

Sport Sponsorships: Conceptualising Employee Attitudes, Organizational Identification and Inter-organisational Citizenship

Norfazlina Ghazali

Faculty of Business Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Selangor, Malaysia

norfazlina4843@salam.uitm.edu.my

Abstract

The objective of this research is to explore the nature and prevalence of inter-organisational citizenship behaviours within a sponsorship-rights holder relationship. This research will conceptualise sponsorship as an inter-organisational relationship and investigate how this inter-organisational relationship impacts the employees of sponsors' organisation. Recent studies emphasize that understanding the mechanics of sports sponsorship is critical to its success. However, there is a lack of research investigating sponsorships as an inter-organisational relationship. This is a gap that would be valuable to fill, because an understanding of inter-organisational relationship principles would assist both sponsors and rights holders to initiate and develop more effective sponsorship relationships. Exploring the phenomenon in Malaysia as the research setting, this study will focus the sponsorship in the football industries in Malaysia.

Keywords: Sponsorship, Inter-organisational relationship, Sponsorship Assessment, Inter-organisational Citizenship Behaviour, Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

A sponsorship is an inter-organisational relationship, where the rights holder can generate value from interacting with sponsors in ways that revenues are generated from them (Lund, 2011). Whereas sponsorships were once charitable in nature, today they are characterized by a joint sharing of resources between the rights holder and the sponsor (Calderón-Martínez, Más-Ruiz, & Nicolau-González, 2005; Quester, & Thompson, 2001). Recent studies emphasize that understanding the mechanics of sports sponsorship is critical to its success (Farrelly, 2010; Farrelly & Quester, 2005). One of the important criteria for sponsorship success is the improvement of relationship between sponsors' employees and the right holder.

This relationship is displayed through inter-organisational relationship.

However, there is a lack of research investigating sponsorships as an inter-organisational relationship. This is a gap that would be valuable to fill, because an understanding of inter-organisational relationship principles would assist both sponsors and rights holders to initiate and develop more effective sponsorship relationships.

Commonly, the research conducted to assess the impact of sponsorship tends to examine the effects on the external audience such as consumer. This research will conceptualise sponsorship as an inter-organisational relationship and investigate how this inter-organisational relationship impacts the employees of sponsors' organisation. As Richard (2003) claims, there is a need for research that explores the impact of sponsorship on this internal

audience. Moreover, Khan (2012) argues that how employees' respond to their firm's sponsorship can impact the sponsor's return on investment. Thus, this study seeks to expand sponsorship literature by focusing on the internal audience (i.e., employees).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sponsorship Assessment

Previous research on sponsorship highlights that sponsorship characteristics can impact attitudes and behaviours of both internal and external customers (Zepf, 2008). An initial review of the literature suggests four key characteristics - perceived status of property, personal liking, sponsor-property fit and perceived goodwill (Speed and Thompson, 2000). Perceived status of property involves the level of prestige individuals assign to the event or right holder Speed and Thompson (2000). Personal liking is defined as the extent that individuals find the event intrinsically attractive and interesting (d' Astous & Bitz, 1995). Sponsor-property fit represents the extent to which consumers perceive the sponsor and the sponsored property as fitting together (Walraven, Bijmolt & Koning, 2013). Perceived goodwill is a response consumers (internal or external) have towards a sponsoring company due to the company's support of an object that they are involved with (Meenaghan, 1991; Meenaghan, 2001).

It is proposed that the assessment of sponsorship from these four aspects will impact employee attitudes toward the sponsorship, organisational identification and the nature and prevalence of ICBs within the sponsor-rights holder relationship.

Attitude toward Sponsorship

Hickman, Lawrence and Ward (2005) conclude that sport sponsorship can improve employee perception, attitude and behavior. Attitudes of employees towards

their employer's corporate sponsorship are defined as the favourable (or unfavourable) disposition of employees towards their employer's corporate sponsorship campaign (Khan, 2012). Employees are pivotal for determining whether an organization will achieve its objectives. In explaining the importance of employee's role in specific relations, Chernatony, McDonald and Wallace, (2011) regards employees as ambassadors of the organization with some acting in boundary-spanning roles that interact with customers and other key external stakeholders. Based on Ajzen (1985) theory of planned behaviour, employee attitudes influence subsequent employee behaviours. Therefore, this phase of the research investigates how employees's attitude to a sponsorship influences their behavior in the relationship between sponsors and sponsored property.

Organisational Identification

In his seminal work on organizational identification, Patchen (1970) listed three important characteristics of organisational identification: shared characteristics, solidarity and supportive component. Organisational identification is the way individual share the similarity, a sense of belongingness and loyalty toward their organisation's goals and policies Patchen (1970). Ashforth and Mael (1989) claim that employees who identify strongly with their organisation are more likely to show support for them as well. Furthermore, Simon (1997) adds that employee decisions would also be more in line with the organisation's objectives. Hence, the study proposes that organisational identification with a sponsored property and the employer will result in the development of a stronger sponsorship relationship between the two organisations. Thus, it is important to facilitate employees' organisational identification with the sponsored property as Dutton et al. (1994) further noted that

strong organisational identification may have an impact citizenship behaviours. Hickman et al. (2005) also concludes that employees with an interest in the sponsored event/property may develop a strong sense of identification with their employer as well as a greater level of commitment.

Inter-organisational Citizenship Behavior

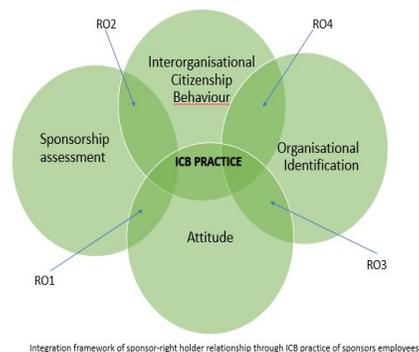
At the risk of oversimplification, Inter-organisational Citizenship Behaviour (ICBs) are Organizational Citizenship Behaviours (OCBs) occurring within an inter-organisational context (Lauren, Chad, & Charles, 2009). Whereas OCB occur within an organization, ICB transcend organizational boundaries. ICB are employee behaviours that extend beyond their role requirement, while not directly rewarded and promote effective organisational functioning (Raelin & Kevorkian, 2014). ICB are neither enforceable nor based on formal or contractual agreements. The prevalence of ICB results from an organization’s permanent decision-making process through its agents within inter-organisational dyads and networks (Autry, Skinner & Lamb, 2008). The dimensions of ICB are advancement, altruism, conscientiousness, constructiveness, compliance, loyalty, and tolerance (Autry et al., 2008; Lauren et al., 2009). Advancement is behavior directed at constantly improving operations in the relationship and its outcomes. Advancement improves relationships, knowledge bases, and integrated processes linking two or more organizations. Altruism is behavior directed at helping other others to acquire skills, knowledge, or resources. Conscientiousness occurs when people perform inter-organisational tasks with higher than normal levels of forethought and effort. Constructiveness is both interest and activity in inter-organisational affairs that affect the inter-organisational network, its members, and relationships. Compliance means to follow

or orient behavior towards the rules, policies, and processes of the relationship as a whole or of the partnering organisations. Loyalty is the allegiance to cluster members and to the cluster as a whole, sometimes sacrificing own interests for the greater good. Tolerance means to accept inevitable inconveniences associated with inter-organisational relationships and exchanges (e.g., delays, impositions, and inaccuracies, without retribution). Cooperation is a criteria for measuring the success of the sponsorship program. Khan (2012) and Farrelly & Quester (2005) suggest a range of behavioural measures to this. These include communication between partners, sharing of information and level of investment out into the partnership.

Currently, there are no previous attempts to examine ICB within a sport sponsorship. Hence, this aspect of the research will explore how ICBs contribute to an effective relationship between the rights holder and the sponsor.

Conceptual Model

The working conceptual model shows the integration of all the four key concepts – employee sponsorship assessment, employee attitude to the sponsorship, organizational identification, and ICBs. This model was developed based on the previous literature theories.



Conceptualization of RO1 will be based on the assessment made by employees based on the four constructs, such as perceived status of property, personal liking, sponsor-property fit and perceived goodwill. For the attitude of employees the proposed study will be based on the theory of [24] which generally used to determine the attitude of respondent toward something. The model proposed *the connection between assessment and ICBs, thus the study will find out how this assessment impacts the ICBs among employees.*

Conceptualisation of RO2 shows that the assessment made by the *employees towards sponsorship will develop attitude hence influence their ICB.*

Conceptualisation of RO3 in the model shows interconnection between *employees' attitudes and organisational identification.* This was based on previous literature stated that attitude influences intentions to undertake a certain activity (e.g.. ICBs) (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1975; Chatzoglou & Vraimaki, 2009). Therefore, *the model suggest that attitude will impact the organisational identification among employees and the ICBs practice.*

Conceptualisation of RO4 will be based on the connection between organisational identification and ICBs of employees. The employees' assessment of their organisations' sponsorship effort will influence their perceptions about the organization, which will lead to higher identification with the organisation. This is based on the literature from past research which found that interest in the company sponsored sport resulted in a stronger sense of organizational identification (Hickman et al., 2005). *It is proposed that highly identified employees will engage in more ICBs.*

Hence, from the integration model, the study will try to know how these constructs connected to one another and

lead to ICB practice among employee in a sponsor-right holder relationships.

Objectives of the study

The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of sports sponsorship on the organisational identification and inter-organisational citizenship behaviour among the sponsors' employees. Specifically, the objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To explore how perceived status of property, personal liking, sponsor-property fit and perceived goodwill impact employee attitude to the sponsorship.
2. To explore how perceived status of property, personal liking, sponsor-property fit and perceived goodwill impact the nature and prevalence of inter-organisational citizenship behaviours within a sponsorship-rights holder relationship.
3. To explore the relationship between employee attitude to the sponsorship and organisational identification
4. To explore the relationship between organisational identification and the nature and prevalence of inter-organisational citizenship behaviours within a sponsorship-rights holder relationship.

Design/Plan of the Study

The study will be a qualitative study case study. Case studies are most appropriate where little is already known about the study phenomenon or where detailed insights are required from individual participants. The present study will be selecting few organizations to be the focus of this study, hence implied the multiple case study approach. The data collection will be carried out through the interview with selected employees from seven

sponsors. The semi-structured question will be asked to seek for people's view and perspectives in a detailed and comprehensive manner.

Participants in this study will be employees from seven sponsors of Johor Darul Takzim (JDT F.C), a professional football team based in Johor Bahru, Malaysia. The sponsors are Berjaya Corporation, Johor Corporation, Nike, Forest City, Iskandar Waterfront, Astaka Padu and Fastrack City. From the pool of employees, separate samples will be used, those directly involved in the sponsorship and those not directly involved. This will enable the ICB issue to be examined, as not all sponsor employees will be involved in developing and maintaining the relationship with the rights holder.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATION

The study is expected to provide insight to the sponsors regarding their employees' evaluation in regard to their effort in sponsorship and how does this effort improve the inter-organisational citizenship behavior among the employees. Furthermore, current study is expected to add more literature within the areas of sponsorship in general and specifically in

Chernatony, L., McDonald, M. and Wallace, E. (2011). *Creating Powerful Brands*, 4th ed., Butterworth-Heinemann, Oxford.

d' Astous, A., & Bitz, P. (1995). Consumer evaluations of sponsorship programmes. *European Journal of Marketing*, 29(12), 6-22.

Dutton, J. E., Dukerich, J. M., & Harquail, C. V. (1994). Organizational images and member identification. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 39, 239-263.

Farrelly, F. and Quester, P. (2005), Examining important relationship quality constructs of the focal sponsorship exchange. *Industrial*

the areas of inter-organisational citizenship behavior.

REFERENCES

Ajzen, I. (1985). From intentions to actions: A theory of planned behavior. In *Action control* (pp. 11-39). Springer Berlin Heidelberg.

Ajzen, I., & Fishbein, M. (1975). A Bayesian analysis of attribution processes. *Psychological bulletin*, 82(2), 261.

Ashforth, B. E. and Mael, F. (1989). Social identity theory and the organization. *Academy of Management Review*, 14, 20-39

Autry, C. W., Skinner, L. R., & Lamb, C. W. (2008). Inter-organisational citizenship behaviors: an empirical study. *Journal of Business Logistics*, 29(2), 53-74.

Calderón-Martínez, A., Más-Ruiz, F.J. & Nicolau-Gonzálbez, J.L. (2005). Commercial and philanthropic sponsorship: direct and interaction effects on company performance. *International Journal of Market Research*, 47(1), 75-99.

Chatzoglou, P. D., & Vraimaki, E. (2009). Knowledge-sharing behaviour of bank employees. *Marketing Management*, 34(3), 211-9.

Farrelly, F. (2010). Not playing the game: Why sport sponsorship relationships breakdown. *Journal of Sport Management*, 24: 319-337.
doi:10.1177/1077800405284363

Hickman, T.M., Lawrence, K.E. and Ward, J.C. (2005). A social identities perspective on the effects of corporate sport sponsorship on employees. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 14(3), 148-57.

Khan, A. M. (2012). The influence of corporate sponsorship on the sponsor's employees.

- Lauren R. S., Chad, W. A., & Charles W. L. (2009). Some measures of inter-organisational citizenship behaviors: Scale development and validation. *The International Journal of Logistics Management*, 20 (2), 228-242
- Lund, R. (2011). Leveraging cooperative strategy - cases of sports and arts sponsorship (PhD dissertation). Stockholm. Retrieved from <http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:su:diva-54361>
- Meenaghan, T. (1991). Sponsorship – legitimising the medium. *European Journal of Marketing*, 25(11), 5-10.
- Meenaghan, T. (2001). Understanding sponsorship effects. *Psychology & Marketing*, 18 (2), 95-122.
- Patchen, M. (1970). Participation, achievement, and involvement on the job. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall
- Quester, P. G., & Thompson, B. (2001). Advertising and promotion leverage on arts sponsorship effectiveness. *Journal of advertising research*, 41(1), 33-47.
- Raelin, J. A., & Kevorkian, J. (2014). How to develop: Network Citizenship Behavior. *Academe*, 100(3), 17
- Richard R. Dolphin, (2003). Sponsorship: perspectives on its strategic role. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*. 8(3) 173-186.
- Simon, H. A. (1997). Administrative behavior: A study of decision-making processes in administrative organizations (4th ed.). New York: Free Press
- Speed, R. and Thompson, P. (2000). Determinants of sports sponsorship response. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 28(2), 227-238.
- Walraven, M., Bijmolt, T. H. A., & Koning, R. H. (2013). Dynamic effects of sponsorship: The development of sponsorship awareness over time. *Journal of Advertising*.
- Zepf, B. (2008). Sport sponsorship as an internal marketing tool: employees' sponsorship assessments and their effect on job attitudes. unpublished doctoral dissertation, Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL