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International Business
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ABSTRACT OF
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Objectives
The main objectives of this study were to investigate the effects of the most commonly communicated deal-level characteristics of sport sponsorships on sponsorship outcomes. Enthusiasm towards the sponsored activity was introduced as a potential moderator in order to gain a better understanding of the most relevant audience for sport sponsorships.

Summary
The research objectives were identified after thorough review of existing literature on the topic. A questionnaire measuring the subjects' response to the deal-characteristics and enthusiasm towards the sponsored activity was created. After analysis of the collected data, conclusions about the effects were drawn and their implications for managerial decision making in international business were discussed.

Conclusions
Sponsor's regional proximity was found to have the greatest influence on fit and altruistic motives out of the deal-characteristics studied. In turn, sponsorship fit and altruistic motives were found to be significant predictors of sponsorship outcomes. The results imply that international sponsors are at a disadvantage compared to local sponsors, and they must carefully consider other factors in order to accomplish favorable outcomes. In addition, enthusiasm towards the sponsored activity was found to have a positive effect on the evaluations of sponsorship fit and sponsor's motives.

Key words: *Sponsorship, Marketing, Sports, Advertising, Consumer attitudes*

Language: English

Grade:

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

Sponsorship is the fastest growing marketing medium in the world (IEG, 2017) and it can be utilized to achieve various commercial objectives of businesses more effectively than traditional advertising. Sport sponsorships account for 70% of all global sponsorship spending, reaching €65 billion in 2018 alone (Gough, 2021). The most valuable contracts have exceeded of €100 million per year (Reuters Staff, 2019). Despite the current uncertainty surrounding all sporting events and especially their audience attendance, the COVID-19 pandemic may have set the stage for record-breaking sponsorship numbers in the coming years. The 2020 Summer Olympics, the UEFA EURO 2020 and Copa America among other major sporting events were postponed due to the pandemic and are now set to be held in 2021, only to be followed by the Winter Olympics and the FIFA World Cup in 2022.

Like all contracts, sponsorships require mutual agreement on the specific terms between the parties involved. Previous literature has shown that those terms, when communicated to consumers, can significantly influence consumers' perceptions, attitudes and behavior. This paper further investigates the effects of essential and negotiable deal-level characteristics on sponsorship outcomes, with the objective of providing applicable information for managers navigating the growing field. The study will also contribute to a body of literature that is still relatively narrow, considering the significance and prosperity of sponsorship in today's marketing.

1.2. Research Objectives and Questions

The objectives of this study are to investigate the effects of the most commonly communicated deal-level characteristics of sport sponsorships on consumers' perceptions of sponsorship fit and sponsor's motives, which are known to influence sponsorship outcomes, such as attitudes and purchase intentions. As sport sponsorships are mainly targeted to the audiences of the sponsored sport, the study

will also aim to determine whether enthusiasm towards the sponsored activity influences the interpretation of the information communicated about sponsorships.

1. How are consumers' perceptions of sponsorship fit and sponsor motives affected by the most commonly communicated deal-characteristics?

2. Does level of enthusiasm towards the sponsored activity influence the perception of sponsorship fit and sponsor's motives?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Sponsorship

The term sponsorship refers to "the provision of assistance either financial or in kind to an activity by a commercial organization for the purpose of achieving commercial objectives" (Meenaghan, 1983). Typically, the sponsored property operates in the field of sports, arts, entertainment or causes and access to the property's exploitable commercial potential, received in return for the paid assistance, allows the sponsor to pursue its commercial objectives (IEG, 2017; Meenaghan, 1991). For example, Rolex engages in sponsorships across various activities. It has ongoing partnerships with the Wimbledon, TED and the Academy Awards, better known as the Oscars, to name a few (Rolex, n.d.; Doan, n.d.). The commercial benefit for Rolex can be, for example, having its logo visible in the props at the Oscars. Similarly, it is no coincidence that all of the timekeepers and scoreboards used in the Wimbledon showcase visible Rolex branding. Worth noting is that although causes and non-profit organizations, such as TED, can act as sponsees, a distinct difference exist between sponsorship and philanthropy, as the latter lacks the assistance provider's benefit of exploiting the commercial potential of the property (IEG, 2017). Rolex benefits from its partnership with TED by getting visibility at TED conferences and related media campaigns.

2.2. Sponsorships in Sports

The most commonly sponsored activities and the majority of sponsorship spending are found within sports. For example, Chevrolet is spending $83 million per year to sponsor Manchester United, having its logo placed on the front of the teams uniform in exchange (Bassam, 2020). In sponsorship literature, sponsorships have been classified into of 1) venues, equipment and things, 2) events and activities, 3) groups and individual athletes and 4) organizations, leagues and associations (Gwinner & Eaton, 1999). Sponsorship classifications can also be more specific and focus on the different types within a category. For example, events and venues often have “name sponsors” (e.g. Red Bull Ice Cross, Barclays Premier League and Gillette Stadium), but they may also offer advertising space in the perimeters of the field of play or alongside the course. So-called “shirt sponsorships”, such as the record deal between Manchester United and Chevrolet, are one of the most well-known sponsorship types, especially in Europe. However, virtually every piece of equipment in sports can be used as space for advertising, from helmets to racquets, footwear, clothing, vehicles, and the list goes on. Sponsors can also receive visibility through media or take advantage of the association to the sponsee in their own marketing. For example, billions of people see Coca-Cola advertisements when watching the Olympic Games on TV (Lange, 2020). Consumers may also see the Olympic rings on a bottle of Coke they buy from their local store anywhere in the world. Global spending of $65.8 billion in 2018 (Gough, 2021) is a telling indicator of the magnitude of sport sponsorships in the global marketing domain, with most expensive deals reportedly worth over a hundred million dollars per year (Reuters Staff, 2019).

2.3. Commercial Objectives of Sponsorship

The foundational body of modern sponsorship literature (Cornwell & Maignan, 1998; Gwinner, 1997; Meenaghan, 1991) recognizes two main objectives that firms seek when agreeing to sponsorships: increasing brand awareness and establishing, strengthening or changing brand image. Awareness got a bulk of the attention in early works, partly because of the ease of measuring it compared to image, which is a much more ambiguous concept (Meenaghan, 2001). However, its ability to predict consumer

engagement and behavioral intentions is limited, as awareness alone doesn't have a significant effect on purchase intentions, whereas, for example, attitude toward the sponsor does (Biscaia et al., 2013; Madrigal, 2001). This issue was highlighted by Gwinner & Eaton (1999) and Meenaghan & O'Sullivan (2001). Similarly, Madrigal (2001) compared basing a sponsorship decision solely on exposure to "putting the cart before the horse". As a result, sponsorships' effects on consumers' perceptions have been an area of interest in more recent works.

Other objectives recognized in sponsorship literature are building brand equity (Gladden & Funk, 2001) and brand loyalty (Levin et al., 2004), showcasing responsibility and product attributes (IEG, 2017), development of goodwill and community relations, staff recruitment, boosting sales and improving profitability (Cornwell & Maignan, 1998). However, simply agreeing to sponsorships will not guarantee any results for the sponsor. Achieving sponsorship objectives requires thorough planning, effective execution and a match between the partners that not only enables mutual understanding and proficient cooperation between the partners, but creates a sense of fit and sincerity in consumers' eyes (Jensen & Cornwell).

2.4. Image Transfer and Dimensions of Sponsorship Fit

Gwinner (1997) suggests that an event's image transfers to the sponsoring brand's or organization's image through sponsorship. However, he also recognizes that the image transfer process is moderated by perceived sponsorship fit, which, in turn, is influenced by functional and image related similarity. For example, Adidas is a FIFA World Cup sponsor, that has functional similarity with the event, because Adidas products are worn by the players on the field. If Gatorade sponsored the same event, its products wouldn't necessarily be consumed at the event, but due to Gatorade's strong affiliation to sports, image related similarity would exist between the partners. In both scenarios, the association to the event would likely strengthen the sponsor's image as a brand primarily for athletes and active people. Lack of similarity, on the other hand, would likely disrupt the image transfer process, as it would only create confusion and unclarity regarding the sponsor's positioning (Simmons & Becker-Olsen, 2006). A sponsorship lacking similarity is also likely to come across as insincere

(Pappu & Cornwell, 2014) and incongruent information has been found to be easily ignored by consumers (Jensen & Cornwell, 2017). For example, the International Olympic Committee received criticism for the Olympic Games-McDonald's due to the incongruency between lifestyle expected from Olympic athletes and fast food. (Dewey, 2018; Malhotra, 2012; Walzak, 2017). The partnership had lasted for over two decades when the parties mutually agreed to part ways in 2017 (Dewey, 2018; IOC, 2017).

Functional and image-related similarity are not the only factors affecting consumers' perception of overall sponsorship fit. Simmons & Becker-Olsen (2006) argue that fit can be derived from the congruency of missions, products, markets, technologies, attributes, brand concepts or any other key association. Zdravkovic et al. (2010) identified different sub-dimensions of fit between sponsoring brand and social cause. The sub-dimensions include, but are not limited to, the partnership's visibility in promotional activities, the communicated explicitness of the supportive nature of the partnership and the partners' compatibility in terms of visuals, promotional activities, location and target market. The vagueness of definitions and abundance of dimensions can make fit an overwhelming and challenging concept for managers and existing literature provides little help in regard to determining which factors are the most important for achieving desired outcomes.

2.5. Sport Sponsorship's Deal-level Characteristics and Consumers' Perceptions of Fit

Despite the uncertainty surrounding fit formation, it is clear that perceived fit is a significant predictor of evaluations, attitudes and behavioral intentions toward the sponsor (Pappu & Cornwell, 2014; Simmons & Becker-Olsen, 2006; Speed & Thompson, 2000; Woisetschläger et al., 2017; Zdravkovic et al., 2010). Woisetschläger et al. (2017) notes that a limitation of Gwinner's (1997) work is that it fails to take into account deal-level characteristics (e.g. type, fee, length, regional proximity) and their potential effects on image transfer and attitude formation. As discussed in section 2.2., sport sponsorships can be classified based on the object through which the sponsor gains visibility to sponsorships of 1) venues, equipment and things, 2) events and activities, 3) groups and individual athletes and 4) organizations,

leagues and associations (Gwinner & Eaton, 1999). Moreover, different sponsorship possibilities exist within each object. For example, a sponsor of a team may gain visibility from having their logo placed on the team's shirt, on the match brochures or on the perimeter of the field, rink or court (Woisetschläger et al., 2017). Later in the literature review and the following sections of this paper, the term 'sponsorship type' is used to refer to this classification of objects and the different mediums within them. The type is important mainly because of the varying sponsor prominence between them and tradition associated to certain objects. High sponsor prominence can create a perception that the activity is heavily commercialized, which is generally a negative association in consumers' minds (Grohs & Reisinger, 2014). Moreover, most high prominence objects, such as team uniforms and venues are often viewed as important symbols of team and fan identity, which are sometimes seen as inappropriate places for commercial messages, especially if the sponsor is seen as incongruent with the team's and its fans' image and values (Bee & Dalakas, 2013; Woisetschläger et al. 2013; Woisetschläger et al. 2017).

