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Article

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MARKETING | RESEARCH ARTICLE

The role of sports sponsorship in negative new stories about a brand: Approach the halo effect

Ge-Qi Cui¹, Jung-Yong Lee² and Chang-Hyun Jin^{2*}

Abstract: This study examines whether a company's sports sponsorship plays a buffering role that mitigates negative consumer perceptions of the company or its brands. The study highlights the necessity of examining how congruence between a sports event and a sponsoring brand is related to brand image or brand attitude formation. An experimental design was used to test the hypotheses. To prevent leakage of information about the experimental stimulus, two experiments were implemented in different places at the same time. There was no exposure to either experimental stimulus in advance. A random sampling scheme was used for group allocation. The results indicated that attitude and image formation changed considerably when sports sponsorship was strongly related to a company's corporate image. In general, consumers experience amicable and favorable reactions and evaluations of a company that sponsors sports events that are highly congruent with the company's corporate image. Consumers evaluate a company or product more favorably when a sports event is congruent with the company or product image. As indicated in the experimental results, sports sponsorship affects corporate brand attitude and purchase intention.

Subjects: Brand Management; Sport Psychology; Sport & Leisure Industries

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Global companies 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, but companies also increasingly view sports sponsorship to grow brand equity. Global companies are facing a fiercer and fiercer and competitive environment. In this situation, establishing a differentiated corporate image has become as important as pursuing profits.

For that reason, sports sponsorship is one of the most important types of sponsorship. A sports event is a field-oriented communication channel for companies and many well-known companies are already using this channel. This study regarding the halo effect of sports sponsorship are expected to inform practical guidelines for sports sponsorship by stressing the importance of the congruence of a sports event with a corporate or brand image and examining its role as a buffer that mitigates negative consumer perceptions.

Keywords: negative effect; corporate brand image; sport sponsorship; halo effect; purchase intention; congruence effect

1. Introduction

Marketers and researchers have long explored the effects of sponsorship, a marketing alternative to commercial advertising. Sports sponsorship involves placing brand images and logos on athletes' uniforms and equipment as well as on structural elements at sports venues. The goal of sports sponsorship is to facilitate the recognition of a corporate brand and to sustain and improve its brand image (Bauer, Gordon, & Spillecke, 2013; Cornwell et al., 2001; Coughlan & Mules, 2001). 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 et al., 2005; Jin, 2017; Meenaghan, 2005; Olson, 2010). Global companies 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 et al., 2011), but companies also increasingly view sports sponsorship as a way to grow brand equity (Wilson, 1998). 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 et al., 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 et al., 2009; Meenaghan, 2005).

It is, however, difficult to measure the effects of sustaining a corporate brand image through sponsorship. Many companies are actively trying to more accurately measure the effects of sponsorship. Some scholars argued that the halo effect is stronger when consumers lack knowledge of a certain subject (Koltuv, 1962; Kozlowski, Kirsch, & Chao, 1986). The halo effect in the relationship between a country and companies that operate manufacturing facilities in that country. A halo effect that stems from the association of a company with social activity such as cultural event (Klein & Dawar, 2004). Although companies are developing sports sponsorship activities as a marketing strategy, very little evaluation of the effects of sports sponsorship before and after an event has been conducted. The present study contributes to increasing the credibility of measures of sponsorship by examining the effects of such negative image information and applying the concept of the halo effect.

Thus, the purpose of this study attempts to investigate whether there is an interaction effect between exposure to polarized corporate information and two different exposure on the transfer of brand image attribution. Also, the study explores on what role negative information and sponsorship congruence play in affecting corporate brand evaluation, and purchase intention. The study also examines how the corporate brand as perceived by consumers affects the formation of an image of the company and brand through the halo effect. The empirical results of this study regarding the halo effect of sports sponsorship are expected to inform practical guidelines for sports sponsorship by stressing the importance of the congruence of a sports event with a corporate or brand image and examining its role as a buffer that mitigates negative consumer perceptions.

2. Literature review

2.1. Perspective of sports sponsorship

Global companies 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 et al., 2011), but companies also increasingly view sports sponsorship to grow brand equity (Wilson, 1998). Global companies are facing a fiercer and fiercer and competitive environment. In this situation, establishing a differentiated corporate image has become as important as pursuing profits. A company's corporate image not only helps it survive in the market; it also enables the company to lead market change. Global companies are investing time and money in building their own differentiated images. The value of a corporate brand image can be increased by improving the corporate image. While corporate marketing strategy has in the past focused on a "buy me" strategy, recent marketing strategy has focused more specifically on a "love me" strategy based on establishing a brand image that appeals to consumers' emotions (Holt, 2004).

Generally, the objective of sports sponsorship is to build corporate reputation, positive brand awareness, and a positive brand image as well as sports sponsorship communication creates a brand association in the mind of the consumer by linking a brand to the sponsored activity (Cornwell and Coote, 2005; Gwinner & Eaton, 1999; Koo et al., 2009). Sports sponsorship is regarded as an efficient marketing tool for facilitating communication between companies and consumers (Abratt and Grobler, 1989; Bauer et al., 2013; Meenaghan, 1983; Sleight, 1989). Sponsorship can enhance a company's reputation and increase consumer awareness of its brands as well as profitability (Gwinner & Eaton, 1999; Hoek, Gendall, & West, 1990; Javalgi, Traylor, Gross, & Lampman, 1994; Woodside & Summers, 2010). Sponsorship is more effective when consumer product companies target the general public and industrial product companies target members of the business-to-business community (Crowley, 1991; Meenaghan, 1991). Sponsorship, which provides financial, human, and physical support to a certain event despite the risk of loss, is such a persuasive promotional tool (Alreck & Settle, 1999; Cornwell and Coote, 2005; Gwinner & Eaton, 1999).

