



**Conceptual framework of sponsorship's relationship with components of
organizational culture**

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Abstract

Sponsorship in sport has become a prominent promotional tool for many companies across the world. Although many studies have suggested elements necessary for successful sponsorships, the lack of emphasis on measurement has the potential for employees to view their firm's sponsorship initiatives as executive ego enhancers. This study highlights the relationship between sport sponsorship, organizational culture, and employee behavioral benefits. By reviewing literature on member identity and people focused components of organizational culture; we propose that when employees are highly identified with their organization, via sport sponsorship, a people focused decision-making culture may result in numerous employee benefits.

Keywords: sponsorship; organizational culture; people focus; member identity

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Introduction

Meenaghan (1991) defined sponsorship as “an investment, of cash or in kind, in an activity, in return for access to the exploitable commercial potential associated with that activity” (p. 36). Companies often utilize sponsorship to establish an association with an event or property in order to share in their image (Javalgi, Traylor, Gross & Lampman, 1994). Javalgi and colleagues (1994) explained how sponsorship has experienced rapid growth over the past four decades in both quantity of opportunities and money invested. Alongside the industry's growth is the exploitable potential of the sport enterprise. Since sport generates a considerable amount of emotional attachment and excitement, sponsorship initiatives commonly involve alignment with the sport industry (Copeland, Frisby & McCarville, 1996).

Sport sponsorship has been explained as the attempt to form a strategic link between a company and a sporting property as a means of communicating brand messages to the vast audience of a particular team, player or event (Javalgi et al., 1994). Along with extensive reach offered by sport to various audiences, the platform has also been known to significantly differentiate a company from its competitors (Hickman, Lawrence & Ward, 2005). Fan's excitement and emotional attachment to various sport teams has made this an attractive option for a company looking to utilize the symbols associated with sport properties as their own (Copeland et al., 1996). In fact, sponsors' objectives have commonly focused on exploiting sport properties' positive images in order to define, improve, or reestablish a company's own image (Farrelly, Quester & Burton, 2006).

Despite sponsorship's expansion over the previous four decades (Cornwell, 2008; Javalgi et al., 1994), many professionals in the field have failed in gaining a clear understanding of what makes sponsorships successful (Cornwell, 2008). Sponsorship in sport has the potential to be a very strategic marketing tool in impacting millions of consumers (Crimmins & Horn, 1996); however, 72% of companies in the International Event Group's (IEG) 2009 sponsorship report indicated they spent 1% or less of their sponsorship budget on measuring the success of their programs (IEG Sponsorship Report, 2009). As indicated by this report, managers have been unable or unwilling to

measure the specific organizational benefit attained by sponsorship initiatives simply because the catalyst of success is unknown. Consequently, sponsors' employees have often viewed sponsorship programs as executive ego-booster, creating negative associations in the realm of sponsorship-linked marketing (Crimmins & Horn, 1996). Negative employee perception has been explained to have the likelihood of alienating staff and offers an explanation for the failure of some sponsorship initiatives (Mitchell, 2002). Therefore, evaluating how sponsorship decisions impact employees would appear to be a valuable consideration for sponsorship managers.

Purpose of Current Study

Since the sport sponsorship market has become more competitive and cluttered over the previous four decades, more attention to the strategic use of sponsorships has been given to the field (Fahy, Farrelly & Quester, 2002). Specifically, literature has displayed a growing concern about how sponsorships have affected the sponsoring company's employees (e.g., Hickman et al., 2005; Rogan, 2008; Farrelly & Greysen, 2007; Grimes & Meenaghan, 1998; Coote & Cornwell, 2004). Increased cost of sponsorships has amplified the need for reasoning and accountability in these investments (Javalgi et al., 1994), along with better communication of sponsorships' business practicality to the organization's internal stakeholders (Grimes & Meenaghan, 1998). The purpose of this conceptual piece is to propose a framework – presented in Figure A – that suggests how sport sponsorship can be used to enhance organizational culture, and thus create many positive benefits for an organization and its employees.

Research specific to sponsorship and marketing's impact on organizational culture has been limited (Baker, Hunt & Hawes, 1999; Coote & Cornwell, 2004). However, some studies have suggested ways sponsorships may affect employees' company perceptions, and the symbolic impact these marketing strategies may have had on organizations' operations (Grimes & Meenaghan, 1998; Nerpin, 2008; Kelemen & Pappasolomou, 2007). In this paper, we first explain organizational culture's components. The subsequent sections will then explain two key characteristics, which have been suggested to capture the essence of an organization's culture. Finally, this study will offer implications and suggestions on how sponsorship decision makers can evaluate their company's employees' identification with sponsorship initiatives, and use this identity to make employee focused decisions in order to achieve both internal benefits and external commercial success.

Conceptual Framework

Organizational Culture

There have been many attempts at defining organizational culture. Schein (1990) examined the term thoroughly and explained organizational culture as a “pattern of basic assumptions invented, discovered, or developed by a given group, as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaption and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid, and therefore, is to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems” (p. 111). A simpler definition from Taylor, Doherty, and McGraw (2008) explained the concept of organizational culture as “the core values, beliefs and assumptions about how things are done within an organization” (p. 85). Any way the term is broken down, culture has been visible through examining what the organization and its employees value, perceive to be important, and assume to be acceptable (Taylor et al., 2008, p. 102).

Culture has been a term relating to the way different groups of people live, or the way things are done in a certain environment. Taylor and her associates (2008) took the term organizational culture beyond its basic and anthropological roots, and identified corporate culture as a key element of strategic human resource management (SHRM). The SHRM process emphasizes the importance of an organization’s internal resources as a means to achieve its strategic objectives, and focuses on treating employees as investments. These investments should be cultivated to develop a strong psychological connection to an organization (Taylor et al., 2008, p. 25).

Hogg and his colleagues (1998) expressed culture as being dependent on how an organization’s employees view their company-wide goals. Osborne (1996) also discussed this idea by suggesting corporate culture is really a reflection of an organization’s business strategy. Exploring culture within the lens of business and organizational strategy makes it appropriate to attempt to relate marketing initiatives and objectives to the internal employees’ perceptions of the sponsoring firm’s culture. In fact, Baker and his colleagues (1999) have posited that since previous researches have stated organizational culture can be manipulated to improve financial performance, gaining a better understanding of how organizational culture can fit in with marketing strategies should be useful to sponsorship managers looking to capitalize on full promotional potential.

Although organizational culture has been entrenched in many firms, culture has still been suggested to have the ability to be evolved by employee attitudes about the way a firm communicates to the external audience (Hogg et al., 1998). In other words, the methods a company utilizes to advertise and communicate its brands to the external constituents may affect the employees' perceptions of how things operate internally; thus, changing the corporate culture. Communicating brand messages through sport sponsorships has appeared to have the ability to project a firm's strategy to the external consumers, and also influence the organizational culture in the eyes of the internal audience (Hogg et al., 1998, p. 883).

Despite the numerous definitions and applications previously discussed, some common themes resonated by most organizational cultural analyses include, (a) who the organization is, (b) how the organization is set up, and (c) what makes a particular organization's way correct (Schein, 1985). One way an organization's culture is visible to employees is through symbolic perceptions of the way work is completed (Handy, 1993). Robbins (1997) identified ten key characteristics capable of capturing organizational culture and describing how tasks are completed, including (a) member identity, (b) group emphasis, (c) people focus, (d) unit integration, (e) control, (f) risk tolerance, (g) reward criteria, (h) conflict tolerance, (i) means-end orientation, and (j) open system focus (p. 602).

