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## Sport Event Sponsorship Management from the Sponsee's Perspective

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### Abstract

Sponsorship plays a critical role in the delivery of major sport events. To date, the majority of sponsorship research has focused on the sponsors' perspective or consumer responses. Drawing upon brand alliance literature and relationship marketing theory, this paper discusses learnings from the management of sponsor-sponsee relationships at a major sport event. We provide insights from the sponsee (i.e. the event) perspective: this is intended to further our understanding of relationship management in the context of event sponsorship, as well as providing practical information for both event industry and sport industry practitioners. This case study produced three main findings in terms of relational effectiveness: clear and compatible strategy, development of positive inter-organisational culture and inter-personal relationships, and stability. Each of these attributes are key to successful and effective sponsorship management.

*Keywords:* Sponsorship; relationship marketing; alliance management

## **1. Introduction**

This paper examines the management of sponsorship relationships from the perspective of the sponsee. In a competitive sport and event landscape it can be difficult to attract and retain sponsors. The purpose of this study was to explore how an event with a history of long-term sponsorship partnerships effectively manages these relationships. As noted by Toscani and Prendergast (2018), the sponsee (i.e. the sponsored property) has received much less scholarly attention when compared to the large body of research on sponsors, despite the dyadic relationship of sponsor-sponsee stakeholders. In approaching this from the perspective of the sponsee, the current paper interrogates and categorises organisational complexities, processes and influences in managing multiple sponsors of a major sport event.

Sponsorship revenue has become crucial for the financing and delivery of major and mega-events (Jensen & Cornwell, 2017). As well as economic benefit, event sponsorship can bring lucrative value-in-kind investment and co-marketing opportunities. As has been well documented, there are various benefits for sponsors, including: direct communication and authentic engagement with various stakeholders (Cornwell, 2019); potential to differentiate one's brand in the marketplace (Cornwell, Roy, & Steinard, 2001); the enhancement of corporate image and identity (Cornwell, 2019); the augmentation of brand image and awareness (Cunningham, Cornwell & Coote, 2009); all of which, in turn, increase brand loyalty (Tsordia, Papadimitriou & Parganas, 2018). As such, the sponsorship of events has become a multi-faceted brand and marketing strategy of choice for firms worldwide.

A significant body of research has examined the objectives of firms involved in sport sponsorship and the reasons for sponsorship termination (e.g. Apostolopoulou & Papadimitriou, 2004; Farrelly, 2010; Smolianov & Aiyeku, 2009). Numerous studies have also focused on the impact of sponsorship on consumer responses and attitudes (e.g. Cheong, Pyun

& Leng, 2019; Ko, Chang, Park & Herbst, 2017; Tsordia et al., 2018). For a detailed overview see Kim, Lee, Magnusen and Kim's (2015) meta-analytic review of audience responses to sponsorship. While the sponsor and consumer have been the focus of much attention, there has been a dearth of research into the management of sponsorship from the sponsee's perspective, whether that be an event, league, team, or individual athlete. Cobbs (2011, p. 590) highlighted the lack of attention given to the sponsored property, remarking that 'Scholars have also been slow to reach across the sponsorship dyad to investigate relationship strategy from the perspective of the sponsored enterprise'. Furthermore, Demir and Söderman (2015, p. 272) opined that 'while previous studies have convincingly made the case for sponsorship as a resource and capability, the domain of sport sponsorship is still in its infancy with respect to conceptual rigor and empirical variety'.

One particular area demanding further exploration is inter-organisational relationship management. That is, the relationship between the sponsor firm and the sport or event organisation. Despite the increased discourse and anecdotal assumptions about business-to-business coordination and relationship management in sponsorship contexts, there is still a significant shortfall by way of empirical investigation into relationship dynamics between sponsor and sponsee. Jensen and Cornwell (2017, p. 401) stipulate that 'Despite sponsorship's effectiveness as an international marketing communications platform for global brands and its importance to sponsored organizations, the dynamics of sponsor-property relationships have been afforded scant attention.' As van Rijn, Kristal and Henseler (2019, p. 225) recently state, 'It is necessary to understand the drivers of sponsor-sponsee relationships, and in particular, insights are needed into potential disruptors of these relations.' We note that specifically the sponsee's view, in terms of relationship management, requires attention. To address this, we draw on relationship marketing theory to understand how sponsorship alliances are managed by a sponsee (in a sponsored event).

The following section provides an overview of sport sponsorship research, alliance literature and relationship marketing theory. The methodology underpinning this empirical study is then outlined. The findings from the investigation are then discussed, along with their relationship to previous research. Subsequently, limitations of the study are presented, future research avenues suggested, and conclusions drawn.

## **2. Literature Review**

Event sponsorship ventures occur worldwide as organisations seek brand-related value through association. The majority of research in sport and event sponsorship has focused on the sponsor's perspective (Toscani & Prendergast, 2018). Much attention has been given to the objectives and benefits derived by the sponsor firm (e.g. Berkes, Nyerges, & Vaczi, 2009; Plewa, Carrillat, Mazodier & Quester, 2016; Tsordia et al., 2018). For example, Söderman and Dolles (2010) explored the advertising behaviour and strategic aims of sponsors in China during the years preceding the 2008 Olympic Games. Similarly, Apostolopoulou and Papadimitriou (2004), along with Kang and Stotlar (2011), examined the motivations of Olympic Games sponsors. Moreover, as has been noted recently, "the impact of sponsorship on sponsees is both relatively under-studied and yet of practical importance" (Dickenson & Souchon, 2019, p. 2).

It is acknowledged that brand image transfer is not just an outcome for the sponsor; rather, it is a multidirectional process (Westberg, Stavros, & Wilson, 2011). Sponsorship partners are influenced by the brand strength and reputation of each another; thus, co-branding is an important consideration for all parties in respect of strategic sponsorship acquisition and management. When brands are performing well, the benefits are evident. However, if a scandal or crisis unfolds for either the sponsor or sponsee, it can negatively impact their partner's brands (see: Kahuni, Rowley & Binsardi, 2009). In the business market, which includes the

professional sport sector, brand reputation is increasingly important and often considered one of the most important assets of an organisation. As long noted in strategic alliance literature, to expand the reach of one's brand or improve brand image, organisations are increasingly entering into various forms of co-branding alliances (Rao & Ruekert, 1994; Simonin & Ruth, 1998).

Sponsorship is recognised as a form of co-branding alliance (Tsiotsou, Alexandris & Cornwell, 2014). As such, to further understand the inter-organisational relationship between sponsor and sponsee, we draw on strategic alliance literature.

### **2.1 Inter-Organisational Sponsorship Alliances**

Within sponsorship literature, there is reference to a partnership or alliance between sponsor and sponsee (Farrelly et al., 2008; Morgan, Adair, Taylor & Hermens, 2014; van Rijn et al., 2019), this underscoring the heightened importance of inter-organisational relationship management. As sponsorship represents a form of inter-organisational alliance, it is logical to draw on insights from this body of literature when examining management of the sponsor-sponsee relationship. While some areas of relationship management have been examined in sponsorship literature (see the review below), there remains a lack of attention given to the sponsee in this relational context.

