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**Article**

## Measuring Attitudes Toward Sponsor And Purchase Intention

Cogent Business & Management

**Provided in Cooperation with:**

Taylor & Francis Group

*Suggested Citation:* Nguyen, Dinh Toan; Vu, Huy Thong (2022) : Measuring Attitudes Toward Sponsor And Purchase Intention, Cogent Business & Management, ISSN 2331-1975, Taylor & Francis, Abingdon, Vol. 9, Iss. 1, pp. 1-18,  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2022.2049961>

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/288619>

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**To cite this article:** Dinh Toan Nguyen & Huy Thong Vu (2022) Measuring Attitudes Toward Sponsor And Purchase Intention, Cogent Business & Management, 9:1, 2049961, DOI: [10.1080/23311975.2022.2049961](https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2022.2049961)

**To link to this article:** <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2022.2049961>



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Received: 30 August 2021  
Accepted: 01 March 2022

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Reviewing editor:  
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## MARKETING | RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Measuring Attitudes Toward Sponsor And Purchase Intention

Dinh Toan Nguyen<sup>1\*</sup> and Huy Thong Vu<sup>2</sup>

**Abstract:** This study was conducted to investigate the impact of exposure to sponsored events, involvement with sponsored events, and sponsor-event congruence on attitudes toward sponsor and purchase intention. The paper first reviews existing literature and then develops related hypotheses to achieve its objectives. The study combined both qualitative and quantitative research methods. It was conducted by surveying 293 participants and followers of the Vietnamese Rap 2020—an event sponsored by Pepsico. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to test the proposed hypotheses. The research results indicated that exposure to sponsored events, involvement with sponsored events, and sponsor-event congruence had a significantly positive effect on attitudes toward sponsor. Furthermore, involvement with a sponsored event, sponsor-event congruence, and attitudes toward sponsor had a positive effect on purchase intention. Based on the study's empirical findings, some suggestions are provided to help enterprises improve the effectiveness of sponsorship activities.

**Subjects:** Events Management; Leisure Management; Events; Marketing; Consumer Behaviour; Marketing Communications

**Keywords:** Exposure to sponsored event; involvement with sponsored event; sponsor-event congruence; attitude toward sponsor; purchase intention

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## PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Sponsorship has been growing in popularity worldwide over the past several decades, moving from a philosophy of corporate donation to a key element of the marketing strategies used by companies to create brand value and to obtain a competitive advantage in the marketplace. This study includes empirical evidence on the relationship between sponsor-event congruence, involvement with a sponsored event, exposure to a sponsored event, attitude toward the sponsor and purchase intention. This study provides a unique and useful insight into the behavior of consumers in emerging economies for niche products. It not only expands the conventional theory of consumer behavior, but also provides a reference for businesses on how to close the gap between sponsorship participation and consumers' purchase intention.

## 1. Introduction

Nowadays, the governments of many countries around the world have cut back on financial and public investment in cultural and sporting events (J. A. Meenaghan, 1983; Shin et al., 2018). This requires organizers of such events to turn to the private sector for funding. Besides, in order to make cultural and sporting events more feasible, commercial sponsorships are becoming increasingly important, and they are considered as financial measures that facilitate such activities (Gwinner, 1997). Historically, festivals and events have often been subsidized by the government to improve the competitiveness of the destination and to create jobs and income for the local population (Getz & Page, 2016; Lamont & Dowell, 2008; Saragih, 2021). As a result, many cultural and sporting activities are struggling to find commercial funding to maintain their financial viability (Mack, 1999). Despite this, there is a lack of research into how sponsoring events affect brands. This lack of research has limited the ability of event organizers to find sponsors and businesses that are willing to sponsor (Shin et al., 2018). Planning and developing sponsorship require an effective combination of branding with appropriate events (Mack, 1999; Meenaghan, 1991; Pan & Phua, 2020).

In current studies, the focus is primarily on sponsored events (O'Reilly & Madill, 2009), but the impact that the sponsor's brand has on consumer behavior is not yet well understood (Gwinner et al., 2009; Hsiao et al., 2021; McDaniel & Mason, 1999; Roy & Cornwell, 2004; Shin et al., 2018). Such research is essential because sponsors expect sponsorship investments to increase their returns, and event managers are trying to promote the effectiveness of sponsorship to potential sponsors (McDonald, 1991). Moreover, most studies on the impact of sponsorship have been conducted in the context of big sporting events (Abreu Novais and Arcodia, 2013; Rifon et al., 2004; Walliser, 2003). Only a few studies have looked at the effect of branding on events in other areas such as culture, festivals, and music (Lamont & Dowell, 2008; Rowley & Williams, 2008; Saragih, 2021; Shin et al., 2018). Therefore, there is a significant gap in research materials on sponsorship for cultural, festival, and musical events, and in particular for reality TV shows (Getz, 2005; Shin et al., 2018).

