Examine the Fit between the Event and the Sponsor and their Influence on Consumer's Attitude and Purchase Intention: A Case of Indian Premier League

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Abstract—*Nowadays, a number of corporate sponsors participate and invest in sports sponsorship, to reach their target audience and to improve the brand image of their product. In India, the Indian Premier League is the first of its kind which had gathered the interest of both the sponsor's and the fans. During the IPL season different sponsors from the different brands had associated with the league for the promotion of their brands. The study used structural equation modeling technique to analyze the impact of personal liking for the event, sports identification, perceived sincerity, and status of the event as predictors of event-sponsor fit in sports sponsorship context. This study had also attempted to ascertain the impact of event-sponsor fit on two other behavioral outcomes, such as attitude towards sponsor and purchase intention. Data were collected from the 244 Indian Premier League (IPL) viewers those had watched the match on the ground. The study found that personal liking for the event, sports identification and perceived sincerity had negative impact on event-sponsor fit but the status of the event had positive impact on it. The event-sponsor fit impacted positively the perception of consumer toward the sponsor which had a positive influence on their purchase intentions.*

Keywords: *Sponsorship, Sport consumer behavior, Sports sponsorship, Structural equation modeling*

1. INTRODUCTION

According to the International event group (2000) sponsorship had defined as 'a fee paid in the form of cash, goods, or services to the property (i.e. sport event or organization) in return for taking the advantage of exploitable commercial potential associated with that property'. Legae (2005) defined sponsorship as a business agreement between two parties in which sponsor paid fee in cash or in kind and in exchange sponsored party (i.e. individual, event, or organization) provided an opportunity to utilize the rights and associations that the sponsor used commercially. According to IEG Sponsorship report (2013) sponsorship expenditure by companies worldwide increased by $51.1 billion in 2012 to $53.3 billion in 2013.

The study of the past literature related to sponsorship showed that, companies could achieve their corporate and marketing objectives with the help of sports sponsorship. Sponsorship objectives often include increasing the sales of the organization (Gwinner and Swanson, 2003), consumer brand recall (Kim, Tootelian and Mikhailitchenko, 2012), and improve the brand image of the organization (Bibby, 2011). In essence, the sponsoring organization used sponsorship, to form the positive link between the sponsoring brand and the target customers (Crimmins and Horn, 1996). By using these elements, the researchers tried to influence the behavioral intentions of the fans and the customers.

In the previous studies the researchers had used the different constructs to measure attendee's (fans, or consumer's) cognitive, affective and behavioral attitude in the form of image transfer (Gwinner Larson and Swanson, 2009), involvement with the event or the team (Beaton, Funk, Ridinger and Jordan, 2011), preferences towards the event, team or the sponsor (Ian and Kate, 2007) and to purchase the product of the sponsor of the event or the team (Kim, James and Kim, 2013). But all these studies and constructs measured the impact of the sponsor's brand outside India. This study used the constructs which had already used in the other studies. But we checked all the reliability and validity measures of the data in the Indian context. This is the first paper, which had used the views of the live audience towards the event and their sponsor. This study had used the measurement model and the structural model to find out the cause and effect relationship between the event and the sponsor fit and its impact on their attitude towards the sponsor's brand and their purchase intentions.

The manuscript has written in the following sections. In the first section, the study described the theoretical validity of the model by using the different studies related to the event (team or the sponsor's) of the event and on that basis developed the hypothesis of the study. In the second and third section, the

paper clearly defined the research methodology that can be used in the study and the explanation of the different techniques which had used for the analysis of the data. In the end, the study discussed the result and findings and their implications on the theoretical and managerial point of view.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Event-Sponsor Fit

Event-sponsor fit means the compatibility between the event and the sponsor, so the sponsor could get the benefit by attaching their brand with the event. In the sponsorship literature, event-sponsor fit had been used to indicate a consumer's perception of liking between the sponsor and the sponsored team event (Meenghan, 2001; Cornwell, Weeks, & Roy, 2005; Koo, Quarterman, & Flynn, 2006). In a study by Gwinner and Eaton (1999) found that sponsorship companies were getting the benefit of sponsoring team/event if the consumer perceived the similarity between the team and the event. That similarity may be functional based (brand was used in the event) or image based (resemblance between image and event). In the other study by Gwinner and Bennett (2008) it was found that, consumer's perception of fit between the event and the sponsor brand, could influence their attitude towards the sponsor brand and this had also affect their purchase intentions. In the recent study by Gwinner et al. (2009) found, the positive impact of team identification and event-sponsor fit on consumer's perception of image transfer from the outcome to the sponsored brand. The survey too found that positive image of the brand in the judgment of the consumer's could also affect their purchase decisions.

