Introduction

Sponsorship is a marketing communications tool that has been applied to various sectors including sport, arts, music, cause, and education. Sponsorship is now a significant part of the marketing mix, representing a substantial proportion of companies’ marketing budgets (Grohs and Reisinger 2005). The relationships between sports properties (sponsees) and sponsors continue to grow with large commitments in financial and/or in-kind resources (e.g. products, services, expertise) by sponsors in exchange for ‘exploitable commercial potential’ (sponsee’s assets, stakeholders, images) associated with the sponsees (Meenaghan 1991). When examined on a global scale, sponsorship is huge business. Estimated at $13.6 billion worldwide in 1996, sponsorship spending is expected to reach $55 billion in 2014 (IEG 2014). Sport sponsorship accounts for approximately 70 percent of all sponsorship spending (IEG 2014). The 2014 Sochi Olympic Winter Games alone raised $1.3 billion in national (domestic) sponsorship rights, more than any other Winter Games in history (Sochi 2014). In addition to domestic sponsors, the International Olympic Committee’s (IOC) worldwide sponsorship programme known as ‘The Olympic Partners’ (TOP) programme exceeded the $1 billion in revenue for the 2013–2016 period covering the Games of Sochi (winter) and Rio (summer) (Owen 2013). When considering that sponsors are recommended to invest on average three dollars on activation programs (Eisenhart 1988) for every dollar spent on rights fees (3:1 ratio), the actual sponsorship-related spending around the Sochi Games may be closer to $4 billion. In addition, sponsorship of professional sport leagues and their respective teams such as the National Football League in North America, the Barclay’s Premier League in UK (Manchester United), or the National Rugby League in Australia (Penrith Panthers) have flourished in the last few years. But whether companies spend hundred of millions to be associated with these high profile sports or a few hundred dollars to support a local community sport event, they do so because they believe sport brings value.

The ability of sponsorship to have great impact from the community to the global levels makes it an attractive marketing communications strategy for many firms. By developing a well-planned and coordinated approach to communications and public relations, companies can use sponsorship to achieve a number of corporate objectives (Farelly 2006). These may include ‘enhancing/reinforcing firm brand associations, strengthening competitive positioning, creating favourable affect, and aligning social and economic goals’ (Becker-Olsen and Simmons 2002: 90).
The use of sponsorship as a strategic tool to support brand related objectives (i.e. brand image, reputation) is well documented in the literature (Meenaghan 1991, Gwinner 1997, Cornwell and Maignan 1998, Gwinner and Eaton 1999, Cornwell et al. 2005). In addition, sponsorship can be used to improve relationships with key stakeholders (e.g. corporate or public partners), motivate employees, reach target markets, and, ultimately, increase sales (Irwin and Sutton 1994). Nowadays, corporations that are successful in sponsorship ventures (e.g. Coca-Cola and VISA sponsoring Olympic Games and FIFA World Cup) use sponsorship as a resource that not only offers a competitive advantage but also provides a point of differentiation from competitors (Amis et al. 1997, Amis et al. 1999, Amis 2003, Fahy et al. 2004, Papadimitriou and Apostolopoulou 2009). In doing so, sponsorship is not only integrated within long-term marketing strategies (Papadimitriou et al. 2008) but also integrated vertically and horizontally within all aspects of a company (Ferrand et al. 2012). This implies that sponsors must develop long-term partnerships with sponsees and be strongly committed to invest additional amounts of money into strategic activation programs (Papadimitriou et al. 2008). This is an important distinction because sponsorship and advertising each work differently to persuade customers. Sponsorship activation is also needed given the increasingly cluttered environment resulting from a large number of sponsors involved in sponsorship combined with the increase in the number of sports events available at all levels. This situation is somewhat ironic as sponsorship was first seen as an innovative approach to tackle environments cluttered by advertising and traditional media stimuli and messages (Meenaghan 1991).

According to Meenaghan (2001), advertising exploits the construct of emotion while sponsorship connects with the emotion inherent in sport. Thus, by getting intimate with an audience engaged in a highly charged emotional experience, sponsorship gives marketers a powerful opportunity that differs from traditional advertising. Through activation programs, sponsors can connect to the passion of the player, team, or event and in doing so achieve brand image benefits. Thus, sponsorship persuades consumers indirectly through the association between the event or their favourite teams/players and the sponsor as opposed to advertising which focuses on the company. Fans of a football team for example literally ‘love’ the shirt worn by their favourite players that includes the sponsor’s brand name. The opportunity for a company to be seen as a supporter of the team as well as sharing their values and passions for it can be powerful. For example, by investing $600 million to sponsor Manchester United for six years (Thorogood 2014), Chevrolet’s name will not only appear on the shirt of the team but will provide the brand a unique setting to create strong attachments with fans via the values shared by association with the team (Kover 2001). Similarly, Tim Hortons’ (a coffee and doughnut restaurant chain in Canada) sponsorship of little league ice hockey (Timbits Hockey) in communities across Canada allows for the transfer of attributes from the sport’s image (e.g. community, family, fun) to the sponsor’s product’s image via the promotion of the association between the two. But for Tim Hortons, this sponsorship is also an opportunity to build relationships and co-create value with many stakeholders including local Tim Hortons franchisees, hockey associations, young participants and their parents, coaches, local arenas, National Hockey League (NHL) players (e.g. Sidney Crosby), leagues (Major Junior Hockey Leagues), NHL teams, and hockey events from across Canada. As such, sponsorship must also be viewed in terms of relationships that create value within a network of stakeholders (Farelly 2006, Ferrand et al. 2012).

There are multiple options for companies wishing to sponsor sport properties including the sponsorship of athletes, sport federations, teams, leagues, stadiums/arenas, and events. Each of these options can be divided further – for example, athletes may be amateur or professional; athletes may have different sponsors for their shoes, clothes, and equipment such as skis or racquets; events (and sport federations) may be local, national, or international in scope. While this chapter
examines the perspective of sponsors within events specifically, other stakeholders essential to the staging of an event must be considered. They have commercial rights that, if not clearly defined, are often in conflict with event sponsors’ rights. In other words, Coca-Cola may be a worldwide sponsor of the Olympic Games but other key stakeholders involved within the Olympic system (e.g. athletes, sport federations, and leagues) may have Pepsi (Gatorade) as a sponsor. Thus, event properties must provide clear policies around the rights of the event, what stakeholders can or cannot do in relation to the event and be vigilant in protecting their sponsors. This is of particular importance given the rise of ambush marketing activities throughout all levels of sport events (McKelvey and Grady 2008, Séguin and O’Reilly 2008, Ferrand et al. 2012).

