

# **The Effects of Fit and Reputation in Different Sponsorship Contexts: The Role of Motive Attribution**

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## **Abstract**

Sponsorship is one of the fastest growing forms of marketing communication. Despite the popularity, sponsorships are a relatively unexplored discipline in academia compared to related marketing areas. This thesis investigates the role of fit and company reputation as well as how motive attribution can act as a mediator in sponsorship contexts. We also examine if there is a difference in the degree to which these constructs will impact consumer outcomes in sports versus socio sponsorships. Five hypotheses were explored by conducting an experiment using an online-based questionnaire. Our findings indicated a direct effect of fit and reputation on company image and consumers' sponsorship attitude. However, perceived fit did not play a crucial role. Altruistic motive attribution on sponsorship attitude proved significant for fit and reputation in general. Socio sponsorships resulted in a more favorable sponsorship attitude. In addition, the effect of reputation on sponsorship attitude was mediated by attributed altruistic motive for socio sponsorships. The results are of interest theoretically, as the two sponsorship objects are often studied separately, and for managers who need guidance in choosing the right sponsorship object. More specifically, a company with a good reputation that wants to be perceived as an altruistic company should sponsor a charitable organization rather than a sports organization.

# Preface

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Economics and Business Administration, within the master program in Marketing and Brand Management at the Norwegian School of Economics. In the course “Managing Corporate Reputation” at NHH we learned about socio sponsorship and found this topic very interesting because of its ability to benefit both society and companies at the same time. In addition, sponsorships are becoming more common, and knowledge about the mechanisms behind a sponsorship is needed. While reading sponsorship literature we did not find any studies on whether attributed motive is equally important in socio versus sport sponsorships, so this became the topic for our thesis.

First of all we would like to thank our supervisor Professor Einar Breivik for his valuable comments and support throughout this project. We would also like to thank fellow students, friends and others for their response to our questionnaire. Finally, we are grateful to Stein Bergsmark, Ida Bergsmark, and Dr. Katrine Løken for useful input and motivational encouragement.

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Eli Birgitte Storlie Bergsmark

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background

Since the beginning of the 1980's, sponsorships have become a natural part of companies' marketing tools, and they represent a rapidly growing area of marketing communication (Cornwell et al., 2005). Sports are the most common sponsorship object, although social causes and arts also receive a considerable amount of sponsorship money (IEG, 2010).

Increased awareness, enhanced image and more positive attitudes toward the sponsoring company are usual desired outcomes of sponsorships (Walliser, 2003). As the most common sponsorship object, sports sponsorships are the most extensively studied in academia. However, sponsorships of social causes are becoming more relevant as requirements toward companies to show social responsibility increase. The term "socio sponsorship" is used to describe a sponsorship with the prime objective of showing social responsibility (Seitanidi and Ryan, 2007).

In contrast to socio sponsorship, sports sponsorships are often seen as more commercially oriented (Seitanidi and Ryan, 2007). This can be a drawback as some researchers have found perceived motive to be important when consumers evaluate sponsorships (e.g. Rifon et al., 2004). On the other hand, Meenaghan (2001), states that consumers in general are positive toward sponsorships, despite a potential commercial dimension.

Despite the increase in sponsorship spending, the sponsorship area is relatively new as an academic field compared to related marketing areas (McDaniel, 1999). We regard sponsorships as interesting, especially because sponsorships have a unique possibility to give back to society and at the same time achieve marketing objectives for companies. This implies possibilities for a win-win situation for the sponsor, the sponsor object, and society in general.

In this thesis we aim to contribute to existing knowledge about central aspects concerning sponsorships, and especially to compare how sports sponsorship and socio sponsorship work. These two forms of sponsorship share many features, but at the same time they have

been emphasized as quite different. The findings may be interesting in a theoretical perspective, but also managerially, as more knowledge about mechanisms behind sponsorship success can guide managers in their pursuit to find the best sponsor relationships.

## 1.2 Research Purpose

In this study we will examine the effects of reputation and fit on attitude toward the company, attitude toward the sponsorship and company image. In addition we will look at how attributed motive can play a mediating role in different sponsorship contexts.

In the sponsorship literature the role of fit is thoroughly studied, and most results indicate that a high fit between the sponsor and the sponsorship object is preferable (e.g. Cornwell et al., 2005; Olson, 2010; Sohn, Han and Lee, 2012). Research also indicates that the perception of a company's actions is colored by its reputation (Bae and Cameron, 2006). A company with a bad reputation may be eager to sponsor organizations that are well liked in order to enhance the attitude toward the company. However, can a sponsorship have a positive effect on consumer attitude if the company reputation is bad?

Consumers generally try to understand a company's behavior and infer a motive behind the intention of the sponsorship activity (Yoon et al., 2006). Sports sponsorships are often perceived more like usual advertising than socio sponsorship. This study intends to test whether the role of motive is more important in socio sponsorship than in sports sponsorship. In sum, we will investigate the following research questions:

*What is the importance of fit and reputation in a sponsorship? What is the role of motive attribution in the different contexts of sports and socio sponsorships?*

## 1.3 Thesis Structure

The thesis begins with a chapter on sponsorship, describing the phenomenon, the main concepts and research objectives in academia. This is followed by a description of sports and socio sponsorship, ending in a section on communication of sponsorships. In Chapter



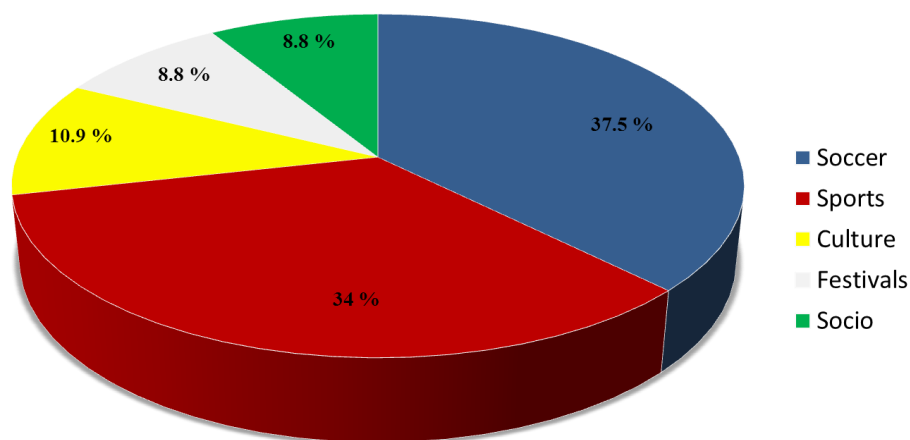
3, the specific sponsorship constructs that we investigate, namely fit, reputation and motivation, are described more thoroughly. Each section also serves as a discussion explaining the rationale for the hypotheses, which will follow at the end of each section. In Chapter 4 we describe how the experiment was developed and conducted. This also includes the results and interpretation of the pretest, followed by a section on measurements. Chapter 5 outlines the method of analysis and the results from the main experiment. Chapter 6 provides a discussion of the findings including theoretical and managerial implications. Finally, in Chapter 7 we address limitations and suggest further research.

## 2. Literature

In this section we present the main literature on sponsorships in general, and more specifically sports sponsorships and socio sponsorships. We also describe relevant aspects related to market communication of sponsorships.

### 2.1 Sponsorship

According to Sponsor Insight (2010), 3.284.000.000 Norwegian Kroner was spent on sponsorships in Norway in 2009. Figure 2.1 describes the amount of money spent on sponsorships in 2009 divided by objective. Not surprisingly sports, and especially soccer, hold the majority of sponsor deals. After sports follow sponsorships of culture, festivals, and socio sponsorships.



**Figure 2.1.** Sponsorship Spending, Norway 2009

*Note:* Sports include all sports except soccer.

*Source:* (Sponsor Insight, 2010).

Increased spending on sponsorships has led researchers to want to learn more about the mechanisms behind sponsorships and its potential effects on business. Sponsoring has existed in some form since the ancient Greece, when people would sponsor their athletes.

However, sponsorships are only recently considered a significant part of a firm's marketing communication strategy, which makes it important to understand the basis for consumers' attitudes toward sponsorships.

Meenaghan (1991, p. 36) describes sponsorship as: "an investment in cash or in kind, in an activity, in return for access to the exploitable commercial potential associated with that activity". This is perhaps the most commonly used definition found in the sponsorship literature. Cornwell and Maignan (1998) propose another definition. They state that sponsorship involves two activities: "(1) an exchange between a sponsor and a sponsee, whereby the latter receives a fee and the former obtains the right to associate itself with the activity, and (2) the marketing of the association by the sponsor" (p. 11).

From the consumers' point of view, sponsorship is an indirect form of persuasion working through the link established between the sponsor and the object. Since the definition of a sponsorship is somewhat unclear, it is often confused with related concepts like corporate philanthropy and other forms of advertising. Through the creation of goodwill, sponsorships show clear philanthropic objectives (Keller, 2008). However, it should not be mistaken for pure philanthropy because most sponsorships have an underlying commercial motive.

Consumers are to a great extent the most studied group when it comes to sponsoring. The main reason for companies to spend money on sponsorship programs is to increase awareness, enhance image, improve goodwill, improve profitability, and reaching otherwise unreachable customers (Walliser, 2003). In addition, an enhanced attitude toward the sponsor is a common sponsorship objective (Cornwell et al., 2005). Fishbein and Ajzen (1975, p. 6) describe attitudes as a "learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to a given object". Companies become involved in sponsorship activities, hoping this can contribute to a more positive impression of the company, and that this will reflect in the consumers' behavior toward the company. Company attitude is also commonly claimed to have a connection with the relevant sponsorship construct fit, as nearly all sponsorship research finds a positive relationship between fit and attitude toward the sponsor and the sponsorship (Olson and Thjømmøe, 2011).

Although not as thoroughly researched, sponsorship attitude is also a relevant sponsorship construct. For example, Simmons and Becker-Olsen (2006) claim that sponsorship attitude is a predictor of company equity. They also found that sponsorship attitude significantly influences post-sponsorship attitude and purchase intentions. A study by Simonin and Ruth (1998) indicates that attitude toward the alliance predict post-relationship attitudes toward the brands involved in the sponsorship. However, this was only true for the least known company in the alliance. It is also acknowledged that people draw inferences about companies based on its actions (Yoon et al., 2006). Thus, a favorable attitude toward a company's sponsorship activity is likely to contribute to an overall more positive perception of the company.

An enhanced image is also one of the most common sponsorship objectives (Walliser, 2003; Smith, 2004). A brand's image is defined as "perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory" (Keller 2008, p. 51). Based on this, sponsorship activity is viewed as a means of leveraging secondary associations (Keller, 2008). The hope is that the associations attached to the object will be transferred to the sponsor as secondary associations that bring some positive valence to the sponsor. Examining the cognitive processes around a certain sponsorship is a central part of sponsorship studies (Crimmins and Horn, 1996; Gwinner and Eaton, 1999; Johar and Pham, 1999; McDaniel, 1999; Speed and Thompson, 2000). Schema theory is much used in this context. First of all, a schema is "a cognitive structure that represents knowledge about a concept or type of stimulus including its attributes and relations among those attributes" (Fiske and Taylor, 1991, p. 98). A schema-based approach means that consumers access information about the sponsor and the sponsorship object from their memory. The new information they receive is compared with the existing schema. Consumers then use the schema to judge the appropriateness of the new information (Smith, 2004). Others have tried to explain different processing mechanisms in sponsorship by the use of mere exposure, low-level processing, reactivation, et cetera. Nevertheless, no common framework has emerged (Cornwell et al., 2005).

The role of fit when it comes to image transfer is much discussed in the sponsorship literature. A high fit is claimed to make image and attitude transfer to the sponsor more likely. Firstly, perceived similarity makes image transfer easier. Secondly, consumers

prefer cognitive consistency (Martensen et al., 2007; Rifon et al., 2004; Simmons and Becker-Olsen, 2006). According to a schema-based approach, those who perceive congruence between sponsor and event have more positive responses to the sponsorship in general (Smith, 2004).

## 2.2 Sports Sponsorship

Sports sponsorships receive about two-thirds of all sponsorship money, which includes sporting events, leagues, teams, players, and organizations (Crompton, 2004; Olson, 2010). Researchers often draw the distinction between commercial and philanthropic sponsorship according to the degree of exploitation of the sponsorship association intended by the sponsor (Walliser, 2003). People in general distinguish between sponsorship seen as advertising and sponsorship seen as philanthropy (Meenaghan, 2001). Sports sponsorship is generally perceived as a commercial activity, but at the same time the opportunity to be perceived as altruistic is greater than for ordinary advertising (Walliser, 2003). Increased purchase intentions and attitude (e.g. McDaniel, 1999; Speed and Thompson, 2000; Martensen et al., 2007), enhanced image (e.g. Grohs, Wagner and Vsetecha, 2004), greater awareness, and increased sales (e.g. d'Astous and Bitz, 1995) are common objectives when sponsoring sports.

An advantage with sponsorship of social causes and environmental programs is that it often generates more goodwill (Meenaghan, 2001). This can be favorable for companies' reputation as it demonstrates social responsibility. A problem that might occur, however, is that people seem to be more reluctant to accept sponsorships related to arts and environment than sponsorships related to sports (Walliser, 2003). A reason for this could be that sporting events are more common, and is also widely covered by media (ibid.). Additionally, it is likely that companies are less reluctant to promote sports sponsorship, as advertising stories about people in difficult situations has a greater potential to offend people compared to commercials about athletes.