In addition to the sponsorship type, the other most commonly communicated characteristics of sport sponsorships are contract length (duration of the partnership), regional proximity (local, national or international) and sponsorship fee (the amount of compensation the sponsor receives), according to Woisetschläger et al. (2017), who studied these deal characteristics' relationship to perceived fit. High sponsor fee and high prominence types were found to be negatively related to fit, as a result of the effects discussed before. As higher fees can be charged for higher prominence, the effects of fee are often similar (Woisetschläger et al., 2017). However, individuals who identify with the sponsored activity have been shown to associate higher fees to more support provided to the cause, and therefore respond to high fees positively (Dreisbach et al. 2018; Grohs & Reisinger, 2014; Meenaghan, 2001) Moreover, the results indicate that contract length and regional proximity are positively related to perceived sponsorship fit and positive sponsor motives. Agreeing to a longer sponsorship shows commitment to a common goal or mission and as discussed before, dimensions of fit include congruency of mission (Simmons & Becker-Olsen, 2006). The effect of regional proximity is in line with the congruency of location dimension by Zdravkovic et al. (2010). To summarize, the key takeaways from deal-characteristics' effects on perceived fit are:

- High prominence sponsorships have a negative effect on perceived fit
- High is generally negatively related to fit, unless the individual feels connected to the sponsored activity
- Longer lasting sponsorships are seen as more fitting than ones with shorter durations
- International sponsors are perceived as less fitting than national or local sponsors

Cornwell (2019) pointed out that in a study conducted by Statista (n.d.) cited in Carp (2019) on the perceived fit of the Premier League shirt sponsorships, the partnership between Arsenal and the airline Emirates was found to be perceived as the second best fitting, despite the partners lacking functional or image-related similarity. Emirates is also an international sponsor. However, Emirates has been Arsenal's shirt sponsor since 2006 and the current contract extends until 2024, making it the longest running shirt sponsorship in the league and among the longest sport sponsorships ever in the world (Wilson, 2018), which may be a significant contributor to the high perceived fit. On the other hand, according to the same study, the sponsorship between Southampton Football Club and Virgin Media was perceived the best fitting, but Virgin Media first appeared on the teams shirts only during the 2016/2017 season, the first of a three year contract (Virgin Media, 2019). Virgin Media is a UK national telecommunications company that provides, telephone, internet and television services, including sports coverage (ibid). Thus, the sponsorship does feature regional proximity at the national level and image related similarity. As only shirt sponsorships were included in the study, relative prominence did not vary between the sponsorships and thus, did not affect the results.

The findings by Woisetschläger (2017) and Statista (n.d.) cited in Carp (2019) fail to answer important questions regarding whether one positive characteristic of a sponsorship can overrule the negative effects typically caused by certain other characteristics and similarly, whether one negative characteristic is enough to significantly reduce the positive effects of others, when examining the overall sponsorship fit. Based on the cases of Arsenal's and Southampton Football Club's shirt sponsorships, it could be hypothesized that the positive effects of desirable

characteristics are more likely to overrule the negative effects of undesirable ones than vice versa. It is also unclear whether some deal characteristics are more significant predictors of fit than others. Worth noting is that the sample of the study comprised of fans of the Premier League, and consumers highly involved with an activity are more likely to find fit and express goodwill toward its sponsor (Gwinner & Bennet, 2008; Meenaghan, 2001). Thus, consumers with lower interest in the Premier League may have perceived the fits differently. Although the effects of team involvement on the interpretation of sponsorship characteristics has been studied before, further research on the effects of fandom of a league or sport is still needed.

2.6. Attributions of Intent and Inference of Motives

Attribution theory (Jones & Davis, 1965) assumes that people have a tendency to attribute causes to behavior, especially intentional behavior, in an attempt to explain why another person did something. In the same vein, Woisetschläger et al. (2017) argues that consumers are likely to infer sponsor motives from information that is available to them about the sponsorship in question. Applying the multiple inference model (MIM) of attribution by Reeder et al. (2004), he suggests that consumers will infer that the sponsor motives are a mix of the following:

1. Affective motives – The sponsor has sincere, good intentions towards the sponsored property and agreeing to the sponsorship has been a “free choice”.
2. Normative motives – The firm agreed to the sponsorship in order to fulfill its duty as a good corporate citizen, perhaps also facing pressure from the public to engage in such activities. Thus, the sponsor can be seen as obedient and having “limited choice”.
3. Calculative motives – The sponsor’s motive is gaining commercial benefit in the form of reach and sales without sincere aspirations to support the sponsored property or to act responsibly.

According to the MIM, within a “free choice” condition, the target person is perceived to have unselfish motives and it is perceived as the most desirable. Obedience in a “no choice” or “limited choice” condition is also seen as positive. An example of such

condition in a sponsorship context is that a company would be facing public pressure to engage in sponsorships to fulfil its corporate social responsibilities. Taking the desired action would likely indicate normative motives and thus satisfy the public.

On the other hand, suspicion of the target person's ulterior or selfish motives results in a negative perception. Woisetschläger et al. (2017) studied the relationship between motive inferences and consumers' attitudes toward the sponsor and their findings were largely in line with the MIM. As affective motives are seen as unselfish, they are positively related to consumers' attitude toward the sponsor. A hypothesized positive relationship between normative motives and consumers' attitude was displaced by affective motives in the study. Calculative motives, on the other hand, were found to be negatively related to consumers' attitudes. Given that commercial benefit is the distinctive characteristic that separates sponsorship from philanthropy, some calculative motivation is to be expected. According to the results, it should not, however, come across as the dominant motive in consumers' minds. The findings by Woisetschläger et al. (2017) support previous evidence of the effects of perceived sponsor sincerity by Pappu & Cornwell (2014) and Speed & Thompson (2000).

2.7. Deal-level Characteristics and Consumer Inferences of Sponsor Motives

As discussed earlier, the most frequently communicated characteristics of sport sponsorships are type, fee, length and regional proximity. As consumers use this information, along with the sponsor-sponsee similarity, to form their perceptions of sponsorship fit, they infer sponsor motives based on the same information. According to Woisetschläger et al. (2017), the direction of the relationship between deal characteristics and inferred motives follows that of deal characteristics and perceived fit, thus:

- High prominence is associated with high calculative motives of sponsor
- High fee is generally associated with high calculative motives
- Contract length is positively related to affective motives

- National and local sponsors are perceived to have higher affective motives, while international sponsors are perceived to have higher calculative motives

The findings are also supported by other studies. Consumers have been shown to respond unfavorably to high-prominence sponsorships, such as stadium naming rights and team sponsorships, in which a large advertisement is placed on the teams shirt or jersey also by Biscaia et al. (2013), Grohs & Reisinger (2014) and Woisetschläger et al. (2013). Higher fees can naturally be charged for more prominent sponsorships. In such cases, the sponsor can be perceived to be solely trying to maximise the commercial benefit, and therefore seen to have high calculative motives and a lack of affective motives (Woisetschläger et al., 2017). Similarly, because teams and organizations can charge higher fees for better visibility, such sponsorships may create a perception of giving up traditions or compromising values in exchange for money (Dreisbach et al. 2018).

Consumers that are enthusiastic about the sponsored cause or activity can sometimes make an exception in regard to interpreting sponsorship fee and associate it with positive motives (Grohs & Reisinger, 2014; Meenaghan, 2001). This is likely due to appreciation of the support provided to an activity those consumers genuinely care about (Meenaghan, 2001) or in-group favoritism (Tajfel & Turner, 1984). Enthusiasm's effects are discussed in more detail in section 2.8.

The likely reason for favorable perceptions of longer contracts is that consumers acknowledge that agreeing to a long partnership requires a high level of trust between the partners and genuine commitment by the sponsor (Woisetschläger et al., 2017). Longer contracts can also be seen as an indication of congruency between the partners missions and values, which has been shown to result in favorable consumer responses (Simmons & Becker-Olsen, 2006). International sponsorships are likely judged as calculative because they lack the act of involvement in their own community and therefore, a lack of normative motives is easily perceived (Clark et al., 2002; Woisetschläger et al., 2017).

2.8. Effects of Team and Sport Identification on Sponsorship Outcomes

A sports fan is a consumer of organized sport and they can particularly identify with a team, league or a sport in general (Hunt et al. 1999). Their response to certain types of sponsorships may vary depending on the type of object the fan identifies with. Generally, highly identified consumers respond to sponsorships more favorably (Dalakas & Levin, 2005; Grohs & Reisinger, 2014; Madrigal, 2001; Meenaghan, 2001) but there are exceptions. In light of existing literature, team identification has been found to cause the most radical effects.

Strong group identities and possessions of extended self may be formed among fans of sports teams (Belk, 1988). According to the social identity theory of intergroup behavior, being highly identified with a group leads to in-group favoritism and discrimination against the out-group (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). Consequently, fans tend to perceive the sponsorships of their favorite team favorably and the sponsorships of rival or opposing teams unfavorably (Bee & Dalakas, 2013; Dalakas & Levin, 2005; Cornwell et al., 2018; Koronios et al., 2016; Mazodier et al., 2018; Woisetschläger et al., 2013). According to Koronios et al. (2016), fans may purchase their favorite teams sponsor's products even without true interest in the product category. Fans can also respond to their own team's sponsorships negatively or even in a hostile manner, if the sponsorship is perceived to be a threat to the group's identity or tradition or incongruent with fans beliefs (Bee & Dalakas, 2013).

Stadium naming rights sponsorships have sometimes been subject to fan resistance due to fans feeling that such change is oppressive to their identity and traditions (Woisetschläger et al., 2013). In extreme cases, fans have even refused to adopt the new corporate or brand related name and, as a protest, continued referring to the old one (ibid). For example, many fans of the Milwaukee Brewers have declared that they will continue referring to the team's home field as Miller Park, despite the official name being American Family Field from the start of 2021 (Radcliffe, 2020). Interestingly, the former name that fans are refusing to give up also featured a corporate sponsor. However, it seems that a local brewery that had been featured in the stadium's name since its opening in 2001 was perceived to be a better fitting sponsor for a team called the Brewers than an insurance company (Schwartz, 2019). Despite potential

resistance, it must be noted that naming-rights sponsorships have the ability to reach and gain awareness of a large number of consumers and they have been shown to significantly increase the sponsoring companies' stock prices (Clark et al., 2002).

Gwinner & Bennet (2008) suggest that, especially in individual sports (snowboarding, motor-cross, tennis, etc.), consumers are likely to identify with the sport as a whole, rather than any single athlete. Despite the observation that this is more common in individual sports, a consumer can certainly also enjoy watching or attending a game of football, ice hockey, basketball or any sport without necessarily being a fan of any team.

Consumers enthusiastic about the sponsored activity are more likely to correctly recall its sponsors (Cornwell & Releya, 2000; Kim & Ko, 2008). Consumers with high sport identification also tend to find fit between sponsor and sponsee more easily than consumers with low sport identification (Gwinner & Bennet, 2008) and therefore evaluate the sponsor more favorably (Pappu & Cornwell, 2014; Speed & Thompson, 2000; Woisetschläger et al., 2017; Zdravkovic et al. 2010). Consumers that identify with an activity are perhaps unwilling to recognize negative attributes in an activity that is a part of their identity due to in-group favoritism (Tajfel & Turner 2004). Zdravkovic et al. (2010) suggest that familiarity with the sponsored cause diminishes the effect of perceived fit on attitude toward sponsor. This is in line with the findings by Meenaghan (2001), who found that consumers may be more appreciative of the support sponsors provide to an activity they care about, regardless of how fitting they would otherwise perceive the partnership to be. A study conducted by Grohs & Reisinger (2014) even indicates that consumers highly involved with an event's activity would generally perceive commercialization of the event positively. Despite the numerous findings regarding enthusiasm's general effects on sponsorship outcomes, its potential moderating effect on inference of sponsor motives remains unknown (Woisetschläger et al., 2017).