2.2. Personal Liking for the Event

Personal liking for the event was a direct benefit that the individual attendant of the event received directly by seen that sporting event. A model developed by Close, Finney, Lacey, & Sneath, (2006) showed that an event attendee's knowledge of the sponsor's products, sports enthusiasm and sports activeness had the positive impact on the spectators perception of the sponsor's community involvement in the event. That involvement impacted positively, the perception of attendee's, towards the sponsor's brand, which delivered a positive influence on their purchase intention. A study by Close and Lacey (2015) used fan attachment as a variable in their study and found that those fans who had attached with the event shared favorable thoughts about the event which could help to increase the attendee's patronage towards the sponsor's product. This discussion drives our first hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: More the liking for the event, higher the perception of the event-sponsor fit.

2.3. Sports Identification

Sports identification means, the knowledge of the attendees (fans) about the particular sport or the event. In the sports literature, there were large variations found between the thinking of high identified fans and low identified fans. Those attendee's (fans) had high attached with the sport (or event), they had also found positive perception, about the sponsor's of that particular event (Madrigal, 2000; 2001). A study by Gwinner and Bennett (2008) discovered that event-sponsor fit was positively influenced by sports identification. High identification with the sports increased the fit perception, which positively affects the perception of consumer's towards the sponsor, which could also affect their purchase decisions. In another study by Mahony, Madrigal & Howard, (2006) provided a psychological commitment to team scale for assessing intensity of fans commitment to a particular sports team. This treatment will contribute to our second hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: Higher the sport identification, higher the perception of event-sponsor fit.

2.4. Perceived Sincerity

Perceived sincerity means consumer perception towards the sponsor brand. When the consumer perceived a sponsor, sincere in their sponsorship and not motivated by the commercial objectives, this could increase positive response towards the sponsor and willingness to consider the sponsor's product. Speed and Thompson (2000) used perceived sincerity as a construct in their study and found that, consumers were more willing to buy the product of the sponsor, if they were determined by the earnestness of the sponsor. Rifon, Choi, Trimble & Li (2004) used mediation analysis in their study and found that, if consumers think that, the sponsor was taking part in the event to make the profit, not for altruistic motive, then it could negatively affect the credibility of the sponsor. The survey also found that, credibility was an important factor, which could shape the consumer attitude towards the sponsor. On that base we form our third hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Higher perceived sincerity of the sponsor will result higher event-sponsor fit.

2.5. Status of the Event

An associative memory network viewed by Keller (1993) suggested that the importance of the brand had increased if that brand was associated with the celebrity through endorsement or linked with any sports event through sponsorship. In substance, the positive image of the celebrity or event had transferred to the sponsored brand. A study by Stipp and Schiavone (1996) suggested that the companies of different brands wanted to cash the opportunity, by linking their product with high status event such as the Olympics or World cups, because these types of events were highly admired and watched by the audience. Kim (2010) tried to found the impact of sports sponsorship on stock market returns

of companies, after tying with the sports event (i.e. World cup and the PGA), on the basis of three factors such as sponsorship fit, event characteristics and brand equity. The study found that sponsors were getting the unusual returns after sponsoring the World cup and the PGA. The subject area likewise found that every sponsor related to these events not enjoyed the abnormal returns. On the basis of the above discussion, we propose our fourth hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: Higher the perceived status of the event, higher the event- sponsor fit.

2.6. Attitude towards Sponsor

The sponsorship, literature suggested that, those consumers, who had a confident image in their mind for the sponsor's brand, had more willingness to buy the product of the sponsor (Stipp and Schiavone, 1996; Close and Lacey, 2015). A study by Koo et al., (2006) also explored the same concept of fit in the form of high versus low degree of image fit. The survey found that, if the individual respondent perceived the high point of relevance between the sponsoring brand and the event image, then this could positively affect their attitude towards the sponsoring brand, than those subjects who perceived a low degree of image fit. In another study by Rifon et al., (2004) found that, if congruence or fit existed between the socially desirable cause and the sponsor, then this would lead to increase the sponsor credibility and positively affect the consumer attitude towards the sponsored brand. On the basis of following information, we form our fifth hypothesis:

Hypothesis 5: Positive perception of event-sponsor fit will result a positive attitude towards the sponsoring entity.