## 2.3 Socio Sponsorship

According to Seitanidi and Ryan (2007), corporate community involvement is a generic term covering corporate philanthropy, sponsorship and cause-related marketing (CRM). They identify two types of sponsorships, namely commercial sponsorships and socio sponsorships. Commercial sponsorships are donation of resources from a business with the motivation to promote the company or its products, with expectations of mainly tangible benefits like increased sales (ibid.). Socio sponsorships are aiming to serve social needs, and the anticipated compensation reward is mainly intangible and related to image and reputation (ibid.).

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is important for corporations due to its potential effects on reputation (Geue and Plewa, 2010). CSR has traditionally been a corporate function organized by communication teams, but today this is to an increasingly greater extent entrusted to brand managers (Pope, 2010). Using CSR as a tool to enhance brand trust and ethical equity is becoming more acknowledged (ibid.). Whereas Seitanidi and Ryan (2007) define social sponsorship as a CSR-activity, Pope (2010) describes it as an investment that is something in between philanthropy and CSR.

Researchers define the objectives behind social sponsorships somewhat differently, but it seems reasonable that this activity aims to show corporate responsibility. D'Astous and Bitz (1995) found that philanthropic sponsorship had a more positive impact on corporate image than commercial sponsorships. This is also in line with Meenaghan (2001), who states that social sponsorships generate more goodwill.

Many researchers emphasize the importance of perceived motive behind the sponsorship, especially in sponsorship of social causes. This is because consumers perceive a more philanthropic dimension related to such sponsorships (Meenaghan, 2001). The reputation of the firm before entering a sponsorship may also have an effect on suspicion among consumers (Geue and Plewa, 2010). The degree of fit is also discussed in the sponsorship literature, with no clear consensus regarding whether high fit is preferable or not.

Generally, the fear of backfiring effects may scare companies from communicating their CSR initiatives. According to Sen and Bhattacharya (2001), the effect of CSR on company evaluations is more sensitive to negative CSR information than positive CSR information.

Results from Østmo (2011)<sup>1</sup> indicate that Norwegian companies are reluctant to communicate their involvement with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).

There are fewer studies on sponsorships of social causes than for example CRM (Geue and Plewa, 2010), and sport sponsorships (Walliser, 2003). Compared to sports sponsorship, social sponsorship is less widespread. In Norway, social causes received only 8.8 % of total sponsorship recourses in 2009 (Sponsor Insight, 2010). However, social sponsorship is becoming increasingly more relevant due to large environmental challenges and the continuous focus on negative consequences of materialism in Western society. Companies want to show that they care, but still achieve something for themselves.

## 2.4 Communication of Sponsorships

Sponsorships include the unique opportunity to combine marketing objectives and at the same time contribute to society. Sponsorships are a subtle way of marketing, and must be communicated properly to achieve the potential positive effects of increased awareness and attention. In sponsorship terms this is called leveraging (Cornwell et al., 2005). Crimmins and Horn (1996, p. 16) state, “if the brand cannot afford to communicate its sponsorship, then the brand cannot afford sponsorships at all.”

To choose the appropriate medium to communicate the sponsorship is important. The most common sources are Public Relations (PR) and traditional advertising, which is used by 79 % and 76 % respectively. Internal communication (71 %), hospitality (67 %), direct marketing (61 %), Business to Business (B2B) marketing (56 %), Internet tie-ins (51 %), on-site sampling (49 %) and sales promotions (49 %) are also common communication methods (Weeks et al., 2008).

Whether the company as a sender is the right medium through which to communicate the sponsorship is a central discussion. In general, advertising is regarded as direct and persuasive (Crimmins and Horn, 1996), and is by Cornwell (1995) called the most prominent sponsorship leverage. However, advertising is increasingly losing its credibility due to the large volume in all channels in society, while PR is often perceived as more

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<sup>1</sup> A study of CSR among 484 Norwegian firms conducted on behalf of City Church Mission.

sincere (Ries and Ries, 2004). On the other hand, Engeseth (2009) claims that PR is losing credibility because people increasingly acknowledge the possibility that PR might be biased.

If a socio sponsorship is communicated through a company source rather than PR, this can lead to more skepticism and attribution of a commercial motive (Simmons and Becker-Olsen, 2006; Yoon et al., 2006). However, PR is less controllable, so using the company as the sender is the easiest and most obvious way for companies to communicate. In this thesis we will only assess how companies' own communication efforts have an impact on consumers.

Communication plays an important role in achieving congruence. Bridges et al. (2000) claim that consumers generally evaluate fit, and that a low fit creates a need for explanatory links. Communication decisions can mitigate the negative effects of low fit by explaining the link logically (Simmons and Becker-Olsen, 2006; Olson and Thjømøe, 2011; Sohn, Han and Lee, 2012). In addition, the company reputation is relevant when trying to predict how consumers interpret communication from companies (Yoon et al. 2006).



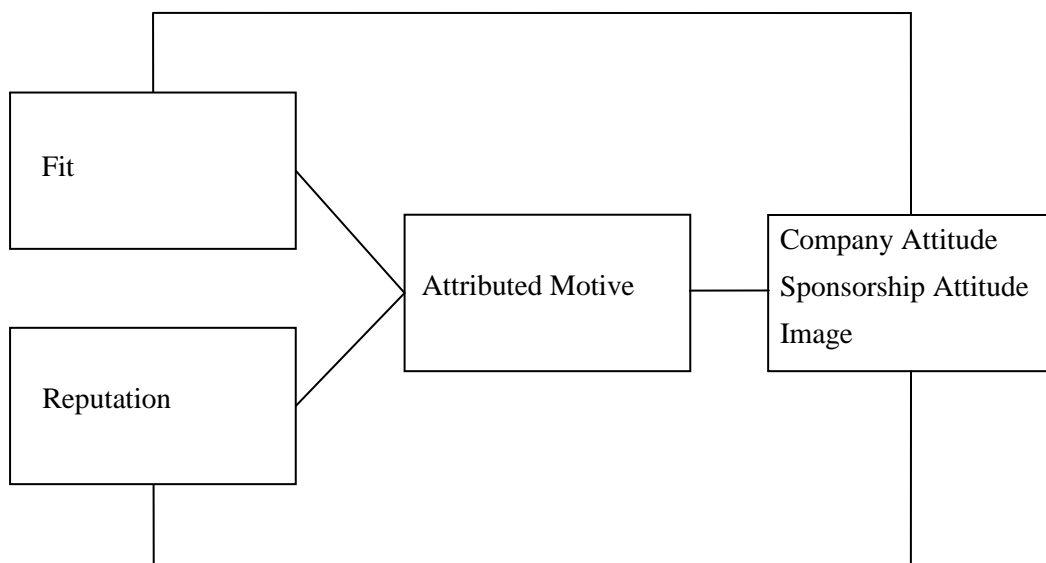
### 3. Research Model and Hypotheses

In this section we present the research questions that lead to the research model. We then discuss the constructs fit, reputation and motive attribution, which serves as a rationale for each of the five hypotheses.

