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### The animosity transfer process

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# **The Animosity Transfer Process: consumer denigration of foreign sponsors and testing potential mitigation strategies**

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## **Abstract**

### **Purpose**

Sponsorships involving foreign brands are ubiquitous, but those involving a company from an animosity-evoking country can adversely affect rather than enhance domestic consumers' attitude towards the brand. This paper explains the mechanisms by which brand denigration occurs, introducing and validating a model of the animosity transfer process as well as considering if various framing and timing strategies attenuate or lead to adverse consumer responses.

### **Design/methodology/approach**

Study 1 tests the animosity transfer model, utilizing a scenario in which English consumers respond to a German brand sponsoring the England soccer team. Study 2 assesses the generalizability of the model in the context of Indian consumers' responses to sponsorship of their cricket team by a Chinese company, and the extent to which an honest framing of the sponsorship choice through the announcement affects outcomes. Study 3 returns to an England-Germany country dyad, testing whether priming consumers with information about the sponsorship prior to a full announcement, attenuates or intensifies the impact of animosity on the studied outcomes.

### **Findings**

The three studies demonstrate that when consumers learn of a sponsorship, it triggers an evaluation process in which the agonistic emotion (anger) they feel plays a pivotal role. More intense emotional appraisals weaken perceptions of sponsor-sponsee congruence, which together act as consecutive process variables mediating the relationship between animosity and sponsorship outcomes. Framing the sponsorship announcement with an honest justification for the partnership can improve outcomes but not amongst those with the highest animosity. Providing consumers with an advanced warning (preannouncement) of the sponsorship also amplifies consumers' unfavorable evaluations showcasing how difficult animosity is to manage in this context.

### **Originality/value**

The animosity transfer model aids understanding of the mechanisms by which animosity affects brand attitude for foreign (out-group) sponsors. It identifies how animosity generates agonistic emotions and in turn weakens perceived fit between the sponsor and sponsee, leading to adverse consumer responses.

### **Keywords**

Animosity, agonistic emotion, fit, attitude, sponsorship, framing

## INTRODUCTION

German discount supermarket Lidl, on becoming an official sponsor of the England soccer team, divided public opinion. Some England supporters welcomed the additional finance for the national team. But, not all thought this way. British newspaper columnist Marina Hyde wrote sarcastically: *“Did you fight in two World Wars so Germany could become official sponsor of the England football team?”* Indeed, one unhappy reader replied: *“It’s like all their bombing was wasted effort when they could have done this all along!”* Another commentator wrote: *“Nasty foreigners undermining the development of our local teams,”* while one reader of a related article, jubilantly shared: *“I will never shop there now!”*

In contemporary economies, brand managers often turn to foreign markets to sustain and grow (Davvetas et al. 2015, Douglas and Craig 2011). Sponsoring organizations or events can facilitate market entry and cut-through for foreign entrants and this is an increasingly popular strategy (Cornwell 2014). For instance, in the 2018/19 season, all but one of the 20 shirt sponsors of English Premier League soccer clubs were foreign owned companies (Oakes 2018).

However, despite its ubiquity, such investments do not automatically guarantee foreign brands a place in the hearts and minds of domestic consumers (Meng-Lewis et al. 2013, Lee and Mazodier 2015). Indeed, if making a foreign sponsorship work is already difficult, it becomes even more challenging when domestic consumers have a predisposition to *hate* the brand’s Country-Of-Origin (COO), as highlighted in some responses in the opening vignette to a German brand (Lidl) sponsoring the England soccer team. The simultaneous pursuit of foreign / cross-border sponsorships in an environment of fraying international political cooperation and growing nationalism and consumer resentment toward out-groups (Bonikowski 2017), highlights the pressing need for managers to understand how animosity toward their brand’s COO might influence the effectiveness of their

marketing efforts. Yet, as argued by Cornwell and Kwon (2019), prior research fails to account for the complexity of current international marketing ecosystem, particularly in the sponsorship domain.

To date insight remains sparse, with only two studies capturing the direct negative effect that consumer animosity has on sponsorship effectiveness (Meng-Lewis et al. 2013, Lee and Mazodier 2015). While both offer valuable findings, more understanding remains necessary about the psychological process underpinning this denigration. Responding to calls for a better understanding of the psychological processes motivating consumer phenomena (Keh and Sun 2018) we unpack, at a more granular level, how animosity may shape consumer responses towards the foreign brand when it is announced as a partner in a major domestic sponsorship.

Underpinning the research, we draw on twenty years of scholarly work relating to consumer animosity (Klein et al. 1998, Riefler and Diamantopoulos 2007, Funk et al. 2010), social identity theory (Hornsey 2008), as well as recent advances in emotion research (Lerner et al. 2015, Lerner and Tiedens 2006, Harmeling et al. 2015). Building on these foundations, we introduce the *animosity transfer process*, delineating the route by which consumer animosity towards a sponsor's country-of-origin affects brand attitude. Our model posits that brand denigration hinges on the integral agonistic emotion (anger) a consumer feels when they learn about a foreign brand sponsoring a domestic object (or entity). In turn, cognitive processing ability changes, diminishing perceptions of congruency or fit between the two partners. In search of a remedy, we explore whether foreign brands are able to mitigate the degree of denigration through managing the agonistic emotion a person feels, through a process by which they: (a) frame the sponsorship announcement using an honest justification (i.e. we are sponsoring this team 'because'...), or (b) provide some advanced warning for the sponsorship (i.e. use a preannouncement).

We make three main contributions to the international marketing and sponsorship literatures. Firstly, we extend understanding of *how* animosity transfers to brand responses. Previous animosity research generally (Klein 2002, Klein et al. 1998, Riefler and Diamantopoulos 2007, Funk et al. 2010),

and within the sponsorship domain (Meng-Lewis et al. 2013, Lee and Mazodier 2015), specifies and tests the direct effect of animosity on selected dependent variables. The latter includes important outcomes such as willingness to purchase (WTP), brand attitude, product avoidance, and word-of-mouth (WOM). However, as noted by Cakici and Shukla (2017), there is a need for more finer-grained perspectives, in particular those that unpack the process by which animosity transfers to brand responses. This is important because it helps to answer questions of *why* animosity can be so harmful in cross-border sponsorship contexts, while at the same time providing a new opportunity for practitioners to better manage and work towards mitigating its consequences.

Second, the animosity transfer process provides a foundation for future in-group / out-group sponsorship research, which has only recently discovered a “dark-side”, with fans of rival teams denigrating rather than endorsing brand sponsors (Angell et al. 2016, Bergkvist 2012, Grohs et al. 2015, Olson 2018). In so doing, our research contributes to the emerging communications literature regarding in- and out-group dynamics in a multinational context (Demangeot et al. 2015). Of specific relevance in this context is how the animosity transfer process captures a consumer’s integral emotional state after a sponsorship announcement, which mediates their sponsorship evaluation. Poels and Dewitte (2019) recently lament the lack of communications research that includes or even considers a person’s emotional state when they evaluate new information; for which we evidence is a well-founded concern.

Finally, the paper presents important implications for international brand managers, in particular relating to the management of sponsorship announcements. For instance, the framing of messages affects consumer responses (Olsen et al. 2014) and drawing on social identity (Turner 1982) and attribution (Weiner 1985) theories, we test whether providing an honest justification for the partnership can reduce the adverse effects of animosity through the proposed process. A second tactic is to use preannouncements as a means of preparing consumers for bad news, reducing agonistic emotions (Bies 2013). However, justifying empirical evidence for the latter is scant and our analysis also find this strategy, in the context of sponsorship announcements by brands with an

animosity inducing COO, not merely ineffective but actually counterproductive, offering instead a ‘don’t’ rather than ‘do’ gameplay for international brands.

