

THE EFFECT OF NEGATIVE SPONSOR INFORMATION
AND TEAM RESPONSE ON IDENTIFICATION LEVELS
AND CONSUMER ATTITUDES

DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

Grounded in social identity theory and balance theory this study employed an experimental design to extend previous research on sport teams, sport sponsors, and sport consumers. Specifically, this research examined the impact negative sponsor behavior has on consumer attitudes toward the sponsor and consumer levels of team identification while also taking into consideration the team response to the negative event. Four treatment groups—negative information/no response, negative information/continue response, negative information/terminate response, irrelevant information (control)—were utilized to test the hypotheses

The data were analyzed using ANOVA and MANOVA. Results revealed that sponsor behavior and team response (continuing or terminating the sponsor relationship) was a non-factor in team identification levels; however, bad sponsor behavior and team response had a marked influence on consumers, in particular highly identified fans, attitude toward the sponsor. That is, highly identified fans reported more favorable attitudes toward a sponsor regardless of the sponsor behavior. Additionally, an identification x treatment group interaction was noted such that highly identified fans reported more favorable attitudes toward the badly behaving sponsor when the team

continued the relationship with the sponsor compared to when the team *terminated* the relationship with the sponsor.

This research holds a practical significance, as results provide insight on how consumers respond to the occurrence of negative events by a sponsor including what type of team response is best received by consumers of the team, as well as theoretical significance as it examined and tested tenants of social identity and balance theory relative to fans and sponsors.

This work is dedicated to the many individuals—teachers, coaches, family members, and friends—who have significantly influenced my life. Their guidance, support, encouragement, lessons, and, above all, unwavering belief in my abilities have empowered me and uniquely shaped the many stages of my life. They were all, knowingly or unknowingly, with me during this journey and each of them will continue to be with me in all of my future endeavors.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In 1999, Enron Energy Services agreed to a contract worth more than \$150 million dollars for the title rights to the, still under construction, Houston Astros stadium (Muret, 1999). The contract seemed to benefit both parties as the Astros garnered much needed financial resources and Enron was projected to gain over \$200 million for handling the energy needs of the stadium as well as the publicity of having the facility called Enron Field (Muret, 1999).

*However, in late 2001, Enron filed for bankruptcy amid an investigation of criminal activity. The Astros, at first stood by their corporate sponsor and in December 2001 team president Tal Smith stated, "Until there's no longer a company, it'll be called **Enron Field**" (Sports Illustrated, 2001). Yet, just a few months later, following continued controversy surrounding Enron, the Astros changed their position and paid \$2.1 million dollars to buy back the naming rights (USA Today, 2002) and begin the process of distancing themselves from the fallen company whose name was located on everything from the signs on the stadium to the cups at the concession stand (Bruss, 2002). Astros' officials stated the move to separate itself from Enron was necessary "because it felt negative public perception was reflected upon the team" (Bruss, 2002).*

The Enron case may be considered an extreme example, but is not an isolated incident of 'sponsorship gone wrong'. For instance, Nike, the biggest shoe company in the world and premier sponsor of many athletes and athletic teams, has faced repeated criticism over reports of sweatshops used to manufacture Nike shoes (Global Exchange, 2006). Such criticism has led to numerous protests on university campuses whose athletic teams are affiliated with Nike or considering a partnership with Nike (Global Exchange, 2006). Likewise, the soft drink company Coca-Cola, another seemingly ubiquitous sponsor of athletic events, has received unflattering press centering on a series of murders, kidnappings, and tortures of Coke bottling plant union leaders in South America (Killer Coke, 2006). The negative publicity has led to protests at several American universities as well a ban on Coke product sales on many college campuses (Killer Coke, 2006). Additionally, in 2002 Pittsburgh Pirates marketers were left scrambling to find the best marketing strategy following the controversy involving questionable accounting practices which surrounded PNC Financial Services Group Inc., the Pirates sponsor who held the naming rights to the stadium (Leone, 2002).

The above incidents provide only a glimpse of the numerous scandals involving sport team sponsors which have occurred in recent years. While corporate scandals are not a new phenomenon, the rise in corporate sponsorship of athletic events and teams has thrust such impropriety into the sports world spotlight.

Sponsorship has flourished within the sports industry in recent years and sponsorship spending increased from \$1.35 billion in 1987 to \$10.5 billion in 2003 (IEG, 2002). Howard and Crompton (2005) reported that sport organizations received 69% of all sponsorship investments which totaled more than \$7 billion dollars in 2003. Once a

way for businesses to achieve altruistic satisfaction, sponsorship has become a complex marketing strategy with the ultimate purpose of increasing the bottom line (Meenaghan, 2001). Clearly, sponsorship “has emerged as a primary communication vehicle for many thousands of corporations” (Howard & Crompton, 2005, p. 436). Thus, the relationship between sport organizations and sponsoring businesses has become more complex with sport organizations dependent on sponsorship dollars and organizations looking to get the most from their investment (Stotlar, 2004).

Teams have steadily continued to sell sponsorships, relying on the money to fund team operations and organizations have continued to buy sponsorship rights hoping to ‘tap into’ the “emotional connection consumers have with a favorite property” (Madrigal, 2001, p. 146). In fact, it is this relationship between entities that separates sponsorship from traditional advertising (Meenaghan, 1996). A sport team provides an audience of consumers which sponsors hope to exploit by capitalizing on the consumer-team-sponsor relationship.

However, there has been little consideration of the consequences of this relationship when the sponsoring organization is involved in a negative public scandal. In other words, how does a report of an illegal or immoral incident involving a team sponsor impact consumers? Does the negative publicity diminish attitudes toward the associated team? Does the relationship with the team serve to buffer or protect the attitudes toward the sponsor? Or, do consumers effectively ignore the relationship between team and sponsor when allegations of impropriety surface? Further, how does the team’s response to the allegations impact consumer attitudes?

Therefore, the purpose of this research was to examine consumers' affective responses to negative information about a sponsor of a particular sports team. The impact of the information on the attitude of consumers toward the sponsor and team was measured as well as the impact of various team responses to the negative information. Considered in this research was the relationship between consumer, team, and sponsor which was conceptualized in terms of team identification and based in social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and balance theory (Heider, 1958).

Sponsorship

Meenaghan (1991, p.36) defined sponsorship as “an investment, in cash or in kind, in an activity, in return for access to the exploitable commercial potential associated with that activity”. Sponsorship is driven by the exchange theory which posits in order for an exchange between two or more parties to occur both parties must feel what they receive in return for their services or goods is equal to their offerings worth (Crompton, 2004). In other words, both the sponsor and sport organization must feel the relationship between entities is beneficial.

Generally, sponsorship involves purchasing rights to a sport organization which allows the opportunity to utilize various marketing strategies to leverage the sponsorship. Leveraging is defined as “collateral communication of a brand's relationship with a property” (Cornwell, Weeks, & Roy, 2005, p. 36) and in many cases, a sponsoring organization will spend as much money leveraging the sponsorship as was spent on the initial sponsorship rights (Meenaghan, 1994). Crimmins and Horn (1996) stated “if a brand cannot afford to spend to communicate its sponsorship, then the brand cannot afford sponsorship at all” (p. 16).

In addition to the extra leveraging expense, Meenaghan (1991) identified other key differences between traditional marketing communication and sponsorship. Generally, sponsoring organizations do not have as much control over the message received by patrons and the message is often “mute”. Further, unlike advertisements, sponsorship is likely to elicit a “good will” response from consumers (Meenaghan, 1991).

Perhaps the biggest difference between traditional advertising and sponsorship involves the development of a relationship between sponsor and consumer. Crompton (2004) stated that sponsors design messages “to establish an intimate and emotionally involved relationship(s) with a target audience” (p. 270). Although, a number of techniques as well as a number of theories have been used to examine sponsorship effectiveness (see Cornwell et al., 2005 and Crompton, 2004 for a review), examining sport sponsorship through identification has allowed for the more thorough examination of the relationship that is developed between consumer and sponsor.

Consumer-Team-Sponsor Relationships

Understanding the consumer-team-sponsor relationship provides the basis for understanding how these associations impact consumer attitudes and behaviors. The consumer-team relationship is well researched and will be discussed here in terms of team identification which is based in social identity theory. Together, social identity theory and balance theory will provide the conceptualization of the three component consumer-team-sponsor relationship.

Team Identification and Social Identity Theory

Team identification is defined as the “oneness” a person feels toward a group (Ashforth & Mael, 1989) and Fink, Trail, & Anderson (2002) stated a person “becomes

identified with an organization when they embody the attributes they ascribe to their organization into their own self-concepts” (p. 196). People use sport fandom to derive self-esteem by attaching themselves to a sports team containing characteristics which they desire to associate into their own identity.

Team identification is rooted in social identity theory which social psychologists have frequently used as a lens through which to examine the psychology of group processes. Social identity theory posits a person’s self-identity is comprised of both a personal identity and a social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Personal identity consists of individual traits or characteristics that express uniqueness while social identity involves one’s group memberships. Group memberships may be based on a number of classifications such as race, gender, or sexual orientation as well as group affiliations such as church membership, political party, employment organization, or favorite sport team (Turner, 1982). Individuals may simultaneously belong to numerous groups all of which help to characterize “who one is, in terms of the defining characteristics of the category” (Hogg & Terry, 2001). Typically, behavior is guided by which group membership is most salient in a given situation and the behavioral norms accompanying such membership.

Central to social identity theory is the concept of ingroups and outgroups (Hogg & Abrams, 1990). Social identity theory suggests persons’ make social comparisons between groups in an attempt to increase self-esteem by categorizing outgroups as inferior to the ingroup to which they belong. For instance, highly identified fans are more likely than low identified fans to derogate opposing team fans (Branscombe & Wann, 1994). Similarly, high identified fans are more likely than low identified fans to

demonstrate ingroup bias, or favoritism, toward other fans of their team (Wann & Branscombe, 1995) and high identified fans display biased perceptions, in favor of their team, of game events and outcomes (Wann & Dolan, 1994).

Balance Theory

In conjunction with social identity theory, Heider's balance theory (1958) can be used to explain the relationship between high identified fans and team sponsors. Balance theory (Heider, 1958) suggests individuals strive to maintain a sense of balance in their lives, or "a harmonious state, one in which the entities comprising the situation and the feelings about them fit together without stress" (p. 180). Heider (1958) noted persons' actions, beliefs, and judgments are influenced by the need to preserve such balance and has illustrated this point using triads (Figure 1).

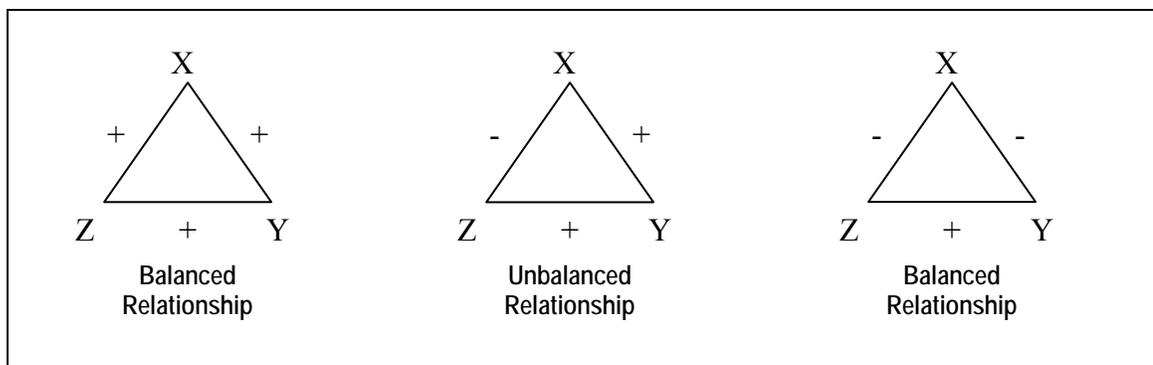


Figure 1.1: Illustration of Heider's (1958) balance theory.

For instance, if X feels positively toward Y, and Y feels positively toward Z, and X feels positively toward Z then the relationship is balanced. However, if X feels positively toward Y, and Y feels positively toward Z, yet X feels negatively toward Z

then the relationship is unbalanced. The same holds true even when the nature of the relationship is reversed. If X feels negatively toward Y, and X feels negatively toward Z, then Y must feel positively toward Z in order for the relationship to feel balanced. In essence, the adages ‘your friends are my friends’ and ‘the enemy of my enemy is my friend’ explain the balance theory.

Balance theory is helpful in explaining findings concerning the relationship between a fan, a team, and a team sponsor (Dalakas & Levin, 2005). For instance, Dalakas and Levin (2005) surveyed NASCAR fans and found a positive relationship between attitude toward the fans’ favorite driver and attitude toward the favorite driver’s sponsor. Interestingly, however, Dalakas and Levin also found a relationship between fans’ least favorite driver and the least favorite driver’s sponsor such that fans felt much stronger dislike for a brand that sponsored a driver they did not like. In other words, a positive relationship between a fan (F) and a driver (D) and a positive relationship between a sponsor (S) and a driver, requires a positive relationship between a fan and sponsor in order to maintain a balanced relationship. Similarly, a negative relationship between a fan and a driver requires a negative relationship between the fan and the disliked drivers sponsor in order to balance the relationship. A fan liking the sponsor of a driver they dislike creates an unbalanced relationship (See figure 2).

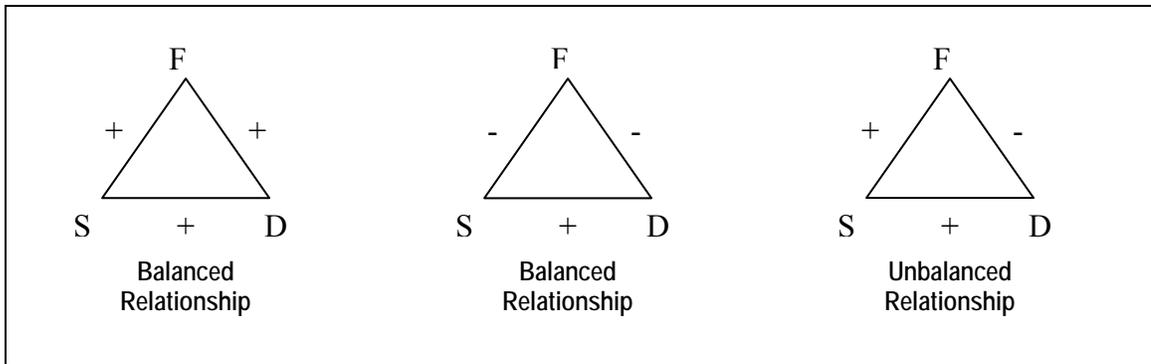


Figure 1.2: NASCAR fan, driver, and sponsor relationships (Dalakas & Levin, 2005)

The key to this relationship is in the strength of the relationship to the team. Fans that are not highly identified do not need to feel more positively about a team sponsor in order to maintain a sense of balance. This is illustrated by Madrigal (2000) who, using fans of a college athletic team, found a positive relationship between purchase intentions of sponsor merchandise and team identification and later, in a study examining identification, beliefs, and attitudes regarding sponsorship, found team identification “moderates the effect of attitude on intentions to purchase” (Madrigal, 2001, p. 157). Additionally, Cornwell and Coote (2005) reported a positive relationship between organizational identification and intention to purchase sponsors products in their study examining sponsorship of a cause while Gwinner and Swanson (2003) sampled college football fans and found attitude toward sponsor, sponsor patronage, sponsor recognition, and satisfaction with sponsor to be significantly higher for highly identified fans than for individuals who were not highly identified.

These results suggest a sponsor can connect itself to a sport organization and capitalize on the relationship between consumer and team (Madrigal, 2000). A sport

organization is a part of highly identified fans' self-concept and by attaching a product or brand to the team, sponsors become intertwined in part of a "consumer's extended self" (Madrigal, 2000, p. 22). Madrigal further states:

"It is unlikely that consumers in general, or attendees of an event in particular, will feel any passion toward a product; they do, however, have strong feelings about the causes, events and sports teams with which they are affiliated. Companies that are able to successfully tap into a consumer's psychological connectedness to a property align themselves to something much more meaningful to that individual than a mere product. It would appear that rather than creating mere awareness, the promise of sponsorship may lie in the opportunity to capture a consumer's 'share of the heart'" (p.22-23).

The evidence above relative to social identity theory coupled with the balance theory leads to the first hypothesis:

Hypothesis #1: Highly identified fans will have more positive attitudes toward the team sponsor than those lower in identification.

Negative Information

Given the potentially strong relationship between a consumer, team, and sponsor it seems natural to consider the reciprocal effects which might occur when a sponsor commits an immoral or incompetent act. In fact, Kuzma, Veltri, Kuzma, and Miller (2003) examined the effect of negative sponsor information on consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions. Results revealed negative information about the sponsoring organization resulted in a negatively influenced attitude toward the sponsor, the sponsored university, and negatively impacted purchase intentions. The results of the

Kuzma et al. (2003) study are consistent with literature on the spillover effect which can occur when corporate alliances are formed (Simonin & Ruth, 1998; Votolato & Unnava, 2006).

The spillover effect, or the rubbing off of attitudes from one entity to another, can occur when two organizations join in an alliance or when an organization joins forces with a spokesperson (Simonin & Ruth, 1998; Votolato & Unnava, 2006). For instance, Tiger Woods positive image may ‘spillover’ onto the image of Nike golf equipment or the images of Visa and the Olympics may ‘spillover’ onto one another.

However, current research has failed to consider the impact team identification may have on such attitudes. For example, the participants of the Kuzma et al. (2003) study were not affiliated or attached with the team or sponsored university. Thus, this study did not take team identification into consideration and essentially only measured outgroup (i.e., non-fans’) attitudes and intentions.

Indeed, research has shown a difference in reaction between high and low identified group members when presented with negative information regarding anything associated with the group. That is, research examining responses to the presentation of negative information showed reactions to negative information are dependent on member level of identification (Cohen & Garcia, 2005; Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002). More specifically, high identified group members tend to cope with a group threat by reaffirming their group membership (Cohen & Garcia, 2005; Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1997) while low identified group members respond by distancing themselves from the group (Cohen & Garcia, 2005; Lickel, Schmader, Curtis, Scarnier, & Ames, 2005).

In addition, research reported differences in perceived or attributional bias between ingroups and outgroups. For instance, in a study examining the impact of group influence on political beliefs, Cohen (2003) found biased processing of information when group affiliations were made salient. Interestingly, however, the biased processing did not simply alter the perceptions of the information. Rather, group members actually altered the information which was being evaluated (Cohen, 2003). In other words, highly identified group members did not “receive” the same message as low identified group members. Rather, the message was skewed to better align with the group ideals.

In a sport context, Wann and Dolan (1994) measured the relationship between identification and attributional bias and found differences between highly identified and low identified fans perceptions of athletic competitions. Highly identified fans viewed negative team outcomes as a result of bad officiating or cheating by the opposing team rather than as a product of poor performance whereas low identified viewers attributed the negative outcome to poor team play (Wann & Dolan, 1994). Wann (1995) also found highly identified fans to be positively biased toward other ingroup members. This bias was manifested through “ingroup favoritism” and the reporting of more positive traits and less negative traits about ingroup members when compared with low identified fans (Wann, 1995).

An assumption of social identity theory is people have a need to see themselves in a positive manner and thus strive to maintain a positive self-evaluation through positive group affiliation (Hogg & Terry, 2001). Ingroup bias enables group members to protect self-esteem by altering their perceptions of negative events or messages associated with their group.

Thus, it is apparent that high and low identified group members are influenced differently when presented with negative information about their group. Given these findings, the second hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 2: When presented with negative information about a team sponsor, highly identified fans of the team will show higher levels of team identification than low identified fans.

Taking the balance theory into consideration, it would appear that highly identified fans would also have different reactions to the sponsor even if presented with negative information about the sponsor. Balance theory predicts that ingroup members (i.e., highly identified fans of the team) who have a positively established relationship with the team, would recognize the positive relationship between the sponsor and the team. Thus, to maintain a balanced state, they would want to maintain a positive relationship with the sponsor even if faced with negative information. This leads to the third hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: When presented with negative information about a team sponsor, highly identified fans of the team will hold more positive attitudes about the sponsor than those with lower levels of identification.

Team Response

This research additionally considered the impact of a team response to negative information about a team's sponsor on consumer attitudes. That is, how would consumer attitudes differ if the team were aware of the impropriety and chose to continue their relationship with the sponsor or if the team were aware of the impropriety and chose to end their relationship with the sponsor?

Research examining the impact of negative information on organizational alliances found a greater negative ‘spillover’ from one organization to another occurred if consumers believed the associated organization was aware of the negative offense and still chose to continue their relationship with the disgraced company (Votolato & Unnava, 2006). In other words, consumers felt less favorably toward an organization who continued an association with a negative other. Votolato and Unnava suggested consumers perceived the associated organization to be somewhat culpable for the negative event if they knowingly chose to continue the relationship despite the negative acts.

Fink, Parker, Brett, & Higgins (2007) found similar results in a study measuring consumer response to a negative off-field incident by an athletic team member. Fink et al. reported that individuals who believed the team took strong disciplinary action against the team member felt more favorably about the team than individuals who believed the team took little or no disciplinary action against the team member. Put more simply, if a punishment was given to the misbehaving team member consumers felt better about the team than if a punishment was not given. Additionally, Fink et al. found a significant interaction between consumer level of team identification and team response with highly identified fans attitudes being more negatively influenced in the weak response condition than in the strong response condition. That is, post test scores on fan identification dropped significantly for highly identified fans exposed to the weak response condition, yet low identified fans experienced no statistically significant decline.

Fink et al. (2007) noted that these results could be explained through balance theory and social identity theory. Because of their strong attachment, when presented

with negative information involving their team, highly identified fans are more compelled to seek out positive information to counteract the negative information and restore a sense of balance. Similarly, Doosje, Branscombe, Spears, and Manstead (1998) noted that when presented with both negative and positive information, highly identified group members place more emphasis on the positive information in order to offset the negative information and maintain a favorable feeling about their connectedness with their group.

Thus, we know that highly identified group members cope with a group threat by reaffirming their group membership (Cohen & Garcia, 2005; Ellemers et al., 1997) and the previous paragraphs suggest that a positive response by the group can aid this process. Therefore, if a team is associated with a “badly behaving” sponsor, a response by a team terminating the relationship is likely to assist highly identified fans ability to restore the positive emotion felt between consumer and team more so than a team response which reasserts the team relationship to the negative other. Given this information, the fourth hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 4: There will be a significant interaction effect between level of team identification and team response on posttest team identification level.

Considering balance theory and team identification, team response and the level of team identification is also likely to determine consumer attitude toward the sponsor. A team response terminating the relationship with the “badly behaving” sponsor renders the sponsor an outgroup member. Highly identified fans see outgroup members as inferior (Hogg & Abrams, 1990) and display less favorable attitudes toward outgroup members. However, a team response continuing the team-sponsor relationship maintains the ingroup status of the sponsor. Literature has shown highly identified group members

partake in ingroup bias and feel more favorably toward ingroup members (Wann & Branscombe, 1995; Wann & Dolan, 1994). This leads to the fifth hypothesis:

Hypothesis 5: There will be a significant interaction effect between level of team identification and team response on consumer attitudes toward the sponsor.

In conclusion, athletic organizations have increasingly turned to sponsorship revenue as a means to fund rising operational costs. The partnering of corporations and athletic organizations may seem like a win-win situation where teams receive much needed revenue and organizations receive marketing rights, publicity, and perhaps most importantly, an association with or membership into a group passionate about a their team. However, there has been a dearth of literature examining the consequence of the team-sponsor relationship when the sponsoring organization is faced with negative allegations.

This research, grounded in social identity theory and balance theory, begins to fill in the gaps of current sponsorship literature by examining consumer reactions to reports that a team sponsor has committed a negative act. Additionally, this research considers athletic team responses and how either continuing or ending the sponsorship relationship will impact consumer attitudes. Perhaps most importantly, this research takes into account consumer level of team identification and the impact varying levels of identification have on consumer attitudes.

This research holds importance for both athletic teams and corporations as it provides insight on how consumers will respond to the occurrence of negative events by a sponsor including what action is best received by consumers of the team. Additionally, it offers information to organizations regarding their association with a popular athletic

team and how such a relationship may or may not afford some protection for their unforeseeable blunders. This research is also important in theoretical sense as it examines and tests tenants of social identity and balance theory relative to fans and sponsors.

Delimitations

There are delimitations of this study which must be mentioned. First, participants of this study were students attending a large public university in the Midwest who volunteered for the study. Therefore, the subjects were very homogenous in nature including similarities in age and race. It is possible that a more heterogeneous sample could provide different results. Second, this research did not reveal the name of the sponsor. Naming the sponsor could alter the results if participants possessed a strong affinity for the sponsor.

Limitations

The major limitation of this study involves the generalizability of the results. Given the convenience sampling used for this experiment, results are not generalizable to other populations and can be said to hold true only for participants in this study. Similarly, the homogenous population used adds to this study's lack of generalizability.

Definition of Terms

Attitude: The dependent variable in this research is attitude. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) suggested attitude is most readily defined as “a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to a given object” (p.6).

Attitude is concerned with predispositions rather than actual behaviors and corresponds with affect; and “evaluation of some object, person, issue, or event” (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, p. 12).

Negative Information: Negative information is an independent variable in this research consisting of two levels, negative information and no information (control). Negative information was defined as a scandalous event which unethical in nature, and was sustained over a period of time by the sponsor (Hughes & Shank, 2005).

Team identification: Team identification is an independent variable in this research.

Team identification is defined as the “oneness” a person feels toward a group (Ashforth & Mael, 1989) and Fink, Trail, & Anderson (2002) stated a person “becomes identified with an organization when they embody the attributes they ascribe to their organization into their own self-concepts” (p. 196). Individuals high in team identification feel a strong connection with their team as well as a sense of achievement while individuals low in team identification do not feel a connection or sense of achievement with the team.

Sponsorship: Sponsorship was defined as “an investment, in cash or kind, in an activity, in return for access to the exploitable commercial potential associated with that activity” (Meenaghan, 1991). Sponsorship involves purchasing marketing rights to an organization which allows for leveraging, or communicating, the relationship with consumers.

Team Response: Team response is an independent variable in this research consisting of two levels, continuing the relationship and terminating the relationship. Research has shown that consumers demonstrate a more negative attitude toward organizations who, if aware of the situation, continue a relationship with a company who is guilty of a negative act (Votolato & Unnava, 2006).

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a literature review for the key components of this study. Specifically, this chapter will review the literature pertinent to sponsorship, social identity theory and team identification, balance theory, negative information, and attitude as a means to support the hypotheses proposed in Chapter 1.

Sponsorship

Sponsorship is defined as “an investment, in cash or kind, in an activity, in return for access to the exploitable commercial potential associated with that activity” (Meenaghan, 1991, p. 36), and involves the purchasing of rights to an organization in return for the opportunity to market one’s company by use of the organization.

Sponsorship is based on the exchange theory which suggests that an exchange between two or more parties will only take place if all parties involved feel what they receive in return for their goods or services is equal to their offerings (Crompton, 2004). That is, both the sponsor and the sponsored team must feel that the relationship is beneficial. Benefits for an athletic team are fairly obvious as the money received from a sponsor helps fund organizational operations. However, the reciprocal benefits a sponsor receives for purchasing marketing rights are somewhat harder to identify.

Sponsor benefits have been measured in a variety of ways including media equivalency times, sponsor recall and recognition, image transfer, attitude toward sponsor, intent to purchase, sponsor fit, and increases in sales (Crompton, 2004). Media equivalency is the most frequently used measure of sponsorship worth and involves comparing the cost for the amount of media coverage a company receives due to sponsorship to the cost of the same amount of media coverage via advertising (Crompton, 2004). For example, an organization may determine it receives 10 minutes of television media coverage due to sponsorship during one athletic event for \$1 million dollars. When compared to the cost of purchasing 10 minutes of television advertising for the same athletic event, the organization may determine that sponsorship is the better bargain. Of course, the leveraging of sponsorship generally involves much more than simply television coverage and may include signage at an event which is viewable by patrons in attendance as well as a television audience, logos on t-shirts or cups as well as promotions or giveaways all for the benefit of promoting the sponsors name.

However, using media equivalencies as a measure of effectiveness has been questioned. Crompton (2004, p. 272) noted that “if a company or brand has very high unaided recall before a sponsorship, then the value of media exposure is likely to be relatively small”. Likewise, the quality of media coverage is likely to vary significantly when comparing brand exposures due to advertising and brand exposures due to sponsorship (Crompton, 2004). Both of these factors suggest that comparing media equivalency times of sponsorship exposures and traditional advertising exposures may

not be comparing ‘apples to apples’ and therefore not the best measure of sponsorship effectiveness. Crimmins and Horn (1996) suggested media equivalencies only consider visibility and not impact. They state:

Measuring ‘visibility’ leaves the real questions unanswered. Does anybody notice the logo in the background? What message about the brand is communicated by the logo on the scorer’s table? The brand is paying a high price to be seen in this particular environment. Is being seen on the scorer’s table at the NBA All Star game really worth any more than being seen on the side of a building somewhere? Does anyone know that the brand is a sponsor of this event? Does anyone care? These questions aren’t about visibility. These questions are about impact (p. 12).

Sponsor recall and recognition have also been used as a measure of sponsor effectiveness. Recall and recognition involves measuring consumers’ ability to recall or recognize a sponsor following an event (Cornwell et al., 2005). Sponsor recall and recognition is based on the mere-exposure hypothesis (Zajonc, 1968) which posits that continuous exposure to a stimulus will produce an affective response. That is, the more a consumer is exposed or surrounded by a particular brand or organization the more likely they are to recognize or recall that brand as well as feel more favorably toward the familiar brand.

Research measuring brand recognition and recall of a sponsor has been mixed. Bennett (1999) found substantial mere exposure effects in consumers attending a soccer game. In addition, Bennett noted false consensus effects, or individuals believing that the consumers in attendance, as well as the general public, purchase the sponsors brand, in

comparison to a competitors brand, more often than really occurs. However, Pham and Johar (2001) reported a recall bias for prominent brands stating that consumers were prone to ‘recall’ a sponsor of an event to be a prominent brand regardless of the actual sponsor. That suggests consumers will attribute sponsorship of an event to a company or brand that is popular or seems like an appropriate fit for the event even if that brand is not the actual sponsor.