#### 3.1 Research Model

Figure 3.1 below shows our research model. Based on this model we develop five hypotheses, which form the basis for addressing our research questions:

*What is the importance of fit and reputation in a sponsorship? What is the role of motive attribution in the different contexts of sports and socio sponsorships?*



**Figure 3.1.** Research Model

We chose fit and reputation as independent variables because they are important factors for how sponsorships are perceived. Figure 3.1 shows the direct effects of the independent

variables on consumer outcomes (company attitude, sponsorship attitude, and company image). In addition, we added the mediator variable attributed motive to explain underlying mechanisms behind the sponsorship outcomes.

The objective of the hypotheses H1 and H2 is to test the main effect of fit and reputation on consumer outcomes, which we do by using a one-way ANOVA. Hypotheses H3 and H4 test if attributed motive mediates the effects of fit and reputation. To explore this we use a Sobel Test and Bootstrapping. The fifth hypothesis, H5, intends to investigate whether there is a difference in the role of attributed motive when comparing sports and socio sponsorships. Here, we use a one-way ANOVA, Sobel Test and Bootstrapping.

### 3.2 The Role of Fit

The connection between perceived sponsorship congruence and how consumers respond to a sponsorship is discussed extensively in the sponsorship literature (e.g. Grohs, Wagner and Vstecha, 2004; Simmons and Becker-Olsen, 2006; Weeks, Cornwell and Drennan, 2008).

According to branding theory, fit can be achieved along different dimensions (Smith, 2004). For example, geography can create a basis for perceived fit if the sponsor and sponsorship object are from the same area. If the sponsorship object and the company's product give the same benefits in use, this can form a functional fit (ibid.). Further, symbolic fit is when the consumer perceives that the sponsor and the sponsor object appeal to his self-concept (ibid.). A company often chooses sponsor object based on the potential to create fit, and may also explain the intended fit to the consumers through its market communication. In a research setting, it can be difficult to capture fit on only one dimension. Therefore, some researchers try to capture fit in a general sense. Then they ask the respondents to evaluate whether the relationship between a sponsor and an object naturally makes sense (e.g. Speed and Thompson, 2000; Simmons and Becker-Olsen, 2006).

Expectations also play a role when consumers evaluate congruence (Fleck and Quester, 2007). For instance, if a company has a long tradition of sponsoring sports or charity organizations, people may think that the sponsor activity is appropriate and logical. With

the increased focus on social responsibility, consumers will expect that most companies engage in such activities. This implies that over time, companies can succeed in communicating their sponsorship independently of strict requirements of high initial fit.

Many researchers conclude that perceived fit is important for sponsorship success (e.g. Olson, 2010; Speed and Thompson, 2000). Schema theory can explain how fit is important to the consumer learning process (Smith, 2004). For instance, it is easier for consumers to integrate a sponsorship into existing cognitive structures if a company they already see as responsible supports a social initiative (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006). On the contrary, an incongruent sponsorship will lead to more elaboration as it does not fit with the existing schema, which can trigger skepticism about the sponsorship (Rifon et al., 2004).

Grohs, Wagner and Vstecha (2004) propose that a high fit between event and sponsor increases recall. Because consumers are likely to use heuristics to remember sponsors, the sponsor is easier to recall if the relationship makes sense intuitively. Johar and Pham (1999) state that congruence facilitates sponsor identification. Further, a high congruence will help strengthen the existing market position of the firm or brand, which is favorable to secure a point of differentiation and increase purchase intentions (Brown and Dacin, 1997). A high fit can also lead to increased image transfer. The claim is that a good fit between the object and the company makes value transfer from the object to the company possible (Grohs, Wagner and Vstecha, 2004; Martensen et al., 2007).

A lot of research documents that high fit is favorable, but there are also some findings that indicate that high fit is less preferable. Jagre, Watson and Watson (2001) propose that an incongruent relationship increases recall because it triggers elaboration. A slightly incongruent relationship may also result in positive attitudes, as it is perceived as interesting, but not frustrating and impossible to solve (ibid.). Thus, the company can strategically use a minor incongruence to create more positive attitudes. Sponsorships are also used to reposition a brand (Smith, 2004). This means that a sponsorship can have an intentional low fit to try to change the secondary associations consumers have to the company or the product.

Geue and Plewa (2010) suggest that congruence has an impact on what motive consumers attribute to the sponsor. This again impacts whether the consumers perceive the

sponsoring firm as socially responsible, which also affects the company's reputation. Some studies support the notion that high congruence leads consumers to attribute a more altruistic motive to the sponsor (e.g. Rifon et al., 2004). On the other hand, some studies find that low congruence is positive because consumers perceive the sponsor as more sincere when there is no obvious link to the sponsorship object. This is especially relevant in sponsoring of social causes (d'Astous and Bitz, 1995; Speed and Thompson, 2000; Carrillat, d'Astous and Colbert, 2008).

The evidence regarding congruence from academia is contradicting, particularly when it comes to socio sponsorships. Even though there are some evidence favoring incongruent sponsorships, it seems that congruence in some dimension is more likely to result in favorable outcomes. Based on this we propose the following hypothesis:

**H1: Fit will have a direct positive effect on attitude toward the company, attitude toward the sponsorship, and image.**

### 3.3 The Role of Reputation

Corporate reputation can be defined as “a cognitive representation of a company's actions and results that crystallizes the firm's ability to deliver valued outcomes to its stakeholders” (Fombrun, Gardberg, and Barnett, 2000, p. 87). A corporate reputation consists of perceptions of different aspects like product quality, people management, investment value, and CSR (Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001). The reputation of a company can impact how consumers evaluate a sponsorship activity. This is based on the assumption that consumer evaluation involves the use of pre-existing schemas, and companies with a good reputation are usually perceived as more credible (ibid.). According to Gupta and Pirsch (2006), an overall positive attitude toward the company results in a more favorable response to CRM. In contrast, marketing communication from companies with a bad reputation is often found to receive low consumer support, and can in some cases even backfire (Yoon et al., 2006). Sen and Bhattacharya (2001) found that companies with low quality products ran a greater risk of consumers perceiving the CSR-effort as carried out at the expense of corporate abilities.

The reputation of a company will most likely affect the perceived motive behind a sponsorship. In order to be a credible sponsor for social issues, Haley (1996) points out the importance of an organization's likeability, including its reputation. Several researchers support the idea that attributions regarding the motive depend on reputation. For instance, consumers seem to be more aware of what companies with good reputations are doing, and so they are likely to make more favorable attributions regarding CSR initiatives for such companies (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2004). Also, Yoon et al. (2006) state that a company's CSR activities can explain how consumers' judgments of a company can create favorable or unfavorable evaluations. This is closely linked to attribution theory, and in short it means that those who are good do good.

