Communication Effects in Sponsorships:

An assessment of how different communication strategies can enhance incongruent sponsorships

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To my son Aksel

Abstract

Collateral communication of sponsorships is considered a prerequisite for sponsorship success. Sponsorship is a communication form that is passive and indirect by nature and is therefore increasingly leveraged with additional communication effort through more active channels. This dissertation focuses on traditional advertising as a sponsorship leverage tool. Compared to sponsorship, advertising offers a more controlled communication environment. Thus, communicating a sponsorship through advertising means that the sponsorship message appears as more direct, explicit, and persuasive. In general, little is known about how consumers process sponsorship information, and even less about how sponsorships are processed when they are presented through controlled communication channels. Based on the commonly held notion that *fit* between sponsor and sponsee is associated with positive consumer responses, the dissertation proposes that communication may improve incongruent sponsorships through the ability to enhance perceptions of fit. By suggesting that strategic communication can influence fit perceptions, the dissertation adapts to the conceptualization of fit as a malleable construct.

Two experiments were conducted to investigate effects of communication on consumers' responses to incongruent sponsorships. Based on persuasion theory, a distinction was made between open-ended and closed-ended communication. An open-ended message, labeled *implicit communication strategy*, subtly implies the basis of sponsorship fit, whereas a closed-ended message, labeled *explicit communication strategy*, states the basis of sponsorship fit directly. Results from the two experiments show an overall advantage of the implicit strategy. Positive effects on attitude toward the sponsoring brand for this strategy were mediated by brand image, sponsorship attitude, and altruistic motive attribution. Contrary to the predictions, perceived fit was not identified as a key processing mechanism for implicit communication. The explicit strategy was more effective in enhancing perceived fit, which along with sponsorship attitude had a positive indirect effect on brand attitudes. However, there were no overall positive effects of explicit message arguments on brand attitudes, suggesting alternative mechanisms working in the opposite direction and cancelling out positive total effects.

This dissertation combines theory on *schema congruity* and *indirect persuasion* with existing sponsorship theory in order to make predictions about communication effects on incongruent sponsorships. Recently, sponsorship researchers have recognized the opportunity of enhancing an incongruent sponsorship through articulation of the relationship between the sponsor and the sponsee. However, there is a lack of research into what *type* of information is most effective in this regard. The research in this dissertation bridges this knowledge gap by testing two distinct approaches to sponsorship communication. Moreover, no research has examined communication effects at different *levels* of sponsorship incongruency. As an attempt to fill this gap, the dissertation provides a test of communication effects for strong versus moderate sponsorship incongruency. The research offers practical recommendations with respect to how incongruent sponsorships should be communicated. Theoretically, it contributes to the understanding of how a sponsorship message is processed, to the conceptualization of perceived fit, and to theory of indirect persuasion.

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Chapter 1.   Introduction

1.1. Background

Commercial support of sport, art, and charitable activities is not a new phenomenon; In Ancient Greece, artists and athletes were supported by wealthy citizens, and gladiators in the ancient Roman Coliseum were often sponsored by aristocrats (Sandler and Shani 1989; Shanklin and Kiania 1992; Smith 2004). However, sponsorship as we know it today is a relatively recent marketing communication tool. Modern forms of commercial sponsorship started developing around 1980 (Meenaghan 1983), and today, sponsorship has become a major component in companies' communication mix. Sponsorship activities represent one of the most rapidly growing areas of marketing communication, and worldwide sponsorship expenditures reached $44 billion in 2009 (IEG 2010).

Despite the extensive increase in sponsorship spending over the past few decades, there is still a substantial lack of research into important aspects of this communication medium. The academic interest in sponsorships emerged in the mid-1980s and began to increase in the early 1990s (Cornwell and Maignan 1998). Sponsorship research has developed from being highly descriptive, concentrating on macro-level issues such as type of sponsors and their objectives (Sandler and Shani 1989), to focusing on measuring effects using causal designs. Whereas there have been clear advances in sponsorship research during the past decade, the majority of the work still lacks the same theoretical and methodological foundations evident in the broader marketing literature (McDaniel 1999). A shift of focus towards how sponsorships actually work in the minds of consumers is notable, but individuals' processing of sponsorship stimuli is still characterized as a "black box" (Cornwell, Weeks, and Roy 2005).

The idea of similarity, or *perceived fit*, between a brand/company and a sponsored object is the most frequently examined theoretical concept related to processing of sponsorship stimuli (Cornwell et al. 2005). Sponsorship researchers have since the late 90's been concerned with documenting the effects of perceived fit on a variety of sponsorship outcomes through experimental testing. The general consensus derived from this stream of research is that high fit is associated with positive sponsorship outcomes. A managerial implication has therefore

been to select objects that represent a clear match with the sponsor. However, the sponsorship marked contains numerous examples of successful sponsorships that lack self-evident links. In the branding literature, sponsorship is conceptualized as a means by which secondary brand knowledge can be *reinforced* or *created* (Keller 2008). Acknowledging that sponsorships can be used to create a set of new brand associations implies that there is a mismatch between the sponsoring brand and the sponsee. In this regard, Smith (2004) notes that sponsorship can be a useful tool in brand repositioning, implying that the brand does not initially fit the object on a desired association. Therefore, low-fit sponsorships are not only common, but also intentional (Coppetti et al. 2009). Simmons and Becker-Olsen (2006) refer to the type of sponsor-sponsee link that exists independent of strategic effort to create one as "natural fit". Natural fit exists when the link between the sponsor and the sponsee is intuitive or obvious, such as the link between Helly Hansen and sailing or the link between Nike and Tiger Woods. In both these cases, the sponsor produces equipment used by the athletes during an event. When sponsorships cannot capitalize on a natural level of congruency, it is the marketers responsibility to "explain" the relationship to the market (Cornwell et al. 2006). Such articulation of a sponsorship's meaning requires additional communication effort, known in the literature as activation or leveraging. Advertisement is one of the most frequently used communication channels for sponsorship leveraging (IEG 2009). Applying a controlled and verbal advertising message to a sponsorship implies that its meaning can be creatively explained to target audiences. As such, an advertising message may be used strategically to forge a perception of sponsorship fit, which should benefit sponsorships that do not possess a natural and intuitively evident basis of fit. The idea that communication can influence perceived fit suggests that fit is a flexible construct that can be strategically manipulated. This challenges the conventional treatment of fit as an inherently stable characteristic of a sponsor-sponsee relationship. The view of fit as a malleable entity is in accordance with more recent brand extension research, which has shown that both ad content and ad repetition can influence perceptions of fit between an extension and a brand (Bridges, Keller, and Sood 2000; Lane 2000). Also sponsorship researchers have lately advocated the view of fit as a malleable, or flexible, construct. Recent research contributions have recognized the opportunity to enhance incongruent sponsorships through communication (Cornwell et al. 2006), and some studies have explored the direct influence of communication on perceived fit (Coppetti et al. 2009; Dardis 2009; Simmons and Becker-Olsen 2006). Yet, none of these studies have investigated effects of different *types* of communication.

Derived from a rhetorical perspective, any proposition made by an advertiser can be expressed in a variety of ways, and "in any given situation one of these ways will be the most effective in swaying an audience" (McQuarrie and Mick 1996, p. 424). Accordingly, fit between brand and object in a sponsor-sponsee relationship can be promoted in various ways, and it is the marketer's responsibility to find out which way will be most effective in specific situations.

1.2. Research Questions

The purpose of this dissertation is to study how consumers process communication about naturally incongruent sponsorships. Figure 1.1 below illustrates the general conceptual framework underlying the research.

FIGURE 1.1
General Conceptual Framework
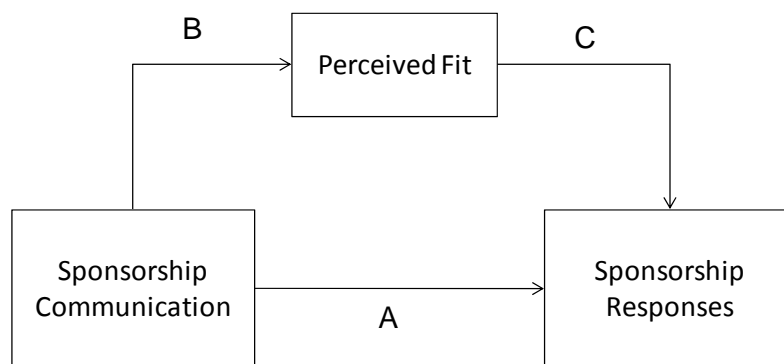
Path A in the model conforms to previous sponsorship research, which indicates that leveraging communication assists in promoting positive sponsorship outcomes (Weeks, Cornwell, and Drennan 2008). However, the way that communication produces such positive outcomes remains an open question. The current research attempts to bridge this gap in the literature by examining how different types of sponsorship messages are processed by consumers. Sponsorships that are not leveraged with additional communication possess a certain level of natural incongruency (Simmons and Becker-Olsen 2006). Researchers have noted that sponsorships that do not profit from natural congruency require additional communication (Cornwell et al. 2006; Crimmins and Horn 1996; Simmons and Becker-Olsen 2006). By examining the processing and effect of different sponsorship advertising messages,

the current research focuses on how strategic communication can enhance naturally incongruent relationships. Hence, the following research question is formulated:

RQ1: How can sponsorship communication enhance consumers' responses to naturally incongruent sponsorships?

The dissertation challenges the conventional view of congruency as a fixed characteristic of a sponsor-sponsee relationship by proposing that perceived sponsorship fit can be influenced by strategic information. Therefore, whereas the sponsorship literature mainly has focused on *consequences* of perceived fit, this dissertation adds to the knowledge of *antecedents* of perceived fit. Previous sponsorship research has established a positive relationship between perceived sponsorship fit and consumers' responses to sponsorships (path C in figure 1.1). Accordingly, managers of naturally incongruent sponsorships are advised to *create fit* between the brand and the object through additional communication (path B in figure 1.1). However, only a few researchers has looked at the opportunity to enhance perceived fit per se. Conceptually, assuming that perceived fit can be actively created suggests that fit is a flexible, rather than fixed, construct. By examining the influence of an advertising message on perceived fit, the current research investigates whether perceived fit may be conceptualized as a flexible construct. Therefore, the second research question is as follows:

RQ2: Can perceived fit in naturally incongruent sponsorships be improved by communication?

The conceptual model suggests that sponsorship communication will influence consumer responses through the ability to facilitate perceptions of fit. This does not exclude alternative mechanisms that may explain variance in outcome variables. Although not formally accounted for in the proposed model, the dissertation will investigate other potential processing mechanisms beyond perceived fit.

1.3. Intended Contributions

Answering the research questions outlined in the previous section should contribute both theoretically and practically to the field of commercial sponsorship. The conceptual

understanding of perceived fit between sponsor and sponsee will benefit from a study of both its antecedents and consequences. Previous research has mainly focused on its consequences, which advocates a view of fit as a stable construct. Moreover, incorporating advertising theory in a sponsorship context will bring further insights into the conceptual differences between advertising and sponsorship as marketing communication tools. Also, this dissertation contributes to a central question frequently raised by sponsorship researchers, namely, *how is a sponsorship message processed by consumers*? Thus, the dissertation contributes to the stream of research that seeks to open "the black box" of sponsorship processing. From a practical point of view, sponsorship managers will benefit from the current research, as it provides useful insight into how a sponsorship should be communicated in the market. Since sponsorships increasingly are leveraged with additional communication efforts, this research addresses issues of current interest in the sponsorship market.

1.4. Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation is organized into six chapters. Chapter 2 presents an overview of theoretical perspectives relevant to the phenomenon addressed by the research questions. The chapter outlines three main theoretical domains. First, sponsorship theory is presented. This section identifies theoretical perspectives that have been used to explain processing mechanisms and effects in sponsorships. Second, theories of congruency in relation to information processing are presented, mainly derived from social psychology research. More specifically, research on schema theory and assimilation/contrast effects contributes to the theoretical basis for examining sponsorship congruency. Third, theories of persuasion are presented. Of particular interest for the development of a sponsorship communication typology is the distinction between open and closed communication, conceptually identified as conclusion explicitness. This distinction has been of interest to researchers within various academic disciplines, including marketing, social psychology, communication, and linguistics. Drawing on this literature review, two communication strategies are suggested and tested throughout the dissertation.

Chapter 3 and 4 present two experimental studies conducted to test the conceptual relationships suggested by the research model. Both chapters start by outlining a set of

research hypotheses concerning main and mediated effects of sponsorship communication, followed by a description of methodology and a presentation of analysis and results. Chapter 5 presents a discussion of findings from both experiments, followed by an evaluation of their theoretical and managerial implications. Finally, chapter 6 addresses limitations of the studies and outlines future research recommendations.

Chapter 2.   Literature Review

2.1. Sponsorship Theory

2.1.1.   Background: What is it and how does it work?

Sponsorship has been defined as "an investment, in cash or in kind, in an activity in return for access to the exploitable commercial potential associated with that activity" (Meenaghan 1991, p. 36). Acknowledging the role of leverage activities in sponsorships, Cornwell (1995) propose the following definition employing the term 'sponsorship-linked marketing': "sponsorship-linked marketing is the orchestration and implementation of marketing activities for the purpose of building and communication an association to a sponsorship" (p. 21). Sponsorship is often confused with related concepts, such as traditional advertising and corporate philanthropy. From a consumer-oriented perspective, sponsorship represents an indirect form of persuasion that works through the mental linkage created between a brand/company and the sponsored object. The indirect nature of sponsorship implies that the message is not complete in the sense that it lacks explicitness and sophistication (Cornwell 2008; Crimmins and Horn 1996). Sponsorship is therefore fundamentally different from traditional advertising, where the persuasive message is verbal, persuasive, creative, and controlled. In spite of its philanthropic roots (Keller 2008; Tench and Yeomans 2006), sponsorship is also essentially different from altruism (Speed and Thompson 2000). Conceptual confusion regarding philanthropy and sponsorship is typically embedded in sponsorships' ability to generate goodwill. However, as sponsorship clearly conveys commercial motives, it should be considered a legitimate component of firms' communication mix (Meenaghan 1991; Walliser 2003).

Image-related objectives are regarded as one of the main motives for entering sponsor-sponsee relationships (Cornwell and Maignan 1998; Cornwell, Roy, and Steinard Ii 2001; D'Astous and Bitz 1995; Gwinner 1997; Gwinner and Eaton 1999; Pham 1991). By being exposed in conjunction with an object highly valued by target consumers, the sponsors' aim is that the associations attached to the object will reflect upon their brand. This process is in the sponsorship literature known as *image transfer*, and has theoretically been explained by associative networks (Anderson and Bower 1973; Farquar and Herr 1993) and spreading

activation (Anderson and Pirolli 1984; Collins and Loftus 1975). Consistent with an associative network memory model, a brand's image has been defined as "perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory" (Keller 2008, p. 51). From this theoretical position, sponsorship activity is viewed as a means of leveraging *secondary associations* (Keller 2008). By linking a brand to another entity, such as a sponsorship object, consumers may *infer* that the brand shares associations with that entity, hence producing secondary associations (Keller 2008). This process is consistent with the saying that the "medium is the message", implying that the sponsorship message is equivalent to the attributes of the sponsored object possessed by the consumers (Meenaghan and Shipley 1999).

In addition to documenting image-effects of sponsorships (Dean 1999, 2002; Gwinner and Eaton 1999; Javalgi et al. 1994; Nicholls, Roslow, and Dublish 1999; Quester and Thompson 2001), research has shown that sponsorship is a useful communication tool in building brand awareness (Abratt, Clayton, and Pitt 1987; Bennett 1999; Gardner and Shuman 1987; Hoek 1999; Javalgi et al. 1994; Nicholls et al. 1999), increasing purchase intentions (Madrigal 2001; Martensen et al. 2007; McDaniel 1999; Pope and Voges 1999; Speed and Thompson 2000), and increasing the sponsor's financial value (Cornwell and Pruitt 2001; Miyazaki and Morgan 2001). However, the processing mechanisms that lead to these outcomes have only recently been attained to by sponsorship researchers (Cornwell et al. 2005). Research contributions regarding processing mechanisms in sponsorship have been described as heavily fragmented, and despite their potential complementarities, no commonly accepted framework has emerged (Cornwell et al. 2005; Deitz, Myers, and Markley 2009). In a review of recent sponsorship research promoting theoretically grounded contributions, Cornwell et al. (2006) summarize theoretical mechanisms that have been used empirically to explain how sponsorships work in the mind of consumers. These include mere exposure (Bennett 1999), low-level processing (Olson and Thjømøe 2003), reactivation (Pham and Vanhuele 1997), classical conditioning (Speed and Thompson 2000), attribution theory (Rifon et al. 2004), identification (Madrigal 2000, 2001), prominence heuristic (Pham and Johar 2001), articulation (Coppetti et al. 2009; Cornwell et al. 2006), and congruency (Becker-Olsen and Simmons 2002; Cornwell and Pruitt 2001; Gwinner and Eaton 1999; McDaniel 1999; Pracejus and Olsen 2003; Simmons and Becker-Olsen 2006). The sponsorship literature also identifies factors that may have a direct impact on the processing mechanisms. These include

individual factors, such as consumers' prior experience, knowledge, and involvement in the sponsor or the object, *group factors*, such as social alliances, *market factors*, such as competitor activities, and *management factors*, such as sponsorship leverage (Cornwell et al. 2005). A wide range of sponsorship objectives have been identified in the literature, and they can be broadly conceptualized as cognitive, affective, or behavioral. Processing mechanisms and their antecedents and consequences are summed up in figure 2.1 below. The model is adapted and modified from Cornwell et al.'s (2005) analysis of sponsorship research.

FIGURE 2.1
Model of Sponsorship Processing Mechanisms
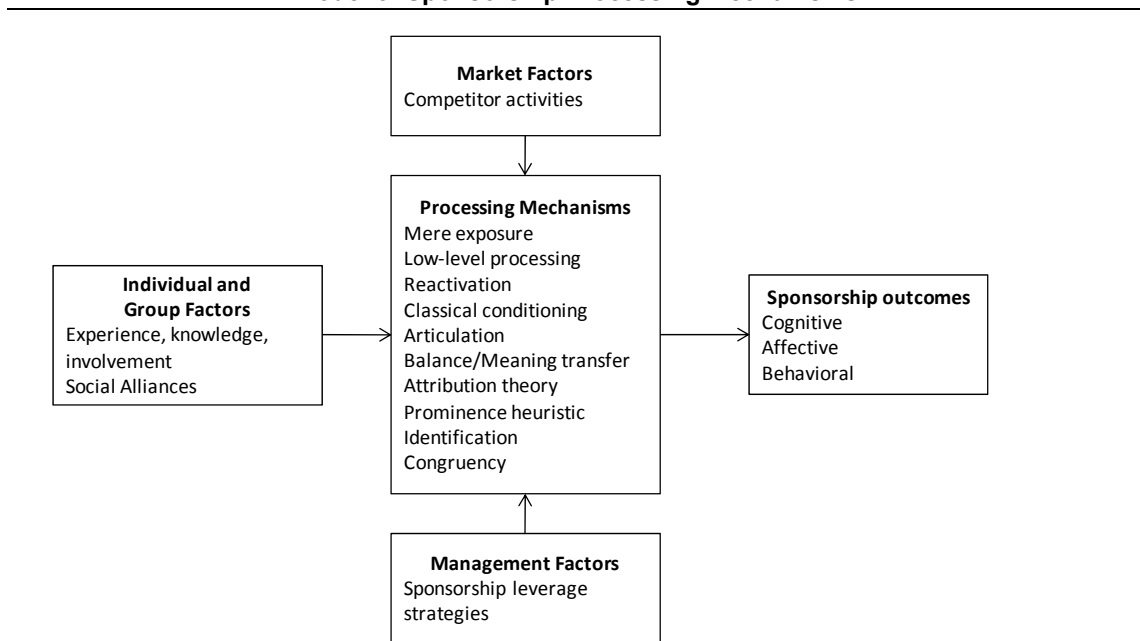
Modified from Cornwell et al. 2005

Congruency, or the idea of fit between sponsor and sponsee (also identified as *congruence*, *matching*, *compatibility*, *relatedness*, *relevance*, and *similarity*[1]), is by far the most frequently investigated theoretical concept in relation to processing of a sponsorship stimuli (Cornwell et al. 2005; Deitz et al. 2009). Nevertheless, this body of research has treated the concept of congruency fairly vaguely, and it is often viewed as a unidimensional construct for the sake

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[1] For an overview of how congruence has been conceptualized in the sponsorship literature, see Fleck and Quester (2007)

of parsimony and simplicity (Fleck and Quester 2007; Speed and Thompson 2000). In spite of the empirically established relationship between perceived fit and sponsorship outcomes, only a few studies have looked at possible *antecedents* of perceived fit. Knowledge about stimulus-based antecedents of fit is scarce, and research into this area would provide useful insights for practitioners in developing effective sponsorship communication strategies. The next section puts focus on the concept of congruence in sponsorships and sums up main empirical findings from the literature (a literature overview can be found in appendix A).

2.1.2. Perceived Fit in Sponsorships

Perceived Fit – Fixed or Flexible?

The concept of fit between a brand and another entity has received significant attention in various areas of the marketing discipline, including brand extensions (e.g., Broniarczyk and Alba 1994; Völckner and Sattler 2006; Aaker and Keller 1990), brand alliances (e.g., Simonin and Ruth 1998), advertising (e.g., Dahlén and Lange 2004; Dahlén and Rosengren 2005; Goodstein 1993), celebrity endorsement (e.g., Forehand and Perkins 2005; Kamins 1990; Martin 1996; McCracken 1989; Misra and Beatty 1990), and sponsorship (e.g., Cornwell et al. 2006; D'Astous and Bitz 1995; Gi-Yong, Quarterman, and Flynn 2006; Grohs, Wagner, and Vsetecka 2004; Gwinner and Eaton 1999; Johan and Pham 1999; McDaniel 1999; Speed and Thompson 2000). The commonly held belief within this body of research is that congruence between the brand and the entity (e.g., an extension of the brand, a spokesperson, or a sponsored object) has positive effects on consumer responses. Since the notion of positive congruency effects in sponsorships has received substantial empirical support, sponsorship managers are advised to select sponsorship objects that fit some features of the brand. A theoretical premise for such recommendation is that fit is an inherently rigid characteristic of a sponsorship, hence an uncontrollable variable for sponsorship managers. A rigid perspective of fit has traditionally been adopted by sponsorship scholars when studying congruence effects on consumers' responses to sponsorship stimuli. This dissertation, however, adapts to the conceptualization of fit as a dynamic, or flexible, condition, as suggested through recent marketing research. Studies on brand extensions have demonstrated that strategic information may influence consumers' perceptions of similarity between parent brand and the extension (e.g., Bridges et al. 2000; Ingrid, David, and Shashi 2005; Klink and Smith 2001; Lane 2000), implying that fit should be regarded as a subjective perception

(Lane 2000). Seeing that a sponsorship object can be considered as an extension of the sponsor's business domain (Sandler and Shani 1989), brand extensions have been considered as an interesting analogy for making predictions about congruity effects in sponsorships (D'Astous and Bitz 1995). Only a few known sponsorship studies have directly examined communication effects on perceived fit (Coppetti et al. 2009; Dardis 2009; Simmons and Becker-Olsen 2006). Whereas one study has documented positive message repetition effects on perceived fit (Dardis 2009), others have showed that fit can be created by providing information that explains how the sponsor fits the sponsored object (Coppetti et al. 2009; Simmons and Becker-Olsen 2006). Results from these studies suggest that fit should be regarded as a flexible construct. However, more research is required in order to understand *how* low-fit relationships can be influenced strategically. Especially, researchers should attend to what type of information that is most effective in creating perceived fit.

Dimensions and Levels of Perceived Fit

Sponsorship researchers have used different bases for explaining how fit between sponsor and sponsorship objects is judged by consumers. The most widely accepted categorization of fit in the sponsorship literature, suggested by Gwinner (1997), distinguishes between *functional-based* and *image-based* similarity. Functional similarity relates to sponsorships in which the sponsoring brand is used by participants during an event, and image-based similarity refers to the relatedness between the image of the sponsee and the image of the sponsor (Gwinner 1997). Similar categorizations have been suggested by other researchers, such as *functional* versus *symbolic* fit (Speed and Thompson 2000) and *direct* versus *indirect relevance* (Rifon et al. 2004). Studies on functional similarity has been dominating the literature (Rifon et al. 2004). An alternative categorization of links relates to the aspect of whether the link is inherently natural and logical or if it is a strategic attempt on behalf of the sponsor. Cornwell (1995) distinguishes between *logical* and *strategic* link, and similarly, Simmons and Becker–Olsen (2006) use the terms *natural* versus *created* fit. Natural fit is defined as "the extent to which the sponsored cause is perceived as being congruent with the image of the sponsor, independent of efforts to create a perceived fit between the organizations" (p. 156). Created fit, on the other hand, relates to congruency that has been derived from program details or communications rather than from an inherently high fit between organizations. The conceptualization of fit as either natural or created is consistent

with the perspective of fit as a flexible property that might be influenced through communication initiatives.

In order to develop a more precise framework for the concept of congruency, Heckler and Childers (1992) introduced the concepts of *relevancy* and *expectancy* that partition the general idea of incongruency. The two-dimensional perspective has been adopted, extended, and validated in later studies on advertising persuasion. Recently, this perspective has been introduced also in sponsorship research (Fleck and Quester 2007). Heckler and Childers base their study to a large extent on Goodman's (1980) work related to thematic incongruency, which is further separated into relevancy and expectancy. They define relevancy as "material pertaining directly to the meaning of the theme that reflects how information contained in the stimulus contributes to or detracts from the clear identification of the theme or primary message being communicated" (Heckler and Childers 1992, p. 477). Expectancy, on the other hand, refers to "the degree to which an item or piece of information falls into some predetermined pattern or structure evoked by the theme" (p. 477). McMellon et al. (2005) specify the meaning of expectancy and relevancy in an advertising context as follows: expectancy is defined by degrees of agreement with consumers' past experience with the product or product's advertising, and relevancy relates to how clearly the advertising message content communicates a consumer's meaning of the product. Expectancy has also been explained as a dimension of novelty and creativity, whereas the relevancy dimension concerns meaningfulness (Ang and Low 2000).

Whereas sponsorship research to a certain extent has been concerned with *dimensionality* of fit, the conceptualization of fit has to a lesser degree been discussed in terms of *levels* of incongruency. Sjödin and Törn (2006) contend, in concurrence with Mandler (1982), that incongruency is a continuous construct, but that previous advertising research has "failed to adopt a common operationalization of incongruency or a way to validly distinguish between levels of incongruency"(Sjödin and Törn 2006, p. 34). Research that contrasts two extreme cases of congruency neglects the fact that (in)congruency may lie between a perfect match and a perfect mismatch (Lee and Thorson 2008; Meyers-Levy and Tybout 1989). In the consumer research literature, a moderate level of incongruency has been shown to generate more favorable responses compared to congruency and severe incongruency (e.g., Lee and Thorson 2008; Meyers-Levy, Louie, and Curren 1994; Meyers-Levy and Tybout 1989). This

effect has been explained by positive affect associated with the ability to resolve the moderate level of incongruency (Mandler 1982). A theoretical discussion about consumers' responses to different levels of congruency is provided in section 2.2.2.

Consequences of Perceived Fit

Empirical findings in the sponsorship literature support the notion that high fit is associated with positive sponsorship effects. It has been documented that high perceived fit enhances image transfer (Grohs et al. 2004; Gwinner and Eaton 1999; Gwinner, Larson, and Swanson 2009), increases the attention paid to the sponsorship (Speed and Thompson 2000), has positive effects awareness[2] (Cornwell et al. 2006; Grohs et al. 2004; Quester and Farrelly 1998), improves attitudes towards the sponsor (Speed and Thompson 2000), adds to clarity of the sponsoring firm's positioning (Simmons and Becker-Olsen 2006), and increases willingness to consider the sponsor's product (Speed and Thompson 2000). Is has also been demonstrated that levels of congruency can impact individuals' inferences regarding sponsor motivation and perception sponsor credibility (Rifon et al. 2004; Speed and Thompson 2000). Although the relationship between perceived fit and favorable sponsorship outcomes is relatively well established, a few researchers have recognized potential pitfalls of a perfect match between a sponsor and a sponsee (Cornwell et al. 2005; Jagre, Watson, and Watson 2001). First, the predictability of congruent sponsorships may inhibit interest and attention. Corresponding with congruity theory in social psychology (e.g., Mandler 1982), a perfect match may stimulate less extensive processing and be less positively valued compared to a moderate level of incongruity (Cornwell et al. 2005). Second, a perfect match may in some cases generate negative inferences about a sponsorship motive and lower its credibility. D'Astous and Bitz (1995) found that consumers inferred more genuine sponsor motives when the sponsor and the sponsee were not linked, and a study by Speed and Thompson (2000) indicated that high-fit sponsorships of a high-status event were perceived as insincere. The role of motive attribution in sponsorship is further discussed in section 2.1.4.

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[2] Awareness effect of sponsorship congruency is debated in the sponsorship literature. Johar and Pham (1999) explain positive awareness effects for congruent sponsorships by constructive processes of sponsor identification. They show that sponsor identification is biased toward event-congruent sponsors. The explanation is that consumers use the relatedness heuristic because it is easy to generate an intuitive explanation of why there should be a semantic fit. This finding suggests that high relative relatedness of the actual sponsors will result in an overestimation of the true level of proper sponsor identification. Trendel and Warlop (2007) suggest that use of implicit memory measures is necessary to suppress this bias

Antecedents of Perceived Fit

Most studies on congruence effects in sponsorships have contributed to the understanding of how high versus low fit impacts responses to sponsorships. Only limited attention has been devoted to antecedents of perceived fit. In a recent study, Gwinner and Bennett (2008) found that perceived *brand cohesiveness*, identified as internal brand congruence, and *sport identification*, defined as the degree to which consumers feel that the sport is personally important, were significantly affecting level of perceived event-sponsor fit. In a study by Roy and Cornwell (2004), sponsor *category expertise* and sponsor *brand equity* were found to influence thoughts about fit. Results from thought-listing in this study showed that high-equity sponsors generated more favorable thoughts about fit than did the low-equity sponsors. Whereas these studies have addressed individual and market factors as potential antecedents of fit, a few sponsorship studies have also examined management factors with reference to how perceived fit can be strategically influenced (e.g., Dardis 2009; Simmons and Becker-Olsen 2006). These studies are addressed further in the next section regarding sponsorship leveraging. Although several studies have documented effects of management factors on consumers' responses to sponsorships (e.g., Cornwell et al. 2001; Quester and Thompson 2001; Stipp and Schiavone 1996), limited focus has been directed at strategically induced antecedents of perceived fit in particular.

Based on the notion that high fit is an important predictor of sponsorship success, scholars and practitioners have focused on the importance of selecting objects that fit the sponsor. However, some researchers have recognized the fact that not all firms have a natural high fit with the sponsorship object (Crimmins and Horn 1996; Simmons and Becker-Olsen 2006; Trendel and Warlop 2005), and that sponsorship success may depend on the sponsors' ability to explain how their connection to the object should be interpreted (Crimmins and Horn 1996). Articulation of a sponsorship rationale requires additional communication effort, referred to as leverage. Research on sponsorship leverage is addressed in the next section.

2.1.3. Leveraging Sponsorships

Crimmins and Horn (1996) suggest that "if the brand cannot afford to spend to communicate its sponsorship, then the brand cannot afford sponsorship at all" (p. 16), implying that sponsorship rights alone will not secure a worthwhile impact. Being a passive and implicit communication medium, sponsorships need articulation through more direct and active

communication venues (Cornwell et al. 2001; Crimmins and Horn 1996). Therefore, sponsorships are increasingly leveraged with additional communication tools in order to forge a link between sponsor and object. Leveraging[3] is defined as "the act of using collateral marketing communications to exploit the commercial potential of the association between a sponsee and sponsor" (Weeks et al. 2008, p. 639). Among sponsorship practitioners, it is widely accepted that additional effort is required in order to maximize the outcome of sponsorship investments (Weeks et al. 2008). A recent survey by the International Event Group (IEG) indicates that the average North American sponsor expected to spend $1.40 to leverage its deal for every $1 it pays in rights fees in 2009 (IEG 2009). Although sponsorship researchers also assume a positive relationship between leveraging effort and sponsorship effectiveness, limited research has empirically established such relationship (Cornwell 2008). Cornwell (2008) recognizes leveraging of sponsorship as one of the most needed areas of sponsorship research.

Following internal communications, advertising is the most popular forms of sponsorship leverage, used by 75 % of the sponsors in the IEG survey (IEG 2009). Cornwell et al. (2005) note that collateral advertising of a brand's relationship with a property strengthens the link creatively and creates stronger traces in memory. The authors also argue that weight and nature of the leveraging activities are central to communication effects achieved in sponsorships. Sponsorship has been characterized by its ability to persuade indirectly (Crimmins and Horn 1996), and differs from advertising with respect to degree of control, message delivery, and implementation (Meenaghan 1991). The sponsor will typically have little control over the media coverage of the sponsored event, and the message is passive in its persuasion form. Comparably, advertising is more direct, explicit, and easier to control (Roy 1998). Moreover, a primary difference between advertising and sponsorship is the explicitness, or clarity, of the marketer's profit objectives. Overall, it is the lack of a meaningful communication component in sponsorships that requires creative use of leverage strategies that will establish a differentiating sponsorship (Cornwell et al 2001). Therefore,

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[3] The terms *leverage* and *activation* are frequently used interchangeably in the sponsorship literature when reference is made to marketing communications intended to capitalize on sponsorship investments (Weeks et al., 2008). According to Weeks et al. (2008), leverage is used to describe all sponsorship-linked marketing communication and activities collateral to the sponsorship investment, whereas activation often refer to sponsorships where there is an interaction between the audience and the sponsor.

the incorporation of traditional advertising aspects in sponsorship communication contribute to a more explicit nature of sponsorship messages (Rifon et al. 2004).

A few studies have empirically examined effects of additional marketing support in sponsorships (e.g., Grohs et al. 2004; Quester and Thompson 2001; Weeks et al. 2008). In a field study on leveraging effect in an art festival sponsorship, Quester and Thompson (2001) documented a positive relationship between leverage spending and sponsor awareness and attitudes. Another field study, conducted by Grohs et al. (2004), documented that leverage effort enhanced image transfer from the sponsored event to the brand. Weeks et al. (2008) have studied how the Internet can be used as a tool to leverage sponsorships. Findings from a Web site navigation experiment indicated that leverage promoted more favourable attitudes toward the sponsor. Cornwell, Roy, and Steinard (2001) explored managers' views on the brand-equity-building capabilities of sponsorships, and one central finding was that leveraging activities were considered valuable in differentiating the brand from nonsponsors. Similarly, Meenaghan (1996) has discussed how leverage effort can be an effective strategy to counter ambushing attempts from competitors. Ambush marketing is the term for marketing strategies that are set out by nonsponsors to convey an impression that they are official sponsors. As such, ambush marketing represents a major threat to the effectiveness of actual sponsors, which makes great demands on sponsors to leverage their sponsorships. Overall, the joint conclusion in the sponsorship literature concerning leveraging is that additional communication is a crucial determinant of sponsorship success.

Traditionally, sponsorship research has not been examining the effect of additional communication activities on consumers' perception of fit per se. Research on brand extensions, on the other hand, has demonstrated that advertising can be used in several ways to directly improve consumers' fit perceptions (Czellar 2003; Ingrid et al. 2005). Empirical studies have demonstrated that increased ad exposure (Klink and Smith 2001; Lane 2000) and ad content (Boush 1993; Bridges et al. 2000; Kevin and Roderick 1998; Lane 2000) can impact perceived fit between parent brand and extension. Studies by Lane (2000) and Klink and Smith (2001) have shown that repeated exposure to an incongruent brand extensions enhance fit judgments. The central idea is that repeated exposure will redirect processing away from negative thoughts typically associated with incongruency (Lane 2000). Repeated exposure provides greater opportunity to assimilate the extension with the brand schema, a

process that increases salience of favourable extension attributes and their brand schema congruence (Klink and Smith 2001; Lane 2000). Theoretically, these assumptions are in accordance with previous research that has documented positive effects of ad repetition on amount and valence of message elaboration (Anand and Sternthal 1990; Cacioppo and Petty 1979). This research contends that increased repetition enhances message support and decreases counter-argumentation (Cacioppo and Petty 1979). Moreover, it supports documentation from schema research, which shows that schema-driven elaboration tends to distort information that is schema-incongruent and move towards schema-congruency (Lane 2000).

Studies on context and information accessibility effects indicate that consumers' evaluations can be influenced by making particular product attributes relatively more accessible than others (Stapel, Koomen, and Velthuijsen 1998). Brand extension research is in accordance with this notion, as several studies have shown that ad information can contribute to the salience of certain brand associations that will provide a rationale and basis of perceived congruency in brand extensions. Boush (1993) found that advertising slogans that primed consumers with shared associations had a significant effect on perceived similarity in brand extensions. Theoretically, the author argues that some brand attributes and beliefs may lie dormant in memory until activated by the advertisement. Lane (2000) suggests that the content of the advertisement should offer a basis for consumers to interpret the link, especially in the case of highly incongruent extensions where consumers' initial perceptions may persist or even polarize regardless of repetitive exposure. Accordingly, she found that brand extension ads influenced perceived fit by evoking specific brand associations. Similarly, Bridges et al. (2000) propose that communication strategies for brand extensions can increase fit perceptions by establishing so-called explanatory links. Based on the idea that *salience* and *relevance* of the parent brand's associations in the extension context will determine fit evaluations, the authors suggest that strategic information can frame fit judgments by enhancing salience and/or relevance. Empirical results supported the idea that communication can aid consumers in comprehending the rationale for an extension, hence enhancing perceived fit. Sjödin and Törn (2006) note that these studies support the idea that incongruency perceptions may be reduced or removed when consumers are aided in their effort to make sense of the new information.

In a sponsorship context, the opportunity to strategically influence perceived fit has only recently received academic interest. Corresponding to the brand extension research referred to above, sponsorship studies indicate that perceived fit can be influenced by information *repetition* (Dardis 2009) and message *content* (Simmons and Becker-Olsen 2006). Dardis (2009) recently extended the findings from brand extension research into a sponsorship context by examining the effect of repeated exposure on perceived congruence. Results supported the view of fit as a malleable construct by showing that fit was positively influenced by repeated exposure to sponsorship messages. With respect to message content, Simmons and Becker-Olsen (2006) examined how sponsorship information can be used to create perceived fit. In a study on social sponsorships, the authors demonstrated that negative effects of low fit can be reduced through communication decisions that create fit. Fit was created in two ways in this study: (1) with product-related donations that was expected to evoke shared associations, and (2) with messages that explicitly explained how the sponsor was similar to the cause. In a recent study, Coppetti et al. (2009) perceived fit was strategically influenced by articulation of the sponsor-sponsee relationship. Articulation was manipulated by adjusting the sponsoring brand's existing advertising slogan to the sponsorship context, and by directly expressing the rationale for the sponsorship. Although not examining the effect of information on perceived fit per se, a study by Cornwell et al (2006) documented positive memory effects of articulation of fit in incongruent sponsor-event relationships. Based on associative network theory, Cornwell at al. (2006) argue that incongruent sponsorships will have weaker links than congruent relationships, hence inferior memory. By providing articulation of fit (through press releases), they showed that memory for the incongruent sponsorships was improved, which was theoretically explained by the formation of additional network links between the sponsor and the sponsee.

