

<https://doi.org/10.5559/di.33.3.03>

FROM CORPORATE MOTIVES TO THE IMPACTS OF SPORTS SPONSORSHIP ON EMPLOYEES: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

Marko MLAKAR, Tomaž ČATER, Robert KAŠE
School of Economics and Business,
University of Ljubljana, Ljubljana, Slovenia

UDK: 338.246.027
339.138:796
796.078

Original scientific paper

Received: May 28, 2024

This paper reviews the common motives and major impacts of sports sponsorships undertaken by sponsoring organisations. Following a systematic review of 72 relevant articles, seven key motives for engaging in sports sponsorship were identified. Marketing, customer retention, and brand equity emerged as the most frequently studied, while the sponsorship of emerging sports associations for brand promotion was the least examined. Regarding impacts on employees, findings from 28 articles indicated that high retention and brand identification were the most researched topics, with no studies addressing potential negative effects. The study contributes to the existing literature by highlighting overlooked motives and effects of sports sponsorships. We recommend that future research focuses on the less-studied motives and investigates potential negative impacts on employees within sponsoring organisations.

Keywords: sports sponsorship, motives, impacts on employees, marketing, employee retention



Marko Mlakar, School of Economics and Business,
University of Ljubljana, Kardeljeva ploščad 17,
1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia
Email: marko.mlakar@amrop.si

INTRODUCTION

Sports sponsorship is an age-old strategy applied by the corporate sector to achieve various objectives. In the 19th century, it was sponsorship by Evangelos Zappas that paved the way for the modern Olympic Games to be held in Greece (Kis-soudi, 2005). Some objectives of sponsorship inevitably influence the behaviour of the employees of sponsoring companies. Corporate sponsorship affects the attitudes and performance of such employees on different levels and in different ways (Khan & Stanton, 2010). The main focus of the study is examining the impact of companies' sports sponsorship on their employees. These impacts can be independent or an offshoot of the firms' sponsorship objectives. The review article hence also compares any possible impact on employees vis-à-vis the company's objectives while sponsoring sports.

Since sponsorship brings multiple benefits, companies pursue a variety of motives under the guise of sports sponsorship. While most of these motives are explicit, some are implicit. Sponsorship not only helps to put sporting events in the spotlight, but is also a source of considerable revenue and customer trust. It entails a symbiotic relationship where the sports industry receives financial support and the sponsoring company increases its brand awareness, which influences the attitude held by employees (internal audience) of the sponsoring companies. Brand promotion and customer loyalty, along with economic gains, are the obvious goals a company seeks to achieve with its sponsorship efforts (Cheong et al., 2019). By achieving the objective of such mega brand awareness and customer retention, the internal audience of the sponsoring firm is bound to become influenced.

Another important objective pursued by sports sponsorship is the sponsoring company's compliance with CSR (corporate social responsibility). Despite the diversity of emerging roles in an organisation's political, social and economic perspectives (Lindgreen & Swaen, 2010), the CSR approach mainly focuses on the strategy of sports sponsorship for establishing a quick and effective connection with the brand's customers since it is viewed as soft and sceptic-free marketing of the brand (Cornwell et al., 2005). A further focus of the approach is to influence employees' attitudes towards their employer and the level of their job performance (Plewa & Quester, 2011).

Some organisations pursue motives that are not apparent in their explicit sports sponsorship agenda. Such hidden goals can be important for understanding the relationship between organisational goals concerning sports sponsorship and its impact on the employees of the company doing the spon-

soring. Even though we have informally learned that some companies sell their name to the organisers of sporting events in order to increase the event's value, few studies address this fact. Another (unofficial) motive (of the sponsoring company) is to develop long-term business relationships with co-sponsoring organisations. All of these hidden motives are believed to influence employee perceptions of the employer/manager. However, even fewer studies focus exclusively on a company's implicit sponsorship motives and the associated impact on employees, creating the need for a more recent investigation of this topic.

A company that is popular with the public increases the social prestige of its employees and thus their job satisfaction, with such public popularity being easily achieved by sponsoring sporting events. Efforts to advertise to external consumers create results for internal branding (Hofer & Grohs, 2018). Sponsor-related internal marketing is also an important impact of sports sponsorship on the sponsoring company's internal audience (employees) and is linked to other motives pursued by that company.

The list of the independent impacts of a company's sports sponsorship on its employees is long. General effects include job satisfaction, employee retention, a change in how the employer is perceived, and general performance improvement (Hall, 2007). Employee engagement and their perception of both the employer and the company are improved through company sports sponsorship (Batt et al., 2021). Even though studies were conducted in past decades on the negative impacts on employees' cognitive abilities, newer studies regarding this aspect are missing. Recent studies have also not examined the development of relationships between employees of different sponsoring organisations. Anxiety, sociophobia, feeling that the work is stressful etc. are possible negative effects on the employees of the sponsoring company.

Although many studies explore companies' motives for sponsoring sports and the impact on their employees, few specifically address the relationship between these motives and the effects on employees within sponsoring companies. The implicit motives of companies and negative impacts of sports sponsorship on employees also have yet to be studied in detail. This lack of research results in an incomplete understanding of how sports sponsorship leads to key outcomes (Cornwell & Kwon, 2020), highlighting the need for further robust research to fill this gap. Against this background, an up-to-date study that provides a systematic literature review to determine which motives behind sponsorship are prevalent, how

they affect employees, and what is still missing in this regard is appropriate. The purpose of this comprehensive literature review is to identify the common areas of focus and research gaps, with the goal of proposing new avenues for examining the impact of sports sponsorship on a sponsoring company's employees.

RESEARCH DESIGN

For the systematic review presented here, we did not use PRISMA (preferred reporting items for systematic review and meta-analysis), given that it has been argued (Mishra & Mishra, 2023) that PRISMA is most suitable for reviewing articles reporting clinical studies due to its rigid structure focused on the reproducible quality of evidence for patient care and treatment. We followed the methodology developed by Durach et al. (2017), since it is more appropriate for our context. The flexibility of this approach, with its focus on managerial and operational insights, and adaptability to the time-sensitive and dynamic nature of corporate environments, were the key strengths considered. Regardless of the area of study, six steps (developing the research question, establishing inclusion/exclusion criteria – based on the required characteristics of primary studies, assembling the relevant literature, extracting the relevant literature, synthesising the information obtained, presenting the results/findings) are commonly followed by researchers while conducting an effective systematic literature review (Durach et al., 2017).