A theoretical framework to test the impact of event sponsorship could integrate sponsor-event congruence, involvement with a sponsored event, and exposure to the sponsored event (Santos et al., 2008; Shin et al., 2018). The successful link between brand image and event image is considered a prerequisite for effective sponsorship (Coppetti et al., 2009; Fleck & Quester, 2007; Hsiao et al., 2021). A higher level of sponsor-event congruence is indicated to have a positive impact on the sponsor brand (Mazodier & Merunka, 2012; Shin et al., 2018; Sirgy et al., 2008). In an experimental study on event sponsorship, Meenaghan (2001) tested the concept of fan involvement and its implications for event sponsorship. He drew the conclusion from focus group interviews that higher levels of fan involvement in specially sponsored events would evoke a positive sentiment toward the sponsors. In addition, the more an audience is exposed to the link between an event and sponsorship, the more likely it is that the link will be encrypted in their memory (Johar et al., 2006). However, there is little research about how sponsor-event congruence, involvement in events, and exposure to sponsored events affect attitudes toward the sponsor, or about how attitudes toward sponsors affect purchase intention. Furthermore, existing studies only examine the congruence and attitude toward sponsors as moderating variables in the relationship between sponsorship and sponsor brands (Henseler et al., 2007; Santos et al., 2008).

At one level, sponsorship enables a sponsor to promote a positive attitude toward their organization through the existing association between consumers and sponsees. A positive attitude toward an organization is recognized as an important factor that influences consumer purchase intention and ultimately consumer behavior (Ajzen, 2001; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Shin et al., 2018). Although there seems to be general agreement that a positive association between consumers and sponsees can induce a positive association between a consumer and sponsor, additional research is still needed to substantiate this point. Therefore, further research on these factors is needed to understand the subsequent influences on attitudes toward the sponsor as well as on purchase intention. The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of sponsor-event

congruence, involvement with a sponsored event, and exposure to the sponsored event on attitude toward the sponsor and intention to buy during “Rap Viet 2020”, an event sponsored by Pepsi. More specifically, this study examines the relationships between these variables. The study will contribute to a deeper understanding of the effects of sponsorship (Meenaghan, 2001; Meenaghan & O’Sullivan, 2001).

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1. Purchase intention

Purchase intention is considered as a dependent variable of all the variables of interest in the present study (e.g., perceived relevance, involvement level, and attitude). All the research variables are hypothesized to have a positive influence on purchase intention (Y. K. Kim et al., 1997). Much research related to the prediction of human behavior has been based on the theory of rational action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) and the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991). According to Ajzen (1991), people act in accordance with their intentions and perceptions of behavioral control, and intentions are influenced by attitudes toward behavior, perceptions of behavioral control, and subjective norms. Study results have reinforced the belief that intention plays an important role in guiding actual behavior (Ajzen, 2001; Bassili, 1995; Kendzierski & Whitaker, 1997; Sheeran & Orbell, 1998). Future purchase intent can be a strong indicator of sponsorship effectiveness, especially when a sponsor participates in events that target fans with a shared identity (Ko et al., 2008).

From the sponsor’s point of view, consumer purchase intention is the most useful indicator of sponsorship effectiveness due to its impact on future sales (Crompton, 2004). In addition, intent to purchase is a central indicator for sports organizations in order to legitimize their relationships with actual sponsors and negotiate future sponsorship contracts (Hong, 2011). Buying intention is not the same as actual buying behavior, but consumer intentions are important in guiding their behavior (Ajzen, 2001). According to Spears and Singh (2004), purchase intention refers to a person’s conscious plan to make an effort to purchase a brand. Dees et al. (2008) argue that purchase intention indicates an individual’s motivation to perform a particular buying behavior. According to Meenaghan (2001), fans’ reactions to sponsors pass through a series of stages, from first knowing the sponsors to finally accepting the intention and purchase behavior of their products. Fans’ perceptions of sponsors positively contribute to their attitudes toward them and subsequently purchase intention (Schlesinger & Güngerich, 2011; Y. Zhang et al., 1996). When fans see sponsors support their team, they may purchase their products as an act of goodwill or to repay the sponsor for supporting the team (Parker & Fink, 2010). Several studies have used purchase intention as an ultimate indicator to evaluate the effectiveness of sponsorship (Alexandris et al., 2007; Biscaia et al., 2013; Madrigal, 2001; Y. Zhang et al., 1996). However, most studies refer to sponsors in general, rather than focusing on actual sponsors associated with a specific event (Hong, 2011).

### 2.2. Attitude towards sponsor

Attitude is often defined as “a psychological tendency expressed by rating a particular entity with some degree of approval or disliking” (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). This is an individual’s overall assessment of an object, issue, or person, and the primary goal of sponsorship is often to create a positive consumer attitude toward the sponsor (Cornwell & Maignan, 1998). Therefore, evaluating consumers’ attitude toward their sponsorship or brand is the main objective of sponsors. Previous studies have emphasized the importance of measuring attitude toward the sponsor as an important indicator of sponsor effectiveness (Javalgi et al., 1994; Lee et al., 1997; Sandler & Shani, 1993; Speed & Thompson, 2000).