Indeed researchers have considered event-sponsor fit when measuring sponsor effectiveness. Matchup hypothesis suggests consumers have preconceived expectations regarding endorsers which impact their attitude toward endorsed advertising (Lynch & Schuler, 1994). In other words, consumers feel more favorably toward an advertisement and product which is endorsed by an individual that ‘fits’ with the image of the product. McDaniel (1999) applied this line of reasoning to sponsorship and measured sponsor-event fit on consumer attitudes. Results found that matching a brand with a similar event had a positive effect on consumer attitude toward the sponsor within a selected market segment (McDaniel, 1999).

In addition to event-sponsor fit, researchers have examined the role of image transfer in sponsorship effectiveness. Image transfer suggests the image of the event can be transferred onto the sponsoring brand through the brand’s association with the event. Javalgi, Traylor, Gross, and Lampman (1994) found sponsorship can increase the image of a company which was already viewed positively but can also draw negative focus to a company which already had a tarnished image. Gwinner and Eaton (1999) conducted an experiment measuring image transfer from event to sponsor and found more similarities between event and sponsor personality components when subjects were aware of the

sponsor-event relationship suggesting a greater image transfer. Interestingly, a greater image transfer was noted when the brand and event were seen as a better ‘fit’ for one another (Gwinner & Eaton, 1999).

In addition to the abovementioned ways in which sponsorship has been examined, researchers have examined the influence of team identification on the consumer–team–sponsorship relationship. Team identification involves the intense connection felt between a fan and a team and team identification literature has reported increased affinity for entities associated with a beloved team including a team sponsor. For instance, Madrigal (2000) found highly identified fans reported a greater intent to purchase team sponsor products than low identified fans. Gwinner and Swanson (2003) similarly reported highly identified fans demonstrated more favorable attitude toward a sponsor, sponsor patronage, sponsor recognition, and sponsor satisfaction than low identified fans. Further, Cornwell and Coote (2005) found a significant relationship between purchase intentions of a sponsor product and organizational identification.

Madrigal (2000) states the benefit of sponsorship may ultimately exist in the ability of a sponsor to connect their product or brand to a team and take advantage of the relationship which exists between a fan and their team. The ability to become synonymous with a sport team provides a sponsor the opportunity to become part of a consumer’s self-identity (Madrigal, 2000).

Social Identity Theory and Team Identification

Team identification is based in social identity theory (SIT) which suggests an individual’s self identity is comprised of both a personal and a social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Personal identity consists mainly of individual qualities and characteristics

that express uniqueness while a person's social identity evolves primarily from salient group memberships and classifications. Group membership can evolve from numerous classifications including age, race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, team affiliation, etc. and typically individuals will hold memberships in a variety of groups. For instance, a person may identify as African-American, female, Baptist, and a Chargers fan all at the same time and it is this multitude of group memberships which help bring shape to an individual (Hogg & Terry, 2001). In most cases, one's behavior will be dictated by which group membership is most prominent or important in a given situation.

Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail (1994) suggested two antecedents to organizational identification; perceived organizational identity and construed external image. Perceived organizational identity refers to the perception a member holds about their organization and the more appealing one's perception of the organization, the stronger member identification will be. Construed external image refers to the image that a member perceives outsiders of the organization to hold. The more positive the perception of the external image appears, the higher the level of organizational identification. In other words, Dutton et al. (1994) suggested that members of an organization will identify more strongly with an organization if they feel that the organization's identity is attractive and if they feel that the outside perception of an organization's identity is attractive.

One of the most important tenets of social identity theory centers on the classification of ingroups and outgroups (Hogg & Abrams, 1990). The term ingroup refers to all individuals who belong to a salient group while outgroup refers to all individuals who are not considered members of that group. For example, if a person

identifies as a democrat, all other democrats would be considered ingroup members when that group membership is deemed important while all republicans would be considered outgroup members.

Social identity theory posits individual self-esteem is derived from group memberships and furthers that individuals have a “need to seem themselves in a positive light” (Hogg & Terry, 2001, p.4). To increase self-esteem individuals make comparisons based on group membership and often classify members of an outgroup as lesser than members of an ingroup. That is, democrats may belittle or discount republican groups or organizations as a means to increase their self-esteem and feel better about their own group membership or ingroup members may provide special favors to other democrats (ingroup members) that would not be offered to members of the republican party (outgroup members). Such occurrences of social discrimination and outgroup derogation have been explained through social identity theory (Reynolds, Turner, & Haslem, 2000).

Ashforth and Mael (1989) defined team identification as the “oneness” a person feels toward a group. Team identification was further conceptualized by Fink, Trail, and Anderson (2002) who stated identification involves the internalization of organizational characteristics into one’s self-identity. Mael and Ashforth (2001) identified six potential benefits of being highly identified with a sport team: belonging, diversion, stimulation, aggression release, entertainment, and vicarious achievement. These benefits were similar to the eight motives for identification (achievement, acquisition or knowledge, aesthetics, social interaction, drama/eustress, escape, family, and physical skill of participants) proposed and tested by Fink et al. (2002) which were drawn from Trail, Anderson, and Fink’s (2000) theoretical model of sport spectator consumption behavior.

Aesthetics refers to being pleasing in appearance or pleasurable to the senses and Trail et al. (2000) described aesthetics as the appreciation of the physical grace of an athlete. Fink et al. (2002) found aesthetics to be a salient feature of team identification and commented that fans may find different aspects of a team or athlete pleasing and will be attracted to teams or athletes which appeal to their aesthetic nature.

Belonging refers to the benefits received when one feels they belong or are connected to something. Mael and Ashforth (2001) proposed being identified with a group provided a sense of belonging even if other group members are interpersonal strangers and further suggested that groups provided a common thread to connect individuals and communities. Similarly, speaking to the benefits of social interaction, Trail et al. (2000) suggested it is socially rewarding to attend or discuss a sporting event and to partake in fan behavior such as wearing fan colors or emblems.

Drama/eustress refers to a stress caused by a positive or pleasant event. Biologists have suggested often times individuals do not receive enough eustress in their lives and will seek out stimulating activities which will elicit this response (Fahey, Insel, & Roth, 2003). Fink et al. (2002) suggested the drama of a sporting event can provide such a stimulus thus acting as a motive for consumption.

Fink et al.'s (2002) concept of escape appears similar to Mael and Ashforth's (2001) idea of diversion. Identifying with a sport team can create a distraction or diversion from one's everyday life. This is particularly true when an identified member is watching or attending a sporting event but can also occur at various points throughout a day when conversation may momentarily turn to the game that was recently played providing an identified fan an 'escape' from the day in, day out rhythm of their life.

Fink et al. (2002) proposed family as a motive to identification which was defined by Trail et al. (2000) as the desire to attend a sporting event for the purpose of spending quality time with a partner or family member. For example, a father may take his daughter to a basketball game in order to spend time with her. However, in Fink et al.'s (2002) research, family did not show a significant relationship to the other motives, nor did it explain much of the variance for identification. The researchers suggested that although a family may seek out a sporting event to attend as a way to spend quality time together, they are drawn to the event for other reasons. In other words, a family or couple can spend time together anywhere (movies, hiking, etc) but are drawn to a sporting event, and choose that activity for other reasons.

Physical skill is defined as an appreciation of the physical skill of an athlete (Trail et al., 2000). Although perhaps a motive for consumption, physical skill has shown little relation to level of identification (Fink et al., 2002; Trail et al., 2000).

Acquisition of knowledge Acquisition of knowledge refers to one's "need to know" or the "the learning about the sport, team, or players through social interaction, and media consumption" (Trail et al., 2000, p. 159). Typically, highly identified fans have a greater desire to know more about a team including, game statistics, player profiles, rules, and strategies.

Achievement refers to vicarious achievement, or the sense of self esteem that one draws from being associated with a particular team (Fink et al., 2002). Vicarious achievement was defined as "the need for social prestige, self-esteem and sense of empowerment that an individual can receive from their association with a successful team" (Fink et al., 2002, p. 198). Vicarious achievement allows an identified fan to live

through another's experiences and to feel the emotions and glory associated with their team which can lead to an increase in self esteem if the given organization is a successful one. Fink et al. found vicarious achievement to be the best indicator of team identification suggesting people use sport fandom to derive self-esteem by attaching themselves to a sports team containing characteristics which they desire to associate into their own identity and further noted that other leisure activities do not meet the requirements needed for vicarious achievement. Therefore, people seek out sporting events to fulfill this need.

Attachments

Team identification has been researched considerably yet has suffered from a lack of consistency in the terminology used by researchers (Trail et al., 2003). Trail et al. (2003) noted that some researchers have used the term fan and others have used spectator when referring to an individual who is attending a sporting event and suggested these two words, fan and spectator, are actually independent of one another and should be used to refer to individuals with varying levels of identification. That is, spectator would be used when describing a consumer with low levels of identification and fan would be used when describing someone with higher levels of identification.

Funk and James (2001) proposed a continuum to distinguish between differing levels of identification. The first level is the awareness level, where one becomes cognizant of a specific team. The second level is the attraction level where one may identify a particular team as their favorite. Third is the attachment level where one's connection to the team strengthens, and finally, fourth, is the allegiance level where an unwavering commitment to the team occurs.

Using this distinction, Trail et al. (2003) proposed that fans and spectators attend sporting events for different reasons, identify with different aspects of the experience and thus become 'attached' to varying aspects of the sport team including attachments to player, team, coach, university, community, sport, and sport level. Trail et al. developed and tested a model which helped to distinguish fans from spectators and their differentiated attachment points.

Trail et al.'s (2003) model incorporated the previously discussed motives for consumption (Fink et al., 2002; Trail et al., 2000) which were divided into 3 latent variables. The first latent variable was termed the overarching motive and consisted of the social interaction and escape motives. The second variable was comprised of the vicarious achievement motive, and the third latent variable consisted of the aesthetic, drama/eustress, acquisition of knowledge, and appreciation of physical skill motives and was called spectator motives. All three of these latent variables were correlated. Vicarious achievement was also correlated with the latent variable organizational identification. Organizational identification included five points of attachment: team, coach, community, university, and players. The spectator motive was correlated with sport identification which had two points of attachment: level and sport.

Separating the motives into three correlated variables was done to separate the motives that apply only to fans of a successful team (achievement), motives that apply to both spectators and fans (overarching motives), and motives that apply to both spectators and fans of unsuccessful teams (spectator motives). Similarly, Trail et al. (2003) suggested that the three categories of motives were linked with different points of attachment. Trail et al. (2003) posited that achievement motives were connected with

organization which includes team, coach, players, community or university and spectator motives were linked with sport identification which included the sport in general or the level of the particular team. Finally, the overarching motives of escape and social support were associated with both the vicarious achievement motive and the spectator motives thus encompassing all levels of fans and spectators.

The model demonstrated three latent motive variables which were separated to demonstrate and encompass the varying levels of fandom. The model also demonstrated the differing points of attachment that are associated with the identification levels. Furthermore, the model showed an overarching motive composed of escape and social interaction that applied to all spectators regardless of their level of fan or spectator status. In other words, the overarching motive suggested that both fans and spectators may be motivated to attend a sporting event for socialization purposes or to escape from their daily hassles, however, a fan and a spectators point of attachment may differ. Fans may attend for the purpose of interacting with other fans and discussing and cheering for their team, while spectators may attend for the purpose of interacting socially with others while enjoying the aesthetic nature of the game and, ultimately, who wins and who loses is less important. In sum, Trail et al. (2003) suggested that not only can spectators not be fans, but fans may not be spectators. In other words, those who attend games may not be highly identified fans and highly identified fans may not actually be attending the games.

Outcomes

Team identification is an extremely powerful phenomenon and has been linked to a variety of behavioral, affective, and cognitive outcomes. For instance, fans who are highly identified demonstrate different self-esteem responses than low identified fans.

Highly identified fans are more likely than low identified fans to BIRG (bask in reflected glory) following team successes. BIRGing is a way to share in the glory of the team by wearing team paraphernalia and using “we” rather than “they” statements when referring to the team. BIRGing serves to strengthen and build self-esteem through vicarious achievement of a successful other.

However, low identified fans are more likely than high identified fans to CORF (cut off reflected failure) following a loss or a disappointing season (Wann & Branscombe, 1990). CORFing is an attempt to distance or disassociate oneself from an unsuccessful other which can be done by refusing to wear team logos or colors and by using the term “they” instead of “we” when referring to the team. BIRFing (basking in reflected failure) has been explained as an alternate to CORFing (Campbell, Aiken, & Kent, 2004). BIRFing entails highly identified fans celebrating their relationship with their team even though the team is not successful. The fans manage their self-esteem by internalizing their loyalty to their team and by sharing a connection with other BIRFing fans they maintain a social group identity. Fans who BIRF take pride in the fact that they are not ‘fair weather fans’.

In addition, highly identified fans have shown a greater willingness to illegally help their team including helping the athletes cheat, bribing officials, stealing playbooks, falsifying drug tests, supplying drugs, and giving illegal funding (Wann, Hunter, Ryan, & Wright, 2001). Similarly, Wann and his colleagues (Wann, Haynes, McLean, & Pullen, 2003; Wann, Peterson, Cothran, & Dykes, 1999) have also noted that highly identified fans are also more likely to consider committing anonymous acts of hostile and instrumental aggression. The difference between hostile and instrumental aggression is in

the motivation for the act. Hostile aggression is done for the purpose of watching one suffer while instrumental aggression is done for the purpose of gaining a competitive advantage.

Level of team identification has also been linked with increased levels of arousal (Branscombe & Wann, 1992; Hillman et al., 2000), higher reported measures of pleasantness when viewing a favorite team (Hillman et al., 2000), and increased loyalty, satisfaction, and intention to attend games (Matsuoka, Chelladurai, & Harada, 2003). Further, team identification has been correlated with attributional bias (Wann & Dolan, 1994), ingroup favoritism (Wann, 1995), an increased willingness to buy team memorabilia (Kwon & Armstrong, 2002) and a willingness to spend greater amounts of money and time to obtain team tickets (Wann & Branscombe, 1993).

Thus, it is apparent that team identification is an extremely valuable emotion for sport organizations to foster. Fans that are highly identified with the team are will spend more money, time, and energy in an effort to support the team and express support for their team.

Balance Theory

Heider's balance theory (1958) was originally conceptualized to explain social relationships between individuals and consistencies between 'links' in these relationships (Sussmann & Davis, 1975). Heider proposed a balanced state between a perceiver (P), another person (O), and an issue (X) would occur if all relationships in this triad were positive. For instance, consider two individuals, Susan and Anne, who are friends and therefore have a positive relationship. Suppose Susan feels positively toward, or is supportive of, issue X. Given Anne's positive relationship with Susan, Anne must also

feel favorably toward issue X in order to maintain a balanced state in regard to this particular triad of relationships. If Anne feels unfavorably toward issue X yet Susan feels favorably toward issue X, such dissimilar views are likely to cause dissonance in their relationship, or a state of unbalance.

Additionally, a balanced state can occur in a triad if there are two negative relationships and one positive relationship. Again, consider friends Susan and Anne who have a positive relationship. Suppose Susan is unsupportive or feels unfavorably toward issue X. In order for the relationship to remain balanced Anne must also feel unfavorable toward issue X, therefore resulting in two negative relationships (Susan-issue X, Anne-issue X) and one positive relationship (Anne-Susan).

