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# Value Co-Creation and Engagement Platforms: Facilitating Business in Service Management

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# **Value Co-Creation and Engagement Platforms: Facilitating Business in Service Management**

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**TO FAMILY AND FRIENDS**

## ABSTRACT AND FOREWORD

In recent marketing and service management literature, social interaction is regarded as the key for business and leisure activities. The shift from production and consumption of value towards collaborative co-creation of value through resource integration serves as a fundamental theoretic domain for this thesis. In his dissertation, Markus Buser, therefore, takes up a highly topical development in research on service management in general and sport management in particular.

The logic of value co-creation emphasises contributions by all actors detached from their respective role. Accordingly, all actors share the same role as resource integrators because they provide and use other actors' resources. Actors' resource integration is facilitated by engagement platforms. Focal platform operating actors grant access to the engagement platform, mediate interaction, and provide the platform enabling infrastructure. Hence, those focal actors create touchpoints for social interaction, and all actors provide their own resources and use others' resources in value creating relationships.

Markus Buser contributes to a general conceptual understanding of value co-creation as well as the business-facilitating nature of engagement platforms in both marketing and service management academia as well as practice.

To address the research aim, conceptual and empirical work is undertaken to gather an understanding of interaction between networks of actors on engagement platforms.

On the one hand, actor-centric approaches cover the role of actors in the sport context and their resource integration. On the other hand, systemic approaches try to unravel the interconnectedness of actors and engagement platforms to provide a more holistic view on value co-creation. This thesis takes multiple perspectives in sport management and addresses the following research questions:

how can actors make use of engagement on platforms on various levels, how do actors' roles influence decision-making, what kind of resources are exchanged, and how are those engagement platforms interconnected with each other within ecosystems?

Markus Buser answers this complex question with an impressively clear argumentation. Engagement platforms are points of contact where actors are connected, integrate resources and ultimately co-create value. As such, they are crucial in all kinds of business relationships in service management and beyond. His cumulative dissertation is characterised by an

extremely high scientific standard, which does not lose sight of the practical relevance. Markus Buser is an exceptionally talented researcher, and he promises to become an intelligent and successful manager in the future. Through his transfer papers, he impressively succeeds in making his high-quality scientific publications available to practitioners in an effective and efficient way. Markus Buser thus makes a precious contribution to the transfer of knowledge in our society.

I wish Markus Buser's work broad acceptance in theory and practice. Above all, I wish him all the best, good luck, health, and success, both professionally and personally. May the intense love for his family last forever.

*Prof. Dr. Herbert Woratschek*

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*Markus Buser*

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 MOTIVATION AND RESEARCH AIM

In this day and age, interaction is an integral determinant for business as well as for leisure activities. The collaborative nature of social exchange serves as an explanatory approach for different fields of personal and professional life. Modern technology development and digital innovations facilitate interaction and thus, multilateral relationships. Since 2004, when Vargo and Lusch (2004) as well as Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) published their seminal articles about the service-dominant logic and co-creation, scholars started to discuss social interaction through the lens of value co-creation. The paradigm shift from a goods-dominant logic to a service-dominant logic not only provides valuable ideas for different research streams in service marketing and management academia but also nurtures practical implications.

Value co-creation emphasises contributions by all actors, regardless of their respective roles, as paramount for the collaborative creation of value. Throughout adjustment and adaption, the initial focus of B2C or B2B shifted to actor-to-actor (A2A), where the roles of providers and beneficiaries are merging to economic and social actors as resource integrators (Vargo & Lusch, 2017). An actor thereby represents an individual human or machine as well as collections of humans or machines, including technologies and organisations (Storbacka, Brodie, Böhmman, Maglio, & Nenonen, 2016). Hence, value co-creation centres actors' provision and use of resources to increase well-being, and consequently value. This process of resource integration is governed by shared formal and informal institutions (Brodie, Fehrer, Jaakkola, & Conduit, 2019; Vargo & Lusch, 2016).

Scott (2013) differentiates between regulative (e.g. rules and laws), normative (e.g. values, norms and social obligations), and cultural-cognitive (e.g. common beliefs and shared understanding) institutional pillars. Institutions are dynamic and revised, changed and adapted by actors (Lusch & Nambisan, 2015). By these means, institutions control actors' behaviours, and actors' behaviours consequently shape institutions in a virtuous cycle.

Social interaction being described through the lens of value co-creation sheds light into diverse contexts of relationships. To dig deeper into actors' interaction and the value co-creation process, it is crucial to refer to other behavioural and dispositional approaches. As such the relational concept of customer engagement uses the general theoretical perspective

of service-dominant logic to further elaborate on active interaction and network development (Brodie, Hollebeek, Jurić, & Ilić, 2011; Kumar et al., 2010). Literature refers to customer engagement as a multidimensional concept, including “cognitive, emotional and/or behavioural dimensions” (Brodie et al., 2011, p. 260). Van Doorn et al. (2010, p. 254) emphasize the behavioural dimension and state that “customer engagement behaviors go beyond transactions, and may be specifically defined as a customer’s behavioral manifestations that have a brand or firm focus, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers”. Consequently, customer engagement is determined by an actor’s psychological state (Brodie et al., 2011) or by behavioural patterns (van Doorn et al., 2010) in favour of a brand or firm that exceed the core relation with the respective brand.

Advancing the understanding of customer engagement and value co-creation, Breidbach and Brodie (2017) propose to include the perspective of engagement platforms. Engagement platforms are defined as touchpoints, both physical and virtual in nature, that support the integration of resources and, thus, value co-creation (Breidbach, Brodie, & Hollebeek, 2014). Engagement platforms facilitate interaction in various contexts.

Focal actors operate engagement platforms and, thereby, mediate between participating actors. As such, they provide the infrastructure to support interaction and value co-creation on platforms. The infrastructure consists of activities associated with the development, maintenance, and adaption of physical, virtual, and informational infrastructure (Stabell & Fjeldstad, 1998). At the same time, engagement platform operators act as resource integrators that provide other resources besides the platform itself. All actors provide their own resources, and use and benefit from the resources of others. This contributes to the co-creation of value on engagement platforms.

Research in this area started with a strong focus on dyadic relationships between actors on engagement platforms. Those focal actors and the analysis of their interaction are an essential element of the actor-centric research perspective. However, more recent literature calls for broadening the scope of engagement research, investigating broader notions of actors, and shifting the focus from dyads to networks (Alexander, Jaakkola, & Hollebeek, 2018; Breidbach & Brodie, 2017; Storbacka et al., 2016).

To follow this call for research, the thesis applies a systemic perspective to enrich the actor-centric perspective with a more holistic view on co-creation and engagement platforms (see [chapter 1.2.1.2](#)).

As the concept of engagement is recognized for bridging empirical knowledge with the theoretical lens of value co-creation (Alexander et al., 2018), this thesis uses both, empirical and conceptual approaches to elaborate on value co-creation and engagement platforms (see [chapter 1.2.1.1](#)).

The ideas of value co-creation and engagement platforms are fully applicable to management practice. Both perspectives are closely aligned with managers' terminologies, and numerous examples demonstrate implementations for management. For instance, sporting goods manufacturers such as Nike or Adidas, use digital platforms for their customers to engage in co-designing athletic apparel (Frow, Nenonen, Payne, & Storbacka, 2015). Online based engagement platforms, like Netflix or Spotify, align their business models with their customers' interaction and engagement to use the information in order to provide individualized offerings through their machine learning-based recommendation algorithms. Firms from various industries use open innovation platforms to foster interaction and provide employees, customers, suppliers, and other stakeholders with the opportunity to engage in the exchange of experiences, knowledge, problems, and ultimately solutions to collaboratively co-create value. Such open innovation engagement platforms cover a wide range of application areas such as product or service development, environmental initiatives, and technological or social innovations. Through interaction, firms are able to benefit from other actor's resource integration on engagement platforms. Paired with firm's own resource provision, e.g. in the form of virtual or physical platforms or other kinds of resources, business is initiated.

Consequently, actors' collaboration through resource integration on engagement platforms facilitates interaction and thus, business activities. Managers have to be aware of how these encounters or touchpoints need to be designed to support actors' contributions and enhance the co-creation of value (Payne, Storbacka, & Frow, 2008). The touchpoints for interaction and engagement are crucial in all kinds of business relationships in service management and beyond.

Hereinafter, the sport context is used to conceptualise and investigate value co-creation and the business facilitating nature of engagement platforms. Sport is a service industry where special characteristics need to be taken into account, and it also covers an extensive spectrum of actors and activities. Richelieu and Webb (2019, p. 3) refer to this variety as a continuum "from kids playing hockey in the street, to jogging with a dog, to highly coded, structured,

politicized, and disciplined events”. Woratschek, Horbel, and Popp (2014) also highlight the uniqueness of the sport context by describing the mix of volunteers and professionals, coopetition, event management, and emotionalized customers, or rather fans. Despite sport’s special characteristics, it also features overlapping matters of concern and themes with other fields and industries, such as value creation, product and service innovations, branding, or business development.

Sport management academia, however, lacks to apply the ideas of value co-creation and especially actor engagement on platforms to explain the importance of interactions and relationships in the sport context. The traditional understanding in sport management assumes that sport consumers pay for the output of combined resources because they want to consume the value that is embedded within sport products and services. Woratschek and Griebel (2020) call this traditional approach of sport production and consumption the “logic of sport products”.

The sport value framework published by Woratschek et al. (2014) introduced the service-dominant logic to sport management literature, and many scholars adopted those ideas ever since. But the sport value framework and most subsequent studies put special emphasis to the sport event and neglect other settings. Moreover, ideas of engagement platforms and their facilitative role for business in sports are under-researched in sport management. In addition to that, the transfer of these theoretical ideas has the potential to nurture the way of thinking in sport management practice. (Service) marketing literature clearly shows how these ideas are able to shed light into interactions, resource integration and ultimately co-creation of value in different kinds of service settings from an academic as well as from a practical perspective.

Therefore, this thesis aims to contribute to a general understanding of value co-creation. Moreover, it analyses the role of engagement platforms in both service management academia and practice. The sport context is used as a research subject. Based on this, the subordinate topic of the thesis is as follows:

*How can actors’ resource integration on engagement platforms nurture a new conceptual understanding of interaction and value co-creation in the sport management context?*

## 1.2 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

To provide answers to the subordinate topic posed above, this thesis consists of four chapters that take a broad perspective on value co-creation and engagement platforms. Thereby, the thesis differentiates between scientific articles (Figure one, grey background) and knowledge transferring articles (Figure one, white background). The articles from the former category are published or are currently part of a journal's double-blind peer-review process, whilst transfer papers aim to give actors outside the scientific sphere an understanding of the generated academic knowledge.

The knowledge transfer is linked to the University of Bayreuth's *Third Mission* strategy, defined as "mutual exchange of knowledge between the University of Bayreuth and actors from society, business, culture, and politics to achieve social, societal, and economic innovations" (University of Bayreuth, 2017, p. 2). These projects are specifically targeted towards students and practitioners, and aim to actively transfer existing and generated knowledge into economy and society (University of Bayreuth, 2017). The *Third Mission* transfer strategy also refers to the communication of knowledge through various channels, such as scientific workshops, conferences, seminars or symposia. This communication objective was also fundamental for the numerous national and international PhD-seminars and workshops as well as for the international conference contributions by the author of this thesis. The author's international conference contributions are listed in appendix A.

### 1.2.1 RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Scientific articles (paper 1-7), together with transfer articles (paper A-E), are arranged in the research framework (see Figure one). This figure illustrates the dimensions of the research perspective and the methodological approach.

Based on the differentiation, the framework comprises four areas explained in the following four chapters. In terms of the methodological approach, the framework differentiates between empirical research and conceptual research. Actor-centric and systemic are the distinctive dimensions for the research perspective. Those key distinctions and the underlying matrix are described in more detail hereafter. Figure one illustrates the author's projects and arranges them in the research framework.

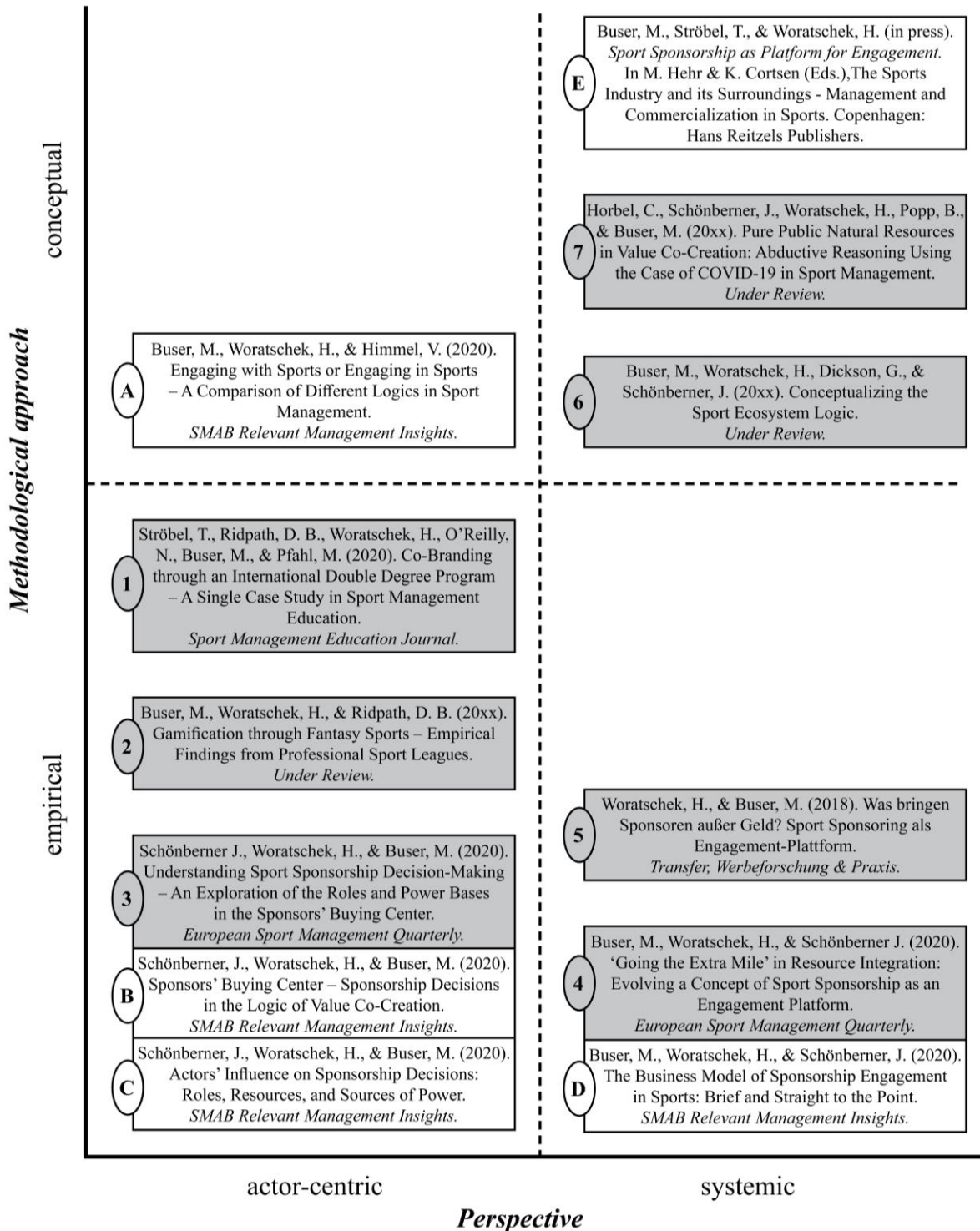


Figure 1. Research framework.

### 1.2.1.1 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Academic papers, no matter if empirical or conceptual, share a common objective: to create innovative knowledge by expanding on carefully selected sources (Jaakkola, 2020). To reach this goal, scholars need to evaluate the state of research and choose a methodological



approach that fits the individual project's circumstances and information availability as well as accessibility. The methodological approach thereby guides how knowledge should be gathered. Following the theory of science, this thesis differentiates between conceptual and empirical research.

*Conceptual research* contributes to “bridge existing theories in interesting ways, link work across disciplines, provide multi-level insights, and broaden the scope of our thinking” (Gilson & Goldberg 2015, p. 128). Following this definition, the main focus of conceptual articles is to develop theory by argumentatively elaborating conceptual frameworks, reviews, or integrative models to build the foundation of future empirical studies (Krafft, Goetz, Mantrala, Sotgiu, & Tillmanns, 2015). Scientific theory represents all systematically related assertions of concepts and their interrelationships that demonstrate the manifestation and the reason for phenomena to occur (Corely & Gioia, 2011). Theory purposefully increases the scientific understanding by applying a systematic structure that is capable of explaining and predicting phenomena (Hunt, 1983).

Projects that are arranged under the conceptual research dimension, therefore, contribute to build theory by synthesising, adapting and modelling existing phenomena or concepts, or transfer them to new fields of research.

*Empirical research* aims to support theory. Hence, theories and concepts are empirically tested to provide evidence of observed relationships (Krafft et al., 2015). Within the concept of empirical induction, scientific theories and general conclusions are extrapolated by induction from observations or empirical facts (Popper, 1989). Following the induction-deduction-scheme, the cognitive process of phenomena inductively rises to general laws and theories to nurture from these, and to descend again deductively to empirical observations (Popper, 1989). Consequently, systematically documented and edited data material serves as a foundation for analysing conceptual relationships and thus, theory development. Empirical research covers a wide variety of research methods, including all kinds of qualitative research, survey-based research, panel research, and (lab or field) experiments (Krafft et al., 2015).

Empirical projects use data and observations to contribute to the proof of concepts or hypothesised relationships. Data can, therefore, be both qualitative and quantitative, and researchers can draw on a broad spectrum of scientific methods that fit the needs of the chosen research design.

### 1.2.1.2 RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE

With regard to the research perspective, a distinction is made between actor-centric and systemic. The *actor-centric* dimension is derived from political sciences. Mayntz and Scharpf (1995) introduced the actor-centric institutionalism following the basic assumption that social phenomena are the result of interactions between intentionally behaving actors (Scharpf, 2006). The institutional framework structures actors' behaviours in several ways (Baumgartner, 2010). It defines rules that actors expect themselves as well as others to follow. It also governs the use of resources, influence the action orientation, and shape aspects of the respective action situation (Mayntz & Scharpf, 1995). Within the concept of actor-centric institutionalism, an actor refers to both, individuals and constellations of individuals, who can be regarded as uniformly acting actors. Although this concept is retrieved from political sciences, it features many theoretical overlaps with marketing and management literature. Accordingly, social interaction by actors and groups of actors, the behaviour-governing role of institutions as well as the actors' ability to shape institutions are discussed through the lens of value co-creation (Lusch & Nambisan, 2015; Scott, 2013; Vargo & Lusch, 2016).

Projects summarised under the actor-centric dimension consequently focus on social phenomena and behaviours of focal actors or groups of focal actors within a network that contributes to the co-creation of value.

The *systemic* dimension allows capturing the holistic and dynamic nature of value creation (Vargo and Lusch, 2016). Co-created value cannot be limited to individual actors, dyads or triads on the micro-level, engagement platforms on the meso-level or networks of interrelated engagement platforms on the macro-level. This is not to say that analyses covering either one of those levels are incorrect. Nevertheless, a systemic perspective would rather unite those different levels and consider their emergence as a continuum from actors' dyads or triads, engagement platforms, and ultimately the whole service ecosystem (Meynhardt, Chandler, & Strathoff, 2016). To consider a holistic picture of value co-creation, it is necessary to apply a systemic perspective on interactions (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). This interactive approach builds the social context for relationship marketing, which is based on relationships, networks, and interaction, whereby embedded in a wider management network (Gummesson, 2002). Hence, a systemic perspective reflects a process of zooming-out to be capable of

conceptualizing a broader picture with multi-actor settings on different levels, or rather networks of engagement platforms within ecosystems (Akaka & Vargo, 2015).

Consequently, projects of this thesis that are assigned to the systemic dimension consider a multi-level perspective. As such, they refer to a holistic view of systems where value is co-created beyond industry boundaries.

Besides the projects that are part of the research framework, this thesis consists of an introductory chapter one, opening remarks of chapter two that aim to briefly summarise the traditional logic in (service) management and sport management, and a concluding chapter six. To assure conformity, different layouts of submitted articles have been adjusted to the layout of this thesis.

### **1.2.2 AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION TO RESEARCH PROJECTS**

Scientific paper one ([\*Co-Branding through an International Double Degree Program – A Single Case Study in Sport Management Education\*](#)) empirically elaborates on an international co-branding strategy employed by two universities, Ohio University and the University of Bayreuth, in the field of sport management education. Thereby, these two universities are focal actors that collaborate to a joint double degree in sport management and thereby co-create value. Within the case study, it becomes evident that the two focal actors coordinate the processes and link actors. As such, the two universities serve as engagement platforms that facilitate interaction and resource integration for various actors, including academics, lecturers, administrator, employers, but first and foremost, elite students in the field of sport management. Empirical findings also show what skills and competencies are necessary to succeed in the field.

The conceptualisation of the double degree program and the respective scientific publication was led by Herbert Woratschek, Tim Ströbel, and David Ridpath. The author of this thesis, hereafter referred to as the author, contributed to the paper by implementing the standardised online questionnaire, guided, and controlled data collection. The author also edited and analysed the generated data and developed the section on the case study method as well as on the double degree process.

Scientific paper two ([\*Gamification through Fantasy Sports – Empirical Findings from Professional Sport Leagues\*](#)) focuses on professional sport leagues as focal actors and analyses the use of gamification towards building the respective sport league brand. Fantasy

sports is classified as a gamified application for professional sport leagues to engage their fan base. Thus, online-based fantasy sports can be referred to as a virtual engagement platform for diverse actors' interaction. The empirical study investigates the effects of fantasy sports-participation on sport fans' sport practice and sport usage habits, as well as their attitudinal parameters (consumption capital, word-of-mouth, loyalty) towards the hosting sport organization.

The author developed the theoretical foundation as well as the empirical study together with Herbert Woratschek. David Ridpath supported the collection of data from sport fans in North America. The author analysed the data and led the article to submission. Herbert Woratschek contributed through constant conceptual and empirical advice and revisions of the paper.

The third scientific paper ([\*Understanding Sport Sponsorship Decision-Making – An Exploration of the Roles and Power Bases in the Sponsors' Buying Center\*](#)) sheds light into decision making within a sponsoring company's organization. The article's main objective is to extend the literature on sport sponsorship decision-making by investigating sponsor's cooperation with external partners as well as the external and internal determinants of the sponsors' buying centre. An empirical Delphi-study serves as an exploratory method to gain insights into group decision-making in corporate sponsorships. It analyses the role of external partners and organisational factors on the sponsors' buying centre as well as the power bases of individuals occupying different roles in the sponsors' buying centre. The paper highlights internal processes but acknowledges the role of external actors. Expanding the organisational boundaries to a more holistic picture is vital for the projects of the thesis covering a systemic perspective to explain the co-creation of value.

The author supported data collection and analysis. He contributed through the revision of the paper and discussions throughout the whole process. The majority of theoretical and empirical work was carried out by Jan Schönberner and Herbert Woratschek. This paper was awarded the second price in the European Association for Sport Management new researcher award 2019.

Scientific paper four ([\*'Going the Extra Mile' in Resource Integration: Evolving a Concept of Sport Sponsorship as an Engagement Platform\*](#)) and five ([\*Was bringen Sponsoren außer Geld? Sport Sponsoring als Engagement-Plattform\*](#)) contribute to an understanding of sport

sponsorship as an engagement platform on which the sponsee grants access and both sponsee and sponsors integrate resources. Thereby, sponsorship engagement is conceptualized theoretically from the application of actor engagement as behaviour in the context of sport sponsorship. For that reason, actors' behavioural manifestations beyond or without the sponsorship contract are defined as sponsorship engagement in sports. To refine the conceptualisation, both projects empirically investigate what types of resources are integrated in sponsorship engagement. Therefore, an empirical three-staged Delphi-study with N=18 (project five) and N=61 (project four) sport sponsorship practitioners was performed. Whilst project four observes resource integration within multiple sponsor–sponsee networks, project five, as a pre-study, only considers dyadic relationships between sponsor and sponsee. Project five is published in German language and aimed to introduce the conceptual understanding to managers. Both projects emphasise that engagement behaviour exceeds contractual agreement and cannot be limited to specific actors and their resource integration, but they nurture a more comprehensive perspective. Consequently, those projects contribute to a holistic perspective of engagement while considering the dynamic nature of value co-creation.

The author led both of the projects in terms of theoretical and empirical refinement. For project five, Herbert Woratschek contributed with his expertise and transferring capabilities to give the project more practical relevance and power. Therefore, the paper was awarded the journal's best paper award in 2018 in the practice category. Project four was initialised with proactive research vision by Herbert Woratschek and, first and foremost, accelerated by the author, who developed the theoretical concept. Moreover, the author designed, analysed and applied the empirical data to sponsorship engagement. Herbert Woratschek and Jan Schönberner served as sparring partners in fruitful academic discussions and revised the paper repeatedly.

Scientific paper six (*Conceptualizing the Sport Ecosystem Logic*) conceptually develops the new sport ecosystem logic. To develop the sport ecosystem logic, this conceptual paper synthesises theories and bridges network approaches in sport management, ecosystem, and service ecosystem literature. The sport ecosystem logic serves sport management researchers and practitioners with a powerful conceptual understanding of linkages, platforms, networks, and ultimately the sport ecosystem. By doing so, the sport ecosystem logic nurtures a new

conceptual understanding of sport ecosystems, on the one hand, and the co-creation of value in sport management, on the other hand. Reflecting a proposition based style of theorising, both are achieved through the development of five fundamental premises that constitute to the sport ecosystem logic.

The project was kicked-off with extensive academic discussions by Herbert Woratschek, Geoff Dickson, Jan Schönberner and the author. The author was responsible for the further development of the sport system logic during his time as a visiting researcher at La Trobe University in Melbourne, Australia. The paper benefitted through various rounds of advice and revision by the co-authors Herbert Woratschek, Geoff Dickson, and Jan Schönberner before submission.

Scientific paper seven ([\*Pure Public Natural Resources in Value Co-Creation: Abductive Reasoning Using the Case of COVID-19 in Sport Management\*](#)) reflects on resource integration in sport management. Thereby the article aims to classify resources by applying a holistic perspective on value co-creation in sport management on all levels of aggregation. Resources are classified as physical, human, financial, organisational, informational, relational, legal and natural resources. The case of COVID-19 is used to conceptualise conscious voluntary, conscious involuntary and unconscious resource integration behaviour by actors with and without agency leading to positive or negative value.

The author contributed to the conceptual development of the fundamental ideas, conducted a systematic literature review, worked out the sections on value co-creation and resource integration in sport management, and assisted multiple rounds of revision of the paper.

The further articles (transfer paper A-E, Figure 1, white background), namely the four *SMAB Relevant Management Insights* and the book chapter were all developed and led by the respective first authors with the co-authors' contributions through helpful discussions, edits and revisions.

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## **CHAPTER 2: TRADITIONAL CONCEPTS AND APPROACHES**

### **2.1 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

#### **2.1.1 (SERVICE) MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVE**

Marketing theory and practice focus largely on goods and services as units of exchange. During a production process, firms or organisations combine input factors, or rather resources to create value. Resources in business are traditionally financial resources but also raw input materials, employee's capacities, or energy (Woratschek, 2020). Economics and business administration literature assumes that firms create value by effectively and efficiently combining resources (Woratschek, 2020). This value is reflected in the products and services produced by a company. Those units of output are enriched with utility during the production and distribution process by companies and offer embedded value to the consumer (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Thus, the customers are the recipients of goods and services, and they occupy the role of consumers, i.e., they exchange the unit of output for money and use-up the embedded value. Ultimately the value is destroyed by the consumer, leading to the demand for new products or services. This perspective is related to production and consumption and thus referred to as a goods-dominant logic of exchange (Vargo & Lusch, 2011).

#### **2.1.2 SPORT MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVE**

Traditional approaches in sport management also adapt this traditional way of thinking to explain exchange in sport. Hence, sport events are produced by firms or organisations that combine resources to embed value in an event (Chelladurai, 2014). The sport industry therefore is segmented along product types that are offered to the sport consumer (Pitts, Fielding, & Miller, 1994). Sport consumers demand these kind of output units because they meet certain needs and satisfy consumers' motivations (Woratschek & Griebel, 2020). Woratschek and Griebel (2020, p. 4) refer to this as the "logic of sport products".

However, the goods-dominant logic and the logic of sport products neglect the collaborative nature of service management in general and sport management in particular. Value cannot be produced by firms in isolation since customers alongside with other actors collaboratively join in value-creating relationships.

This is why the underlying thesis applies the conceptual ideas of value co-creation through resource integration to explain the role of engagement platforms.

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## **2.2 ENGAGING WITH SPORTS OR ENGAGING IN DOING SPORTS – A COMPARISON OF DIFFERENT LOGICS IN SPORT MANAGEMENT (TRANSFER PAPER A)**

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### **2.2.1 LOGIC OF SPORT PRODUCTS**

Following the “logic of sport products”, consumers demand, buy and ultimately consume the value embedded in sport products or services (Woratschek & Griebel, 2020). The widespread opinion in the field views sport consumption as “the process involved when individuals select, purchase, use, and dispose of sport and sport event-related products and services to satisfy needs and receive benefits” (Funk, Alexandris, & McDonald, 2008, p. 6). So consuming sport refers to whether consumers “do it” or prefer to “watch it”.

Active sport consumption features actively practising any kind of sports, which is directly related to physical practice (Preuß, Alfs; & Ahlert, 2012, p. 44). Therefore, active sport consumption summarizes the active involvement and commitment to sport participation (Taks & Scheerder, 2006).

Passive sport consumption refers to watching sports as part of spectatorship such as TV, online or other media channels. Besides consumption around sport events (e.g. entrance, food, travel, accommodation, etc.), passive sport consumption includes merchandise, pay-tv, sports betting and so on (Preuß et al. 2012, p. 46) and any type of travelling to visit a sport event as a spectator (Preuß et al., 2012, Koning, 2009, p. 229).

Sport consumption is most often measured in monetary value. Preuß et al. (2012) draw a picture of sports-related consumption in private households in Germany for the year 2010. Expenses for active sports amount for € 112.6 bn. Consumption on passive sports totals at € 26.0 bn. Please refer to Figures 1 and 2 for more details on active and passive sport consumption in Germany in 2010.

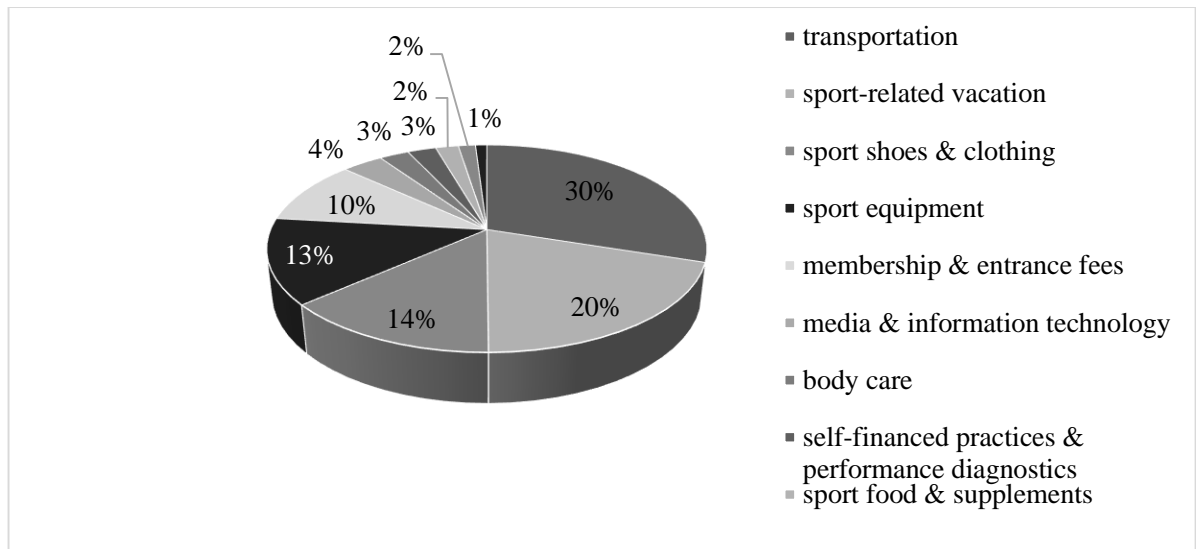


Figure 1: Active sport consumption in Germany in 2010<sup>1</sup> (Preuß et al., 2012)

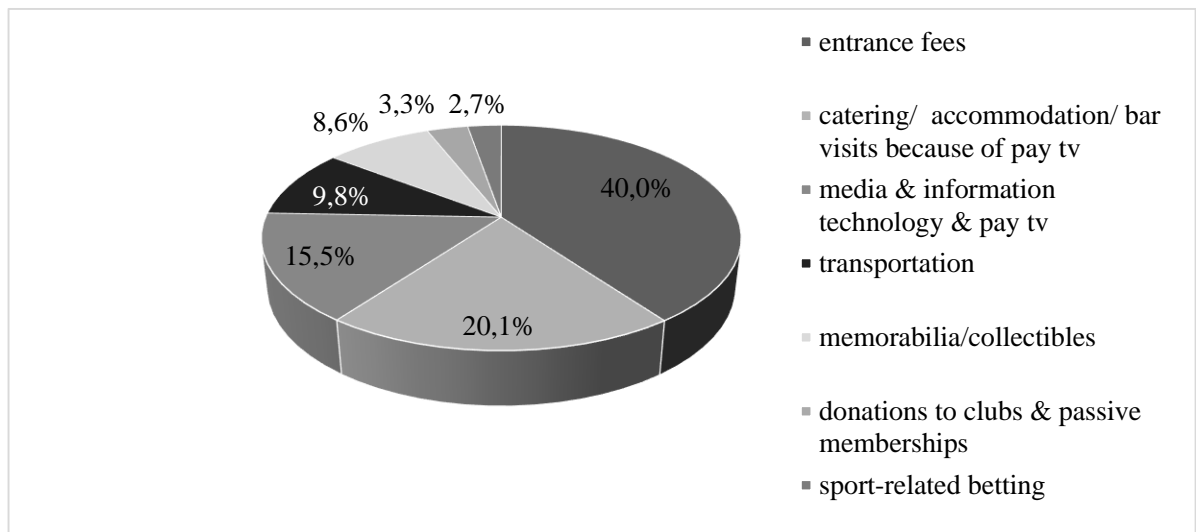


Figure 2: Passive sport consumption in Germany in 2010<sup>1</sup> (Preuß et al., 2012)

Forecasting economic impact ex-ante and calculating monetary value ex-post remains a difficult challenge. Furthermore, both active and passive sport consumption is subject to constant change due to emerging technologies and disruptive approaches of interaction through engagement (Smith, & Westerbeek, 2010). The latest disruption is the progressing digitalisation of the sport industry.

<sup>1</sup> Calculations include all expenses for the individual sport organization and for transport to practice sport. Beyond this, the figures include all expenditures that need sport as an input-factor, such as media and information technology (Preuß et al., 2012).

### 2.2.2 LOGIC OF VALUE CO-CREATION

In contrast to the “logic of sport products” (Woratschek & Griebel, 2020), the “logic of value co-creation” (Woratschek, 2020) focuses on the collaboration and social interaction of participating actors. The “logic of value co-creation” emphasises that fans or spectators of sport events actively engage in value co-creation through social interaction (e.g. chanting, singing, travelling together) (Woratschek et al., 2014; Woratschek, 2020; Yoshida, Gordon, Nakazawa, & Biscaia, 2014). Consequently, there is no passive consumption in watching sports. Thus, we call this sport usage instead of passive sport consumption as actors engage with sports.

If people engage in doing sports, we call this sport practice (Buser, Woratschek, & Ridpath, 2020). This implies that sportspersons provide their resources (e.g. physical abilities) and use others’ resources (e.g. coaches’ knowledge, opponents’ abilities). Therefore, we differentiate sport practice (i.e. engaging in doing sport) from sport usage (i.e. engaging with sport), and refrain from differentiating between the terms active and passive sport consumption.

Sport practice is influenced by wearable technologies that impact the way how people participate in sport (Kim & Chiu, 2019). Sportspersons can track, plan and execute their training sessions with the assistance of those wearables and share their data with others. The constant emergence of fitness apps changes the fitness industry as more and more sportspersons tend to prefer such applications on their mobile devices instead of going to a gym and working out individually. Lots of fitness apps, therefore, integrate gamification approaches to foster interactive competition with like-minded (Lister, West, Cannon, Sax, & Brodegard, 2014).

Technological development also radically changes the way how people engage with sports. Approaches like virtual reality, connected stadiums, or second screen usage modifies the classical in-stadium experience or broadcast of an event. The possibility of sports broadcast and entertainment of consumers is far from being reached. Steadily improving technologies do put the consumer closer to the action and empower engagement like never before. Formula E, for example, uses the “Fanboost” approach to allow fans to vote for their favourite drivers and give them extra power to overtake or defend from an opponent (Formula E, 2020). Fans are consequently able to influence the results of the race by their engagement. Technological convergence thereby contributes to the enhancement of data processing characterized by connectedness and ubiquity (Smith, & Westerbeek, 2010).

No matter if engaging in or engaging with sports, technology development and digitalisation enables people to engage more. Technological platforms enable and facilitate more engagement and therefore, they boost value co-creation. If these platforms drive value co-creation, they can be also described as engagement platforms (Buser, Woratschek, & Schönberner, 2020a; Buser, Woratschek, & Schönberner, 2020b). However, they can only unfold value if sport persons engage on them through integrating their resources.

Value is always value-in-sport usage or value-in-sport practice. Co-created value is a dynamic process which cannot be covered by static financial figures. Additionally, putting a price tag on all the memories connected with unforgettable sport events like Olympic Games or World Cups is just not possible. Furthermore, everybody values these memories differently.

To put it in a nutshell:

- (1) The logic of sport products differentiates between passive and active sport consumption.
- (2) Furthermore, the logic of sport products focuses mainly on financial value showing the huge economic importance of sports.
- (3) But there is no passive consumption because people engage with sports even if they watch sports.
- (4) The logic of value co-creation differentiates between sport usage and sport practise.
- (5) Sport practice refers to engaging in doing sports.
- (6) Sport usage refers to engaging with sports.
- (7) Technology and digitalization enable and facilitate engagement in sport practice as well as in sport usage.
- (8) Digitalisation boosts value co-creation.
- (9) Value co-creation cannot be fully covered by financial value.

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## CHAPTER 3: EMPIRICAL AND ACTOR-CENTRIC PERSPECTIVE ON ENGAGEMENT

### 3.1 CO-BRANDING THROUGH AN INTERNATIONAL DOUBLE DEGREE PROGRAM – A SINGLE CASE STUDY IN SPORT MANAGEMENT EDUCATION (SCIENTIFIC PAPER 1)

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#### ABSTRACT

Scholars forecast that globalization will require sport managers to have competencies in international business. Sport, due to its global nature, has become an international business, leading to sport management programs at postsecondary institutions growing in number and the marketing of such programs becoming a key success factor. In an increasingly competitive educational environment, both effective curriculum offerings and innovative marketing, including branding, are important for a successful sport management program. This article shares a case study of innovative marketing—the co-branding through a double degree program between two longstanding sport management programs, one in North America (Ohio University, United States) and one in Europe (University of Bayreuth, Germany). This program is designed to enhance international education, as well as global internship and job-placement opportunities. The details of the double degree program within the background of co-branding are presented as a pedagogical framework for international education. Data from a survey of industry professionals are analyzed to demonstrate the need for such an international double degree program. Results provide a template for replication by other institutions and identify potential future research.