2.7. Purchase Intention

In behavioral outcome, researchers attempted to encounter out the effect of sponsorship on consumers' purchase intentions. A study by Kim, James and Kim (2013) with the help of a model, tried to investigate that, sports consumers buying decisions were collectively determined by their motives (i.e. Hedonic, psychological and societal) and commitments (i.e. Affective, continuance and normative). The study found that, different motives could affect the sports consumer's commitments to purchase the particular product or not. In another study by Herrmann, Kacha and Derbaix (2015) established the positive relation between the sponsor's promotional activities, the consumer's attachment with the sponsored brand and their behavioral intentions. In other words, sponsors leveraged activities related to the sponsorship, could increase the awareness of the consumer's (or fans), about the sponsored entity, which delivered a positive impact on their purchase intention. Lastly we propose our sixth hypotheses:

Hypotheses 6: Consumer's positive thinking regarding the sponsoring entity can alter their purchase decisions.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Scale Measures

Likert type scale and semantic differential scale had used to measure the different constructs of the study. Because all constructs were opted from the previous studies, so to meet the requirement of the study, slight changes had been done in the constructs. All the constructs and their items were displayed in table 1. All the constructs (except the attitude towards sponsor and purchase intention) were measured on a seven-point Likert-type scale ranged from 1 (strongly agree) to 7 (strongly disagree). To measure personal liking for the event, the four-items, seven-point Likert scale was selected from Speed and Thompson, (2000). Sports identification was measured on a six-items, seven-point Likert scale adopted from Cornwell and Coote, (2005), earlier used by Bhattacharya, Rao and Glynn (1995) and Meal and Ashforth (1992). Perceived sincerity of sponsor was measured on a three-items, seven point semantic differential scale taken from Rifon et al., (2004) earlier used by Mackenzie and Lutz, (1989). Status of the event was assessed with a three-items and event-sponsor fit with four items, seven-point Likert scale based on work by Speed and Thompson (2000). To measure attitude towards sponsor, three-items, seven-point semantic differential scale was taken from Speed and Thompson, (2000) firstly used by Bruner and Hensel (1992). The purchase intention was measured through a three-items, seven-point semantic differential scale specific to the sponsor (Vivo), developed by Ngan, Prendergast & Tsang (2011).

3.2. Data Collection

The Indian Premier League (IPL) season 9 had started from 8th April, 2016 and ended 29th May, 2016. The data were collected from 244 respondents, who had watched the match of the IPL on the PCA ground of Mohali. The brand Vivo gets chosen because it was the main title sponsors of the IPL in that season. In the ninth season of IPL, Vivo brand had spent Rs100cr for a year to be a title sponsor of the IPL. The event IPL had been chosen for this study because of the two main reasons. First reason was that the people of India were very much attached with the game of cricket. Second reason was the commercialization of the IPL.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

4.1. Sample Profile

Heterogeneity was marked in the 244 sample respondents under demographic profile. Mostly (64 percent) respondents were male. 16 percent of respondents belonged to 18-20 years, with another (77 percent) ranged from 21 to 30 years and (seven percent) ranged between 31 to 40 years. Analysis also showed a difference in household income with (60 percent) respondents earned less than Rs1, 50000 lac annually, (35 percent) earned between Rs1, 50000- 500000 lac annually and five percent earned greater than Rs500000 lac annually. 22 percent respondents actively played the cricket, 25%

respondents irregularly played the cricket and 53% respondents just watched the cricket.
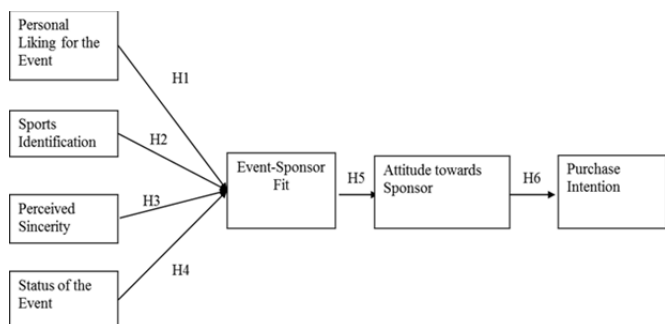
Structural Equation Model

4.2. Measurement Model

The measurement model was tested using confirmatory factor analysis. The model fit was measured using the relative/ normed chi-square (X^2/df), yielding value of $X^2/df = 2.583$, which was below the recommended threshold of 3 (Kline, 2011). The chi-squared value was 707.826 and all factor loadings were statistically significant (P=0.000). The comparative fit index (CFI) was .916 and the tucker Lewis index (TLI) was .901. Thus, both were above the suggested cut off of 0.9 (Hu and Bentler, 1999). The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), which indicated the amount of error in the model, was 0.08, which was equal to the cut-off of 0.08 (Bentler, 1990; Bentler and Bonett, 1980). All the values had shown that the model represents an acceptable fit to the data.