Step 1. Development of the research questions. Following a systematic review of the literature, this study seeks to find answers to three research questions:

- (1) *What are the common motives of organisations to engage in sports sponsorship?*
- (2) *What are the biggest impacts of sports sponsorship on the employees of the sponsoring organisation?*
- (3) *What is the possible relationship between the two motives of sports sponsorship and their impacts on the sponsoring organisation's employees?*

Step 2. Inclusion/exclusion criteria. Before reviewing the literature, the inclusion criteria were aligned with the above three research questions. Peer-reviewed articles from journals applying high academic standards were selected to ensure the validity of the data (Durach et al., 2017). Therefore, we used Web of Science (WoS) journals that exclude ethically questionable/

biased publishers, and all conference papers, book chapters and abstracts were excluded from the review framework (Cornwell & Kwon, 2020). The timeframe of the publications spanned 20 years (2003–2022) in order to obtain the largest possible number of relevant articles. A detailed list of inclusion and exclusion criteria can be found in Table 1.

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
In quantitative research, for RQ2, the sample size should equal or be above 25 individuals	Research published based on poor evidence was excluded
Year of publication should not be before 2003	Research published as a poster presentation
The crux of the publication should match the key words of our research paper	Publications with very short (less than 5 pages) content
The variables of the published article and our study should match	Articles published in journals not mentioned in the Thomson Reuters Master Journal Li
To be published by internationally acceptable publishers	Where the focus of the publication lies beyond the theme of the current study
Having a complete conceptual background of hypothesis and methodology	Publications written in languages other than English

TABLE 1
Inclusion and exclusion criteria for selecting studies on corporate sponsorship and its effects on employees of the sponsoring company

Step 3. Compilation of relevant literature to establish the baseline sample. In this third step, following the guide (Durach et al., 2017), we searched for articles with different key terms, e.g., "corporate motives for sports sponsorship", "drivers of sports sponsorship by corporate sector" and "impact of sports sponsorship on corporate employees", which yielded 119 articles.

Step 4. Extraction of relevant literature. Following the inclusion/exclusion criteria, the sample was reduced to 72 journal articles (in step 3) from 119. Among these 72 articles, 44 dealt with the motives of sponsorship and 28 with the impacts of sponsorship on the employees of sponsoring companies. To keep the count simple, articles that addressed both RQs were only considered for one RQ based on the main topic of their research.

Step 5. Synthesis of the information obtained. A synthesis of the information obtained was created in relation to each research objective, and the primary motives and types of impact were carefully categorised. While synthesising the data, we attempted to establish a relationship between a company's motives and the impact they may have on its internal audiences. It was assumed that a single motive may have many types of impact on employees.

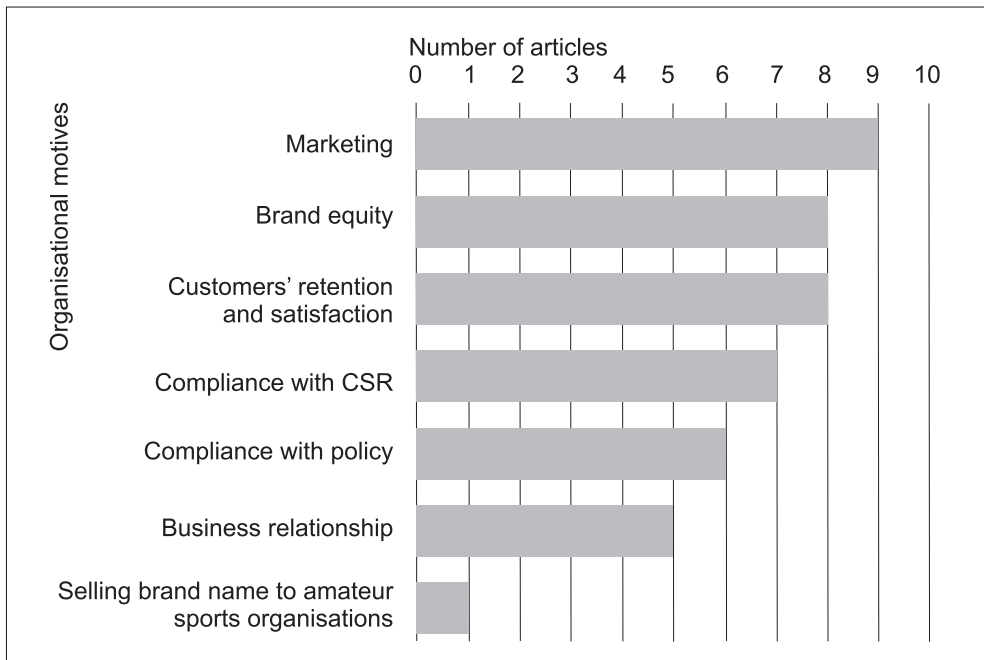
Step 6. Presentation of the results. The final step of the chosen research design is to present the results obtained and then discuss the findings. This step also helps to point out future areas for studies to fill the research gap by exploring the missing points concerning the general objectives of sports sponsorship as well as the prevailing effects on the internal audience of the sponsoring organisations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Generally prevailing motives for sports sponsoring (RQ1)

During the research, we categorised some of the main goals of sports sponsorship. The majority of the studies mentioned marketing as the leading objective, followed by customer satisfaction and brand equity. There were seven motives in total (Figure 1). No study examined the informally mentioned motive that companies sponsor sporting events only to build long-term business relationships with other sponsoring organisations. This motive is thus not included in the figure.

FIGURE 1
Quantitative overview
of the studies on
corporate motives
behind sponsorship



Another motive – the sale of brand names to small (amateur) sports organisations – was not directly investigated in any article reviewed. However, some articles reported indirectly on these two objectives, which led us to consider how this research gap could be filled. The general findings for each listed objective are presented below under relevant sub-headings.

(1) Marketing

The aim behind sports sponsorship is to market the sponsoring company in order to boost its sales (Miragaia et al., 2017). Brand awareness in social networks and the media is a concern of a company behind sports sponsorship (Rupp et al., 2006). Some companies are guided by patriotism when deciding to sponsor events or teams, albeit their true goal is marketing to increase customer reach (Sudolska et al., 2020). Some companies sponsor sports to compensate for their negative impression in society. It has been observed that sponsored athletes are used successfully in corporate marketing (Penttinen & Lehtimäki, 2022). A study (Koronios et al., 2021) examining the strategic motivations for industry sports sponsorship finds that they impact informal marketing tools and purchase intent concerning the sponsored brand. The most frequently observed motives in an empirical study were "market", followed by "society", "clan" and "bonding" (Slåtten et al., 2017). Sports sponsorship is seen as an effective business strategy as it creates new platforms for marketing to event audiences (Maldonado-Erazo et al., 2019). Companies use sporting events as a medium to market their brand to the fans of a given sport (Grohs et al., 2004).