Overall, research has shown that strategic sponsorship information provides an opportunity for marketers to enhance perceptions of low-fit sponsorships. Studies have documented that both repetition and content of sponsorship information may facilitate fit judgments. The inclusion of explicit information in sponsorship communication may also have implications for other determinants of sponsorship success. Although not empirically tested, sponsorship researchers have expressed concerns with respect to commercialization of sponsorships (Cornwell et al. 2005; Simmons and Becker-Olsen 2006). Explicit persuasion tactics may challenge the philanthropic element of sponsorship, which could have implications for

consumers' perceptions of underlying sponsor motives. The following section presents theory and empirical findings related to sponsor motive attribution.

2.1.4. Sponsor Motive Attribution

Attribution theory examines how people describe the reasons for others' actions (Moskowitz and Skurnik 1999). In a sponsorship context, attribution theory posits that perceivers of a sponsorship stimulus will infer underlying sponsor motives (Rifon et al. 2004). Little research attention has been given the role of motive attribution in the processing and effect of sponsorships. Consumers' inferences about underlying motives have to some degree been studied in the context of social sponsorships (e.g., Dean 2002; Rifon et al. 2004), but is more commonly found as a theoretical foundation in cause-related marketing studies (Webb and Mohr 1998). In a marketing communication context, the classical distinction between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation refers to whether consumers infer self-centred, commercial incentives versus other-centred, altruistic motivations (Webb and Mohr 1998).

Sponsorship research has documented a relationship between perceived fit in sponsorships and individuals' attribution of sponsor motives, but results are mixed in terms of the direction of this relationship. In a study by Rifon et al. (2004) it was demonstrated that high fit between a sponsor and a sponsored cause generated consumer attributions of altruistic sponsor motives. Speed and Thomson (2000) found a negative interaction effect between perceived fit and sponsored event status on consumers' responses to the sponsorship. The result was explained by a negative correlation found between the interaction term and perceived sponsor sincerity, suggesting that high fit was associated with perception of an insincere sponsorship. Speed and Thompson (2000) reasoned that such sponsorships may have been interpreted as commercially motivated rather than altruistic, muting the response to the sponsor. Correspondingly, d'Astous and Bitz (1995) found that for philanthropic sponsorships, low fit was appreciated for the same reasons; consumers may infer that support is genuine when the sponsors' activities are not linked to the sponsored entity. Carrillat, d'Astous and Colbert (2008) recently documented that the impact of high versus popular art on purchase intentions was fully mediated by the degree to which consumers made a commercial attribution to the sponsor.

Rifon et al. (2004) argue that motive attributions will be influenced by the characteristics of the sponsorship strategy and message. As traditional advertising elements are brought into sponsorship, the more explicit the commercial nature of the message becomes (Rifon et al. 2004). Rifon et al. (2004) hypothesized that explicitness, through incorporation of brand-level information, would generate attributions of commercial motives. The study compared a brand-level message with a company-level message, but results did not document any significant difference between these two messages on motive attribution. However, the theoretical basis for the assumption is in accordance with the CSR literature, which has expressed concerns about potential adverse effects of cause-related marketing if motives for philanthropic donations are being questioned (Varadarajan and Menon 1988). Similarly, Weeks et al. (2008) found that noncommercially oriented articulation of the sponsorship rationale generated more favourable attitudes than commercially oriented articulation. More research is required to establish the effect of different types of sponsorship messages on consumers' inferences about sponsor motives.

In spite of the apparent commercial nature of modern sponsorships, their fundamental ability to generate goodwill should not be underestimated when considering effects of sponsoring high-profiled objects. Attribution theory is therefore relevant beyond so-called philanthropic cause-sponsorships. The increasing practice of sponsorship leverage through traditional communication channels may have implications for consumers' causal inferences about sponsor motives. Effects of sponsorships without leverage are typically explained by mere exposure and low-level processing theory (Olson and Thjømøe 2003). Based on persuasion theory (e.g., Petty and Cacioppo 1981), Rifon et al. argue that increased elaboration typically associated with sponsorship incongruency will produce greater resistance to the positive sponsorship message. They also posit that the increased elaboration will elicit beliefs about the sponsorship act, hence weaken beliefs about altruistic sponsor motives. This assumption should be further examined in a sponsorship leverage setting, as it may have implications for campaigns using explicit and active persuasion tools to communicate sponsorships.

2.2. Theories of Congruency in Information Processing

2.2.1. Background: Perspectives on Cognitive Consistency

The internal processes of maintaining cognitive consistency have been formulated in somewhat different theoretical directions, including *balance theory* (Heider 1946, 1958; Newcomb 1953), *congruity theory* (Osgood and Tannenbaum 1955), *dissonance theory* (Festinger 1957), and *symbolic psycho-logic* (Abelson and Rosenberg 1958). These theories all support the notion that individuals seek to maximize internal consistency of their cognitive systems (Newcomb 1968). Petty and Cacioppo (1981) outline three common features of consistency theories; first, the theories describe the condition for balance and imbalance among cognitive elements, second, they claim that imbalance motivates people to restore consistency among cognitive elements, and third, they describe procedures by which balance can be attained.

Various areas of the marketing discipline have been concerned with congruency effects, including traditional advertising (e.g., Dahlén and Lange 2004; Dahlén et al. 2005), ad endorsement (e.g., Kamins 1990), brand extensions/alliances (e.g., Völckner and Sattler 2006; Aaker and Keller 1990), product placement (e.g., Russell 2002), and sponsorship (e.g., Dardis 2009; Speed and Thompson 2000). Balance theory has been applied by celebrity endorsement research in order to explain the relationship between consumer, endorser, and product (Boyd and Shank 2004). The main postulate of the balance perspective is that if the consumer has a positive attitude toward the endorser and perceives that the endorser has positive attitudes towards the promoted product, then the consumer will tend to generate positive attitudes toward the product in order to maintain cognitive consistency. Within traditional advertising, there has been a growing body of research concerning the effects of information congruency on advertising response (Dahlén and Lange 2004). The term incongruency, when used in an advertising context, refers to the practice of creating advertising campaigns that are somehow able to receive attention among ad viewers (Lee and Mason 1999). Research indicates that information congruency may have positive memory and attitudinal effects due to consumers' preference for the norm and adherence with consumer expectations, but that also incongruency may have positive effects on memory and attitudes because more careful information processing is induced (Dahlén and Lange 2004). Also with respect to brand extensions and brand alliances, congruency represents an

important theoretical construct. Out of 15 documented determinants of brand extension success (Völckner and Sattler 2007), congruency, or perceived fit, between the parent brand and the extension has been found to be the most prominent (Völckner and Sattler 2006). In general, the branding literature has highlighted the need for positioning strategies that facilitate perceptions of a clear brand image (Keller 1993; Park, Jaworski, and MacInnis 1986). This literature suggests that brands with multiple concepts make it more difficult for consumers to identify the brand's basic meaning (Park et al 1986). Applied to a sponsorship context, research has shown that high fit between sponsor and sponsee contributes to perceived clarity of the sponsor's positioning because it is consistent with what people expect from the sponsor (Simmons and Becker-Olsen 2006). A clear perception of a brand's image has also been ascribed to the level of congruence between brand associations, conceptualized by Keller (1993) as "the extent to which a brand association shares content and meaning with another brand association" (p. 7). In case of sponsorships, the clarity of a sponsoring brand's image is likely to suffer if a secondary association that is leveraged through sponsorship is incongruent with existing associations.

Research on brand extension has also been concerned with categorization theory when examining congruency effects. The categorization perspective explains the influence of a category on a new category member (Loken 2006; Loken, Barsalou, and Joiner 2008). The literature examines the extent to which beliefs and affect associated with a brand category are used to draw inferences about a new brand extension (Loken et al. 2008). Whether category inferences can extend into a new brand extension will depend on similarity between the brand category and the extension (Loken et al. 2008). The central idea is that similarity increases the transfer of beliefs and affect, which is consistent with finding of positive image transfer effects for congruent sponsorships (Gwinner and Eaton 1999). Two psychological factors that influence perceived similarity in brand extensions are information *accessibility* (or salience) and *relevance* (Bridges et al. 2000; Keller and Aaker 1992; Loken et al. 2008). Whereas accessibility refers to the ease of category information retrieval, relevance pertains to whether the information is deemed appropriate and important in the extension context (Bridges et al. 2000; Loken et al. 2008) Accessibility of associations depends not only on their strength in memory, but also on retrieval cues provided (Keller and Aaker 1992).

The majority of research on congruency within the marketing discipline supports the notion that cognitive consistency has positive attitudinal connotations. However, some differences seem to exist between the various areas. Whereas the celebrity endorsement and brand extension literatures provide broad support to the notion that congruent relationships are critical to positive evaluative outcomes, the advertising literature shows mixed results. In sponsorship research, the majority of the work is consistent with findings in celebrity endorsement and brand extension research, suggesting that a high level of congruity is preferable for sponsorship outcomes. As addressed in the presentation of consequences of perceived fit (section 2.1.2), only a few sponsorship researchers have addressed the potential positive effects of additional processing induced by incongruent information demonstrated in social psychology (e.g., Jagre et al. 2001).

For the purpose of exploring how perceived fit between a brand and a sponsorship object can be altered by communication, congruity theory is of particular interest. According to Tannenbaum (1968), the congruity principle has its origins and its most direct relevance in the *attitude change area*. According to the attitude change model, it is the state of incongruency which generates a pressure for change in attitude in the direction making for a new congruent situation (Tannenbaum 1968). A congruent state implies that there is internal consistency in a person's cognitive system, also referred to as schemas. In the following, an overview of schema congruity theory is presented, followed by a presentation of two important cognitive processes relevant to congruency in information processing; assimilation and contrast.

2.2.2. Schema Congruity Theory

In the marketing literature, affective and cognitive effects of congruency have to a large extent been explained through schema theory. When people are facing new encounters, they are thought to be evaluating these against some knowledge structures called schemas, defined as "representations of experience that guide action, perception, and thought" (Mandler 1982, p. 3). People's cognitive schemas represent an important construct when examining consumers' encoding, interpretation, retention, and retrieval of information (Misra and Beatty 1990). In general, schemas are thought to resist change, implying that new stimuli are adapted to fit the perceiver's schema, a process known as assimilation (Crocker, Fiske, and Taylor 1984). However, in response to incongruent information, existing knowledge

structures may be modified or altered to accommodate the incongruency (Crocker et al. 1984). Research shows competing results regarding affective and cognitive effects of different levels of congruency. The following presents how schema theory can be used to make predictions about consumers' responses to congruent versus incongruent information.

There is a theoretical and empirical dispute regarding the relative effect of schema-congruent and schema-incongruent information on amount of attention received, degree of elaboration induced, and the resultant memory. Whereas some argue that congruent information will be remembered best due to more effective encoding (Misra and Beatty 1990), others contend that incongruent information yield greater recall because of increased attention and elaborate processing (Crocker et al. 1984; Hastie 1980). More extensive cognitive elaboration has been attributed to the distinctiveness and salience conveyed by the incongruency (Hunt and Kernan 1992). This view advocates that because incongruent information is more difficult to comprehend, it will be retained in working memory relatively longer than congruent information (Srull 1981). A competing view suggests that greater attention does not necessarily ensure greater memorability (Misra and Beatty 1990). Celebrity endorsement research lends support to the so-called match-up hypothesis, which contends that congruency between the spokesperson and the brand leads to better memorability (Misra and Beatty 1990). Misra and Beatty (1990) found support for a 'filtering model', suggesting that schema facilitates encoding of schema-related information by structuring the information in a meaningful way. Results showed that schema-irrelevant information was filtered out, resulting in inferior memory. This corresponds to Crocker et al.'s (1984) arguments holding that although incongruent stimuli may initially draw attention, they are not always fully processed. Factors such as processing load, expertise, and motivation will have an impact on whether incongruent information receives attention (Crocker et al. 1984).

Mandler (1982) suggests that the very process of responding to different levels of schema congruity may itself influence the valence and extremity of affective responses. He contends that schema incongruency is a case of interruption of expectations and predictions, and that the heightened arousal and cognitive effort that follows will increase the extremity of evaluation. Mandler (1982) theorizes that the affect generated by responding to moderate incongruency will be more favourable than the affect resulting from responding to either congruency or extreme incongruency. He reasons that moderate incongruities are regarded as

interesting and positively valued, thereby leading to more positive responses than ones elicited by schema congruity. In the case of extreme incongruency however, the mismatch cannot be resolved or only be resolved if fundamental changes are made in the existing cognitive structure. The cognitive elaboration that is generated by trying to resolve the extreme incongruency is thought to result in frustration, and more negative evaluations are generated compared to moderate incongruency situations (Mandler 1982). Therefore, it is the degree to which the processor can satisfactorily resolve the incongruency that determines whether an evaluation is relatively more favourable or more unfavourable (Meyers-Levy and Tybout 1989). Moreover, it is the very process of resolving the incongruency that is thought to generate a rewarding feeling, resulting in positive affect (Meyers-Levy and Tybout 1989). In accordance with Mandler's view, Sjödin and Törn (2006) argue that the surprise following violation of expectation in a brand communication context is intrinsically arousing. Therefore, surprise caused by incongruency may lead to more intense emotions.

In order to understand effects of schema congruity on brand beliefs and attitudes, it is important to understand how levels of congruity are processed. As discussed above, schema theory predicts increased elaboration with incongruency. This increased thoughts-generation often takes the form of attributional sense-making (Simmons and Becker-Olsen 2006). In the categorization literature, this process is known as a *piecemeal process*, in which individual attributes of an object is evaluated (Fiske and Pavelchak 1986; Lee 1995). In contrast, category-based processes occur when judgments are based on the affect associated with the category to which the object belongs (Lee 1995). This is a less labor-intensive evaluation method, in which prior knowledge about a category is used in evaluations (Goodstein 1993). Research indicates that category-based processes are used when the stimulus information is congruent with the category schema, whereas piecemeal processes are used when the information is incongruent with it (Goodstein 1993; Lee 1995; Loken and John 1993; Meyers-Levy and Tybout 1989; Sujan 1985). This result is explained by increased motivation for detailed stimulus processing in cases of incongruency between the stimulus and category expectations (Goodstein 1993).

Two processes; *assimilation* and *accommodation*, have been used to explain changes in valence of thoughts for incongruent information (Crocker et al. 1984; Lane 2000; Mandler 1982; Meyers-Levy and Tybout 1989). When exposed to incongruent information, the new

information can either be integrated into the cognitive structures through an assimilation process, or it can be adjusted or modified to fit prior knowledge through an accommodation process. Whereas assimilation provides cognitive continuity and integration, accommodation allows cognitive change (Mandler 1982). These processes both work to counter the negative effect that usually is associated with incongruency. In a brand extension context, Lane (2000) argues that an assimilation process will increase the salience of favourable extension attributes as well as their consistency with the brand schema. At the same time, an accommodation process is assumed to occur as the brand schema is altered through the formation of linkages between the brand and extension. The assimilation of new information into existing cognitive structures is further discussed in the next section, where this process is theoretically evaluated against an opposite process, known as contrast.

2.2.3. Assimilation and Contrast Effects

The context in which a stimulus is presented is thought to have a significant effect on people's judgment of that stimuli (Martin, Seta, and Crelia 1990). Research on contextual effects in brand evaluation typically concerns the processes of *assimilation* and *contrast*. These processes are thought to explain how existing attitudes can alter perceptions and judgments of new objects (Sherif and Hovland 1961). Assimilation involves the addition of new information into existing schema, identified as the process of interpreting new information as consistent with an activated construct (Moskowitz and Skurnik 1999). Contrast effects, on the other hand, occur when the evaluation of an object is moving away from the point of reference (Levin 2002). The theoretical concepts of assimilation and contrast effects are relevant in relation to strategies that involve positioning an established brand name in a new context (Levin and Davis 1996), such as brand alliances, brand extensions, and sponsorships. In a sponsorship context, assimilation occurs when a brand is exposed in conjunction with a sponsorship object, and the associations attached to the object reflect upon the brand. This process is known in the sponsorship literature as *image transfer*. It implies that audiences have the ability to *infer* the unknown qualities of the target (the sponsor) from the known qualities in the context (the sponsorship object) (Levin 2002).

A central question regarding direction of priming effects is whether positive contexts always have positive effects (*assimilation*), or if it is possible that contextual information is used in such a way that positive contexts have negative effects (*contrast*) (Stapel et al. 1998).

Although sponsorship research indicates that assimilation (image transfer) occurs when an object is linked to a sponsor (Grohs et al. 2004; Gwinner and Eaton 1999), it has been shown that contrast effects may occur in cases where there is a severe mismatch between sponsor and sponsored object (Gwinner and Eaton 1999). Response data for cigarette sponsorship ads has demonstrated that the pairing of a well-liked healthy event and an unhealthy product that is not as well-liked does not necessarily result in transfer of positive affect (Gwinner and Eaton 1999; McDaniel and Heald 2000). This effect was demonstrated by Gwinner and Eaton (1999) in a study where the incongruent relationship between World Cup Soccer and Camel Cigarettes was examined. Results demonstrated that greater congruence was found in the "no sponsorships" condition, indicating a contrast effect. Priming studies from social psychology research have shown that prime extremity may be an important determinant of whether assimilation or contrast effects follow (Herr 1986, 1989; Stapel et al. 1998). Arguments holding that a relatively extreme prime is more likely to yield contrast than a moderate prime (Herr 1989), seem to represent a plausible theoretical explanation for the empirical evidence of contrast effects in the tobacco sponsorship case above. Whether assimilation or contrast occur will also depend on the cognitive resources people devote to the judgment task (Meyers-Levy and Sternthal 1993). Research has shown that contrast demands more cognitive effort than assimilation (Martin 1986). In social psychology research, effects of evaluative conditioning have been shown to increase when cognitive capacity is occupied by mental load (Walther 2002). In accordance with this perspective, Trendel and Warlop (2005) have documented increased sponsorship effectiveness when viewers are using few cognitive resources in the processing an incongruent sponsoring brand. The authors argue that increased elaboration reactivates the existing memory associations surrounding the brand, which reduces the likelihood that new associations are formed.

2.3. Theories of Persuasion

2.3.1. *Background: Perspectives on Persuasive Communication*

Theories of persuasion have been concerned with the *processes* underlying the effectiveness of persuasive communications. Dual-process models, such as the elaboration likelihood model (ELM; Petty and Cacioppo 1986) and the heuristic/systematic model (HSM; Chaiken 1980), represent today's most influential persuasion paradigms (Crano and Prislin 2006). According to the dual-processing perspective, individuals either form judgments based on effortful and deliberative systematic processing, or by using a less demanding and less careful heuristic approach (Meyers-Levy and Malaviya 1999). Using the systematic processing approach, the degree to which recipients identify and elaborate on the claims will mediate judgments, whereas mediating mechanisms for the heuristic approach relate to salient message cues (Meyers-Levy and Malaviya 1999). Hence, type of processing depends on the degree of elaboration the perceiver engages in. Elaboration, identified as "the extent to which a person carefully thinks about issue-relevant information" (Petty and Cacioppo 1986, p. 7), will depend on individuals' motivation and ability to process. Level of processing motivation and ability will vary according to individual and situational factors. Individual factors include personal relevance of the topic, amount of relevant background knowledge, and people's tendency to enjoy and engage in thinking, known as "need for cognition" (NFC) (O'Keefe 2008). Increased personal relevance and NFC are associated with greater processing motivation, whereas prior knowledge has implications for processing ability. Situational factors include for example message repetition and presence of distraction in the persuasive setting, which both affect the ability to process information. In situations where message elaboration is high (central processing), persuasive effects will depend on the predominant valence (the evaluative direction) of the receiver's issue-relevant thoughts (O'Keefe 2008). Two factors, the receiver's initial attitude and argument quality, will influence the predominant valence of elaboration. If the message's advocated position is proattitudinal for the receiver, predominantly favorable thoughts will be evoked, whereas counterattitudinal messages will evoke predominantly unfavorable thoughts (O'Keefe 2008). With respect to message argument quality, high elaboration suggests that weak messages will result in negative reactions, whereas strong arguments will generate positive reactions. When level of elaboration is low (peripheral processing), persuasion effects are determined by heuristics that are activated by extrinsic features (peripheral cues) of the communication. Different

heuristics have been indentified, such as the credibility heuristic (e.g., the communicator's expertise), liking for the communicator (e.g., attractiveness of the communicator), and the consensus heuristic (e.g., influenced by others' reactions to the message) (O'Keefe 2008).

Whereas a great deal of persuasion research is guided by general theoretical frameworks explaining underlying processes of persuasion, such as the dual processing models described above, others aim at clarifying the roles of particular variables that have an impact on persuasion, such as characteristics of the source, the message, or the receiver (O'Keefe 2001). Accordingly, O'Keefe (2001) makes a distinction between *persuasion theories* and so-called *variable-oriented research*. When examining whether and how sponsorships can benefit from controlled communication, research should focus on how the communicated message may be designed for best possible persuasive effect. Development of persuasive communication messages has received attention in traditional advertising, where empirical studies examine the persuasive effect of types of claims, or so-called ad execution variables. For example, studies have looked at the differential effect of informational vs. emotional appeals (e.g., Yoo and MacInnis 2005), visual vs. verbal messages (e.g., Sojka and Giese 2006), controversial vs. non-controversial ads (e.g., Huhmann and Mott-Stenerson 2008), and differences between open vs. closed ads (e.g., Ketelaar et al. 2008). In a sponsorship context, however, specific message execution formats has not been systematically researched. As a variable-oriented research approach focusing on characteristics of the message, studies on advertising have increasingly been concerned with degrees of explicitness of a message's conclusion (open vs. closed ads). Conclusion explicitness research, or studies on indirect persuasion, is interesting in a sponsorship communication setting for several reasons. First, it addresses recent trends in how advertising messages are executed (McQuarrie and Phillips 2005), including sponsorship ads. Second, it relates to soft sell vs. hard sell approaches, which should be of interest to managers of a goodwill-generating communication tool such as sponsorship. Third, since the nature of sponsorship communication is implicit and indirect in its persuasive form, the conclusion explicitness approach is an interesting theoretical approach in terms of how varying degrees of added explicitness will affect responses to the sponsorship. The following sections are concerned with theory related to processing and persuasiveness of stated vs. implied conclusions. Since open-ended, or implied, conclusions rely on consumers' ability to *infer* the missing conclusion, the discussion starts with a theoretical overview of inference-

making. Then, research concerning conclusion explicitness and implicatures in advertising is presented.

2.3.2. *Indirect Persuasion and Inference-Making*

When processing an advertising message, consumers tend to make inferences about product attributes for which no explicit claims have been made (Smith 1991). Indirect persuasion attempts to capitalize on this ability to go beyond what's explicitly stated in an ad message (McQuarrie and Phillips 2005). Persuading indirectly by making indirect message claims has become a common practice in advertising. In a print ad content analysis, Leigh (1994) found that 74% of all ads with a headline used figures of speech, and Phillips and McQuarrie (2002) documented that use of figurative ad pictures nearly doubled from 1954 to 1999. Researchers are using different terminology when referring to the distinction between indirect and direct persuasion; distinctions have been made between direct vs. indirect message claims (McQuarrie and Phillips 2005), open(-ended) and closed(-ended) advertising (Ahearne, Gruen, and Saxton 2000; Chebat, Charlebois, and Gelinas-Chebat 2001; Ketelaar et al. 2008; Sawyer and Howard 1991; Yannopoulou and Elliott 2008), and between explicit and implicit conclusions (Kardes 1988). Moreover, the term 'verbal anchoring' has been used with reference to text that help explain image ads (Phillips 2000). These differences are often explored under general terms such as *conclusion explicitness* or *conclusion omission*, which refer to variations in conclusion articulation (Kardes, Posavac, and Cronley 2004; Martin, Lang, and Wong 2003; O'Keefe 1997; Sawyer and Howard 1991; Sengupta and Gorn 2002). Other studies examine effects of different types of rhetorical devices, such as metaphors, rhetorical questions, etc., without referring to terminology such as the above (e.g., Ang and Lim 2006; Burnkrant and Howard 1984; McQuarrie and Mick 2003; Munch and Swasy 1988; Petty, Cacioppo, and Heesacker 1981; Tom and Eves 1999). Despite the extensive use of figurative language in advertising practice, limited empirical research has been conducted with respect to its persuasive effects (Brennan and Bahn 2006).

Different reasons for why an ad can be defined as open have been suggested, usually representing distinct streams of empirical research (Ketelaar et al. 2008). A persuasive ad message has been defined as open if the information is abstract, ambiguous, or implicit rather than explicit, of if rhetorical figures are used (Ketelaar et al. 2008). A rhetorical figure (or figure of speech) refers to "an artful deviation in the form taken by a statement" (McQuarrie

and Mick 1996, p.424). Based on the classical distinction between schemes and tropes, McQuarrie and Mick (1996) have developed a framework for classifying rhetorical figures. Whereas schemes are identified as text containing "excessive order and regularity", tropes can be identified as text containing "deficiency of order or irregularities" (McQuarrie and Mick 1996, p.427). Hence, tropic figures are characterized as undercoded texts, which means that the readily available organizations of information are insufficient (McQuarrie and Mick 1996). They are seen as incomplete in the sense of lacking closure, which is thought to increase elaboration (McQuarrie and Mick 1996). Examples of schemes include rhyme and alliteration, whereas metaphors and puns are typical examples of tropic figures. Since a rhetorical figure deviates from the expected by violating some norm or convention (McQuarrie and Mick 1996), it should be considered analogously to schema-incongruent information.

Because indirect persuasion relies on consumer inference about missing information (McQuarrie and Phillips 2005), inference-making is a central construct when examining the processing of open advertising messages. Inference-making refers to the construction of meaning beyond what is explicitly given (Dick, Chakravarti, and Biehal 1990). During the inference process, consumers make "if-then" linkages between information (such as cues, heuristics, or arguments) and conclusions (Kardes et al. 2004). There are two basic processes of inference-making; *induction*, which implies generalizing from specific information to general ideas, and *deduction*, which pertains to construction of specific conclusions from general principles (Kardes et al. 2004). Inferences are either based on situationally available information (stimulus-based processing) or retrieved from memory (memory-based processing), and they can be made automatically, spontaneously, or deliberately (Kardes et al. 2004). While automatic inferences are formed without awareness or intention, spontaneous inference formation requires more resources and depends on consumers' ability and motivation, and deliberative inferences are described as goal-directed and formed with awareness and intention (Kardes et al. 2004). The degree to which consumers make inferences without conscious intention will impact their engagement in counter-arguments about the information; if inferences are made without conscious intention, consumers are less likely to engage in counter-arguments (Kirmani, Lee, and Yoon 2004).

2.3.3. Conclusion Explicitness in Advertising

The question of whether an explicit conclusion should be used in a persuasive message is a traditional issue among persuasion researchers in psychology and communication (Sawyer 1988). From a communication research standpoint, O'Keefe (1997) defines explicitness as the degree of articulation of a message's overall conclusion, recommendation, or standpoint. Studies on conclusion explicitness are typically concerned with the relative persuasive effects between messages containing explicit statements of the advocate's conclusion and messages in which the conclusion is omitted (O'Keefe 1997). The following reviews studies within the advertising literature that have examined this relative effect. Moreover, an alternative processing view is presented, which can be found in the linguistic theory of *implicatures* (Sperber and Wilson 1986). Finally, the applicability of indirect persuasion theory in sponsorship communication is discussed.

In an advertising context, conclusion explicitness relates to whether conclusions in the ad message are stated or implied (Martin et al. 2003). Whereas explicit conclusions involve a direct statement of a conclusion following a process of deductive reasoning, implicit conclusions rely on an implied set of arguments that are designed to guide an audience toward an intended conclusion (Ahearne et al. 2000). Research on conclusion explicitness in advertising has demonstrated inconsistent findings regarding the relative effectiveness of implicit and explicit conclusions. The traditional view on advertising has been that ads should be clear in their communication form (Ketelaar et al. 2008). Early research, such as the classical study by Hovland and Mandell (1952), demonstrated an advantage for the explicit statement of a conclusion with respect to opinion change. The idea of an advantage of explicitness over implicitness in advertising has traditionally been attributed to reduced chances of ad misinterpretation (Ahearne et al. 2000). However, more recent contributions have documented a persuasive advantage of open-ended messages in advertising (e.g., Ang and Lim 2006; McQuarrie and Phillips 2005; Sengupta and Gorn 2002). Since implicit messages require the audience to generate their own conclusions, attitudes following open-ended information tend to be more positive (Linder and Worchel 1970; Sawyer and Howard 1991), more accessible from memory (Moore, Reardon, and Durso 1986), and more persistent over time (Kardes 1988). Moreover, self-generated inferences are less likely to encourage counter-argumentation (Kardes and Sanbonmatsu 1993; Phillips 1997). These positive effects are partly attributed to the greater attention and more in-depth processing

induced by the missing conclusion. One of the most important functions of rhetorical figures is to motivate the audience in processing the ad (McQuarrie and Mick 1996). In general, inferential thoughts require more elaborative comprehension processes than noninferential thoughts (Celsi and Olson 1988). Since individuals need to comprehend complex messages to draw inferences, figurative language elicits more interpretative effort and cognitive elaboration than literal messages (Ang and Lim 2006; Kardes 1988; McQuarrie and Mick 1992). Individuals who are exposed to a statement that violates a convention will search for a context that makes the violation comprehensible (McQuarrie and Mick 1996). Due to their deviation from the expected, figurative ad language will attract more attention (McQuarrie and Mick 1996), and the increases level of elaboration due to higher interpretative effort will increase memorability (McQuarrie and Mick 2009). Implicit ads may also have positive affective outcomes, since the process of interpreting or reaching an interpretation is thought to be inherently pleasurable (Ketelaar et al. 2008). Lower degrees of explicitness invites to active audience participation (O'Keefe 1997), and the process of interpreting implicit messages is thought to provide intrinsic rewards (Ang and Lim 2006). McQuarrie and Mick (2009) refer to rhetorical figures as "pleasing incongruencies", hence supporting the idea that the processing per se is pleasing. Research has shown that arriving at a conclusion when processing open ads has produced positive *attitudes towards the ad* (McQuarrie and Mick 1999).

O'Keefe (O'Keefe 1997, 2002) identifies some potential threats in relation to conclusion articulation in persuasive messages. First, he argues that explicitness "enlarges the disagreement space" (p. 2), implying that the articulation offers more claims available for objections. Conversely, lower degree of conclusion articulation minimizes the disagreement space and increases in this manner the persuasive effect (O'Keefe 1997). Second, he suggests that explicitness may produce "boomerang" effects, implying that the audience's opinions changes in the opposite direction of the advocate's standpoint. This might happen if the explicitness insults the audience due to articulation of the obvious, or anger it due to perceptions of the message as aggressive and too directive. Such assumption has been supported by early persuasion research; Walster and Festinger (1962)[4] found that a message was more persuasive when the intent to persuade was not obvious. It is also in compliance

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[4] As cited in Kardes (1988)

with research on hard versus soft sell approaches to advertising, which suggest that hard sell tactics may induce reactance and backfire of the persuasion attempt, whereas more subtle soft sell approaches reduce the likelihood of boomerang effects (Kardes 1988). Moreover, implicit conclusions enhance advertiser credibility through consumers' perception of reduced coerciveness (Martin et al. 2003). Reinhard and Messner (2009) use the term *explicit persuasion*, referring to "an advertiser's direct attempt – for example via overt verbal statements – to convince consumers to execute the desired behaviour, or to adopt the desired attitude" (p. 179). The authors argue that such an explicit order may be perceived as a restriction on individuals' freedom to choose. As a consequence, a feeling of reactance may decrease the perceivers' acceptance of the message. Consumers' use of persuasion knowledge to cope with persuasion attempts have been conceptualized by Friestad and Wright (1994) through the so-called "Persuasion Knowledge Model". This model accounts for people's beliefs about a marketer's tactic in the persuasion process, which partly builds on attribution theory. In a sponsorship context, research has shown that attribution of commercial motives represents a threat to sponsorship success (Rifon et al. 2004; Speed and Thompson 2000). As such, effects of persuasion awareness should be accounted for when developing sponsorship communication programs. The potential boomerang effect described here is to a large extent in accordance with the tendency of consumers to attack persuasive messages at higher level of exposure (Cacioppo and Petty 1979). Research has shown that counterargumentation decreases at moderate exposure frequency, but increases at high exposure levels (Cacioppo and Petty 1979).

Thus far, the discussion has highlighted potential negative consequences of using an explicit communication approach. However, the literature has also emphasizes possible disadvantages of indirect or ambiguous messages. Sawyer and Howard (1991) point out two risks in relation to conclusion omission in implicit advertisements. First, consumers may be unable to form a conclusion, or they can form a conclusion that differs from the one intended. Second, the fact that open-ended ads are more difficult to process may lead to negative ad affect. A sufficient level of ad processing motivation is therefore considered as a prerequisite for positive effects of open communication (Sawyer and Howard 1991). Consistently, research has demonstrated that the effectiveness of implicit conclusions is restricted by a set of boundary conditions relating to characteristics of the audiences, including level of involvement (Ahearne et al. 2000; Chebat et al. 2001; Kardes 1988; Sawyer and Howard 1991; Stayman and Kardes

1992) and need for cognition (Martin et al. 2003). In addition to a sufficient level of processing motivation, certain factors related to the message itself are thought to impact the audience's ability to reach the intended conclusion of open-ended ads. There are several message factors that may influence the effectiveness of an open-ended communication, including the complexity of the message, argument quality (AQ), and message formats (Sawyer 1988). Sawyer (1988) argues that a more complex message is more likely to require an ad conclusion, unless the audience is very heavily involved and is quite intelligent. In a study by Martin et al. (2003) it was demonstrated that argument quality, defined as the valence of thoughts evoked by an argument, was a moderating factor on the persuasive effect of implicit advertising. The results indicated an interaction effect between need for cognition and argument quality on the persuasiveness of implicit conclusions by demonstrating that implicit conclusions used with strong AQ were the most persuasive ads for high-NFC individuals. This result was not evident for low-NFC individuals. With respect to the third message factor, message format, differences in inference-making have been found between pictorial and verbal message formats (Sojka and Giese 2006). Moreover, print media may be more effective than broadcast media for implicit conclusion messages, since arguments in print can be processed at the reader's own pace, whereas broadcast media requires a fixed and fast processing rate (Sawyer 1988). In addition to characteristics of the audience and message factors, the brand's market position should according to Sawyer (1988) be expected to interact with the effectiveness of open-ended advertising messages. He argues that well-known brands with larger market shares are more likely to benefit from implicit advertising than smaller share, less familiar brands. These brands may benefit from previous advertising that provide cues directing at a "proper" conclusion, and their heavier advertising budgets and frequent media exposure signalize quality, which gives them a "benefit of the doubt" in open-ended advertisements (Sawyer 1988).

Research on open versus closed ads has been concerned with the level of brand-related counterarguing induced by the different message formats (Petty et al. 1981). According to Brennan and Bahn (2006), an advantage of figure of speech in advertising lies in the ability to direct the cognitive elaboration towards message comprehension and away from counterarguing. Two factors that may explain why figure of speech will result in fewer brand-related counterarguments than literal messages relates to the level of distraction associated with ambiguous information and the level of credibility attributed to the message

conclusion. The so-called *distraction hypothesis* suggests that the audience could be distracted from elaborating on the credibility of message claims due to the more complex process of message comprehensions (Brennan and Bahn 2006; McQuarrie and Mick 1992). The alternative explanation, represented by the *credibility hypothesis*, suggests that the reduction in counterarguing could result from the audience's perception of the decoded message as self-generated and therefore more credible (Brennan and Bahn 2006).

In order to understand how the language in advertising messages is processed by consumers, general theory of communication and linguistic have been applied to advertising research. Since indirect persuasion relies heavily on consumers' degree of inference-making, a relevant theoretical perspective is that of *implicatures*, advocated by linguistic theorists (e.g., Levinson 2000). The next section evaluates the applicability of this theoretical approach in indirect persuasion.

Implicatures

The idea of *implicatures*, formulated by the linguists Sperber and Wilson (1986), relates to information that is implicitly communicated to an audience (Phillips 1997), and is as such relevant when studying indirect persuasion in marketing communication. Sperber and Wilson (1986) contend that individuals are likely to develop implicatures by employing problem-solving strategies when processing a message and draw on available knowledge (Phillips 1997). Therefore, when used in persuasive advertising, implicatures are inferred by readers to provide meaning for the advertising message (Phillips 1997). As such, the use of implicatures involves an indirect claim that is thought to elicit beliefs for which no explicit statement has been made (Shanahan and Hopkins 2007). Sperber and Wilson (1986) distinguish between strong and weak implicatures. Whereas strong implicatures refer to a situation where one inference is likely to be chosen as most relevant by most members of the language community most of the time, weak implicatures yield a wider and more varied range of inferences (McQuarrie and Phillips 2005). McQuarrie and Phillips (2005) emphasize several consequences of weak implicatures in advertising. First, weak implicatures imply attempts to guess the ad message, which tend to be positively biased. Second, guesses about advertisers' intent are less likely to function as distracting thoughts compared to inferences generally. Third, weak implicatures enhance persuasiveness due to less counterarguing because the perceiver's cognitive capacity is occupied by making multiple inferences.

There is a dispute among pragmatic theorists regarding the way implicatures actually work, centered around the question of whether or not inferences are made automatically (De Neys and Schaeken 2007) Whereas Sperber and Wilson's (1986) Relevance Theory assumes that implicatures are effortful and not automatic, an alternative school of thought, known as the "neo-Gricean" view (e.g., Levinson 2000)[5], claims that "pragmatic interpretation is actually the default interpretation in a concrete, communicative setting" (De Neys and Schaeken 2007, p.128). More specifically, relevance theory maintains that implicatures are cognitively demanding inferences, whereas the neo-Gricean account considers implicatures as automatic, default inferences. If adopting the neo-Gricean view, omitted conclusions in marketing communication may be inferred automatically rather than the suggested effortful processing that requires high consumer involvement. McQuarrie and Phillips (2005) seem to have embraced this alternative view of indirect persuasion effect. They point out two important advantages associated with the implicature formulation relatively to the traditional view of indirect persuasion. First, compared to conventional theory regarding processing of indirect claims in advertising, theory on implicatures does not specify a high level of message involvement as a requirement for inference generation associated with weak implicatures (McQuarrie and Phillips 2005). Indirect claims are rather described as inference generation based on relatively undemanding processes similar to those used to comprehend messages in everyday encounters (McQuarrie and Phillips 2005). They also acknowledge that indirect persuasion is not a homogeneous category, implying that different kinds of indirect persuasion can explained by invoking different processes. Therefore, the two views on importance of involvement are not considered mutually exclusive. Second, the authors contend that indirect persuasion as a theoretical category is *"intolerably vague"*, and is in need of differentiation. It is the lack of constraints on inferences that produces weak implicatures, and the indirectness of a claim is therefore said to vary directly with the degree to which such constraints are absent (McQuarrie and Phillips 2005). Hence, degrees of indirectness is accounted for, implying that different types of processing may explain how indirect persuasion work in advertising.