As discussed, the effectiveness of sport sponsorship, sponsorship is a promotional tool that makes delivering critical messages to consumers easier and has been shown to be highly effective compared with the cost of commercial advertising (Hastings, 1984). Whether a sponsorship can achieve its goals depends on the congruence between the events, the sponsor's attitude, the impression the sponsorship makes on consumers, and consumer awareness of the brand involved (Bauer et al., 2013; Speed & Thompson, 2000). Sports sponsorship is one of the most important types of sponsorship. A sports event is a field-oriented communication channel for companies and many well-known companies are already using this channel.

Yet few studies have developed effective criteria for evaluating the value of a sports event despite the apparently high utility of sports sponsorship (Nicholls, Roslow, & Laskey, 1994). Following increased attention to how companies invest to gain market share, research on the effectiveness of sponsorship is active now. The effectiveness of sponsorship of sports events has been reported in a number of studies that have found that sponsorship ultimately enhanced a corporate image. Also, research has studied diverse aspects of the congruence between corporate images and events. However, few studies have investigated whether a company's sports sponsorship acts as a buffer in an environment that is unfavorable to the company. There are virtually no studies on the halo effect of sports events.

2.2. Effects of negative information

When a company is exposed to negative events or information, the company and its products and services, as well as its reputation, suffers negative impacts (Fearn-Banks, 1996). Negative information comprises any message that can do harm to the reputation or value of a company's employees or products. When people are exposed to a negative message, it is stored in long-term or short-term memory and thereby affects current or future decision-making processes (Weinberger, Allen, & Dillon, 1981). If a certain product is shown to do damage, such as through food poisoning, or a company has practiced unethical treatment of workers or inappropriate business practices, publicity about such problems generates negative information about the company or its products.

In general, negative information is revealed by mass media, reports from civic groups, or consumer complaints (DiDomenico, Haugh, & Tracey, 2010; Klein & Dawar, 2004).

Exposure to negative information about a company or product affects the company's reputation and consumers' intention to purchase the product (Weinberger & Lepkowska-White, 2000). Compared with positive information, negative information draws attention from consumers more easily and occupies a greater share of publicly available information than positive information does. Negative information is sometimes distorted by rumors (Richins, 1983). Negative information is reported to have a negative influence on a company's reputation, market share, brand equity, and consumer attitudes towards a brand (Klein & Dawar, 2004; van Heerde, Helsen, & Dekimpe, 2007).

In a situation in which a company is exposed to a threat from negative information, the company's social responsibility activity can help it obtain credibility and recognition as an ethical company and thereby mitigate the effects of negative information. Having a positive image based on social responsibility activity can be helpful when the company encounters a crisis. This study examines whether sports event sponsorship can also mitigate the effects of negative publicity.

2.3. The halo effect

Some scholar defined the halo effect as a phenomenon whereby the general opinion of a certain object affects the evaluation of the object's specific characteristics as well as the halo effect defined as a logical error that occurs when a person evaluates logically unrelated behaviors similarly (Newcomb, 1931; Well, 1907). Hawkins, Roger, and Coney (1992) focused on the consumer purchase decision process and defined the halo effect as the influence of a brand name or corporate reputation on consumer behavior, in particular on consumer behavior in the process of making purchase decisions. Blum and Naylor (1968) and Anastasi (1988) defined the halo effect as a phenomenon whereby an evaluation of some prominent characteristics of an object affects the evaluation of its less prominent characteristics. Here, the general impression of an evaluated object or the evaluation of its prominent characteristics becomes the origin of the halo.

Considering the halo effect more broadly, it has been observed in social psychology, personal psychology, marketing, and politics. The halo effect also acts diversely and unconsciously in daily life. Personal appearance, family background, wealth, occupation, and authority can generate a halo effect. Previous studies have argued that a general impression of an evaluated object or the prominent characteristics of the object can also generate a halo effect (Anastasi, 1988; Blum & Naylor, 1968).

Returning to this study's focus on corporate or brand image, studies have found a halo effect in the relationship between a country and companies that operate manufacturing facilities in that country. Schiffman (1972) found that a country image generates a halo effect that inclines consumers to draw certain conclusions about a company or product from the country when there is very little experience or information about the company or its products.

2.4. The congruence effect

Previous studies on corporate sponsorship activity have focused mainly on the concept of congruence. The concept of congruence has been studied in a wide range of research fields in terms of fit, similarity, relevancy, elatedness, or linking. The term "congruence" will be used throughout this paper based on defining it as a "similarity between a company and an event that the company sponsors in terms of image" (Gwinner, 1997). Congruence is focused on the similarity between the image that the public has about a company and the image of a sponsored event in a cultural or artistic field. Congruence between a sponsor and a subject causes a strong bond between the two and strengthens image transfer (Gwinner, 1997; Gwinner & Eaton, 1999). A more positive attitude about a sponsor can be induced when congruence between the sponsor and an event is greater (Rifon, Choi, Trimble, & Li, 2004). Congruence between a sponsor and an event also has a positive influence on emotional transfer (Chebli & Gharbi, 2014).

This study examines changes of image attributes according to the degree of congruence between a sponsor and a sports event by extracting components of brand image. This study also investigates changes in the components of image attributes of a corporate brand before and after exposure to negative/positive information about a company.

2.5. Research hypotheses

Exposure of a company to a negative event or information can have a negative impact on the company or the public, as well as its products, services, and the reputation related to the company (Fearn-Banks, 1996). In general, consumers pay more attention to negative information than positive information when considering an issue. Negative information about a company revealed by mass media not only hinders establishing credibility with consumers, it can also cause a crisis (Henard, 2002). Consumers who have been exposed to negative information use the negative information in their decision-making more analytically than in the case of positive information (Ahluwalia, Burnkrant, & Unnava, 2000; Fiske, 1980; Klein, 1996; Skowronski & Carlston, 1989). Additionally, negative information has been found to attract more interest and attention on the part of consumers than positive information (Maheswaran & Meyers-Levy, 1990). People tend to perceive stronger pain when losing a certain amount of money than when gaining the same amount of money (Kahneman & Tversky, 1982). Consumers keep negative information in their minds longer than neutral information (Kensinger & Corkin, 2003).