(2) Brand equity

Brand image and brand equity are directly related to a brand's sports sponsorship (Bibby, 2009). A study that looked at the role of fit and sports sponsorship concluded that a significant relationship exists between the latter and brand equity (Henseler et al., 2007). After examining managers' views on brand equity, a unique study concluded that managers largely rely on sports sponsorship to achieve their company's goals, with brand equity featuring at the top of the list (Henseler et al., 2011). The constructs of a sponsor's brand equity are fully achieved through sports sponsorship (Cliffe & Motion, 2005; Lindgreen et al., 2010).

(3) Customer retention and satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is a key concern of a company's sports sponsorship and was investigated in one study (Wagner et al., 2019). A more recent study found a direct link between sports sponsorship and customer loyalty to the sponsoring brand (Schönberner et al., 2021). To fill this gap, a study (Cornwell, 2019) was performed to show the actual benefits of sponsorship as a platform for customer loyalty for both sponsors and sponsored parties. A brand can be perceived to be altruistic when an individual's knowledge of the sport is linked to the sponsoring brand (Gwinner, 2005). Chinese and Korean companies also achieve customer loyalty and engagement via

sports sponsorship (Liu et al., 2015). Companies that engage in sports sponsorship pursue various goals, with one of the most important being to increase sales (Ameri & Bashiri, 2010). Nowadays, sports sponsorship is a high-value means of communication between the sponsoring brand and its customers (Dolphin, 2003). Companies invest in sports sponsorship to improve their business results by increasing customer satisfaction (Jensen & Hsu, 2011).

(4) Compliance with CSR

It is essential for companies to ensure CSR (Vaaland et al., 2008) as the number of socially conscious buyers in markets grows (Brooks, 2013). Since CSR holds an important role in a company's image in the market, companies are making efforts to provide for CSR, and sports sponsorship is an important step in this respect (Plewa et al., 2016). In order to maximise benefits, participant trust and purchase intention (Berger et al., 2007), companies engage in CSR by sponsoring sporting events (Plewa & Quester, 2011). CSR is the guiding factor for sports sponsorship initiatives (Cortsen & Marketing, 2014). In order to portray the brand's image as socially responsible, companies sponsor sports as part of CSR (Demirel & Sponsorship, 2020).

(5) Compliance with policy

Many organisations make sports sponsorship an important part of their policy. A study (Vance et al., 2016) reviewed the literature to determine the influence of corporate policy on sports sponsorship and the choice of sponsorship types (e.g., refreshment, entertainment/music). The goal of aligning corporate culture with existing policy prompted management to sponsor sports (Guiso et al., 2015). There are a few other studies that mention "corporate policy compliance in sports sponsorship" as the primary objective for corporate sports sponsorship (Hall, 2007; Daellenbach et al., 2013; Johnston & Paulsen, 2014).

(6) Business relationship

Companies prefer B2B (business-to-business) relationships over B2C (business-to-customer) ones, citing the long-term advantages that B2B has over competitors in the post-sponsorship market (Jensen & Cornwell, 2021). Another study finds the same B2B motive underlying sports sponsorship, but with the ultimate goal of brand marketing to customers (Clark et al., 2003). Some companies sponsor sports to build business relationships with the ultimate goal of improving profit opportunities (Weller et al., 2019). In research on sponsorship networks, companies sponsor sports to improve business rela-

TABLE 2
Comprehensive
classification of
organisational motives
for engaging in sports
sponsorship

tionships with other network members (Wagner et al., 2017). B2B relationships exist between sponsoring organisations and sports companies, with these relationships being characterised by trust and commitment from sponsors (Farrelly & Quester, 2005).

(7) Selling brand names to amateur sports organisations

According to the extensive review of the literature, no study conducted between 2003 and 2022 examined the benefits for companies of selling a brand name to small sporting events. Still, there is one study that looks at corporate profits arising from sponsoring amateur sports organisations (Seguin et al., 2005). All the motives for sports sponsorship studied, with numbers and references to the articles, may be found in Table 2.

Motives	No. of articles	References
Marketing	9	(Miragaia et al., 2017; Rupp et al., 2006; Sudolska et al., 2020; Penttinen & Lehtimäki, 2022; Koronios et al., 2021; Slåtten et al., 2017; Maldonado-Erazo et al., 2019; Grohs et al., 2004; Close et al., 2006)
Brand equity	8	(Keller et al., 2011; Cornwell & Coote, 2005; Bibby, 2009; Henseler et al., 2007; Henseler et al., 2011; Cliffe & Motion, 2005; Lindgreen et al., 2010; Tsordia et al., 2018)
Customers' retention and satisfaction	8	(Wagner et al., 2019; Schönberner et al., 2021; Cornwell, 2019; Gwinner, 2005; Liu et al., 2015; Ameri & Bashiri, 2010; Dolphin, 2003; Jensen & Hsu, 2011)
Compliance with CSR	7	(Brooks, 2013; Plewa et al., 2016; Plewa & Quester, 2011; Berger et al., 2007; Cortsen & Marketing, 2014; Demirel & Sponsorship, 2020; Vaaland et al., 2008)
Compliance with policy	6	(Vance et al., 2016; Guiso et al., 2015; Daellenbach et al., 2013; Hall, 2007; Johnston & Paulsen, 2014; West et al., 2014)
Business relationship	5	(Jensen & Cornwell, 2021; Clark et al., 2003; Weller et al., 2019; Wagner et al., 2017; Farrelly & Quester, 2005)
Selling a brand name to amateur organisations	1	(Seguin et al., 2005)

Impacts of sponsorship on the employees of the sponsoring companies (RQ2)

The review of the literature on how sponsorship affects the employees of the sponsoring company revealed that some types of impact are quite common in many studies, while others have hardly been studied. In total, seven types of impact were classified according to the number of articles reporting on them, with the details being shown in Figure 2.