Research has shown that individuals will choose a balanced state over an unbalanced state and will demonstrate a behavioral response which will provide balance if such a response is possible (Sussmann et al., 1975). Extending Heider's balance theory, Newcomb (1968) suggested that if two individuals dislike one another then each will be indifferent to how the other feels toward issue X. That is, if Susan and Anne are *not* friends and therefore have a negative relationship, then neither one will concern themselves with how the other feels on issue X and similar or differing attitudes are irrelevant.

Sussmann (1975) found partial support for Newcomb's (1968) work. In situations where only two individuals were involved, if there was a negative relationship, or dislike, between participant A and participant B then participant A was indifferent to the opinions of participant B. However, Sussmann noted that adding the presence of another person effectively eliminated such indifference. In other words, in the presence of another, if

there was a dislike between participant A and participant B, than participant A was likely to disagree with participant B regardless of the stance of participant B. These results would suggest that in the presence of others, individuals feel the need to maintain a balanced state and are more likely to take a position opposite of individuals for whom they have a dislike. The relationship remains balanced by having two negative relationships and one positive given that participant A does not like participant B and therefore does not like the same things participant B likes.

Balance theory posits individuals prefer to exist in a balanced state and strive to maintain balance in their relationships. Abelson and Rosenberg (1958) offered three ways an unbalanced situation could be rectified: 1) change a relationship from positive to negative or vice versa, 2) distinguish or separate a relevant issue, or 3) no longer think about the issue. For example, suppose a fan (F) has a favorite player (P) who plays on their favorite team (T). In this situation, the relationship is balanced as there are three positive relationships; F+P, F+T, P+T. However, imagine if the player was traded to a team the fan did not like (U). In this case, the relationship would be unbalanced with two positive relationships and one negative relationship; F+P, P+U, F-U. To remedy the imbalance, the fan could feel more negatively about the player or more positively about the unfavorable team. By changing one of the relationships to negative (F-P) or positive (F+U) the relationship becomes balanced. According to Abelson and Rosenberg (1958) the fan could also choose to differentiate the situation by making it clear that he likes the player but still does not like the unfavorable team or the fan could choose to ignore the situation all together.

Dalakas and Levin (2005) used balance theory to explain the relationship between a fan, a team, and a sponsor. Specifically, the researchers found that, given the positive relationship between a fan and a team, a positive relationship between a team and a sponsor resulted in a more positive relationship between a fan and a sponsor. Balance theory was further supported as results showed that given a negative relationship between a fan and team, a positive relationship between a team and sponsor resulted in a more negative relationship between a fan and a sponsor. That is, fans felt less favorably toward a sponsor of a team they did not like.

Negative Information and Identification

Negativity effect suggests individuals pay more attention and place more value on negative information than positive information (Fiske, 1980; Klein, 196) and the impact of negative information on consumer attitudes has also been researched in terms of the spillover effect, or the rubbing off of attitudes from one entity to another (Simonin & Ruth, 1998). For instance, Till and Shimp (1998) examined the spillover from a celebrity endorser to the endorsed brand. Results revealed negative information about a fictitious endorser resulted in a small negative spillover to the endorsed brand when the endorser was perceived as unfavorable. Likewise, Keller and Aaker (1993) examined the spillover effect from a failed brand extension to the core brand. Results showed an unsuccessful brand extension negatively impacted attitudes toward a high quality core brand and the spillover was increased if the high quality core brand had multiple brand extension failures.

Votolato and Unnava (2006) considered various types of reported negative information on the spillover of attitudes between associations. Specifically, Votolato and

Unnava contrasted negative information perceived as immoral with negative information which highlighted incompetence. Their results found the type of negative information as well as the nature of the entities involved in the relationship impacted the amount of negative spillover that occurred. In particular, Votolato and Unnava reported a greater negative spillover from a partnering alliance if the partner was perceived to be incompetent. However, if the partnering alliance was a spokesperson a greater negative spillover occurred when the negative information involved an issue of immorality.

Additionally, research has shown negative framing of information to be more persuasive than positive framing of information when individuals are highly involved with the target issue (Maheswaran and Meyers-Levy, 1990). Maheswaran and Meyers-Levy suggested this may be due to the fact that consumers high in involvement engage in greater levels of message processing than consumers low in involvement and thus found negative information to be more persuasive.

However, when comparing negative and positive information about a *brand* on consumer attitudes, Ahluwalia, Burnkrand, and Unnava (2000) reported brand commitment moderated the effect of negative information with high commitment consumers finding the positive information to be more persuasive than the negative information. Ahluwalia et al. noted that high commitment consumers instinctively engaged in greater amounts of counter argumentation than low commitment consumers when presented with negative information about a brand which led to high commitment consumers finding the negative information to be less diagnostic than the positive information. That is, negative brand information was more persuasive to consumers with low brand commitment and deemed more diagnostic, or informative, while consumers

high in brand commitment found positive brand information to be more informative while automatically counter arguing and dismissing the negative brand information.

Negative spillover has also been examined in regards to a team and sponsor relationship. In a study examining the impact of negative sponsor information on consumer attitudes, Kuzma, Veltri, Kuzma, and Miller (2003) found significant spillover from the negatively presented sponsor to the associated organization. Specifically, Kuzma et al. (2003) reported that negative information about a team sponsor resulted in decreased attitudes toward the sponsored team, the related university, and additionally decreased purchase intentions of team/university gear. However, the Kuzma et al. (2003) research did not consider the potential moderating impact of team identification on consumer attitudes and given the strong influence team identification has been shown to have on consumer behavior and beliefs, it is likely high and low identified consumers may perceive or respond to negative information differently.

Indeed, research has shown that a response to negative information about a group is impacted by level of group identification (Cohen & Garcia, 2005; Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002). Highly identified group members are likely to perceive negative information about their group as a threat and respond to such a threat by reaffirming group membership which accomplished by utilizing a variety of strategies. When threatened, high identified group members respond with a group level response rather than an individual level response, emphasize group homogeneity, as well as increase group commitment (Ellemers et al., 1997). In addition, high identified group members faced with a group threat highlight the positive aspects of their group (Cohen & Garcia, 2005), become defensive of their group (Doosje, Branscombe, Spears, & Manstead,

1998), view the negative event as untrue by either disregarding the event or challenging the source (Fujioka, 2005; Ellemers et al., 2002), and justify the actions of the group member (Doosje, et al., 1998). In essence, high identified group members react by sticking together as one solidified unit using their collective identity as protection against damaging threats (Cohen & Garcia, 2005).

On the contrary, low identified group members distance themselves from the group by emphasizing group heterogeneity (Doosje, Spears, Ellemers, & Koomen, 1996), focusing on other social identities (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), and expressing less group commitment including a willingness to leave the group (Ellemers et al., 1997). In sum, Ellemers et al. (2002, p. 625) state:

High identifiers see the groups as homogeneous units and are prepared to stand and fight, even when it would pay them in personal terms to abandon their group, but they also maintain group loyalty under less threatening conditions in which group solidarity is not needed. Low identifiers, on the other hand, accentuate the dissimilarity of individual group members and show at best indifference to continued group membership under both threatening and more neutral conditions.

In addition to research suggesting level of group identification affects response to negative information, or a perceived group threat, there is also research suggesting ingroup and outgroup members may actually perceive a message differently. That is, highly identified group members partake in biased processing by altering negative messages so that they are more representative of group ideals or less threatening to group esteem. For instance, Cohen (2003) manipulated ingroup and outgroup status by

presenting subjects with a political message that was designated as being representative of either a republican or democratic stance or in the control condition the message was neutral and not said to be representative of either political party. Participants receiving the message in an ingroup condition, such that the message was reported to match their political affiliation, evaluated the message much differently than participants receiving the message in the outgroup condition (message was reported to be from a political party opposite the participants views) and from participants in the control condition. Further, Cohen reported that further analyses revealed that not only did group membership skew evaluations of the message but “redefined the very object to be evaluated” (p. 819).

Such attributional bias has also been studied in a sport context. Wann and Dolan (1994) measured fans perceptions of particular athletic competitions and found significant differences between high and low identified fans. Specifically, highly identified fans noted poor officiating, underhanded play by the opposing team, or bad weather conditions as reasons for a team loss while low identified fans were more likely to associate the loss to poor play by team members.

In addition Wann (1995) reported differences in perceptions of high and low identified group members. Highly identified fans showed a bias toward other ingroup members and reported other highly identified fans as possessing more positive characteristics than low identified fans.

Response

Recent literature has measured organizational response to negative information on consumer attitudes (Fink, Brett, Higgins, & Parker, 2007; Votolato & Unnava, 2006). Votolato and Unnava examined negative spillover from one organization to another when

an associated organization was reported to be incompetent or immoral. The researchers reported a difference in consumer attitudes toward the parent organization which were dependent on the company response to the reported negative information. Specifically, consumers felt less favorably toward the parent organization if, after becoming aware of the negative acts, they chose to continue the relationship with the affiliated company despite the bad behavior.

Similarly, using an athletic team context, Fink et al. (2007) manipulated managerial response to a negative off-field incident by a team member. In the strong managerial response condition subjects were told the player received a stiff punishment whereas in the weak managerial response condition subjects were led to believe that little or no punishment was handed down. Fink et al. (2007) reported that subjects in the strong managerial response condition felt more positively toward the team than subjects in the weak managerial response condition. Results from the Fink et al. study also reported differences between highly identified fans and low identified fans reactions to the managerial response. More precisely, highly identified fans reacted strongly to the weak managerial response and identification scores dropped significantly whereas low identified fans did not demonstrate a significant difference.

Thus, recent research suggests consumer attitudes might be impacted by the organizational response to the negative information. Consistent with previous research, there is also evidence to support a moderating effect of team identification.

Attitude

The dependent variable in this research is attitude. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) suggested attitude is most readily defined as “a learned predisposition to respond in a

consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to a given object” (p. 6).

Traditionally, attitude was conceptualized as having three components: affect, cognition, and conation (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). However, Fishbein and Ajzen proposed these concepts were not actually components of attitude rather were separate constructs. Therefore, Fishbein & Ajzen distinguished between four important concepts, beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and behaviors, which incorporate the concepts of affect, cognition, and conation.

Beliefs refer to one’s evaluation of an object and “link an object to some attribute” (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, p. 12). For instance, one might believe that wearing a ‘lucky’ team jersey will help the team win. Thus, jersey, the object, is linked to winning, the attribute. Beliefs coincide with cognition or “the knowledge, opinions, beliefs, and thoughts about the object” (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, p. 12).

Attitude is concerned with predispositions rather than actual behaviors and corresponds with affect; an “evaluation of some object, person, issue, or event” (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, p. 12). The term attitude should only be used when a measure necessitates an affective judgment be made (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975).

Behavioral intention coincides with conation and is defined as “a person’s intentions to perform various behaviors” (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, p. 12). Distinguishing behavioral intention from behavior is important (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Intention is the subjective probability that one will perform a particular behavior while behavior, defined as overt, observable acts, is the actual performing of the particular behavior.

Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) presented a conceptual framework which linked the above components in a beliefs-attitudes-intentions-behavior hierarchy. Fishbein and

Ajzen stated that beliefs “serve as the informational base that ultimately determines attitudes, intentions, and behaviors” (p. 14). Thus, a person’s attitude is ultimately based on the totality of his/her beliefs about the object in question and is expressed as varying strengths of positive or negative affect.

Additionally, the Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) hierarchy suggested that behaviors are based on intentions which are based on attitudes. In other words, a positive attitude would lead to positive behavioral intentions which would lead to a positive observable behavior. However, Fishbein and Ajzen noted that:

“attitude is a general predisposition that does not predispose the person to perform any specific behavior. Rather, it leads to a set of intentions that indicate a certain amount of affect toward the object in question. Each of these intentions is related to a specific behavior, and thus the overall affect expressed by the pattern of a person’s actions with respect to the object also corresponds to his attitude toward the object” (p. 15).

Therefore, understanding persons’ attitudes toward an organization, or toward an organizational relationship, is vitally important. The belief-attitude-intention-hierarchy suggests attitudes are linked with intentions and subsequently behaviors. Thus, determining if an organization, or an organizational relationship, produces positive affect is valuable information to firms seeking to sponsor sport teams and teams seeking company sponsors.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methodology used to test the research hypotheses described in Chapter 1. This chapter will be organized into the following sections: 1) research design, 2) selection of sample, 3) variables, 4) reliability and validity measures, 5) data collection procedures, and 6) data analysis procedures.

Research Design

There are a number of investigative methods commonly used when conducting research including survey research, developmental studies, qualitative research, correlational studies, ex post facto, historical research, philosophical research, and experimental research (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 2002). Each research method is valuable yet distinct from the others and determining which research method is best to use should be a decision based on the research purpose and the answers sought.

Experimental research, described as “a scientific investigation in which the researcher manipulates one or more independent variables, controls any other relevant variables, and observes the effect of the manipulations on the dependent variable(s)” (Ary et al., 2002, p. 276), was determined to be most appropriate for this study. There are three

fundamental components in experimental research: control, manipulation, and observation. Together, these components provide “the most convincing evidence of the effect that one variable has on another” (Ary et al., 2002, p.276).

Manipulation in experimental research is an intentional procedure in which the researcher manipulates the independent variable to create various treatment conditions (Ary et al., 2002). The different conditions are referred to as the levels of the independent variable. For example, this experiment was designed to measure the impact of information on consumer attitudes. The independent variable, information, was manipulated and consisted of two levels: negative information and no information. The levels of the independent variable become the treatment conditions (Ary et al., 2002) meaning the dependent variable, or outcome, is measured following the presentation of the differing treatment conditions. In this case, the dependent variable “attitude” was measured following the presentation of negative information (treatment 1) and following the presentation of no information (treatment 2).

Observation refers to the measurement of the dependent variable (Ary et al., 2002). Following the administration of the treatment conditions the outcome must be observed. In behavioral research, the outcome is often a score on a questionnaire or test which has been designed to measure the dependent variable (Ary et al., 2002).

Control is defined as the elimination or subtraction of the effect of a variable(s) (Vogt, 1999) and is essential in experimental research. Without control it is uncertain whether the outcome of the experiment was the result of the manipulated variable or the result of extraneous variable(s). To be certain the results are in fact due to the experimental treatment, researchers must hold all other influencing factors constant when

conducting experimental research (Ary et al., 2002). Confounding variables which threaten the validity of the research can be controlled through experimental design or through statistical measures.

There are three types of experimental research designs: pre-experimental, true-experimental, and quasi-experimental designs (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). Pre-experimental designs offer little control over validity threats and should be avoided when possible while quasi-experimental designs control for many validity threats and are appropriate when randomization of subjects is not possible (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). True experimental designs must include a control group, random assignment and experimenter control of the manipulation and are superior to pre-experimental and quasi-experimental designs at controlling for many validity threats present in experimental research (Campbell & Stanley, 1963).

Campbell and Stanley (1963) and Ary et al. (2002) discuss numerous threats to internal and external validity present in experimental research. Internal validity is the “extent to which the results of the study can be attributed to the treatments rather than to flaws in the research design” (Vogt, 1999, p. 143). Without internal validity the results are “uninterpretable” (p. 5) as it is unclear if the results are attributable to the various treatments or to uncontrolled, confounding variables (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). External validity concerns the generalizability of the results to populations or situations outside of study (Vogt, 1999).

Threats to internal validity that researchers must be concerned with include: history, maturation, testing, instrumentation, statistical regression, experimental mortality, selection-maturation interaction, implementation, location, subject, and

statistical conclusion. External validity threats include: interaction effect of testing, interaction effect of selection, reactive arrangements, and multiple-treatment interference. Each of these threats are discussed in greater detail in Table 3.1.