For the current study's purpose, the ensuing sections will explore how sport sponsorships fit into the cultural topics of people focus and organization member identity. These two components of organizational culture were further analyzed for a few reasons. First, member identity's relationship with sponsorship and culture will be examined because it has been suggested by some that sponsorships have the ability to use symbolic aspects of sport properties to forge a common identity and relationship with an employee and his or her company (Hickman et al., 2005). Furthermore, Hickman and his associates (2005) proposed sport sponsors "may be looking for ways to match organizational values with the values of fan identity that is already a part of an employee's self concept" (p. 150). For this reason, the model will aim to explain how member identity between individual employees and an organization's sponsorship can work in conjunction with other components of culture to enhance the internal benefits of sponsorship.

It has been suggested by some studies that corporate sponsorships often risk being perceived as executive ego enhancements, which have served to benefit and

entertain top management staff (Crimmins & Horn, 1996). In other words, sponsorship initiatives have the potential to provide perceived incentives in the interest of top executives, and not the entire employee base. The choice to examine people focused culture's relationship with sponsorship lies in the notion that considering employee's affinity for and relationships with sport properties and their characteristics has the potential to increase support in the staff, creating more value to sponsors (Coote & Cornwell, 2004). Moreover, Hickman and his associates (2005) explained how increasing interest of individuals within the workforce remains a solid sponsorship management objective. This study aims to show how sponsorship in sport can impact a people focused organizational culture, which utilizes various interests and identities within the staff, and can benefit employee behaviors.

Sponsorship and Member-Organizational Identity

One of the most common sponsorship objectives for companies has been enhancing, redefining, or establishing a certain brand image (Burton, Quester & Farrelly, 1998). In sport, companies have tried to achieve this objective by choosing events, teams, and properties possessing a desirable fan and consumer association. Sponsors of a property have often attempted to achieve goodwill, or the positive brand perceptions capable of creating a form of equity through associations held by consumers and audiences of a company's messages (Meenaghan, 1991). The following section seeks to explain how sponsorship may build internal employee goodwill and symbolically enhance employee identification with a company's marketing strategies based on the sponsorship programs the company undertakes; essentially enhancing how members identify with an organization, and strengthening company culture.

The first key characteristic holding the ability to capture organizational culture is member identity or "The extent to which employees identify with the organization as a whole, not just their individual job or task" (Robbins, 1997, p. 602). Through sport sponsorship, organizational identity has the capability of being embedded in sponsorship policy (Cunningham, Cornwell & Coote, 2009), reflected by the types of sponsorships undertaken and properties sponsored (Hickman et al., 2005), and expressed by internally communicating desirable values held by the sport property and adopted by the company and its employees (Rogan, 2008). This section will seek to detail the different methods companies may pursue in order communicate organizational values through sponsorship initiatives, and thus impact the member identity component of organizational culture.

Embedding identity in a sponsorship policy

One way organizations have expressed their identity to stakeholders is through their mission statement. Ran and Duimering (2007) indicated mission statements have been thought to represent the essence of organizational identity. Although a company's mission statement has little relevance to involvement in sport, a company's sponsorship policy does. A company's sponsorship policy has been said to be related to a company's mission, and is established to provide guidelines for what a firm will and will not sponsor in sport, music, festivals, and other events (Cunningham et al., 2009). Furthermore, sponsorship policies have served to detail a company's specific vision and values, and have communicated those ideals to employees and stakeholders to display a clear organizational identity (Meenaghan, 2001).

Cornwell, Weeks and Roy (2005) explained an effective sponsorship policy is necessary to ensure employees are able to see the connectivity among the company's mission statement, various sponsorship activities, audiences being targeted, and how they relate to overall organizational objectives. For example, when companies have financial driven success implied in their mission, their sport related sponsorship policies often focused on matching up with individual athletes who "strive to be the best" (Cunningham et al., 2009). In this example, a firm's sponsorship policy communicated a message to its employees regarding the achievement of individual success, and this identity should be resonated in the staff's perception of sponsorships and company values. If employees have perceived these organizational elements as being congruent, a company potentially has achieved strong employee identification between company culture and sponsorship initiatives. While this may be effective in cultivating member identity, a firm's mission statement and sponsorship policy have not been the only company components capable of communicating company values and impacting the organizational culture.

Reflecting identity by types of properties sponsored

Haley (1991) explained how sponsorship programs have been used as strategic tools, communicating the values and ideals held by the company. In sport, these values and ideals take numerous forms; one of these forms has been supporting a local team (Hickman et al., 2005), which reflects the identity of community support. The sponsorships a company has undertaken may have the ability to impact how employees identify with their company, especially if the sponsorship is a local property of interest, favored by many employees (Hickman et al., 2005). This perception of interest in a local

and commonly cheered for team has been said to reflect a symbolic identity of community support and common team interest between employees and organization (Cunningham et al., 2009). The benefit created by the relationship between common fan identities in the company and employees is described by social identity theory.

Hickman and his associates (2005) explained social identity theory as the way an individual identifies his or herself in terms of a belonging to certain social categories. In sport sponsorship's case, this mutual identity between an organization, employees, and a commonly supported team may be reflected when an organization sponsors sport property favored by the employee. Sponsorships have been shown to have the power to reflect an organizational identity in which employees can relate, increasing the likelihood of them giving back to the company through a desire to enhance their performance, further strengthening the culture's values and beliefs. By reflecting identity through types of sponsorship programs, a company can generate a greater sense of in-group identity and belonging, negating the impact of mere task-oriented thinking, and impact culture in many positive ways (Hickman et al., 2005).

Expressing identity through relevant values held by property

On top of reflecting identity through sponsorship of property in which employees relate, organizations have also used sponsorship to express and project desirable values held by a particular property towards internal constituents. For instance, if a company sponsored the Olympics, they may have utilized Olympic characteristics and generated employee identification with themes specific to the games such as a mindset towards the highest performance, reaching elite levels of individual performance, striving for overall team success, and accomplishing goals of an entire team or country (Rogan, 2008). The values and attitudes held by Olympic athletes and participating countries can be applied internally to foster the same ideals in organizational culture and identity.

Rogan (2008) told an anecdote of a Lane4's sponsorship of the Global Ocean Race Crew, which explained how a company can utilize a sponsored property's values by expressing and instilling them internally to employees. This sponsorship had commercial purposes; however, Lane4 used this commercial partnership as an activity to express and communicate the desirable identity of the Global Ocean Race Crew and inspire its employees to establish the same organizational culture views. Lane4 interviewed sailing crewmembers and discovered the cultural values and characteristics that were believed to make this team high performing and successful. This untraditional benchmarking activity provided the company with a list of team characteristics, which

included (a) ability to handle pressure, (b) high levels of innovation and risk taking for success, and (c) healthy competition between group members (p. 270). Lane4 then used this team identity in order to express and impact their company's culture, and its employees' member identity surrounding the marketing campaign. Activities like the one described here have been used to reinforce, redefine, or establish company culture and enhance member identity around a commercial, yet internally strategic sponsorship (Cunningham et al., 2009).

People focus: How sport sponsorship affects employees

Varey (1995) illustrated an employee-focused trend of many companies, who were beginning to target their marketing and sponsorship strategies to customers, while also taking into account how these strategies could impact the organization's employees. This trend was a similar assertion to what Robbins (1997) described as a people focused culture, or an internal organizational structure that greatly considers how company decisions would affect its employees. Coote and Cornwell (2004) explained the importance of using decisions about sponsorship programs to influence the staff's attitudes and behaviors, increasing the value and effectiveness of the program in return. When an organization's employees have been a focus point of a sponsorship, the company culture may be positively impacted and sponsorship's commercial potential maximized.

Implementing an employee focused sponsorship strategy can have numerous positive outcomes, such as an increase in employee's organizational commitment (Hickman et al., 2005), and task and job engagement (Rogan, 2008). The following will analyze each of these benefits of employing a people focused organizational culture through sponsorship.