**KEYWORDS:** international business, innovative marketing, globalization, pedagogical framework

### 3.1.1 INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades, sport has grown worldwide, most notably in developed countries. In turn, the global popularity of sport enables international connections, particularly in emerging sport markets such as China, Brazil, India, Russia, the Middle East, and the African continent (Fay, Velez, & Parks, 2011; Miller, Lawrence, McKay, & Rowe, 2001; Ridpath, Smolianov, Harris, Akindes, & Ishac, 2019). As the sport industry grows, the importance of having competent and trained professionals who understand the global aspects of sport and management becomes crucial. The sport industry is global, thus it is critical that sport management students be well prepared for this aspect in career development (Choi, Kim, & Park, 2013; LeCrom, Dwyer, & Greenhalgh, 2018).

Many scholars have encouraged international cooperation between institutions, study abroad opportunities, the internationalization of sport management programs, and enhanced global content in curricula (e.g., Costa, 2005; LeCrom et al., 2018). In seeking to build on this literature and improve international education, this article shares an example of an innovative strategy to help identify and train future professionals for an increasingly competitive global sport environment. Specifically, an innovative co-branding strategy through a double degree program between two long-standing sport management programs, one in North America (Ohio University, United States) and one in Europe (University of Bayreuth, Germany), is analyzed internally and with an industry survey. Case study research allows for data collection and analysis from different sources, both qualitative and quantitative, to intensively describe a single case (Yin, 2014). As the double degree program was designed to enhance international education, global internship, and job placement opportunities for the students enrolled, the case study is presented to provide learning around training future practitioners in such a global environment.

The benefits of educational interchange and cooperation between academic sport management institutions are widely acknowledged (de Haan & Sherry, 2012; Kelley, Beitel, DeSensi, & Blanton, 1994; LeCrom et al., 2018; Li, MacIntosh, & Bravo, 2012; Masteralexis & McDonald, 1997; Moore, 2004). With the foundation of numerous international associations (e.g., North American Society for Sport Management, European Association for Sport Management, Sport Management Association of Australia and New Zealand, Asian Association for Sport Management, World Association of Sport Management), sport management education and research have become more international concurrent to the

globalization happening in the sport industry. As a result, universities and colleges have increased their efforts in finding strategic partners with an international perspective to recruit top students and provide their graduates with a competitive advantage.

Moreover, sport management programs face increasing competition for top students and financial support as similar programs are added elsewhere. Marketing of these programs to set them apart becomes more important (LeCrom et al., 2018; Moore, 2004). Kelley et al. (1994) suggested 25 years ago that sport management programs need to restructure their curriculums to keep pace with the world's rapidly changing business and economic environment. Sport management programs in North America were traditionally housed in education, kinesiology, or health departments (Masteralexis & McDonald, 1997). This is changing almost 100 programs in North America integrated in business schools (College programs in sports business, 2020). This represents approximately 20% of the 531 North American universities that have programs as listed on the North American Society for Sport Management website (NASSM, 2019). The NASSM (2019) website also reports on programs in Europe, Asia, Africa, and Australia, supporting the global presence of education in the field.

These trends support the need for innovative strategies in the complex higher education market to support the future success of graduates in the global sport industry. In this context, the authors propose that brand alliances, especially co-branding partnerships between academic programs and their institutions, can be a means to increase the quality and viability of traditional sport management pedagogy. The case study of the double degree program between Ohio University and the University of Bayreuth demonstrates how international co-branding can be implemented as a strategic advantage in the development of sport management programs. The institutions integrate branding activities to better prepare future practitioners for a growing international sport marketplace.

### **3.1.2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **3.1.2.1 EVOLUTION OF SPORT MANAGEMENT EDUCATION**

The existing literature, although not specifically addressing international co-branding strategies, does discuss the need for innovation in sport management education. Experiential learning within program curricula allows students to keep pace with the rapid global changes in the sport business industry (Choi et al., 2013; Costa, 2005; de Haan & Sherry, 2012; Kelley

et al., 1994; LeCrom et al., 2018; Li et al., 2012). The evolution of sport management education has reflected the growth of the sport industry itself. Indeed, it was Walter O'Malley, then president of the Brooklyn Dodgers, who was one of the first to recognize that sport was growing as a business, specifically with the advent of television. He predicted the need for professionally trained sport business administrators and sport management as a separate and distinct educational curriculum. This vision led to the creation of the first accredited sport management program in the world when Dr. James Mason established the graduate program at Ohio University (Parks, Quarterman, & Thibault, 2011). Today, there are over 800 bachelor, masters, and doctoral level sport management programs throughout the world, and the list is growing (NASSM, 2019). As of March 2020, according the website [degreesinsports.com](http://degreesinsports.com), there are 447 undergraduate programs, 254 masters programs, and 36 doctoral programs in the United States that offer sport management-specific degrees (Degrees in sports, 2020). Many of these institutions also offer online hybrid and executive education options. With sport management programs increasingly well established, it is now important for curricula to reflect experiential and international foci.

### 3.1.2.2 INTERNATIONALIZATION OF SPORT MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

There have been many attempts to empirically assess sport business opportunities and challenges over the past 25 years (Choi et al., 2013; LeCrom et al., 2018). Scholars have identified differences between North American and overseas sport managers in terms of educational background, language, and cultural training. This is amplified in many countries by having nonnative athletes live and compete in different cultures, such as professional sports organizations from North America and Europe competing on each other's continents (de Haan & Sherry, 2012; LeCrom et al., 2018; Masteralexis & McDonald, 1997; Popp, Hums, & Greenwell, 2009; Ridpath, Rudd, & Stokowski, 2020). To improve training of globally minded students, sport management programs must provide students with the requisite curriculum and skill development (Foster, O'Reilly, & Davila, 2020).

Light and Dixon (2007) discussed adapting sport management pedagogy in relation to changes in the sport industry. Traditional learning, they argued, needs to evolve toward experiential learning, suggesting that education is expected to involve students in the practices of the sport management community. Lave and Wenger (1993, p. 29) referred to this as "legitimate peripheral participants," which means that participating in the sport management profession not only involves learning specific skills but also the execution of

those skills. Specifically, concerning the continued evolution and globalization of the sport business industry, it also involves learning the culture of the community and how to participate in its practices.

There have been efforts in sport management pedagogy to maximize experiential learning, ideally with such experiences having an international component. The original Sport Education model developed by Siedentop (1998) emphasized experience that is relevant to the real world of sport. This model still holds today, and current thinking suggests the need to include the increasingly global nature of the field (e.g., Foster et al., 2020). Although not specifically internationally focused, the Siedentop (1998) model theorized the importance of actual experience in a sport setting to maximize hands-on learning through community-based sport clubs. One of the significant recommendations overlooked in North American sport management programs is the value of being exposed to non-English speaking settings. Although English is a worldwide language, it is imperative that sport management students be exposed to other cultures and languages to better position themselves in the global sport marketplace (Danylchuk & Boucher, 2003; Thibault, 2009).

Parks et al. (2011) noted that sport is constantly changing, so future sport managers must be equipped to deal with it. North American professional leagues like the National Basketball Association and National Football League schedule games in foreign countries and are considering expansion to global markets (NFL, 2016; USA Today, 2018). Although the United Kingdom has been the primary focus of the National Football League, the league has also held games in Mexico City. There are also plans for Canada, China, and Brazil to host exhibition games and training camps, and these countries may have an expansion franchise, too (Breer, 2015; NFL, 2016). Meanwhile, European professional leagues and clubs have a similar strategic approach. Football clubs like Real Madrid, Bayern Munich, and Arsenal F.C. compete in the International Champions Cup with most of the games taking place in the United States (International Champions Cup, 2019). European clubs also play friendlies in international markets all over the world (Foster et al., 2020; Ridpath et al., 2020).

Fay et al. (2011) discussed the importance of education mirroring and advancing understanding of international sport operations. Sport crosses international boundaries and can be an agent for change. One example is when three long-time political adversaries, the United States, Russia, and Iran, put differences aside to save the sport of wrestling in the Olympic Games (MacFarquhar, 2013). American and Iranian wrestlers embraced and

showed sportsmanship during the 2015 Wrestling World Cup and, then, challenged the International Olympic Committee's decision to drop the sport from the Olympics. This alliance demonstrated the intersection of international sport and politics and highlighted the importance of the internalization of sport management education. Co-branding efforts based on a partnership between educational programs can improve sport management education, in this sense, and foster greater understanding across the global sport marketplace (Moore, 2004).

### 3.1.2.3 INTERNATIONAL CO-BRANDING THROUGH A DOUBLE DEGREE PROGRAM

Recently, branding research has focused on stakeholders and relationships. From this perspective, customers are active contributors to branding, and brand management is a continuous, social, and interactive process between all actors involved (Merz, He, & Vargo, 2009). Current sport management research has also considered these relationships among sport brands (Kunkel & Biscaia, 2020) and social and interactive aspects, such as the co-creation of brand meaning (Ströbel & Germelmann, 2020).

A brand evolves through the interaction of various actors. Thus, it cannot be built autonomously (Ströbel & Germelmann, 2020). Several interactions and behaviors must be coordinated so that brand image, brand strength, and, ultimately, brand value can flourish. This platform, or network-oriented perspective, means that every actor integrates resources. Brodie, Benson-Rea, and Medlin (2017) defined this perspective as integrative branding. The co-actors need to balance the brand meanings for all involved actors by sharpening the collective brand meaning through coordinated branding activities and, in turn, integrating these into the brand identity communication. This concept is pivotal for any branding activity, such as co-branding between two or more independent brands. Co-branding refers to the systematic cooperation between two or more independent brands in a strategic marketing context to realize joint synergies (Woratschek, Kunz, & Strobel, 2008). A narrower definition of co-branding extends the brands' systematic cooperation to the co-creation of a new product or service. Major reasons for co-branding strategies are signalling effects and mutual image improvements (Bengtsson & Servais, 2005; Helmig, Huber, & LeeFlang, 2007; Leuthesser, Kohli, & Suri, 2003; Simonin & Ruth, 1998). Therefore, the actors cooperate on advertising campaigns, dual branding, or joint sales promotions. In such a co-branding strategy, the perceived fit of the brands and their activities plays a major role in shaping attitudes and behavioral intentions toward the co-branded activity.

Increased competition in the international sport management education marketplace calls for systematic marketing of university brands and their programs. University brands drive future students' likelihood to apply for a study program (Judson, Aurand, Gorchels, & Gordon, 2008; Rauschnabel, Krey, Babin, & Ivens, 2016). Empirical work on co-branding in education research is scarce. One of few studies about higher education marketing was an analysis of the effect of co-branding between universities in the United Kingdom with the British Council (Hemsley-Brown & Goonawardana, 2007). While the co-branding activities of the British Council supported the university brand in their marketing efforts, it also affected the university's brand identity. The authors concluded that universities must consider harmonizing all cobrands inside and outside the university to be successful. Therefore, universities must develop their brand identity and coordinate the branding activities of their sub brands together with potential co-brands and other actors outside the university to co-create a collective brand meaning.

Co-branding universities from different countries and cultural backgrounds is challenging. Coordinated brand communication activities are the necessary groundwork. A common degree program between two institutions in different countries takes international co-branding to an even more sophisticated level by eliciting a collective brand meaning among all co-actors to promote specific programs and universities (Brodie et al., 2017). A double degree program can serve as a platform for any co-branding activities and, thereby, secure a strategic advantage. Although sport management programs have been cooperating internationally for many years in areas such as research, faculty exchanges, and study abroad programs, a co-branding strategy along with the concept of a formal double degree program is novel. Therefore, this article is a case study of innovative marketing—the co-branding through a double degree program between the long-standing sport management programs at Ohio University and the University of Bayreuth. A successful curricular and research alliance between academic institutions depends on adequate brand fit, so this is considered in the current case. In addition, the authors discuss the opportunities and threats deriving from this co-branding strategy.



### 3.1.3 CASE STUDY

#### 3.1.3.1 RESEARCH PROTOCOL

Case study research focuses on understanding dynamics occurring in single settings (Eisenhardt, 1989). Yin (2014, p. 16) defined case studies as “empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the ‘case’) in depth and within its real-world context.” The singularity approach is also reflected in other definitions of case study research (Stake, 1995; Gerring, 2004). Case study research allows for an “in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, program or system in a ‘real life’ context” (Simons, 2009, p. 21). Accordingly, case study research is an effective tool and allows the investigation of complex, social, and context-dependent phenomena, while, at the same time, contributing to knowledge and theory building (Melewar, Foroudi, Dinnie, & Nguyen, 2018; Yin, 2014). In recent years, more and more scholars have used case study research to explain a wide range of phenomena in higher education, such as stakeholder network development (Vargas, Lawthom, Prowse, Randles, & Tzoulas, 2019), human resource development (Mughal, Ross, & Fearon, 2017), barriers and drivers of innovations (Lašáková, Bajžíková, & Dedze, 2017), or the role of corporate identity management (Melewar et al., 2018).

This research aims to describe a co-branded double degree program from multiple levels of analysis by employing a single-case embedded design (Yin, 2014). For that reason, the authors combine data collection methods by applying theory (i.e., internationalization of sport management education, international co-branding), qualitative data (i.e., program descriptions, publicly available information about the institutions), and quantitative survey data with practitioners from the global sport industry. Through the application of the case study design, the authors present a template for replication by other institutions/organizations and identify potential future research.

This case study consists of three major parts. First, an initial analysis of the sport management programs of both universities is presented in order to illustrate the strategic fit for an international co-branding strategy. Second, the co-branding strategy based on the double degree program between both institutions will be introduced. Third, an online survey with practitioners in the global sport industry is undertaken to obtain the views of professionals working in the sport industry about joint global sport management programs.

### 3.1.3.2 STRATEGIC FIT FOR AN INTERNATIONAL CO-BRANDING STRATEGY

Ohio University and the University of Bayreuth have highly regarded and long-standing sport management programs (Pedersen & Thibault, 2014). Undergraduate and graduate programs in sport management are in high demand at both universities. Each has a large cohort of alumni who work in key positions in the sport industry. Ohio University is a public research university with a large student body. The University of Bayreuth is also a public university and considered medium sized in terms of its student population. Both are located in small- to medium-sized cities where the university has a major role in the local economy and culture. Each program includes sport management, business, and law classes. Students choose between several major areas, co-majors, and course options (e.g., sport sponsorship, analytics, facility management, marketing, finance, and revenue generation). The distinctiveness of both programs is based on strong business-based curriculums as well as their strong cooperation with alumni. This positioning of the program internationally includes the three fundamental values of quality, individuality, and passion. These qualities help differentiate this double degree program from its competition in higher education (Dholakia & Acciaro, 2014).

### 3.1.3.3 THE PARTNERSHIP

The partnership was seeded in 2008 when officials from Ohio University and the University of Bayreuth started an initial exchange of ideas at a conference. This led to a Memorandum of Understanding in 2011 for research, student, and faculty cooperation as well as exchanges, signed by the leadership of both institutions. The agreement to develop a double degree in sport management was signed in spring 2014. To assess the impact of this double degree program, it is important to review empirical literature, study abroad programming, and other exchange programs at these and other institutions. Related literature is clear on the benefits and need of a globalized education and preparation for future sport managers in an ever-changing worldwide sport industry (Foster et al., 2020; Masteralexis & McDonald, 1997). Ohio University and the University of Bayreuth have conducted joint annual study abroad trips with a business consulting project component, student and faculty exchanges, research collaborations, and, recently, a small program with eight students from both universities. Current students are at various points in the program, and it has helped the institutions identify curriculum and logistical issues that can be addressed prior to the official launch of the double degree program in July 2020. This test run helped foster an understanding of

institutional differences and how to run the program efficiently. This has not only enhanced the educational aspect of the sport management programs but also created demand for a co-branded double degree program.

#### 3.1.3.4 CO-BRANDED DOUBLE DEGREE PROGRAM

The joint undergraduate double degree program has an interdisciplinary and international focus characterized by students spending time and completing their studies at both universities and in both countries. Each year, up to 10 students from the University of Bayreuth and 10 students from Ohio University can participate in the program. The application and selection of undergraduate students at both institutions occurs at the beginning of the first year for the University of Bayreuth students or during the second year of enrolment for Ohio University students.

The partners agreed on a strategy to promote the double degree as a co-branded program. Such a strategy demands the integration of different actors' resources at both universities (Brodie et al., 2017). This integrative process is orchestrated by a respective actor at each university (Brito, 2001) with specific coordinating functions for the program. These two actors coordinate the processes and link, if necessary, persons responsible for certain problems at both universities. The two central actors coordinate a brand platform that enables the integration, expansion, and new composition of predominantly operating resources (Breibach, Brodie, & Hollebeek, 2014; Storbacka, Brodie, Böhmman, Maglio, & Nenonen, 2016).

Vallaster and von Wallpach (2013) stressed the role of all actors in the co-creation of brand meaning, including faculty, administrators, and students, specifically within program marketing and student recruitment. The promotional aspects of the program target high school students and current university students in both countries. The program will allow both institutions to attract strong students. The co-branding strategy involves two interrelated processes: building brand identity and co-creating brand meaning (Brodie et al., 2017). In this respect, both programs must highlight the special features of the study process and the recruiting process and define the contents of the curriculum. The latter is supplemented by the expert opinion of practitioners in the sport sector.

### 3.1.4.1 PROGRAM OF STUDY PROCESS

In this program, a Bayreuth student spends the first year at their home institution. The same is true for students starting at Ohio University. In the second year, students who originated in Bayreuth move and spend one full year, consisting of fall, spring, and summer semesters, at Ohio University, whereas those who originated in Ohio stay there for their second year. In the third year of the double degree program, all students study in Bayreuth, with the fourth and final year at Ohio University. It is anticipated that several cohorts will be at various points in the program continuously. Table 1 outlines this process.

Origin	University of Bayreuth	Ohio University
Year 1	Students at home institution	
	General studies & fundamentals	
Year 2	<i>Bayreuth students at Ohio University</i>	Sport management specializations & business cluster courses
Year 3	Advanced topics in sport management & business administration	<i>Ohio students at University of Bayreuth</i>
	<b><i>Bachelor of Sport, Business &amp; Law (University of Bayreuth)</i></b>	
Year 4	<i>Bayreuth students at Ohio University</i>	Sport management specializations & capstone courses
	<b><i>Bachelor of Sport Management (Ohio University)</i></b>	

Table 1: Process of the double degree program

At the end of the third year, all successful students are awarded a Bachelor of Sport, Business & Law from the University of Bayreuth. Then, after completion of the fourth year, students are awarded a Bachelor of Sport Management degree from Ohio University. Thus, after four years, successful completion of the full program results in two bachelor's degrees as well as international practical experience. This provides a competitive advantage for program graduates.

### 3.1.4.2 RECRUITMENT TO THE DOUBLE DEGREE PROGRAM

For students applying for the double degree program at both institutions, in addition to the relevant academic requirements, the entrance evaluation criteria also include sporting background, interest in working in a global environment, language skills, international background/ competencies, extracurricular/university commitment (e.g., study abroad and internships), a letter of motivation from the candidate, and a personal interview. The target

group for the double degree program is candidates with above-average commitment, excellent knowledge, and well-established interest for a career in sport business.

#### 3.1.4.3 LEARNING OUTCOMES

Learning outcomes are an important aspect of any academic program. In the case of the double degree program, the learning outcomes of each of the two degrees are fulfilled. However, students work toward a variety of supplementary learning outcomes related to a global sporting context, including:

- a) Strong knowledge base in international sport management core areas (breadth and depth of knowledge, business knowledge competencies)
- b) Effective communication through written means and public presentation in a global context, including skills in a second language (written and verbal communications; communications competencies)
- c) Career management skills in a global environment
- d) Critical thinking skills appropriate for the global sport industry (critical thinking; analytical competencies)
- e) Effective information literacy related to the global sport industry (information literacy; analytical competencies)
- f) Skills necessary to live in a diverse, global society (global learning; sociocultural competencies)
- g) Effective team participation with those from different backgrounds and cultures (teamwork effectiveness; sociocultural competencies)
- h) Ethical reasoning skills (ethical reasoning; sociocultural competencies).

#### 3.1.4 ONLINE SURVEY WITH PRACTITIONERS IN THE GLOBAL SPORT INDUSTRY

As part of this case study, it was important to capture the views of sport industry practitioners to assess the need for enhanced globalized education in sport management. These insights contributed to an understanding of international sport management education and, specifically, the question of whether a double degree program would be beneficial to the development, job placement, and advancement of sport managers. This portion of the case was guided by the following research questions:

- RQ1. Which skills and competencies are necessary to succeed in the international sport business job market?

RQ2. Do practitioners from the U.S.A. and Germany have different expectations of future employees' skills and competencies?

RQ3. Does the double degree program enhance the students' ability to gain employment in an increasingly competitive global marketplace?

Participants were purposefully sampled based on prescribed characteristics and asked to respond to an online survey that also sampled other practitioners in the global sport industry (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Leaders in the global sport industry and, specifically, those in positions to hire new graduates were targeted. The respondents represented several segments of the sport industry, including teams, leagues, governing bodies, and major brands.

### **3.1.5 RESULTS**

A Qualtrics survey was emailed to prospective participants and promoted via LinkedIn in July 2019. Participants were notified that their participation was voluntary. A Likert scale from 1 = not required to 5 = to a very high degree was used to assess the skills and core competencies needed for sport managers. Ohio University's Institutional Review Board for human subjects research approved the survey in summer 2019. The survey instrument was also reviewed by three sport business experts to assess and improve content validity. Analysis included descriptive statistics and a one-way analysis of variance. Overall, the survey was answered by 68 respondents (33 from United States, 27 from Germany, two from other countries, and six did not specify). The respondents work for agencies (18), sports clubs and teams (eight), sports governing bodies (seven), sporting goods manufacturers (three), executive education providers (four), and other organizational types (12). Sixteen did not specify their place of work.

RQ1. Which skills and competencies are necessary to succeed in the international sport business job market?

Respondents indicate that specific soft skills are essential to succeed in the job market. Team skills ( $M= 4.68$ ), communication skills ( $M= 4.58$ ), planning and organizational skills ( $M= 4.32$ ), and critical thinking/judgment ( $M= 4.29$ ) as well as structured and goal-oriented working style ( $M= 4.29$ ) are reported as the top skills for future sport managers. The most important subject-specific competency (see Table 2) is project management ( $M= 4.18$ ), followed by customer relationship management ( $M= 4.08$ ). Strategic management ( $M= 3.88$ ), marketing ( $M= 3.84$ ), service management ( $M= 3.82$ ), and brand management ( $M= 3.72$ ) are close behind the top skills. Social media skills ( $M= 3.71$ ), negotiation skills ( $M= 3.68$ ), and

multidisciplinary thinking (M= 3.68) are identified as important skills, among others, as well. Specific sport business knowledge (M= 3.57) as well as intercultural competencies (M= 3.06) are ranked lower by respondents. The means of language skills, search engine optimization, human resources management, e-commerce, graphic design software, international working experience, and international education are all below the threshold of M= 3.0. However, they are included in the following analysis of variance to investigate RQ2.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Team Skills	65	<b>4.68</b>	.503	.253
Communication Skills	65	<b>4.58</b>	.583	.340
Planning and Organizational Skills	65	<b>4.31</b>	.635	.404
Critical Thinking/Judgement	65	<b>4.29</b>	.805	.648
Structured and Goal-Oriented Working Style	65	<b>4.29</b>	.723	.523
Project Management	68	<b>4.18</b>	1.007	1.013
Customer Relationship Management	65	<b>4.08</b>	1.035	1.072
Leadership Skills	65	<b>3.94</b>	.747	.559
Conflict Management	64	<b>3.94</b>	.957	.917
Strategic Management	67	<b>3.88</b>	.962	.925
Marketing	68	<b>3.84</b>	1.002	1.003
Service Management	67	<b>3.82</b>	1.014	1.028
Brand Management	68	<b>3.72</b>	1.020	1.040
Social Media Skills	65	<b>3.71</b>	1.182	1.398
Negotiation Skills	65	<b>3.68</b>	1.120	1.253
Multidisciplinary Thinking	65	<b>3.68</b>	1.062	1.128
National Working Experience	64	<b>3.66</b>	1.250	1.563
Sponsorship	65	<b>3.65</b>	1.351	1.826
Business Ethics	64	<b>3.64</b>	.998	.996
Specific Sport Business Knowledge	65	<b>3.57</b>	1.199	1.437
Event Management	68	<b>3.43</b>	1.331	1.771
Advertising	64	<b>3.42</b>	1.206	1.454
Data Analytics	65	<b>3.34</b>	1.189	1.415
Sales Management	65	<b>3.34</b>	1.278	1.634
Public Relations	65	<b>3.12</b>	1.179	1.391
Intercultural Competencies	65	<b>3.06</b>	1.273	1.621
Language Skills (bi- or trilingual)	65	<b>2.80</b>	1.563	2.444
Search Engine Optimization	62	<b>2.79</b>	1.175	1.382
Human Resources Management	67	<b>2.48</b>	1.146	1.314
E-Commerce	64	<b>2.47</b>	1.284	1.650
Graphic Design Software	63	<b>2.32</b>	1.029	1.059
International Working Experience	64	<b>2.30</b>	1.318	1.736
International Education (e.g. Study Abroad. Student Exchange)	64	<b>2.13</b>	1.315	1.730

Note: 5-point Likert scale (1=not required until 5=to a very high degree)

Table 2: Means of survey items

RQ2. Do practitioners from the U.S.A. and Germany have different expectations of future employees' skills and competencies?

There are significant mean differences between respondents from the United States and Germany. A one-way analysis of variance suggests the overall importance of customer relationship management, multidisciplinary thinking, and national working experience; however, mean differences indicate a country-to-country difference. Furthermore, intercultural competencies, language skills, search engine optimization, human resources management, e-commerce, graphic design software, international working experience, and international education are not strongly required in the overall sample, but they are more strongly required by the responding sport business professionals from Germany (Table 3).

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Significance between groups
Customer Relationship Management	USA	33	<b>4.42</b>	.708	.123	<b>.01*</b>
	Germany	27	<b>3.63</b>	1.245	.240	
Multidisciplinary Thinking	USA	33	<b>3.24</b>	1.032	.180	<b>.00*</b>
	Germany	27	<b>4.22</b>	.847	.163	
National Working Experience	USA	33	<b>3.18</b>	1.424	.248	<b>.01*</b>
	Germany	27	<b>4.19</b>	.681	.131	
Intercultural Competencies	USA	33	<b>2.52</b>	1.176	.205	<b>.00*</b>
	Germany	27	<b>3.56</b>	1.155	.222	
Language Skills (bi- or trilingual)	USA	33	<b>1.73</b>	1.069	.186	<b>.00*</b>
	Germany	27	<b>3.96</b>	1.126	.217	
Search Engine Optimization	USA	31	<b>2.45</b>	1.028	.185	<b>.05*</b>
	Germany	26	<b>3.08</b>	1.294	.254	
Human Resources Management	USA	32	<b>1.91</b>	.818	.145	<b>.00*</b>
	Germany	27	<b>3.04</b>	1.160	.223	
E-Commerce	USA	32	<b>2.03</b>	1.062	.188	<b>.02*</b>
	Germany	27	<b>2.89</b>	1.340	.258	
Graphic Design Software	USA	32	<b>1.97</b>	.861	.152	<b>.01*</b>
	Germany	26	<b>2.69</b>	1.087	.213	
International Working Experience	USA	33	<b>1.39</b>	.659	.115	<b>.00*</b>
	Germany	27	<b>3.26</b>	1.095	.211	
International Education	USA	33	<b>1.24</b>	.561	.098	<b>.00*</b>
	Germany	27	<b>3.04</b>	1.192	.229	

Note: 5-point Likert scale (1=not required until 5=to a very high degree); \*  $p \leq .05$ .

Table 3: Means of survey items



RQ3. Does the double degree program enhance the students' ability to gain employment in an increasingly competitive global marketplace?

Sport business professionals seek multidisciplinary thinkers who have international working experience. The findings support the learning objectives of the double degree program and, also, that expanded international educational opportunities are increasingly needed. The results imply that practitioners may have different expectations in certain competencies. This highlights the importance of future sport managers being nimble and prepared for an industry that has expanded beyond borders and continents.

### **3.1.6 DISCUSSION**

This case study of a co-branded double degree program has highlighted an innovative strategy to better prepare future sport industry managers for an increasingly global environment. However, there is not yet widespread recognition of a need for a new and innovative approach despite this case and other related research (Choi et al., 2013; Foster et al., 2020; LeCrom et al., 2018; Parks et al., 2011). The double degree program is, to the best of the authors' knowledge, the first co-branding in international sport management education and has provided a template for other institutions. Sport management as an academic discipline continues to evolve. It is critical to explore innovative educational solutions to meet the needs of a growing international industry and meet the learning objectives of the academic programs (Choi et al., 2013; Costa, 2005; de Haan & Sherry, 2012; Kelley et al., 1994; LeCrom et al., 2018; Li et al., 2012). This case study contributes to sport management education literature. It is an illustration of how to build an international double degree program through co-branding to attract top students who, in turn, should be better prepared and competitive in international employment (Hemsley-Brown & Goonawardana, 2007).

Specifically, this case study has fostered a better understanding of the strategic advantage of international co-branding between sport management programs along with ways to better address competencies in educational programs within a growing international marketplace. Thus, the complementary brand identities of the sport management programs at the two institutions provide an adequate brand fit to run a successful co-branding strategy that better intertwines significant benchmarks and skills (Helmig et al., 2007; Leuthesser et al., 2003). The international co-branding through the double degree program creates a collective brand meaning that secures a strategic educational advantage that strengthens both university brands. However, based on the concept of integrative branding (Brodie et al., 2017), both

programs must continue to integrate more relevant actors from international sport business. This will enhance the industry with better-prepared professionals that can work in different countries and sport systems, which has been called for in related literature (Fay et al., 2011; Foster et al., 2020; Masteralexis & McDonald, 1997; Ridpath et al., 2019; Ridpath et al., 2020; Ströbel et al., 2015; Thibault, 2009). The sport industry continues to evolve, so it will be a major disadvantage if sport management programs do not continually adapt.

Insights derived from global sport industry practitioners are supportive of the learning goals of the double degree program. The double degree focuses on soft skills but also on international and multidisciplinary subject-specific competencies that are identified in previous research and by the practitioners surveyed here. Furthermore, students benefit from the expertise and knowledge in international sport management education and research that both brands integrate into the program. The practitioners indicate that sport business professionals require more soft skills than subject specific competencies. Sport business professionals expect a solid knowledge base from their future employees after graduation from university. Soft skills are often not included in the focus of an academic education. However, sport management is an international, intercultural, and interdisciplinary profession that does focus on skills concerning multiple occupational groups (e.g., athletes, fans, spectators, marketing experts, lawyers, physicians, and therapists). The management of those heterogeneous groups requires well developed and diverse soft skills, typically from the first day of a professional career in sport management. A closer look at the survey subsamples shows that respondents from the United States prioritize customer relationship management. This is typical for the highly commercialized and sales-driven North American sport industry. European sport business professionals give more weight to international experience and knowledge. Due to the comparatively smaller size of European domestic sport industries, internationalization is more widespread. Moreover, many sport marketing companies are already international companies active in various countries. The internationalization.

The double degree program can enhance students' ability to gain domestic and international employment in an increasingly competitive global marketplace. In addition, students learn soft skills from living abroad. They acquire subject-specific competencies in a unique combination of sport management courses and experiential learning and knowledge from two major sport markets. The international co-branding between both university brands ensures

that students will meet the requirements for a successful national and, especially, international sport management career. Affiliation with the alumni networks of both institutions may also be advantageous for their career.

However, the relative advantage of an international double degree program can only be permanent if the program corresponds with practitioners' expectations of future employees' skills and competencies. Many of these skill sets can be enhanced by international education opportunities and experiences. As mentioned in past research, globalization will require future sport managers to have relevant competencies in international business (Foster et al., 2020; LeCrom et al., 2018). Competencies like language skills, international work experience, and cultural understanding are rated highly by practitioners, so it is incumbent on sport management educators to better integrate international education and opportunities in their programs. Therefore, it will be necessary to balance the curriculum of the double degree program to address disparate competencies.

Several recommendations for effective co-branding of a double degree program arise from this case study. At the very least, institutions should have these four main things codified to ensure the success of international sport management programs:

- a) Long-term staff exchanges
- b) Formal cooperative agreements (e.g., memorandum of understanding)
- c) The appointment of at least one employee from each university to coordinate co-branding activities, joint planning, and implementation and control of the study program
- d) The development of a specially coordinated course of studies, a defined recruiting process, and the involvement of important actors outside the universities that are connected with the educational objectives (e.g., alumni)

### **3.1.7 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

This research is based on a single case of co-branding an international sport management program and a convenience sample of industry professionals who are part of the authors' networks. Thus, any generalization of the findings should be cautious and future research should include a broader sample of industry professionals. Practically, a template for an innovative co-branding strategy through a double degree program is provided that other program directors and university administrators can adopt and use. All sport management programs should assess and, potentially, implement these types of partnerships as a way to

innovate and enhance programming along with practical opportunities and job placement as a way to remain relevant and current within the ever-changing and global-centric sports industry.

A second limitation is that this program only started recently. A soft opening started in the Fall of 2018 and the official launch was July 2020. Thus, the authors do not yet have feedback from graduates. This postbaccalaureate assessment will also be delayed with the advent of the 2020 Covid-19 global pandemic, which, likely, will affect enrolment and graduation from the program for the next 1–2 years. Future studies must ask graduates to evaluate the program and how it influenced their career. The double degree explored in this case study will be assessed as it progresses over the next 5–10 years. Other studies can assess the impact of students who graduate from this program or similar programs elsewhere.

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## **3.2 GAMIFICATION THROUGH FANTASY SPORTS – EMPIRICAL FINDINGS FROM PROFESSIONAL SPORT LEAGUES (SCIENTIFIC PAPER 2, EXTENDED ABSTRACT)**

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**Under Review**

### **3.2.1 RESEARCH AIM**

In recent years, technology development has contributed to new forms of customer engagement. A popular evolution in this area is gamification, which refers to “technologies that attempt to promote intrinsic motivations toward various activities, commonly, by employing design characteristics to games” (Hamari and Koivisto, 2015, p. 420). This field is particularly interesting to marketers as it enhances the level of interaction between actors by the integration of joyful entertainment elements, specifically in sports.

In a professional sport context, sport league brands make use of gamification to increase interaction and develop deep relationships with their fans. Primarily this happens by providing their fans access to Fantasy Sports (FS) applications. FS allows participants to assemble virtual teams of real-world players that compete against each other based on their statistical real-sports performance. This increases interaction and engagement between leagues and fans (Weiner and Dwyer, 2017). It also can increase engagement between fans with FS leagues within families or work colleagues.

The focus of this paper is two-fold. First, we aim to conceptually classify FS within the concept of gamification of professional sports leagues. We use theoretical ideas of gamification to apply the concept from the FS literature. Research in this area does not sufficiently include the marketing perspective of professional sport leagues as the primary rights holder that work together with external service providers to host FS as gamification applications. Our theoretical contribution will indicate the importance of FS as a gamified application and essential marketing tool for professional sport leagues. Professional sport leagues use FS to engage and connect with their fan base. Research in this area demonstrates the positive effects of gamification on marketing parameters. Sport leagues share the same interests by including FS in their service offerings. This paper explicitly takes the perspective

of sport league management and elaborates why FS literature can benefit from the gamification concept to derive management implications for professional sport leagues. Additionally, we empirically investigate FS effects on sport practice (engaging in doing sport) and sport usage (engaging with sport) of FS players on increasing and retaining sport fans. Professional sport leagues, similar to organisations from other industries, follow triple-bottom-line value systems that includes economic, environmental and social sustainability (Fehrer and Gerke, 2020). Fostering sport fans' engagement with sports through marketing activities does account for this economic goal. The social aspect for professional sport leagues includes the promotion of the respective sports and by that physical activity, in this paper referred to as engaging in doing sport. To provide a comprehensive perspective on sport leagues and organisations marketing efforts to promote both economic and social aspects, we aim for this two-folded approach.

Consequently, this article addresses the research questions how FS-participation affects sport fans' sport practice and sport usage habits, as well as their attitudinal parameters (consumption capital, WOM, loyalty) towards the hosting sport organisation. The build-up of consumption capital increases the joy of live sport experiences (Adler, 1985), positive WOM leads the acquisition of new fans and increased loyalty helps sport leagues to retain an existing fan base (Heskett *et al.*, 1994).

In relation to FS participation, there is a lack of research regarding fans' sport practice in contrast to sport usage habits, where significant previous research already exists. This empirical study's main contribution is theorising about sport fans' practice, as well as a replication of previous research in sport usage habits and attitudinal parameters to validate existing work in the field. Finally, the research conclusions present a more holistic picture of FS effects taking the perspective of professional sport league management.

### **3.2.2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

The idea of gamifying marketing relevant processes is considered as a tool to develop an interactive and reciprocal relationship between customers and companies. By doing so, gamification adds a specific hedonic experience to the interaction that is characterized by competition. Gamification used game design elements in non-game contexts (Deterding *et al.*, 2011). In the marketing environment, gamification is praised for being the "new industrial revolution driven by play" (Harwood and Garry, 2015, p. 533). Scholars have studied the positive effects of gamification in various contexts, such as product adoption (Müller-

Stewens *et al.*, 2017), product advertising (Bittner and Schipper, 2014), and brand connections (Berger *et al.*, 2018).

From the application of gamification elements and sport leagues' efforts to foster engagement, FS has evolved to represent an essential component of developing deep relationships with fans in numerous professional sport leagues. Keeping the fans engaged with the league throughout a long season through psychological, social and market-driven, influential factors is one of the main goals of FS (Dwyer *et al.*, 2013). The mixed experience of spectator and participatory sport in combination with competitive information-seeking behaviour constitutes the secret to success of FS (Karg and McDonald, 2011).

FS is defined as an “ancillary sport service, heavily associated with real-world sport statistics, FS participation is primary an online activity that is completely customisable, interactive and involves nearly every major professional sport (...)” (Dwyer and Drayer, 2010, p. 207). In other words, for FS, the real on-field competition represents a model made up of the real-time calculation of point values via the fantasy sport service provider.

### **3.2.3 RESULTS AND FINDINGS**

The empirical study clarifies two purposes of the research. First, we want to enrich the knowledge on FS and its effects on sport practice and physical activities of sport fans. This link is not found significantly in the academic discussion about FS. Second, we intend to replicate previous studies and demonstrate the positive effects of FS-participation on sport usage, as well as gaining and retaining sport fans from a professional sport league perspective. This allows a holistic picture with one data set in the same context. This context contains the ‘Big Five’ observed leagues in North America, namely the National Football League (NFL), the Major League Baseball (MLB), the National Hockey League (NHL), the National Basketball Association (NBA) and the Major League Soccer (MLS), which host FS applications prominently on their respective websites. Overall, the leagues work together with external service providers, authorised to use the right to use official trademarks of the leagues and provided with real-time statistics and access to expert opinions, predictions and other data, which is all very valuable to FS players. The empirical study aims to contribute a purposeful explanation of reasoning on why sport leagues need to support the gamified engagement of their sport fans. As a result, it is necessary to investigate the effects of FS participation from the perspective of professional sport leagues marketing efforts.

*Results for Study one*

Study one determines if any statistical differences exist between sport fan's practice ( $H_1$ ) and usage ( $H_2$ ) patterns between FS players and FS non-players. FS participation thereby proposes the hypothesised effect of FS participation as a gamified application hosted by professional sport leagues on different levels of sport engagement.

In contrast to the common controversy of media-based activities and its negative effects on physical activity, empirical results show that sport practice habits of FS-players in comparison to FS non-players do not show any statistically significant difference. That is, despite active participation in league-related FS leagues sport fans keep their level of physical activity up. As a consequence: FS participation does not harm active sport practice patterns of fans. On the other hand, results show that sport fans that participate in league-related FS leagues spend less time on actively doing the respective sports. From the perspective of a league, these numbers indicate that participants of the gamified FS application spend less time on playing the type of sport in a team or as a leisure activity. Especially for a younger age group, this development is concerning at first glance. On the other hand, sport leagues can actively use this lack of sport participation to engage with their fans on both online and offline platforms through the application of active FS (Moller *et al.*, 2014). Active FS represents a combination of online-based FS and the inclusion of individuals' activity parameters, which can be aimed at respective sports achievements. The results for FS effects on sport usage indicate that FS playing fans show significantly higher sport usage patterns in comparison to FS non-players for hypotheses  $H_{2a}$  –  $H_{2d}$ . This confirms results of former studies by Karg and McDonald (2011). Only  $H_{2e}$ , detailing the expenditure on league related merchandise, does not exhibit significant results. In summation, the results lead the researchers to draw the conclusion that sport leagues should increase effort and planning to foster and facilitate FS sport as gamified experiences for their fans, benefiting from higher recognition online and offline. In so doing, the leagues can better interact with their target audience and increase the number of touchpoints.

Hypothesis	Dependent Variable	Fantasy Sports	N	Means	Std. Deviation	Significance
H <sub>1a</sub>	Hours a week of physical activity	Players	129	7.90	5.23	<b>.870</b>
		Non-Players	190	8.01	5.98	
H <sub>1b</sub>	Hours a week of actively practising SPORTS**	Players	49	2.88	3.36	<b>.025*</b>
		Non-Players	44	4.70	4.35	
H <sub>2a</sub>	Hours a week do you spend watching the LEAUGE** on television	Players	129	<b>7.44</b>	4.82	<b>.000*</b>
		Non-Players	190	<b>3.57</b>	3.52	
H <sub>2b</sub>	Times a week do you read articles about the LEAGUE**	Players	129	<b>7.22</b>	10.04	<b>.000*</b>
		Non-Players	190	<b>2.65</b>	3.74	
H <sub>2c</sub>	Times a week do you watch LEAUGE** content online	Players	129	<b>10.56</b>	14.20	<b>.000*</b>
		Non-Players	190	<b>4.56</b>	8.12	
H <sub>2d</sub>	Times a week do you visit the LEAGUE**'s website	Players	129	<b>1.87</b>	3.86	<b>.022*</b>
		Non-Players	190	<b>.97</b>	2.66	
H <sub>2e</sub>	Monthly expenses (in dollars) on LEAGUE**-related merchandise	Players	129	<b>8.29</b>	21.20	<b>.522</b>
		Non-Players	190	<b>6.70</b>	22.01	

\* Note: Significant with a level of  $p < .05$

\*\* Respondents, who indicated, e.g. the NBA as their league of interest, where questioned about basketball (SPORTS) and the NBA (LEAGUE). Respondents, who indicated that they do not participate in SPORTS (e.g. basketball) were not asked the numbers of hours per week.

*Table I: Results for one-factor Welch-ANOVA on sport practice and usage patterns*

### *Results for Study two*

The Welch-ANOVA indicates that participants of league related FS applications evaluate their individual attitude towards the observed constructs significantly more positive. By that, the influence of FS participation as a gamification application for sport fans with regard to sport leagues on observed marketing parameters has been proven.

FS players typically have higher level knowledge about a favourite sport organisation and league. This knowledge combines to create a “perceived expertise of sports”. Through the interaction with others and their willingness to increase their FS performance, participants strive for information and actively gather and process league content. This positively relates with higher consumption of online content, such as analysis, reports or statistics about players and teams (H<sub>3</sub>).

This study provides significant evidence that attitudinal loyalty to the sport league increases with FS participation. Attitudinal loyalty in that environment describes a process of predisposition towards the sport league (Dick and Basu, 1994). Fans that engage in FS are more likely to have a higher attitudinal loyalty to a sport league (H<sub>4a</sub>). This contributes to the retention of those fans as long-term customers.

In analysing attitude towards a league, sport fans show behavioural manifestations in terms of repeated purchase of tickets, frequency of encounters, and repetitive behaviours (Wakefield, 2016). Behavioural loyalty is viewed as the strength of the relationship between attitude and actual purchasing behaviour (Dick and Basu, 1994). As results of the empirical study demonstrate, the level of behavioural loyalty (as a consequence of attitudinal loyalty) increases with FS participation, meaning that sport fans that participate in a league-related FS league are more likely to act loyal to the sport league (H<sub>4b</sub>).

Furthermore, the participants spread positive WOM to attract potential new customers. This effect is also influenced by playing FS (H<sub>5</sub>). This goes hand in hand with the acquisition of new customers who potentially gain higher profits for the respective league organisation. Consequently, FS participation of sport fans unveils a higher level of attitude as well as behavioural loyalty towards the sport league brand. FS sport players indicate higher expertise, more commitment to the league and are more loyal with corresponding positive WOM about the league.

Hypothesis	Dependent Variable	Fantasy Sports	N	Means	Std. Deviation	Significance
H <sub>3</sub>	SExpert_Mean	Players	129	<b>5.22</b>	1,37	<b>.000*</b>
		Non-Players	190	<b>4.05</b>	1,66	
H <sub>4a</sub>	AttLoyal_Mean	Players	129	<b>5.31</b>	1,33	<b>.000*</b>
		Non-Players	190	<b>4.10</b>	1,71	
H <sub>4b</sub>	BehavLoyal_Mean	Players	129	<b>6.23</b>	0,91	<b>.000*</b>
		Non-Players	190	<b>5.22</b>	1,56	
H <sub>5</sub>	WOM_Mean	Players	128	<b>5.40</b>	1,45	<b>.000*</b>
		Non-Players	190	<b>4.57</b>	1,70	

\* Note: Significant with a level of  $p < .05$

Table II: Results for one-factor Welch-ANOVA on observed marketing parameters

### 3.2.4 CONTRIBUTIONS

This paper argues that in the context of professional sports in North America, league organisations use gamified experiences in the form of FS to interact with their target group and by that strengthen their brand. Therefore, sport leagues host their own FS leagues or work together with external service providers by transferring their trademarks, players-rights, and statistics.

The contributions of this paper are manifold. First, from a theoretical standpoint, we classify FS within the concept of gamification of professional sports league. This connection is highly beneficial to the academic discourse in FS, as it focuses on the sport league management and

centres FS as a marketing tool that is purposefully used by sport leagues to fulfil their marketing mission. Second, with sport practice (engaging in doing sport) and sport usage (engaging with sport), we bridge the traditional logic of sport consumption with innovative approaches around engagement in and with sports. Third, we refute the prejudice that FS leads to less physical activity due to time substitution or time poverty. Although FS-players show the same level of general physical activity, they are less active in the respective sports. This development should be addressed by sport leagues when it comes to promoting the sport as an activity to the fan base. Fourth, we contribute to the replication of existing studies. FS participation increases sport fans' usage habits and thus, creates media-dominated, highly engaged consumers that represent a "lucrative segment" for these professional sport league (Dwyer and Drayer 2010, p. 214). Our results indicate that FS leads to a higher build-up of consumption capital as well as an increased attitudinal and behavioural loyalty. Eventually, this leads to lasting income from loyal spectators and fans. FS leads to more WOM and thus to an improved reputation. This, in turn, fosters the acquisition of new customers, which increases the income of the league and the teams in the league.



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### 3.3 UNDERSTANDING SPORT SPONSORSHIP DECISION-MAKING – AN EXPLORATION OF THE ROLES AND POWER BASES IN THE SPONSORS' BUYING CENTER (SCIENTIFIC PAPER 3)

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#### ABSTRACT

**Research question:** Despite increasing global sponsorship expenditures, research on sponsorship decision-making remains limited. Sponsors are considered holistically as organisations that make sponsorship decisions. However, sponsorship decisions are usually group decisions on which several individuals collaborate. Although the industrial marketing literature introduced the concept of buying centers for analysing group decisions, sponsorship decision-making as group decision-making is underresearched. The purpose of the study is to address this gap in the sport management literature by examining the roles of individuals involved in sponsorship decision-making and their power bases.

**Research methods:** The study uses a qualitative Delphi technique with three rounds and two samples of sponsorship managers ( $N_1=18$ ,  $N_2=13$ ) from Germany and Austria.

**Results and Findings:** The results show that the sponsors' buying center (SBC) comprises eight different roles: *deciders*, *users*, *coordinators*, *experts*, *signatories*, *negotiators*, *initiators*, and *networkers*. The findings also reveal that individuals occupying the various roles fulfil different tasks and rely on different power bases. The SBC is influenced by organisational and environmental factors. The study further demonstrates that sponsors can outsource roles to external partners.

**Implications:** This study is the first to investigate the SBC empirically by taking the characteristics of the sponsorship context into account. This article, thereby, contributes to our theoretical understanding of sponsorship decision-making by examining the individuals' roles in the SBC, the external and internal influences, and the involvement of external partners. Finally, the results have managerial implications for both sponsors and sponsees.

**KEYWORDS:** Sponsorship, decision-making, buying centre

### 3.3.1 INTRODUCTION

Sponsorship represents a vital revenue stream for sports organisations and a strategic marketing activity for the sponsoring companies (Cornwell & Kwon, 2019). Sponsors invest billions of dollars annually in sponsorships, with the majority allocated to sports (IEG, 2018). Accordingly, we focus on sport sponsorship. Despite their importance in the process, sponsorship decisions have received little attention in the literature (Jensen & Cornwell, 2017; Walliser, 2003).

Cornwell and Kwon (2019, p. 1) describe sponsorship as a “multifaceted strategic decision.” One facet, the steps in the sponsors’ decision-making process, was addressed by previous studies (e.g., Athanopoulou & Sarli, 2015; Chadwick & Thwaites, 2004, 2005). Lee and Ross (2012) investigated the factors influencing sponsors’ decision-making, such as specific sport team characteristics or country-related factors, which represent another facet of sponsorship decisions. However, the further facet, which is that usually multiple individuals decide as a group about sponsorships has been largely neglected in the literature. In previous studies, sponsors are considered holistically as organisations that make decisions.

Although the industrial marketing literature has already postulated that “no marketing manager can ignore the fact that most buying decisions are not made by a single individual” (Wind, 1978, p. 75), only the two studies of Arthur et al. (1997) and Aguilar-Manjarrez et al. (1997) addressed this issue in the sponsorship literature. Both studies applied the buying center (BC) concept of Webster and Wind (1972a) from the industrial marketing literature to the sponsorship context. The original BC comprises five different roles, the deciders, users, gatekeepers, influencers, and buyers, which are occupied by the individuals involved in organisational buying decisions (Webster & Wind, 1972a).

However, both studies reveal certain shortcomings, as the authors applied the roles of the original BC analogously to the sponsorship context, thereby neglecting the fact that context is a relevant determinant for research in sport management (Woratschek et al., 2014). The sponsorship context has some very specific characteristics. Due to the high degree of sponsorship customisation, contract negotiations are an important element in the sponsorship decision-making process (e.g., Chadwick & Thwaites, 2005; Cornwell & Kwon, 2019). Furthermore, sponsors frequently collaborate with external partners when making sponsorship decisions (O’Reilly & Madill, 2012). Since this was largely ignored in the studies of Arthur et al. (1997) and Aguilar-Manjarrez et al. (1997), O’Reilly and Madill

(2012) proposed exploring the roles that external partners play in sponsor decision-making. Moreover, even though Arthur et al. (1997) emphasised the importance of understanding the relationships between the members of the BC, they did not investigate the power related to the roles of the sponsors' buying center (SBC).

Hence, Arthur et al. (1997, p. 231) called for further research: "Is the buying center in sport sponsorship similar in composition to that exhibited in the general industrial purchasing literature?" Consequently, the purpose of this study is, on the one hand, to address this call for research, and on the other hand, to extend the literature on sponsorship decision-making by investigating cooperation with external partners as well as the external and internal determinants of the SBC.

### **3.3.2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **3.3.2.1 SPORT SPONSORSHIP AND MANAGERIAL DECISION-MAKING**

Cornwell and Kwon (2019) identified shortcomings in the research on managing the sponsorship process, which includes the sponsors' initial sponsorship decision. Other authors have indicated that research on sponsors' decision-making is generally limited (Jensen & Cornwell, 2017; Walliser, 2003). Despite the well-known fact that several individuals are involved in organisational decision-making (Webster & Wind, 1972a), in the sponsorship literature, authors mostly consider sponsors from a holistic perspective as organisations that make decisions. Only Arthur et al. (1997) and Aguilar-Manjarrez et al. (1997) studied sponsorship decisions through the lens of group decision-making by applying the BC concept of Webster and Wind (1972a). Arthur et al. (1997) indicated that the four roles from the original BC, namely deciders, buyers, gatekeepers, and influencers, but not the role of users are involved in sponsorship decisions. They further claimed that the composition of the SBC is influenced by the buying situation and interaction processes, but they lack evidence. Consequently, Arthur et al. (1997) called for further research that investigates empirically the applicability of the original BC to the sponsorship context. Aguilar-Manjarrez et al. (1997) were, to the best of our knowledge, the only ones to have responded to this call. In their study, they showed that all five roles of the original BC could be found in sponsorship decision-making.

However, both studies focused on an analogous transfer of the original BC roles to the sponsorship context, which implies several shortcomings. First, the context itself is an

essential determinant of the analysis, and influences, for example, value co-creation in sports stadiums (Stieler et al., 2014) and the perceived value of a sport event (Woratschek et al., 2014). These studies rely on context definitions from the service-dominant logic literature, where Chandler and Vargo (2011, p. 40) define context as “a set of unique actors with unique reciprocal links among them.” Accordingly, we expect the context of sponsorship to impact on sponsor decision-making.

Second, the original BC stems from the industrial marketing literature, which focuses mainly on industrial goods. However, sponsorship is allocated to the service sector, where services are differentiated between standardised and customised. Roth et al. (2006) found that in the case of customised services, negotiating is a better strategy than setting fixed prices. Sponsorships can be considered as customised services, where the sponsors’ demands are integrated into the sponsorship contract. Accordingly, negotiations over the conditions of the contract seem to represent an important element in the sponsorship decision-making process. Yet, this has not been addressed in the previous studies, although other authors have already highlighted contract negotiations in the sponsorship literature (e.g., Chadwick & Thwaites, 2005; Cornwell & Kwon, 2019). From these gaps in the literature, our first research question emerged. RQ1: To what extent can the original BC concept be applied to the sponsorship context and how should the composition of the SBC be modified?

Third, Arthur et al. (1997) and Aguilar-Manjarrez et al. (1997) focused on the roles within the sponsoring company. However, Abratt et al. (1987) already found that external marketing agencies assume 20% of the responsibility for sponsorship promotions. O’Reilly and Madill (2012) further stated that the cooperation of sponsors with other organisations regarding sponsorship decision-making represents another characteristic of the sponsorship context. Although Aguilar-Manjarrez et al. (1997) mentioned that external partners could be involved in sponsorship decisions, they did not investigate their assertion. Accordingly, O’Reilly and Madill (2012) emphasised the need to investigate the sponsor cooperation with external partners, which led to our second research question. RQ2: How do sponsors cooperate with external partners regarding sponsorship decision-making?

Despite the shortcomings of the previous studies, the basic idea of applying the BC concept to explain sponsorship decision-making is reasonable. Detailed knowledge of the roles of the involved individuals represents the prerequisite for understanding organisational decision-

making behaviour (Wind, 1978). Consequently, we used the BC concept as a theoretical underpinning.

### 3.3.2.2 THE BUYING CENTER CONCEPT AND ITS EXTERNAL DETERMINANTS

The BC “includes all members of the organisation who are involved in [an organisational buying] process” (Webster & Wind, 1972a, p. 14). To understand this process, it is necessary first to identify the roles of the members involved in the BC (Webster & Wind, 1972a). In this article, roles are defined as “common patterns of behavior manifested by people in their interaction with other people concerned with purchasing” (Calder, 1978, p. 78).

The BC contains the five organisational roles of deciders, users, gatekeepers, influencers, and buyers (Webster & Wind, 1972a). Later Bonoma (1982) added a sixth role, the initiators. Webster and Wind (1972b) emphasised that one individual can occupy more than one role, and one role can be occupied by more than one individual. The roles are defined as:

- (1) Deciders: those with the authority to choose among alternative buying actions.
- (2) Users: those members of the organisation who use the purchased products and services.
- (3) Gatekeepers: those who control the flow of information (and materials) into the buying center.
- (4) Influencers: those who influence the decision process directly or indirectly by providing information and criteria for evaluating alternative buying actions.
- (5) Buyers: those with the formal responsibility and authority for contracting with suppliers (Webster & Wind, 1972a, p. 17).
- (6) Initiators: recognise that some company problem can be solved or avoided by acquiring a product or service (Bonoma, 1982, p. 113).

In the initial considerations of the BC, the focus was exclusively on members of the buying organisation (Bonoma & Zaltman, 1978; Webster & Wind, 1972b). Later, Wind and Robertson (1982) added a concept with an inter-organisational focus to the BC literature, namely the “linking pin” or “boundary role” concept. According to Wind and Robertson (1982) “linking pins” are not organisational roles, but internal members of the BC who have intra- and interorganisational contacts and represent the organisation externally. They further found that “linking pins” could exert a strong influence on buying decisions, and called for further research on the connection between the “linking pins” and the organisational roles. Consequently, we clarify empirically the “linking pin” concept in the sponsorship context.

Furthermore, the BC is influenced by external determinants, such as environmental and organisational factors (Johnston & Lewin, 1996; Webster & Wind, 1972a). Environmental factors are of a physical, economic, legal, technological, cultural, and political nature (Webster & Wind, 1972a). Lee and Ross (2012) also found that political and economic factors, which they called country factors, influence sponsorship decisions. The frequently researched organisational factors are company-specific determinants that influence the composition of the BC (Wood, 2005). Organisational factors include the buying situation (Fortin & Ritchie, 1980), company size (Crow & Lindquist, 1985), product type (Jackson et al., 1984), purchase complexity (Brown et al., 2012), novelty of purchase (McQuiston, 1989), formalisation and centralisation (Johnston & Bonoma, 1981), purchase importance (Lewin & Donthu, 2005), time constraints (Lau et al., 1999), purchase uncertainty (Spekman & Stern, 1979), perceived risk (Garrido-Samaniego & Gutiérrez-Cillán, 2004), and the company's technological infrastructure (Osmonbekov et al., 2002).

In the sponsorship context, Aguilar-Manjarrez et al. (1997) and Arthur et al. (1997) only investigated the influence of the buying situation, which is classified in straight rebuys, modified rebuys, and new tasks, on the SBC. New task situations usually require the highest number of individuals, the most information, and include the evaluation of many different alternatives (Arthur et al., 1997), whereas straight rebuys are regarded as “nobrainers” (Aguilar-Manjarrez et al., 1997, p. 16). From the observed discrepancy between the extent of research on organisational determinants of general BCs and of SBCs, we derived research question three. RQ3: What organisational factors influence the SBC in the sponsorship context?

### 3.3.2.3 THE POWER BASES OF THE ROLES WITHIN BUYING CENTERS

The interaction processes within the BC are considered internal determinants of the buying decision (Crow & Lindquist, 1985). “Since members of the buying center differ in their influence” (Töllner et al., 2011, p. 713), it is important to understand the relationships within BCs. The relationships between the roles can be explored by considering each role's power bases (Bonoma, 1982; Johnston & Bonoma, 1981). In this article, power is defined as an individual's ability to influence the behaviour of other members of the BC (Wind & Robertson, 1982).

Bonoma (1982) applied the five bases of social power from managerial decision-making by French and Raven (1959) to the BC: reward power, coercive power, attraction power, expert



power, and status power. Reward power is the capacity to provide others with material or non-material rewards for their compliance. Coercive power is the ability to punish other individuals with monetary or non-monetary sanctions for non-compliance. Attraction power refers to the ability to ensure others act according to his/her preferences because they like him/her. Expert power relates to the capacity to exert influence on a decision through specialised knowledge. Status power is the formal or informal authority individuals possess due to their position in the company. Kohli (1989, p. 53) concluded that “each of the five bases of power is hypothesised to be related directly to manifest influence.”

Furthermore, in his study Kohli (1989) found that expert and reinforcement (the combination of reward and coercive) power represent strong influences within a BC, while attraction and status power are less influential power bases. Thomas (1984) also demonstrated the superior relevance of expert power over attraction and status power. In the sport management literature, the power base concept is mainly applied to studies on the leadership of sport organisations (e.g., Megheirkouni, 2019) and coach-athlete relationships (e.g., Rylander, 2015; Turman, 2006). Since there is limited research in the sponsorship literature on group decision-making, studies about the power bases are also scarce. However, in the sponsorship context, Long et al. (2004) investigated the influences on sponsorship decisions in a university athletics department (sponsee perspective). They found that, amongst other elements, an individual’s positional power and expertise influence a sponsorship decision, which could be compared to French and Raven’s (1959) status and expert power. Aguilar-Manjarrez et al. (1997, p. 18) mentioned that power and status are “key influences on the decision” and Arthur et al. (1997, p. 230) emphasised the importance of understanding the “relative influence” of each BC member. Since the authors did not elaborate further on their assertions, we identified another gap in the sponsorship literature and pose research question four. RQ4: What are the power bases of individuals occupying the roles in the SBC, and what level of influence can be attributed to the various power bases?

### **3.3.3 METHOD**

The aim of our research, combined with the limited knowledge of the roles in sponsorship decision-making suggests a need to apply an exploratory research design. Therefore, we chose to conduct a qualitative Delphi study, which is well suited for exploratory research (Okoli & Pawlowski, 2004). The Delphi method is a broadly used research technique, which has already been introduced to the sport management literature (Costa, 2005). We considered

the Delphi technique appropriate, because it can be used for “putting together the structure of a model” (Linstone & Turoff, 1975, p. 4). Day and Bobeva (2005, p. 103) defined the Delphi technique as “a structured group communication method for soliciting expert opinion about complex problems or novel ideas, through the use of a series of questionnaires and controlled feedback.” The anonymised feedback comprises an aggregated analysis of the results from one round, and is returned to the participants in the questionnaire of the next round (Hasson et al., 2000).

The number of iterations in Delphi studies depends on the research objective, but usually does not exceed three rounds (Dietz, 1987). We aimed to reach stable opinions or consensus between the participants, which represent the stop criterion. To address our research questions, we considered the Delphi technique superior to the one-time expert interviews used in previous studies (e.g., Töllner et al., 2011). The Delphi technique encompasses the collaborative theorising approach, which entails academics theorising together with practitioners and not about them (Nenonen et al., 2017). The multi-round design and the anonymised feedback lead to results that are “strengthened by reasoned argument in which assumptions are challenged, thus helping to enhance validity” (Hasson et al., 2000, p. 1013).

#### 3.3.3.1 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

In the first Delphi round, semi-structured interviews with a duration of 25 to 34 minutes (Mean=27) were conducted. Seventeen interviews were conducted by phone and one in a face-to-face setting. All interviews were audio-recorded with the participants’ permission. The aggregated results of the first round were edited graphically by the research team and returned to the participants in the second round. In that round, we used an online questionnaire with open-response questions, where the participants evaluated the results of the first round. After the second round, the participants predominantly reached consensus about the roles involved in sponsorship decision-making and added no further roles. Therefore, the predefined stop criteria were met, and we stopped data collection with this sample.

For the third round, we recruited another sample of participants. With this type of triangulation, we aimed to increase the confirmability of the research by discussing the first-rounds results with other members of the research population (Day & Bobeva, 2005). In the third round, we chose semi-structured interviews to reduce the risk of bias in the results, due to misunderstandings by the new participants. The interviews took between 35 and 76

minutes ( $M=49$ ), were all conducted by phone and audio-recorded. The detailed interview materials were derived from our thorough literature review and informed by the results of the respective preceding round.

### 3.3.3.2 PARTICIPANTS

Purposive sampling was used to select the participants throughout our study (Hasson et al., 2000). Based on the selection criterion of having at least two years of professional experience in sport sponsorship, we contacted 44 sponsorship managers from Germany and Austria, of whom 18 participated (40.91% response rate). The age of the participants in the first two rounds were from 26 to 48 years ( $M=33.67$ ) and had professional experience in sport sponsorship from 2 to 25 years ( $M=8.17$ ). Ten managers were from sponsoring companies, five from sport marketing agencies, and three from sports clubs. By including the perspective of intermediaries and sponsees, we were able to gain more holistic insights into the sponsorship decision-making process, which led to increased trustworthiness of our study (Werner et al., 2015).

The sample of the third Delphi round comprised 13 sponsorship managers, who were purposively selected, based on the same experience criterion as before. The response rate was 41.94% (13 of 31). Furthermore, we ensured that each manager had already taken part in sponsorship decision-making. The managers were between 25 and 53 years ( $M=36.92$ ) old and had professional experience ranging from 2 to 23 years ( $M=9.31$ ). All managers were employed at sponsoring companies, because profound insights from actual members of a SBC were required to answer the questions in the third round.

### 3.3.3.3 DATA ANALYSIS

All interviews were transcribed verbatim and uploaded to MAXQDA®, which we used for data analysis. As in previous qualitative studies on BCs (e.g., Töllner et al., 2011), we conducted a qualitative content analysis. We performed structured content analysis, using the five-step process proposed by Mayring (2015): deriving the coding system, defining main categories and anchoring examples, coding the text material, extracting appropriate excerpts, and processing the results. Given the exploratory nature of our study, we coded deductively and inductively, in order to reveal new patterns and/or relationships (Merriam, 1998). Finally, we edited the results and converted them into graphics. The graphically prepared results were then included in the online questionnaire of the second Delphi round, or to the interview

guideline of round three. The results of the second round were analysed by coding the responses relating to each role according to their valence. The data retrieved from the third round interviews were analysed following the same procedure as in the first round, by using an adapted coding system.

The quality criteria credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability should be considered, to ensure the trustworthiness of Delphi studies (Day & Bobeva, 2005). We accounted for credibility by discussing the results with the participants, which yielded concurrent validity. Furthermore, the sufficient experience of the participants increases content validity (Hasson et al., 2000). Addressing the dependability criterion, we ensured intercoder-reliability (Misoch, 2015). Two researchers coded the extracted text excerpts independently using the previously discussed coding systems. The agreement results of 0.88 in the first round, 0.92 in the second round, and 0.90 in the third round showed good to very good intercoder-reliability (Rust & Cooil, 1994). The selection of a second sample for the third Delphi round as a form of triangulation, and the extensive discussion of our findings with other sponsorship researchers, implies confirmability of the results. We attempted to ensure transferability by the purposive sampling of our participants and the detailed description of the procedure of our empirical study. However, a qualitative Delphi study inherently exhibits limitations in applying its findings to other contexts (Day & Bobeva, 2005).

### **3.3.4 RESULTS**

#### **3.3.4.1 DELPHI ROUND 1**

Following Webster and Wind (1972a), our aim in the first round was to identify the roles of the members involved in the context-specific SBC (RQ1). Consequently, we asked the managers unaided who is involved in sponsorship decision-making. The focus was on new task situations, where sponsors make initial sponsorship decisions. In what follows, we coded the participants according to the type of their organisation. However, we found no significant differences in the responses of the participant types and therefore made no further distinctions in reporting the results.

From the managers' responses, we identified six roles that are involved in sponsors' decision-making. Two of the identified roles in the sponsorship context represented equivalents of the roles deciders and users from the original BC concept. Furthermore, our results identified

three roles that had similarities but did not resemble the respective roles of the original BC, at least not identically. Consequently, these roles were modified. In the sponsorship context, the gatekeepers are more appropriately described as coordinators, influencers as experts, and buyers as signatories. While gatekeepers only control the flow of information into the BC (Webster & Wind, 1972b), the coordinators additionally supervise and manage the decision-making process by ensuring that each role integrates the appropriate resources at the right time. For example, S9 stated that she “take[s] care in this case and check[s] in due time how long it will take until everything is signed and returned, because only when the budget release is there, the contract can go into circulation.” According to the managers’ responses, we modified the role influencers to experts who bring expertise from different departments into the SBC. For instance, S5 indicated that he “receives feedback from the R&D department on the amount of work that needs to be done internally, which of course helps [him] to assess whether the investment is worthwhile or not.” We could not identify the role of buyers in our data, at least not as defined originally. However, all participants emphasised the role of the individuals who sign the sponsorship contract, which we named signatories.

Interestingly, we found a new role which was not included in the original BC. These are networkers, who on the one hand, establish and maintain relationships internally and, on the other hand, primarily become active beyond the boundaries of the sponsoring company “to be on the market and know what’s going on” (A3) and “to establish contacts with potential partners” (S7). However, we could not identify the role of initiators from our interviews. The results further showed that one person could occupy more than one role, and vice versa.

#### 3.3.4.2 DELPHI ROUND 2

In the online questionnaire, we returned the results on the six roles of the SBC, interspersed with selected sample quotations, as feedback to the managers. We then asked the managers to evaluate the roles identified in the first round and offered them the opportunity to add any missing roles (RQ1).

The results after the second round showed consensus among the managers regarding four roles, and majority agreement regarding two roles. The managers reached consensus, for which we set the required agreement rate at 80%, on the roles deciders (100% agreement), experts (94.12%), signatories (93.33%), and coordinators (87.50%). A majority of the participants approved the roles networkers (66.67%) and users (60.00%). The managers

added no further role. Accordingly, the stop criteria were predominantly met, and we decided not to conduct any further round with this sample.

From the results, we developed the first draft of the SBC model, which contained six roles of the individuals involved in sponsorship decision-making. However, the first- and second-round participants only reached consensus on four roles: deciders, experts, signatories, and coordinators. In addition, the service research literature indicates that negotiations are superior in the context of customised services (Roth et al., 2006). Since sponsorship contracts are customised, several authors highlighted the relevance of negotiations between the sponsor and the sponsee (e.g., Chadwick & Thwaites, 2005; Cornwell & Kwon, 2019). As the first rounds did not reveal the importance of negotiations, we decided to add the role negotiators conceptually to the SBC model. We deliberately did not merge the roles signatories and negotiators, because S1 and S10 emphasised that the individuals who sign the contract often do not execute any other tasks concerning sponsorship decision-making. To further examine our SBC model extended by the negotiators, we set up the third Delphi round with participants who are unbiased from the previous rounds. Consequently, we recruited the second sample.

#### 3.3.4.3 DELPHI ROUND 3

At the beginning of the third-round interviews, we discussed our extended SBC model with the new participants. We then questioned them on the SBC and additionally sought their opinion about the role of initiators, which was not found in the previous rounds (RQ1). We were wondering about the lack of initiators because this role is well established in the industrial marketing literature (e.g., Bonoma, 1982). First, we saw no logical reason why there would be no initiators in the sponsorship context. Second, experience shows that respondents in unaided interviews often do not mention self-evident facts. Hence, we confronted the respondents with the role of initiators in the third round.

The results showed that all 13 sponsorship managers unanimously approved all roles of the SBC and proposed explicitly including both the initiators and negotiators. For example, S15 stated that “we are not just waiting to receive a [sponsorship] proposal [...], you certainly start to think for yourself about what fits where and how.” These initiators can be from specialist departments such as marketing, sales, product, or human resources. The negotiators are “only one or two people on each side” (S25), and they negotiate both new sponsorship contracts and contract renewals. After discussing the eight roles with the interviewer, all 13

managers approved the composition of the SBC. For instance, S11 said “from my point of view, nothing is missing anymore”, S15 indicated that “all these roles are involved”, and S19 added that “all these roles are relevant, I would confirm them all.”

Interestingly, the participants of the first two rounds gave no indications regarding the negotiators and initiators. The participants of the third round were confronted with the SBC and, aided by the present concept, included both roles unanimously. This discrepancy shows that the role concept is complex for practitioners, so that it is challenging to give all-encompassing answers. However, as previous studies about unaided and aided recalls of sponsor brands show (e.g., Biscaia et al., 2014), participant responses in aided questionings are more comprehensive and accurate. For this reason and because consensus (100% agreement) was reached in the third Delphi round, we added the roles of initiators and negotiators to the SBC model. This extension of the findings from the first rounds highlights the value of the iterative research design of the Delphi method when investigating complex problems (Day & Bobeva, 2005).

Subsequently, the managers were asked about the tasks that the different roles of the SBC perform concerning sponsorship decision-making. The findings demonstrate that each role has a different set of tasks and thus help to clearly define and distinguish each role (see Table 1). The experts and signatories display the smallest variety of tasks. The networkers and the coordinators perform the most extensive set of tasks.

<b>Roles</b>	<b>Tasks</b>
<i>Deciders</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• evaluate the prepared decision-supporting propositions</li> <li>• make the final sponsorship decisions</li> <li>• carry the main responsibility for decisions</li> </ul>
<i>Users</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• create ideas for leveraging sponsorships</li> <li>• collaborate with specialist departments and external partners regarding sponsorship-linked marketing campaigns</li> </ul>
<i>Coordinators</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• implement and activate the sponsorship with on-site or online activities</li> <li>• control the information flow</li> <li>• ensure that timelines are met and decisions made</li> <li>• facilitate collaboration in the SBC</li> <li>• involve all other roles in the decision-making process</li> </ul>
<i>Experts</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide expertise from specialist departments</li> <li>• prepare selection criteria to support <i>deciders</i> in their decision-making</li> </ul>
<i>Signatories</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• check the formalities of the contract</li> <li>• sign the sponsorship contract</li> </ul>
<i>Networkers</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• connect relevant actors and maintain the relationships</li> <li>• know who is in the market, who is bound long-term, and the possibilities to contact potential sponsees</li> <li>• sensitise other roles internally for the topic of sponsorship</li> <li>• inform specialist departments about the potential for and advantages of sponsorships</li> </ul>
<i>Negotiators</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• conduct negotiations with potential sponsees about contract conditions</li> </ul>
<i>Initiators</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recognise sponsor needs that can be satisfied by a sponsorship</li> <li>• initiate sponsorship decision-making processes by pointing out needs</li> </ul>

*Table 1. Role-related tasks of the SBC members.*

Below, we discuss RQ4, as its results were retrieved from the third Delphi round. The answers to RQ2 and RQ3 were synthesised from all three Delphi rounds and will be reported subsequently. The RQ4 was about assessing the roles' power bases and the level of influence attributed to them. For this purpose, the participants were asked to allocate the five types of power bases by French and Raven (1959) – reward, coercive, attraction, expert, and status power – to the eight roles of the SBC. After explaining each power base thoroughly, we used a 4-point scale (no, low, moderate, and strong influence) on which the managers could assign how they perceive the level of influence that the roles exert on sponsorship decisions, by using the various power bases. From the managers' responses, we were able to determine which roles use which power bases, the level of influence of each power base, and the resulting roles' overall levels of influence on a sponsorship decision (see Table 2).



Roles	Power bases					Mean	Rank
	Expert power	Status power	Attraction power	Reward power	Coercive power		
<i>Deciders</i>	●●○	●●●	●●○	●●●	●●○	2.15	1.
<i>Negotiators</i>	●●●	●●●	●●○	●●○	●●○	2.05	2.
<i>Initiators</i>	●●●	●●○	●●●	●●○	○○○	1.87	3.
<i>Coordinators</i>	●●○	●●○	●●●	●●○	○○○	1.79	4.
<i>Signatories</i>	●○○	●●●	●○○	●●○	●●○	1.74	5.
<i>Networkers</i>	●●●	●●○	●●●	●○○	○○○	1.68	6.
<i>Experts</i>	●●●	●●○	●●○	○○○	○○○	1.56	7.
<i>Users</i>	●●●	●●○	●●○	○○○	○○○	1.50	8.
<i>Mean</i>	2.31	2.15	2.10	1.41	0.98		
<i>Rank</i>	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.		

Table 2. Power bases of the roles in the SBC.

Our results show that each role uses each type of power base to influence a sponsorship decision. However, Table 2 demonstrates that the degree to which each role draws on the respective power bases varies considerably. For example, deciders exert influence mostly through the use of status and reward power, while also relying at least moderately on the other three power bases. Signatories draw merely on status and reinforcement (reward and coercive) powers, whereas their remaining power bases are low. Other roles like experts and users, almost exclusively use expert power (strongly) and attraction power (moderately). Furthermore, the results indicate different levels of influence of the power bases across all roles (see Table 2). Overall, the various roles make the most use of expert power to influence sponsorship decisions. All roles, besides the signatories, draw at least moderately on expert power. The second-strongest influence is exerted by the use of status power, closely followed by attraction power. The reinforcement powers, reward and coercive power, show the lowest level of influence. However, the reinforcement powers are relatively more important for the roles with the most status power: namely deciders, signatories, and negotiators.

Considering the level of influence of the roles aggregating all power bases, the deciders were ranked as the most influential role in the SBC (see Table 2). The second most influence on sponsorship decisions is exerted by the negotiators, followed by the initiators. The experts and users represent the least influential roles.

### 3.3.4.4 RESULTS RETRIEVED FROM ALL DELPHI ROUNDS

After conducting three Delphi rounds, we developed the sport sponsorship decision-making model, which is based on the SBC with its roles (see Fig. 1). The connective elements between the roles represent the internal collaboration necessary for group decision-making. Thereby, the role-related usage of different power bases to different degrees determines the roles' influence within the SBC. Furthermore, the conceptual model includes the empirically investigated external partners (RQ2) and organisational factors (RQ3), and the conceptually added environmental factors, which all influence the composition of the SBC. The members of the SBC, in turn, influence the steps of the sponsorship decision-making process, which results in a final sponsorship decision.

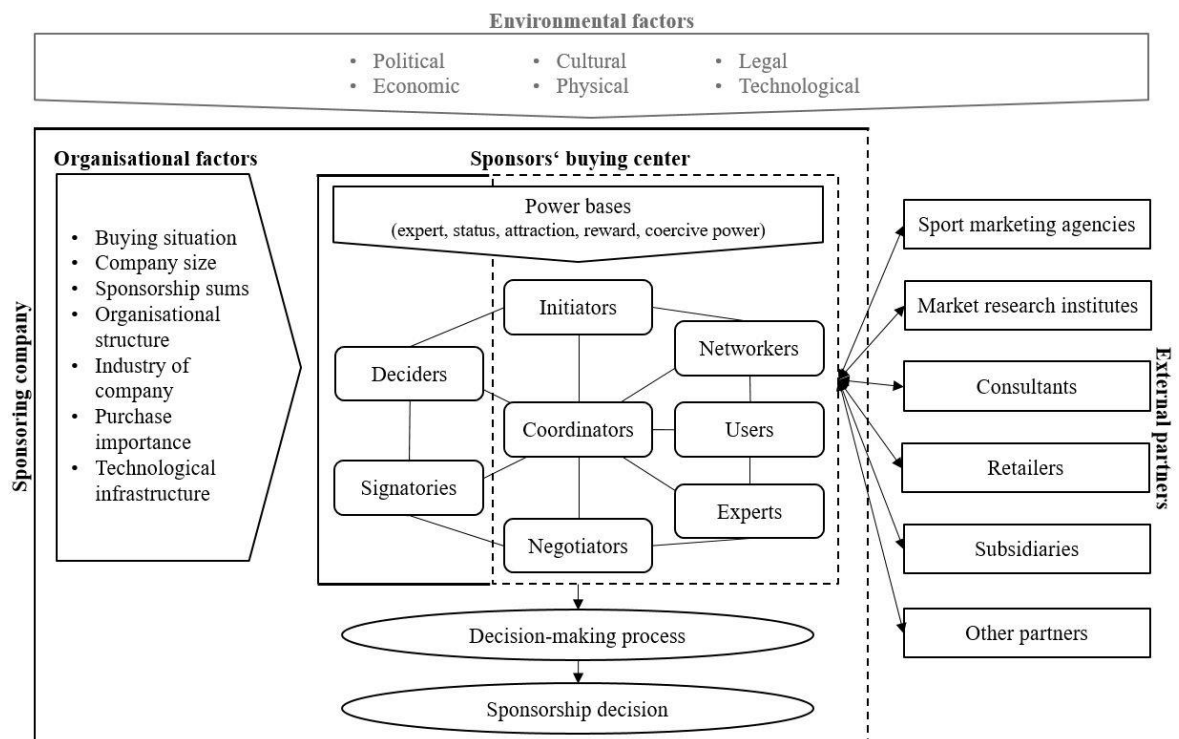


Figure 1. The sport sponsorship decision-making model.

The sponsors' cooperation with external partners regarding sponsorship decision-making is depicted by dotted lines in Fig. 1 (RQ2). The managers stated that sponsors outsource roles to external partners when the capacity to occupy all roles internally is missing. External

partners can be sport marketing agencies, consultants, market research institutes, subsidiaries, and retailers. The managers indicated that sports marketing agencies, retailers, and subsidiaries could occupy the six roles of experts, networkers, users, coordinators, negotiators, and initiators. External consultants could assume the roles of experts, networkers, and initiators, while market research institutes were only involved as experts. In general, all roles of the SBC can be outsourced to external partners except the deciders and signatories (depicted by continuous lines in Fig. 1). This can be explained on the basis that both roles are situated on a higher hierarchical level within the sponsoring company and have more responsibility than the other roles.

Moreover, according to the managers, various organisational factors influence the composition of the SBC (RQ3, see Fig. 1). The complexity of the buying situation and the size of the sponsoring company impact on the SBC. The larger the company and the more complex the buying situation, the more individuals are involved in the SBC (S19). In smaller companies, for example, all roles are occupied by only two or three individuals. The SBC also depends on the organisational structure of the sponsor, which could contain flat or strongly hierarchical structures. Furthermore, the amount of sponsorship investment influences the involvement of the roles in the SBC. This depends on fixed and predetermined sums for sponsorships, and determines who is responsible for a final decision or signature. The importance of the purchase depends on the corporate-political or strategic relevance of the sponsorship. If a company has the chance to contract with a prestigious sponsee, individuals from a higher hierarchical level are involved. Moreover, the technological infrastructure influences the processing of information within the SBC. For instance, if the information is entered into a software system and forwarded automatically to the appropriate roles, the coordinators would lose importance. The last organisational factor mentioned by the managers was the industry in which the company operates. Although captured in the sponsorship context, our results predominantly conform to the organisational factors from the industrial marketing literature.

### **3.3.5 DISCUSSION**

#### **3.3.5.1 THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS**

Our research contributes to the discussion on sponsorship decision-making by identifying eight roles involved in the SBC. Two roles, deciders and users, are analogous to the original

BC (Webster & Wind, 1972a). Through finding the previously neglected initiators, we expand our understanding of sponsorship initiation. The dominant opinion in the sponsorship literature was that sponsees commence sponsorships by sending proposals to the sponsors (e.g., Athanasopoulou & Sarli, 2015; Cornwell & Kwon, 2019). We found that there is in fact a reverse process, where sponsors actively seek sponsees that match their corporate marketing strategy. The modified role of experts, which is similar to the original influencers, provides expertise from different departments and facilitates decision-making by developing selection criteria. The coordinators are central to the formal process of sponsorship decision-making, as they pull the strings and manage collaboration within the SBC (see Fig. 1). Furthermore, we added the role of negotiators. Although the roles of negotiators and signatories seem similar to the buyers from the original BC, we separated these two roles because those who conduct the negotiations are not always those who sign the contract. The confirmation of the negotiators role by managers in the third Delphi round is plausible, as the service research literature indicates the importance of negotiations in the context of customised services (Roth et al., 2006).

Interestingly, we identified a new role, the networkers, in the sponsorship context. The networkers have contacts in the market and link the appropriate actors within and beyond the SBC in the right situations. Accordingly, the networkers can be regarded as a manifestation of Wind and Robertson's (1982) "linking pin" concept, in an organisational role within the SBC. Wind and Robertson (1982) attributed a strong influence on buying decisions to the "linking pins", whereas in our study the networkers show a moderate overall influence on sponsorship decisions (see Table 2). However, finding the networkers contributes to the current discussion in the literature, where sponsorship is increasingly considered from a network perspective (e.g., Chanavat et al., 2016). Sponsors enter into sponsorships to use networking opportunities so as to establish business relations (Wagner et al., 2017). Our study shows that sponsors even involve external partners in their sponsorship decision-making. Hence, the networkers are of paramount importance for sponsor decision-making, because they are not only responsible for establishing and maintaining the relationships with different actors in the sponsorship network, but also with the external partners assuming roles of the SBC.

Moreover, our study is the first to examine empirically the power bases of the various roles and the level of influence attributed to them. To achieve a better understanding of the roles'

relationships, it is important to know that the different roles exert different levels of influence on sponsorship decisions, which is determined by the use of the various power bases.

Across all power bases, the deciders, followed by the negotiators and initiators, exert the strongest influence within the SBC (see Table 2). Accordingly, they are the main drivers of sponsorship decisions. The negotiators' strong influence highlights the importance of contract negotiations in the context of customised services, as proposed by Roth et al. (2006). Interestingly, although the experts and users draw most heavily on the most influential power base, expert power, they are not the main drivers of sponsorship decisions. Since external partners can occupy roles in the SBC, they also gain influence on sponsorship decisions. The level of influence depends on the role they assume. However, the most influential role, the deciders, always remains within the sponsoring company, which shows that the sponsors retain control over the final sponsorship decision.

When looking at the power bases themselves, we observe that across all roles, expert power is the most influential power base (see Table 2). This finding is in line with previous studies in the marketing literature, which also stated that expert power has the most influence on purchasing decisions (Kohli, 1989; Thomas, 1984). However, within the SBC both reinforcement powers show the least influence, which contrasts with the results from Kohli (1989), who assigned the second most influence to these powers. Our result can be explained by the high emotionality of the sponsorship context, in which, according to S21, the employed managers inherit a high intrinsic motivation and attach less value to extrinsic motivation. This explanation may also account for the relatively higher relevance of attraction power in comparison to reinforcement powers in the SBC. However, this finding is also contrary to the results from Kohli (1989) and Thomas (1984), where reinforcement powers were superior to attraction power. Interestingly and again in opposition to the results of Kohli (1989), status power is the second most influential power base in the SBC. Although S21 stated that the hierarchies are nowadays flatter in many sponsoring companies, status remains an important determinant of power. The differences between our findings in the sponsorship context and those from studies in the industrial marketing literature show the importance of considering the characteristics of the research context. Finally, we need to point out that in our study, we could not directly measure the abstract power construct, but rather assessed the levels of influence of the roles with respect to the power bases, as perceived by the members of the SBC (Hinkin & Schriesheim, 1994).

Furthermore, the present study addressed the calls for further research about sponsor group decision-making by considering the characteristics of the sponsorship context (Arthur et al., 1997) and the cooperation of sponsors with external partners (O'Reilly & Madill, 2012). Our results show that sponsorship decisions, especially new task situations, are usually group decisions with several individuals involved in the SBC. Furthermore, the SBC differs from the original BC from Webster and Wind (1972a). This is due to the characteristics of the sponsorship context, such as the high relevance of contract negotiations. Especially the finding of the new networkers role underlines the frequent cooperation with external partners. Finally, our study demonstrates that the Delphi technique can contribute to theory-building through its iterative design (Okoli & Pawlowski, 2004) and the rigour of collaborative theorising with managers (Nenonen et al., 2017). Accordingly, the Delphi study's results are relevant for both scholars and practitioners.

#### 3.3.5.2 MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

According to Webster and Wind (1972a), for managers, it is important to know the internal processes within a BC. Drawing on our findings on the tasks and power bases associated with the various roles, managers of sponsoring companies can better understand the composition of a SBC. This knowledge supports the appropriate allocation of human resources (Töllner et al., 2011), which is the assignment of the right individuals to the SBC roles. For example, when individuals are required for the role of coordinators, sponsors should look for someone who can control the flow of information in the SBC, manage the collaboration between all members, and ensure that decisions are made in time. Furthermore, the coordinators should be able to use mainly attraction power, followed by expert and status power. By comparison, for staffing experts, sponsors should know that experts almost exclusively provide expertise and prepare selection criteria for decision-making, so that their influence stems primarily from their high expert power. Importantly, experts could be technical staff from departments other than sponsorship or marketing (Osmonbekov et al., 2002).

If sponsors do not have the required human resources in-house, our findings emphasise the potential to outsource some roles to external partners. All roles, except for the deciders and signatories, can be outsourced to external partners. When dealing with external partners, ensuring that an appropriate individual occupies the role of networkers is important.

Furthermore, conflicts are unavoidable in group decision-making, due to diverging expectations of the BC members (Johnston & Bonoma, 1996), but they can be resolved by

effective leadership (Tellefsen, 2006). Our findings on the roles' different power bases support sponsors in managing conflicts within the SBC. According to Lambert et al. (1986), there are four possible conflict resolution strategies in BCs: problem-solving, persuasion, bargaining, and politicking. Interpersonal problem-solving and persuasion strategies are applied more frequently than competitive or confrontation strategies (politicking). With knowledge of the roles' power bases, sponsors can assign appropriate roles to resolve a conflict according to the required strategy. For example, for problem-solving and persuasion strategies, the roles of coordinators, networkers, and initiators seem appropriate, because they have the strongest attraction power, paired with moderate status power underpinning their authority. If, on the other hand, a politicking strategy is required, the deciders, negotiators and signatories would represent suitable options for the conflict-solving task, since they are the roles with the strongest reinforcement (reward and coercive power) and status power in the SBC (see Table 2).

For sponsees and external partners, the identification of roles in the SBC is essential since, on the one hand, they could influence the different members of the SBC effectively towards a decision in favour of their proposal (Töllner et al., 2011). On the other hand, a targeted approach to the appropriate role is the most efficient form of communication (Wood, 2005). For example, when contacting a sponsor about a potential partnership, it seems reasonable to look for initiators or deciders, who exert a high level of influence within the SBC. When the topic is about implementation strategies or organisational issues, targeting the users or coordinators would be a good choice. Contacting an inappropriate member of the SBC could lead to inefficient communication and unsuccessful proposals, ultimately resulting in lost revenue (Herbst & Kemmerling, 2015).

#### 3.3.5.3 LIMITATIONS, FUTURE RESEARCH, AND CONCLUSIONS

Our study provides insights into sponsorship decision-making by exploring the SBC, with its internal and external influences, and the cooperation with external partners. However, the study is subject to some limitations, which provide a basis for future research. First, qualitative research about BCs is well established in the literature (e.g., Töllner et al., 2011). However, due to the exploratory nature of the study, we acknowledge some limitations in generalising our results and applying them to other contexts. The findings of qualitative Delphi studies convey no more and no less than the aggregated opinion of the research sample (Day & Bobeva, 2005). Furthermore, as we focused on new task situations, we cannot assert

the veracity and validity of the SBC in contract-renewal situations (straight rebuys).

Second, although we advise occupying all roles of the SBC, we cannot judge the quality of the sponsorship decisions. Further research, for example a large-scale quantitative study, is needed to determine whether the quality of a decision differs when all SBC roles are occupied, compared to when specific roles remain vacant.

Third, we investigated corporate sponsorships in the professional sports sector. In the non-professional sports sector, the sponsoring companies are generally smaller and more locally orientated. This, of course, would influence the composition of the SBC, which would still comprise eight roles, but involve fewer individuals, so that one individual would occupy many roles in the SBC. If, however, a sponsorship decision is made by one single individual, the SBC model becomes redundant.

Fourth, although we are confident of our sport sponsorship decision-making model displayed in Fig. 1, further research would help to consolidate and refine our findings. Further studies could build on the fact that the results on the power bases were obtained only from the third Delphi round, while the remaining results were retrieved from all three rounds. The discrepancy that the roles of initiators and negotiators were only acknowledged by the managers in the third, but not in the first two Delphi rounds, could represent another starting point for future research. Moreover, it should be investigated empirically how environmental factors affect the SBC and how the organisational factors determine the composition of the SBC in its detail.

Our findings of the networkers role and sponsor cooperation with external partners emphasise the importance of looking beyond the dyadic sponsor-sponsee relationship when researching sponsorship decision-making. In conclusion, our sport sponsorship decision-making model contributes to theory and theorising about sponsorship decision-making and facilitates generating hypotheses for future research.



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### **3.4 SPONSORS' BUYING CENTER – SPONSORSHIP DECISIONS IN THE LOGIC OF VALUE CO-CREATION (TRANSFER PAPER B)**

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In most approaches in the sponsorship literature, sponsorship decisions are considered holistically as decisions of the sponsoring company. From the perspective of value co-creation (Woratschek, 2020), this assumption is not comprehensive. In fact, it is rarely the case that only one individual as a representative of the company decides. Sponsorship decisions usually are group decisions involving several collaborating individuals, and this aspect is reflected in the logic of value co-creation.

#### **3.4.1 WHAT ROLES DO VARIOUS INDIVIDUALS PLAY IN SPONSORSHIP DECISION-MAKING?**

In the industrial marketing literature, the so-called buying center concept describes different roles of individuals involved in corporate purchasing decisions. The original buying center includes the organisational roles of deciders, users, influencers, gatekeepers, buyers, and initiators (Webster & Wind, 1972, p. 17; Bonoma, 1982, p. 113). Thereby, each role can be occupied by several individuals, and one individual can play more than one role.

However, an analogous application of the original buying center to the sponsorship context does not seem appropriate, as sponsorship has some special characteristics (Arthur, Scott, & Woods, 1997, p. 231). On the one hand, sponsorships are customised services in which contract negotiations are an essential part of the decision-making process (Cornwell & Kwon, 2019, p. 5). Yet, the industrial marketing literature mainly focuses on goods and standardised services instead of customised ones. On the other hand, the aspect of value co-creation in decision-making is not regarded.

Moreover, sponsors often collaborate with external partners when making sponsorship decisions (O'Reilly & Madill, 2012, p. 51). This aspect has largely been ignored in the discussion about the original buying center, which points to the key role of the logic of value co-creation in research and practice.



### 3.4.2 HOW SHOULD THE ORIGINAL BUYING CENTER BE MODIFIED TO FIT THE SPONSORSHIP CONTEXT?

In their empirical study, Schönberner, Woratschek, and Buser (2020) show that the sponsors' buying center (SBC) consists of eight different roles, with each role having its own set of specific tasks (see Figure 1). Three of the roles of the original buying center can be found in the SBC, namely deciders, users, and initiators.

Furthermore, three roles had to be modified to fit the sponsorship context. The roles of influencers changed into experts and gatekeepers into coordinators. The original role of buyers was separated into two distinctive roles, namely the signatories and negotiators, a new role added in the SBC.

Interestingly, another new role was identified: the networkers. They are mainly oriented outside the company and have connections in the market. Thus, the networkers indicate the collaboration of sponsors with external partners. It may be that the original buying center neglected those collaborations with external partners because the logic of value co-creation was neither established in the management literature nor considered as guidance in academic thinking.

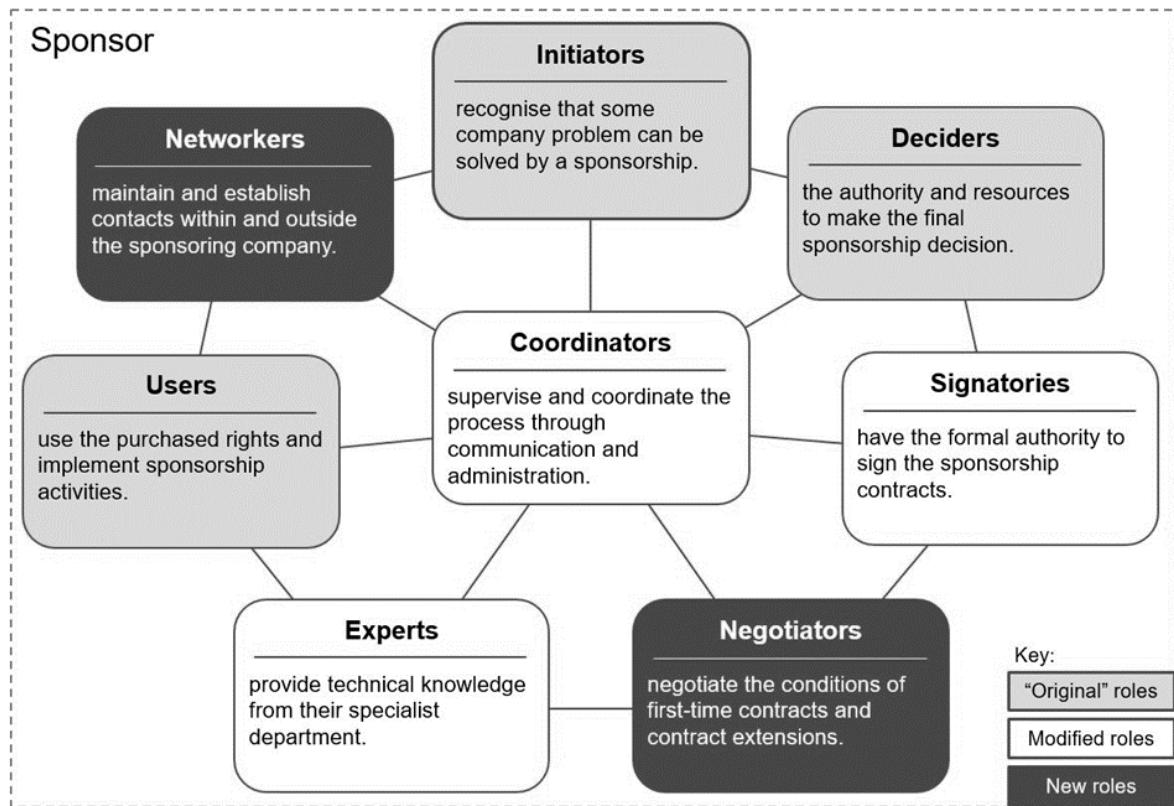


Figure 1: The roles of the sponsors' buying center (SBC).

### 3.4.3 HOW DO SPONSORS INCLUDE EXTERNAL PARTNERS IN THEIR DECISION-MAKING?

The study of Schönberner et al. (2020) revealed the relevance of the cooperation with external partners when making sponsorship decisions. If sponsors do not have the required expertise or capacity in-house, they outsource various roles to external partners. External partners can be, amongst others, sport marketing agencies, market research institutes, consultants, distributors/wholesalers, and markets and subsidiaries (see Figure 2). Accordingly, external partners gain influence on sponsorship decision-making of companies. Therefore, the logic of value co-creation addresses the importance of internal and external collaborations better than the logic of sport products. However, not every role can be outsourced. The findings indicate that the roles of deciders and signatories always remain within the sponsoring company. Hence, the main responsibility for the decisions lies with the sponsor.

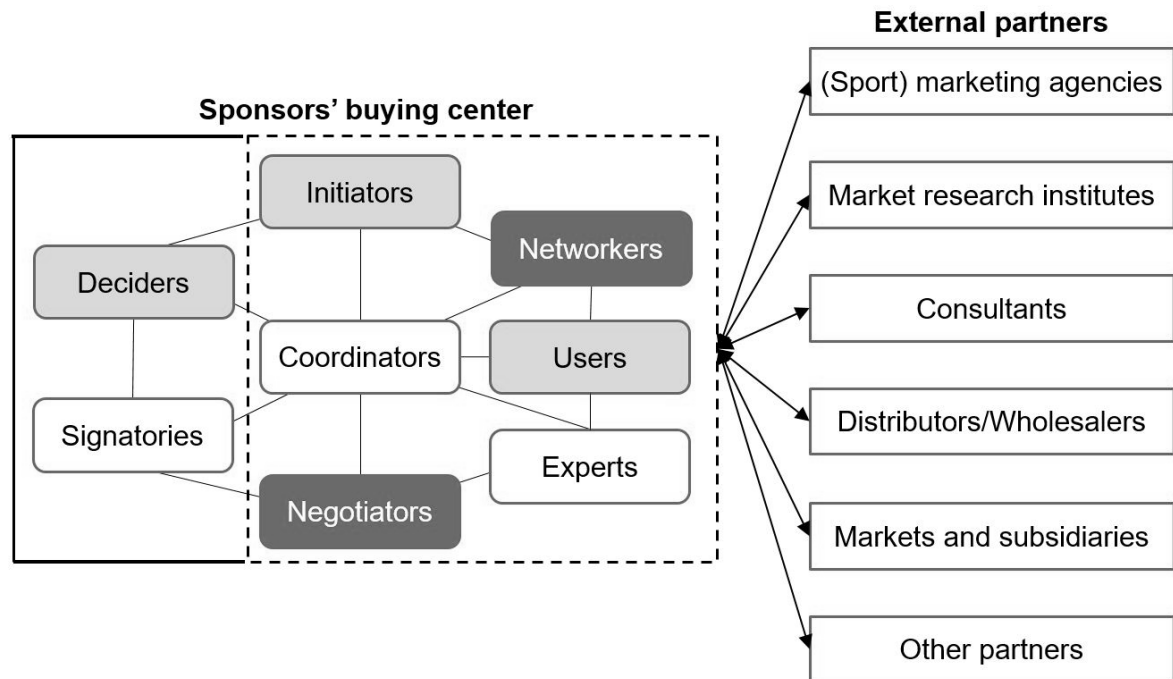


Figure 2: The cooperation with external partners (adapted from Schönberner et al., 2020).

### 3.4.4 HOW CAN MANAGERS USE THE INFORMATION GAINED FROM THE SBC PRACTICALLY?

The SBC allows sponsors to understand the composition of decision-making teams better. The knowledge about the roles and their specific tasks supports sponsors to assign their staff appropriately to fitting roles. If sponsors lack human resources to occupy all roles, they can outsource specific roles to external partners.

The identification of the roles of the SBC is significant for sponsees, as it leads to more efficient ways of communication (Wood, 2005, p. 272). Addressing the right role with a sponsorship proposal saves time and effort for both parties and increases the prospect of success for the sponsee.

To put it in a nutshell:

- (1) Most approaches in the sponsorship literature assume that individual decisions represent sponsors' decision-making processes.
- (2) From the perspective of value co-creation, this assumption is limited.
- (3) Sponsorship decisions are usually group decisions.
- (4) In industrial marketing, buying centers are introduced as group decision-making processes.
- (5) Sponsorship decisions have some special characteristics because sponsorships are collaborative and customised services.
- (6) The sponsors' buying center contains eight different roles with different task sets, namely coordinators, deciders, users, initiators, signatories, experts, negotiators, and networkers.
- (7) Especially the newly introduced role of networkers emphasises the importance of the logic of value co-creation in sport management.
- (8) Sponsorship decisions include internal as well as external collaborations.
- (9) Sponsors cooperate with external partners in sponsorship decision-making by outsourcing specific roles.
- (10) Sponsors can use the knowledge of the SBC for appropriate human resource allocation.
- (11) Sponsees can generate more efficient and promising ways of communication.

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### 3.5 ACTORS' INFLUENCE ON SPONSORSHIP DECISIONS: ROLES, RESOURCES, AND SOURCES OF POWER (TRANSFER PAPER C)

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Individuals rarely decide alone about sport sponsorships in a company. Sponsorship decision-making is mainly group decision-making. The so-called sponsor's buying center (SBC) describes the roles of the individuals involved in sponsorship decisions. These roles are the deciders, signatories, initiators, experts, users, coordinators, negotiators, and networkers (Schönberner, Woratschek, Buser, 2020, p. 10). Each role has its specific set of tasks in the SBC, but it remains unclear which resources the actors need in their roles.

#### 3.5.1 WHAT RESOURCES ARE REQUIRED FOR SPECIFIC ROLES?

In this article, resources are defined as an individual's skills, competencies, and knowledge, which Vargo and Lusch (2004) refer to as operant resources (Woratschek, Horbel, & Popp, 2014, p. 11).

Resources	Roles							
	Decid-ers	Initia-tors	Users	Net-workers	Nego-tiators	Coord-inators	Exp-erts	Signa-tories
Technical knowledge	◐	◐	●	◐	◐	◐	●	
General communication skills	○	○	◐	◐		◐	◐	
Negotiation skills					●			
Strategic thinking	◐	◐		○	○	◐		○
Social competencies	○	○	○	◐	○	◐		
Analytical abilities	◐	○	○				○	○
Networking capabilities		○		◐			○	
Creativity		○	◐					
Decision-making skills	○							
Implementation capabilities			◐					
Affinity for sports			○					

○ = low degree, ◐ = moderate degree, ● = strong degree

Table 1: Required resources for different roles.

In our empirical study, we revealed 11 different types of resources that are integrated into the SBC, namely technical knowledge, general communication skills, negotiation skills, strategic thinking, social competencies, analytical abilities, networking capabilities, creativity, decision-making skills, implementation capabilities, and affinity for sports. The results further show that several types of resources overlap in the roles of the SBC. Still, each role requires different degrees and combinations of the resources (see Table 1).

Actors who play specific roles need specific resource combinations. Additionally, each role is equipped with various sources of power, which exert a leverage effect on operant resources. Actors playing specific roles integrate sources of power in order to significantly influence a sponsorship decision. To examine the level of influence of each role, an analysis of the sources of power of the roles can be applied (Bonoma, 1982, p. 115).

### 3.5.2 WHAT SOURCES OF POWER ARE ENDOWED IN EACH ROLE?

The five sources of power are reward power, coercive power, attraction power, expert power, and status power (French and Raven, 1959). Reward power is the ability to provide others with rewards, while the opposing coercive power is the capacity to punish. Attraction power refers to influence based on liking a person. Influencing someone's behaviour by specialised knowledge is called expert power. Status power is associated with the formal or informal position within an organisation.

Roles	Sources of power					Rank
	Expert power	Status power	Attraction power	Reward power	Coercive power	
Deciders	●	●	●	●	○	1.
Negotiators	●	●	●	●	○	2.
Initiators	●	●	●	○	○	3.
Coordinators	●	●	●	○	○	4.
Signatories	○	●	○	●	●	5.
Networkers	●	●	●	○	○	6.
Experts	●	○	●	○	○	7.
Users	●	○	●	○	○	8.
Rank	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	

○ low degree,      ● = moderate degree,      ● = strong degree

Table 2: Sources of power (adapted from Schönberner et al., 2020).

Schönberner et al. (2020) have shown in their study that each role of the SBC uses – to a certain degree – each source of power to influence sponsorship decisions (see Table 2). Furthermore, the most influential source of power is expert power, followed by status and attraction power. Reward and coercive power seem to be no significant determinants of sponsorship decisions.

The deciders, followed by the negotiators and initiators, are the most influential roles across all power sources, while the experts and users exert the least influence on sponsorship decisions (see Table 2). Accordingly, the roles of deciders, negotiators, and initiators are considered the main drivers of decisions in the sponsorship context.

The knowledge about the resources and sources of power is important for managers in order to understand better the actors' roles, resources and sources of power in the SBC. If a specific role in a company has to be filled in the SBC, it makes sense to look specifically for people who have the necessary resources to perform the role. For example, when individuals are required for the role of coordinators, it is recommended to hire someone who can integrate the following resources: strategic thinking, communication skills, technical knowledge, and social competencies. Coordinators should also have mainly attraction, expert, and status power. In comparison, persons occupying the role of experts integrate smaller sets of resources with a focus on technical knowledge and rely almost exclusively on expert power.

To put it in a nutshell:

- (1) Sponsorship decisions are mainly group decisions made in a sponsors' buying center.
- (2) Actors play specific roles in a sponsor's buying center.
- (3) Each role requires the actor to have and use specific operant resources.
- (4) Sources of power exert a leverage effect on operant resources, and therefore, significantly influence sponsorship decisions.
- (5) Expert power, status power, and attraction power are the most influential sources of power across all roles in the sponsorship context.
- (6) Deciders, negotiators, and initiators are the main drivers of sponsorship decisions.
- (7) Managers should ensure that the person to be hired has the relevant resources for a specific role in sponsorship decisions.

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## CHAPTER 4: EMPIRICAL AND SYSTEMIC PERSPECTIVE ON ENGAGEMENT

### 4.1 THE BUSINESS MODEL OF SPONSORSHIP ENGAGEMENT IN SPORTS: BRIEF AND STRAIGHT TO THE POINT (TRANSFER PAPER D)

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#### 4.1.1 THE LOGIC OF SPORT PRODUCTS

The sponsorship incomes of the “Big Five” European football leagues (England, Germany, Spain, France and Italy) totalled for 4.3 billion euros, i.e. 27% of total revenues, in 2017/18 (Deloitte, 2019). However, sponsorship income of the Big Five is not equally distributed (Woratschek & Griebel 2020), and such figures only cover financial value. In the best case, those financial figures only depict the exchange of the acquired association rights for financial or in-kind assistance (Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 2014; Meenaghan, 1983). However, traditional approaches in sport management focus on the financial value of sponsorships because it is implicitly assumed that value is embedded in the sponsorship rights, and therefore, firms buy them.

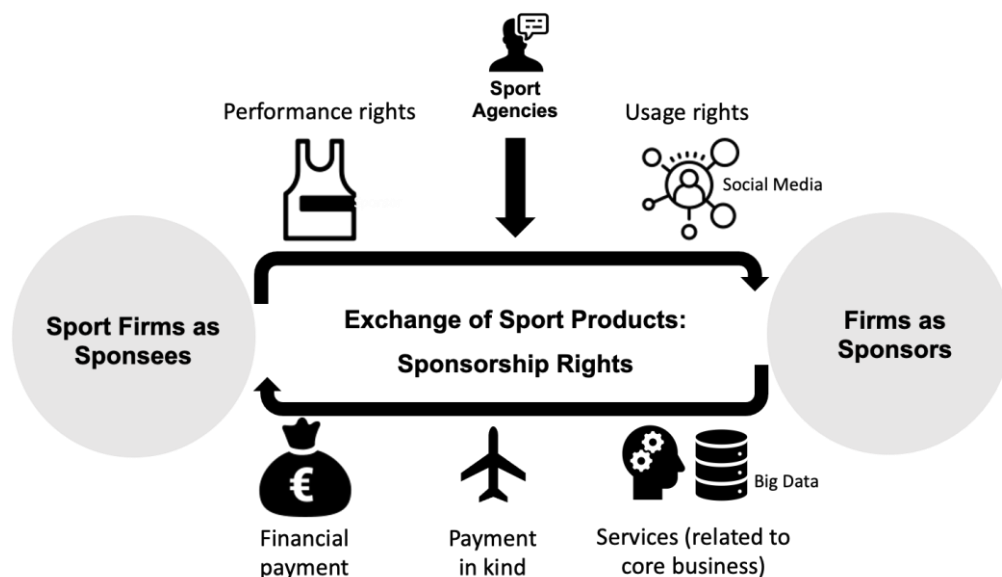


Figure 1: Sport sponsorship – logic of sport products (images partly provided by <https://icons8.com>)

According to the traditional approach, figure 1 shows the market relations between sponsor and sponsee. In sport sponsorship, rights (performance rights, usage rights) are exchanged for money, payments-in-kind or services. In principle, sponsorship rights are seen as products that contain a certain value for the buyers.

Often the sponsorship rights are brokered through sport agencies, which act as “matchmakers,” so to speak. Matchmakers are a form of platform business models (Fehrer, Brodie, Kaartemo, & Reiter, 2020) and serve as intermediaries because they link actors in one or more markets. They also correspond to a value net (Stabell & Fjeldstad 1998). Value nets analyse intermediaries’ primary activities that directly lead to value for sponsors and sponsees.

The platform business model also corresponds to sponsees because they link sponsors with the fans, spectators and other sponsors. Sport agencies and sponsees as platform business models share the same value configuration, i.e. how value is created for the customers. For more details about different value configurations, please watch the video cited below.

However, the difference between the two business models lies in the fact that sports agencies act as intermediaries for the actors in one market (one-sided market: sponsorship rights) and sponsees as intermediaries for the actors in multisided markets (sports market, advertising market, labour market).

#### **4.1.2 THE LOGIC OF VALUE CO-CREATION**

From the perspective of the logic of value co-creation (Woratschek, Horbel & Popp 2014; Woratschek, 2020), the platform business model “matchmaker,” or rather the value configuration “value net,” is not sufficient.

On the one hand, sponsors and many others also contribute to value creation, not only the sponsee. The sponsee provides sponsorship rights so that valuable awareness is created in the sponsors’ target groups (customers, fans, employees). This implies, for example, that fans, sponsee’s customers, and employees are excited to watch sponsored sporting activities. Hence, value is not embedded in sponsorship rights, it is co-created by different actors.

On the other hand, sponsors do not only provide financial resources or payments-in-kind. Inspired by the logic of value co-creation, engagement literature generates an understanding of voluntary resource integration in sport sponsorship. The collaboration of actors can materialise on physical platforms, such as hospitality areas, business meetings, or sponsor roadshows. Furthermore, those relationships can unfold on virtual platforms. This includes

shared content via social media channels or digital network apps designed to facilitate the interaction of sponsors. The Dutch Bundeling company, in cooperation with PSV Eindhoven or other sports organisations, serves as an example (Kürbs, 2019, p. 9). Their app aims to connect business partners. Moreover, it represents a further possibility for sport organisation to inform its partners or to invite them to special events. Besides, users can display companies sorted by sector, which facilitates networking (Bundeling, 2019).

Engagement platforms (EPs) are defined as “physical or virtual touchpoints designed to provide structural support for the exchange and integration of resources, and thereby co-creation of value between actors in a service ecosystem” (Breidbach, Brodie, & Hollebeek, 2014, p. 594). Following this definition, EPs enable interaction and collaboration of actors, both online and offline, and facilitate resource integration (Storbacka, Brodie, Böhmman, Maglio, & Nenonen, 2016). The difference to matchmakers or value nets is based on the different logics how value is created in sport sponsorship (Woratschek & Buser, 2018).

Following definitions of engagement as behaviour (Jaakkola & Alexander, 2014; van Doorn et al., 2010), sponsorship engagement (SE) is defined as actor’s behavioural manifestations and the integration of resources beyond (or without) the sponsorship contract. The sponsee acts as an operator of the EP, but also as resource integrator in a value co-creation process. All other actors, who gained access to the sport sponsorship EP, can interact with others. They provide and use resources simultaneously. Consequently, all actors engaging in sport sponsorship benefit from multilateral resource integration. Thereby, the operator facilitates SE.

To illustrate what kind of resources are integrated, we focus on the relations between different sponsors and a sponsee. Our empirical study reveals five types of voluntary resources integrated on a sport sponsorship EP (Buser, Woratschek, & Schönberner 2020): management competencies, technical competencies, networking skills, innovative ideas, and products and services that are not part of the sponsorship contract. For the sake of clarity, figure 2 shows a sport organisation as an operator of an EP with two sponsors and the resources integrated based on contracts and voluntary provision.

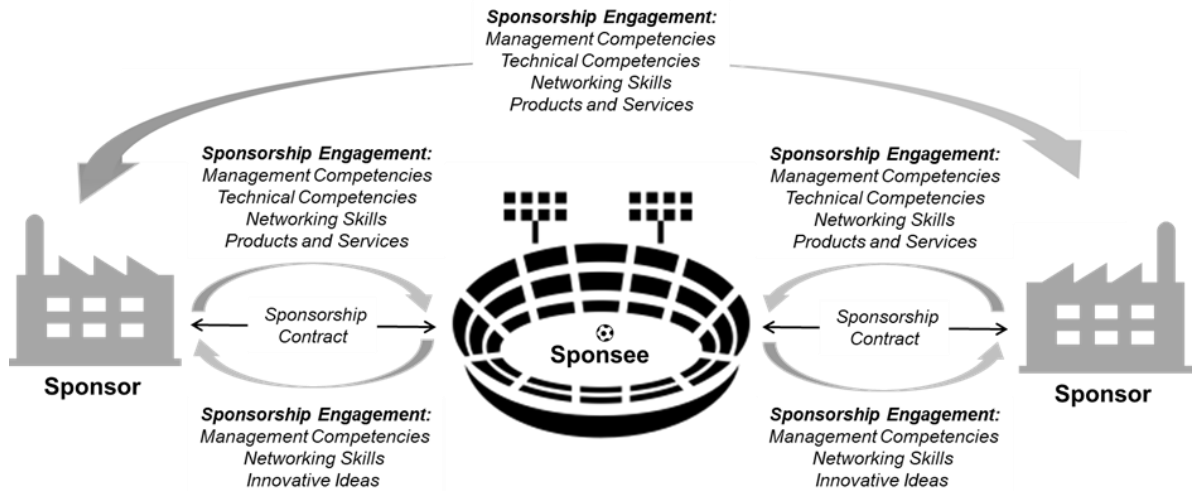


Figure 2: Sport sponsorship – logic of value co-creation

No contract exists among the different sponsors. However, they likewise exchange resources and show SE. This circumstance makes the sponsor–sponsor relationship very special. Table 1 gives insights into voluntarily integrated resources as part of the actors’ SE behaviour.

	Type of resources	Sample quotation
Resource integration beyond (or without) the contract (SE)	Management competencies	“tax consultant is also a sponsor and then advises us [the sports club] without billing, for the most part, at least“ (exp_8)
	Technical competencies	“the sponsor is involved in the development of our boats. They provide us with wind tunnels to improve our performance“ (exp_45)
	Networking skills	“put(ing) in a good word for us ... [the sports club]“ (exp_16) or „even bring him [the partner] along, that we [the sports club] personally can convince them“ (exp_16).
	Innovative ideas	“we basically bring the ideas“ (exp_5) as “they have their own event department that helps with the implementation. So they are creating and have tools that they use and that you can use as a partner“ (exp_46).
	Products and services	“for example, if players move, they mostly use the moving company [sponsor]. Of course with relatively good conditions“ (exp_6).