We examine the animosity transfer process in three studies. Study 1 tests the theory’s baseline model utilizing a scenario in which English consumers’ respond to a German brand sponsoring the England soccer team. Study 2 enhances and extends the generalizability of the model by applying it to a different animosity context (India and China) and considers the framing of sponsorship announcements. In Study 3 we return to an England-Germany country dyad but test whether priming consumers with information about the sponsorship involving a foreign brand prior to a full announcement, but without revealing its brand name or COO, works to attenuate (or intensify) the impact of animosity on the studied outcomes.

## **CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT**

Conceptually, animosity is defined as “the remnants of antipathy toward another country due to past military, political, or economic conflicts ...” (Klein et al, 1998, p.90), with marketing research showing how animosity can affect consumers’ buying of foreign goods.

Social identity theory provides one perspective for understanding animosity, which seeks to explain the rationale for, and effects of, in- and out-group distinctions. Individuals gain self-esteem through their own achievements as well as those of the groups to which they belong (Turner 1982). Group identities also bestow structure on social environments and provide a mechanism for attachment. For group identities to be meaningful, some others (out-group) should be excluded (Abrams and Hogg 2004, Hornsey 2008). Group based self-esteem depends on the degree to which the in-group regards themselves as privileged compared with out-groups. Privilege may stem from a sense of economic, social, physical and / or moral superiority (Hornsey 2008). Enmity toward out-groups typically arises when a challenge exists to an in-group’s sense of superiority and status. One of the most important group identifications is nationality, with the challenge to one country (in-group) from

another (out-group) giving rise, depending on the nature of the threat, to military/war and economic based animosity (Klein and Ettensoe 1999, Riefler and Diamantopoulos 2007).

As such, animosity is an *attitude* towards a specific foreign country comprising of both *cognitive* and *affective* elements (Bagozzi et al. 1999). To demonstrate how animosity transfers onto, and works to denigrate, consumer attitudes toward a foreign sponsor brand, we test the model presented in Figure 1. Before this, we briefly outline the four constructs in the model comprising the animosity transfer process, mapping the relationships between each (Figure 1).

Insert Figure 1 about here

### *Agonistic Emotion*

Emotions are “a general category for mental feeling processes” (Bagozzi et al. 1999, p.185), strongly associated with action tendencies, such as fighting when angry or crying when sad, and activated by specific incidents or events (Lazarus 1991). Since an incident may trigger strong emotional responses in one person but have no effect on another, it is the psychological *appraisal* of the incident that determines the emotion felt. The Appraisal Tendency Framework (ATF) (Lerner and Keltner 2000, Lerner and Keltner 2001) offers a sophisticated model of emotional responses. Rather than clustering emotions simply by valence – positive or negative – the ATF differentiates each on the basis of different appraisal dimensions.

Anger endures, especially when *responsibility* or blame for an incident lies with others, which is deemed unpleasant, unnecessary and outside the control of the appraiser (Lerner et al. 2015). Research shows that people exhibiting high levels of animosity can experience agonistic emotion (anger) just by thinking about the country (Harmeling et al. 2015) - although emotions tend to be more intense when a specific trigger event or emotion-activating incident is experienced (Lerner et al. 2015). Scholars refer to this as *integral* emotion since it occurs in response to a specific stimulus. In keeping with these insights, we expect that receiving news of a sponsorship involving a foreign brand – the emotion activating incident – will curate more intense emotional responses amongst people with



higher animosity towards the brand's COO. Since blame for the sponsorship is easily allocated or laid upon one or both partners, whereby the broader appraisal is likely to consider the situation as unpleasant and unnecessary (Lerner et al. 2015), it follows that agonistic emotion is the prevailing response. Consequently, the first link in the animosity transfer process is validated when:

*H<sub>1a</sub>. Higher animosity towards a foreign country (out-group) is positively associated with feelings of agonistic emotion (anger) [following news of a foreign brand entering into a sponsorship arrangement with an in-group object].*

### *Perceived fit*

Fit represents the degree of perceived compatibility between partners (Mazodier and Quester 2014). A plethora of studies demonstrate its importance for determining favorable consumer responses in a range of marketing contexts (Woisetschläger and Michaelis 2012), including sports sponsorship (e.g. Pappu and Cornwell 2014, Mazodier and Merunka 2012, Mazodier and Quester 2014, Olson and Thjømmøe 2011).

We expect that evaluations of fit weaken as agonistic emotion increases, rationalized by the fact that anger limits depth and breadth of cognitive processing (Lerner and Tiedens 2006). When people experience agonistic emotion they experience a narrowing of situational construal, akin to “*tunnel vision*” (Lerner and Tiedens 2006). Cognitive resources are redistributed to focus on the emotion-activating event, which normally comes at the sacrifice of thoughtful and deliberative decision-making (Lazarus 1991). Agonistic emotion stimulates heuristic, less calculative, processing of novel stimuli (Lerner and Tiedens 2006), causing the recipient to focus more on anger-related information, which comes at the expense of other non-anger inducing cues (Lerner and Tiedens 2006, Tiedens 2001). This ultimately heightens a “what you see is all there is” bias (Kahneman 2011), causing stronger arguments to be more readily ignored in place of stereotypical information (Bodenhausen et al. 1994). If agonistic emotions lead to evaluations based more on the trigger(s) of those emotions, at the expense of other salient clues, we expect that agonistic emotion decreases any general likelihood of recognizing or perceiving elements of fit between the sponsor and sponsee (i.e.

finding any merit / rationality in the sponsorship), particularly when compared to those who do not experience anger in the same way. As such:

*H<sub>1b</sub>. Higher agonistic emotion is negatively associated with perceived fit between sponsorship partners.*

#### *Favorability (post-announcement)*

Studies in sponsorship consistently find fit to be a determinant of positive changes in brand attitude (Speed and Thompson 2000, Mazodier and Quester 2014, Pappu and Cornwell 2014). In line with congruency (Cornwell et al. 2005) and spreading activation theories (Anderson 1983), congruent objects stored as separate schemas in the brain are more easily scanned and retrieved from memory. Sponsorships perceived as better fitting should therefore be more fluently processed, causing the evaluator a heightened level of satisfaction and gratification, which should ultimately spill over to enhance their attitude towards the foreign brand (Meyers-Levy and Tybout 1989). Favorability captures the *degree* to which the marketing effort has improved a person's perception of the sponsor (Speed and Thompson 2000), and should yield the following outcome:

*H<sub>1c</sub>. Higher perceived fit between sponsorship partners is positively associated with more favorable attitudes to the foreign brand.*

In line with the animosity transfer process model, each “link” in the chain should be significant, ultimately denoting the mechanism by which animosity indirectly, and negatively, influences changes in sponsor brand favorability.

Attention now turns to potential strategies to mitigate the detrimental effects of animosity.

#### *Framing of sponsorship announcements: the role of honest justifications*

Actions such as queue jumping and cutting in line often provoke conflict, and anger amongst those waiting dutifully. However, research on compliance demonstrates that providing a reason such as

“may I go ahead of you in using the photocopier *because* I’m in a rush” are significantly more likely to gain acceptance than a request only (e.g. “may I go ahead of you in using the photocopier” (Langer et al. 1978). Even when the rationale provides no real information (e.g. “may I go ahead of you in using the photocopier because I need to make copies”) it elicits more acquiescence than providing no reason. Research suggests that disagreements where participants state the motivations and justifications for their actions are less likely to provoke anger and more likely to reach an amicable conclusion (Hample 2005). On a practical level, marriage guidance counselors often adopt a goal perspective to conflict resolution, asking couples to discuss the rationale for their behaviors, rather than merely focusing on behavior (Fincham and Beach 1999, Seligman 2011).