Organizational commitment

Today, especially in the realm of sport, firms have learned employee commitment should not be expected; rather, commitment must be earned (Hickman et al., 2005, p. 151). Employee commitment has been found to be negatively correlated with an employee's intention to leave, helping companies retain employees and prevent costly turnover and recruitment costs (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Inglis, Danylchuk & Pastore, 1996). Moreover, Mathieu and Zajac (1990) also found evidence suggesting committed workers are also more likely to achieve better job-related performance. Clearly, some researches would support the idea that committed employees are better for achieving organizational success. As it relates to sport sponsorship, Hickman and his associates

(2005) explained a sponsorship, if perceived as supportive to employees, has the potential to foster the feeling of mutual care between employees and their organization, which then leads to increased organizational commitment. Although research regarding culture's effect on organizational commitment has been limited, Aicher (2010) suggested commitment's antecedents may be correlated to culture.

In 1991, Meyer and Allen conceptualized three distinct types of organizational commitment. These three types of commitment included (a) continuance, (b) affective, and (c) normative. Since continuance commitment is based on an employee's awareness of the personal costs and lost investments associated with leaving an organization (Turner & Chelladurai, 2005; Meyer & Allen, 1997), and not any type of affinity or identification with an organization, we will leave this type out of our review. The other two forms of commitment will follow, as we first distinguish between the two, and then explain their potential interplay with sport sponsorship.

Affective commitment

Employees who have cared about their company and believed in its strategies have been explained to increase their loyalty and commitment to their employer (Mitchell, 2002). Affective commitment is based on an employee's emotional attachment and involvement in an organization (Turner & Chelladurai, 2005). In other words, affective commitment influences employees to remain with a company because they *want* to, due to rewarding work experiences and work fulfillment (Meyer & Allen, 1991, 1997).

Employees have been said to contain more than just economic interests in their company; interests also consist of social desires such as solidarity and affinity for the firm in which they work (Hickman et al., 2005). Furthermore, Hickman and his associates (2005) presented evidence that "demonstrated that employee perception, attitude and behavior are positively affected by sport sponsorship by means of affinity with a sport team" (p. 154). The potential of sport sponsorship to manifest employee's organizational and sponsor affinity, causes us to look into how this emotional attachment (as explained by Meyer & Allen 1991), can be created by a people focused culture, generated by sponsorship initiatives in which employees are also highly identified with.

Responding to these social and affinity interests may be achieved in a number of ways; the conceptual model presented in Figure A expresses a method of using a sport sponsorship in order to foster affinity and commitment in employees. When a firm sponsors a team, player or event, especially one in which employees already have an

affinity for, employees may be more committed to their company (Hickman et al., 2005), due to positive work experiences and job fulfillment. As it is related to sponsorship, positive work experiences may be an employee's opportunities to attend sponsored sporting events (Hickman et. al, 2005), or reaping the benefits of other ancillary sponsorship components. Supplying sponsored event tickets to employees, such as the case where Guinness supplied its employees tickets to the Rugby World Cup (Hickman et al., 2005), may work to increase job fulfillment and employee affinity for their organization; thus, enhancing affective organizational commitment.

Normative commitment

In 1991, Haley explained corporate contributions (e.g., corporate sponsorships) were strategic resources, having dimensions with the ability to communicate symbolically and shift perceptions of an organization's employees. In other words, sponsorships may have the ability to communicate important corporate values and characteristics to staff, influencing how employees view their employer's strategies. Studies have shown positive employee perceptions of their company's sponsorships are positively related to organizational commitment (Hickman et al., 2005). The form of commitment Hickman and his associates may have been discussing is normative commitment. Normative commitment refers to an employee's perception of moral obligation to continue employment with a firm, or feeling they *should* stay with an organization because of congruence in individual and organizational values (Turner & Chelladurai, 2005; Meyer & Allen, 1991).