Based on the above discussion, corporate exposure to negative information about a company certainly affects the formation of the company's corporate image. This study examines how the image attributes of a corporate brand change in test subjects when they are exposed to negative information by conducting an actual experiment. This study proposes the following hypothesis:

H1: Under the assumption that all other conditions are the same, the value of corporate brand image attributions will be lower after exposure to negative information than before exposure.

Congruence between a company and a sports event is one of the key subjects of research on the sponsorship effect (Cornwell, Humphreys, Maguire, Weeks, & Tellegen, 2006). Relevant studies have emphasized the importance of the event-sponsor congruence by highlighting consumers' positive perception of a company, sponsorship, or event (Cornwell et al., 2006; Gwinner, 1997; Gwinner & Eaton, 1999; Rifon et al., 2004). Companies can expect diverse positive impacts from the more favorable attitude of consumers that sponsorship generates. Image transfer takes place through factors such as the similarity between a company and a sports event. Congruence consequently affects consumer selection behavior in an effective way (Pracejus & Olsen, 2004; Speed & Thompson, 2000). The level of event-sponsor congruence becomes an important factor when consumers evaluate sponsorship (Coppetti, Wentzel, Tomczak, & Henkel, 2009). As image transfer from an event to a sponsor brand actively occurs, consumer attitudes towards the sponsoring brand become more positive (Weeks, Cornwell, & Drennan, 2008). A previous study reported that articulation in sponsorship has a positive impact on memories of an event and sponsor (Cornwell et al., 2006). While the sponsor memory effect was neutral in the case of a sponsorship featuring high congruence, sponsor memory could be enhanced through articulation in the case of a sponsor with low congruence (Cornwell et al., 2006).

Congruence between an event and a sponsor has been found to be one of the main influential factors in generating a sponsorship effect. Many studies have stressed the importance of event-sponsor congruence (Gwinner, 1997; Gwinner & Eaton, 1999; Rifon et al., 2004). Congruence between a sponsor and a subject creates a strong bond between the two and thereby strengthens image transfer (Gwinner, 1997; Gwinner & Eaton, 1999). Greater congruence between a sponsor and an event generates a more positive attitude towards the sponsor (Rifon et al., 2004). A more positive effect of a company's sports sponsorship can be expected when the image of the sports event is highly congruent with the company's corporate image.

H2: Under the assumption that all other conditions are the same, a group that is exposed to a sports sponsorship with greater congruence between a corporate image and a sports event will place a higher value on the corporate brand image attributions than a group that is exposed to a sports sponsorship with less congruence.

A previous study argued that consumer attitudes do not easily change because of negative information when a company already has a good relationship with consumers (Coombs, 1999). That is, the formation of a positive relationship between a company and consumers can prevent damage to intangible assets that the company has accumulated, such as reliability or reputation, as the positive relationship produces a halo effect (Coombs & Holladay, 2004).

The overall image of a person, a product, a company, or a country is formalized by several components of an image. An image affects the evaluation of other related characteristics of an object once it is formed. In general, this phenomenon is connected to what is known as the halo effect, in virtue of which a comprehensive image of a certain object affects the evaluation of other characteristics of the object (Ghiselli & Brown, 1949). Researchers have investigated the halo effect from a variety of perspectives. However, they have commonly argued that consumers make evaluations based on comprehensive impressions rather than distinguishing between evaluating a product based on diverse aspects of its performance. A study on social responsibility also showed evidence of a halo effect. A halo effect that stems from the association of a company with social responsibility affects three concepts of attribution theory, which include accountability, stability, and controllability. This in turn positively affects the brand and company evaluation (Klein & Dawar, 2004).

The halo effect is a result of an individual's overall attitude towards a brand and that it has a great influence on the evaluation of the brand's individual attributes (Holbrook, 1983). People evaluate a variety of specific characteristics by referring to the impressions, memories, or attitudes that they first develop of a certain object or person. Depending on an evaluator's first impression, the assessment of specific and diverse feelings is made in the same way, whether positively or negatively. A previous study found that people who are not familiar with a certain subject develop a stronger halo effect than those who are familiar with it. Consumer familiarity with a subject, therefore, plays a role in generating the halo effect as well (Koltuv, 1962). It has been reported that the halo effect is stronger when consumers lack knowledge of a certain subject. These results are consistent with the common belief that work-related knowledge is negatively related to the halo effect (Koltuv, 1962; Kozlowski et al., 1986).

A corporate image that is established through sports sponsorship can act as a buffer when the company is exposed to negative messaging. Hence, companies should seek sports sponsorship opportunities as a marketing strategy. Recent studies have pointed out that the halo effect can differ according to the degree of congruence between the characteristics and image of the company and those of the sports event being sponsored. Acceptors' perceptions of negative information can differ according to the intention behind the negative information, accountability, and intensity.

Previous study related to consumer attitude should be demonstrated how the drivers of intentions evolve as customers repeatedly use and experience an offering through the introduction and growth stages of a life cycle (Johnson, Herrmann, & Huber, 2006). They emphasized that researcher who look at the consumer behavior is the existence of temporal or carryover effects from one period to another. The time dependence of evaluations, attitudes, and intentions is central factors in consumption-system approach refining as a bundle of goods and services that are consumed over time in multiple consumption episodes (Mittal & Kamakura, 2001). Some scholars found that behavioral intentions in a given period are a function of attitudes in that period and prior period intentions (Bolton and Drew, 1991; Johnson et al., 2006; Oliver, 1980). Thus, evaluations of company, product and brand are not constructed anew each period. Consumer are willing to have updated versions of prior evaluations (Bolton and Drew, 1991; Johnson et al., 2006; Oliver, 1980). To examine how the formation of consumer attitudes is affected by the halo effect of sports sponsorship before and after exposure, this study poses the following research question:

H3: All other things being equal, subjects committed to post-exposure negative information about the company with high congruence sponsorship as opposed to those committed to pre-exposure negative information with about the company with high congruence sponsorship are less likely to have a its corporate brand image (H3-1), or purchase intention (H3-2).

H4: All other things being equal, subjects committed to post-exposure positive information about the company with high congruence sponsorship as opposed to those committed to pre-exposure positive information with about the company with high congruence sponsorship are more likely to have a its corporate brand image (H4-1), or purchase intention (H4-2).

RQ1: Can consumer attitudes towards a corporate brand, or the intention to purchase that brand, before and after exposure to sponsorship of a sports event, change due to the halo effect (including negative information about the company or sports event), based on the degree of congruence between the company/brand and the sports event?

3. Method

3.1. Experimental design

The study is to explore the role of the polarity of corporate information (e.g., negative and positive) and two different exposures (pre vs. post) on the transfer of brand image attribution. The study also examines how the corporate brand as perceived by consumers affects the formation of an image of the company and brand through the halo effect. We investigate how such information induces consumers to rethink or change their company or brand image and by distinguishing between consumer attitudes before exposure to information about a company and after such exposure. The procedure and experimental design used in this study adopted by the previous study (Berens et al., 2005; Jin, 2017; Jin & Lee, 2019). Some scholar emphasized that the experimental design is the best way to explore the relationship between independent and dependent variables such as causal relationship in the social science filed (Holbrook, 1983).

A 2 (pre-exposure vs. after exposure) X 2 (Negative vs. Positive information) X 2(High vs. low congruence sponsorship with company) factorial between-subject design was used for this study. First, the study explores the transfer of corporate brand attribution after exposing negative information about company with relevant sponsorship event. The corporate brand attitude and purchase intention treated as dependent variables in this study. The dependent variable is consumers' intention to take perception and action against the negative information and company with reference to its high relevant sponsorship events.

3.2. Pretest

Before conducting the experiment, the researcher administered a pretest to check the experimental design procedure and the experimental stimulus. First, an expert in the relevant field chose four types of experimental stimuli deemed appropriate for this study. Considering that the majority of the research subjects used this study are in their twenties or thirties, a global automobile company was chosen as the subject company and a Formula One (F1) car race was chosen as the recipient of sponsorship.

For negative information about a company, contents related to unethical behavior were provided, such as reports of accounting fraud, tax evasion, technological defects, fuel efficiency manipulation, and environmental pollution. For positive information, contents related to the company's new investments and chief executives' volunteer work and commitment to new technology development were provided. For the experiment regarding congruence between corporate image and sports events, effects were tested by dividing the events into two types: a sports events that are mostly congruent with the corporate and product image and another event that is mostly incongruent.

A total of 30 students majoring in business administration participated in the pretest. Investigators asked them to read the two different information with the company that was randomly assigned to him/her out of the different versions. All respondents were undergraduate business administration students who received extra course credit for participating in the study. They checked the experimental procedure, questionnaire composition, and the editorial condition and information content of the document before the actual experiment was conducted. A 5-point Likert-type scale was used to answer questions designed to determine whether the information about the company was negative and whether the sports sponsorship was congruent with the corporate image.

In t-tests of the experimental stimulus, an operational test of the experimental stimulus showed a significant result. The mean of negative information was 2.42 (S.D = .051) and the mean of positive information was 3.34 (S.D = .089), indicating statistical significance ($t = 8.63, p < .001$). To test the halo effect according to the type of sponsorship events, the study chose two types of sponsorship event. The study first chose a total of four types of sponsorship event that were suggested by a previous study, which are F1, tennis game, basketball game and the world billiards championship and let the students who participated in the pretest rank the five types. The participants determined the rank by giving the highest score to the FIA Formula 1 world championship that is most closely related to the automobile company. The respondents simultaneously chose the type of sponsorship event with a high match company and the less match sponsorship event with company. The study conducted experimental stimulus tests using the type that had the highest score and the type with the lowest score. The mean of the congruence of the company's F1 sponsorship was 3.30 (S.D = .041) and the mean of the congruence of sponsorship of the world billiards championship that was chosen as a control group was 2.10 (S.D = .058), indicating statistical significance ($t = 19.63, p < .001$).

3.3. Experimental procedure

This study conducted an experiment with a panel of the company's consumers who see various sport events, not unlike the brand itself as well as have an interest in sports and plans to watch the sports event. A total of 126 and 200 sports fans for both experiments were chosen as subjects for the main experiment. They were compensated with \$5.00 gift cards to increase the response rate. To prevent leakage of information about the experimental stimulus, two experiments were implemented in different places at the same time. There was no exposure to either the experimental stimulus in advance. A random sampling scheme was used for group allocation.

3.3.1. Experiment 1

On the first day of the experiment, all test subjects wrote answers to a questionnaire about the experimental subject company and its brand image. In composing the questionnaire, the logo and an image of the subject company was placed at the top of the questionnaire. On the second day, an experiment designed to check the effects of negative information and congruence was conducted. The subjects were divided into two groups according to company information type and two groups according to the degree of congruence of the sports sponsorship. The experimental stimulus was distributed to each group. The test subjects read the experimental stimulus and then wrote answers to a questionnaire.

3.3.2. Experiment 2

To examine the halo effect of sports sponsorship, the same stimulus from the previous experiment was used. The experiment was designed to investigate differences in attitudes between the pre-exposure group and the after-exposure group. The subjects were divided into four groups for the experiment. Experiment participants filled out a survey under the same condition before being exposed to the stimulus about the subject company and its brand. Test subjects who participated in the experiment were randomly divided into the four groups. The experiment followed a between-subject factorial design using four groups (information type: negative/positive, congruence level: F1 race vs. world billiards championship).

We examined changes in attitude between the groups before and after exposure to the stimulus (negative or positive information about the company). On the first day of the experiment, participants evaluated the image of the subject company. On the second day, four types of edited experimental stimuli were distributed to each group and the test subjects read the material. On the third day, participants were exposed to the stimulus in an identical way. The test subjects filled out the survey consisting of questions about the sports sponsorship.