Internationally, strategic alliances have become ubiquitous in business (Wu, Shih, & Chan, 2009). Indeed, it is well recognised that an effective strategic alliance has the potential to create distinct competitive advantage for partners (Bell, den Ouden, & Ziggers, 2006). No surprise, then, that organisations are becoming increasingly dependent on strategic alliances to sustain or improve their market position and enhance business prosperity (Ring, Doz & Olk, 2005). Inter-organisational partnerships not only present access to new markets and resources, but also foster knowledge-sharing and inter-firm learning (Dyer & Singh, 1998).

Strategic alliance literature is robust with definitions of what constitutes a strategic alliance. There is general consensus that strategic alliances involve the purposive partnering of multiple organisations that seek mutual benefit and recognise dyadic dependence (Kale, Singh, & Perlmutter, 2000). Alliance literature covers a vast scope of topics in myriad industry contexts. Considerations in inter-organisational alliance management have been identified as: differences in organisational priorities (Elmuti, Abebe, & Nicolosi, 2005); strategic compatibility (Doz, 1996); cultural differences (de Man, Roijakkers, & de Graauw, 2010); inter-partner commitment and trust (Andersen & Kumar, 2006); and previous alliance experience (Simonin, 1997).

These alliance management considerations are generally categorised into structural (formal) and relational (informal) divisions. The structural elements include formal contracts and documented parameters. It has been suggested that alliance performance is predetermined by factors such as the initial design (Hennart & Zeng, 2005), partner selection (Wu et al., 2009), or strategic compatibility (Koza & Lewin, 2000). The relational (or informal) elements of alliance management focus on the influence of relational interactions and capabilities on alliance performance (Contractor, 2005; Salk, 2005). This is principally concerned with social exchange post-alliance formation; for example, mutual information sharing and partner communication. Relational capabilities in this context are perceived as the proficiency of organisations to interact with others, assisting in knowledge transfer, and innovative alliance growth (Lorenzoni & Lipparini, 1999).

Many scholars contend that these two areas are inextricably linked in alliance management (Dewulf & Kadefors, 2010; Faems, Janssens, Madhok & Van Looy, 2008). A review of the ensuing relational and structural debate in alliance management has been aptly captured by both Contractor (2005) and Salk (2005). The preceding discussion leads to our first research question:



RQ1: When managing sponsorship alliances, what are the key structural (formal) and relational (informal) considerations for the sponsee?

## **2.2 Sponsorship Relationship Management**

Relationship management is of critical consequence to the sponsee, as events are dependent on sponsors for financial investment and brand related value. Over the past twenty years, reference has been made to the importance of relational elements to the longevity of sponsorship arrangements (Cornwell & Maignan, 1998; Farrelly, 2010; Farrelly & Quester, 2005a, 2005b; Farrelly, Quester & Clulow, 2008). Important factors for successful inter-organisational relationships have been identified as trust, mutual understanding, long-term perspective, communication and cooperation (Nufer & Bühler, 2010).

Farrelly and colleagues have led research in the area of sponsorship relationship management, exploring a number of relationship dynamics. This has included: the effect of market orientation on commitment and trust (Farrelly & Quester, 2003a, 2003b); economic and non-economic satisfaction (Farrelly & Quester, 2005a; Farrelly et al., 2008); and the relationship dynamics of trust, commitment, communication and market orientation (Farrelly, Quester & Mavondo, 2003). While Farrelly et al. (2003) provide a sound basis for the exploration of drivers of relational strength, they focused solely on the perspectives of sponsors.

Subsequently, Farrelly and Quester (2005b) further investigated the effects of trust, commitment and satisfaction within the sponsorship relationship; in doing so, they were among the first to examine sponsorship from both the sponsor and sponsored properties' perspectives. In a theoretical paper, Urriolagoitia and Planellas (2007), built on this work and proposed that sponsorship should be viewed as a form of strategic alliance; what was more, the sport property should not be neglected in future analysis. It has been suggested that for sponsorship to function

well, a sponsoring organisation and sport property ought to have an effective business-to-business relationship and that this should be appropriately managed (Davies et al., 2008). However, as highlighted by Cornwell and Kwon (2019, p.1), ‘there is a surplus of research that examines audience responses to sponsorship-linked marketing but a shortage of research that examines marketing management of the sponsorship process’.

While there has been a shortfall in research focusing on the sponsee’s perspective in the sponsorship process (Dickenson & Souchon, 2019; Toscani & Prendergast, 2018; van Rijn, et al., 2019), there has been emerging discourse in this space. For example, Dickenson and Souchon (2019) focused on the effects of sponsorship on the sponsee. These scholars draw on social psychology theory to examine consumer perceptions of sponsee equity. This approach provided novel insight into consumer response directly relating to the sponsee.

Toscani and Prendergast (2018) presented a conceptual paper that reviews sponsorship literature, highlighting relational considerations from the sponsee’s perspective. They concluded that sponsees need to understand their own objectives in order to develop congruent sponsorship alliances. They called for further study in this context, referring to the sponsee as ‘the silent dyadic partner in sponsorship research’ (Toscani & Prendergast, 2018, p. 401). Subsequently, Van Rijn et al. (2019) focused on the discontinuation of sponsorship relationships, thereby providing insights from both the sponsor and sponsee perspectives. They concluded that future research should apply ‘an alliance-based approach to sponsorship relations’ (van Rijn, et al., 2019, p. 238).

These cited scholars have propelled the research conversation towards sponsees. In the current paper, our aim is to further such discussion by providing context-rich insights from the sponsee perspective. This declaration leads to our second research question.

RQ2: From the sponsee's perspective, what factors are important in the maintenance of positive sponsor relationships?

### **2.3 Relationship Marketing Theory**

To address our two broad research questions we draw on relationship marketing theory, which in turn informs the empirical basis of our investigation. Within management and marketing literature, relationship-based theories generally assert that by building relation-specific assets, knowledge-sharing routines and effective governance, firms can leverage their relational resources to competitive advantage (Yli-Renko, Autio & Sapienza, 2001). This can be seen as an extension of the resource-based view, as it maintains that competitive advantage is generated and sustained by dyadic and network relations (Dyer & Singh, 1998). This also ties in with the strategic alliance literature noted above.

In regard to relationship-based theories, the approach most relevant to sponsorship partnerships is the relationship marketing perspective. Stemming from exchange theory, the underlying principle of relationship marketing is that parties receive reciprocal benefits through the relational exchange process. This approach, as opposed to the traditional transactional approach, has its roots in services marketing literature (see: Berry, 1983; Grönroos, 1994). In a broad business sense, therefore, the premise of relationship marketing is collaboration between parties (Gummesson, 2008).

Relationship marketing perspectives have previously been applied to the empirical study of sport sponsorship. For example, Farrelly et al. (2003) drew on relationship marketing theory to study market orientation, collaborative communication, trust and commitment within 20 of the largest sponsor organisations of sport properties in Australia. They found that market orientation and collaborative communication are both important antecedents to commitment. Jensen and Cornwell (2017) applied a relationship marketing lens to a quantitative analysis of

factors and conditions that may jeopardise sponsorship relationships. More recently, it has been used in the study of sponsorship discontinuation (van Rijn, et al., 2019). As these scholars stipulate, the study of sponsorship in a relationship marketing context provides an appropriate framework by which to highlight the antecedents to partnership success or failure.

Thus far, the complexities of sponsorship management have been emphasised in the extant research, along with the need to conceptualise and better understand the relationship from a sponsee's perspective. Drawing on research to date, this qualitative investigation seeks to explore the structural and relational considerations of managing multiple event sponsor relationships. The nuances of case selection, data collection and data analysis are outlined in the following section.

### **3. Methodology**

A social constructivist research philosophy was adopted, the underlying assumption being that observable phenomena and their associated reality involve an interpretivist, as opposed to a positivist, analytical framework (Bryman, 2012). Given the inductive and exploratory nature of the research, a qualitative methodology was deployed to elicit the thoughts, feelings and behaviours of those responsible for managing event sponsorship relationships. As noted by Marshall and Rossman (2011), the purpose of exploratory inquiry is to pursue new areas of investigation, creating categories of meaning while generating ideas for further research.

A qualitative case study design was chosen so that deep understanding of the 'why' and 'how' of contemporary sponsorship management could be established (Yin, 2013). Business scholarship can certainly benefit from interpretive research (Gummesson, 2003), particularly as qualitative data allows for 'thicker' descriptions of organisational reality, thereby providing deep insights into managerial experience (Visconti, 2010). By engaging with individuals

involved with the management and operations of an organisation, researchers can begin to appreciate their underlying complexity (Bluhm, Harman, Lee & Mitchell, 2011). The focus in this paper on a single case study organisation allowed for in-depth analysis of processes and mechanisms.

### **3.1 Case Study Selection**

The selection criteria centred on event sponsorship of a major event heralding national and international significance, where sponsorship relationships were managed internally, as opposed to being outsourced to an external agency. Eventually, a high profile Australian National Sport Organisation (hereinafter Event Owner) that is responsible for the delivery of its sport at all levels across Australia, and organises an international event annually, was selected on the basis of that criteria. The annual sport event in question generates significant commercial revenue and receives extensive international media coverage. It provided a context within which the complexities of large-scale sponsorship relationships could be studied. For commercial-in-confidence reasons, along with a request for confidentiality, the case study event and Event Owner cannot be named.

It is important to note that the relationships under investigation were between the Event Owner and the sponsors. In this case, the sponsoring firms specifically sponsor the event, as opposed to the Event Owner or the relevant sport more generally. Event sponsorship was managed by the Sponsorship Unit, which resides within the Event Owner's Commercial Sector. The structure of this staffing arrangement is depicted in Figure 1.

**\*Insert Figure 1 near here\***

### **3.2 Data Collection & Analysis**

Prior to data collection, university ethics approval was granted and a commercial-in-confidence agreement with the Event Owner was executed. Case study data was collected

through in-depth interviews and document analysis. One-on-one interviews were deemed most relevant to address the research questions, and the most suitable technique to gain a holistic understanding of sponsorship management within the organisation. Informed by the sponsorship and alliance literature, an interview schedule was developed. Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to ask specific questions and guide the conversation, while also allowing flexibility from respondents during discussion. For example, we asked interviewees: ‘How would you describe the relationship between your organisation and your sponsorship partner?’.

To ensure a comprehensive understanding of sponsorship operations, and thus relational elements of the sponsor-sponsee dyad, the entire Sponsorship Unit was interviewed. Interviewees were encouraged to freely discuss aspects they deemed most critical to sponsorship management; this avoided a prescriptive approach on the part of the researchers. We interviewed all personnel involved in the day-to-day management of sponsors.

All individuals identified in Figure 1 were interviewed; this involved a total of thirteen interviews (two rounds of interviews were conducted). Figure 1 indicates whether the individual was interviewed in the first round (i.e. int. 1), second round (i.e. int. 2), or both (int. 1 & 2). Upon analysis of round one interviews, it was evident that further data was required from some interviewees. The second round of interactions involved four repeat interviews, which allowed for clarity of themes. The second round of interviews included two additional informants: the Commercial Manager and the Business Development Manager. While these two individuals did not reside directly within the Sponsorship Unit, they were involved with strategy development and broader commercial activity relevant to sponsorship relations.

Interviews lasted between 30-90 minutes; they were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Data analysis followed an iterative path. Initial evaluation involved reading and re-

reading the transcripts to ensure high familiarity with the data, which was manually coded. Analysis began with open coding processes, which allowed for categorisation of phenomena. This was followed by the more specific process of axial coding. Data was displayed in numerous ways during the process of analysis. Key themes emerged and a coding-system was established.

While the principle focus for this paper is on interview data, document analysis was also conducted. This included the Event Owner's previous twenty-nine years of Annual Reports and Financial Statements, four Strategic Plan documents, and 10 recent media releases/marketing fact sheets. Review of these documents provided comprehensive background information on the Event Owner, its sponsorship history, strategy and performance. This information was used to inform interviews, provide a more holistic understanding of the organisation and, allowed for greater contextual detail when analysing interview data. As noted by Prior (2011), this type of documented data can inform the researcher as to fundamentals about what is claimed to be going on in an organisation.

### **4. Findings & Discussion**

The focus of this study was on the sponsee perspective of sponsorship management considerations and factors influencing such relationships. The key findings of the case study are presented under three major themes: strategy, culture, and stability. These areas emerged from the data as the main influences on sponsorship relationship management. These themes, associated sub-themes and example data quotes are outlined in Table 1.

**\*Insert Table 1 near here\***

#### **4.1 Strategy**

Event sponsorship is managed not only as a revenue stream but as a strategic resource. Data analysis of the strategy elements identified three sub-themes: (i) image and compatibility; (ii) event value; and (iii) commercial integrity.

**4.1.1 Image and Compatibility.** Brand image and strategic compatibility were found to be critical influences on sponsorship management during the mid-life of relationships. The Event Owner had a clear focus on partnering with internationally prestigious brands. As noted by the CEO in the Event Owner's 2008 Annual Report, they 'see the [event] as a global super brand that will continue to target and attract other global super brands.' During the interview, the Head of Sponsorship summarised the main brand considerations of potential sponsors as: 'global, fit, prestige'. Account Manager 2 stated that: 'It says a lot about the product that we have, if we have the right sponsors'. The Commercial Manager referred to the 'interdependence...between the two organisations' in terms of brand marketing.

It was noted that the onsite event activations, offsite promotions and global media campaigns of the sponsors contributed significant value to the event's brand. This exposure and cross-promotion of the event and the sponsors' brands created 'mutual benefit that we want sponsors to be out there promoting the event, so it's good for us but it's also good for them' (Commercial Manager). Thus, if sponsors' brands are not aligned to that of the event, this can have negative brand ramifications for the event. These findings support Henseler et al.'s (2009) assertion that brand image transfer is a two-way process in sport sponsorship. Moreover, this aligns to strategic alliance scholarship that notes the importance of compatibility within inter-organisational arrangements (Elmuti et al., 2005).

Protecting the image of the event was a core consideration during sponsorship management. Thus, it was recognised as critical to not just accept the largest financial investment but to really understand 'what the company [sponsor] stands for' (Business



Development Manager). Potential sponsorship partners were assessed to ensure not only brand congruence but also strategic compatibility with the sport organisation and its major event. The importance of strategic compatibility between the Event Owner and sponsors was emphasised by numerous interviewees. As the Director of Commercial stipulated, 'some sponsors will have a different strategy to what you actually want'. Sponsors' strategic focus and brand image can change through the duration of their association with the event, so brand and strategic assessment was found to be an ongoing dimension of sponsorship management.

Just as the strategic direction of sponsors can shift, so too can that of the event. As recognised in the Event Owner's Annual Reports, the event has undergone a number of major rebranding periods. For example, in 2007 there was a clear shift from targeting and branding in the Australian context to 'win[ning] the hearts and minds of sports fans throughout Asia, to reinforce the [event's] positioning... and to nurture their pride in the event.'

The Client Services Manager discussed the dynamic nature of their commercial objectives over time. As noted, change in the event's branding can lead to divergence from sponsors' brand strategies. 'There is a fine balance between 'we need growth' but 'we also need long standing partners', because that's sort of the balancing game that we play with the success of the event.' (Client Services Manager). So, while constantly improving the offering and listening to the sponsors were identified as crucial in establishing committed and long-term relationships, focus must also remain on the event brand. This underscores the complexities of managing long-term inter-organisational partnerships.

**4.1.2 Event Value.** The Event Owner has had numerous long-term sponsorship relationships (i.e. over 15 years in duration). Numerous interviewees related this to the importance of value creation for each individual sponsorship partner. The provision of unique value was a key strategy for this Event Owner. Emphasis was on staying ahead of the market and offering a

unique value proposition to sponsors. The Commercial Manager highlighted the dynamic nature of the industry and the importance of ‘creating new assets or thinking about using technology’ to provide innovative value add-ons for sponsorship partners. It was evident that this sport organisation took a proactive approach in leveraging sponsorship relationships, as opposed to merely playing a servicing role.

The document analysis indicated that the event was in a strong commercial position. It was broadcast to over 200 countries and has generated significant engagement through social media platforms. However, it was recognised by the Director of Commercial that while growth is positive for the event, it has caused friction during times of renegotiation with long-term sponsors:

With the [event] over the last 5 or 6 years, its grown massively, it’s really grown enormously from a commercial perspective and therefore when we come to a renewal of a sponsor its actually quite challenging in that, ‘hey guys this events gone like this [increasing rapidly], your sponsorship fees gone like this [minor increase]’.

In a very competitive sponsorship environment, this event can be seen as a market leader in its ability to generate sponsorship demand. The event’s commercial success and the explicit strategic objectives of the Event Owner are notable throughout their Annual Reports. As noted in the Event Owner’s 2009 Annual Report, ‘It is testimony to the strength of the [event] and [NSO] brands that companies continue to seek an association... regardless of the tough economic environment the sports sector operates in.’ In regard to expanding the event’s commercial value, a key strategy was expansion in the Asia Pacific region. During interviews, both the Director of Commercial and the Head of Sponsorship noted that this regional repositioning enhanced the sport organisation’s sponsorship negotiation power.

It has previously been noted that sport properties typically rely on sponsors' objectives for strategic direction (O'Reilly, Seguin, & Pegoraro, 2008). By contrast, the sponsorship management of this Event Owner was heavily influenced by various levels of internal commercial strategy. A second assumption in the literature is that demand for sponsors normally outweighs supply (Nickell et al., 2011; Stotlar, 2004). However, in the case of this Event Owner, the Director of Commercial noted – when discussing their Asia Pacific strategy – that, 'for the first time ever, you've got Chinese companies, very wealthy, that are directly coming to us and saying I want to sponsor the event'.

**4.1.3 Commercial Integrity.** Commercial clutter was identified as one of the main strategic considerations when managing event sponsorship. In this regard, the importance of consistency within sponsorship management was emphasised. As sponsorship is a marketing tool, it is important that messages are getting through to the desired market (business-to-business or business-to-consumer). Providing too much scope for sponsorship activation onsite can limit the impact and dilute the messages of sponsors. In discussion of activation and signage requests from sponsors, the Head of Sponsorship stated that: 'They [the sponsors] are not going to get the same exposure and cut through if we just say yes to everyone'. Approving further sponsors activations can be 'for short-term gain and degrade the brand [of the event]' (Commercial Manager) in the long-term. As noted by the Director of Commercial, 'Our job is to protect the integrity of the event and to ensure the equity between sponsors'.

Providing leverage beyond contractual obligations not only risks clutter but can negatively influence negotiations: 'if they do get too much or they are too visible onsite, when we go to renegotiate, there is no value attributed to what we have just given them. They keep pushing it' (Client Services Manager). The four Account Managers identified the difficulty in managing multiple sponsors and trying to provide innovative activation approval.

In an effort to maintain the commercial integrity of the event, the sponsorship team held regular work-in-progress meetings. These discussions were a tool for maintaining consistency and transparency within the Sponsorship Unit. This was particularly relevant for the four Account Managers who oversee the day-to-day operations and logistics of the sponsorship relationships. As stated by the Business Development Manager, ‘certainly one mantra that we have tried to instil in all the team this year...is consistency’.

Managing commercial clutter was related to multiple sponsorship partners, alongside dealing with other internal commercial sectors (namely, merchandise and broadcasting). The multi-faceted nature of event sponsorship management was evident through regular communication with other departments. For example, ‘The operational department does all the security and risk strategy for all of the activations. And PR, e-coms [e-communications] working with what pair activities are happening onsite, websites, social media’ (Client Services Manager). In other words, sponsorship cannot be managed in a silo. Working in collaboration with other departments is imperative to ensure contradictions are avoided. This results in balancing the Sponsorship Unit’s objectives with other commercial objectives.

### **4.2 Culture**

The theme of culture incorporates three sub-themes: (i) cultural difference; (ii) coopertition; and, (iii) inter-personal relationships.

**4.2.1 Cultural Difference.** The growing interest from Asian firms in sponsoring the event has triggered cultural considerations for the Event Owner. As the Business Development Manager outlined, it can be complex managing sponsorship relationships in different cultural contexts:

It is a little bit different because we are dealing with Asian sponsors, so the culture is different and understanding how they do business is very different and we are still new to that... And certainly in Asia ... the majority of the time we are spending with people

is about just developing a relationship. And you are not necessarily talking business for long parts of the time you spend with them.

It is well documented in organisational literature that people influence the culture of a firm. In this study it was found that people also influence the inter-organisational culture within sponsorship alliances. In particular, the character of the individual who is the main point of contact within a sponsorship alliance plays a critical role. An effective relationship and a suitable personality match or cultural fit between their Account Managers and their portfolio of sponsors is important: 'in this role there is a lot of customer facing time ... the traits and behaviours are the first things I look for in people' (The Head of Sponsorship). Event Owner Managers consulted with sponsors to inform staff recruitment selection criteria and decision-making, taking into account the profile of employee personality with the sponsors, including 'what sort of people would you want to see? What type of traits would you want us to employ?' (The Head of Sponsorship). Human resource considerations appear critical within a sponsorship partnership, as personality clashes or cultural misalignment can be potentially detrimental to overall sponsorship performance.

In terms of the cultural environment within the sponsorship network, it was found that conflict can arise when there was cultural misalignment between sponsoring firms. From a branding perspective it is reasonable that current sponsors are informed on 'who else is coming into the family' (Head of Sponsorship). Due to common attachment to the one event, brand consistency and compatibility are important considerations for not only the event but also the individual sponsors.

**4.2.2 Collaboration.** Bringing the sponsors closer together and encouraging collaboration, as opposed to seeing each other as competitors, emerged as a sub theme. Creating an environment of collaboration was a relatively new initiative: 'We've operated so independently with each

account that that really hadn't happened in the past. Where now we are doing sponsor forums twice a year, where everyone gets together' (Client Services Manager). These biannual forums bring all the sponsor firms together as a process of reflection, planning, and to 'cohabitate on some of the things and they can cross pollinate' (Director of Commercial). Bringing all the sponsors together in a formal structured setting was also used by the Event Owner to 'talk to them about all the feedback we have received and what we are planning for next year, has anything changed with the event, the precinct, what's happening and then we get feedback in return. That's actually been really positive for us' (Head of Sponsorship). The aim of the Event Owner, therefore, was to create a collaborative culture amongst the sponsorship 'family'.

While the benefits of the sponsorship forums were noted, contention was also evident. As the Head of Sponsorship outlined, 'To some degree we create our own enemy as well because we make them talk to each other and we make them have dialogue with each other and they all find out obviously what each other is doing.' Similarly, the Client Services Manager noted: '...does it [connecting the sponsors] stop challenging discussion? Absolutely not.'

As each individual sponsorship contract is uniquely crafted to best meet the objectives of the specific sponsor, the benefits received by each sponsor differ. The Client Services Manager discussed how bringing the sponsors together led to comparisons between their offerings and those of other sponsors, which can be difficult to manage: 'That message is very hard to get through. It's not comparing apples to apples. People buy different assets.' It was found that while there was potential for collaboration to bring mutual benefit to sponsors and the event, 'they all want to do one thing and that is leverage their one brand absolutely as best as they can, to the expense of the others actually' (Head of Sponsorship).

Some sponsors used agencies, which can increase the points of contact but may delay decision-making and communication processes. Inter-organisational literature highlights the

importance of clearly identified roles and responsibilities within alliances (Huxham & Vangen, 2000). In a study of the sport industry, Babiak and Thibault (2008, p. 291) found ‘many difficulties associated with IOR [inter-organisational relationship] management stemming from uncertainty regarding the roles and responsibilities of the partners’ in cross-sectoral partnerships. The interviews demonstrated that this strain is felt within sponsorship relationships – especially when uncertainty, time delays and contradictions arise.

**4.2.3 Interpersonal Relationships.** Inter-personal relationships that comprise the inter-organisational sponsorship arrangement were fundamental to event-sponsor relationship functioning. All levels of sponsorship personnel confirmed the importance of relationship management. The Director of Commercial highlighted that harmonious relationships were critical, as ‘there’s nothing worse than people just bickering and fighting, you know, every time they want something and we won’t give it to them’.

There was consensus among interviewees that the development of dyadic commitment and trust was imperative for effective sponsorship management. As the Head of Sponsorship stated: ‘There’s one thing in my view that you can’t buy in business and that is trust’. This is consistent with business partnership research, which notes that social exchange is just as crucial in inter-organisational relationships as it is in inter-personal relationships (Muthusamy & White, 2005). This also supports the findings of Farrelly and Quester (2005a) that building and maintaining trust is an imperative underpinning of sponsorship relationships, acting as an antecedent to both economic and non-economic satisfaction of sponsors. The present study confirms that it is also important to the sponsee.

Account Managers act as boundary spanners between the event and the sponsor firm. That is, they have a ‘dual role’ (Account Manager 4): working for the event but at the same time ‘become sort of the advocate for your client [sponsor]’. All Account Managers

commented on the importance of understanding sponsors' objectives, however it was noted that it can be difficult to gather certain information from sponsors. Account Manager 1 discussed that it would be beneficial to:

...be more entrenched in their [the sponsors'] business and it's just a matter of some sponsors do it better than others... [some] are really great at sharing that information and have a great understanding of what they are trying to achieve through their sponsorship and for their brands.

Trust within interpersonal relationships can help with the sharing of information, transparency and strengthening of a positive inter-organisational culture between the event organisation and the sponsor firm.

### **4.3 Stability**

The importance of stability in managing sponsor relationships was identified as a key theme. This comprises four sub-themes of: (i) staff turnover; (ii) longevity; (iii) event cycle; and, (iv) network management.

**4.3.1 Staff Turnover.** As noted above, the importance of personal relationships between the Event Owner staff and their counterparts within the sponsor firms was deemed critical to inter-organisational relationship strength. This supports previous inter-organisational research which has found that the regularity and productivity of social exchanges are associated with longevity of sponsorship dyads (Olkkonen, Tikkanen & Alajoutsijarvi, 2000). Reliance on personal relationships is, however, a double-edged sword, as dependence on an individual relationship can cause disruption when staff leave the organisation.

In the years prior to data collection, the sponsee had experienced significant personnel change within the sponsorship unit, resulting in four new Account Managers being appointed. This proved quite challenging for efficient management across the whole sponsorship network.



Disruption to relational stability during personnel change was noted. As Account Manager 3 stated:

For sponsors it is awful when their sponsorship manager changes, because they probably think ‘oh god I have to go through all this again’; because once you’ve established that relationship and you know what’s happened in previous years obviously that’s a lot easier for them as well.

Alliance scholars have found that personnel change influences various elements of alliance management (de Man et al., 2010; Dewulf & Kadefors, 2010). In particular, Das and Kumar (2011) discussed how an individual’s regulatory focus – the tendency to direct behaviour to positive outcomes – influences alliance dynamics. Personnel changes can have a disruptive impact on the relationship in terms of knowledge transfer, personal understandings of one another’s business and appreciation of partner expectations. Relationship building and shared understandings are critical, as reflected by this interviewee’s observation: ‘You’ve got to get to know people and they’ve got to get to know you and things that you know are going to bug them or things that are going to be fine and you obviously in time get to know that about people’ (Account Manager 2).

**4.3.2 Longevity.** Sponsorship literature refers to the benefits of long-term sponsorship relationships and the associated positive outcomes of sponsorship longevity (e.g. Farrelly & Quester, 2005a). In the current study, sponsorship longevity was viewed with mixed sentiments. Similar to that of previous literature, the Director of Commercial opined: ‘you would choose a longer-term relationship with less money over a short-term gain every time. Long-term relationship’s everything ‘cause it actually says about your brand and your event – hey people want to stay involved’. Furthermore, ‘keeping a sponsor is a lot easier than going to find a new one’ (Business Development Manager).

Similarly, as noted by the Client Services Manager, ‘Clients that have been involved for a long time, they understand...They still push but they can take a step back and understand a big picture from our perspective.’ The Director of Commercial agreed with this,

The longer term a sponsorship is the better. For a number of reasons, one it is consistent, always you know exactly what to expect from them, you know how they operate, you know what they are going to do.

However, the Account Managers referred to ‘power struggles’ in association with relationship duration (Account Manager 1). As Account Manager 1 commented, ‘So they [the sponsors] think that they are very familiar with the contract and run the place you know’. In light of recent staff changes within the Event Owner, some sponsors saw the introduction of new Account Managers as an opportunity to stamp their authority and power within the relationship (Account Manager 1 and Account Manager 2). As noted by alliance scholars, the major challenges in inter-organisational collaboration are power struggle, exploitation and control dynamics (Spekman, Forbes, Isabella & MacSvoy, 1999).

Moreover, as the event changes in terms of brand direction and priority areas, it can be difficult to manage long-term partners who have well established expectations. The Head of Sponsorship recognised this challenge, referring to the importance of keeping sponsors informed about the Event Owner’s priority areas, ‘So there’s a lot of data that we actually give to sponsors to help them understand the sport and the event. So the longer term for them is better so they can make decisions based on that data.’

**4.3.3 Event Cycle.** The cyclic nature of sponsorship emerged as a key concept given the annual nature of the event. The Director of Commercial noted three distinct time periods:

There's basically 3 phases with a sponsor... the actual event, so that's activation on the event. However post the event is all the debrief and that goes on for 3 or 4 months. Did that work? Did that not work?...The next thing is planning for the next event.

Although the event has been performing well commercially, the competitiveness of attracting sponsors was still a concern for management. The competitive seasonal sport environment in Australia was discussed. One of the main points of differentiation from seasonal sports and individual athlete sponsorship was captured by the phrase: 'money can't buy experiences' (Head of Sponsorship). As the Head of Sponsorship explained, 'We can't do that because we don't own the [athletes]... it's very different to say an AFL [Australian Football League] or a cricket where the sport signs contracts with and actually owns the players and can get them to do things; we can't do that.'

A significant sub-theme here was the aspiration to provide further value for sponsors throughout the calendar year, not just for the duration of a rather brief event. The idea is to 'give them more contact with the sport, get them more engaged with the sport.' (Head of Sponsorship). This was not just to remain competitive with seasonal sports but also to increase revenue streams and 'ensure and protect ourselves to some degree against the GFCs [global financial crises] of the world when and if they happen' (Head of Sponsorship).

A major consideration for event management, as opposed to ongoing athlete or season-based sponsorship, is regularity of communication. Maintaining contact during non-event times is crucial for relationship management, but this can be difficult when sponsors' attention has shifted elsewhere. As Account Manager 2 stated: 'I think it's really important that they don't feel like you're just oh it's all over now we are not talking to you for 6 months.'

While there may be difficulties related to annual event sponsorship, especially in regard to extended brand exposure, there may also be advantages. This is because there are

opportunities during non-event months to strengthen alliance relationships and ensure that the strategic agendas of both sponsee and sponsors remain in sync. The Head of Sponsorship stipulated how important the three months post-event are in terms of evaluation and feedback for the sponsors:

We physically go and present to them... what they have done, how their sponsorship was brought to life, what leverage they got from that sponsorship, what media values etc they got from their sponsorship. So it is a very formal process straight after event for about two and half months to prep, deliver and then discuss immediately what just happened.

The post-event period allows for the processing of key learnings and two-way evaluation between the sport organisation and sponsors which adds value to the relationships. This can be seen as a period of knowledge-sharing and learning between the firms.

**4.3.4 Network Management.** The importance of maintaining equity across a network of sponsorship partners emerged from the data analysis. The complexities of managing multiple partners simultaneously and satisfying their diverse needs were highlighted. As most events have multi-level sponsor networks, this is a fundamental element of sponsorship management. One of the main considerations with managing multiple partners is ‘making sure they are not crossing each other and making sure everyone’s doing what they need to as a sponsor’ (Head of Sponsorship).

The differences amongst the sponsor network were clearly identified. Strategically, some sponsors targeted the local audience, while others focused on the international market. Sponsorship leverage can vary significantly, from a focus on corporate hospitality to brand exposure and on-site product trials. For the sponsee, understanding the objectives and strategies

of each partner is therefore critical to relationship management. Not only do objectives differ, but how money is spent also varies:

We have some sponsors that would pay less sponsorship fees but they've got more money to invest to leverage the sponsorship. On the flip side of that, we have other sponsors that put all of their money into the sponsorship fee but don't necessarily have additional funds to leverage it. (Client Services Manager)

This can present complications in event sponsorship management as to how much the sport organisation 'protect those sponsors, because we've got all the money... Do we have a responsibility to sponsors that pay more money to say we need to protect your brand visibility to some extent?' (Client Services Manager).

The Event Owner strategically assessed the activation proposals of sponsors, as the Head of Sponsorship noted: 'If you do a deal with someone and they get exclusivity, you need to try and generate the best return you can at that point in time because you are locking people [other sponsors] out.' Thus, an important question when attempting consistency in sponsorship management was: 'if we do it for this person how are we going to facilitate that for 24 other sponsors?' (Client Services Manager).

Brands and strategy are not stagnant; therefore, sponsorship relationships should be managed attentively and with a reasonable amount of flexibility. All four Account Managers observed that the event sponsors commonly sought benefits beyond their contractual stipulations. Evidently, it was a balancing act for the Account Managers to ensure innovative opportunities were presented while also maintaining consistency within the sponsor network.

It was evident that tension between sponsors can be difficult to manage and may trigger sponsor dissatisfaction with the event. As the Client Services Manager stated, 'Even though their brands aren't exactly competing, they are competing for the consumers' attention.' As

such, minimising inter-sponsor conflict was crucial to ensure individual relationships between the sponsee and sponsors are not jeopardised.

## **5. Implications**

The goal of this paper was to investigate sponsorship management considerations from the perspective of the sponsee. While extant literature has focused on sponsors' and consumers' perspectives, little attention has been given to the role and concerns of the sponsored event/organisation. In pursuing this line of inquiry we build on the recent work of Toscani and Prendergast (2018) and Dickenson and Souchon (2019), which also highlight the need for further study of the sponsee.

This exploratory investigation expands relationship-based sponsorship literature and highlights a number of important areas for practitioner consideration. It is evident that sponsorship practitioners must consider and monitor their own strategy and that of their partner firms during the mid-life (or on-going management period) of sponsorship to ensure compatibility is maintained. Commercial and marketing activity is dynamic and thus in inter-organisational settings, processes should be in place to ensure effective management and dyadic satisfaction. Personal relationships are also critical in maintaining positive inter-organisational arrangements.

Regarding the study's research questions, it was confirmed that from the sponsee's view that both structural and relational considerations are critical for sponsorship management. This aligns with the findings of Farrelly et al. (2003) who examined the sponsor's perspective, finding that market orientation and collaborative communication are instrumental to trust and commitment development. Our findings indicate that there are a range of internal and external alliance factors that influence the sponsorship relationship. These are illustrated in Figure 2. As this was an exploratory study, we were not testing a model but rather sought to provide in-

depth insights into key sponsorship considerations for sponsees. Figure 2 represents the main themes that emerged in the data. The external factors are those that do not directly sit within the sponsorship alliance but which have notable impact on sponsorship relationships. The most pertinent structural and relational considerations within sponsorship alliances directly influence the sponsee's relationships. We acknowledge that this is an exploratory study, and as such future research is needed to determine whether these factors/considerations are critical in other contexts. Studies focussing on other cases, whether using interviews or other instruments (i.e. surveys) is recommended.

Insert Figure 2 near here

The most important considerations found in this study were: partner compatibility; event strategy and value; inter-personal relationships and the impact of staff turnover; collaboration of sponsors; protecting event commercial integrity; and, competing with season-based properties. In addressing research question two (which sought to identify factors that are important in the maintenance of sponsor relationships) it was interesting to note that despite mostly positive sentiment around long-term relationships, tensions and power struggles were also identified. This is an important consideration for sport managers and marketers in the industry. As Das and Teng (2000) note, power tensions or imbalances can lead to significant alliance instabilities and potential termination. Managing relationships and monitoring any simmering power contentions is critically important. In this study we focused on an event that is in a strong commercial position. It would be valuable for future research to expand on the topic of power dynamics within different sponsorship contexts (e.g. a new event, declining event or revived event).

Previous research has noted significant shortfalls in a sponsees' inter-organisational relationship management (Babiak & Thibault, 2008), along with sponsorship governance

(Doherty & Murray, 2007). By contrast, the Event Owner in the present study displayed clear strategic direction and a sophisticated business model. It was evident that firms are prospecting the Event Owner in regard to potential sponsorship. Previous studies have not examined contexts whereby a corporate firm approaches a sport organisation; this presents an enticing area for future scholarship.

In accordance with previous research, the present study confirmed the importance of sponsor-event brand compatibility and strategic fit. When discrepancy appeared between a sponsor and the event, tensions emerged within the relationship. Moreover, brands and image change, and thus compatibility, are fluid and must be managed throughout the life of the partnership. From a practitioner perspective, sponsorship managers must ensure a level of adaptability appropriate to the nuances of their relationships and be cognisant of partner brand movement. It would be interesting for future research to look longitudinally from the perspective of the sponsee, exploring how their sponsorship network varies and transforms over time.

Trustworthy relationships are instrumental in managing sponsorship. This is not a novel finding per se; for, as relationship marketing theorists contend, collaboration between parties is a key to successful business operations (Gummesson, 2008). However, looking at this from the sponsee's view, trust needs to be dyadic. This paper has argued that a relationship marketing perspective be further applied to the study of sponsorship, particularly from the sponsee perspective. The temporal nature of the relational approach allows for analysis of how inter-organisational arrangements change over the course of the sponsorship agreement. Future longitudinal research, examining how sponsorship relationships pass through life-cycle stages, is needed. This would illustrate how relationship management evolves over time.



Personality traits within the sponsorship team were deemed imperative for inter-organisational relationship management. This is a key take-away for practitioners. Consideration of inter-organisational partners during recruitment can be critical to ensuring smooth transition of new staff into relationship management positions. In this study, sponsorship partners were consulted during the staff recruitment process. Human resource considerations – both internally and externally – within inter-organisational settings is thus an interesting area for further investigation. Also, in relation to new staff, it was acknowledged that turnover can have degenerative impacts on inter-organisational relationships. Social bonds, asset-specific knowledge and inter-partner trust are easily lost when personnel are replaced. As such, it is critical that tacit knowledge is effectively managed and that multiple layers of relationships are established between partnering firms.

This study identified a fine line between inter-firm collaboration and conflict. The Event Owner has instigated sponsorship networking days to encourage collaboration between sponsors. However, it was found that this effort at transparency also increased tension within some relationships. The benefit of event sponsors co-branding and the potential conflict when connecting sponsors, is an important consideration for sponsorship practitioners. Not only could a co-marketing approach increase the benefit for sponsors, it may also enhance the commercial attractiveness of the sponsee. However, when managing these multiple sponsor collaborations, caution must be taken to avoid conflict.

In terms of the management of event-based sponsorship, a key consideration was providing value in the competitive sponsorship industry. A critical challenge for sport event sponsorship managers is to find value that can rival season-long sports, while maintaining the commercial integrity of the event. Event-based sponsorship was discussed in a cyclic nature, where communication and activity vary at different times during the year. It was found that non-event periods allow for comprehensive evaluation, strategising and relationship building.

Furthermore, while cultural aspects of sponsorship were not a primary focus of this study, it was noted that different managerial approaches are required with firms in different parts of the world. As events continue to reach a global audience and geo-targeting technologies proliferate, this presents an interesting area for future sponsorship research and practitioner consideration.

While this study provided insight to sponsorship management from an underexplored sponsee perspective, there are limitations to its scope and scale. The empirical findings draw upon data from a single case study. This confounds the ability to generalise these findings. Moreover, this case study is based on an annual event organised by a continuous enterprise (the Event Owner), as opposed, for example, to the changing location of the Olympic Games and the temporary nature of their organising committees. Although the findings are not generalisable across the spectrum of sponsor-event arrangements, the provision of deep insights into a single case is intended to be valuable for the sport-event sponsorship sector. Relationship management, as investigated in this paper, is not just applicable to sponsorship alliances but is likely to be of interest across a range of inter-organisational relationships – specifically other cross-sectoral, lateral arrangements.

This study focused on the mid-life of sponsorship management. That is, we explored existing relationships (from the sponsee's perspective) to understand what factors were critical to their on-going sustainability. As such, we interviewed all personnel involved in the management of sponsorship relationships. We acknowledge that the Chief Executive Officer and Board of the organisation would have involvement in large commercial decisions. However, for this study we were interested in the day-to-day management of relationships by the sponsorship team.

## **6. Conclusion**

Overall, the current literature on relationship management in sponsorship is heavily weighted with theoretical and anecdotal underpinnings; further empirical research is therefore needed in order to provide research that has demonstrated industry relevance. As such, a fundamental intent of this paper is to provide qualitative insight into event sponsorship from a different perspective – that of the sponsee.

Sponsorship plays an important role in event delivery, specifically in regard to financial and value-in-kind investment and brand marketing. The growth in sponsorship investments makes the efficient governance of sponsorship relationships all the more urgent. Farrelly and Quester (2005b) found that properties tend to act opportunistically, and this may explain why sponsors have acted independently to achieve their objectives. However, this case study found that the property does not merely play a servicing role by managing sponsorship as a strategic mechanism. Indeed, the paper has highlighted a range of critical relationship management considerations during the mid-life of sponsorship arrangements.

It is suggested that future research further examine the interdependency and strategies of sport events and their business-related partners. Investigating antecedents to relationship success and/or termination or failure, would further understanding of these complex inter-organisational arrangements. Sport and event marketing practitioners need to invest resources into the establishment and on-going maintenance of structural and relational dimensions of partnership management.

Brands are dynamic, as we see changes in image, positioning and related marketing. Given the co-branding nature of sponsorship, the sponsee and sponsor are vulnerable to variance in one another's brand and critically, reputation. Contemporary business (i.e. sponsors) and sport (i.e. sponsees) are rife with organisational and individual scandal. The prevalence of these challenges makes strategic sponsorship acquisition, on-going relationship

management and evaluation even more critical. Moreover, given the competitive nature of the sponsorship industry and the growth of experiential marketing and influencer marketing, there is mounting pressure on sponsees to increase their value proposition and maintain effective sponsor relationships.