Developing positive attitudes toward sponsors has been indicated in studies as a key factor in evaluating sponsorship effectiveness (Alexandris et al., 2007; Chen & Zhang, 2011; Speed & Thompson, 2000) and the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) provides an important theoretical foundation for this concept. According to Ajzen (1991), attitudes toward objects play an important role in predicting a person’s behavioral intentions and they can influence behavioral responses to objects (Ajzen, 2001).

Attitudes can be formed through direct experiences with an entity or through exposure to knowledge and messages about an entity (Albarracin et al., 2014). A person's beliefs about an object represent the basis of their attitude toward that object, with beliefs seen as the relationship between attitude and an object and its attributes, characteristics, outcomes, goals or values (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Keller (2003) supports the idea that attitudes toward a sponsor represent a consumer's overall assessment of a brand sponsoring an event, and Meenaghan (2001) operates this construct as a favorable orientation toward the sponsor. Companies engaging in sports sponsorship activities expect to see sports consumers develop the same positive feelings about the sponsored brands that they have toward their teams (Shaw & McDonald, 2006). Sports and music fans have tended to have a favorable attitude toward sponsors if they believe that sponsorship is important to their team or artist (Cornwell et al., 2006; Madrigal, 2001; Rai et al., 2021). Alexandris et al. (2007) further suggest that the preference and conversion of goodwill toward sponsors represent the specific attitude of consumers toward sponsorship activities. Additionally, previous studies have suggested that attitudes toward the sponsor are an important predictor of purchase intention (Chang et al., 2021; Koo et al., 2006; Rai et al., 2021; Speed & Thompson, 2000). While having a positive attitude towards the sponsor, it is argued that fans will correspond positively to the products/brands of the sponsor and expect high consumption value of its products/brands. This in turn stimulates consumption intention (Dees et al., 2008). Fan intention to purchase and use the products/brands of the sponsor is therefore elicited at the very end. The association of sports fan attitude towards sponsors with purchase intention is confirmed by Madrigal (2001)'s study within a western-based domestic sports sponsorship context. In conclusion, the existing research suggests the following. As attitudes toward the sponsor brand become more favorable, purchase intentions increase (Papadimitriou et al., 2016; Speed & Thompson, 2000; Tsiotsou & Alexandris, 2009). Based on the inductive arguments and empirical evidence, the current research accordingly hypothesises:

**H1:** Attitude towards sponsor has a direct positive effect on intentions to purchase products of sponsors.

### **2.3. Involvement with sponsored event**

Involvement refers to the degree of psychological connection (Funk et al., 2004), the perception of personal relevance (Kyle & Chick, 2002), and the degree to which a person is committed to an object, activity, place, or experience (Gross & Brown, 2008). Based on social judgment theory (Sherif & Hovland, 1961), this concept has been further developed in the study of consumer behavior (Laurent & Kapferer, 1985; Rothschild, 1984) and the interrelationship between the learning and participation of sports consumers has been recognized (Mullin et al., 2014). In a follow-up study, hockey knowledge was found to be a predictor of a consumer's match attendance rate (J. J. Zhang et al., 2020). Involvement has been widely applied in entertainment and sport (Dimanche et al., 1991) where it is defined as "an unobservable state of motivation, arousal, or interest in an activity or entertainment activity or a product" (Havitz & Dimanche, 1997). In addition, involvement with an event is defined as a kind of genuine excitement caused by a strong and solid interest in a specific activity (on our case the sponsored sport event) which results from the importance of this activity for an individual (Celsi & Olson, 1988; Lardinoit & Derbaix, 2001). However, little effort has been made to understand the relationship between involvement with an event and attitudes toward the sponsor's brand and purchase intentions (J. Lee & Beeler, 2009), especially in the context of television entertainment programs.

In an in-depth analysis of sport, Beaton et al. (2011) suggest that "involvement with sport manifests itself when individuals rate their participation in a sporting activity as an important focus in their lives and provide both hedonistic and symbolic value". The authors conceptualized coherence as a multifaceted construct and used measures of hedonic value, centrality, and symbolic value in their research. Several studies have adopted a multifaceted approach to measuring engagement. Pleasure, importance, cues, and risks were used to examine the relationship between trip purpose



and engagement of the audience in the 2004 Olympic Games (Kaplanidou & Havitz, 2010). However, a single-factor model has also been found to be reliable (S.-S. Kim et al., 2011) and it was adopted by McGehee et al. (2003) to measure the cohesion of long-distance competitors.