3.4. Measurement

Adjectives used in existing studies were recomposed to match this study to develop brand image attributions. Among the items used in Aaker (1997) and Gwinner (1997) that question brand personality, a total of 20 adjectives were finally chosen for this study through a selection process that involved searching for adjectives that correspond to participants' images of the experimental brand revealed in the pretest.

Three items used in Low and Lamb (2000) were applied for questions related to attitudes towards the corporate brand. Sub-question items included the level of amicability of the relevant corporate brand, the level of liking, and the level of favorability of the impression.

Three items among the measurement criteria employed by Haley and Case (1979) were used to measure intention to purchase. Intention to purchase was measured using a single index that asks whether a participant will buy a product from the experimental stimulus company in the foreseeable future. The questions included "I am willing to buy a product of this company", "I am highly likely to buy a product of this company", and "I want to buy products of this company overall."

3.5. Manipulation check

Three items were used to measure the validity of the experimental stimuli. A validity test checks whether the experimental stimulus that included negative information about the company and the degree of congruence of the sports sponsorship was appropriately manipulated. A t-test was conducted to check whether the mean of each group was significant. The mean for experimental participants in each group proved to be significant. An operational test of the negative information type showed the following result: very negative information and not at all negative information: 3.60/1.53, $t = 33.6$, $p < .001$. An operational test of the sports event with high congruence with the corporate image was conducted by checking the similarity of the sports event to the image of the company and brand (high/low: 3.70/2.18, $t = 36.2$, $p < .001$).

4. Results

4.1. Summary of results according to brand image attribution

Hypotheses 1 and 2 were tested through experiment 1. The results are summarized in Table 1. A paired t-test was conducted on the differences between the variables regarding brand image attributes before and after exposure to negative information. The average value of the brand image decreased for 18 items after exposure to negative information. Among the sub-factors of brand image, honesty, familiarity, affectionateness, trend, interest, youth, positivity, trust, leadership, success, coolness, attractiveness, passion, extroversion, activeness, masculinity, and boldness decreased to a statistically significant extent. However, happiness and softness among the brand image attribute variables showed no statistically significant differences.

Brand image attributions exhibited only small differences before and after exposure to positive information. The average value of the brand image attributes honesty, trust, and leadership increased to a statistically significant extent. However, other factors showed non-significant results.

Paired t-tests were conducted on differences between the variables before and after exposure according to the level of congruence of the corporate image and the sports event. The average

Table 1. T-tests of brand image attributions on information type

Brand Image Attribution	Before Exposure		After Exposure		Difference (Mean)		t-value		p-value	
	N	P	N	P	N	P	N	P	N	P
	Honesty	3.20	2.62	3.03	3.16	0.17	0.54	1.82	2.98	.070
Familiarity	3.08	3.46	2.76	3.59	0.32	0.14	2.75	.581	.006	.563
Affectionateness	2.91	2.81	2.71	2.95	0.20	0.14	1.71	.674	.089	.503
Happiness	2.84	2.68	2.73	2.92	0.10	0.24	.879	1.09	.380	.281
Trend	3.15	3.46	2.78	3.57	0.37	0.11	3.20	.430	.002	.669
Interest	3.34	3.24	2.89	3.30	0.46	0.05	3.66	.272	.000	.786
Youth	3.52	3.57	3.24	3.62	0.28	0.05	2.23	.274	.027	.785
Positivity	3.53	3.70	3.20	3.84	0.34	0.14	2.97	.773	.003	.442
Trust	3.02	2.97	2.30	3.30	0.16	0.32	4.89	1.77	.000	.081
Technology	3.59	3.62	3.35	3.89	0.23	0.27	2.06	1.42	.041	.160
Leadership	3.28	3.08	2.88	3.59	0.40	0.51	3.75	2.29	.000	.026
Success	3.33	3.89	3.03	3.92	0.30	0.03	2.73	.139	.007	.890
Coolness	3.34	3.16	2.91	3.38	0.43	0.22	3.58	1.04	.000	.302
Attractiveness	3.34	3.14	2.97	3.27	0.37	0.14	3.16	.650	.002	.518
Passion	3.53	3.38	3.06	3.57	0.47	0.19	4.28	.878	.000	.383
Softness	2.91	2.73	2.80	2.81	0.10	0.08	.861	.474	.390	.637
Extroversion	3.66	3.70	3.28	3.70	0.38	0.00	3.27	.000	.001	1.00
Activeness	3.77	3.70	3.41	3.84	0.35	0.14	3.30	.643	.003	.522
Masculinity	3.59	2.95	3.03	3.00	0.57	0.05	4.71	.320	.000	.750
Boldness	3.54	3.00	2.91	3.19	0.63	0.19	5.25	1.05	.000	.300

Note: N: Negative, P: Positive, *p < .1, ** p < .05, ***p < .01.

value of the brand image decreased for 16 items after exposure. Specifically, the means for trend, interest, youth, positivity, trust, technology, leadership, success, coolness, attractiveness, passion, softness, extroversion, activeness, masculinity, and boldness increased to a statistically significant extent. However, honesty, familiarity, affectionateness, and happiness among the variables of brand image attributes showed statistically non-significant differences (see Table 2).

The brand image attribute variables exhibited no large differences before and after exposure according to the level of congruence between the corporate image and the sports event. Among the brand image variables, only activeness showed a statistically significant difference. All other factors produced non-significant results.

4.2. Results according to the halo effect

Hypotheses 3 and 4 were tested through experiment 2. And the study made answers for the research questions. Independent t-tests were conducted to test the homogeneity of each group. To check the effectiveness of the sub-factors for each variable, this paper conducted Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA) on the post-hoc scores using pretest scores as covariates. A MANCOVA tests differences in the means of dependent variables. To check the pre-test homogeneity of the groups distributed across the experimental stimuli, the averages of the dependent variables corporate image and intention to purchase were first obtained and independent t-tests were conducted. The results are presented in <Table 3> below.