In this chapter, we examine event sponsorship from the sponsor’s perspective. First, we examine both the sponsors’ and events’ motives and objectives for partnering together. Next, key brand-related concepts important for sponsees and sponsors are presented. We then examine the notion of activation so critical to sponsorship. This is illustrated using a variety of sponsorship activation cases at local, national, and international levels. The concept of value co-creation between stakeholders is discussed (Ferrand et al. 2012). In other words, by sponsoring an event, sponsors are able to create relationships with various stakeholders and activate those relationships to co-create value within stakeholders systems (Ferrand et al. 2012). Finally, sponsors are increasingly concerned about the steps taken by event organisers in protecting their rights. The issue of brand protection and ambush marketing will also be discussed. The chapter concludes with some reflection about the current research issues in the sponsorship literature and future research perspectives. The reader is also directed to Chapter 13 in this Handbook, which considers destination and event branding–related concepts.

Sponsors and events’ objectives

Although early definitions (e.g. Meenaghan 1991) of sponsorship focused on sponsors’ investments in cash or kind in return of exploitable rights, the most recent definitions and approaches (e.g. Ferrand et al. 2007, Quester and Bal 2012; Ferrand et al. 2012) have been broader and more inclusive, considering sport sponsorship as an exchange, a relationship, a partnership or an alliance between a sponsor and a sponsee. According to these recent approaches, both sponsors and sports events contractually engage in a partnership to obtain certain benefits and achieve particular objectives which are distinct, even if most of the time, they go in similar directions. Other stakeholders are influenced by sponsorship, and therefore have an interest and sometimes objectives in this partnership. This is for instance the case when sponsors provide certain resources or expertise to athletes or when sponsors engage in corporate social responsibility (CSR) actions towards local sport and non-sport communities. However, in this section, we will respectively concentrate on sponsors and sports events’ motives and objectives.

Sponsors’ objectives and motives

The reasons why companies and sometimes public institutions sponsor sports events are various. But the reasons for choosing a particular sports event are often not rational and the motivations may be less professional than textbooks suggest. Motivations behind sponsorship are often individual and personal, even if they can be translated and expressed into specific objectives, and range from philanthropic, social, and altruistic motives (e.g. supporting a sporting event dear to the local community) (e.g. Berrett and Slack 1999), personal interests (e.g. often coined as the hobby motive) (e.g. Thwaites and Carruthers 1998), moral obligations, which could be seen sometimes as family and community pressures (e.g. Charalambous-Papamiltiades 2013),
The sponsors’ perspective

to purely commercial motives (e.g. increasing sponsor’s customer perceived brand equity) (e.g. Shanklin and Kuzma 1992). For instance, Burton et al. (1998: 31), observed that sport sponsorship sometimes happened because ‘a chief executive had a personal interest in a sport or because the sports marketing was familiar with and fond of a particular league, team or event’. It should be noted that these various motives are not necessarily exclusive from each other and that they are often combined (Shaw and Amis 2001). These motives are also strongly influenced by the nature of the sponsoring organisations and their status (e.g. private, semi-public, and public organisations), their size (e.g. small businesses versus international corporations), their type of industry (e.g. banking versus tobacco industry), and their economic environment (e.g. developed versus developing countries) (Charalambous-Papamiltiades 2013). In this regard, it is likely that the sponsorship of small community sports events would be more strongly associated with philanthropic, social, and altruistic motives than large and mega events. Although sponsors may partner with large and mega sports events to achieve social goals and objectives (e.g. CSR), it is impossible to determine whether or not these objectives are associated with philanthropic and social motives. In fact, many would say that they are mainly associated with commercial and image motives as illustrated for instance with the term ‘greenwashing’ which characterises the strategy used by some corporations to hide, compensate, or balance environmentally irresponsible acts by implementing ‘green’ CSR programmes (Parguel et al. 2011).

As for the motives, sponsors’ objectives are heterogeneous and their sophistication will strongly depend on the nature of the organisations. However, it would be naive to assume that all large companies from developed countries pursuing commercial objectives necessarily have clear measurable objectives. This is what was for instance found by Farely et al. (1997) and made Papadimitriou et al. (2008: 214) say that ‘a few companies make those investments with confined understanding of the range of benefits involved and how those benefits can be realized’. Furthermore, this absence of clear rationale and specific objectives is for Desbordes and Tribou (2007) what make the distinction between patronage and sponsorship, with patronage involving non-rational expenses in comparison with the primary goals of the sponsors. It is likely that many sponsors of small sport community events would not have clear and specific objectives considering the philanthropic and social dimensions of the partnership and the small size of these sponsors, often made of local stores and businesses.

When objectives are clearly defined, they can be diverse, highlighting the variety of sporting events and sponsorship configurations. As for sponsors’ commercial objectives, the literature identifies increasing corporate awareness; increasing product and brand awareness; improving brand image and reputation; developing brand loyalty, proximity and relationships; increasing sales and market shares; providing entertainment to clients; improving customers relations and hospitality opportunities; developing business and trade relations; public relations; and achieving internal goals such as developing internal relationships and enhance employees’ motivations, commitment, and pride (Charalambous-Papamiltiades 2013). Exposure and media attention are also mentioned by practitioners and researchers, but we can consider this as means to achieve the more specific objectives mentioned above. Objectives can also change over time for the same sponsors, as demonstrated by Ségui et al. (2005), with for instance a shift from awareness to image and relationships objectives when good levels of awareness are achieved.

For instance, in the context of the 2013 Tour de France, the US consumer tech and electronics firm Belkin sponsored a cycling team to get increased brand visibility around the world, while the French sportswear brand Le Coq Sportif became a race sponsor and supplier aiming to increase brand awareness on an international scale (Wilson 2013). In another sporting context, as part of their sponsorship of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, McDonald’s tried to connect with local customers and increase sales by offering a China Mac, a burger with Chinese flavours, while
Lenovo tried to increase its sales by releasing a limited edition of notebook computers reflecting the torch design (Dyer 2007). The variety of objectives and targets can also be illustrated by the VELUX Group, a Danish brand known for its roof windows and skylights, when they state that, through their sponsorships of sporting events such as the VELUX 5 OCEANS yacht race, the European Handball Federation (EHF) Champions League, and the VELUX 2013 European Championships in men’s volleyball, they aim to give their ‘partners, customers and employees the opportunity to live their passion and help stimulate their dream’ (VELUX 2014). In terms of objectives, this sponsorship portfolio of events should ‘increase awareness of the VELUX brand, realize brand position goals and stimulate sales of VELUX products’ (VELUX 2014).

In the past, several authors (e.g. Irwin and Asimakopoulos 1992, Thwaites 1994) have made distinctions between corporate objectives on the one hand and product and brand objectives on the other hand. However, we can wonder if this separation is still relevant because many sponsorship activities aim to achieve both corporate and brand objectives simultaneously as illustrated in the previous examples. Sponsorship was also recognised in the literature as a great complement to companies’ and brands’ marketing and advertising strategies. This role was acknowledged for instance by Meenaghan (1991: 39) who stated that sponsorship ‘fits quite naturally alongside advertising, public relations, personal selling and sales promotion in that its basic function lies in achieving marketing communications objectives’.

Another objective that can be considered as defensive is to be a sponsor to block competitors (Irwin and Asimakopoulos 1992). This is especially the case for sporting events which offer category exclusivity such as the Olympic Games. In the same vein, mimicry phenomena can also be observed among companies and brands, and it is not excluded that some of them engage in sponsoring sporting events because their main competitor does it. This is for instance what was found by Spence et al. (1997) in relation to the 1995 Rugby World Cup held in South Africa. However, it is likely that these objectives do not currently represent the most predominant case considering the increasingly important sums sponsors have to invest to obtain a sponsorship. It could be considered as a motive but this would most likely be translated into commercial and branding objectives.

Besides commercial objectives, sponsors also have more philanthropic, social, and community objectives illustrated by the growing tendency for sponsors to develop CSR activities. This is what several sponsors did during the 2012 London Olympic Games (Bretherton et al. 2011). For instance, as part of their sponsorship of the Games, Coca-Cola partnered with the sport charity StreetGames to deliver an improved sporting experience to young British people. However, from a critical stance, it could be noted that these types of activities do not solely respond to community objectives but also contribute to commercial corporate and brand objectives. The community and philanthropic approach is very well illustrated with small, local sport events which are often sponsored by local businesses and shops who do not necessarily express clear commercial interests; making these more like patronage activities according to the definition of Desbordes and Tribou (2007) seen above.

**Sport events’ motives and objectives**

Geng et al. (2002) observed major mind-set gaps between sponsors and sport organisations regarding the role and purpose of sponsorship. According to these authors sport organisations overestimate the philanthropic while underestimating the marketing-promotion dimension of companies and brands willing to engage in sport sponsorship. Furthermore, not all sport managers are aware of sponsors’ objectives. This is demonstrated by Tomasini et al. (2004) who found that 15.7 percent of the sport managers they surveyed were not aware of their sponsors’
objectives; but it would not be surprising to observe much higher proportions in other sport contexts and countries.

As for the sport events, the main objective in associating sponsors is to obtain further resources and expertise. The bigger the sporting events are, the more resources they need to organise and stage the sporting performances. Among these resources, money has probably been the most prevalent aspect even if we can increasingly observe transfer of knowledge, expertise, service, and technology from sponsors. For instance, car companies and brands can offer to transport athletes, IT and computer brands and companies can offer to manage results recording and communication, and bank companies and brands can contribute to the sales and purchase of tickets. This is for example the case of The Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Championships with the sponsorship of Hertz which provides transportation for athletes; G4S Secure Solutions which provide security; Lanson which is the official supplier of champagne and which plays a significant part in the high-end and luxury ‘Wimbledon experience’; HSBC which provides onsite banking services for the players, public, and retailers; and Jacob’s Creek which is the exclusive pouring wine. In this particular alliance, sponsors are called corporate partners and suppliers by the sport event, maybe to emphasise the significant contribution of these sponsors and maybe to give spectators and fans the impression that the sport event does not receive money from the partners, which would correspond to the high-class and almost aristocratic image of the Wimbledon Championships. These sponsorship arrangements avoid the sporting events to search for other business partners as the sponsors endorse this role and also contribute to the success of the sporting events by reinforcing its image or by increasing the quality of the services offered. Also, when these companies and brands benefit from a strong reputation and positive image, which is also known as brand equity, being associated with them can reinforce the image and the positioning of the sporting event. This is for instance the case with Rolex, the official timekeeper of the Wimbledon Championships, which reinforces the high-end and luxury image of the sport event. For these reasons, some authors (e.g. Motion et al. 2003, Farrelly et al. 2005, Ferrand et al. 2007) have considered sport event sponsorship as a cobranding process because sponsors do not only provide additional resources to the event but also co-design and co-create it.

Events as brands

The importance of having a well-defined brand and achieving a high level of brand equity has been prominent in business research (Aaker 1991, Keller 1993) and its application to sports is rising rapidly (Richelieu 2004, Bouchet et al. 2013). Sport organizations and sporting events are in an exceptional position to benefit from branding strategies given the huge amount of passion triggered by sporting events and the deep, emotional connections with fans and other stakeholders (e.g. Richelieu 2004, O’Reilly and Séguin 2008). This is certainly the case of team brands such as Manchester United (football) and All Blacks (rugby), or events such as FIFA World Cup or Olympic Games. Stating their names triggers certain associations/images, pride, experiences, certain attributes, a sense of belonging, and/or many other connections with the fans. Given that achieving brand related objectives (e.g. image, awareness) are key outcomes sought by sponsors, a well-managed event brand (e.g. Wimbledon, Tour de France, Super Bowl) is of paramount importance for overall success. This is especially true for sport sponsorship where ‘image’ of the sponsored event is a key concern for the sponsor wishing to capitalise or borrow the image of the event to support its own brand, known as image transfer (Gwinner and Eaton 1999). This is the case of Coca-Cola and the Olympic Games, Adidas and FIFA World Cup, or Tim Hortons and Timbits ‘little league’ ice hockey. We illustrate the importance of having a well-defined brand using the Olympic brand as an example.
The IOC’s decision to commission a global brand/image assessment in the mid-1990s was driven, in part, by the sponsors demanding brand information on the Olympic Games. This was deemed essential to ensure proper alignment between the sponsors’ brands and the Olympic brand in activation programs. The brand audit (i.e. an evaluation of a brand’s position or value within industry compared to competitors) exercise provided NOCs/OCOGs with supportive evidence of the appeal and power of Olympic image when dealing with potential sponsors and broadcasters. In other words, by gaining in-depth understanding of consumers’ opinions of the Olympic image and by confirming that the Olympic ideals/values (e.g. excellence, friendship, fair play, sports, peace, etc.) remained highly relevant to them (the consumers), the IOC was able to build its brand strategies and align with its partners. The 1999 Salt Lake City bribery scandal reinforced the importance of having a well-planned public relations strategy to protect the brand (see Ellis et al. 2011). The IOC established practices to protect its brand (this issue will be discussed later in the chapter), enhance it, and ensure that the Olympic image would be marketed consistently around the world. The latter was (and still is) of particular importance given the number of stakeholders who create brand alliances with the Olympic brand, for example, 205 NOCs, OCOGs/YOCOGS, sponsors (TOP, OCOGs, and NOCs), and broadcasters from around the world. The IOC’s strategic approach to managing its brand has contributed to making the Olympic brand one of the strongest sport brands in the world. In other words, it is known to have strong ‘brand equity’ (see Ferrand et al. 2012). According to Aaker (1991), the key elements of brand equity are brand awareness, brand associations (image), perceived brand quality, and brand loyalty. Consequently, sport events that achieve a high level of brand equity (Olympic Games, FIFA World Cup, Tour de France, Wimbledon, etc.) are attractive propositions for sponsors and other stakeholders wishing to benefit from aligning their brands with event brands. In doing so, sponsors are most likely to develop brand alliances with the event as well as other event stakeholders when activating their sponsorship.

**Sponsorship and brand alliance**

As discussed previously, sponsorship is a promotional tool used by companies to achieve a variety of objectives (e.g. brand awareness, brand image, brand reputation) (Meenaghan 1991, Amis et al. 1999). While there are instances where sponsorship remains a simple transaction (e.g. sponsor pays money in exchange for signage at event), particularly for community sport events, the sponsorship industry has evolved to a more complex level. As suggested earlier, sponsorship is often integrated into all aspects of a company, making it an important strategic pillar. This implies that sponsorship enables value to be extracted from relationships with internal stakeholders (e.g. employees, managers, shareholders) and/or external stakeholders (e.g. athletes, other sponsors, government officials, sport federations, etc.). Sponsorship then can be used as a platform to create co-branded identity that not only adds value to existing brands (co-sponsors, athletes, sport federations) but is itself a source of value (Motion et al. 2003). According to Meenaghan and Shipley (1999: 335): ‘in sponsorship both the sponsor and sponsored activity become involved in a symbiotic relationship with a transference of inherent values from the activity to the sponsor’. Extending a sponsorship over a long period of time and in a variety of contexts (i.e. co-promotions linked to an event, hospitality programmes, athlete appearances, etc.) allows for the basis for the construction of co-branded corporate identities and relationships (Motion et al. 2003). Simonin and Ruth (1998: 20–21) describe brand alliances as

short or long term association or combination of two or more individual brands, products, and/or distinctive proprietary assets. These brands or products can be represented
physically . . . or symbolically . . . by the association of brand names, logos or other proprietary assets.

Thus, the synergy created by two (or more) brands coming together may create opportunities to capitalise on the unique strengths of each brand and result in a greater return than could be achieved by the two individual brands (Ferrand et al. 2012). As such, a good ‘fit’ or ‘complementarity’ between brands can lead to each brand gaining useful attributes (Leuthesser et al. 2003). In other words, when both the event brand and the sponsor brand bring value to the alliance, they have ‘brand complementarity’. It is suggested that the best way to maximise benefit from such alliances is through sponsorship activation; this is discussed in the following section.

### Sponsorship activation and interaction with stakeholders

It is now widely accepted that a successful sponsorship does not only rely upon the choice of an appropriate sport event (e.g. one with brand complementarity) but also upon good leveraging activities, which are often correlated to the amount of money invested. As mentioned in the introduction, the 3:1 ratio (i.e. three times more investment in the leveraging activities than the amount of the deal) has received support from the literature (e.g. Eisenhart 1988, Gross et al. 1987, Séguin et al. 2005) but higher ratios ranging from 5:1 to 10:1 were also mentioned in the literature (Currie 2000). Sponsorship leveraging or activation activities are also closely related to the integration of sponsorship into the marketing mix. This is for instance what was expressed by Cornwell and Maignan (1998: 18) when saying that ‘superior outcomes of sponsorships can be expected when sponsorship is used as an activity that provides a focus for all other corporate communications’. In the same vein, Meenaghan (1991) estimated that activities such as advertising, public relations, personal selling and sales promotion fit very well with sponsorship activities. Séguin et al. (2005) identified 10 sponsorship best practices and several of them demonstrate the importance of both integration and leveraging. They are:

1. a significant investment in human and financial resources in leveraging (3:1 to sponsorship value) the investment in the sponsorship;
2. clearly defined objectives (both the sponsor and the sponsee);
3. integration with the sponsor’s overall marketing mix;
4. a consideration of customer interests;
5. a need for strong long-term relationships;
6. the requirement of ongoing television coverage on a major network;
7. a good fit between the sponsor’s objectives and the sponsee’s products;
8. the incorporation of branding as a sponsorship objective;
9. hospitality as prominent leveraging technique; and
10. cross-promotion with associate sponsors.

However, even if many authors recognise the importance of integration and leveraging activities, there are still debates in the current literature (e.g. Pope and Voges 1994, Vignali 1997, Walshe 2008) about exactly what place sponsorship should specifically hold, about the form and level of this integration, and about the prioritisation of sponsorship objectives over marketing and communication objectives. The term brand activation has progressively replaced the term brand promotion at the turn of the twenty-first century to highlight the fact that sponsor brands had to stop being passive, such as simply being shown on a panel around a stadium, but had to become active and be in direct contact and experienced by the sport events’ spectators (Ferrand
et al. 2007). Consequently, for Ferrand et al. (2007) activation should go beyond the attributes, functions and benefits of the brand, which is the feature of traditional marketing, to focus on the overall experience spectators and stakeholders can have with the brand.

As examples of leveraging methods, Spence et al. (1997) found that most sponsors of the 1995 Rugby World Cup combined the sponsorship with advertising, public relations, publicity, and sales promotion. Papadimitriou et al. (2008) identified for sponsors of the Athens Olympic Games the use of Olympic symbols and logos on sponsors’ products and packages, the introduction of new Olympic-themed products, Olympic-themed sale promotions and hospitality programs for key partners. These authors also noticed that the Games sponsors mainly relied upon mass-media (i.e. TV and newspapers) advertising, although the Internet had not been used extensively. In another study, Papadimitriou and Apostolopolou (2009) identified leveraging methods such as media advertising (electronic and print), sales promotions, publications, special events, introduction of new products/services, customer hospitality, and employee programs. In their study, Séguin et al. (2005) noticed various tactics such as media relations, athletes’ appearances, special events, and many promotional activities, particularly internal ones targeting distributors, brokers, consultants, and employees. Ferrand et al. (2007) identified many of these mentioned methods such as media advertising and promotion, but they also mentioned slogans, packaging campaigns, peripheral special events, merchandising, games and contests, broadcast sponsorship, and Internet platforms. However, these authors emphasised the fact that these methods should be implemented in order to create special experiences for the spectators and customers and that ‘successful activation requires a synergy between the organiser of the event and the sponsor(s)’ (Ferrand et al. 2007: 44). Moreover, if activation requires the active contribution of sport event organisers to maximise sponsors’ benefits, activation can also increase and improve spectators’ experience. This is for instance what Montreal Impact, the Canadian soccer franchise, claimed in a recent press release when saying that new corporate partnership deals would improve in-game experience for supporters (Montreal Impact 2014). For instance, as a new sponsor, Tim Hortons (the coffee and restaurants franchise), will have a new concession selling its most popular products and a new mezzanine to host particular events, while Buonanotte, an Italian restaurant chain, will be servicing all suites, and will have a new concession as well. Although, a direct link can be seen between the partnerships and the products sold, as part of a sponsorship and activation deal, the ‘improved experience’ for spectators is not fully conspicuous, and we can wonder whether this enhancement is not more marketing rhetoric than a truly positive experience change or improvement. It is likely that this interpretation is subjective and will depend on spectators. More research is needed to determine whether these claims of improved experiences are supported by spectators and fans.

In the case of an event such as Wimbledon, a sponsor may develop strategies for its brand to be engaged with the Wimbledon brand (e.g. history, tradition, upscale, royalty, images of great matches, hospitality, etc.) through a variety of activation programs. Depending on its objectives, it may also choose to involve multiple brand allies. This is the case of AMEX which organised a four-day promo called ‘Wimbledon at Tower Bridge’ (Swartch 2004).

It featured a floating court on the Thames River with a live concert by Alicia Keys, a charity pro-celebrity tennis night, and giant live-screen coverage of the tournament – all free to the public. AMEX tied in with the Evening Standard newspaper to feature a coupon that was redeemable on-site for tickets to the concert and charity tourney. Of course, AMEX card members were able to call 24 hours in advance to a special number and get their two tickets delivered by mail to their home or office. The off-site promotion also featured champagne, the traditional strawberries and cream but only
card members could purchase the special picnic ‘hamper’ lunches. AMEX’s Web site and an advance print and electronic campaign touted special deals for cardholders at the club, including a free program, a free radio tuned to Radio Wimbledon and a tie-in with the charity Sports Relief.

(Swartz 2004)

Such alliances allow consumers to ‘experience’ the brand in various ways by activating the sponsorship.

In terms of activation, the Tour de France is an interesting case because sponsors and partners have been involved since 1930 in promotional activities. For each race stage, a publicity caravan passes before the riders and distributes goodies to the spectators attending on the side of the road. For the 2013 Tour de France, the caravan was made of 178 vehicles (i.e. about 20-km long and lasting about 45 minutes) representing 38 brands and distributed about 15 million goodies (Fraioli 2013). The more sponsors and partners are important, the more vehicles they have in the caravan. For the 2013 edition, the main sponsors which were LCL, Skoda, Carrefour, and Vittel, which had between 11 and 7 vehicles each. In terms of goodies, the caravan, for instance, distributed giant foam hands, t-shirts, key rings, magazines, washing powder samples, inflatable neck pillows, bracelets, caps, bags of sweets and candies, madeleines (i.e. shell-shaped cookies), dried sausage, pens, water bottles, and condoms. However, the caravan is not only about the goodies but also about the extravagant vehicles and music offered to the public. For instance, the Xtra detergent truck comprised a huge aquarium with a Chippendale’s dancer in it, Skoda displayed its new Citigo model on a truck, while Belin had a car which looked like a box of crackers. This caravan is nowadays a full part of the sport event allowing sponsors to maximise their deal as well as to help attracting about 12 million road spectators, which undeniably contributes to the success of the Tour de France. This was supported by a survey conducted by the organisers who found that ‘47% of spectators come first and foremost to see the publicity caravan’ (letour.fr 2012). This example demonstrates how sponsors build relationships with other stakeholders and ‘co-create’ value when activating their sponsorships. The concept of value co-creation is discussed later in the chapter.

In terms of activation, the Olympic case is also interesting as sponsors are not usually visible within sport facilities. During the 2012 Olympic Games, one method used by BP was to erect a mirrored box pavilion used for its ‘Fuelling the Future’ Showcase experience which aimed to display how BP was rising to the global energy challenge. This 15-minute experience attracted about 48,000 visitors who could see a 360-degree rotating cyclorama of panoramic images (DJ Willrich 2014). The glass frontage attracted also numerous visitors who took pictures of themselves; this pavilion was seen by many as an iconic element of the Olympic Park. This pavilion aimed to be inspiring, such as the Olympic Games, and to demonstrate BP was sharing with the sport event a concern for sustainability. However, the efficiency of such activities remains to be demonstrated and we can wonder if the impact of the sponsorship and the related activation was strong enough to improve the negative image BP holds in the public after the 2010 oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

Cadbury, an official Olympic supporter of the 2012 London Olympic Games, decided to extend the sponsorship agreement to achieve CSR objectives. With the help of a delivery partner, Groundwork UK, Cadbury launched the ‘Spots v Stripes’ campaign, a community-based initiative which aimed to use ‘playing games to connect people and engage with them to build stronger communities’ (Cadbury 2011a: 3). Prior to the Games, Cadbury then organised, through its community programme, various games (e.g. cricket and football games, Paralympic sports, rounders, sack races, and board games) in various deprived areas in the UK and Ireland. On one
hand, this initiative helped the brand to activate its sponsorship and bring fun in communities while, on the other hand, created a positive momentum for the Games and took them to people who would not normally expect any association with the Games (Bretherton 2014). To the end of December 2011, Cadbury claimed to have organised 1,882 Spots v Stripes events, involving 2,923 volunteers and 121,107 players, and reaching 906,022 people and 1,002 community groups (Cadbury 2011a). This partnership was recognised by both partners to have increased Cadbury’s capability to work with charities and has opened doors for possible future cooperative work with Groundwork (Bretherton 2014). In this case, the activation went beyond a simple partnership with the sport event but also involved another stakeholder (i.e. a charity organisation) which again reinforces the idea of co-creation associated with sport event sponsorships. Following the first year of the Cadbury Spots v Stripes campaign, Cadbury then launched the ‘Spots v Stripes Race Season’, which comprised nine challenges split into four online and five offline races, targeting people in the UK and Ireland. The four online challenges comprised: (1) the Big Race barcode, which consisted in typing a Big Race Bar on-pack code as fast as possible; (2) the Scroll-athon, which consisted in using a mouse or touchpad to scroll through a 100m track as fast as possible; (3) the Click-athon, which consisted in closing 50 screen windows with a mouse as fast as possible, and (4) the Type-athon, which consisted in typing out a string of words to tell a story. The offline challenges comprised: (1) the fastest coin stacker; (2) the faster doodler; (3) the fastest bed maker; (4) the fastest tea maker; and (5) the fastest to unravel a toilet roll, and were organised in various places by brand ambassadors (Cadbury 2011b). This race season represented also for Cadbury the opportunity to launch a new chocolate bar named the Big Race bar which means that the community programme was used as a platform for a more classical activation programme involving the launch of a new sponsor’s product. This case of activation based on CSR programmes is quite recent and does not apply for the moment to many sport events, particularly for the smallest ones. Although the sport event itself (e.g. second-tier international, small national or local events) can be sponsored for philanthropic and CSR purposes and be an alternative to traditional event sponsorship (see Séguin et al. 2010), sponsors rarely engage in CSR activities in addition to the event itself. Sponsors increasingly engage with CSR programmes with sport organisations (e.g. FIFA, UEFA, NBA), but these programmes are generally not limited to a specific event.

The above sponsorship activation examples illustrate how sponsors are able to generate value by involving a number of stakeholders connected to events. Over the years, a number of authors (e.g. Sandler and Shani 1989, Shani and Sandler 1998; Farrelly et al. 1997; Meenaghan 1998; Ferrand et al. 2007) have discussed the importance of activation programs to maximise the benefits offered by sponsorship and to diminish the impact of ambush marketing. As the investment in sponsorship programs increased, companies began to use it as a strategic resource (e.g. Amis et al. 1997, 1999) and to gain competitive advantage (e.g. Amis et al. 1997, Fahy et al., 2004; Papadimitriou and Apostolopoulou 2009). In other words, sponsorship investments are more strategic and, as such, allow companies to develop relationships with stakeholders and co-create value.

Stakeholders, value co-creation and sponsorship

As seen throughout this book, sport event organisers collaborate with a variety of stakeholders in the planning and delivering of events (e.g. governments, sport bodies, athletes, coaches, volunteers, facility managers, sponsors, etc.). The importance of developing and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships between sport event organisations and their stakeholders has certainly been well-understood by practitioners (Bülher and Nufer 2009). While relationship marketing has received considerable attention in the literature, scholars have also examined the
influence of networks on the marketing of an organisation (e.g. event) as well as the relationships between stakeholders involved in the value co-creation process (e.g. Grönroos 1994; Gummeson 1997). According to Sheth and Uslay (2007: 305) ‘marketing is now amidst a paradigm shift from exchange (value in exchange) toward value co-creation (value for all stakeholders), with an intermediate iteration at value creation (value in use and relationship marketing)’. Ferrand et al. (2012) argue that sport organisations’ approach has shifted from co-creating value using a ‘market orientation’ to a ‘stakeholder orientation’ and consequently has entered an era of ‘stakeholder marketing’. According to Merz et al. (2009), we are currently in a ‘stakeholder-focus brand era’, where stakeholder co-creation of brand value plays a significant role. It is suggested that ‘approaches to brand equity need to go beyond end customers and their knowledge of the brand’ (Jones 2005: 14). The roles of multiple stakeholders interface with a brand in producing brand value. Ferrand and McCarthy (2009) suggested that stakeholder theory has enabled managers to move from an approach where stakeholders are managed for the benefits they bring to an organisation (i.e. organisation based), to one that focuses on relationships and processes (i.e. network-oriented vision). This approach gives a much richer picture when looking at sources of brand value and equity within an event perspective. According to Ferrand et al. (2012) sponsors and event organisers can co-create value by developing relationships within the network, build the basis of relationship marketing within the organisation, as well as create and develop the relationships within a market orientation.

A number of scholars have recently examined the way that stakeholders contribute to a brand’s sources of value (e.g. Vargo and Lusch 2004; Merz et al. 2009). It is suggested that the co-creation of brand value involves all an organisation’s stakeholders (Vargo and Lusch 2004, 2008). In the case of an event, these stakeholders (see Chapter 2) include governments, community, sport organisations, media, sponsors, delegations, and other organizations. Thus, an important task of an event organizing committee is to determine how each stakeholder contributes to the value co-creation process (Ferrand et al. 2012). For example, we examined earlier how sponsors co-create value with other event stakeholders through brand alliances and activation programs. Stakeholders actively engaged in co-creating value are increasingly involved in the protection and control of event brands (Ellis et al. 2011, Séguin and Scassa 2014). In fact, stakeholders who have the most to gain from a strong event brand seem to be the most engaged in brand protection.

**Protecting the event’s brand and partners’ rights**

Sponsors invest large sums of money in brand building and achieving a high level of brand equity. In fact, some scholars have suggested that a brand is a company’s biggest asset (Keller 1993). There are three stages of strategic brand management for building and protecting brand equity: ‘adopting a brand orientation mind-set, developing internal branding capabilities and, consistent delivery of the brand’ (M’zungu et al. 2010: 612). While it could be argued that most mega and large-scale sport events have indeed adopted a brand philosophy to their businesses, their ability to deliver and protect their brands on a consistent basis vary from one event to the next depending on the amount of resources and control held over marketing/branding programs.

The first issue in relation to sponsorship and sport event protection is probably the choice of sponsors. Although, as mentioned earlier, the literature underlies the importance of image fit or congruence between the sponsee and sponsors’ brands, it is unlikely that negatively-viewed brands aim to sponsor negatively-viewed sport events. On the contrary, these negatively-viewed brands will try to sponsor sport events with strong brand equity and positive associations to expect a transfer to their own brand image. Consequently, sport events need to be careful when choosing sponsors and should not only focus on the tangible resources offered but also on the
intangible aspects and the potential negative impact such partnership could have on their brand image. For instance, AMGEN, the title sponsor of the cycling Tour of California, is a California-based biotech company but also a producer of the EPO drug which has been used by cyclists for doping purposes and which has been at the origin of many doping scandals (e.g. the 1998 Festina scandal in the Tour de France). Although this sponsorship does not create any significant negative consequence from AMGEN’s point of view (some cynical observers would even say that it allowed the company to show the quality of some of its products), it potentially harms the image of the sport event and cycling in general as it reinforces the association between them and the doping issue. Therefore, it is very important that sport events, especially small ones which are often in need for resources, are aware of the potential damages certain sponsors can cause to their image.

Another issue that seems to be common for all sporting events is the need for events to register marks (name, logo, symbol, slogan, image, or combination) with government authorities. According to the World International Trademark Organization (WIPO), a trademark identifies the goods or services of a particular source with those of others (WIPO 2014). In the case of an event, the trademark owner is often a sport federation (local, national, or international), a league (National Football League or NFL, Premier League), or an association (Professional Golf Association, Association of Tennis Professionals). By registering the marks, an event owner is able to grant permission to a third party (e.g. sponsor, licensee) in order to commercially use the trademark legally. While all event owners (e.g. local to international), should register their marks, it is particularly important for popular events that develop lucrative merchandising programs. It also protects itself from unauthorised use by other parties and enables the event organisers to pursue legal action against trademark infringement. This is of particular significance in light of the emergence of ambush marketing.