Companies with a good reputation have a greater ability to sustain and retain an above average return on assets (Dowling, 2001). According to Fombrun et al. (2000), a good reputation can bring several benefits to a company, like an improved image or an ability to be better prepared for a potential crisis. A good reputation can also lead consumers to perceive charitable contributions through a sponsorship as positive for both the company and the cause. The authors (ibid.) suggest that audiences' suspicion is a mediator between the reputation of the company and their final attitudes toward the company. Bae and Cameron (2006) point out that a company with a bad reputation runs the risk of consumers becoming skeptical towards the real intention behind the sponsor activity. Such companies can often be perceived as self-interested. If consumers perceive the motives of a company to be insincere, the company runs the risk of damaging their own image. This is in line with the findings of Yoon et al. (2006), who state that CSR activities are unable to enhance corporate reputation if the company is seen as unethical.

Although a lot of research on reputation in sponsorship contexts is conducted with regards to CSR, we expect that reputation can also play an important role in sports sponsorship. On the basis of this, we propose the following hypotheses:

**H2: A good reputation will lead to a more positive a) attitude toward the company, b) attitude toward the sponsorship, and c) image, compared to a bad reputation.**

### 3.4 The Role of Motive Attribution

“Evaluations of a firm and its actions are considered to rest in part on the degree to which consumers associate egoistic or altruistic motives” (Ellen, Webb and Mohr, 2006, p.148). Attribution theory refers to causal reasoning consumers engage in when they try to understand a company’s behavior and infer a motive for the sponsorship activity (Yoon et al., 2006).

In the literature, motive attribution is often linked to the theory of celebrity endorsement. Rifon et al. (2004) suggest that consumers attribute motives to celebrities when they endorse a product. The two most common motives inferred to the endorser are that the celebrity actually believes in the product’s qualities (altruistic motive), or that he/she only does so for financial gain (commercial motive). Bhattacharya and Sen (2004) propose two factors that seem to moderate consumer suspicion toward a company’s motive for sponsoring a cause. They are the reputation of the company and fit between the company and the cause it is sponsoring.

Rifon et al. (2004) state in their paper that motive can be either altruistic or exploitative. An altruistic motive will lead to higher credibility and more positive attitudes toward the sponsorship, while a more exploitative motive will lead to more negative attitudes toward the sponsorship.

If consumers do not perceive a link or a high fit between the sponsor and the object this can lead to negative effects. A low congruence can trigger skepticism about the sponsorship message (Petty and Cacioppo, 1981), leading consumers to infer a more commercial motive behind the sponsorship activity. Moreover, there is evidence that a high congruence induces less elaboration, a higher sense of altruistic motivation and higher appreciation among the consumers (Rifon et al., 2004). In sum, it seems that thorough elaboration increases the risk of consumer skepticism.

Based on this, we expect that a high fit will induce less elaboration on the sponsor’s motives, resulting in increased perception of altruistic motives. On the other hand, low fit will induce more elaboration resulting in increased perception of commercial motives. We propose the following hypothesis:

**H3: The effect of fit on consumer outcomes is mediated by attributed motive.**

Companies often involve in sponsorships to achieve more favorable evaluations from consumers. A considerable amount of attribution research finds that people explain the acts of others in terms of corresponding traits (Yoon et al., 2006). When sponsoring a sport, or especially a social cause, one of the goals is usually to be perceived as a responsible actor, and that this will result in benefits like increased reputation and goodwill. However, trait attributions are not made if the consumer becomes suspicious of the company's underlying motives for the sponsorship activity (ibid.). This might indicate that company reputation plays an important role when it comes to motive attribution. Can a company with a bad reputation be perceived as good simply by engaging in sponsorship of a positive activity?

Friestad and Wright (1994) suggest that if consumers question a firm's motivation they may elicit more persuasion knowledge. This can result in greater cognitive elaboration when consumers evaluate the motivations. "Attribution theory and the persuasion knowledge model provide a basis for the argument that consumers will attempt to understand firms' motives embedded within marketing communication" (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006, p. 47).

For a company with a bad reputation a sponsorship might stimulate perceptions of commercial motives. A company with a good reputation has more goodwill and might stimulate perception of altruistic motives. We suggest the following hypothesis:

**H4: The effect of reputation on consumer outcomes is mediated by attributed motive.**

Motive attribution is an important construct in the sponsorship literature, but there is no substantial amount of research that has investigated whether there is a difference in perceived motive between sports and socio sponsorships.

Consumers generally question why a company is involved in CSR and socio sponsorships. Involvement in such activities makes consumers cautious regarding the sincerity of the company's motives (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2004). CSR-activities can improve a company's image when consumers attribute a sincere motive. The activity is ineffective if

the sincerity of the motive is ambiguous, and it can also hurt the company if the motive of the CSR-activity is seen as insincere (Yoon et al., 2006). In addition, according to Osterhus (1997), trust in the company is important in order to achieve favorable outcomes from a CSR sponsorship. This indicates that the role of motive is more crucial when a company sponsors a social cause.

Based on speculations by Rifon et al. (2004) we propose that attribution of sponsor motive plays a less important role in sports sponsorships. Firstly, such an outcome can be explained in light of the previous discussion of reputation and attribution theory, as this sort of sponsorship is often identified as less altruistic. Secondly, since consumers in general expect companies to be at least partially motivated by profit, the sponsorship of social causes can be perceived as incongruent with the perception of the company. Becker-Olsen et al. (2006) support this. They found that when a firm is viewed as motivated by profit, there is no reduction in corporate credibility. In other words, skepticism toward a firm's motivation is not only driven by a company's profit motive. Skepticism can occur because of a discrepancy between the stated objectives and company actions. If consumers do not perceive sports sponsorship as very altruistic, they will probably not care very much if the sponsor's motive is profit oriented.

Socio sponsorship is likely to be seen as nobler than sports sponsorship. However, if a company with a bad reputation is involved in a socio sponsorship, this can potentially create large incongruence in consumers' minds, leading to frustration and negative attitudes toward the sponsoring company (Jagre, Watson and Watson, 2001). Another factor is that consumers are so used to seeing companies sponsoring sports organizations and events that this in itself may lead to less elaborate thoughts about the motive behind the sponsoring. Socio sponsorships are on the other hand less common, which may lead to more elaborate thoughts about motive. Based on the previous discussion, the fifth hypothesis H5 states the following:

**H5: The effect of socio sponsorships on consumer outcomes will be more affected by motive attribution than sports sponsorship.**



## 4. Methodology

In this chapter we describe the methodological choices behind the hypotheses testing and data analysis.

### 4.1 Introduction

Two levels of fit and two levels of reputation, high vs. low and good vs. bad, were tested in an experimental study for both sports and socio sponsorship. Firstly, we present the development of stimuli. The presentation includes choice of sponsors and sponsor objects, the pretest of fit, and the development of the sponsorship advertisements. Secondly, we outline the research design and data collection procedures before we describe the measurement procedure.

### 4.2 Stimuli Development

#### **Fictional vs. Real Companies and Organizations**

To test the hypotheses, we chose to use real life sponsors and sponsor objects. A fictional stimulus has the advantage of not being colored by peoples' prior opinions about the company or the organizations. Nevertheless, it is quite difficult to create a base for evaluating a sponsorship in a short message in a questionnaire that is answered in few minutes. This method can also be risky if the respondents discover that the companies and/or organizations are not real, making careless response more likely. In order to reduce the risk that some of the answers will be affected by the respondents' relationship with the stimuli we included knowledge about the company and involvement with the organizations as control variables.

#### **Choice of Companies**

We chose to use companies from the banking sector, because such companies are common sponsors of both sports and social causes. Banking is a sector that is relevant to most people. This makes it more likely that they have an opinion about the companies'

reputations. Also, some of the companies in this sector have a bad reputation, while others are well liked, which increases the chance to find two companies with distinct reputation differences. Based on reputation indices (Reputation Institute, 2011; Synovate, 2009) we chose companies that we consider well known, at the same time as they are rated to have either a good or a bad reputation. As the companies with a good reputation, Skandiabanken and Gjensidige were chosen. Terra and GE Money Bank were chosen to represent companies with bad reputations. As these companies were already chosen based on reputation indices, we did not pretest reputation.

### **Pretest of Fit**

Fit is a comprehensive construct that can occur on several dimensions. To get a more thorough base for deciding which combinations of sponsors and sponsor objects that had a potential to create high fit and low fit, we pretested this in two ways. Firstly, we tested the sense of global fit, and secondly, the sense of image overlap between the sponsoring company and the sport or charity organization. A total of 30 persons completed the pretest.

11 sports organizations and 11 charity organizations were included in the pretest. The sports selected were skiing, climbing, sailing, wrestling, chess, polo, golf, soccer, biking, basketball, and track and field. The organizations chosen were Amnesty International, UNICEF, Norwegian Sea Rescue, Save the Children, the City Church Mission, Bellona, the Cancer Foundation, the Federation for Animal Protection, Norwegian Refugee Council, Blue Cross, and the Salvation Army. We chose these organizations because we assumed they would have potential for creating high or low fit with respect to the image dimensions and the global fit measure.

We adopted the test of global fit from Speed and Thompson (2000), and the respondents were asked to indicate the degree of agreement with the statements:

- (Company) and (Sport/Charity Organization) have similar image
- (Company) and (Sport/Charity Organization) fit well together
- The associations I have to (Company) are similar to the associations I have to (Sport/Charity Organization)
- (Company) and (Sport/Charity Organization) stand for similar things

The 11 sports organizations and 11 charitable organizations were paired with the 4 companies resulting in 88 sponsorship combinations. In order to avoid respondent fatigue, the 88 combinations of the 4 companies, 11 sports and 11 organizations were split in half and tested between subjects.

In the pretest of image, the respondents were asked to rate all companies, sports and organizations according to two distinct image dimensions "involving" and "strategic". Here, we had chosen 5 and 7 adjectives corresponding to each of the two dimensions that the respondents rated on a 7-point scale ranging from "not describing" to "very describing". The items corresponding to the strategic image dimension were "goal oriented", "orderly", "performance oriented", "result oriented", and "systematic". The items related to the involving dimension were "empathic", "helpful", "useful", "close", "socially engaged", "fair", and "honest".

The image dimension "strategic" was chosen after an examination of common company values in the banking sector based on their web sites. Also, we assumed that this value would be relevant to many sports. As a value that could be valid for both a bank and a charity organization, "involving" was chosen. Even though this might be a more obvious value for charity organizations than for banks, we considered this to be the best alternative. We hoped to find some overlap between the companies and the organizations, in order to discover which combinations that could be perceived as a good image fit.

### **Interpretation of the Pretest**

To choose the companies for the main study, we assessed the four companies' mean scores (M) on the image dimensions (see Table 4.1. for mean scores, n, and standard deviations). The image scores of Skandiabanken ( $M_{\text{Strategic}} = 5.22$ ,  $M_{\text{Involving}} = 4.27$ ) were higher on the strategic dimension than for Gjensidige ( $M_{\text{Strategic}} = 4.37$ ,  $M_{\text{Involving}} = 4.68$ ), and therefore chosen for the main study. Terra ( $M_{\text{Strategic}} = 2.74$ ,  $M_{\text{Involving}} = 3.99$ ), had lower scores on both dimensions compared to GE Money Bank ( $M_{\text{Strategic}} = 2.92$ ,  $M_{\text{Involving}} = 4.35$ ) and we therefore selected Terra as the company with a bad reputation.

**Table 4.1.** Mean Scores on the Image Dimensions

Companies/sports/charity organizations	Mean (St. Dev.)	
	Involving	Strategic
Skandiabanken	<b>4.27</b> (0.92)	<b>5.22</b> (0.13)
Gjensidige	<b>4.37</b> (0.57)	<b>4.68</b> (0.09)
Terra	<b>2.74</b> (0.37)	<b>3.99</b> (0.67)
GE Money Bank	<b>2.92</b> (0.43)	<b>4.35</b> (0.54)
All sports	<b>3.91</b> (0.50)	<b>4.90</b> (0.59)
Soccer	<b>4.10</b> (0.47)	<b>4.69</b> (0.65)
Basketball	<b>3.20</b> (0.23)	<b>3.69</b> (0.10)
All charity organizations	<b>5.60</b> (0.45)	<b>4.80</b> (0.35)
Amnesty International	<b>5.82</b> (0.74)	<b>4.79</b> (0.43)
The Federation of Animal Protection	<b>5.01</b> (0.51)	<b>4.26</b> (0.28)

*Notes:* The table reports the mean scores and standard deviations (in parentheses) on the image dimensions for the companies, sports, and charity organizations selected for the main study.  $n = 30$  for all scores.

The results from the image test showed that sports organizations were rated higher on the “strategic” dimension compared to “involving”, while the charity organizations were rated higher on “involving”. In total, sports had a score of ( $M = 3.91_{\text{Involving}}$ ,  $M = 4.90_{\text{Strategic}}$ ), while the organizations had ( $M = 5.60_{\text{Involving}}$ ,  $M = 4.80_{\text{Strategic}}$ ).

Based on the global fit measure (see Table 4.2) and the image-overlap, we chose soccer as the sport with potential to generate high fit across the companies. It had, relative to the other sports, a high natural congruency ( $M = 2.78_{\text{Skandiabanken}}$ ,  $M = 1.95_{\text{Terra}}$ ) and was also perceived relatively strategic ( $M = 4.69_{\text{Strategic}}$ ). Basketball was chosen to create low fit as it had a relatively low score on the global fit measure for both companies ( $M = 1.75_{\text{Skandiabanken}}$ ,  $M = 1.62_{\text{Terra}}$ ) and a low score on the strategic image dimension ( $M = 3.69_{\text{Strategic}}$ ).

