

## **A cross-cultural examination of consumer attitudes and behaviours toward naming rights and jersey/shirt sponsorships.**

Sport sponsorship continues to be a rapidly growing market for brands across all industries. In order to maximize benefits, brands seek novel ways to leverage their sponsorships to attract consumers. Two of the most widely visible and expensive forms of sponsor leveraging are stadium naming rights and jersey/shirt sponsorship. Though the two sponsorship types are quite different in implementation, the objectives behind them tend to be similar, such as increased awareness, exposure, and recognition (Gillooly et al., 2020; Kwak & Pradhan, 2019), as well as more positive brand image and stronger associations between the team and sponsor's brands (Martin et al., 2020; Martinez & Janney, 2015).

In North America, professional sport facilities have held corporate names for several decades, but the National Basketball Association (NBA) became the first major professional league to allow jersey sponsorship in 2017, and in only a few years the cost for each type of sponsorship has become roughly equal (Lefton & Lombardo, 2019; Young, 2021). Internationally, the situation is reversed – jersey sponsorship has existed in European soccer since the 1950's (Jensen et al., 2012), while stadium naming rights are more recent and less common, though growing, with lower average costs than those in North America (Woisetschalger et al., 2014).

Although the markets for these two sponsorship types are clearly developed, academic research on them has lagged (Eddy, 2014). Despite long-held assertions that sponsorship type might impact outcomes (Gwinner, 1997), and calls for research comparing effects across different sponsorship types/contexts (Lin & Bruning, 2021), the scant extant research has primarily examined these sponsorship types independent of one another in single sport organization (team/league) scenarios (Woisetschlager et al., 2017). Within this work, notable differences exist between countries of investigation; for example, a naming rights study in Germany indicated soccer fans had more negative attitudes toward the naming sponsor and greater resistance to using the name (Woisetschlager et al., 2014) than what has been observed in American football contexts (Chen & Zhang, 2012; Eddy, 2014; Eddy et al., 2017). Thus, the purpose of this study is to examine fans' attitudinal and behavioural differences between jersey and naming-rights sponsors in a cross-national setting.

A useful theoretical framework to explain differences in attitudinal and behavioural response to different sponsorship types is schema theory. A schema is a "cognitive structure that represents knowledge about a concept or type of stimulus, including its attributes and relations among those attributes" (Fiske and Taylor, 1991, p.98). Schema theory therefore explains how individuals can process and make sense of new information by comparing it with a schema held in memory. The schema retrieved from memory is then used by consumers to evaluate the pairing of two objects that are presented together (Roy & Cornwell, 2003). The information held in schemas can subsequently influence affective and behavioural responses to the paired stimuli (Fiske, 1982).

Work on advertising suggests that consumers can hold schemas about particular executional elements, such as advertising format or media vehicle (Stoltman, 1990). Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that consumers will hold differing schemas for jersey and naming rights

sponsorships. Schemas are created through direct experience, media exposure and interpersonal communications (McDaniel, 1999; McDaniel & Heald, 2000). Based on the historical predominance of jersey sponsorship in the UK and naming rights sponsorship in the US and the resultant high levels of exposure fans will have had to these sponsorship types, we can hypothesise that the jersey and naming rights sponsorship schemas will be more developed and readily accessible to fans in the UK and US respectively. As such, the following hypotheses are proposed:

*H1: Sponsorship authenticity, brand image, and behavioural intentions will differ between US and UK participants.*

*H2: Sponsorship authenticity, brand image, and behavioural intentions will differ between leverage types.*

*H3: There will be a significant interaction effect between country of origin and leverage types on sponsorship authenticity, brand image, and behavioural intentions.*

Participants for the study were recruited via a Qualtrics panel, which have become popular in sport management research due to the quality of responses and ability to representatively sample broad populations (Du et al., 2020; McCullough & Trail, 2023). Two samples of sport fans completed the questionnaire – one sample of residents of the United States ( $n = 292$ ), the other of residents of the United Kingdom ( $n = 289$ ). Basic knowledge questions were used to ensure familiarity with the NBA (for U.S. residents) and the English Premier League (EPL; for U.K. residents). In terms of demographics, the average age of the participants was 42.12 years ( $SD = 14.49$ ), 55% identified as male, and 47.5% were married.

To facilitate comparisons between the countries and sponsorship types, a between-group cross-sectional design was employed. After the initial team/brand knowledge questions, a hypothetical scenario outlined how the participant's self-identified favourite team (in the NBA for U.S. residents, EPL for U.K. residents) had signed a new sponsorship (Jeep for U.S. residents; Land Rover for U.K. residents). Half of the respondents within each country (at random) were informed the sponsorship was for the team's jersey/shirt, and the other half were told it was a naming rights sponsorship. Respondents then completed 26 scale items measuring three dependent variables (sponsorship authenticity, brand image, and behavioural intentions) and three covariates (brand attitude, attitude toward sponsorship, and appropriateness of leverage type).

