

DRIVING VIEWING INTENTIONS THROUGH ENTITATIVITY OF CONCURRENT SPONSORS

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Keywords: Concurrent sponsorship; property viewing intentions; entitativity; conditional process modeling

Description: This paper examines how roster size, homogeneity of sponsors' offerings, and an implicit theory about groups (a) influence people's 'groupness' perceptions (i.e. entitativity) of concurrent sponsors and (b) interact with entitativity, such that viewing intentions are affected.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

While sponsorship studies typically focus on audience's attitudes and behaviors towards the sponsoring brands, little is known of how sponsorships influence people's intentions to view sponsored events (Olson 2010). This is a particularly salient issue when concurrent sponsors are

involved, where at least two (and usually many more) brands simultaneously sponsor the same property (Carrillat et al. 2010), which tends to be the norm (Groza et al. 2012). Instead, the sponsorship literature generally reports consumer responses towards a sponsor within dyadic sponsor-property settings (Cornwell et al. 2005). Consequently, this study aims to address both these concerns (the lack of attention on the sponsored property in sponsorship studies, and the narrow focus on sponsor-ponsee dyad). More specifically, the focus of this paper is on how people's perceptions of concurrent sponsorships drive their viewing intentions towards sponsored properties. In particular, we investigate how people's perceptions of roster size, homogeneity of sponsors' offerings, and implicit theory about groups (a) influence their 'groupness' perceptions (i.e. entitativity) of concurrent sponsors and (b) interact with entitativity (conditional process modeling; Hayes 2013), such that viewing intentions are affected. In addition, we investigate these relationships for sponsors that invest financial resources and sponsors that offer in-kind support.

Method and Data

Data were collected through a mixed-design fractional factorial survey with experimental partitioning (Atzmüller and Steiner 2010; Aguinis and Bradley 2014). A total of 263 students from a single European country were simultaneously presented with two vignettes – a 'financial' concurrent sponsorship context and an 'in-kind' concurrent sponsorship context. To mitigate against potential method bias, eight sponsorship-type vignette-pairs were created, allowing for the property, focal concurrent sponsor, and ordering of the sponsorship type, to interchange. The hypothesized relationships were investigated in both 'financial' and 'in-kind' sponsorship contexts by capturing people's responses to the respective constructs in both sponsorship types,

using established (psychometrically sound) operationalizations. Data were analyzed using confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling in Lisrel 8.71.

Summary of Findings

The results suggest people's entitativity of concurrent sponsors, as well as their viewing intentions towards sponsored properties, are affected differently depending on the sponsorship context (financial versus in-kind sponsors). Specifically, roster size significantly and positively relates to entitativity in 'financial' concurrent sponsorships but does not significantly relate to entitativity in 'in-kind' concurrent sponsorships. However, roster size interacts with entitativity such that viewing intentions are negatively affected in both sponsorship types. In other words, as roster size increases, the relationship between entitativity and viewing intentions weakens. Further, while homogeneity perceptions positively affect entitativity in both sponsorship contexts, the interaction between entitativity and homogeneity perceptions positively affects viewing intentions only for in-kind sponsors. Instead, a significant and positive relationship between entitativity and viewing intentions exists in 'financial' concurrent sponsorship contexts, independent of homogeneity perceptions. Finally, people's implicit theory about groups has no significant impact on entitativity, nor affects the entitativity-viewing intentions relationship in either sponsorship context.

Key Contributions

Theoretically, we add to the scant literature on entitativity in marketing contexts in general, and concurrent sponsorships, in particular. Specifically, we demonstrate people respond differently to sponsored properties depending on whether sponsors invest financial resources or in-kind

resources. Importantly, the study suggests entitativity's antecedents found in social psychology may not always be directly applicable to all concurrent sponsorship contexts. Further, the results indicate entitativity's drivers may interact with entitativity itself such that people's behavioral intentions are affected (i.e. viewing intentions enhanced/worsened). Managerially, our study suggests the number of sponsors, and the type of product categories property rights-holders offer sponsors should be limited. For example, rights-holders should allow fewer sponsors to become official sponsors of more product categories within a narrow product-category scope. This way, viewing intentions should increase when sponsors are entitative. That said, with substantially fewer sponsors it likely means that each sponsor needs to contribute more resources/capabilities to a property than before. Further, roster size appears to be an important antecedent to entitativity in 'financial' sponsorships. Hence a reduction in roster size should lead to a reduction in entitativity in the first place. Consequently, it is advisable for concurrent 'financial' sponsors to actively communicate other antecedents to entitativity.