Effectiveness of Sports Sponsorship and Athletes’ Endorsement As Brand Communication Tools

Thesis

By

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# Table of Contents

1. Chapter 1: Introduction 5
   1.1 Introduction to Marketing .......................................................... 5
   1.2 Introduction to Sports Sponsorship .............................................. 7
       1.2.1 Objectives of Sports Sponsorship ................................. 8
       1.2.2 Forms of Sports Sponsorship ........................................ 9
       1.2.3 Benefits of Sports Sponsorship .................................. 11
       1.2.4 Threats and Risks of Sports Sponsorship ...................... 14

2. Chapter 2: Case Studies 18
   2.1 The case of Maria Sharapova ................................................. 18
   2.2 The study by Ron Garland, Jan Charbonneau, and Terry Macpherson “Measuring sport sponsorship effectiveness: links to existing behavior” … 21
   2.3 The study by Labiba Abdel-Naby Ibrahim “An evaluation of the effectiveness of sports sponsorship among football fans in Egypt” .......... 23

3. Chapter 3: Research methodology and its implication 26
   3.1 Objectives of the paper ......................................................... 26
   3.2 Research methodology ....................................................... 27

4. Chapter 4: Survey findings 31
   4.1 Research findings ............................................................... 31
   4.2 Analysis ........................................................................... 38

5. Chapter 5: Discussion 46

6. Conclusion 48

7. Appendices 50

8. References 54
Abstract

This research is aimed to look at the new phenomena of sports sponsorship used as a marketing tool by businesses. First, it discusses the history of sponsorship in general and then addresses sports sponsorship in specific. It also analyzes a recent case, which is directly related to athletes’ endorsement. In the following part, it examines the researches completed on related subjects. In addition, this work includes analysis of a survey, which has been created to determine the potential effectiveness of sports sponsorships and the level to which customers are influenced by this type of marketing tool.
Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction to Marketing

In our world, there are numerous products with homogeneous features, alike purposes, and similar design. In order to distinguish themselves, companies apply marketing tools to their products and services. Brand positioning allows them to become noticeable. The concept of positioning originates from the period of market segmentation in the late 1960s and the early 1970s (Myers & Tauber, 1977, p. 53). The prime goal of companies is to create a unique perception of the brand in the eyes of the consumers (Ries & Trout, 1981, p. 47). Sagar, Singh, and Agrawal (2006, p. 76) have suggested that there are five segments that contribute to the brand positioning: brand identity, brand personality, brand image, brand awareness, and brand communication. John Dawes, Kerry Mundt and Byron Sharp (2009) have also added brand salience as a sixth element.

As stated by Scott M. Davis (2000, p.16) brand identity is “a set of promises for the buyer, which implies trust, consistency, and defined set of expectations.” There are two dimensions of brand identity: external and internal (Kapferer, 1994, p. 21). The prism of externalization includes physique, reflection, and relationship while internalization involves culture, personality, and self-image (Kapferer, 1994, p. 23).

The brand personality is the construct of the brand positioning (Sagar, Khandelwal, Mittal, & Singh, 2011, p. 125). Brand personality has the similar trades as a human individuality; it describes how it “speaks and behaves” (Bhatia, 2012).

Brand image is an overall impression a product presents to the consumer, including functional, physical and psychological traits of a brand (Sengupta, 1990, p. 113). David
Ogilvy in his book “Confession of an Advertising Man” (1963, p. 45) has argued that brand image and brand personality are indistinguishable. Twenty-five years later Philip Kotler (1988, p. 52) claimed in his work that brand image is “a set of belief held about a particular brand.” His suggestion that it reflects consumers’ perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs towards a product has found support among other researchers (Sagar, Khandelwal, Mittal, & Singh, 2011, p. 129).

Brand awareness is a measurement that indicated how broad consumers’ knowledge regarding the product is (Rossiter & Percy, 1987, p. 59). David A. Aaker (1996) has divided brand awareness into several categories: brand recognition, brand recall, brand dominance, top of mind, brand knowledge and brand opinion. This model can be used to measure customers’ loyalty and brand choice (Aaker, 1996, p. 110).

The feature of brand positioning suggested by Dawes, Mundt and Sharp (2009, p. 196) in their article – brand salience – is the one responsible for improving advertising effectiveness and increasing the successfulness of brand positioning (Vieceli & Shaw, 2011, p. 124).

The concluding element on brand positioning is brand communication. Kevin Lane Keller (1993, p. 30) has suggested that this feature carries the most value. It is responsible for the connection with consumers on both conscious and sub-conscious level (Keller, 1993, p.44). Brand communication consists of such elements as controlled and uncontrolled communication, brand name, brand attitude, brand intention and satisfaction (Grace & O'Cass, 2005, p. 110). Revealing a brand to the potential consumers recruits various means of media and communication, including all sorts of
advertising, campaigns, trade fairs, word of mouth promotions, direct advertising and sponsorship (Keller, 1993, p. 20). This work is discussing sports sponsorship and celebrity athletes’ endorsement in particular as a powerful tool of brand communication, which is gaining appreciation nowadays.

**Introduction to Sports Sponsorship**

In 1999 Matthew D. Shank dedicated a book to the issue of sports sponsorship, he has defined it as “investing in a sports entity (athlete, league, team or event) to support overall organizational objectives, marketing goals and/or promotional strategies” (Shank, 1999, p. 34).

Sports sponsorship as a phenomenon does not have a precise time of appearance. Some sources state it has been introduced about thirty years ago (Belzer, 2013) while there are organizations, which claim they have a history of sports supporting deriving from 1976 ("History of sports sponsoring | Würth Group," n.d.). Douglas Idugboe (2012) declared that sport and marketing go hand in hand from the 1870s, providing an example tobacco companies in the USA that were issuing cards with baseball players on them. Since then sports sponsorship has developed significantly, obtaining new forms and volumes. Already in 1984 different companies invested over $200 million into Los Angeles Olympic games (Idugboe, 2012). The sums keep growing, and in 2008 Sportswear Company from China –Li Ning – signed Yelena Isenbyeva, who is a Russian pole-vaulter, to represent their brand for $2.5 million per year.
Objectives.

The objectives of sponsorship or celebrity endorsement can be categorized six main groups, analogous to advertising aims. Those could be divided into direct and indirect: while direct objectives are concerned about boosting sales, indirect ones focused more on creating brand awareness (Shank, 1999, p. 102). Examples of direct objectives are sales increase and competition. Growth in sales is self-explanatory; companies investing money into any marketing are hoping that would lead to the escalation of profit both in a short-term and on a longer scale (Shank, 1999, p. 103).

The goal of competition implies the principle under which companies are trying to use marketing tool for the sole purpose of not allowing their competitors to practice them (Shank, 1999, p. 107).

Indirect objectives contain awareness, reaching target markets, relationship marketing, and image building. Brand awareness and brand image are the main pillars of brand positioning already discussed above, which are tightly interconnected with marketing communication. Reaching target markets is one of the goals that can be achieved with the help of sports sponsorship. While people involved in sports by either watching or performing it are diverse, they still can be segmented and reached almost effortlessly (Sherry, 1998, p. 5). Relationship marketing has a long-term influence on a brand’s success. Building a relationship with consumers and turning them into loyal clients can supposedly improve brands positioning and broaden customer database, as faithful clients tend to bring their family and friend thanks to the word of mouth marketing (Shank, 1999, p. 110).
**Forms of Sports Sponsorship.**

Sports sponsorship can occur in several diverse forms. The three leading categories of sports sponsorship can be divided into sponsoring competitions and tournaments, sponsoring stadia, sponsoring teams, both national and local clubs, or using athletes’ endorsement as a marketing tool ("BBC - GCSE Bitesize: Sponsorship and sport," n.d.). Sponsoring significant events, such as tournaments and championships, require a lot of financial input. “Companies invest as much as $240 million to be TOP (The Olympic Program, the name of the highest level Olympic sponsorship that gives companies the right to sponsor one quadrennial cycle of both the Winter and Summer Games) - sponsors for an event that last just over two weeks” (Davis, 2012, p. 5). High level of financial involvement is one of the reasons why the sponsors of main competitions are huge, well-known Multinational Corporations. For instance, the sponsors of FIFA World Cup 2018 were announced: Coca-Cola, McDonald’s, Visa, Adidas, Gazprom and others ("2018 FIFA World Cup Russia™ - FIFA Partners - FIFA.com," 2015).