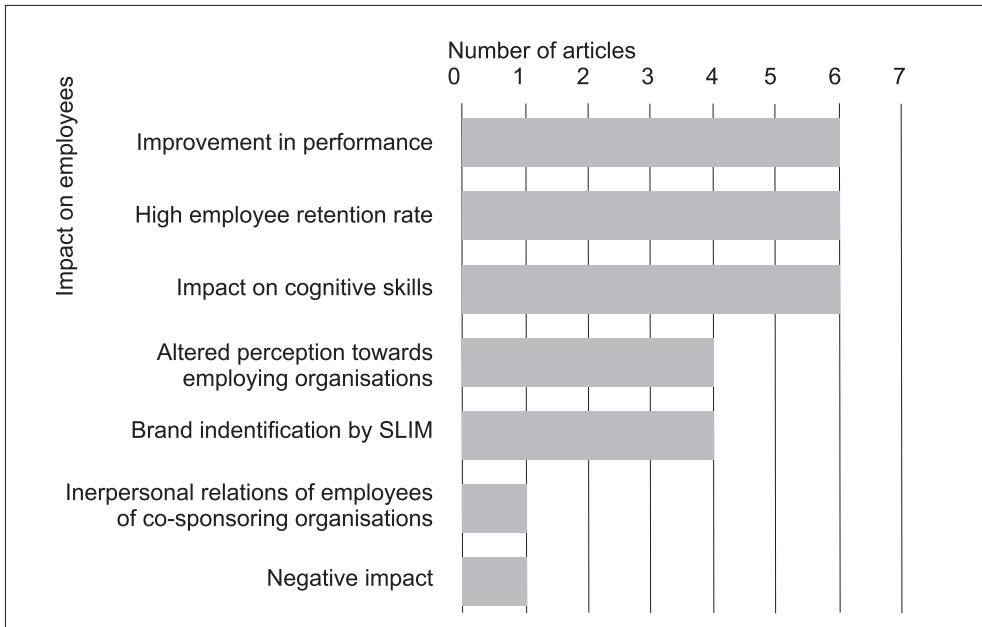


FIGURE 2
Quantitative overview of articles examining the impact of corporate sponsorship on the behaviour of sponsoring companies' employees

(1) Improvement in performance

Employees of a company engaging in sports sponsorship report positive indicators of better overall performance in various aspects of work-related tasks and tend to collaborate with their teammates (Zarei et al., 2019). Employees participating in a sports sponsorship often establish a sense of teamwork amongst colleagues, which eventually leads to improved collaboration in the organisation. Although less studied, the impact of a company's sports sponsorship on the performance of its internal employees is very evident (Edwards, 2016). Through sports sponsorship, companies can improve the performance and engagement of their employees (Farrelly et al., 2012). Improved employee performance is one of the direct effects of corporate sports sponsorship (Hickman et al., 2005). A study (Khan & Stanton, 2010) which examined the relationship between sponsorship activities and the impact on employees concluded that employees develop better attitudes to improve their performance for their sponsor. Another study (Hofer & Grohs, 2018) established the same impact on employees. Via sports sponsorship, a positive organisational environment is generated, which enhances the performance of its internal audience.

(2) High employee retention rate

More recent studies challenge the traditional relationship between employees and companies and stress that employee engagement contributes to better company performance. To

increase brand awareness, companies engage in internal marketing to their employees since they play an important role in the success of a brand (Papasolomou & Vrontis, 2006), and retaining these employees is key to success. Employer branding is achieved through sports sponsorship and becomes a solid source for attracting and retaining employees (Karjaluo et al., 2019). Sports sponsorship of a company (engaged in CSR) and the rate of internal employee retention are positively related (Ali et al., 2010). One study (Demirel et al., 2018) successfully developed and tested a model that reveals a positive relationship between factors such as team selection, sponsorship activities and level of employee retention, as well as an increase in the productivity of sponsoring companies via employee sponsorship. One of these factors is also examined in another study, which concludes that team selection for sports sponsorship strongly influences employee commitment to the company (Hickman et al., 2005). Sports-related communication with internal employees leads to employee satisfaction, cohesion and, ultimately, retention (Farrelly & Greyser, 2007; Meenaghan et al., 2013). In a nutshell, sports sponsorship creates an environment of productive performances, new team building, better career mobilities, rewards, and social prestige for the internal employees of the firm sponsoring sports.

(3) Impacts on cognitive skills

The quality and quantity of sponsorship have been found to be strongly related to employees' brand image. Employees' brand knowledge, engagement and commitment along with their cognitive activity (decision-making, grasping trends, general understanding) are increased by cultivating internal marketing parameters (Morhart et al., 2009; Löhndorf & Diamantopoulos, 2014; Ngo et al., 2019). Through sports sponsorship, brands change the personal behaviour of their employees towards the brand and thereby make them fitter (Zepf, 2008). Other common cognitive skills of employees, which become influenced by the sports sponsorship of their employers, are conflict resolution, communication on the inter-organisational level, critical thinking, and management of time and stress. Although less studied, the cognitive skills of employees hold potential to be affected in depth, both positively and negatively.

(4) Altered perception of the employer organisation

The way employees perceive their employer or company is extremely important for the company's success. Sports sponsorship by the employer changes the sponsoring company's image in the minds of employees (Ployhart, 2006; Theurer et al., 2018).

Involving employees in event-related sports sponsorship activities changed their perception of goodwill towards the employer (Inoue et al., 2016). Another study (Schönberner et al., 2021) concluded that sports sponsorship influences the organisation's image, especially the internal audience (employees). When a company sponsors a sports event, it adds to its image by demonstrating compliance with CSR, and changes the perception held by its employees towards it. Having found a productive work environment, social recognition and alignment with personal values, the employees of sports sponsoring firms tend to develop a better perception of their employer firms.

(5) Brand identification by SLIM

Sponsorship-Linked-Internal-Marketing (SLIM) is another emerging strategy of an organisation behind its sports sponsorship. SLIM is analysed in an article (Batt et al., 2021) as a strong source of employee identification with the brand. Employees' involvement in sponsorship activities makes the employer's brand more vivid to them (Farrelly et al., 2012). Internal brand communication improves employees' knowledge and understanding of the brand and is positively linked to their comprehensive understanding of their employer company (Piehler et al., 2016). In general, we can state that there are enough data on "brand identification" as an impact of SLIM on the employees of sponsoring companies (Cornwell & Kwon, 2020). SLIM invokes a deeper connection between employees and the brand, resulting in greater brand identification amongst employees. By setting channels of direct communication with employees, SLIM keeps employees informed and engaged with sponsorship activities.

