The Effect of Sponsor’s Brand on Consumer–Brand Relationship in Sport Sponsorship

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of brand awareness, image, and perceived quality on the consumer–brand relationship by using survey data collected from 560 sports fans to compare their attitudes towards a corporate sponsor prior to and following the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia soccer event. The study tests nine hypotheses to explain consumer attitude formation prior to and following the sponsored sports event. This study was organized as a model that was developed to illustrate the manner in which brand awareness, image, and perceived quality of a sponsor’s brand would have positive effects on consumer–brand relationship satisfaction and brand commitment, and how that brand commitment and satisfaction would positively affect brand loyalty. Therefore, since brand awareness, image, and perceived quality can amplify limitations on consumers’ brand perception and decision-making behaviors, the knowledge provided by this conceptual model is likely to help both brand managers and practitioners in the spectator sports industry better understand consumer perceptions of sports sponsorship events as well as help them develop tools to design sports sponsorship brand programs that are more effective at targeting specific consumers.

Keywords: Sports Sponsorship, Brand Awareness, Brand Image, Perceived Quality, Consumer–Brand Relationship Satisfaction, Brand Commitment, Brand Loyalty

I. Introduction

Among sports marketing tools, sponsorship is emerging as a prominent means of leveraging favorable images, thereby increasing awareness and understanding of firms and their products. This recent upsurge of interest in sports sponsorship and its marketing value has led to rapid growth in sponsorship investment outlays (Cornwell, Weeks, & Roy, 2005; Meenaghan, 2005; Olson, 2010). Multinational companies in particular have taken great interest in global sporting events because such marketing transcends cultural barriers in an increasingly competitive world economy. Moreover, not only is the effectiveness of marketing via traditional media weakening (Westberg, Stavros, & Wilson, 2011), but companies also increasingly view sports sponsorship as a way to grow brand equity (Wilson, 1997).

Many companies use sponsorship to increase product
and brand awareness as well as to strengthen the association between their brands and targeted consumers. Sponsorship also helps firms differentiate themselves from their competitors (Lagae, 2003) and reinforces their images while taking advantage of opportunities to promote products or make sales (Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 2000). For these reasons, sponsorship has become an increasingly popular tool for increasing brand exposure and strategic marketing communication, shaping consumer attitudes and managing brand equity (Chavanat, Martinent, & Ferrand, 2009; Meenaghan, 2005). These trends are reinforced by the global scope of professional sports, and sports sponsorship has therefore become crucial to companies seeking to leverage the credibility and brand awareness that sponsorship brings to consumers, which represents great value in terms of corporate marketing strategy (Cornwell, Weeks, & Roy, 2005; McDaniel, 1999).

There is a great need for studies that examine the effects of sponsorship on the relation between consumers and brands by comparing consumer attitudes towards sponsoring brands prior to and following sports events. Accordingly, the present study examines the significance of sponsorship from a marketing perspective by comparing consumer responses to an official sponsor’s brand prior to and following the 2010 World Cup soccer tournament. The study investigates the effects of brand awareness, image, and perceived quality on consumer–brand relationship satisfaction and brand commitment as well as the effects of this relationship on building brand loyalty. The empirical results of this study should help marketers develop guidelines for pursuing sports sponsorship as a marketing strategy.

II. Literature Review and Research Hypotheses

A. Sports Sponsorship Effectiveness and the Consumer–Brand Relationship

Many international corporations and scholars have recognized that sponsorship activities transfer the image of the sponsored event or property to the sponsor and benefit the image of the sponsoring company (Grohs, Wagner, & Vsetewcka, 2004; Gwinner & Bennett, 2008; Quester & Thompson, 2001; Woodside & Summers, 2010). The IEG sponsorship report of 2018 predicted that sponsorship spending in 2018 would amount to USD 65.8 billion, up from USD 62.7 billion a year earlier (see www.sponsorship.com).

Sports sponsorship is one of the fastest growing areas of sponsorship promotion and is rightly regarded as an intangible asset because it involves brand image, brand loyalty, and corporate image (Cornwell & Coote, 2005; Koo et al., 2006; McDaniel, 1999), which are intangible but necessary assets for establishing favorable relationships between consumers and companies and for strengthening relationships between consumers and brands. One reviewer mentioned that when public firms such as Hyundai announce their sponsorship investments, investors (shareholders) react positively and negatively based on the contract details, previous partnerships, and the firm’s financial indicators, as well as the fit between the two parties. Some research suggests, for example, that adding sports sponsorship to the marketing communication mix helps corporations build customer brand awareness and positive brand attitudes toward their corporate brands (Koo et al., 2006). Sports sponsorship and sponsorship-linked marketing campaigns have become valuable tools for communicating symbolic brand associations as part of the process of building and increasing customer-based brand equity (Roy & Cornwell, 2004) or changing the personality of a sponsor’s brand (Rosenberger & Donahay, 2008; Speed & Thompson, 2000). Sponsorship is therefore a form of support for events (in the case at hand, sports events) that may include brand image reinforcement, growth of brand awareness, and growth
Sponsorship is one of the most effective communication channels for reaching target audiences and consumers who attend sports events (Alexandris, Tsaousi, & James, 2007; Choi, Tsuji, Hutchinson, & Bouchet, 2011) and for establishing brand awareness, brand preference, and positive brand images (Chavanat, Martinent, & Ferrand, 2009; Gwinner & Eaton, 1999; Koo et al., 2006). Choi et al. (2011) have provided evidence that sponsors who align with sporting events or organizations benefit from their efforts through brand awareness, perception, brand loyalty, repurchase intention, organizational promotion, and increased sales.