Consumer involvement with a sponsored event has an impact on the factors related to brand and brand image (Su & Kunkel, 2019). A recent review of sponsorship-linked marketing studies has shown that involvement with the sponsorship entity has an impact on consumer awareness, affection and behavioural outcomes (Cornwell & Kwon, 2020). A study by Hansen and Scotwin (1995) provides further evidence that sports fans with a higher level of involvement are significantly more likely to recall the sponsor than those with a lower level of involvement. Pham (1992) has shown that when the level of consumer involvement in a sponsored event is high, the consumer's information processing is significantly affected. Drawing upon this view, the following hypotheses is proposed:

**H2a:** Involvement with a sponsored event has a direct positive effect on attitude towards sponsor.

**H2b:** Involvement with a sponsored event has a direct positive effect on intentions to purchase products of sponsors.

#### **2.4. Sponsor-event congruence**

The concept of congruency was first introduced in social psychology to examine the formation of attitude and memory (Jagre et al., 2001). According to Osgood and Tannenbaum (1955), congruency is the perception of congruence between objects; people evaluate different objects and develop attitudes based on the perceived congruence between them. The association of two objects with distinct meanings creates a process of identification (Rokeach & Rothman, 1965), which leads to a change in attitudes to maintain cognitive consistency (Tannenbaum, 1967). It also maintains homogeneity between subjects with different attitudes (Solomon et al., 2014). The relationship between event image and sponsor brand image is explained through schema theory (K. Gwinner & Bennett, 2008; Mazodier & Quester, 2014). In the case of sponsorships, improving the match between sponsor and event will increase the response to sponsorship from personal preferences, cognitive status, and attitudes toward the sponsors (Speed & Thompson, 2000). When consumers experience a sponsored event, they theoretically consider both the functional and visual similarities between the sponsor and the event (Gwinner, 1997). While functional similarity assesses whether the sponsored brand products will be used during the event (Grohs & Reisinger, 2014), image similarity measures the appropriateness between the event image and sponsor brand's image (K. P. Gwinner & Eaton, 1999). Most of the current research on event sponsorship has addressed the impact of the perceived fit between the event image and brand image on the sponsoring brand (Chiu & Pyun, 2020; Coppetti et al., 2009; Fleck & Quester, 2007; Shu et al., 2015). These studies have largely concluded that a high level of congruence between an event image and the sponsoring brand image generates positive brand responses, including sponsor brand recall (Rodgers, 2003), image transfer (Chiu & Pyun, 2020; K. P. Gwinner & Eaton, 1999; Smith, 2004), positive attitudes toward the sponsor brands (Ko et al., 2017; Papadimitriou et al., 2016; Y. Zhang et al., 1996), and purchase intention (Papadimitriou et al., 2016; Y. Zhang et al., 1996). However, studies on image congruence are inconsistent and to a certain extent somewhat contradictory with regard to the relationships between events and sponsor brands (Fleck & Quester, 2007; Shin et al., 2018). The following hypotheses were tested: Drawing upon this view, the following hypotheses is proposed:

**H3a:** Sponsor-event congruence has a direct positive effect on attitude towards sponsor.

**H3b:** Sponsor-event congruence has a direct positive effect on intentions to purchase products of sponsors.

### 2.5. Exposure to a sponsored event

Exposure to a sponsored event includes the number of times an individual is exposed to an event message, and it is generated through a mention of the name, appearance of the logo, etc. (Santos et al., 2008). The degree of exposure to each sponsor-sponsorship association is an important factor influencing sponsor awareness (Johar et al., 2006; Wakefield et al., 2007). The more audiences are exposed to sponsorship associations, the more likely it is that these associations will be encoded in memory (Johar et al., 2006). Awareness is formed through increased exposure, although at a diminishing rate (Grohs & Reisinger, 2014). Many researchers believe that having greater knowledge about a subject can help consumers evaluate it more positively. However, knowledge does not enhance the public's positive assessment of a subject (Bornstein, 1989; Rindfleisch & Inman, 1998). The effect of exposure simply indicates that even repeated exposure to a subject can enhance the public's ability to judge the subject (Herrmann et al., 2011; Olson & Thjømøe, 2009). This is especially true in the case of unintentional exposure (Bornstein, 1989). In this case, people rely on familiarity with certain subjects: people tend to judge a subject more positively if they are more familiar with it (Monin, 2003; Zajonc, 2001). Furthermore, many studies find a positive impact of repeated simultaneous presentations of sponsor and sponsored event on the awareness of the sponsor as well as on the sponsored event itself (Cornwell et al., 2001; Crimmins & Horn, 1996). The following hypothesis is proposed:

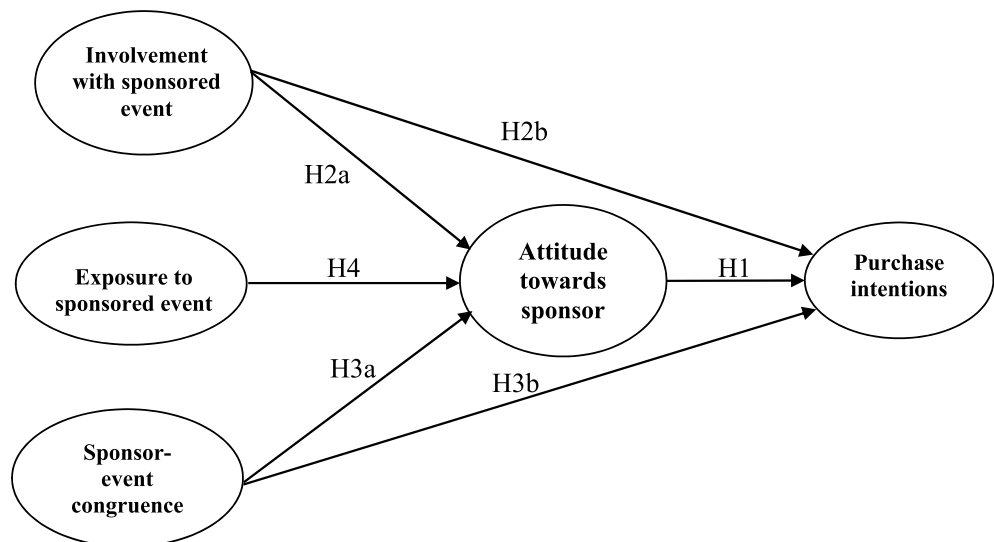
**H4:** The level of exposure to a sponsored event has a direct positive effect on attitude towards sponsor.

Based on the research overview, this article focuses on the influence of event sponsorship on consumers' purchase intention. The proposed research framework is shown in Figure 1.

### 3. Research methodology

The study methodology was conducted in two phases. The first phase focused on developing measures based on the definitions of each construct, primarily adapting previously validated measures. Content validity was assessed to ensure consistency of measures. The second research phase involved testing the study hypotheses using data collected at a sponsored event.

**Figure 1. Conceptual model.**





### **3.1. Measurement instrument and questionnaire design**

Measurement items in this study were modified from previous studies. Slight modification of the wording of the previous scales was done so as to fit the current research context. The measures were then tested according to the standard scale development guidelines (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). As this study was conducted in Vietnam, all the items were translated from English to Vietnamese and back to English to check their accuracy. When necessary, adjustments were made to the Vietnamese translation.

Thus, the purchase intention of consumers was measured with four items by Biscaia et al. (2013) denoted by PI1 to PI4. To measure the attitude toward sponsorship, the author used the scale “attitude toward event association with sponsors” of H.-S. Lee and Cho (2009) with four items denoted by ATTI1 to ATTI4. The scale of sponsor-event congruence was measured by five items developed by Speed and Thompson (2000), denoted by FIT1 to FIT5. The construct of involvement with sponsored event was traditionally assessed with six items based on the study of Bennett et al. (2007) coded as INV1 to INV6. A five-point Likert scale was used for all measurement items.

Measurement for exposure to a sponsored event was adapted from the work of Grohs et al. (2004), with three observed items denoted by EXPO1 to EXPO3. The respondents were asked to report the number of times they were provided with information about the event on three main media forms: television, newspapers, and the official website of the event. This item employed a 5-point ordinal scale with 1 = zero, 2 = 1 time; 3 = 2 to 3 times; 4 = 4 to 5 times; and 5 = over 5 times.

### **3.2. Data collection and analysis**

To test the research hypotheses, a survey was conducted at the Rap Viet 2020 event. This study employed a web-based, self-administered questionnaire. The main survey questionnaire used a convenience sample of the research population was customers who have ever watched and followed Rap Viet 2020 event—Rap Viet is a talent show about rap copyrighted from Workpoint TV's The Rapper, produced by Ho Chi Minh City Television in collaboration with the Vie Channel company. It was held in Ho Chi Minh city and broadcast live on HTV2, VTVcab 1—Vie Entertainment, YouTube, and VieON from August to November 2020. This event was sponsored by Pepsico with its brand Pepsi Lime Flavor Zero Calories, and it attracted many Vietnamese youths. In each broadcast episode, Rap Viet attracts more than 500 thousand—700 thousand viewers at the same time on YouTube. Even the final night of the show also reached 1.2 million online views on YouTube, among the highest among domestic entertainment shows, maintaining its position in the top trending. The survey was conducted from December 1 to 25, 2020 after the Rap Viet 2020 finale was held.

The questionnaire of this study included 26 items used in factor analysis, following the principle of at least five observations for one observed variable (Bentler & Chou, 1987). Therefore, the initial sample size was  $26 * 5 = 130$  observations. However, to increase the reliability of the study, the author intended to collect a sample of 350 observations. From 347 completed questionnaires, 293 were retained for the data analysis; 54 were discarded due to missing values or extreme outliers. The final sample consisted of 103 males and 190 females. According to Hair et al. (2006), a sample size between 150 and 400 is sufficient for SEM analysis to test the study hypotheses. The results are printed in Table 1.

SPSS 22.0 and AMOS 20.0 were used to analyze the collected data. Following Anderson and Gerbing (1988), a two-step approach was adopted. First, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to test the measurement model fit and the factor structure of each scale. Second, structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to test the study hypotheses.