In the test results, none of the dependent variables exhibited a significant Levene Statistics value or difference in averages at the .05 significance level. The Welch value is a statistically significant result. To capture the pure effect of exposure to contrasting types of information and of the congruence of the sports sponsorship, a MANCOVA was implemented using pre-exposure and post-exposure groups as covariates. Next, Box's homogeneity test was conducted to check the homogeneity of the covariance matrix. In the test result, $M = 832.01$ ($F = 1.321$, $p = .108$), which was not significant, and the homogeneity assumption was accepted. Following the acceptance of the homogeneity assumption of the covariance matrix, Wilks's λ estimate was used for interpretation.

Analysis of the differences in dependent variables between the pre-exposure and post-exposure groups showed a Wilks's $\lambda = .958$ ($F = 4.297$, $p = .015$). In the analysis of differences between groups that were separately exposed to negative or positive information, Wilks's $\lambda = .956$ ($F = 4.387$, $p = .014$). In the analysis of between-group differences according to the congruence level of the sports sponsorship, Wilks's $\lambda = .958$ ($F = 4.285$, $p = .015$), indicating significant differences in the dependent variables including corporate brand attitude and intention to purchase at the .05 significance level. In the interaction analysis, Wilks's $\lambda = .970$ ($F = 3.038$, $p = .048$), indicating a significant difference in the dependent variables including corporate brand attitude and intention to purchase at the .05 significance level (see Table 4).

The results of the analysis of the main effect are presented in Tables 5 and 6 and Figures 1 and 2. In terms of before and after exposure, corporate brand attitude ($F = 8.633$, $p = .004$) and intention to purchase ($F = 8.163$, $p = .005$) showed significant between-group differences. In terms of exposure to negative or positive information, corporate brand attitude ($F = 8.667$, $p = .004$) and intention to purchase ($F = 8.816$, $p = .003$) also showed significant between-group differences. In the analysis of the congruence of the sports sponsorship, corporate brand attitude ($F = 7.978$, $p = .005$) and intention to purchase ($F = 8.612$, $p = .004$) showed significant between-group differences. Also, corporate brand attitude ($F = 6.010$, $p = .015$) and intention to purchase ($F = 5.277$, $p = .023$) showed an interactive effect. Hence, the main hypothesis was accepted.

5. Conclusion and discussion

The study attempts to investigate whether there is an interaction effect between exposure to polarized corporate information and two different exposure on the transfer of brand image attribution. The study analyzes how a previously perceived image of a company or brand affects the

Table 2. T-tests of brand image attributions on the congruence effect

Brand Image Attribution	Before Exposure		After Exposure		Difference (Mean)		t-value		p-value	
	H	L	H	L	H	L	H	L	H	L
	Honesty	3.09	2.81	3.13	2.68	0.05	0.13	.738	.611	.461
Familiarity	2.85	3.65	2.91	3.25	0.05	0.4	.645	1.27	.519	.211
Affectionateness	2.67	2.84	2.71	2.5	0.04	0.34	.492	1.44	.623	.156
Happiness	2.73	2.68	2.75	2.63	0.02	0.05	.247	.189	.805	.851
Trend	2.70	3.68	3.06	3.56	0.35	0.12	4.39	.375	.000	.454
Interest	2.91	3.32	3.33	3.13	0.42	0.19	4.98	.755	.000	.957
Youth	3.32	3.56	3.52	3.55	0.19	0.01	2.16	.055	.031	.569
Positivity	3.17	3.74	3.50	3.63	0.33	0.11	4.22	.574	.000	.479
Trust	3.10	3.06	3.30	2.90	0.19	0.16	2.68	.714	.008	.416
Technology	3.05	3.69	3.44	3.48	0.13	0.21	2.73	.821	.007	.362
Leadership	2.90	3.25	3.12	3.00	0.22	0.25	3.08	.921	.002	.362
Success	3.03	3.69	3.16	3.77	0.13	0.08	1.85	.311	.065	.757
Coolness	2.99	3.19	3.29	3.13	0.30	0.06	3.64	.250	.000	.804
Attractiveness	3.00	3.13	3.30	2.75	0.30	0.38	3.75	1.67	.000	.102
Passion	3.02	3.39	3.44	3.13	0.41	0.26	5.21	1.06	.000	.295
Softness	2.70	2.74	2.98	2.5	0.28	0.24	3.47	1.04	.001	.306
Extraversion	3.23	3.71	3.57	3.31	0.34	0.4	4.30	.153	.000	.132
Activeness	3.43	3.9	3.70	3.31	0.27	0.59	3.30	2.52	.001	.015
Masculinity	2.96	3.06	3.55	3.03	0.59	0.03	7.02	.125	.000	.901
Boldness	2.84	3.06	3.51	3.00	0.67	0.06	8.40	.262	.000	.794

Note: H: High Congruence, L: Low Congruence, *p < .1, ** p < .05, ***p < .01.

Table 3. Test of the homogeneity of the groups (Information & congruence)

Index	Negative	Positive	Levene Statistics	p	Welch	p
Corporate Brand	3.34	3.01	.630	.428	9.963	.002
Purchase Intention	3.18	3.50	.166	.684	8.480	.004
Index	High	Low	Levene Statistics	p	Welch	p
Corporate Brand	3.44	3.04	.586	.445	7.493	.007
Purchase Intention	3.59	3.21	.050	.824	9.117	.003

*p < .1, ** p < .05, ***p < .01.

Table 4. Results of MANCOVA

Treatments	Variables	Wilk's Lambda	F	df	p
Pre vs. post	D.V	.958	4.297**	(1.275)	.015
N/P		.956	4.387**		.014
Congruence		.958	4.285**		.015
Interaction		.970	3.038**		.048

Note: Interaction: Negative/Positive * H/L Congruence, ** p < .05, ***p < .001.