The objective of sports sponsorship is to build corporate reputation, positive brand awareness, and a positive brand image (Cornwell & Coote, 2005; Koo et al., 2006). Sponsors can generate brand knowledge that links a brand to an associative network in the consumer’s mind (Keller, 2003). Sports sponsorship communication creates a brand association in the mind of the consumer by linking a brand to the sponsored activity (Gwinner & Eaton, 1999). Several recent studies have focused on sports sponsorship to measure its effectiveness relative to such variables as increasing brand awareness, improving brand image, and increasing sales (Cornwell & Coote, 2005; Gwinner & Eaton, 1999; Koo et al., 2006). Others have focused on the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral impacts of sponsorship (Chavanat, Martinent, & Ferrand, 2009; Gwinner & Bennett, 2008; Koo et al., 2006). Still others have focused on linking predeterminant factors (e.g., brand image, perception, and perceived quality) pertaining to sponsoring brands to satisfaction with sports events, customer satisfaction, commitment, and brand loyalty (An & Noh, 2009; Chen et al., 2012; Theodorakis, Alexandris, & Ko, 2011).

Much general sponsorship research is focused on how sponsorship can be used to create consumer awareness, recall, and recognition (Chadwick & Thwaites, 2005; Rifon, Choi, Trimble, & Hariong, 2004; Tripodi et al., 2003). Nevertheless, some researchers have also considered affective outcomes of sponsorship such as attitude, liking, preference, psychological attachment, and favorable thoughts (Becker-Olsen & Simmons, 2002; Ruth & Simonin, 2003). Several sports marketing studies have examined the relationship between sports sponsorship and purchase intention (Chavanat, Martinent, & Ferrand, 2009; Cornwell & Coote, 2005; Roy & Cornwell, 2004).

A consumer–brand relationship is an association that is built through a process in which consumers and brands, as two equal parties, contribute to and interact with each other in a marketplace (Fournier, 1998). Previous models of the consumer–brand relationship posit a hierarchy of common components: a cognitive component (attention, awareness, comprehension, beliefs and opinions, and learning), an affective component (evaluation, attitude, feeling, conviction, and yielding), and a conative component (intention, behavior, and action). These components contribute to establishing and maintaining relationships between consumers and brands (Chavanat, Martinent, & Ferrand, 2009). Key factors that affect the consumer–brand relationship include purchasing experience, emotional experience, act experience, cognitive beliefs, and brand commitment (Evard & Aurier, 1996; Fournier, 1998). Poon and Prendergast (2006) considered the cognitive mechanism and introduced a hierarchy consisting of model-cognition (perceived quality), affect (brand attitude), and experience (purchase intention).

The consumer–brand relationship that is built through consumers recognizing and committing to brands is closely related to the formation of brand loyalty. While it is widely recognized that sponsorship, presumably including sports sponsorship, can help to build brand image through the process of image transfer, to date there has been no attempt to understand the holistic consumer–brand relationship involved in sports sponsorship. Therefore, this study examines changes in the consumer–brand relationship and brand loyalty by measuring them before and after sports sponsorship of a major sports event.
B. Hypotheses

This study is designed to identify and measure the effects of sports sponsorship by examining changes in consumer attitudes towards a sponsor’s brand prior to and following an event at which such sponsorship occurs. Thus, this study seeks an answer to the following research question:

RQ: Will the values generated by this study’s suggested causal relationship (e.g., brand awareness, image, quality, satisfaction, commitment, and loyalty) prior to sponsorship of a given event differ from what they are following such an event?

by testing the hypotheses that follow.

Sports sponsorship outcomes are considered as behavioral and attitudinal outcomes, and include the following: purchase behavior, consumer emotions, and attitudes towards a sponsoring brand; brand associations; brand equity; brand loyalty; and purchase intentions (Cornwell, Weeks, & Roy, 2005; Woodside & Summers, 2010). Brand loyalty leads consumers to repeat purchases over a long-time span or to exhibit more favorable responses to a specific brand (Grover & Srinivasan, 1992; Keller, 2001). Brand loyalty is determined by many factors, including corporate sponsorship (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Madrigal, 2001). Several studies have suggested that loyalty, when based on customer experience, information, and product or brand knowledge, reduces marketing costs and brings more new customers, greater search motivation, favorable word-of-mouth, greater resistance to competitor overtures, repeat purchases, greater market share, and higher relative prices (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2002; Woodside & Summers, 2010).

Commitment is defined as the attitudinal component of loyalty (Bee & Havitz, 2010). As such, in a professional sports context, commitment is closely related to behavioral loyalty (Bee & Havitz, 2010). Brand commitment also supports the decision not to buy another company’s brand. A higher level of brand commitment is expected to have positive effects on the formation of a consumer-brand relationship as well as brand loyalty.

Satisfaction can be defined as “a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfillment” (Oliver, 1999, p. 13). In-group favoritism may influence the level of satisfaction highly-identified sports fans have when interacting with a sponsoring corporation and may generate greater satisfaction with the sponsor (Gwinner & Swanson, 2003). When consumers prefer a certain brand on a continuing basis and feel satisfied with that brand, the consumer-sponsoring-brand relationship satisfaction is reinforced, which supports the formation of brand loyalty. Sports spectators with positive brand perceptions (e.g., positive brand image, quality, or awareness) tend to express higher levels of satisfaction with the sponsor’s chosen event (Chen et al., 2012).

Consumer brand loyalty accompanies commitment and trust in a brand, which are the key factors influencing the consumer-brand relationship, thus ensuring constant profit and increasing market share (Farrelly & Quester, 2005). This study therefore chooses sponsoring brand loyalty, purchase intention towards sponsoring brands’ products, and purchase frequency as variables of interest because of their great importance to marketers (Woodside & Summers, 2010). Consumer brand loyalty that results from consumer-sponsoring-brand relationship satisfaction and commitment develops over time. Consumer awareness of a specific brand apparently supports brand commitment and affects consumer-sponsoring-brand relationship satisfaction, which should influence the formation of brand loyalty, yielding the following hypotheses:

H1. Consumer-sponsoring-brand relationship satisfaction has a stronger direct effect on sponsoring brand loyalty following a sports sponsorship event than prior to that event.

