

The Influence of Identification with Sports Teams on Consumers' Attitudes toward the Sponsor or Purchase Intentions

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Abstract

Introduction

Football fans often show high emotional solidarity with their sports teams or sports club. Therefore, they are often characterized by irrational and loyal consumer behaviour towards products of their club (e.g. tickets, merchandising products). However, so far it couldn't be clarified if this is only the case for products being directly connected with the club or else if these effects are also related to offers indirectly associated to the club. This concerns especially products of club sponsors. Results of market research indicate that many football sponsors achieve high levels of awareness. However, research on the effect of sponsorship on consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions is lacking. But it seems more and more to be necessary to analyse effects on attitude towards the sponsor and intent to buy the sponsor's products because both are related much closer to actual behaviour than awareness. Therefore, the purpose of this speech is to analyse, how far the identification of fans with their football team or football club influences the attitude towards the sponsor and the intent to buy particular products of club sponsors. Thus, it observes a rather neglected construct of sponsorship research (e.g. Madrigal, 2000, Huber & Matthes, 2007).

Theoretical Approach

To evaluate the relation a cause-and-effect chain was developed. It is able to show the triangular relationship between football club, fan and sponsor in an adequate way and reflects the following presumption: The more a fan identifies with a sports team the more does he feel obligated to reciprocate to the sponsor of the club, which is expressed by an intent to buy or an actual purchase of products of club sponsors.

Method

An empirical study was conducted to test the theoretically developed relations. It was based on an already performed study in which primary relationships could be confirmed (cf. Schlesinger, Günzel & Nagel, in print). However, the theoretical model was expanded by the variable "attitude" and the operationalization of the particular constructs were specified. The postulated model was empirically tested with regard to

the sponsorship of a German football club of the highest division. The total random sampling of $n = 2.371$ was generated through an online questionnaire on the club website.

Results

The results demonstrate that consumers' attitudes toward the sponsor had an influence on their intention to purchase products of the sponsor. Further, the results show that the identification with the football club influenced consumers' attitudes toward the sponsor of the club or purchase intentions. The credibility of the sponsorship activity could be confirmed as moderating variable for the success of a sponsorship.

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