Table 5. Main effect

I.D	D.V	MS	df	F	p
Pre vs. post	CBA	6.449	1	8.633	.004
	PI	4.562	1	8.163	.005
Negative vs. Positive	CBA	2.013	1	8.667	.004
	PI	4.928	1	8.816	.003
High vs. Low Congruence	CBA	11.765	1	7.978	.005
	PI	4.813	1	8.612	.004
NP * H/L	CBA	3.685	1	6.010	.015
	PI	2.949	1	5.277	.023

Note: CBA: Corporate Brand Attitude, PI: Purchase Intention, N: Negative, P: Positive, H: High Congruence, L: Low Congruence, *p < .1, ** p < .05, ***p < .01.

formation of a corporate brand image and purchase intention through the halo effect of sports sponsorship. Consumer groups exposed to negative information about a company have exhibited more negative attitudes towards the image attributes of a corporate brand compared with a group that was exposed to positive information. Negative information not only provokes negative feelings among consumers, it also becomes a strong force driving thoughts and action. Negative information about a company has proven to be fatal to general consumers' brand image formation, attitude formation, and intention to purchase. Negative information about a company is believed to affect the formation of perceptions in and the eliciting of emotion from consumers. Consumer rationality and emotion have direct impacts on image formation and evaluation. To discover the motivations that ignite specific outcomes for consumer image and attitude formation or evaluation of a company or brand, it is necessary to examine the stimulation and information that was provided to change consumer attitudes. Consumer reactions to a sports sponsorship that featured a high degree of

Table 6. Result of the halo effect

Pre-Exposure			D.V			After-Exposure			Halo Effect					
N/P	Types	M (S.D)	D.V	N/P	Types	M (S.D)	Mean difference			p				
							Differ	p	Differ	p	Differ	p		
N	Low	3.24(.080)	Brand	N	Low	2.55(.061)	0.69	.001	.03	.001				
	High	3.26(.070)			High	3.65(.080)	-0.39	.001			.65	.001		
P	Low	3.14(.071)		P	Low	2.77(.067)	0.37	.001	.35	.001				
	High	3.61(.068)			High	3.63(.065)	-0.02	.851						
N	Low	3.37(.070)	PI	N	Low	2.89(.078)	0.48	.001	.11	.027		.001		
	High	3.05(.066)			High	3.42(.080)	-0.37	.001						
	Low	3.29(.062)		P	Low	2.87(.086)	0.42	.001	.11	.038				
	High	3.77(.073)			High	4.08(.059)	-0.31	.001						

N: negative, P: positive, High: High Congruence, Low: Low Congruence, Brand: Corporate Brand Attitude, PI: Purchase Intention, D.V: Dependent Variables, *p < .1, ** p < .05, ***p < .01

Figure 1. Corporate brand attitude high vs. low congruence prior sponsorship evaluation.

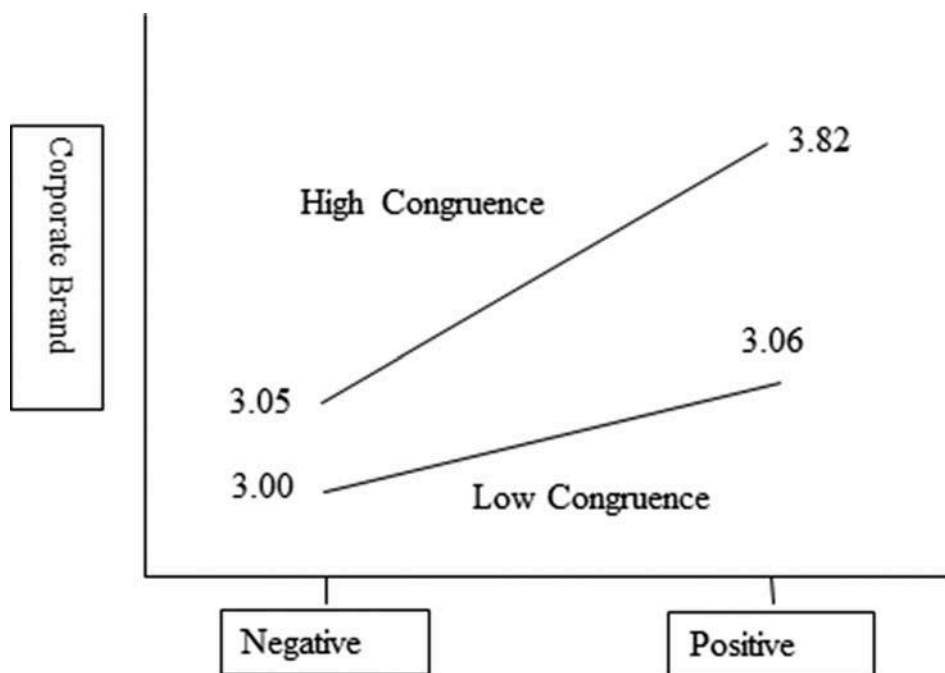
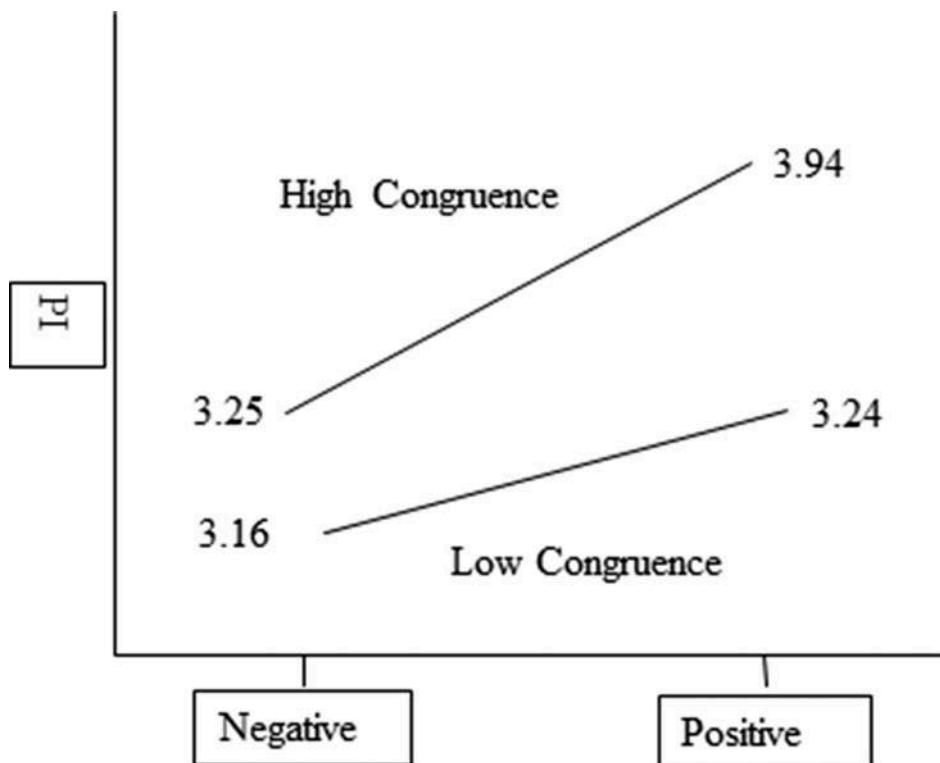