**Table 1. Respondent profiles (n = 293)**

Characteristics	Description	Frequency	(%)
Gender	Male	103	35.2
	Female	190	64.8
Age	≤ 18	31	10.6
	18–22	230	78.5
	> 22	32	10.9
Occupation	High school student	31	10.6
	University student	223	76.1
	Employment	39	13.3

## 4. Results and discussions

### 4.1. Measurement model

A CFA was carried out to examine whether the measurement model was a valid construct. Across a variety of fit indices, the measurement model was acceptable. Specifically, the measures of Incremental Fit Index [IFI], Tucker-Lewis Index [TLI], Goodness of Fit Index [GFI], and Comparative Fit Index [CFI] are close to 1.00 and are regarded acceptable. The value of Root Mean Squared Residual [RMR] is acceptable if it is below .05 (Byrne, 2013). For the Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation [RMSEA], the acceptable range is from .04 to .08 (Turner & Reisinger, 2001). Across these criteria, the CFA results indicated acceptable model fit:  $\chi^2$  (293) = 352.060,  $p = 0.000$ ; Normed  $\chi^2$  (CMIN/DF) = 1.769; RMR = 0.031, GFI = 0.901, RMSEA = 0.051, IFI = 0.937, TLI = 0.925, CFI = 0.936 (Schumacker & Lomax, 2004; Turner & Reisinger, 2001). Moreover, all the standardized factor loadings for items were greater than 0.6 ( $p < 0.001$ ), and the composite reliabilities of the five scales were all greater than 0.7 (Hair et al., 2006), ranging from 0.752 to 0.925. Convergent validity and discriminant validity were assessed by calculating the average variance extracted (AVE) for each scale. All AVE values exceeded 0.5, ranging from 0.532 to 0.567, indicating uni-dimensionality and convergent validity. To assess discriminant validity, the AVE for each scale was compared with the squared correlation between all pairs of variables. For each variable, the squared correlation was greater than the AVE, indicating acceptable discriminant validity (Bagozzi et al., 1998). Additionally, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated for each construct, and they ranged from 0.694 to 0.866 (Hair et al., 2010). The results of scale accuracy tests are printed in Table 2.

### 4.2. Structural model

After confirming the accuracy of the research scales, the research hypotheses were analysed by using the structural equation modelling analysis. The overall structural model fit was acceptable:  $\chi^2$  (293) = 352.307,  $p = 0.000$ ; Normed  $\chi^2$  (CMIN/DF) = 1.762,  $p = .000$ ; RMR = 0.031, GFI = 0.901, RMSEA = 0.051, IFI = 0.937, TLI = 0.926, and CFI = 0.936. This result indicated that the proposed conceptual model converged well and could represent the underlying empirical data structure collected in Vietnam.

Subsequently, the hypothesized relationships were examined. Attitude towards sponsor had a significant positive effect on consumer's purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.179$ ,  $t = 2.105$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Thus, hypothesis 1 was supported. There was also a significant relationship between involvement with sponsored event and attitude toward sponsor ( $\beta = 0.213$ ,  $t = 3.039$ ,  $p < .05$ ), between involvement with sponsored event and consumer's purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.369$ ,  $t = 4.318$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Accordingly, hypotheses 2a and 2b were supported. Sponsor-event congruence had a significant positive effect on both attitude toward sponsor ( $\beta = 0.322$ ,  $t = 4.381$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and consumer's purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.268$ ,  $t = 3.308$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Thus, hypotheses 3a and 3b were supported. Hypothesis 4 was supported with the result that exposure to sponsored event is

**Table 2. Summary of the measurement model**

No.	Scales	Items	Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient	CR	AVE
	Exposure to sponsored event	3	0.694	0.788	0.553
	Involvement with sponsored event	6	0.866	0.925	0.553
	Sponsor-event congruence	5	0.852	0.866	0.567
	Attitudes toward sponsor	4	0.764	0.759	0.542
	Purchase intention	4	0.710	0.752	0.532

Source: Own calculations

significantly related with attitude toward sponsor ( $\beta = 0.176$ ,  $t = 2.305$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Table 3 summarizes the findings, and Figure 2 shows the results with standardized path coefficients and P-values.

