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**An Evaluation of the Effectiveness of
Sports Sponsorship among Football
Fans in Egypt**

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An Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Sports Sponsorship among Football Fans in Egypt

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Abstract

Sports sponsorship in Egypt is growing. Thus, there is an urgent need to be interested in this area. One of the companies' aims is to increase its investment in sports. Nowadays, most of the companies want to evaluate the effectiveness of their communication to make better decisions. There is a lack of researches in this area in Egypt. This study examines theoretical relationships between key variables of sponsorship effectiveness that include sponsor awareness, corporate image and future purchase intentions. Sports fans' involvement was also investigated, and questionnaires were sent electronically via a social network (Facebook) to 107 football fans. The first section of the questionnaire was related to brand awareness items. The second section was about corporate image items; the third section was about purchase intention items. Finally, the last section was about the demographics of the respondents. Unaided recall tasks are considered to be a more appropriate measure than recognition tasks because they require the respondent to retrieve the sponsor's name from memory rather than by recognizing their brand name from a list (Stotlar, 1993). Results suggested that sports fans' involvement had a direct positive effect on perceptions of corporate image; also, corporate image has a direct positive effect on intention to purchase, but there was no correlation between sports fans' involvement and intention to purchase sponsor's product, and there was no correlation between sponsorship awareness and positive effect on corporate image. Finally, there was no correlation between sponsorship awareness and the effect on intentions to purchase a sponsor's products.

Key words: Sports sponsorship, Sponsorship awareness, Corporate Image, Purchase intention.

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Introduction

Sports is the area in which sponsorship has developed furthest. Depending on the year being studied and the country and definitions, the share of sports sponsorship within sponsorship as a whole lies approximately between 50% and 70% of the total (Lagae 2005). Sponsorship is defined as a form to promote the brand associated with the concept of sports, entertainment, culture and society. It is one of the tools of the company's communication (Shimp, 2003). Sponsorship is the totality of market-orientated decision processes about the provision of money, services, know-how or in-kind support of corporations or organizations to individuals, groups or institutions from the area of sports, Culture, charity, ecology, education or broadcasting, in order to achieve specified corporate communication goals via the commercial and psychological potential associated with this activity (Tench and Yeomans, 2006).

The current study is aiming at investigating the factors of measuring the effectiveness of sports sponsorship. The objectives of the present study were specifically set as follows:

- To recognize how sponsorship works in the minds of consumers.
- To test the relationships between variables of sports sponsorship effectiveness (sponsor awareness, corporate image and future purchase intention).
- To offer a framework to those who are responsible for sponsorship in the Egyptian companies so that they can evaluate the activities of sport sponsorship via that.

Statement of Problem

Sports sponsorship in Egypt is growing. Thus, there is an urgent need to be interested in this area. One of the aims of companies is to increase their investment in sports. Nowadays, most of the companies want to evaluate the effectiveness of their communication to make better decisions. There is a lack of researches in this area in Egypt. Sponsorship awareness, corporate image and purchase intention need to be measured in the context of sponsorship effectiveness. Egyptian companies want to support sports events but there is only one study that tackled how these activities influence target markets and how to measure the sports sponsorship effectiveness (Ibrahim, 2011). Therefore, the main question of this research: are there any relationships between key variables (sponsor awareness, corporate image and future purchase intention) among football fans in Egypt?

Literature Review

Sports Fans' Involvement

The definitions and constructs that were used in these extant sports spectator involvement studies were basically derived from consumer involvement studies (Kim, AE., 2003). Consumer involvement is defined as 'the perceived interest in and personal importance of sports to an individual' (Shank & Beasley, 1998). The importance of sports fans' involvement in predictions relating to their intention to purchase NFL teams' apparel was supported in (Sierra et. al., 2012) study, in which a sample of NFL fans at business school in the southwest U.S. were solicited as respondents and were asked to indicate their favorite NFL team and how long in terms of years they have felt this way; sports fans' involvement related to the term 'sport spectator' itself contains the meaning of behavioral contribution or behavioral aspect, such as pending time, paying money to buy ticket, attending a game and analyzing information about sporting events is important for understanding sport spectator behaviors (Kim, AE., 2003).

Several studies have found that there was a relationship between people's involvement and perceptions; i.e., (Lee et. al. 2008) study in which the main purpose of that study was to investigate how people's involvement with a celebrity influences their perceptions of tourism destinations; the level of celebrity involvement was positively related to destination familiarity and visitation intentions. (Tsuji, 2007) indicated that an increase in baseball involvement led to lesser likelihood of recall. Results indicated also that as viewers' involvement with baseball increased, recognition rates decreased for those brands with more exposure. The main objective of (Mohammadian & Rahimipour, 2012) study was examining an integrated model of sports sponsorship in which team attachment is examined as an influential factor on brand image. The results show that team attachment has a direct and relatively strong impact on brand image of sponsors. This indicates that hardcore fans are more likely to have a positive brand image of sponsors.