However, providing a rationale for behavior may not defuse conflicts if the recipient perceives the justification as dishonest (Hample 2005). For instance, while flattery is usually well received, especially if a reason is given for a compliment (e.g. “I like you because of your sense of humor”) it can be counterproductive amongst both recipients and on-lookers if regarded as insincere (Vonk 2002). Attribution theory relates to the perceived motivations and causes of actions, arguing that individuals care not only about the actions of others but also the motivations underpinning actions, and their sincerity (Weiner 1985). For instance, providing an apology for offending behavior can reduce negative emotions, such as anger, but only when perceived as sincere (Ebesu Hubbard et al. 2013). The same is true in business contexts. Consumer reactions to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) depend not only on an organization’s actions but also the *perceived sincerity* of motives (Becker-Olsen et al. 2006, Scheinbaum et al. 2017). As individuals typically lack information on the “true” motives of others, they infer them and judge whether they are consistent with stated behavior (Schaefer et al. 2019). Regarding consumer evaluations of sponsorships, the perceived sincerity of the sponsor appears particularly important, with multiple studies identifying it as a positive determinant of outcomes (De Vries and Duque 2018, Petrovici et al. 2015, Speed and Thompson 2000, Scheinbaum et al. 2017), but we argue that this is especially important in high animosity situations where motivations are even more likely to be appraised. Drawing on attribution and socio-psychology of compliance theories,

together with empirical evidence on the importance of sincerity in determining sponsorship and CSR outcomes suggests:

*H<sub>2</sub>: Providing a justification for a sponsorship that is perceived to be honest (as opposed to providing either an insincere or no justification), suppresses the impact of animosity on feelings of agonistic emotion (anger) following news of the sponsorship.*

#### *Timing of Sponsorship Announcements*

Preannouncements are the release of information prior to any formal execution of news. They are often used prior to official brand, product and promotional launches (Trehan and Maan 2012, Thorbjørnsen et al. 2015). Preannouncements can create buzz and excitement for new products and designs, as well as, in sporting contexts, new players, merchandise and news regarding sponsorship deals (Dahlén et al. (2011). Despite the merits of future-framed marketing in positive contexts (e.g. announcement of a new generation of the iPhone), those exhibiting higher levels of animosity towards a foreign country are likely to consider news of a brand from a hated country sponsoring their sports team as *bad* news. The question we address is whether this can be attenuated by priming consumers for the bad news using a preannouncement? More, specifically, we investigate if preannouncing (i.e. future-framing) a foreign sponsorship, but without naming or exposing its COO, moderates agonistic emotion felt at the time of the official announcement?

Bad news is considered as “information that results in a perceived loss ...creating cognitive, emotional or behavioral deficits in the receiver after receiving the news” (Bies (2013, p.137). Bad news is subjective and perceived differentially depending on a variety of contextual and temporal factors (Barclay et al. 2007). For instance, whilst most people have a sense that missing out on a promotion at work represents bad news, how the information is delivered affects the recipient’s evaluation and response and, to some degree, resulting emotions (Barclay et al. 2007). Indeed, the theoretical basis for cognitive appraisal theory conceives that emotions are elicited based on *how* events are interpreted, not on the event itself.

In a review of the literature regarding how professionals deliver bad news as part of their occupation (physicians, coroners, law enforcement officers), Bies (2013) developed a multiphase framework which introduced ways for reducing the stress, harm and (importantly), emotional impact of bad news for both deliverer and recipient. The three-stage model consists of strategies for the preparation, delivery and transition of negative information. In terms of *preparing* people, Bies (2013) focuses on the provision of an advanced warning that elucidates or primes what *might* happen without explicitly revealing all details of the situation. This allows recipients to *forecast* cognitively different future scenarios, affording an opportunity for predicting how a situation will play out, reducing negative *surprise*. This logic echoes research (Seligman and Binik 1977) that suggests that as ability to predict future possible outcomes increases, (i) a person's adaptability enhances, and (ii) resulting emotional intensity reduces (e.g. anger). If a sponsorship preannouncement is a form of advanced warning about impending bad news that reduces any surprise relating to an animosity inducing COO, then increasing the predictability of the situation providing time to adjust and prepare for this should lead to: (i) lower agonistic emotion at the point of full announcement, and most importantly in this context: (ii) an attenuated main effect of animosity on agonistic emotion. This implies:

*H<sub>3</sub>: Providing advanced warning of the sponsorship suppresses the impact of animosity on feelings of agonistic emotion (anger) following news of the sponsorship.*

### **STUDY 1: TESTING THE BASELINE MODEL (ENGLAND-GERMANY CONTEXT)**

The setting for Study 1 is England-Germany dyad, where the source of animosity is predominantly war-based following two twentieth century military conflicts. With the passage of time (70 years) animosity was expected as relatively low, allowing a more conservative test of the model and each of its central hypotheses.

#### *Participants and Procedure*

We recruited respondents from a Qualtrics managed panel as is commonly used in international marketing research (Sarial-Abi et al. 2016). In total 160 participants completed the questionnaire for a small fee (51% male;  $\bar{x}_{\text{age}} = 45$  years old). Qualification required panel members to be: English citizens from birth, at least 18 years of age, and with some interest in soccer ( $> 2$  on a seven-point scale: 1=not at all interested, 5 = very interested).

The questionnaire comprised three sections. First, respondents read an article detailing tensions between countries, such as Croatia and Serbia and China and Japan, in order to induce honesty and suppress socially desirable responding (Podsakoff et al. 2003), before indicating their animosity towards Germany. Several of the control variables (fan identification, ethnocentrism, prior attitude towards the [sponsor] brand) were also included here. Second, after a short country-of-origin brand matching exercise, designed to reduce demand effects, respondents were told that the England soccer team would be sponsored by German airline Lufthansa, and shown a print ad with the tagline, “Lufthansa - Proud Sponsors of the England Football Team” (Appendix 1). Measures pertaining to the dependent variable and mediators were then collected in randomized question blocks, along with several demographic and behavioral variables (e.g. past travel behavior to Germany). These were broadly in line with those used by Angell et al. (2020). Finally, we tested if respondents were able to correctly identify Lufthansa’s country-of-origin. Three people could not and were removed, leaving a sample of 157 respondents.

In choosing Lufthansa, we conducted a pre-test with 84 English soccer fans (also recruited via a Qualtrics panel). From a randomized list of Germany’s top 45 brands as rated by the BrandZ methodology, respondents selected the *one* that they thought would make the most appropriate sponsor of the German soccer team. Our motivation here was to select a brand that English people automatically associated with Germany. In descending order, Adidas (11.9%), BMW (7.14%), Audi (7.14%), and Lufthansa (4.76%) were most frequently nominated. We selected Lufthansa as (i) Adidas might be considered an unrealistic choice of partner as Nike is England’s long-standing kit manufacturer, and (ii) automobile brand Audi was used later for Study 3.

## *Measures*

We measured all items on seven-point Likert-scales (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) unless stated otherwise. Table 1 details the items. *Animosity* was assessed using an adapted version of four-items selected from the measure of Klein et al. (1998) which combines war and economic bases of animosity. Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) was 0.90. We used a two-item measure of *agonistic emotion* from the scale of Harmeling et al. (2015), derived from Laros and Steenkamp (2005), to capture the extent to which the emotion-activating event – i.e. news of Lufthansa's sponsorship - made respondents feel 'angry' and 'irritated' (Spearman's  $r = .78, p < .01$ ). As regards *perceived fit*, we used Speed and Thompson's (2000) original five-item scale ( $\alpha = 0.94$ ). Finally, we applied Speed and Thompson's (2000) three-item scale to measure *brand favorability*. It captures the extent to which news of the sponsorship affected a respondent's attitude to the sponsor ( $\alpha = 0.97$ ).