Table 1: Resource integration in sport sponsorship as part of SE

Having empirical evidence about voluntary resource integration in sport sponsorship in mind, industry reports about financial figures on sponsorship, such as Deloitte (2018), fail to provide a holistic picture of value creation as their numbers do not include SE. The potential to generate value from sports sponsorship, however, is significantly higher. Therefore, it is essential for sport managers to understand their role as resource integrators as well as EP operators granting access to others.

The isolated exchange of sponsorship rights has no value in itself. Value only results from the usage, respectively from leveraging or activating these rights, which implies that expenses for the mere access to the EP are not sufficient.

Furthermore, sponsorship is more than a pure promotional and sales tool for sponsors to target their strategic objectives. Given the importance of business relations in sponsorship networks, it is essential to be aware that sponsorship value is not limited to contract components. Therefore, the concept of sponsorship as an EP provides a foundation for contract-based as well as voluntary value co-creation. Conclusively, the financial value covers only a small part of value potential in sport sponsorship, whereas the logic of value co-creation reveals the full potential of that value.

To put it in a nutshell:

- (1) Traditional sport sponsorship approaches focus on sponsorship rights and their financial value.
- (2) Traditional sport sponsorship approaches follow the logic of sport products.
- (3) Sponsorship rights are often brokered by sport agencies implementing a platform business model in the sense of a matchmaker or a value net in a one-sided market.
- (4) Sponsees also operate a platform business model or a value net, but in multisided markets.
- (5) In the logic of value co-creation, value emerges through interactions and different actors' co-creation on physical and virtual engagement platforms.
- (6) Sponsorship engagement is actor's behavioural manifestations beyond (or without) the sponsorship contract.
- (7) Sponsorship engagement platforms are touchpoints to facilitate exchange, and therefore actors' resource integration.
- (8) Empirical findings show five different types of resources (voluntarily) integrated by sport sponsorship engagement: management competencies, technical competencies, networking skills, innovative ideas, and products and services.
- (9) Sport managers' roles are twofold: they serve as operators granting access to an engagement platform and, simultaneously, they are resource integrators.
- (10) The logic of value co-creation reveals the full potential of value in sport sponsorship.

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## 4.2 ‘GOING THE EXTRA MILE’ IN RESOURCE INTEGRATION: EVOLVING A CONCEPT OF SPORT SPONSORSHIP AS AN ENGAGEMENT PLATFORM (SCIENTIFIC PAPER 4)

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### ABSTRACT

**Research question:** The few publications discussing sport sponsorship from a network approach lack sufficient explanations for resource integration. Building on the sport value framework, sponsorship, and engagement literature, our objective is to conceptualise sport sponsorship as an engagement platform on which the sponsee grants access and both sponsees and sponsors integrate resources. As such, we differentiate between contractual resource integration and sponsorship engagement. Furthermore, we aim to investigate empirically what types of resources are integrated within multiple sponsor–sponsee networks for a better theoretical foundation of our conceptualisation.

**Research method:** We apply a three-stage qualitative Delphi method with 61 experts from sport sponsorship practice in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland.

**Results and Findings:** The results indicate that multiple sponsors, as well as the sponsee, integrate resources beyond the sponsorship contract. These resources include *management competencies, technical competencies, networking skills, innovative ideas, and products and services*.

**Implications:** This study conceptualises sport sponsorship as an engagement platform. This understanding contributes to theorising about sport sponsorship. Sponsorship serves as more than a pure promotional and sales tool. The results show that voluntary resource integration can lead to strategic partnerships with access to knowledge and expertise. These findings enable us to refine our conceptualisation of sport sponsorship as an engagement platform. Consequently, sponsors can co-create business networks, leading to technology transfer and benefits from economic specialisation. Sponsees gain a better understanding of their role as



facilitators of sponsors' resource integration. That is, they take over the operator role, thus increasing their monetary and non-monetary value.

**KEYWORDS:** Sport sponsorship, engagement platform, resource integration, sport value framework, Delphi study

### 4.2.1 INTRODUCTION

Sponsorship is a useful marketing tool for companies in general and is fundamentally important in financing sport organisations. For sports clubs, the revenue from sponsorships represents a significant part of the profit structure. Sponsorship revenue of the 'Big-Five' European football leagues in England, Germany, Spain, France, and Italy totalled 4 billion euros and accounting for 27% of the total revenues (Deloitte, 2018). These numbers, however, only represent the exchange of sponsorship rights for money. Accordingly, Mullin et al. (2014, p. 231) define sport sponsoring as 'acquisition of rights to affiliate or directly associate with a product or event to derive benefits related to that affiliation or association'. In return for the granted rights by the sponsored institution or athlete, the sponsor provides 'assistance, either financial or in-kind' (Meenaghan, 1983, p. 9). Similar to these definitions, much of the academic discourse focusses on economic exchange and thus neglects sponsors' and sponsees' voluntary give-and-take. This voluntary integration of resources is not stipulated in contracts or agreements. The overall exchange and, thus, the value generated in sport sponsorship is likely much higher than documented in reports or reflected in financial figures.

Furthermore, sponsorship portfolios of sport organisations exceed the dyadic relationship between sponsee and sponsor, which is mainly the focus of analyses in both practice and academia (Apostolopoulou & Papadimitriou, 2004; Mullin et al., 2014). The importance of sponsorship as a relationship, however, remains under-developed in the sponsorship discourse (Ryan & Fahy, 2012). Within the network of business partners, many relationships exist (e.g. on game days in VIP areas, during specific business events, online via social media or specialised networking apps). Thus, sponsorship practice extends the view of the dyadic perspective to a wider network. Some studies have applied a relationship and network approach to sponsorship (e.g. Meenaghan et al., 2013; Olkkonen, 2001), but none investigated the inter-relationship of actors in the sponsorship network or their behaviours within the relationship.

In summary, the strong focus on dyadic, contract-based performance and consideration in the academic literature paired with the multilateralism of relationships in practice, and the shortcomings of network approaches capturing the complexity of relationships require new conceptual foundations. Therefore, engagement platform (EP) literature (e.g. Breidbach & Brodie, 2017a, 2017b), provides suitable ideas and principles.

Thus, this paper has three main goals. First, it aims to conceptualise sport sponsorship as an EP theoretically. Second, it aims to contribute to a better understanding of sponsorship engagement (SE). As such, it empirically investigates sponsees' and sponsors' resource integration on the EP, by differentiating contractual resources and sponsors' and sponsees' voluntary effort to engage beyond the contractual agreements by 'going the extra mile'. Third, drawing on our empirical insights, we validate our theoretical considerations and present a more precise concept of sport sponsorship as an EP.

Accordingly, we present synopses of literature on the relationship and network perspectives in sponsorship, as well as on EP and resource integration. For this research, we refer to platforms as intermediaries of connections between market participants (Thomas et al., 2014). EPs are 'physical or virtual touchpoints designed to provide structural support for the exchange and integration of resources, and thereby co-creation of value between actors in a service ecosystem' (Breidbach et al., 2014, p. 594). As such, EPs enable interaction and collaboration of actors and facilitate resource integration (Storbacka et al., 2016). From this, we evolve a concept of sport sponsorship as an EP. As a theoretical basis, we use EP, actor engagement, and the sport value framework (SVF) by Woratschek et al. (2014). The next step explores contractual and voluntary resource integration (SE) empirically using a three-stage Delphi method, conducted with managers in sport sponsorship. Finally, we validate the theoretical conceptualisation and present a refined concept of sport sponsorship as an EP. Consequently, we outline contributions to theory and practice in sport management.

## **4.2.2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **4.2.2.1 RELATIONSHIP AND NETWORK PERSPECTIVE IN SPONSORSHIP**

Various approaches have characterised the academic discourse on sport sponsorship in the past decades. In recent years, some scholars have described sponsorship from a relationship marketing approach, while others have used a network perspective. Ryan and Fahy (2012) display this development in their overview of how sport sponsorship has been addressed in the literature. Figure 1 shows the academic discourse in sport sponsorship over time.

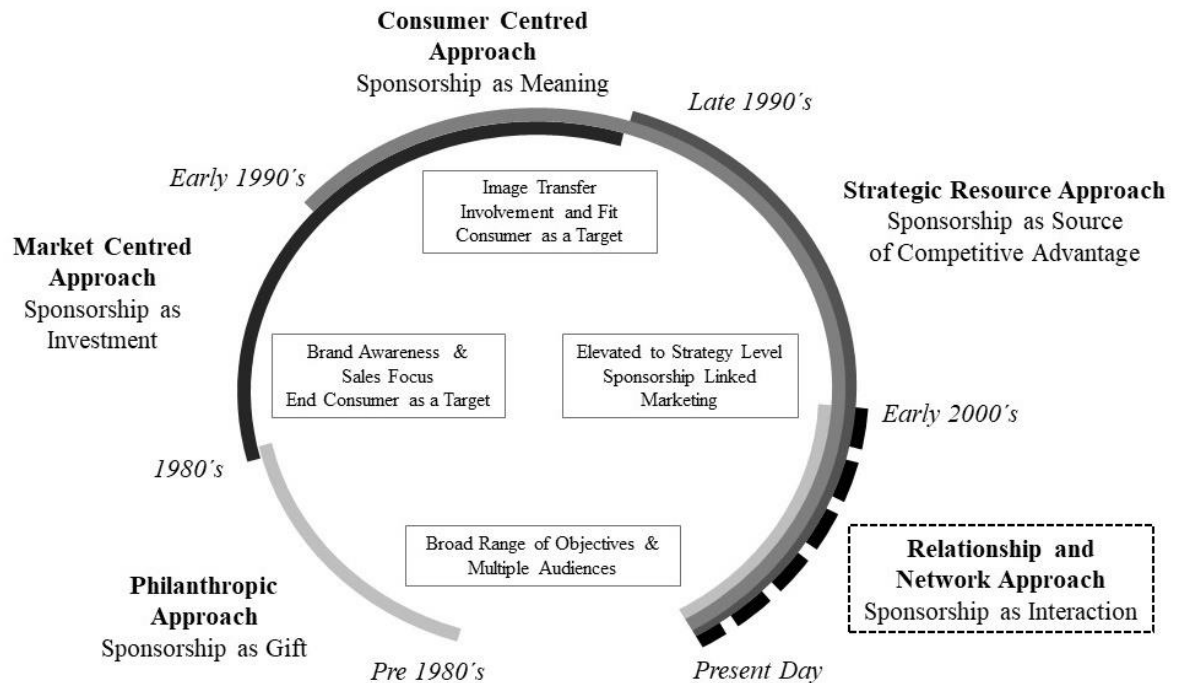


Figure 1: Periods of dominating approaches in sport sponsorship (Woratschek & Buser, 2018, p. 33; adapted from Ryan & Fahy, 2012, p. 1139).

Ryan and Fahy (2012) differentiate among five different periods, each with its specific approaches: a philanthropic, market-centred, consumer-centred, strategic resource, and relationship and network approach of sport sponsorship. The network perspective is still subject to further research (Ryan & Fahy, 2012). Chanavat et al. (2016) also argue that there is a discrepancy between literature and reality in sponsorship, as do Cornwell and Kwon (2020). They call for more work to capture the complexity of relationships in sport sponsorship.

Most research on sponsorship focusses on the relationship between one sponsee and only one sponsor (e.g. as co-marketing alliances) (Farrelly & Quester, 2005) or win-win relationships between a sports entity and its sponsor (Nufer & Bühler, 2010). Extension of the dyad of sponsor and sponsee, however, has stimulated academic discussions. That is, various research streams now add more actors to the sponsorship picture. Cornwell (2008), for example, suggests considering third-party relationships because of the increasing number of intermediary actors, such as consultants, sports right marketers, and other kinds of agencies, that mediate dyadic relationships. Morgan et al. (2014) extend the dyadic alliance of sponsor and sponsee to a complex, dynamic interorganisational relationship with a strong focus on sponsors' business-to-business networks. Furthermore, Olkkonen (2001, p. 312) argues that

a ‘network approach of sport sponsorship goes beyond dyadic relationships to networks of relationships’. As such, the author requests a broader understanding of sport sponsorship by considering more actors and their relationships within the network. So far, however, researchers adopting the network and relationship approach have not provided a holistic set of multilateral relationships and interactions by various actors.

Cobbs (2011) and Farrelly (2010) conceptualise sport sponsorship interactions mainly as inter-organisational dynamics between sponsoring companies. Chanavat et al. (2016) highlight the influence of multiple sponsors in the network and the respective perception of consumers of not only the co-sponsored entities but ambushers as well. Morgan et al. (2014) also extend the bilateral relationship of sponsor and sponsee, postulated by Renard and Sitz (2011) and Fahy et al. (2004), to a network of corporate sponsors. The sponsee acts as a broker in facilitating relationships within the network of sponsors (Cobbs, 2011; Wagner et al., 2017).

In such interorganisational relationships, Demir and Söderman (2015) visualise the exchange of resources from the resource-based view of strategic management. However, they describe neither the type of resources exchanged in sponsorship relationships nor the interaction of stakeholders within the network. Such limitations stem mainly from the theories underlying previous studies – for example, the industrial marketing and purchasing group-related network approach (Olkkonen, 2001) or shared relational value (Morgan et al., 2014). To gain a better understanding of the integration of resources and, by that, relationships in sport sponsorship, this paper uses actor engagement and related EP literature as theoretical foundation. This perspective has the potential to enlighten the sponsorship discourse by investigating resource integration between actors on the sport sponsorship platform (Cornwell & Kwon, 2020). Therefore, we use the sport sponsorship EP as a kind of middle-range theory and also substantiate the SVF as a general theory in accordance to Gerke et al. (2020) and Brodie et al. (2011). In such interorganisational relationships, Demir and Söderman (2015) visualise the exchange of resources from the resource-based view of strategic management. However, they describe neither the type of resources exchanged in sponsorship relationships nor the interaction of stakeholders within the network. Such limitations stem mainly from the theories underlying previous studies – for example, the industrial marketing and purchasing group-related network approach (Olkkonen, 2001) or shared relational value (Morgan et al., 2014). To gain a better understanding of the integration

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#### 4.2.2.2 ENGAGEMENT PLATFORM AND RESOURCE INTEGRATION

This paper applies engagement literature to the context of sport sponsorship and aims to generate understanding about sport sponsorship as an EP, including actors' resource integration. Such complex problems require analysis on different levels of aggregation (Woratschek et al., 2020). For this reason, we follow the commonly proposed distinction of three levels of analysis (Chandler & Vargo, 2011; Kjellberg & Helgesson, 2006; Storbacka et al., 2016): (1) the micro-level (actors' engagement), (2) the meso-level (sets of actors on platforms), and (3) the macro-level (ecosystems and institutions).

At the micro-level, individual actors draw on their resources and competences to serve others and to benefit from others' resource integration (Chandler & Vargo, 2011). That is, '[actor engagement] practices result from actor interactions on EPs' (Breidbach & Brodie, 2017a, p. 767). 'As many actors engage, various resource integration pattern emerges, which transform extant resource configurations by each actor, thus leading to value co-creation' (Breidbach & Brodie, 2017a, p. 767). Resources can be differentiated as operand (raw materials, physical products) and operant (human skills, knowledge) resources (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Hunt and Derozier (2004) suggest a more detailed classification by sub-dividing resources in

financial (e.g. cash, access to financial markets), physical (e.g. plant, equipment), legal (e.g. trademarks, licenses), human (e.g. the skills and knowledge of individual employees), organisational (e.g. competences, controls, policies, culture), informational (e.g. knowledge from consumer and competitive intelligence), and relational (e.g. relationships with suppliers and customers) resources. (Hunt & Derozier, 2004, pp. 7–8)

Actors' reciprocal exchange of different kinds of resources is regarded as actor engagement. Actor engagement builds on the concept of customer engagement, which focusses on the dyadic relationship between customer and company. In the academic literature, customer

engagement has two characteristic streams. On the one hand, Brodie et al. (2011, p. 260) define customer engagement as a ‘psychological state’ expressed on a cognitive, emotional, and behavioural level (multi-dimensional). In the same vein, Kumar and Pansari (2016, p. 498) describe engagement as the ‘attitude, behavior, [and] the level of connectedness (1) among customers, (2) between customers and employees, and (3) of customers and employees within a firm’ (multi-dimensional). On the other hand, Van Doorn et al. (2010, p. 254) regard customer engagement as ‘behavioral manifestations [that] go beyond transactions’ (one-dimensional). Jaakkola and Alexander (2014) agree with Van Doorn et al. (2010) that the focal actor, in most cases the firm, can foster desired engagement behaviours and thus provides a suitable platform for this behaviour. Consequently, an observable activity, or engagement as behaviour, and the tendency to engage, or engagement as a disposition, should be differentiated (Fehrer et al., 2018).

At the meso-level, EPs perform their facilitative role according to the institutional logic embedded in the service ecosystem (Breidbach et al., 2014; Breidbach & Brodie, 2017b). In contrast with economics, engineering, and management literature, marketing and service research explores the interactions of actors, with ‘no isolated focus on the platform itself’ (Breidbach & Brodie, 2017a, p. 765). Given our goal to conceptualise sport sponsorship as EP and investigate resource integration herein, we refer to the understanding of platforms originating in marketing and service research. EPs are touchpoints for the support of value co-creation (Breidbach et al., 2014). As such, they are embedded within service ecosystems and thus enable and support continuous interaction between actors (Ramaswamy, 2009). At the starting point of academic discourse, researchers only took EPs in contexts mediated by information and communication technologies into account (e.g. Ramaswamy, 2009; Sawhney et al., 2005). However, many scholars soon recognised that EPs not only occur within virtual environments, such as the internet, social media, or other online communities, but also exist as physical touchpoints (e.g. Breidbach et al., 2014; Frow et al., 2015). Accordingly, recent conceptualisations regard EPs as being embedded within service ecosystems, both online and offline (Breidbach & Brodie, 2017a). EPs foster value co-creation between actors and, guarantee the availability of resources ‘at the right time and place’ (Storbacka et al., 2012, p. 57).

At the macro-level, service ecosystems span the boundaries and define the context in which actors integrate resources (Lusch & Nambisan, 2015). Service ecosystems represent

‘relatively self-contained, self-adjusting systems of resource-integrating actors connected by shared institutional arrangements and mutual value creation through service exchange’ (Lusch & Vargo, 2014, p. 161). Multilateral resource integration builds a complex net of inter-dependent relationships between actors, manifested in a service ecosystem (Frow et al., 2014). The service ecosystem builds a holistic unit of analyses in the exchange between actors (Maglio & Breidbach, 2014) facilitated by EPs (Breidbach & Brodie, 2017a).

### **4.2.3 Conceptualisation of Sport Sponsorship as an Engagement Platform**

Yoshida et al. (2014) were the first to discuss fan engagement as a specific form of customer engagement in the sport management context. They differentiate four types of engagement behaviour: sport-related, relationship-building, impression-management, and fan engagement behaviours. From these dimensions, they deducted management cooperation, prosocial behaviour, and performance tolerance as three defining attributes of fan engagement. Nevertheless, their conceptualisation and measurement of engagement mainly focus on the interaction of sports fans with their favourite teams. This perspective is very specific and does not allow adaptation to other actors and relationships (e.g. sponsors and sponsees).

A concept describing voluntary resource integration and thus being similar to engagement as behaviour is citizenship behaviour, which is defined as ‘interfirm behavioural tactics, generally enacted by boundary personnel, that are discretionary, not directly or explicitly included in formal agreements, and that in the aggregate promote the effective functioning of the supply chain’ (Autry et al., 2008, p. 54). The interorganisational citizenship behaviour concept was introduced to the sport management literature by Gerke et al. (2017). The authors empirically identify seven dimensions of interorganisational citizenship behaviour reflected by 16 practices over the different phases of the innovation process of organisations within the New Zealand sailing industry cluster. Interorganisational citizenship behaviour is a concept which stems from management research, whereas sport sponsorship is mainly addressed as a marketing concept. Therefore, we have chosen EPs and resource integration as concepts from marketing research.

To do so, the SVF (Woratschek et al., 2014) provides helpful ideas. According to the SVF, sports events are perceived as platforms on which sport customers integrate resources primarily from their social groups. Sport firms offer value propositions, mainly from the configuration of a mediating value network (Stabell & Fjeldstad, 1998; Woratschek et al.,



2014). This is exactly what happens in sport sponsorship; sponsors are linked with sport fans, and other actors mediated by the sponsee. However, sponsees can only mediate different actors if sporting activities take place, as sporting activities are the pivot of sport events (Woratschek et al., 2014) and, thus, sport sponsorship. Nevertheless, the SVF does not provide a sufficient explanation of what kind of resource integration characterises a particular platform. Woratschek et al. (2014) do not incorporate conceptualising actors' resource integration on the platform.

Regardless, given the basic ideas of the SVF, a sport service ecosystem can be defined at the macro-level as a compilation of linked EPs. One focal EP in the sport service ecosystem is the event platform based on sporting activities and competition (Woratschek et al., 2014). Other EPs, such as sport sponsorship and fantasy sports, depend on sporting activities. On the one hand, linked EPs are pivotal for the cohesiveness of the ecosystem surrounding sporting activities (at a macro-level); on the other hand, sport EPs emerge because resource integration occurs (at a micro-level) from sporting activities.

Sport sponsorship constitutes a sub-system within the sport service ecosystem (Tsiotsou, 2016). Within this system, sponsorship activities of various types of organisations or stakeholders (e.g. sports clubs/events/athletes, business partners, private partners) emerge as the foundation of sporting activities. The sponsorship EP emerges when a sponsee and at least one sponsor enters into a sponsorship agreement. To connect the network approaches of sports sponsorship to the EP literature, we refer to Breidbach and Brodie (2017a) in the representation of the different relationship levels of EPs, which assigns studies on resource integration to the micro-level. Resource integration forms the EPs at the meso-level that are linked with other EPs in a service ecosystem at the macro-level. Figure 2 illustrates these inter-relationships.

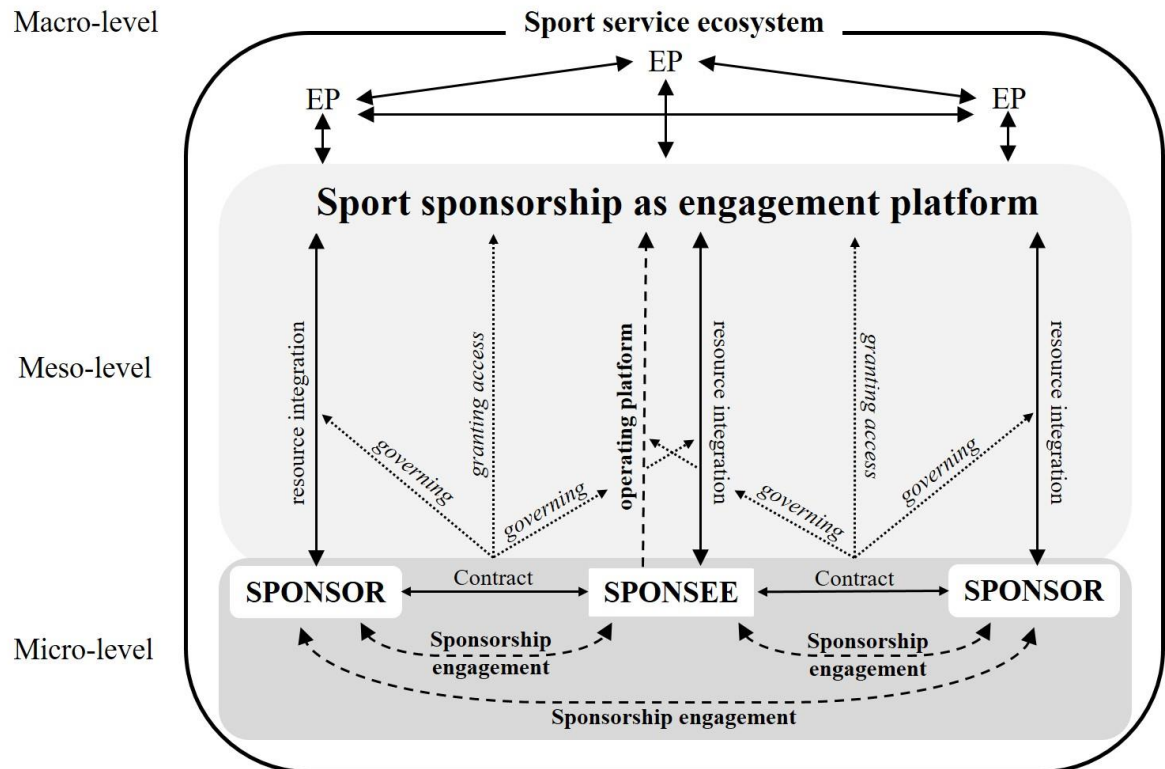


Figure 2: Conceptualisation of sport sponsorship as an EP (adapeted from Beidbach & Brodie, 2017a, p. 766).

Sponsors' main interest is the pursuit of their sponsorship objectives, which can cover a wide range from promotion to sales to networking objectives. Therefore, sponsors enter into contracts with sponsees (continuous lines at the micro-level). The contract establishes the central exchange of resources (meso-level) that governs resource integration (dotted lines at the meso-level). In other words, the sponsorship agreements form part of the institutions that determine how and to what extent resources are integrated on the respective EP. Institutions are referred to as all types of laws, rules, values, expectations, standards, and practices, and cultural–cognitive beliefs (Scott, 2013). Those institutions can be formal (sponsorship contract) or informal (polite and professional treatment business guests) (Brodie et al., 2019). Sponsors and sponsees are linked through rights and obligations within a sponsorship contract. Sponsees, however, not only act as an operator of the EP, but also as a resource integrator in a collaborative process of value co-creation. The sponsee as the operator (broken line in Figure 2 at the meso-level) grants access based on a contract (dotted line) to others, who then give and take resources (resource integration at the meso-level) to co-create value. As the platform operator, the sponsee serves as an intermediary between actors being responsible for the selection of actors (Stabell & Fjeldstad, 1998; Woratschek et al., 2014).

That is, the sponsee grants access to sponsors and other actors to make the platform more attractive and facilitate value co-creation. The selection process is an essential primary activity, which is called network promotion (Stabell & Fjeldstad, 1998). Simultaneously, as another primary activity, the sponsee links sponsors, players, coaches, fans, media, politicians, and others to enable them to co-create value, for example, when coaches give interviews to the sponsors in the hospitality areas or when players have dinner with sponsors. These kinds of activities are network services (Stabell & Fjeldstad, 1998). Finally, the operator role refers to setting up the right infrastructure, for example, the hospitality area, parking lots, catering, VIP seats, and online-based networking apps. These kinds of primary activities are called network infrastructure (Stabell & Fjeldstad, 1998).

In addition to operating the SE platform, the sponsee as resource integrator is also using the platform like any other actor for economic and social exchange. This might be the case, when a sponsee acquires new sponsors with the help of existing ones, when selling merchandise within the hospitality area or by celebrating victories with the sponsors. Within regional contexts or lower levels of professionalism, contracts per se sometimes even do not exist. In these cases, decision-makers agree on performance and consideration without any contractual obligation. Even in these kinds of sponsorship environments, actors engage in SE. In addition to the contractual or non-contractual components of sponsorship deals, the voluntary exchange of resources that exceed the core transaction in sport sponsorship constitutes SE as behaviour (Jaakkola & Alexander, 2014; Van Doorn et al., 2010). Consequently, we define SE as actor's behavioural manifestations and the integration of resources beyond (or without) the sponsorship contract. Underlying these resources is everything actors integrate, from a voluntary basis to a more open sponsorship setting with few or no contractual components. Figure 2 shows SE at the micro-level (broken lines).

SE always requires the integration of resources that can lead to co-creation of value. The interaction between actors and their integration of resources thus form the core of an EP (Storbacka et al., 2016). Consequently, it is necessary to raise the question of what type of resources are exchanged through SE to specify relational exchange on the EP of sport sponsorship. To answer this question, we conduct an empirical study to investigate sport sponsorship as an EP, and we contribute to building theory on actor engagement in the context of sport sponsorship.

The conceptualisation of sport sponsorship as an EP applies the SVF to the sponsorship context. Thereby, the SVF is considered as a general theory (Brodie et al., 2011; Woratschek et al., 2014). As general theory is broad in scope by nature and features a high level of abstraction, middle-range theory is needed to address a subset of phenomena that is relevant within a particular context (Brodie et al., 2011; Weick, 1989). Therefore, we follow Gerke et al. (2019, notably Figure 1) and Brodie et al. (2011) and use our empirical findings to conceptualise sport sponsorship as an EP, which verifies the SVF as a general theory in sport management.

As theorising in marketing disciplines tends to widen the theory-practice gap (Jaworski, 2011; Nenonen et al., 2017), we strive for a collaborative approach with sponsorship managers that will provide theoretical implications to support our concept as well as practical relevance. To do so and to get empirical insights into actors' SE behaviours, we use the Delphi method. This technique serves as a critical component to build theory around the unexplored phenomenon of engagement on a sponsorship platform through collaborative theorising (Nenonen et al., 2017). The two-way process between academic literature and practitioners' perspectives to gain understanding is crucial (Brodie et al., 2017). This approach has the ability to pave the way to evolve the concept of actor engagement on the sponsorship platform by allowing us to go back and forth between the chosen theories and evidence from our empirical study in the sport sponsorship context (Li et al., 2017).

For our research, the micro-level of analysis is of paramount importance as it represents the foundation of our conceptualisation. On the micro-level, actors engage in resource integration (Storbacka et al., 2016). To our knowledge, actors' resource integration in sport sponsorship beyond the dyadic and contract-based performance and consideration has not been analysed to this point. For this reason, our conceptualisation of sport sponsorship as an EP uses sponsors' and sponsee's resource integration on the micro-level to build theory around SE.

#### **4.2.4 Empirical Study of Sponsorship Engagement Behaviour in Sports**

To build our concept on a solid fundamental basis, micro-level resource integration among the sponsee, a sponsor, and all other sponsors are in the centre of interest in our empirical study. The study exceeds the pure economic exchange because it examines resource integration by both the sponsee and sponsors beyond the sponsorship contract. Consequently, we contribute to the exploration and understanding of voluntary resource integration in sport

sponsorship, namely SE. For this purpose, the study raises the question of what type of resources are integrated in the light of SE behaviour.

#### 4.2.4.1 RESEARCH METHOD

As engagement behaviour in sport sponsorship has not been discussed in the sport management literature, we choose an exploratory research approach. To answer the research question, we carried out an empirical study with experts from sport sponsorship, using the Delphi method. The Delphi method is ‘a structured group communication method for soliciting expert opinion about complex problems or novel ideas, through the use of a series of questionnaires and controlled feedback’ (Day & Bobeva, 2005, p. 103). This method combines flexibility in data collection and represents a more exploratory than descriptive research design (Okoli & Pawlowski, 2004; Skulmoski et al., 2007).

The Delphi design, as an iterative and multi-stage method of qualitative research, most often contains two or three rounds of questioning and re-evaluation of participating experts (Day & Bobeva, 2005). The main advantage of this method is that researchers can make use of the evaluation of anonymised feedback provided to the respondents after each round. This feedback serves as a unique way to improve participants’ judgements (Häder, 2014). The multi-round Delphi design enables researchers to increase validity by gaining experts’ consensus within a new field of study. Because assumptions are challenged and, thus, strengthened by experts’ reasoning over multiple rounds of a Delphi study, validity is increased (Hasson et al., 2000). In addition, the multi-stage questioning of industry experts goes hand in hand with a higher level of reliability than data evaluation of independent researchers (Linstone et al., 1975). In our Delphi study, we used three rounds to gather insights into interaction on the EP and respective resource integration by actors. To select information-rich cases that are exceptionally knowledgeable and experienced, we used purposeful sampling (Hasson et al., 2000; Patton, 2002). In total, we chose 61 experts from sport sponsorship practice who were willing to share their experiences and opinions in an articulate, expressive, and reflective manner (Palinkas et al., 2015).

In the first round, from March to April 2018, we conducted semi-structured, guideline based interviews face-to-face and by telephone. Appendix 2 (see online supplementary material) shows the interview guideline. Experts had backgrounds in sports clubs or organisations (25), sponsoring companies (29), and intermediaries such as agencies or right marketers (7), from Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. We split the sample between a national and an

international focus of organisations. Appendix 1 (see online supplementary material) shows the list of participating experts. The broad acquisition of experts from different backgrounds and industries allowed us to gain a comprehensive perspective on SE. Interviews lasted 40 min on average, with a maximum of 63 min and a minimum of 16 min. Interviews were audio-recorded with expert's permission and transcribed verbatim. To analyse the data, we used qualitative content analyses and applied a systematic, theory-guided approach to text analysis using a category system following Mayring (2015). Mayring (2015) describes the theory-driven analysis of specific topics and content from the data as contextual structuring. Thus, we derived main and sub-categories using paraphrases from the interview material and developed categories inductively as well as deductively, with roughly 20% of the data. Deductive development of categories followed the theoretical implications of customer engagement as behaviour (VanDoorn et al., 2010) as well as on EPs (Breibach et al., 2014). Two independent researchers revised the material with the final coding system (Kohlbacher, 2006; Mayring, 2015). Categories and coding system are developed with the MAXQDA12 software.

For the second ( $n = 50$ ) and third ( $n = 45$ ) rounds, conducted between May and July 2018, we edited the data according to the experts' feedback. The decreasing number of experts is due to time constraints, with some managers no longer being able to reconcile the time spent on the second and third Delphi rounds with their daily work. We delivered the results of previous rounds to the experts after textual and graphical edit. Experts could re-evaluate answers on the basis of the anonymous feedback of their counterparts (Hallowell & Gambatese, 2010). Thus, experts validated the results of the final round until reaching consensus on the proposed conceptualisation. Figure 3 illustrates the whole process of the implemented Delphi study.

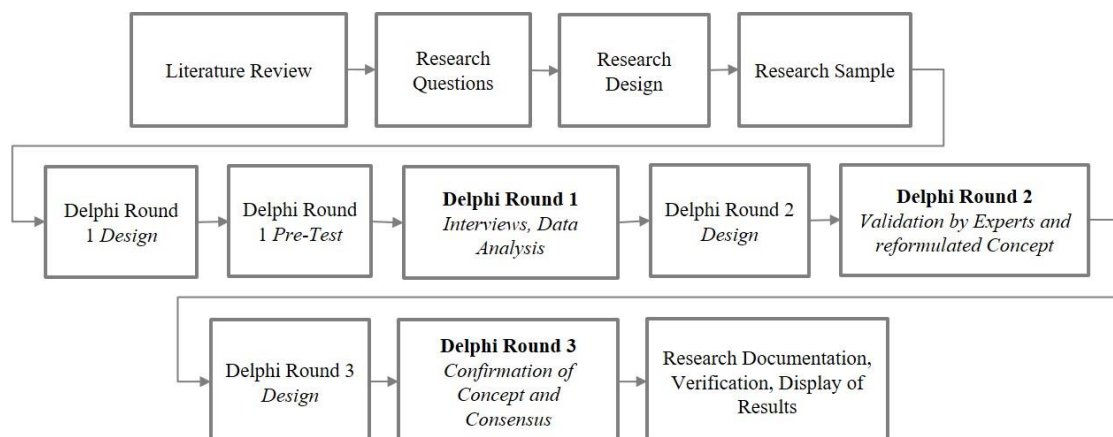


Figure 3: Delphi design (adapted from Skulmoski et al., 2007).

#### 4.2.4.2 EMPIRICAL RESULTS

The empirical Delphi study serves as a way to contribute to the conception of sport sponsorship as an EP by applying a creative synthesis of existing ideas. We co-opt the experts' opinions to discover inter-relationships between theoretical contexts. The study mainly aims for voluntary resource integration, defined as SE. We categorise resources on the basis of experts' contribution to the Delphi study following a typological style of theorising (Cornelissen, 2017).

The data reveal that sponsors and sponsees exchange resources beyond or without a contract. For the contractual components, the experts agreed on the dyadic exchange of financial and in-kind payment or services related to the core business from the sponsoring company's perspective and performance and usage rights from the sponsee's perspective. Performance rights manifest themselves as corporate logo placements on jerseys or boards within the stadium or at the pitch, whereas usage rights need to be activated (e.g. the integration and use of a sponsee's assets in social media campaigns).

The integration of resources among sponsee, sponsor, and other sponsors in the network of partners beyond or without the contract manifests in SE behaviour. SE is observable either on a physical platform (e.g. partner events) or in a virtual environment (e.g. online, social media, mobile networking apps). Resources integrated in SE are categorised into five types: *management competencies*, *technical competencies*, *networking skills*, *innovative ideas*, and *products and services* that are not part of the sponsorship contract.

To build and maintain the best possible partnership, both sponsors and sponsees provide additional resources. On one side, sponsors integrate *management competencies*, which include all kinds of knowledge, entrepreneurial professionalism, and experience, as far as business management is concerned, into the sponsor–sponsee relationship. This might be the case when a 'tax consultant is also a sponsor and then advises us [sponsee] without billing, for the most part, at least' (exp\_8). Sponsors also assist the sponsee's employees with time or human resource capacity as

there are marketing and sales specialists in the big companies. (...) Why should I [sponsee employee] be so stupid and not even ask how they do it? I am not the omniscient. They [sponsor employees] are sometimes much longer in business than me; they can give me advice. (exp\_4)

In certain constellations, skills and knowledge are provided that add a technical component. In this regard, sponsors engage beyond the contract by integrating *technical competencies*, such as access to technical infrastructure for the use of the sponsee. ‘The sponsor is involved in the development of our boats. They provide us with wind tunnels to improve our performance’ (exp\_45). The sporting success of the sponsee positively reflects on the sponsor’s brand.

In addition, sponsors integrate their *networking skills* by promoting the platform among their business partners and giving recommendations for other actors to join the network. The experts agree that sponsors encourage their partners or customers by ‘put[ing] in a good word for us...[sponsee]’ (exp\_16) or ‘even bring him [business partner] along, [so] that we [sponsee] personally can convince them’ (exp\_16). These recommendations by a sponsor in favour of the sponsee’s platform help sports clubs, organisations, and athletes enlarge their network and increase attractiveness. Positive recommendations are often the basis for the mediation of business partners: ‘[Sponsee] purposefully use our [sponsor] contacts to open up new contacts, or rather sponsors for their network’ (exp\_48). Integrating networking skills allows sponsees to benefit financially through sponsorship deals. Networking skills include positive referrals and the ability to act as an intermediary. ‘And there we [sponsee] are this mediator who then brings the right people together’ (exp\_11).

Sponsors also provide additional *products and services* that are not initially agreed on in the sponsorship contract, simply because they want to support the sponsee and foster a multilaterally beneficial relationship. ‘For example, if players move, they mostly use the moving company [sponsor]. Of course, with relatively good conditions’ (exp\_6).

On the other side, sponsees integrate resources such as *management competencies* and *networking skills* into the sponsor–sponsee relationship. Mainly as a mediator between actors on the platform, sponsees provide sponsors with the possibility ‘to get to know company XY. (...) Companies ask us [sponsee], and we establish contacts with the other company’ (exp\_28). In a virtual context, sponsees integrate networking skills, such as a specially designed online platform, which is ‘comparable to Xing or LinkedIn. Then, when you partner with us [sponsee], each partner will (...) gain access and then choose a partner directly and get in touch with them. This is the network idea for us’ (exp\_25).