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Figure 1: Event Owner Commercial Structure & Interviewees

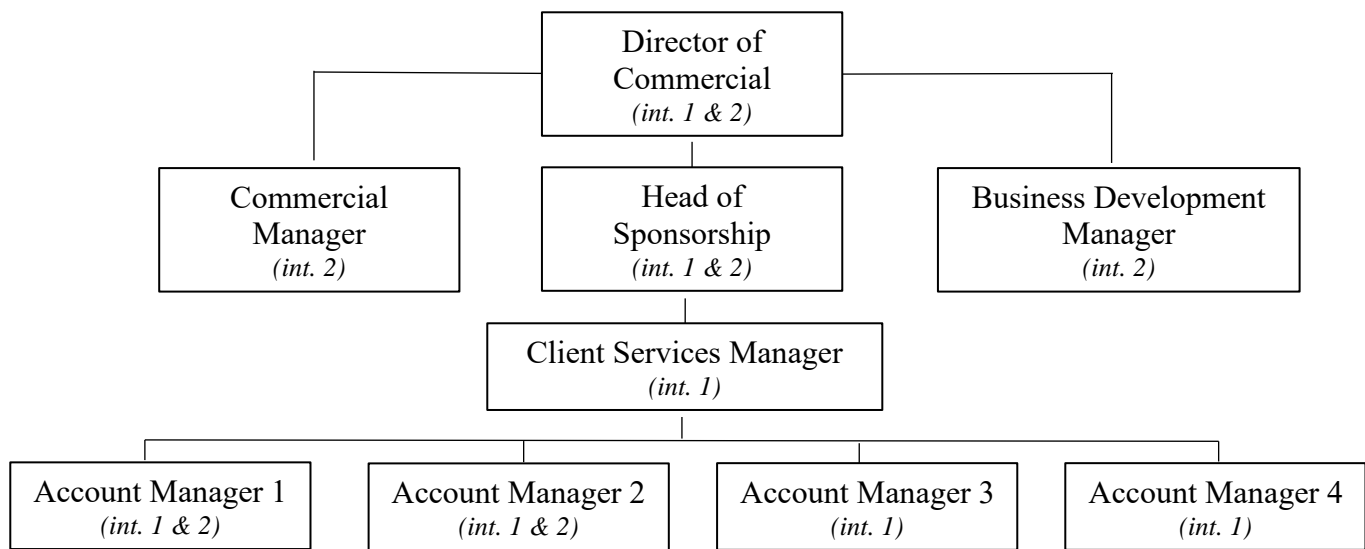


Figure 2: Factors Influencing Sponsorship Relationships

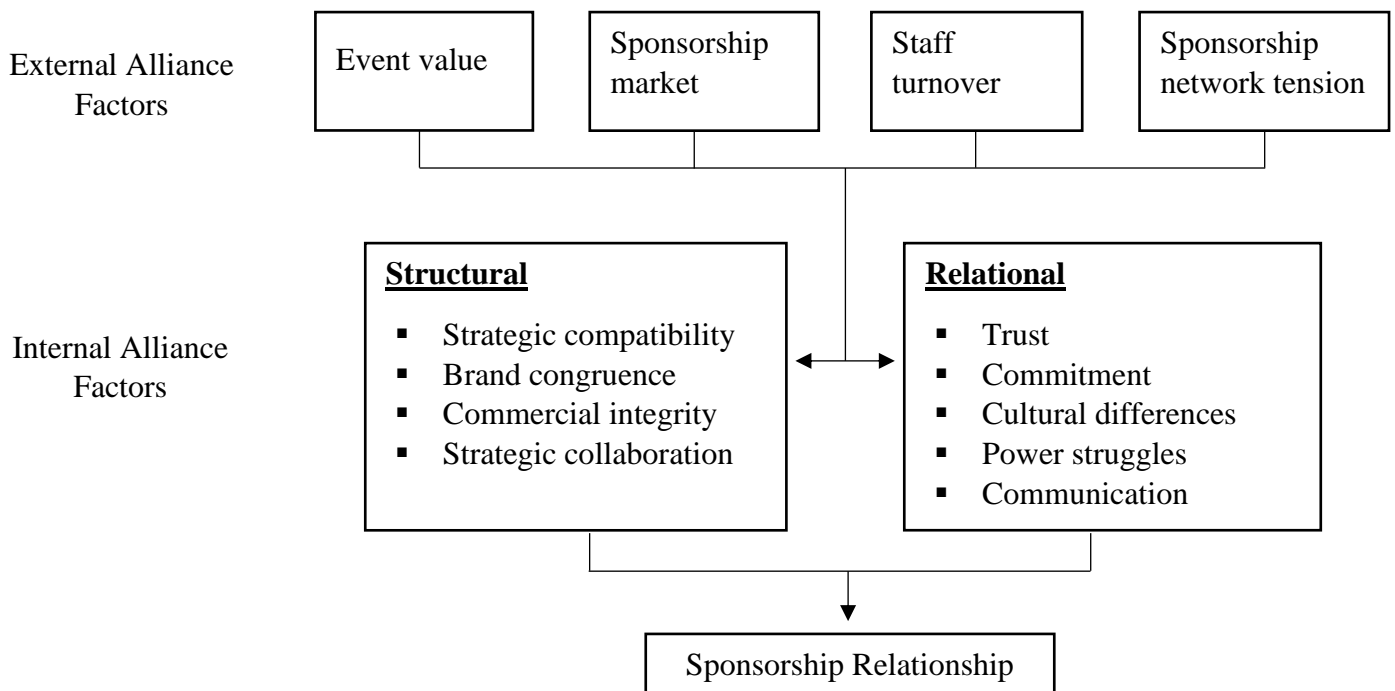


Table 1: Coded Data Themes and Sub-themes

Major Themes	Sub-themes	Example Data Quotes
Strategy	Image & Compatibility	“It says a lot about the product that we have, if we have the right sponsors” (Account Manager 2)
	Event Value	“It is testimony to the strength of the [event] and [NSO] brand that companies continue to seek an association” (Annual Report 2009)
	Commercial Integrity	“Our job is to protect the integrity of the event and to ensure the equity between sponsors” (Director of Commercial)
Culture	Cultural Difference	“...understanding how they do business is very different and we are still new to that...” (Business Development Manager)
	Collaboration	“...now we are doing sponsor forums twice a year, where everyone gets together” (Client Services Manager)
	Interpersonal Relationships	“There’s one thing in my view that you can’t buy in business and that is trust” (Head of Sponsorship)
Stability	Staff Turnover	“You’ve got to get to know people and they’ve got to get to know you...obviously in time get to know that about people.” (Account Manager 2)
	Longevity	“you would choose a longer-term relationship with less money over a short-term gain, every time.” (Director of Commercial)
	Event Cycle	“...it’s really important that they [the sponsors] don’t feel like you’re just oh it’s [the event] all over now we are not talking to you for 6 months” (Account Manager 2)
	Network Management	“...making sure they are not crossing each other and making sure everyone’s doing what they need to as a sponsor” (Head of Sponsorship)