## *Results*

*Measurement Validation.* We conducted a confirmatory factor analysis using robust maximum likelihood (MLR) estimation in Mplus 7.4 (Muthén and Muthén 2015). The analysis included the four focal constructs outlined in the conceptual model, along with several continuous control variables (ethnocentrism, fan identification, and prior attitude to Lufthansa). According to widely accepted criteria (Hu and Bentler 1999), the results revealed an acceptable fitting model:  $\chi^2(167) = 247.96, p < 0.001$ ; Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = 0.97; Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) = 0.97; Root Square Mean Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = .06, Standardized Root Mean Residual (SRMR) = 0.04. In support of convergent validity, all items loaded on their respective constructs as anticipated ( $p$ 's < 0.001), with standardized loadings above 0.78, and the average variance extracted (AVE) by each factor exceeded the 50% threshold recommended by Fornell and Larcker (1981). Discriminant validity was also confirmed, since each factor's AVE exceeded the magnitude of its squared correlation with all other constructs, with the highest combination being between perceived fit and favorability (.48) (see tables 1 and 2 for the measurement model and factor correlations).

Insert Tables 1 and 2 about here

*Direct and Mediation Analysis.* We estimated the baseline model using path analysis with the PROCESS (3.5) macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2017) having first created composite scores for each of the seven validated scales mentioned above. The latter is a critical step for establishing relationships between multi-item constructs when using PROCESS. Specifically, we introduced agonistic emotions and perceived fit as process variables serially mediating the relationship between animosity and favorability (see Figure 1). In addition, each endogenous variable (agonistic emotions, perceived fit, favorability) was regressed on nine control variables which included three of the constructs specified in the original measurement model (ethnocentrism, fan identification, prior attitude to the sponsor), and six single-item variables (gender, age, perceived country-of-origin fit, German friends or relatives, ever visited Germany, sponsor use [flown with Lufthansa in the last 24 months]), the latter three being binary (0=no, 1=yes).

We found support for all direct paths, satisfying  $H_{1a}$  -  $H_{1c}$  (see table 3, study 1). Of this fully saturated model, the direct path between animosity and favorability was also significant ( $\beta = -0.19$ ,  $t = -2.30$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Animosity was positively related to higher agonistic emotion ( $H_{1a}$ :  $\beta = 0.29$ ,  $t = 2.39$ ,  $p < .05$ ), while agonistic emotion was negatively related to perceived fit ( $H_{1b}$ :  $\beta = -0.39$ ,  $t = -6.81$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The latter was positively associated with higher favorability ( $H_{1c}$ :  $\beta = 0.63$ ,  $t = 7.91$ ,  $p < .01$ ). These three paths provided *prima facie* evidence of serial mediation, which was confirmed by jointly testing the consecutive process variables. Bootstrapped estimates (5,000 resamples) tested the indirect effect between animosity and favorability towards Lufthansa, which was negative and statistically significant ( $\beta = -0.07$ , 95% CI: -0.15 to -0.01). Thus, respondents with higher animosity towards Germany reported a larger *relative* negative change in their attitude towards Lufthansa compared to those exhibiting lower animosity, via this indirect path.

Insert Table 3 about here



Regarding the control variables, only two of the 27 paths were significant. People who were more positive about the brand prior to the sponsorship reacted less angrily to the announcement ( $\beta = -0.33$ ,  $t = -2.22$ ,  $p < .01$ ), which was in contrast to those who were older ( $\beta = 0.03$ ,  $t = 3.20$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

*Robustness tests.* To further test the robustness of the serially mediated model, we replaced the (i) favorability, and (ii) animosity scales, and on each occasion, re-estimated the baseline model. We substituted Speed and Thompson's (2000) favorability scale with an absolute difference score measuring attitude change. A two-item semantic differential scale (1 = bad / unfavorable, 7 = good / favorable) was collected before (for use as a control variable) ( $t_1$ ) and after ( $t_2$ ) respondents learned of the sponsorship news. The model remained highly consistent with the one reported above. Likewise, we replaced the abridged animosity scale of Klein et al. (1998) with the alternative three-item measure of Harmeling et al. (2015) [*there are frequent military disputes between England and Germany, England and Germany are enemies, Germany is a threat to England's national security*]. Again, the overall indirect effect was of a comparable magnitude and direction ( $\beta = -0.06$ , 95% CI: -0.13 to -0.00), which is unsurprising given that both measures of animosity were highly correlated (Pearson's  $r = 0.83$ ). We progressed with confidence in the Animosity Transfer Process model.

### *Summary*

The results of Study 1 provide support for the *Animosity Transfer Process*. As expected, denigration depends on the agonistic emotion consumers felt towards the sponsorship, which led to poorer perceptions of fit between the foreign sponsor and domestic sponsee, with both consecutive process variables linking higher animosity and the negative change in sponsor attitude observed in the study. But, does the transfer of animosity to sponsor evaluations work differently in different contexts (country dyad, sponsorship settings) and are there subtle ways such an announcement can be optimized to mitigate the denigration caused by animosity? To assess the generalizability and versatility of the model and consider framing effects we conducted a follow-up study in India.

## **STUDY 2: GENERALIZING THE MODEL (INDIA-CHINA CONTEXT) AND CONSIDERATION OF FRAMING EFFECTS**

### *Method and Procedure*

We switched the sport to cricket and country-dyad to India-China where animosity rose recently (Bhatia 2016). Study 2 involved an online survey experiment, with a triadic design whereby respondents viewed one of three versions of a social media advertisement announcing Air China as the official sponsor of India's cricket team. To qualify for the study respondents had to be Indian nationals, adults, and with some interest in cricket. We initially recruited 210 such respondents via MTurk. During initial cleaning, we filtered out respondents who: provided incomplete data (n=14), failed to respond correctly to the attention check (n=35) and failed to identify Air China as from China (n=27). The useable sample included 98 men (73.1%) and 36 women (26.9%), with a mean age of 31.8 years (Range: 21 – 64, Std Dev.: 7.29). Respondents were randomly assigned to view either an announcement that included an honest justification for the sponsorship from the sponsor (n=55), an insincere justification (n=40), or a neutral statement, factually informing respondents of the sponsorship without any form of justification (n=39), which was included as a control group for comparison purposes.

### *Stimuli and Manipulation Checks*

The control group viewed a digital advertisement announcing the sponsorship with the factual statement “we would like to announce that we are the new official sponsor of the India cricket team” (see Appendix 1). The honest justification group viewed an identical advertisement apart from the inclusion of the statement “because...we believed in the team so much we outbid all of our competitors”. In the insincere group, we replaced the latter statement with “because...we believe in the team and love India and its passion for cricket”. Initial checks revealed no significant differences between the three groups in terms of gender, age, ethnocentrism and the degree to which respondents supported the India team ( $p$ 's  $>.05$ ).

### *Measures*

All measures were the same as Study 1 apart from adaptations for *agonistic emotion* and *animosity*. Specifically, we used a three item version of *agonistic emotion* again derived from Harmeling et al. (2015), to capture the extent to which the emotion-activating event – i.e. news of Air China’s sponsorship - made respondents feel ‘angry’, ‘frustrated’ and ‘irritated’ ( $\alpha = 0.96$ ). To capture more fine-grained differences, we measured *agonistic emotion* on a 100-point scale. All other constructs were captured on an 11-point (1-11) scale. For *animosity*, in addition to the global measure utilized in Study 1, we followed Klein et al. (1998) by including separate measures for economic and war animosity components.