Further, we chose Amnesty International as the organization with potential to generate high fit across the companies, as the combination had a relatively high natural congruency ( $M = 2.17_{\text{Skandiabanken}}$ ,  $M = 1.68_{\text{Terra}}$ ) and was perceived involving ( $M = 5.82_{\text{Involving}}$ ). The Federation for Animal Protection was chosen to create low fit as they had a relatively low score on the global fit measure for both companies ( $M = 1.68_{\text{Skandiabanken}}$ ,  $M = 1.20_{\text{Terra}}$ ) and

a low score on the image dimension involving ( $M = 5.01_{\text{Involving}}$ ). (For mean scores, n, and standard deviations for non-selected sports and charity organizations, see Appendix A.)

**Table 4.2.** Mean Scores on Global Fit

Sponsorship combinations	Mean (St. Dev)
Skandiabanken-Soccer	<b>2.783<sup>a</sup></b> (1.653)
Skandiabanken-Basketball	<b>1.750<sup>a</sup></b> (1.202)
Skandiabanken-Amnesty International	<b>2.167<sup>b</sup></b> (1.542)
Skandiabanken-The Federation of Animal Protection	<b>1.683<sup>b</sup></b> (1.295)
Terra-Soccer	<b>1.950<sup>c</sup></b> (1.294)
Terra-Basketball	<b>1.617<sup>c</sup></b> (0.940)
Terra-Amnesty International	<b>1.683<sup>d</sup></b> (0.948)
Terra-The Federation of Animal Protection	<b>1.200<sup>d</sup></b> (0.443)

*Notes:* The table reports mean scores and standard deviations (in parentheses) for the sponsorship combinations selected for the main study.  $n = 15$  for all combinations.

<sup>a</sup> Difference between Soccer and Basketball is significant at  $p < .05$

<sup>b</sup> Difference between Amnesty International and Animal Protection is significant at  $p < .05$

<sup>c</sup> Difference between Soccer and Basketball is significant at  $p < .05$

<sup>d</sup> Difference between Amnesty International and Animal Protection is significant at  $p < .05$

When developing the sponsorship advertisements, we used the image dimensions in the messages to create high or low perceived fit. The messages were framed focusing on how the companies and the organizations aspired to pursue the same values. We found this to be the best way to manipulate fit, as other typical dimensions like user group, geographic or product related fit would be artificial in this setting. The eight different advertisements can be found in Appendix B.

After we had developed the questionnaire for the main study, a focus group of seven people gave feedback on the questions and appearance of the advertisements. The

respondents understood all the questions, and thought the commercials looked very realistic. Everybody evaluated Skandiabanken's reputation to be much more positive than Terra's, and the majority also correctly distinguished the high and low fit matches.

### 4.3 Research Design and Procedure

We used a 2 (high vs. low fit)\*2 (good vs. bad reputation)\*2 (sports vs. socio sponsorship) factorial experimental design, resulting in 8 experimental groups. There were 393 respondents who answered the questionnaire, which was constructed using the online survey software Qualtrics.

The majority of the respondents were NHH students invited to participate through Facebook, but the questionnaire was also distributed to family and friends outside school. This experiment violates the assumption of random sampling by using non-probability sampling as the sampling method. This means that samples are gathered in such a way that all individuals in the population do not have equal opportunity to be chosen. Convenience sampling is the most common method under non-probability, where respondents are selected based on accessibility. The drawback of a non-probability sample is that it is not a random selection of the entire population, thus the results of the research cannot be used in generalizations to the entire population (Saunders, 2009).

Nevertheless, non-probability sampling made it possible for us to achieve a large sample in a short time and at low cost, which were important aspects given the limited resources and the restricted scope normally associated with a master thesis. To avoid non-response and careless responding, caution was taken to reduce the load on the respondents. Hence, the respondent's task, represented by the number of questions in the questionnaire, was limited to 29 questions. The average respondent completed the survey in about five minutes. To achieve the same amount of responses on each survey, we divided the eight versions into blocks in Qualtrics, which was programmed to secure an equal number of responses for each survey. However, the final number of responses varied between 44 and 57 respondents for each block. This was because the respondents that failed to complete the questionnaire were also registered as a response. Even so, we still got an acceptably

high number of respondents in all blocks in order for us to be able to investigate relationships.

To analyze the data, we used the statistical software Stata. The questionnaire can be found in Appendix C.

#### 4.4 Measurements

In the research model, we suggested the three consumer outcomes company attitude, sponsorship attitude and image as dependent variables. Fit and reputation are independent variables, which are linked to consumer outcomes both directly and indirectly via attributed motive. Object involvement, company knowledge, gender and age are included as control variables. To report on how the scales were performing in the experiment, we conducted a factor analysis (principal component) with an oblimin rotation. A factor analysis, being a data reduction technique, is a good tool for investigating the items (questions), measuring that the constructs behave as expected. The oblimin rotation is an oblique rotation method (Hair et al., 2006), which means that that factors (or components) are allowed to correlate. High values among a group of factors indicate convergent validity and variance (Hair et al., 2006). According to Pallant (2007) only factor loadings above 0.4 and Eigenvalues over 1 should be included.

#### **Dependent Variables**

##### *Company Attitude*

An attitude can be defined as a “learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to a given object” (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975, p. 6). An enhanced attitude toward the sponsor is a common sponsorship objective (Cornwell et al., 2005).

Attitude toward the company was measured by three items using seven point semantic differential scales (very bad/very good), (very negative/very positive), and (hard to like/easy to like) adopted from Mitchell and Olson (1981) and Muehling and Laczniak (1988).

The three items related to attitude toward the sponsorship all loaded on the same factor with factor loadings above 0.8. Cronbach's coefficient alpha was used to assess the internal consistency (reliability) of scale items. The value for sponsorship attitude was 0.9699, well above the recommended value which is 0.7.

### *Sponsorship Attitude*

Favorable attitude change as a sponsorship outcome is often acknowledged as the most important sponsorship effect (e.g. Martensen et al., 2007; Speed and Thomson, 2000). Simmons and Becker-Olsen (2006) claim that sponsorship attitude is a predictor of firm equity, and that sponsorship attitude significantly influences post-sponsorship attitude and purchase intentions.

Attitude toward the sponsorship was measured on a three-item semantic differential scale (negative/positive, unfavorable/favorable, bad/good) used by Simmons and Becker-Olsen (2006).

The three items related to attitude toward the sponsorship all loaded on the same factor with factor loadings above 0.9. The Cronbach's alpha for sponsorship attitude was 0.9617, also above the recommended value.