Organizational commitment has been suggested to arise from congruence between individual and organizational values (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986). As it relates to sponsorship initiatives, a people focused culture would look into how the values held by various sport properties are either resonated by employees, or have potential to harm congruency between staff and property values. Hickman and his colleagues (2005) stated "Corporate sport sponsorship as a purposeful internal marketing tool can stimulate employee commitment if employees perceive sponsorship as a signal of organizational support" (p. 151). The concept of organizational support may include support for mutual moral and individual values between a company and its employees.

Mitchell (2002) explained that by focusing on the people in an organization, a company might avoid creating messages that have the ability to build resentment within the organization. One may feasibly say that messages and symbolic communication building resentment would work against normative organizational commitment. Coote

and Cornwell (2004) proposed communicating an identity within a corporation's sponsorship program might represent important symbols in which employees can identify with, creating increased employee citizenship behaviors. A people focused culture should evaluate the symbolic messages that could potentially resonate with the company's staff, and utilize these symbols to increase normative commitment through sport sponsorship initiatives.

Engagement

The notion of employee engagement is relatively new in the field of organizational management, but it can be analyzed by examining many different psychological states, traits and behaviors regarding employees and their company (Macey & Schneider, 2008). Despite the many complex facets employee engagement has been suggested to contain, Macey and Schneider (2008) acknowledged engaged employees contribute more to an organization. Although Macey and Schneider maintained employee engagement has been, and will continue to be, a difficult element to be defined and constructed, Branham (2005) suggested engagement is a condition in which employees become highly energetic, feel great pride for their company, and thus, are willing to completely focus on the task at hand. Additionally, acknowledging prideful, energetic and engaged employees have the potential to be a key competitive advantage for any business (Macey & Schneider, 2008).

Sponsors in sport have found their sponsorships to be more successful when fans are involved and engaged in the marketing activities (Cornwell, 2008). Cornwell further stated the more involved the audience, the more likely they will remember and be affected by a company's sponsorship messages. Along with the importance of external engagement, companies have now begun to leverage their sport sponsorships to build enthusiasm and engage not only consumers, but also employees (Inglis et al., 1996). However, a survey taken by Branham in 2005, studying US employees, indicated only 25% of US professionals are engaged in their work.

Sport sponsorship may have the ability to engender employee pride and enthusiasm commonly found amongst engaged employees. To support this, Rogan (2008) suggested sponsorships of sport properties have had potential to create a deep emotional and rational dedication between employees and their organization. In conjunction with sponsorship's ability to create a connection between employees and organization, a company may use the emotions fostered by sponsorship as organizational cohesion, which bonds individuals together around common pride with

marketing activities and sport affiliations (Grimes & Meenaghan, 1998). Again, this pride is common in engaged employees, and empirical evidence suggests when this pride occurs, fans (or employees in this case) may internalize a sponsored team's success as their own success (Hirt, Zillmann, Erickson, & Kennedy, 1992).

The increased focus on internal engagement in sponsorship efforts is due to the notion that employees who are engaged in their company's marketing efforts have been suggested to hold more power to make the brand, or sponsorship, come alive for consumers (Mitchell, 2002). However, sport sponsorships may be dangerous, in that if value has not been communicated to employees, and decisions have displayed merely executive incentive and focus, the investment may be perceived as a managerial benefit (Haley, 1991), which would seem to work against a people focused culture.

Companies have begun to see the benefits of focusing on employee's needs and wants, evaluating these desires, and engaging these employees in sponsorship efforts. If a sponsorship has accomplished employee engagement it has been suggested to create three great company benefits, including (a) reduced turnover, (b) increased productivity and profitability, and (c) higher customer loyalty (Rogan, 2008). Kahn (2009) suggested when employees are able to 'be the brand' and become engaged in the company, they interact with customers in a way increases and reinforces the brand experience. Furthermore, it has been said the relationship between employee engagement created by sponsorship and enhanced customer service may lead to an increase in sales (Rogan, 2008). Thus, it should remain a managerial objective to focus sponsorship decisions on engaging the firm's employees.