Sponsoring stadiums implies a situation when a company constructs an arena and names it after itself. Examples of this category can be spotted effortlessly: Emirate’s Stadium in London, England, Imtech Arena in Hamburg, Germany or Coca-Cola Park in Johannesburg, South Africa ("BBC - GCSE Bitesize: Sponsorship and sport," n.d.).

Sponsoring sports clubs can also take place in various ways. It can be represented by providing a company with free transportation services, or giving it a free kit. An important factor to consider is that placing a name of the brand on team’s sportswear or the banners near the field is supposed to be advertising, but in practice, it is also called sponsorship due to the tax-free in various states (Kuhn, 2014).
Celebrity endorsement is another type of sports sponsorship. It involves an athlete drawing the attention of consumers to a brand and pursuing them to form a particular perception of the product, which is based on the image of the endorser (Ginman, 2010). In order for the strategy to perform satisfactorily, the endorser is supposed to be well-known enough to the potential customers and being able to contribute to the value of the brand and its awareness in a positive way (Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard, & Hogg, 2006, p. 47). Abdullah Malik and Bushan D. Sudhakar (2014, p. 6) in their work have introduced three groups of characteristics an endorser is supposed to hold: attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise. The Product Match-Up Hypothesis is not less essential to a successful campaign: it states that there is a direct correlation between the match of celebrity’s image and the brand image and, on the other end, influence on potential clients (Forkan, 1980, p.42).

Recently, corporations involve more celebrities from the sports world. In 2010, sponsors invested approximately $46.3 billion on endorsements from various stars of the sports world (Koo, Ruihley, & Dittmore, 2012, p. 150). This phenomenon is explained by the study accomplished in California shopping mall, which has discovered that a photograph of Michael Jordan’s head from the back has been more recognizable than the pictures of the face of Jesus Christ, Bill Clinton or Newt Gingrich (Andrews & Jackson, 2002, p. 24).

The process of identification represents one of the central aspects of celebrity athletes’ endorsement – a person is willing to imitate the behavior of someone they admire (Ginman, 2010). In other words, brands are attempting to reach followers of athletes or
other sports celebrities and provide them with an opportunity to be more like their idols (Bailey & Cole, 2004).

Identification implies the process when people create their selves – how they see themselves and value their personalities. The actual self and the ideal selves are two margins covering grounded appreciation of oneself and the concept of ideal self respectfully (Ginman, 2010). The ideal self is the one, which can be influenced by celebrity endorsement. Placing a prosperous individual, who is enjoying the brand, might awake the need of corresponding to the image of a “perfect” person by possessing the same belonging or participating in the same activities (Solomon, 2007, p. 79). Celebrity endorsement is targeted to provide and opportunity for regular people to be more like them (Varey, 2002, p. 206). That is the reason why corporations are acting generously in terms of supporting celebrity endorsement, and athletes’ validation in particular. Nike is one of the companies that practice this technique in high volumes: only in 2010, Nike has expended roughly $712 million US dollars on endorsement by celebrity athletes (Koo, Ruihley, & Dittmore, 2012, p. 152).

**Benefits of Sports Sponsorship.**

Like any other type of marketing communication tools, sports sponsorship has both potential benefits and risks (Ginman, 2010).

According to the work of Allen D. Schaefer, R. Stephen Parker, and John L. Kent (2010, p. 32), the list of potential benefits includes enhanced ad recall, ability to gain and hold consumers’ attention, increased desirability of the product and likelihood of purchasing, and increased brand loyalty.
Enhanced ad recall is a point, which is interconnected with gaining customers’ attention. Having a well-known figure or a sports club presenting a brand provides a greater possibility of being noticed by a potential client (Schaefer, Parker, & Kent, 2010, p. 36). Firstly, it will draw the attention of public with less effort and then retain this attention.

Increased desirability of the product is related to the halo effect and the sense of the ideal self. The halo effect implies that a person ranking high on one dimension is viewed higher on the others (Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard, & Hogg, 2006, p. 120). So, possessing something that their role models have pursues them to rate themselves higher. And this leads to the factor of increased purchase likelihood.

Increasing brand loyalty might be vital for a company and may be a smart marketing strategy. There is a so-called rule of thumb among marketers: 20 percent of customers are responsible for 80 percent of sales. (Solomon, 2007, p. 139) Once a consumer is loyal to the brand, he or she is rarely willing to shift preferences and change trademarks. Making a customer loyal to the brand practically creates a lifetime client. The same idea was expressed by Armstrong and Kotler (2005, p. 22), who also provided an example of the NASCAR that succeeded in originating memorable experiences that often transforms into lasting relationships with customers.

Bernard J. Mullin, Stephen Hardy and William A. Sutton (2007, p. 76) have outlined additional benefits of sports sponsorship. Mainly focusing on companies’ opportunities, they have named a possibility of exclusivity as one of the advantages. The sponsoring
agreement may be negotiated in a way, which would provide a corporation with an exclusive right of sponsorship. The gain from this aspect is related to a high level of exposure without worrying about having their competitors disturbing their marketing campaign (Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 2007, p. 83).

Building goodwill is another benefit on the list by Mullin, Hardy, and Sutton (2007, p. 87). The authors claimed that sponsorship is a more personal way of conducting business, and as long as sponsors are acting on top of their abilities it positively boosts brands image.

In addition, some sponsorship agreements provide Secure Entitlements or Naming Rights. This also refers to a type of sponsorship by naming facilities or events. “Naming rights are the most expensive sports marketing investment in the present marketplace, and it is also regarded as the less utilized mode of sponsorship” (Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 2007, p. 91).

One of the purposes of sponsorship is increasing sales, and a high likelihood of achieving it makes sports sponsorship more beneficial. In order to accomplish it, companies are supposed to initially evaluate their objectives and then decide what form of sponsorship would be the most successful in their case (Shank, Sports Marketing: A Strategic Perspective, 2009).

Outperforming competitors is another important goal of companies. By engaging into sports sponsorship, it is possible to block the same opportunity for the competitors.
While failing to sponsor and letting a competitor have this chance eventually might lead to a market loss (Shank, 2009, p. 98).

As it has been described above, brand image is one of the pillars of brand positioning, and this is a reason why corporations dedicate their resources to building and improving this picture. Sports sponsorship represents a way to achieve a desirable perception of a brand among potential and existing consumers. It is important to take into consideration that a chosen sports club or celebrity is also assumed to have a positive image (Shank, 2009, p. 101).

Rajeev Batra, John G. Myers, David A. Aaker (1996) have defined another list of potential benefits from sports sponsorship, consisting of three aspects. One of them is similar to the idea of image building – the characteristics of a team or a personality of an endorser might start being associate with a brand. Another concept describes that generating a positive attitude toward the brand can be achieved by introducing sports sponsorship or celebrity endorsement (Batra, Myers, & Aaker, 1996). The last one is awareness, which is one of the brand positioning mainstays, and sports sponsorship has a potential to increase this aspect. However, it is not clear who benefits more - a sponsor or a sponsored team or a celebrity, what leads to another side of the coin – risks related to sports sponsorship (Ginman, 2010).