(6) Interpersonal relationships with employees of co-sponsoring organisations

A review paper identified a study on the interaction between the audience and the staff of event organisers as well as sponsoring organisations (Coppetti et al., 2009). Similarly, sponsorship can affect the interaction between the managers/staff of co-sponsoring organisations. Unfortunately, in this systematic review no study was found that identified this type of impact on employees. However, there are common assumptions about the positive impacts of co-sponsoring initiatives on the interpersonal relations of employees from different organisations. Once developed, these interpersonal relationships not only ensure the success of the co-sponsored initiatives, but also establish longer-lasting connections among the employees of co-sponsoring organisations.

TABLE 3
Detailed classification
of the various impacts
of sports sponsorship
on internal employees
within the organisation

(7) Negative impacts

One study (Richards et al., 2005) shows that a company's sponsorship activities (if it is a type of fundraising or manipulation) can produce a negative impact on its employees by revealing negative employer intentions or by having no impact at all. The possible negative impacts of sports sponsorship can create feelings of resentment or alienation among those employees who lack an interest in sports. Some employees may perceive this activity as a source of distraction from their main work. Many employees may find the pressure to participate in sponsorship activities to be burdensome.

Impacts	No. of articles	References
Improvement in performance	6	(Edwards, 2016; Farrelly & Greyser, 2007; Hickman et al., 2005; Hofer & Grohs, 2018; Khan & Stanton, 2010; Zarei Mahmoudabadi et al., 2019)
High employee retention rate	6	(Papasolomou & Vrontis, 2006; Karjaluoto et al., 2019; Demirel et al., 2018; Meenaghan et al., 2013; Walraven et al., 2012; Ali et al., 2010)
Impact on cognitive skills	6	(Morhart et al., 2009; Ngo et al., 2019; Piehler, 2018; Löhndorf & Diamantopoulos, 2014; King & Grace, 2008; Zepf, 2008)
Altered perception of the employer organisation	4	(Ployhart, 2006; Theurer et al., 2018; Inoue et al., 2016; Schönberner et al., 2021)
Brand identification by SLIM	4	(Batt et al., 2021; Farrelly et al., 2012; Piehler et al., 2016; Cornwell & Kwon, 2020)
Interpersonal relationship with employees of co-sponsoring organisations	1	(Coppetti et al., 2009)
Negative impacts	1	(Richards et al., 2005)

Assumed connection between the motives of companies and possible impacts on their employees

It appears from the two sub-results above that there may be a strong relationship between the objective of corporate sports sponsorship and its impact on the professional behaviour of their employees. Some correlations are derived and summarised in Table 4. The marketing and brand equity motives increase identification with the brand, which serves the SLIM cause on a broader level and influences employee performance on an individual level. In addition, these two motives can cause high employee retention. The impact on cognitive skills is most likely to be influenced by 5 of the 7 motives for sports sponsorship by an organisation.

Serial number	Objectives	Associated impacts on employees
1	Marketing	i. SLIM ii. improved employee performance iii. altered perception of the sponsoring organisation iv. impact on cognitive skills
2	Brand equity	i. high employee retention rate ii. improved employee performance iii. impact on cognitive skills
3	Customers' retention and satisfaction	i. SLIM ii. high employee retention rate iii. altered perception of the sponsoring organisation iv. impact on cognitive skills
4	Compliance with CSR	i. altered perception of the sponsoring organisation ii. SLIM iii. improved employee performance
5	Compliance with policy	No possible impact on employees
6	Business relationship	Negative impacts
7	Selling a brand name to an amateur organisation	i. negative impacts at large ii. impact on cognitive skills
8	Development of a business relationship with a co-sponsoring organisation	i. negative impacts ii. interpersonal relationship with employees of co-sponsoring organisations iii. altered perception of the sponsoring organisation iv. impact on cognitive skills

TABLE 4
Comprehensive summary of the relationship between organisational goals in sports sponsorship and their impacts on employee outcomes

Some studies have determined the impact of a company's motives on its employees. Our hypothesis about the impact of marketing on improving the employees' cognitive and personal skills is consistent with the findings of other studies. A company's motive for sponsorship is clearly brand equity, although it also influences employee performance and ensures employee retention.

Interestingly, the two least studied motives (selling the brand name to amateur sporting events and developing long-term relationships with other sponsors) hold the potential to produce a major negative impact on employees. These two motives can have the exact opposite effect of what CSR has on employees' perceptions of their employer. Cognitive abilities can be disrupted. Interpersonal relationships between co-sponsors' employees inevitably develop and may not always be beneficial to the employer in question. This gap in the literature opens up a field for future research.

DISCUSSION

The data from empirical and original research show that a relatively large amount of research has considered the corporate motives for sports sponsorship and the impact of sponsorship on the sponsoring companies' employees. Most of these studied motives include marketing, customer retention, brand equity, corporate social responsibility, and compliance with other corporate policies. This study identified a lack of research on two possible motives: first, that a company sells its name to increase the popularity of an amateur sports organisation or event and, second, that it builds long-term relationships with concurrent sponsoring organisations.

In this systematic study of the impact of sports sponsorship on the sponsoring organisation's employees, we established that improved performance, good employee retention, and improved employee cognitive skills were the most studied impacts. However, the negative (and mitigation) effects on employees' cognition have not even begun to be studied. For example, companies might leverage sports sponsorships to improve employee engagement, performance and cognitive skills by reducing potential negative effects like stress.

Our research extends the current body of knowledge by exposing overlooked motives and effects of sports sponsorship and proposing a more comprehensive approach to understanding its impact on both companies and their employees. We hope the presented review will motivate more primary and applied research to address these understudied phenomena, with the aim to investigate companies' implicit motives for sponsoring sporting events and their effects (independent of or related to the motives) on their employees.

The study findings imply that corporate sports sponsorship has untapped potential for influencing employee behaviour and they also highlight key gaps in the research on less studied motives, negative impacts on employees, and the implicit benefits for companies. The relatively modest volume of literature suggests that while we understand some positive impacts, much remains unexplored, calling for further comprehensive research to capture the full spectrum of sports sponsorship.