Internal Validity Threat	Description	How to Control
1) History Threat	Anything that occurs between the measurements other than the IV	* Experimental design * Log all events
2) Maturation	Process within the participant that occurs over extended periods of time	* Randomization * Short experiments
3) Testing	The effect of taking one test on the results of another	* Randomization * No pretest
4) Statistical Regression	Groups selected based on extreme scores tend to regress toward the mean	* Randomization * Parallel analysis of extreme outliers
5) Instrumentation	Change in instrumentation, scorer, or observer	* Use a single instrument with high reliability and validity * Randomly assign 'double blind' observers
6) Selection	Using different methods when selecting the treatment groups	* Randomization
7) Experimental Mortality	Loss of subjects during the experiment	* Use appropriate procedures for handling missing data
8) Selection-Maturation Interaction	Mistaking multi-group and quasi-experimental designs for treatment effect	* Design selection
9) Implementation	The difference between individuals who administer different treatment groups	* Hold the implementer constant
10) Location	The levels of the IV differ in location which may influence the outcome	* Have levels of the IV occur in the same location * Insure the equality of the environments
11) Attitude of Subjects	Participant attitude can influence outcome. Subjects may work extra hard or may become demoralized if they perceive they are in a different status group	* Randomization * Equal treatment of groups
12) Statistical Conclusion Validity	Problems with the data invalidate conclusions (low power, violating assumptions)	* Increase power * Heed statistical assumptions * Use reliable measure * Don't 'fish' in the data
External Validity Threat	Description	How to Control
1) Reactive/Interaction Effective of Testing	A pretest may influence the response to the IV and make the results not generalizable to a non-pretested population	* Do not pretest * Measure pretest interaction effect
2) Reactive Effects of Experimental Arrangements	Persons not in an experimental environment may respond differently to the treatment	* Experimental design
3) Interaction of Selection and Experimental Variable	Participants self-select to participate and want to help the experimenter	* Produce results over a wide variety of conditions
4) Multiple-Treatment Interference	Previous treatment effects influence subjects outcome	* Experimental design

Table 3.1: Experimental Design Validity Threats (Ary et al., 2002; Campbell & Stanley, 1963)

A true experimental design was selected for this study. Specifically, two hypotheses were tested using a posttest only control group design while the three remaining hypotheses were tested using a pretest-posttest control group design. In the posttest only control group design, research participants are randomly assigned to treatment groups, administered the treatment, and outcomes are measured. In the pretest-posttest control group design research participants are given a pretest measure and then, after some time has passed, given a treatment and a posttest measure. Both treatment designs control for internal validity threats of history, maturation, testing, instrumentation, regression, selection, mortality, and interaction of selection and maturation (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). In addition, the post-test only control group design controls for the interaction of testing and X external validity threat (Campbell & Stanley, 1963).

The internal validity threats of location, implementation, and attitude of subjects were also controlled in the experimental designs by insuring the testing location for all participants were similar, using the same implementers for all treatment groups, and by treating all groups equally so as not to imply that one group was better than the others. The external validity threat of multiple X interference was controlled for as only one treatment was given while the external validity threat of interaction of selection and X remained a generalizability limitation of the study. Exact data collection procedures will be discussed in further detail in a following section.

Selection of Sample

The preferred method of sampling is to choose a sample representative of the population by using a probability sampling technique such as simple random sampling,

stratified sampling, cluster sampling, or systematic sampling (Ary et al., 2002). However, in instances where enumeration of the population is not possible, Ary et al. (2002) recommends nonprobability sampling such as accidental sampling, purposive sampling, or quota sampling.

The nonprobability technique of convenience sampling was chosen. Convenience sampling involves using volunteers or an accessible sample to participate in the research study (Ary et al., 2002). The main limitation of using this sampling technique involves the question of generalizability. Convenience sampling does not allow the researcher to infer the results of the study beyond the research participants because there is no way to ensure the sample is representative of the overall target population (Ary et al., 2002). This was noted as a limitation of the study.

In addition to selecting an appropriate sampling technique, sample size was also calculated. Sample size was determined by the number of treatment groups and statistical method used to analyze the data. Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to analyze the data and Hair, Anderson, Tatham, and Black (1998) recommend a minimum of 20 subjects in each cell. However, Hair et al. (1998) note that larger cell sizes might be needed to achieve the generally accepted level of statistical power of .80.

Statistical power is based on the selected alpha level, sample size, and effect size (Hair et al., 1998). Hair et al. define power as “the probability that the statistical test will identify a treatment’s effect if it actually exists” (p.352). Given that alpha level and power are inversely related, as the alpha level is increased power decreases (Hair et al., 1998). Effect size, or the standardized difference between group means, also impacts power and as effect size increases so does power (Hair et al., 1998). After selecting an

alpha level and estimating effect size the most common way to increase statistical power is to increase sample size (Hair et al., 1998). Hair et al. caution that group sizes less than 50 are unlikely to produce sufficient statistical power which may result in a type II error, or the possibility of finding no result when in fact there is one, while very large sample sizes may produce statistical significance yet have little practical significance or a type I error.

Hair et al. (1998) provides a chart which indicates the minimum R^2 that a sample size will detect based on the number of independent variables, selected alpha level (either .01 or .05), and an .80 level of power. This study included three independent variables (See Table 2), thus, according to the Hair et al. chart (p.165), a sample size of 100 is needed to detect R^2 values of .10 or greater with the set alpha at $p=.05$ and statistical power of .80. However, the analysis procedures used in this study did not consider moderately identified fans and only considered the upper 33% and lower 33% of mean scores on the identification measure (explained in greater detail below). Therefore, a greater number of participants were needed to ensure appropriate group size. In addition, a larger sample size can increase the statistical power. Given the above information, this research included 323 participants or approximately 25 participants per group.

Variables

Before variables can be measured they must first be operationalized. Vogt (1999) describes operationalizing a variable as defining “a concept or variable in such a way that it can be measured or identified” (p. 200). In other words, an operational definition provides “meaning to a construct by specifying operations that researchers must perform to measure or manipulate the construct” (Ary et al., 2002, p. 33). The operational

definitions of the variables in this study are provided below along with previous reliability scores. In addition, Table 2 provides a listing the independent and dependent variables in combination with the related hypothesis.

This study included three independent variables: information about a sponsor, team identification, and team response. Information about a sponsor included two levels, negative information and irrelevant information. The irrelevant information treatment was used as the control while negative information involved the presentation, in the form of a researcher created “news article”, of a scandalous event in which an unnamed team sponsor was involved. A scandalous event was defined as an event which was immoral in type and sustained over a period of time (Hughes & Shank, 2005). A pretest was used to insure the manipulation of information worked and the information presented was indeed perceived as negative.

Team identification was defined as the ‘oneness’ a person feels with a team (Ashforth & Mael, 1989) and was operationally defined as the summated score on a four item scale ($\alpha=.84$) drawn from the work of Trail and James (2001). The items, ‘Regardless of whether the Browns win or lose, I will continue to support them’, ‘I would experience a loss if I had to stop being a fan of the team’, ‘I consider myself to be a real fan of the Browns’ and ‘Being a fan of the Browns is very important to me’ were measured on eight-point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Following the work of Haugtvedt, Petty, and Cacioppo (1992), the top 33% of mean scores on the summated scale were determined to be highly identified while the bottom 33% of mean scores were determined to be low in team identification. The middle 33%

of mean scores were not used in this study's data analysis as the hypotheses proposed in this research were concerned only with differences between high and low identified fans.

Team response was the third independent variable and consisted of three levels, no team response, a team response terminating the relationship with the sponsor, and a team response reaffirming the relationship with the sponsor. Responses were included in the researcher created news article following the reporting of the negative incident.

There were two dependent variables in this study: posttest team identification level and attitude toward the sponsor. Attitude was defined as "a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to given object" (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, p.6). Attitude toward sponsor was operationally defined as the mean score of a three item semantic differential scale ($\alpha=.97$) which followed the work of Roy and Cornwell (2003). The stem asked for feelings toward the sponsor and the anchors for the eight-point scale were 'favorable/unfavorable', 'bad/good' (reversed scored), and 'positive/negative'. Posttest team identification operationalized using the same four item scale (Trail and James, 2002) used in the pretest.

Hypothesis	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable
1) Highly identified fans will have more positive attitudes toward the team sponsor than those lower in identification.	Identification Level	Attitude toward Sponsor
2) When presented with negative information about a team sponsor, highly identified fans of the team will show higher levels of team identification than low identified fans.	Information Identification Level	Posttest Team Identification
3) When presented with negative information about a team sponsor, highly identified fans of the team will hold more positive attitudes about the sponsor than those with lower levels of identification.	Information Identification Level	Attitude toward Sponsor
4) There will be a significant interaction effect between level of team identification and team response on posttest team identification level.	Level of Identification Team Response	Posttest Team Identification
5) There will be a significant interaction effect between level of team identification and team response on consumer attitudes toward the sponsor.	Level of Identification Team Response	Attitude toward Sponsor

Table 3.2: Research hypotheses and the associated independent and dependent variables.

Reliability and Validity Measures

Content validity refers to the actual content of the instrument and its “relationship to the construct it is intended to measure” (Ary et al., 2002). Content validity is a subjective measure in which an instrument is considered to exhibit content validity if it is determined to be representative of the domain it is attempting to measure. Face validity refers to the appearance of the instrument and if “on the face of it, a measure seems to make sense” (Vogt, 1999, p. 107).

To determine content and face validity, a panel of experts was selected and asked to rate individual items and the instrument as a whole for relevance, completeness, and appearance. The panel consisted of three sport management faculty members with

experience in the area of the study. The experts were provided with an explanation and details of the study as well as instructions to assist them in the evaluating the instrument. The experts' comments were used to make changes to the initial instrument as necessary.

After completing the instrument revision per the panel of experts' comments, a field test was conducted to further establish face and content validity. A group of six graduate students were asked to complete the questionnaire and comment on item wording, clarity, and ease of completion. The comments and responses were assessed and appropriate changes to the instrument were made as deemed necessary.

Manipulation Checks

Ary et al. (2002) states "the manipulation of an independent variable is a deliberate operation performed by the experimenter" (p. 279). The purpose of the manipulation is to affect an outcome. However, prior to conducting research it is important to ensure the levels of the independent variable are actually distinct from one another and that they are perceived as intended.

A manipulation check was performed for this study for the variable negative information. The purpose of the check was to determine if the information presented was actually perceived as negative. The level of perceived negativity has been shown to impact group member response (Johns, Schmader, & Lickel, 2005). That is, extremely negative information produced uniform results where low to moderate negative information produced more varied results depending on group identification. Therefore, this research used a scenario in which the negative information was perceived as moderately negative. The manipulation check was performed using a panel of experts and a pretest. The panel of experts included sport management faculty members who

examined the negative information for believability, soundness of arguments, and perceived level of negativity. Suggestions from the experts were used to alter the manipulation prior to the pretest. The pretest used 60 students which were similar to the population used in the study. Pretest participants viewed the information and were asked to complete a three item scale ($\alpha=.83$) drawn from the work of Johns et al. (2005). The items were measured on a seven-point summated scale and were worded as follows: How severe did this event seem to you? (not very severe at all/extremely severe), How much damage or harm did this event have for other people? (not harmful at all/ extremely harmful), Regardless of what others might have thought, how wrong did you think this event was? (I didn't think the event was wrong/I thought the event was very wrong). A mean group score between three and five was considered to be an indication of low to moderately negative information.

Additionally, a manipulation check was conducted for team response to ensure the response was clear and unambiguous. The manipulation check consisted of a two items which stated: 1) Are the Cleveland Browns aware of the incident their team sponsor is involved in?, 2) Did the Cleveland Browns choose to continue or end their relationship with their sponsor? Pretest group members completed each item after reading the news article and the answers were evaluated for accuracy (See Appendix E).

Manipulation Check Results

Results of the manipulation check revealed that the information was in fact deemed negative and participants accurately identified the Cleveland Browns' response to the negative information. Specifically, reliability for the four-item negativity scale was high ($\alpha= .94$) and a *t*-test revealed significant differences ($p< .001$) between the

participants who read the irrelevant information ($M= 2.6$, $SD= 1.23$) and those who read the negative information ($M=5.61$, $SD= .95$). Additionally, 99% of the participants correctly indicated that the Browns were aware of the incident and 98% of the participants correctly indicated the Browns response (continuing or terminating sponsor relationship) to the negative incident. Thus, the manipulations were determined to be reliable for this experiment.

Data Collection Procedures

This research was carried out using an experimental research design. In the study, the relationship between negative information and posttest team identification and attitude toward sponsor was measured with pretest team identification serving as a moderator. Additionally, the relationship between team response to the negative information and posttest team identification and attitude toward sponsor was measured with team identification again serving as a moderator. The procedures for this research are discussed below.

Methods

Approval from the Human Subjects Review Committee was obtained before the commencement of data collection procedures. Following committee approval, researchers collected data from 323 students enrolled in sport, fitness, and health classes at a large Midwestern university who volunteered to participate in the study. The study was conducted in university classrooms on a weekday during a normal school term. The subjects were chosen primarily because they were accessible, provided a large, homogenous population, and were likely to be sport fans.

Before the study began, the participants were read instructions concerning the collection procedures and were given a consent form to read and sign. Subjects were told the purpose of the study was to measure consumer attitudes about a popular NFL team. Following the collection of the consent forms, the subjects were handed a questionnaire which measured their identification level for the Cleveland Browns. Subjects were instructed to include a 'codename' on their questionnaire so that posttest scores could be anonymously matched to their original identification scores.

The scores on the pretest were analyzed and used to assign the participants into one of three identification groups, high, medium, or low. The high identification group consisted of the top 33% of the scores while the low identification group consisted of the bottom 33% of the scores. Two weeks later the researcher returned to the classrooms and administered the treatments. There were four versions of the news article which were randomly assigned to the participants in each of the three identification levels which created the differing treatment groups (See Appendices A, B, C, and D).

Treatment group one received an article containing negative information about a said Cleveland Browns' sponsor. To keep from raising suspicions of Browns' fans that might be aware of actual team sponsors and therefore question the authenticity of the news article, the name of the sponsor was blacked out and participants were told that the researchers did not receive permission to reveal the name of the sponsor for this research. Treatment group two received an article containing the same negative information but with an additional paragraph stating the Browns were aware of the impropriety and were choosing to continue the relationship with the sponsor. Treatment group three also received the negative information about the sponsor with an additional paragraph stating

the Browns were choosing to terminate the relationship with the sponsor. Treatment group four was the control group and received a news article containing irrelevant information about the Browns and the sponsor.

The Browns were chosen as the focus for this study due to their proximity to the data collection site as it was likely many of the participants would identify as strong Browns fans. However, the collection site was also positioned close to another popular NFL team so it was also likely that many of the participants would *not* identify as Browns fans. Therefore, it was estimated that the use of the Browns would provide the researchers with groups of highly identified and low identified fans to compare.

After reading the assigned news article, the subjects were given a questionnaire (See Appendix F) which measured posttest team identification and consumer attitude toward the sponsor. Following the completion of the instrument, the news article and questionnaire were collected and the subjects were debriefed and dismissed.

The debriefing statement informed the participants that the “news article” was invented by the researchers and the information contained in the article was fabricated. The participants were also told the true purpose of the research was to measure the impact of negative information about a team sponsor as well as the team’s response to the information on consumer attitudes. The entire process lasted approximately 15 minutes (first collection=5 minutes, second collection=10 minutes) and subjects were asked not to discuss the experiment with anyone.

Data Analysis Procedures

The data for this experiment were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Procedures were used which analyzed the data to determine if the following hypotheses were supported or unsupported:

Hypothesis #1: Highly identified fans will have more positive attitudes toward the team sponsor than those lower in identification.

Hypothesis 2: When presented with negative information about a team sponsor, highly identified fans of the team will show higher levels of team identification than low identified fans.

Hypothesis 3: When presented with negative information about a team sponsor, highly identified fans of the team will hold more positive attitudes about the sponsor than those with lower levels of identification.

Hypothesis 4: There will be a significant interaction effect between level of team identification and team response on posttest team identification level.

Hypothesis 5: There will be a significant interaction effect between level of team identification and team response on consumer attitudes toward the sponsor.

Analyses

Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, and frequencies) were run to describe the variables of concern. Hypothesis 1 predicted that highly identified fans would have more positive attitudes toward a team sponsor than low identified fans and was tested using a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) where level of identification

was the independent variable and attitude toward the sponsor was the dependent variable. A one-way ANOVA is used when comparing mean scores of several different groups and the dependent variable is continuous measure (Pallant, 2005).

Hypothesis 2 and 3 predicted that, when presented with negative information about a sponsor, highly identified fans would show higher levels of identification scores and feel more positively about the team sponsor than low identified fans and was tested using a two-way between groups multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) with identification and information serving as the independent variables and attitude toward sponsor and posttest team identification serving as the dependent variables. MANOVA is used to compare means between groups when there is more than one dependent variable (Pallant, 2005).

Hypothesis 4 and 5 predicted an interaction effect between level of identification and team response on posttest identification scores and consumer attitudes toward sponsor. These hypotheses were also tested using a two-way between groups MANOVA with team identification and team response serving as the independent variables and posttest identification and attitude toward sponsor serving as the dependent variables.

A two-way between groups MANOVA allows for the testing of a main effect, interactions between independent variables, and differences between dependent variables (Hair et al., 1998). When interpreting the results of MANOVA the researchers compared the T^2_{crit} to the computed value of Hotelling's T^2 to determine the impact of the IV on the DV's. Additionally, variance explained in the dependent variable by each independent variable, specifically the variance explained in posttest identification scores and attitude toward sponsor by the independent variables of level of identification, negative

information, and team response, can be determined by examining the eta squared statistic.

According to Hair et al., the assumptions for MANOVA are as follows:

- 1) Independence among observations: This assumption was met during the research design and data collection procedure and it believed that all observations are independent of one another.
- 2) Equality of variance-covariance matrices: This assumption was controlled for by using groups of near equal size but was also tested for by using the Box's M test.
- 3) Normality: This assumption is that all of the dependent measures are multivariate normal. It was controlled for by using a large sample size and testing all variables for univariate normality. Hair et al. (1998) mention that variable univariate normality does not guarantee multivariate normality, however states that if all variables meet univariate normality than violations to the normality assumption are generally inconsequential.
- 4) Linearity and multicollinearity:
A scatterplot was used to test for a linearity of the dependent variables and the dependent variables were checked for multicollinearity using Bartlett's test for sphericity. Violations of this assumption can reduce statistical power.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the results of this study. The first section of this chapter will discuss the initial tests conducted to assign groups. The second section will describe the sample characteristics as well as correlations, means, and standard deviations for all variables of interest while the third section will provide the results of analyses used to test the hypotheses.

Initial Tests and Grouping

As noted in chapter 3, initial data were collected from subjects two weeks prior to the treatment implementation and final data collection. A pretest measure of participants' identification level with the Cleveland Brown's was collected and, using the mean scores, participants were grouped into high, middle, and low identification groups. Participants in the top 33% of the mean scores were labeled high identifiers and participants in the bottom 33% of the mean score were labeled low identifiers. The following section contains specific information regarding the sample and measurement scales.

General Sample and Statistical Information

Data were collected from 323 students enrolled in undergraduate sport, fitness, and health classes. A total of 99.4% of the participants were undergraduate students with a mean age of 21.25 years and 78.9% of the total participants were male. There were a

total of 76 participants in treatment group one (negative information/no response), 84 participants in treatment group two (negative information/terminate response), 83 participants in treatment group three (negative information/continue response), and 80 participants in treatment group 4 (irrelevant information). The high identification group included 107 of the participants while the low identification group included 112 of the participants (See Table 4.1).

Variable	Neg./No Resp.		Neg./Terminate		Neg./Continue		Irrelevant Info.	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
High Id								
Male	21	80.8	25	89.3	21	77.8	20	76.9
Female	5	19.2	3	10.7	6	22.2	6	23.1
Total	26		28		27		26	
Low Id								
Male	21	77.8	25	83.3	24	92.3	22	75.9
Female	6	22.2	5	16.7	2	7.7	7	24.1
Total	27		30		26		29	
Middle Id								
Male	15	65.2	18	69.2	23	76.7	20	80.0
Female	8	34.8	8	30.8	7	23.3	5	20.0
Total	23		26		30		25	

Table 4.1: Participants by identification level and treatment group.

Reliability estimates for all multi-item scales were above the .70 recommended cutoff (Robinson, Shaver, & Wrightsman, 1991). Cronbach's alpha for the scales were as follows: Brown's identification pre-test ($\alpha = .98$), Brown's identification post-test ($\alpha = .98$), and attitude toward sponsor ($\alpha = .99$). While data were collected for all three

identification groups (high, medium, low), comparisons of the high and low groups were the only ones of interest for this study. Therefore, the remainder of this chapter will discuss analyses from just those two groups.

The total mean score on the pretest identification measure for the high and low identified groups was 4.17 (high ID $M=7.47$, low ID $M=1.00$) while the total mean score for the posttest identification measure for the high and low identified groups was 4.09 (high ID $M=7.17$, low ID $M=1.19$). Additionally, the total mean score for the attitude toward sponsor measure for the low and high identified groups was 3.09 (high ID $M=3.49$, low ID $M=2.71$). The means, standard deviations, and correlations of all variables of interest can be seen in Table 4.2 and Table 4.3.

Variable	1	2	3
1. Pretest Identification	---		
2. Posttest Identification	.941**	---	
3. Attitude toward Sponsor	.197**	.234**	---

Table 4.2: Correlations of variables of interest. (middle ID filtered out, high and low ID together)

Variable	High Identification		Low Identification	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1. Pretest Identification	7.47	.733	1.00	.05
2. Posttest Identification	7.17	1.45	1.19	.78
3. Sponsor Attitude	3.49	2.08	2.71	1.89

Table 4.3: Means and standard deviations of variables by high and low identified groups.

Additionally, preliminary assumption testing was conducted to check for normality, linearity, univariate and multivariate outliers, homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices, and multicollinearity. No violations were noted thus it was determined that statistical tests performed to test the hypotheses would be valid.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 predicted that highly identified fans would have more positive attitudes toward the team sponsor than low identified fans. To test this hypothesis a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to compare means of participants in the irrelevant information treatment group. The irrelevant information (i.e., control) group was used for this analysis as they were the only group that did not receive negative information about the fictitious sponsor. Thus, any differences in attitudes toward the sponsor could be attributed to the independent variable. Identification level (i.e., high, low) was used as the independent variable and participant attitude toward the sponsor was the dependent measure.

The overall model was significant ($F_{(2, 76)} = 3.61, p = .033, \eta = .086$) and there was a significant difference ($p = .038$) in attitudes toward the team sponsor between highly identified consumers ($M=6.03, SD=1.34$) and low identified consumers ($M=5.06, SD=1.49$) (See Table 4.4). Highly identified fans felt more favorably toward the team sponsor than low identified fans. Thus, hypothesis 1 was supported.

Variable		N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Attitude toward sponsor	High ID	26	6.03	1.34
	Low ID	29	5.06	1.49
	Med. ID	24	5.19	1.43

Table 4.4: Means and standard deviations of attitude toward sponsor for control treatment group

Hypotheses 2-5

Hypotheses 2 predicted that when presented with negative information about a team sponsor, highly identified fans would exhibit higher identification scores than low identified fans. Hypothesis 3 predicted that, when presented with negative information about a team sponsor, participants who were informed that the team had decided to continue its relationship despite the sponsor bad behavior would feel more favorably toward the sponsor than participants who were informed the team had decided to terminate the relationship with the sponsor. Hypotheses 4 and 5 predicted an interaction effect between level of identification and team response on posttest identification scores and consumer attitudes toward the sponsor. All four of these hypotheses were tested using a two-way between groups multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). A 2x3 factorial design was used with identification group (high, low) and treatment group (negative info./no response, negative info./terminate, negative info./continue) serving as the independent variables and posttest team identification and attitude toward sponsor serving as the dependent variables.

Using Roy's Largest Root Criterion, results revealed the overall model was significant ($F_{(2, 157)} = 899.87, p < .001, \eta = .92$). There were significant main effects for

treatment group ($F_{(2, 158)} = 7.25, p = .001, \eta = .084$) and identification group ($F_{(2, 157)} = 406.46, p < .001, \eta = .838$), as well as a significant interaction between treatment x identification group ($F_{(2, 158)} = 3.5, p = .033, \eta = .042$) (See table 4.5).

Effect	Value	F	Hyp. df	Err. df	Sig.	Part. Eta Sq.
Intercept	11.46	899.86	2.00	157.00	.000	.920
Treatment	0.09	7.25	2.00	158.00	.001	.084
Identification	5.17	406.45	2.0	157.00	.000	.838
Treatment x Identification	0.04	3.50	2.0	158.00	.033	.042

Table 4.5: Multivariate tests of the variables treatment, identification, and treatment x identification interaction computed using $\alpha=.05$.

Tests of between-subjects indicated a significant identification group difference for posttest identification scores ($F_{(1, 158)} = 813.56, p < .001, \eta = .837$) and attitude toward sponsor ($F_{(1, 158)} = 13.97, p < .001, \eta = .081$). Follow-up analyses revealed significant differences ($p < .000$) on posttest identification scores between the high identification ($M = 7.05, SD = 1.63$) and low identification ($M = 1.20, SD = .89$) groups as well as significant differences ($p = .000$) of attitude toward sponsor between the high identification ($M = 2.67, SD = 1.55$) and low identification ($M = 1.89, SD = 1.20$) groups. Pre-test team identification scores explained nearly 84% of the variance in post test team identification scores, while it explained about 8% of the variance in attitudes toward the sponsor. In other words, as expected, highly identified fans, no matter what treatment group they were in, continued to harbor higher scores on team identification and attitudes toward the sponsor than those that were not identified fans (See Table 4.6).

Variable	Identification	Std. Deviation	Mean	N
Posttest Identification	High ID	1.63	7.05	81
	Low ID	0.89	1.20	83
Att. toward Sponsor	High ID	1.55	2.67	81
	Low ID	1.20	1.89	83

Table 4.6: Identification mean scores for posttest identification and attitude toward sponsor between high and low identification groups in the neg. info/no response, neg. info/terminate, and neg. info/continue treatment groups.

Tests of between-subjects indicated significant treatment group differences for attitude toward the sponsor ($F_{(2, 158)} = 4.96, p = .008, \eta = .059$), thus hypothesis 3 was supported. However, treatment group was not significant in posttest identification scores therefore; hypothesis 2 was not supported ($F_{(2, 158)} = 1.14, p = .33$) (See Table 4.7).

Source	DV	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Part. Eta Sq.
Corrected Model	Posttest ID	1403.23	5	280.65	163.09	.000	.838
	Att. Sponsor	54.05	5	10.81	6.09	.000	.162
Intercept	Posttest ID	27776.35	1	2776.35	1613.42	.000	.911
	Att. Sponsor	856.63	1	856.63	482.59	.000	.753
Treatment	Posttest ID	3.93	2	1.96	1.14	.322	.014
	Att. Sponsor	17.60	2	8.80	4.96	.008	.059
Identification	Posttest ID	1399.96	1	1399.96	813.56	.000	.837
	Att. Sponsor	24.80	1	24.80	13.97	.000	.081
Treatment x ID	Posttest ID	0.42	2	0.21	0.12	.885	.022
	Att. Sponsor	11.90	2	5.95	3.33	.037	.041
Error	Posttest ID	271.88	158	1.72			
	Att. Sponsor	280.46	158	1.78			
Total	Posttest ID	4418.44	164				
	Att. Sponsor	1184.89	164				
Corrected Total	Posttest ID	1675.11	163				
	Att. Sponsor	334.51	163				

Table 4.7: Treatment, identification, and treatment x ID tests of between-subjects effects for posttest ID and attitude toward sponsor computed using $\alpha = .05$.

Pairwise comparisons revealed significant differences ($p = .006$) in attitude toward sponsor between the negative info./terminate ($M = 1.92, SD = 1.22$) and negative info./continue groups ($M = 2.73, SD = 1.74$) and explained about 6% of the variance (See Table 4.8). That is, the treatment group to which participants were exposed did impact their attitudes toward the team sponsor. Subjects who read about a negative sponsor incident followed by a team response continuing the team-sponsor relationship felt *more* favorably toward the sponsor than subjects who read about a negative sponsor incident followed by a team response terminating the sponsor-team relationship. Therefore, hypothesis 3 was supported.

	Treatment Group	Mean	SD	N
Attitude toward Sponsor	Neg.Info/No Response	2.22	1.19	53
	Neg.Info/Terminate*	1.92	1.22	58
	Neg.Info/Continue*	2.73	1.74	53
	Total	2.28	1.43	164

Table 4.8: Means and standard deviations of attitudes toward sponsor for treatment groups neg. info/no response, neg info./terminate, and neg. info/continue. * indicates groups that are significantly different and 0.05 level.

Tests of between-subjects indicated a significant treatment group x identification group interaction for attitude toward sponsor ($F_{(2, 258)} = 3.35, p = .037, \eta = .041$). The treatment group x identification group interaction was not significant for posttest identification scores. Therefore, hypothesis 4 was not supported while hypothesis 5 was supported.

Variable	Treatment	Identification	Mean	SD	N
Att. toward Sponsor	Neg.Info/No Response	High ID	2.56	1.13	26
		Low ID	1.89	1.18	27
	Neg.Info/Terminate	High ID*	2.01	1.30	28
		Low ID	1.83	1.15	30
	Neg.Info/Continue	High ID*	3.46	1.8	27
		Low ID	1.97	1.32	26

Table 4.9: Means and standard deviations of attitude toward sponsor x identification level and treatment group. * indicates groups that are significantly different at the 0.05 level.

Examination of the mean scores revealed participants in the high identification group felt more favorably toward the sponsor in the negative info./continue condition ($M = 3.46$, $SD = 1.80$) than in both of the other treatment conditions, the negative info./no response condition ($M = 2.56$, $SD = 1.13$) and the negative info./terminate condition ($M = 2.01$, $SD = 1.30$) (See Table 4.9). That is, highly identified fans felt more favorably toward a badly behaving sponsor if the team continued the relationship with the sponsor than if the team terminated the relationship with the sponsor. Figure 4.1 visually depicts the identification group x treatment group interaction on attitude toward sponsor.