2.9. Research Approach and Expectations

As discussed earlier, sponsor motives and sponsor-sponsee fit have been areas of interest in numerous sponsorship studies, but the study by Woisetchläger et al. (2017) is the most relevant in regards to their inference based on the most frequently communicated deal-level characteristics. Based on the findings of that study, along with dimensions of fit presented by Simmons & Becker-Olsen (2006) and Zdravkovic et al. (2010) and findings regarding sincerity of sponsor by Pappu & Cornwell (2014) and Speed & Thompson (2000), it is expected that high deal length and regional proximity are positively related to fit and altruistic motives. Similarly, low deal length and regional proximity are expected to be negatively related to fit and positively related to egoistic motives. High prominence sponsorship types are also expected to be positively related to egoistic motives and negatively related to fit, in line with Bee & Dalakas (2013), Woisetschläger et al. (2013) and Woisetschläger et al. (2017). Based on the expected relationships between variables, the following hypotheses are presented:

H1: Prominence of sponsorships will negatively influence a) sponsorship fit, b) altruistic motives of sponsor and c) positively influence egoistic motives of sponsor

H2: Local sponsorships will positively influence of a) sponsorship fit, b) altruistic motives of sponsor and c) negatively influence egoistic motives of sponsor

H3: The deal length of sponsorship will positively influence a) sponsorship fit b) altruistic motives of sponsor and c) negatively influence egoistic motives of sponsor

Sport enthusiasm's moderating effect on perceptions of fit has been studied previously, but only with different independent variables. A study by Gwinner & Bennet (2008) shows positive moderating effects of sport enthusiasm on perceived fit, so it is reasonable to expect that similar effects would also be seen with deal-level characteristics as independent variables. Sport enthusiasm's effect on motive inferences has not been studied before. However, Meenaghan (2001) found that

consumers who care about the sponsored activity may be more appreciative of the support sponsors provide to it, even regardless of other factors. Enthusiastic consumers may also be less likely to recognize any negative attributes of any involved party within the activity due to in-group favoritism (Tajfel & Turner 2004). Woisetschläger et al. (2017) found the same independent variables to be associated with high fit and desirable motives and accordingly low fit and undesirable motives. Thus, sport enthusiasm can also be expected to have similar effects on inferred sponsor motives as it has been shown to have on perceived fit.

H4: Sport enthusiasm will positively influence a) sponsorship fit and b) altruistic motives of sponsor and c) negatively influence egoistic motives of sponsor

Finally, fit has been shown to be positively related to attitude towards both the sponsorship and its partners and, in turn, purchase intentions (Pappu & Cornwell, 2014; Simmons & Becker-Olsen, 2006; Speed & Thompson, 2000; Woisetschläger et al., 2017; Zdravkovic et al., 2010). Altruistic sponsor motives have been shown to have a positive effect on attitudes and purchase intentions, while egoistic motives have been shown to have an opposite effect (Pappu & Cornwell 2014; Speed & Thompson 2000; Woisetschläger et al., 2017). Since the findings regarding attitude and purchase intentions are relatively clear and comprehensive, the purpose of including these variables in the present study is primarily to ensure that findings are directly applicable to managerial decision making. Supporting previous findings is a secondary objective, although it is certainly to be expected.

H5: Sponsorship fit will positively impact attitude toward sponsor

H6: Altruistic motives will positively impact attitude toward sponsor

H7: Egoistic motives will negatively impact attitude toward sponsor

H8: Attitude toward sponsor will positively influence intention to purchase sponsor's products

2.10. Conceptual framework

In light of existing literature, the most frequently communicated deal-level characteristics can significantly influence consumers' perceptions of sponsorship fit and inferences of sponsor motives, which are two important predictors of sponsorship outcomes, such as attitude and intention to purchase (Biscaia et al., 2013; Madrigal, 2001; Woisetschläger et al., 2017). However, literature on the topic is limited and more research is needed to help managers take into account meaningful characteristics and negotiate more effective sponsorships in the future. The effects of sport identification on overall sponsorship evaluations have been researched previously, but its effects on consumers' interpretation of single deal-level characteristics are still unknown. This study will also attempt to determine whether the negative effects of one unfavorable characteristic are enough to overrule the positive effects of others, and vice versa.

The conceptual framework for this study follows the principles of the framework used by Woisetschläger et al. (2017) with the addition of sport enthusiasm as a moderating variable. The fee variable will not be studied, because it is not communicated as often as duration and because it is largely dictated by prominence, as higher fees can naturally be charged for more visibility. Because the effects of normative motives were displaced by those of affective motives in Woisetschläger's study, motives in this study will be classified as altruistic (unselfish) and egoistic (selfish), similar to what was done in a study by Dreisbach et al. (2018). Although a considerable body of literature exists on the effects of perceived fit and motives on attitude and purchase intentions toward the sponsor (Dreisbach, 2018; Pappu & Cornwell, 2014; Speed & Thompson, 2000; Woisetschläger et al., 2017; Zdravkovic et al. 2010), it will also be included in this study in order to provide a complete path from cause to effect, from independent variables to dependent variables that are directly applicable to managerial decision making.

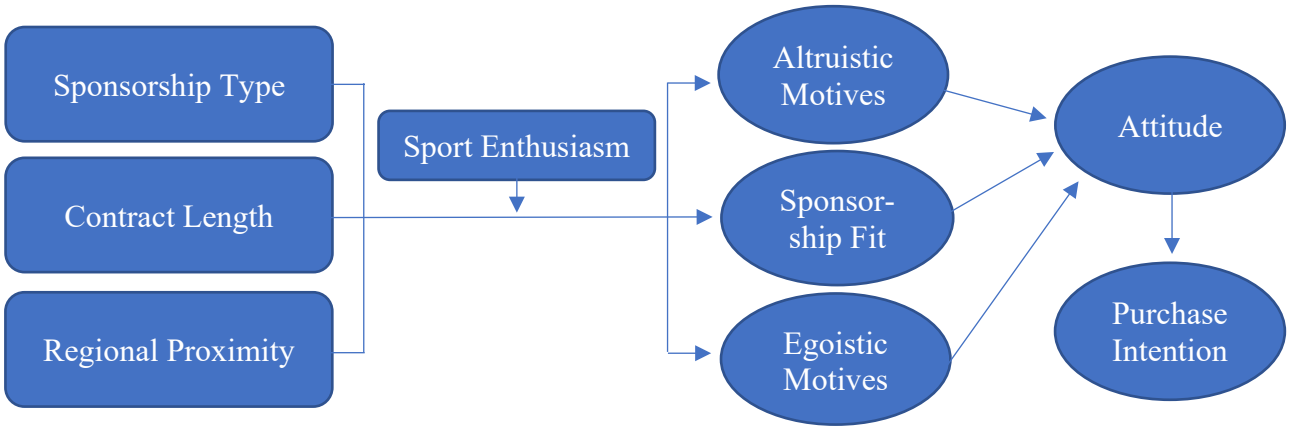

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

In order to cover the necessary independent variables to test the hypotheses presented in the previous section, eight different sponsorship scenarios were created to stimulate responses to the survey questions. The scenarios covered all possible combinations of high prominence/low prominence sponsorship type, local/international sponsor and above average/below average deal length. Other factors remained unchanged between the scenarios.

A distinctive difference between the prominence of the sponsorship types to be included in the actual survey was ensured by conducting a pre-test. 25 subjects participated in the pre-test survey, which included three sets of questions measuring the prominence of four sponsorship types. Two sponsorship types, venue naming rights sponsorship (high prominence) and venue perimeter sponsorship (low prominence), were selected based on the pre-test results.

Familiarity and attitudes towards different countries were pre-tested in a similar manner. Out of five countries tested, Italy was selected to be used in the actual survey

due to the high familiarity and neutral attitudes towards it displayed by the results of the pre-test survey, in which 27 subjects participated. The correct interpretation of high and low deal length was ensured by presenting an average of 3 years along with the 1 year or 5 years specific to each scenario.

A fictional footwear company, “Propes”, was created to serve as the sponsor in all of the scenarios. Ice-hockey was chosen as the sport that would be played in the sponsored venue, since it is popular in Finland, where the survey was mainly distributed. Popularity of the selected activity is beneficial for two reasons. Firstly, greater variance of the respondents enthusiasm towards the sponsored activity could be expected. Secondly, as both stadium naming and perimeter advertising are common in Finnish ice-hockey, most respondents were presumably familiar with the selected types of sponsorships, reducing the likelihood of misunderstanding scenarios or questions in the survey. The full scenarios can be found in the appendix

3.2. Data Collection

The survey was created on Webropol 3.0 program. Due to limited resources and time constraints, a convenience sample used and the survey was distributed to network consisting mostly of Aalto Universtity’s undergraduate students. The responses were collected between March 7 and March 11 in 2021.

As discussed in previous sections, the study consisted of three independent variables. For the purposes of the study, two levels of each of the variables were used, resulting in a two by two by two survey design. Thus, eight different scenarios, covering all of the variable combinations, were used and each respondent only saw one of the scenarios. A relatively equal and random distribution of the different scenarios was ensured by using a grouping question at the start of the survey asking the respondents to select the 1.5 month part of the year their birthday was in. By dividing the calendar year into eight even segments, each respondent could be directed to only see one specific scenario and a relatively equal number of respondents would be directed to see each of the eight.

3.3. Measures

All of the measures used in this study were adopted from existing research. Slight modifications may have been made to ensure each measure's suitability to the context. Firstly, enthusiasm towards the sponsored activity was measured using a three-item scale adopted from Walraven et al. (2015), which included questions regarding the respondents interest in the activity and their frequency of watching it. The scale was found to be highly reliable (α = .930).

Perceived fit was measured using a four-item scale by Pappu & Cornwell (2014), which included statements such as "Propes and the venue have similar goals" and "The image of Propes and the image of the venue are very similar". The respondents were asked to indicate how much they agree or disagree with the statements on a Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The reliability of scale was found to be sufficient (α = .852).

Perceived altruism and egoism of the sponsor's motives were measured in a similar manner, asking the respondents to indicate whether they agree or disagree with motive-related statements on a 7-point scale. Two items for both altruism and egoism were adopted from a scale by Rifon et al. (2004). The Cronbach's alpha between the altruism items was found to be on the borderline of acceptable at .583. However, as the two items, "Propes has genuine intentions to support the venue" and "Propes sponsored this venue to fulfil its responsibility as a good corporate citizen", measure two slightly different components of altruism which are not always related, a lower reliability score was expected. The egoism scale was found to be reliable (α = .743).

Attitude towards sponsor and attitude towards sponsee were measured using a three-item scale adopted from Kwon & Nayakankuppam (2015). Reliability analysis of the measure resulted in alphas of .898 and .792, respectively. Intention to purchase the sponsor's products was measured using a combination of two items adopted from Grappi et al. (2015) with an alpha of .839. All attitude and purchase intention items were measured using 7-point Likert-type scales. The scale items and their anchors can be found in the appendix.

3.4. Participants

202 subjects participated in the survey. 54.5% of the participants identified as male, 43.1% as female and 2.0% as “other”, while one participant chose not to report their gender. The median age of the participants was 22 with a mean of 24.54.

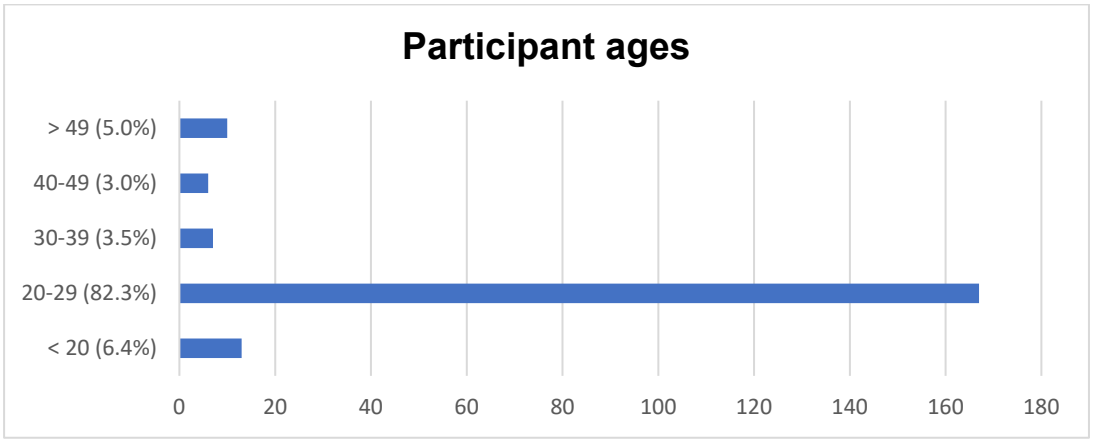

Figure 2: Participant ages

The nationalities represented in the sample included Finnish (82.2%), Canadian (8.5%), USA (2.5%), Australian (2.0%), Austrian (1.0%). Nationalities reported by a single participant (0.5%) were Liechtensteiner, Thai, Vietnamese, Egyptian, Estonian, Scottish and Bangladesh, while one participant identified as “European”.

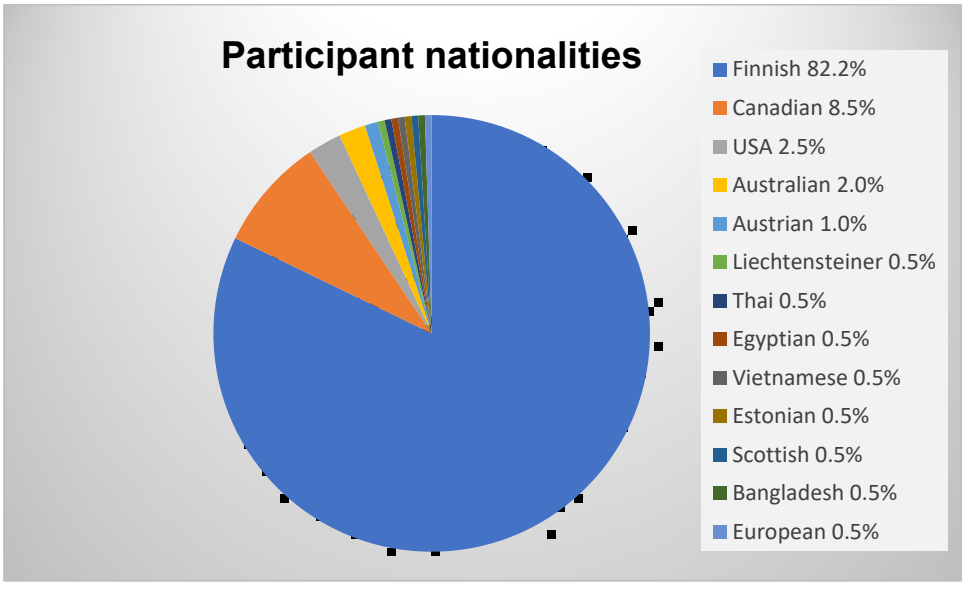

Figure 3: Participant nationalities

3.5. Data Analysis

The chosen software for analysing the collected data was IBM SPSS Statistics 27. The effects of the independent variables (prominence, regional proximity and length) on the perceptions of fit and motives each were analysed by conducting analyses of variance (ANOVA). Enthusiasm's moderating effects on those relationships were analysed by conducting two-way ANOVAs with enthusiasm as a fixed factor with each of the independent variables separately. Enthusiasm's overall effects were also analysed using ANOVA. The subjects were divided into high and low enthusiasm groups using a median split in order to make the enthusiasm variable suitable for analyses of variance. Regression analyses were performed to evaluate the extent to which fit and motives predict attitude towards sponsor and sponsee and further, purchase intentions.

4. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1. Deal Characteristics' Effects Perceived Sponsorship Fit and Sponsor's Motives

The effects of the deal characteristics' of interest in this study (prominence, regional proximity and length) were analysed using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The purpose of the analyses was to compare the means of perceived fit, altruistic motives and egoistic motives between the two levels of each of the deal characteristics, which served as the independent variables in this study. A summary variable with a range of 1 to 7 was created for each of the dependent variables (fit, altruistic motives, egoistic motives). The analyses of variance were performed to compare the means of the summary variables under the different conditions of each independent variable.

4.1.1. Effects of Prominence on Fit and Motives

A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to analyse the effect of sponsorship prominence on perceived sponsorship fit, sponsor's altruistic motives and sponsor's egoistic motives. The analyses were conducted between high and low prominence conditions. No significant difference was found between the means of fit in the low prominence condition (M = 3.39, SD = 1.34) and the high prominence condition (M = 3.14, SD = 1.17). The difference between the means of altruistic motives in the low prominence condition (M = 3.31, SD = 1.31) and in the high prominence condition (M = 3.08, SD = 1.35) was also not significant. Similarly, no significant difference was found between the means of egoistic motives in low prominence conditions (M = 5.41, SD = 1.16) and in the high prominence conditions (M = 5.27, SD = 1.32).

High prominence sponsorships resulted in slightly means of lower perceived fit and altruistic motives of the sponsor. The effects followed the hypothesized direction but they were non-significant at the .05 level. Thus, H1 can be accepted regarding a) fit and b) altruistic motives. The direction of the effect on egoistic motives was opposite of the expected direction. The mean level of perceived egoism demonstrated under the low prominence conditions was only slightly higher than the level demonstrated under high prominence conditions. Although the difference was statistically insignificant, H1 must be rejected concerning c) egoistic motives.

Particularly interesting is that prominence was found to have a negative effect on both altruistic and egoistic motives. Although the differences were not significant, egoistic and altruistic motives are generally regarded as opposites of each other. However, given the nature of sponsorship as a commercial activity, it may be that consumers assume a certain level of egoistic motives of sponsor regardless of other factors and thus, a perception of more altruistic motives wouldn't necessarily have an inverse effect on egoistic motives.

4.1.2. Effects of Sponsor's Regional Proximity on Fit and Motives

A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to analyse the effect of sponsor proximity on sponsorship fit, sponsor's altruistic motives and sponsor's egoistic motives. The analyses were conducted between high (local sponsor) and low (international sponsor) proximity conditions. The means of fit in high proximity condition ($M = 3.54$, $SD = 1.17$) and low proximity condition ($M = 3.05$, $SD = 1.30$) were found to be significantly different [$F(1, 200) = 7.60$, $p < .05$]. The means of altruistic motives in the high proximity condition ($M = 3.46$, $SD = 1.41$) and low proximity condition ($M = 2.99$, $SD = 1.24$) were also found to be statistically significant [$F(1, 200) = 6.32$, $p < 0.05$]. No significant difference was found between the means of egoism in the high proximity condition ($M = 5.33$, $SD = 1.16$) and in the low proximity condition ($M = 5.35$, $SD = 1.30$).

The effects of regional proximity followed the expected directions of all parts of the hypotheses. As discussed above, the effect was significant on fit and altruistic motives and insignificant on egoistic motives. As a result, H2 can be accepted as a whole. Worth noting is that proximity of the sponsor was the most significant of the three characteristics studied concerning fit formation and inference of altruistic motives. It was the only factor resulting in presumably positive outcomes regarding all three of the dependent variables. In addition, only one of the four international sponsor scenarios produced above mean scores of perceived fit and sponsor altruism among all scenarios. Unsurprisingly, the other presumably positive conditions, low prominence and above average length, were satisfied in the particular scenario.

4.1.3. Effects of Deal Length on Fit and Motives

A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to analyse the effect of sponsorship deal length on sponsorship fit, sponsor's altruistic motives and sponsor's egoistic motives. The analyses were conducted between high (above average) and low (below average) deal length conditions. No significant difference was found between the means of fit in the high deal length condition ($M = 3.32$, $SD = 1.28$) and the low deal length condition ($M = 3.22$, $SD = 1.25$). The difference between the means

of altruistic motives in the high deal length condition (M = 3.19, SD = 1.30) and in the low deal length condition (M = 3.21, SD = 1.38) was also not significant. Similarly, no significant difference was found between the means of egoistic motives high deal length conditions (M = 5.26, SD = 1.22) and in the low deal length conditions (M = 5.44, SD = 1.25).

Deal length had the least noticeable effect on the means of perceived fit and motives out of the three characteristics studied, as very little difference was observed between the means of the dependent variables in the two conditions. Although statistically insignificant, the effects of deal length on fit and egoistic motives followed the expected directions. However, deal length was found to have a negative effect on altruistic motives, conflicting with the hypothesis. Thus, H3 is accepted regarding a) fit and c) egoistic motives but rejected regarding b) altruistic motives.

The effects of the other two independent variables included in the study followed the same direction on both fit and altruistic motives, as expected. Therefore, the finding regarding the effect of deal length on altruistic motives is unexpected and the reason for it is unknown. It could be that deal length is not always associated with positive traits, such as willingness to commit, or it perhaps those traits are not as strongly associated with altruism as previous literature suggests. Worth noting is that the found effect was statistically insignificant, so conclusions should be drawn from it without further research on the matter.

4.2. Effects of Enthusiasm on Fit and Motives

Enthusiasm's effects on sponsorship fit and sponsor's motives was investigated by comparing the means of low and high enthusiasm groups, which were created using a median split of the enthusiasm summary variable. ANOVA showed no significant effect of enthusiasm on fit but a marginally significant effect on altruistic motives was found [F (1, 200) = 2.81, p > .05). Enthusiasm was not found to have a significant negative effect on egoistic motives. Although insignificant, the effects of enthusiasm on fit and egoism were in line with H4. Sponsorship fit was perceived to be higher by the high enthusiasm group (M = 6.76, SD = 2.53) than by the low enthusiasm group (M = 6.34,

SD = 2.53) and egoistic motives were perceived to be lower by the high enthusiasm group (M = 5.30, SD = 1.27) than by the low enthusiasm group (M = 5.38, SD = 1.21). Enthusiasm's effects on the relationships between individual deal characteristics and perceptions of fit and motives were also measured. They were measured using two-way ANOVA, because it provides results that illustrate the differences in the independent – dependent variable relationships between the high and low enthusiasm groups.

4.2.1. Enthusiasm and Sponsorship Prominence

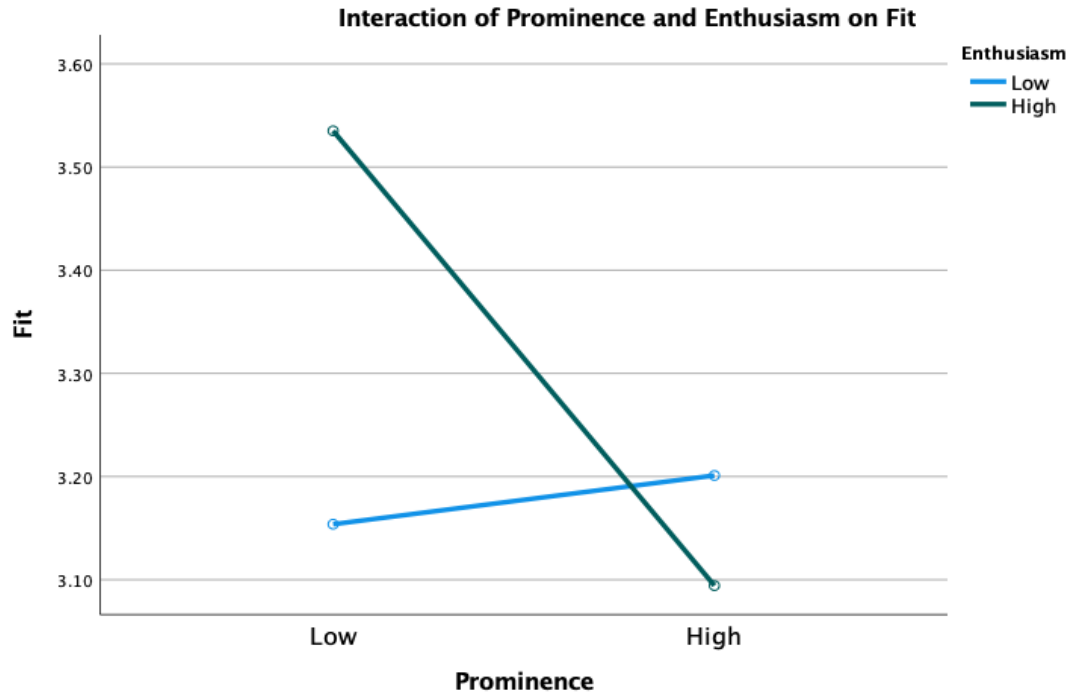

Figure 4 Effects of the interaction between enthusiasm and prominence on fit

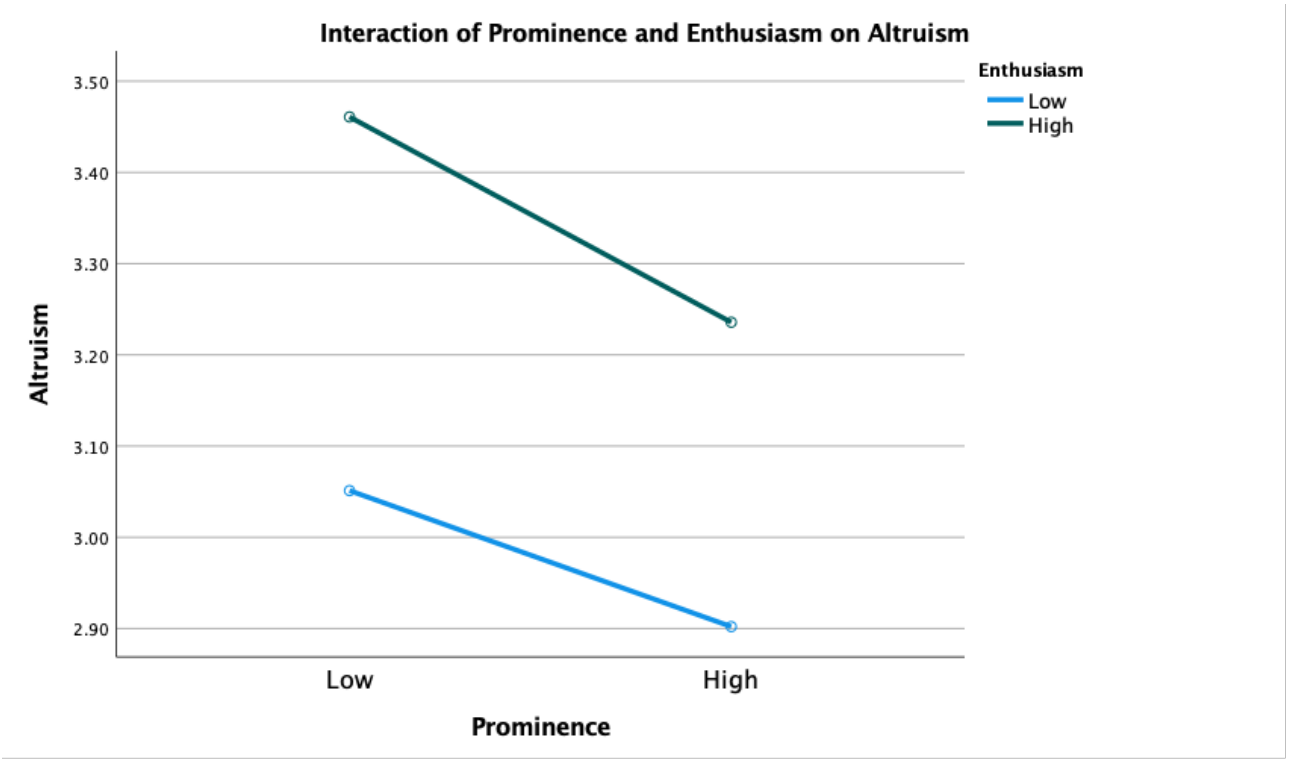

Figure 5 Effects of the interaction between enthusiasm and prominence on altruism

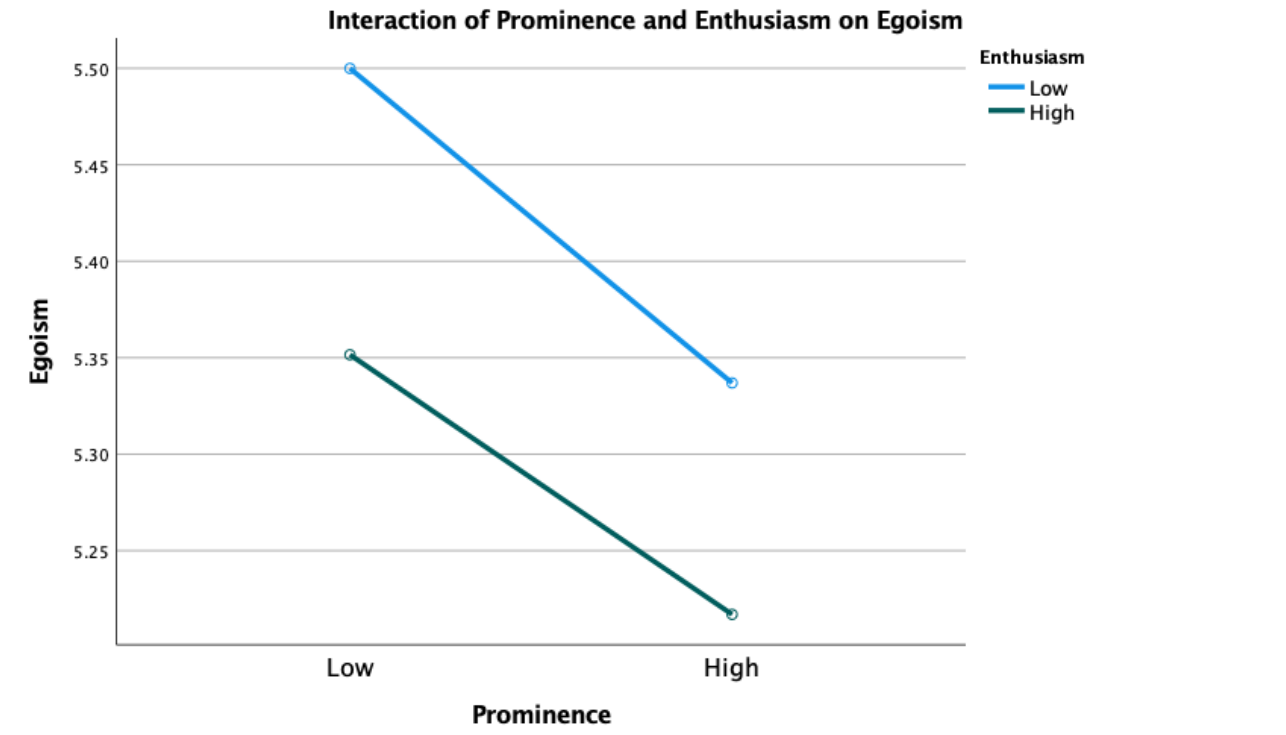

Figure 6 Effects of the interaction between enthusiasm and prominence on egoism

No significant interaction between enthusiasm toward the sponsored activity and sponsorship prominence was found on sponsorship fit, sponsor's altruistic motives or sponsor's egoistic motives. Although statistically insignificant, noticeable differences between the high and low enthusiasm groups could be observed. Illustrated in Figure 4, the high and low enthusiasm groups were found to evaluate fit differently compared to each other under both low and high prominence conditions. The high enthusiasm group perceived a higher fit than their low enthusiasm counterparts under low prominence conditions, however, the results were the opposite during high prominence conditions.

A potential explanation for this may be that low enthusiasm consumers don't perceive highly prominent properties, such as venue names, as inappropriate for commercial use, whereas enthusiastic consumers have been shown to perceive stadium naming as oppressive to traditions (Woisetschläger et al., 2013). Enthusiastic consumers may also be more familiar with different sponsorship types and therefore take the prominence into account more frequently than unenthusiastic consumers, when evaluating a sponsorship. Knowledge of sponsorship types would also help them to evaluate the prominence of a given sponsorship type relative to other types. In the same vein, consumers lacking knowledge of sponsorships wouldn't necessarily be able to draw conclusions from information related to prominence.

Altruism was perceived to be slightly higher in low prominence conditions within both groups, with the high group demonstrating a higher mean score for altruism compared to the low group under both conditions, see Figure 5. The effects on egoism were similar to the effects on altruism in terms of direction. Although unexpected, similar effects on egoism had also been seen in a previous test, discussed in section 4.1.1. Consumers acknowledging the nature of sponsorship as a commercial activity may explain why high altruism isn't necessarily associated with low egoism. The mean of perceived egoism was higher in the low group under both conditions, illustrated in Figure 6. Although statistically insignificant, the findings provide support to the expectation that high enthusiasm consumers would be more generous in their evaluation of a sponsor's motives (H4 b & c).