### *Common Method Variance:*

As we utilized the same survey instrument to collect all measures, Common Method Variance (CMV) may cause an inflation in item factor loading estimates and structural parameters (Podsakoff et al. 2003). To address this, we adopted two main approaches. Firstly, we attempted to reduce the likelihood of socially desirable responding by highlighting the anonymous nature of responses and including an attention check. Secondly, we conducted two post-hoc procedures: (i) specification of a single factor, and (ii) use of an unrelated marker variable (Podsakoff et al. 2003). At the end of the questionnaire, we asked respondents the extent to which they agreed with the statement “I love eating fruit”. The partial correlations revealed a relatively low shared variance ( $r=.06$ ,  $p=NS$ ), indicating that CMV is unlikely to be a concern. Nonetheless, we followed the protocol of Musarra et al. (2016) and calculated a marker-corrected correlation matrix, partialing out shared variance between the marker variable and all variables in the matrix (i.e. factors comprising the study model; animosity, agonistic emotion, perceived fit, favorability). The uncorrected measurement model using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was estimated in Mplus 7.4 ( $\chi^2 = 133.60$ ,  $df = 84$ ,  $p < .01$ ; CFI = .98, TLI = .97, RMSEA = .06). This was then compared to the bias corrected model. A Chi-squared difference test revealed that model fit was largely unaffected when this transformation was made ( $\Delta \chi^2 = 0.53$ ).

### *Manipulation Check*

To test if our manipulation had worked effectively, we included two items in the questionnaire that captured the extent to which participants felt the justification for the sponsorship provided was honest and genuine – as no justification was given in the control group, it was excluded. An independent samples t-test established significant differences ( $t > 2.0$ , 92,  $p < .05$ ) between the two conditions with regards to the honesty ( $\bar{x}_{\text{honest justification}} = 5.38$   $\bar{x}_{\text{insincere justification}} = 3.63$ ) and genuineness ( $\bar{x}_{\text{honest justification}} = 5.16$   $\bar{x}_{\text{insincere justification}} = 3.85$ ) for the explanations provided. These were of the magnitude expected. Next, we established if the manipulation caused differences between the endogenous variables in the model, and compared the honest, insincere and control conditions in a pairwise manner. Mean scores and standard deviations for agonistic emotion, perceived fit and favorability are given in table 4. A one-way ANOVA ( $F = 4.21$ , (2,131)  $p < .05$ ) revealed, most importantly, that the agonistic emotion respondents felt after learning of the sponsorship was significantly higher when the justification was insincere ( $\bar{x}_{\text{insincere justification}} = 81.17$ ), as compared to the honest and control version of the announcement ( $\bar{x}_{\text{honest justification}} = 66.29$ ,  $\bar{x}_{\text{control justification}} = 69.21$ ). The latter did not differ from one another, however ( $p > .10$ ). No difference was observed in perceived fit ( $F = 2.18$  (2,131)  $p > .10$ ), although evaluations of brand favorability was also lower for the insincere justification ( $\bar{x}_{\text{insincere justification}} = 3.27$ ) compared to both other groups – although this was at a marginal level of significance ( $F = 2.59$ , (2,131)  $p < .10$ ). Again, we did not find differences in favorability between the control and honest justifications ( $\bar{x}_{\text{honest justification}} = 4.69$ ,  $\bar{x}_{\text{control justification}} = 4.23$ ).

Table 4 about here

### *Results*

We conducted a sequential mediation analysis using Model 6 of the PROCESS 3.5 macro for SPSS, with 5,000 bootstrap replications (Hayes 2017). In the first step we confirmed the baseline model using the aggregated sample ( $\beta = -0.13$ , 95% CI: -0.27 to -0.04), controlling for the treatment and the following control variables: ethnocentrism, fan identification, prior attitude to the sponsor, gender, age, perceived country-of-origin fit and social desirability. The latter was included in study 2 given the

sensitive nature of the relationship between India and China, and was captured using a four-item scale from Cohen (1999), e.g. “*when I make a mistake, I am always ready to admit it*” ( $\alpha = 0.70$ ). Unlike in the first study, a significant path between animosity and favorability, mediated by agonistic emotion only, created a second but weaker indirect pathway ( $\beta = -0.09$ , 95% CI: -0.20 to -0.14). As table 3 shows, other links in the chain were broadly consistent with those in study 1, although the direct link between animosity and favorability ( $c'$ ) was not significant. Of the control variables, only prior attitude towards the brand acted to mitigate feelings of agonistic emotion ( $\beta = -1.73$ ,  $t = -2.25$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Perceived fit was also determined by prior attitude ( $\beta = 0.45$ ,  $t = 5.81$ ,  $p < .01$ ), age ( $\beta = -0.06$ ,  $t = -0.06$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and an individual’s social desirability scores ( $\beta = 0.27$ ,  $t = 2.39$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Older participants were again less favorable to the sponsorship ( $\beta = -0.05$ ,  $t = -2.41$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

To explore further, we tested for moderated mediation, taking each type of justification and comparing them with the control group (control vs. honest justification; control vs. insincere justification), which was coded as the baseline. PROCESS model 83 was deployed. The interaction was specified on the first link of the animosity transfer process model (path a). We retained only those control variables from the above discussion that were mentioned as significant. Here we focused on the interaction with animosity, comparing each justification to the control condition where no justification was provided. Starting with the honest justification, we found the interaction with animosity was statistically significant ( $\beta_{\text{animosity}*\text{honest}} = 5.60$ ,  $t = 2.29$ ,  $p < .05$ ), confirming a conditional effect. Next, we investigated the exact nature of this interaction. Specifically, we established that the framing worked to reduce agonistic emotion when animosity was one standard deviation below the mean, which constituted relatively high levels on the basis of the scale anchors (i.e. 6.49) ( $\beta_{\text{animosity}*\text{honest}(\text{low})} = -13.74$ ,  $t = -2.04$ ,  $p < .05$ ). It had a negative but non-significant impact at the mean (8.43) ( $\beta_{\text{animosity}*\text{honest}(\text{mod})} = -2.84$ ,  $t = -0.59$ ,  $p > .10$ ) and a positive but again non-significant impact one standard deviation above the mean (10.30) ( $\beta_{\text{animosity}*\text{honest}(\text{high})} = 8.06$ ,  $t = 1.18$ ,  $p > .10$ ). The Johnson-Neyman significance region was -1.79, with the treatment therefore effective in just below 25% of the sample. Whilst the type of framing did not impact favorability directly ( $p > .10$ ), we found it had an indirect and positive impact in those exhibiting lower levels of animosity ( $\beta_{\text{animosity}*\text{honest}(\text{low})} =$

0.36, 95% CI: .03 to 0.97), but had no significant effect at other levels. As globally, most animosity is at a low or moderate level (Lee and Mazodier 2015), the ability of an honest justification to lower agonistic emotion and improve brand favorability, is thus an encouraging result for sponsorship managers.

For the second type of framing (insincere justification) we found a reverse pattern. The moderation was marginally significant ( $\beta_{\text{animosity*insincere}} = 4.72, t = 1.89, p = .06$ ) but had no conditional effect on agonistic emotion at lower (but still relatively high) or moderate levels of animosity ( $\beta_{\text{animosity*insincere(low)}} = -3.76, t = -0.53, p > .10$ ;  $\beta_{\text{animosity*insincere(mod)}} = 5.85, t = 1.15, p > .10$ ). However, it worked to amplify agonistic emotion when animosity was one standard deviation above the mean ( $\beta_{\text{animosity*insincere(high)}} = 15.47, t = 2.13, p < .05$ ). This pertained to 63% of the sample. We did not find evidence that this impacted favorability indirectly at any level of animosity. Given the anger reducing properties of the honest justification, compared to providing no justification, albeit at lower levels of animosity, as well as the relationship between the insincere and control conditions, we conclude that our findings only provide marginal support for H<sub>2</sub>.