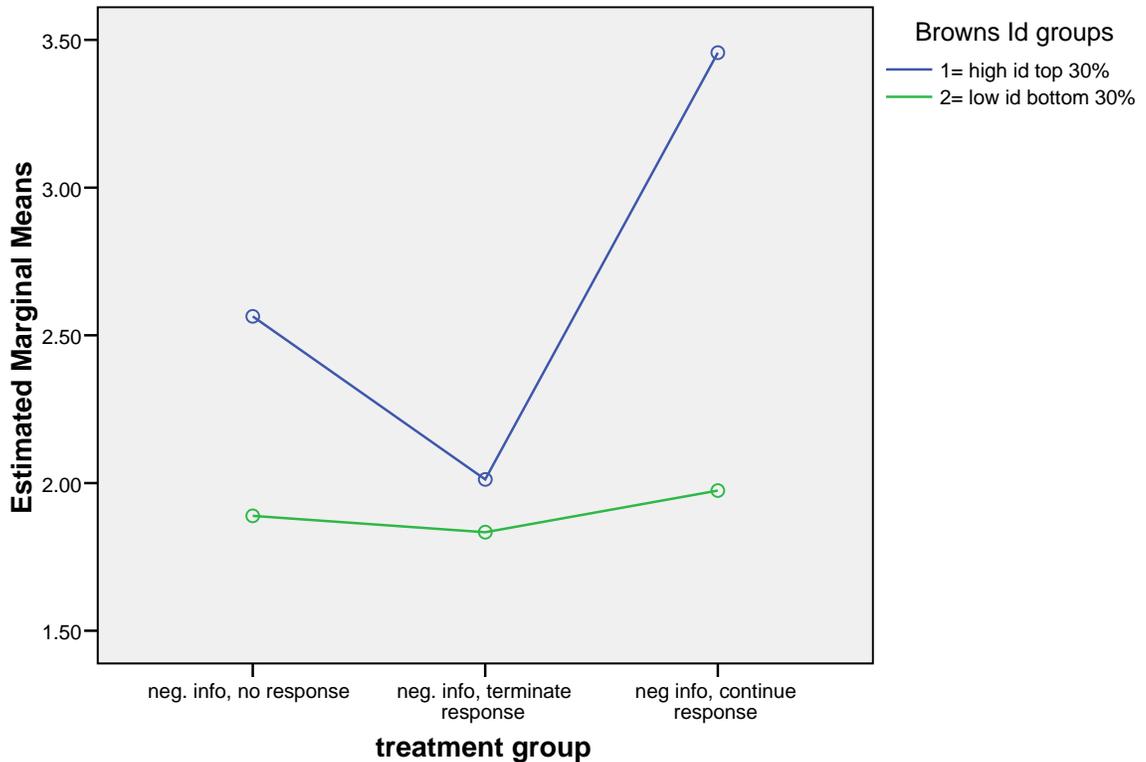


Figure 4.1: Identification group x treatment group interaction on sponsor attitude

In sum, data analysis supported three of the five proposed hypotheses. Hypothesis one was supported and analysis revealed that, in general, participants highly identified with a team feel more favorably toward a team sponsor than low identified fans. Hypothesis two was not supported as analyses revealed negative information about a team sponsor did not significantly alter participant posttest team identification scores. However, hypothesis three was supported as negative information about a team sponsor did significantly impact participants' attitude toward the team sponsor.

Additionally, hypothesis four was not supported as a treatment group x identification group interaction was not discovered for posttest team identification. Yet, hypothesis five was supported as a treatment group x identification interaction was discovered for attitude toward sponsor. These results and their implications will be discussed in detail in chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Social identity theory underlines individuals' tendency to attach themselves or belong to certain social groups. For many, being a fan of a particular sport team fulfills this social need. As Beisser (1967, p. 129) states:

“Everyone needs to feel he has ties with others. With the dispersal of the traditional extended family, the clan and the tribe, this need to be identified with a group of some kind has become more intense. The sports fan . . . can gather with others, don his Dodger cap or some other identification badge, and . . . in effect, by doing all of this, he becomes a member of a larger, stronger family group, a collective entity.”

There is a growing body of literature which has focused on the effects of being highly identified with a sport team on consumer attitudes and behavior. The current study adds to this literature base and provides further insight on the consumer-team relationship specific to team sponsors. Specifically, this chapter will discuss the present findings relevant to each hypothesis as well as detail the limitations and implications of this study.

Consumer-Team-Sponsor Relationship

Previous work has reported that fans' attitudes toward a team sponsor are partially dependent on the strength of the fans' connection to the team (Cornwell & Coote, 2005;

Gwinner & Swanson, 2003; Madrigal, 2000). This research supports these findings. Analyses revealed that highly identified fans felt significantly more favorable toward a team sponsor than low identified fans. These findings were constant regardless of the assigned treatment group. That is, highly identified fans felt more favorable about a sponsor than less identified fans when presented with neutral information as well as felt more favorable when presented with negative information about the team sponsor. Thus, it appears that simply being a fan of the team altered consumers' attitudes, in a positive manner, about the team sponsor.

These findings can be explained by considering both social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and balance theory (Heider, 1958). Highly identified fans feel positively toward their team. Given that the team has a positive relationship with a particular sponsor, a fan must also feel positively toward the sponsor in order to maintain a balanced relationship. If a fan were to hold negative feelings toward the sponsor the fan would need to also lessen their regard for their team in order to balance the relationship. Or, the fan would be forced to find other ways to rectify the cognitive dissonance created by liking one aspect, but not the other, of two entities which are so closely tied. Figure 5.1 visually depicts these scenarios.

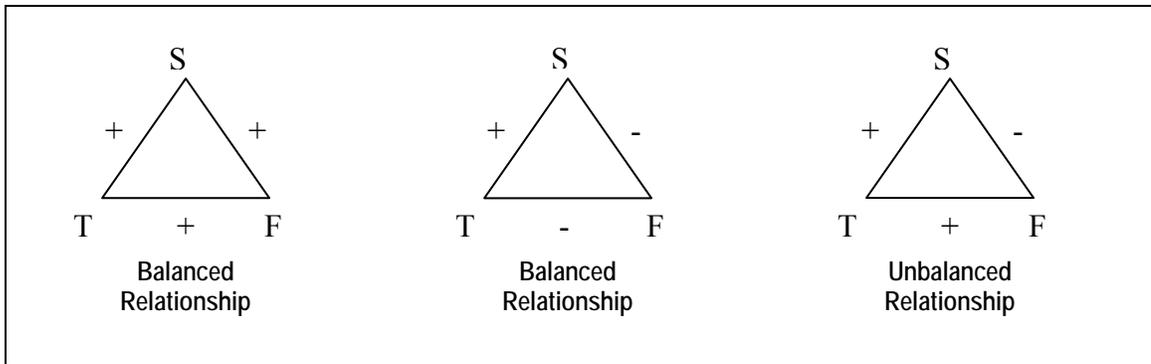


Figure 5.1: Consumer-team-sponsor relationship (T=team, S=sponsor, F=fan).

However, the impetus for a consumer to feel more favorably about a team sponsor is in the strength of the consumer's relationship with the team. Madrigal (2000) argued that sponsors have the ability to become connected to consumers' sense of self through their affiliation with a team. It appears that by signing on as a team sponsor, an organization immediately becomes part of that team's ingroup and is thus embraced by other highly identified group members (i.e. consumers).

Certainly, this is important information for organizations considering sponsoring a sport team. While researchers struggle to find 'proof' that sponsorship is an effective marketing strategy, it can be noted that highly identified fans do indeed feel more favorably about a team sponsor than those less identified with the team. How this translates into consumer purchases was beyond the scope of this study but previous research has indeed connected favorable attitudes with increased purchase intentions (Madrigal, 2000; 2001). Therefore, establishing oneself as an ingroup member, or as an extended part of the team, seems to be the first step in capitalizing on a sponsorship investment.

However, while this study lends support to the argument that sponsorship is effective due to an *affiliation* with a popular other, it did not examine the possibility that consumers also feel more favorably toward the team sponsor because sponsors are *contributors* to the team. In other words, fans see sponsors supporting their team and therefore feel favorably about a sponsor and buy the sponsors product as an ‘extension of goodwill’—or, as a way to repay the sponsor for supporting their team. Certainly, it seems likely that expressing favorable feelings toward an organization that has contributed to your team would be captured within the affiliation motive. An organization typically does not support a team unless there is a pre-existing affiliation. Nonetheless, understanding exactly why highly identified fans feel more favorably toward a team sponsor, whether it is due simply to the affiliation or if it is dependent on support an organization offers a team, is an important question to answer.

In fact, marketing strategies would differ significantly if affiliation alone is the determining factor in increasing attitudes toward an organization. For instance, consider a fast food restaurant that is not a sponsor of a sport team. To increase affiliation the fast food restaurant could offer and advertise burgers with team nicknames, give discounts to fans that show their ticket stubs, or create a unique sandwich or dessert specific to a particular community targeted at fans of the team. In doing such, the fast food restaurant can increase affiliation without actually sponsoring or supporting the athletic team. And, if affiliation alone is a determining factor in increasing consumer attitudes, fans would feel more favorably toward the fast food restaurant.

However, if fans feel more favorably because they see sponsors as contributors to the team, than attitudes toward an organization which is affiliated with a team but not

also a contributor should not be as favorable as attitudes toward an organization who is affiliated but also a contributor (sponsor). That is, if extension of goodwill is a strong motive for feeling more favorably toward an organization, than fans should feel more favorably toward actual donating sponsors than organizations which simply link themselves to a sport team without any contribution to the team. Future studies should incorporate measures designed to distinguish between these two motives.

Additionally, sponsorship literature has focused on mere exposure as a means to explain sponsorship effectiveness. This study does not discount mere exposure, nor was support for mere exposure effect demonstrated. Given that this experiment used an unknown, fictitious sponsor it was impossible to examine the effects of mere exposure on consumers. While mere exposure to signage or advertisements of a sponsor may increase awareness of the sponsorship and in turn generate more favorable attitudes, this study indicated that most important to highly identified fans was the connection between the team and sponsor. In other words, for highly identified fans, increasing signage and ads is not as important as communicating and informing consumers of the relationship with the team.

Negative Information and Team Response

Analyses also revealed a significant treatment group main effect for attitude toward sponsor. Specifically, subjects who were in the negative info./continue treatment group felt significantly more favorable about the team sponsor than subjects in the negative info./terminate treatment group. In other words, the action the team took toward the sponsor following the negative incident, either terminating their relationship or

continuing their relationship, was a determinant in how consumers viewed the sponsor. And, when the team continued the relationship with the sponsor, consumers felt more favorably about the sponsor.

Interestingly, the same results were not found for team identification. That is, the team response to the negative sponsor incident did not significantly impact team identification levels. Nonetheless, it should be noted that examination of the mean identification score did reveal a decrease in identification following the negative info./continue response. Given that this experiment only included one negative article about a sponsor, it is difficult to assess how continuing a relationship with a sponsor who has repeated bad behavior over a period of time might impact consumer identification with the team. The declining mean scores, although not significant in this study, could indicate danger for a team who remains loyal to a troubled sponsor.

While the treatment main effect for attitude toward sponsor is important, it is best explained by examining the interaction effect between team identification level and treatment group. Results of the study revealed that highly identified fans felt significantly more favorable toward the badly behaving sponsor when the team *continued* its relationship with the sponsor than when the team terminated its relationship with the sponsor. This result can be partially explained by ingroup bias which has been well documented within social identity theory (Wann, 1995). Fans view a team sponsor as part of their ingroup and feel more favorably toward that sponsor. Even when the sponsor commits troublesome acts, fans overlook or rationalize these shortcomings and remain supportive of their group member (i.e., sponsor).

Researchers have suggested that group members cope with negative information about their group by reaffirming group membership while low identified or non-members will try to distance themselves from the group (Cohen & Garcia, 1005; Ellemers et al.,1997). Social identity theory contends that group members have a need to view themselves in a positive manner (Hogg & Terry, 2001), and thus, highly identified group members may turn a blind eye to depraved acts by group members and use attributional bias, essentially altering perceptions of the negative events, as mechanisms to protect group members self-esteem. By continuing the sponsor relationship, the sport organization sends a message to team fans that the sponsor is still part of the ingroup and should be thought of and supported as such.

However, when the team decided to terminate the relationship with the sponsor, the sponsoring organization immediately became an outgroup member and essentially lost all 'protection' afforded to ingroup members. That is, fans no longer felt the need to remain loyal to the sponsor. Further, since the sponsors bad behavior was no longer a reflection on the team, fans did not feel the need to rationalize or ignore the behavior. Additionally, research has shown that ingroup members often display hostility toward outgroup members (Hogg & Abrams, 1990; Wann & Branscombe, 1995) and when the sponsor was dismissed by the team, they became vulnerable to such treatment.

Interestingly, there was not an interaction effect between level of team identification and team response on posttest identification scores. In fact in this research, as previously noted, the response of the team to the negative sponsor information did not have any significant effect on team identification scores. One explanation for this finding could be found by applying the balance theory. When the sport team reaffirms its

relationship with the sponsor this indicates a positive relationship between the team and sponsor. To maintain a balanced relationship a highly identified fan must either feel negatively toward both the sponsor and the team or feel positively toward both the sponsor and team. Feeling positively toward the team but negatively toward the sponsor, who was designated as an ingroup member by the team, results in an unbalanced relationship. As does feeling positively toward the ingroup sponsor yet negatively toward the team. Thus, it seems that the most natural choice for fans, for which a large part of their identity is wrapped up in their team affiliation, is to continue feeling favorably about the team and thus also embrace the sponsor as an ingroup member, regardless of the behavior by the sponsor.

Yet, this result and reasoning is in contrast to previous work which has suggested greater negative ‘spillover’ when an organization knowingly remains tied to an organization who has acted in an immoral manner (Votolato & Unnava, 2006). This also contrasts the work of Fink et al. (2007) who found strong managerial action in response to bad behavior by a team member assisted in maintaining high team identification levels. Perhaps highly identified fans have different expectations for businesses associated with the team than players on the team. In all likelihood fans are more identified with the team players than the team sponsors and thus may feel more threatened by their actions than a sponsor’s. While player conduct is a direct reflection of the team and the disciplinary action handed down a direct reflection of team morals, highly identified fans may see discernable differences between players’ connectedness to the team and sponsors’. Team sponsors may be viewed as merely business transactions; a company willing to give money to the sport organization. Although fans appreciate the support and feel more

favorably toward the sponsor when they are involved with the team, highly identified fans may not feel the sponsor's behavior in any way threatens the identity of the organization. Additionally, fans may be calloused to immoral corporate behavior. Given the number of incidents that are reported on a daily basis fans may be immune to any incident that is not both extremely heinous and long-term.

The negligible impact sponsors' actions had on fan identification levels begs the question, what, if anything, can diminish a fan's attachment to their team? Has sport become an establishment so deeply rooted in the fabric of its fans that they are willing to overlook transgressions or relationships with unprincipled corporations? Lickel et al. (2005) have examined the constructs of vicarious shame and guilt in which group members feel shame and guilt because of misguided actions of other group members. Perhaps fans express their displeasure with the team through emotions not connected to their team identification. Highly identified fans might be capable of feeling shamed that a group member acted in such an immoral manner without their level of identification wavering. Emotions such as vicarious shame and guilt may be the outlets fans use to express their displeasure and negative feelings without having to examine their level of identification which is tied so closely to their own personal identity and self-esteem. Clearly, the impact or non-impact sponsors' actions have on fan's identification levels is an area worthy of much greater attention.

