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## Introduction to special issue on sport marketing and sponsorship

Sponsorship refers to “cash or in-kind fee paid to a property (typically in sports, arts, entertainment, or causes) in return for access to the exploitable commercial potential of that property” (IEG, 2017: p.1). In 2018, brands spent more than \$65 billion to acquire sponsorship rights for different properties across the world, with the highest spending in North America at \$24.2 billion and Europe at \$17.6 billion (IEG, 2018). Sports properties account for about 70% of all sponsorship spending. While obtaining sponsorship rights is important, brands also need to understand sponsorship-linked marketing in terms of consumer response to sponsors or image transfer mechanisms as well as on management and strategy in the sponsorship process (Cornwell & Kwon, 2020).

This special issue of the *Journal of Business Research* features ten select papers from the 2018 *Sports Marketing & Sponsorship Conference* in San Diego, California. This biennial conference aims to bring together scholars from around the world to present and discuss current research on topics related to sponsorship. The articles in this special issue provide insight on sponsorship research and practice in North America and Europe and employ a diversity of quantitative research approaches, including experimental research, field research, survey research, and longitudinal secondary data research. The papers fit within at least one of three broad themes, with many papers supporting research in more than one of the following: (1) understanding consumer response to sponsorship, (2) examination of sports property image transfer, and (3) management of sponsorship strategies. Below, we outline the research themes and provide a summary of each paper.

### (1) Understanding Consumer Response to Sponsorship

The first three articles in this special issue examine the underlying psychological processes that influence fan attitudes toward sponsors. Specifically, the cognitive and emotional mechanisms that lead to negative transfer effects in the sponsorship of a rival team (Bee, King, & Stornelli, 2021), the role of schadenfreude within rivalries and sponsorships of rival teams (Tyler, Cobbs, Nichols, & Dalakas, 2021), and how regulatory fit and sponsor motives influence attitudes toward the sponsor in a CSR-linked sponsorship (Habitzreuter & Koenigstorfer, 2021).

Bee, King, and Stornelli (2021) theoretically and empirically demonstrate the cognitive and emotional mechanisms through which fans respond to a rival team sponsorship. Using the perspectives of social identity theory (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and cognitive appraisal theory (e.g., Scherer, 1999), the authors determined that highly identified fans perceive a rival sponsorship as threatening to their in-group identity which leads to the specific emotions of anger and fear.

Interestingly, however, anger but not fear mediated the effect of threat on subsequent attitudes and intentions toward the sponsor. The authors propose these effects can be explained through research on the appraisal tendency framework (e.g., Lerner & Tiedens, 2006) where anger tends to be punitive and prompts people to take action, whereas fear is often characterized by caution and tentativeness. Their research identified a novel mechanism through which negative transfer effects occur and highlights the importance in identifying specific emotional responses rather than only using valence-based responses.

Tyler et al. (2021) use a cognition-emotion framework to understand the role of schadenfreude (joy at others' misfortune) within rivalries (Study 1) and sponsorships of rival teams (Study 2). In their first study, the authors connect cognitive appraisals to a set of previously developed rivalry antecedents (Tyler & Cobbs, 2015) to determine that unfairness and cultural/team value differences are most strongly associated with generating schadenfreude in the context of sports team rivalries. In a rivalry game sponsorship context (vs. sponsorship of a rival team), their second study identified perceived sincerity of the sponsoring brand as a mechanism through which schadenfreude positively influences sponsorship outcomes. However, although the authors included the two salient rivalry antecedents identified in the first study as moderators of the relationship between schadenfreude and perceived sincerity, the antecedents did not moderate the relationship as expected. Their findings in the context of a rivalry game sponsorship provide an interesting contrast to previous research that has demonstrated that schadenfreude toward a rival leads to negative outcomes for brands sponsoring a rival team.

In the context of a CSR-linked event sponsorship, Habitzreuter and Koenigstorfer (2021) examined how fans' regulatory fit influenced perceived sponsor motives and subsequent attitudes toward the sponsor. Across two experiments, the authors manipulated goal orientation with a sponsorship message that focused on either concern about promoting the environment or concern about protecting the environment and manipulated (Study 1) and measured (Study 2) regulatory focus (gain vs. loss mindset). Their findings suggest that regulatory fit (i.e., when goal orientation and regulatory focus “fit” or match) induces higher levels of perceived philanthropic motives (i.e., the sponsor has a genuine interest in a cause) towards sponsors, which in turn, leads to more favorable attitudes toward the sponsor.

### (2) Sports Property Image Transfer

Sponsorship research has established that the image or meanings associated with a sports property transfer to sponsoring brands (Gwinner & Eaton, 1999; Speed & Thompson, 2000). The next set of articles in

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this special issue expand on the factors that affect the image transfer process and resulting sponsor outcomes with an examination of analogical articulation (Madrigal & King, 2021), concurrent sponsorships (Boronczyk & Breuer, 2021), human brands (Hofmann, Schnittka, Johnen, & Kottemann, 2021), and brand heritage (Rose, Rose, Merchant, & Orth, 2021).

Sponsorship image transfer is improved when consumers perceive a fit (i.e., congruent sponsorship). Madrigal and King (2021) focus on how brands can improve perceptions of their partnership with a sports property when image characteristics do not naturally align (i.e., incongruent sponsorship). The authors examine the process through which analogical articulation, a strategy which associates similarities between a sponsoring brand and a sports property, improves fit perceptions between a brand sponsor and a sports property. Their results confirm that analogical articulation improves perceptions of fit and that this process relies on memory retrieval, analogical mapping, and analogical reasoning.

Boronczyk and Breuer (2021) expand research on brand transfer associations by considering image transfer between concurrent sponsors. In an effort to more accurately reflect a consumer's viewing environment, the authors used incidental brand exposure in a manipulated video context to display sponsor information. The authors found that image transfer occurs between concurrent sponsors, specifically there was a direct transfer of image characteristics (i.e., attitudes and personality traits) from a concurrent sponsor to the focal sponsor and an indirect transfer of personality traits from the cosponsor through the sports property (i.e., event image) to the focal sponsor.

Hofmann et al. (2021) consider how factors associated with human brand image (e.g., professional athlete) influence market value. The authors consider how performance-based (e.g., talent, expertise) and popularity-based (e.g., press releases, social media) attributes influence the favorability of the player's brand image and market value. Through a combination of primary and secondary data, their research indicates that positive brand image enhances the market value of human brands and that both performance-based and popularity-based factors determine positive brand image. Interestingly, popularity-based attributes mediate the impact of performance-based attributes on the market value of human brands.

Rose et al. (2021) developed a measure to assess sports brand heritage and examine how sports brand heritage facilitates image transfer effects to sponsoring brands. Sports brand heritage includes the history and on-going achievements of a sports team. The first three studies focus on the development and validation of the following five dimensions of sports team heritage: athletes, coaches, symbols, stadium, and rituals. The final two studies experimentally demonstrate that highlighting past successes of sports team heritage positively influences attitudes toward a sports team and the sponsoring brand.

### (3) Management of Sponsorship Strategies

Sponsorship is a business investment (Crimmins & Horn, 1996). Managers devote considerable time and money evaluating sponsorship opportunities, managing sponsorship partnerships and relationships, assessing sponsorship impact, leveraging and activating sponsorship communications, and/or protecting official sponsors from ambush marketing. The final three articles in this special issue examine issues related to managerial decision-making: ambush marketing (Wolfsteiner, Grohs, & Reisinger, 2021), fan benefits of sponsorship activation (Dreisbach, Woisetschlager, Backhaus, & Cornwell, 2021), and factors that influence the dissolution of sponsor partnerships (Jensen & Cornwell, 2021).

Ambush marketing entails marketing activities that brands use to convey a connection with a sports property without having an official sponsorship agreement with them (Koenigstorfer & Urich, 2017; Wolfsteiner, Grohs, & Wagner, 2015). Not surprisingly, this practice causes concern to both properties and official sponsors who have been looking for ways to combat it successfully. The research of Wolfsteiner,

Grohs, and Reisinger (2021) provides insight regarding factors that influence the potential effectiveness of official sponsors disclosing ambush marketing activities. Based on three experiments, the authors find that when a highly accessible negative communication frame (e.g., name and shame) is used to disclose and denounce ambush marketers, that event sponsors benefit and ambush marketers are negatively affected. Furthermore, the authors also find that this effect is due to increased goodwill for official event sponsors compared to ambush marketers.

As sponsoring brands have gradually been shifting their interest from exposure and impressions to engagement and activations, sponsorship research needs to also more thoroughly examine sponsorship activations. Based on an examination of 68 real-world sponsorship activation campaigns, Dreisbach et al. (2021) developed a typology of the benefits offered to fans as part of sales-oriented activation campaigns. Their analysis identified the following three categories of benefits offered to fans of a sponsored property: financial (e.g., discounted tickets), symbolic (e.g., fan photo event), and social (e.g., support of a local club). Based on an experimental field study of 1,356 soccer fans, the authors found that all three types of fan benefits improve outcomes for sponsors, but that symbolic and social benefits result in slightly better sponsor outcomes than financial benefits. These activation campaign-related factors also positively influenced inferences fans make about a sponsor's altruistic (vs. egoistic) motivations, which, in turn, favorably affects sponsor outcomes.

The paper by Jensen and Cornwell (2021) provides much needed insight on sponsorship relationship management, an area that has been identified as significant but under researched (Cornwell & Kwon, 2020). Their study investigated the factors that cause the dissolution of sponsorship-related horizontal marketing partnerships, which can be especially beneficial for partners to monitor to ensure long-term partnerships. Through an analysis of a longitudinal dataset of 136 U.S.-based title sponsorships, the authors identified several predictors of either the dissolution or persistence of such sponsorship relationships. Notably, the dissolution is less likely with regional proximity, the brand/company name as title sponsor (vs. name in title or presenting sponsor), a B2B product/company sponsor (vs. B2C), lower tech firms as sponsors.

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