Discussion and Conclusions

Theoretical Implications

The previous literature review has sought to form a link between sport sponsorship and the cultural components or member identity, and people focused decision-making. This section will aim to describe the conceptual framework from the model provided in Figure A. The framework's components include (a) member identity, (b) people focused decision making, and (c) the individual employee behavior components of organizational commitment and engagement. Due to the findings from the literature review, we propose sport sponsorships, in which employees identify with, may lead to a more people focused decision making culture, and thus may also increase affective commitment, normative commitment and employee engagement.

This article attempted to explain that through embedding an organizational value system through sponsorship policies, reflecting common team and community support through sponsorship, and expressing desirable values and identity found in the sport property sponsored are all methods of creating, redefining or enhancing an organizational identity. The framework here puts forward that member identification underlines the model; in that by first evaluating the teams and values employees identify with, sponsorship managers are better able to focus on how sponsorship decisions potentially impact employees. Furthermore, this people focused decision-making process, based on employees' identification, has the potential to enhance employees' organizational behaviors.

Managerial Implications

Although sponsorships objectives have commonly been focused on nurturing business relationships and achieving external awareness objectives (Grimes & Meenaghan, 1998), there have been recent studies recommending that companies build relationships, and attempt to identify with the company's employees as well. Hickman and his associates (2005) have claimed sponsorship has the capability of communicating internally and altering a company's culture. The current study has utilizes Haley's (1991) claim, which explained employees form their perceptions based on the way managers utilize their monetary resources. Therefore, this study has aimed to illustrate to managers how sponsorship investments can play a role in how employees perceive their company's organizational culture, and affect individual employees' organizational behaviors.

Based on the competitiveness and costliness of the sponsorship industry, employee participation and communication in the way sponsorship decisions are made has become increasingly important (Kelemen & Papasolomou, 2007). By using member identity as a SHRM tool, managers may enhance their ability to evaluate the impact sponsorship decisions have on their employees. This people focused decision-making has been suggested to heighten managers' ability to achieve organizational and employee engagement and reap the aforementioned benefits.

The increase in sponsorship cost and calls for greater accountability have made it essential for managers to legitimize and gain support of their actions with all organizational stakeholders (Burton et al., 1998). The previous sections have offered the idea of sponsorship's symbolism and the role it has been suggested to play in individual employees, organizational processes, and ultimately organizational culture. The ideas

outlined have emphasized the importance of using sport sponsorship to enhance brand perceptions of not only in the intended external audience, but also by the company's staff.

Organizational culture was briefly described as what the organization values and believes to be important to achieving company goals (Taylor et al., 2008). Research has shown companies have been (a) using sponsorship policies to embed organizational identity (Cunningham et al., 2009), (b) reflecting a desirable identity to employees who have common interests or similar goals (Hickman et al., 2005), and (c) utilizing values held by a sponsored property and expressing these values to their own staff (Rogan, 2008). Employing a people focused culture, through sponsoring events of similar interests and identity with employees, has many benefits in strengthening an organization's culture. If the organization has placed focus on how employees are affected by sponsorship decisions, it has been suggested to increase an employee's commitment (Hickman et al., 2005), and engagement (Rogan, 2008).

This study has proposed a conceptual framework, while including managerial suggestions. Though limited, research on the topic of sponsorship's impact specific to organizational culture has displayed an opportunity to attain many benefits through the use of employees as a strategic tool in achieving organizational objectives. Nonetheless, the propositions posited by this study would need to be tested in order to substantiate the claims made by this conceptual piece. However, due to the aforementioned benefits included in the literature review, sponsorship's impact on a sponsor's staff and organizational culture is a topic sport managers can expect to see more research on in the coming years.

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