Conclusions, Implications, and Limitations

The results of this study indicate the importance for corporate sponsors of becoming affiliated with a team. Once the relationship between team and sponsor is established, the sponsor becomes a member of a tight network of fans and consumers.

Simply by being a member of this ingroup, the sponsor is looked upon more favorably by highly identified fans. Even in the wake of unflattering press, highly identified fans still exhibited more favorable attitudes toward the sponsor than low identified fans.

Of particular importance however, was the reaction of the team to the negative information. When the team showed support and continued their relationship with the sponsor, highly identified fans felt much more favorably toward the sponsor than when the team decided to terminate the relationship. Sponsoring organizations must understand that being a member of the ingroup (i.e. having a sponsoring relationship with a team) provides a great deal of security for the sponsor when negative events become public. Therefore, nurturing the team relationship is essential and working to remain associated with the team following negative publicity or actions is imperative to the continued support of highly identified fans of the team. Additionally, teams can use this research finding as another selling point for sponsorships. The fact that the sponsored organization was “protected” against their own bad acts is a perk that might not be as salient through other means of advertising.

This study also demonstrated that teams are not really impacted by the actions of their sponsors. Regardless of the sponsor’s behavior, consumers’ level of team identification did not waver. Further, the continuation or termination of the relationship with the sponsor following a negative sponsor action did not significantly impact consumers’ identification with the team. Therefore, even if a team sponsor finds themselves in a significant amount of trouble the team need not feel pressured to cut ties

with what might be a very loyal and important sponsor for fear of losing its core fan base. The negativity surrounding the sponsoring organization did not appear to ‘rub off’ on the team.

However, one of the limitations of this study was that it was conducted over a short period of time. Subjects were given the negative information to read and then their attitudes were assessed. It certainly seems possible that had the sponsor’s negative actions received repeated criticism over an extended period of time, the repercussion on fans’ team identification levels might have been more noticeable. In other words, the negative image surrounding a team sponsor might be transferred onto the team if the incident remains a focal point for a long period of time.

Another limitation of the current study was that it used an anonymous sponsor. While fans were told that the information was about an actual team sponsor, the sponsor’s name was never revealed to the participants. This allowed the researcher to control for participants brand loyalty which could potentially confound the results. However, brand loyalty to the team sponsor could prove to be a vitally important variable in consumers’ response to negative information about a sponsor. For instance, a highly identified fan may be extremely brand loyal to Nike even though their team is sponsored by competing brand Adidas. The question then remains, how does the Nike brand loyalty impact attitudes toward Adidas and how enduring are those attitudes? In other words, the team-sponsor (Adidas) relationship might be enough for a highly identified fan to feel more favorably toward Adidas but is it enough to also influence purchase intentions of a Nike brand loyal consumer? Also, given that the team-sponsor relationship is the only connection for the consumer to Adidas, is negative behavior by Adidas judged more

harshly by fans that were not previously brand loyal? Future studies should incorporate the variable brand loyalty into the research design allowing for the measurement of attitudes toward an actual team sponsor.

Additionally, future research should look to determine if certain negative behaviors are deemed more egregious than others. Previous research has hinted that the type of negative action by an organization may determine how the action is perceived (Votolato & Unnava, 2006). For instance, do fans feel differently about immoral acts than incompetent acts?

In sum, this research extended previous research on sport teams, sport sponsors, and sport consumers. Specifically, this research examined the impact negative sponsor behavior has on consumer attitudes toward the sponsor and consumer levels of team identification while also taking into consideration the team response to the negative event. While the sponsor behavior and team response was a non-factor in team identification levels, bad sponsor behavior and team response had a marked influence on consumers, in particular highly identified fans, attitude toward the sponsor.

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APPENDIX A

Manipulation: Negative Info./No Response

SPONSOR WOES

Cleveland Browns' sponsor finds itself at the center of controversy

Sunday, October 22, 2006

Jill Maloney and Matt Rosenberg
THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

Forrester Inc. has been a long-time sponsor of the Cleveland Browns, contributing millions of dollars to the Browns organization in return for Browns marketing rights. The relationship dates back to 1999 when Forrester and the Browns first joined forces and the Forrester name can be seen in a variety of places inside Cleveland Browns Stadium as well as on Browns merchandise. However, Forrester was recently implicated in a series of extremely unfair practices concerning their South American manufacturing plant.

Sources report that workers at the Forrester plant in Colombia are working in unsafe conditions including extreme heat, a result of the combustion machines the plant operates, which has resulted in over 37 heat related injuries this year alone. In addition, it is reported that plant workers typically work 14 hour shifts and are paid the American equivalent of \$2.49 an hour. Global Exchange reports that a livable wage in Colombia would be the equivalent of \$4.67 per hour.

The latest incident for the organization occurred in July when Oscar Dario Soto Polo, the manager of the Colombia Forrester manufacturing plant was found murdered at his home, the third plant manager murdered in the last 7 years at the Colombia plant. Workers at the Forrester plant say they are frustrated by the indifference to their plight shown by Forrester CEO Ray Rodgers and the disparity in working conditions between the Colombia plant and other Forrester manufacturing plants in the United States, specifically citing the multi-billion dollar plant in Oklahoma which houses a state-of-the-art hydrothermal cooling system.

The recent negative publicity has drawn criticism from several organizations including Students for a Better World (SBW) and The Human Connection which has added Forrester to its list of organizations targeted in its Sweatfree Campaign.

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APPENDIX B

Manipulation: Negative Info./Continue Response

SPONSOR WOES

Cleveland Browns' sponsor finds itself at the center of controversy

Sunday, October 22, 2006

Jill Maloney and Matt Rosenberg
THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

Forrester Inc. has been a long-time sponsor of the Cleveland Browns, contributing millions of dollars to the Browns organization in return for Browns marketing rights. The relationship dates back to 1999 when Forrester and the Browns first joined forces and the Forrester name can be seen in a variety of places inside Cleveland Browns Stadium as well as on Browns merchandise. The Browns remain committed to their affiliation with Forrester even though Forrester was recently implicated in a series of extremely unfair practices concerning their South American manufacturing plant.

Sources report that workers at the Forrester plant in Colombia are working in unsafe conditions including extreme heat, a result of the combustion machines the plant operates, which has resulted in over 37 heat related injuries this year alone. In addition, it is reported that plant workers typically work 14 hour shifts and are paid the American equivalent of \$2.49 an hour. Global Exchange reports that a livable wage in Colombia would be the equivalent of \$4.67 per hour.

The latest incident for the organization occurred in July when Oscar Dario Soto Polo, the manager of the Colombia Forrester manufacturing plant was found murdered at his home, the third plant manager murdered in the last 7 years at the Colombia plant. Workers at the Forrester plant say they are frustrated by the indifference to their plight shown by Forrester CEO Ray Rodgers and the disparity in working conditions between the Colombia plant and other Forrester manufacturing plants in the United States, specifically citing the multi-billion dollar plant in Oklahoma which houses a state-of-the-art hydrothermal cooling system.

The recent negative publicity has drawn criticism from several organizations including Students for a Better World (SBW) and The Human Connection, which has added Forrester to its list of organizations targeted in its Sweatfree Campaign.

Cleveland Browns Senior Vice President and General Manager Phil Savage reported Friday that the organization supports Forrester and is committed to continuing its relationship with the organization. While the decision to remain tied with Forrester will save the Browns a substantial sum of money, Savage stated, "The Browns organization feels it important to exhibit loyalty and remain dedicated to our business partners who have remained loyal and supported us for so many years."

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APPENDIX C

Manipulation: Negative Info./Terminate Response

SPONSOR WOES

Cleveland Browns' sponsor finds itself at the center of controversy

Sunday, October 22, 2006

Jill Maloney and Matt Rosenberg
THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

Forrester Inc. has been a long-time sponsor of the Cleveland Browns, contributing millions of dollars to the Browns organization in return for Browns marketing rights. The relationship dates back to 1999 when Forrester and the Browns first joined forces and the Forrester name can be seen in a variety of places inside Cleveland Browns Stadium as well as on Browns merchandise. However, the Browns decided to end their long standing relationship with Forrester when the company was recently implicated in a series of extremely unfair practices concerning their South American manufacturing plant.

Sources report that workers at the Forrester plant in Colombia are working in unsafe conditions including extreme heat, a result of the combustion machines the plant operates, which has resulted in over 37 heat related injuries this year alone. In addition, it is reported that plant workers typically work 14 hour shifts and are paid the American equivalent of \$2.49 an hour. Global Exchange reports that a livable wage in Colombia would be the equivalent of \$4.67 per hour.

The latest incident for the organization occurred in July when Oscar Dario Soto Polo, the manager of the Colombia Forrester manufacturing plant was found murdered at his home, the third plant manager murdered in the last 7 years at the Colombia plant. Workers at the Forrester plant say they are frustrated by the indifference to their plight shown by Forrester CEO Ray Rodgers and the disparity in working conditions between the Colombia plant and other Forrester manufacturing plants in the United States, specifically citing the multi-billion dollar plant in Oklahoma which houses a state-of-the-art hydrothermal cooling system.

The recent negative publicity has drawn criticism from several organizations including Students for a Better World (SBW) and The Human Connection which has added Forrester to its list of organizations targeted in its Sweatfree Campaign.

Cleveland Browns Senior Vice President and General Manager Phil Savage reported Friday that the organization decided to terminate its relationship with Forrester stating that Forrester actions were no longer consistent with the Brown values. Although the decision to cut ties with Forrester will cost the Browns a substantial sum of money, Savage stated, "You can't put a price tag on human liberties and the Browns organization no longer wishes to be associated with Forrester."

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APPENDIX D

Manipulation: Irrelevant Info.

SPONSOR HIRES NEW CEO

Cleveland Browns' sponsor hires new CEO

Sunday, August 20, 2006

Jill Maloney and Matt Rosenberg
THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

Forrester Inc. has been a long-time sponsor of the Cleveland Browns contributing millions of dollars to the Browns organization in return for Browns marketing rights. The relationship dates back to 1999 when Forrester and the Browns first joined forces and the Forrester name can be seen in a variety of places inside Cleveland Browns Stadium as well as on Browns merchandise.

Forrester recently hired Darcy Givens to replace the retiring CEO Ray Rodgers who has been at the helm of the company for over 15 years. Givens, a Portland, Oregon native, has spent the last seven years as Rodgers assistant. Prior to her employment with Forrester, Givens was employed with Malick of Burbank, CA and served as the financial manager. Cleveland Browns Senior Vice President and General Manager Phil Savage announced Friday they are pleased at the company's choice to replace Rodgers and feels Givens will do an excellent job moving the company forward.

- The Cleveland Browns have announced updated donation procedures and guidelines for the 2006-2007 season. Any person or organization wishing to make a charitable contribution to the Browns organization via an organized Browns event should adhere to the following guidelines.

All requests should be mailed or faxed to Browns' offices and must use the respective organization's stationery. Requests should be received 4-6 weeks prior to the event and include the event date, time, location, and whether or not the organization is requesting player appearances. Additionally, the request should include a specific description of what the organization is requesting of the Browns.

There is a maximum of one request per year per organization and selection will be based on the beneficiaries of the event and whether the event matches the Browns focus on youth. All donations are limited to greater Cleveland organizations.

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APPENDIX E

Manipulation Check Questionnaire

Directions: Please read each statement carefully and circle the response that best represents how you feel about that statement. Sometimes you may feel as though you have had the same item before on the questionnaire. This will not be the case, so do not look back and forth through the items. Do not try to remember how you checked similar items earlier in the questionnaire. Make each item a separate and independent judgment. Work at a fairly high rate of speed. It is your immediate feeling that we want. On the other hand, please do not be careless, because we want your true impressions.

1) How do you view the events in this article?

Not negative at all								Extremely negative
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

2) How severe do the events in this article seem to you?

Not severe at all								Extremely severe
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

3) How much damage or harm is caused by the events in this article?

Not harmful at all								Extremely harmful
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

4) Regardless of what other people might think, how do you think these events are?

Not wrong at all								Extremely wrong
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Directions: Please read each question and circle the response you feel is most appropriate.

- 1) Are the Cleveland Browns aware of the incidents their team sponsor is involved in?
 - a) YES, the Browns are aware of the incidents their team sponsor is involved in.
 - b) NO, the Browns are *not* aware of the incidents their team sponsor is involved in.
 - c) I am not sure.

- 2) Did the Cleveland Browns choose to continue or end their relationship with their sponsor?
 - d) The Browns chose to continue their relationship with their sponsor.
 - e) The Browns chose to terminate their relationship with their sponsor.
 - f) I am not sure.

APPENDIX F
Final Questionnaire

Directions: Please read each statement carefully and circle the response that best represents how you feel about that statement. Sometimes you may feel as though you have had the same item before on the questionnaire. This will not be the case, so do not look back and forth through the items. Do not try to remember how you checked similar items earlier in the questionnaire. Make each item a separate and independent judgment. Work at a fairly high rate of speed. It is your immediate feeling that we want. On the other hand, please do not be careless, because we want your true impressions.

Example:

How do you feel about the Buckeyes?

Favorably
Unfavorably

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

This would be a response for someone who feels extremely favorable about the Buckeyes.

Part I-Pretest

1) Regardless of whether the Browns win, I will continue to support them.

Strongly									Strongly
Agree									Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		8

2) I would experience a loss if I had to stop being a fan of the Browns.

Strongly									Strongly
Agree									Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		8

3) Being a fan of the Browns is very important to me.

Strongly									Strongly
Agree									Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		8

4) I consider myself to be a 'real' fan of the Browns.

Strongly									Strongly
Agree									Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		8

Directions: Please read each statement carefully and circle the response that best represents how you feel about that statement. Sometimes you may feel as though you have had the same item before on the questionnaire. This will not be the case, so do not look back and forth through the items. Do not try to remember how you checked similar items earlier in the questionnaire. Make each item a separate and independent judgment. Work at a fairly high rate of speed. It is your immediate feeling that we want. On the other hand, please do not be careless, because we want your true impressions.

Example:

How do you feel about the Buckeyes?

Favorably
Unfavorably

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

This would be a response for someone who feels extremely favorable about the Buckeyes.

Part I-Posttest

1) **Regardless of whether the Browns win, I will continue to support them.**

Strongly										Strongly
Agree										Disagree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		8

2) **I would experience a loss if I had to stop being a fan of the Browns.**

Strongly										Strongly
Agree										Disagree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		8

3) **Being a fan of the Browns is very important to me.**

Strongly										Strongly
Agree										Disagree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		8

4) **I consider myself to be a ‘real’ fan of the Browns.**

Strongly										Strongly
Agree										Disagree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		8

How do you feel about the Browns' sponsor described in the article?

- | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--------------------|
| 5) Favorable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Unfavorable |
| | | | | | | | | 8 |
| 6) Good | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Bad |
| | | | | | | | | 8 |
| 7) Positive | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Negative |
| | | | | | | | | 8 |

Part II

Directions: Please circle the correct response.

- 8) Year in School:
- a. 1st year undergraduate
 - b. 2nd year undergraduate
 - c. 3rd year undergraduate
 - d. 4th year undergraduate
 - e. 5th year undergraduate
 - f. 6th year undergraduate
 - a. graduate/professional student
 - b. other
- 9) Sex:
- a. Male
 - b. Female

Directions: Please fill in the blank

10) Age _____

Please make any additional comments about the Browns and their sponsor or general comments about this research in the space below: