

How winning or losing influences sponsorship effects: an examination of birging and corging

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Abstract keywords

Sport Marketing, Sponsorship, BIRGing, CORGing

Aim of abstract/paper - research question

The purpose of the study is to examine the influence of winning or losing on sponsorship effects in intercollegiate sports such as basketball. The current study is one of the first known attempts to experimentally examine the influence of winning on sport consumers.

Theoretical background or literature review*

Sport sponsorship spending has increased tremendously over the last few decades and projected worldwide sponsorship spending in 2011 was \$48 billion. Global companies have invested significant amounts of money in sport sponsorship to achieve marketing goals. For example, McDonald's recently renewed its sponsorship with The Olympic Partner (TOP) from 2014 to 2020 for an estimated \$180 and \$200 million (Mickle, 2011). While many high-profile companies sponsor various professional sports, sponsors also support amateur athletes, such as intercollegiate sports. In the United States, a few large companies (e.g., Nike, adidas, Under Armour) compete to become the official sponsor of universities and their varsity sport teams.

Because sponsors invest an abundance of money in sport sponsorship, evaluating sponsorship effects (i.e., return on investment or return on sponsorship) is critical and scholars have investigated the factors influencing sponsorship effects (e.g., Jensen & Hsu, 2011). In addition, companies spend money to increase brand awareness, brand image, and to increase sales (e.g., Tomasini, Frye, & Stotlar, 2004). Sponsorship research has also been extended into college sports. For example, Lee and Pedersen (2011) examined the impact of sport fandom and the number of visits to sporting events. According to that study, it was found that sport identification, sport fandom, number of visits, and exposure frequency all influence sponsorship effects.

Wann and Branscombe (1990) introduced the concept of basking-in-reflected-glory (BIRGing) and cutting-off-reflected-failure (CORFing). BIRGing and CORFing have been analyzed and conclusions suggest that these concepts influence sport fans' identification and behaviors (e.g., Campbell, Aiken, & Kent, 2004). For example, sport fans wear team jerseys to associate themselves with their favorite team during successful campaigns which evoke feelings of pride leading fans to become more involved with a team.

Therefore, greater sport sponsorship effects could be observed among sport fans when their favorite team wins games as compared to when the same team loses games. Little is known about BIRGing and CORFing effects on sport sponsorship to date.

Based on the literature review and purpose of study, the researchers suggest the following research hypotheses:

H1: Sponsorship effects are influenced by winning or losing of sponsoring team.

H2: Sponsorship effects are influenced by team identification among sport fans.

H3: Sponsorship effects are influenced by the number of visits of sponsoring team's games.

Methodology, research design and data analysis

This study was conducted at Indiana University (IU), a Big Ten Conference institution located in the Midwest of the United States. IU's basketball program has been built on a tradition of winning (e.g., NCAA National Championships in 1940, 1953, 1976, 1981, and 1987); however, the basketball team had struggled over the last several years. But in the 2011-12 season basketball enjoyed a successful season and its national ranking reached 15th in the NCAA Division I. The team proceeded to the "Sweet 16" in the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 2002. Therefore, the fans of IU basketball have experienced major increases in excitement in the current season as compared to the last few seasons.

Therefore, this study employed a longitudinal study method to collect data. The data collection involved both a losing season and a winning season. Surveys were administered for the two data collection periods and subjects were university students in the same major at IU. A total of 175 subjects participated in the first surveys and another 200 subjects will participate in the second survey. During both data collections the same survey was utilized that asked questions about (1) basic demographics, (2) team identification, and (3) the number of visits to basketball games. To measure sponsorship effects, brand recall and attitude toward the brand questions were asked of the subjects. adidas was selected as the sponsoring brand in this study because adidas is a main sponsor for IU athletic teams. In addition, both surveys used an identical on-line survey tool.

Results, discussion and implications/conclusions**

Because data collection for the second time period is still ongoing, the results will be forthcoming and available soon. Findings of this study will highlight the predictive utility of winning as an important element in sponsorship. The theoretical and practical implications of the results are discussed, along with future directions for research.

References – limited to 5

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