, and it's important in relation to consumer behaviors and their intentions (Tsiotsou & Alexandris, 2009). Domain involvement is the relation with exposure to and attention for the sponsorship, i.e. the number of hours fans spend watching their team on television or attending its matches on field. (Olson, 2010). Academic research

proposed a variety of attitudinal and behavioral constructs, such as recognition rates, sponsor image, purchase intentions and word of mouth communication, as high level sponsorship effects (Meenaghan, 2001;Olson, 2010). Additionally, the mediating role of constructs such as sponsor's altruism (Olson, 2010) and sponsored team's degree of success (Wakefield & Bennett,2010) have been shown to influence sponsorships outcomes. However, research regarding sponsorship evaluation is not well established, as the interactions between constructs proposed are complex and dynamic.

METHODOLOGY, RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA ANALYSIS

A qualitative method was used for the purpose of this study and questionnaires were collected from fans of a major professional football team in Greece. The questionnaires were distributed to nine major team's fan clubs by a team of 5 researchers, and were completed in the presence of the surveyors. The sampling population was chosen because fan clubs members are a major part of football club's fan base. A total of 618 questionnaires were successfully completed and analyzed by means of the SPSS.

RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS/CONCLUSIONS

Sponsor Recognition is positively linked with domain involvement and team attachment. The more involved people are in the domain of football and the more closely they follow their favorite team, the more likely it is that they recognize the sponsors of their team. Nevertheless, overall sponsor recognition is quite low (21%) and no one could recall (aided recall) more than 57% of the team's sponsors. As far as team attachment is concerned, two significantly distinct groups of fans were found: those who watch the games from TV and get updates from the mass media and those who attend their team's games at the field. Team attachment that is limited to TV watching is not significantly related to sponsor recognition.

Sponsor recognition was not found to have a noteworthy significant effect on purchase intention. This is consistent with the overall low sponsor recognition. Perceived sponsor altruism and perceived team performance are the main factors that significantly explain the intention to purchase products or services offered by the sponsors of a team. We have identified four distinct factors for sponsor altruism (i.e. willingness to serve, legitimate commercial interest, exploitation of the team, strong corporate image) and two for team performance (i.e. performance in the field, financial performance-value for money). Interestingly enough, perceiving the sponsor as trying to exploit the team, has no significant effect (negative, obviously) on the intention to purchase the sponsors' products/services. Both factors of performance along with willingness to

serve the team and strong corporate image are the factors that affect purchase intention.

Sponsor recognition is positively linked with higher team involvement and attachment; however, sponsor recognition do not show a noteworthy significant effect on purchase intention. On the other hand, perceived altruism significantly affects purchase intention. Therefore, it is advisable that companies involved in sport sponsorship should collectively make an effort to advance the image of this type of commercial communication.

References

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