4.3. Structural Model Estimation

Structural equation modeling technique was used to test the hypothesized relationship between the constructs. The structural equation model was tested using the statistical software Amos 21.0. The model had a chi-square value of 715.448, df = 281 and P=0.000. An examination of the Comparative Fit index (CFI= .916), the Tucker Lewis Index (TLI= .901), Incremantal Fit Index (IFI= .915) Parsimonious Fit Iindex (2.546) and the Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA= 0.08) provided evidence for acceptable fit (Bentler, 1990; Bentler and Bonett, 1980).

4.4. Reliability and Validity

In this paper, both the convergent validity and discriminant validity of the model were assessed. Convergent validity was tested using the average variance extracted (AVE), Cronbach's Alpha, and Composite Reliability (CR). The standardized factor loadings for all the constructs used in this study were more than the prescribed cut-off of 0.50 (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988). Composite reliability (CR) values (see Table. 1) were well above the threshold limit of 0.70 (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994), thus demonstrating that the scales measured

the concepts that they were designed to measure. Reliability of every construct was assessed with Cronbach's Alpha which ranged from 0.80 (perceived sincerity) to 0.94 (personal liking for the event) which signified a very good level of reliability for the items and scales that were used in the study (Nunnally, 1978). Discriminant validity (see Table. 2) was assessed through the average variance extracted (AVE) for each latent variable included in the model, which was greater than the squared correlation estimate (Fornwell and Larcker, 1981). The data of Table 1 & 2 shows that these requirements had been met.

Table 1 (a): Descriptive statistics

Constructs	Mean	SD	Range of standardized loadings	CR	Cronbach alpha	AVE
PL	10.39	4.53	.81 - .89	.91	.91	.72
SID	20.66	7.77	.84 - .88	.94	.94	.73
PS	6.41	2.64	.66 - .87	.81	.81	.59
SOE	7.66	3.27	.78 - .80	.83	.83	.63
ESF	10.27	4.36	.74 - .89	.91	.88	.73
ATS	8.79	4.29	.82 - .93	.91	.91	.76
PI	5.89	3.06	.81 – 94	.91	.89	.76

Table.1 (b): Correlation among constructs

Constructs	PL	SID	PS	SOE	ESF	ATS	PI
PL	*.84*						
SID	.64	*.85*					
PS	.23	.19	.77				
SOE	.79	.64	.38	.79			
ESF	.55	.41	.26	.72	.85		
ATS	.16	.22	.34	.35	.47	.87	
PI	.08	.21	.38	.31	.32	.85	.87

Note: PL= Personal Liking for the Event, SID= Sponsor Identification, PS= Perceived Sincerity, SOE= Status of the Event, ESF= Event-Sponsor Fit, ATS= Attitude towards Sponsor PI= Purchase Intention, SD= Standard Deviation, CR= Composite Reliability, AVE= Average Variance Extract
Note: Off-diagonal values were inter-construct correlations and on-diagonal values were $\sqrt{AVEs}$.
Note: All correlations were significant at p <0.01

Table 3: Goodness of fit index and hypotheses

Goodness of fit of the model	Hypotheses	Relationship	Standardized Regression weights	T.Value	Supported vs. Rejected
X^2/df = 2.583	H1	PL →ESF	-.230	-.299	Rejected
CFI = .916	H2	SI →ESF	-.164	-1.189	Rejected
TLI = .901	H3	PS → ESF	-.152	-.223	Rejected

IFI = .915	H4	SOE→ESF	1.150***	5.422	Supported
Chi-Square=707.826	H5	ESF→ATS	.466***	6.338	Supported
RMSEA = 0.08	H6	ATS→PI	.918***	13.524	Supported

Note: *** indicates p < 0.000 and no star means none-significant

5. RESULTS

The study used structural equation modeling technique to examine the different hypotheses H1-H6 of the proposed model. The results of the study had shown in Table. 3. Based on the result, all the constructs didn't have the positive impact on event-sponsor fit as per mention in the hypotheses. The five hypothesis described in the study only the status of the event H4 (β = 1.150) had the positive impact on event-sponsor fit and the three hypothesis personal liking for the event H1 ((β = -.230), sports identification H2 (β = -.164) and perceived sincerity H3 (β = -.152) had failed to impact on event-sponsor fit. Therefore the study rejects the H1, H2, and H3 hypotheses. The study also found the positive correlation between the event-sponsor fit and attitude towards sponsor H5 (β = .466; P < .000). The consumer's positive attitude towards the sponsor impacted positively on their purchase intention also (β = .918; P < .000). It means the study supports the H4, H5, and H6 hypotheses.

6. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

The results of the study showed that if any consumer (or fan) liked the event that didn't mean that he/she liked the sponsor of the event also. The first hypothesis had shown the negative correlation between the personal liking for the event and the event-sponsor fit. This hypothesis suggested that those people, who liked the event, think more positively about the sponsored product then other peoples. But the results of the study showed that peoples of India liked the event (IPL) but they didn't think positively about the sponsor of the event (Vivo). This had also shown in the second hypothesis of the study that there was a negative association between the sports identification and the event-sponsor fit. It means that the consumer's had identified only the game of cricket but they didn't recognize the sponsor of the game. The study also found the perception of Indian consumer towards the sponsor (Vivo) of the event. Because if consumer perceives the sponsor a sincere partner of the event and sponsor had done well to promote the game then the sponsor can get the good results from the sponsorship. But the rejection of the third hypotheses suggested that the Indian consumer didn't perceive the sponsor (Vivo) a sincere partner of the event (IPL). In other words, the Indian consumer's thought that, the sponsor was attached with the event for its commercial benefits.

The main finding of the study was that the event-sponsor fit was positively influenced by the status of the event. The results of the study indicated that, Indian consumer's perceived IPL as a high status event and they were also highly associated with the event. This improved their image of the event and the sponsor.

The study also found that, when the customer formed the positive link between the event and the sponsor, then this could affect their attitude towards the sponsor, which could positively influence their purchase intentions. In other words, outcome of the sponsorship would be affected by the consumer's attitude towards the sponsor and their perception of event-sponsor fit. In this study, the status of the event was only the big factor which had the positive association with the event-sponsor fit. It means those fans/consumers watched the match on the ground they could frame the positive picture about the sponsor (Vivo) in their mind, when they saw the match. The people of India were crazy for the cricket and especially for T-20 cricket. The results showed that the event (IPL) had positive impact on consumer's attitude towards the sponsor (Vivo), which could positively affect their purchase decisions also.

7. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

These days' companies were using sponsorship as a marketing tool to reach their target customers and to improve the brand image of their products. The current work was moving over the useful thoughts to managers and vendors to improve the marketing scheme of their company.

The research findings confirmed that if the event managers make a liaison between the sponsors and the event, then this could give the positive signal to the customers and also transfer the image of the outcome to the sponsor brand. The fit impacted the attitude and behavioral intention of consumers positively towards the sponsor's brand. From the managerial point of sight, it was important to know the perception of the target market about the event, so the firm could use the positive image of the event to achieve their brand positioning goals.

Managers should choose to sponsor events with which they share either a functional or an image fit. High fit benefits sponsor image for more and less involved consumers. In this study, only the status of the event was huge factor which affected positively the thinking of the consumers towards the sponsor and also their buying decisions.

To maximize the value of sponsorship, both the sponsor and the event managers must had the full understanding of the variables that affected the event-sponsor fit. In the previous researches personal liking for the event, sports identification and perceived sincerity had positive impact on event-sponsor fit, but in context to IPL they had negative association with the event-sponsor fit. So it was essential for the managers that they had the complete knowledge of the different variables to guide the consumers and convince them to purchase the products of the firm. This would also help them to determine their target market in terms of brand awareness and image

transfer. They should weigh the factors that were affecting sponsorship success and should incorporate those elements into their preparation process.

For the success of sponsorship, the advertising was an essential tool. The event directors had seen sponsorship as the part of the corporate communication mix. It was important for the event managers that they should communicate and convince the customers, especially those were extremely involved with the event, about the event-sponsor fit.

8. LIMITATIONS

Like all other studies, this study had also contained certain limitations. The first limitation of this study was that we had taken different constructs from different research papers and tried to develop a model. Although we had tested our model with confirmatory factor analysis and structure equation modeling technique and also assessed its reliability and validity but these were only the initial attempts that would be refined in the future research studies. The other limitation of this study was that, this study had used only sports sponsor for their research purposes, which was the part of the sport event. So the results of this study were not applicable to other type of sponsorships such as arts, charitable events or other type of sponsorships.

9. FUTURE RESEARCH

In this research study, several areas related to sports sponsorship had been considered. This study further explored the concepts of event-sponsor fit (Speed and Thompson, 2000; Gwinner and Bennett, 2008; Gwinner et al., 2009). This research takes a step towards understanding how the different variables impact event-sponsor fit and how the fit impacts consumer behavioral intentions. But still, we believe that, in future, we should explore other variables which could affect the fit perception of the customers. In the future studies, we would also find out the impacts of high identified fans and low identified fans on event-sponsor fit or image transfer.

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