#### 4.3. Tests of mediation effects

To further the analyses, the mediating effects of sponsoring brand attitude were investigated. A bias-corrected bootstrap-function with 1000 samples (Baron & Kenny, 1986) was used to investigate mediating effects. To examine the mediating effects of attitude towards sponsor, the effects of involvement with sponsored event on consumer's purchase intention were examined; the results indicated a partial mediation effect (total effect:  $\beta = 0.407$ ,  $p < .001$ ; direct effect:  $\beta = 0.369$ ,  $p < .001$ ; indirect effect:  $\beta = 0.038$ ,  $p = .021$ ). Participants who perceive high involvement with sponsored event had more favorable purchase intention directly and, as a result, more favorable attitude towards sponsor. Next, the mediating effects of attitude towards sponsor

**Figure 2. Structural path model.**

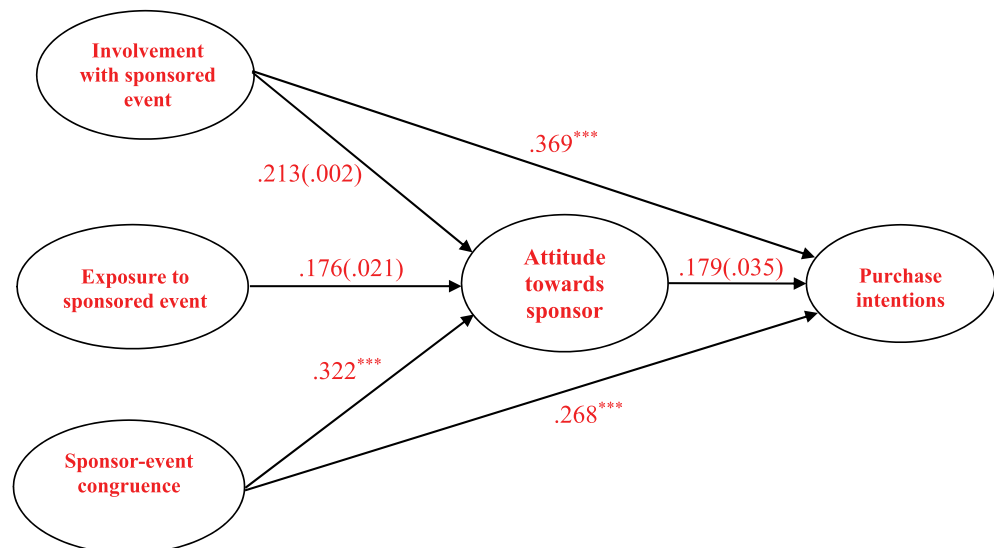


Table 3. Regression paths of the structural model (standardized path coefficient)							
Hypothesized paths		Estimate	SE	CR (=t-value)	P	Results	
CPI	<—	AWS	.179	.050	2.105	.035	H1—Supported
AWS	<—	IWE	.213	.054	3.039	.002	H2a—Supported
CPI	<—	IWE	.369	.038	4.318	***	H2b—Supported
AWS	<—	FIT	.322	.050	4.381	***	H3a—Supported
CPI	<—	FIT	.268	.032	3.308	***	H3b—Supported
AWS	<—	EWE	.176	.035	2.305	.021	H4—Supported

Note: \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ; CPI: Consumer's purchase intention; AWS: Attitude toward sponsor; IWE: Involvement with sponsored event; FIT: Sponsor-event congruence; EWE: Exposure to sponsored event.

**Table 4. Standardized indirect effects**

	Estimates					Two Tailed Significance				
	IWE	FIT	EWE	AWS	CPI	IWE	FIT	EWE	AWS	CPI
AWS	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	...	...	...	...	...
CPI	.038	.058	.032	.000	.000	.021	.032	.057	...	...

were analyzed. In the relationship between sponsor-event congruence and consumer's purchase intention, attitude towards sponsor had a role of full mediation (total effect:  $\beta = 0.326$ ,  $p < .001$ ; direct effect:  $\beta = 0.268$ ,  $p < .001$ ; indirect effect:  $\beta = 0.058$ ,  $p = .032$ ). Finally, To examine the mediating effects of attitude towards sponsor, effects of exposure to sponsored event on consumer's purchase intention were examined, the results indicated that, there is no indirect relationship between exposure to sponsored event and consumer's purchase intention (indirect effect:  $\beta = 0.032$ ,  $p = .057 > .05$ ). Overall, these results indicate that, for those who perceive high involvement with sponsored event and high sponsor-event congruence in a Reality Television, the formation of high purchase intention originates with favorable attitude towards sponsor. The results of scale accuracy tests are printed in [Table 4](#).

## 5. Conclusion

This study has provided empirical evidence on the relationships between sponsor-event congruence, involvement with sponsored event, exposure to sponsored events, attitude toward sponsor, and purchase intention. The research results also demonstrate that attitude toward sponsor brand has a significant positive influence on purchase intention. Involvement with sponsored event and sponsor-event congruence have an influence on both attitude toward sponsor and purchase intention. Meanwhile, exposure to sponsored event has an influence on attitude toward event. The research results also show that attitude towards sponsor had a role of full mediation in the relationship between sponsor-event congruence, involvement with sponsored event and consumer's purchase intention. This study provides a unique and useful insight into the behavior of consumers in emerging economies for niche products. This study not only expands the conventional theory of consumer behavior, but it also provides a reference for businesses on how to close the gap between sponsorship participation and consumers' purchase intentions. The research results suggest some solutions that could be implemented in order to improve the effectiveness of sponsorship activities.