**Threats and Risks of Sports Sponsorship.**

As there are no marketing tools that do not obtain downsides, sports sponsorship has its risks and threats.
Ambush marketing is an example of a threat to this type of marketing instruments. As it has been discussed previously, sponsorship agreements may prevent competitors from sponsoring the same event or sports club. Unfortunately for sponsors, they cannot eliminate ambush marketing happening without paying sponsorship fees (Emmett, 2010). There are two widely known examples of ambush marketing. The first appeared during the Olympic Games in Beijing 2008, where Adidas was an official sponsor. At the same time many athletes, including those from China, Argentina, Tanzania, and Russia, were outfitted by Li Ning – Chinese sportswear brand (Tschang, 2008). Another example took place in South Africa in 2010 during FIFA World Cup. Budweiser was an authorized beer of the championship, but at the match between national teams of Holland and Denmark thirty-six women arrived wearing identical short orange dresses. They were ejected from the stadium, and two women were charged by South Africa police for organizing the ambush marketing stunt for a Dutch brewery. “The women were arrested for breaching the Contravention of Merchandise Marks Act that prevents companies from benefiting from the event without paying for advertising” (Gibson, 2010). High media coverage of sports events again originates opportunities for non-sponsors to generate benefits on the expenses of sponsors.

Another threat to the sponsors is legislation, which is becoming less favorable for the corporations. This aspect mainly concerns alcohol and tobacco products that do not have much in common with sports. Countries within European Union, Asia, Australia and Northern America have various levels of banishing tobacco and alcohol advertisings, and their effect on public health is now monitored (COM, 2008, p. 2). In 2001 Indian government announced plans of banning sports sponsorship by tobacco firms, what has created a fear of losing huge audience from the side of companies and a
fear of losing revenue from the side of Indian sports officials as ITC Ltd tobacco corporation was the primary sponsor of all cricket and golf events in the country.

The last group of risks of sports sponsorship is related to the human involvement in the process.

The image of the brand is vital, but when it is promoted by a person or a group of people, it becomes depended on these people. Parulekar and Raheja (2006, p. 162) have stated that congruency between the image of a brand and the image of the athletes representing it required in order for the sponsorship to be successful.

It was already mentioned above that when it comes celebrity endorsement form of sports sponsorship it is essential for a celebrity athlete to be credible as he or she is viewed as the source of the message from the sponsor (Ginman, 2010). As soon as celebrity loses trustworthiness, the sponsor is risking to involved with a person with squat reputation. The brightest example for this point is a case of Tiger Woods – professional American golfer – who has been known as a family man until his affairs became public. Nike, which was his sponsor at that time, appeared to be in a trap with a multimillion-dollar agreement with Mr. Woods, even though his worsened image has no longer been positively affecting Nike (“Good sports sponsorships: industry trends, best practice and risk management”, 2014).

Having an external spokesperson or spokespeople is a great concern for sponsoring companies because they are providing power over the brand to “something as unpredictable as a human being” (Ginman, 2010). Celebrities can quickly gain or lose popularity; sports club can win a championship and be in the bottom to the next season
– all these factors are outside the control of the company (Keller, Aperia, & Georgson, 2008, p. 33).

Sports sponsorship is becoming more common around the world.
Chapter 2: Case Studies

The case of Maria Sharapova

The recent case of Maria Sharapova failing a drug test at 2016 Australia Open can demonstrate to which extent sponsorship and athlete endorsement are contingent on the reputation of a particular sportsperson.

According to the official Women’s Tennis Association website, Maria Sharapova, 28, has started her work life in sports at the age of six years old ("Maria Sharapova Biography | Players | WTA Tennis," n.d.). She has been a successful tennis player throughout her career and has managed to obtain thirty-eight WTA titles ("Maria Sharapova Biography | Players | WTA Tennis," n.d.). Consequently, she has been signed by world’s top sports companies, what has led the sportswoman to the 26th place of the Forbes’ “The World’s Highest-Paid Athletes” ("The world's highest-paid athletes," 2015).

As Maria Sharapova represents one of the most popular and admired athletes around the world, the case of her failing 2016 Australia Open drug test has been widely covered by media. On the seventh of March 2016, a five-time Grand Slam winner has initiated a press conference, during which she has admitted the fact: “I did fail the test, and I take full responsibility for it” (Sharapova, 2016). She has further explained that the drug she has been consuming legally for a decade is meldonium, which was added to the World Anti-Doping Agency prohibited list on the first of January 2016 (Sharapova, 2016). The team of an iconic sportswoman neglected to verify whether the medicine has been added to a list of banned substances, and, as a result, Ms. Sharapova is now facing an up to four-year disqualification period ("Maria Sharapova failed drugs test at Australian
Open - BBC Sport," 2016). From March 12th, the tennis player has been suspended from participating in official tennis tournaments by International Tennis Federation ("Maria Sharapova: Racquet firm Head defends deal extension - BBC Sport," 2016).

The World Anti-Doping Agency decided to refrain from commenting in order to “protect the integrity of the case” ("WADA Statement regarding Maria Sharapova Case | World Anti-Doping Agency," 2016), what was expected as they continuously deal with similar situations, the only difference being that they are not always highly publicized. The rest of the sports world, which is concerned with the case, was divided to those who believe in an honest mistake, and those who are suspicious about the situation.

Maria Sharapova’s long-standing opponent Serena Williams has demonstrated support to the tennis players, claiming that taking full responsibility for the remissness proves that Maria has “courage and heart” (Williams, 2016).

Contrasting the first ranking woman tennis player, Professor John Brewer, Head of School of Sport, Health and Applied Science in St. Mary’s University, London, expressed his doubt regarding the innocent character of Sharapova’s mistake. During his interview with BBC News, he has claimed that meldonium is used to help heart conditions, and potentially improve the function of the heart (Brewer, 2016). “…Athletes like it because it helps their endurance and ability to recover from intensive exercise” observes Professor Brewer (2016). In addition, there is another factor that argues the mistake is not as innocent as it appears to be. According to an article on BBC News, meldonium has been of World Anti-Doping Agency ‘watchlist’ for a year before
it has officially become prohibited (2016). The claim that Maria Sharapova and her whole team overlooked a vital decision of WADA is dubious.

Maria Sharapova’s success enabled her to receive commercial endorsement offers from prosperous companies, significantly enriching her budget. After athlete’s confession, sponsors did not require much time to decide on a future strategy.

Several major sponsors have quickly distanced themselves from Ms. Sharapova after the doping scandal. Nike, her high-profile sponsor, was the first to announce the suspension of a multimillion contract with the player (O'Reilly, 2016). Nike has commented the situation: “We are saddened and surprised by the news about Maria Sharapova.” ("Nike statement on Maria Sharapova," 2016). Alongside with Sportswear Company, Swiss watchmaker TAG Heuer has decided no to renew a contract with former number one tennis player. ("Maria Sharapova: Nike, Tag Heuer, and Porsche distance themselves following drugs test - BBC News," 2016) As they have clarified to Business Insider: “We had been in talks to extend our collaboration. In view of the current situation, the Swiss watch brand has suspended negotiations." (O'Reilly, 2016). Porsche has followed their lead and announced that they will suspend promotional work with the tennis player (Elgot, 2016). The desire of these companies to distance from the doping incident is a clear example of human involvement risk of sports sponsorship and athletes’ endorsement described earlier in this work.

There are other significant sponsors Maria Sharapova has, including Evian, Avon, and Head tennis rackets. While Avon is restraining itself from any comments and Evian is “following closely the development of the investigation”, there is one sponsor, which
took a different approach – Head tennis rackets (Elgot, 2016). The chairman of Head, Johan Eliasch, has defeated their position on the extension of a deal with Maria Sharapova during an interview on BBC Radio 4. The chairman emphasized positive personal characteristics of the player and called her announcement an admirable action ("Maria Sharapova: Racquet firm Head defends deal extension - BBC Sport," 2016). The news of Maria Sharapova failing a drug test at 2016 Australia Open has appeared on seventh of March and had an enormous impact on both sports and business worlds.