The overall 2x2 MANCOVA model was significant (Pillai's trace = .066,  $p < .001$ ), and all three covariates were significant at the .05 level. *H1* was supported ( $p < .001$ ), with the US group being more positive on all three DVs. *H2* ( $p = .443$ ) and *H3* ( $p = .616$ ) were not supported. The findings suggest that US residents have more positive attitudes and behaviours toward sponsors, regardless of leverage type, than UK residents. In addition, the non-significant results indicate that if the hypothesized schema incongruences between naming rights and jersey/shirt sponsorships ever did exist, this gap has since been closed. Additional results and discussion will follow in the presentation.

## References

- Du, J., McLeod, C. M., & James, J. D. (2020). Brand environments and the emergence and change of awareness for new sports teams: A two-wave examination. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 29(1), 18-32.
- Chen, K. K., & Zhang, J. J. (2012). To name it or not name it: Consumer perspectives on facility naming rights sponsorship in collegiate athletics. *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics*, 5, 119–148.
- Eddy, T. (2014). Measuring effects of naming-rights sponsorships on college football fans' purchasing intentions. *Sport Management Review*, 17(3), 362–375.
- Eddy, T., Dwyer, B., & Slavich, M. (2017). The impact of team outcomes, brand connection, and game attendance on the corporate image of a stadium naming rights sponsor. *Journal of Applied Marketing Theory*, 7(1), 1-17.
- Fiske, S.T. (1982). Schema-triggered affect: Applications to social perception. In M.S. Clark & S.T. Fiske (Eds.), *Affect and cognition: The 17th annual Carnegie Symposium on cognition* (pp. 55-78). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Fiske, S., & Taylor, S. E. (1991). *Social Cognition*. Addison-Wesley, Reading, MA.
- Gillooly, L., Medway, D., Warnaby, G., & Grimes, T. (2020). The importance of context in understanding football fans' reactions to corporate stadia naming rights sponsorships. *European Journal of Marketing*, 54(7), 1501–1522.
- Gwinner, K. (1997). A model of image creation and image transfer in event sponsorship. *International Marketing Review*, 14(3), 145-158.
- Jensen, R., Bowman, N., Wang, Y., & Larson, B. (2012). New league, new market and new sponsorship: An exploratory study of attitudes towards shirt sponsorship in Major League Soccer. *Soccer & Society*, 13(4), 536–554.
- Kwak, D. H., & Pradhan, S. (2019). Fans' responses to the National Basketball Association's (NBA) pilot jersey sponsorship program: An experimental approach. *Journal of Sports Analytics*, 5(2), 121–136.
- Lefton, T., & Lombardo, J. (2019, February 25). *NBA: Big payoff for a little patch*. Street and Smith's Sports Business Journal. [https://www.sportsbusinessdaily.com:443/en/Journal/Issues/2019/02/25/Leagues and Governing Bodies/NBA patches.aspx](https://www.sportsbusinessdaily.com:443/en/Journal/Issues/2019/02/25/Leagues%20and%20Governing%20Bodies/NBA%20patches.aspx)
- Lin, H. C., & Bruning, P. F. (2021). Sponsorship in focus: a typology of sponsorship contexts and research agenda. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 39(2), 213-233.
- Martin, D. S., Bourdeau, B. L., & Stephan, J. (2020). Measuring the effectiveness of facility naming rights sponsorships. *Journal of Business Research*, 110, 51–64.

- Martinez, R. J., & Janney, J. J. (2015). Market reactions to corporate sponsorships of European football kits: The moderating effects of firm congruence. *Journal of Sport Management*, 29(2), 211–222.
- McCullough, B. P., & Trail, G. T. (2023). Assessing key performance indicators of corporate social responsibility initiatives in sport. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 23(1), 82–103.
- McDaniel, S. R. (1999). An investigation of match-up effects in sport sponsorship advertising: The implications of consumer advertising schemas. *Psychology & Marketing*, 16(2), 163–184.
- McDaniel, S. R., & Heald, G. R. (2000). Young consumers' responses to event sponsorship advertisements of unhealthy products: Implications of schema-triggered affect theory. *Sport Management Review*, 3(2), 163–184.
- Roy, D. P., & Bettina Cornwell, T. (2003). Brand equity's influence on responses to event sponsorships. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 12(6), 377–393.
- Stoltman, J. J. (1990) Advertising effectiveness: The role of advertising schemas. Paper presented at the *Winter Meeting of the American Marketing Association*.
- Woisetschläger, D. M., Haselhoff, V. J., & Backhaus, C. (2014). Fans' resistance to naming right sponsorships: Why stadium names remain the same for fans. *European Journal of Marketing*, 48(7/8), 1487–1510.
- Woisetschläger, D. M., Backhaus, C., & Cornwell, T. B. (2017). Inferring corporate motives: How deal characteristics shape sponsorship perceptions. *Journal of Marketing*, 81(5), 121–141.
- Young, J. (2021, November 17). *Crypto.com buys naming rights to Lakers' Staples Center in a \$700 million deal*. CNBC. <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/11/17/cryptocom-buys-naming-rights-to-lakers-staples-center-in-a-700-million-deal-.html>