H2. Sponsoring brand commitment has a stronger direct effect on sponsoring brand loyalty following a sports sponsorship event than prior to that event.

A relationship is an interdependent and intersatisfying product of constant interaction that is built through active communication between two parties. Consumers are also more likely to build a relationship with a brand when the relationship is expected to offer
benefits and value. Moreover, if consumers can expect satisfaction from such a relationship, or are already satisfied with the relationship, the relationship tends to solidify. For forming such a consumer–brand relationship, affective and social-emotive attachment, commitment, and supportive cognitive beliefs on the part of consumers are the most significant contributing factors (Blackston, 1993; Fournier, 1998).

Brand commitment is a deep emotional attachment with a specific brand and often results in a long-term relationship between the consumer and the brand (Desai & Raju, 2007; Fournier, 1998). Brand commitment can also include brand attachment (Coulter, Price, & Feick, 2003; Warrington & Shim, 2000); in particular, Warrington and Shim regard brand commitment as an affective and psychological attachment to a certain brand in a certain product category. Establishing brand commitment involves forming an emotional link with a specific brand (Fountain, Fish, & Charters, 2008). Hence, consumer–brand relationship satisfaction is expected to have a positive association with the consumer’s brand commitment. These observations lead to the following hypothesis:

**H3.** Consumer–brand relationship satisfaction has a positive effect on brand commitment both prior to and following sports sponsorship.

Sponsorship is considered an efficient tool for increasing customer awareness of a brand (Rifon, Choi, Trimble, & Hairong, 2004; Speed & Thompson, 2000; Woodside & Summers, 2001). Brand awareness provides consumers with implications or clues that readily remind them of certain brands, which is very important because this involves recalling specific brand names and product information from a consumer’s long-term memory (Keller, 2001). As knowledge of a brand increases, the perceived functional and emotional risks of choosing that brand decrease (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2002). In other words, brand awareness affects cognitive and emotional states, and such states determine the solidity of the consumer–brand relationship (Koo et al., 2006; Pope & Voges, 2000). It seems clear that consumer perception and awareness of a brand play a role in generating brand satisfaction and commitment.

Hence, brand awareness is expected to have a positive association with consumer–brand relationship satisfaction and consumer commitment. These observations lead to the following hypotheses:

**H4.** Sponsoring brand awareness has a stronger positive effect on consumer–brand relationship satisfaction following a sports sponsorship event than prior to that event.

**H5.** Sponsoring brand awareness has a stronger positive effect on brand commitment following a sports sponsorship event than prior to that event.

Brand image is defined “in terms of perceptions of a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory” (Keller, 1993, p. 3). Many studies have suggested that brand image can be an important information cue for consumers in evaluating a product (Hutchinson, Kalyan, & Mantrala, 1994; Nedungadi, Chattopadhyay, & Muthukrishnan, 2001). The major goal of a sports sponsorship campaign is to transfer a brand image (Pope & Voges, 2000), increasing the likelihood that consumers will form long-term associations between images of the sponsored entity and the sponsoring company (Westberg, Stavros, & Wilson, 2011). Pope and Voges (2000) indicated that sports sponsorship enhances the corporate image. Researchers have suggested that sponsorship activities transfer the image of a sponsored event or property to the sponsor, thus benefiting the image of the sponsoring company (Gwinner & Bennett, 2008; Quester & Thompson, 2001; Woodside & Summers, 2010). Woodside and Summers (2010) pointed out that image transfer through sponsorship occurs when preexisting associations regarding a property become linked in memory with the sponsored brand.

Brand image is one of most important factors affecting purchase behavior, and customer satisfaction regarding a corporate image increases when it is linked with a sports event through sponsorship activities (Gwinner & Eaton, 1999; Keller, 1993; Pope & Voges, 2000). Hence, brand image is expected to have a positive association with consumer–brand relationship satisfaction following a sports sponsorship event than prior to that event.
satisfaction and consumer commitment. These observations lead to the following hypotheses:

**H6.** A sponsor’s brand image has a stronger positive effect on consumer–brand relationship satisfaction following a sports sponsorship event than prior to that event.

**H7.** A sponsor’s brand image has a stronger positive effect on brand commitment following a sports sponsorship event than prior to that event.

Previous studies have found that perceived quality has a positive effect on satisfaction with a sponsored event, customer satisfaction, brand commitment, and brand loyalty (An & Noh, 2009; Jeong, Ryu, & Brown, 2018; Koo et al., 2009; Lim, 2017; Theodorakis, Alexandris, & Ko, 2011). Perceived quality should lead consumers to trust and identify with a brand. Moreover, perceived quality is closely related to customer satisfaction, as consumers with higher quality perceptions also exhibit higher customer satisfaction (Beerli et al., 2004; Kennedy, Ferrell, & Leclair, 2001; Park, 2018; Teas & Agarwal, 2000). Perceived quality is attributed to a company’s brand through beliefs (Poon & Prendergast, 2006) and depends on the performance of the sponsoring entity (Pope, Voges, & Brown, 2009).

Poon and Prendergast (2006) observed that customers use both intrinsic and extrinsic cues to evaluate product quality. Intrinsic cues are related to a product’s features, while extrinsic cues can be communicated through sponsorship. Pyun, Kwon, & Lee (2011) found that people who exhibit or report high perceived brand quality are more likely to recognize a perceived global brand and are more likely to have watched a sports event sponsored by that brand. Hence, perceived brand quality is expected to have a positive association with consumer–brand relationship satisfaction and consumer commitment. These observations lead to the following hypotheses:

**H8.** The perceived quality of a sponsored product has a stronger positive effect on consumer–brand relationship satisfaction following a sports sponsorship event than prior to that event.

**H9.** The perceived quality of a sponsored product has a stronger positive effect on brand commitment following a sports sponsorship event than prior to that event.

The research model for our nine hypotheses is shown in Figure 1:

![Figure 1. Suggested Research Model](image-url)
III. Methods

A. Data Collection and Sampling

The study used the Hyundai-Kia Motors brand, an official World Cup sponsor, because the event appeals to dynamic, youthful, enthusiastic, and future-oriented customers who see soccer—not unlike the brand itself—as embodying these qualities. Thus, this brand and event were chosen because of the apparent similarity of the brand’s image to characteristics of the World Cup. Two surveys were conducted concerning Hyundai-Kia Motors’ brand during separate time periods—two months before the sponsored World Cup tournament in Russia, during the first week of May 2018, and two months after the event, during the last week of September 2018. A total of 560 sports fans were surveyed.

Three hundred of the 350 people (community members) contacted for the May survey returned the first study questionnaire (they were compensated with $5.00 gift cards to increase the response rate). The first part of the questionnaire included demographic questions and questions about the respondents’ interest in sports and intentions regarding the Korean soccer team’s games and was designed to determine their interest in sports and how often they watch the Korean soccer team play. The second part pertained to the World Cup sponsor’s brand. The eventual analysis included 241 respondents who had an appropriate interest in both. Fifty-nine questionnaires were deleted due to too many missing values, lack of an interest in sports, or a lack of plans to watch the tournament games.

In September 2018, the researcher contacted members who participated in the first survey and re-administered it in a second round with 78 new participants to address vacancies and the low response rate, among other things. The second sample produced 319 usable surveys (76% of the participants in the second round completed both surveys) that could be used to compare the tested variables in the earlier and later groups. The 319 respondents used for the eventual analysis showed the relevant interest and intentions. From the second survey, eleven questionnaires were deleted due to a high number of missing values or a lack of interest in sports, or because the respondent had not watched the Korean soccer team’s tournament games.

Demographic profile described in Table 1. The sample respondents comprised 260 men and 300 women, with 560 questionnaires being administered. Ages ranged from 20 years to more than 40 years; 210 subjects (37.5%) were 20–29 years of age, 180 (32.2%) were 30–39 years of age, and 170 (30.3%) were more than 40 years of age. One hundred ninety-five of the respondents were salaried workers (35%), 233 were college students (42%), and 132 had specialized jobs or ran their own businesses (24%).

B. Instrument Construction

This research modified previously developed scales to measure the following exogenous variables: brand awareness, brand image, and perceived quality (see Appendix A). The items were selected based

| Table 1. Demographic Profile |
|-----------------------------|
| Sex            | (n=560) | % |
| Man            | 260     | 46.4 |
| Woman          | 300     | 53.6 |
| Age            |         |     |
| 20–29          | 210     | 37.5 |
| 30–39          | 180     | 32.2 |
| 40–49          | 150     | 26.8 |
| Over 50        | 20      | .03 |
| Education level|         |     |
| High school    | 195     | 34.8 |
| College level degree | 233 | 42.0 |
| Graduate Level | 132     | 23.6 |
| Occupation     |         |     |
| Salary workers | 195     | 35   |
| Profession     | 132     | 23.6 |
| Own business   | 133     | 24   |
| Unemployed     | 100     | 17.4 |
| Monthly Income |         |     |
| Below $2,000   | 68      | 12   |
| $2–3,000       | 252     | 45   |
| $3–5,000       | 208     | 37   |
| Over $5000     | 32      | .6   |
on factor loadings, item total correlation, and item difficulty, while maintaining a multifaceted scale. Four items were selected to measure brand awareness—defined as a consumer’s understanding and feeling about a brand and as an initial stage in the formation of a consumer–brand relationship: rationality, quality, knowledge, and level of understanding (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2002; Johnson & Grayson, 2005; Zeithaml, 1988). Brand image is defined as a specific brand attribute and reflects a positive attitude toward brand characteristics (Keller, 2003). The brand image scale items (high quality brand, favorability, strength, and superiority) were taken from measures previously validated in the literature (Gwinner & Eaton, 1999; Keller, 1993), modified to fit the context of sports sponsorship. The perceived quality of a sponsor’s product is defined in terms of the consumer’s perception of product quality (Zeithaml, 1988) and was measured by four items: cognitive thinking or feeling about the product’s design, quality, performance, and function.

The sponsor’s brand relationship satisfaction was defined by fun feelings, usefulness, and satisfaction associated with the brand (Gwinner & Swanson, 2003; Oliver, 1999) and was measured by three items: enjoyable, useful, and satisfactory. Brand commitment was defined as an intention to maintain a brand relationship and was measured with four items taken from Aaker, Fournier, & Brasel (2004). The scale was selected to express the psychological construct of commitment set in a behaviorally intentional context.

Brand loyalty was defined as the frequency of preference for a certain brand leading to repeated purchases (Oliver, 1999). Three suitable measurement items (e.g., likeable, recommendation, and favorable opinion) were selected from previous studies (Oliver, 1999). Brand Loyalty was measured by three statements

| Construct                             | Survey Measures                                                                 |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sponsor’s Brand Awareness (SBA)       | I have difficulty in imagining this brand in my mind                             |
|                                       | I can recognize this brand among competing brands                               |
|                                       | I think that this brand is of high quality                                      |
|                                       | I feel good about using its brand.                                              |
| Sponsor’s Brand Image (SBI)           | This brand makes me feel good                                                   |
|                                       | I felt this brand is high quality brand                                         |
|                                       | I have favorable attitude toward this brand                                     |
|                                       | I feel strongly attracted to its brand                                          |
| Sponsor’s Brand Perceived Quality (SBPQ) | The brand is very reliable           |
|                                       | This brand is safe to use and consume                                           |
|                                       | This brand is of good quality                                                  |
| Sponsors’ Brand Relationship Satisfaction (SBRS) | Using this brand is a good experience for me                             |
|                                       | I really enjoy using this brand                                                 |
|                                       | I am satisfied about this brand                                                 |
| Sponsor’s Brand Commitment (SBI)      | I don’t have consider other brands because I have this one.                    |
|                                       | I want to keep using this brand                                                 |
|                                       | I want to maintain a long-term relationship with this brand                    |
|                                       | I enjoy my relationship with this brand, so I want to keep buying it.           |
| Sponsor’s Brand Loyalty (SBL)         | I willing to recommend this brand to others                                     |
|                                       | I have favorable opinion about this brand                                       |
|                                       | I like to use this brand in near future again                                  |


Appendix A
rating their level of agreement on 7-point Likert scales ('1' denoted strong disagreement and a rating of '7' denoted strong agreement).

VI. Results

A. Descriptive statistics

As shown in Table 2, all mean scores were greater than 3.0, ranging from a low of 2.9 to a high of 5.3. This indicates an overall positive response to the constructs. Significant differences were detected between the scores prior to and following the sports sponsorship for all constructs. Because maximum likelihood estimation (MLE) procedures were used, the normality assumption must not be severely violated (Curran, West, & Finch, 1996). It has been suggested that the mean of skewness and kurtosis should fall within a range of ±1.96 (Hair et al., 1998) and that guidelines for severe nonnormality are skewness > 3 and kurtosis > 10 (Kline 1998). This study’s data were thus reasonably normal.

B. Reliability and Validity Tests

We tested the scales for dimensionality, reliability, and validity using exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA; Bentler, 1992) before assessing the hypothesized relationships shown in Figure 1. Scale reliabilities were estimated using Cronbach’s alpha, as shown in Table 3. For all six constructs, Cronbach’s alpha exceeded the standard acceptance norm of .70. The average variance extracted (AVE) also satisfied the standard of 0.5, which means the measurement indexes exhibit convergent validity.

Table 3. Results of EFA and CFA

| Concepts                                  | Items | FL   | CR   | α    |
|-------------------------------------------|-------|------|------|------|
| Sponsor’s Brand Awareness (SBA)           | SBA1  | .85  | .92  | .95  |
|                                           | SBA2  | .85  |      |      |
|                                           | SBA3  | .86  |      |      |
|                                           | SBA4  | .92  |      |      |
| Sponsor’s Brand Image (SBI)               | SBI1  | .86  | .80  | .84  |
|                                           | SBI2  | .93  |      |      |
|                                           | SBI3  | .84  |      |      |
|                                           | SBI4  | .89  |      |      |
| Sponsor’s Brand Perceived Quality (SBPQ)  | SBPQ1 | .95  | .81  | .85  |
|                                           | SBPQ2 | .88  |      |      |
|                                           | SBPQ3 | .89  |      |      |
| Sponsors’ Brand Relationship Satisfaction (SBRS) | SBR1 | .84  | .89  | .94  |
|                                           | SBR2  | .91  |      |      |
|                                           | SBR3  | .87  |      |      |
| Sponsor’s Brand Commitment (SBC)          | SBC1  | .87  | .80  | .85  |
|                                           | SBC2  | .94  |      |      |
|                                           | SBC3  | .90  |      |      |
|                                           | SBC4  | .89  |      |      |
| Sponsor’s Brand Loyalty (SBL)             | SBL1  | .89  | .86  | .91  |
|                                           | SBL2  | .93  |      |      |
|                                           | SBL3  | .93  |      |      |

Notes: FL: Factor Loadings, CR: Composite Reliability

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of the Constructs

| Constructs | Prior (N=241) |   |   |   |   | Following (N=319) |   |   |   |
|------------|--------------|---|---|---|---|------------------|---|---|---|
|            | Mea n | S.D  | Mea n | S.D  | t-value |
| SBA        | 3.1   | .77  | 5.3   | .92  | -6.02** |
| SBI        | 4.2   | 1.2  | 4.8   | 1.1  | -6.12** |
| SBPQ       | 3.1   | 1.1  | 3.7   | 1.2  | -30.7** |
| SBRS       | 3.7   | 1.2  | 4.2   | 1.2  | -4.85** |
| SBC        | 2.9   | 1.1  | 3.5   | 1.2  | -5.79** |
| SBL        | 3.6   | 1.2  | 4.2   | 1.3  | -5.67** |

Notes: SBA: Sponsor’s Brand Awareness, SBI: Sponsor’s Brand Image, SBPQ: Sponsor’s Brand Perceived Quality, SBRS: Sponsor’s Brand Relationship Satisfaction, SBC: Sponsor’s Brand Commitment, SBL: Sponsor’s Brand Loyalty, ** p<.05
Fornell and Larcker (1981) listed three procedures for assessing convergent validity: the item reliability of each measure, the composite reliability of each construct, and the AVE (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Hair

| Construct | AVE | r   | $r^2$ | AVE/$r^2$ | C.V | D.V |
|-----------|-----|-----|-------|-----------|-----|-----|
| SBA       | .78 |      |       |           |     |     |
| vs. SBI   | .754 | .569 | 1.37  | ○         | ○   | ○   |
| vs. SBPQ  | .715 | .511 | 1.53  | ○         | ○   | ○   |
| vs. SBRQ  | .703 | .494 | 1.58  | ○         | ○   | ○   |
| vs. SBC   | .756 | .572 | 1.36  | ○         | ○   | ○   |
| vs. SBL   | .706 | .498 | 1.57  | ○         | ○   | ○   |
| SBI       | .73 |      |       |           |     |     |
| vs. SBA   | .754 | .569 | 1.28  | ○         | ○   | ○   |
| vs. SBPQ  | .698 | .487 | 1.50  | ○         | ○   | ○   |
| vs. SBRQ  | .737 | .543 | 1.35  | ○         | ○   | ○   |
| vs. SBC   | .656 | .430 | 1.70  | ○         | ○   | ○   |
| vs. SBL   | .732 | .536 | 1.36  | ○         | ○   | ○   |
| SBPQ      | .75 |      |       |           |     |     |
| vs. SBA   | .715 | .511 | 1.47  | ○         | ○   | ○   |
| vs. SBI   | .698 | .487 | 1.54  | ○         | ○   | ○   |
| vs. SBRQ  | .737 | .543 | 1.27  | ○         | ○   | ○   |
| vs. SBC   | .678 | .460 | 1.63  | ○         | ○   | ○   |
| vs. SBL   | .718 | .516 | 1.45  | ○         | ○   | ○   |
| SBRS      | .83 |      |       |           |     |     |
| vs. SBA   | .703 | .494 | 1.68  | ○         | ○   | ○   |
| vs. SBI   | .737 | .543 | 1.53  | ○         | ○   | ○   |
| vs. SBPQ  | .768 | .590 | 1.41  | ○         | ○   | ○   |
| vs. SBC   | .712 | .507 | 1.64  | ○         | ○   | ○   |
| vs. SBL   | .746 | .557 | 1.49  | ○         | ○   | ○   |
| SBC       | .69 |      |       |           |     |     |
| vs. SBA   | .756 | .572 | 1.21  | ○         | ○   | ○   |
| vs. SBI   | .656 | .430 | 1.61  | ○         | ○   | ○   |
| vs. SBPQ  | .678 | .460 | 1.50  | ○         | ○   | ○   |
| vs. SBRQ  | .712 | .507 | 1.36  | ○         | ○   | ○   |
| vs. SBL   | .763 | .582 | 1.19  | ○         | ○   | ○   |
| SBL       | .81 |      |       |           |     |     |
| vs. SBA   | .706 | .498 | 1.63  | ○         | ○   | ○   |
| vs. SBI   | .732 | .536 | 1.51  | ○         | ○   | ○   |
| vs. SBPQ  | .718 | .516 | 1.57  | ○         | ○   | ○   |
| vs. SBRQ  | .746 | .557 | 1.45  | ○         | ○   | ○   |
| vs. SBC   | .763 | .582 | 1.39  | ○         | ○   | ○   |

Note: AVE: Average Variance Extracted, $r$: correlation between factor of interest and remaining factors, $r^2$: squared correlation between factor of interest and remaining factors, C.V: Convergent Validity (AVE>.50), D.V: Discriminant Validity (AVE/$r^2$>1)
Hair et al. (1998) suggested that an item is significant if its factor loading is greater than 0.50. As shown in Table 3, the factor loadings of the items in the measure range from 0.84 to 0.94, thus meeting that threshold and demonstrating convergent validity at the item level. Discriminant validity was assessed by comparing correlations of components with the AVE. At the construct level, Hair et al. (1998) recommended that composite reliability should be used in conjunction with SEM to address the tendency of Cronbach’s alpha to underestimate reliability. For composite reliability to be adequate, a value of .70 and higher has been recommended (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The final indicator of convergent validity is the AVE, which measures the amount of variance captured by the construct in relation to the amount of variance attributable to measurement error (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

As shown in Table 4, the means of the square of the correlation coefficients ($r^2$) are less than the AVE. The AVE should be greater than the means of the square for all correlation coefficients (Fornell & Larker, 1981). As shown in Table 4, the AVE falls between .69 and .83, and the means of the square of the correlation coefficients ($r^2$) fall between .03 and .18, which indicates that the AVE is greater than the means of the square of the correlation coefficients. The results of convergent and discriminant validity indicated that $AVE/r^2$ is greater than 1 and the AVE is greater than .50 in all cases. This also satisfies the requirement of discriminant validity for research hypothesis model verification (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Fornell & Larker, 1981), and additionally means that the data collected for verification ensure discriminant validity.

C. Hypothesis Tests through Multi-Group Analysis

The study conducted CFAs for the overall ratings, the ratings prior to the sponsoring event, and the ratings following the sponsoring event to test for construct validity and to eliminate factors with low loadings or loadings of multiple constructs (Bentler, 1992). The model’s goodness of fit was verified by subjecting measurement variables to assessments of reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. The purpose of this study is to test the causal relationship between independent variables, such as brand awareness, image, and quality, and dependent variables such as satisfaction and loyalty in both events. The study found that the coefficients are positive as well as negative. Brand awareness, image, and quality are closely related to the consumer–brand relationship with satisfaction, commitment, and loyalty, even if some relationships were not statistically significant. In this study, the objective of the multi-group simultaneous path analysis was to test the variation of the path coefficient in both groups. In addition, the study aimed to explore consumers’ different perceptions of sponsorships by comparing several sports events.

Multi-group CFA with covariance structure analysis was conducted using EQS6b (Bentler, 1992) and MLE. The multi-group analyses followed Byrne (1994) and Kline (1998) by examining the statistical difference across the two groups. The values of selected fit indexes for the multi-sample analysis of the path model with equality-constrained direct effects are reported in Table 5, which shows the standardized solutions. Generally, the standardized path coefficients are used to compare paths within groups. The basic rationale for a multiple-group path analysis is the same whether the model is recursive or non-recursive (Bentler, 1992; Byrne, 1994; Kline, 1998). The goodness of fit yielded $\chi^2=282.2 \ (df=155)$, $CFI=.968$, $GFI=.915$, $NNFI=.955$, $RMSEA=.050$ for ratings prior to the sponsorship ($t_1, n=241$). The goodness of fit yielded $\chi^2=260.4 \ (df=138)$, $CFI=.969$, $GFI=.921$, $NNFI=.953$, $RMSEA=.049$ for ratings following the sponsorship ($t_2, n=319$). The multiple-group goodness of fit yielded $\chi^2=683.4 \ (df=321)$, $CFI=.962$, $GFI=.906$, $NNFI=.951$, $RMSEA=.046$. This is an acceptable goodness of fit, which means that this study’s measurement methodology is sufficiently reliable. The are 241 participants for the pre-event group and 319 for the post-event group. To overcome the
limitation regarding different sample sizes for both groups, the researchers checked the measurements’ invariance to address any problems raised in further analysis (Chin et al., 2012).

A multi-group simultaneous path analysis was conducted to determine whether the path coefficients for the relationships between sponsor brand awareness, image, perceived quality, brand relationship satisfaction, brand commitment, and brand loyalty were equal across the two groups. The Lagrange multiplier test (LM method) in EQS was used to determine which paths were different.

As Table 6 shows, the hypothesized model was estimated for each group individually. As H1 and H2 predicted, consumer–brand relationship satisfaction influenced sponsor brand loyalty both prior to ($\beta =0.21, p<0.05$) and following the sponsorship ($\beta =0.38, p<0.05$). The effect of brand commitment on sponsor brand loyalty was significant, both prior to ($\beta =0.54, p<0.05$) and following the sponsorship ($\beta =0.89, p<0.05$). The tests revealed many significant interactions, but most were the opposite of the predicted effects. The tests revealed the interaction between the influence of consumer–brand relationship, brand commitment, and the sponsorship of a given event on sponsor brand loyalty ($\chi^2=6.42, p<0.05$, $\chi^2=7.08, p<0.05$).

As H3 predicted, the consumer–brand relationship influenced brand commitment, both prior to ($\beta =0.55, p<0.05$) and following the sponsorship ($\beta =0.64, p<0.05$). The tests revealed the interaction between the influence of the consumer–brand relationship and sponsorship on brand commitment ($\chi^2=3.18, p=0.07$, marginal path significance: $p<0.07$).
As H4 and H5 predicted, brand awareness influenced consumer–brand relationship satisfaction, both prior to ($\beta=0.37, p<.05$) and following the sponsorship ($\beta=0.50, p<.05$), and brand awareness influenced brand commitment, both prior to ($\beta=0.11, p<0.05$) and following the sponsorship ($\beta=0.36, p<.05$). The tests revealed many significant interactions, such as the interaction between the influence of brand awareness and the sponsorship on consumer–brand relationship satisfaction and brand commitment ($\chi^2=3.90, p<0.05$ for consumer–brand relationship satisfaction; $\chi^2=4.00, p<0.05$ for brand commitment).

As H6 and H7 predicted, brand image influenced consumer–brand relationship satisfaction, both prior to ($\beta=0.51, p<.05$) and following the sponsorship ($\beta=0.54, p<.05$), and brand image influenced brand commitment, both prior to ($\beta=0.14, p<0.05$) and following the sponsorship ($\beta=0.21, p<0.05$). The tests revealed interactions such as those between the influence of brand image and the sponsorship of a given event on consumer–brand relationship satisfaction and brand commitment ($\chi^2=3.19, p=.07$, marginal path significance; $\chi^2=4.34, p<0.05$ for brand commitment).

As H8 and H9 predicted, the perceived quality of the sponsor’s product influenced consumer–brand relationship satisfaction following the sponsorship ($\beta=0.45, p<0.05$), but not prior to the sponsorship ($\beta=0.03, p>0.05$). The effect of perceived quality on brand commitment was not significant, either prior to ($\beta=0.08, p>0.05$) or following the sponsorship ($\beta=0.03, p>0.05$). The tests revealed that the interaction between the influence of perceived quality and sponsorship on consumer–brand relationship satisfaction ($\chi^2=8.46, p<0.05$) were all statistically significant, but ran directly counter to the predicted effects. However, the interaction between the influence of perceived quality and sponsorship on brand commitment was not significant ($\chi^2=0.80, p>0.05$). Thus, most hypotheses were supported, but H8 was only partially supported, while H9 was not supported.

V. Discussion

A. Theoretical Implications

This study provides insight into the impact of brand awareness, image, and perceived quality on the consumer–brand relationship by studying changes to pre-event consumer attitudes following the 2018 FIFA World Cup event. The organization of the study was based on a model of the manner in which, according to the assumptions underlying the hypotheses, the brand awareness, image, and perceived quality of a sponsor’s brand would have positive effects on consumer–brand relationship satisfaction and brand commitment, and the manner in which brand commitment and satisfaction would have positive effects on brand loyalty. The research question considered whether these relationships would change following a sponsorship event.

As the results show, the path coefficient of perceived quality on brand commitment was not significant either before or after sponsorship, and the path coefficient of perceived quality on brand commitment was not significant prior to sponsorship. On the other hand, the sponsor’s brand awareness and image were closely related to consumer–brand relationship satisfaction and brand commitment. Also, consumer–brand relationship satisfaction positively affected brand commitment. Consumer–brand relationship satisfaction and brand commitment play an important role in building a sponsor’s brand loyalty through sports sponsorship. Although perceived quality did not have a positive effect on consumer–brand relationship satisfaction prior to sponsorship, it had a positive effect on this relationship following sponsorship. The relationship between perceived quality and brand commitment was not statistically significant.