[5] Cited in De Neys and Schaeken (2007)

Summary and Implications for Sponsorship Communication

In sum, recent research has shown greater persuasiveness in favour of open-ended messages in advertising, resulting in an increased usage of open ads in the past few decades (Ketelaar et al. 2008). However, although later studies have demonstrated advantages of indirect advertising claims over making direct claims, research has also demonstrated competing predictions regarding the nature of this advantage (McQuarrie and Phillips 2005). Several advantages associated with open-ended messages using figurative language have been hypothesized in the literature. Openness is thought to attract attention and interest due to the deviation from what is expected, and it is expected to increase level of elaboration because it requires more interpretative effort, which as a result is anticipated to increase memorability (Chebat et al. 2001; Ketelaar et al. 2008). Positive affective responses are expected to rise from the intrinsic reward of processing and solving ambiguous information, and from disguise of persuasion intent (Ang and Lim 2006; Kardes 1988).

With reference to the research approach in this dissertation, conclusion explicitness refers to the degree to which the rationale of a sponsorship is articulated in a persuasive message. The sponsorship rationale in this setting pertains to a created basis of fit that is not cognitively accessible independent of communication. Based on the characteristics of open and closed advertising messages (Chebat et al. 2001), an open sponsorship message is one that merely implies the rationale, whereas a closed sponsorship message states the rationale in a direct form. No research has been conducted in terms of what type of message will be most effective in sponsorship communication. Based on the idea that naturally incongruent sponsorships require additional "explanation", the current research seeks to investigate whether these types of sponsorships will benefit more from a closed or an open communication approach. The next chapter presents a study that was conducted to examine different approaches to sponsorship communication. A communication typology will be introduced, conceptually derived from theory on conclusion explicitness. The typology makes a distinction between open-ended and closed-ended sponsorship communication. The open-ended message is labelled 'implicit communication strategy' and the closed-ended sponsorship message is labelled 'explicit communication strategy'.

Chapter 3.   Study 1

3.1. Introduction

This chapter outlines a study addressing the two research questions presented in chapter 1. The chapter is organized as follows: First, the overall purpose of the study is introduced. Second, the development of a communication typology is outlined, followed by a specified version of the conceptual framework that was introduced in the first chapter. Third, derived from the two research questions underpinning this dissertation and the theoretical background presented in the second chapter, a set of research hypotheses is outlined. Fourth, the methodology for the experimental study is presented, followed by data analysis and discussion of results. Finally, the chapter presents some concluding remarks and suggestions for a second study.

3.2. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the first study was to examine whether strategic communication of a naturally incongruent sponsorship can improve consumers' responses to the sponsorship by creating a link between sponsor and sponsee. Natural incongruency implies that there is no self-evident link in the sponsorship independent of strategic communication (Simmons and Becker-Olsen 2006). The concept of creating fit through information refers to activation of a pathway that would not be activated without the information (Cornwell 2008), which implies that the pathway lies dormant in memory until activated (Boush 1993). Although brand extension and sponsorship research has documented mere exposure effects on perceived fit (Dardis 2009; Lane 2000), the current study focuses on content effects rather than repetition effects. The idea is that ad content should be designed to evoke specific brand associations that constitute the pathway between the brand and the object. Based on an associative network perspective, brand associations are thought to differ in relative strength of connection to the brand node (Keller 1993). Strong, or dominant, brand associations are those which represent the brand meaning, whereas weaker secondary associations are identified as non-defining (Bridges et al. 2000). It is the dominant brand associations that will determine which associations are potentially salient to consumers (Bridges et al. 2000; Keller 1993). This study is based on a situation where the sponsoring brand's dominant associations are seen as incongruent with

the sponsored object, hence producing a low level of natural congruency. Since communication is proposed to be able to activate a pathway, a non-salient image-overlap at the secondary level in the associative network is required. Therefore, this study investigates whether communication can make secondary associations accessible and relevant for fit evaluations. Whereas most sponsorship research has focused on the differential effects of high vs. low fit, the current study concentrates on low-fit sponsorships only. Conforming to the idea of perceived fit as a continuous measure (Mandler 1982; Sjödin and Törn 2006), the study distinguishes between two levels of low fit; strong and moderate. The difference between strong and moderate incongruency implies that two distinct levels of perceived fit, regardless of communication, should be identified. Moreover, the two levels should represent different degrees of image-overlap, where the particular image dimension constitutes the basis for created fit. Since created fit is defined as *activation* of a pathway, the pathway must be *available* in memory, hence the term "dormant" (Boush 1993) (for a discussion of knowledge availability vs. accessibility see Higgins 1996). The following section presents the development of a communication typology and a conceptual framework that will be tested for the two levels of sponsorship incongruency.

3.3. Conceptual Development

3.3.1. Communication Strategies

Sponsorship research has documented that incongruent sponsorships need additional communication in order to reduce unfavorable effects associated with low fit (Simmons and Becker-Olsen 2006). However, less is known about what *type* of information that will be most effective in this regard. The current research addresses this gap in the literature by testing two communication strategies, labeled *explicit* and *implicit*, that vary with respect to degree of message explicitness. According to O'Keefe (1997), explicitness in communication refers to "the degree of articulation of the message's overall conclusion" (p. 2). With reference to conclusion explicitness theory in advertising, the explicit strategy in the proposed typology involves a message containing a direct statement of the overall conclusion, whereas the implicit strategy relies on implied arguments that guide individuals toward the intended conclusion (Martin et al. 2003). In the following, characteristics of the two strategies in a sponsorship context are specified.

The Explicit Communication Strategy

The explicit strategy is conceptually identified as a closed-ended conclusion message. In a traditional advertising context, a closed-ended message will typically involve direct verbal claims regarding a brand's attributes and benefits (McQuarrie and Phillips 2005). In a sponsorship advertising context, however, the message is the sponsor-sponsee relationship. Therefore, the intended conclusion will typically pertain to the rationale for the relationship, which is related to judgments of fit.[6] For example, the Norwegian energy company Statoil's[7] football sponsorship campaign contained print ads with an explicit text referring to points of similarity based on future-orientation and Norwegian heritage[8]. Examples of print ads from this campaign are included in appendix B. Another example of an explicit sponsorship message can be found in the ad for Texaco's sponsorship of the 1992 Olympic Games, where an verbal message explained how the company strives for excellence in their business in the same way as athletes strive for excellence in their sport (Cornwell et al. 2005). Manipulation of an explicit conclusion in the current study involves a verbal statement of the point of similarity between the sponsoring brand and the sponsee, which is based on a non-salient image overlap. In accordance with conclusion explicitness theory, the explicit claim is designed to leave limited opportunities for misinterpretation regarding the intended ad conclusion. With reference to theory of implicatures (Sperber and Wilson 1986), the explicit strategy contains strong implicatures, implying that the intended inference is likely to be chosen as the most relevant by most consumers (McQuarrie and Phillips 2005).

The Implicit Communication Strategy

The implicit communications strategy is conceptualized as an open-ended conclusion message. Derived from conclusion explicitness theory, the implicit strategy relies on implied arguments that guide the audience toward the intended conclusion (Ahearne et al. 2000; Martin et al. 2003). In this study, manipulation of message openness involves figurative language that *implies* a connection between the brand and the object, rather than stating it explicitly. Figures of speech, or rhetorical figures, are identified as expressions that deviate

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[6] Bridges et al. (2000) propose that judgments of high perceived fit ensue when consumers comprehend the rationale for the relationship between an extension and the parent brand.

[7] Statoil is one of the major sponsors of sport, art, and social causes in Norway. The ad campaigns referred to here was initiated by Statoil prior to the merger with Hydro.

[8] Intended message conclusion has been confirmed by Kristin Lie at McCann, the ad agency behind the campaign

from expectation (McQuarrie and Mick 1996). Through figurative language, the persuasive message has an indirect form, where claims are made in a figurative rather than a literal way (McQuarrie and Phillips 2005). The indirect claim should also be identified as a weak implicature, as it is not obvious which inference will be chosen as the most relevant by the audience (McQuarrie and Phillips 2005). Slogans represent a frequently used advertising tool, and sponsorship ads are as such no exception. A sponsorship slogan typically incorporates elements of both parties, hence implying a link between them. In the Statoil example mentioned previously, the slogan of the campaign was "We support the heroes of tomorrow". With reference to the explicit text in the same ad, this slogan *implies* that there is a common ground in the relationship based on future-orientation and Norwegian heritage. The ad campaign for Accenture's sponsorship of Tiger Woods serves as another example of how slogans can create fit implicitly. One ad slogan claims that "The road to high performance is not always paved", with a picture displaying Tiger Woods searching for the ball in the rough. The implicit message has reference how challenges require expertise and competence. The general phrase used throughout the campaign is "we know what it takes to be a tiger", also referring to the common feature of competence. The Accenture sponsorship ad is included in appendix B.

3.3.2. Conceptual Model

The general conceptual model outlined in the first chapter suggests that communication will impact consumers' responses to a sponsorship through the ability to enhance perceived fit. A specified conceptual model for the purpose of this study is displayed in figure 3.1. Based on persuasion research, individuals are expected to respond differently to open-ended vs. closed-ended messages (Chebat et al. 2001; McQuarrie and Phillips 2005). The previous section outlined a communication typology corresponding with conclusion explicitness theory, distinguishing between implicit and explicit sponsorship communication. The conceptual model suggests that communication of a sponsorship using open vs. closed ad messages will affect consumers' responses differently. Sponsorship responses are in this study conceptualized as *brand attitude, sponsorship attitude*, and *brand image*. Brand attitude relates to subjects' overall evaluation of the sponsoring brand, sponsorship attitude refers to subjects' overall judgments of the relationship between the sponsor and the sponsee, and brand image pertains to the image dimension that is used as a basis for created fit in the communication strategies. Derived from the perspective of perceived fit as a flexible

construct, the model proposes that communication will influence level of perceived fit. Therefore, based on existing research documenting a positive relationship between fit and favourable sponsorship responses (Deitz et al. 2009; Gwinner and Eaton 1999; Speed and Thompson 2000), communication effects are anticipated to be mediated by perceived fit. Formal predictions about the causal relationships in the conceptual model are presented throughout the next sections.

FIGURE 3.1
Conceptual Model, study 1
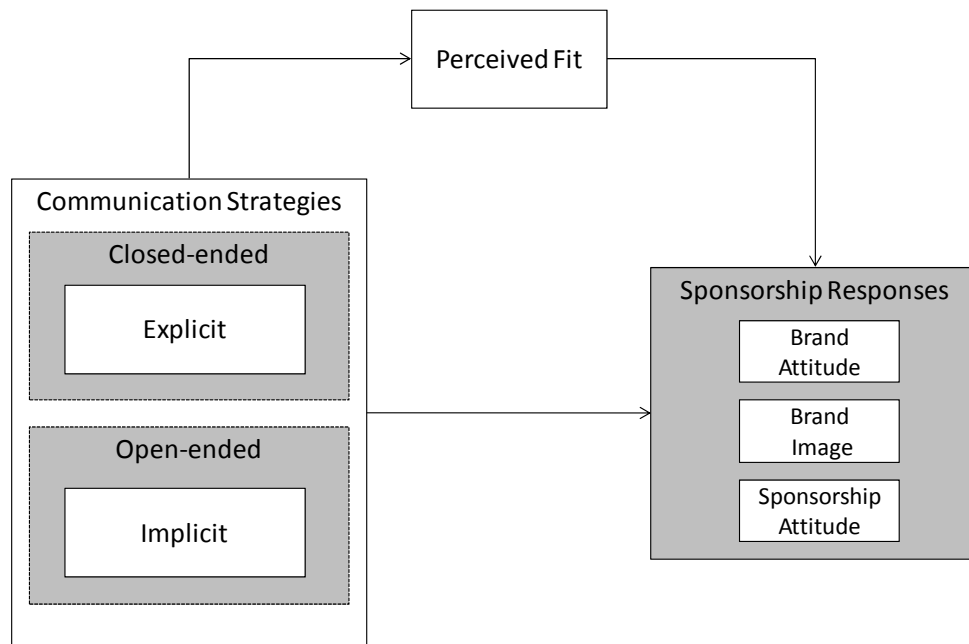
3.4. Research Hypotheses

In study 1, the conceptual model was tested for two distinct levels of natural sponsorship incongruency; strong and moderate. The following sections outline a set of research hypotheses regarding main and mediated effects of sponsorship communication. First, predictions of main effect are presented. Based on sponsorship and advertising research, communication of a sponsorship through advertising is expected to engender an effect on consumers' responses, as compared to no additional communication. Derived from persuasion theory, differences between open-ended and closed-ended conclusion messages with respect to communication effects are anticipated. The relative effects of the two communication forms are hypothesized to be moderated by level of sponsorship incongruency. Second, a formal prediction is made regarding the mediating role of perceived fit.

3.4.1. Communication Effects on Sponsorship Responses

Researchers have suggested that sponsorships should be leveraged through additional marketing communication tools in order to fully exploit their commercial potential (Cornwell et al. 2005; Crimmins and Horn 1996; Meenaghan 1991). Crimmins and Horne (1996) note that use of collateral advertising offers an opportunity to strengthen the sponsorship link creatively. However, limited research effort has been devoted to exploring this opportunity. Cornwell (2008) suggests that communication managers should supply a *concept* to support the sponsorship link rather than relying on individuals' preexisting memory networks. Such concept represents a *mediator*[9] that connects the sponsor and the object (Cornwell 2008). Cornwell (2008) argues that by providing the mediator, one may activate a pathway between the two parties that would otherwise not be activated. Sponsorships without leverage have to rely on natural mediators (those not induced by communication). In cases of sponsorship incongruency, mediators may not naturally arise, and supplied mediation will be required (Cornwell 2008). Cornwell (2008) suggests that supplied mediating associations may influence formation of positive attitudes. Although there is a general agreement among

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[9] Cornwell (2008) uses the term 'mediator' with reference to a concept, word, or visual image which is used to activate a pathway between a sponsor and the sponsored entity. It should not be confused with how the term is used in the remaining dissertation, where mediator (or mediating variable) refers to a variable that accounts for the relationship between an independent and dependent variable.

scholars and industry professionals that sponsorships should be leveraged with controlled communication, what type of information to provide in a given situation remains an open question (Cornwell 2008). In addressing such knowledge gap, this dissertation suggests that explicit and implicit information about fit may have different effects depending on whether the sponsorship is strongly or moderately incongruent. Within advertising research, it has been debated whether open-ended communication may have an advantage over closed-ended conclusion messages (McQuarrie and Phillips 2005), but their relative persuasive effect have not been tested in a sponsorship communication context. Contrary to conclusion explicitness research in traditional advertising, the current study also attends to the issue of levels of natural incongruency within the context of open- vs. closed-ended communication. As they both involve deviations from the expected, the concept of open vs. closed communication and the concept of sponsorship incongruency have been subjects to related theories of cognitive processing. As discussed in the theory section, both sponsorship incongruency and message openness are thought to induce higher levels of cognitive elaboration. However, whereas sponsorship incongruency is associated with negatively biased elaboration (Simmons and Becker-Olsen 2006), ad message openness has been associated with positively valued thoughts (McQuarrie and Phillips 2005). The focal question of the current study is whether open or closed sponsorship messages generate more favorable responses, and whether the effects are constrained by the level of natural incongruency between the sponsor and the sponsored object.

The experiment was executed to test the opportunity of enhancing consumers' perceptions of naturally incongruent sponsorship through exposure to advertising messages compared to announcement of a sponsorship without advertising information. Also, it examines the relative persuasive effect of open-ended versus closed-ended sponsorship messages at two levels of sponsorship incongruency. Without communication, a sponsorship message merely consists in the association of the sponsor and the sponsee, and it is up to the individual to interpret the message (Fleck and Quester 2007). Although the unexpectedness of an incongruent sponsorship is likely to increase elaboration, this elaboration is typically negatively biased (Jagre et al. 2001; Simmons and Becker-Olsen 2006). In a study by Becker-Olsen and Simmons (2006), thought-listing results indicated that the increased elaboration associated with the incongruency did not result in finding a sponsorship link. Hence, additional information that explains the link is required to avoid the negatively biased

elaboration. Recognizing that the sponsorships in the current study lack a self-evident link, an added information component provided by the sponsorship communication is expected to enhance consumers' responses to the sponsorships. The effectiveness of the two strategies is proposed to be moderated by level of natural sponsorship incongruency. For the moderately incongruent sponsorship, positive communication effects are anticipated for both the open-ended sponsorship message where the sponsorship rationale is implied (the implicit strategy) and for the closed-ended message where the rationale is explained (the explicit strategy). In accordance with Cornwell's (2008) proposition regarding strategically supplied mediation associations, it is expected that providing the implicit message will activate a meaningful pathway between the sponsor and the object, which will lead to positive brand and sponsorship attitudes. Since the mediator concept is unlikely to arise naturally without communication, the implicit strategy is anticipated to generate a more positive brand image compared to no communication. The closed-ended conclusion in the explicit strategy provides the same basis for creating a pathway between the associates, but rather than presenting a simple cue, this strategy offers a more specific and directly stated rationale for the relationship. The explicit strategy is therefore also expected to generate more positive attitudes toward the sponsoring brand and the sponsorship, as well as strengthening respondents' perception of the communicated brand image. Therefore, the following two hypotheses are proposed regarding communication effects for the moderately incongruent sponsorship:

H1: When the sponsorship is moderately incongruent, the implicit communication strategy will generate (a) more positive brand attitudes, (b) more positive attitudes toward the sponsorship, and (c) a more positive brand image compared to no communication.

H2: When the sponsorship is moderately incongruent, the explicit communication strategy will generate (a) more positive brand attitudes, (b) more positive attitudes toward the sponsorship, and (c) a more positive brand image compared to no communication.

The two first hypotheses suggest that both explicit and implicit communication will generate positive responses when the sponsorship is only moderately incongruent. However, although the direction of the effects will be similar, they are expected to differ in relative magnitude. The figurative language in the implicit strategy evokes a dormant shared association without stating the basis for created fit directly. When the sponsorship is only moderately incongruent, an implicit cue is assumed to be sufficient in resolving the incongruency. Positive attitudes is likely to follow because the elaborative effort is rewarded with relevant meaning (Lagerwerf and Meijers 2008). This is in accordance with Mandler (1982), who posits that a moderate level of incongruency can be resolved without fundamental changes in existing knowledge structures, implying that the interpretative processing is likely to be positively valued. Similarly, derived from indirect persuasion theory, an open persuasive message is expected to generate more positive responses than a closed message, due to positively valued self-generated inferences and perceptions of reduced coerciveness (Ahearne et al. 2000; Sawyer and Howard 1991). Therefore, the implicit strategy is anticipated to generate superior attitudinal effects over the explicit strategy when the sponsorship is only moderately incongruent:

H3: When the sponsorship is moderately incongruent, the implicit communication strategy will generate (a) more positive brand attitudes, (b) more positive attitudes toward the sponsorship, and (c) a more positive brand image than the explicit strategy

The advantage of an open message is expected to be restricted by sponsorship incongruency. Weak implicatures may be appreciated up to the point where perceivers are not able to comprehend the open message because it is too complex (Lagerwerf and Meijers 2008; Phillips and McQuarrie 2004). Potential pitfalls of open ads include the possibility of being unable infer the missing conclusion, or ending up with an undesirable or wrong conclusion (Ketelaar et al. 2008; Martin et al. 2003). In a study on levels of verbal anchoring of completely open visual ads, Phillips (2000) showed that individuals preferred a moderate over no closure to the ads due to enhanced comprehension. When a sponsorship is strongly incongruent, the message openness may suffer from low comprehension since the implicit cue is an insufficient "anchor". Negative affective and cognitive effects associated with strong incongruency have also been predicted by schema congruency research (Mandler 1982) and priming studies (Herr 1986). Based on schema theory, a strong level of natural

incongruency is likely to inhibit processes of assimilation (i.e., integration of information into existing schema) or accommodation (i.e., adjustment of information to fit existing schema). According to Mandler's (1982) view, severe incongruency will require structural changes in a person's cognitive structures, hence assimilation is not possible. If the following accommodation process is unsuccessful, Mandler (1982) argues that the emotional experience of the information processing will be negative. Accordingly, the omitted conclusion in the implicit strategy is expected to lead to frustration and negatively valued responses when the sponsorship is strongly incongruent. Priming studies have shown that contrast effects occur when individuals are primed with extreme categories (Herr 1989). Although individuals may correctly infer the intended conclusion because of the activated pathway, the increased elaboration evoked by the figurative language is likely to produce counter-arguments when the sponsorship is strongly incongruent. The control condition should be regarded as a completely open communication strategy, in which no directing cues are provided. Hence, respondents in the control group have the opportunity to find alternative links that pertain to a wide array of fit dimensions (i.e., geographical links, overlap of user groups, typical sponsor category, etc.). The explicit communication group however, will be constrained by the implicit cue in terms of making inferences about the sponsorship rationale. Since the implicit cue represents an incongruent image dimension (low image-overlap), the processing is likely to be negatively biased. Therefore, a contrast effect is expected when a strongly incongruent sponsorship is communicated implicitly compared to the no-communication group. Based on the arguments presented here, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H4: When the sponsorship is strongly incongruent, the implicit strategy will generate (a) less positive brand attitudes, (b) less positive attitudes toward the sponsorship, and (c) a less positive brand image compared to no communication.

Strong natural incongruency is expected to be dependent on explicit arguments that explain the rationale for the sponsorship. The incongruency inherent in the sponsorship is likely to drive attention and elaboration, but the inferences drawn will be constrained by the explicit arguments. Hence, logical arguments are thought to reduce counter-argumentation and negative inferences due to lack of comprehension that will be associated with weak implicatures. Explicit arguments providing a sponsorship rationale and a logical pathway

between the sponsor and the object are therefore expected to enhance consumers' responses to the strongly incongruent sponsorships compared to no communication. Formally, the hypothesis is stated as follows:

> *H5: When the sponsorship is strongly incongruent, the explicit communication strategy will generate (a) more positive brand attitudes, (b) more positive attitudes toward the sponsorship, and (c) a more positive brand image compared to no communication.*

The hypothesized positive relationships between advertising information and sponsorship responses are derived from the idea that communication forges a link between the brand and the object. The next section formalizes this idea by proposing the role of perceived fit in the causal model.

3.4.2. The Role of Perceived Fit

Based on the view that perceived fit is a flexible property, communication is expected to alter consumers' perceptions of fit. In accordance with Cornwell (2008), fit is likely to increase when added information activates a specific piece of information that otherwise would not be activated. Brand extension researchers have argued that *salience* and *relevance* of associations will determine fit evaluations (Bridges et al. 2000; Loken et al. 2008), and that these measures will be influenced by communication strategies (Bridges et al. 2000). Salience refers to associations that are accessible from memory, and depends partly upon dominant brand associations (Bridges et al. 2000) and provision of retrieval cues (Keller and Aaker 1992). In a situation of naturally incongruent sponsorships, dominant brand associations are likely to be perceived as incongruent with dominant object associations. Applied to a sponsorship context, relevance pertains to whether the sponsor is considered appropriate and important in the context of the sponsorship object. In line with Bridges et al.'s (2000) arguments about incongruent brand extensions, dominant brand associations are often seen as irrelevant in a sponsor-sponsee relationship or relevant brand associations may be non-salient and therefore not used when evaluating fit. In this study, communication will frame fit evaluations by making relevant associations more salient. Sponsorship researchers have widely embraced the idea that consumers' respond positively to sponsorships that are

perceived to match each other on some dimension. Therefore, perceived fit is expected to mediate the communication effects on consumers' responses to the sponsorship:

> *H6: The postulated effects of (a) the implicit and (b) the explicit communication strategy on consumer responses (H1-H5) will be mediated by perceived fit*

3.5. Methodology

3.5.1. Introduction

The two communication strategies, implicit and explicit, were tested in an experimental study at two levels of sponsorship incongruency; moderate and strong. The following sections outline the methodological choices underlying hypotheses-testing and data analyses. First, the development of stimulus is presented, which includes a pretest of incongruency levels and operationalization of the two communication strategies. Second, the research design and procedures for data collection are outlined, followed by an overview of measurements employed and a description of instruments used to analyze the data.

3.5.2. Stimulus Development

Pretest of Natural Congruency

In order to identify two distinct levels of natural congruency, eight brands and four sports were pretested with respect to (1) three distinct image dimensions (eco-friendliness, competence, and future-orientation[10]) and (2) their level of perceived fit with each other in a sponsorship context. Image scores indicate the level of image overlap on specific dimensions, which represents the potential pathway facilitated by communication. Perceptions of fit between the brand and the object indicate level of natural congruency. Results from both tests can be found in appendix C.

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[10] A variety of image dimensions beyond the three selected here are relevant with reference to image transfer in sponsorships, such as health and nutrition, competitiveness, excitement, etc. Selection of the three dimensions was based on an overall evaluation of the possibility of creating fit between corporate brands and sports.

Brands selected for the pretest included five energy corporate brands (Lyse Energi, Agder Energi, British Petroleum (BP), ConocoPhillips, and Chevron), and three entrepreneur corporate brands (Veidekke, Mesta, and NCC). Since sponsorship represents a rapidly growing corporate communication tool (Ormeño 2007), only corporate brands were selected for the purpose of reducing expectancy (Heckler and Childers 1992) as a source of variation in perceived fit. Sports selected included football, sailing, climbing, and skiing. The combination of sports and brands was chosen based on the opportunity to create fit with reference to the three image dimension. For example, energy companies are increasingly focusing on renewable energy, which potentially can be reinforced through a relationship with the values of "pure energy" in sports[11], or large companies in general may seek cooperation with professional sport to reinforce associations of competence.

A total sample of 43 students completed the pretest. To avoid priming effects, image overlap and perceived fit were tested between-subjects. Of the total sample, 14 subjects rated all brands and sports on the three image dimensions, each measured by three items on a 7-point Likert scale. Respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which they thought each item was descriptive of the brands and sports, ranging from "not describing at all" to "very describing". Exploring mean scores on the three image dimensions showed that all brands scored overall higher on *competence* (M = 3.93) and *future-orientation* (M = 3.47) compared to *eco-friendliness* (M = 2.97). Moreover, the greatest overall mean difference between the brands and the sports was reported with respect to eco-friendliness (M_{brands} = 2.97, M_{sports} = 4.25; p = .002). The aim of the pretest was to identify two distinct levels of image overlap between a sport and a brand within a product category. Only in relation to the energy brands, distinct levels of image scores were evident. Among these brands, BP received a significantly lower mean score (M = 2.64) compared to both Agder Energi (M = 3.69; p = .014) and Lyse (M = 3.61; p = .004). With respect to the sports, results showed that sailing was perceived as the most eco-friendly (M = 4.78). Based on the idea that the image-overlap should be non-salient when no information is provided, eco-friendliness was selected as the basis for creating fit in the study, and sailing was chosen as the desirable sponsorship object for enhancing perceptions of eco-friendliness and perceived fit.

[11] Simmons and Becker-Olsen (2006) recognize that oil and chemical companies, which typically are associated with environmental pollution, frequently are seen as sponsors of environmental causes. As such, sponsorship represent an opportunity to overcome specific negative brand associations.

In order to assess level of natural congruency, 29 respondents from the pre-test sample evaluated fit between the brands and sports on a four-item, 7-point Likert scale. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with statements capturing fit in a global sense. This approach was adopted from Speed and Thompson (2000) who developed a holistic measure regardless of any particular dimension of fit. In accordance with this global measure, respondents in the current pre-test were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the following statements: (1) "(Brand) and (Sport) have similar image", (2) "(Brand) and (Sport) fit well together", (3) "The associations I have to (Brand) are similar to the associations I have to (Sport), and (3) "(Brand) and (Sport) stands for similar things" (Cronbach's $\alpha > .90$). The perceived fit questionnaire containing 32 combinations of the eight brands and four sports was split in half and tested between-subjects in order to avoid respondent fatigue. Based on results from the image overlap test, combinations of the energy companies and sailing were considered in the analyses. Results demonstrated that BP/sailing was perceived as the least congruent combination (M = 2.25), whereas Agder Energi/sailing appeared as the most congruent pair (M = 3.43), followed by CP/sailing (M = 3.27) and Lyse/sailing (M = 2.89).

Selection of sponsorships for the main study was based on both image-overlap and the global fit measure. Results indicated that BP and sailing were perceived as a poor match based on both image-overlap (eco-friendliness) and the global fit measure, hence selected as the strongly incongruent sponsorship for the main study. With respect to a moderate level of incongruency, the image-test pointed out Agder Energi and Lyse as potential candidates. After an evaluation of the possibility that fit between Agder and sailing may have been judged based on a geographical link, Lyse was selected as the proper brand representing the moderate level of incongruency. Although receiving a perceived fit score slightly below the scale average (M = 2.89), the combination with the relative high brand image score makes Lyse/sailing suitable as a moderately incongruent sponsorship. Results from the pretest suggest that the combinations of Lyse/sailing and BP/sailing represent two distinct levels of congruency. First, they scored differently on the perceived fit measure ($M_{Lyse-sailing}$ = 2.89, $M_{BP-Sailing}$ = 2.25; p = .093[12]) and second, there was a significant difference between the two

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[12] Based on the low sample size (n = 14), a difference between the two sponsorships at the 10% significance level was deemed sufficient in this regard.

brands on the particular brand image score (M_{Lyse} = 3.61, M_{BP} = 4.42; p = .004). Table C.1 and table C.2 in appendix C provide a full overview of results from the pretest.

Communication Strategies

Two communication strategies, one open-ended (*implicit*) and one closed-ended (*explicit*), were in this study examined in terms of how they may enhance consumers' responses to incongruent sponsorships. Message openness in the implicit strategy was ensured through a slogan formulated as a metaphor; "*pure cooperation*" ("Rent samspill"). The term 'pure' was intended as a cue relating to the image dimension constituting the created link. A metaphor is identified as a type of indirect message through which claims are made in a figurative way rather than in a literal way (McQuarrie and Phillips 2005). The literature categorizes metaphors as a tropic figure, which is thought to expand individuals' dimensional thinking (MacInnis 2004). As such, it represents a suitable tool for conclusion openness in the implicit strategy. The explicit strategy used in the experiment contained a text explaining the rationale for the sponsorship, hence activating the non-salient pathway in the sponsorship through direct claims. Specifically, the verbal message focused on renewable energy both in sailing and in corporate energy production, hence pointing out their common features. The ads corresponding to the operationalization of the two strategies differed only with respect to verbal content. Pictorial elements and logos of the sponsors and the sponsorship object were held constant across the two strategies. Moreover, a text identifying that the brand is an official sponsor of the sport was included in both strategies in order to properly ensure the audience's recognition of the stimuli as a sponsorship ad. Ad stimuli used in the experiment can be found in appendix D.

3.5.3. Research Design and Procedure

A 2 (moderate vs. high incongruency) x 3 (two communication strategies and one control group) experimental design was employed in order to test the research hypotheses. A sample of 189 respondents enrolled in a business administration course at NHH completed the survey. Subjects were randomly assigned to the six experimental groups. After a short introduction to the sponsorship, participants in the test groups were exposed to one of the sponsor ads. The control groups received the same introduction to the sponsorship, but were not exposed to sponsorship advertisement. Questions were identical for the test- and the control groups, except for the questions referring to the sponsorship ad.

3.5.4. Measurements

Three dependent variables (*brand attitude*, *sponsorship attitude*, and *brand image*) and one mediating variable (*perceived fit*) were suggested by the conceptual model. Attitude toward the sponsor is the most common dependent variable in sponsorship research (Olson 2010). Attitude effects on the sponsorship per se have received less attention, but a few studies have shown that sponsorship attitude is positively influenced by perceived fit (Olson 2010; Simmons and Becker-Olsen 2006). Since the strategic premise for the sponsorship communication in this study is to facilitate fit perceptions based on a specific image dimension, scores on this dimension was included as a dependent measure. Based on previous studies on conclusion explicitness (Ahearne et al. 2000; Kardes, Kim, and Lim 1994; Martin et al. 2003), effects were assumed to be moderated by individuals' level of need for cognition (*NFC*) and involvement in the sponsorship object (*object involvement*). Gender was included as a demographic control variable. In order to examine the processing of the two communication strategies, the questionnaire also included measures of cognitive elaboration, attitude towards the ad, and ad comprehension. The questionnaire for the two test groups also contained an open question allowing for analysis of both type, or direction, and amount of thoughts elicited by the ads. Moreover, ad sincerity was added as an advertising control variable. All variables used in the questionnaire can be found in appendix E.

Dependent Variables

Brand attitude. Attitude toward the sponsoring brand was measured on a five-item, 7-point semantic differential scale. Respondents were asked to evaluate the brand by selecting the point on the scale for each item that best represented their attitude toward the sponsoring brand. Items were worded as "very bad/very good", "very negative/very positive", "hard to like/easy to like", "very unfavorable/very favorable", adopted from Muehling and Laczniak (1988) and Mitchell and Olson (1981). Similar items have been used in previous sponsorship research (e.g., Roy and Cornwell 2003; Ruth and Simonin 2003; Weeks et al. 2008).

Sponsorship attitude. In order to capture the respondents' attitude toward the sponsor-sponsee relationship, Simmons and Becker-Olsen's (2006) three-item semantic differential scale was adopted. The scale is anchored at "negative/positive", "unfavorable/favorable", "bad/good".

Brand Image. The brand image dimension, constituting the basis for created fit, was measured by the three-item 7-point Likert scale from the pretest. The three items were worded as adjectives pertaining to an environmental-friendly image ("natural", "eco-friendly", and "pure"). Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they thought each adjective was descriptive of the brand.

Mediating Variable: Perceived Fit

Perceived fit was captured by the same measure employed in the pretest. See section 3.5.2 for a discussion of the global measure of perceived fit adopted from Speed and Thompson (2000).

Control Variables

Need for cognition. Need for cognition captures the extent to which individuals are motivated to think about information in a persuasion situation (Sicilia, Ruiz, and Reynolds 2006). Respondents' individual level of need for cognition was measured on a modified version of the 18-item scale devised by Cacioppo et al. (1984). In order to prevent respondent fatigue, six items from the original scale were used (# 1,2,8,10,16, and 18). The selection was based on ease and appropriateness of a Norwegian translation, and an adoption of the approach to mix reversed and non-reversed items.

Object involvement. Personal involvement in the sponsored sport was measured one a four-item, 7-point Likert scale, partly adopted from Speed and Thompson (2000). Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with items framed as statements about whether they felt that the sport is important to them, the degree to which they follow media coverage of the sport, level of knowledge about rules, and whether they thought the sport is exciting.

Demographic variable. Due to a relatively homogenous sample (Bachelor students enrolled in a business course at NHH), gender was the only demographic variable included in the study.

Ad-Related Variables

Elaboration. To measure respondents' level of cognitive elaboration, a three-item, 7-point Likert scale was employed. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with statements reflecting degree to which they felt induced by the ad to evaluate the sponsorship. Thought-listing was also included a method for capturing cognitive elaboration. Thought-listing is frequently used as a method for measuring elaboration in relation to advertising stimuli (e.g., Chebat et al. 2001; Smith 1991; Woodside and Glenesk 1984). Such measurement of cognitive responses allows for examination of both *type* and *number* of thoughts generated by the ad (Cacioppo and Petty 1979).

Attitudes toward the ad. Attitude toward the advertisement was measured on a four-item, 7-point semantic differential scale, inspired by Mitchell and Olson (1981). The scale was anchored by "bad/good", "difficult to like/easy to like", "irritating/not irritating", and "not interesting / interesting".

Ad comprehension. A three-item, 7-point Likert scale, inspired by Lastovicka's (1983) measure of consumers' *cognitive confusion* in relation to television ads, was developed in order to measure the degree to which respondents felt that they understood the ad message. Item statements reflected perceived difficulty in comprehending the ad, perceptions of ad complexity, and felt uncertainty about the ad/message meaning.

Ad credibility. Ad credibility was measured using items from Beltramini and Evans' (1985) ad credibility scale, which captures the extent to which an ad evokes "sufficient confidence in its truthfulness". Seven items were measured on a 7-point semantic differential scale, anchored by "untrustworthy/trustworthy", "not credible/credible", "not convincing/convincing", "unlikely/likely", "dishonest/honest", "reasonable/unreasonable, "not authentic/authentic".

Other Variables

An additional set of variables were accounted for due to their documented relationship with perceived fit by sponsorship research. These include *sponsor motive attribution* (Carrillat et al. 2008; D'Astous and Bitz 1995; Rifon et al. 2004; Trimblet and Rifon 2006), perceived *sponsor sincerity* (Olson 2010; Quester and Thompson 2001; Speed and Thompson 2000),

and perceived *clarity of positioning* (Simmons and Becker-Olsen 2006). The purpose of adding these variables was to further explore the role of perceived fit in sponsorships and processing mechanisms in sponsorship communication.

Motive attribution. Six items from the sponsor motives scale developed by Rifon et al. (2004) were adopted and adjusted for the purpose of this study. Three items related to altruistic motive attribution, and the remaining three pertained to commercial motive attribution. Statements regarding altruism reflected both perceived care for the sport/athletes and the sponsor's concern for the society. Statements about commercial motive attribution reflected the sponsor's concern for sales, profit, and image enhancement.

Sponsor sincerity. Sponsor sincerity was measured on a five-item, 7-point semantic differential scale. Inspired by a measure of message source credibility (Lichtenstein and Bearden 1989), the scale was anchored at "sincere/insincere", "honest/dishonest", "trustworthy/not trustworthy", and "credible/not credible".

Positioning clarity. Simmons and Becker-Olsen's (2006) measure of clarity of positioning on a three-item, 7-point Likert-type scale was adopted. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement to the following statements: "the brand clearly communicates what it stands for, "the brand has an image that is difficult to understand" (reversed item), and "the brand conveys a clear image in all its actions".

Factor Analysis and Scale Reliability Check

A factor analysis (principal component) with oblimin rotation was performed in order to assess the extent to which the identified variables fit the data (Pett, Lackey, and Sullivan 2003). Oblimin rotation is an oblique rotation method, allowing correlated factors (Hair et al. 2006). This is an appropriate method for the present study since the theoretical constructs in the model are assumed to be correlated. 11 factors with eigenvalues > 1 were extracted. In accordance with recommendations by Hair et al (2006), factor loadings above .40 were considered significant since the sample size was close to 200 ($n = 189$). Therefore, factor loadings below .40 were not considered in the interpretation of the factor solution. High loadings on a predicted factor indicate convergent validity, implying that the indicators of the specific construct share a high proportion of variance in common (Hair et al. 2006).

According to Hair et al (2006), loadings above .60 are considered "high". Results show that only two items were below .60, suggesting acceptable convergent validity of the scales.

Results indicated that brand image and perceived clarity of positioning loaded on the same factor. However, items for the positioning variable were cross-loading with additional factors in the solution, hence appearing as an unstable factor. It was therefore excluded from the analyses. Ad credibility and ad attitude also appeared as the same factor in the rotated solution. Ad credibility was excluded from the analysis due to cross-loading of several scale items. Also the sponsor sincerity measure appeared as unstable in the factor analysis, and was excluded due to cross-loading with several items. The first item in the elaboration scale was also excluded due to cross loading. Cronbach's coefficient alpha (α) was used to assess the internal consistency (reliability) of scale items. Cronbach's α values for the extracted factors showed that the two *motive attribution* measures reached values below the generally agreed upon lower limit of α = .70 (Hair et al. 2006). The remaining factor solution showed good internal consistency with α-levels above .70. Results from the factor analysis and reliability check are reported in table F.1 in appendix F.

3.5.5. Data Analysis

Main Effects

Hypotheses concerning main effects of sponsorship communication (H1-H5) were tested using multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). MANOVA is used in order to asses group differences across multiple metric dependent variables simultaneously (Hair et al. 2006), and is as such an appropriate test for communication effects on the set of dependent variables.

Mediated Effects

The causal step strategy proposed by Baron and Kenny (1986) represents the most commonly used method for testing hypotheses about mediation (Preacher and Hayes 2008). However, researchers have recently identified potential weaknesses related to this approach (Cerin and MacKinnon 2009; Hayes 2009; Preacher and Hayes 2004, 2008). Hayes (2009) mentions several criticisms of the causal step approach. First, methodologists have found that the causal steps approach is among the lowest in power. Second, the approach is not based on

quantification of the intervening effect. Moreover, a criterion for Baron and Kenny's multistep approach is that the independent variable (X) accounts for variability in the dependent variable (Y); hence there must be a significant total effect of X on Y for mediation to occur. However, researchers have argued that a significant total effect is not essential in establishing mediation (Cerin and MacKinnon 2009; Cole, Walter, and Bruch 2008; Hayes 2009). As a consequence of these criticisms, the Sobel test, known as the *product-of-coefficients* approach, has been suggested as an alternative method. This test quantifies the indirect effects (*ab*) [13] instead of inferring them from a set of their constituent paths (Hayes 2009). Sobel test is also more powerful than the stepwise procedure since it more directly addresses mediation (Preacher and Hayes 2004). Yet, the Sobel test has been criticized because it assumes that *ab* is normally distributed. As noted by Hayes (2009), the sampling distribution of the *ab* tends to be asymmetric. Therefore, a *bootstrapping* procedure has been recommended since it does not impose the assumption of normality. Bootstrapping is a nonparametric resampling procedure, which involves repeatedly sampling from the data set and estimating the indirect effect in each resampled data set (Preacher and Hayes 2008). This process builds an empirical approximation of the sampling distribution of *ab* that is used to construct confidence intervals for the indirect effect. Throughout this dissertation, both Sobel test and bootstrapping results are reported when mediation effects are tested, which is a common approach in recent studies using mediation analysis (e.g., Cole et al. 2008; Ruva and McEvoy 2008). However, in accordance with Preacher and Hayes' (2004, 2008) recommendations, bootstrap confidence intervals will in the current study be used as the basis for hypotheses-testing if the two tests generate inconsistent results.

3.6. Results

3.6.1. Manipulation Checks

Natural Incongruency

To measure the success of sponsorship incongruency manipulation, level of perceived fit and score on the brand image dimension in the two control groups were compared. These

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[13] *ab* = the product of the coefficient for X in a model predicting M from X (*a*) and the coefficient in a model predicting Y from both M and X (*b*)

measures serve as indicators of degree of natural incongruency, identified in this study as perceived fit without additional strategic sponsorship information. In accordance with the findings from the pretest, results indicated a significant difference between Lyse (moderate incongruency) and BP (strong incongruency) with respect to perceived fit with the sponsorship object ($M_{Moderate}$ = 3.79, M_{Strong} = 2.81; p = .000) and brand image ($M_{Moderate}$ = 4.20, M_{Strong} = 3.52; p = .011) when no additional information was provided. The mean scores on both measures verify the conceptualization of the incongruency levels as strong and moderate.

Communication Strategies

O'Keefe (2003) has discussed the role of manipulation checks in experimental persuasive message effects research. A central argument is that message manipulation checks are unnecessary when message variations are defined in terms of intrinsic features. O'Keefe (2003) contains that a study that for example examines whether messages containing a metaphor would be more persuasive than messages without one, there will be no need to check the manipulation; "The messages either did or did not contain an introductory metaphor, quite independent of participant perceptions" (p. 257). Therefore, since manipulation assessment is in essence an evaluation of whether the operationalization of the strategies is in line with the definitions, advertising expert opinions from both academia and the professional industry were gathered in order to validate the suggested communication typology. This method has been previously used in marketing research as means of manipulation check (e.g., Thorbjørnsen, Pedersen, and Nysveen 2009). A scholar expert[14] on rhetoric argued that the slogan in the implicit strategy should be classified as a metaphor. The academic[15] and practical[16] advertising experts were unified in their arguments holding that the implicit and the explicit ads are practically applied and conceptually distinct strategies in terms of conclusion explicitness in advertising.

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[14] Lagerfeld, Christian, PhD. student at the Norwegian School of Economics and Business Administration. Research area: Corpus analysis: Applied metaphor studies.
[15] Obstad, Birger, Associate Professor in Marketing at Buskerud University Collage (HIBU). Research areas: Visual Communication, Marketing, and Strategy
[16] Øritsland, Kari, Brand consultant at Orangeriet (Norwegian communication agency). Expert on visual communication

3.6.2. Test of Assumptions

The research hypotheses suggested for study 1 were analyzed using multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). General assumptions that must be met for the test procedures of parametric techniques include *independence of observation*, *normality*, and *homogeneity of variance* (Hair et. al 2006). Additional assumptions for MANOVA include *multivariate normality*, *linearity*, lack of *multicollinearity*, and *homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices* (Hair et. al 2006).

Independence of Observations

Lack of independence of observations indicates that responses in each experimental group are not made independent of each other (Hair et. al 2006). In order to avoid dependence between the groups, the respondents were randomly assigned to the experimental treatments, and the measures were taken at the same point of time. However, information was gathered in a group setting, identified by Hair et al. (2006) as a common violation of independence. In order to reduce this threat of assumption violation, instructions were made clear, and participants were instructed not to talk to each other during the experiment.

Normal Distribution

Skewness and kurtosis values below │1│ indicate normality of distribution. Descriptive statistics show that the brand attitude measure had a kurtosis value above the critical value at both levels of sponsorship incongruency. This indicates a peaked distribution clustered in the centre of the scale. A high kurtosis value represents a risk of an underestimate of the variance, but this risk is reduced with large samples (Tabachnick and Fidell 2007)[17]. Another violation was evident for the object involvement measure for the strongly incongruent sponsorship, which obtained a skewness value slightly above the critical level (1.07). In cases of violation of normality, non-parametric tests were be used to control the results. Skewness and kurtosis values for all the variables in the model for each level of sponsorship incongruency can be found in table G.1 and G.2 in appendix G.

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[17] Cited in Pallant (2007)

Homogeneity of Variance

Levene's test was conducted to test the assumption of homogeneity of variance between the groups, where a significant test value indicates violation of the assumption. Results show that the variances for experimental groups with respect to *brand attitude* were not equal ($p < .05$) in case of the moderately incongruent sponsorship, and it was also unequal with respect to *brand image* in the case of strongly incongruent sponsorship. These cases represent violations of the assumption of homogeneity of variance across the experimental groups. Non-parametric tests were therefore conducted as a control supplement to MANOVA. Levene's test results are shown in table G.3 in appendix G.

Multivariate Normality

Calculation of Mahalanobis distances was used to check whether there were cases in the sample that had a strange pattern of scores across the two dependent variables (Pallant 2007). Seeing that the maximum value of the Mahalanobis distances (18.1) was larger than the critical value obtained from a chi-square table (13.82) (Tabachnick and Fidell 2007)[18] indicated that there were multivariate outliers in the data. Exploring the values for Mahalanobis distances showed that only one respondent exceeded the critical value, indicating that there was no serious violation of the multivariate normality assumption.

Linearity

The assumption of linearity refers to a straight-line relationship between each pair of the dependent variables (Pallant 2007). The matrix of scatter plots between these pairs for each test group in the data set indicated no violation of the linearity assumption.

Multicollinearity

If the dependent variables in a MANOVA are highly correlated, there is a case of multicollinearity. Multicollinearity is an indication of redundant dependent measures and decreased statistical efficiency (Hair et. al 2006). Examining the correlation matrix shows that the dependent variables were only moderately correlated ($r_{min} = .253$, $r_{max} = .586$), suggesting no serious threat of multicollinearity in the data. The correlation matrices for

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[18] Cited in Pallant (2007)

moderate and strong sponsorship incongruency are reported in table H.1 and H.2 in appendix H.

Homogeneity of Variance-Covariance Matrices

Box's M Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices was used to assess the equivalence of covariance matrices across the groups. Significant values in the data set ($p < .05$) indicated some violations of this assumption. This is not surprising since the Box's M test is especially sensitive to departures from normality (Hair et al. 2006). Such violation has minimal impact if the groups are of approximately equal size (Hair et al. 2006). Hair et al. (2006) suggest that equal size can be determined as follows: largest group size/smallest group size < 1.5. A marginal violation of the test was found when comparing the implicit and explicit strategies for the strongly incongruent sponsorship ($38/19 = 1.9$). All other group size comparisons were below the critical level. Overall, the single violation of equal group size is not considered a severe threat to the assumption of equality of covariance matrices across groups.

3.6.3. MANOVA -Test of Main Effects

Hypotheses H1-H3 involved main effects for the moderately incongruent sponsorship. The two first predictions suggested that both communication strategies will have positive effects on the three dependent measures versus the control group. H3 predicted that the implicit strategy will generate more positive responses compared to the explicit strategy. Hypotheses H4-H5 concerned main effects for the strongly incongruent sponsorship. They predicted contrast effects for the implicit strategy and positive effects for the explicit strategy. All hypotheses were tested using multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). Table 3.1 outlines the mean differences between the groups and corresponding p-values from MANOVA.

Results from MANOVA showed that there was a significant difference between the implicit strategy and the control group on the combined dependent variables for the moderately incongruent sponsorship ($F_{3,57} = 2.69$, $p = .055$; Wilks' Lambda $= .88$). Considering the dependent variables separately, there was a statistical significance between the groups with

respect to both *brand attitude* ($F_{1,59}$ = 5.30, *p* = .025; $M_{Implicit}$ = 4.54, $M_{Control}$ = 4.20)[19] and *brand image* ($F_{1,59}$ = 5.24, *p* = .026; $M_{Implicit}$ = 4.81, $M_{Control}$ = 4.20), but not on *sponsorship attitude*. Therefore, support was found for H1a-b, whereas H1c was rejected. Also for the explicit strategy, results indicated a significant difference between communication and no communication on the combined dependent variables when the sponsorship was moderately incongruent ($F_{3,60}$ = 3.27, *p* = .027; Wilks' Lambda = .86). When the three dependent variables were analyzed separately, results showed a statistical significance between the groups with respect to *sponsorship attitude* ($F_{1,62}$ = 7.16, *p* = .010; $M_{Explicit}$ = 5.45, $M_{Control}$ = 4.68) and *brand image* ($F_{1,62}$ = 5.93, *p* = .018; $M_{Explicit}$ = 4.82, $M_{Control}$ = 4.20), but not for *brand attitude*. Accordingly, H2b-c were supported, whereas H2a was rejected for the moderately incongruent sponsorship. Hypotheses H3 predicted that the implicit strategy would generate more positive brand and sponsorship attitudes and higher score on brand image than the explicit strategy when the sponsorship was moderately incongruent. Testing this prediction using multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) indicated no significant difference between the two communication strategies on the combined dependent variable. H3 was therefore rejected.

Based on H4, the implicit strategy was expected to produce contrast effects when the sponsorship was strongly incongruent, hence a lower score on the dependent variables in the control group compared to the implicit communication group was predicted. Results showed that there were no significant differences between the groups on the combined dependent variable. Therefore, no support was found for H4. H5 predicted that the explicit strategy would generate positive communication effects when the sponsorship was strongly incongruent. However, no differences were documented between the control group and the explicit strategy ($F_{3,60}$ = 1.00, *p* = .397; Wilks' Lambda = .95), and H5 had to be rejected. Overall, results showed no significant main effects of communication on any of the three dependent variables when the sponsorship was strongly incongruent.

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[19] Due to violation of the assumption of normality and homogeneity of variance in the case of brand attitude (see appendix G), a non-parametric test was performed to verify the result. A Mann-Whitney test confirm that there was a statistically significant difference between the control group and the implicit strategy on brand attitude score (Z = -1.93, p = .053)

Sponsorship responses	Communication group					
	Moderate incongruency			Strong incongruency		
	Implicit	*Explicit*	*Control*	*Implicit*	*Explicit*	*Control*
Brand attitude	**4.54**[a] $n = 36$ (.68)	4.40 $n = 39$ (.85)	**4.20**[a] $n = 25$ (.35)	4.42 $n = 19$ (.58)	4.36 $n = 38$ (1.17)	4.13 $n = 26$ (.65)
Brand image	**4.81**[b] $n = 36$ *(1.09)*	**4.82**[c] $n = 39$ (1.02)	**4.20**[b,c] $n = 25$ (.95)	3.58 $n = 20$ (1.15)	3.84 $n = 38$ (1.57)	3.52 $n = 37$ (.92)
Sponsorship attitude	5.23 $n = 36$ (1.36)	**5.45**[d] $n = 36$ (1.36)	**4.68**[d] $n = 25$ (1.14)	4.47 $n = 20$ (1.28)	5.08 $n = 38$ (1.49)	4.47 $n = 27$ (1.21)

Notes: The table reports mean scores, number of respondents in each cell (n), and standard deviation (in parentheses). Mean scores with same alphabetical superscripts are significantly different from each other
[a] Difference between implicit and control on brand attitude is significant at $p < .05$
[b] Difference between implicit and control on brand image is significant at $p < .05$
[c] Difference between explicit and control on brand image is significant at $p < .05$
[d] Difference between explicit and control on sponsorship attitude is significant at $p < .05$ (All significance testing using MANOVA)
All other comparisons were not significant

Control Variables

Individuals' level of sponsorship object involvement and their level of need for cognition were suggested as possible covariates in the model. A requirement for covariance analysis is that covariates must be correlated with the dependent variables (Hair et al. 2006). The correlation matrix showed that neither control variable was significantly correlated with the dependent variables in the model (see appendix H for correlation matrices). They were therefore excluded from the analysis. A two-way between-groups MANOVA was conducted to test the impact of gender on the main effects for the moderately incongruent sponsorship. Results indicated a significant interaction effect between gender and the implicit strategy (vs. control) on *brand attitude* ($F_{1,57} = 4.30$, $p = .043$). When the MANOVA was run for female and male respondents separately, results show that there was a significant difference between the implicit strategy and the control group only for the female respondents ($F_{1,26} = 8.34$, $p = .008$). The main effect for gender on brand attitude did not reach statistical significance. No significant main- or interaction effects were found when considering the effect of the explicit strategy (vs. control).

3.6.4. Mediation Effects

One of the main tenets of the current study was to examine whether perceived fit can be influenced by strategic marketing communication. As evident from table 3.2 below, comparing the communication strategies with the control group with respect to level of perceived fit indicated no significant effects of communication at any of the sponsorship incongruency levels. Therefore, communication effects were not mediated by perceived fit, and H6 was rejected. Alternative processing mechanisms are analyzed and discussed in section 3.7.

TABLE 3.2
Mean Score Comparisons – Perceived Fit

	Communication group					
	Moderate incongruency			Strong incongruency		
	Implicit	*Explicit*	*Control*	*Implicit*	*Explicit*	*Control*
Perceived fit	3.73 *n* = 35 (.92)	3.63 *n* = 39 (1.15)	3.79 *n* = 25 (.80)	3.04 *n* = 20 (1.48)	3.25 *n* = 38 (1.14)	2.81 *n* = 28 (1.02)

Notes: The table reports mean scores, number of respondents in each cell (n), and standard deviation (in parentheses).No comparisons within levels of incongruency are significant

3.6.5. Summary of Findings

Study one confirmed that sponsorship communication may enhance individuals' attitudes toward the sponsoring brand, improve its brand image and generate positive attitudes toward the sponsorship. However, significant effects were only evident in the case of moderate sponsorship incongruency. For this sponsorship, the implicit strategy improved attitudes toward the brand, whereas the explicit strategy generated more positive attitudes toward the sponsorship. Both strategies significantly improved the brand image in terms of eco-friendliness. The conceptual model predicted that positive communication effects would be mediated by the strategies' ability to enhance fit perceptions. However, findings from study one suggest that the communication strategies were not able to influence perceived sponsorship fit. Therefore, positive communication effects cannot be explained by created perceived fit in this study. A discussion of the findings is provided in the next section, followed by further analysis and suggestions for the second study.

3.7. Discussion and Further Analyses

3.7.1. Ad Processing

In this section, results from thought-listing and ad-related variables are presented. These measures were taken in order to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the processing of the two communication strategies at the two levels of sponsorship incongruency.

Ad-Related Variables

Attitude toward the ad was accounted for based on its documented relationship with self-generated conclusions in advertising research (McQuarrie and Mick 1999), and *ad comprehension* represented a measure of perceived ad ambiguity and complexity. Scores for each experimental group on these two ad-related variables are displayed in table 3.3 below. Results show that no statistically significant differences were found between the two strategies for neither incongruency level.

TABLE 3.3
Mean Score Comparisons – Ad-related variables

Ad-related variables	Communication group			
	Moderate incongruency		Strong incongruency	
	Implicit	*Explicit*	*Implicit*	*Explicit*
Ad attitude	4.76 $n = 36$ (1.30)	4.58 $n = 39$ (1.50)	4.59 $n = 19$ (1.57)	4.33 $n = 38$ (1.40)
Ad comprehension[a]	3.13 $n = 35$ (1.32)	3.26 $n = 39$ (1.65)	3.27 $n = 20$ (1.89)	3.00 $n = 38$ (1.52)

Notes: The table reports mean scores, number of respondents in each cell (n), and standard deviation (in parentheses). No pairwise comparisons within each incongruency level are significant at the 10% level
[a] Scale items are negatively framed statements reflecting ad comprehension

Open-ended messages are characterized by a certain degree of ambiguity (Ketelaar et al. 2008). Therefore, the implicit strategy group was expected to score higher on the measure capturing perceived difficulty of ad comprehension. However, no differences were found for the two strategies on this variable for any of the sponsorship incongruency levels. A plausible explanation relates to the level of sponsorship incongruency inherent in both ads, which may have contributed relatively more to perceived ambiguity/complexity than message openness per se. The explicit message contained arguments about fit for a sponsorship that initially is

perceived as incongruent. Hence, the arguments may not have been perceived as intuitively sound, and therefore demanding a high level of interpretative effort. Open responses support this notion; some respondents report message ambiguity upon exposure to the explicit strategy (e.g. *"(…) If they mean pure energy in terms of no drug abuse, they should probably have chosen another sport (…). If that's not what they mean, I don't understand the link between the two"* and *"I did not quite understand who were cooperating. I had to think twice before I understood the link"*)

Research has shown that individuals who are able to generate a conclusion from open-ended ads produce more positive attitudes towards the ad (McQuarrie and Mick 1999). Based on the discussion above, also the explicit strategy seems to possess a certain degree of message openness. Therefore, it is likely that both strategies will generate positive ad attitudes to the extent that the intended conclusion is reached. Message conclusion in the current study pertains to match between the sponsor and the object on a specific image dimension. Attitude towards the ad should therefore be positively associated with both perceived fit and brand image. For the moderately incongruent sponsorship, ad attitude was positively correlated with brand image (r = .385, n = 36), but not perceived fit (r = .114, n = 35), when the sponsorship was communication implicitly. When the sponsorship was communicated explicitly, ad attitude was correlated with perceived fit (r = .544, n = 39), but not brand image (r = .153, n = 39). Hence, individuals' concurrence with explicit arguments about fit is positively associated with ad attitude, and acceptance of the implicit cue pertaining to the image dimension in the implicit strategy is positively associated with ad attitude. The result implies that reaching the intended conclusion in each strategy is associated with positive attitudes towards the ad, as predicted by conclusion explicitness theory.

Amount of Cognitive Elaboration

Cognitive elaboration was included in the study since it represents a central theoretical construct for explaining both conclusion explicitness and schema incongruency effects. Based on conclusion explicitness theory, one would expect the open-ended strategy to generate a higher level of cognitive elaboration than the closed-ended strategy (McQuarrie and Mick 1996). However, results showed that the implicit strategy did not increase level of reported elaboration. This finding may partly be explained by the difference in number of message arguments in the two ads. The explicit strategy contained a larger number of

arguments than the implicit message that needed to be processed. Moreover, research has shown that elaboration of an open message requires a sufficient level of processing motivation (Ahearne et al. 2000; Chebat et al. 2001; Sawyer and Howard 1991). Although sufficient processing motivation should have been assured by the experimental design (through forced exposure and limited distraction and noise during processing), individuals may have processed the implicit slogan at a low cognitive level without recognizing a missing conclusion, hence reporting a lower level of cognitive elaboration. This assumption will be discussed further in the section concerning alternative mediation effects. Moreover, it is important to note that sponsorship incongruency represents another force towards increased processing, which is equally represented in both strategies. Since the relative importance of message openness and sponsorship incongruency with respect to cognitive elaboration is unknown, it is difficult to isolate the elaboration effects that might have been induced by message openness.

Number of thoughts (words) elicited by the ads serves as an indicator of *amount* of cognitive elaboration. Results from the open responses show that the explicit strategy elicited a higher number of thoughts compared to the implicit strategy ($M_{Explicit}$ = 19.08, $M_{Implicit}$ = 13.19; p = .08) when the sponsorship was moderately incongruent. An opposite result was evident for the strongly incongruent sponsorship; the implicit strategy generated a higher level of cognitive elaboration than the explicit strategy, as indicated by number of words ($M_{Explicit}$ = 12.87, $M_{Implicit}$ = 21.64; p = .008). Results from significance testing of the two measures of amount of cognitive elaboration are reported in table 3.4.

TABLE 3.4
Amount of Cognitive Elaboration, study 1

Cognitive elaboration measures	Communication groups			
	Moderate incongruency		Strong incongruency	
	Implicit	Explicit	Implicit	Explicit
Elaboration	2.62	2.93	2.84	3.00
	n = 37	n = 39	n = 22	n = 38
	(1.54)	(1.52)	(1.51)	(1.47)
Number of words	13.19[a]	19.08[a]	21.64[b]	12.87[b]
	n = 37	n = 39	n = 22	n = 38
	(10.24)	(17.82)	(17.20)	(10.69)

Notes: The table reports mean scores, number of respondents in each cell (n), and standard deviation (in parentheses). Mean scores with same alphabetical superscripts are significantly different from each other
a difference between implicit and explicit is significant at p < .10
b difference between implicit and explicit is significant at p < .01

Type of Cognitive Elaboration: Thought-Listing

Thought-listing allowed for examination of the type of elaboration that was elicited by the communication strategies. Two coders, blind to the research hypotheses, categorized open responses as thoughts about the image dimension (e.g. "Pure energy, sustainable energy, positive associations to Lyse's future-oriented energy") thoughts about fit (e.g. "I immediately recognized the link between sailing, which uses a natural resource in wind, and Lyse, which uses natural resources to produce energy"), thoughts about the ad (e.g. "I immediately thought that there was too much info. I was stressed by all the writing"), and thoughts about sponsor's motives (e.g. "Many are trying to cling to the environmental movement. Not sure if they really mean it. Try to make profit out of an important subject"). Image thoughts were further classified as positive ("clean", "environmentally friendly resources" etc.) or negative ("polluting", "dirty" etc.), fit-related thoughts were further classified as high, low, or neutral, ad-related thoughts were categorized as positive, negative, or neutral, and motive thoughts were classified as commercial or altruistic. In addition, all thoughts were classified as positive, negative, or neutral. Agreement between coders was approximately 80%, and there were no significant differences in their coding for any thought categories. Disagreement was resolved through negotiation between the experimenter and the two coders.

The analyses uncovered several differences also with respect to type, or direction, of the elaboration. Content of open responses was analyzed using Pearson's chi-square, which is suitable for analyzing categorical data (Field 2005). Findings are summed up in table 3.5. For the moderately incongruent sponsorships, significant differences were documented for total negative thoughts, positive image-related thoughts, and neutral thoughts about fit. Pearson's chi-square reports show that the explicit strategy generated a higher level of total negative thoughts ($\chi^2(1) = 2.86$, $p = .091$) and a higher level of neutral thoughts about fit ($\chi^2(1) = 4.69$, $p = .030$). The implicit strategy generated a higher level of positive image thoughts ($\chi^2(1) = 5.00$, $p = .025$). No differences were found between the strategies with respect to thoughts about the ad or the sponsor's motives. For the strongly incongruent sponsorship, significant differences between the strategies were evident in relation to negative and total thoughts about fit and for commercial motive attributions. Pearson's chi-square reports show that the implicit strategy generated more thoughts about poor fit ($\chi^2(1) = 11.82$, $p = .001$), and that the explicit strategy generated more thoughts about commercial sponsor motives ($\chi^2(1) =$

3.67, p = .055). An assumption of the chi-square test is that expected frequencies should be greater than 5 in all cells (Field 2005). In cases of violations of this assumption (see table 3.5), Fisher's exact test was used to verify the results. This test calculates an exact probability value for the relationship between the two categorical variables. Results confirmed the significant results from Pearson's chi-square test.

TABLE 3.5
Type of Cognitive Elaboration - Chi Square tests, study 1

Thoughts categories		Communication groups			
		Moderate incongruency		Strong incongruency	
		Implicit *(n = 37)*	*Explicit* *(n = 39)*	*Implicit* *(n = 22)*	*Explicit* *(n = 38)*
Total	Positive	32.4%	38.5%	31.8%	21.1%
	Negative	**29.7%**[a]	**48.7%**[a]	50.0%	28.9%
	Neutral	32.4%	20.5%	27.3%	39.5%
Image	Positive	**27.0%**[b]	**7.7%**[b]	18.2%	13.2%
	Negative	0%	2.6%	9.1%	5.3%
Fit	High	13.5%	10.3%	4.5%	5.3%
	Low	2.7%	10.3%	**40.9%**[d]	**5.3%**[d]
	Neutral	**2.7%**[c]	**17.9%**[c]	4.5%	7.9%
	Total	18.9%	30.8%	**45.5%**[e]	**18.4%**[e]
Ad	Positive	16.2%	10.3%	18.2%	10.5%
	Negative	18.9%	23.1%	13.6%	15.8%
	Neutral	0%	2.6%	0%	5.3%
	Total	35.1%	30.8%	31.8%	31.6%
Motives	Commercial	5.4%	10.3%	**4.5%**[f]	**23.7%**[f]
	Altruistic	0%	0%	0%	0%

Note: Percentages indicate the rate of respondents within the communication group who reported thoughts pertaining to the category
[b,c,d,e] Difference between implicit and explicit is significant at p < .05
[a,f] Difference between implicit and explicit is significant at p < .10
All significant testing using Pearson Chi-Square
c, d, f include cells with expected count < 5. Fisher's exact test validated the results in these cases

3.7.2. The Role of Perceived Fit

Results from the hypothesis-testing indicated that the communication strategies were not able to enhance consumers' perception of fit. In this section, the role of perceived fit at the two levels of sponsorship incongruency is evaluated. Analysis of the open responses contributes to a better understanding of how the strategies worked in terms of generating thoughts about fit.

Moderate Sponsorship Incongruency

Considering the level of perceived fit in the control group for the moderately incongruent sponsorship, the score was surprisingly high (M = 3.79, SD = .82, *n* = 25)[20]. A relative low standard deviation indicated that respondents were rather consistent in their answers. The correlation matrix showed that there was no correlation between brand image and perceived fit in the control group (r = .374), suggesting that fit was not evaluated based on eco-friendliness when no information was provided, as expected. Since no open question was asked for the control groups, there is little indication in the data of which dimension of congruence has been used in fit evaluations. One may therefore only speculate upon likely explanations. In this process, Heckler and Childers's (1992) two-dimensional framework for perceived fit may be useful. According to Fleck and Quester (2007), a sponsorship should be considered relevant if it "makes sense and contributes clearly some meaning to the sponsor" (p. 983), whereas a sponsorship should be deemed expected to the extent that it relates to a predetermined sponsor schema. Since the control group did not receive any cues directing at a specific image dimension, there have been no restrictions in terms inference-making. There are no obvious symbolic or image-related links between the brand and the sport, nor is there overlap in participants/spectators activities and the sponsor's product (functional link). Therefore, respondents in the control group may have discarded any points-of similarity based on relevancy and based their fit evaluations according to the expectancy dimension of congruency. Various characteristics of the sponsorship, such as *market prominence* (Johar and Pham 1999), *industry sector*, and *sponsorship history* (Fleck and Quester 2007), should be evaluated in order to determine whether expectancy is likely to have influenced fit evaluations. First, based on the idea that prominent brands are perceived as more likely sponsors (Johar and Pham 1999), it is possible that fit perceptions in the control group were mainly formed based on the expectancy of a large company to be sponsoring sport. Second, belonging to a typical sponsor category may have influenced the expectancy dimension. Since power and utilities represent an active industry within sponsoring (IEG 2009), the Lyse sponsorship may have confirmed the respondents' expectation, hence increased overall fit evaluations. Third, Lyse is a visible sponsor in the Norwegian sponsorship market as the company is currently sponsoring Viking, a Norwegian football club. Consequently, fit evaluations may also have been determined by historical associations with the brand's

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[20] The pretested score of perceived fit between Lyse and sailing was 2.89 (see section 3.5.2)

sponsorship activities (Fleck and Quester 2007). If individuals that were not exposed to additional sponsorship information based their fit perceptions on expectancy rather than relevancy, whereas individuals in the communication groups were imposed to evaluate fit according to relevancy, the difference between the control group and the strategies may diminish. Theory on implicatures in advertising suggests that openness in communication has caused a wider and more varied range of inferences regarding the intended conclusion (McQuarrie and Phillips 2005). Since the control group is not restricted by advertising arguments when fit is evaluated, this condition may be regarded as analogous to an open communication strategy containing weak implicatures, hence opening up for multiple interpretations.

Open responses provide an opportunity to better understand the processing of the two communication strategies with respect to fit evaluations. Results show that there were no differences between the strategies in relation to explicit thoughts about similarity between the brand and the sport. However, thoughts pertaining to the image dimension indicate some interesting differences. Chi square results show that the implicit strategy generated more thoughts about the image dimension compared to the explicit strategy. It is likely that the implicit strategy generated more elaboration about the image dimension due to conclusion omission. If individuals have been able to infer the missing conclusion, a positive interpretation process may have caused the positive attitude effects evident from the main effects. A more in-depth analysis of this mechanism is provided in the section regarding alternative mediation effects (3.7.3).

Strong Sponsorship Incongruency

As expected, the control group for the strongly incongruent sponsorship reported the lowest level of perceived fit among all groups (M = 2.81, SD = 1.02, n = 28)[21]. The difference between the control group and the explicit strategy for the strongly incongruent sponsorship was just slightly above the 10% significance level ($M_{Explicit}$ = 3.25, $M_{Control}$ = 2.81; p = .113). Exploring mean scores on each item show that the two first items received a significantly

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[21] Although BP enjoys high market prominence, belongs to a typical sponsor category, and is currently sponsoring various Norwegian sporting events, these previously mentioned reasons for increased expectancy effects on fit may have been dominated by an overall strong perception of irrelevancy.

higher score than the two last items (see tables I.1 and I.2 in appendix I for a paired sample t-test of the scale items). Seeing that the two first items; "*similar image*" and "*fit well together*", may be regarded as more broad and holistic than the two last items; "*the associations correspond*" and "*stand for similar things*", suggests two-dimensionality inherent in the scale. The fact that the two latter items contain more specific statements of fit puts constraints on the bases on which fit can be evaluated, which may explain their relative lower scores. Based on the assumption that the measure is two-dimensional, a factor analysis with oblimin rotation extracting two factors was performed. The results supported the expected two-dimensionality (results are reported in table I.3 in appendix I). If considering only the two first items of the scale, labeled 'general perceived fit', a significant increase was found for the explicit strategy compared to no communication ($M_{Explicit}$ = 3.57, $M_{Control}$ = 2.96; p = .042). A simple mediation analysis confirmed that the general measure of perceived fit significantly mediated the effects of the explicit strategy on both brand attitude and sponsorship attitude for the strongly incongruent sponsorship. Results from Sobel test and the bootstrapping procedure are illustrated in appendix I.

Thought-listing analysis show that 40.9% of the individuals exposed to the implicit strategy reported negative evaluations of fit. This is a significantly higher number of counter-arguments compared to the explicit communication group, in which only 5% reported counter-arguments. With reference to hypothesis 4, the implicit strategy was expected to generate a contrast effect compared to the control group. This assumption was rejected by the data. Yet, the high level of negative thoughts about the implied conclusion brings support to the notion that an open strategy will be negatively perceived in the case of strong sponsorship incongruency. Moreover, the difference between the implicit and explicit strategy with respect to *total* number of negative thoughts was just above the 10% significance level (p = .103). Although only marginally different, the direction supports an overall conclusion that the open-ended strategy generated negative inferences when the sponsorship was strongly incongruent.

In general, there was little support in the data for the assumption that communication may produce positive effects through the ability to influence perceived fit. In the following section, alternative mediation models are suggested in order to further explore how the communication strategies have been processed.

3.7.3. Alternative Mediation Effects

The conceptual model suggests that brand attitude, brand image, and sponsorship attitude are three equally leveled dependent variables. Alternatively, brand attitude may be considered the ultimate objective of the sponsorship investments, and sponsorship attitude and brand image may be conceptualized as means towards this goal. Most empirical studies on sponsorship effects use some form of attitude change toward the sponsor as the dependent construct (Olson 2010). Based on a hierarchical perspective of sponsorship effects, sponsorship attitude and brand image were analyzed as alternative mediating variables to perceived fit. Results showed that communication of the strongly incongruent sponsorship did not influence the alternative mediators (see table 3.1). However, the moderately incongruent sponsorship was positively influenced by communication with respect to both brand image and sponsorship attitude. Therefore, the following analysis pertains only to moderate sponsorship incongruency when investigating alternative mediation effects.

Results from open responses indicated an overall more positive effect of the implicit strategy regarding the communicated image dimension. This finding is in accordance with indirect persuasion theory (Sawyer and Howard 1991) and communication theory (O'Keefe 1997), which posit that attitudes following self-generated conclusions are more positive compared to attitudes following directly stated claims. With respect to the brand image measure, MANOVA results indicated that both the explicit and the implicit strategy generated significantly higher scores on the communicated brand image dimension compared to the no-communication group (see table 3.1). Individuals exposed to the communication strategies seem to have inferred the intended image-overlap even though level of perceived fit was not influenced. To test whether brand attitude effects were mediated by the impact on this image dimension, Sobel and bootstrap tests were conducted. With respect to the effect of the implicit strategy (vs. control) on brand attitude, results show that the Sobel test was significant ($Z = 1.93$, $p = .053$). In addition, the bootstrap result for indirect effects on brand attitude showed that zero was not between the lower and upper bound (95% CI = {.0176, .3590}), implying that the null hypothesis should be rejected (Preacher and Hayes 2004). Since the effect of the implicit strategy on brand attitude decreased to zero with the inclusion of the mediator, a perfect mediation can be concluded (Preacher and Hayes 2004). Results are reported in figure 3.2. For the explicit strategy, however, the mediation analysis showed no significant indirect effect of brand image on brand attitude ($Z = 1.45$, $p = .15$, 95% CI = {-

.0010, .2618}). These results may be explained by conclusion explicitness theory, in which advantages of open-ended ads are attributed to positive attitudes following self-generated conclusions. With reference to the results above, the implicit and the explicit strategy both generated the intended conclusion in terms of brand image. However, only when the conclusion was self-generated, rather than influenced by explicit statements, it had a significant impact on brand evaluations.

FIGURE 3.2
Simple Mediation - Impact of the <u>Implicit</u> Strategy on Brand Attitude via Brand Image, study 1

Sobel Z value: 1.93, p = .05
95% CI: {.0176, .3590}

[a] Direct effect after controlling for brand image
[b] Total effect
[c] Compared to control group
* p < .10
** p < .05
*** p < .01
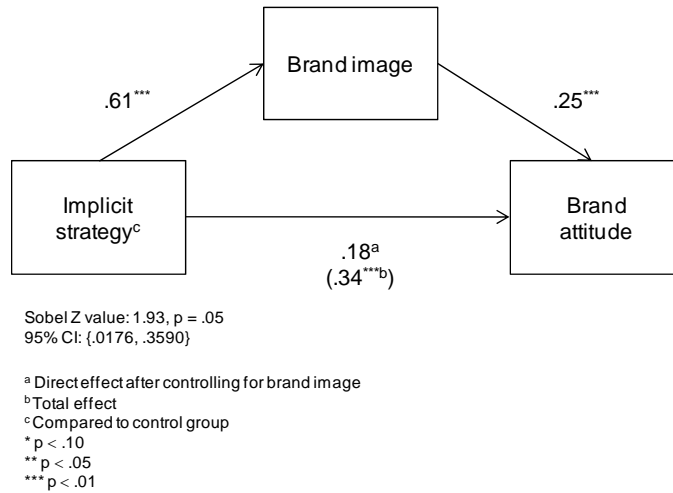
Test of main effects in section 3.6.3 showed that only the explicit strategy enhanced consumers' attitudes toward the moderately incongruent sponsorship. A simple mediation analysis showed that there was a significant indirect effect of sponsorship attitude on brand attitude when the moderately incongruent sponsorship was communicated explicitly, as indicated by both a significant Sobel test ($Z = 1.90$, $p = .058$), and the exclusion of zero in the bootstrapped confidence interval (95% CI = {.0202, .3508}). This result is illustrated in figure 3.3. This result may be explained by the fact that explicit arguments drove attention toward the sponsor-sponsee relationship since direct claims are made about shared features. Subjects exposed to the implicit strategy, on the other hand, may be less encouraged to scrutinize the sponsorship due to lack of explicit arguments. Results depicted in figure 3.3 show that there was no significant total effect of the explicit strategy on brand attitudes. In a discussion regarding the distinction between the terms *mediated effects* and *indirect effects*, Preacher and Hayes (2004) argue that whereas mediated effects imply an initially present

total effect, the assessment of an indirect effect does not require such assumption. Applied to the finding reported above, an indirect effect can be said to have occurred regardless of lack of total effect. When testing the hypotheses regarding mediation in this dissertation, both mediated and indirect effects are accounted for. In accordance with Preacher and Hayes (2004), the term 'indirect effect' will be used when there is no significant total effect.

FIGURE 3.3
Simple Mediation - Impact of the <u>Explicit</u> Strategy on Brand Attitude via Sponsorship Attitude, study 1
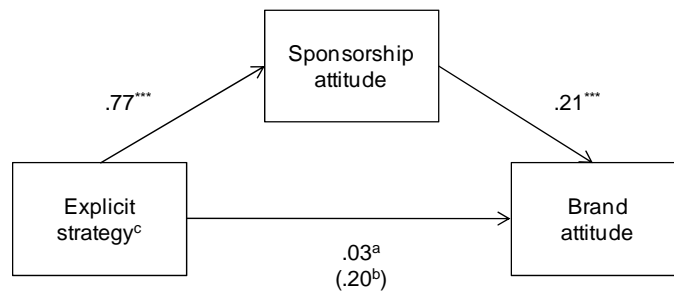
Sobel Z value: 1.90, p = .058
95% CI: {.0202, .3508}

[a] Direct effect after controlling for sponsorship attitude
[b] Total effect
[c] Compared to control group
* p < .10
** p < .05
*** p < .01

3.8. General Conclusions and Suggestions for Study 2

Results from the first experiment suggest that communication that advocates sponsorship fit represents an opportunity to positively influence a moderately incongruent sponsorship. When incongruency is strong, however, results indicate that communication will not be able to enhance consumer responses. For the strongly incongruent sponsorship, the only sign of positive effects relates to the general dimension of perceived fit when the sponsorship is explicitly communicated. Positive communication effects were expected to be mediated by the ads' ability to influence perceived fit. However, only when the two most general items for perceived fit were considered, a significant indirect effect occurred. The overall results indicate that conscious evaluations of fit did not play a key role in ad processing. Alternative mechanisms were therefore explored in order to understand how the strategies were processed. Analyses showed that the communicated image dimension was positively influenced by both the explicit and the implicit strategy for the moderately incongruent

sponsorship. However, simple mediation analysis indicated that brand image was a significant mediator for the implicit strategy only. Supported by the analysis of open responses, the implicit strategy seems to have produced self-generated conclusions regarding the image dimension implied in the open-ended message. According to theory, such self-generated conclusions are associated with more positive and accessible attitudes. The difference between the explicit and the implicit strategy in terms of the mediating role of brand image supports the idea that positive attitudes can be attributed to the fact that ad conclusions are self-generated. The documented role of brand image as a significant mediator for effects of implicit communication suggests that there may have been an image transfer from the sponsorship object to the brand[22], regardless of conscious evaluations of fit. Therefore, brand image should in the next study be conceptualized as an alternative mediator to perceived fit. Mediation analysis also suggests sponsorship attitude as a mediator for communication effects. Findings showed that sponsorship attitude was influenced only by the explicit strategy. Hence, direct arguments seem to have induced consciousness about the relationship and subsequent positive evaluations. Therefore, sponsorship should also be conceptualized as a potential mediator in the model. Furthermore, study 2 should explore the role of motive attribution in the processing of sponsorship communication. Although significant only for the strongly incongruent sponsorship, open responses showed that the explicit strategy generated more thoughts about commercial motives compared to the implicit strategy. The measures of commercial and altruistic motive attribution received low internal consistency ($\alpha < .70$) and should be revised prior to further analyses.

Both communication strategies contained a picture displaying a sailboat and rough seas. The picture in itself serves as an implicit cue, as it may generate thoughts about the image dimension (e.g., energy, wind- and water power). The discussion above ascribed the positive brand image effects to message openness and self-generated conclusions. However, it is possible that positive effect of the implicit strategy on brand image may have been caused by the picture rather than through central processing of the open message. Although pictorial elements were constant across the communication strategies, textual elements in the explicit strategy pose a greater cognitive load on the perceivers than does the slogan in the implicit

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[22] The study does not include a direct measure of image transfer, which would require measuring image before and after sponsorship exposure. Due to the risk of hypothesis-guessing, such measure was not accounted for in the study

strategy. Therefore, respondents in the implicit group may have used the picture as a heuristic in their attitude formation to a larger degree than those exposed to the explicit strategy. Assuming that respondents focused on the picture rather than the verbal message, the manipulations (variations in verbal content) may not have been sufficiently strong. Excluding pictures from the ads in the second study should therefore strengthen the manipulations. Since most forms of marketing communication use a combination of verbal and non-verbal elements to express the intended message (Houston, Childers, and Heckler 1987), excluding the pictures reduces the realism of the ads, hence representing a threat to external validity. However, this is deemed necessary in order to secure internal validity in the study.

The analyses from the first experiment imply that the explicit strategy was perceived as ambiguous and complex to the same extent as the implicit strategy (see table 3.3). Some alteration for the operationalization of the explicit strategy should therefore be considered for the second study. First, the number of arguments should be constrained, thus reducing the risk of confounding message length with message explicitness. Second, the explicit message should be more direct in its statement about fit, hence limiting chances of misinterpretations of the intended conclusion (which is the very criterion for a strong implicature (McQuarrie and Phillips 2005)). Finally, removal of pictorial elements may increase readability of the verbal message, reducing the risk of confounding readability and conclusion explicitness.

Some regards should also be taken concerning the questioning order. In the first study, brand image was measured secondly, following the perceived fit measure. First of all, this may be problematic because respondents could easily look at both questions simultaneously, and thereby guess the basis of created fit. As a consequence, differences between the groups may have been underestimated. Measuring the brand image dimension prior to the dependent measures may also have caused demand effects, since the conclusion for the ad message is provided through the measure. This issue is especially applicable in regards to the implicit strategy, since the theoretical rationale for effects is based on self-generated conclusions. Brand image should therefore be measured subsequent to any dependent measures, and separately from perceived fit.

Chapter 4. Study 2

4.1. Revisions for Study 2

Findings from the first study suggest that a moderately incongruent sponsorship may benefit from additional communication. Several differences were found with respect to implicit vs. explicit communication. The implicit strategy generated more positive brand attitudes compared to the control group, which was mediated by brand image. Since perceived fit was not influenced, the image effect occurred regardless of any conscious evaluation of similarity between the brand and the object. The explicit strategy did also successfully enhance brand image, but this effect was not translated into more positive brand attitudes. Mediation analysis showed that there was an indirect effect of sponsorship attitude on brand attitude when the sponsorship was communicated explicitly. The second study was set out to replicate findings for the moderately incongruent sponsorship in the first study, and to explore alternative processing mechanisms that explain communication effects on brand attitudes.

The strategic argument for sponsorship communication in study 1 was to create a perception of fit based on relevant, but non-salient brand associations. The discrepancy between the brands and the sport on the communicated image dimension indicates that sponsorship was used to overcome negative brand associations, which is a common approach in the sponsorship market (Simmons and Becker-Olsen 2006). Although the image dimension was successfully created by both strategies, perceived fit was not significantly enhanced. A plausible explanation may be that the communicated image dimension (eco-friendliness) conflicts with some dominant product category associations (environmental pollution), which may have caused counter-argumentation when prompted with the question about fit immediately after exposure. An alternative strategic approach to create fit in sponsorships involves a brand's favorable associations that are not salient in the sponsorship context and therefore not used when evaluating fit. In brand strategy terms, this strategic distinction can be seen as an analogy to *creating* versus *reinforcing* brand associations (Keller 2008). The image dimension used in study 1 can be considered an element in a brand repositioning process, whereas the strategic premise is study 2 will be to use an already favorable brand association to create a perception of sponsorship fit. Naturally incongruent sponsorships with a non-salient image overlap based on favorable brand associations are frequently found in the

sponsorship market. For example, the Norwegian Opera and Ballet is currently sponsored by Mercedes-Benz. The relationship may be perceived as naturally incongruent due to lack of functional link or an obvious image-based link. However, the company argues that the two parties are similar based on tradition, quality, and future-orientation. Assuming that consumers evaluate the sponsorship as incongruent regardless of communication, there is a potential of created fit based on this non-salient image-overlap. Another example is Guinness' sponsorship of Hurling, which has been studied by Meenaghan (2002). The sponsorship manager at Guinness identified an image overlap between the brand and the sport based on values such as skilful, Irish, traditional, male, powerful, and exciting. However, the sponsorship manager recognized that these values to some extent were "latent and unpolished rather than immediately appreciated on a national basis" (Meenaghan 2002: 8). This implies that although an image link may be recognized by the sponsorship partners, that link is not necessarily intuitively apparent to the target audiences. These two examples illustrate that there might exist a non-salient, latent sponsorship fit that needs to be explained to the market through additional sponsorship communication. The second study in this dissertation was conducted to explore this type of relationship. In terms of level of sponsorship incongruency, the second study was set out to replicate and further explore findings regarding the moderately incongruent sponsorship. Whereas the first study conceptualized two levels of natural incongruency in terms of both global incongruency and low overlap on the communicated image dimension, the second study assumed global incongruency, but overlap on the communicated image dimension. Moderate incongruency was therefore anticipated based on low natural fit and an existing, but non-salient image-overlap. Hence, it is the non-salient existing link that leads to the definition of moderate incongruency, rather than a moderate level of perceived fit and image-overlap. Selection of an appropriate sponsor-sponsee relationship for the second study is presented in the following section.

4.1.1. Sponsorship Selection

Since the aim of study 2 was to replicate findings for the moderately incongruent sponsorship in study 1, sponsorship partners for the second study should be equivalent to the moderate level of incongruency between Lyse and sailing. As discussed above, the strategic premise for the sponsorship is now reinforcement of existing brand associations. Lack of findings with respect to perceived fit for the moderately incongruent sponsorship in the first study was

discussed with reference to expectancy as an alternative dimension of fit. Therefore, in order to decrease expectancy as an explanatory factor in fit evaluations, the sponsoring brand should not be a profiled sport sponsor in the Norwegian market, and it should not represent an industry sector that is perceived as a typical sponsor category[23]. Based on the arguments above, the clothing retailer Benetton was selected as the sponsor and the Norwegian Football Federation (NFF) as the sponsorship object. The sponsorship was expected to be perceived as naturally incongruent since there is no obvious fit based on functionality (the Benetton-line does not include athletic clothes) or image (e.g., football has a masculine and people-oriented image, and Benetton is a feminine and medium up-scaled brand). Moreover, the brand does not belong to a typical sport sponsor category, nor is the brand a current sport sponsor in the Norwegian market[24]. Recognizing the potential of creating a link between Benetton's "united colors" profile related to tolerance and respect for diversity and NFF's ongoing campaign against racism made the sponsorship suitable for this study. This specific image dimension was not assumed to be salient when individuals evaluate fit. Hence, additional information pertaining to this particular dimension is expected to positively influence fit evaluations.

4.2. Revised Conceptual Model and Research Hypotheses

4.2.1. Conceptual Model

Results for the moderately incongruent sponsorship in the first study indicated that perceived fit was not a significant mechanism linking the communication groups to sponsorship responses. For the second study, brand image and sponsorship attitude were considered alternative mediators to perceived fit. Whereas perceived fit captures conscious evaluations of similarity between the partners, the image dimension represents the ability to create favorable brand associations. Attitude toward the sponsorship was considered as a mediator in the revised model since it captures attitude towards the act of sponsoring, which may explain positive effects on the sponsor. Sponsorship attitude is rarely examined in the sponsorship literature (Olson 2010). However, when accounted for, sponsorship attitude has

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[23] Market prominence is not considered a threat as long as category typicality and sponsorship history are controlled for.

[24] Benetton is sponsoring sport internationally, but these sponsorships were assumed to enjoy low awareness in the Norwegian market.

been conceptualized as a predictor of sponsor equity (Olson 2010; Simmons and Becker-Olsen 2006), which is consistent with the revised conceptual model. Simple mediation analysis in the first study showed that both brand image and sponsorship attitude significantly accounted for changes in brand evaluations caused by communication. Furthermore, the role of sponsor motive attribution in the processing of sponsorship communication was also conceptualized as a potential mediator in the second study. Sponsorship research has suggested that sponsors that are perceived as altruistically motivated are better liked than those who are evaluated as commercially motivated (D'Astous and Bitz 1995; Speed and Thompson 2000; Weeks et al. 2008). No differences were found between the two strategies with respect to motive attribution in the previous study. However, there were reliability issues with the employed measures, and the variables were explored further in the second study after making some adjustments to the scale items. In the first study, open responses showed that more thoughts regarding commercial sponsor motives were generated from the explicit than the implicit strategy. Motive attribution was therefore suggested as a fourth alternative mediator in the revised conceptual model. The model is depicted in figure 4.1 below.

FIGURE 4.1
Revised Conceptual Model, study 2
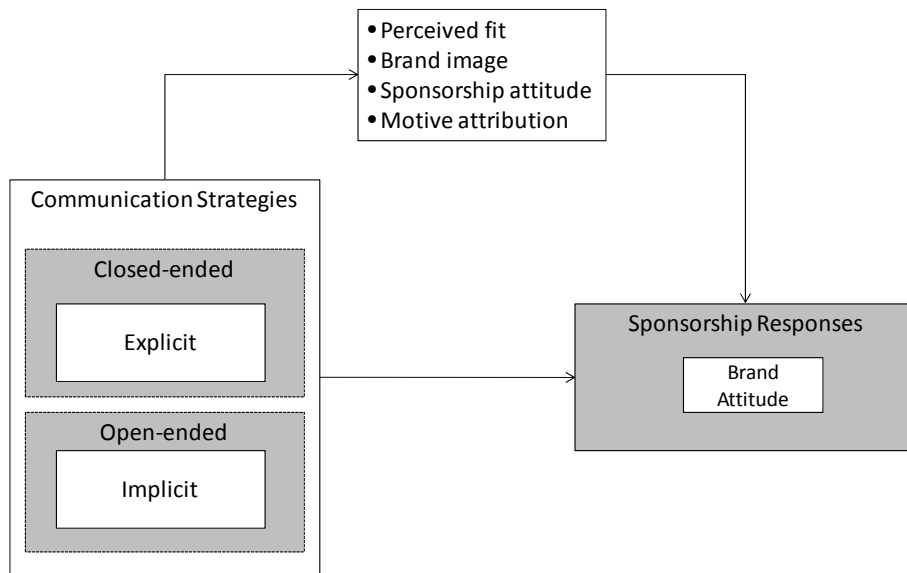
4.2.2. Hypotheses – Main Effects

The sponsorship tested in study 2 was conceptualized as moderately incongruent based on the non-salient image overlap between the sponsor and the sponsee. Consistently with Bridges et al. (2000), communication that activates a non-salient, but relevant image dimension is expected to yield favorable consumer attitudes. The fundamental idea is that a meaningful pathway is created based on a specific relevant image dimension, which clarifies the rationale for the sponsorship. Since the sponsorship in this study lacks an intuitively logical or functional link, elaboration about the sponsorship without communication (control group) is expected to be negatively biased (Simmons and Becker-Olsen 2006). In study 1, positive communication effects on brand attitudes were only evident for the implicit strategy. Yet, because the created fit in the current study is based on an existing image overlap (a reinforcement strategy), positive effects are also anticipated for the explicit strategy. Therefore, the following hypotheses are modified versions of H1 and H2 from the first study, reflecting the relationships in the revised conceptual model:

H1(rev.): Compared to no communication, the implicit strategy will generate more positive brand attitudes

H2(rev.): Compared to no communication, the explicit strategy will generate more positive brand attitudes

H3 in the first study predicted a significant difference between the implicit and the explicit communication strategy. Although evidently operating through different mechanisms, the first study revealed no significant differences between the strategies with respect to brand attitudes. In the discussion of findings, it was argued that the manipulation may not have been sufficiently strong due to dominating pictorial elements. Also, the manipulations may have suffered based on lack of strong implicatures and low readability in the explicit strategy. Therefore, after adjusting for these issues, the same theoretical basis for predicting differences between the implicit and explicit strategy was employed for the second study: Based on conclusion explicitness theory, the implicit strategy is expected to generate more positive responses than the explicit strategy for the moderately incongruent sponsorship. The underlying theoretical principle is that self-generated conclusions following open ads will be

more positively valued because the interpretative process itself is pleasing (McQuarrie and Mick 2009). Furthermore, the moderately incongruent sponsorship is expected to benefit from message openness since individuals are likely to be able to infer the intended conclusion from the figurative language. More specifically, the implicit cue is expected to be sufficient to resolve the incongruency. In accordance with social psychology theory, the process of resolving information incongruency (through assimilation or accommodation) tend to be positively valued (Mandler 1982), which in this case is expected to translate into positive responses to the sponsorship. Therefore, H3 from study 1 is repeated with modifications according to the revised conceptual model:

> *H3(rev.): The implicit communication strategy will generate more positive attitudes toward the brand than the explicit communication strategy*

4.2.3.   Hypotheses – Mediation Effects

The purpose of study 2 was to examine whether communication can improve sponsor attitudes by make an existing image-link salient. As previously argued, using existing brand and object associations as a basis for creating fit implies that the sponsorship should be considered as analogous to the moderately incongruent sponsorship in the first study. Schema congruity theory posits that moderate incongruency can be resolved without any fundamental changes in the existing knowledge structure (Mandler 1982). Using an existing image overlap as the basis for created fit should facilitate acceptance of fit for naturally incongruent sponsorships without major structural changes. Derived from schema theory, it is expected that people judge fit based on a comparison of their object and brand schemas from memory (Coppetti et al. 2009; McDaniel 1999; Roy and Cornwell 2003). Without communication, the relevant image dimension is not likely to be salient, but when primed with the relevant dimension, the schemas are likely to fit to a larger extent. The basic idea is that some brand beliefs may lie dormant in memory until activated (Boush 1993). Therefore, priming subjects with the common features inherent in the sponsorship, through explicit or implicit communication, is likely to facilitate perceptions of fit. Knowing that fit is positively associated with sponsorship responses (Speed and Thompson 2000), it is anticipated that there will be a mediated (or indirect) effect of perceived fit on brand attitudes when the sponsorship is communicated explicitly and implicitly:

H6(rev.): Effects of (a) the implicit and (b) the explicit communication strategy on brand attitude will be mediated by perceived fit

Study 1 indicated that the effect of the implicit strategy was mediated by the *brand image* dimension communicated in the ads. Open responses showed that thoughts regarding the communicated image dimension were reported more frequently by respondents exposed to the implicit strategy than by those exposed to the explicit strategy. Positive mediation effects through brand image may be explained based on conclusion explicitness theory, which suggest that one of the benefits of open-ended messages is that they produce self-generated conclusions (Kardes 1988; Linder and Worchel 1970). These conclusions are thought to generate more positive brand attitudes. Regardless of conscious evaluations of similarity between the brand and the sport (perceived fit), receivers of the implicit strategy are thought to be induced to elaborate on image dimension implied by the implicit cue. The cue is likely to evoke thoughts about the existing brand image dimension, and a self-generated conclusion is expected to be associated with positive brand attitudes. Therefore, brand attitude effect of the implicit communication strategy is anticipated to be mediated by brand image:

H7: Effects of the implicit communication strategy on brand attitude will be mediated by brand image.

The first study showed that the explicit strategy also generated a more positive brand image, but this was not a significant mediation mechanism for changes in brand evaluations. This indicates that ad arguments are effective in persuading consumers about the specific image dimension, but this mechanism does not explain individuals' brand evaluations.

A significant indirect effect of *sponsorship attitude* on brand evaluations was documented in the first study when the sponsorship was communicated explicitly. It is likely that respondents were induced by the explicit arguments to evaluate the sponsor-sponsee relationship. A direct statement of the sponsorship rationale is likely to evoke conscious evaluations about specific features of the relationship. Although the implicit strategy is expected to generate more extensive interpretative processing, the open message contains fewer specific pieces of information that need to be evaluated. Since brand attitude effects of the open message in the first study were completely mediated by brand image, the processing

is likely to be biased towards the implied image dimension rather than the sponsor-sponsee relationship per se. Therefore, effects of the explicit strategy on brand attitude are expected to be mediated by sponsorship attitude:

H8: Effects of the explicit communication strategy on brand attitude will be mediated by sponsorship attitude.

In accordance with Rifon et al. (2004), a higher number of arguments in the explicit message is likely to increase attribution of commercial motives, whereas the more subtle persuasion attempt in the implicit message is believed to generate altruistic motive attribution. This is also in line with general theoretical assumptions of open ad benefits, since message openness is thought to be perceived as less coercive and thereby more sincere than closed-ended messages (Martin et al. 2003). In general, perceptions of altruistic motives generate favorable sponsorship responses (D'Astous and Bitz 1995; Speed and Thompson 2000), and the ability to induce inferences of altruistic motives is therefore likely to mediate effects on attitudes toward the sponsor. Although no differences were documented between the strategies with respect to motive attribution in the first study, the open responses indicated that the explicit strategy generated more thoughts regarding commercial sponsor motives than the implicit strategy[25]. Based on the arguments above, positive brand effects of the implicit strategy are expected to be mediated by attribution of altruistic sponsor motives, and effects of the explicit strategy are expected to be mediated by commercial motive attribution:

H9: Effect of the implicit communication strategy on brand attitude will be mediated by altruistic motive attribution

H10: Effect of the explicit communication strategy on brand attitude will be mediated by commercial motive attribution

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[25] Such finding was documented for the strongly incongruent sponsorship only, but the same direction was evident also for the moderately incongruent sponsorship, which suggests further investigation of this tendency.

4.3. Methodology

4.3.1. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the second study was three-fold: First, to validate the results from the first study by replicating findings for the moderately incongruent sponsorship, and second, to further examine perceived fit as a potential flexible construct by using an *existing*, but *non-salient* image overlap as a basis for fit creation. Third, the lack of findings in regards to perceived fit in study 1 suggests a search for alternative processing mechanisms that explain communication effects on brand attitude.

4.3.2. Stimulus Development

Pretest of Natural Congruency

31 respondents from a convenience sample participated in a pretest conducted to assess level of perceived sponsorship fit and image overlap. Perceived fit was measured using a five-item, 7-point Likert scale. The perceived fit scale was slightly modified for the second study. Exploring the single items in the original scale indicated that the second item, reflecting the most holistic view on fit ("fit well together"), reached the highest score across all experimental groups. For the second study, an additional item reflecting holistic fit was included. The item was framed as a statement about sponsorship logic, derived from Speed and Thompson's (2000) scale. The three remaining items have reference to similarity based associations, values, and goals. Image overlap was captured by measuring the brand's and object's image by three items on a 7-point Likert scale. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed that the brand and sport could be described as "diverse", "antiracist", and "tolerant". Perceived fit and brand/sport image were measured between-subjects, and respondents were randomly assigned to the two measures. Results confirmed that individuals perceived a low degree of congruence between Benetton and NFF; the mean perceived fit score on the 7-point scale was 2.2 (SD = 1.02, n = 12). With respect to brand image, Benetton received a mean score of 5.6 (SD = 1.26, n = 16) and NFF scored 4.96 (SD = 1.69, n = 16). Hence, no significant difference existed between Benetton and NFF in terms of the image dimension (p = .154). The pretest therefore confirmed that the sponsorship may be considered naturally incongruent with the potential of creating a link based on the specific image dimension.

Communication Strategies

The operationalization of the two communication strategies was slightly modified for study two. Analysis of open responses in study 1 suggested that there was a degree of openness to the explicit strategy, indicated by the fact that respondents identified other conclusions than the intended (e.g., interpreted "pure" in terms of no drug abuse rather than eco-friendliness), which conforms to the idea of weak implicatures. Furthermore, respondents recognized the message to some degree as vague and difficult to comprehend (e.g. "I had to think before I understood the link"). The explicit message in study 2 was therefore made more direct with regards to verbally expressing how the brand and the sport are similar, hence providing stronger implicatures. A specific campaign related to antiracism in football ("Give racism a red card") run by NFF was emphasized in the text, followed by a direct claim that both football and Benetton represent diversity. With respect to the implicit strategy, openness was yet again ensured by the use of a metaphor. The metaphor was created on the basis of the existing Benetton slogan: "United Colors of Benetton". Replacing 'Benetton' with 'Football' gave the slogan "United Colors of Football", where the term 'united' represents the implicit cue directing at the intended conclusion. A similar approach has been used by Coppetti et al. (2009) who manipulated sponsorship articulation by changing an existing advertising slogan to better suit the sponsorship context[26]. Contrary to the first study, the implicit slogan was also used in the explicit strategy. This was done partly to reduce risks of confounding ad openness with ad liking, and partly to increase ad realism since ads typically contain some form of headline in addition to text.

4.3.3. Research Design and Procedure

An experimental design was employed in order to test the research hypotheses. A sample of 181 respondents, recruited from an online panel at Norstat, completed the survey. Subjects were randomly assigned to the three communication groups (implicit, explicit, and no communication). Respondents in the test groups were introduced to the sponsorship, followed by exposure to one of the communication strategies. The control group received the same introduction, but was not exposed to any advertisements. After the sponsorship introduction

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[26] Pringles' advertising slogan was changed from 'Once you pop, you can't stop' to 'Once you dance, you can't stop' in order to articulate the link between the brand and the sponsored music festival.

(with/without message manipulation), respondents were instructed to answer a set of questions regarding the sponsorship. Questionnaires for the two test groups were identical, whereas questions pertaining to the ad were left out in the control group. A description of measurements used in the questionnaires is outlined in the following sections.

4.3.4. Measurements

Dependent Variable

The measure of brand attitude was changed from a semantic differentials scale to a 5-items 7-point Likert scale in the second study. This was done because the original scale received kurtosis values above the critical value in study one. The idea was to increase complexity and cognitive load by asking the respondents to evaluate statements rather than bipolar adjectives/expressions. Items still reflect the concepts from the original scales (based on: Mitchell and Olson 1981; Muehling and Laczniak 1988). In addition to three items measuring general brand attitude, two items were included to capture perceived brand *quality*, which is a common approach in assessing attitude toward a brand (e.g., Hastak and Olson 1989; Mitchell and Olson 1981).

Mediating Variables

Mediators suggested in the revised conceptual model include *perceived fit*, *brand image*, *sponsorship attitude*, and sponsor *motive attribution*. Perceived fit and brand image measures from the pretest were repeated in the main study. Due to low scale reliability of the motive attribution measures in the first experiment, scale items were revised for the second study. With respect to the items pertaining to altruistic motive attribution, the second item (I_2: "sponsor because it benefits the society": M = 4.91) reached a higher score than the first and third items (I_1: "genuine interest for sport": M = 2.78, and I_3: "care for the athletes": M = 2.79) in the first study. A likely explanation is that the second item reflects the public's general perception of sponsorship as a communication tool, rather than a perception of altruistic motives. Therefore, this item was excluded from the second study. Due to low reliability also for the commercial motive attribution measure, only one item was retained ("sponsor to create a positive image"), and another item reflecting image-oriented commercial objectives was added (""sponsoring to improve corporate impression"). No alterations were made for the sponsorship attitude measure.

Control Variables

Of the control variables accounted for in the first study, object involvement and gender were included also in the second study. Moreover, *brand knowledge* was included as a potential covariate since knowledge about the brand's prior ad campaigns may influence processing and responses with regards to the communication strategies. Two items based on Hirschman and Solomon's (1984) object familiarity scale, were measured on a 7-point Likert scale. Items were framed as statements about general brand awareness and awareness with respect to the brand's ad history. Additionally, age and geographical living location were considered relevant covariates, since respondents were recruited from a national online panel including individuals of age 16 to 40. Due to limited findings and low scale reliability with respect to NFC in the first study, this factor was excluded in the second study. Finally, a measure of perceived *object image* was added to the experiment. Respondents were asked to evaluate the sponsored object on the same image items as the brand. Inclusion of the object image measure in the main study offers an opportunity to study image-overlap more directly, as well as the role of object image in the communication processing.

Ad-Related Variables

Items capturing *cognitive elaboration* were slightly altered for the second study. In the original scale, items were framed as statements about the ads' ability to induce in-depth elaboration. Despite the implicit strategy's lack of message conclusion, it did not generate a higher level of cognitive elaboration[27]. Therefore, for the second study, items were framed as statements about elaboration due to perceived ad ambiguity. As a consequence, this variable is expected to confound with *ad comprehension*, which accordingly was excluded from the second study. Also *ad attitude* was maintained from the previous study, as it may provide some indication of affective influence of self-generated conclusions.

Factor Analysis and Scale Reliability Check

A factor analysis with oblimin rotation (varimax) extracted 8 factors with eigenvalues above 1.00. Results indicated that brand image and sponsorship attitude loaded on the same factor, implying poor discriminant validity with respect to these two variables. Although the

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[27] As discussed in relation to study 1 findings, this might be explained by 1) number of arguments in the explicit ad and 2) sponsorship incongruency.

empirical perspective of construct redundancy (the factor analysis) implied a concept redundancy issue in the data, a conceptual perspective suggests that the two constructs should be viewed as logically different (Singh 1991). Extracting 9 factors, allowing an eigenvalue of .74 for the ninth factor (brand image), provides a solution that is consistent with the expected factor structure. This approach is in accordance with Rust, Lemon, and Zeithaml (2004) who argue that a eigenvalue cutoff should be evaluated based on construct parsimony, managerial usefulness, and psychological meaningfulness. Moreover, using the nine-factor structure for further analyses is appropriate since the primary objective of the factor analysis was to investigate the internal consistency of the measurement model (Nysveen et al. 2005).

Due to high cross-loading of several scale items, ad attitude and brand knowledge were excluded by the rotated factor solution. Cronbach's coefficient alpha (α) values were used to assess the internal consistency (reliability) of scale items. Except from the object image measure ($\alpha = .656$), Cronbach's α value for the extracted factors were all above the critical lower limit of $\alpha = .70$ (Hair et al. 2006). Results from the factor analysis and reliability check are reported in table F.2 in appendix F.

4.3.5. Data Analysis

The revised conceptual model involves only one dependent variable. Therefore, to replicate main effects from the first study, univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed. Hypotheses concerning mediation effects of sponsorship communication were tested through simple mediation analysis, employing both Sobel and bootstrap tests (for discussion regarding alternative approaches to mediation analysis, see section 3.5.5). Whenever more than one mediator could be identified, multiple mediation analysis was conducted. Results from the pretest and main study are presented throughout the following sections.

4.4. Results

4.4.1. Manipulation Checks

Natural Incongruency

The low level of perceived fit in the control group (M = 2.8, SD = 1.1, n = 46) confirmed the result from the pretest and suggests that the relationship between Benetton and NFF should be regarded as naturally incongruent. With respect to brand and object image, a non-significant mean difference in the control group indicated that there was an overlap on the specific image dimension between Benetton and NFF (M_{Brand} = 4.24, M_{Object} = 4.56; p = .243) when no additional communication was provided, which also is consistent with findings in the pretest. Overall the sponsorship fulfils the requirements of low natural fit with the potential of creating fit based on a non-salient image-overlap.

Communication Strategies

The same advertising expert panel used in the previous experiment was asked to evaluate the ads used in the second study. Their individual and joint conclusion was that the strategies represent two distinct levels of conclusion explicitness (for a discussion regarding the use of an expert panel as a manipulation check, see section 3.6.1).

4.4.2. Test of Assumptions

The revised conceptual model involves only one dependent variable. Therefore, predictions of main effects were tested using univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA). Univariate test procedures of ANOVA are valid if the dependent variable is normally distributed, if the groups are independent in their responses on the dependent variable, and if variances are equal across the treatment groups (Hair et al. 2006). Assumptions relating to normality, independence of observations, and homogeneity of variance are tested below.

Test of Normality

The descriptive statistics for the entire sample is reported in table G.5 in appendix G. Skewness and kurtosis values below │1│ indicate normality of distribution. Only one minor violation of normality was found; the skewness value of object involvement was 1.3, which

was not considered a major threat to the assumption of normality. Skewness and kurtosis values < │1│ for the dependent variable indicate that the assumption of normality for the ANOVA is met.

Independence of Observations

The threat of dependence between observed groups was avoided by randomly assigning respondents to the experimental groups. Measures were taken within a short period of time during an online experiment. Compared to the first experiment, information for the current study was not gathered in a group setting, reducing chances of dependence between groups.

Test of Homogeneity of Variance

Levene's test statistics indicate no violation of the assumption of equality of variance for the dependent variable. Test results can be found in table G.6 in appendix G.

4.4.3. ANOVA - Test of Main Effects

Hypotheses regarding effects of sponsorship communication on the dependent variable were tested using univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA). Results indicated that communication group (implicit, explicit, control) had a significant effect on the combined dependent variable ($F_{2,133} = 4.82$, $p = .009$). Predictions of communication effects concern pairwise comparisons between the communication groups. Hence, hypotheses were tested using univariate analysis of variance for each pair of condition. Results indicated that the implicit strategy generated more positive brand attitudes than the control group ($F_{1,89} = 8.68$, $p = .004$; $M_{Implicit} = 4.43$, $M_{Control} = 3.71$), which is consistent with the findings in study 1. The revised H1 was therefore supported. With respect to the explicit strategy, no significant effect was documented on brand attitude. This is consistent with study 1, but inconsistent with the predictions. Hence, the revised H2 was rejected. Whereas findings from study 1 failed to support the prediction of superior attitudinal effects for the implicit strategy over the explicit strategy, the current study confirmed that the implicit strategy produced more positive brand attitudes than the explicit strategy ($M_{Implicit} = 4.43$, $M_{Explicit} = 3.80$; $F_{1,88} = 6.52$, $p = .012$). Therefore, support is found for the revised H3. Results from group comparisons on the dependent variable are reported in table 4.1.

TABLE 4.1
Main Effects – Communication Effects on Brand Attitude (Means)

	Communication groups		
	Implicit	*Explicit*	*Control*
Brand attitude	**4.43**[a,b]	**3.80**[b]	**3.71**[a]
	$n = 45$	$n = 45$	$n = 46$
	(1.06)	(1.27)	(1.27)

Notes: The table reports mean scores, number of respondents in each cell (n), and standard deviation (in parentheses). Mean scores with same alphabetical superscripts are significantly different from each other
[a] Difference between implicit and control on brand attitude is significant at $p < .01$
[b] Difference between implicit and explicit on brand attitude is significant at $p < .05$

Control Variables

To test for impact of object involvement and age, a univariate analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted for each pair of comparisons. Results show that significant main effects reported in table 4.1 were significant after controlling for object involvement and age. Two-way between groups ANOVA was conducted in order to examine possible interactions of gender and geographical location with the communication effects. Non-significant interaction terms indicate that there were no significant differences in the communication effect for males or females, or for the different geographical groups in the sample.

4.4.4. Mediation Effects

To test hypotheses regarding the mediating role of *perceived fit*, *brand image*, *sponsorship attitude*, and *motive attribution* on sponsorship communication effects, simple mediation analysis, using Sobel and bootstrap tests, was conducted. In instances of more than one significant mediator, multiple mediation analyses were conducted. Univariate analyses of variance were conducted to test the impact of each strategy compared to the control group. Table 4.2 displays communication effects on the set of suggested mediators.

TABLE 4.2
Mean Score Comparisons - Potential Mediators

Potential Mediators	Communication groups		
	Implicit	Explicit	Control
Perceived fit	3.27 n = 45 (1.26)	**3.40**[a] n = 45 (1.30)	**2.86**[a] n = 46 (1.10)
Brand image	**4.91**[b] n = 45 (1.32)	4.61 n = 45 (1.46)	**4.24**[b] n = 46 (1.30)
Sponsorship attitude	**4.35**[c] n = 45 (1.41)	**4.53**[d] n = 45 (1.49)	**3.52**[c,d] n = 46 (1.33)
Altruistic motive attribution	**3.36**[e] n = 45 (1.19)	3.09 n = 45 (1.30)	**2.80**[e] n = 46 (1.32)
Commercial motives	5.08 n = 45 (1.29)	**5.21**[f] n = 45 (1.67)	**4.67**[f] n = 45 (1.37)

Notes: The table reports mean scores, number of respondents in each cell (n), and standard deviation (in parentheses). Mean scores with same alphabetical superscripts are significantly different from each other
[a] Difference between explicit and control on perceived fit is significant at p < .05
[b] Difference between implicit and control on brand image is significant at p < .05
[c] Difference between implicit and control on sponsorship attitude is significant at p < .01
[d] Difference between explicit and control on sponsorship attitude is significant at p < .01
[e] Difference between implicit and control on altruistic motive attribution is significant at p < .05
[f] Difference between explicit and control on commercial motive attribution is significant at p < .10
All other comparisons were not significant

The Role of Perceived Fit

Perceived fit was expected to mediate the effects of the implicit strategy on sponsorship responses. However, recognizing that the implicit strategy did not significantly affect perceived fit compared to the control group, no such mediating role of fit was detected. H6a (rev.) was therefore rejected. Analysis of variance for the explicit strategy versus the control group indicated that individuals exposed to explicit communication reported a higher level of fit compared to those receiving no communication ($F_{1,89}$ = 4.57, p = .035; $M_{Explicit}$ = 3.40, $M_{Control}$ = 2.86). A simple mediation analysis confirmed a significant indirect effect of perceived fit on brand attitude when the sponsorship was communicated explicitly; (Z = 1.87, p = .062; 95% CI = {.0200, .4911}). Thus, support was found for H6b (rev.).

Perceived fit

Explicit strategy[c]

Brand attitude

.54[**]

.43[***]

-.14[a]
(.09[b])
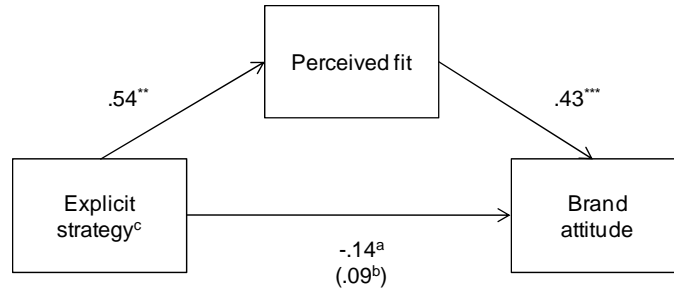
Sobel Z value: 1.87, p = .062
95% CI: {.0200, .4911}

[a] Direct effect after controlling for perceived fit
[b] Total effect
[c] Compared to control group
* p < .10
** p < .05
*** p < .01

The Role of Brand Image

Consistent with findings from study one, the variance analysis indicated that the implicit strategy group scored significantly higher on brand image than the control group ($F_{1,89}$ = 5.97, p = .017; $M_{Implicit}$ = 4.91, $M_{Control}$ = 4.24). A simple mediation analysis was therefore conducted to test whether the effect of the implicit strategy on brand attitude was mediated by brand image. Results confirmed that the indirect effect of brand image was significant, as indicated by both Sobel test (Z = 2.26, p = .024) and bootstrapped confidence intervals (95% CI = {.0537, .7072}). Whereas results from study one indicated a perfect mediation, significance values from the current findings indicate that the moderation was only partial; the effect of the implicit communication on brand attitude decreased by a nontrivial amount, but not to zero (Preacher and Hayes 2004). Result for the simple moderation model is depicted in figure 4.3. H7 was therefore supported.

Brand image

$.67^{**}$

$.51^{***}$

Implicit strategy[c]

Brand attitude

$.38^{*a}$
$(.72^{***b})$
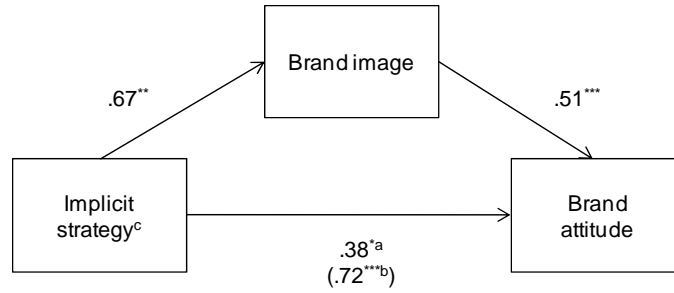
Sobel Z value: 2.26, p = .02
95% CI: {.0537, .7072}

[a] Direct effect after controlling for brand image
[b] Total effect
[c] Compared to control group
* p < .10
** p < .05
*** p < .01

The Role of Sponsorship Attitude

Results from variance analysis showed that the explicit strategy group scored significantly higher than the control group on *sponsorship attitude* ($F_{1,89} = 11.62$, *p* = .001; $M_{Explicit} = 4.53$, $M_{Control} = 3.52$). Conducting a simple mediation analysis showed that there was a significant indirect effect of sponsorship attitude on brand attitude, as confirmed by both Sobel test ($Z = 2.98$, *p* = .003) and the bootstrapped confidence interval (95% CI = {.2069, .8745}). Thus, hypothesis H8 was supported by the data. With respect to the implicit strategy, sponsorship attitude was not predicted to have a significant indirect effect on brand attitude. However, contrary to the first study, results showed a significant difference between the implicit communication group and the control group. ($F_{1,89} = 8.24$, *p* = .005; $M_{Implicit} = 4.35$, $M_{Control} = 3.52$). Based on both Sobel and bootstrap test, it was revealed that sponsorship attitude significantly mediated the effect on brand attitude also for the implicit strategy ($Z = 2.62$, p = .009; 95% CI = {.1211, .7814}). Path coefficients for this simple mediation model for both strategies are displayed in figures 4.4 and 4.5 below.

FIGURE 4.4
Simple Mediation – Impact of the <u>Explicit</u> Strategy on Brand Attitude via Sponsorship Attitude, study 2
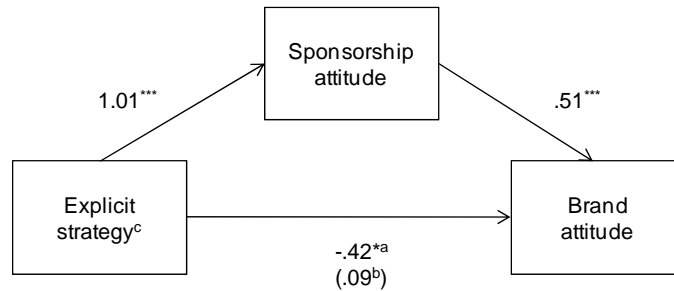
Sobel Z value: 2.98, p = .003
95% CI: {.2069, .8745}

[a] Direct effect after controlling for sponsorship attitude
[b] Total effect
[c] Compared to control group
* p < .10
** p < .05
*** p < .01

FIGURE 4.5
Simple Mediation – Impact of the <u>Implicit</u> Strategy on Brand Attitude via Sponsorship Attitude, study 2
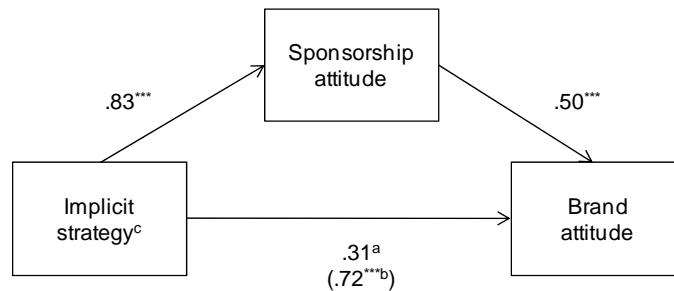
Sobel Z value: 2.62, p = .009
95% CI: {.1211, .7814}

[a] Direct effect after controlling for sponsorship attitude
[b] Total effect
[c] Compared to control group
* p < .10
** p < .05
*** p < .01

The Role of Altruistic Motive Attribution

Also for altruistic motive attribution, a significant difference was found between the implicit strategy and the control group ($F_{1,89} = 4.34$, $p = .04$; $M_{Implicit} = 3.36$, $M_{Control} = 2.80$). Simple mediation analysis showed that perceived altruism significantly moderated the effect of the implicit strategy on *brand attitude* ($Z = 1.77$, $p = .076$; 95% CI = {.0115, .4304}). H9 was therefore supported. Path coefficients are depicted in figure 4.6. With respect to commercial

motive attribution, results indicated the expected difference between the control group and the explicit strategy (see table 4.2). As expected, explicit message arguments generated a higher level of perceived commercial intent, but statistically significant only at the 10% level ($F_{1,89}$ = 2.81, p = .097; $M_{Explicit}$ = 5.21, $M_{Control}$ = 4.67). Mediation analysis showed no evidence of an indirect effect of commercial motive attribution on brand attitude, hence H10 was rejected.

<div align="center">

FIGURE 4.6
Simple Mediation – Impact of the Implicit Strategy on Brand Attitude via Altruism, study 2

</div>
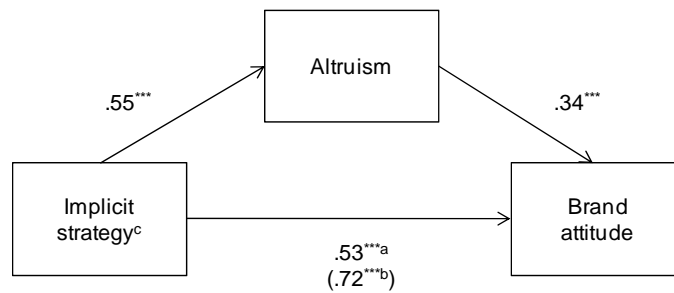
Sobel Z value: 1.77, p = .076
95% CI: {.0115, .4304}

[a] Direct effect after controlling for altruism
[b] Total effect
[c] Compared to control group
* p < .10
** p < .05
*** p < .01

4.4.5.   Multiple Mediation Analysis

The Implicit Communication Strategy

The results above indicate that brand image, sponsorship attitude, and altruistic motive attribution were all significant mediators for the effects of the implicit strategy on brand attitude. In order to determine the relative magnitude of the documented indirect effects associated with the three mediators, multiple mediation analysis was conducted using the SPSS macro developed by Preacher and Hayes (2008). Testing one multiple mediation model instead of conducting several simple mediation analyses reduces the likelihood of parameter bias due to omitted variables and allows one to determine the relative magnitudes of the indirect effects (Preacher and Hayes 2008). Hence, contrasting indirect effects in multiple mediator models means that the *unique* abilities of each mediator to account for the effect of X on Y are compared (Preacher and Hayes 2008). Sobel and bootstrap tests were conducted

to assess the possible differences between the indirect effects. Calculations from normal theory test (Sobel test) and bootstrap confidence intervals are reported in table 4.3. In accordance with the simple mediation analysis, bootstrap results for indirect effects show that all three variables were significant mediators, since their 95% confidence interval does not contain zero (Preacher and Hayes 2008). Results in table 4.3 show an example of inconsistency between Sobel test and Bootstrapping with respect to the effect of altruistic motive attribution; Whereas Bootstrapping indicated a significant mediation effect, the Sobel Z-value was not significant (p > .10). Although the bootstrapped CI is used as the basis for hypotheses-testing when Bootstrap and Sobel tests are inconsistent (discussed in section 3.5.5), it should be noted that the CI's lower limit is just marginally above zero. The result indicates that the mediating effect of altruism is reduced by the presence of the two other mediators in the model. However, examination of the contrasts by pairs indicates that the three indirect effects could not be distinguished in terms of magnitude, since zero is contained in the confidence interval for all three contrasts.

TABLE 4.3
Multiple Mediation – Impact of the <u>Implicit</u> Strategy on Brand Attitude via Brand Image, Sponsorship Attitude, and Altruism

		Product of Coefficients		Bootstrapping BCa 95% CI	
	Point Estimate	SE	Z	LL	UL
Indirect Effects					
Brand Image	.21	.10	1.97[**]	.0339	.5309
Sponsorship Att.	.20	.10	1.92[*]	.0360	.5210
Altruism	.10	.06	1.51	.0052	.3020
TOTAL	.50	.17	2.94[***]	.1739	.9187
Contrasts					
Brand Image vs. Sponsorship Att.	.005	.14	.03	-.3241	.3389
Brand Image vs. Altruism	.11	.11	.96	-.1027	.4106
Sponsorship Att. vs. Altruism	.10	.12	.86	-.1610	.4397

Note: BCa = bias corrected and accelerated; 5000 bootstrap samples. CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit
[*]p<.10
[**]p<.05
[**]p<.01

The Explicit Communication Strategy

Results from simple mediation analysis indicated significant indirect effects of both perceived fit and sponsorship attitude on brand attitude when the sponsorship was communicated explicitly. A multiple mediation analysis, using both Sobel and bootstrap tests, was therefore conducted to determine the relative magnitude of the indirect effects associated the two mediators. Results are reported in table 4.4. From both Sobel test and the bootstrap CI intervals it was revealed that only sponsorship attitude was found to be a significant mediator when the two variables was entered simultaneously (Z = 2.73, p = .006; 95% CI = {.1941, .9099}). Examination of the contrast confirmed that there was a significant difference between the magnitude of the two mediators; Z = -2.12, p = .03; 95% CI = {-.9938, -.1194}. Hence, when controlling for the indirect effect of sponsorship attitude, perceived fit is no longer a significant mediator for the communication effects. Plausible explanations and further analyses of this finding will be provided in the discussion section.

TABLE 4.4
Multiple Mediation – Impact of the <u>Explicit </u>Strategy on Brand Attitude via Perceived Fit and Sponsorship Attitude

| | | Product of Coefficients | | Bootstrapping | |
| | | | | BCa 95% CI | |
	Point Estimate	SE	Z	LL	UL
Indirect Effects					
Perceived Fit	.05	.07	.71	-.0773	.2419
Sponsorship Att.	.46	.17	2.73[***]	.1941	.9099
TOTAL	.51	.17	3.01[***]	.2231	.9220
Contrasts					
Perceived Fit vs. Sponsorship Att.	-.41	.19	-.2.12[**]	-.9938	-.1194

Note: BCa = bias corrected and accelerated; 5000 bootstrap samples. CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit
[*]p<.10
[**]p<.05
[**]p<.01

4.4.6. Ad Processing

No difference between implicit and explicit communication with regards to the scaled cognitive elaboration measure was found in the first experiment. The items measuring cognitive elaboration were altered for the second experiment in order to capture degree of message ambiguity. As anticipated, results showed that the implicit strategy generated a higher elaboration score than the explicit strategy, with a p-value slightly above the critical 10% significance level ($M_{Implicit} = 3.94$, $M_{Explicit} = 3.37$; $p = .102$). Again, the marginal difference may be explained by perceived ambiguity of an explicit message claiming similarity in a naturally incongruent sponsorship. With respect to number of words elicited by the ads in the open responses, there was no significant difference between the strategies. Results from the two cognitive elaboration measures are reported in table 4.5.

TABLE 4.5
Amount of Cognitive Elaboration, study 2

Cognitive elaboration measures	Communication strategy	
	Implicit	*Explicit*
Elaboration	3.94 n = 45 (1.75)	3.37 n = 45 (1.56)
Number of words	17.71 *n* = 45 *(20.12)*	18.62 *n* = 45 *(17.70)*

Notes: The table reports mean scores, number of respondents in each cell (n), and standard deviation (in parentheses). No mean differences were statistically significant

In order to analyze the valence of thoughts elicited by the ads, open responses were categorized by two coders who were blind to the research hypotheses. The same categories from the first experiment were utilized. Agreement between coders was approximately 85%, and there were no significant differences in their coding for any of the thought categories. Disagreement was resolved through negotiation between the experimenter and the two coders. Chi square tests of differences between the strategies are presented in table 4.6. Results indicated few differences between the strategies. The only statistically significant difference was documented with respect to thoughts about the communicated image dimension. Whereas the implicit strategy in the first experiment elicited significantly more thoughts about the image dimension than the explicit strategy, the second experiment showed an opposite pattern. Here, the explicit strategy generated significantly more thoughts about

the image dimension compared to the implicit message. Results from the thought-listing task indicated no significant difference between the two strategies with respect to motive attribution. This is in accordance with results for the scaled measures of commercial and altruistic motive attribution (see table 4.2). As presented in the mediation analysis, there was a difference between the control group and the implicit strategy with respect to perceived altruism, and a marginal difference between the control group and the explicit strategy in relation to commercial motive attribution. However, results from the open responses suggest that only a few respondents evaluated sponsor motive consciously during ad processing.

TABLE 4.6
Type of Cognitive Elaboration - Chi Square tests, study 2

Thoughts categories		Communication groups	
		Moderate incongruency	
		Implicit (n = 45)	*Explicit (n = 45)*
Total	Pos.	24.4%	24.4%
	Neg.	35.6%	28.9%
	Neu.	48.9%	46.7%
Image	Pos.	**11.1%**[a]	**28.9%**[a]
	Neg.	0%	2.2%
	Total	**11.1%**[b]	**28.9%**[b]
Fit	Pos.	6.7%	13.3%
	Neg.	15.6%	15.6%
	Neu.	6.7%	15.6%
	Total	28.9%	44.4%
Ad	Pos.	8.9%	6.7%
	Neg.	22.2%	15.6%
	Neu.	4.4%	6.7%
	Total	31.1%	24.4%
Motives	Commercial	8.9%	15.6%
	Altruistic	2.2%	6.7%

Note: Percentages indicate the rate of respondents within the communication group who reported thoughts pertaining to the category. Percentages with same alphabetical superscripts are significantly different from each other
[a,b] Difference between implicit and explicit is significant at $p < .05$

4.5. Summary of Findings and Conclusions

4.5.1. Main Effects

Hypotheses 1-3 were modified according to the revised conceptual model for the second study. Results showed that the positive brand attitude effect generated by the implicit strategy in the first study was replicated; once again, there was a significantly higher brand attitude score for the implicit strategy compared to the control group (H1). Based on changes in the strategic premise for the sponsorship (reinforcement of *existing* image link), a positive attitude effect was anticipated also for the explicit strategy (H2). This prediction was not supported by the data. H3 concerned differences between the two communication strategies. Results confirmed the predicted effect; the implicit strategy generated more positive brand attitudes compared to the explicit strategy. Mediation analyses were conducted in order to explain the mechanisms underlying the main effects.

4.5.2. Mediation Effects

Four mediators were suggested in the revised conceptual model, including perceived fit, brand image, sponsorship attitude, and motive attribution. Based on hypotheses 6(rev.) through 10, the effect of the implicit strategy on brand attitude was expected to be mediated by perceived fit, brand image, and altruistic motive attribution, and the effect of the explicit strategy was expected to be mediated by perceived fit, sponsorship attitude, and commercial motive attribution. Results confirmed brand image and altruistic motive attribution as significant mediators for the implicit strategy. However, perceived fit was not significantly enhanced by the strategy, hence ruled out as an explanatory mechanism. Inconsistently with the first study, implicit communication effect on brand attitude was also mediated by a positive impact on sponsorship attitude. A multiple mediation analysis assessed the significant unique indirect effects for the implicit strategy. Contrasts of the indirect effects showed that there was no significant difference in terms of magnitude of the indirect effects when compared by pairs. Analysis of the explicit strategy confirmed that all three predicted mediators were significantly enhanced compared to the control group. Simple mediation analysis revealed that only perceived fit and sponsorship attitude were significant mediators for brand attitude effects. Contrasting the two significant indirect effects in a multiple

mediation analysis showed that the specific indirect effect through sponsorship attitude was significantly larger than the specific indirect effect through perceived fit.

4.5.3. Conclusions

The purpose of the second study was (1) to replicate and confirm findings from study one, (2) to examine the possibility of crating perceived fit based on an existing, but non-salient image overlap, and (3) to further explore mediating mechanisms in explicit and implicit sponsorship communication. Results show that findings from the first study to a large extent were replicated by the second study. Consistent with findings for the moderately incongruent sponsorship in the first study, only the implicit strategy generated significantly more positive brand attitudes compared to the no-communication group. Both studies revealed that the implicit strategy did not influence perceived fit, hence ruling out fit as an explanatory mechanism for the positive attitude effects. The second study confirmed, in accordance with the first study, that positive brand evaluation could be partly explained by the implicit strategy's ability to influence the implied brand image dimension. As predicted, the second study also found that consumers' attribution of altruistic sponsor motives explained some of the positive brand attitude effect. A third significant mediator appearing in the analysis for the implicit strategy was attitude toward the sponsorship. This variable was not significantly influenced by the implicit strategy in the first study, and it was predicted that this variable would only account for effects of the explicit strategy. With respect to the explicit communication strategy, the first study showed that both brand image and sponsorship attitude was significantly enhanced, but only sponsorship attitude represented a significant indirect effect on brand attitudes. Study 2 confirmed sponsorship attitude as a significant indirect effect. The communication image dimension, however, was not influenced by explicit message arguments. Results also showed that explicit arguments were able to increase level of perceived fit. This result confirms that a dormant image-overlap can be activated and enhance fit perceptions, but only when explicit statements are provided. As predicted, the positive influence on perceived fit represented a significant indirect effect on brand evaluations. The explicit strategy was anticipated to generate attributions about commercial sponsor motives, and this mechanism was expected to mediate effects on brand evaluations. Results confirmed that explicit arguments increased perceptions of commercial motives, but no significant indirect effect on brand attitude was documented. A plausible explanation may be that the commercial motive scale reflects a general perception about why

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companies invest in sponsorships, and as such represent no threat to positive sponsor evaluations. Further discussion about the role of commercial motives is provided in the next chapter.

Although findings from study 1 to a large extent were replicated by study 2, open responses in the second experiment challenge the suggested explanation for the nature of the implicit message processing. The first study showed a larger number of image-related thoughts when the dimension was implied rather than explicitly stated. Based on conclusion explicitness theory, this effect was ascribed to increased tendency to elaborate on a missing conclusion. Results from the second study do no support this theoretical explanation. First, open responses showed that significantly fewer thoughts about the image dimension were generated for the implicit strategy compared to the explicit strategy. Second, despite a marginally higher score on cognitive elaboration for the implicit strategy compared to the explicit strategy, this measure may be considered a reflection of perceived message ambiguity rather than a higher level of interpretative effort. This assumption is supported by the fact the number of thoughts, as a measure of degree of cognitive elaboration, was not higher in the implicit group.

Consistent with other areas of the marketing discipline, the sponsorship literature has widely accepted perceived fit between the sponsor and the sponsee as a key success factor. As such, perceived fit was a central concept when developing communication strategies with the aim of enhancing incongruent sponsorship. This is in accordance with recommendation made regarding a managerial responsibility of creating fit through additional communication effort (Crimmins and Horn 1996; Simmons and Becker-Olsen 2006). Results from the first study showed that communication did not significantly enhance perception of fit and that other processing mechanisms were more suitable in explaining communication effects. Strategic adjustments were made for the second study in order to further explore the role of perceived fit. Here a reinforcement strategy was employed, through which an existing, but non-salient image overlap was communicated. The idea was that the lack of image-overlap in the first study produced counter-arguments and prevented a positive effect of fit, and that the use of an existing image overlap would facilitate positive fit evaluations to a larger degree. Yet, results from the second study showed that perceived fit played a less prominent role than expected. This finding challenges the view of fit as the most important construct when

creating successful sponsorship communication programs. A further discussion of this surprising finding along with an in-depth discussion of the alternative processing mechanisms is provided in the next chapter.

Chapter 5.   Discussion and Implications

5.1. Introduction

This chapter is organized as follows: First, main findings from the two experiments are summarized. Second, an in-depth discussion of the findings is presented, organized according to the explanatory mechanisms for communication effects documented in the research. Third, theoretical and managerial implications of the findings are discussed.

5.2. Summary of Findings

In the following sections, main findings from the two studies are reviewed. A summary of results from the hypotheses-testing can be found in table 5.1. The presentation of results is organized with respect to main effects and mediation effects.

5.2.1.   Main Effects

The purpose of the first study was to test communication effects on sponsorship responses at two distinct levels of natural sponsorship incongruency. Sponsorship responses were initially conceptualized as brand attitude, sponsorship attitude, and brand image. Both the explicit and implicit strategies were expected to generate more positive consumer responses compared to the control group when the sponsorship was moderately incongruent (H1-H2). Results showed that the implicit strategy had a positive effect on brand attitude and brand image (supporting H1a and H1c), whereas attitude toward the sponsorship was not improved compared to the control group. The explicit strategy generated positive attitudes towards the sponsorship and improved brand image compared to the control group (supporting H2b and H2c), whereas brand attitude remained unchanged by the explicit message. H3 concerned predictions of differences between the two communication strategies for the moderately incongruent sponsorships. Results documented no differences between the strategies with respect to any of the dependent variables. With respect to the strongly incongruent sponsorship (H4 and H5), results indicated that scores on the dependent variables were not altered by any of the communication strategies compared to the control group. Overall, only the moderately incongruent sponsorship benefited from additional communication.

A second study was conducted to replicate and extend findings in relation to the moderately incongruent sponsorship in the first experiment. Based on the presence of a non-salient image overlap between the Benetton brand and NFF, this sponsorship was regarded as analogous to the moderately incongruent sponsorship in study 1 in terms of theoretical predictions for communication effects. Communication was expected to generate a pathway between the parties based on the dormant image overlap inherent in the sponsorship, hence providing a positively valued meaning to the sponsorship. Both the explicit and the implicit strategies were anticipated to positively influence brand attitudes. However, results showed that once again, only the implicit strategy was able to generate more positive brand attitudes compared to the no-communication condition. Contrary to the first experiment, the second study lent support to the hypotheses regarding superior brand attitude effects of the implicit strategy over the explicit strategy.

5.2.2. Mediation Effects

The general conceptual model presented in the first chapter suggested that communication effects on sponsorship responses would be mediated by perceived fit. Results in the first study showed that neither communication strategy influenced perceived fit at any of the sponsorship incongruency levels. Based on a hierarchy-of-effects approach, brand image and sponsorship attitude were suggested as mediators linking sponsorship communication and attitudes toward the sponsor brand. Mediation analysis in the first study documented a complete mediation of brand image on brand attitude when the moderately incongruent sponsorship was communicated implicitly. Although no significant total effect of the explicit strategy on brand attitude was documented, there was a significant indirect effect through sponsorship attitude. With respect to the strongly incongruent sponsorship, communication did not influence any of the potential moderators in the revised model, hence ruling out the possibility of indirect effects through these variables. Additional analysis of the measure of perceived fit suggested that the measure was two-dimensional, distinguishing between a general sense of fit and a more specific dimension. Results showed that the explicit strategy positively influenced the general dimension of perceived fit, and mediation analysis confirmed that general perceived fit represented a significant indirect effect on brand attitudes and sponsorship attitudes (results are reported in appendix I). In summary, implicit communication effects for the moderately incongruent sponsorship were mediated by brand image, and explicit communication effects worked through improved attitudes toward the

sponsorship. For the strongly incongruent sponsorship, explicit communication effects were mediated by enhanced perceptions of general sponsorship fit.

In study 2, brand image, sponsorship attitude, and altruistic motive attribution were conceptualized as alternative explanatory mechanisms to perceived fit for communication effects on brand attitude. According to H6(rev), both the implicit and the explicit communication strategies were expected to generate positive brand attitudes through perceived fit. Results showed that only the explicit strategy increased perceived fit between the sponsor and the object, and a simple mediation analysis revealed that perceived fit significantly explained variations in brand attitude for this strategy (supporting H6b). Consistent with the first experiment, a mediation analysis showed that a positive influence on brand image mediated the effect of the implicit strategy on brand attitude (supporting H7). Findings in the first experiment suggested that attitude toward the sponsor-sponsee relationship significantly accounted for variation in brand attitude caused by the explicit strategy, whereas the implicit strategy did not generate such effect. Contrary to findings in the first study, the second study showed that both the implicit and the explicit strategy generated more positive attitudes toward the sponsorship compared to the control group. Mediation analysis confirmed that sponsorship attitude was a significant mediator not only for the explicit strategy (supporting H8), but also for the implicit strategy. Finally, brand attitude effects of the implicit strategy were in accordance with the predictions (H9) also mediated by altruistic motive attribution. In conclusion, implicit communication effects were mediated by brand image, altruistic motive attribution, and sponsorship attitude, whereas the explicit strategy influenced brand attitude through perceived fit and sponsorship attitude.

TABLE 5.1
Summary of Hypotheses-Testing

Hypotheses	Study 1	Study 2
	Main effects	
H1a/H1(rev.)	Supported	Supported
H1b	Rejected	[a]
H1c	Supported	[a]
H2a/H2(rev.)	Rejected	Rejected
H2b	Supported	[a]
H2c	Supported	[a]
H3a/H3(rev.)	Rejected	Supported
H3b	Rejected	[a]
H3c	Rejected	[a]
H4a-c	Rejected	[a]
H5a-c	Rejected	[a]
	Mediation effects	
H6a/H6a(rev.)	Rejected	Rejected
H6b/H6b(rev.)	Rejected	Supported
H7	[a]	Supported
H8	[a]	Supported
H9	[b]	Supported
H10	[b]	Rejected

[a] Sponsorship attitude and brand image were conceptualized as moderators in the revised model, hence they do not apply to hypotheses of main effects in study 2, or to hypotheses of mediation effects in study 1.
[b] The hypothesis regarding motive attribution as a mediator applies only to study 2

5.3. Discussion of Findings

With reference to the two research questions formulated in the first chapter, this dissertation has put focus on communication effects for naturally incongruent sponsorships. The two studies have uncovered several mechanisms that explain the effect of open-ended versus closed-ended sponsorship communication. Derived from the broad consensus regarding importance of fit in sponsorships, the studies investigated whether and how communication can alter fit perceptions and thereby possibly enhance consumers' responses to naturally incongruent sponsorships. Findings have brought limited support to the notions that ad messages can influence fit evaluations, and that this impact represents an indirect effect on sponsorship responses. Results from the first study showed that fit was only marginally influenced and that other factors, such as brand image and sponsorship attitude, represent more powerful explanations for positive communication effects on the sponsoring brand. These alternative explanatory mechanisms were further explored in the second study, where

four significant mediators were identified; perceived fit, brand image, sponsorship attitude, and motive attribution. The following discussion is organized according to these mechanisms. A final section of the discussion is devoted to the differences between strong and moderate incongruency in the first study.

5.3.1. The Role of Perceived Fit

Although some recent academic attention has been devoted to how articulation can enhance responses to incongruent sponsorships (e.g., Coppetti et al. 2009; Cornwell et al. 2006; Weeks et al. 2008), only a few studies have empirically examined the ability to strategically influence perceived sponsorship fit per se (e.g. Dardis 2009), and no known studies have examined different *types* of messages directly on perceived fit. The current research has contributed to this gap in the literature by examining whether perceived fit can be created by two distinct advertising messages that vary with respect to degree of conclusion explicitness. Therefore, one of the main objectives of the current research was to examine whether perceived sponsorship fit is a fixed or flexible construct. Results showed a significant change in perceived fit when the sponsorship was communicated explicitly in the second study. In accordance with the prediction, a mediation analysis confirmed that increased fit was a significant explanatory mechanism for positive brand attitude effects. Additional analysis showed that the explicit strategy in the first study positively influenced the most holistic dimension of fit, and that this influence represented a significant indirect effect on brand attitudes. Overall, results from the two experiments suggest that explicit arguments advocating similarity between the sponsor and the object may positively influence perceived fit, thus lending support to the notion that fit is a flexible construct (RQ 2). The implicit strategy, however, did not influence perceived fit in any of the experiments. Examination of the open responses was useful in clarifying how the strategies have been processed in terms of fit evaluations. For the moderately incongruent sponsorship in study 1, there was no significant difference between the two strategies with respect to positive or negative fit evaluations. For the strongly incongruent sponsorship, on the other hand, the implicit strategy generated a significantly higher number of negative fit evaluations. At this level of incongruency, conclusion openness is likely to have resulted in frustration because the intended conclusion was not intuitively logical. The high level of counter-argumentation regarding fit in the implicit group (40.9 %) is in line with the expected contrast effects for open-ended communication when incongruency is strong (H4 in study 1). Therefore, support

is found for Mandler's (1982) view on effects of strong discrepancy between new information and existing knowledge, which posits that unsuccessful accommodation processes will typically follow extreme incongruency. If individuals are not able to activate a new schema that "fits" the new information (accommodation) due to extreme incongruency, the response will according to Mandler's (1982) theory be negatively valued. In the explicit group, the direct statements about the basis of fit seem to have gained acceptance among the respondents. Only 5.3% reported counter-arguments (negative fit evaluations), and although few positive thoughts about fit were reported (4.5%), the significant increase in the general dimension of perceived fit for this group suggests that the explicit information contributed to the formation of a meaningful pathway between the sponsor and the sponsee. This result is also in accordance with indirect persuasion research, which contends that ability and motivation to resolve the ambiguity in an implicit message will determine its success (Chebat et al. 2001; Sawyer and Howard 1991). Motivation and/or ability to infer the omitted conclusion is likely to have suffered from the strong level of incongruency in the current situation. The cue provided in the implicit strategy represents a severe mismatch with dominant brand category associations, since eco-friendliness and the oil industry represent an incongruent constellation in the mind of most consumers. When confronted with the implied statement of fit, it probably requires extensive interpretative effort to infer that alternative energy sources increasingly employed by oil companies represent the explanatory link. And even if the perceivers do recognize the intended conclusion, the elaborative state induced by the implicitness has evidently motivated counter-argumentation. Therefore, strong sponsorship incongruency seems to require explicit arguments.

In the case of the moderately incongruent sponsorship, only one respondent (2.7%) reported counterarguments regarding fit when exposed to the implicit strategy, and four respondents (10,3%) were arguing against fit in response to the explicit strategy. Also with respect to positive arguments, there was limited elaboration; four respondents (13,5%) exposed to the implicit strategy, and 5 respondents (13,3%) exposed to the explicit strategy reported positive fit evaluations. Overall, the perceived fit measure and thought-listing indicate that perceived fit was not an important construct when individuals were evaluating the moderately incongruent sponsorship. As evident from the mediation analyses, processing differences for this sponsorship can rather be explained by alternative mechanisms, which will be evaluated later in the discussion.

The sponsorship examined in the second study was evaluated as conceptually equivalent to the moderately incongruent sponsorship in the first study. Pretesting confirmed an image-overlap based on "diversity", which was anticipated to be non-salient when no communication was provided. Both explicit arguments and an implicit cue were expected to activate the dormant image-overlap and therefore increase perceived fit. However, results showed that only the explicit strategy enhanced evaluations of fit, which represented a significant mediator for brand attitude effects. The verbal statements of similarity in the explicit strategy focused on NFF's campaign against racism in sports. This is a very specific piece of information that may not be known (available) of salient (accessible) to individuals who were processing the implicit message. In spite of a significant increase in perceived fit following exposure to explicit message arguments, there was no significant total effect on brand attitudes. Hence, other factors have had a reversed effect brand evaluations, which has cancelled out overall positive effects of fit. Perceivers of the implicit message were not constrained by information about the sponsorship object, which according to communication theory is expected to elicit weaker implicatures compared to the explicit strategy (Lagerwerf and Meijers 2008). Weak implicatures produce a wider range of inferences (McQuarrie and Phillips 2005), and the intended conclusion is less likely to be inferred compared to the explicit strategy. Results indicate that individuals exposed to the implicit strategy have not reached the intended conclusion, as measured by conscious evaluations of perceived fit. Alternative explanations for improved attitudes toward the sponsoring brand in relation to open-ended communication, and explanations for lack of positive total effects for the explicit strategy are discussed in the following sections.

5.3.2.   The Role of Brand Image

The brand image variable reflects the basis for created fit in the two communication strategies. In the first study, both the explicit and the implicit strategies had a positive influence on brand image when the sponsorship was moderately incongruent. However, only for the implicit strategy did this effect represent a significant explanatory factor with respect to changes in brand attitude. The second study produced a similar result; positive brand attitude effects were mediated by enhanced brand image elicited by the implicit strategy. Contrary to the first experiment, the explicit strategy did not enhance brand image compared to the control group. A potential explanation can be found in the relative influence of the two strategies on perceived image of the sponsorship object. Results show that the explicit

strategy generated a significantly inferior object image compared to the implicit strategy ($M_{Implicit}$ = 4.98, $M_{Explicit}$ = 4.30; p = .017). In order to examine the role of object image, a simple mediation analysis was performed, through which the indirect effect of object image on brand image was assessed. Sobel and bootstrap tests both confirmed that object image significantly mediated the effect on brand image (Z = 1.86, 95% CI = {.0039, .5579}), suggesting that differences in brand image evaluations between the two strategies can be explained by their relative impact on object image. The explicit strategy seems to have generated negative inferences regarding the sponsorship object. Verbal arguments in the ad emphasized the antiracism-campaign run under the NFF auspices, which led to significantly lower score on the image dimension compared to the metaphoric slogan in the implicit strategy. Object image was not measured in the first study, but it is not likely that object image has had a similar impact in this study. Mean statistics show a higher level of object involvement for the sponsored object in the second study (M = 4.61, SD = 2.08, n = 136) compared to the object in the first study (M = 2.59, SD = 1.47, n = 86), which should be expected since football is a much more high-profiled sport compared to sailing. Open responses also indicate that there were highly fragmented beliefs and feelings toward the football, which suggests a polarized attitude pattern with respect to the sponsorship object. This impression is also confirmed by the high standard deviation for the object involvement measure in the second study (SD = 2.08). It is likely that explicit arguments about the high-profiled object induced processing at a higher cognitive level than the arguments about the low-involvement object in the first study.[28]

In the first study, positive brand image effects in relation to the implicit strategy were explained by conclusion explicitness theory (see discussion in 3.7.3). Supported by the open responses, results indicated that message openness increased elaboration about the missing conclusion (the image dimension) when the sponsorship was moderately incongruent. This result is in accordance with indirect persuasion theory suggesting that open ads attracts more interpretative effort than closed ads. Since open ads are thought to be more demanding in terms of cognitive capacity (Chebat et al. 2001), consumers' motivation to process ad information has been regarded as a key factor for implicit conclusion effectiveness (Martin et

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[28] Analysis show that object image was not mediating the brand attitude effects of implicit vs. explicit communication.

al. 2003). However, level of cognitive elaboration in the first study, measured by total number of elicited thoughts, showed that the implicit strategy generated a lower level of cognitive elaboration than the explicit strategy. Also, the individual processing factors, need for cognition and object involvement, did not explain the effect of implicit communication as predicted by conclusion explicitness research (Martin et al. 2003). In discussion of the results, it was therefore suggested that positive image effects could have been produced based on heuristic processing (Chaiken 1980), in which the picture and/or the implicit message was used as a peripheral cue. In the second study, the brand image dimension was once again significantly enhanced by the implicit message, which through mediation analysis was documented as a significant mechanism for explaining brand attitude effects. However, contrary to the first study, open responses gave no indication of increased elaboration that would suggest conscious interpretation of the implied image link. Having removed the pictorial element from the ads, the result supports the notion that thoughts regarding the image dimension in the first study may have been elicited by the picture as a peripheral cue rather than through extensive interpretation of the missing conclusion. This research offers no direct test of the difference between verbal and visual metaphors. However, the difference between the implicit strategies in the two studies in terms of number of image-related thoughts elicited is in accordance with the claim that visual metaphors is one of the most powerful rhetorical figures (Dahlén 2009; McQuarrie and Mick 1996). Moreover, the two measures capturing amount of cognitive elaboration showed that the implicit strategy did not generate a higher level of elaboration compared to the explicit strategy. This calls for an alternative theoretical interpretation of the implicit message effects than the one offered by conclusion explicitness theory in terms of increased interpretative effort. McQuarrie and Phillips (2005) have questioned the prerequisite of high involvement for implicit communication effectiveness; if only involved consumers bother to self-generate inferences, then the growing use of open ads would imply that consumers' general level of ad message involvement have grown equally strong, which clearly is a doubtful proposition. In search for an alternative explanation for how indirect claims are processed by consumers, McQuarrie and Phillips (2005) consider the linguistic concept of *implicatures* (Sperber and Wilson 1986) in communication. The theoretical formulation of weak implicatures offers an alternative explanation to how an implicit ad message confer an advantage (McQuarrie and Phillips 2005). Whereas conclusion explicitness researchers argue that characteristics of the audience, such as level of *involvement* and *NFC*, will influence the effect of open-ended ads (Ahearne et al. 2000; Chebat et al. 2001; Kardes 1988; Martin et al. 2003; Sawyer and Howard 1991;

Stayman and Kardes 1992), the weak-implicature model of indirect persuasion describes the inference-making process as "a relatively undemanding process akin to that used to comprehend messages in everyday encounters" (McQuarrie and Phillips 2005, p. 10). With reference to the results in the current research the weak implicatures in the implicit communication strategy may have benefited from self-generated inferences at a low cognitive processing level. More specifically, the significant role of brand image in open-ended communication suggests that fit may have been evaluated based on image overlap at a spontaneous or subconscious level. This is supported by the fact that perceived fit did not explain positive brand attitude effects for the implicit strategy. In accordance with Trendel and Warlop (2005) who argue that sponsorships are most effective when few cognitive resources are devoted to the processing of incongruent sponsorships, the results show that a low processing level with a subtle image transfer produced more positive attitudes than central processing of explicit arguments.

5.3.3. The Role of Motive Attribution

A central difference between sponsorship and advertising is the ability of sponsorship to generate goodwill, which can be attributed to its perceived benefit to the society (McDonald 1991; Meenaghan 2001; Meenaghan and Shipley 1999). A related perspective is that positive attitudes arise from the implicit and indirect nature of the persuasive message in sponsorship communication. The persuasive intent and commercial motivation are more subtle in sponsorships, hence sponsorships are typically perceived as less coercive than traditional advertising. However, through leveraging investments, the inclusion of a more direct and explicit communication component into sponsorships reduces the difference between traditional advertising and sponsorship as communication forms. Results from the two experiments in this dissertation suggest that message explicitness may undermine the unique ability to enhance goodwill with sponsorships. The following discussion evaluates the role of motive attribution in the relative persuasiveness of implicit and explicit sponsorship communication.

Consumers who are confronted with an obvious intent to persuade are assumed to become suspicious of ulterior motives, which may decrease the persuasive impact (Reinhard, Messner, and Sporer 2006). That is because awareness of persuasion intent may induce reactance and decrease message acceptance (Reinhard and Messner 2009; Reinhard et al.

2006). In general, psychological reactance takes place in response to threats to perceived behavioral freedoms (Brehm 1966). In relation to persuasive communication and attitude change, reactance refers to a situation where individuals experience that their freedom to take a position is threatened (Brehm and Brehm 1981). According to Reinhard et al. (2006), the persuasiveness of an explicit persuasive intent depends on whether individuals make inferences about altruistic or selfish motives. They find that explicit persuasive appeals make ulterior motives more accessible. With reference to the current research, the explicit arguments about the sponsorship rationale may have decreased persuasiveness of the message due to selfish motive attribution. In the first experiment, open responses for the strongly incongruent sponsorship supported this notion since explicitness generated more arguments about commercial motives compared to the implicit communication strategy. The finding is in line with previous sponsorship research, which has shown that articulating a sponsorship in a commercially oriented way may be negatively evaluated by consumers (Weeks et al. 2008). No significant findings were documented with respect to the measures of commercial and altruistic motive attribution in the first study. The scales reached low internal consistency (α < .70), and were altered for the second study.

In the second experiment, some interesting findings with respect to the role of altruistic motive attribution were documented. Analysis of variance indicated that the implicit strategy significantly increased attribution of altruistic sponsor motives compared to the control group, and mediation analysis showed that this influence represented a significant explanatory mechanism for positive brand attitude effects. Similarity to the significant role of brand image, altruistic motive attribution contributed to positive brand evaluations regardless of perceived fit. In the discussion of the impact of brand image, it was argued that effects may be attributed to positive inference-making at a low cognitive level. Similarly, attribution of altruistic motives seems to have occurred through heuristic processing rather than through a conscious evaluation of the sponsor's underlying motives. Open responses support this notion, since only one respondent in the implicit communication group reported thoughts about altruistic motives. In spite of their commercial nature, sponsorships are generally perceived as a marketing tool that benefits the community (Cornwell et al. 2005), and perceptions of intrinsically favorable actions are thought to be positively evaluated by consumers (Simmons and Becker-Olsen 2006). Results indicate that the act of sponsoring has generated positive responses regardless of perceived fit, and that this effect has occurred

through a positive affective reaction explained by image transfer and motive attribution. A similar result has been found in a study on cause-brand alliances by Lafferty (2007). Contrary to the predicted direction, results from the study showed that perceived fit in a brand-cause relationship was not a significant predictor of positive attitude formation. Lafferty (2007) reasons that positive affective reactions associated with a cause can "precede and negate any need for a logical fit" (p. 451). Applied to the findings in the current research, an affective response to the implicit message seems to have preceded cognitions and influenced attitudes regardless of perceived fit.

The explicit strategy did not influence perceived altruism compared to the control group. The fact that altruism was a significant mediator only for the implicit strategy suggests that explicit arguments may have caused reactance due to increased awareness about the persuasion intent. Knowing that perceived fit is positively associated with perceptions of sponsor sincerity (Rifon et al. 2004), and that the explicit strategy successfully improved evaluations of fit, this result may appear as a paradox. However, a simple mediation analysis confirms the expected relationship between perceived fit and altruistic motive attribution; Sobel test and bootstrapping procedure show that despite the lack of a significant total effect of the explicit strategy (compared to control) on altruism, there was a significant indirect effect through perceived fit ($Z = 1.88$, 95% CI = {.0240, .5456}). Lack of total effect indicates that other mechanisms have been working in the opposite direction of perceived fit and reduced perceived altruism. A reasonable explanation is that positive effects of created fit on perceived altruism compete with negative inferences caused by increased awareness of persuasion intents. According to Rifon et al. (2004), greater elaboration association with low fit increases the likelihood that persuasion knowledge is retrieved and used to make inferences about intrinsic motivation. Commercial motive attribution was expected to capture such negative effect. However, no significant indirect effect was found in the mediation analysis. The correlation matrix (see table H.3 in appendix H) may provide a plausible explanation. Results show that commercial motive attribution was positively correlated with brand attitude, sponsorship attitude, brand image, and perceived fit ($r_{BrandAtt.} = .213$, $r_{SponsorshipAtt.} = .237$, $r_{BrandImage} = .401$, $r_{Fit} = .236$). Perception of commercial motives seems therefore to represent a positive mechanism rather than a negative inference about object exploitation. A possible explanation for this unexpected results is that image-related objectives are perceived as the most common reason for entering sponsorships (Cornwell et

al. 2001), and a high score on this measure does not necessarily conflict with perceptions of altruism. The non-significant negative correlation between altruistic and commercial motive attribution supports this assumption. Overall, the two experiments lend support to the idea that implicit communication effects can be explained by altruistic motive attribution, whereas conclusion explicitness may have caused negative effects due to awareness of persuasion attempt. For the explicit strategy, potential positive effects of perceived altruism caused by enhanced fit are likely to have been mitigated by perceptions of the sponsorship as a tactic. Through the implicit strategy, however, the sponsorship retains its original communication form to a larger degree than the explicit strategy, hence producing goodwill-effects.

Despite the widely recognized importance of adding a controlled communication component to incongruent sponsorships (Cornwell et al. 2006; Crimmins and Horn 1996; Simmons and Becker-Olsen 2006), results from this dissertation suggest that there also is a risk associated with high level of explicitness in a sponsorship message. People appreciate philanthropic sponsorships more than commercial sponsorships (D'Astous and Bitz 1995), and an obvious attempt to use a sponsorship object for commercial purposes may harm the brand, or at least outweigh the positive effects of sponsorship communication. An additional study was conducted to explore the opportunities and risks of exploiting the commercial potential of a sponsored object (ref. definition of sponsorship, section 2.1.1). The specific purpose of the additional study was to investigate effects of using a sponsorship in the introduction of an incongruent brand extension. The idea was to test whether a sponsorship cue, perceived as congruent with the parent brand on some image dimension, could facilitate acceptance of an incongruent extension. Results show that the desired effect failed to materialize. In fact, findings indicate that the inclusion of a sponsorship may have a reverse effect than the intended outcome; when sponsorship was included as a cue in launching the extension compared a regular extension introduction without the sponsorship cue, results showed a tendency of more negative attitudes toward the extension and the parent brand. Open responses showed that the sponsorship caused negative inferences regarding the obvious persuasion tactic (e.g., "This is an obvious attempt to brainwash me into liking the Benetton extension"). Therefore, the use of sponsorship in the launching of brand extension seems to have produced negative attitude effects similar to those elicited by the explicit communication strategy. A detailed presentation of the experiment and further discussion of findings can be found in appendix J.

5.3.4.   The Role of Sponsorship Attitude

Attitude toward the sponsorship was in the first study conceptualized as one of three dependent variables. Results showed that this variable was positively influenced by the explicit strategy when the sponsorship was moderately incongruent. During additional analyses of the results, an alternative model was proposed, in which sponsorship attitude was conceptualized as a mediator for communication effects on brand attitude. Mediation analysis confirmed that sponsorship attitude change represented a significant indirect effect on brand attitudes when the sponsorship was communicated explicitly. The second study replicated this result, but showed that also effects of the implicit strategy were mediated by positive influence on sponsorship attitude.

The revised conceptualization of sponsorship attitude as a mediating variable is supported by a few studies in the sponsorship literature (e.g., Olson 2010; Simmons and Becker-Olsen 2006). Contributions by Simmons and Becker-Olsen (2006) and Olson (2010) show that attitude toward the sponsorship mediates effects of perceived fit on sponsor equity. In the current research, sponsorship attitude and perceived fit were tested as two alternative mediators. However, in concurrence with the sponsorship studies mentioned above, a mediation analysis was performed in order to assess the relationship between fit, sponsorship attitude, and brand attitude. Sobel test and bootstrapping procedure showed that the effect of the explicit strategy (versus control) on sponsorship attitude was mediated by perceived fit. The multiple mediation analysis conducted in the second study in this dissertation showed that simultaneous testing of perceived fit and sponsorship attitude as two indirect effects reduced the role of perceived fit (see table 4.4). With reference to the discussion above, perceived fit may be considered a predictor of sponsorship attitudes rather than an equally leveled mediator as suggested by the conceptual model in study 2. Overall, mediation analyses suggest a more complex causal structure between the variables than what is indicated by the conceptual models in this dissertation. With respect to sponsorship attitude, an alternative model may depict perceived fit as an important antecedent of sponsorship attitude, rather than two "competing" mechanisms as suggested in this research. Causal relationships between the suggested mediators in the revised model are beyond the scope of this dissertation, but represent a potential valuable focus for future sponsorship research.

5.3.5. Strong vs. Moderate Sponsorship Incongruency

The research presented in this dissertation has documented that the use of advertising as a sponsorship leverage tool can enhance consumers' responses to naturally incongruent sponsorships. However, findings suggest that only moderately incongruent sponsorships will benefit from communication. In this regard, it is important to note that the communication typology developed concerns degrees of fit explicitness, and that other communication approaches may be more suitable for strongly incongruent sponsorships. Readers may question the strategic choice of creating fit based on eco-friendliness for a sponsor in the oil industry. However, the market is not unfamiliar with so-called "green marketing" in businesses that are associated with environmental pollution. For example, the car industry and oil companies are adapting to changes in the environment by developing and communicating products with an environmental appeal. Hence, the communication strategies for the strongly incongruent sponsorship fit well with current market trends. The following discussion attempts to theoretically explain the differences between the moderately and strongly incongruent sponsorships in the first experiment.

Based on schema congruity theory, incongruent information can be assimilated into existing schemas or adjusted to fit the schemas through an accommodation process (Mandler 1982). However, if incongruency is severe, such as sport sponsorships in the alcohol and tobacco industries, research has shown that introduction of a sponsorship can reduce level of perceived fit (Gwinner and Eaton 1999). Hence, a contrast effect has occurred as a consequence of the sponsorship. Although such contrast effects have been documented in comparisons of sponsorship vs. no sponsorship (which is not the scope of the current research), the first study predicted similar results for communication vs. no communication (H4). Results did not support predictions of contrast effects; the score on the dependent variables (in the original conceptual model) were not significantly lower in the implicit communication group compared to the control group[29]. According to Meyers-Levy and Sternthal (1993), contrast will only occur when substantial cognitive resources are devoted to

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[29] As discussed in relation to the role of perceived fit in 5.3.2, the explicit strategy produced a larger degree of counter-argumentation about fit compared to the implicit group. However, the hypothesis about contrast effect (H4) concerned difference between communication and no-communication. Nevertheless, the finding supports the idea that message openness is subject to counterargumentation for strongly incongruent sponsorships.

message processing. Lack of contrast effect may therefore be explained by the fact the subjects' have not been processing the ad information at a high cognitive level. The fact that object involvement was low in the first study ($M < 3$), is likely to have reduced the intensity of affective responses as well as motivation to attack the message arguments. Moreover, absence of contrast effects may be explained by the expectancy dimension of congruency (Heckler and Childers 1992). The incongruent sponsor (BP) is a large company currently involved in sponsorship activities, which may have increased overall congruence and cancelled out potential contrast effects based on priming of the severe image mismatch. Finally, level of emotional intensity may explain lack of attitude change. If individuals are not able to accommodate the incongruent information to existing beliefs, negative emotions may arise and produce contrast effects (Mandler 1982). According to Mandler (1982), the emotional intensity will depend on how much discrepancy exists between the new information and existing schemas. In the case of contrast effects documented for tobacco-sport relationships (Gwinner and Eaton 1999), it is likely that the level of discrepancy has been sufficiently severe for producing contrast effects. There may be less overall perceived discrepancy between an oil company, such as BP, and sailing, than one would expect from a tobacco-sport sponsorship. The intensity of negatively valued emotions for the tobacco sponsorship is therefore likely to be stronger compared those generated from the BP sponsorship in the current research.

5.4. Implications

5.4.1. Theoretical Implications

The research in this dissertation makes several important contributions to sponsorship theory. First, it provides insight into the conceptualization of perceived fit in sponsorship. In previous sponsorship research, consequences of perceived fit have been rather extensively examined, and empirical evidence for positive congruency effects have led to the joint conclusion is that high sponsorship fit should be pursued when selecting a sponsorship object (Grohs et al. 2004; Gwinner and Eaton 1999; Simmons and Becker-Olsen 2006; Speed and Thompson 2000). The sponsorship market is nevertheless characterized by successful sponsorships that do not possess an intuitively observable natural link (Simmons and Becker-Olsen 2006), which suggests a less prominent role of perceived fit than what is implied by sponsorship

research. Based on findings from brand extension research, strategic communication was expected to positively influence the degree to which consumers perceive a match between a sponsoring brand and the sponsored object. In the literature, only three known studies have tested the effect of strategic information directly on perceptions of fit in sponsorship; one study has documented positive effects of exposure repetition on perceived fit (Dardis 2009), and two studies have documented that information about how a sponsor is similar to the sponsored object can influence perceived fit (Coppetti et al. 2009; Simmons and Becker-Olsen 2006). Other studies have investigated the opportunity to enhance incongruent sponsorships through articulation of the sponsorship rationale (Cornwell et al. 2006; Weeks et al. 2008), but these contributions have not tested the effect on perceived fit per se. Moreover, only a few studies have tested effects of different *types* of messages when articulating sponsorship. Rifon et al. (2004) examined the difference between sponsorships statements that include brand-level information versus statements with corporate-level information, but no differences were documented between the two message types. Weeks et al. (2008), however, found a significant difference between noncommercially and commercially oriented articulation with respect to sponsor attitudes. They also found that activational information (event-related information) versus nonactivational information (minimal event-related information) on a sponsor's Web site has an impact on attitudinal ratings. Most studies above have manipulated sponsorship information through web site content or press releases. No known studies have investigated different advertising message styles. Therefore, this dissertation contributes to the sponsorship literature by showing whether and how different *types* of information, communicated through the *advertising* medium, has a *direct impact on perceived fit*. Hence, it contributes to the understanding of how established message-variables from advertising research work in a sponsorship setting.

Overall, findings in the dissertation contribute to the notion that perceived fit is a flexible construct that can be positively influenced by strategic communication. And more importantly, the findings add to the knowledge of what type of information is required; results show that only explicit verbal arguments improve conscious evaluations of fit when the sponsorships are naturally incongruent. Yet, implicit communication was more effective in enhancing sponsor attitudes, regardless of fit alterations. The results therefore indicate that perceived fit is not necessarily the most important mechanism in sponsorship communication, suggesting that the role of created fit in sponsorship communication should be revised. By

documenting alternative explanatory mechanisms beyond perceived fit, the dissertation contributes to the knowledge of how sponsorship information is processed. An important contribution is also provided by the results regarding processing of two distinct levels of natural incongruency. Previous sponsorship research has not made this distinction, as most studies investigate consequences of high versus low fit.

A central theoretical domain underlying this dissertation is the conceptual distinction between open-ended and closed-ended conclusion messages. The theoretical premise for the open-ended strategy is that omission of an explicit conclusion will increase elaboration and impose self-generated conclusions that are more accessible and more positively valued. Since the interpretative processing of an implicit message is cognitively more demanding than processing of an explicit message, a sufficient level of processing motivation and ability has been considered a prerequisite for message persuasiveness. An alternative explanation of how implicit messages are processed has been found in the weak-implicatures model of indirect persuasion, which does not presuppose a high level of consumer involvement (McQuarrie and Phillips 2005). Findings in this dissertation contribute to the idea that the implicit communication can be effective regardless of consumer involvement, hence supporting the neo-Grecian (Levinson 2000) view on effortless and automatic inference making. Accordingly, this dissertation contributes broadly to the theoretical understanding of how open-ended versus closed-ended ad messages are processed.

Sponsorship research indicates that high-fit sponsors are evaluated as more sincere and intrinsically motivated (altruistic motive attribution) than low-fit sponsors (Olson 2010; Rifon et al. 2004). However, no research has considered how *communication* of low-fit sponsorships interferes with motive attribution. This dissertation adds to the understanding of how explicitness represents a threat to the goodwill-aspects of sponsorships. And in general, the results contribute to the knowledge of how consumers cope with persuasion attempts. According the Persuasion Knowledge Model (Friestad and Wright 1994), a message's persuasive effect will depend on the degree to which individuals regard an agent as using a tactic during the persuasion attempt. Applied to a sponsorship communication context, Cornwell (2005) suggest that sponsorship leverage may induce perceptions of the sponsorship as a tactic, which may lead to discount of any previously held positive attitudes due to the philanthropic nature of sponsorships. The research in this dissertation provides

empirical support to this conception, which is an important contribution to the knowledge of how sponsorships should be leveraged in the market.

5.4.2. Managerial Implications

Results from the two experiments suggest that a moderately incongruent sponsorship should be communicated using an open-ended conclusion strategy. Although a closed-ended conclusion strategy may increase perceptions of fit, this will not necessarily translate into more positive attitudes towards the sponsor. Findings support the idea that the more explicit the commercial nature of a sponsorship message becomes, the more likely is it that thoughts regarding profit motives will be activated (Rifon et al. 2004). Positive brand evaluations for the implicit strategy were partly determined by the strategy's ability to generate altruistic motive attribution. Sponsorship managers should therefore be careful in terms of using explicit arguments in sponsorship communication, as they may harm the unique ability of sponsorships to generate goodwill and a positive image. It is important to keep in mind that even though modern sponsorship clearly conveys commercial objectives, it still maintains philanthropic meanings (Cornwell et al. 2005). Sponsors should strive to capitalize on the fact that consumers' attitudes toward sponsorships in general are favorable, driven by a common belief that sponsorships contribute positively to the society (Meenaghan 2001).

Effects of the implicit strategy were mediated by brand image. Study 1 indicated that also the explicit strategy significantly improved brand image, but that this mechanism did not significantly mediate effects on brand evaluations. The explicit strategy improved attitudes toward the sponsorship in both studies, but there was no total effect on brand attitudes. These results imply that sponsorship managers should be concerned with *levels* of sponsorship outcomes used as determinants of success. From a hierarchy-of-effects point of view, both brand image and attitude toward the sponsorship should be considered means to generate positive attitudes toward the sponsor. With reference to findings in the first study, if brand image was defined a measure of sponsorship success, one would mistakenly conclude that the implicit and the explicit message were equally contributing to sponsorship success. Likewise, if attitude toward a sponsorship was considered the ultimate objective, which seems to be a

common approach among Norwegian sponsorship managers[30], the study would suggest the explicit strategy as the recommended communication approach. However, the implicit strategy should be implemented because improved brand attitudes represent a higher-level objective.

Study 2 suggests that an explicit strategy focusing on a sponsorship object may generate negative image transfer to the sponsoring brand. Negative connotations related to the Norwegian Football Federation may have been activated by the explicit strategy. The implicit strategy does not explicitly refer to NFF, but rather to the sport in general. This suggests that a sponsorship communication strategy should focus on the broader aspect of a sporting object, rather on the organization. However, further research across more sponsorships objects is required in order to generalize this particular finding to other sponsor-sponsee relationships.

This dissertation suggests that perceived fit may be created through explicit verbal arguments that activate a non-salient pathway between the brand and the object. However, overall more positive results were documented in relation to an implicit communication form. This implies that there may be other mechanisms than perceived fit, such as motive attribution and a more subtle image transfer, which should be emphasized when developing communication strategies. Managers of sponsorship communication must weigh the possibility of enhancing perceived fit through explicit claims against the threat of reduced goodwill associated with persuasion awareness. Moreover, some indications in the data support the risk of producing negative inferences when a strongly incongruent sponsorship is communicated implicitly. In this case, sponsors may not rely on positive automatic inferences, and thoughtful arguments are probably required to persuade consumers. Further investigation of the communication opportunities for strongly incongruent sponsorship is a subject for future research.

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[30] This assumption is based on media references, managerial sponsorship conferences, etc.

Chapter 6. Limitations and Future Research

The research presented in this dissertation is not without limitations. The following discussion considers limitations with respect to theoretical perspectives, research design, stimuli selection, and measurements. As a response to specific limitations, suggestions for future research are presented.

Theoretically, this dissertation builds on theories of schema congruency, indirect persuasion, and attribution theory. Predicted persuasiveness of the implicit and explicit communication strategies was largely based upon theory of conclusion explicitness in advertising. One of the central theoretical arguments was that the implicit message would increase interpretative effort, and that self-generated inferences about the missing conclusion would produce positive attitudes. Attitude results were to a large extent in accordance with the predictions, but increased elaboration due to conclusion omission had to be ruled out as an explanatory mechanism. An alternative automatic implicature-based processing mechanism was discussed. In light of the results, other theoretical perspectives than those covered in this dissertation could have been useful in explaining effects accounted for by the two communication strategies. For example, the distinction between emotional and information advertising appeals build on theory of cognition versus affect, which could have been useful perspectives in explaining differences between implicit and explicit sponsorship communication. Moreover, the role of ability and motivation in information processing, as accounted for in dual processing theories (e.g., ELM), could be interesting to investigate in relation to the open vs. closed communication framework. These suggestions would require a somewhat different research design. Measures of individuals' level of involvement (e.g., brand involvement) and preference for cognition vs. affect (Sojka and Giese 2006) would have to be taken prior to the manipulation. In the discussion of findings, awareness of the persuasion attempt was suggested as an explanation for why the explicit strategy did not enhance brand attitudes. Theory on "persuasion knowledge" (Friestad and Wright 1994) may therefore represent a useful conceptual background for predicting communication effects in sponsorships in future research.

Industry professionals and sponsorship researchers have traditionally employed exposure-based methods and tracking measures to assess sponsorship effectiveness (Cornwell and

Maignan 1998). However, more recent research has focused on experimental design in order to test consumer responses to controlled differences in sponsorship designs (Speed and Thompson 2000). Whereas the exposure and tracking studies involve issues of discriminant and predictive validity (Pham 1991; Speed and Thompson 2000), experimental work implies issues of generalizability and managerial application (Speed and Thompson 2000). In any single study, researchers must make tradeoffs among types of validity of generalized causal inferences (Shadish, Cook, and Campbell 2002). When conducting an experimental design, external validity will typically be compromised for the benefit of internal validity (Quester and Thompson 2001). A common criticism of experimental method is that researchers rely too heavily on artificial settings (Kardes 1996). Efforts undertaken to preserve internal validity in the two experimental studies pose a threat to external validity of the findings. First, like most empirical studies on sponsorship effects (Olson 2010), the current research used fictitious sponsorships. The choice of testing fictitious sponsorships was made in order to avoid expectancy effects on perceived fit. Moreover, when testing effects of two communication approaches, it was important to use fictitious sponsorships to prevent confound with any prior communication effects. Nevertheless, the use of fictitious sponsorships in a laboratory setting can be questioned in terms of generalizability to effects of sponsorships in a real world setting. Second, marketing communication typically uses both verbal and pictorial elements in order to persuade consumers, and since pictures were removed in the second experiment, external validity of the study is threatened by low ad realism. Third, precautions should be made in terms of communication effects following forced ad exposure in a laboratory setting. Individual ability and motivation to process ads in the experiments are most likely to be inhibited to a larger extent in a natural exposure setting. Differences between the two strategies evident in an experimental setting may therefore be threatened by noise and distraction in a non-forced setting. To prevail over issues of external validity, future research should test the communication typology outside a laboratory setting, which would account for differences in processing effects for implicit versus explicit communication under heavier cognitive load. Moreover, a more realistic ad design would secure greater generalizability of the results, although internal validity would suffer greatly.

The studies conducted in this dissertation employed explicit attitude measures, which may have caused demand effects or social desirability biases. Trendel and Warlop (2005) have argued that incongruent sponsorships are as likely as congruent sponsorship to succeed, and

that this possibility is overlooked by explicit effect measures. Also the current research has adopted an explicit measure approach. Future research should therefore employ implicit measures to account for nonconscious processing when examining incongruency effects in sponsorships, if nothing else, to rule out demand effects caused by explicit measures. The fact that respondents were asked to consciously evaluate fit may have primed respondents with the incongruency inherent in the sponsorships and therefore inhibited potential positive communication effects. If not employing implicit measures of perceived fit, future research should at least consider communication effects without prompting respondents with the question of fit. Furthermore, communication effects on perceived fit should be tested by repeated exposure designs. As argued by Lane (2000) in a brand extension context; "one exposure may not be enough to skew thinking toward the subtle overlap between brand and incongruent extension and thereby counter the more imposing thoughts of incongruity" (p. 81). Since incongruent sponsorships typically attract attention and negatively biased elaboration towards the salient source of incongruency (Mandler 1982; Meyers-Levy and Tybout 1989), repeated exposure may be necessary in order to redirect processing away from negative thoughts of incongruency (Lane 2000).

Findings in this dissertation suggest that motive attribution may explain effects of sponsorship communication. In the sponsorship literature, altruism, or intrinsic motive attribution, has also been referred to as sincerity (Speed and Thompson 2000) and skepticism (Alexandris, Tsaousi, and James 2007). The items used in the current research were adapted from Rifon et al. (2004). In their study, a factor analysis discriminated between commercial objectives related to a public image and those related to profit. Such factor solution was not evident in the first study in this dissertation, and the profit-related objectives were excluded for the purpose of internal consistency. Therefore, the commercial objective measure in the second study considered only one dimension of commercial objectives. Also the altruistic motive measure suffered from internal consistency issues in the first study, and only two items were retained after a factor analysis. Issues of internal consistency in the employed scales suggest that there may be a more complex factor structure underlying the constructs of altruistic and commercial motive attribution than evident from the present research. Future should test and validate more dimensions of sponsor motive attribution.

Results presented in this dissertation showed that perceived fit was only marginally altered and that other mechanisms were more important in explaining positive communication effects on attitude toward the sponsoring brand. The fact that only two product categories, two sponsorship objects, and two bases for created fit have been tested, represent a threat of mono-operation bias in the research. Future research should explore the malleable nature of perceived fit further by testing other dimensions of created fit (e.g., functional fit, overlap of user groups, geographical link) for additional product categories and sports. Also the generalizability of communication effects for two levels of sponsorship incongruency requires testing across several sponsorship combinations.

The purpose of this dissertation was to examine how responses to incongruent sponsorships can be improved by communication. Overall, results suggest that implicit communication generate more favorable responses than explicit communication. A central question is whether this result can be generalized to communication of congruent sponsorships. Research has shown than explicitness can increase persuasion when the source is likeable (Reinhard and Messner 2009; Reinhard et al. 2006). Since high-fit sponsorships are generally better liked than low-fit sponsorships, the effectiveness of explicit arguments may be moderated by level of fit. From the research presented in this dissertation, it was evident that explicitness enhanced fit perceptions, which had an indirect effect on altruistic motive attribution and brand attitudes (study 2). However, the total effect was not significant, which indicate that other mechanisms have contributed negatively to brand evaluations and altruistic motive attribution. In discussion of the role of motive attribution, these negative inferences were ascribed to awareness of persuasion intent and reactance. Since lack of altruistic motive attribution for the explicit strategy was the only "formal" test of these mechanisms, future research should investigate negative inferences due to conclusions explicitness further. Moreover, the mechanisms should be tested for high-fit sponsorships with the intention to determine the moderating role of perceived fit for explicit message persuasiveness.

Message openness in the implicit strategy was operationalized as a metaphoric sponsorship slogan with an incorporated cue implying the intended conclusion. To generalize findings of the implicit strategy, other forms of open-ended messages should be tested. Similar results for other types of rhetorical figures (i.e. rhetorical questions) would validate the findings in this dissertation. The present research has looked at variations in conclusion explicitness of verbal

messages, but other message characteristics should be further explored in order to develop effective communication programs for sponsorships. For example, messages varying on altruistic appeals, message sources (the sponsor vs. the object as source), and verbal vs. visual ad material may be examined with respect to their persuasive impact in sponsorship communication.

In accordance with the view of congruency as a continuous measure, the first study in this dissertation distinguished between strong and moderate levels of sponsorship incongruency. The two levels were deemed distinct based on statistically different scores across two congruency measures; global perceived fit and image-overlap. The second study operationalized level of incongruency based on the same measures, but the premise for conceptualizing the level as moderate was slightly altered due to a change in strategic focus (from *creating* fit to *reinforcing* an existing link). In this case, the level of incongruency was considered moderate because there was a non-salient existing link in the relationship. The existence of a link, although not accessible regardless of information, excludes per se a strong level of incongruency. Although results indicate that the two studies successfully manipulated a moderate level of incongruency, the inconsistency in how the level was operationalized represents a threat to the validity of the conceptualization of incongruency level. Moreover, as pointed out by Sjödin and Törn (2006), is the midpoint of a Likert scale really equivalent to a moderate degree of incongruency? Future research should attempt to validly distinguish between levels of congruency. One methodological approach is to sample a representative set of sports and brands and thereby create a continuous congruency scale.

Finally, findings suggest that the role of fit in communication of incongruent sponsorships may be subordinate to other mechanisms, such as image transfer, motive attribution, and attitudes towards the sponsor-sponsee relationship. Future research should explore the structural relationship between these mediating variable further. Also, results indicate that an affective component in sponsorship as a branding tool may have caused the positive effects of implicit sponsorship communication. No direct measure of an affective response was included in the research. Future research should therefore attempt to account for affective component of the information processing. Theoretically, this is of particular interest since theories of branding, communication, and social psychology all suggest that the very process of making inferences or resolving incongruencies is inherently pleasurable. This effect can

only be assumed from the results in this dissertation, and more research is needed to establish this theoretical mechanism also in sponsorship communication.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Overview of Empirical Studies of Perceived Fit in Sponsorships

Appendix B: Examples of Sponsorship Ads

Appendix C: Pretest, study 1

Appendix D: Advertising Stimuli, study 1 and study 2

Appendix E: Questionnaires, study 1 and study 2

Appendix F: Factor Analysis and Reliability Check, study 1 and study 2

Appendix G: Assumption Testing, study 1 and study 2

Appendix H: Correlation Matrices, study 1 and study 2

Appendix I: Two Dimensions of Perceived fit, study 1

Appendix J: Experiment: Brand Extension with Sponsorship

Appendix A: Overview of Empirical Studies of Perceived Fit in Sponsorships

TABLE A.1
Overview of Empirical Studies on Antecedents and Consequences of Perceived Fit in Sponsorships

Study	Study description	Findings
Copetti, Wentzel, Tomczak, and Henkel (2009)	Study of how articulation and audience participation can improve incongruent sponsorships.	Articulation and audience participation led to improved sponsorship evaluations, more favorable brand attitudes and an increased image transfer from the object to the sponsoring brand.
Alexander (2009)	A case study exploring the role of fit in building a platform for integrated communication of brand values.	The close fit between the sponsor and the sponsored entity facilitated a co-branding relationship.
Dardis (2009)	Explores the effects of repeated exposure to sponsorship messages on the perceived congruence of sponsorship affiliations	Perceived congruence was significantly higher at higher numbers of exposures. Perceived congruence mediated the effects of repeated exposure on attitude toward the sponsor, company community relations, and purchase intention
Deitz, Myers, and Markley (2009)	Examines consumers' processing of sponsorship information based on a resource-matching perspective	Perceived fit was positively associated with responses to the sponsorship. Both need for cognition and event social identification was identified as antecedents of perceived fit.
Gwinner, Larson and Swanson (2009)	Studies how the image transfer process is impacted by level of identification and event-sponsor fit	A logical event-brand fit enhance image transfer perceptions.
Carrillat, d'Astous, and Colbert (2008)	Study of the effect of type of art (high art vs. popular art) event on sponsorship effectiveness is examined across different degrees of sponsor-event congruence	The positive impact of popular art sponsorship over high art sponsorship was greater when congruence was high rather than low.
Becker-Olsen and Simmons (2006)	Looks at the role of natural and created fit in social sponsorships	When fit is low versus high, clarity of positioning is lower, more thoughts are generated in response to the sponsorship, these thoughts are less favorable, attitude toward the sponsorship is less favorable, and firm equity is lower. Created fit offers benefits similar to those of natural fit.
Cornwell et al (2006)	Examines memory effects of congruency in event sponsorships, and the role of articulation for incongruent sponsorships	Recall is better for congruent than for incongruent sponsors. Recall for incongruent sponsorships improved with articulation
Koo, Quarterman, and Flynn (2006)	Examines the effect of image fit on consumers' cognitive and affective responses, and their ability to recognize the sponsor.	Participants in the high fit group had a more positive corporate image and brand attitudes compared to the low fit group. High perceived fit resulted in greater likelihood for correct sponsor identification.

Colbert , d'Astous, and Parmentier (2004)	Examines the effect of type of sponsor, nature of sponsorship, level of congruence and nature of the event on perceptions of the sponsorship.	Philanthropic sponsorships were more positively evaluated when the link was weak. Commercial sponsorships were better perceived when the link was strong.
Grohs, Wagner, and Vsetecka (2004)	Analysis of drivers of sponsor identification	Event-sponsor fit is one of the dominant factors predicting sponsor recall
Rifon, Choi, Trimble, and Li (2004)	Study of congruency effects on consumers' attribution of sponsor motives	Fit between sponsor and cause generates consumer attribution of altruistic motives and enhances sponsor credibility and attitude toward the sponsor
Cornwell, Pruitt, and Van Ness (2001)	Looks at share price changes of motorsport sponsors. The worth of sponsoring a winner versus just participating in a sponsorship was compared.	Significant gains in share price were documented when congruent sponsors sponsored a winner. Little effect on share price was found for incongruent sponsors.
Speed and Thompson (2000)	Tests the effects of consumers' attitudes about a sports event, their perceptions of sponsor-event fit, and their attitudes about the sponsor on consumers' responses to the sponsorship	Sponsor-event fit is positively associated with sponsorship responses. Fit also has an interaction effect with perceived status of the event and personal interest in the event
Gwinner and Eaton (1999)	Testing of the degree to which a sporting event's image was transferred to a brand through event sponsorship activity	When event and brand are matched on either an image or functional basis, the transfer process is enhanced
Johar and Pham (1999)	A study regarding heuristics for sponsor identification	Sponsor identification is biased toward brands that are prominent in the marketplace and semantically related to the event
McDaniel (1999)	Examining the influence of advertising schemas on consumers' responses to sport sponsorship advertising.	Match between brand and event improved attitude toward the advertisement. Congruence had no effect on attitude towards the brand or purchase intentions.
Quester & Farrelly (1998)	Study of antecedents of sponsor recognition	Natural link between the sponsor and the event increased sponsor recognition
Ferrand and Pages (1996)	Development of a methodology to match a sponsor and an object.	Fit between sponsor and object was assessed by examining shared image based on a list of adjectives. Results of a canonical analysis uncovered the existence of image dimensions common to both the object and the sponsor.
D'Astous and Bitz (1995)	Examines the role of link between sponsor and event in commercial and philanthropic sponsorships	A strong link has positive effects on sponsor image for commercial sponsorships, whereas a weak link generates a positive image for philanthropic sponsorships. The link has a non-linear effect on perceived sponsor image

Appendix B: Examples of Sponsorship Ads

FIGURE B.1
Statoil Sponsorship Ad - "Stadium"

Appendix C: Pretest, study 1

TABLE C.1
Mean Score Comparisons – Brand/Object Image, Pretest study 1

Brands	Statistics
Agder	3.69 $n = 14$ *(1.27)*
Lyse	**3.61**[a,c] $n = 13$ *(1.32)*
CP	2.87 $n = 13$ *(1.20)*
Chevron	2.67 $n = 13$ *(1.30)*
BP	**2.42**[b,c] $n = 12$ *(1.26)*
Sports	
Sailing	**4.78**[a,b] $n = 14$ *(1.11)*
Skiing	4.54 $n = 14$ *(1.24)*
Climbing	4.12 $n = 14$ *(1.62)*
Football	2.88 $n = 14$ *(1.17)*

Significance testing only reported for selected brands and sports (in bold)
Standard deviation in parentheses
[a,b] Differences between brands and sports are significant at $p < .05$
[c] Difference between Lyse and BP is significant at $p < .01$

TABLE C.2
Mean Score Comparisons – Perceived fit, Pretest study 1

Sponsorships	Statistics
Agder - Sailing	3.43 $n = 15$ *(1.10)*
CP - Sailing	3.27 $n = 15$ *(1.28)*
Lyse - Sailing	**2.89**[a] $n = 14$ *(1.40)*
Chevron - Sailing	2.29 $n = 12$ *(1.66)*
BP - Sailing	**2.25**[a] $n = 14$ *(1.39)*

Sponsorships selected in bold
Standard deviation in parentheses
[a] Difference between Lyse and BP is significant at $p < .10$

Appendix D: Advertising Stimuli, study 1 and study 2

FIGURE D.1
Ad Manipulation - Explicit Strategy, study 1
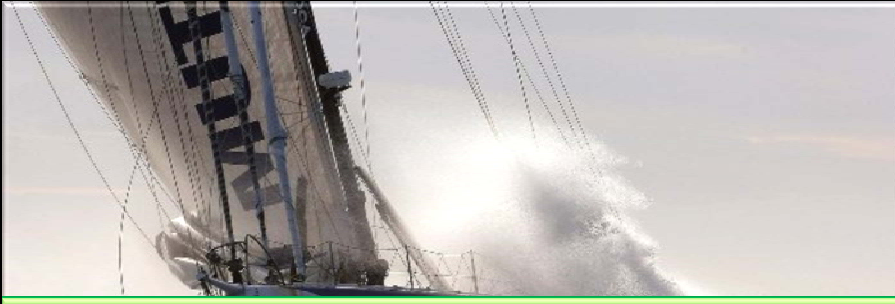
Med fokus på fornybar energi samarbeider vi nå med idrettens fremste representant for utnyttelse av ren kraft. Vi tror at man kommer langt ved å utnytte ren energi, både når det gjelder miljøvennlig energiproduksjon og på idrettsarenaen.

Vi er derfor stolt sponsor for seilsporten!

Lyse er offisiell sponsor for Norges Seilforbund

Med fokus på fornybar energi samarbeider vi nå med idrettens fremste representant for utnyttelse av ren kraft. Vi tror at man kommer langt ved å utnytte ren energi, både når det gjelder miljøvennlig energiproduksjon og på idrettsarenaen.

Vi er derfor stolt sponsor for seilsporten!

BP er offisiell sponsor for Norges Seilforbund

United Colors of Football

United Colors of Benetton samarbeider med
Norges Fotballforbund i kampanjen mot rasisme
på idrettsarenaen.

Både Benetton og fotball står for mangfold.

Gi rødt kort til rasisme!

Benetton er offisiell sponsor av
Norges Fotballforbund

UNITED COLORS
OF BENETTON.

FIGURE D.4
Ad Manipulation - Implicit Strategy, study 2

United Colors of Football

Benetton er offisiell sponsor av
Norges Fotballforbund

UNITED COLORS
OF BENETTON.

Appendix E: Questionnaires, study 1 and study 2

Questionnaire, study 1[31]:

Instruksjon til undersøkelsen

Du vil i dette skjemaet bli bedt om å svare på en rekke spørsmål som dreier seg om dine holdninger og meninger knyttet til ulike objekter og aktiviteter. Vi begynner med å vise deg en reklameplakat, og vi ønsker deretter at du svarer på noen enkle spørsmål i forbindelse med denne reklamen. Det vil ta ca. 15 minutter å fullføre dette skjemaet.

1. Først ønsker vi å vite noe om dine synspunkter på *forholdet mellom energiselskapet Lyse og idretten seiling*. På en skala fra 1 til 7, hvor enig eller uenig er du i følgende påstander:

	Helt uenig						*Helt enig*
Lyse og Norges Seilforbund har liknende image	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Lyse og Norges Seilforbund passer bra sammen	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Assosiasjonene jeg har til Lyse stemmer godt overens med de assosiasjonene jeg har til Norges Seilforbund	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Lyse og Norges Seilforbund står for mange av de samme tingene	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

2. Vi er ute etter å kartlegge *identiteten til Lyse*, og vi ønsker derfor at du vurderer hvor godt ordene nedenfor beskriver selskapet.

	Svært lite beskrivende					*Svært beskrivende*	
Naturlig	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Miljøvennlig	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Rent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

3. Vi er her interessert i din *generelle holdning til Lyse*. Sett en ring rundt alternativet i skalaen nedenfor som du mener best representerer din holdning til selskapet.

Jeg synes Lyse er:

Svært dårlig	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Svært bra
Svært negativt	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Svært positivt

---

[31] Only the Lyse-questionnaire is provided here. The Questionnaire for BP is identical except for the brand name

Vanskelig å like	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Lett å like
Svært ufordelaktig	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Svært fordelaktig

4. Nå vil vi gjerne vite hva du mener om *sponsorsamarbeidet mellom Lyse og Norges Seilforbund*. Sett ring rundt et punkt på skalaen nedenfor som du mener best representerer din holdning til sponsorsamarbeidet.

Jeg synes at sponsorsamarbeidet mellom Lyse og Norges Seilforbund er:

Negativt	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Positivt
Ugunstig	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Gunstig
Dårlig	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Bra

5. Vi er også ute etter dine meninger om Lyse sin *markedskommunikasjon*. På en skala fra 1 til 7, hvor enig eller uenig er du i følgende påstander:

	Helt uenig						*Helt enig*
Lyse kommuniserer på en klar måte hva selskapet står for	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Lyse har et image som er vanskelig å forstå	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Lyse formidler et tydelig image gjennom alle sine markedsaktiviteter	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

6. Vi vil også at du forteller oss noe om *hva du synes om Lyse som sponsor av Norges Seilforbund*. Merk av et punkt på skalaen nedenfor som best representerer dine holdninger.

Som sponsor av idretten seiling synes jeg Lyse fremstår som:

Lite oppriktig	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Oppriktig
Lite pålitelig	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Pålitelig
Uærlig	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Ærlig
Lite troverdig	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Troverdig

7. Her ønsker vi at du forteller oss din oppfatning av *hvorfor* Lyse har valgt å inngå et sponsorsamarbeid med Norges Seilforbund. På en skala fra 1 til 7, hvor enig eller uenig er du i følgende påstander:

	Helt uenig						*Helt enig*
Lyse sponser seiling fordi de har en genuin interesse for denne idretten	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Lyse sponser seiling fordi sponsing er en samfunnsnyttig form for markedsføring	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Lyse sponser seiling fordi de ønsker å overtale kundene til å kjøpe sine produkter	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Lyse sponser seiling først og fremst fordi de bryr seg om økonomisk fortjeneste	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Lyse sponser seiling fordi det skaper et positivt image for selskapet	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Lyse sponser seiling fordi de bryr seg om utøvernes situasjon og fremtid	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

8. Resten av denne siden er satt av for dine tanker rundt reklameplakaten du så. Bruk noen minutter til å notere ned alle de tankene du gjorde deg da du så reklamen. Her er det ikke noe rett eller galt svar, og vi er interessert i dine umiddelbare tanker og assosiasjoner.

9. Her er vi ute etter din *generelle mening om reklamen* du så, uavhengig av dine holdninger til selskapet eller idretten. Indiker et punkt på skalaen nedenfor som best representerer dine meninger om reklamen i seg selv.

Jeg synes reklamen var:

Dårlig	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	God
Vanskelig å like	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Lett å like
Irriterende	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Lite irriterende
Lite interessant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Interessant

10. Bruk også skalaen nedenfor til å si oss noe om *hvordan du oppfattet reklamen*. Indiker et punkt på skalaen som best representerer dine meninger om reklamen.

Jeg synes reklamen var:

Lite troverdig	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Troverdig
Upålitelig	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Pålitelig
Lite overbevisende	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Overbevisende
Usannsynlig	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Sannsynlig
Uærlig	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Ærlig
Tvilsom	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Uproblematisk
Uekte	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Ekte

11. Vi vil gjerne at du også sier noe om i hvilken grad du *forsto innholdet i reklamen*. Det gjør du ved å indikere hvor enig eller uenig du er i følgende påstander:

	Helt Uenig						Helt enig
Jeg synes reklamen var vanskelig å forså	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Reklamen var for komplisert	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Jeg var ikke sikker på hva reklamen dreiet seg om	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Budskapet i reklamen var uklart	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

12. Vi vil også vite noe om *hvor mye du tenkte over* det som ble formidlet i reklamen, og vi ber deg derfor om å indikere hvor enig eller uenig du er i følgende påstander:

	Helt Uenig						Helt enig
Reklamen fikk meg til å tenke nøye gjennom budskapet som ble formidlet	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Reklamen fikk meg til å grundig evaluere sponsorsamarbeidet mellom Lyse og Norges Seilforbund	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Sammenliknet med andre sponsorreklamer fikk denne reklamen meg til å tenke nøye på sponsing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

13. Vi ønsker også å få vite *hvilket forhold du har til idretten seiling*. På en skala fra 1 til 7, hvor enig eller uenig er du i følgende påstander:

	Helt Uenig						*Helt enig*
Seiling betyr mye for meg	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Jeg ser eller leser mediedekningen av seiling når jeg kan	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Jeg kjenner til reglene for idretten seiling	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Jeg synes seiling er spennende	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

14. Til slutt trenger vi å vite noe om deg som respondent. Bruk hele skalaen fra 1-7 for å indikere hvor godt du mener påstandene nedenfor beskriver deg som person.

	Helt Uenig						*Helt enig*
Jeg foretrekker kompliserte fremfor enkle oppgaver	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Jeg liker å ha ansvaret for situasjoner som krever mye tankevirksomhet	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Jeg foretrekker å tenke på små, daglige prosjekter fremfor langsiktige gjøremål	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Ideen om å måtte bruke mine tankeevner for å nå toppen appellerer til meg	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Jeg føler lettelse heller enn tilfredshet etter å ha løst en oppgave som krevde dyp tankevirksomhet	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Jeg ender vanligvis opp med å reflektere over problemer selv om de ikke angår meg personlig	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Kjønn:

□ Mann

□ Kvinne

Questionnaire, study 2:

Instruksjon til undersøkelsen

Du vil i dette skjemaet bli bedt om å svare på en rekke spørsmål som dreier seg om idrettssponsing. Først vil du få se en sponsorannonse, og vi vil etterpå be deg om å svare på noen enkle spørsmål i forbindelse med denne.

Du vil nå få en rekke spørsmål som dreier seg om sponsorsamarbeidet mellom klesmerket **Benetton** og **Norges Fotballforbund**, som du så på forrige side. Vi er i denne undersøkelsen interessert i dine meninger og holdninger rundt et slikt samarbeid.

1. Først ønsker vi å vite noe om dine synspunkter på _forholdet mellom klesmerket Benetton og idretten fotball_. På en skala fra 1 til 7, hvor enig eller uenig er du i følgende påstander:

	Helt uenig						Helt enig
Benetton og Norges Fotballforbund passer bra sammen	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Fotball er et logisk sponsorsobjekt for Benetton	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Flere av assosiasjonene jeg har til Benetton stemmer godt overens med assosiasjoner jeg har til fotball	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Benetton og idretten fotball uttrykker mange av de samme verdiene	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Benetton og idretten fotball har mange av de samme målene	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

2. Vi er nå interessert i din _generelle holdning til Benetton._ På en skala fra 1 til 7, hvor enig eller uenig er du i følgende påstander:

	Helt Uenig						Helt enig
Benetton er et merke jeg liker svært godt	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Jeg har en positiv holdning til Benetton	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Jeg synes Benetton er et merke som er lett å like	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Benetton produserer produkter av høy kvalitet	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Benetton lager svært gode produkter	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

3. Nå vil vi gjerne vite hva du mener om _sponsorsamarbeidet mellom Benetton og Norges Fotballforbund._

   Sett ring rundt et punkt på skalaen nedenfor som du mener best representerer din holdning til sponsorsamarbeidet.

Jeg synes at sponsorsamarbeidet mellom Benetton og Norges Fotballforbund er:

Negativt	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Positivt
Ugunstig	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Gunstig
Dårlig	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Bra

4. Her ønsker vi at du forteller oss din oppfatning av _hvorfor_ Benetton har valgt å inngå et sponsorsamarbeid med Norges Fotballforbund. På en skala fra 1 til 7, hvor enig eller uenig er du i følgende påstander:

	Helt uenig						*Helt enig*
Benetton sponser fotball fordi de har en genuin interesse for denne idretten	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Benetton sponser fotball fordi de bryr seg om utøvernes situasjon og fremtid	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Benetton sponser fotball først og fremst fordi det skaper et positivt image for merket	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Benetton sponser fotball fordi de håper at folk skal få et bedre inntrykk av merket	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

5. Resten av denne siden er satt av for dine tanker rundt reklameplakaten du så. Bruk noen minutter til å notere ned alle de tankene du gjorde deg da du så reklamen. Her er det ikke noe rett eller galt svar, og vi er interessert i dine umiddelbare tanker og assosiasjoner.

6. Vi er ute etter å kartlegge _identiteten til Benetton_, og vi ønsker derfor at du vurderer hvor godt ordene nedenfor beskriver merket.

	Svært lite beskrivende						*Svært beskrivende*
Mangfoldig	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Antirasistisk	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Tolerant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

7. Vi er ute etter å kartlegge _identiteten til idretten fotball_, og vi ønsker derfor at du vurderer hvor godt ordene nedenfor beskriver merket.

	Svært lite beskrivende						*Svært beskrivende*
Mangfoldig	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Antirasistisk	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Tolerant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

8. Her er vi ute etter din *generelle mening om reklamen du så*, uavhengig av dine holdninger til merket eller idretten. Indiker et punkt på skalaen nedenfor som best representerer dine meninger om reklamen i seg selv.

Jeg synes reklamen var:

Dårlig	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	God
Vanskelig å like	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Lett å like
Irriterende	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Lite irriterende
Lite interessant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Interessant

9. Vi vil også vite noe om *hvor mye du tenkte over* det som ble formidlet i reklamen, og vi ber deg derfor om å indikere hvor enig eller uenig du er i følgende påstander:

	Helt Uenig						Helt enig
Da jeg så annonsen måtte jeg tenke meg om to ganger for å forstå hva Benetton egentlig ønsket å formidle	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Annonsen for Benetton var laget slik at jeg måtte reflektere nøye over hva budskapet var	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

10. Her ønsker vi at du forteller oss *hvor godt du kjenner til Benetton*.

   Vil du si at du er kjent med Benetton?

Lite kjent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Godt kjent

   Vil du si at du er kjent med Benetton sine reklamekampanjer?

Lite kjent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Godt kjent

11. Vi ønsker også å få vite *hvilket forhold du har til idretten fotball*. På en skala fra 1 til 7, hvor enig eller uenig er du i følgende påstander:

	Helt Uenig						Helt enig
Fotball betyr mye for meg	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Jeg ser eller leser mediedekningen av fotball når jeg kan	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Jeg synes fotball er spennende	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix F: Factor Analysis and Reliability Check, study 1 and study 2

TABLE F.1
Factor loading and Cronbach's Alpha, study 1

Items	Factor 1: Brand attitude	Factor 2: Ad comprehend	Factor 3: Object involvement	Factor 4: NFC	Factor 5: Elaboration	Factor 6: Comm. motives	Cronbach's α
1.Good	.864						
2.Positive	.892						
2.Likable	.774						
3.Favorable	.748						.874
1.Difficult		.891					
2.Complicated		.819					
3.Uncertain		.873					
4.Unclear		.805					.878
1.Meaningful			.873				
2.Interest			.803				
3.Knowledge			.893				
4.Exciting			.803				.864
1.Complicated				.829			
2.Responsibility				.857			
3.Thinking				.726			
4.Reflection				.433			.874
1.Evaluation					.885		
2.Thinking					.877		.789
1.Purchase						.815	
2.Profit						.801	
3.Image						.644	.656
Eigenvalues	9.05	3.65	3.43	2.73	1.98	1.74	

Note: Factor loadings below .40 were suppressed

(The factor solution continues on next page)

Items	Factor7: Sponsorship attitude	Factor8: Ad Attitude	Factor9: Perceived fit	Factor10: Altruistic motives	Factor11: Brand image	Cronbach's α
1.Positive	.853					
2.Favorable	.811					
3.Good	.873					.924
1.Good		.767				
2.Likable		.840				
3.Not irritating		.925				
4.Interesting		.736				.898
1.Same image			-.764			
2.Fit well			-.627			
3.Same associations			-.774			
4.Same values			-.773			.900
1.Genuine interest				.809		
2.Benefits society				.444		
3.Care				.637		.504
1.Natural					-.651	
2.Eco-friendly					-.702	
3.Pure					-.721	.900
Eigenvalues	1.61	1.47	1.29	1.16	1.00	

Note: Factor loadings below .40 were suppressed

Factor Loading and Cronbach's Alpha, study 2

Items	Factor 1: Sponsorship attitude	Factor 2: Object involvement	Factor 3: Altruistic motives	Factor 4: Brand attitude	Factor 5: Perceived fit	Factor 6: Object image	Cronbach's α
1.Positive	.667						
2.Favorable	.649						
2.Good	.701						.961
1.Meaningful		.960					
2.Interest		.949					
3.Exciting		.937					.972
3.Genuine interest			.823				
4.Care for athletes			.841				.853
1.Like				.746			
2.Positive attitude				.528			
3.Easy to like				.805			
4.High quality				.928			
5.Good products				.917			.926
1.Fit well					.809		
2.Logical					.739		
3.Same associations					.796		
4.Same values					.873		
5.Same goals					.831		.930
1.Diverse						.815	
2.Antiracist						.801	
3.Tolerant						.644	.656
Eigenvalues	9.24	3.83	2.50	2.40	1.85	1.51	

Items	Factor 7: Elaboration	Factor 8: Comm. motives	Factor 9: Brand image	Cronbach's α
1.Think twice	.940			
2.Reflect	.908			.841
1.Image		.830		
2.Impression		.845		.874
1.Diverse			.837	
2.Antiracist			.785	
3.Tolerant			.882	.910
Eigenvalues	1.17	1.10	.74	

Note: Factor loadings below .40 were suppressed

Appendix G: Assumption Testing, study 1 and study 2

TABLE G.1
Descriptive Statistics - Moderate Sponsorship Incongruency, study 1

Variables	N Statistics	Mean Statistics	Std. Dev.	Skewness		Kurtosis	
				Statistics	Std. Error	Statistics	Std. Error
Brand attitude	100	4.40	.70	-.104	.241	**2.227**	.478
Sponsorship attitude	100	5.18	1.24	-.612	.241	.136	.478
Brand image	100	4.66	1.05	-.727	.241	.684	.478
Perceived fit	99	3.70	.98	-.452	.243	-.286	.481
Att. Ad	75	4.62	1.11	-.751	.277	.201	.548
Ad comprehension	74	3.19	1.49	.323	.279	-.958	.552
Elaboration	76	2.80	1.53	.578	.276	-.638	.545
Altruistic motives	100	2.85	1.08	.398	.240	-.086	.476
Commercial motives	100	4.96	1.32	-.683	.240	.133	.476
Object involvement	100	2.64	1.24	.789	.241	-.019	.478
NFC	100	4.88	1.00	-.213	.241	.451	.478

Violation of normality assumption in bold

TABLE G.2
Descriptive Statistics - Strong Sponsorship Incongruency, study 1

Variables	N Statistics	Mean Statistics	Std. Dev.	Skewness		Kurtosis	
				Statistics	Std. Error	Statistics	Std. Error
Brand attitude	83	4.29	.91	-.174	.264	**1.774**	.523
Sponsorship attitude	85	4.74	1.37	-.259	.261	-.236	.517
Brand image	85	3.68	1.29	.348	.261	-.022	.517
Perceived fit	86	3.06	1.19	.215	.260	-.602	.514
Att. Ad	59	4.16	1.34	-.397	.311	-.635	.613
Ad comprehension	58	3.09	1.65	.667	.314	-.372	.618
Elaboration	60	2.94	1.47	.501	.309	-.510	.608
Altruistic motives	86	2.70	1.05	.171	.257	-.472	.508
Commercial motives	86	5.02	1.38	-.470	.257	-.524	.508
Object involvement	86	2.59	1.47	**1.071**	.260	.491	.514
NFC	88	4.87	.96	-.413	.257	-.140	.508

Violation of normality assumption in bold

TABLE G.3
Test of Assumption of Univariate Homogeneity, study 1

Variables	Levene's test of equality of error variances			
	Moderate incongruency		Strong incongruency	
	F	p	F	p
Brand attitude	5.26	**.007**	5.74	**.005**
Brand image	.35	.70	3.85	**.025**
Sponsorship attitude	.23	.79	.653	.52

p<.05 (in bold) are indications of violation of the assumption of homogeneity of variance

TABLE G.4
Test of Homogeneity of Variance-Covariance Matrices, study 1

Box's test of Equality of Covariance Matrices			
Moderate incongruency		Strong incongruency	
F	p	F	p
2.66	**.001**	2.55	**.002**

p<.05 (in bold) are indications of violation of the assumption of homogeneity of variance

TABLE G.5
Descriptive Statistics - Moderate Sponsorship Incongruency, study 2

Dependent variables	N Statistics	Mean Statistics	Std. Deviations Statistics	Skewness		Kurtosis	
				Statistics	Std. Error	Statistics	Std. Error
Brand attitude	136	3.98	1.23	-.054	.208	.110	.413
Purchase int.	136	3.29	1.34	-.049	.208	-.498	.413
Sponsorship attitude	136	4.13	1.47	-.284	.208	.028	.413
Perceived fit	136	3.17	1.23	.169	.208	-.224	.413
Brand image	136	4.58	1.38	-.548	.208	.304	.413
Object image	136	4.61	1.38	-.423	.208	.366	.413
Altruism	136	3.08	1.28	-.121	.208	-.846	.413
Object involvement	136	3.61	2.08	.256	.208	**-1.276**	.413
Att. Ad	90	3.92	1.53	-.030	.254	-.643	.503
Elaboration	90	3.65	1.67	.208	.254	-.598	.503

Note- Statistics in bold indicate violation of normality assumption

TABLE G.6
Levene's Test of Equality of Variance, study 2

Dependent variable	Levene's test of equality of error variances	
	F	p
Brand attitude	1.464	.235

Appendix H: Correlation Matrices, study 1 and study 2

TABLE H.1
Correlation Matrix - Moderate Sponsorship Incongruency, study 1

Variables	Brand att.	Sponsorship att.	Brand image	Fit	Altruism	Commercial	Att. Ad	Ad. comprehend	Elaboration	NFC	Object involv.
Brand att.	1										
Sponsorship att.	.373**	1									
Brand image	.405**	.253*	1								
Fit	.446**	.360**	.309**	1							
Altruism	.253*	.220*	.253*	.298*	1						
Commercial	.015	-.068	-.118	-.060	-.224*	1					
Att. Ad	.304**	.360**	.258*	.379**	.151	-.077	1				
Ad. comprehend	-.191	-.102	.027	-.165	.235*	-.062	-.281*	1			
Elaboration	-.013	.000	.161	.062	-.115	-.016	.138	.046	1		
NFC	.007	-.073	-.032	.066	-.059	.193	.006	-.039	.144	1	
Object involv.	-.089	.156	.021	-.092	.207*	-.088	.029	.087	.232*	-.029	1

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$

Variables	Brand att.	Sponsorship att.	Brand image	Fit	Altruism	Commercial	Att. Ad	Ad. comprehend	Elaboration	NFC	Object involv.
Brand att.	1										
Sponsorship att.	.408**	1									
Brand image	.586**	.445**	1								
Fit	.395**	.595**	.620**	1							
Altruism	.167	.394**	.281**	.249*	1						
Commercial	.036	.072	.031	.149	-.189	1					
Att. Ad	.318*	.469**	.377**	.379**	.329*	.029	1				
Ad. comprehend	-.029	-.267*	.076	-.075	-.047	-.075	-.338*	1			
Elaboration	-.211	-.007	-.325*	-.279*	.006	.234	.103	-.216	1		
NFC	.007	.139	-.026	.000	-.004	-.005	-.011	.019	.160	1	
Object involv.	-.176	.181	.069	.092	.210	-.028	.209	-.134	.003	.285**	1

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$

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TABLE H.3
Correlation Matrix - Moderate Sponsorship Incongruency, study 2

Variables	Brand att.	Sponsorship att.	Brand image	Fit	Altruism	Commercial	Object image	Elaboration	Object involv.
Brand att.	1								
Sponsorship att.	.564**	1							
Brand image	.588**	.683**	1						
Fit	.398**	.653**	.490**	1					
Altruism	.375**	.412**	.263**	.398*	1				
Commercial	.213*	.237**	.401**	.236**	-.103	1			
Object image	.130	.206*	.314**	.172	.179*	.202*	1		
Elaboration	.051	-.236*	-.051	-.024	.063	-.076	.021	1	
Object involv.	-.086	.001	.042	.051	.071	.062	.419**	.088	1

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$

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Appendix I: Two Dimensions of Perceived Fit, study 1

TABLE I.1
Mean scores – Perceived Fit scale items

Perceived fit scale items	Statistics
Fit 1	3.00 (1.36) $n = 88$
Fit 2	3.49 (1.45) $n = 88$
Fit 3	2.71 (1.32) $n = 88$
Fit 4	2.84 (1.32) $n = 88$

TABLE I.2
Paired Sample t-test – Perceived Fit scale items

Pairs	t	Sig (2-tailed)
Fit 1 – Fit 3	3.93 $n = 189$	.000
Fit 1 – Fit 4	2.40 $n = 188$	.017
Fit 2 – Fit 3	12.29 $n = 189$	.000
Fit 2 – Fit 4	11.55 $n = 188$	.000

TABLE I.3
Factor Analysis - Dimensions of Perceived Fit

| Items	Factor 1: General	Factor 2: Specific	Cronbach's α
1.Similar image	.992		
2.Fit well	.734		.821
3.Corresponding associations		-1.003	
4.Stand for same things		-.705	.856
Eigenvalues	3.08	0.38	

FIGURE I.1
Simple Mediation – Impact of the <u>Explicit</u> Strategy on Brand Attitude via General Dimension of Perceived Fit for Strong Incongruency, study 1

Perceived fit
(General dimension)

.62*

.35**

Explicit strategy[c]

-.02[a]
(.20[b])

Brand attitude
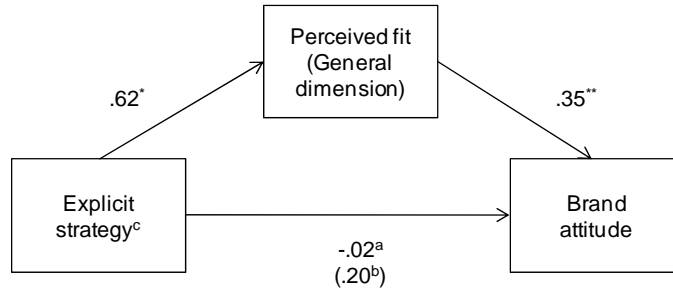
Sobel Z value: 1.74 p = .081
95% CI: {.0096, .5357}

[a] Direct effect after controlling for perceived fit (general)
[b] Total effect
[c] Compared to control group
* p < .10
** p < .05
*** p < .01

FIGURE I.2
Simple Mediation – Impact of the <u>Explicit</u> Strategy on Sponsorship Attitude via General Dimension of Perceived Fit for Strong Incongruency, study 1

Perceived fit
(General dimension)

.62**

.35***

Explicit strategy[c]

.61*[a]
(.20[b])

Sponsorship attitude
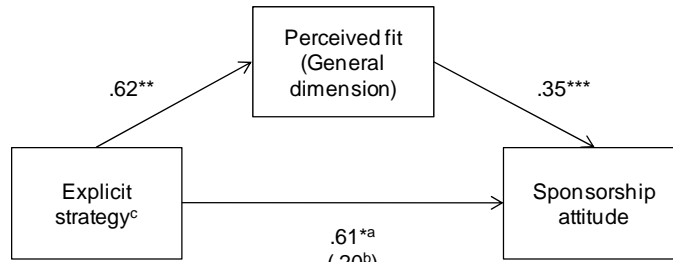
Sobel Z value: 1.93, p = .05
95% CI: {.0229, .8419}

[a] Direct effect after controlling for perceived fit (general)
[b] Total effect
[c] Explicit strategy compared to control group
* p < .10
** p < .05
*** p < .01

Appendix J: Experiment - Brand Extension with Sponsorship

Introduction

A sponsorship investment offers the right to be associated with an object that is highly valued in consumer markets. The passive and indirect nature of sponsorship as a communication form has given rise to the notion that additional funding must be spend to fully exploit its commercial potential. In order to explore the commercial opportunities provided by sponsorship rights, an experiment was conducted to test effects of using sponsorships as a communication cue in launching an incongruent brand extension. Based on the idea that brand extensions are evaluated more positively when they are perceived as similar to the parent brand (Hem and Iversen 2009; Völckner and Sattler 2006), the focal question of the study was whether a sponsorship cue can aid acceptance of an incongruent extension. It is the indirect link to a sponsorship object that is proposed to facilitate acceptance of an incongruent extension. This mechanism is proposed to require a congruent relationship between the sponsorship object and the extension category. The basic idea is that the sponsorship object possesses specific associations highly relevant in the extension category, which the parent brand lacks. By being associated with the sponsored object, the aim is that relevant associations will be used in evaluations of the extension. In addition to relevance of the sponsorship object in the extension category, the relationship between the sponsee and the parent brand must be accepted as matching in order to attain the desired transfer effects. The rationale is therefore that consumers' judgment of the extension is based on their evaluation of fit between the parent brand and the sponsorship object, and perceived fit between the sponsorship object and the extension. This idea corresponds to the balance theory perspective. The involved relationships, according to balance theory, are illustrated in figure J.1. Three relationships are included in the strategy: (1) the relationship between the parent brand and the sponsored entity (path A), (2) the relationship between the parent brand and its extension (path B), and (3) the relationship between the sponsorship object and the extension (path C). In order to facilitate acceptance of the extension, the sponsorship object must be perceived as congruent both with the extension category and the parent brand.

FIGURE J.1
Conceptual Model – Sponsorship in Brand Extension
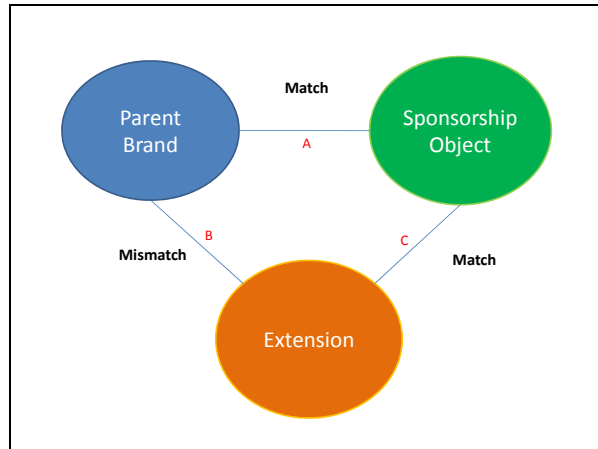
Methodology

49 respondents enrolled in an international business course participated in an online experiment that was conducted to test the difference between launching an incongruent brand extension with sponsorship and launching the extension without the sponsorship. Dependent variables included *extension attitude*, *parent brand attitude,* and *perceived fit* between the brand and the extension. In the sponsorship condition, subjects were introduced to the sponsorship between Benetton (parent brand) and the Olympic Games (sponsorship object) through a sponsorship ad. The ad contained an explicit message claiming that the brand and the Olympic movement both represent *tolerance* respect for *diversity*. The aim was to establish a link between the sponsorship partners based on these common features. After viewing the sponsorship ad, subjects were informed about the extension of the brand into the sport equipment category, followed by an ad for the extension. The extension ad contained the Olympic logo and a text identifying Benetton as an official Olympic sponsor. In the no-sponsorship condition, the brand extension was launched as a regular extension without any information about the fictitious sponsorship. The extension ad was identical to the one used in the sponsorship group except from the sponsorship information. Questionnaires for both groups are included in the end of this appendix.

Results and Discussion

Comparing the two groups; extension with vs. without sponsorship prime, showed no statistically significant differences on the dependent variables. Results are reported in table J.1 below.

TABLE J.1
Effect of Sponsorship Cue in Brand Extension

Dependent variables	Extension communication group	
	Sponsorship	*No sponsorship*
Parent brand attitude	4.17 *n* = 28 *(1.68)*	4.75 *n* = 21 *(0.98)*
Extension attitude	3.16 *n* = 28 *(1.24)*	3.71 *n* = 21 *(1.31)*
Extension fit	2.41 *n* = 28 *(1.31)*	2.58 *n* = 21 *(1.46)*

Notes: The table reports mean scores, number of respondents in each cell (n), and standard deviation (in parentheses). No mean comparisons were statistically significant

Nevertheless, the results are intriguing due to the unexpected direction of mean differences across all three dependent measures. It was expected that the sponsorship would facilitate acceptance of the incongruent extension, but results indicate an opposite pattern. In light of the results documented in the dissertation, these findings are considered as an interesting analogy to the effects of explicit sponsorship communication. The findings from the explicit strategy in the main study combined with results in this additional study suggest that exploiting a sponsorship for its commercial potential may backfire on the brand. Based on the "persuasion knowledge" perspective (Friestad and Wright 1994), obvious sponsorship exploitation is likely to generate inferences about the marketers motives and tactics. In the domains of brand extensions, corporate social responsibility, and sponsorships, it has been argued that incongruency engender attribution of self-interest and commercial motives (Simmons and Becker-Olsen 2006). In the current study, negative inferences regarding the company's actions may be explained by the combination of perceived sponsorship exploitation and extension incongruency. Rather than reducing the negative effect of an incongruent extension, the explicitness of the sponsorship may have added to an overall perception of self-interest and strive for market value. Moreover, the values associated with the Olympic Games may not be compatible with commercial exploitation. Although the brand and the object may share some association based on respect and diversity, these values are probably too strongly attached to their respective contexts (sports vs. fashion) and

therefore not compatible in a joint marketing attempt. The level of sponsorship fit was accounted for in the experiment, and respondents in the sponsorship-condition reported a moderate level of fit between Benetton and OG (M = 3.56, SD = 1.8, n = 28). A high standard deviation indicates that the respondents were inconsistent in their answers. Open answers suggest that respondents who based fit evaluations on functionality (attribute-based) perceived low sponsorship fit, whereas those who based their evaluation on the symbolic features (non-attribute-based) perceived high sponsorship fit. The conceptual model suggested that congruency between the parent brand and the sponsorship object was a prerequisite for image transfer and subsequent acceptance of the incongruent extension. However, there seems to be mixed perceptions regarding the sponsor-sponsee match, which may explain why the sponsorship prime failed in generating positive attitudes towards the extension.

The results should be interpreted with some caution due to relatively low and unequal cell sizes. There is a possibility that the non-significant results can be explained by insufficient power (Hair et al. 2006). Further analysis with a larger sample size should be conducted to verify whether a sponsorship cue has a negative effect in a brand extension strategy. Splitting the group based on gender show that male respondents were significantly more positive toward the extension in the absence of the sponsorship cue ($M_{Sponsorship}$ = 3.06, $M_{No-sponsorship}$ = 4.77; p = .001) and perceived a higher brand-extension fit ($M_{Sponsorship}$ = 2.57, $M_{No-sponsorship}$ = 4.00; p = .034). However, low cell sizes ($N_{sponsorship}$ = 14, $N_{No-sponsorship}$ = 6) suggest inadequate power to make valid conclusions.

Overall, results from this additional experiment support the idea that managers should be careful when attempting to exploit the commercial potential given by sponsorship rights. People appreciate the altruistic side of sponsorships, and if they perceive the sponsoring as a tactic rather than a philanthropic action, the investments may at best be ineffective, and at worst it may actually damage the brand. These results have provided some preliminary results, and further research is required to validate the findings.

Questionnaire sponsorship group:
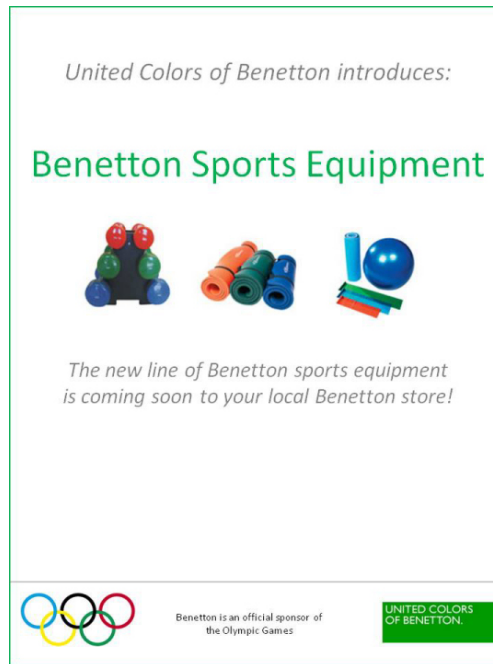
Welcome to the survey!

In this short survey you will be shown an advertisement followed by a few questions. It will take you approximately 5 minutes to complete the questionnaire. This study is an important part of my doctoral degree here at NHH, so I kindly ask you to answer the questions as honestly as possible.

Thank you for participating!

United Colors of Benetton is one of the official sponsors of the Olympic Games. Click "next" to view the Olympic sponsorship ad for Benetton
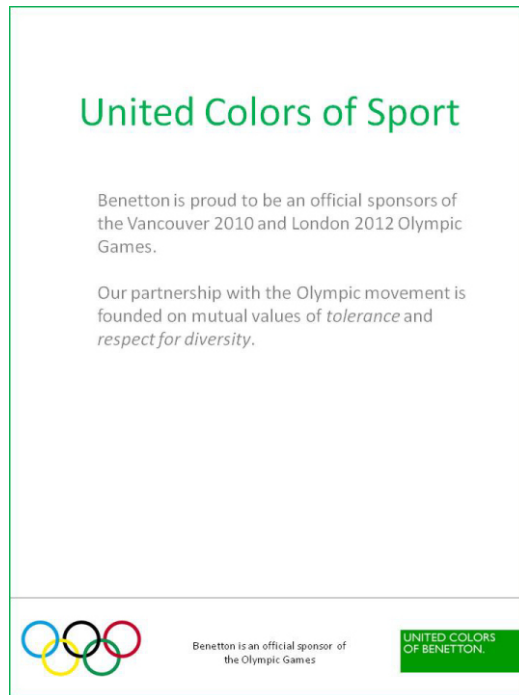
You will now be introduced to a new product line that the clothing retailer Benetton plans to put out on the market. Click "next to view the advertisement for the new product line.

1. We are first interested in your <u>opinion about the new Benetton sport equipment line</u>. On a scale from 1 to 7, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Disagree						*Agree*
I am positive towards the new Benetton sport equipment line	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I would probably like the Benetton sport equipment line if I tried it	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I believe the Benetton sport equipment line will be of high quality	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I would consider buying products from the Benetton sport equipment line	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I would recommend Benetton sport equipment to my friends	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

2. We are also interested in your general opinion about the Benetton brand. Please pick the point on the scales below that best represents your attitude towards Benetton.

I think Benetton is:

Very bad	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very good
Very negative	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very positive
Very unfavorable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very favorable

3. We also want to know your opinion on how well you think a sport equipment line matches the Benetton brand. On a scale from 1 to 7, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Disagree						*Agree*
Benetton sport equipment is a natural extension of the Benetton brand	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The sport equipment line is very typical for the Benetton brand	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Thinking about the associations I have to the Benetton brand, the sport equipment line is a suitable extension	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Overall, I think the sport equipment line fits the Benetton brand very well	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

4. Why do you think Benetton and sport equipment fit/does not fit?

5. We would also like to know your opinion on the relationship between Benetton and the Olympic Games. On a scale from 1 to 7, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:

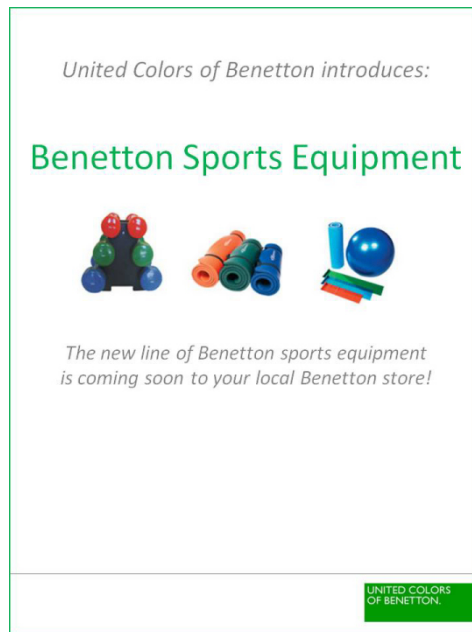|	*Disagree*						*Agree*
Benetton and the Olympic Games fit well together	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
There is a logical connection between Benetton and the Olympic Games	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Many of the associations I have to Benetton overlap associations I have to the Olympic Games	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Questionnaire no-sponsorship group:

Welcome to the survey!

In this short survey you will be shown an advertisement followed by a few questions. It will take you approximately 5 minutes to complete the questionnaire. This study is an important part of my doctoral degree here at NHH, so I kindly ask you to answer the questions as honestly as possible.

Thank you for participating!

You will now be introduced to a new product line that the clothing retailer Benetton plans to put out on the market. Click "next to view the advertisement for the new product line.

6.   We are first interested in your <u>opinion about the new Benetton sport equipment line</u>. On a scale from 1 to 7, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Disagree						*Agree*
I am positive towards the new Benetton sport equipment line	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I would probably like the Benetton sport equipment line if I tried it	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I believe the Benetton sport equipment line will be of high quality	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I would consider buying products from the Benetton sport equipment line	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I would recommend Benetton sport equipment to my friends	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

7. We are also interested in your general opinion about the Benetton brand. Please pick the point on the scales below that best represents your attitude towards Benetton.

I think Benetton is:

Very bad	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very good
Very negative	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very positive
Very unfavorable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very favorable

8. We also want to know your opinion on how well you think a sport equipment line matches the Benetton brand. On a scale from 1 to 7, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Disagree						*Agree*
Benetton sport equipment is a natural extension of the Benetton brand	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The sport equipment line is very typical for the Benetton brand	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Thinking about the associations I have to the Benetton brand, the sport equipment line is a suitable extension	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Overall, I think the sport equipment line fits the Benetton brand very well	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

9. Why do you think Benetton and sport equipment fit/does not fit?