

Sponsorship in Focus: A Typology of Sponsorship Contexts and Research Agenda

Hsin-Chen Lin*

E-mail: hc.lin@unb.ca

Faculty of Management, University of New Brunswick, 255 Singer Hall, 7 Macauley Lane, Fredericton, NB, Canada, E3B 5A3

Patrick F. Bruning

E-mail: Patrick.Bruning@unb.ca

Faculty of management, University of New Brunswick, 255 Singer Hall, 7 Macauley Lane, Fredericton, NB, Canada, E3B 5A3

Author Notes:

*Corresponding author

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Abstract

Purpose – Sponsorship has become an important marketing activity. However, research on the topic treats the sponsorship context, characterized according to the type of sponsored property and the social role of these properties, as a stable characteristic or as a dichotomous characteristic within empirical studies. Therefore, we outline a multi-level typology of the different types of sponsorship contexts to account for traditional types of sponsorship as well as emerging themes such as online sponsorship. We then propose an agenda for future research.

Design/methodology/approach – We conduct a general review of the sponsorship literature to synthesise established sponsorship types with newly emerging themes to develop a multi-level typology of sponsorship contexts and a research agenda.

Findings – Our conceptual analysis revealed a typology of sponsorship contexts that captures both general and specific types of sport sponsorship, prosocial cause sponsorship, culture and community sponsorship, and media and programming content sponsorship.

Research limitations/implications – Our typology provides an organizing framework for future research focusing on different sponsorship contexts. However, the emergent categories still require further empirical testing. Therefore, we develop a set of questions to guide future research on the topic.

Practical implications – Our typology outlines the different sponsorship contexts that should be considered by organizations that engage in sponsorship-linked marketing.

Originality/value – This paper provides a multi-level categorization of sponsorship contexts that integrates both traditional categories and newly emerging categories to better inform future research on situational differences in sponsorship.

Keywords: Sponsorship Context; Sponsorship Property; Sponsee; Cause Marketing; Sports Marketing

Sponsorship is a marketing promotion activity that can influence brand equity across different sports, causes, arts, or other contexts (Cornwell & Kwon, In Press; Gwinner 1997; Kim, Lee, Magnusen, and Kim 2015). These different sponsorship contexts can carry distinct meanings and appeal to different consumers (Schwaiger et al. 2010; Weinberger and Wallendorf 2012). Yet, the degree of contextual differences in sponsorship effects remains unclear. Prior research suggests that different sponsorship contexts might minimally impact the nature of consumers' responses (Olson 2010), while meta-analytic evidence suggests that the effects of sponsorship characteristics could differ across contexts (Kim et al. 2015). This discrepancy could be due in part to the simple, and at times dichotomous, nature of the comparisons made. This has the consequence of making managerial decision-making and the evaluation of research findings reliant on subjective inferences instead of empirical evidence. Sponsorship costs can also differ according to the property being sponsored (Jensen 2017; Jensen and Cobbs 2014). Therefore, while a variety of sponsorship contexts can convey different images and meanings (Cornwell 2019; Gwinner 1997), these contexts still need inclusive categorization and differentiation within a comprehensive typology to guide more focused research on conditional effects and inform more precise decision-making.

Our conceptual contributions will be outlining and differentiating the categories of sponsorship context into a descriptive typology to guide an agenda for future research (MacInnis, 2011). The sponsorship context represents an important condition of sponsorship that has yet to receive the systematic analysis of other general and specific sponsorship topics (for examples see Cornwell 2008; Cornwell and Humphreys 2013; Cornwell and Kwon In Press; Cornwell and Maignan 1998; Cornwell, Weeks and Roy 2005b; Meenaghan 2013; Meenaghan and O'Sullivan 2013). The variety of meanings conveyed, and functions served, by these different sponsorship

contexts could help specify new contexts, mechanisms, and outcomes, to enable more precisely targeted sponsorships. Therefore, we intend to provide clarity and order for the different types of sponsorship contexts to afford greater precision within future research.

We first specify the sponsorship construct domain to situate the categories and sub-categories of sponsorship contexts that emerge from our review into the literature. As societies change and research progresses, the sponsorship construct needs updating to account for new emerging themes like online content and community sponsorship, and to clarify ambiguous terms and conceptual boundaries like event sponsorship. We then outline a multi-level typology of sponsorship contexts and propose a research agenda.

Defining and Outlining the Sponsorship Domain

We reviewed research from 1970 through April, 2020 from the top marketing journals, as well as other well-respected marketing and business journals that publish sponsorship research. The 2015 Association of Business Schools Academic Journal Guide (ABS 2015) was used to guide initial article selection from journals rated 3, 4, or 4*. Articles were searched using the ABI/INFORM, Business Source Premier, Science Direct, and Scopus databases using key search terms “sponsor”, “sponsorship”, “cause marketing”, and “event marketing”. Both cause and event marketing were used due to their notable consideration of sponsorship content (Cornwell and Maignan 1998). The review provides a summary of the findings from the articles identified by the aforementioned processes.

The topic of sponsorship has been addressed using multiple names, such as “commercial sponsorship” (Meenaghan 1983), “sponsorship” (Cornwell and Maignan 1998), “sponsorship-linked marketing” (Cornwell 2008; Cornwell et al. 2005b), “corporate sponsorship” (Pappu and Cornwell 2014; Madrigal 2001), and “organizational sponsorship” (Haley 1996; Speed and

Thompson 2000) that each addresses a similar or highly overlapping concept. Specific applications are also used, such as sports sponsorship (Bennett 1999), event sponsorship (Gwinner and Eaton 1999), social sponsorship (Simmons and Becker-Olsen 2006), and arts sponsorship (Quester and Thompson 2001).

Meenaghan (1983, p.9) originally defined sponsorship as a, “provision of assistance either financial or in-kind to an activity by a commercial organization or in-kind to an activity by a commercial organization for the purpose of achieving commercial objectives.” Woisetschläger, Backhaus, and Cornwell (2017, p. 121) define sponsorship as, “a cash or in-kind fee paid to a property (typically in sports, arts, entertainment, or causes) in return for access to the exploitable commercial potential of that property.” While many variants of the sponsorship definition reflect the early definition(s) by Meenaghan (1983; 1991) and Cornwell and Maignan (1998), other definitions reveal new information that helps to outline and clarify the conceptual domain of sponsorship (Becker-Olsen 2003; Klincewics 1998; Ruth and Simonin 2003). Therefore, we develop our working definition of sponsorship and outline the key defining characteristics.

Sponsorship captures *a purposeful exchange relationship between a sponsoring entity and a separate sponsored entity in support of a tangible activity, event, or dialogue engaged by the sponsored entity*. Sponsorship is characterized by the following defining elements. First, it represents an exchange relationship between a sponsoring entity (a sponsor) and a separate sponsored entity (a sponsee) that involves the sponsee receiving a benefit, such as a fee or in-kind contribution, and the sponsor receiving the right of legitimate association with the sponsee (Cornwell and Maignan 1998; Lardinois and Derbaix 2001; Meenaghan 1983; 1991; Olson 2010). Second, this exchange relationship must support a tangible activity, event, or dialogue engaged by the sponsee (Gudelunas 2011; Lee and Mazodier 2015; Meenaghan, 1983). Third,

the exchange relationship must be purposeful for the sponsor and sponsee according to sponsorship objectives and mutual acceptance of terms (Cornwell and Maignan 1998; Javalgi, Traylor, Gross, and Lampman 1994; Klincewics 1998; Ruth and Simonin 2003). Objectives can be more commercial and profit-based or more philanthropic in nature (Cornwell et al. 2005b; Klincewics 1998; Meenaghan 1991). Fourth, sponsorships can apply to a variety of sponsee entities that can have a more global or more regional scope (Cornwell et al. 2005b; Woisetschläger et al. 2017; Quester and Thompson 2001; Weinberger and Wallendorf 2012), and can take the form of a manifest collective entity, dialectic group, or virtual community (Becker-Olsen 2003; Cornwell et al. 2005b; Gudelunas 2011). Finally, this exchange relationship can be marketed to consumers and the public through parallel yet distinct advertising (Cornwell and Maignan 1998).

Multi-Level Typology of Sponsorship Contexts

The sponsorship context refers to the type of sponsorship that is engaged by the sponsor and is often determined by the social function of the sponsee or sponsored property. Organizations often sponsor sports and cultural entertainment entities, as well as prosocial causes and community functions. The specific details of these sponsorships help define the meanings and qualities conveyed, and help delineate the consumers targeted, by the sponsorship (Bergkvist 2012; Du, Sen, and Bhattacharya 2008; Schwaiger, Sarstedt, and Taylor 2010; Weinberger and Wallendorf 2012). Sponsorships can also be used to target online consumers and communities (Alonso Dos Santos, Guardia, Campos, Calabuig Moreno, and Ko 2018; Evans, Grubbs Hoy and Carpenter Childers 2018; Liao, Huang, and Xiao 2017).

We outline a typology of sponsorship contexts derived from specification in prior definitions (Woisetschläger et al. 2017) and a review of contexts examined in prior research. The

typology is presented according to its categories and sub-categories in Table 1 to consider sponsorship at multiple levels of specificity (Meenaghan 2001). The review revealed four broad categories of sponsorship contexts: sports sponsorship, prosocial cause sponsorship, culture and community sponsorship, and media and programming sponsorship. Prior research has explicitly recognized sponsorship contexts of sports, culture, and causes (Cornwell et al. 2005b). However, these categories can be confused with generalized event sponsorship, which can cover all three contexts. Additionally, these contexts are often applied as a broader reflection of generalized sponsorship instead of the distinct meanings and qualities associated with the specific context.

< Insert Table 1 about here >

The variety of sponsorship contexts considered within the literature is evolving. For example, the category of media and programming content sponsorship has been a recurring theme in the literature (Bellman, Murphy, Arismendez, and Varan 2019; Gwinner 1997) that could become more important as novel media channels become more prominent (Close Scheinbaum 2016; Evans et al., 2018). While this category has been relatively neglected in the literature, it is unique and is likely to become more prevalent than would be suggested by its current research exposure. There are also likely to be different images and meanings for sponsors of programming content and sponsors that host online communities. Therefore, we extend our typology to identify relevant sub-categories. Next, we overview the specific categories and sub-categories of sponsorship context.

Sport sponsorship is a sponsorship exchange relationship between a sponsoring entity and a separate sports event, league, venue, or competitor entity. It has sub-categories of sports event sponsorship (Crimmins and Horn 1996; Drengner, Gaus, and Jahn 2008; Speed and Thompson 2000), sports league sponsorship (Cornwell, Pruitt, and Clark 2005a; Farrelly,

Quester, and Greyser 2005), sports venue sponsorship (Clark, Cornwell, and Pruitt 2002), and sports individual/group sponsorship (Carrillat and d'Astous 2014; Madrigal 2000).

These sub-categories are meaningful for a few reasons. First, they help to distinguish a sports event from other types of events. Events are often considered in a way that transcends the specific nature and purpose of the event according to similar social processes (Jahn, Cornwell, Drengner, and Gaus 2018). However, events will vary according to the target audience and the meaning conveyed through sponsorships. Different event contexts should also implicate different underlying psychological processes, such as attributions to sponsors for prosocial cause events, reciprocity for cultural and community events, or social alliances for both sports and other events associated with identifiable cultural groups like Mardi Gras (Weinberger and Wallendorf 2012). While many events can fit into multiple sub-categories, considering the specific combination of these sub-categories could be more informative than merely describing more generalized events. Second, there is a similar need to differentiate sport venue sponsorships from the sponsorship of other venues like cultural venues (Cahill and Meenaghan 2013; Grohs, Wagner, and Steiner 2012). While many designated sports venues can house cultural and community events, their association to specific teams facilitates fan identification and alliances with the venue. Ardent fans will often refer to their “home” sports venue in loyal terms, such as “Home Field” or “Home Court”. This suggests that consumers could form social attachments to sports venues that differ from their attachments to other types of venues. Finally, the distinction between sports league and team sponsorships has implications for fan allegiances, identification, and potentially harmful rivalry (Bergkvist 2012, Grohs, Reisinger, and Woisetschläger 2015; Lin and Bruning, In Press), which could differentiate this type of sponsorship from more inclusive league sponsorship (Olson 2018).

Prosocial cause sponsorship is a sponsorship exchange relationship between a sponsoring entity and an event, entity, or initiative that seeks to promote, support, or otherwise benefit a prosocial cause, event, entity, or initiative. It has sub-categories of prosocial event sponsorship (Cornwell and Coote 2005; Dean 2002; Simmons and Becker-Olsen 2006), prosocial group sponsorship (Menon and Kahn 2003; Simmons and Becker-Olsen 2006; Szykman, Bloom, and Blazing 2004), and prosocial initiative sponsorship (Du, Sen, and Battacharya 2008).

These sub-categories are meaningful for a few reasons. First, as mentioned for sports event sponsorship, creating a sub-category of prosocial event sponsorship distinguishes it from other events that could reveal different motives and elicit different consumer responses. Second, it distinguishes the concentrated activity of an event from more ongoing single initiatives, or prosocial groups that might engage a number of ongoing initiatives. Events are bounded in time from both management and consumer exposure perspectives. While past sponsors could be re-activated and recalled by consumers (McAlister, Kelly, Humphreys, and Cornwell 2012), the memory of an event sponsorship could erode quickly as successive events occur and occupy consumers' thoughts. Thus, sponsorships might be more potent during an event, but less enduring after the event concludes and as the event's prominence in the minds of consumers fades. Finally, it is important to distinguish between group and initiative sponsorship within this category. Initiative sponsorship involves a sponsor leading an external collaboration (initiative) in pursuit of certain prosocial objectives, conveying greater involvement and commitment from the sponsor than merely providing resources would. While both could signal a commitment to prosocial causes, the initiative sponsorship might signal greater engagement, commitment, and leadership that could elicit more positive attributions.

Culture and community sponsorship is a sponsorship exchange relationship between a sponsoring entity and an event, entity, or venue that provides entertainment to a given community or displays the practices and artifacts of one or more cultures. It has sub-categories of culture and community event sponsorship (Cliffe and Motion 2005; Javalgi et al. 1994; Weinberger and Wallendorf 2012) and recreational venue sponsorship (Cahill and Meenaghan 2013; Grohs et al. 2012).

Cultural and community sponsorships are covered less in the literature than sports and cause sponsorships; yet they could reach different consumer segments, reach these consumers in different ways, and convey different virtues of sponsoring companies. There appear to be two important types of content at this early stage of the research, popular entertainment and fine arts sponsorships (Quester and Thompson 2001; Schwaiger et al. 2010), which might expand to represent distinct subcategories in the future. We currently focus on the distinction between event and venue sponsorship, which are meaningful for a couple reasons. First, they distinguish primarily cultural or entertainment events and venues from those primarily associated with sports and prosocial causes. Second, they represent distinct contexts, because venues are more enduring and predominant than events, representing a more stable association over time and once a sponsorship has ended. Events on the other hand can be cheaper and could hold greater flexibility over time. These distinctions should be clarified as we learn more about the culture and community category of sponsorship.

Media and programming content sponsorship is a sponsorship exchange relationship between a sponsoring entity with an online or offline media entity that can provide programming or virtual communities. It has sub-categories of programming and content sponsorship (Dens, De Pelsmacker, and Verhellen 2018; Evans et al. 2018; Harvey, Gray, and Despain 2006), and

online community sponsorship (Becker-Olsen 2003; Alonso Dos Santos, Moreno, Guardia, and Campos 2016).

The media and programming sponsorship literature is relatively underdeveloped compared to the literature on sports, prosocial cause, and even culture and community sponsorships. However, it could experience substantial growth as new media domains and consumers' engagement in these domains increase. The sub-components of this sponsorship context are meaningful for a couple reasons. First, they represent more virtual sponsorship contexts than sports, cause, and many cultural sponsorships which are organized to occur in physical venues. This increased virtuality could reduce geographical proximity as a possible barrier of audience engagement. Media programming and online communities might require devices like televisions, computers, or smart phones instead of geographical proximity. They can represent extensions of another category like a sports team (Alonso Dos Santos et al. 2016; 2018), but can also be manifest exclusively as content (Cahill and Meenaghan 2013; Evans et al., 2018; Harvey et al. 2006) or company sponsored online communities that have distinct social properties and dialogue (Becker-Olsen 2003; Kozinets, deValck, Wojnicki, and Wilner 2010). Second, programming and content sponsorship involves the sponsee creating specific media or programming content, which can include online influencer activities. Online community sponsorship involves the sponsee creating the virtual platform where the online community creates or co-creates content. Both domains are considerably under-researched, so these sub-categories could diverge into more sub-categories as the research progresses.

RESEARCH AGENDA AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

We reviewed the sponsorship literature to develop a multi-level typology of sponsorship contexts that can inform an agenda for future research. The initial step in the review involved re-

specifying the definition and defining characteristics of sponsorship to account for a wide range of perspectives and new types of sponsorship properties that have emerged within the literature. The next step was to outline a typology comprised of general and specific sponsorship context categories of sports sponsorship, prosocial cause sponsorship, culture and community sponsorship, and media and programming content sponsorship. The typology should foster more nuanced research to guide more precise and informed managerial decisions.

Research Agenda

The sponsorship context typology reveals some important directions for future research according to general categories of cross-context comparative research, segmentation research, as well as strategic decision-making and sponsor-sponsee exchange research. We outline these topics, specific research questions, and methodological considerations in Table 2. We discuss the logic underlying the generalized research questions next.

< Insert Table 2 about here >

Cross-context comparative research. This topic is derived from prior research which suggests that there could be both similarities and differences in sponsorship processes and outcomes across different sponsorship contexts (Kim et al. 2015; Olson 2010). However, current operationalizations of sponsorship contexts tend to present them as general categories (Kim et al. 2015; Olson 2010) or study-specific contexts (Du et al. 2008; Olson and Thjomoe 2009). This creates a situation where the within-category variation could be almost as substantial as the between-category variation across contexts, which could obscure the outcomes and mechanisms of specific sponsorships that organizations consider. Thus, we call for more research comparing sponsorship effects and processes across different contexts.

Initially, this research could expand on the typology of sponsorship contexts to identify new categories and sub-categories of sponsorship context that could complement and expand our typology. For example, are there differences between the sponsorship of online influencers and other content and programming sponsorships that would suggest these are distinct subcategories? Online influencers have become important modes of advertising that can be leveraged through partnerships (Evans et al. 2018; Lin, Bruning, and Swarna 2018), and this trend should be studied further. This research might also consider whether popular entertainment and fine arts should be considered as distinct sponsorship contexts in addition to other potential distinctions.

RQ1: Are there categories and sub-categories of sponsorship context that are not yet accounted for or sufficiently described in the literature?

This research stream could take other forms as well. First, it should pay specific attention to comparing the effects of sponsorships and sponsorship characteristics on cognitive, affective, and conative outcomes across different sponsorship contexts. In this regard, Kim and colleagues (2015) have set a good standard for where this research should eventually lead. It would be ideal to eventually have a base of research that is broad and rich enough to enable meta-analytic comparisons of sponsorship effects across different sponsorship contexts. In the meantime, perhaps more research could adopt the approach taken by Olson (2010), whereby multiple studies are conducted in different contexts to compare the effects of sponsorship. This stream of research should also account for how the social ecosystems around sponsorships have different effects according to the specific sponsorship contexts. For example, are there concurrent sponsorship effects (Boronczyk and Breuer 2019; Yousaf, Mishra, and Gupta 2018), ambushing effects (Kelly, Cornwell, and Singh 2019; Wolfsteiner, Grohs, and Reisinger 2019), rivalry effects (Lin and Bruning In Press; Tyler, Cobbs, Satinover, and Dalakas 2019), secondary

societal benefits (Habitzreuter and Koenigstorfer In Press; Close Scheinbaum, Lacey, and Drumwright 2019), and other controversies (Cornwell and Kwon In Press; Evans et al. 2018; Peluso, Rizzo, and Pino 2019) that could impact sponsorship outcomes differently across sponsorship contexts? This question could also address how these broader ecosystems influence the authenticity of the sponsorships for both the sponsors and sponsees (Charlton and Cornwell 2019; Cornwell 2019; Toscani and Prendergast, 2018), and how current sponsorship environments could involve broader implications like protests and backlash against fossil fuel industries derived from global warming concerns (BBC News, 2019; Gompertz, 2019).

RQ2: How do sponsorship ecosystems and effects differ across sponsorship contexts?

Second, the research on cross-context differences should more closely consider aspects of congruence and authenticity. This consideration can implicate each of the different parties involved in the sponsorship, including the sponsoring organization, the sponsored property, the employees of the sponsoring organization, and the consumers involved with both the sponsor and the sponsored property (Cornwell, 2019; Cornwell, Howard-Grenville, and Hampel 2018; Toscani and Prendergast 2018). For sports sponsorships, these consumers would primarily represent people who follow the sport or the team. However, they can also represent a much broader base of consumers when the sponsored property is a ubiquitous entity such as the Olympics or a local sports stadium that can house other non-sport events like concerts or other types of shows. The research on sponsorship congruence is quite robust and there are multiple different types of congruence that can be considered according to the organization's specific objectives (Fleck and Quester 2007; Olson and Thjomoe 2011; Zdravkovic, Magnusson, and Stanley 2010). Therefore, future research should examine how aspects of congruence and authenticity operate differently across sponsorship contexts.

RQ3: What are important predictors and outcomes of various forms of congruence and authenticity within different sponsorship contexts?

Finally, future cross-context comparative research should specifically compare the degree to which different sponsorships involve established sponsorship processes. Some of the more prominent theoretical processes considered in this literature include: mere exposure and classical conditioning (Bennett 1999; Olson and Thjomoe 2009; Speed and Thompson 2000), constructive sponsor recall (Johar and Pham, 1999; Simmons and Becker-Olsen 2006), image transfer (Gwinner 1997; Gwinner and Eaton 1999; Schwaiger et al. 2010), identification (Cornwell and Coote 2005; Madrigal 2000; 2001; Mazodier, Henderson, and Beck 2018), and consumer attributions (Dean 2002; Ellen, Webb, and Mohr 2006; Woisetschläger et al. 2017) as examples. Specifically, it would be informative for future research to compare and contrast the degree to which sponsorships influence consumer, product, and financial market responses to sponsorship according to exposure, constructive recall, image transfer, identification, and attributions. Some of these perspectives can even be considered more specifically. For example, different sponsorship contexts could influence consumers to infer different types of motives to the sponsoring organization. Different types of sponsorships could also explain distinct patterns of social identification and competitive/national rivalry (Lee and Mazodier 2015; Lin and Bruning In Press). Indeed, the research on theoretical sponsorship processes needs to more completely account for differences in sponsorship contexts. This would help explain differences in the indirect processes to facilitate more precise and effective strategic decision-making. At the same time, considering new contexts either from the less well-researched contexts categorized in our typology, or those that are yet to be identified, might help identify new outcomes of sponsorship.

RQ4: Which theoretical processes are most relevant across different sponsorship contexts, how do these processes differ across contexts, and are there new sponsorship mechanisms and outcomes that are relevant to different sponsorship contexts?

Segmentation research. One important implication of an increased focus on the sponsorship context is that different contexts will target different segments of consumers. Of course, some ubiquitous sponsorships, such as sponsorships of the Olympics or Amnesty International, could target very broad markets. However, many other sponsorships could target a very specific base of consumers according to differentiating characteristics such as: demographic and interest-based characteristics (Grohs et al. 2012; Quester and Thompson 2001; Sirgy, Lee, Johar, and Tidwell 2008), characteristics of consumers' societal commitments and life experiences (Cornwell and Coote 2005; Du et al. 2008; Mekonnen, Harris, and Laing 2008), or regional characteristics (Close Scheinbaum, Finney, Lacey, and Sneath 2006; Madrigal 2000; Weinberger and Wallendorf 2012). Indeed, sponsorships and sponsorship-linked marketing should be deliberately targeted at the segment of the population that the organization wishes to contact and influence. Therefore, future research on segmentation should be engaged to better answer the broad research question of who sponsorships influence according to the specific sponsorship context.

RQ5: What are the target marketing implications of different sponsorship contexts and which processes are involved?

Strategic decision-making and sponsor-sponsee exchange research. As specified in our definition, sponsorships represent a specific form of exchange relationship. As such, theoretically, they should require investment and provide benefit for both (or all) parties involved (Cropanzano and Mitchell 2005; Farrelly and Quester 2005; Jensen and Cornwell 2017). The

value of these investments and benefits can influence sponsorship costs, matching, renewals, terminations, and other decision-making (Farrelly and Quester 2003; Jensen 2017; Jensen and Cobbs 2014; Jensen and Cornwell 2017; In Press; Thjomoe et al. 2002; Yang and Goldfarb 2015). Given the broad and varied nature of the different sponsorship contexts, it is likely that the nature of business relationships will differ substantially across sponsorship contexts. While there is a relative paucity of research on strategic sponsorship decision-making, the lack of cross-context comparative research is even more pronounced. There have been some important advancements in our understanding of the product market and financial market implications of sponsorship (Ballings, McCullough, and Bharadwaj 2018; Clark, Cornwell, and Pruitt 2002; Cornwell et al. 2005a; Jensen and Cobbs 2014), as well as some early thoughts on employee reactions (Cornwell et al. 2018). However, the research on these aggregate and internal audiences lags considerably behind the consumer research (Cornwell and Kwon In Press). Furthermore, the specifics of the sponsorship context are likely to play an important role in explaining the relational and strategic implications of sponsorship decisions on both brand equity and sponsorship viability. Therefore, more research is needed to describe, explain, and evaluate sponsorship decision-making and exchange relationships across different sponsorship contexts.

RQ6: What are the different objectives, costs, outcomes, and returns-on-investments related to different sponsorship contexts? What are the relational, partnering, and viability implications of different sponsorship contexts?

Managerial Implications

The current typology should help managers make better decisions about the specific type of sponsorship they should engage in and whether or not they should continue with a sponsorship that they currently participate in (Farrelly and Quester 2003; Thjomoe, Olson, and Bronn 2002;

Toscani & Prendergast 2018). Indeed, sponsorship properties are not all the same and they can differ according to how they fit with the sponsor and the sponsor's intended message. Furthermore, they will differ regarding which segment of the market they target most effectively. Therefore, managers should pay close attention to the sponsorship context to ensure that they sponsor a property that they are or can be congruent with. Congruence could help make sponsorships more authentic and engaging as it has been shown to have moderate to strong relationships with consumer responses (Cornwell, 2019; Kim et al. 2015).

Organizations should also sponsor a property that directly meets their objectives according to the cost of the relationship, the segment of the consumer population they intend to target, and the message they want to send to consumers. Organizations have a range of objectives and sponsorship will differ in their cost (Jensen 2017; Jensen and Cobbs 2014). Furthermore, sponsorships can target different consumers and serve a variety of other functions to different audiences (Cornwell 2019; Cornwell and Kwon In Press; Toscani and Prendergast 2018). Moreover, they can increase exposure (Bennett 1999; Olson and Thjomoe 2009), aid constructive recall (Johar and Pham 1999; Simmons and Becker-Olsen 2006), improve the sponsoring organization's image (Gwinner 1997; Gwinner and Eaton 1999; Schwaiger et al. 2010), increase social identification and attachment (Cornwell and Coote 2005; Madrigal 2000; 2001), and foster positive and supportive consumer attributions (Dean 2002; Ellen, Webb, and Mohr 2006; Woisetschläger et al. 2017). Most sponsorships will not serve all functions to all audiences at the same time. Therefore, organizations can be more deliberate in finding and selecting the most appropriate sponsee partner according to the congruence, cost, target market, and function of the sponsorship by applying the typology proposed herein.

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Table 1. A Multi-Level Typology of Sponsorship Contexts.

Category of Sponsorship Context and Description	Sub-Category of Sponsorship Context	Example Citations	Clarification of Overlap
<u>Sports Sponsorship</u> : a sponsorship exchange relationship between a sponsoring entity and a separate sports event, league, venue, or competitor entity.	Sport Event Sponsorship	Crimmins, & Horn, 1996; Drengrer et al., 2008; Speed & Thompson, 2000	This sub-category links sponsoring entities to specific sports events or event clusters. The broader category of sport sponsorship has considerable overlap with event sponsorship, as many events that are sponsored are either professional or recreational sporting events. However, confusion can arise from the fact that some events can be community or cultural events, while others can be prosocial cause-related events. Given this possible overlap, the specific type of event should be better specified as a sub-category of sports, prosocial cause, or culture and community sponsorship. There could also be further meaningful differentiation between professional and recreational sports events, and this should be considered in future research.
	Sport League Sponsorship	Cornwell et al., 2005b; Farrelly et al., 2005	This sub-category links sponsoring entities to official, ongoing, and continuous sports leagues. Some sports sponsorships relate to entire ongoing leagues that govern numerous individual match events between a specific set of member teams. These leagues differ from less continuous and more restricted sports events whereby the event entity changes from event to event. These sponsorships also associate the sponsoring company with the specific sport and league without automatic association with a given team. There could be further differentiation between professional and recreational sports leagues, and this should be considered in future research.
	Sport Venue Sponsorship	Clark et al., 2002	This sub-category links sponsoring entities to official venues primarily designated to sports. The category of sport sponsorship has considerable overlap with broader venue sponsorship, as many venues that are sponsored might have primary roles of hosting sporting activities. However, sports venues can oftentimes house a range of cultural and community events. Given these unclear overlaps, the primary associative function of the venue should be better specified as a sub-category of sports or culture and community sponsorship. There could be further differentiation between professional and recreational sports venues, and this should be considered in future research.
	Sport Team/ Individual Sponsorship	Madrigal, 2000; Carrillat & d'Astous, 2014	This sub-category links sponsoring entities to specific sports teams or athletes. Some sports sponsorships relate to specific teams or even individual competitors. These sponsorships primarily associate the sponsoring company with the specific team or competitor, whereby different organizations would sponsor the different teams or competitors within a given event or league.
<u>Prosocial Cause Sponsorship</u> : a sponsorship exchange relationship between a sponsoring entity and an event, entity, or initiative that seeks to promote, support, or otherwise benefit a prosocial cause, event, entity, or initiative.	Prosocial Event Sponsorship	Cornwell & Coote, 2005; Simmons & Becker-Olsen, 2006	This sub-category links sponsoring entities to specific events or event clusters engaged to promote a cause beneficial to society or societal members. The category of prosocial cause sponsorship overlaps with event sponsorship, as many events that are sponsored can have philanthropic benefits for specified prosocial causes. However, confusion can arise from the fact that some events can technically be sporting events, while others can be community or cultural events, both with stated benefits for a given prosocial cause. Given this possible overlap, the specific type of event should be better specified.
	Prosocial Group Sponsorship	Menon & Kahn, 2003; Szykman et al., 2004	This sub-category links sponsoring entities to specific groups engaged to promote a cause beneficial to society or societal members. Some prosocial cause sponsorships relate to formal entities that manage and engage activities to support and benefit the prosocial cause. These sponsorships associate the sponsoring company with the formal prosocial entity whereby the sponsoring organization provides resources for the entity to use in their range of mission-relevant activities.
	Prosocial Initiative Sponsorship	Du et al., 2008	This category links sponsoring entities to specific multi-party collaborative initiatives intended to promote a cause beneficial to society or societal members. Some prosocial cause sponsorships relate to specific initiative projects that involve multiple collaborating parties for one planned iteration. These sponsorships associate the sponsoring company directly with the prosocial cause as an active participant in the collaborative initiative, as opposed to an external benefactor of another entity's initiative.

Table 1 (Continued). A Multi-Level Typology of Sponsorship Contexts.

<p><u>Culture and Community Sponsorship</u>: a sponsorship exchange relationship between a sponsoring entity and an event, entity, or venue that provides entertainment to a given community or displays the practices and artifacts of one or more cultures.</p>	<p>Culture and Community Event Sponsorship</p>	<p>Qeuster & Thompson, 2001; Weinberger & Wallendorf, 2012</p>	<p>This sub-category links sponsoring entities to specific events that are either for entertainment or promote specific cultures. The category of culture and community sponsorship has considerable overlap with event sponsorship, as many events can be community or cultural events. However, confusion can arise from the fact that many other events can be sports or prosocial cause-related events. Given these unclear overlaps, the specific type of event should be better specified. Furthermore, culture and community events should be further specified according to whether they are better characterized as community social activities, or better characterized as professional or semi-professional fine or performing arts events. This could represent a distinction that needs further specification.</p>
	<p>Recreational Venue Sponsorship</p>	<p>Cahill & Meenaghan, 2013; Grohs et al., 2012</p>	<p>This sub-category links sponsoring entities to specific venues that serve primarily entertainment or cultural purposes. The category of culture and community sponsorship has considerable overlap with broader venue sponsorship, as many venues that are sponsored might have primary roles of housing sporting activities. However, sports venues can oftentimes host a range of cultural and community events as well. Furthermore, there are also many instances where the sponsorship of venues can have a primary and even exclusive cultural, community, and entertainment function. Given these unclear overlaps, the primary associative function of the venue should be better specified.</p>
<p><u>Media and Programming Content Sponsorship</u>: a sponsorship exchange relationship between a sponsoring entity with an online or offline media entity that can provide programming or virtual communities.</p>	<p>Online Community Sponsorship</p>	<p>Becker-Olsen, 2003; Alonso Dos Santos et al., 2016</p>	<p>This sub-category links sponsoring entities to specific online groups that coalesce initially and primarily on a virtual platform. Virtual online communities are becoming more prevalent as activities and communities gain a greater online presence. Many of the more formal online communities require a formal host to ensure adequate organization. This sub-category of media and programming content sponsorship identifies and addresses the early associations between company sponsors and virtual online communities to facilitate more comprehensive research in this domain.</p>
	<p>Programming and Content Sponsorship</p>	<p>Dens et al., 2018; Evans et al., 2018; Harvey et al., 2006</p>	<p>This sub-category links sponsoring entities to specific content delivered to consumers and the more general population through traditional media and new media channels. In these cases, the content and programming is carried out by an entity that is separate from the company sponsor, but these activities are supported by contributions from the sponsoring company. This content and programming can be provided through traditional media channels or various new media, or online, channels. Given the early stages of the research on this sub-category of media and programming content sponsorship, future research should further explore the content, conceptual boundaries, and unique processes within this domain.</p>

Note: The table provides a typology of the category-level (e.g., sports sponsorship) and sub-category-level conceptualizations of sponsorship (Meenaghan, 2001). We did not base this categorization on an exhaustive list of specific contexts (e.g., specific sports, causes, forms of community entertainment, etc.) to provide a more parsimonious typology. There can be overlap between the different sub-dimensions of sponsorship contexts for any given context, as some sponsees can serve multiple societal roles and some sponsorships can involve multiple collaborative partners. In this regard, a given sponsorship can represent multiple different contexts. Together, the dimensions and sub-dimensions of the sponsorship contexts should clarify the possible configurations of sponsorship contexts. The typology was derived from articles published in *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, *Journal of Consumer Research*, *Journal of Marketing Research*, *Marketing Science*, *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, *Journal of Retailing*, *European Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Advertising*, *Journal of Advertising Research*, *Marketing Letters*, *Psychology and Marketing*, *Journal of Business Ethics*, *European Sport Management Quarterly*, and *Journal of Business Research*.

Table 2. Agenda for Future Research.

Topic	Potential Research Questions	Methodological Considerations
Comparative Research on Sponsorship Context	<p>New Categories/Sub-Categories of Sponsorship Context, Mechanisms, and Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Are there categories or sub-categories of sponsorship context that are not yet accounted for in the current typology?</i> • <i>Are there new mechanisms and outcomes of sponsorship that are relevant to new sponsorship contexts?</i> <p>Sponsorship Congruence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What conditions are important for sponsorships to be congruent within different sponsorship contexts?</i> • <i>Are different types of congruence more or less relevant within different sponsorship contexts?</i> <p>Sponsorship Processes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What sponsorship contexts are most conducive to the different sponsorship processes?</i> • <i>How do sponsorship effects differ within- and between general sponsorship contexts?</i> 	<p>This research will have methodological challenges, as the specific measures considered in a given context could differ. These challenges could be more relevant to the specific characteristics and mechanisms instead of the more generalized outcomes. Therefore, this research should consider direct and indirect relationships across different contexts. This research could benefit, initially, from qualitative interviews or focus groups across different contexts to assess the issues of congruence and sponsorship processes. It could also reveal new types of sponsorship contexts or further explain under-developed types of sponsorship context.</p> <p>This exploratory research could be followed by surveys that assess the conditions and reasons for different types of congruence across general and specific sponsorship contexts. This research could also assess how different types of congruence relate to different outcomes according to the specific sponsorship context using a variety of methodologies such as interviews, surveys, field experiments, or analyses of secondary data. It could also consider how the sponsorship context impacts the direct and indirect effects involved in established sponsorship processes. Empirical studies focused on new or emerging types of sponsorship context would help to explain and establish the marketing potential of these new contexts. This cross-context research could adapt methods currently used in cross-national and cross-cultural research, such as methods of assessing measurement invariance and comparing direct/indirect relationships. Eventually, sponsorship context should be a focus of qualitative and quantitative reviews, whereby these reviews increase in fidelity as research on the topic develops.</p>
Research on Consumer Segmentation and Sponsorship Context	<p>Consumer Segmentation and Target Marketing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What consumer characteristics, experiences, and individual differences tend to be targeted most effectively by different sponsorship contexts?</i> • <i>How and why does the sponsorship context influence specific consumer segments according to established sponsorship processes?</i> • <i>Does the degree to which marketing is more or less targeted within specific sponsorship contexts impact brand equity?</i> 	<p>There has been a substantial amount of consumer research that has considered between-consumer differences as antecedents and moderators of sponsorship processes. Therefore, future research focused on individual differences that are relevant to segmentation decisions is needed to synthesize the research findings. The specific relationships between consumer characteristics and sponsorship contexts could then be examined using surveys and field experiments that have been designed to (a) consider consumer sub-groups, (b) ensure the generalizability for both qualitative and survey studies (b) account for common method bias in the case of surveys, and (c) consider multiple types of sponsorships concurrently to allow more valid analyses of comparisons between consumers and across sponsorship contexts. While experiments could reduce common method bias and support causal inferences, they should use field samples instead of student samples which only cover a narrow segment of the population.</p>
Strategic Considerations and Sponsorship Viability Implications of Sponsorship Context	<p>Strategic Decision-Making:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What are the organization-level objectives and outcomes associated with the different sponsorship contexts?</i> • <i>Do sponsorship costs and returns-on-investments differ across sponsorship contexts?</i> <p>Sponsorship Viability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How does the nature of the sponsorship relationship differ across sponsorship contexts?</i> • <i>What types and amounts of non-monetary sponsor contributions are expected by the sponsored properties in different types of sponsorship contexts?</i> • <i>How do sponsorship and environmental characteristics influence sponsorship viability differently according to sponsorship contexts?</i> 	<p>Research on organizational objectives might involve a mixture of interviews and surveys with key informants from sponsor and sponsee organizations, as well as consumer, investor, and employee audiences (Cornwell and Kwon In Press). The research on how these objectives relate to outcomes could involve connecting the content of these interviews and surveys, drawn from organizational key informants, with consumer response data; data on sponsorship cost, sales, or other market outcomes; and data on financial outcomes. This will help to clarify how objectives relate to outcomes differently across various sponsorship contexts.</p> <p>Research on sponsorship viability could initially use interviews to understand how the nature of the relationship differs across various sponsorship contexts, as well as the types of non-monetary social resources that get exchanged as part of the sponsorship. This research could use data collected from both the sponsors and sponsees (i.e., dyadic data) to understand the nature of the exchange relationship and the psychological attitudes, commitments, and intentions regarding the relationship. These studies would likely need to account for the prominence of the sponsored property, as this will be a source of variation within and between different sponsorship contexts. This research should consider sponsorship outcomes of sales (Andrews, Luo, Fang, and Aspara 2014), returns-on-investments (Jensen and Cobbs 2014; Nickell and Johnston 2020), financial market returns (Cornwell et al. 2005a), and relational viability (Jensen and Cornwell 2017; In Press) across the different sponsorship contexts by analyzing company sales data and other secondary data.</p>