In the next step, we examined the same models but replaced the global measure of animosity (as also used in Study 1) with the five-item measure of economic ( $\alpha = .89$ ) and three item war ( $\alpha = .83$ ) animosity scales of Klein et al. (1998). For the first condition (honest justification), we found a similar general pattern of results across both types of animosity. However, the framing worked much better for war animosity ( $\beta_{\text{war animosity*honest}} = 6.49, t = 2.70, p < .01$ ), and specifically at one standard deviation below the mean (i.e. 6.51) ( $\beta_{\text{war animosity*honest (low)}} = -16.92, t = 2.53, p < .05$ ). The indirect effect on favorability showed an improved brand attitude for those lower in war animosity ( $\beta_{\text{war animosity*honest (low)}} = 0.47, 95\% \text{ CI: } 0.11 \text{ to } 0.95$ ). In contrast, for economic animosity the framing was comparably less effective and thus only marginally significant at the 90% level ( $\beta_{\text{ec animosity*honest}} = 4.70, t = 2.62, p < .10$ ) and, specifically, at lower (one standard deviation below the mean) levels of economic animosity (6.57) ( $\beta_{\text{ec animosity*honest (low)}} = -11.36, t = -1.68, p < .10$ ). The framing neither improved nor worsened agonistic emotions at other levels of either war or economic animosity, nor

did it impact levels of favorability indirectly. The interaction between the second type of framing (insincere justification versus the control group) and war animosity had a significant effect on the agonistic emotion felt ( $\beta_{\text{war animosity*insincere}} = 4.93, t = 2.03, p < .05$ ), but only amongst those exhibiting higher levels (i.e. 10.99) ( $\beta_{\text{war animosity*insincere (high)}} = 16.39, t = 2.23, p < .05$ ). No indirect effect on favorability was found, nor was any significant moderation observed involving economic animosity and the insincere justification ( $\beta_{\text{ec animosity*insincere}} = 4.90, t = 1.30, p > .10$ ).

### *Summary*

Both studies 1 and 2 present evidence supporting the animosity transfer process in a foreign sponsorship context. Study 2 demonstrates that the framing of sponsorship announcements affects consumer responses, and at least for low animosity individuals, an honest justification reduces agonistic emotion (compared to an announcement devoid of justification), which partially confirms H2. We would naturally assume an insincere justification makes the situation worse – which it does – augmenting agonistic emotion for high animosity individuals. Next, we turn our attention to another potential managerial remedy, testing if providing consumers with advanced warning of the sponsorship can help to diminish agonistic emotion felt at the time of the full announcement.

## **STUDY 3: SPONSOR PREANNOUNCEMENTS (ENGLAND-GERMANY CONTEXT)**

### *Method and Procedure*

We revisited the England-Germany context employed in Study 1. Respondents were 140 English males ( $\bar{x}_{\text{age}} = 56$  years old). Recruited via a Qualtrics panel, respondents participated in a 2 (preannouncement vs. no preannouncement)  $\times$  continuous (general animosity) design. The questionnaire, measures and stimuli were consistent with Study 1 (items displayed in table 1), except German automobile brand Audi was the hypothetical sponsor (refer to Study 1, pre-test results). Nine cases were removed from the dataset for failing attention checks, leaving a sample size of 131.

The survey experiment was delivered over two days in a re-contact design. The initial contact collected information regarding animosity towards Germany and several other countries (as decoys).

At the close of the survey, but only in the preannouncement condition ( $n = 62$ ), respondents received a newspaper cutting informing readers that the England team no longer had a main sponsor (factually correct at the time) but were soon to announce the name of a new “foreign” sponsor. In the no preannouncement condition ( $n = 69$ ), respondents were thanked for their time and invited to participate in a further study later. Two days later (the re-contact), respondents in both conditions were informed that Audi would become the next sponsor of the England soccer team via a digital advertisement unveiling the relationship (see Appendix 1). Remaining questions were then collected.

As an attention check, we asked respondents in the preannouncement condition to identify the *type* of brand (domestic, foreign, no brand) that would next sponsor the England soccer team. All identified the correct answer. In the recontact study, we asked both groups whether the full announcement (of a foreign brand being the main sponsor) was surprising or not (1 = not at all surprising, 7 = very surprising). As expected, in the preannouncement condition, the news was not seen as being as surprising ( $\bar{x}_{\text{anger}} = 4.97$ ;  $\bar{x}_{\text{neutral}} = 5.67$ ;  $t = -2.17$ ,  $df = 129$ ,  $p < .05$ ), evidencing that the manipulation had worked. However, contrary to our expectation, in the case of the preannouncement, respondents reported higher agonistic emotion ( $\bar{x}_{\text{preannouncement}} = 4.17$ ;  $\bar{x}_{\text{no preannouncement}} = 3.61$ ;  $t = 2.01$ ,  $df = 129$ ,  $p < .05$ ), lower perceptions of fit, at a marginal level of significance ( $\bar{x}_{\text{preannouncement}} = 2.39$ ;  $\bar{x}_{\text{no preannouncement}} = 2.84$ ;  $t = -1.78$ ,  $df = 129$ ,  $p < .10$ ), and a lower level of favorability towards Audi ( $\bar{x}_{\text{preannouncement}} = 2.77$ ;  $\bar{x}_{\text{no preannouncement}} = 3.41$ ;  $t = -2.41$ ,  $df = 129$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

## *Results*

### *Tests for moderated-mediation.*

Using the same set of control variables as in Study 1, we then tested if the preannouncement (coded 1), compared to its absence (coded 0), moderated the first link in the model on agonistic emotion. We found support that it did ( $\beta_{\text{animosity*preannouncement}} = .40$ ,  $t = 2.05$ ,  $p < .05$ ) but not in the direction hypothesized. Conditional effects on agonistic emotion at different values of the moderator showed that the preannouncement had the most detrimental effect on agonistic emotion at moderate (i.e. the



mean) ( $\beta = .54, t = 2.14, p < .05$ ) and high levels of animosity (one standard deviation above the mean) ( $\beta = 1.05, t = 2.92, p < .01$ ). It didn't change the feelings of those lower in animosity. A moderated indirect effect on favorability was also found for consumers highest in animosity but not at other levels ( $\beta_{\text{preannouncement*animosity(high)}} = -.38, 95\% \text{ CI: } -0.72 \text{ to } -0.07$ ). Consequently, we conclude that using a preannouncement in this context is likely to be counterproductive.  $H_3$  is rejected.

### *Summary*

To dampen the effect of animosity in a foreign sponsorship context, we find that using a preannouncement (by the domestic partner), without naming the foreign brand or its country of origin, fails to remedy denigrating consumer responses after a full announcement. On the contrary, our findings suggest that such an intervention is counterproductive. The discussion considers an explanation for this.

## **DISCUSSION**

Prior research establishes that sponsorship of domestic entities by foreign brands can lead to negative outcomes for the sponsor (Lee and Mazodier 2015). A corpus of research on animosity within international marketing suggests that rivalry manifesting in antagonistic feelings held by the in-group towards out-group actors (Klein 2002, Klein et al. 1998, Russell and Russell 2010, Gineikiene and Diamantopoulos 2017) may account for the 'dark side' of sponsorship. Yet, surprisingly little attention has been given to examining animosity within the context of international sponsorship, despite its widespread use.