Team attachment exhibited fairly strong total effects on both sponsor image and purchase intentions, which implies that highly attached fans are more likely to develop positive image about the sponsor and express willingness to buy its products (Tsiotsou & Alexandris, 2009).

Sponsorship Awareness

Brand awareness refers to awareness at a specific point in time rather than knowledge of the brand; the term is used to refer to situational awareness, not absolute awareness (Holden, 1992).

In measuring brand awareness, unaided recall and aided recall (recognition) of sponsors are used (Ko et. al., 2008; Gilaninia and Reza, 2011). Unaided recall tasks are considered to be a more appropriate measure than

recognition tasks because they require the respondent to retrieve the sponsor's name from memory rather than recognizing their brand name from a list. An extension of exposure measurement is measurement of sponsorship awareness. In this type of test, a list of sponsored properties is presented to a sample of the target group, who are asked to name (aided or unaided) the sponsors of the property (Lagae, 2005). Tracking measures are designed to evaluate the awareness, familiarity and preferences engendered by sponsorship based on surveys (Belch, G. & Belch, M., 2009); a review of sponsorship literature indicates that the primary objectives of corporate sponsorship are (a) increasing brand awareness (Pope, 1998); (b) enhancing corporate image (Yang et. al., 2008; Javalgi et. al., 1994) and (c) increasing sales (Crompton, 2004). Sponsorship awareness has a positive effect on corporate image.

Corporate Image

Each company strives to attain a particular image with customers, stockholders and the general public. Sports is associated with a healthy lifestyle; this association can be good for the sponsor (Irwin et. al., 2002). Enhancement of corporate image is one of the most important communication objectives for corporate sponsors (Dolphin, 2003; Fullerton, 2007; Harris, 2005), but specific definitions of "image" and other sponsorship goals have been lacking. Similarly, though managers purport to measure the effectiveness of their promotional activities (Javalgi et. al., 1994), previous research used to measure the effect of corporate image through consumers' attitude towards sponsors. (Kim, K., 2006; Stipp and Nicholas, 1996) found that the sponsor's image is related to viewers' evaluation and recall of the commercials; the researchers measured also attitudes toward Olympic sponsorship. Some researchers measured corporate image (Javalgi et. al., 1994; Crompton, 2004); others measured brand image (Phillip, 2000). Building brands through sponsorship is also investigated by (Cliffe, 2005). In an empirical study (Tsiotsou & Konstantinos, 2009) found that highly attached fans are more likely to develop positive image about their team's sponsor and consequently express positive intention to say good things and buy the sponsor's products.

Purchase Intention

Most studies concerned with prediction of human behavior from attitude have relied on the planned behavior theory (Zhao & Othman, 2011). Some researchers studied the relationship between sport sponsorship and purchase intention. (Ngan et. al., 2011) found that team performance significantly influenced consumers' intention to purchase the sponsors' product. The premise is that highly attached fans are more likely to develop positive image for their team sponsor, exhibit higher intentions for purchasing and recommend the sponsor's products (Tsiotsou & Konstantinos, 2009).

Conceptual Background Sports Sponsorship

Sponsorship is a good tool that enhances the company's community involvement and portrays it as a good corporate citizen; as markets, they recognize that the initial task in getting consumers to purchase their products is to create awareness (Fullerton, 2007). Sport sponsorship acts first and foremost on cognitive goals, because sponsoring acts indirectly and implicitly, a brand also strives for effective goals (Lagea, 2005).

Effectiveness of Sponsorship

Sponsorship is a worthwhile investment that would validate senior management decisions; they often commission evaluations in order to convince a partner to be involved in future events. The main motivation of a sponsorship evaluation is to measure ROI to determine if the return on their investment was worth it (O'reilly, 2007). Sponsorship traditionally placed much emphasis on 'visibility' measurements; however, standard measures of brand awareness, recall and recognition are borrowed from conventional advertising research. These measures may be insufficient to measure sponsorship effectiveness in the digital age (Steyn, 2009).

Research Methodology

For the purpose of this study, the researcher modified and used existing survey scales. The survey instrument included a series of questions relating to the following five areas: Sports fan sponsorship, Sponsorship awareness, corporate image, Purchase intention and Demographic information.

Description of each sub-scale is presented in the next section. This study is based on snow sampling aged from 20 years and above; the researcher depended on this kind of sampling technique to let participants obtain the sample by identifying other similar participants (Keyton, 2006).

107 respondents answered the questionnaire via Facebook; there were less responses because the researcher applied the study in the period between 1 December 2012 and 1 January 2013, when most of the Egyptians were interested in the political events and referendum on the constitution; moreover, football activity had been frozen.

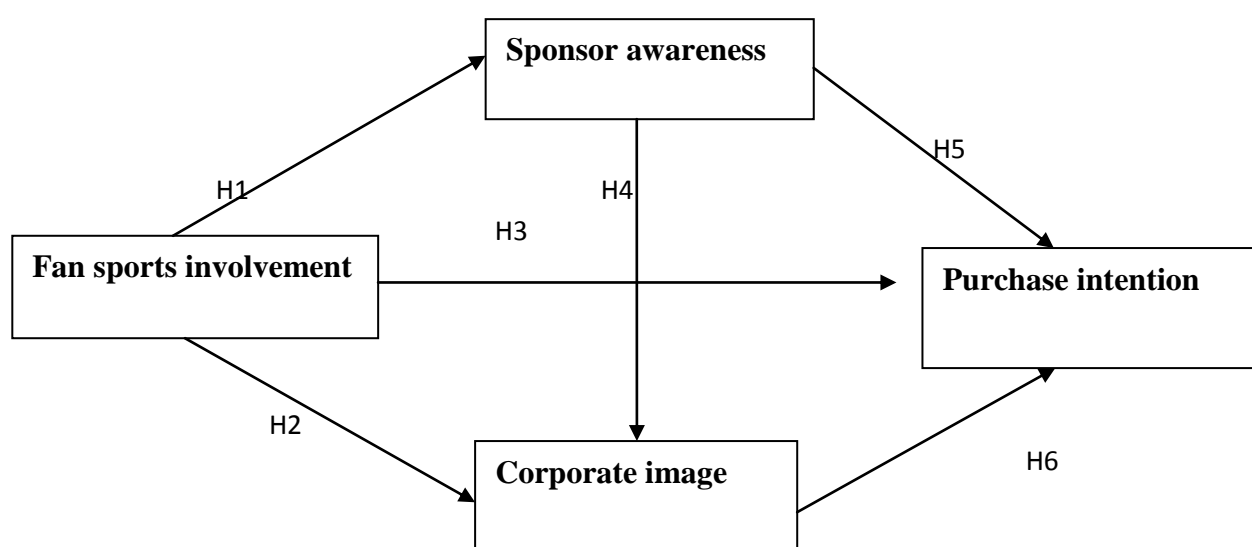
Research Model

Evaluating sponsorship effectiveness based on single variables may not be sufficient due to the complex nature of the process of developing perceptions about sponsorship. Accordingly, to more fully understand how sponsorship

works in the minds of sports fans, a researcher model (Ko et. al., 2008) was developed to delineate the proposed relationships among the four constructs (i.e., sports involvement, sponsor awareness, corporate image and future purchase intention) of sponsorship effectiveness.

Figure 1 illustrates the hypotheses that sports fan involvement directly affects awareness, image and purchase intention. Heightened levels of awareness and image predict a higher level of purchase intention. Corporate image is directly influenced by sponsor awareness. Each construct is discussed next, followed by pertinent research hypotheses.

Figure 1. *Proposed research model of the relationships among fan sports involvement, Sponsor awareness, corporate image and purchase intention (Ko et. al., 2008)*



Research hypotheses

H1: sports fan involvement has a direct positive effect on sponsorship awareness.

H2: sports fan involvement has a direct positive effect on perceptions of corporate image.

H3: sports fan involvement has a direct effect on intention to purchase a sponsor's product.

H4: sponsorship awareness has a direct positive effect on corporate image.

H5: sponsorship awareness has a direct effect on intention to purchase a sponsor's products.

H6: corporate image has a direct positive effect on intention to purchase.

Sports fan involvement

In this study the researcher measured the interest of sports fans about the sport. Sports fan involvement is measured by (Shank and Beasley, 1998). Sports Involvement Scale (SIS) is used; the same scale has been used by (Ko et. al., 2008) study. The (SIS) includes 8 semantic items: '1/ Watching football matches is interesting 2/ I read about sport in newspapers 3/ My team's news attracts my attention on t.v. 4/ I like to attend my team's matches 5/ I view all my team's matches on television 6/ I like to talk about my favorite team with my friends 7/ I follow my team's news in the newspapers and its results 8/ I follow my team's homepage on the internet'.

Brand Awareness

The researcher used unaided recall method as recommended by several scholars (e.g. Turley & Shannon, 2000). Recall tests can assess the ad's impact on the memory. Proponents of recall tests say the major concern is not the results themselves but how they are interpreted (Blech, G. & Blech, M., 2009). Aided recall is where subjects are provided with the name of the company or product and then asked about the ads. On the other hand, unaided recall is where subjects are supplied only with a category and they must identify which ads they remember in that category. Unaided recall is the more stringent measure and often results in lower scores than aided recall (Berkman and Gilson, 1987).

Corporate Image

The researcher adapted a 6-item scale used by (Ko et. al. 2008 & Javalgi et. al., 1994) which assesses six dimensions of corporate image: (1) sponsors have good product and services; (2) sponsors only want to make money; (3) sponsors target to support the football activity; (4) sponsors respond to consumer needs; (5) sponsors of my favorite team have a good reputation and credibility; (6) sponsors are good companies to work for. The format was a 3-point Likert scale ranging from 1(disagree) to 3 (agree).

Purchase Intention

The researcher measured this with a 3-item scale. Specific items include: (1) I am willing to try the products/services of team's sponsors; (2) I am willing to buy the products/services of the sponsors; (3) In the case of the company presenting new product/service, I will buy it.

Demographic Information

The last part of the survey asked the respondents to provide demographic information, which included gender, age, education, and income. In order to establish validity and reliability of the survey, the researcher conducted a field test and a pilot study prior to the actual survey. As a result of the experts' recommendations, a few modifications in the questionnaire were made. After the revised instruments were developed, the result of the reliability test of the questionnaire was 97%.

Results and Discussion

The greatest percentage was the age from 20 to 30 years old (80.4%) with a big difference from the other group (30-to more) (19.6%). The higher educated had a great percentage (78.5%), with a big difference compared to other two education groups (average 2.8%), and post-higher education (18.7%). The present study was conducted to examine theoretical relationships among the four constructs (i.e., sports fan involvement, sponsor awareness, corporate image and future purchase intention) of the sponsorship effectiveness.

Testing the study's hypotheses

H1: sports fan involvement has a direct positive effect on sponsorship awareness. Pearson correlation between fan involvement and awareness ($R=.211$, Sig.(2-tailed)=.029). This means that the main hypothesis of the study is accepted and that the correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). The results also indicate that increased fan involvement in a particular event will evoke more awareness of the team's sponsor. The results also support previous findings that highly involved consumers are more likely to be aware of sponsors (Ko et. al., 2008; Gilaninia and Reza, 2011). This finding is consistent with (Tsuji, 2007) study which proved that the effects of baseball involvement and team identification were found to affect awareness level.

H2: sports fan involvement has a direct positive effect on perceptions of corporate image.

Pearson correlation between fan involvement and perceptions of corporate image ($R=.256$, Sig.(2-tailed)=.008). The result also supports previous findings that the highly involved the fans in sports, the highly positive image of the sponsors (Tsiotsou & Alexandris, 2009; Ko et. al., 2008; Gilaninia and Reza, 2011).

H3: sports fan involvement has a direct effect on intention to purchase a sponsor's product.

Pearson correlation between fan involvement and purchase a sponsor's product ($R=.123$, Sig.(2-tailed) =.206). This means there is no correlation

between fan sports involvement and intention to purchase sponsor's product. This result may refer to the decrease of buying power of the respondents. This result is also not consistent with the previous research that mentioned the positive relationship between consumers' identification with nonprofit organizations and their intentions to purchase sponsors' products (Tsotsou & Alexandris, 2009). It is suggested that sponsors should consider football fans' behavior and their intentions. They should be interested in the fans because the latter are the final target of their sport marketing activities. Hypotheses 4 and 5 predicted that sponsorship awareness would have a direct positive effect on corporate image and the intention to purchase a sponsor's products.

H4: Sponsorship awareness has a direct positive effect on corporate image.

The test of hypothesis 4 confirmed that there were no correlation between sponsorship awareness and positive corporate image ($R=155$, Sig.(2-tailed $=.110$). The political events may have affected the mind of the sample, so they were not able to determine their perceptions toward sponsors. Previous studies have found a positive correlation between sponsorship awareness and corporate image (i.e., Woisetschlager, 2007; Nufer, 2009). It is suggested that sponsors should work on the development of consumers' awareness and do more efforts to increase it in fans' minds. The restoration of football activity may help them do that.

H5: Sponsorship awareness has a direct effect on intention to purchase a sponsor's products.

The test of hypothesis 5 confirmed no correlation between sponsorship awareness and intention to purchase a sponsor's product ($R=.116$, Sig.(2-tailed $=.233$). This result is not consistent with the previous studies (Ko et. al. 2008). The respondents may have no intention to purchase a sponsor's product although they know the name of the sponsors as there were 61% have aware of sponsors of their favorite team. This means that hypotheses 4 and 5 are refused as there is no correlation between sponsor awareness and both corporate image and purchase intention of sponsor's products; therefore, it is proposed that marketers or public relations officials work on creating positive sponsor image, in order to increase sponsorship effectiveness. They should create programs and actions that will increase purchase intention. This can be done by promoting sponsorship efforts through different types of communication strategies (i.e., electronic mass media, internet (e.g., sports websites, the sponsors' website, social media and announcement in the stadiums). These actions can help in increasing positive corporate image and building purchase intention.

H6: corporate image has a direct positive effect on intention to purchase.

Hypothesis 6 predicted that corporate image has a direct positive effect on intention to purchase ($R=.377$, Sig.(2-tailed $=0.000$). Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). This result supports (Ko et. al., 2008) findings that customers with a more favorable image were more likely to purchase a sponsor's products. The significant impact of the image is a better predictor of

sponsorship effectiveness than sponsor awareness when we consider future purchase intention as an ultimate dependent variable of sponsorship. This result is consistent also with previous studies which proved that sponsor credibility and attitude towards sponsors partially mediate the fan identification –purchase link, by examining the effect on Asian fans' purchase intention when both the sponsoring firm and the sponsored sports team are Western (Chin et. al., 2012).

The model of this study has not achieved all its hypotheses; this result is not consistent with the review of literature (Ko et. al., 2008; Gilaninia and Reza, 2011). So, there is need to retest this model in several research environments.

Analysis of variance test (ANOVA) proved a significant difference between sponsorship awareness at the various education levels of respondents $\{(F=4.194) (sig=.018)\}$. To know the difference for whose interest, the least significant difference (LSD) was used to make a multiple comparison between these groups and it proved the following:

- There is a significant difference between the first group (higher education) and both average (mean difference=-.85, Sig=.010) and post higher education (mean difference=-.65, sig=.010).

- There is differences between age and purchase intention of sponsor's product (T-test =-3.266, p=.001). T-test proved a significant differences for the respondent's age from (30 to 40 years old) [mean =8.1905, std. deviation =.67964], compared to the respondents from (20 to 30 years old) [mean =6.8721, std. deviation =1.81365]. This result may refer to the buying power of the older respondents rather than the younger.

- There is difference between the respondents' education and sponsorship awareness (T-test=-2.493, p=.014) proved significant differences for post-university [mean =2.80, std. deviation=.523] compared to higher educated [mean =2.18, std. deviation =1.073]. This is an expected result as post-educated respondents have awareness about their favorite team sponsors than the less educated. There is also a difference between education and sports fan involvement. [T-test = -3.755, p=.000] proved a significant differences for post-university [mean=20.8000, std. deviation=1.935] compared to higher educated [mean=18.0000, std. deviation=3.22057]. It is suggested that the researchers in their future study should focus on the relations between the demographics and variables of sponsorship effectiveness.

The statement on the sports fan involvement scale having greatest weight was 'watching football matches is interesting' $\{(weight=92.30, mean=2.77, std. deviation=.542)\}$. It is suggested that academics should examine the effects of watching football matches on recalling the names of sponsors.

On the other hand, the statement on the corporate image scale taking highest weight =88.30 was 'the sponsors of my favorite team have a good reputation and credibility', (mean=2.65, std. deviation=.584). According to this result, it is suggested that sponsors should consider the passion and loyalty of consumers when creating communication messages and they should be the target of most sports marketing activities.

'I'm willing to try products/services of team's sponsor.' The previous statement on purchase intention scale had greatest [weight =86.00, mean =2.58, std. deviation=.695].

The results showed that there were no differences between the respondents' gender and variables of the study (sponsorship awareness, sports fan involvement, corporate image and purchase intention).

Limitations

There are several limitations in this study. First, the sample was from football fans, using this category of sample limits our ability to generalize our findings. It will be necessary to conduct follow-up studies in other categories such as customers or football match viewers. Second, it is necessary to measure sponsorship effectiveness in various sports such as Olympic Games (volleyball, handball, etc). Third, to validate the model, it will be necessary to conduct follow-up studies in other sports sponsorship contexts.

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