Our primary recommendation is to conduct a comprehensive study on the impact of sponsorship on the cognition of the sponsoring company's employees. Such a study would help us understand how the employees of a sports sponsor perceive the different levels of stress, excitement, new decisions and people they must deal with, changes in monotonous work routines, stress, anxiety, stressful new responsibilities and the area of new learning. The second recommendation is to conduct a study on the change in workers' percep-

tions of the company's sports sponsorship after knowing the cause of the sponsorship. While some studies conclude that companies gain legitimacy via sports sponsorship, no study shows the fiscal benefits a company can gain by selling its name as a sponsor to add to the prestige of a sporting event. Finally, it is recommended to investigate the impact of certain motives of sports sponsorship on employees' professional behaviour by doing more original, longitudinal studies examining employee behaviour in companies pursuing sports sponsorships.

Declaration of interest statement

All authors declare that they have no competing interests in this research entitled "From corporate motives to the impact of sports sponsorship on employees: A systematic review".

REFERENCES

- Aaker, D. A. (2009). *Managing brand equity: Capitalizing on the value of a brand name*. Simon & Schuster Inc., The Free Press.
- Ali, I., Rehman, K. U., Ali, S. I., Yousaf, J., & Zia, M. (2010). Corporate social responsibility influences, employee commitment and organizational performance. *African Journal of Business Management*, 4(13), 2796–2801.
- Ameri, M., & Bashiri, M. (2010). Evaluation of sport sponsorship as an element of sport marketing mix. *World Journal of Sport Sciences*, 3(1), 17–27.
- Batt, V., Holzer, M., Bruhn, M., & Tuzovic, S. (2021). Effects of sponsorship quality and quantity on employee brand behavior. *Journal of Brand Management*, 28(5), 495–509. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41262-021-00242-w>
- Berger, I. E., Cunningham, P. H., & Drumwright, M. E. (2007). Mainstreaming corporate social responsibility: Developing markets for virtue. *California Management Review* 49(4), 132–157. <https://doi.org/10.2307/41166409>
- Bibby, D. N. (2009). Brand image, equity, and sports sponsorship. In A. G. Woodside, C. M. Megehee, & A. Ogle (Eds.), *Perspectives on cross-cultural, ethnographic, brand image, storytelling, unconscious needs, and hospitality guest research* (Vol. 3, pp. 21–99). Emerald Group Publishing Limited. [https://doi.org/10.1108/S1871-3173\(2009\)0000003006](https://doi.org/10.1108/S1871-3173(2009)0000003006)
- Biedenbach, G., Bengtsson, M., & Wincent, J. (2011). Brand equity in the professional service context: Analyzing the impact of employee role behavior and customer–employee rapport. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 40(7), 1093–1102. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2011.09.007>
- Brooks, C. (2013, May 24). Social responsibility no longer optional for businesses. *FOX Business*. Available at <https://www.foxbusiness.com/features/social-responsibility-no-longer-optional-for-businesses>
- Cheong, C., Pyun, D. Y., & Leng, H. K. (2019). Sponsorship and advertising in sport: A study of consumers' attitude. *European Sport Manage-*

ment Quarterly, 19(3), 287–311. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16184742.2018.1517271>

Clark, J., Lachowetz, T., Irwin, R. L., & Schimmel, K. (2003). Business-to-business relationship and sport: Using sponsorship as a critical sales event. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, 5(2), 38–53. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSMS-05-02-2003-B004>

Cliffe, S. J., & Motion, J. (2005). Building contemporary brands: A sponsorship-based strategy. *Journal of Business Research*, 58(8), 1068–1077. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2004.03.004>

Close, A. G., Finney, R. Z., Lacey, R. Z., & Sneath, J. Z. (2006). Engaging the consumer through event marketing: Linking attendees with the sponsor, community, and brand. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 46(4), 420–433. <https://doi.org/10.2501/S0021849906060430>

Coppetti, C., Wentzel, D., Tomczak, T., & Henkel, S. (2009). Improving incongruent sponsorships through articulation of the sponsorship and audience participation. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 15(1), 17–34. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527260802012788>

Cornwell, T. B. (2019). Less "sponsorship as advertising" and more sponsorship-linked marketing as authentic engagement. *Journal of Advertising*, 48(1), 49–60. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2019.1588809>

Cornwell, T. B., & Coote, L. V. (2005). Corporate sponsorship of a cause: The role of identification in purchase intent. *Journal of Business Research*, 58(3), 268–276. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0148-2963\(03\)00135-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0148-2963(03)00135-8)

Cornwell, T. B., & Kwon, Y. (2020). Sponsorship-linked marketing: Research surpluses and shortages. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 48, 607–629. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429325106>

Cortsen, K. (2014). Capitalising on CSR-based partnerships in sports branding and sports sponsorship. *International Journal of Sport Management and Marketing*, 15(1-2), 75–97. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJSMM.2014.069105>

Daellenbach, K., Thirkell, P., & Zander, L. (2013). Examining the influence of the individual in arts sponsorship decisions. *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing*, 25(1), 81–104. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10495142.2013.759819>

Demirel, A., Demirel, A., Fink, J., & McKelvey, S. (2018). An examination of employees' response to sponsorship: The role of team identification. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 27(2), 67–81. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSMS-09-2019-0108>

Demirel, A. (2020). CSR in sport sponsorship consumers' perceptions of a sponsoring brand's CSR. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, 21(2), 371–388. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSMS-09-2019-0108>

Dolphin, R. R. (2003). Sponsorship: Perspectives on its strategic role. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 8(3), 173–186. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13563280310487630>

Durach, C. F., Kembro, J., & Wieland, A. (2017). A new paradigm for systematic literature reviews in supply chain management. *Journal of Supply Chain Management*, 53(4), 67–85. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jscm.12145>