### *Theoretical Implications*

The animosity transfer process sheds light on the mechanisms by which animosity affects brand attitude for the foreign (out-group) partner in an international sponsorship arrangement. Specifically, we extend existing knowledge on the topic (Meng-Lewis et al. 2013, Lee and Mazodier 2015) by focusing on the underlying process for the effect of animosity on brand attitude. Our focus is the

period immediately following consumers becoming aware of the sponsorship. We show that the agonistic emotion a person feels in response to the news is driven by the animosity they hold to the brand's COO. Agonistic emotion inhibits cognitive processing which negatively affects assessments of perceived fit and, in turn, brand attitude – measured here as favorability. Three studies confirm the model, which is generalized to different sports and country dyads.

As the research demonstrates, the animosity transfer process hinges on the agonistic emotion (anger) individuals exhibit in response to news of the foreign brand sponsoring the domestic team. Extant research establishes that emotions influence judgments and decision-making and this goes beyond (bad) good emotions leading to more (un)favorable or (pessimistic) optimistic evaluations (Lerner et al. 2015, Lerner and Tiedens 2006). In the context of foreign brands sponsoring national sports teams, we find that agonistic emotion contributes to poorer perceptions of fit with the domestic partners (England soccer and Indian cricket teams). This is consistent with the functional view of emotions, which regards them as phenomena designed to increase individuals' adaptive responses to important environmental stimuli (DeSteno et al. 2004). Evolutionary perspectives regard out-groups as a potential source of conflict and rivalry, creating a barrier to in-group goal fulfilment. In this context, emotions are useful to help individuals activate goal-driven tendencies (Böhm et al. 2018). However, agonistic emotions bias inter-group evaluations (DeSteno et al. 2004); and in our studies, affect judgments of dissimilarity and magnify ill-fitting evaluations with in-group objects.

### *Managerial Implications*

While managers cannot easily control their company's COO, they can influence how sponsorships are announced. The research provides insights into what sponsorship managers should and should not do when announcing sponsorships linked to an animosity inducing COO. Providing an honest justification for the sponsorship reduces agonistic emotion and improves favorability. However, this is only effective for low levels of animosity. As most international sponsorships involve instances of low levels of animosity (Lee and Mazodier 2015), honest justifications warrant consideration. Amongst high animosity individuals, the tactic is not effective.

Preannouncements are an often suggested strategy for reducing agonistic emotions (Bies 2013). However, we find no easy solution and such a strategy, in the context of animosity inducing sponsorships, proved to be counterproductive. During this research, we also explored other tactics, including the use of self-deprecating and superiority-based humor in sponsorship announcements to reduce agonistic emotion. Humor is often deployed to reduce tension, conflict and anger in interpersonal relations (Norrick and Spitz 2008). However, we found both types of humor to be ineffective. Specifically, humor failed to reduce agonistic emotion amongst low animosity participants and exacerbated anger amongst high animosity consumers. Amongst the latter group it appears that the use of humor, even if at the expense of the out-group (e.g. self-deprecating) is interpreted as a hostile act by the in-group who regard that the partnership is no laughing matter.

## **LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

In this study, we tested the animosity transfer process in a sports sponsorship context. Whilst this is the most common form of sponsorship, we recognize that sports tend to heighten consumer emotional responses compared to other commercial contexts (Close et al. 2006). Future research should test the generalizability of the animosity transfer process in other international brand partnership settings, including brand alliances and co-branding. Indeed, by encouraging further replications, we might also explore differences in the medium as well as the message for partnership announcement strategies; for instance twitter campaigns and social media. Moreover, we used real and well-established brands as sponsorship partners, which are also more likely to under – rather than over – estimate the agonistic emotional response from in-group consumers. Indeed, many English consumers may already be aware of German partnership agreements between the England soccer team and Lidl, and Team GB (athletics) and Aldi respectively. While we have no reason to doubt the ecological validity of our model, validation using real-time partnerships would be beneficial and insightful, but practically difficult to operationalize, especially since marketing managers typically shroud in secrecy such partnerships before their formal announcement.

In addition, we utilized favorability (marginal change in attitude to the sponsor following the announcement) as the outcome variable. This was appropriate given the application to sponsorship (Speed and Thompson 2000). Yet, in other contexts, alternative outcome variables (e.g., willingness to pay, ownership, word of mouth, forgiveness) may also be appropriate, and included in the animosity transfer process model. Likewise, we only measured the effects at a single point in time, namely immediately following the sponsorship announcement. However, Lee and Mazodier (2015), studied how changes in brand affect for EDF (a sponsor of the 2012, London Olympic Games) related to British consumers' animosity towards France at three time points (before, during and after the event). They found no significant temporal changes in brand affect and brand trust for UK consumers with above-average levels of animosity and for this cohort cross-national disposition remained stable over time. Testing the animosity transfer model and the contingent role of individuals' emotions in a dynamic setting, such as over the course of a limited time partnership agreement, is appropriate. This is particularly the case since animosity is not a stable construct and may vary over time (Lee and Tae Lee 2013). We acknowledge the limitation that in this research we deal with understanding the period of time at the point of sponsorship announcement.

Finally, the paper considers two strategies that may have had potential to suppress the relationship between animosity and agonistic emotion – and thus, reduce the impact of the animosity transfer process following cross-border sponsorship announcements. Future research should investigate other tactics, providing greater managerial relevance and insight. One option, for use in cases which generate low to moderate levels of animosity, could be *counteracting primes* which provoke alternative, more desirable emotions which can be effective in regulating aggression (Meier et al. 2006). For instance, inducing individuals to experience compassion leads to enhanced perceptions of similarity with out-group members (Han et al. 2007). In the sponsorship context, this may involve focusing on similarities in culture, or common goals, beliefs and values. For instance, communications might appeal to individuals' moral identity (Choi and Winterich 2013) by stressing how grassroots sport, community engagement, and disadvantaged groups will all benefit from the partnership.

The opening vignette prompted our interest in whether, 70 years on from the end of World War Two, animosity could be responsible for the consumer responses alluded to in these quotations. It would be easy to overlook the role of emotions in guiding consumer attitudes and behavior, but we hope to have demonstrated that animosity can spill over into many areas of life with profound effect, including the selection of a supermarket sponsor of a national soccer team.

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**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Confirmatory Factor Analysis for Study 1**

Factor	Label	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standardized Loading
<b>Animosity [AVE = .70, CR = .90]</b>				
ANI1	I dislike Germany.	2.83	1.56	.78 (.04)
ANI2	I will never forgive Germany.	2.27	1.51	.81 (.05)
ANI3	Germany is not reliable.	2.46	1.42	.83 (.04)
ANI4	You can never trust Germany.	2.42	1.51	.91 (.03)
<b>Agonistic Emotions [AVE = .84, CR = .91]</b>				
AE1	Angry	3.64	1.67	.87 (.04)
AE2	Irritated	4.04	1.85	.96 (.03)
<b>Perceived Fit [AVE = .76, CR = .94]</b>				
PF1	There is a logical connection between Lufthansa and the England soccer team.	2.80	1.49	.78 (.07)
PF2	The England team and Lufthansa fit together well.	2.87	1.53	.95 (.02)
PF3	It makes sense to me that Lufthansa sponsors the England soccer team.	2.72	1.48	.94 (.02)
PF4	The image of the England soccer team and Lufthansa are similar.	2.68	1.34	.84 (.04)
PF5	Lufthansa and the England soccer team stand for similar things.	2.99	1.49	.82 (.04)
<b>Favorability [AVE = .90, CR = .97]</b>				
FAV1	This sponsorship makes me feel more favorable to Lufthansa.	3.36	1.39	.96 (.01)
FAV2	This sponsorship improves my perception of Lufthansa.	3.43	1.47	.96 (.01)
FAV3	This sponsorship makes me like Lufthansa more.	3.32	1.48	.93 (.02)
<b>Fan Identification [AVE = .82, CR = .90]</b>				
FAN-ID1	Others (friends, family) see me as a big fan of the England soccer team.	4.41	1.70	.94 (.12)
FAN-ID2	I see myself as a big fan of the England soccer team.	4.67	1.70	.87 (.10)
<b>Prior Attitude to the Sponsor Brand [AVE = .89, CR = .94,]</b>				
ATT1	Bad-Good	4.64	1.07	.93 (.03)
ATT2	Unfavorable-Favorable	4.55	1.04	.96 (.03)
<b>Ethnocentrism [AVE = .79, CR = .92]</b>				
ETH1	It is not right to purchase foreign products because it puts English workers out of jobs.	2.92	1.54	.84 (.05)
ETH2	We should purchase products manufactured in England instead of letting other countries get rich off us.	3.92	1.81	.86 (.03)
ETH3	We should not buy foreign products because this hurts England business and causes unemployment.	3.29	1.67	.96 (.02)

Notes: AVE = average variance extracted; CR = composite reliability.