The study by Ron Garland, Jan Charbonneau, and Terry Macpherson

“Measuring sport sponsorship effectiveness: links to existing behavior”

In 2008 three New Zealand scholars: Ron Garland, Jan Charbonneau and Terry Macpherson – have published their work “Measuring sport sponsorship effectiveness: links to existing behavior”. This research examines New Zealand rugby fan reactions to sponsorship. The paper starts with the discussion of different views on how sponsorship works (Garland, Charbonneau, & Macpherson, 2008, p. 47). For the purpose of evaluating sports sponsorship, the authors decided to apply Ehrenberg’s (1974, p. 26) ATR model, which is an acronym for awareness – trial – reinforcement model. So, the focus of this study was aimed at repetitive purchases (Garland, Charbonneau, & Macpherson, 2008, p. 47). The authors had two primary objectives: to evaluate the awareness of team sponsors and to measure its impact. The researchers have chosen to collect the data via telephone interviews. During a two-staged process of acquiring the respondents two hundred and twenty-four rugby spectators were approached; the response rate was 58% giving a total of one hundred and twenty-nine interviewees (Garland, Charbonneau, & Macpherson, 2008, p. 48). All the surveys have been
conducted via telephone, each call lasting on average ten minutes, and included demographic, behavioral, probability, and cognitive questions. The finding can be classified into two groups reflecting the objectives. Analysis of awareness of team’s sponsors has proven that the majority of the respondents could recall at least one of key sponsors – only nineteen percent could name none (Garland, Charbonneau, & Macpherson, 2008, p. 48). The correlations that the authors drew from the number of brands recalled and the numbers of games attended, and between the numbers of sponsors and the age of the respondents are captivating. Fascinating enough the amount of home matches visited did not have a dramatic effect; on average 28% of the interviewees remembered one or two brands independently of how many games they have been to. Contrarily, the age did influence the awareness of sponsors, people under 40 years old on average scored higher in naming the sponsoring brands (Garland, Charbonneau, & Macpherson, 2008, p. 48). In addition, finding on awareness has demonstrated that more popular and prosperous companies outside the sponsorship factor were remembered more often than the rivals. For instance, beer manufacturing brand Lion Red was mentioned in 92% of the answers, what is much more frequently than Manawatu Toyota and Air New Zealand carrier, also well-established organizations (Garland, Charbonneau, & Macpherson, 2008, p. 49).

The second part of the analysis is titled “Behavioral intention”. Unfortunately, scholars were not able to present clear results as they did with the first finding. The question, which addressed this issue, was straightforward: other things being equal are you more or less likely to obtain the sponsor brand? According to the results, the majority – 65% – has claimed that sponsorship has no effect on their purchasing decisions (Garland, Charbonneau, & Macpherson, 2008, p. 49). At the same time, one-third of the
respondents admitted that sponsorship of their favorite team had influenced their buying behavior. The correlation table presented by Garland, Charbonneau and Macpherson suggests that if one has bought Lion Red beer in last four weeks, the probability of him or her obtaining the same brand because of sponsorship is over 35% (2008, p. 49).

The research performed by New Zealand scholars has introduced valuable implications: their findings demonstrate that sponsorship is capable of reinforcing existing buyer behaviors and is more suitable for well-known brands that already possess a broad customer base (Garland, Charbonneau, & Macpherson, 2008, p. 50). The authors are advocating that it is too risky for small businesses and brands to practice sponsorship as the only brand communication tool.

The study by Labiba Abdel-Naby Ibrahim “An evaluation of the effectiveness of sports sponsorship among football fans in Egypt”

Another study discussing sports sponsorship has been conducted by the professor of Helwan University, Egypt, Labiba Abdel-Naby Ibrahim in 2014. The author decided to explore this area due to its importance in the last years, to prove it he uses a fact mentioned by Wim Lagae (2005): “Depending on the year being studied and the country and definitions, the share of sports sponsorship within sponsorship as a whole lies approximately between 50% and 70% of the total” (Ibrahim, 2014, p. 74). The results of this study are much more controversial and skeptical than the ones produced by New Zealand scholars.
As the previous scholars, Ibrahim Ph.D. also offers the conceptual background for her research. She has borrowed the standard measures for brand awareness, recognition and recall from conventional advertising research (Ibrahim, 2014, p. 77). The survey included five groups of questions, covering following areas: demographic information, sports fan sponsorship, sponsorship awareness, purchase intention, and corporate image (Ibrahim, 2014, p. 78). The questionnaire has been distributed via Facebook between the first of December 2012 and the first of January 2013. One hundred and seven people took part in the survey during that month (Ibrahim, 2014, p. 78). The author has utilized Sports Involvement Scale, which has been introduced in 2008 (Ko, Kim, Claussen, & Kim, 2008, p. 82). In order to complete the research, she has come up with six hypotheses interconnecting the areas of the survey (Ibrahim, 2014, p. 79). The first hypothesis describes the existence of a direct positive effect of sports fan involvement on sponsorship awareness. The theory has been proven by the finding of a significant positive correlation between two variables (Ibrahim, 2014, p. 79). This discovery is important as, quoting Professor Ibrahim, “brand awareness in the main target of the sponsors” (2014, p. 80).

The next hypothesis is seeking to the connection between sports fan involvement and the perception of a corporate image. The research has accepted this hypothesis as well, discovering that high involvement in sports produces a higher positive image of the sponsor (Ibrahim, 2014, p. 80).

When it comes to the third hypothesis, the findings are becoming less expected. Labiba Ibrahim has established that there is no correlation between sports fan involvement and intention to purchase sponsor’s product. The result does not consist with previously
performed researches and, the author mentions that it could be caused by a decrease of
the buying power of the respondents (Ibrahim, 2014, p. 80).

The following two hypotheses have also been rejected. The study has demonstrated a
lack of correlation between sponsorship awareness and corporate image, as well as
between sponsorship awareness and intention to purchase sponsoring brand (Ibrahim,
2014, p. 81).

Contrarily to previous assumptions, the hypothesis of the direct positive effect of the
corporate image on intention to purchase a product or service has been accepted
(Ibrahim, 2014, p. 82).

The model created by Labiba Ibrahim has not achieved all its hypotheses and produced
results not consistent with literature reviewed by the author (Ibrahim, 2014, p. 82). Professor has mentioned an important detail, which could have affected the outcomes of
the research: Egypt has been experiencing an unstable political situation, what could
have determined perceptions towards sponsorship (Ibrahim, 2014, p. 81). To conclude,
only half of the theories found proof in this research, what produces concerns, as it does
not ally with previous researches in this field.

Case studies described above demonstrate that the area of sports sponsorship is not yet
studied thoroughly. Researches are producing different outcomes, and this aspect does
not allow to draw conclusions on the effectiveness of sports sponsorship and athletes’
endorsement.
Chapter 3: Research Methodology

The purpose of this work is to evaluate the effectiveness of sports sponsorship as a brand communication tool. It has been discussed earlier in this paper that brand communication is an essential part of marketing (Keller, 1993, p. 30). Sponsorship as a part of brand communication can have both conscious and subconscious effect on one’s buying decisions (Keller, 1993, p. 34). Theory suggests that it is relatively easy for athletes’ endorsement and sports sponsorship to increase a positive brand image for the supporting company (Cornwell, Humphreys, Maguire, Weeks, & Tellegen, 2006, p. 316). Emotions are the most significant triggers in the process of purchasing a product or service (Solomon, 1999, p. 100). It is not only logically assumed, but it has also been scientifically proven, that positive emotions inspire purchases, while negative emotions prevent those (Solomon, 1999, p. 101). As it has been mentioned above, sport-related marketing depends heavily on the outcomes of the games and matches (Ginman, 2010). It should then rationally follow that every lost game will cause negative reactions, and every successful one will produce positive feelings toward the team and, as a result, its sponsors as a result. Apparently, this makes sports sponsorship highly volatile. Contrarily to this assumption, though, it has been noted by Malik and Sudhakar that having a robust level of passionate attachment to a team or a particular athlete brings out positive emotions toward everything related independently of their current performance (2014, p.65).