Successful television broadcast events clearly have a positive impact in terms of attracting young people to television, and this is important as TV watchers are getting older (Depp et al., 2010). In addition, due to ongoing changes in government budget policies, commercial sponsorship is increasingly playing an important role in the sustainable success of events. Therefore, reality TV event organizers, among others, need to develop strategies for searching for and securing appropriate commercial sponsorships. Understanding the impact of sponsorship on aspects of the brand is the key to these strategies. Moreover, brand managers need to better understand the effectiveness and return on investment of their sponsorship decisions. Being aware of these needs, the purpose of this study is to look at the effects of sponsorship in reality TV events in Vietnam, using a research model based on the relationships between sponsor-event congruence, involvement with sponsored event, exposure to sponsored event, attitude toward sponsor, and purchase intention.

### 5.1. Implications for managers

The results of this study can be used as a basis for successful sponsorship strategies by both event organizers and sponsor brand managers. This study indicates that managers need to make efforts to increase the perceived relevance of the sponsored event to the sponsor's brand and to improve the attitude toward the sponsor as a means of increasing people's awareness of the sponsor and

their intention to buy. For brand managers wishing to improve purchase intention and increase return on investment through the sponsorship of reality TV events, the results of this study provide empirical evidence that the perceived congruence between sponsored events and sponsor brands is an aspect that sponsors should consider when choosing a reality TV show to sponsor. Brand managers need to choose reality TV shows where the audience will perceive a high degree of compatibility between the event and the sponsor. The research results indicate that when reality TV participants and followers have a perception of a close fit between the event and the sponsoring brand, their attitude toward the sponsor will be better. The results of this study are also consistent with previous studies (Shin et al., 2018). For example, Roy and Bettina Cornwell (2003) also indicated that the closer the fit between sponsors and events, the more positive the consumers' perception of the sponsor. Therefore, market research to determine perceived relevance would be very useful when identifying events where the sponsorship effect would be positive.

The level of involvement with a sponsored event is also a major factor in the sponsorship endorsement process. This factor influences the attitude toward the sponsor and the purchase intention of consumers. This result is also consistent with previous studies. For example, Meenaghan (2001) also demonstrated that a higher level of fan involvement with an event in particular evokes a positive emotion toward the sponsors. Moreover, fans appreciate and recognize the sponsor's investment in the event the most (Parker & Fink, 2010). When fans see sponsors supporting their team, they may purchase their products as a gesture of goodwill or to repay the sponsor for supporting the team (Parker & Fink, 2010). Therefore, research to determine the level of consumer involvement with a sponsored event and whether the event's fans align with the sponsor's target audience is essential to identify and select events to sponsor.

Furthermore, the research results demonstrate that attitude toward the sponsor has the positive influence on the purchase intention of consumers. It is therefore suggested that sponsors and event organizers note that consumer response to event sponsorship activities depends on the attitude and degree of goodwill toward the sponsor. Therefore, raising the level of goodwill toward the sponsor will help them to achieve their desired goals through sponsorship. The results of this study are consistent with the study of Biscaia et al. (2013).

In addition, exposure to a sponsored event is an important factor in the sponsorship perception process. This study has shown that the more fans are exposed to an event, the more positive their attitudes toward sponsors. This means that companies should give more consideration to the number of target audiences that may be exposed to the event they intend to sponsor. For example, Rap Viet event organizers should consider that the Rap Viet program can be held in many big cities in Vietnam such as Hanoi and Da Nang, not just in Ho Chi Minh City as it is now, thereby attracting many people. More fans attend and follow the event. Moreover, it is necessary to organize exchange events between players, judges, and fans. That not only increases consumer exposure to the event, but it also enhances consumer engagement with the event.

## **5.2. Limitations and further research directions**

Firstly, the study was conducted only in Hanoi, while the Rap Viet 2020 was televised on many platforms and attracted a large number of young people across Vietnam. Other research samples in areas of Vietnam and also in other countries for other types of events could find different effects.

Secondly, this study only selected post-event reviews and it did not include any official reviews of previous consumer purchasing intention. Moreover, consumer purchasing intention is subject to change (Woisetschläger & Michaelis, 2012). Additionally, the consumer's purchase intention for the sponsoring brand is most likely to be different before and after the event. A test design that tests a change in attitude and intention before and after participating in event sponsorship could provide a more complete assessment.

Thirdly, since this study only measures behavioral intention, it is difficult to predict actual brand purchase behavior. Future research may benefit from trying to measure actual behavior. Such studies require a longitudinal research design over a certain period. Although this was beyond the focus of this present study, it deserves more attention in future studies.

#### Funding

This work was supported by the "This research is funded by the National Economics University, Hanoi, Vietnam."

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#### Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

#### Citation information

Cite this article as: Measuring Attitudes Toward Sponsor And Purchase Intention, Dinh Toan Nguyen & Huy Thong Vu, *Cogent Business & Management* (2022), 9: 2049961.

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