4.2.2. Enthusiasm and Sponsor Proximity

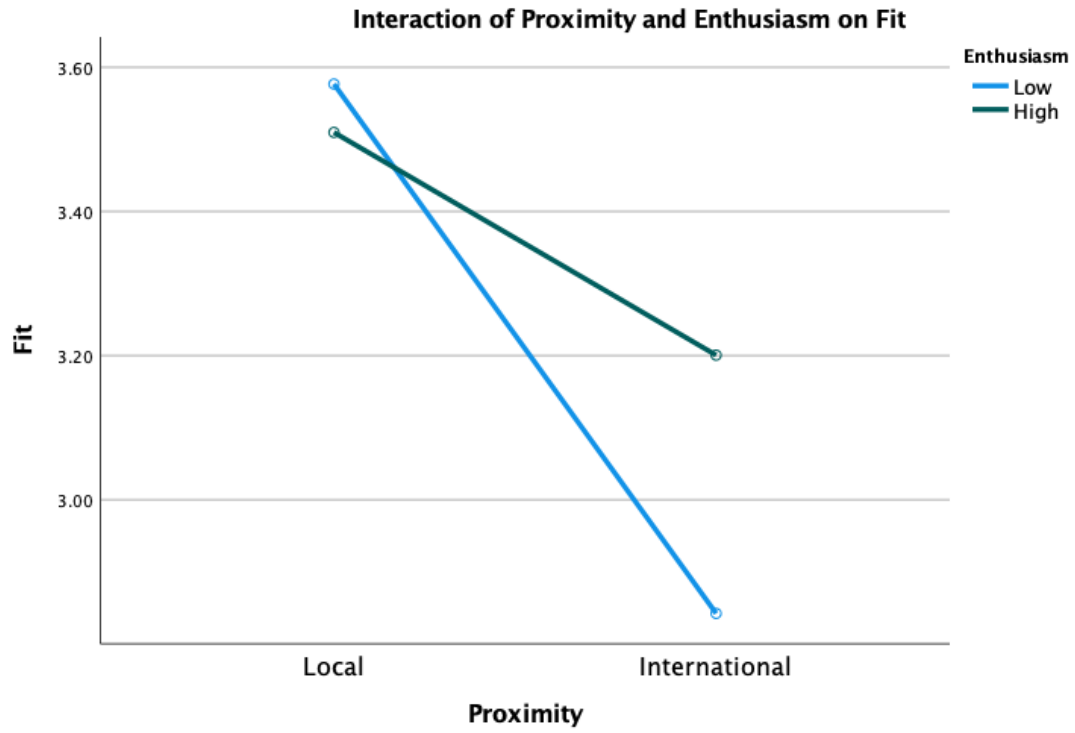

Figure 7 Effects of the interaction between enthusiasm and proximity on fit

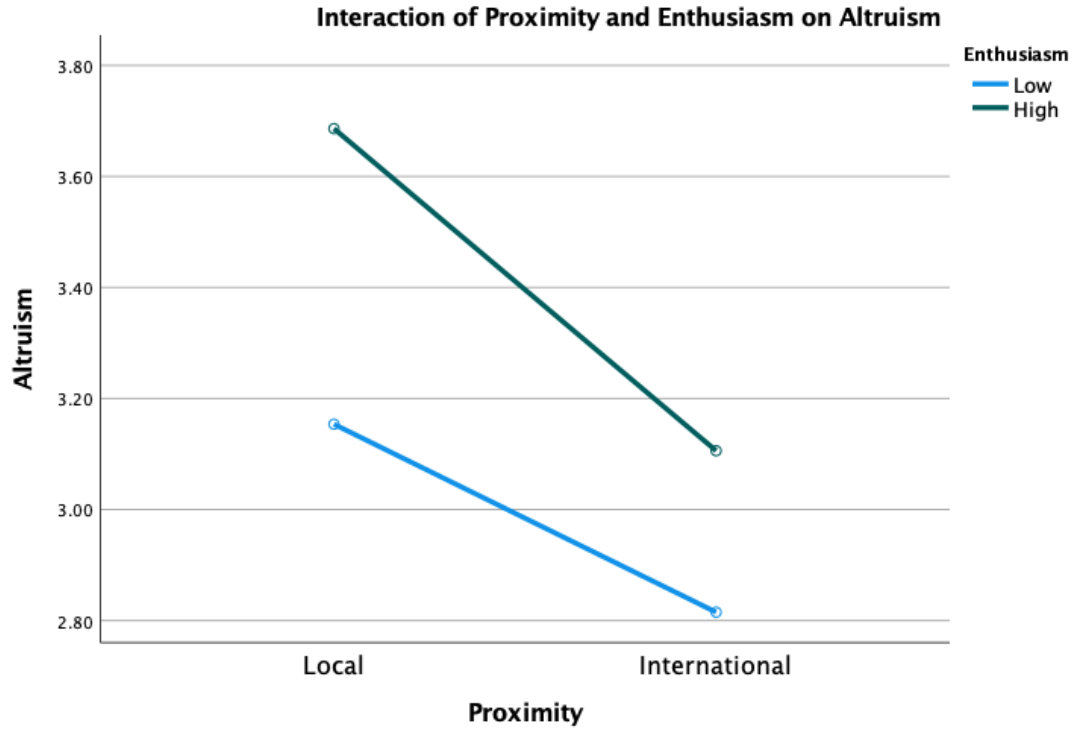

Figure 8 Effects of the interaction between enthusiasm and proximity on altruism

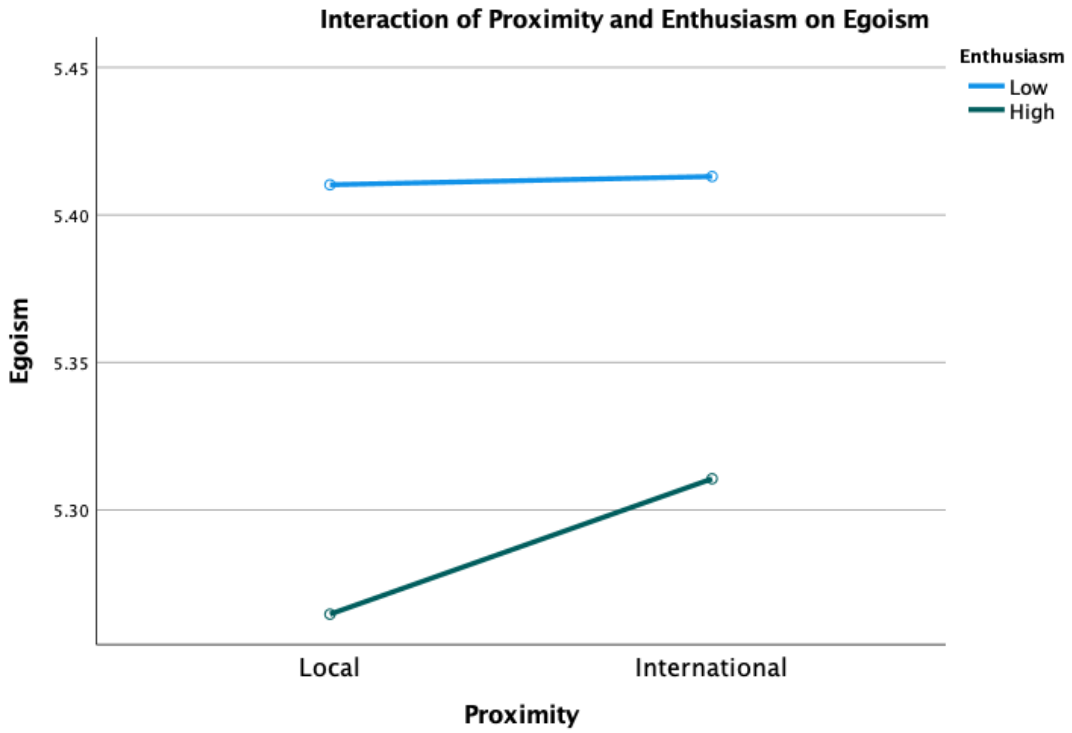

Figure 9 Effects of the interaction between enthusiasm and proximity on egoism

No significant interaction between enthusiasm toward the sponsored activity and sponsor proximity was found on sponsorship fit, sponsor's altruistic motives or sponsor's egoistic motives. However, some interesting results could be observed. Similar levels of fit were perceived when sponsor was local and lower means of fit were demonstrated by both high and low enthusiasm groups when sponsor was international. However, the mean fit in the low enthusiasm group was slightly lower in international sponsor scenarios, see Figure 7. So, the low enthusiasm group seemed to respond to sponsor proximity more strongly than the high enthusiasm group. This is particularly interesting, as it was the high enthusiasm group that seemed to respond to sponsorship prominence more strongly, seen in Figure 4.

As discussed in the previous section, familiarity with sponsorships may play a role in the response to sponsorship prominence, as knowledge of different sponsorship types will likely make it easier for a consumer to evaluate the relative prominence of a given sponsorship. However, no prior knowledge is required to interpret the regional proximity of a sponsor. Potentially lacking knowledge of sponsorship types,

unenthusiastic consumers may rely more on information they can interpret more easily, which may explain the low enthusiasm group's stronger response to sponsor's regional proximity.

Altruism was perceived to be slightly higher in high proximity conditions within both groups, with the high group demonstrating a higher mean score for altruism compared to the low group under both conditions, visible in Figure 8. As expected, proximity's effects on egoism were the opposite and the mean of perceived egoism was higher in the low group under both conditions, see Figure 9. Although statistically insignificant, the findings provide support to the expectation that high enthusiasm consumers would be more generous in their evaluation of a sponsor's motives (H4 b & c).

4.2.3. Enthusiasm and Deal Length

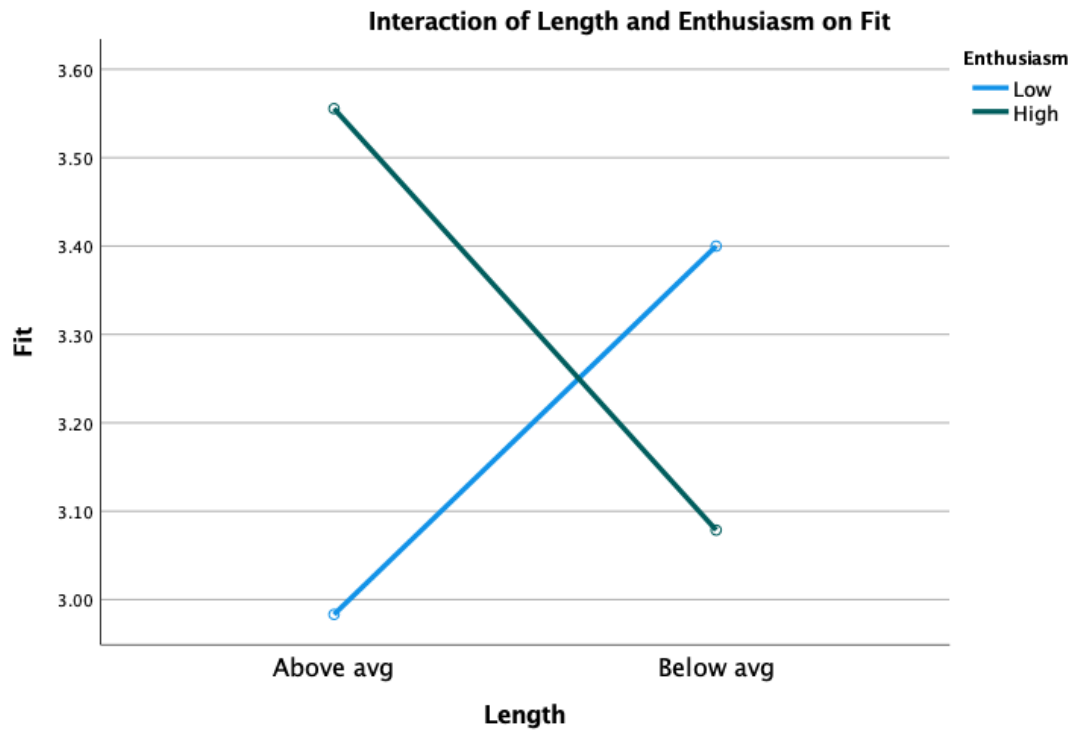

Figure 10 Effects of the interaction between enthusiasm and length on fit

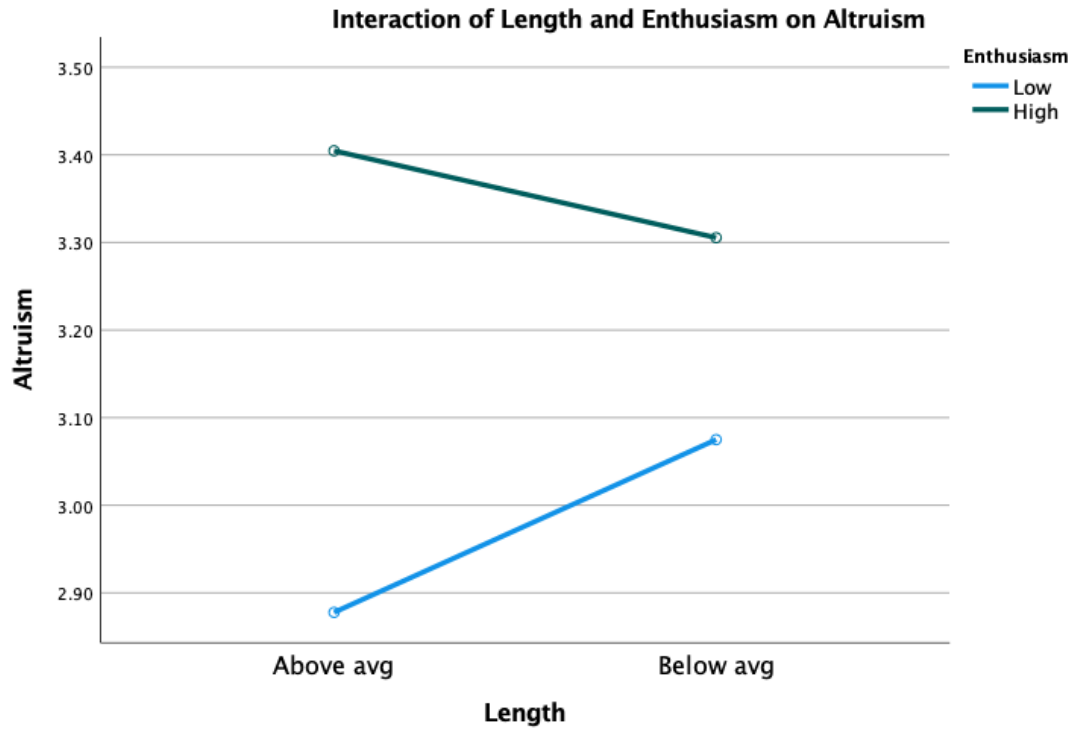

Figure 11 Effects of the interaction between enthusiasm and length on altruism

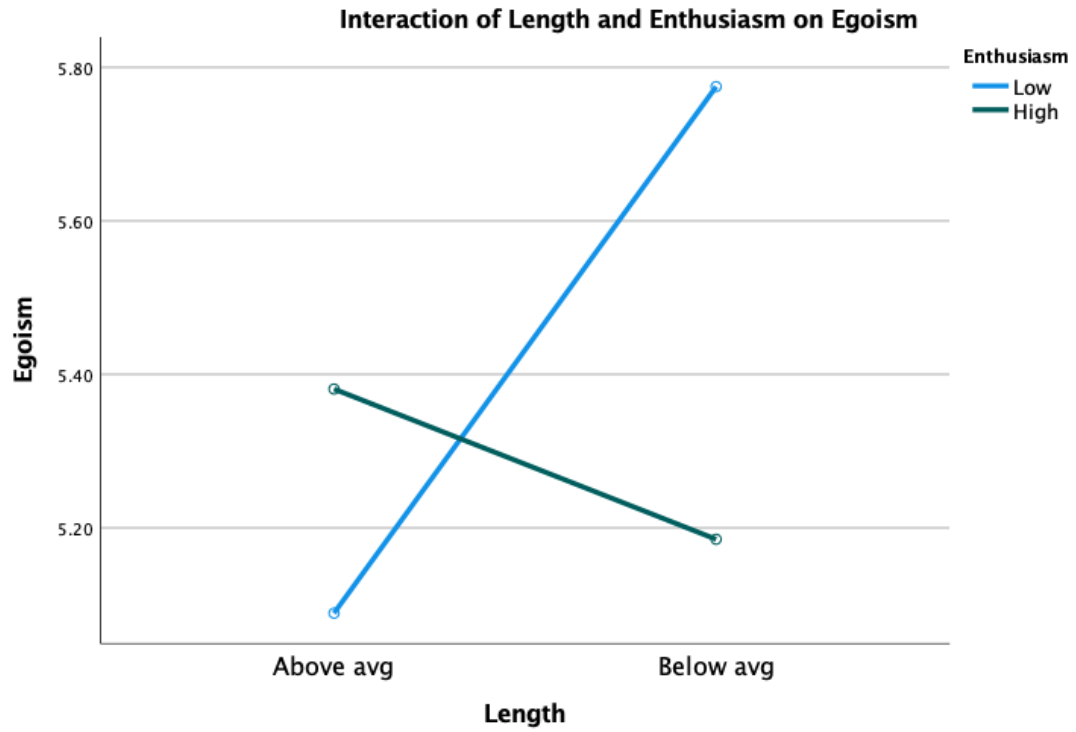

Figure 12: Effects of the interaction between enthusiasm and length on egoism

Significant interaction of sponsorship deal length and enthusiasm was found on sponsorship fit [$F (1, 200) = 6.26$, $p < .05$). As seen in Figure 9, deal length had a positive effect on fit among the high enthusiasm group but a negative effect on fit among the low enthusiasm group. Deal length was expected to be positively related to fit, but it was only found to be true within the high enthusiasm group. Unlike with prominence, familiarity with sponsorship length cannot be a reason for the discrepancy, since the deal lengths in the survey scenarios were presented relative to an average. However, enthusiastic consumers may appreciate the commitment and congruency of missions demonstrated by longer deals towards an activity they care about. Since unenthusiastic consumers would not have any personal attachment to the activity, commitment or congruency of missions showed by a sponsor of that activity would not be important to them. That would also provide some explanation to the high perceived fit of the sponsorship between Emirates Airlines and Arsenal, discussed in section 2.5. Despite being international, Emirates Airlines' sponsorship with Arsenal was thought to one of the best fitting shirt sponsorships in the Premier League among fans (Carp, 2019).

No significant interaction of deal-length and enthusiasm was found on sponsor's altruistic motives. However, Figure 11 shows that the high enthusiasm group perceived higher altruistic motives than the low enthusiasm group in both conditions, providing support to H4 b).

Significant interaction of sponsorship deal length and enthusiasm was found on sponsor's egoistic motives [$F (1, 200) = 6.38$, $p < .05$), illustrated in Figure 12. Interestingly, the expected negative effect of deal-length on egoism was now found within the low enthusiasm group, while the effect seen among the high enthusiasm group was positive. In the two other tests where noticeable interaction was found (Figure 4 & Figure 10), the high group seemed act in line with the hypotheses, while the low enthusiasm group did not. However, sponsorship fit was the dependent variable in both of those tests and unexpected results on egoism were found when testing the effects of deal-characteristics without the moderating effect of enthusiasm. Thus, conclusions shouldn't necessarily be drawn from the results of one interaction, especially as egoism was not found to be a significant predictor of sponsorship outcomes, discussed in the following section.

4.3. Effects of Fit and Motives on Attitudes and Purchase Intentions

A multiple regression analysis was performed to test whether sponsorship fit, sponsor's altruistic motives and sponsor's egoistic motives could significantly predict attitude toward sponsor. Thus, the suggested regression model consist of three predictor variables: sponsorship fit, sponsor's altruistic motives and sponsor's egoistic motives. The results indicate that the model was a significant predictor of attitude toward sponsor [$F (3, 198) = 34.70$, $p < .05$] and it explains 34.5% of the variance. The contributions of fit ($B = .28$, $p < .05$) and altruistic motives ($B = .23$, $p < .05$) were significant, while the contribution of egoistic motives was not significant. Based on the results, hypotheses H5 and H6 are accepted but H7 is rejected.

The regression model consisting of the same predictors was also tested on attitude toward sponsee and on purchase intentions. Similar to attitude toward sponsor, the model was found to be a significant predictor of attitude toward sponsee [$F (3, 198) = 36.13$, $p < .05$], explaining 35.4% of the variance. The contributions of fit ($B = .25$, $p < .05$), altruistic motives ($B = .30$, $p < .05$) and egoistic motives ($B = .10$, $p < .05$) were all significant. The model was also found to be a significant predictor of intention to purchase the sponsor's products [$F (3, 198) = 30.11$, $p < .05$], and it explains 31.3% of the variance. The contributions of fit ($B = .48$, $p < .05$) and altruistic motives ($B = .18$, $p < .05$) were significant, while the contribution of egoistic motives was not significant.

A simple regression analysis was also conducted to test whether attitude toward sponsor is a significant predictor of intention to purchase the sponsor's products. Attitude toward sponsor was found to explain 33.6% of the variance in purchase intentions and the model was statistically significant [$F (1, 200)$, $p < .05$]. The regression coefficient indicated that when attitude increases by 1, purchase intentions increase by .80. In light of the results, H8 can be accepted.

The effects of egoistic motives on attitude toward sponsor was contrary to the hypotheses. No hypotheses were formed of egoism's effects on attitude toward sponsee and purchase intentions, but the findings regarding those relationships can also be seen as unexpected. The reasons for the unexpected effects of egoistic motives may be similar to those regarding the unexpected findings of sponsorship

prominence's effect on egoism, discussed in section 4.1.1. Commercial benefit of the sponsor is what differentiates sponsorship from philanthropy (IEG, 2017). Consumers may acknowledge that and assume a certain level of egoistic motives of sponsor regardless of other factors. Thus, egoistic and altruistic motives can be present simultaneously and egoism and lack of altruism are not seen as equivalents. In that case, it is natural that egoism's effects on sponsorship outcomes is not significant.

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1. Main Findings

The main findings regarding the effects of deal characteristics on fit and altruistic motives were mostly in line with the hypotheses and previous literature, Woisetschläger et al. (2017) being the most relevant piece. High prominence was found to be negatively related to fit and altruistic motives, while deal length and regional proximity were found to be positively related. The effects of deal characteristics on egoistic motives were mixed and interestingly, no statistically significant or even noticeable relationship between egoism and sponsorship outcomes was found. However, as altruism was found to be positively related to the outcomes, lack of altruistic motives would have a similar effect to what was expected from egoistic motives.

A potential reason for the mixed results regarding the inference of egoistic motives and the lack of relationship between egoism and sponsorship outcomes is that consumers may acknowledge the financial responsibilities companies have towards shareholders and fulfilling that responsibility is seen as necessary and understandable, rather than undesirable. Instead, a lack of altruistic motives along with those egoistic motives is seen as unfavorable. Consumers may also understand that commercial interests are what differentiate sponsorships from philanthropy, and some level of egoism is therefore expected in all sponsorships.

Out of the three deal-characteristics studied, only regional proximity was found to have statistically significant effects on both fit and altruism. As fit and altruism were found to be significant predictors of sponsorship outcomes, the finding also suggests that proximity's indirect effects on sponsorship outcomes would also be greater than those of prominence and deal-length. The finding is logical, as more dimensions of fit presented by Simmons & Becker-Olsen (2006) can likely be associated with proximity than with the other variables. For example, it is reasonable to assume that locality creates a perception of congruency regarding at least markets, missions and attributes. In addition, locality in itself was listed as a subdimension of fit by Zdravkovic et al. (2010). In regard to motives, local sponsorships can be seen as a form of community involvement, whereas international sponsors come from outside the community and can therefore be perceived to have fewer altruistic motives (Clark et al., 2002; Woisetschläger et al., 2017).

The findings regarding enthusiasm's effect on altruism were mostly in line with the hypotheses created on the basis of the identity theory (Tajfel & Turner 2004) and findings by Meenaghan (2001). Higher means perceived altruism was found among the high enthusiasm group in comparison to the low enthusiasm group. Thus, enthusiasm was found to be a positive moderator between deal characteristics and altruism. The effect was also consistent across all interactions, which can be clearly seen in Figures 5, 7 and 11.

Enthusiasm's overall effects on fit were also in line with Gwinner & Bennet (2008), as enthusiasm was positively related to fit. However, enthusiasm's interaction effects with individual deal-characteristics on fit were mixed. With each deal characteristic, high enthusiasm resulted in higher perception of fit only under one of the two conditions. Rather than the effects of high enthusiasm only occurring under certain conditions, the mixed results were potentially a result of inconsistencies among the low enthusiasm respondents. The high enthusiasm respondents' inferences of fit and altruistic motives based on the deal characteristic followed the hypothesized directions much more accurately compared to the low enthusiasm group. In this case, the higher consistency displayed by the high enthusiasm group may be a result of higher familiarity compared to the low enthusiasm group. Individuals that are enthusiastic about ice-hockey are probably more familiar with ice-hockey sponsorships than their characteristics than

unenthusiastic individuals. Due to higher familiarity, they may be able to compare information about a given sponsorship to others they are aware of, whereas unfamiliarity with sponsorships would result in a lack of contrast and in turn, more variance in the perceptions of individuals.

5.2. Implications for International Business

The key takeaway for international business is the importance of the sponsor's regional proximity to the sponsored activity or property. The lower perceived fit and sponsor altruism certainly create a disadvantage for international sponsors. However, the outcomes of international sponsorships were only measured relative to local sponsorships in the present study. Therefore, no conclusions should be drawn about the absolute outcomes of such sponsorships. Considering that the most valuable and large scale sponsorships in the world are international, it would be unreasonable to suggest that international sponsorships would result in absolutely negative outcomes.

A central finding was also that the only international sponsorship scenario that surpassed the means of perceived fit and altruism satisfied the positive conditions of prominence and length. The observation indicates that it is vital for international sponsors to consider all other factors that contribute to fit and inference of motives. Prominence and length were factors of interest in the present study, but all other potential dimensions of fit and motive inferences should also be taken into account. While the finding highlights the importance of considering all possible factors when deciding to engage in international sponsorship, it also provides encouraging indications that international sponsorships can reach similar levels of perceived fit and altruistic motives as local sponsorships, despite regional proximity being an important factor.

Unlike the effects of proximity, the findings regarding enthusiasm towards the sponsored activity are more promising from the perspective of firms seeking to engage in international sponsorships. Enthusiastic consumers seem to be more generous when evaluating fit and motives of international sponsorships, while placing more emphasis on factors other than proximity compared low enthusiasm consumers,

illustrated in figures 4-12. As sponsorships are often specifically used to reach the audience of the sponsored activity, the consumers targeted are generally enthusiastic about the activity. Therefore, the perceptions and behavior of enthusiastic consumers should be of greater interest and concern for all sponsors, regardless of their proximity.

5.3. Limitations and Future Research

There are several limitations to be recognized in the sample and context that were used in the present study. Firstly, a perfectly equal distribution of the eight survey with differing scenarios was not possible. Therefore, the number of responses to each of them varied. Slight variance in itself would be of less concern within a larger sample, however, the size of the sample used was only 202. Two scenarios only received under 10% of the total responses, raising concern about potential lack of variance of demographic factors and enthusiasm within the groups. Using a convenience sample resulted in some demographics, especially age groups, being over represented.

The measures used in the study were mostly found to be reliable. However, the scale used for measuring altruism proved to be suboptimal, as it returned an alpha of .583 in the reliability analysis. The scale only consisted of two items, so elimination of items in order to improve it was not possible. Further research should include a more reliable altruism measure. All scales should also consist of more than two items, which would allow for elimination of items, if needed.

There are also limitations associated with the context and scenarios of the survey. Although pre-tested to suit the purposes of the study, only two types of sponsorships were used. Similarly, Italy was selected to be used as the home country of the international sponsor based on a pre-test, but the results are not applicable to other countries without further research. Locality may also be perceived differently across different countries and cultures and professional ice-hockey is also male-dominant players typically only represent a few nationalities, cultures and ethnic backgrounds.

Only two conditions of each of the tested variables were represented in the scenarios. Future research should include multiple conditions, for example adding sponsors from multiple different countries and including a variety of different deal lengths and sponsorship types. In regards to venue sponsorships specifically, it should be compared whether differences exist between a new venue, which was the case in the present study, and an existing one, also taking into account the duration of existence of the venue, as it may affect the traditions, heritage and legacy associated with the venue, especially in highly involved consumers' minds.

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7. APPENDIX

Survey scenarios:

1. High prominence, high regional proximity, high deal-length

A new ice hockey arena is being built in the capital region of Finland. The arena will serve as the home venue for a local professional ice hockey team. Propes is a footwear company based in Helsinki and it will serve as the sponsor of the new venue. This means that Propes will provide financial assistance to the venue and in exchange, the venue will be named "Propes Arena" and prominent "Propes Arena" signage will be displayed on the arena. The average length for venue sponsorships in Finland is 3 years, but Propes agreed to a 5 year deal. Propes and the venue management are looking forward to a productive partnership.

2. High prominence, high regional proximity, low deal-length

A new ice hockey arena is being built in the capital region of Finland. The arena will serve as the home venue for a local professional ice hockey team. Propes is a footwear company based in Helsinki and it will serve as the main sponsor of the new venue. This means that Propes will provide financial assistance to the venue and in exchange, the venue will be named "Propes Arena" and prominent "Propes Arena" signage will be displayed on the arena. The average length for venue sponsorships in Finland is 3 years, but Propes agreed to a 1 year deal. Propes and the venue management are looking forward to a productive partnership.

3. High prominence, low regional proximity, high deal-length

A new ice hockey arena is being built in the capital region of Finland. The arena will serve as the home venue for a local professional ice hockey team. Propes is a footwear company based in Italy and it will serve as the main sponsor of the new venue. This means that Propes will provide financial assistance to the venue and in exchange, the venue will be named "Propes Arena" and prominent "Propes Arena" signage will be displayed on the arena. The average length for venue sponsorships in Finland is 3 years, but Propes agreed to a 5 year deal. Propes and the venue management are looking forward to a productive partnership.

4. High prominence, low regional proximity, low deal-length

A new ice hockey arena is being built in the capital region of Finland. The arena will serve as the home venue for a local professional ice hockey team. Propes is a footwear company based in Italy and it will serve as the main sponsor of the new venue. This means that Propes will provide financial assistance to the venue and in exchange, the venue will be named “Propes Arena” and prominent “Propes Arena” signage will be displayed on the arena. The average length for venue sponsorships in Finland is 3 years, but Propes agreed to a 1 year deal. Propes and the venue management are looking forward to a productive partnership.

5. Low prominence, high regional proximity, high deal-length

A new ice hockey arena is being built in the capital region of Finland. The arena will serve as the home venue for a local professional ice hockey team. Propes is a footwear company based in Helsinki and it will serve as a minor sponsor of the new venue. This means that Propes will provide financial assistance to the venue and in exchange, Propes’ advertisements will be displayed on the boards of the ice rink inside the arena. The average length for venue sponsorships in Finland is 3 years, but Propes agreed to a 5 year deal. Propes and the venue management are looking forward to a productive partnership.

6. Low prominence, high regional proximity, low deal-length

A new ice hockey arena is being built in the capital region of Finland. The arena will serve as the home venue for a local professional ice hockey team. Propes is a footwear company based in Helsinki and it will serve as a minor sponsor of the new venue. This means that Propes will provide financial assistance to the venue and in exchange, Propes’ advertisements will be displayed on the boards of the ice rink inside the arena. The average length for venue sponsorships in Finland is 3 years, but Propes agreed to a 1 year deal. Propes and the venue management are looking forward to a productive partnership.

7. Low prominence, low regional proximity, high deal-length

A new ice hockey arena is being built in the capital region of Finland. The arena will serve as the home venue for a local professional ice hockey team. Propes is a footwear company based in Italy and it will serve as a minor sponsor of the new

venue. This means that Propes will provide financial assistance to the venue and in exchange, Propes' advertisements will be displayed on the boards of the ice rink inside the arena. The average length for venue sponsorships in Finland is 3 years, but Propes agreed to a 5 year deal. Propes and the venue management are looking forward to a productive partnership.

8. Low prominence, low regional proximity, low deal-length

A new ice hockey arena is being built in the capital region of Finland. The arena will serve as the home venue for a local professional ice hockey team. Propes is a footwear company based in Italy and it will serve as a minor sponsor of the new venue. This means that Propes will provide financial assistance to the venue and in exchange, Propes' advertisements will be displayed on the boards of the ice rink inside the arena. The average length for venue sponsorships in Finland is 3 years, but Propes agreed to a 1 year deal. Propes and the venue management are looking forward to a productive partnership.

Scales:

Enthusiasm toward the sponsored activity (ice hockey)

1. To what extent are you interested in ice hockey?

- Very interested
- Fairly interested
- Somewhat interested
- Not particularly interested
- Not at all interested

2. Which statement best applies to you?

- I follow ice hockey very closely
- I follow ice hockey fairly closely
- I follow ice hockey somewhat closely
- I don't follow ice hockey with any particular interest
- I have very little interest in ice hockey

3. How often do you watch ice hockey matches? Please include both live attendance and watching on television.

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Multiple times a year
- Once a year or less often

Sponsorship fit

1. Propes and the arena stand for similar things.

- Strongly disagree/Strongly agree

2. Propes and the arena have very similar goals.

- Strongly disagree/Strongly agree

3. The image of Propes and the image of the arena are very similar.

- Strongly disagree/Strongly agree

4. The ideas I associate with Propes are very similar with the ideas I associate with the arena.

- Strongly disagree/Strongly agree

Altruistic motives

1. Propes has genuine intentions to support the arena.

- Strongly disagree/Strongly agree

2. Propes sponsored this venue in order to fulfil its responsibility as a good corporate citizen.

- Strongly disagree/Strongly agree

Egoistic motives

1. Propes sponsored this venue to increase profits.
- Strongly disagree/Strongly agree

2. Propes sponsored this venue to improve corporate image.
- Strongly disagree/Strongly agree

Attitude toward sponsor

1. How favorable do you feel about Propes?
- Extremely unfavorable/Extremely favorable

2. How likable is Propes?
- Extremely dislikable/Extreme likable

3. How positive/negative is your attitude towards Propes?
- Extremely negative/Extremely positive

Attitude toward sponsee

4. How favorable do you feel about the prospect of sponsoring an ice hockey arena?
- Extremely unfavorable/Extremely favorable

5. How likable is the arena sponsored by Propes?
- Extremely dislikable/Extreme likable

6. How positive/negative is your attitude towards the arena sponsored by Propes?
- Extremely negative/Extremely positive

Purchase intention

1. I would buy Propes' products.
- Very unlikely/Very likely

2. The next time I need footwear, I would consider buying Propes.
- Very unlikely/Very likely