Furthermore, sponsees integrate *innovative ideas* such as new ways of leveraging the sponsorship and assisting the sponsor by communicating with its respective target audience.



Therefore, sponsees ‘basically bring the ideas’ (exp\_5) as ‘they have their own event department that helps with the implementation. So they are creating and have tools that they use and that you can use as a partner’ (exp\_46).

Sponsors have the opportunity to actively use relationships with the sponsee so that all actors benefit equally. If both sponsor and sponsee are willing to override contractual limitations and go in new routes together, a fruitful relationship can emerge. Moreover, sponsoring companies interact with other sponsors (sponsor–sponsor relationships). For example, sponsors exchange *management competencies* and discuss latest business developments with the industry as well as use the platform to develop business contacts as, in their opinion, ‘it’s all about networking and accessing decision-makers’ (exp\_47). Using sport sponsorship and the contract with the sponsee to gain access to the EP and, thus, to decision-makers from other industries and potential business partners is a crucial objective for sponsors.

Similar to the sponsor–sponsee relationship, sponsors integrate *technical competencies* in the form of technical knowledge in favour of other network partners. Sponsors from specific industries exchange technical knowledge for collaboration with other sponsors. For example, a ‘building contractor’ (exp\_16) needs to exchange knowledge with other service providers in the same industry, for example, ‘electrician, plumber’ (exp\_16) to improve own service provision.

By integrating *networking skills*, sponsors also recommend the platform to other decision-makers in their network and, in doing so, foster engagement of additional actors. In the Delphi study, the experts agreed that within the sponsorship network, sponsors integrate *products and services* from their company’s portfolio. As one expert stated, ‘they [other sponsors] not only get discounted products (...) but can also access our ticket contingents, merchandise discount, or money-cannot-buy experience’ (exp\_45).

Both sponsors and sponsees pursue SE. The participating actors ‘[go] the extra mile’ (exp\_16) and voluntarily exchange service-for-service to benefit from the sponsorship while also reaching their own goals. ‘In the end, a win-win situation should arise, from which both partners benefit’ (exp\_21). Sponsees aim to ‘[bind] with the sponsor’ (exp\_6), ‘enlarge the existing network’ (exp\_16), and ‘decrease fluctuation’ (exp\_8), while sponsors use the network to ‘make contacts and to do business’ (exp\_7).

#### 4.2.5 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Despite the existence of network approaches in sport sponsorship (Chanavat et al., 2016; Cobbs, 2011; Morgan et al., 2014; Olkkonen, 2001), the real practical aspects of this phenomenon are not conceptualised sufficiently. The overall value in sport sponsorship, however, is not limited to the rights and obligations determined in bilateral contracts but rather is more comprehensive. Resource integration exceeds the contract components and is examined as a behavioural manifestation of engagement (Van Doorn et al., 2010).

Our empirical study reveals sponsors' and sponsees' integration of *management competencies, technical competencies, networking skills, innovative ideas, and products and services* beyond the sponsorship contract. The identified types of resources can be assigned to the resource categorisation of Hunt and Derozier (2004). Management competencies can be assigned to human resources, as both sponsors and sponsees integrate knowledge, expertise, and their respective employees' time in sport SE. Technical competencies in SE can be identified as access to physical resources; for example, sponsoring companies provide access to technical infrastructures, such as R&D facilities, or ways to develop or improve materials. Relational resources represent networking skills that are integrated in sport SE; for example, the mediating role of the sponsee has the potential to build relationships between two or more sponsors. From these alliances with other business partners, sponsors derive additional value (e.g. in the form of future business). Innovative ideas are considered as organisational resources. Finally, products and services are the result of a combination of different resources, such as human and physical resources. We refer to the resources integrated on the basis of contractual agreements by the sponsee as legal resources, while sponsors integrate financial resources as well as products and services (resource combination). Table 1 provides an overview of the empirical findings and the assignment to resource categories according to Hunt and Derozier (2004).

	Type of resources	Sample quotation	Assignment to resource categorisation (Hunt & Derozier, 2004)
Contractual resources	Financial payment	'the main benefit from the sponsor is financial, of course, there are also contributions in kind' (exp_22)	Financial resources
	Payment in kind	'payments in kind are of growing interest' (exp_39)	Resource combination
	Services (related to core business)	'services are becoming increasingly important because sponsors have recognised that they can generate additional value' (exp_40)	Resource combination
	Performance rights	'performance rights unfold a performance out of themselves, e.g. the logo in the sense of visibility and brand presence' (exp_51)	Legal resources
	Usage rights	'usage rights only unfold their performance if sponsors leverage the rights' (exp_51)	Legal resources
Voluntary resources (sponsorship engagement)	Management competencies	'tax consultant is also a sponsor and then advises us [the sports club] without billing, for the most part, at least' (exp_8)	Human resources
	Technical competencies	'the sponsor is involved in the development of our boats. They provide us with wind tunnels to improve our performance' (exp_45)	(Access to) physical resources
	Networking skills	'put(ing) in a good word for us ... [the sports club]' (exp_16) or 'even bring him [the partner] along, that we [the sports club] personally can convince them' (exp_16).	Relational resources
	Innovative ideas	'we basically bring the ideas' (exp_5) as 'they have their own event department that helps with the implementation. So they are creating and have tools that they use and that you can use as a partner' (exp_46).	Organisational resources
	Products and services	'for example, if players move, they mostly use the moving company [sponsor]. Of course, with relatively good conditions' (exp_6).	Resource combination

*Table 1: Contractual and voluntary resource integration in sport sponsorship.*

No contractual commitment exists among the different sponsors. However, sponsors also engage and exchange resources, including management competencies, technical competencies, networking skills, and products and services. This circumstance makes the sponsor–sponsor relationship special in consideration of sport sponsorship as an EP. Through the bilateral agreement with a sponsee, corporate sponsors gain access to other resource integrators on the sponsorship EP; company representatives then act as resource providers while also benefitting from other actors' resources. This perspective lends support to

Olkkonen's (2001, p. 317) idea that sponsorship 'can be described as a value-adding exchange network'. Figure 4 illustrates the types of resources that are integrated into the sport sponsorship network beyond the sponsorship contract.

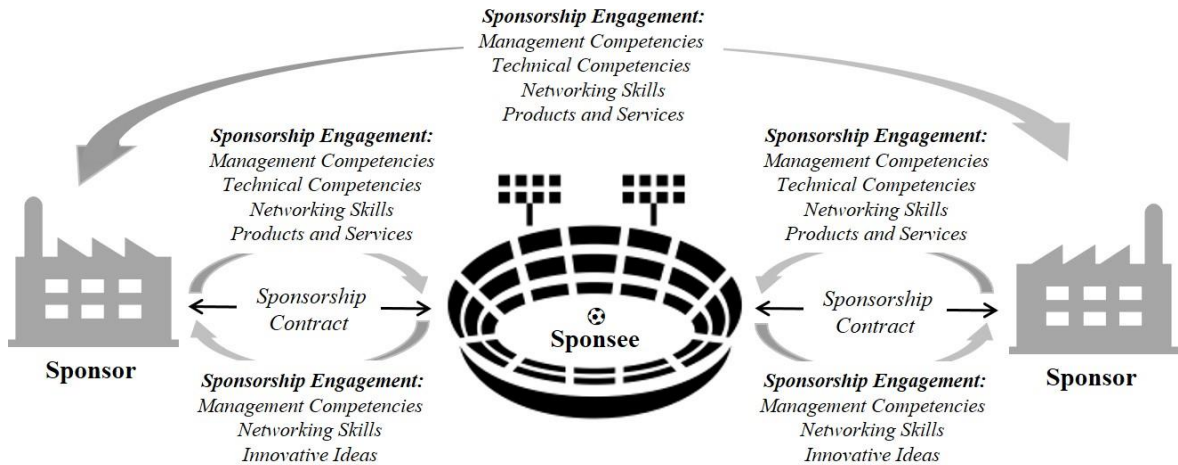


Figure 4: Resource integration in sport sponsorship.

In addition to the distinct and well-discussed objectives in sport sponsorship, corporate sponsors benefit from their own and other actors' SE. Underpinned by the empirical results, SE is a widespread phenomenon confirmed by our empirical study and is theoretically based on actor engagement and EP literature. The reason for sponsees to show engagement behaviour is to foster sponsor satisfaction and retention. Sponsors engage beyond the contract to develop multilaterally beneficial partnerships with sport properties. On some prominent platforms, such as FIFA or the IOC, or for global football brands, such as Bayern Munich, Real Madrid, and Manchester United, sponsors engage to extend their contract with the property and not lose it to a competitor. In addition, sponsors use their access to the network and engage to develop business contacts. Ideally, these business contacts lead to increased turnover and thus can be traced back to the original idea of sport sponsorship.

Sponsorship revenue accounts for a substantial share of the total sports market (IEG, 2018). The leveraging of purchased rights requires additional investments as it involves the total amount of sponsorship spending beyond the purchased rights (Cornwell & Kwon, 2020). These leveraging measures do not necessarily need to be regulated by a contract but are often the output of platform actors' innovative collaborations.

In addition, financial figures on sponsorship (e.g. Deloitte, 2018; IEG, 2018) do not include the voluntary, non-contractual share of benefits discovered in the current study. The potential to generate monetary value from sport sponsorship, therefore, should be estimated as

significantly higher. Sponsees also should pay more attention to the effects of SE, so that the hidden potential for generating value, both monetary and non-monetary, can be realised. It is also essential for sponsee's managers to understand their role as operators of a platform granting access to other actors. In sponsorship practice, operations that facilitate interactions include sponsor workshops, business speed-dating, or sport games for the business club. There is no value to the isolated sale of sponsorship rights, as the value only results from the use of the rights. The price for sponsorship rights represents an indicator of the scarcity of access to a sponsorship EP. Expenses for mere access are not sufficient. SE is a necessary condition for the creation of value from sponsorship contracts. The empirical results contribute to raising awareness of sponsorship partners about which resources they can integrate to increase the value of sport sponsorship.

#### **4.2.6 CONTRIBUTIONS**

The contributions to the literature are manifold. First, we conceptualise sport sponsorship as an EP at the meso-level embedded within a sport service ecosystem at the macro-level. Therefore, we contribute to a broader understanding of the network approach in sport sponsorship. Second, building on our conceptualisation of sport sponsorship as an EP, we empirically analyse what types of resources sponsors and the sponsee integrate within and especially beyond the contract at the micro-level. This enables us to validate our conceptualisation. Third, we present a more precise concept of sport sponsorship as an EP. In doing so, we specify voluntary resource integration as SE. Fourth, we show that sponsees grant access to an EP in which actors' expertise and knowledge aid in the co-creation of value. Fifth, we develop sport sponsorship beyond a pure promotional and sales tool to a networking tool for sponsoring companies using economic specialisation and technology competencies of other actors. Sixth, we model sponsees as gatekeepers and operators of EPs, which increases their monetary and non-monetary value.

By engaging in resource integration on the EP, sponsors and sponsee co-create value in sport sponsorship. In these relationships with knowledgeable resource integrators, all actors benefit collaboratively. Voluntary resource integration by reciprocal SE helps to establish and continue multilaterally beneficial partnerships in sponsorship. Sporting activities are at the fundamental core for the emergence of different types of EPs, one of which is sport sponsorship (Woratschek et al., 2014; Woratschek & Buser, 2018). Managers and decision-makers in the sports industry need to be aware of the unique opportunities provided by

resource integration in sport sponsorship. Using the EP to build relationships with other actors not only serves as a way to leverage the sponsorship but also helps to develop business contacts and enlarge sponsors' and sponsees' networks. On the one hand, sponsors can improve their strategic focus by collaborating with other actors, which might lead to joint campaigns or innovative ideas. On the other hand, for sponsees, enlarging their business network by increasing the attractiveness of the EP leads to benefits from others' economic specialisation and technology transfer. In general, value can be monetary and non-monetary. The sponsorship platform is more than a pure promotional and sales tool for companies to reach their strategic objectives. SE in a business network opens the door to access knowledgeable actors and benefit from the integration of physical, human, organisational, informational, and relational resources. With access to the EP, which is granted by the sponsorship contract, sponsors can co-create their business network together with the sponsee and benefit from others' resource integration. The platform itself represents the venue for innovation through the access and integration of resources (Aal et al., 2016). Given the importance of business relations in sponsorship networks, it is essential to be aware that sponsorship value can be derived beyond a dyadic relationship and is not limited to contract components. Therefore, the underlying concept of sponsorship as an EP provides a foundation for actors' collaboration and the co-creation of value through resource integration. Furthermore, the empirical study shows what types of resources can be integrated, leading to benefits from economic specialisation and technology transfer.

#### **4.2.7 LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH**

Whereas our conceptualisation of sport sponsorship is embedded within a service ecosystem, we only conceptualise sport sponsorship as an EP at the meso-level and give empirical insights into actors' resource integration on the micro-level. The knowledge about the different type of resources integrated within SE among the sponsee, a sponsor, and all other sponsors on the EP builds a solid basis for future analysis. Further research could investigate other EPs in sports at a meso-level as well as the relationship between EPs at a macro-level. The sport service ecosystem can contain mutually dependent EPs. Sport management research and practice have yet to analyse adequately the inter-relationship of these platforms. In addition to the platform of the sporting event (SVF) and sport sponsorship (SE), multiple EPs need to be taken into account to consider the whole picture. Such EPs might be organisations' appearance in different competitions (e.g. national league vs multi-national

league), sports betting (e.g. fantasy sports), or digital sport gaming (e.g. esports). Similarities and differences between EPs should be examined to gain a better understanding of the sports system and how value is co-created from a systemic perspective. Digging deeper into the inter-dependencies between actors, networks, and networks within networks would enlighten the nature of sport management and the discussion on various unique characteristics of sports industries. Therefore, management-related literature streams, such as interorganisational citizenship behaviour (Gerke et al., 2017) or ecosystems (Adner, 2017) paired with service marketing concepts can describe and conceptualise the interconnectedness of actors, platforms and networks more holistically. For our conceptualisation of sport sponsorship as an EP, we draw on marketing-related concepts actor engagement, EP, and the SVF to support the nature of sport sponsorship as a marketing concept. The academic discourse on SE as behaviour, however, would benefit from the comparison, the complement, and ultimately the merger of the two literature streams of sport marketing and organisational management. This will subsequently open new fields of conceptual as well as empirical research.

In our concept, we treat sponsees and sponsors as engaging actors. At the meso-level, other actors, such as politicians, media organisations, spectators, fans, and sport authorities, also integrate resources in multilateral relationships, which are worthwhile to be elaborated. Besides other actors' influence on the sponsorship platform, the effects of SE on the financial value of sport sponsorship need to be analysed in future research. Industry reports, such as Deloitte (2018) or IEG (2018) do not directly cover voluntary resource integration as part of SE. Indirect effects of SE by sponsees, however, certainly influence the future financial value of sponsorship contracts. Sponsees might build a positive reputation for their SE behaviours, include it in contract negotiations with potential sponsors and increase their sponsorship revenue. Sponsors, on the other hand, might choose an engaging sponsee because of the reputation and pay a premium for this partnership. Our empirical study is limited to resource integration of a sponsee and multiple sponsors. Future research could highlight other actors' engagement to integrate resources at the micro-level. Other actors such as spectators and home and away team fans could integrate a different type of resource on a sponsorship EP. Broader theorising under the application of actor engagement, EP, and network theories by using platforms within sport management is required to foster innovation and shape new markets and business models in the sport industry.

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### 4.3 WAS BRINGEN SPONSOREN AUßER GELD? SPORT SPONSORING ALS ENGAGEMENT-PLATTFORM (SCIENTIFIC PAPER 5, IN GERMAN)

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#### ABSTRACT

Sportsponsoring ist eine Engagement Plattform, auf der Sponsoren und Gesponserte gemeinsam Wert kreieren. Sponsoring Engagement sind alle über den Sponsoringvertrag hinausgehenden Verhaltensweisen verschiedener Akteure, die im Zusammenhang mit dem Sportsponsoring stehen. Als theoretische Basis werden das Sport Value Framework und das Konzept des Customer Engagement herangezogen, um zu analysieren, warum sich Akteure über den Vertrag hinaus engagieren und welche Ressourcen in die Werterstellung integriert werden. Die vertraglichen und die über den Vertrag hinausgehenden Ressourcen werden kategorisiert. Zudem wird herausgestellt, dass der bloße Kauf von Sponsoringrechten nicht zur Wertkreation führt, sondern erst die Aktivierungen der Rechte die gemeinsame Werterstellung ermöglicht.

Sport sponsoring is an engagement platform on which sponsors and sponsees co-create value. Sponsoring Engagement is defined as diverse actors' behavioral manifestations related to sponsoring beyond the sponsoring contract. Sport Value Framework and the concept of Customer Engagement is used as theoretical foundation in order to analyze why actors engage beyond the contract and what resources are integrated in value co-creation process. Integral parts of the sponsoring contract as well as actors' behavioral manifestations beyond the sponsoring contract are categorized. Furthermore, it is outlined that mere purchase of sponsoring rights cannot lead to value creation, but sponsoring activation enables value co-creation.

**KEYWORDS:** Sponsoring Engagement, Sport Sponsoring, Resource Integration, Sport Value Framework, Customer Engagement

### 4.3.1 ZIELSETZUNGEN VON SPONSOREN IM SPORT

Die Zielsetzungen von Sponsoren im Sport sind vielschichtig und dokumentieren sich in zahlreichen Veröffentlichungen. Dabei werden häufig unternehmensbezogene Ziele, wie bspw. Erhöhung der Bekanntheit oder Imageverbesserung sowie produkt- und markenbezogene Ziele, wie etwa Erhöhung des Marktanteils oder Produktabsatzes unterschieden (Abratt, Claytom & Pitt, 1987; Irwin & Asimakopoulos, 1992; Cornwell & Maignan, 1998; Apostolopoulou & Papadimitriou, 2004; Greenhalgh & Greenwell, 2013; Madill & O'Reilly, 2010).

Madill und O'Reilly (2010, S. 134) leiten aus der Literatur über 50 unterschiedliche Zielsetzungen von Sponsoren im Sport ab, die in verschiedenen Abstraktionsstufen erforscht werden. Zielsetzungen aus der Praxis, aufgeschlüsselt nach Wichtigkeit für Entscheidungsträger im Sponsoring sowie im Sportsponsoring werden in Abbildung 1 dargestellt (Nielsen, 2018). Es zeigt sich, dass neben psychologischen und ökonomischen Zielen, die in der wissenschaftlichen Literatur dominieren, auch die Kontaktpflege zu Kunden und Geschäftspartnern sowie Meinungsführern und Medien zu den Zielsetzungen in der Sponsoring-Praxis gehören. Dies ist jedoch im wissenschaftlichen Diskurs weitestgehend unterrepräsentiert. Dahingehend besteht Forschungsbedarf zur Rolle des Sportsponsorings im Beziehungsmanagement der Sponsoren und Gesponserten.

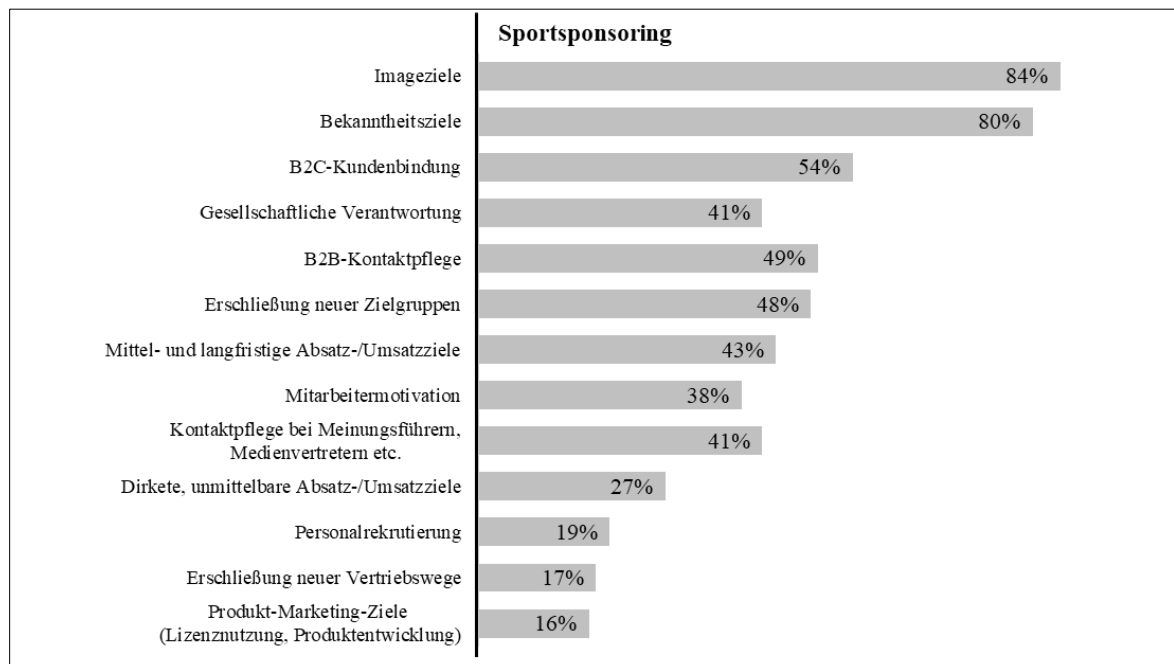


Abbildung 1: Zielsetzungen von Sponsoren aus der Sportsponsoring-Praxis. (Nielsen, 2018)



Daher wird folgende Arbeitsdefinition für das Sportsponsoring verwendet:

“Sponsorship is a business relationship between a provider of funds, resources or services and an individual event or organization which offers in return some rights and association that may be used for commercial advantage.” (Sleight, 1989, S. 4).

Diese Definition legt nahe, dass Sponsoren als Anbieter monetärer und nicht-monetärer Leistungen als Gegenleistung Rechte eingeräumt werden. Die Rechte werden im Zuge verschiedener Aktivierungsmaßnahmen zum eigenen Vorteil genutzt. Unter Sponsoringaktivierung wird die kommunikative Nutzung der Sponsoringrechte und der planmäßige Einbezug der Zielgruppe verstanden (Weeks, Cornwell, & Drennan, 2008, S. 638). Darunter lassen sich sowohl klassische Maßnahmen, wie die Platzierung des Logos auf Banden oder Trikots, als auch interaktivere Maßnahmen, bspw. die Aufforderung zur Teilnahme an Fantasy Sports Ligen fassen. Die Rahmenbedingungen der Aktivierung werden häufig durch den Sponsoringvertrag geregelt. In den meisten Fällen bleibt dabei aber die konkrete Ausgestaltung der Sponsoringaktivierung offen, so dass Handlungsspielräume zwischen den Vertragspartnern bestehen. Diese Handlungsspielräume können zum eigenen Vorteil genutzt werden, da aufgrund der Komplexität nicht alle Eventualitäten von Aktivierungsmaßnahmen im Vertrag geregelt werden können (opportunistisches Verhalten). Die Vertragspartner sind demzufolge gegenseitig auf Entgegenkommen, Kulanz und Fairness angewiesen (Spremann, 1990; Stigler, 1961; Woratschek, 1996). Dies bedeutet, dass im ökonomischen Austausch von Sponsoren und Gesponserten nicht nur vertragliche Leistungen eine zentrale Rolle spielen, sondern auch freiwillige Leistungen, die über den reinen „Kauf“ bzw. „Verkauf“ von Sponsoringleistungen hinausgehen.

Die Wichtigkeit von vertraglichen Leistungen im Sportsponsoring lässt sich in Zahlen dokumentieren. Die globalen Ausgaben für den Erwerb von Sponsoringrechten schätzt IEG (2018) auf rund 62,7 Mrd. US-Dollar. Auf Seiten von Sportclubs stellen die Erlöse aus dem Sponsoring einen erheblichen Teil der Einnahmenstruktur dar. So liegt der Sponsoringerlös der Europäischen Fußballligen in England, Deutschland, Spanien, Frankreich und Italien bei kumulierten 3,78 Milliarden Euro und macht damit 28 Prozent der Gesamterlöse aller Ligen aus (Deloitte, 2017). Diese finanziellen Zahlen unterschätzen jedoch enorm die Wertgenerierung im Sportsponsoring, da sie weder die vertraglich geregelten Sach- und Dienstleistungen noch die freiwilligen Zusatzleistungen widerspiegeln, die sich aus den oben diskutierten Handlungsspielräumen ergeben.

Die meisten gängigen Definitionen von Sportsponsoring beschränken sich auf vertraglich geregelte Leistungen und Gegenleistungen. So definieren Mullin, Hardy und Sutton (2014, S. 231) Sportsponsoring als „acquisition of rights to affiliate or directly associate with a product or event for the purpose of deriving benefits related to that affiliation or association“. Als Gegenleistung für diese Überlassung von Rechten seitens des Gesponserten leistet der Sponsor wiederum „assistance either financial or in-kind“ (Meenaghan, 1983, S. 9). Freiwillige Leistungen werden nicht explizit im ökonomischen Austausch im Sportsponsoring erwähnt. Somit ist zu vermuten, dass die Wertgenerierung im Sportsponsoring weitaus höher ist, als dies die finanziellen Zahlen dokumentieren.

#### 4.3.2 PERSPEKTIVENWECHSEL IM SPORTSPONSORING

Jenseits der oben genannten definitorischen Unterschiede im Kontext des Sportsponsorings unterscheiden Ryan und Fahy (2012) verschiedene Entwicklungen im Zeitverlauf. Daraus abgeleitet zeigt Abbildung 2 die verschiedenen Betrachtungsweisen und gibt Aufschluss darüber welche Perspektiven im Sportsponsoring den wissenschaftlichen und praktischen Diskurs geprägt haben und aktuell prägen.

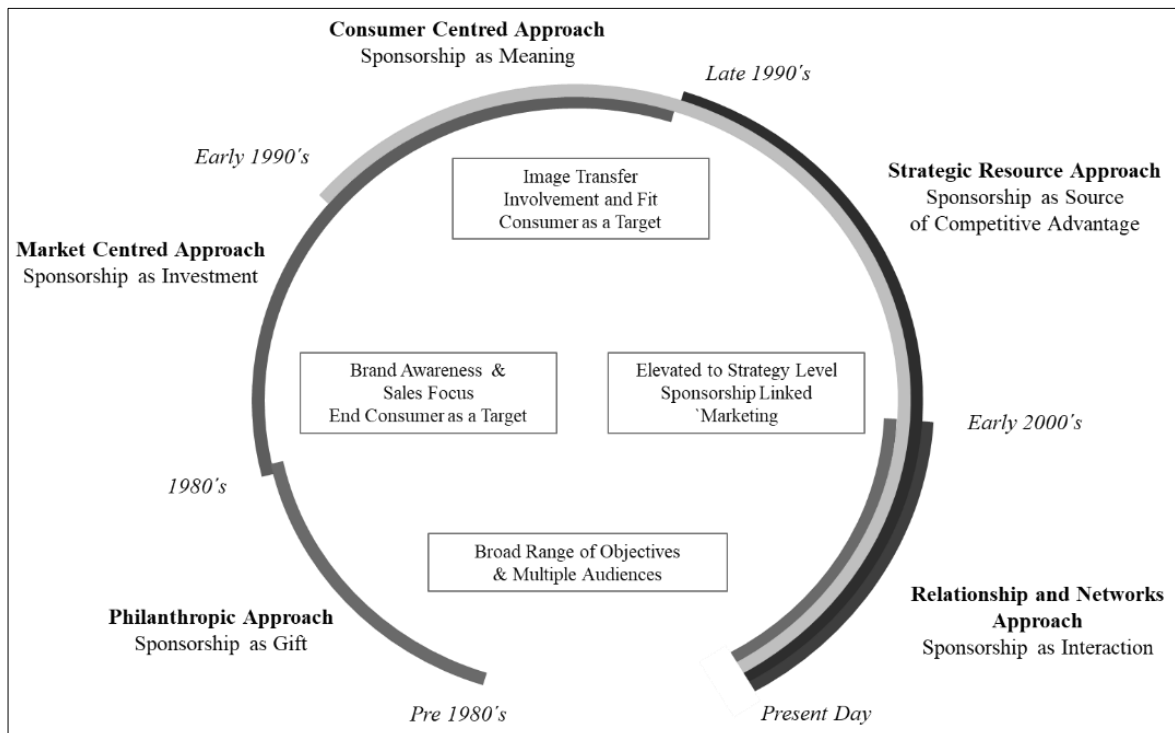


Abbildung 2: Entwicklungen im Sportsponsoring. In Anlehnung an Ryan & Fahy (2012, S. 1139)

In den 1980ern ist Sponsoring eher aus philanthropischen Beweggründen heraus betrachtet worden. Dies wird heute unter dem Begriff Mäzenatentum betitelt. Im Gegensatz zum Sportsponsoring beruht Mäzenatentum nicht auf dem Prinzip „Leistung-Gegenleistung“ sondern beinhaltet lediglich eine einseitige Leistung seitens des Sponsors (Emrich & Messing, 2003, S. 23).

Im Zeitraum von 1990 bis zu Beginn der 2000er Jahre ist die Forschung im Sportsponsoring geprägt von strategischen Ansätzen, marktzentrierter Denkweise und einem tieferen Verständnis von Verhaltensweisen von Konsumenten auf Aktivitäten im Sportsponsoring (Cornwell & Maignan, 1998; Walliser, 2003). Zu Beginn des 21. Jahrhunderts öffnete sich die Sponsoringforschung für ressourcenbasierte Betrachtungsweisen und stellte Sportsponsoring als Möglichkeit dar, Wettbewerbsvorteile zu generieren (Ryan & Fahy, 2012, S. 1143f.).

In modernerer Literatur werden Beziehungen und Netzwerke in den Fokus des Diskurses gerückt. Olkkonen (2001) bspw. bricht die Rollen des Sponsors und des Gesponserten in ihrer dyadischen Beziehung auf und erweitert das Netzwerk um weitere Akteure. Bei den Publikationen handelt es sich überwiegend um konzeptionelle Literaturüberblicke, die den Forschungsbedarf über die Beziehungen der Akteure im Sportsponsoring herausstellen (Demir & Söderman, 2015). Cobbs (2011, S. 591) bezeichnet die Leistungen der Gesponserten als die Bereitstellung einer Plattform, die dazu dient Ressourcen auszutauschen. Allerdings wird weder konkretisiert, welche Art von Ressourcen im Sponsoring getauscht werden noch wie die Akteure die Plattform für ihre Interaktionen nutzen.

Folglich steht der Ressourcentausch im Zentrum dieses Artikels und soll empirisch überprüft werden. Im ersten Schritt wird Sportsponsoring als Plattform-Business definiert. Im nächsten Schritt gilt es, die Wichtigkeit von nicht opportunistischem Verhalten in einer Beziehung in Form freiwilliger, nicht vertraglich vereinbarter Leistungen herauszustellen (Engagement). Dazu werden als theoretische Basis das Sport Value Framework (SVF) und das Konzept des Customer Engagement (CE) herangezogen. Darauf aufbauen untersucht der zweite Schritt Ressourcentausch mit Hilfe der Delphi-Methode. Abschließend wird ein theoretisches Konzept für das Sportsponsoring als Engagement Plattform erarbeitet und die Implikationen für die Praxis im Sportmanagement skizziert.

### 4.3.3 SPORTSPONSORING ALS ENGAGEMENT PLATTFORM

Gesponserte bieten eine Plattform, mit der eine Begegnungsstätte für unterschiedliche Sponsoren geschaffen wird. Diese Sichtweise ist abgeleitet von der service-dominierten Logik (SDL), die durch Vargo und Lusch (2004) Einzug in die Marketingforschung erhielt. Deren Anwendbarkeit auf den Sport belegen Woratschek, Horbel und Popp (2014) im Sport Value Framework. So werden beispielsweise Sportevents als Plattformen beschrieben, auf denen Akteure durch Ressourcenintegration Wert ko-kreieren. Im Zentrum stehen dabei sportliche Aktivitäten und sportlicher Wettkampf. Daraus abgeleitet werden Sportclubs, Sportorganisationen und Sportligen als Plattformen aufgefasst, welche es den Sponsoren ermöglichen, mit anderen Akteuren zu interagieren. Solche Akteure sind z.B. potenzielle und bestehende Kunden oder Geschäftspartner, Mitarbeiter, Politiker, Medien, Sportler, Trainer und Sportmanager.

#### 4.3.3.1 SPORT VALUE FRAMEWORK

Die SDL grenzt sich klar von der güter-dominierten Betrachtung (GDL) des ökonomischen Austausches ab (Vargo & Lusch, 2008). In der GDL wird das Unternehmen als Produzent betrachtet, welcher Wert schafft, der anschließend von den Kunden verbraucht wird. Dies wird in Abbildung 3 für das Sportsponsoring veranschaulicht. Die Sportclubs spielen in verschiedenen Ligen (z.B. Bundesliga und Champions League) und kooperieren mit anderen Dienstleistern (z.B. Werbeagenturen, Sportrechtevermarkter), um ihre Sponsoringrechte zu verkaufen. Das Geld wird vom Sponsor bezahlt, weil der Sportclub Wert schafft, indem er Ressourcen kombiniert. Die Unternehmen kaufen die Sponsoringrechte, weil sie den darin erhaltenen und vom Sportclub geschaffenen Wert nutzen möchten.

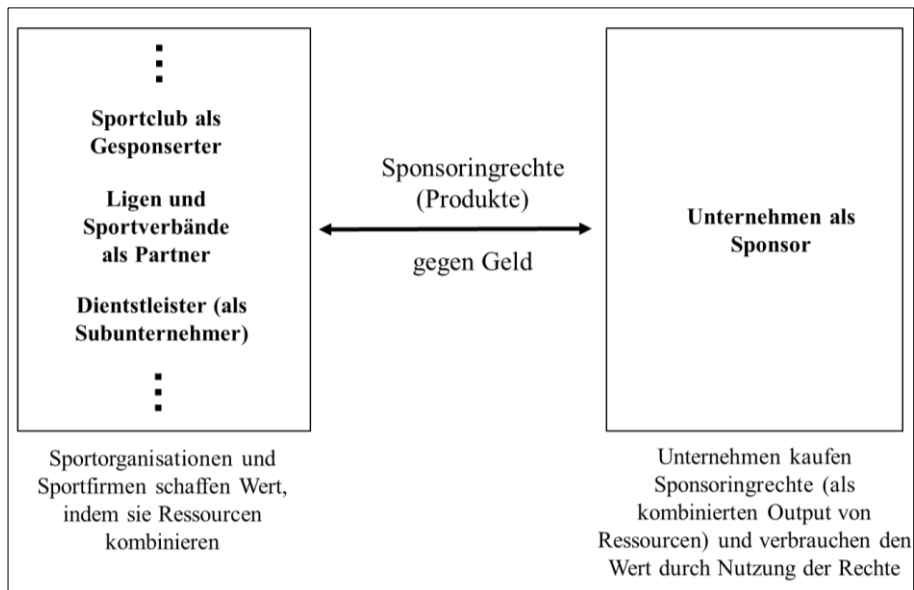


Abbildung 3: Status quo in der Sportökonomie und im Sportmanagement.

Die SDL stellt die Logik eines Tauschs von wirtschaftlich wertvollen Gütern gegen Geld grundsätzlich in Frage. Im Zentrum des ökonomischen Austauschs steht der Service, welcher als „application of specialized competences (knowledge and skills) through deeds, processes, and performances for the benefit of another entity or the entity itself“ definiert ist (Vargo & Lusch 2008, S. 26). Die eigentliche Motivation des ökonomischen Tauschs besteht demzufolge in den Fähigkeiten, Kompetenzen und Wissen von anderen Akteuren. Diese werden genutzt um Wert zu schaffen. Service wird gegen Service getauscht oder mit anderen Worten: Ressourcen werden in einen Prozess der gemeinsamen Wertschöpfung integriert. Dienstleistungen und Produkte werden als manifestierter Service aufgefasst. Dienstleistungen und Produkte werden gekauft, weil sich die Fähigkeiten und Kompetenzen von Akteuren darin manifestieren. Geld ist demnach auch nur ein Service, der von Zentralbanken oder Anbietern von Kryptowährungen bereitgestellt wird, um den Tausch Service gegen Service zu vereinfachen. Insofern ist die Modellierung als Dyade immer eine starke Vereinfachung. Sie verdeckt, dass Werte immer von vielen verschiedenen Akteuren gemeinsam geschaffen werden (value co-creation). Entsprechend können Gesponserte lediglich Wertvorschläge erstellen, aber keine Werte schaffen. Werte entstehen im Sportsponsoring erst, wenn die Sponsoringrechte in bestimmten Kontexten in einer bestimmten Art und Weise genutzt werden (Aktivierung von Sponsoringrechten). Abbildung 4 stellt Sponsoring im Sinne der SDL dar.

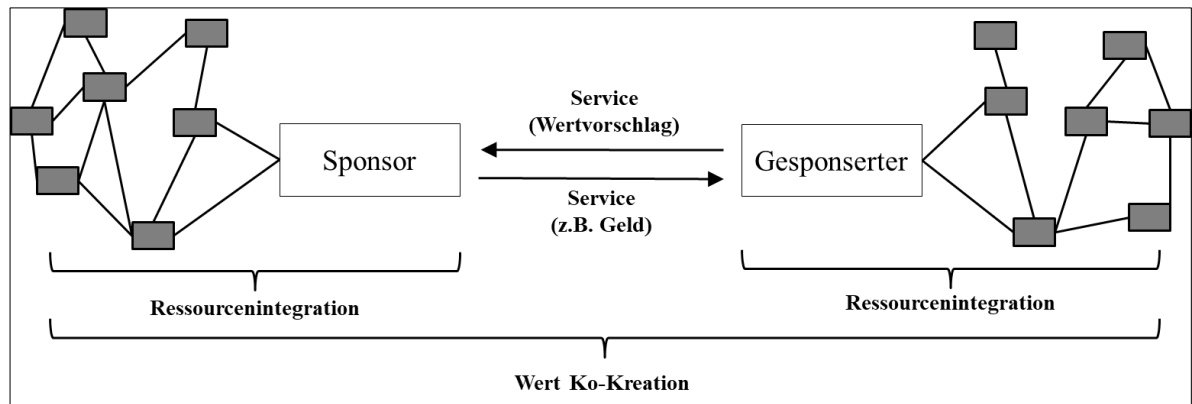


Abbildung 4: Sponsoring in der SDL.