- Edwards, M. R. (2016). The Olympic effect: Employee reactions to their employer's sponsorship of a high-profile global sporting event. *Human Resource Management*, 55(4), 721–740. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.21702>
- Farrelly, F., Greyser, S., & Rogan, M. (2012). Sponsorship linked internal marketing (SLIM): A strategic platform for employee engagement and business performance. *Journal of Sport Management*, 26(6), 506–520. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsm.26.6.506>
- Farrelly, F., & Greyser, S. (2007). Sports sponsorship to rally the home team. *Harvard Business Review*, 85(9), 22–25.
- Farrelly, F. J., & Quester, P. G. (2005). Examining important relationship quality constructs of the focal sponsorship exchange. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 34(3), 211–219. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2004.09.003>
- Grohs, R., Wagner, U., & Vsetecka, S. (2004). Assessing the effectiveness of sport sponsorships – An empirical examination. *Schmalenbach Business Review*, 56, 119–138. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03396689>
- Guiso, L., Sapienza, P., & Zingales, L. (2015). The value of corporate culture. *Journal of Financial Economics*, 117(1), 60–76. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jfineco.2014.05.010>
- Gwinner, K. (2005). Image transfer in global sport sponsorship: Theoretical support and boundary conditions. In J. M. Amis, & T. B. Cornwell (Eds.), *Global sport sponsorship: Sport commerce and culture* (pp. 163–178). Berg Publishers.
- Hall, K. (2007). Looking beneath the surface: The impact of psychology on corporate decision making. *Managerial Law*, 49(3), 93–105. <https://doi.org/10.1108/03090550710816500>
- Hall, T. K. (2008). *Sponsorship and the internal audience: Examining how corporate sponsorship is related to organization identification and job satisfaction*. Texas A&M University.
- Henseler, J., Wilson, B., & Westberg, K. (2011). Managers' perceptions of the impact of sport sponsorship on brand equity: Which aspects of the sponsorship matter most? *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 20(1), 7–21.
- Henseler, J., Wilson, B., Götz, O., & Hautvast, C. (2007). Investigating the moderating role of fit on sports sponsorship and brand equity. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, 8(4), 34–42. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSMS-08-04-2007-B005>
- Hickman, T. M., Lawrence, K. E., & Ward, J. C. (2005). A social identities perspective on the effects of corporate sport sponsorship on employees. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 14(3).
- Hofer, K. M., & Grohs, R. (2018). Sponsorship as an internal branding tool and its effects on employees' identification with the brand. *Journal of Brand Management*, 25(3), 266–275. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41262-018-0098-0>
- Inoue, Y., Havard, C. T., & Irwin, R. L. (2016). Roles of sport and cause involvement in determining employees' beliefs about cause-related sport sponsorship. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, 17(1), 3–18. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSMS-02-2016-001>

- Jensen, J. A., & Hsu, A. (2011). Does sponsorship pay off? An examination of the relationship between investment in sponsorship and business performance. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, 12(4), 72–84. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSMS-12-04-2011-B006>
- Jensen, J. A., & Cornwell, T. B. (2021). Assessing the dissolution of horizontal marketing relationships: The case of corporate sponsorship of sport. *Journal of Business Research*, 124, 790–799. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.10.029>
- Johnston, M. A., & Paulsen, N. (2014). Rules of engagement: A discrete choice analysis of sponsorship decision making. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 30(7-8), 634–663. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2013.838986>
- Karjaluoto, H., & Paakkonen, L. (2019). An empirical assessment of employer branding as a form of sport event sponsorship. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, 20(4), 666–682. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSMS-10-2018-0103>
- Keller, K. L., Parameswaran, M. G., & Jacob, I. (2010). *Strategic brand management: Building, measuring, and managing brand equity*. Pearson Education India.
- Khan, A. M., & Stanton, J. (2010). A model of sponsorship effects on the sponsor's employees. *Journal of Promotion Management*, 16(1-2), 188–200. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10496490903574831>
- King, C., & Grace, D. (2008). Internal branding: Exploring the employee's perspective. *Journal of Brand Management*, 15, 358–372. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.bm.2550136>
- Kissoudi, P. (2005). Closing the circle: Sponsorship and the Greek Olympic Games from ancient times to the present day. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 22(4), 618–638. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523360500122921>
- Koronios, K., Vrontis, D., & Thrassou, A. (2021). Strategic sport sponsorship management – A scale development and validation. *Journal of Business Research*, 130, 295–307. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2021.03.031>
- Lindgreen, A., & Swaen, V. (2010). Corporate social responsibility. *International Journal of Management Review*, 12(1), 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2370.2009.00277.x>
- Lindgreen, A., Beverland, M. B., & Farrelly, F. (2010). From strategy to tactics: Building, implementing, and managing brand equity in business markets. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 39(8), 1223–1225. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2010.02.018>
- Liu, H., Kim, K. H., Choi, Y. K., Kim, S. J., & Peng, S. (2015). Sports sponsorship effects on customer equity: An Asian market application. *International Journal of Advertising*, 34(2), 307–326. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2014.994801>
- Löhndorf, B., & Diamantopoulos, A. (2014). Internal branding: Social identity and social exchange perspectives on turning employees into brand champions. *Journal of Service Research*, 17(3), 310–325. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094670514522098>
- Maldonado-Erazo, C. P., Durán-Sánchez, A., Álvarez-García, J., & Del Río-Rama, M. D. L. C. (2019). Sports sponsorship: Scientific coverage

in academic journals. *Journal of Entrepreneurship and Public Policy*, 8(1), 163–186. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEPP-03-2019-106>

Meenaghan, T., McLoughlin, D., & McCormack, A. (2013). New challenges in sponsorship evaluation actors, new media, and the context of praxis. *Psychology & Marketing*, 30(5), 444–460. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.20618>

Miragaia, D. A., Ferreira, J., & Ratten, V. (2017). Corporate social responsibility and social entrepreneurship: Drivers of sports sponsorship policy. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 9(4), 613–623. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19406940.2017.1374297>

Mishra, V., & Mishra, M. P. (2023). PRISMA for review of management literature – method, merits, and limitations – an academic review. In S. Rana, J. Singh, & S. Kathuria (Eds.), *Advancing methodologies of conducting literature review in management domain (Review of Management Literature, Vol. 2)*, pp. 125–136. Emerald Publishing Limited. <https://doi.org/10.1108/S2754-586520230000002007>

Morhart, F. M., Herzog, W., & Tomczak, T. (2009). Brand-specific leadership: Turning employees into brand champions. *Journal of Marketing*, 73(5), 122–142. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.73.5.122>

Ngo, L. V., Nguyen, N. P., Huynh, K. T., Gregory, G., & Cuong, P. H. (2020). Converting internal brand knowledge into employee performance. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 29(3), 273–287. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-10-2018-2068>

Papasolomou, I., & Vrontis, D. (2006). Using internal marketing to ignite the corporate brand: The case of the UK retail bank industry. *Journal of Brand Management*, 14(1), 177–195. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.bm.2550059>

Penttinen, J. (2022). *Sponsorship of individual athletes in relation to the company's marketing strategy* (Master's thesis). University of Oulu, Oulu, Finland.