Ambush marketing is considered part of today’s landscape of sports events sponsorship. Despite efforts made by event organisers, it remains one of the most annoying issues for sponsors. Consequently, sponsors put significant pressures on event organisers to develop effective strategies aimed at protecting their rights. Chadwick and Burton (2011) define ambush marketing as

\[
\text{a form of associative marketing which is designed by an organization to capitalize on the awareness, attention, goodwill, and other benefits, generated by having an association with an event or property, without the organization having an official or direct connection to that event or property.}
\]

\[(Chadwick and Burton 2011: 714)\]

While there is no one accepted definition in the literature, the attempt to ‘associate’ by a ‘non sponsor’ seems to be a common theme. But regardless of its definition, the responsibility of event organisers to ensure that the rights of sponsors are protected remains a priority. This is true for all types of events (e.g. local or international) offering sponsor exclusivity as a benefit. As suggested earlier, whether one is sponsoring a high profile sport clubs or a local community sport event, it does so because of the belief that sport brings value. Hence, whether a local ice hockey organisation offering the exclusive naming rights to its U-10 league and events (e.g. Timbits Hockey) or TOP Olympic sponsors buying worldwide rights to the Olympics, it remains the responsibility of the sponsee to ensure that competitors do not ambush the rights of sponsors. But regardless of the definition used by academics, if consumers are likely to be confused by the activities of a non-sponsor or if there is a commercial risk to the event as a result of such activities, sponsees must respond in a timely and effective manner. Nowadays, sophisticated event owners not only react to ambush marketing but deal with it from a broader perspective as part of a brand
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management strategy (Ellis et al. 2011). As such, sponsees adopt a proactive approach by gaining control of their marketing/brand programs, clarifying issues around event marketing ‘rights’, developing strategies to reduce ambush marketing activities (or at least their possible impacts) and engaging key stakeholders in the process. This is a novel approach to responding to ambush marketing but concurs with the concept of value co-creation discussed earlier. It is suggested here that by collaborating with stakeholders, event owners seek to maintain and/or enhance the value of their brands and consequently those of stakeholders (Ferrand et al. 2012). This approach certainly warrants further research as its full impact has yet to be fully examined by scholars.

The next section examines the various techniques used by sponsees (e.g. event properties) to respond to ambush marketing and manage it.

The management of ambush marketing

There are numerous strategies that can be used by both the sponsee and the sponsor to deal with ambush marketing. We discuss a few of them here. As presented earlier, it is essential that event properties properly register all marks connected to their events. Event owners, especially large and professional sporting events, should also address clutter and adopt proactive public relations as well as education programs that target specific publics. While event owners are ultimately the ones responsible for protecting their properties against ambush marketing, sponsors also play an essential role through strategic activation of their rights. In addition, other key stakeholders may be solicited in protecting the event brand (Sandler and Shani 1989, 1993, McKelvey and Grady 2008, Séguin and O’Reilly 2008, Chadwick and Burton 2011).

Addressing the clutter that surrounds sport events (especially mega-events such as the Olympic Games, FIFA World Cup, and most professional sport leagues) must be tackled by event organisers. Clutter here goes beyond sponsorship itself (i.e. number of sponsors) and into other stakeholders that form alliances with event brands (broadcasters, governments, sponsors, suppliers, licensees, etc.). In other words, the cluttered environment is often the result of the action of the event organiser and as such ambush marketing only adds to it. This is an important issue for events as the link between consumer confusion and a cluttered environment is well documented in the literature (Stotlar 1993, Shani and Sandler 1998, Cornwell et al. 2005, Séguin et al. 2005, Séguin and O’Reilly 2008, Chadwick and Burton 2011). For brands like the Olympic Games, clutter poses a threat as it displays a highly commercialised environment which takes away from the core essence of the brand (Ferrand et al. 2012).

Public relations (PR) plays an important role as well as it allows the property to target various publics and inform them about the property (and the various rights), the important contributions of sponsors, and the possible impacts of ambush marketing on the event and its stakeholders (Crow and Hoek 2003, Séguin and O’Reilly 2008, Chadwick and Burton 2011). PR can also be used as a vehicle to make a public example (name and shame) of the ambushers by condemning their actions and its negative impacts on the property, create bad publicity, and hopefully offset the benefits they have received via the ambush (Meenaghan 1996). But one should be careful using such strategies as recent cases (Olympic Games, FIFA World Cup) suggest that event organisers can actually position the sponsor into a ‘negative’ story while providing the opportunity for ambushers to respond. Consequently, this can raise public attention to an issue that could possibly be counterproductive for the sponsee and its sponsors (Ellis et al. 2011, Séguin and Scassa 2014).

Perhaps the most effective method of preventing and/or weakening the impact of ambush marketing is for sponsors to strategically activate their connection to the event brand. This allows sponsors to use a variety of activation methods as presented earlier to reach and engage
various publics (e.g. employees, clients, suppliers, stakeholders, etc.) with the events. Sponsor activation programs can also be complemented with sponsor recognition programs executed by the property.

Stakeholders also play an important role in dealing with ambush marketing. For example, co-sponsors, sport federations, the general public, and in some cases local authorities may all be involved in looking out for and/or reporting suspicious activities. For example, prior to the 2010 Vancouver Olympic Games, VANOC (the organizing committee) created a website where the general public was able to report ambush marketing activities. In addition, the Government of Canada agreed to pass a special legislation aimed specifically at protecting sponsors from ambush marketing. The latter is now common practice for mega-sport events (e.g. FIFA World Cup, Olympic Games) (Ellis et al. 2011). Indeed, governments no longer limit their involvement to providing support (financial, diplomatic, political, etc.) necessary for the hosting of mega-events. The fierce competition between cities and/or countries for a limited number of mega-events has made it easier for those properties to demand more from host cities and respective governments, which eventually could exclude less compliant cities and states. Consequently, it is now common procedure for candidate cities (i.e. bidding stage, see Chapter 2 in this Handbook) to guarantee that legislation necessary to effectively reduce and sanction ambush marketing is enacted. While sponsors applaud such measures it has also become increasingly stringent and a cause for concern (Scassa 2011, Ellis et al. 2011). There are potentially a number of negative impacts on other stakeholders (see Séguin and Scassa 2014 for details). For example, such legislation may prevent small businesses from engaging with major international events that take place within their community. Given that these small businesses can also be important stakeholders of events (e.g. member of community, welcoming tourists, support event through government’s financial contribution), ambush legislation can actually be counterproductive. Further, the impact of legislation on athletes and sport organisations has yet to be fully understood. The stringent control of athletes and sport organisations may impact their ability to raise the necessary funds to finance their training programs through corporate sponsorship (Ellis et al. 2011). In a system where value is being co-created by all stakeholders (Ferrand et al. 2012), such actions can be co-destructive in the future. Finally, the media is becoming increasingly aware of these measures and a number of negative stories on event owners have appeared in recent years. This was the case for FIFA during the 2010 World Cup in South Africa. Following from its successful ambush campaign in 2006, Dutch beer company Bavaria obtained a high level of media attention through the promotion of its brand with 36 female supporters dressed in orange-coloured mini dresses of the brewery. They entered the Johannesburg-filled stadium to attend the Netherlands–Denmark preliminary game and FIFA vigorously acted by removing them from the stadium and briefly had them arrested. What was perceived as a harmless incident at first became international news hence giving Bavaria enormous Public Relations impact while positioning FIFA as being an overly aggressive and protective sport organisation (Parsons 2010). Similarly, the 2012 London Organizing Committee’s (LOCOG) aggressive stance on ambush marketing, especially with small local businesses, received its share of bad publicity (Grady and McKelvey 2012). While the legislation may have deterred many smaller businesses from engaging in ambush marketing and/or showing local pride and excitement about hosting the Games, it is suggested that ‘the overzealous approach to its [IOC] brand protection efforts arguably served to tarnish the Olympic brand, given the amount of negative publicity that surrounded these efforts’ (Grady and McKelvey 2012: 25). In other words, as the public becomes aware of legislations aimed at protecting sponsors, it may have a reverse effect on event brands. This may point instead to the need to use softer strategies such as education. The impact of such legislations on other
stakeholders warrants more research in the future. In addition, whether the precedents of passing specific event legislations for mega-events triggers down to smaller events warrants further research as well.