The task to examine the effectiveness of a popular and relatively new brand communication tool is not as simple as it may seem. Sponsors do not have any reasons to disclosure their data on sponsorship: if it fails, it may have an undesirable effect on the brand image while disclosing prosperous results of sponsorship will lower the
competitive advantage over rivals. Moreover, there is no universally accepted method of evaluating sponsorship (Thwaites, 1995, p. 149)

The subsequent part of the chapter is dedicated to describing the methodology used to conduct the original research for this work.

The quantitative method has been chosen to gather the data. This technique is often claimed to be simpler and more efficient to analyze; the data is frequently presented in a numerical form. The source of quantitative data for this study is a survey. “The survey is a systematic method for gathering information from (a sample of) entities for the purpose of constructing quantitative descriptors of the attributes of the larger population of which the entities are members.” (Groves et al., 2013, p. 4). There are several advantages to this method: thanks to a structured framework it can be completed in a short period of time, appropriate sampling can help to generalize an entire population, it minimizes interview bias and requires less time to analyze the outcomes (The Health Communication Unit, 1999, p. 5). There are several factors that are supposed to be determined before conducting the survey; the population of interest, sampling process and medium of reaching respondents are among those (Converse & Presser, 1986, p. 14).

The survey for this research has been conducted online. It has been created with the help Google form tool, which allows everyone to produce questionnaires with existing templates. The online format has enabled this study to reach a broader and more diverse audience. In addition, this method truly provides fast and convenient results. Moreover, this method is convenient for the respondents, and that increases the chance to receive
answers on the survey in a shorter period of time (The Health Communication Unit, 1999, p. 15).

In order to generate a meaningful and successful survey, one is supposed to develop specific skills. In their paper “Conducting survey research” The Health Community Unit has included questionnaire writing, management of data collection, data processing, report writing, and analytical skills to the list of key abilities (1999, p. 12). The structure of the survey is vital for its success; it is supposed to have an opening paragraph, main body and a closing paragraph (Harrison, 2007, p. 1). The beginning paragraph is used to welcome the respondent, inform about the number of the questions and approximate time needed to fill in the questionnaire. In this research, it has been mentioned that the survey had fifteen questions and would take about five minutes to finish.

The survey then continued with the main part of the questions. They were inspired by the previously completed studies on the same or similar subject. There are general queries regarding the preferred type of sport, favorite teams or athletes and the level of the interest. In order to determine the sponsorship awareness, it has been asked to name as many companies sponsoring a team or an athlete of their choice as the respondent can remember. According to Berkman and Gilson (1987, p. 68), unaided recall questions are able to generate adequate measurements, that is why there were no groups of sponsors or sample answers included. Among others, the survey also had a direct question on likelihood to purchase a sponsoring brand. This kind of queries has been attempted before, but the outcomes produced are usually unclear; Easton and Mackie have discovered that “the majority of response was indecisive or ambivalent” (1998, p.
In this survey, it has been decided to try a direct question and prove or disprove the assumption. This question has been presented in a rating scale format.

Besides a mentioned above rating scale of the question, there are many layouts for acquiring the answers. The most popular are open-ended questions with a word, a sentence, or a paragraph response, and an option of one or several out of the list (Harrison, 2007, p. 2).

Demographic questions were placed at the end of the survey, and they include questions on the age and sex of the respondent. The reason for closing the questionnaire with the demographic section is hidden in the exceptional organization of people's minds. It is believed that people are less likely to open up and reply in a genuine way while placing demographic information after completing the study is seemed more harmless (Aday, 1989, p. 272).

The closing paragraph is determined to thank the respondent for the completion and demonstrate the appreciation of his or her time and effort (Harrison, 2007, p. 1).

Before distributing the survey, it is worth testing it on a small sample group (The Health Communication Unit, 1999, p. 19). For this research, the pilot test was run with a group of 10 people, who were suitable for the sample. The participants have been asked to fill on the survey and provide the observations on its quality. Some of the recommendations have utilized and implemented into the final version of the survey (Appendix 1).

The next stage of the research was the distribution of the survey. The online questionnaire was spread with the help of social networks, such as Facebook, Twitter,
and Vk.com. The link to the survey has been allocated in public pages and communities
aimed at people concerned about sports; this assisted in receiving answers from those
who have a sincere interest in watching sports and are appropriate for the sampling. The
survey managed to obtain one hundred responses required in five days.

It is important to notice that the results produced by the survey are reliable and valid.
The online form of distribution through social media platforms allowed a diverse
audience to access the research. In addition, the reliability of the survey is also driven
by the absence of bias; the survey was only gathering personal opinions.

The following chapter will describe the findings of the research in details.
Chapter 4: Research Findings

Research Findings

After the required number of one hundred responses has been reached, the analysis of the data received began. The survey has been created via Google forms, which provides charts and graphs for the outcomes as well as the table with each response recorded. It is worth to start the description with the demographic data to have a clearer impression of the respondents.

To begin with, seventy-six of the participants were male, compared to only twenty-four females. Considering the topic of the research, this result does not seem to be unexpected. Even wider difference between the genders could have been anticipated; as in one of the public pages on social media, where the survey has been distributed, the percentage of male members is almost equal to ninety – out of 117,048 group followers 105,565 are men, 11,444 are women and the rest three percent of the members preferred not to indicate their gender.

Another significant figure is the age of the respondents. In this question there is also a leading category: a group of people of age between nineteen and twenty-five has received 44% of the answers. Other categories with a high number of responses are less than eighteen years old and between twenty-six and thirty-three years old, scoring 24% and 23% respectfully. The nine answers not covered by previous groupings have been distributed between the following options with a minimal difference: thirty-four to forty, forty-one to fifty and over fifty years old. The outcome was not a complete wonder; the distribution was accomplished via social networks, so the fact that the majority of the respondents are from younger generations is not amusing.
Before getting to the main body of the survey, it is worth mentioning that the last question was dedicated for participants to express their thoughts about the subject and present any commentaries they might have had. In order to receive answers, this question has been made obligatory and has been put at the bottom of the survey. There is a lot of information determined to help the researchers to analyze open-ended queries correctly. The majority of them suggest various ways of coding, tabling and reviewing the replies (Holm, 2009) (Zapin, 2013) (Hughes & Silver, 2010). Those techniques have not been useful in this situation, as only six replies contained expressive comments while the vast majority of the participants responded with a “no/nope/nothing” or simply with symbols. It could be concluded that the survey has successfully covered the topic, consequently has not produced any further remarks.

The following part is going to describe the questions related to the subject itself.

The survey has been created solely for people who have a genuine interest in sports, and one the first question was designed to discover which sport, in particular, the respondent favored. The vast majority – 56% – has picked football as a preferred sport to watch, and the rest of the votes have been distributed among hockey, basketball, tennis, golf and ‘other’ option. A follow-up question was asking to name a favorite sports team or athlete. As it can be imagined, the replied varied tremendously.