Woratschek et al. (2014) verwenden die Theorie der SDL als Basis, um diese im Sportmanagement anzuwenden. Im Sport Value Framework (SVF) wird ein Sportevent oder das hier betrachtete Sponsoring als Plattform gesehen, auf der es durch den Austausch von Fähigkeiten und Kompetenzen zur Ko-Kreation von Wert kommt (Foundational Premise (FP) 2 des SVF, siehe Tabelle 1). Nicht der Anbieter von Sponsoring schafft den Wert, sondern der Wert wird gemeinsam vom Anbieter und von den Sponsoren sowie weiteren Akteuren geschaffen, indem alle Akteure ihre Fähigkeiten, Wissen und Kompetenzen als Ressourcen einbringen (FP 10, Woratschek et al., 2014, S. 17f.). Akteure auf Sponsoring-Plattformen integrieren Ressourcen, die von anderen genutzt werden. Die Integration von Ressourcen ist die Voraussetzung für die Ko-Kreation von Wert (FP 6). Der Gesponserte kann dabei nur als Anbieter der Plattform einen Wertvorschlag erstellen, indem er den Zugang zu seinem Netzwerk gewährt (FP5). Wert kann bei den beteiligten Akteuren nur dann entstehen, wenn das Sponsoring genutzt wird (FP 8). Erst die Aktivierung von Sponsoring schafft Wert, nicht der bloße Kauf von Rechten. So dienen z.B. Halbzeitshows zur Platzierung von Produkten und zur Emotionalisierung der Marke des Sponsors. Der Wert der Aktivierung hängt stark vom Kontext ab und somit von weiteren Faktoren wie z.B. der Atmosphäre im Stadion, vom aktuellen Turnierverlauf oder vom Sitzplatz (FP 9). So können Wertvorschläge in einem Kontext werthaltiger sein, wohingegen dieselben in einem anderen Kontext als weniger werthaltig wahrgenommen werden (Chandler & Vargo, 2011).

Sportsponsoring ohne sportliche Aktivitäten ist unvorstellbar, da es nicht wahrgenommen werden würde. Um sportliche Aktivitäten herum bilden sich ganze Industrien (Sportartikelhersteller, Sportstättenbau, beratende Unternehmen, Sporttechnik, etc.). Aktivitäten im Sport bilden den Ausgangspunkt und den Kern für Sportmanagement im

Allgemeinen und Sportsponsoring im Besonderen (FP 1). Ein Beispiel hierfür sind regionale Kooperationen, die als Sportcluster bezeichnet werden. Sportliche Aktivitäten und Events führen zur Ansiedelung von Organisationen rund um den Ort des Events. Diese Organisationen bieten ihre Produkte und Dienstleistungen mit speziellem Bezug zum jeweiligen Sportevent an. Teil dieser Sportcluster sind zum Beispiel Sportausstatter, Ausrüster, Ligen und Vereine, Sportbildungs- und Sportforschungseinrichtungen oder Sportberatungen (Gerke, Desbordes & Dickson, 2015).

Prämissen des Sport Value Frameworks, die die Anwendung der SDL im Sportmanagement darstellen, sind Tabelle 1 zu entnehmen.

<b>FP 1</b>	Sporting activities are the core of sport management.
<b>FP 2</b>	Service is the fundamental basis of exchange in sport.
<b>FP 3</b>	Sport goods (products and services) are vehicles for service provision.
<b>FP 4</b>	Firms and customers can only offer value propositions.
<b>FP 5</b>	Sport firms create value propositions mainly in the configuration of a value network
<b>FP 6</b>	Sport customers co-create value primarily by integrating resources from their social groups.
<b>FP 7</b>	Value is always co-created by firms, customers and other stakeholders.
<b>FP 8</b>	Co-created value is always value-in-use.
<b>FP 9</b>	Co-created value is always value-in-context.
<b>FP 10</b>	The role of firms, customers and other stakeholders is to integrate the resources of their specific networks to co-create value.

*Tabelle 1: Foundational Premises (FP) des SVF. Woratschek et al. (2014, S. 19)*

Betrachtet man Sportsponsoring als Plattform-Business im Sinne der Definition des SVF (Woratschek et al., 2014), so stellt sich die Frage wie Beziehungen auf der Plattform beschrieben werden können. Dazu ist es erforderlich, Akteure sowie deren integrierte Ressourcen zu identifizieren. Darauf aufbauend sind Motive der beteiligten Akteure abzuleiten. Um diese Fragestellungen im Zuge der empirischen Studie in Kapitel vier aufzugreifen, wird sich zur genaueren Konzeptualisierung im Folgenden der Customer Engagement Literatur bedient. Im Zuge der Analyse der Motive und der Ressourcenintegration wird sich aus Gründen der Komplexitätsreduktion auf die beiden Akteure Sponsor (als zentralen Kunden des Sportclubs) und Gesponserter (als Bereitsteller der Engagement-Plattform) beschränkt.

#### 4.3.3.2 CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT UND SPONSORING

Das Konzept des Customer Engagement (CE) basiert auf der SDL, da hier die Integration von Ressourcen in den Werterstellungsprozess betont wird.

Brodie, Hollebeek, Jurić und Ilić, (2011, S. 260) sehen CE als mehrdimensionales Konstrukt mit kognitiven, emotionalen und verhaltensorientierten Komponenten. In diesem Sinne ist Customer Engagement eine Bereitschaft sich in den Werterstellungsprozess einzubringen (CE as disposition).

Demgegenüber steht die Definition von van Doorn et al. (2010). Diese legen den Fokus auf die Verhaltensdimension von CE und sprechen folgerichtig von Customer Engagement Behaviour (CEB): „CEB go(es) beyond transactions, and may be specifically defined as a customer’s behavioral manifestations that have a brand or firm focus, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers.“ (van Doorn et al., 2010, S. 254). Die Autoren stellen heraus, dass jegliches Verhalten, das den Kaufprozess übersteigt, als Engagement anzusehen ist.

Sponsoren können somit in der Rolle des Leistungszahlers als Kunden („customer as payer“) beschrieben werden (Sheth, 2002; Woratschek & Horbel, 2011). Daher wird Sponsor Engagement definiert als Verhaltensweisen des Sponsors, die vertraglich nicht vereinbart sind und sich in freiwilligen Leistungen niederschlagen können. Entsprechend wird das Engagement des Gesponserten als Sponsee Engagement bezeichnet und umfasst ebenfalls die über den Vertrag hinaus erbrachten Verhaltensweisen. Beispiele für Sponsor Engagement sind Weiterempfehlungen der Leistungen des Gesponserten und Aktivierungsmaßnahmen von Sponsoring (soweit nicht a priori vertraglich festgelegt). Beispiele für Sponsee Engagement sind Unterstützungsleistungen bei Aktivierungsmaßnahmen (soweit a priori nicht vertraglich festgelegt) und persönliche Begrüßungen von Sponsoren durch den Stadionsprecher. Sponsoring Engagement sind demzufolge alle über den Sponsoringvertrag hinausgehenden Verhaltensweisen verschiedener Akteure, die im Zusammenhang mit dem Sportsponsoring stehen.

Sponsoring Engagement setzt immer die Integration von Ressourcen voraus, die zur Ko-Kreation von Wert im Sportsponsoring führen kann. Breidbach, Brodie und Hollebeek (2014, S. 594) definieren Engagement Plattformen als „physical or virtual touch points designed to provide structural support for the exchange and integration of resources, and thereby co-creation of value between actors in a service system“. Die Interaktion zwischen Akteuren



und deren Integration von Ressourcen bilden demzufolge den Kern einer Engagement Plattform (Storbacka et al. 2016, S. 1). Ein Beispiel für physische Plattformen im Sportsponsoring sind Hospitalityeinrichtungen im Stadion. Virtuelle Plattformen lassen sich online finden, wo Interaktion über diverse Kanäle der sozialen Netzwerke stattfinden.

#### **4.3.4 INTEGRATION VON RESSOURCEN – EINE EMPIRISCHE ANALYSE**

Bislang gibt es keine Untersuchungen über die Integration von Ressourcen im Sinne des Engagements von Sponsoren und Gesponserten im Sportsponsoring. Daher soll im Folgenden die Integration von Ressourcen im Sportsponsoring empirisch untersucht werden. Die erste Forschungsfrage lautet dementsprechend:

Welche Art von Ressourcen werden gegenseitig von Sponsoren und von Gesponserten zur Ko-Kreation von Wert bereitgestellt und integriert?

Nach van Doorn et al. (2010) sind dem Engagement Verhalten „motivational drivers“ (S. 254) vorgelagert. Die Motivation der Beteiligten am Sportsponsoring führen somit zu freiwilligen, über den Vertrag hinausgehenden Verhaltensweisen. Daher widmet sich die zweite Forschungsfrage diesem Thema:

Was motiviert Sponsoren und Gesponserte zu Sponsoring Engagement Verhalten?

Bisher diskutierte theoretische Vorüberlegungen werden nun anhand einer explorativen, empirischen Studie mit Experten aus der Sportsponsoringpraxis überprüft.

#### **4.3.5 FORSCHUNGSDESIGN**

Für die vorliegenden Fragestellungen ist die Delphi-Methode ein geeignetes qualitatives Erhebungsinstrument. Bei dieser handelt es sich um „einen vergleichsweise stark strukturierten Gruppenkommunikationsprozess, in dessen Verlauf Sachverhalte, über die naturgemäß unsicheres und unvollständiges Wissen existiert, von Experten beurteilt werden“ (Häder & Häder, 1995, S. 12). Zum einen kann durch den charakteristischen Kommunikationsprozess dieser Methode die Expertise differenziert herausgearbeitet werden. Zum anderen kann die Reliabilität der Messungen aufgrund der Erhebung von Expertenmeinungen in mehreren Runden sichergestellt und nachvollziehbar gestaltet werden. Häder (2014, S. 37) unterscheidet vier Typen von Delphi-Befragungen. Diese sind Tabelle 2 zu entnehmen.

<b>Ideenaggregation Typ 1</b>	<b>Bestimmung eines Sachverhalts Typ 2</b>	<b>Ermittlung von Expertenmeinungen Typ 3</b>	<b>Konsensbildung Typ 4</b>
<b>Ziel:</b> Sammlung von Ideen zur Lösung eines Problems	<b>Ziel:</b> Verbesserung der Bestimmung eines Sachverhalts (Vorhersagen)	<b>Ziel:</b> Ermittlung und Qualifikation der Ansichten von Experten	<b>Ziel:</b> hohes Maß an Übereinstimmung bei den Teilnehmern
qualitativ angelegt	qualitatives und quantitatives Vorgehen	qualitatives und (v.a.) quantitatives Vorgehen	quantitativ angelegt
kaum Operationalisierung, teilweise nur Vorgabe des zu bearbeitenden Themenbereichs	Sachverhalt ist möglichst exakt zu definieren		stark differenzierte Operationalisierung des zu bearbeitenden Themas
offene Fragen	offene und geschlossene Fragen kommen zum Einsatz		ausschließlich geschlossene und standardisierte Fragen
Auswahl der Experten erfolgt aufgrund der Expertise	Hypothesen zur Auffindung der Experten nötig, keine formalisierbaren Regeln	Totalerhebung oder bewusste Auswahl der Experten	Auswahl der TN kann aufgrund eines bestimmbarer Rahmens erfolgen
ausschließlich qualitative Runden	qualitative Runde kann zur Operationalisierung genutzt werden		keine qualitative Runde nötig
herausgehobene Rolle der Teilnehmer	Teilnehmer und Monitoring-Team haben in etwa gleich große Bedeutung		herausgehobene Rolle des Monitoring-Teams

Tabelle 2: Unterschiedliche Typen von Delphi-Studien. Quelle: Häder (2014, S. 37)

Für den vorliegenden Untersuchungsgegenstand ist Typ drei zur explorativen Ermittlung von Expertenmeinungen im Sportsponsoringumfeld zielführend, weil die Expertise im Sportsponsoring qualifiziert ermittelt werden soll.

Bei der Durchführung der Delphi-Studie erfolgt zwischen den jeweiligen Runden eine Auswertungsphase, nach der den Experten anonymes Feedback zurückgespielt wird. Experten haben dadurch die Möglichkeit ihre eigenen Antworten sowie die Meinungen der Anderen anonym zu re-evaluieren. Dadurch werden unabhängige Gedankengänge gefördert und eine fundierte Stellungnahme gewährleistet (Dalkey & Helmer 1963, S. 459).

Über den Erhebungszeitraum von Juni 2017 bis September 2017 wurden insgesamt 18 Experten (15 männlich und drei weiblich) aus der Sportsponsoringpraxis befragt. Die Dauer der Interviews betrug im Durchschnitt ca. 52 Minuten, wobei das kürzeste Gespräch 34 Minuten und das Längste 76 Minuten gedauert hat. Um eine möglichst breite Perspektive abzudecken wurden Unternehmensvertreter (n=10), Clubvertreter (n=3) und Vertreter von Intermediären, sprich Vermarktungsagenturen (n=5) befragt. Die durchschnittliche Berufserfahrung in der Sponsoring-Praxis liegt bei 8,2 Jahren. Methodische Untersuchungen zur Delphi-Studie haben ergeben, dass Ergebnisse einer Expertenrunde aus 16 Beteiligten mit denen aus einem Panel von 34 Experten zu 92,86% übereinstimmen (Duffield, 1993, S.

235f.). Die erste Befragungswelle bestand aus teil-strukturierten, leitfadengestützten Experteninterviews. Die Interviews wurden transkribiert und anhand qualitativer Inhaltsanalyse nach Mayring (2002, S. 114) unter Nutzung der *MAXQDA 12-Software* systematisch analysiert. Nach Analyse der Datenbasis sowie textlicher und graphischer Aufbereitung, wurde in der zweiten Befragungsrunde eine auf Freitextantworten-basierte Onlinebefragung mit Hilfe der *Qualtrics-Software* durchgeführt. Die aufbereiteten und anonymisierten Antworten aus den Interviews wurden den Experten zur erneuten Evaluation übermittelt, indem Ergebnisse aus der ersten Runde samt entsprechender Ankerbeispiele im Online-Fragebogen präsentiert wurden. Nach erfolgter Re-Evaluation dient die dritte Runde der Delphi-Studie dazu Aspekte aus den ersten beiden Runden zu quantifizieren und weitere Einschätzungen der Experten zu gewinnen. Abbildung 5 visualisiert den Ablauf der durchgeführten Delphi-Studie.

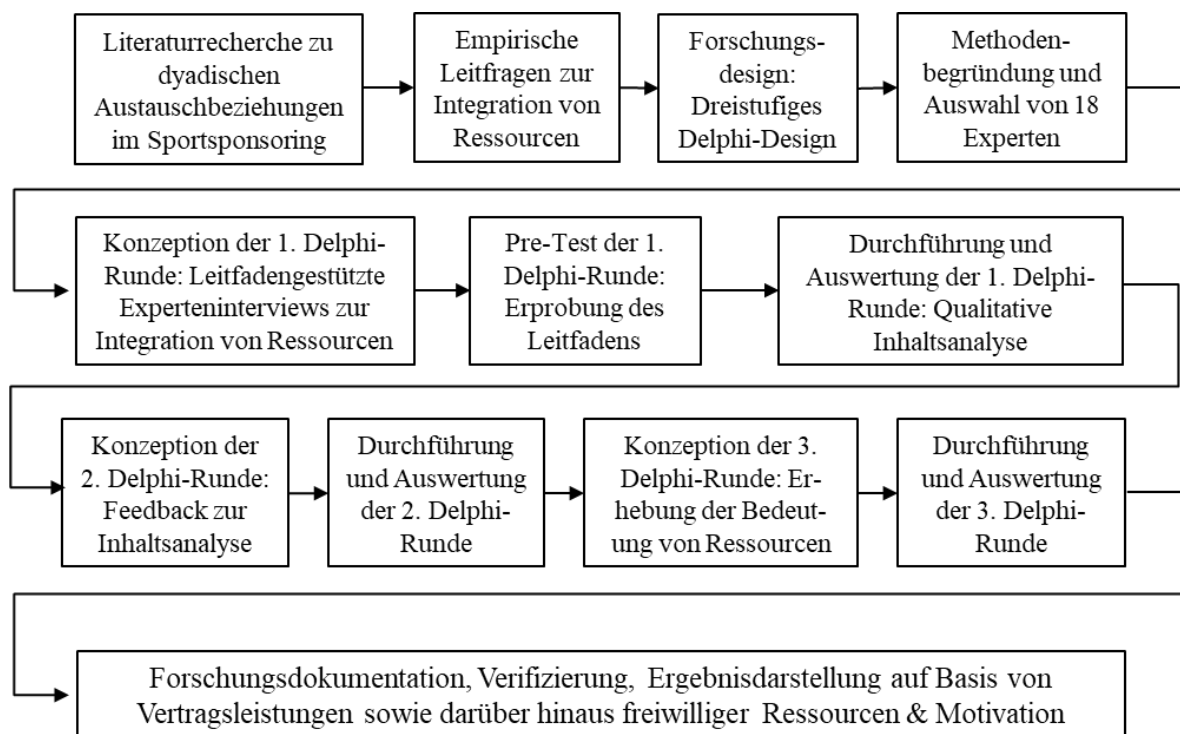


Abbildung 5: Ablauf der Delphi-Studie zur Ressourcenintegration. Eigene Darstellung in Anlehnung an Skulmoski, Hartman und Krahn (2007, S. 3)

#### 4.3.6 ERGEBNISSE

Der Fokus lag zunächst auf idealtypischen Bestandteilen von Verträgen im Sportsponsoring. Dabei sind sich die Experten einig, dass sich Vertragsbestandteile von Sponsoren in den meisten Fällen aus „(...) Sachleistungen, Dienstleistungen und finanzielle(n) Leistungen [Exp\_1, Z. 383-384]“ zusammensetzen. Als Gegenleistung stellen Sportclubs oder Events

Rechte zur Verfügung, die die Experten in Nutzungs- und Leistungsrechte unterteilen. Erstgenannte werden von Clubs zur Verfügung gestellt und können vom Sponsor exklusiv genutzt werden. Sie beinhalten beispielsweise „(...) *Marketing-Rechte*, ggfs. (...) *TV-Rechte*, *Sonderwerbformen*, *Gewinnspiele*, (...) *Hospitality-Rechte*, *Logen*, *Ticketing-Vorkaufsrechte*, ggfs. *Merchandising-Rechte*, *Vorkaufsrechte*, *Exklusivitäten*, *Matching-Offer-Rights* [Exp\_1, Z. 408-413]“. Leistungsrechte manifestieren sich in Produkten und Dienstleistungen und „*entfalten eine Leistung im Sinne von Sichtbarkeit und Markenpräsenz* [Exp\_4, Z. 278-279]“. Beispiele hierfür sind Banden, Logopräsenz auf Trikots oder Werbebannern im Stadion. Daraus abgeleitet lassen sich Vertragsbestandteile im Sportsponsoring wie in Abbildung 6 klassifizieren.

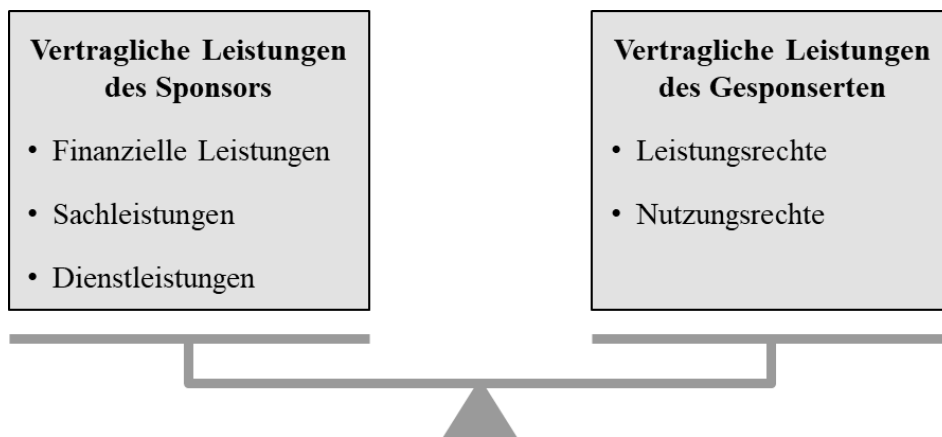


Abbildung 6: Vertragliche Leistungen und Gegenleistungen im Sportsponsoring.

Leistungen, die nicht Bestandteil des oben genannten Tauschs vertraglicher Bestandteile sind, werden als freiwillig integrierte Ressourcen verstanden. Diese Ressourcen lassen sich in fünf unterschiedliche Kategorien einordnen und sind ein Bestandteil des Service-für-Service Austauschs (Vargo & Lusch, 2008, S. 26). Dabei wird zur Benennung der Kategorien die Definition vor Service als angewandte Kompetenz in Form von Wissen und Fähigkeiten herangezogen (Vargo & Lusch 2008, S. 26). Die in der Delphi-Studie ermittelten Ressourcen können in fünf Kategorien eingeteilt werden: Management Fähigkeiten, technische Fähigkeiten, Networking Fähigkeiten, die Fähigkeit, innovative Ideen zu generieren sowie die Abgabe von Weiterempfehlungen. Die Einteilung in Kategorien erfolgte nach Maßgabe der strukturierten Datenreduktion und Aufbereitung der Ergebnisse (Mayring, 2002, S. 120).

#### *Management Fähigkeiten*

Um eine bestmögliche Partnerschaft im Sportsponsoring aufzubauen bzw. aufrecht zu erhalten, stellen sowohl Sponsoren als auch Gesponserte zusätzliche Ressourcen zur

Verfügung. Zunächst einmal ist es aus Sponsorsicht naheliegend ihren Clubpartnern die eigene unternehmerische Professionalität und Erfahrungen bereitzustellen. Große Sponsoren haben „(...) im (Event)management viel Erfahrung. Da kann man sicherlich auch einiges noch professionalisieren gerade in der Sportbranche und das versuchen wir einzubringen [Exp\_2, Z. 279-282]“. Außerdem werden zeitliche und personelle Ressourcen angeboten, um dem „Vertragspartner unter die Arme (zu) greife(n) oder unsere Zeit oder Know-How rein(zu)stecke(n) [Exp\_10, Z. 317-318]“. Auch gesponserte Sportclubs, deren Mitarbeiter Erfahrungen bspw. in der Aktivierung von Sponsorings mitbringen, bieten ihre Fähigkeiten und stehen dem Partner als „Key-Account [Exp\_6, Z. 156]“ zur Seite.

#### *Technische Fähigkeiten*

In gewissen Konstellationen werden Fähigkeiten und Wissen bereitgestellt, die die betriebswirtschaftliche Seite um eine technische, produkt- oder dienstleistungsorientierte Komponente erweitern. Insbesondere Sponsoren haben die Möglichkeit ihre Partner zu unterstützen, indem sie Wissen und Fähigkeiten weitergeben, um beispielsweise Sportausrüstung oder –technologien weiterzuentwickeln. Dies findet im Zuge eines Sponsorings eines Automobilherstellers im Segelsport statt. Der Sponsor ist demnach „involviert in die Verbesserung der Boote. Die stellen ihre Windkanäle zur Verfügung, um die Aero- und Aquadynamik des Bootes zu verbessern [Exp\_7, Z. 338-340]“. Die Verbesserung der sportlichen Leistung und der damit einhergehende Erfolg sind auch im Interesse des Sponsors, was eine „Win-Win-Situation“ für Sponsor und Gesponserten darstellt.

#### *Networking Fähigkeiten*

Sowohl für Sponsoren als auch für Sportclubs ist der Zugang zu anderen Unternehmen wertvoll. Je mehr Sponsoren ein Sportclub hat, desto höher sind die Möglichkeiten Wert zu kreieren. Demnach werden dem Sponsor durch den Zugang zur Plattform neue Geschäftskontakte ermöglicht, was bei entsprechender Nutzung den Wert der Plattform durch eine größere Anzahl an Sponsoren erhöht. Sportclubs veranstalten Sponsorevents, „bei denen (sie) alle Sponsoren einladen, zusammenbringen und gegenseitiger Austausch stattfindet [Exp\_16, Z. 223-227]“ und bieten damit die Plattform für die Generierung neuer Geschäfte. Auch auf globalen Sponsoringplattformen, wie der Fifa, dem IOC oder internationalen Fußballclubs spielt das Thema Netzwerk, vor allem bei der Internationalisierung, eine wichtige Rolle. Dabei nutzen Sponsoren internationale

Wettbewerbe und Reisen, um Präsenz im potenziellen Zielmarkt zu zeigen und gegebenenfalls expansiven Strategien zu folgen [Exp\_3, Z. 85-86].

#### *Innovative Ideen*

Interaktion im Sportsponsoring führt dazu, dass die beteiligten Akteure kreative Ideen im Zusammenhang mit der Aktivierung des Sponsorings im gegenseitigen Austausch weiterentwickeln können. Vor allem Sponsoren haben dahingehend die Möglichkeit Beziehungen zum Sportclub aktiv zu nutzen, sodass alle beteiligten Akteure gleichermaßen profitieren. Wenn sowohl Sponsor als auch Club bereit sind vertragliche Limitationen zu überschreiben „*fruchtet die Partnerschaft für (...) beide [Exp\_18, Z. 563-565.]*“. Einflüsse können vom Sportclub sowie vom Business-Partner kommen, um gemeinsam neue Wege zu gehen und die Plattform stetig weiterzuentwickeln.

#### *Weiterempfehlungen*

Die Wahrscheinlichkeit dafür, dass Weiterempfehlungen für den Sponsor zu höheren Einnahmen führen, hängt u.a. von der wahrgenommenen Beziehungsstärke der Quelle ab (Horbel, 2008, S.110). Zuschauer und Sponsoren haben eine positive Beziehung zum Sportclub, so dass die Weiterempfehlungen des Sportclubs von hohem Wert für den Sponsor sind. Die Weiterempfehlungen von Sportclubs wurden in der empirischen Studie ebenfalls als integrierte Ressource identifiziert: „*Der Verein ist immer in Kontakt mit anderen Vereinen und empfiehlt die Marke [Exp\_18, Z. 226-232]*“.

#### *Motive zum Sponsoring Engagement*

Gegenseitiger Erfolg ist ein bedeutender Grund, warum Sponsoren und Gesponserte Engagement Verhalten im Sportsponsoring zeigen. Obwohl offenkundig individuelle Zielsetzungen im Mittelpunkt des Interesses der Akteure stehen, ist die Wert Ko-Kreation auf der Sponsoring-Plattform wichtig. Freiwillige Ressourcen aus Sicht der Sponsoren anzubieten, „*zahlt sich langfristig aus. Wenn wir einen Mehrwert bieten über den Vertrag hinaus, ist dies (...) ein riesen Imagegewinn. Weil der Verein ein gewisses Bemühen feststellt (...) [Exp\_18, Z. 226-232]*“. Der Aufbau von langfristigen Partnerschaften stellt für Clubs Sicherheit dar. Diese ist erforderlich, um wirtschaftlich und damit auch sportlich planen zu können. Aus diesem Grund „*spricht (man) mittlerweile fast schon gar nicht mehr von Sponsoring, sondern von „Modern Partnerships“ im Marketing. [Exp\_5, Z. 223-224]*“. Gesponserte betreiben Sponsee Engagement, „*um eine besser Verhandlungsposition zu*

haben und die Zufriedenheit im Businessclub zu erhöhen [Exp\_17, Z. 183-184]“. Tabelle 3 stellt die Motive der Akteure im Sportsponsoring dar Sponsoring Engagement zu betreiben.

Motive von Sponsoren	Motive von Gesponserten
Verbesserung des eigenen Image	Kundenneugewinnung und Aufbau von Reputation durch Weiterempfehlungen
	Erhöhung der Zufriedenheit
Sicherung exklusiver Rechte	Verbesserung der Verhandlungsposition
	Bedürfnis nach Sicherheit
Langfristige Kundenbindung durch „Modern Partnerships“	

Tabelle 3: Motive von Sponsoren und Gesponserten zum Sponsoring Engagement

### 4.3.7 DISKUSSION

Das SVF ist als theoretische Basis besser geeignet die Austauschprozesse im Sportsponsoring zu modellieren als die traditionelle Sichtweise in der Sportökonomie und im Sportmanagement (GDL).

#### 4.3.7.1 IMPLIKATIONEN FÜR DAS SERVICE ÖKOSYSTEM

Gesponserte stellen als zentrale Akteure Engagement-Plattformen bereit. Darauf wird Wert nicht durch Sportorganisationen und Firmen geschaffen, sondern durch alle Akteure ko-kreiert, die im Zusammenhang mit dem Sportsponsoring bestehen. Gesponserte erstellen mit der Plattform lediglich einen Wertvorschlag. Wert selbst entsteht nur durch die Nutzung der Akteure (value-in-use) (Vargo & Lusch, 2004; Woratschek et al., 2014).

Die Ko-Kreation von Wert durch die Integration von Ressourcen kann mithilfe der vorliegenden empirischen Ergebnisse untermauert werden. Dabei wird ersichtlich, dass Sponsoren Management Fähigkeiten, technische Fähigkeiten, Networking Fähigkeiten in den Werterstellungsprozess einbringen sowie innovative Ideen generieren. Gesponserte bringen im Gegenzug ihre Management- und Networking Fähigkeiten ein und sprechen Weiterempfehlungen aus. Diese können zu Wert Ko-Kreation mit dem Sponsor, Zuschauern und weiteren Akteuren des Sportevents führen, insbesondere dann, wenn den Weiterempfehlungen gefolgt wird.

Im Sport Value Framework tragen unterschiedliche Stakeholder auf der Sponsoring-Plattform gemeinsam zur Wert Ko-Kreation bei (Woratschek et al., 2014). Abbildung 7 zeigt die Sponsoring Engagement Plattform im Kern des Service Ökosystems und konkretisiert die Ressourcenintegration.

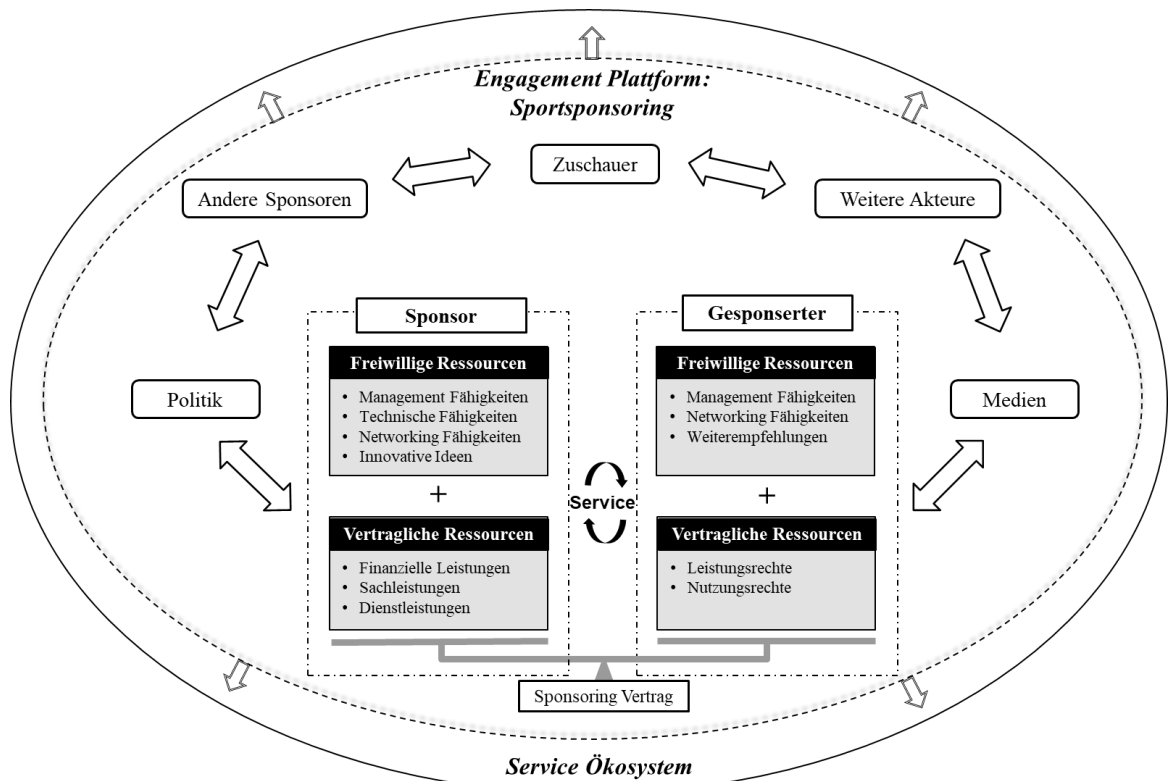


Abbildung 7: Sponsoring Engagement Plattform im Kern des Service Ökosystems.

Sponsor und Gesponserter interagieren auf der Engagement Plattform miteinander. Dabei steht der Austausch von Service im Vordergrund. Es werden neben den im Sponsoringvertrag festgeschriebenen Leistungen und Gegenleistungen freiwillige Ressourcen bereitgestellt und in die Wertkreation integriert. (vertragliche und freiwillige Ressourcen, siehe Kap. 4.2). Die Motive zur Ressourcenintegration liegen für Sponsoren in der Imageverbesserung sowie in dem Bedürfnis exklusive Sponsoringrechte zu sichern und diese nicht an Konkurrenten zu verlieren. Gesponserte haben ein Bedürfnis nach Sicherheit und versuchen neue Sponsoren zu gewinnen (durch Aufbau von Reputation und Weiterempfehlungen). Darüber hinaus integrieren Gesponserte Ressourcen, um Zufriedenheit bei den Sponsoren zu erhöhen sowie die eigene Verhandlungsposition zu verbessern. Beide Akteure integrieren Ressourcen, um vertrauenswürdige und langfristige Partnerschaften aufzubauen und zu pflegen.

Der dyadische Austausch zwischen Sponsor und Gesponserter, der in der vorliegenden Studie untersucht wird, stellt jedoch die Plattform im Sportsponsoring nicht zur Gänze dar. Über die Dyade hinaus stellen andere Akteure im Sponsoringprozess ebenfalls Ressourcen zur Integration bereit und treten in Interaktion. Weitere Akteure sind beispielsweise andere Sponsoren, Politiker oder Zuschauer des Events, die als Hauptzielgruppe der Sponsoringaktivitäten von Unternehmen anzusehen sind. Sponsoring ist somit als



Engagement-Plattform zu definieren, welche durch spezifische sportliche Aktivitäten erst ermöglicht wird (Woratschek et al., 2014).

#### 4.3.7.2 IMPLIKATIONEN FÜR SPONSOREN UND SPORTMANAGER

Umsätze im Sportsponsoring machen einen erheblichen Teil des gesamten Sportmarkts aus. So schätzt das BMWi (2012) die Ausgaben für Sportsponsoring die im Jahr 2010 an Organisationen des Sports geflossen sind auf rund 2,5 Mrd. Euro. Dabei ist außerdem zu bedenken, dass für die Aktivierung der Rechte zusätzlich rund 1,1 Mrd. Euro anzusetzen sind. Diese Aktivierungsmaßnahmen müssen nicht zwangsläufig vertraglich geregelt sein. Dies bedeutet, dass maximal 45 Prozent der Zahlungen im Sportsponsoring für die Nutzung von Sponsoringrechten verausgabt werden. Wenn man bedenkt, dass nur die Nutzung von Sponsoringrechten zur Schaffung von Wert und damit auch zu finanziellem Wert für die Sponsoren beiträgt, dann stellt sich die Frage, ob dieser Anteil wirklich ausreicht, um das Potenzial der gekauften Rechte voll auszuschöpfen. Sponsoren sollten sich daher stärker auf die Aktivierung von Sponsoringrechten fokussieren. Dies wird ebenfalls von einigen Intermediären und Marktforschern im Sportsponsoring empfohlen (Repucom, 2016, Infront, 2017).

Bei den oben genannten Zahlen ist zudem der freiwillige, nicht vertraglich geregelte Anteil von Leistungen, der in der durchgeführten Studie aufgedeckt wird, nicht mit inbegriffen. Das Potenzial finanziellen Wert aus dem Sportsponsoring zu generieren, sollte demzufolge deutlich höher eingeschätzt werden. Auch die Gesponserten sollten stärker auf die Wirkung des Sponsee Engagement achten, weil auch hier bislang verdecktes Potenzial zur Generierung von Wert realisiert werden kann. Zudem ist es für Manager von Sportclubs wichtig, ihre Rolle als Anbieter einer Plattform zu verstehen. Der Gesponserte regelt den Zugang zu einer Engagement Plattform. Dem isolierten Verkauf von Sponsoringrechten steht keinerlei Wert gegenüber, da der Wert sich erst aus der Nutzung der Rechte ergibt. Der Preis für die Sponsoringrechte ist lediglich ein Indikator für die Knappheit des Zugangs zu einer Sponsoring Engagement Plattform. Ausgaben für den bloßen Zugang reichen somit nicht aus. Sponsoring Engagement ist eine notwendige Voraussetzung für die Schaffung von Wert aus Sponsoringverträgen.

Die empirischen Ergebnisse der Studie könnten dazu beitragen, dass Bewusstsein für Sponsoringpartner dahingehend zu schärfen, welche Ressourcen jeweils integrieren werden sollten, um den Wert des Sportsponsorings zu steigern.

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## **CHAPTER 5: CONCEPTUAL AND SYSTEMIC PERSPECTIVE ON ENGAGEMENT**

### **5.1 CONCEPTUALIZING THE SPORT ECOSYSTEM LOGIC (SCIENTIFIC PAPER 6, EXTENDED ABSTRACT)**

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**Under Review**

#### **5.1.1 RESEARCH AIM**

The sport ecosystem is a complex network of relationships, which is affected by a variety of economic, political, ecological, and social dynamics. The relationships between sport actors, as well as the interconnectedness of the whole sport ecosystem, is without a complete conceptualisation in the sport management literature. New theoretical pathways and concepts are necessary to develop a new Sport Ecosystem Logic (SEL) that can serve scholars as well as practitioners to answer unresolved questions and to stimulate additional research (Ladik & Stewart, 2008). This research needs to emphasis all actors' contributions on mutually dependent sport engagement platforms that comprise the sport ecosystem by extending the sport industry boundaries.

The SEL incorporates and extends the utility of the sport value framework (Woratschek et al., 2014), engagement platforms (e.g., Breidbach & Brodie, 2017; Breidbach et al., 2014), and the service-dominant logic (e.g., Vargo & Lusch, 2004; Vargo & Lusch, 2016) to holistically conceptualise value co-creation in sport management. The sport value framework has no utility beyond the sport event platform. Sport events through the lens of the SEL are platforms (Woratschek et al, 2014), but are embedded in a much broader ecosystem of platforms. The SEL therefore provides insight beyond that provided by the sport value framework. The SEL, in contrast to the service-dominant logic, incorporates sport engagement platforms and explains how connections between these platforms create a sport ecosystem with all its defining characteristics, e.g. emotionally loaded and cooperative

sporting activities. Thus, the SEL will enrich discussions on value co-creation in sport management on various levels.

At the outset, we acknowledge that a worldview or conceptualised logic rarely explains all phenomena end-to-end but more or less seeps into scientists' mind-sets within a discipline (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). However, the SEL contributes to sport management literature in two ways. First, we provide a general theory about sport ecosystems. Second, we extend our understanding of value co-creation in sport management. Reflecting a proposition based style of theorising (Cornelissen, 2017), both are achieved through the development of five fundamental premises. For illustration purposes, we provide sport business examples that support our conceptualisation of the SEL.

### **5.1.2 CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT**

Based on a literature review we propose the SEL by bridging network approaches in sport management, ecosystem, and service ecosystem literature.