Model Fit:  $\chi^2(167) = 247.96, p < 0.001$ ; Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = 0.97; Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) = 0.97; RMSEA = .06, standardized root mean residual (SRMR) = 0.04.

**Table 2: Correlation Table (Study 1 and 2)**

FACTOR	ANI		AE		PF		FAV		Fan-ID		ATT	
	Study 1	Study 2	Study 1	Study 2	Study 1	Study 2	Study 1	Study 2	Study 1	Study 2	Study 1	Study 2
<b>Animosity (ANI)</b>												
<b>Agonistic Emotions (AE)</b>	.37**	.55**										
<b>Perceived Fit (PF)</b>	-.25**	-.22*	-.59**	-.41**								
<b>Favorability (FAV)</b>	-.35**	-.31**	-.49**	-.49**	.69**	.85**						
<b>Fan-ID</b>	-0.12	.34**	-0.04	.24**	.16*	-.03	0.15	-.06				
<b>Prior Attitude to Sponsor Brand (ATT)</b>	-.47**	-.41**	-.27**	-.37**	.24**	.58**	.29**	.60**	.17*	-.07		
<b>Ethnocentrism (ETH)</b>	.56**	.52**	.30**	.30**	-.21**	.00	-.23**	-.08	-.04	-.33**	-.32**	-.13

Key: \*\* sig < .01 level; \* sig < .05 level

Values below diagonal are inter-correlations for Study 1 and 2

**Table 3: Animosity Transfer Process in Study 1 and 2**

	<b>Study 1</b> (n = 157)	<b>Study 2</b> (n = 134)
<i>Direct Paths</i>		
(a, b's) Animosity → Agonistic Emotion	.29*	5.32**
Agonistic Emotion → Perceived Fit	-.39**	-.04**
Agonistic Emotion → Favorability	-.04 <sup>NS</sup>	-.02**
Perceived Fit → Favorability	.63**	.66**
(c') Animosity → Favorability	-.19*	-.01 <sup>NS</sup>
<i>Indirect Path (CI 95%)</i>		
Animosity → Agonistic Emotion → Favorability	-0.01 (95% CI: -0.06 to 0.02)	β = -0.09, 95% CI: -0.20 to -0.14)
Animosity → Perceived Fit → Favorability	0.02 (95% CI: -0.08 to 0.14)	β = 0.14, 95% CI: -0.05 to 0.35)
Animosity → Agonistic Emotion → Perceived Fit → Favorability	-0.07 (95% CI: -0.15 to -0.01)	(β = -0.13, 95% CI: -0.27 to -0.04)

Sig: p < .05 = \*, p < .01 = \*\*.

Agonistic Emotion → Favorability is not a hypothesized path

Bootstrapped indirect effects based on 5000 resamples, with 95% upper and lower confidence intervals in parentheses.

Control variables are excluded from this table.

For study 2 Agonistic Emotion was measured on a 100-point scales.

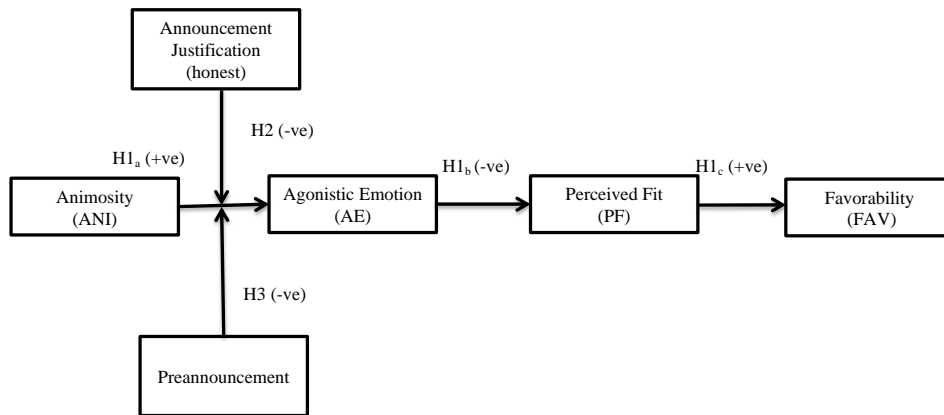
**Table 4: Mean Scores for the three treatment groups in Study 2**

Factor	Control	Honest Justification	Insincere Justification	One-way ANOVA (F)
Agonistic Emotion	69.21 <sup>b</sup> (24.92)	66.29 <sup>c</sup> (26.96)	81.17 <sup>bc</sup> (23.60)	4.21**
Perceived Fit	4.54 (3.05)	4.39 (2.95)	3.29 (2.89)	2.18
Favorability	4.69 <sup>b</sup> (2.87)	4.23 (2.76)	3.27 <sup>b</sup> (2.97)	2.59*

Note: Means with standard deviations in parentheses. Cells with same letter superscripts denote differences at  $p < .10$  level. If the “abc” superscript is included it denotes that the control versus sincere means were significantly different as both have the “a” superscript, and likewise the control versus insincere means would also be different as both have the “b” superscript. If “c” superscript is included, it suggests a significant difference between sincere versus insincere conditions.

One-way ANOVA with post-hoc Tukey tests were conducted, \*\*Sig < .05, \*Sig < .10







**Figure 1: Conceptual Model of the Animosity Transfer Process**



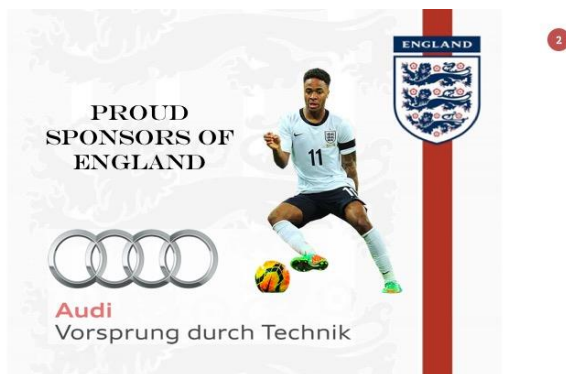
**Appendix 1: Stimuli used in Studies 1 – 3**  
**Study 1**



**Study 2**

<p>"We would like to announce that we are the new official sponsor of the India cricket team"</p>		<p>official sponsor</p>	<p>"We would like to announce that we are the new official sponsor of the India cricket team.</p> <p>Because ... we believed in the team so much we outbid all of our competitors"</p>		<p>official sponsor</p>
					
	<p>"We would like to announce that Air China are the new official sponsor of the India Cricket team.</p> <p>Because...we believe in the team and love India and its passion for cricket"</p>			<p>official sponsor</p>	

**Study 3**





END OF MANUSCRIPT