Figure 2. Purchase intention high vs. low congruence prior sponsorship evaluation.



congruence with a corporate image were examined in this study. The study finds that attitude and image formation changed considerably when sports sponsorship was strongly related to a company's corporate image. In general, consumers experience amicable and favorable reactions and evaluations of a company that sponsors sports events that are highly congruent with the company's

corporate image. Consumers evaluate a company or product more favorably when a sports event is congruent with the company or product image.

The findings indicated that sports sponsorship affects corporate brand attitude and purchase intention. Examining whether a halo effect affects consumer attitudes as a result of sports sponsorship that is congruent with a corporate image, such sponsorship was found to be closely related to attitude changes in the experimental participants. A significant interaction was observed between the formation of a corporate image and intention to purchase, implying that the formation of consumer attitudes towards a corporate brand or purchase intention can be positively enhanced by the halo effect. In other words, a company's sports sponsorship generates a halo effect on such behavioral factors as image formation and intention to purchase. Examining image transfer with regard to a corporate brand, the brand image either decreased or increased depending on the combination of negative/positive information about the company and the degree of congruence between a sports sponsorship and that image. The results of the empirical analysis of the halo effect of sports sponsorship indicate the occurrence of a significant interactive effect, implying that brand attitude can be enhanced through a halo effect.

The study highlights the necessity of examining how congruence between a sports event and a sponsoring brand is related to brand image or brand attitude formation. This paper analyzed brand attitude and intention to purchase before and after exposure to information as a function of a halo effect of sponsoring a sports event. The study finds that attitude and image formation changed considerably when sports sponsorship was strongly related to a company's corporate image. In general, consumers experience amicable and favorable reactions and evaluations of a company that sponsors sports events that are highly congruent with the company's corporate image. Consumers evaluate a company or product more favorably when a sports event is congruent with the company or product image.

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 after 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.

6. Theoretical and managerial implications

According to this study's analysis, which examined whether sports sponsorship that is congruent with a corporate image generates a halo effect and thereby generates attitude changes in consumers, the development of such sponsorship was closely related to attitude changes in the experimental participants. A significant interaction between the formation of a corporate brand attitude and intention to purchase was observed, implying that the formation of consumer corporate brand attitudes or intention to purchase can be positively enhanced through a halo effect.

Sponsorship of sports events plays an important role when companies attempt to establish positive corporate and brand images among consumers. Companies should choose carefully when selecting sports events for the purpose of building a positive image among consumers through sponsorship. Negative information not only provokes negative emotions but also strongly affects thoughts and attitudes (Averill, 1982; Horberg, Oveis, Keltner, & Cohen, 2009). Negative information about a company influence on the formation of brand images and attitudes, intention to purchase a product, and brand loyalty. Once information that implies that a company or brand behaves in what consumers perceive as a good way is stamped on consumers, it can be reflected in active consumer behavior.

The results of this study are consistent with those reported in previous studies (Becker-Olsena, Cudmore, & Hill, 2006; Forehand & Grier, 2003; Menon & Kahn, 2003; Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001). In

terms of brand-sports congruity or congruity between brand attributes and event attributes, corporate marketers should consider any such correspondence between the attributes of a brand and those of an event when developing marketing strategies.

Perspective from the result, 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. The positive image that consumers develop from a company's sports sponsorship activity that is perceived to have high congruence is linked to favorable impressions of the company or brand, which consequently enhances the company's corporate image as well as brand attitude and intention to purchase among consumers. When consumers remember a sponsorship, relationship involving a sports event where congruence between a sponsoring company's image and that event is perceived to be high, the memory produces a strong halo effect enabling the image to be more positively transferred. Companies should, therefore, be careful when choosing sports events to achieve the most positive effects of sponsorship. Moreover, companies can make use of an already established positive image among consumers through the halo effect. Selection of sports events that have high congruence with a corporate and product image is critical. Corporate image and purchase intention can be enhanced through the halo effect.

The results of this study provide an opportunity to check the importance of negative information about a company or product as well as a selection of sports events that affect image formation. The study suggests that only sports sponsorship that are highly congruent with a company or its brand can produce positive and amicable reactions from consumers through a halo effect.

7. Limitations and suggestions

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 a 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).

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.

Regarding the sample used in this study, the consumer segmentation might not be as representative as it could have been because the sample was drawn from only one region of one country. Furthermore, the data were collected through convenience sampling, which may have resulted in sampling bias. In order to establish a connection to furthering studies or to exploring new, the study should be conducted the favored sponsorship types with consumers using social media and internet advertising. Therefore, future studies applying these results to theoretical models of consumer behavior in connection with a global sports sponsorship event should

compare results for consumers from multiple countries and cultures. In addition, the study did not control for differences in gender, age, level of income, or educational attainment that might affect consumer perceptions of a sports event. Thus, future studies should investigate these issues to determine their possible effects on brand equity and sports sponsorship events.

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