Previous two questions were designed to assist the participants with determining their interest in a particular club or athlete, as it is precisely what third questions examines. The respondents have been questioned to evaluate the extent to which they are involved with the team of their choice. A scale rating has been used for this type of question,
including five dimensions from watching the matches occasionally to never missing a game. The majority of the answers were inclining to a more frequent involvement, demonstrating a high interest in club or athlete’s performance. Thirty-two percent of the answers were at the extreme end claiming they only miss the game under extreme circumstances. Other twenty-eight percent has picked an option close to the one mentioned above, meaning they pay attention to almost every game performed by their favorite team. One-fifth of the respondents – twenty people – have chosen an intermediate alternative. The other fifth of the participants has stated that they have less appreciation for a team or an athlete of their choice: fourteen people selecting an extreme option “I watch games from time to time” and six people choosing an alternative next to the lowest possibility. The level to which people feel affectionate to a sport and a particular club or sportsmen/sportswoman will be essential for this study to how the interest affects the effectiveness of sports sponsorship.

The next question is related to the issue of sponsorship directly. It has asked the participants to name as many sponsors as they could remember. It has been specified that it could be any type of sponsorship, including, but not limited to sportswear, venue sponsorship, and other types. The question has been formatted in this manner to stimulate unaided recall. As Labiba Ibrahim has mentioned in her paper, paraphrasing Stotlar’s argument from ‘Sponsorship and the Olympic Games’ (1993, p. 37): “unaided recall tasks are considered to be more appropriate measures than recognition tasks because they require the respondent to retrieve the sponsor's name from memory rather than by recognizing their brand name from a list” (2014, p. 73). The immense majority of the participants – thirty-eight percent – of the research were only able to name one sponsor. Evoking two or three sponsors has also been common, these dimensions scored
The maximum number of sponsors recalled has reached as high as ten brands, but this result has only been achieved by one respondent. It is important to mention that nine out of hundred people, who replied to the survey, could not name any sponsors. They have listed a number of reasons for failing to answer the question. One of the reasons was that the athlete named has already retired and does not have any major sponsors; another participant has named a local school basketball team as her favorite, and it does not have any sponsors but the school itself. Other responses accounted for this group included statements that the person cannot recall any or just minus symbols.

The following question was created to determine whether people were actually exploiting sponsors’ products and services at any point of the time. The question was straightforward and clear for the respondents to answer. Seventy percent of the respondents have admitted that they have used at least one the sponsor products in some period. The other thirty percent has confirmed that they have never consumed any of sponsoring brands.

Later the participants have been asked to specify what product or services of sponsors they have been using. In most cases respondents could only name one brand. It was amusing to find out that more than half of the participants – forty people – have mentioned a brand of sportswear as one of or the only utilized sponsor brand. Besides sportswear, respondents have also frequently obtained fast consumer products, such as beverages or snacks. The least tried sponsors’ brands included services, such as airlines, mobile services or banks.
The follow-up question was supposed to determine possible the level of sponsorship influence on their buying decisions without asking an upfront question. Participants were to specify whether they have started to consume the brands, mentioned in the previous query, before or after they have become sponsors of their favorite teams. Almost half of the respondents – 48.6% – stated that they have started to utilize them before the sponsorship happened. Other eleven people – 15.3% – claimed they have started to use the product or service after it became a sponsor. The other significant portion of participants – almost thirty-seven percent – has selected a ‘not sure’ option. It could have been prematurely assumed, that those, who have admitted that they have used a brand after it got to be a sponsor, were influenced by the support of their favorite team or athlete by the brand. Such a hypothesis could be faulty as it is still not clear whether it was the main reason for usage or it was just a coincidence.

The next question was more straightforward and has asked the participant to estimate the extent to which sponsorship has influenced their buying decisions. It has been decided to introduce an upfront query after all of the pilot testing participants have suggested it. This question was designed to provide scale rating based answers with five options. Figure one was symbolizing a ‘sponsorship did not influence my decision at all’ point, and figure five was representing a ‘sponsorship was the main reason for usage’ option. Again, there is a massive majority inclining to the one side of the scale: 41.4% of respondents has claimed that sponsorship had no effect on their choices of products and services. Eleven people, embodying almost sixteen percent of those, who have answered this question, have chosen the second option. The medium has been chosen by 22.9% – sixteen people; this point could be explained as if sponsorship had an influence on the decision to buy these products, but not strong enough to be called
the main reason. The last two options mutually scored twenty percent of the votes by fourteen people; only four respondents stated that sponsorship was the main reason for acquiring a brand. It was amusing to discover that three out four people have started to use service-providing brands, such as airlines and banks due to their sponsoring activities, even though those types of companies did not score highly in a question on which sponsor-brands respondents used in some period of time.

There are two possible explanations for the result on a scale rating. The first one is that sponsoring is not as effective as it is believed to be. A different explanation is rather skeptical. There are critics, who consider sponsorship, as an indirect type of advertising, to be a pure manipulation (O’Sullivan, 1998, p. 109). It is plausible that the respondents share this point of view, and they did not desire to be seen as sports fans that are easy to be manipulated.

The next question was also addressed to the participants who have ever used sponsoring brands. It has asked the respondents to indicate whether they were continuing to use the brand, and 76.4% of the repliers was still enjoying supporting companies. The other 23.6% represented by seventeen people have discontinued the usage by the time the survey has been conducted. The follow-up question was created for this group of respondents, as it asks for the main reason, why people have stopped utilizing the brand. Almost a half of the participants claimed that they did not longer have a need for a product or service. Four people out of seventeen did not like the quality of the brand, three of them considered it be too expensive. Only two people – 11.8% – named other reasons: one of them has switched to a healthier diet and could not longer drink
sponsoring soda beverage, and another respondent has found his preference was to a competitor’s brand.

The last question related to the sponsorship was dedicated to those respondents, who have stated that they have never used any of sponsoring companies’ products or services. It has asked them to clarify, what was the main reason; for this purpose respondent could have used one of the pre-set choices, or insert their own motives. Over half of the answers – 56% – have picked an option that they simply enough never had an urge or a need to. The second most popular selection, picked by twenty percent – five people, implied that they favor a competing brand more. Other three respondents have chosen financial aspect as the one preventing them from continuing to use the brands of sponsors. Unfortunately, there were participants, who have included an answer to this question into an ‘other’ option, even though they could not name any sponsor, what has created a small mixture in the percentage relation to this question; but it was mild enough not to damage any conclusions.

The only question, which outcomes are left to be discussed, has asked the respondents to name their favorite brand of sportswear. While the results are not significant for the research by themselves, it has been demonstrated above that sportswear sponsors are the most recallable for the team or athlete’s admirers. The data received by this query will be helpful in the further analysis of the survey findings, presented in the following part of the chapter.
Analysis of the Research Findings

This part of the chapter is going to analyze the relationship between various findings of the research and their implications in the real world scenarios.

There has been a hypothesis formed for each dimension discussed in the following part. Three-step process of working with hypotheses has been designed: identifying the supposition, testing it and, finally, accepting or rejecting the premise (Shuttleworth, n.d.).

The analysis will begin with a set of hypotheses testing the relation of the awareness of the sponsor to different variables.

The first hypothesis, which is going to be examined, assumes that older people are more capable of recalling sponsoring brands. For the purpose of studying the theorem, the data from the original survey for this research has been carefully analyzed. There were six age groups and five variables for the expression of the level of attachment to the team or athlete presented. The figures for both measurements have been combined and studied. The outcomes have been sorted in the percentage form, in order to be more accurate. According to the results, demonstrated in Table 1 (Appendix 2), there is a pattern, which displays that older generations provided fewer answers of not recalling any sponsors while over sixteen percent of the youngest category of the respondents had struggled with naming sponsoring brands. At the same time, the most popular answer, which included only one brand recalled, declined in popularity with increasing age of respondent to the point of reaching a group of thirty-four to forty-year-olds. After it got to this point, the number of people responding with one sponsor has started to rise again. The similar outline could be noticed with the following sets of answers. It is important to mention that only people between nineteen and forty years old could recall
more five or more sponsors. It could be suggested that after sports admirers reach certain age – about twenty-five years – they either start paying less attention to the sponsorship of their favorite team or athlete, or they are less capable of retracting the information from the memory. The second assumption is supported by Richard C. Mohs, Ph.D., who has claimed “some parts of the brain that are essential to memory are highly vulnerable to aging” (2007, p. 5). Thus, the hypothesis could be partially accepted, but with a correction that it is only true until some point in person’s life.

The second hypothesis is based on a study described in a journal of Current Directions in Psychological Science, as Kara Rogers reports in her article, which suggests that women are more efficient in both memorizing and recalling details (2008). Grounded on this conclusion, the hypothesis claims that females on average are able to recall more sponsoring brands. Similar, to the previous analysis, the data has been transformed into a percentage form – Table 2 (Appendix 3). The results were relatively consistent for both genders. Both males and females have named only one sponsor in most cases, and from this point the number of people able to recall several sponsors has been decreasing for both genders. At the same time, it is essential to mention, that a smaller percentage of men could not recall any sponsoring brands: five out of twenty-four women did not name any while only four out of seventy-six men failed to answer the question. The females’ inability to respond to this query cannot be attributed to the lack of interest to the team or athlete, as half of those claimed they rarely miss a match. Another important point is related to the fact that no female respondents have managed to recall more than four sponsors; and fourteen of the male participants have come up with five, six, seven or even ten sponsoring brands. There are several studies suggesting that women’s memory is better functioning than the one of opposite sex (Macrae, 2015) (LaMotte,
2015) (Denckla, n.d.) (Grant, 2013). But according to these research findings, females did not perform a simple task of recalling sponsors’ names as well as men. On these grounds, it is possible to reject the hypothesis entirely.

The last hypothesis connected to the number of sponsors recalled by the participants of the survey assumes that the level of interest has a strong positive correlation with those figures. After a cautious analysis of the data, it pattern can be clearly demonstrated. The respondents who did not show much appreciation for a team or athlete of their choice on average were able to name few or even none sponsors. The members of this category of interest to the club made five out of nine answers failing to recall any brand. As the admiration to the sports team was growing a larger portion of respondents managed to evoke memories of numerous sponsors. The medium group, marking their interest at the level of three out of five maximum, has demonstrated more impressing results: more than a half of the respondents in this group has recalled more than two sponsoring brands. The next option of four out five points of interest has scored exactly half of the answers on this range, but the highest number of companies named reached a mark of six units. The group, which has revealed the uppermost interest in a chosen team or athlete, has demonstrated some outstanding results. It is the only category that has managed to reach seven and ten sponsors recalled. There were also more respondents naming over one brand in general. It is worth noticing that the dynamics are not flawless, and there are some exceptional cases. For instance, one person, who has marked his involvement with a team as a ‘two’, was able to list six sponsors. It is similarly unanticipated that a participant with a highest level of interest could not recall any brands associated with his favorite athlete – Usain Bolt. Those answers could be attributed to an unpredictable nature of humans’ minds. Still, the hypothesis can be
accepted, as it has been established that higher stage of attention to a club or a sportsman increases the number of sponsors being recalled.

The next set of hypotheses will contain the information of products or services’ usage, which is anticipated to measure the influence on buying decisions of sports viewers. The first hypothesis in this group claims that the older the sports admirers are, the more likely they are using the brand. In order to have accurate assessments, the data has been transformed into a percentage format.

As it can be seen in the diagram above, the group under eighteen years old is the only one, which has a percentage of non-users higher than those who have ever tried sponsors’ products or services. This condition can be explained by the juvenile age, as in most countries youngsters do not support themselves financially until they reach maturity; thus, they do not have a complete control of their expenditures. The rest of the categories have a slight percentage of people, who have never obtained sponsoring brands. The groups of people from the age of forty to fifty and over fifty years old have been represented by a small portion of the participants of the research; though, pure
hundred percent of them have utilized at least one of the brands at some point of the time. Interestingly, they have named both products and services sponsoring companies. This diversity in their choices implies that the result is not biased and provides reliable information. This hypothesis is ought to be fully accepted.

The next theorem is discussing the relationship between the gender and the usage of sponsorship products. It is assumed that females are more likely to be influenced by a brand supporting a team or athlete they have a positive attitude towards (HGS Meaning, 2012, p. 89). To avoid any confusion, the data for these dimensions has been transformed into percentages.

The histogram presented above has an accurate exemplification of the data distribution. As it can be seen, the scattering of the result has been almost equal among the genders. Two third of female participants – 66.67% – have claimed they have tried sponsors’ products or services at some period of time. A slightly bigger share – 71.05% – of male respondents have argued the same. This data suggests that sponsorship does not possess a stronger influence on one gender over the other. Thus, on these bases, the hypothesis
has to be rejected. The studies describing females’ openness to advertising power are not sustained by this research.

The subsequent hypothesis reviews the relationship between the extent of the interest in a team or athlete and the usage of the sponsors’ services and products. The theorem suggests that sports viewers with a higher degree of involvement with their favorite team’s performance can possible be influenced by the sponsorship more heavily. The table with the data has been created for the purpose of an accurate evaluation of the hypothesis (Appendix 4). The analysis of the data can be divided into two groups, based on the existence or absence of any experience with sponsoring brands.

The first category examines the theory with regards to the participants who have used products or services of the sponsors that they have been able to recall. Even considering the fact that the number of users decreased when the level of interest has moved from option one – the lowest available – to option two, there is a pattern that can be clearly seen. The involvement with a sports club has a strong positive correlation with the number of people, who take actions and try the products and services. Over thirty-seven percent of people, who have used sponsoring brands, have also selected the highest degree of interest.

The analysis of a second category did not produce similarly well-defined results. This group of data studies the outcomes created by participants who have claimed that they have never used any of the sponsoring brands they have been able to name. Contrarily to the previous scenario, no pattern in data distribution could be defined. Most of the votes have been distributed more or less equally among interest points, but one-third of
the responses was attributed not to the highest degree of involvement, but to the fourth position. This is the ground on which the theory is failing. As a result, the hypothesis can only be accepted for sports viewers, who are probable to use sponsoring products and services.

Sportswear is an inseparable part of the sports world. Every team and athlete have an official sportswear representative. The last hypothesis assumes that this type of sponsorship is able to accumulate new customers and maintain long-term relationships with existing clienteles.

As it has been demonstrated by the analysis of the survey responses, brands of clothes are the most recallable types of sponsors: forty-seven out of seventy participants have included a supporting brand of sportswear on the list. It is even more impressing that out of those respondents forty-one people have obtained a recalled brand at some point in time.

One of the queries in the questionnaire was regarding a preferred brand of sports clothes. It was not amusing that Nike and Adidas have received the vast majority of votes, scoring forty-six and thirty-two percent respectfully. These kit-providing companies are also significant sports sponsors; moreover, they use athletes’ endorsement tool on a frequent basis (Fortunato, 2013, p. 95). In the case of uniform-based sponsorship, the company receives a unique opportunity to include the logo not only on the sportswear but also at the venues and all club or athlete related advertising. The research findings have discovered that twenty-six survey respondents have indicated the same sportswear brand both as the sponsor and as their personal favorite.
These figures declare that over sixty-three percent of participants, who have used sponsoring brand of sports clothes, have named the identical trademark as a preferred one.

The first part of the hypothesis can be accepted, as it has been proven that a large portion of team or athlete’s supporters is willing to try a sportswear sponsor’s products. This implies that it is possible to attract new clients by utilizing this brand communication tool.

The hypothesis has also assumed that sponsorship can assist companies with maintaining existing and acquired customers. The data from this research permits to accept this theory as well. Whenever someone indicated a brand as his or her favorite, it implies that a person is attached to it emotionally and will remain a loyal consumer.
Chapter 5: Discussion

As the result of the thoughtful analysis of the research finding, five out of seven hypotheses have been accepted. The two theorems that have been rejected were claiming that gender has a strong correlation with awareness of supporting brands or the influence of sponsorship. The remaining theories have been proven, and they can have a potential impact on sponsors’ decisions.