Overall, this chapter also aimed to demonstrate the evolution of sponsorship practices, which reflects or is reflected in the evolution of the literature and the theories. Specifically, we have shown that, despite the diversity of contexts and sport events, sport event sponsorship has moved from a simple transfer of resources in cash or kind to obtain commercial rights to relationships and partnerships involving various stakeholders. This was, for instance, the case for sponsorship activation, which is necessary and often takes the shape of a close collaboration between partners, and for sponsorship and brand protection which does not only concern the sponsor but involves the sport event and its main stakeholders. The evolution towards more network and stakeholder approaches is certainly relevant, but at the same time, represents an increasingly difficult challenge for researchers as they have to integrate more partners and dimensions when trying to better understand the nature of sponsorship relationships, their efficiency, and their impact on sport organizations and society at large. This complexity would possibly require more diverse research in terms of methods as it was shown that quantitative cross-sectional studies still dominated the area (Charalambous-Papamiltiades 2013). In this regard, more qualitative studies should be encouraged, but also more longitudinal and/or pre-post research design to accurately assess the impact and the efficiency of sport event sponsorship. If the framework of value co-creation appears theoretically relevant, more research is needed to identify the exact contribution various stakeholders might have in the success or failure of sponsorship. At the moment, the literature seems to mainly focus on the outcomes of event sponsorship (e.g. was brand awareness increased? Did brand image improved? etc.); but the specific role of the stakeholders and the various sponsorship arrangement factors on these outcomes remains elusive. One common limitation of quantitative research dealing with the efficiency of certain sponsorship is to use non-specific items which mention the term ‘sponsor’ in general and not the actual real sponsor. This is a limitation because, without specifically naming the sponsors, attitudes measured towards the sponsors are simply proxies for the attachment the spectators or fans express towards the event. Consequently, results tend to be overly positive and general. An example of this shortcoming is when researchers aim to test the impact of the sport event sponsorship on spectators’ purchase intentions towards sponsors’ products or services without taking into consideration the category of the sponsors, although the results will be certainly different with sponsors that are car manufacturers, life insurance providers, or soft drink brands, especially if the spectators surveyed are mainly young and students.

In another area but not disconnected from these methodological considerations, future research could investigate the experiential dimensions of spectators and consumers’ interaction with sponsors, particularly as Ferrand et al. (2007) underlined the importance of the experiential dimension in activation. Finally, many sponsorship studies have focused on major sport events (e.g. FIFA, Olympic Games) and Western contexts (e.g. North America, United Kingdom, Australia, etc.) (Charalambous–Papamiltiades 2013) and more research is certainly needed to better understand sponsorship at small local community sport events and in various geographical, cultural, and economic contexts.

Chapter summary

In this chapter, we have identified the diversity of sponsors’ motives and objectives. As for the motives, it was shown that they range from altruistic and philanthropic to personal interests, familial, community, and commercial, without being totally exclusive from each other. The
diversity of motives therefore reflects the diversity of objectives, which have been increasingly related to branding and brand equity, and which could possibly be summarised into five main motives which are: increasing sales, increasing brand awareness, increasing brand image, improving sponsors’ employee morale and internal relations, and improving relationships with stakeholders (e.g. businesses, community groups). In order to meet the needs and expectations of potential sponsors and partners, the need for managers to consider and approach their sport event as a brand was also emphasised, allowing partnerships between two brands (i.e. the sponsee and the sponsor). Following this, the necessity to leverage the partnership and for sponsors to integrate their sponsorship activities into their overall marketing and communications activities was also underlined. Particularly, activation activities are the most efficient when the sport event and its stakeholders are fully involved.

Here, future research should examine how sponsors and other event stakeholders can use their relationships and networks to co-create value using the event as the catalyst. By co-creating value, stakeholders not only contribute to making the event brand stronger (i.e. reach brand equity), they are also actively engaged in the protection of the brand (Ferrand et al. 2012). This is significant given the growing issue of ambush marketing and the amount of resources needed to respond to it. However, more research is needed to determine whether the inherent need to protect sponsors is being done at the expense of other stakeholders (e.g. athletes and sport federations). There are indications that mega-events such as Olympic Games may be going too far in the name of brand protection and protecting sponsors’ rights (Scassa 2011, Ellis et al. 2011, Séguin and Scassa 2014). For example, it is suggested that strict application of these event-specific legislations may be breaching the general public’s rights (e.g. freedom of expression, freedom of choice between products). ‘Since application of anti-ambush legislation rests in large part with organizing committees the way in which they manage this sensitive issue in the future will dictate whether legislation is the ultimate form of brand protection’ (Séguin and Scassa 2014: 508). Future research could investigate the perceptions of sport event stakeholders as many anti-ambush marketing legislations have been passed to protect sponsors without investigating whether they could produce negative consequences for other stakeholders. For instance, small local businesses increasingly complain about the rigidity of these legislations which limit the possible benefits they could get from hosting the sport event and consequently their involvement and their attitude towards it. In the same vein of the negative reactions generated by sponsorship practices, media have reported negative reactions of fans and spectators following the renaming of their preferred sport event with the sponsor’s name, and future research could investigate these negative consequences for both the sport event and the sponsor.

Suggested readings


Note

1 Dollar amounts ($) are in US currency unless indicated otherwise.
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References