Multi-group CFA analysis was used to examine the relationship between the sponsor’s brand and the consumer–brand relationship. The study found that the consumer–brand relationship is mediated by consumer brand perceptions (awareness, image, and perceived quality) and brand loyalty. Since brand awareness, image, and perceived quality amplify the
constraints of consumer brand perception and decision-making behaviors, this knowledge is likely to help both brand managers and marketing scholars better understand consumer perceptions in relation to sports sponsorship events through the conceptual model. It should also help them develop a range of tools they can use to develop sports sponsorship brand programs that are more effective at targeting specific consumers.

B. Managerial Implications

The study’s results reveal that the effect of sponsor brand awareness was stronger following sponsorship than it was prior to sponsorship, and that brand commitment and consumer–brand relationship satisfaction were closely related to building brand loyalty. World Cup sponsorship, leveraging the exposure made possible at a global sports event, produced favorable responses for the sponsoring company. The sponsorship appealed mostly in an effective way, as brand awareness, image, perceived quality, brand commitment, and consumer–brand relationship satisfaction positively changed following sponsorship. In other words, World Cup sponsorship had more of an emotional effect than a cognitive effect. It appears that brand awareness, image, and perceived quality have stronger effects on brand commitment and consumer–brand relationship satisfaction following a sports sponsorship event than prior to such an event. In addition, the resulting brand commitment was closely related to consumer–brand relationship satisfaction and the formation of brand loyalty.

From a marketing communication perspective, this study makes a valuable contribution to the literature by comparing consumer attitudes towards a sponsor’s brand prior to and following a sports sponsorship event. Moreover, the study is unique in using a field study to investigate consumer groups. The results should benefit marketing studies by offering crucial strategic implications for marketers seeking to adopt effective sponsorship strategies.

The results also indicate that brand awareness and brand image had stronger effects on consumer–brand relationship satisfaction and brand commitment than perceived quality did. The results reveal that consumer–brand relationship satisfaction and commitment played an important role in building brand loyalty and also that such satisfaction was mediated by the interaction of consumers’ brand awareness, brand image, and perceived brand quality, on the one hand, and sponsors’ brand-loyalty building, on the other hand. It is safe to conclude that sponsor brand awareness and image should therefore be considered when marketers seek to build long-term strategies.

In terms of brand–sports congruity or congruity between brand attributes and event attributes, this study’s findings indicate that the images and attributes of Hyundai-Kia Motors products and those of the World Cup corresponded. In this respect, corporate marketers should consider any such correspondence between the attributes of a brand and those of an event when developing marketing strategies. Based on this, companies should emphasize sports event sponsorship when it corresponds to their intended consumer concepts because such strategies have considerable potential for effectively connecting the active image of a sports event with the attributes of a company or a brand, and this may eventually increase brand equity.

C. Limitations and Future Research

Although this study successfully tested several hypotheses and provides important implications for market researchers, it is also subject to several limitations. Considering the difficulty of measuring the effects of sports sponsorship, this study may have failed to measure such effects with complete accuracy. There are several issues involved in securing and protecting sponsorship rights in an environment of burgeoning sponsorship growth for which the study applied no controls. Ambush marketing occurs when non-sponsors attempt to gain benefits available only to official sponsors (Crow & Hoek, 2003) and should therefore be considered in future studies. Comparative
studies that gauge the relative effects of ambush marketing and official sponsorship on brand-related attitudes are needed (Crow & Hoek, 2003; Meenaghan, 1994).

In November 2014, an extension of the sponsorship deal between Hyundai and FIFA was announced. Hyundai sponsored FIFA for several years, and they will remain sponsors until 2022. Some of the respondents may form attitudes due to the previous news, as they would be familiar with the brand–World Cup relationship. Additionally, the performance of the South Korean soccer (football) team may have affected the responses. However, it was not possible to control for such external factors in this study. Thus, a study on a similar topic could control for such events, either through design or through control variables.

One reviewer argued that respondents might have a high level of awareness for Hyundai and Kia, which can thus affect the casual relationship. Thus, a study to measure brand loyalty for a real company or brand should not include consumers with strong loyalty to the company or brand (Johnson et al., 2006). Irrespective of whether participants in this study brought a high level of awareness of and loyalty to the company into the experiment, there is little concern about sample bias because they may have some positive or negative opinion about the product or the company that is unrelated to the sponsorship. Future studies should aim to demonstrate the issue of natural and artificial stimuli in an experimental design, which the author acknowledges in the study’s limitations.

Previous studies suggested that behavioral intentions over a given period of time are a function of attitudes formed during that period and intentions formed in prior periods (Bolton & Drew, 1991; Johnson et al., 2006; Oliver, 1980). However, most sponsors engage with many leverage activities close to such tournaments. If this study’s participants are not exposed to positive advertisements or negative word-of-mouth during the almost four-month period, then these leverage activities could affect respondents in different ways. The issue to consider is that the pre-and post-surveys require a controlled setting for this type of research.

Consumer involvement with sports and brands should be studied further because the level of consumer interest in sports can greatly affect attitudes towards brands. Therefore, future studies that connect consumer involvement in sports and the formation of consumer attitudes toward brands are needed. In addition, various brand types should be compared with one another, and the relationship between various brands and sports needs to be examined. Although a multiple-sponsorship arrangement influences the relationship between the sponsor and the sponsored brands at the cognitive and affective stages (Chavanat et al., 2009), the capacity to take into account respondents’ brand satisfaction and usage behavior is limited. It might therefore prove fruitful in future research to compare the effects of single- and multiple-sponsorship arrangements on consumer-based brand equity (image, awareness, and quality), the consumer–brand relationship (brand satisfaction and commitment) and building brand loyalty.

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