Network approaches within the sport management literature typically consider only the specific context of the sport event platform. The context refers to a "unique set of actors and the unique reciprocal links among them" (Chandler & Vargo, 2011, p. 41), is most often considered from a micro- or meso-perspective. However, there is a lack of conceptual research that extends this perspective beyond an event platform and answers the question of how platforms are embedded in a larger sport ecosystem. Theoretical advances regarding management and service ecosystems can explain the contributions of actors and the interconnectedness of platforms in the sport ecosystem. We argue that integrating the SVF and ecosystem perspectives can enable a theoretical foundation for an aggregated, macro-level perspective towards the sport ecosystem. With theoretical foundations in place, we can now articulate the five fundamental premises that constitute to the SEL. This ensures that the SEL is "based on a novel and distinct set of theoretical grounds" (Cornelissen, 2017, p. 4). We build the SEL from the micro- to the macro-level (i.e. bottom-up approach) and use examples to contextualise our argument.

### **5.1.3 THE SPORT ECOSYSTEM LOGIC**

Put simply, the SEL states that sport actors' have joint interest in sporting activities (FP1) and integrate their resources to co-create value (FP2). Based on these sporting activities actors' collaborative resource integration occurs on sport engagement platforms (FP3).

Because actors integrate resources on more than one interconnected engagement platform, the sport ecosystem is comprised of mutually dependent networks of sport engagement platforms. The sport ecosystem, in contrast to the sport industry perspective, includes all relevant resource integrators that share an interest in sporting activities (FP4). Ultimately, institutions within the sport ecosystem control actors' behaviours and actors' behaviours shape institutions in a virtuous cycle (FP5). Those fundamental premises contribute to the bottom-up approach of the SEL. Table 1 provides an overview over the fundamental premises, their theoretical origins, explanation, and examples.



Fundamental Premises		Theoretical Origin	Explanation	Example
FP1	Actors have joint interests in specific sporting activities.	<i>Ecosystem and service ecosystem literatures both emphasize collaborative joint goals and specific complementarities. SVF states that sporting activities are in the core of sport management.</i>	Athletes compete or sportsmen and –women leisurely participate in sports. These sporting activities are fundamental for other actors to join.	<i>At the Olympic games actors, such as athletes and teams (first and foremost), but also sponsors, media, spectators, fans, service providers, and others join as they share the interest in sporting activities.</i>
FP2	Actors integrate resources to co-create value based on sporting activities.	<i>Ecosystem literature highlights the need to interact. Service ecosystem literature introduces resource integration as basis for value co-creation. SVF describes considers all stakeholders in specific sporting activities to be resource integrators in their specific networks.</i>	Resource integration is both resource provision and resource usage. Actors provide resources for the benefit of others and they use resources from others for their own benefit. Resource integration leads to value co-creation.	<i>Eight Olympic sprinters integrate resources, such as their talent, know-how, passion or power in the 100-meter sprint (resource provision). At the same time they use others' resources, such as volunteers' engagement, event organizers infrastructure or fans atmosphere to co-create value.</i>
FP3	Actors co-create value on sport engagement platforms	<i>Ecosystem literature refers to business platforms where focal actors create multisided markets. Service ecosystem literature introduces engagement platforms as offline and online touchpoints to support value co-creation. SVF refers platforms to sport events where actors spend their business and leisure activities.</i>	Focal actors provide sport engagement platforms to enable and facilitate all actors' value co-creation. Furthermore, they grant access to other actors and also use the platform for their individual benefit. In the SEL, sport engagement platforms are defined as online and offline touchpoints to support value co-creation in multilateral relations based on sporting activities.	<i>The local organizers provide the sport engagement platform (e.g. an athletics stadium) to facilitate other actors' resource integration. Sponsors bring their money and guests to the hospitality area, broadcasters provide their expertise and equipment, and fans integrate resources from their social groups to co-create value on the sport engagement platform.</i>
FP4	Mutually dependent networks of sport engagement platforms comprise the sport ecosystem	<i>Ecosystem literature emphasizes multilateral sets of actors in networks. Service ecosystems are "dynamic constellations of mutually dependent engagement platforms" (Breidbach et al., 2014, p. 600). In sport management, authors use network theory to describe the context-dependent relations of actors and their power.</i>	Actors are not solely integrating resources on one platform. Those platforms are interconnected and build networks. Sport industries are based on outputs as resource combinations (products and services). Sport ecosystems are based on sporting activities and include platforms from other industries as long as they have interests in sporting activities. A sport ecosystem includes all relevant actors contributing to value co-creation in sport management.	<i>A non-sport organisation, Coca Cola is an official sponsor of the Olympic games and integrates resources at sport engagement platforms (e.g. the NBA or NCAA). Consequently, Coca Cola is an actor in the sport ecosystem. Volunteers engage on the sport event engagement platform (e.g. assistance with anti-doping) but also on the sponsorship engagement platform (e.g. hospitality of corporate partners).</i>
FP5	There is a virtuous cycle of institutions controlling actors' behaviours and actors' behaviours shaping institutions	<i>Ecosystems are not fully hierarchically controlled, but based on relational concepts, like shared fate or shared purpose. In service ecosystems institutions control actors and are shaped by actors. In sport management literature institutions influence (inter- and intra-) organisational behaviour.</i>	Institutions control actors' behaviours in a sport ecosystem but can also be shaped by actors in a virtuous cycle. Those institutions are very prominent and powerful in the sport context. Sport institutions are formal (e.g. rules, regulations) as well as informal (e.g. values, beliefs). Institutions are always subject to change and further development (e.g. adaption or rules, fan movements or behaviours) and can therefore lead to innovation.	<i>Institutions at the Olympic games include the Olympic motto and values (informal) as well as the IOC's rules and regulations (sport rules, anti-doping rules). All actors that are associated with the Olympic games need to follow those institutions and are able to shape them (e.g. integration of esports).</i>

Table 1: Fundamental premises of the SSL.

#### 5.1.4 CONTRIBUTIONS

Using the SEL for explaining phenomena of relationships and connections as part of value co-creation is valuable to sport management and marketing academics. The SEL provides insight into the sport ecosystem, therefore enabling a more holistic understanding of the sport ecosystem. The SEL is premised upon theory synthesis (i.e., conceptual integration across multiple theories or literature streams) and theory adaption (i.e., amend an existing theory by using other theories) (Jaakkola, 2020). The integration of management and service-related ecosystem literature (i.e., synthesis) serves as a theoretical underpinning of actors' contributions and the interconnectedness of engagement platforms in the sport ecosystem (i.e., adaption).

The SEL provides a number of distinct contributions to the sport management literature. First, the SEL describes and explains observable processes and phenomena through a set of premises (Gioia & Pitre, 1990; Peters et al., 2014). Sporting activities offer the opportunity to co-create value through resource integration on sport engagement platforms. In contrast to the logic of sport products where value is produced by sport firms and destroyed by consumers, in the SEL, value emerges through the engagement and joint collaboration of many actors in the same sporting activity. Within the SEL, actors integrate resources on different mutually dependent platforms, which build networks in a sport ecosystem. Institutions control how actors integrate resources, but actors can also shape those institutions.

Second, the SEL explains why and how sporting activities are the basis for value-creating relationships. Actors provide and use resources in multilateral relationships on a sport engagement platform with both physical and virtual touchpoints. Given that actors can integrate resources on different engagement platforms, sport engagement platforms are linked to each other. This is why explanations of how value emerges in the sport ecosystem should oscillate between dyads and triads (micro-level), sport engagement platforms (meso-level), and networks (macro-level). The SEL explains how connections between these platforms create a sport ecosystem with all its defining characteristics.

Third, SEL generates enhanced conceptual understanding by combining different literature streams - ecosystem, service ecosystem, and network approaches in sport management. Ecosystem literature states that multilateral set of actors with specific complementarities need to interact. Service ecosystem literature indicates how value emerges through resource

integration controlled by actor-shaped institutions. Network approaches in sport management emphasise the value of coordination and collaboration amongst competitors.

Fourth, in contrast to a sport industry perspective based on the logic of sport products, the SEL clearly states that value emerges because many actors integrate resources in multilateral relationships in a complex system. Value is not solely created by sport organisations. Hence, unlike other approaches, all value-contributing actors are incorporated within the SEL.

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## 5.2 SPORT SPONSORSHIP AS PLATFORM FOR ENGAGEMENT (TRANSFER PAPER E)

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### 5.2.1 SPORT SPONSORSHIP

Sport sponsorship is a key driver for profits of professional sport organisations (e.g., teams, clubs) but also an important financial source for non-profit sport organisations (e.g., associations) to cover costs. Deloitte (2020) estimated sponsorship revenues for the “big five” European football leagues in 2018/19 at around €4.65 billion, representing 27% of the total clubs’ revenues. According to IEG (2018), global sponsorship spending accounted for \$65.8 billion with a projected 4.9% increase in 2018. With a share of 70%, sport is the biggest receiver of sponsorship expenditure in the North American market.

These numbers demonstrate the importance of sport sponsorship in modern sport management. The core of sport sponsorship is defined by Mullin et al. (2014, p.231) as the “*acquisition of rights to affiliate or directly associate with a product or event for the purpose of deriving benefits related to that affiliation or association*”. Within sport events, the platform of sport sponsorship contributes to reach various kinds of goals for sponsoring companies in exchange for “*the provision of assistance either financial or in-kind to an activity*” (Meenaghan, 1983, p. 9). These goals are accompanied by companies’ objectives (e.g., enhancing corporate image) or marketing objectives (e.g., increasing brand awareness) (Gardner & Shuman, 1987). However, more recent literature defines sport sponsorship as relationship building patterns based on interactions (Ryan & Fahy, 2012). Woratschek, Horbel and Popp (2014) propose that sport organisations provide platforms where firms, organisations, spectators, fans, sponsors and other actors spend their leisure and business activities. By doing this, value is co-created and not solely provided by teams and event organisations.

### 5.2.2 VALUE CREATION IN NETWORKS

The sport platform in form of an organized sport competition or event represents a network of social actors, i.e., fans, spectators and other roles of customers that co-create value through an interactive process. Sport consumers derive value from resource integration of their social group on the networking platform together with other actors (Woratschek et al., 2014). Resources are here defined as social actors' skills, knowledge and abilities. Sponsors, sponsees/rights holders and spectators (as well as other actors) integrate these resources to co-create value on sport platforms (sport competitions or sport events). This refers to the service-dominant logic (SDL) by Vargo and Lush (2004). Within that concept, all social and economic actors are considered as resource integrators and value is always co-created in a joint and interactive process (Vargo & Lush, 2004; Pels & Vargo, 2009).

The sport value framework (SVF) has adapted the SDL and transferred it to sport management. According to the SVF, sport is always at the heart of sport management and sport activities constitute all kind of business in sport management (Woratschek et al., 2014). When Real Madrid plays Atletico Madrid in 'La Liga', these sport activities constitute the league as platform. Games in a league lead to many different kinds of business platforms like sponsorship, fan engagement and entertainment. Yet, sport activities are always the basis. Furthermore, social actors' value, which is co-created on the platform, differs depending on the context. The context of a friendly match is differently appreciated by spectators compared with the same teams competing in 'La Liga' or in the UEFA Champions League. Value also differs if such a game is watched in a stadium, during a public viewing event, in pubs or at home (Horbel, Popp, Woratschek, & Wilson, 2016; Woratschek, Durchholz, Maier, & Ströbel, 2017). The premises of the SVF imply that the term production is misleading and cannot be adapted to the sport industry. For example, a sport league does not produce, but coordinates the teams, media, security staff and other actors in a way, so that spectators and sponsors can co-create value through their experience before, during and after the sport competition. In this sense, a sport competition or a sport event can be regarded as a platform where actors can "*co-create value in their business and leisure activities*" (Woratschek et al, 2014, p. 21).

### 5.2.3 SPORT SPONSORSHIP AS ENGAGEMENT PLATFORM

These thoughts can also be applied to sport sponsorship. Sponsorship is a platform business where different sponsors engage to reach specific goals, mainly in marketing communication.

Sponsors very often invite customers, employees, politicians and others in VIP and business lounges to use the leisure experience to gain and maintain business relations. All these actors co-create value and derive individual benefits by integrating resources from the league (knows how to coordinate an attractive competition), the teams (have excellent abilities to play football), the coaches (know how to establish team spirit), the fans (know how to contribute to the stadium atmosphere) and the security staff (know how to guarantee security). Via sport sponsoring platforms, participating actors are engaging in interactive experiences based on sport activities, e.g., networking in hospitality areas during a football match.

The actor engagement (AE) approach emphasizes engagement as a psychological state emerging from such interactive experiences (Storbacka et al., 2016). Although AE is a multidimensional concept, the most obvious dimension seems to be a behavioural one. This dimension is described as customer engagement behaviour (CEB) that goes *“beyond transactions, and may be specifically defined as customer’s behavioural manifestations that have a brand or firm focus, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers”* (Van Doorn et al., 2010, p. 254). The behavioural manifestations of customer engagement are going beyond the elementary purchasing process and describe active patterns of customers that happen voluntarily. Examples for CEB from marketing practice might be giving recommendations about products or services to one’s peer group or posting positive online comments about the brand.

Adapting the concepts of AE and CEB to sport sponsorship, the basic sponsorship transaction needs to be defined first. Sport sponsorship consists of partnerships that are based on an agreement where the exchange is clearly defined. In most sponsorship agreements, the sponsor pays or provides payment in kind in return for the acquisition of rights, like the placement of corporate logos on boards or jerseys or the use of teams or athletes for corporate purposes in marketing campaigns, social media or events.

Every performance in the relationship between sponsor (i.e., company) and sponsee/rights holder (i.e., sport club or event) that exceeds buying behaviour (mainly manifested in the sponsorship contract) can be considered as sponsorship engagement. Thus, sponsors voluntarily behave in favour of the sponsee/rights holder and provide resources that are not covered by any kind of agreement (Buser, Woratschek, & Schönberner, 2020). This may be the case when Adidas offers orthopaedic support for an injured player by manufacturing

specialized football shoes. This performance exceeds the basic sponsorship agreement but may be provided by the sponsor in order to co-create a trustworthy and long-lasting partnership with the player and the sport club.

In order to conceptualize and define sponsorship engagement, it is crucial to understand which resources are provided and integrated (Buser et al., 2020). By following AE and CEB literature (Brodie et al, 2011; Storbacka et al., 2016; Jaakkola & Alexander, 2014) as well as the SVF (Woratschek et al., 2014), sponsors and sponsees/rights holders provide other resources beyond agreed ones. Consequently, sponsorship engagement behaviour exceeds the core performances, like money or payment in kind. In return, sponsees/rights holders also integrate resources by providing rights and services as agreed in the sponsorship contract. Furthermore, sponsees/rights holders also invest in better relationships by providing resources beyond the sponsorship agreement (sponsee/rights holder engagement). In terms of the sponsoring platform of Real Madrid, sponsors and sport club provide knowledge, e.g., the sponsors offer assistance regarding professionalizing the club's management or human resource. Furthermore, sponsors provide ideas and innovation skills in order to develop the club's overall performance, e.g., Microsoft provided their IT-infrastructure to develop a network system where fans can engage online within the stadium through an interactive mobile app (Soper, 2015). In addition, sponsors provide their professional network and invite guests to specialized events in the hospitality area of the stadium in order to acquire and motivate potential partners for the sport club. On the other hand, sponsees/rights holders provide a key account manager who cares about the sponsors' inquiries as far as tickets or hospitality events are concerned although it is not part of the agreement. With a larger number of resource integrating partners, network effects can be generated. These positive effects occur when broad networks of sponsorship partners come together and enhance the overall value of the platform. The platform operating actor, i.e., the sport club or the event hosting organization, develops the platform to make it more interesting for prospective sponsors (Storbacka et al., 2016). The more attractive the platform is, the more companies will recognize these effects and will consider to join the network. The ultimate goal for sponsors and sponsees/rights holders is the development of long-term alliances and partnerships. Furthermore, according to the SVF, platforms with dyadic or triadic relationships are not adequate to understand sport management. Other actors should also be considered, since they can integrate valuable resources on engagement platforms. Sponsorship would not happen if



leagues, teams, security staff and many other actors would not contribute to sponsors' and sponsees/rights holders' value co-creation process.

Figure 1 shows that sponsors, sponsees/rights holders and other actors integrate their resources on the sport sponsorship engagement platform. In this context, integrating means to provide resources and to benefit from other social actors' resources. It is important to notice that value cannot solely be provided by any social actor. Service exchange is always reciprocal and not limited to agreements about transactions.

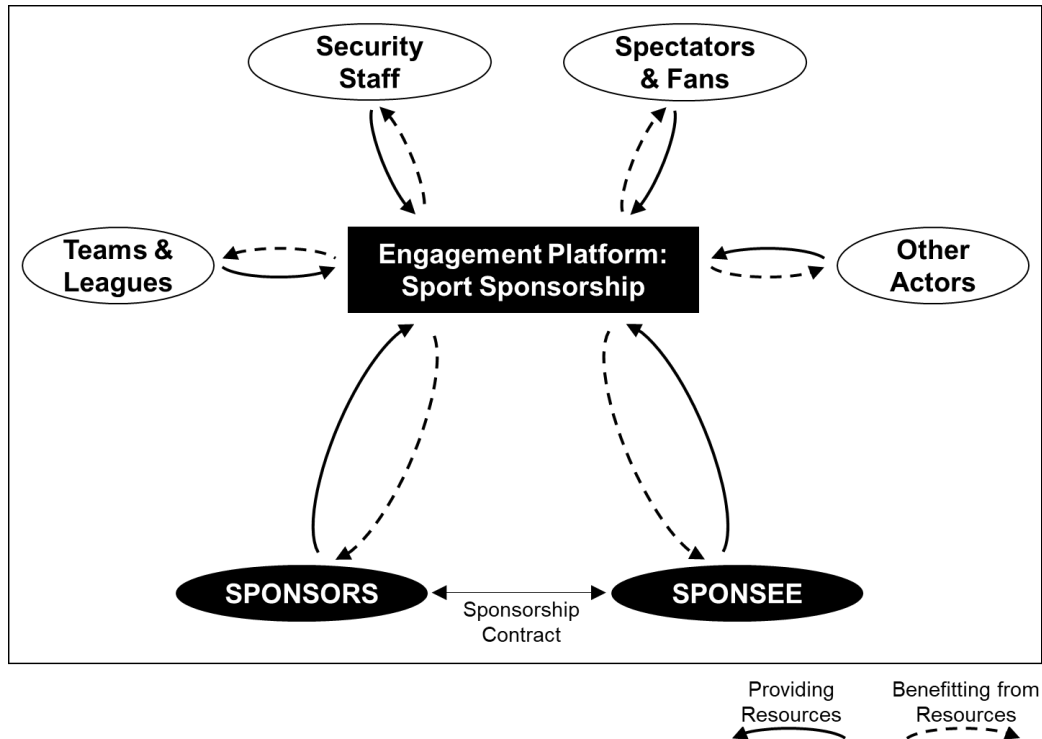


Figure 1: Framework for sport sponsoring as an engagement platform (own figure)

#### 5.2.4 CONCLUSION

Given the paramount importance of sport sponsorship as a tool in financing sport clubs or events, it is essential for sport management practitioners to enable and facilitate value co-creation of that specific engagement platform. Sport managers are obliged to attract resource-integrating actors and develop their business platform to facilitate value co-creation for existing partners as well as to attract new ones. For that reason, they necessarily need to understand the value co-creation aspects of the platform and the engagement process characteristics of sport sponsorship (Woratschek et al., 2014).

Through better understanding of sport sponsorship as an engagement platform, sport management practitioners are able to derive strategies, strengthen their relationships with

other actors and build a network where all actors integrate resources in a value co-creation process. The goal of the sponsee/rights holder is to foster long-term and strong relationships between all actors on the platform to facilitate value co-creation. For sponsees/rights holders, these long-lasting partnerships are essential since they are associated with future revenue generation from sponsors. Through sponsorship engagement, sponsees/rights holders are able to develop a good reputation in their role as platform operator and might attract future business partners, who are willing to join the network. Sponsors have the chance to deeply associate and connect with the sponsee/rights holder, other partners and actors on the sport sponsorship engagement platform, e.g., media, spectators and fans. It is crucial to extend the traditional dyadic and triadic relationships of sport sponsorship. Sponsors do not only focus on sponsees/rights holders' performance because their goal is to reach the fans, spectators, politicians, investors and other actors in order to reach their sponsorship objectives.

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### **5.3 PURE PUBLIC NATURAL RESOURCES IN VALUE CO-CREATION: ABDUCTIVE REASONING USING THE CASE OF COVID-19 IN SPORT MANAGEMENT (SCIENTIFIC PAPER 7, EXTENDED ABSTRACT)**

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#### **Under Review**

#### **5.3.1 RESEARCH AIM**

In this research, we choose the perspective of value co-creation to analyse COVID-19 and its ramifications for sport management. To do so, we propose a theoretical conceptualisation of the process of resource integration, for which we consider the virus to be a natural resource. More specifically, the virus is a pure public natural resource (PPNR), as actors cannot be excluded from its use; nor is its availability limited (Woratschek et al., 2020). PPNRs generally play an important role in value co-creation in sport management. For example, triathletes use the resource of water, mountain bikers drive on natural mountain trails, and pond hockey would not be possible without natural ice. The COVID-19 crisis, however, uncovered a void as it became apparent that existing theories cannot sufficiently explain how PPNRs such as the SARS-CoV-2 virus affect value co-creation. Consequently, COVID-19 functioned as a trigger for theory development on value co-creation in sport management. Resources are generally seen as the basis for competitive advantage and are usually positively referred to in the literature (e.g. Barney, 1991; Madhavaram & Hunt, 2008). Most approaches in sport management follow this idea and perceive resources grounded in the logic of sport products, in which value is produced by sport firms or organisations and embedded in sport services and products that are exchanged for money (Woratschek & Griebel, 2020). Natural resources are regarded as market externalities with positive or negative effects for producers and consumers (Zeder, 2020). In contrast, according to the logic of value co-creation, resource integration is internalised. Social and economic actors integrate resources to co-create value (Woratschek et al., 2014). As value is uniquely determined by the beneficiary,

integrating a resource can generate positive or negative value for the actors involved (Vargo & Lusch, 2004).

Due to the positive connotation of resources, resource integration is generally understood as voluntary behaviour. However, as the current pandemic shows, resource integration is not always a deliberate activity. The SARS-CoV-2 virus, a PPNR, leaves actors no choice. The virus is present; its aftermath for societies and industries—including the field of sport—is immense.

The COVID-19 pandemic and its repercussions demonstrate several research gaps regarding the role of (natural) resources and their integration for value co-creation. First, a classification of resources in sport management—and hence the basis for theoretical developments on resources and their integration—is missing (Hunt, 2002; Woratschek et al., 2020). Second, PPNRs are widely neglected in the discourse on value co-creation. Third, a detailed analysis of the process of resource integration that considers different resource categories, as well as the outcome of their integration, is lacking. Accordingly, there is no profound theoretical foundation to explain phenomena evolving from PPNRs such as the SARS-CoV-2 virus and their consequences for sport management.

In addressing these gaps and following the suggestion of Jaakkola (2020), we analyse the COVID-19 pandemic as a focal phenomenon, which is observable but cannot be properly explained by existing research. With this conceptual, exploratory article, we aim to deepen the understanding of resource integration and its effects on value co-creation for sport-related individuals, organisations, platforms and ultimately the sport industry. Our proposed conceptualisation of resource integration takes an actor's perspective; it differentiates between actors' agency, their roles in resource integration, their resource integration behaviour and the outcome generated for them. Thus, we develop a detailed conceptualisation of resource integration that enriches not only the theoretical understanding of the logic of value co-creation in sport management, but also the comprehension of value co-creation in general.

### **5.3.2 CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT**

Most published articles covering value co-creation do not elaborate on resource integration. To close this gap in the literature, we conceptualise resource integration as a requirement of value co-creation in the specific context of sport management. Our proposed conceptualisation aims to provide a more detailed understanding of various aspects that

determine resource integration; it takes the perspective of actors in sport management as resource integrators, and specifies resource integration depending on actors' agency and their role in the resource integration process. The conceptualisation further sheds light on actors' resource integration behaviour by differentiating between voluntary, involuntary and unconscious resource integration. Finally, we include value as the outcome of resource integration for each involved sport actor (see Fig. 1). By considering these dimensions, our conceptualisation allows for analyses of resource integration for co-creating actors at the micro-level. This forms the basis for assessing resource integration and value co-creation at higher levels of aggregation in sport management (Woratschek et al., 2020).

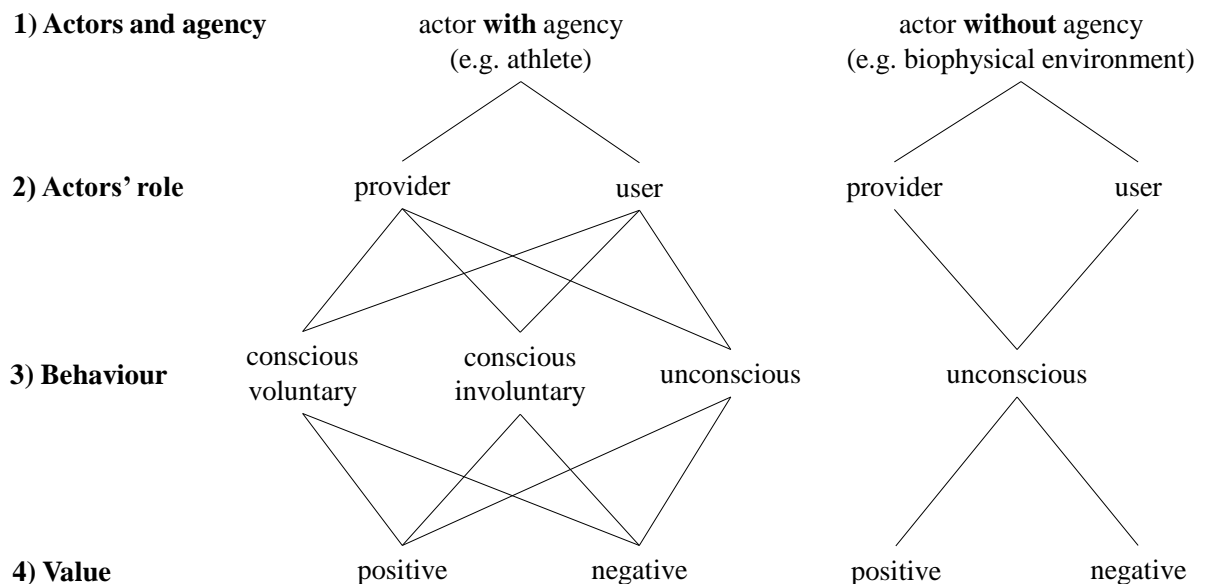


Figure 1: Dimensions of resource integration from an actor's perspective

#### 5.3.2.1 ACTORS AND AGENCY

The first dimension of our conceptual model refers to actors' agency (see Fig. 1). Actors with agency have the ability to act with choice (Archer, 2000). For example, athletes can decide which specific equipment to integrate into their training. If the government or other actors appropriate resources natural resources, they fall into the same category, since actors with agency act with choice on their behalf. These resources are impure public or private natural resources (Woratschek et al., 2020).

However, in our conceptualisation, we specifically focus on PPNRs because they are considerably different. They are provided by the natural environment: an actor without

agency (Woratschek et al., 2020). According to Edvardsson et al. (2014) and Kleinaltenkamp et al. (2012), having agency is a prerequisite for actors to integrate resources and co-create value. From this angle, the natural environment, an actor without agency, cannot create value, although it provides natural resources that other actors use in the value co-creation process (Woratschek et al., 2020). However, Gille (2009) argues that the natural environment is an ‘active participant in seemingly purely social relationships and transformations’ (p. 9). Accordingly, the natural environment, despite having no agency, clearly represents an actor in resource integration. In contrast to actors with agency, the natural environment is unable to prevent other actors from using its natural resources (Horbel, 2013); nor can it evaluate the outcome of resource integration. Actors are sometimes not even aware that they use PPNRs because they are often free of charge and ‘just there’. Notwithstanding, through using natural resources, other actors can accidentally or deliberately alter them (Woratschek et al., 2020).

Since natural resources are inevitably always integrated and have an impact on value creation, it is not adequate to consider them as externalities in economic and social exchanges. In contrast to the reasoning of Kleinaltenkamp et al. (2012), our conceptualisation offers the possibility of internalising the integration of resources from actors without agency.

#### 5.3.2.2 ACTORS’ ROLE IN RESOURCE INTEGRATION

For a detailed understanding of resource integration, it is important to bear in mind that resource-integrating actors have two main roles within this process: they are both providers and users of resources (see Fig. 1). This applies to actors with and without agency alike. For example, an athlete, an actor with agency, provides his/her sporting performance as a resource to other actors (such as spectators), who use and integrate it with other resources to co-create their experience. The athlete also uses resources; for example, physical resources in the form of equipment, which other actors provide. The natural environment, despite having no agency, likewise provides resources (e.g. water resources) to other actors; it also uses resources, for instance, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from the cars of a motorsport race.

#### 5.2.3.3 RESOURCE INTEGRATION BEHAVIOUR

The case of PPNRs owned by an actor without agency makes it clear that actors do not always engage consciously and voluntarily in resource integration. By definition, actors without agency lack the will and/or the power to act with choice. Hence, while they are involved in



resource integration, they always do so unconsciously (see Fig. 1). Actors with agency usually engage in resource integration voluntarily because they expect to gain benefits from it (Kleinaltenkamp et al., 2012). For example, sponsors use athletes as resources in their marketing strategy because they hope to benefit from the athletes' media exposure and image. Hence, they are also willing to provide resources to these athletes, normally in the form of financial (e.g. money), physical (e.g. equipment) or human resources (e.g. management skills).

However, even actors with agency sometimes have no choice as to whether to integrate resources, and thereby consciously—but involuntarily—integrate resources. Such cases are especially pertinent in the case of PPNRs. Athletes who want to participate in the IronMan triathlon in Hawaii need to integrate challenging climatic conditions. The same is true for COVID-19. Sport actors have no choice but to integrate the SARS-CoV-2 virus resource in one way or another. The cancellations of sporting events, the closure of sporting facilities and the lockdown of the sport industry due to the coronavirus outbreak have consequences for the resource integration of every actor in the sport industry. Most of them have had to integrate the PPNR SARS-CoV-2 against their will. The resource integration of actors with agency can also happen unconsciously. Marathon runners are usually not aware of the exact quality of the air they are breathing. Neither involuntary nor unconscious resource integration has so far been discussed in the marketing, management and sport management literature. Accordingly, we extend existing conceptualisations by adding these kinds of resource integration behaviour (see Fig. 1).

#### 5.2.3.4 VALUE

As a final dimension in our conceptualisation, we suggest including value as the outcome of resource integration. For reasons of simplification, we differentiate between positive or negative value in our conceptual model, whereas in reality, actors perceive value on a continuum with positive and negative poles (see Fig. 1). This is in contrast to earlier conceptualisations of resource integration where value is generally seen as positive. This seems logical as actors would not voluntarily participate in the resource integration process when a negative outcome is anticipated. However, as we have shown, actors with agency can also become involuntarily (or even unconsciously) involved in resource integration. Actors without agency (such as the natural environment) lack both the ability to evaluate potential

consequences and the will to decide whether to engage in resource integration, depending on the evaluation of the predicted outcome.

Both involuntary and unconscious resource integration might lead to negative value. For example, a sponsor can be negatively affected by the media coverage about a doping case of one of their sponsored athletes. Nonetheless, the sponsor could also achieve positive results from unconscious resource integration due to the unexpected engagement of a sponsored athlete for a good social cause, thereby receiving a lot of positive public recognition.

Even if actors with agency voluntarily integrate resources, the outcome might not always be positive for them. For example, open water swimmers generally integrate the PPNR of water voluntarily, as otherwise they would not be able to do their sport. This usually leads to positive consequences, especially if the water temperature is beneficial for the athlete's performance. However, the outcome can also be negative for the athlete if the water is polluted, or if the water is too cold and performance suffers.

Our conceptual model (see Fig. 1) demonstrates that different constellations within the dimensions of resource integration may occur. While some of these constellations are more intuitive (for instance, an actor with agency that voluntarily uses resources and integrates them to generate positive value), others are less obvious; for example, the involuntary provision of resources by an actor with agency that nevertheless results in positive value.

Our conceptualisation of resource integration further suggests that actors without agency are resource integrators that provide and use resources. However, in contrast to actors with agency, they can only do so unconsciously. Nevertheless, for both actors with and without agency, the outcome of resource integration can have both positive and negative value. For a deeper understanding of resource integration, it is hence necessary to analyse the four dimensions of each actor's resource integration: (1) the actor's agency; (2) the actor's role in the resource integration process; (3) the actor's resource integration behaviour; and (4) value as the outcome of the process.

### **5.3.3 CONTRIBUTIONS**

Our article contributes to the logic of value co-creation in sport management in several ways. First, we provide a first detailed classification of resources in sport management. With this classification, we build the foundation for conceptualising resource integration as a requirement for value co-creation.

Second, we demonstrate that PPNRs need to be considered as a specific type of resource relevant to resource integration, not only in sport management, but also more broadly. Thus far, PPNRs have largely been neglected in economic analyses of resource integration, as they have not been available to every actor, and their usage is free of charge due to a lack of a clear allocation of property rights. They are therefore often taken for granted (Woratschek et al., 2020). PPNRs can be sub-classified into biotic or abiotic and renewable or non-renewable. The SARS-CoV-2 virus is a biotic, renewable resource that will restock naturally, which makes its consequences even more serious for all sport actors.

Third, we provide a detailed conceptualisation of resource integration in sport management, taking four dimensions into account. This allows us to shed light on formerly overlooked aspects germane to a deeper understanding of resource integration (such as involuntary and unconscious resource integration), which may apply to actors with or without agency. Actors with agency can generally act with choice, so they can decide whether to integrate a resource (Woratschek et al., 2020). Sometimes, however, actors are left without this choice and must integrate their resources. This involuntary resource integration is especially important in cases of PPNRs. Prior arguments were that actors only use PPNRs for their own benefit. As the example of COVID-19 shows, even actors with agency need to integrate the virus as a resource (directly or indirectly) in the value co-creation process, although negative outcomes may be expected. Actors without agency can only involuntarily provide or use resources, as they lack the ability to act with choice. The natural environment, for example, provides the SARS-CoV-2 virus unconsciously; if a vaccination is invented, the environment will need to use this resource.

Fourth, using the case of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, a PPNR, we were able to reveal that resource integration can lead to positive—but also negative—value. PPNRs can undoubtedly provide many benefits for various sport actors who are able to include them in their resource integration without permission or a contract. Nevertheless, they can also bear serious risks, as the current COVID-19 pandemic dramatically indicates. Accordingly, PPNRs can be a curse or a blessing for sport management. Only each individual actor can assess which of these outcomes applies. Hence, the integration of the same resource (or set of resources) can generate positive value for some actors and negative value for others. While our proposed framework provides a detailed understanding of resource integration at the micro-level, we demonstrate that this has positive and negative consequences for value co-creation at all

levels of aggregation. The COVID-19 pandemic affects individuals and sport organisations (the micro-level), sport events and other sport platforms (the meso-level), and the entire sport industry (the macro-level).

Fifth, with our conceptual paper, we contribute to theory development not only in sport management, but also in general management by emphasising the importance of resources and resource integration for the logic of value co-creation. A profound theory allows us to understand the integration of PPNRs (such as SARS-CoV-2) and provides the basis for future empirical research that investigates their impacts at all levels of aggregation. In other words, we can consider the COVID-19 pandemic as a trigger for theory development. Our resulting conceptualisation is generalisable to other PPNRs and resource integration more broadly.

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## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Value is always co-created by various actors on engagement platforms. This general understanding serves scholars as well as practitioners to capture actors' contributions to the success and failure of business and leisure activities. On physical or virtual engagement platforms, actors provide their resources and benefit from others' resource integration in the process of collaborative and interactive value co-creation.

This thesis uses sport as one example for a service industry but also extends the perspective to a broader ecosystem of actors from outside the sport industry. Those actors' contributions are neglected in most of the traditional concepts in service and sport management. Applying an ecosystem perspective by extending the industry boundaries enables a more comprehensive discussion. Nevertheless, the focus of research in this area needs to be application-oriented and should not lose touch with management practice. It has to consider the continuum from individual, dyadic or triadic constellations of resource integrators, sets of multiple actors on engagement platforms to a zoomed-out perspective of networks of engagement platforms in ecosystems. The thesis supports the understanding of value co-creation on engagement platforms on multiple levels.

Actor-centric projects focus on social phenomena as a result of interactions between intentionally acting individuals or groups of individuals. Therefore, traditional approaches in service marketing and sport management are described shortly and enriched with the paramount concept of value co-creation on engagement platforms (chapter two).

Chapter three, thereafter, adopts value co-creation to incorporate empirical studies from various points of view. All projects in chapter three emphasise the interactive nature of collaboration by different actors, e.g. via international co-branding by universities, gamification through fantasy sports by professional sport league, and decision-making in sponsoring companies.

At the transition to chapter four, the thesis expands actor-centric boundaries to acknowledge external actors' contributions in the sense of co-creation and engagement. Thus, the projects in chapter four highlight the systemic dimension beyond actors, firms, organisations, or networks. To empirically study such constellations, simplification is necessary to keep the traction to observable behavioural manifestations. For that reason, the empirical and systemic dimension uses one exemplary engagement platform, namely sport sponsorship to theorise and analyse engagement behaviour through the specification of actor's resource integration.

In chapter five, a more holistic and systemic view on interrelationships of actors and engagement platforms is presented. Within this chapter, the logic of value co-creation is implemented in the sport ecosystem. This perspective allows to explain phenomena of relationships and connections as part of value co-creation in the context of sport management. The logic of value co-creation and the business-facilitating nature of engagement platforms have the potential to enlighten interaction in various kinds of settings, contexts, industries, and thus ecosystems. Especially in a digitalised world, both private and professional interaction amongst human or machine actors is omnipresent. Modern technology development and digital innovations will further facilitate and enable multilateral relationships that are necessary to do business.

Research should apply the ideas of value co-creation on engagement platforms and deploy further empirical work to capture the nature of resource integration, different forms of engagement, and ultimately value co-creation in specific ecosystems to identify context-dependent differences and similarities. Furthermore, both actor-centric and systemic approaches can help to elaborate on dependencies of specific actors, their power and ultimately, the stability of the network of engagement platforms in ecosystems.

In summary, the thesis provides valuable implications for operational and strategic management as well as leadership. The role of actors and their resources in the sense of value co-creation, as well as the business-facilitating role of engagement platforms, needs to be firmly anchored in business mind-sets and management structures. Firms in their role as producers of products and services and customers as consumers neglect the collaborative process of value co-creation. All actors contribute and, therefore, need to be considered in strategic and operative activities. Engagement platforms serve as touchpoints, where actors come together. In a professional environment, the firms' role as a facilitator for interaction opens doors to new and enriching possibilities of value co-creation. All relevant actors provide resources, such as their knowledge, expertise, skills, time, ideas, and network. Thereby, all actors benefit from the integrated resources on engagement platforms, e.g. open innovation platforms, think tanks, trade fairs, roadshows or online and offline business networks. These engagement platforms facilitate business and enable value co-creation for all contributing actors.

## APPENDIX A: LIST OF CONFERENCE CONTRIBUTIONS

- Woratschek, H., Schönberner, J., Horbel, C., Popp, B., & Buser, M. (2020.) *Conceptualising Natural Resource Integration in Sport Management – The Case of COVID-19*. Sport Management Association of Australia & New Zealand Conference (SMAANZ) 2020, online.
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