Piehler, R. (2018). Employees' brand understanding, brand commitment, and brand citizenship behaviour: A closer look at the relationships among construct dimensions. *Journal of Brand Management*, 25, 217–234. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41262-018-0099-z>

Piehler, R., King, C., Burmann, C., & Xiong, L. (2016). The importance of employee brand understanding, brand identification, and brand commitment in realizing brand citizenship behaviour. *European Journal of Marketing*, 50(9/10), 1575–1601. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-11-2014-0725>

Plewa, C., & Quester, P. G. (2011). Sponsorship and CSR: Is there a link? A conceptual framework. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, 12(4), 22–38. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSMS-12-04-2011-B003>

Plewa, C., Carrillat, F. A., Mazodier, M., & Quester, P. G. (2016). Which sport sponsorships most impact sponsor CSR image? *European Journal of Marketing*, 50(5/6), 796–815. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-02-2015-0078>

Ployhart, R. E. (2006). Staffing in the 21st century: New challenges and strategic opportunities. *Journal of Management*, 32(6), 868–897. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206306293625>

Richards, R., Darling, H., & Reeder, A. I. (2005). Sponsorship and fund-raising in New Zealand schools: Implications for health. *Australian*

and *New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 29(4), 331–336. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-842X.2005.tb00203.x>

Rupp, D. E., Ganapathi, J., Aguilera, R. V., & Williams, C. A. (2006). Employee reactions to corporate social responsibility: An organizational justice framework. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 27(4), 537–543. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.380>

Schönberner, J., Woratschek, H., & Ellert, G. (2021). Hidden agenda in sport sponsorship – The influence of managers' personal objectives on sport sponsorship decisions. *Sport Management Review*, 24(2), 204–225. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2020.07.001>

Seguin, B., Teed, K., & O'Reilly, N. J. (2005). National sports organisations and sponsorship: An identification of best practices. *International Journal of Sport Management and Marketing*, 1(1-2), 69–92. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJSMM.2005.007122>

Slåtten, T., Svensson, G., Connolley, S., Bexrud, C., & Lægreid, T. (2017). The sponsorship motive matrix (SMM): A framework for categorising firms' motives for sponsoring sports events. *European Journal of Tourism Research*, 15, 143–166. <https://doi.org/10.54055/ejtr.v15i.268>

Sudolska, A., & Łapińska, J. (2020). Implementation of the CSR concept through sport sponsorship: The case of the Polish chemical capital group. *Journal of Physical Education and Sport*, 20, 1100–1105.

Theurer, C. P., Tumasjan, A., Welpel, I. M., & Lievens, F. (2018). Employer branding: A brand equity-based literature review and research agenda. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 20(1), 155–179. <https://doi.org/10.1163/016738312X13397477909947>

Tsordia, C., Papadimitriou, D., & Parganas, P. (2018). The influence of sport sponsorship on brand equity and purchase behavior. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 26(1), 85–105. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0965254X.2017.1374299>

Vaaland, T. I., Heide, M., & Grønhaug, K. (2008). Corporate social responsibility: Investigating theory and research in the marketing context. *European Journal of Marketing*, 42(9/10), 927–953. <https://doi.org/10.1108/03090560810891082>

Vance, L., Raciti, M. M., & Lawley, M. (2016). Sponsorship selections: Corporate culture, beliefs and motivations. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 21(4), 483–499. <https://doi.org/10.1108/CCIJ-11-2015-0072>

Wagner, U., Persson, H. T. R., & Overbye, M. (2017). Sponsor networks and business relations orchestrated by team sports clubs. *Sport, Business and Management: An International Journal*, 7(4), 426–443. <https://doi.org/10.1108/SBM-07-2016-0030>

Wagner, U., Hansen, K. R., Kristensen, M. L., & Josty, M. (2019). Improving service-center employees' performance by means of a sport sponsorship. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, 20(1), 43–60. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSMS-10-2017-0109>

Walraven, M., Koning, R. H., & van Bottenburg, M. (2012). The effects of sports sponsorship: A review and research agenda. *The Marketing Review*, 12(1), 17–38. <https://doi.org/10.1362/146934712X13286274424235>

Weller, H., Streller, A., & Purinton, E. F. (2019). Brand equity and partnership fit: Strategic alliance considerations for the professional sports industry. *International Management Review*, 15(1), 19–71.

West, D., Ford, J. B., & Farris, P. W. (2014). How corporate cultures drive advertising and promotion budgets: Best practices combine heuristics and algorithmic tools. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 54(2), 149–162. <https://doi.org/10.2501/JAR-54-2-149-162>

Zarei Mahmoudabadi, M., Keshtidar, M., & Razavi, S. M. J. (2019). The impact of sport financial sponsorship on brand equity and performance: Structural equation modeling (SEM) Approach. *Annals of Applied Sport Science*, 7(3), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.29252/aassjournal.712>

Zepf, B. (2008). *Sport sponsorship as an internal marketing tool: Employees' sponsorship assessments and their effect on job attitudes* (Unpublished Dissertation). Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL.

Od korporativnih motiva do utjecaja sportskoga sponzoriranja na zaposlenike: sustavni pregled

Marko MLAKAR, Tomaž ČATER, Robert KAŠE
Fakultet ekonomije i poslovanja, Sveučilište u Ljubljani, Ljubljana, Slovenija

Ovaj rad daje pregled uobičajenih motiva i glavnih učinaka sportskih sponzorstava koje poduzimaju sponzorske organizacije. Sustavnim pregledom 72 relevantna članka identificirano je sedam ključnih motiva za bavljenje sportskim sponzoriranjem. Marketing, zadržavanje kupaca i vrijednost robne marke najčešće su proučavani, dok je sponzorstvo novih sportskih udruga za promociju robne marke najmanje ispitivano. Što se tiče utjecaja na zaposlenike, nalazi iz 28 članaka pokazali su da su visoki stupanj zadržavanja i identifikacija brenda teme koje su se najviše istraživale, dok se ni jedna studija nije bavila mogućim negativnim učincima. Rad pridonosi postojećoj literaturi, ističući zanemarene motive i učinke sportskih sponzoriranja. Preporučujemo da se buduća istraživanja usredotoče na manje proučavane motive i da istražuju potencijalne negativne utjecaje na zaposlenike unutar sponzorskih organizacija.

Ključne riječi: sportsko sponzoriranje, motivi, utjecaj na zaposlenike, marketing, zadržavanje zaposlenika



Međunarodna licenca / International License:
Imenovanje-Nekomercijalno / Attribution-NonCommercial