In regards to the brand awareness, sports sponsorship and athletes’ endorsement have a positive impact on this segment of brand positioning. This communication tool can be useful for companies that are willing to acquire new customers.

In this respect, age and the level of involvement with team or athlete’s performance play a significant role. Thus, it might be helpful for the companies, which consider sponsoring, to review their strategies. At this point, according to the research findings, youngsters under eighteen years old on average are not able to recall several sponsors, so the sponsoring campaigns might be designed in a way to appeal to a younger generation. The same suggestion also applies to elderly sports viewers, who may enjoy campaigns more appropriate and attractive for their age.

As survey finding suggest, people with a higher appreciation for their favorite team or athlete are more aware of the sponsors. It would be reasonable to concentrate the sponsorship campaigns on them, making those people feeling valuable and appreciated. This attempt will assist in establishing long-term relations with the clients.
The ability of sponsorship to persuade sports viewers to obtain products or services is also dependent on several factors.

Young people are less able to spend money on products and services that require significant investments. For this reason, sponsors might desire to concentrate their campaign on more financially stable sports admirers.

Similarly to the brands awareness, people with higher involvement into sports club or athlete’s functioning tend to be more open toward trying sponsors’ products or services. This aspect can be used by sponsors in order to create a favorable environment for this target group of potential customers. The sense of belonging and sharing values is a significant positive influence on people’s buying decisions.

The last hypothesis has discussed the sportswear sponsorship and endorsement. This type of sponsorship is practically inevitable, as every team and athlete have a uniform designed and created by a particular brand of sports clothes. It is neither effortless nor inexpensive to become a sponsor of a well-known and admired club or athlete, but it eventually produces high-quality outcomes, such as increased brand awareness, improved brands image and enlarged audience of potential customers.
Conclusion

The main purpose of this work was to evaluate the effectiveness of sports sponsorship and athletes’ endorsement as brand communication tools.

For this purpose existing researches have been analyzed. The outcomes of those were not consistent enough to draw a precise conclusion. Thus, an original research has been conducted and examined. The results support the idea, expressed by Fullerton (2007), that sponsorship as a decent instrument that enhances the community involvement of the company and improves its brand image.

Sports sponsorship and athletes’ endorsement possess a significant power to influence five pillars of brand positioning. In particular, they are capable of increasing brand awareness, creating a positive attitude towards the brand and build a more appealing brand personality.

The research has proven that all the objectives, mentioned in the first chapter of this paper, have been met. Sponsorship can accomplish reaching target markets, creating relationship marketing and building an image. The sub-conscious impact of this brand communication tool generates a positive approach to the brand due to its connection with a certain team or athlete the person already feels attached to.

Threats presented by sports sponsorship and athletes’ endorsements are still present, but they can be eliminated or at least reduced with an aid of a carefully planed strategy.
Human aspect has a large impact on determining the effectiveness of the sponsorship or endorsement; thus, brands will gain advantage from investing their time into studying a team or an athlete they are planning on supporting and developing a detailed agreement on terms and conditions of the arrangement.

The benefits of this communication tools, listed in the previous chapters of this work, have been proven to exist and influence potential buyers’ decisions in a desirable for a brand manner.

The effectiveness of sports sponsorship and athletes’ endorsement has been established and proven to significant influence.
Appendices

Appendix 1

Effectiveness of Sports Sponsorship and Athletes' Endorsement

Dear respondent! Thank you for helping to discover more of a fascinating world of sports and advertising. This questionnaire will not take longer than five minutes and the results are anonymous and strictly confidential.

* Required

1. No1 What is your favourite sport to watch? *
   Please, pick one
   Mark only one oval.
   - Football (Soccer)
   - Tennis
   - Basketball
   - Hockey
   - Volleyball
   - Golf
   - Other: .................................................................

2. No2 Please, name your favourite sports team/athlete *

   .................................................................

3. No3 To which extent are you interested in the club/athlete you've picked above? *
   Mark only one oval.

   1 2 3 4 5
   I watch games from time to time
   I never miss a match

4. No4 Please, name as many sponsors of that club/athlete as you can remember *
   Including, but not limited to sportswear, general sponsors, venue sponsors, etc.

   .................................................................
   .................................................................
   .................................................................
   .................................................................
   .................................................................
5. **Q5** Do you use any of those sponsors’ products/services? *  
   Please, select “Yes” if you ever used/obtained at least one of them  
   *Mark only one oval.*  
   - Yes  
   - No  

6. **Q6** If you have selected “Yes” in the previous question, please specify what brand have you used.

7. **Q7** If you have selected “Yes” in question Q6, did you start using that brand before or after it became club’s or athlete’s sponsor?  
   *Mark only one oval.*  
   - Before  
   - After  
   - Not sure  

8. **Q8** To which extent sponsorship was the reason you have started to use the brand?  
   *Mark only one oval.*  
   - 1  
   - 2  
   - 3  
   - 4  
   - 5  
   It was not  
   It was the only reason

9. **Q9** Do you still use that brand?  
   *Mark only one oval.*  
   - Yes  
   - No  

10. **Q10** If you do not, please specify what was the reason you have stopped  
    *Check all that apply.*  
    - I did not like the quality  
    - It was too expensive  
    - I have no need in it  
    - Other: .................................................................

11. **Q11** If you have chosen option “No” in question Q5, please specify why have you never used sponsor-brands  
    *Mark only one oval.*  
    - Financially they are out of my range  
    - I never had a need to  
    - I prefer a competitor’s product/service  
    - Other: .................................................................
12. **What brand of sportswear do you prefer?**

Mark only one oval.

- Nike
- Adidas
- Puma
- Reebok
- Kappa
- Umbro
- New Balance
- Other: ........................................................................................................

13. **Your Gender**

Mark only one oval.

- Male
- Female

14. **Your Age**

Mark only one oval.

- <18
- 19-25
- 26-33
- 34-40
- 40-50
- >50

15. **Is there something you would like to mention, that has not been discussed in the survey?**

All comments are going to be appreciated

........................................................................................................
........................................................................................................
........................................................................................................
........................................................................................................
........................................................................................................
Appendix 2

Correlation between the number of brands recalled and the age of the respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of brands recalled</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age Group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;18</td>
<td>16.67%</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
<td>12.50%</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
<td>4.17%</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-25</td>
<td>4.55%</td>
<td>27.27%</td>
<td>29.55%</td>
<td>18.18%</td>
<td>11.36%</td>
<td>2.27%</td>
<td>2.27%</td>
<td>2.27%</td>
<td>2.27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-33</td>
<td>8.70%</td>
<td>30.43%</td>
<td>13.04%</td>
<td>17.39%</td>
<td>13.04%</td>
<td>4.35%</td>
<td>13.04%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34-40</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>66.67%</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
</tr>
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Appendix 3

Correlation between the number of brands recalled and the gender of the respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of brands recalled</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age Group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>20.83%</td>
<td>37.50%</td>
<td>20.83%</td>
<td>12.50%</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>5.41%</td>
<td>35.53%</td>
<td>15.79%</td>
<td>17.11%</td>
<td>7.89%</td>
<td>9.21%</td>
<td>5.26%</td>
<td>2.63%</td>
<td>1.32%</td>
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</table>

Appendix 4

Correlation between the level of interest in a team or athlete and the usage or its absence of the sponsoring brands

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Level of Interest</th>
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<th>2</th>
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<th>4</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Usage</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have used</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never used</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
References


Nike statement on Maria Sharapova [Television series episode]. (2016, March 8). CNBC NOW (Producer), CNBC.


Sherry, J. C. (1998). The objectives of sponsorship or celebrity endorsement can be categorized six main groups, analogous to advertising aims.