### *Corporate Image*

An enhanced image is one of the most common sponsorship objectives (Walliser, 2003; Smith, 2004). Brand image can be defined as “perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory” (Keller, 2008, p. 3).

The image dimensions were measured on a four item 7-point Likert scale based on the pretest. We used four adjectives from the pretest that described either “strategic” (results-oriented/performance-oriented/goal-oriented/orderly) for sports or “involving” (emphatic/honest/helpful/useful) for charitable organizations.

The four items for company image loaded on one factor, but with much lower scores for item 4. Cronbach's alpha for company image was 0.8562



## **Manipulation Checks**

### *Reputation*

Fombrun et al. (2000, p. 87) defines corporate reputation as “a cognitive representation of a company’s actions and results that crystallizes the firm’s ability to deliver valued outcomes to its stakeholders”.

To check the manipulation of reputation we used a four item 7-point Likert scale. The respondents were asked to indicate to what degree they agreed with statements about the company ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. The items were adopted from Fombrun et al. (2000), and then adjusted to include only what we considered the most important items to measure reputation in our experiment. The items were:

- (Company) has a good reputation
- I have the impression that the products provided by (Company) has a high quality
- (Company) has a good management
- I trust (Company)

The four items concerning reputation loaded on the same factor with factor loadings above 0.8. The Cronbach’s alpha for reputation was 0.9585.

### *Fit*

Fit is the perceived congruence between a sponsor and the sponsorship object, and can occur on several dimensions (Smith, 2004).

Based on the global fit measure from the pretest, we checked manipulation of fit using a four item 7-point Likert scale. Two of the statements were slightly altered compared to the pretest to better clarify the concept for the respondents. The items were:

- (Company) and (Sport/Charity Organization) fit well together
- (Company) and (Sport/Charity Organization) have a similar image
- I think it is appropriate that (Company) sponsors (Sport/Charity Organization)
- (Company) and (Sport/Charity Organization) stand for similar values

The four items testing fit loaded on the same factor with values above 0.8. Cronbach's alpha was 0.8836.

## **Mediating Variable**

### *Motive Attribution*

Attribution theory refers to causal reasoning consumers engage in to try to understand a company's behavior and infer a motive for the sponsorship activity (Yoon et al., 2006). "Evaluations of a firm and its actions are considered to rest in part on the degree to which consumer's associate egoistic or altruistic motives" (Ellen, Webb and Mohr, 2006, p.148).

We measured motive attribution on a five-item 7-point Likert scale that ranged from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" adopted from Rifon et al. (2004) and Yoon et al (2006). Two of the items were related to altruistic motive attribution and two items were related to commercial motive attribution. The altruistic-related items were:

- (Company) sponsors (Sport/Charity Organization) due to a genuine interest for the sport/cause
- (Company) sponsors (Sport/Charity Organization) because they care about the athletes/the disadvantaged groups' situation and future

The strategic motive-variable was captured by the items:

- (Company) sponsors (Sport/Charity Organization) first and foremost because they care about profit
- (Company) sponsors (Sport/Charity Organization) because it creates a positive image of the company
- (Company) sponsors (Sport/Charity Organization) because they hope people will get a better impression of the company

The two items concerning altruistic motive loaded on one factor with loadings above 0.8. Cronbach's alpha was 0.8868. The three items concerning commercial motive loaded on the same factor with values above 0.7, and the corresponding Cronbach's alpha was 0.7901.

## **Control Variables**

### *Brand Knowledge*

To measure existing knowledge about the company we used Hirschman and Solomon's (1984) object familiarity scale. The scale ranged from "not familiar" to "very familiar" with respect to the company in general.

### *Object Involvement*

The degree of personal involvement in the sport or charitable organization was measured on a three item 7-point Likert scale partly adopted from Speed and Thompson (2000). The respondents were asked to rate the following statements on a scale that ranged from "totally disagree" to "totally agree":

- I am more than averagely known with (Sport/Charity Organization)
- I have a strong personal relationship with (Sport/Charity Organization)
- (Sport/Charity Organization) is important to me

The three items regarding object involvement all loaded on the same factor with values above 0.9, and the Cronbach's alpha was 0.9232.

### *Demographic Variables*

Gender and age were also included as control variables.

## **4.4.1 Factor Analysis and Scale Reliability Check**

Results from the factor analysis of all the items together, as seen in Table 4.3, indicate that the items related to reputation and company attitude load on the same factor. Because reputation is an independent variable and company attitude is a dependent variable it would not make sense to combine them into one variable. Hence, we excluded company attitude as a dependent variable in the further analysis. We also thought that sponsorship attitude would adequately capture the desired effect because sponsorship attitude has been conceptualized as a predictor of sponsor equity (Olson, 2010; Simmons and Becker-Olsen, 2006).

Results showed that item 4 in the image variable was loading on factor 1, “attitude toward the company” and was therefore excluded. The third question about motive and the third question about fit were cross-loading on several variables, and the factor loading scores were low compared to the other items in the factor so we excluded these items from the analysis.

**Table 4.3.** Factor Loading and Cronbach’s Alpha

Items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6	Factor 7	
	Reputation and company attitude	Sponsorship attitude	Image	Altruistic motive	Fit	Object involvement	Commercial motive	Cronbach's $\alpha$
Good	<b>0.9531</b>	-0.0242	-0.0420	-0.0039	0.0449	0.0470	0.0024	
High quality	<b>0.9083</b>	-0.0130	0.0117	0.0371	0.0283	0.0259	-0.0098	
Management	<b>0.8552</b>	-0.0243	0.0483	0.0468	0.0241	0.0041	0.0059	
Trust	<b>0.9457</b>	0.0019	-0.0181	-0.0079	0.0044	0.0074	-0.0150	0.9585
Good	<b>0.9016</b>	-0.0295	0.0530	0.0502	0.0034	-0.0631	0.0100	
Positive	<b>0.8986</b>	0.0261	0.0413	-0.0060	0.0320	-0.0470	-0.0136	
Easy to like	<b>0.9122</b>	0.0447	-0.0027	-0.0131	-0.0138	-0.0247	-0.0141	0.9699
Positive	0.0385	<b>0.9253</b>	-0.0124	0.0126	0.0221	-0.0090	0.0014	
Favorable	0.0311	<b>0.9557</b>	-0.0168	-0.0195	-0.0046	0.0085	0.0256	
Good	-0.0343	<b>0.9675</b>	0.0439	0.0140	-0.0137	0.0065	0.0010	0.9617
Result or./emphatic	-0.1415	-0.0512	<b>0.9474</b>	0.0159	0.1353	-0.0005	0.0009	
Performance or./honest	0.1517	0.0348	<b>0.8526</b>	-0.0062	-0.0862	0.0382	0.0064	
Goal or./helpful	0.1298	0.0513	<b>0.8667</b>	-0.0035	-0.0580	-0.0227	0.0051	
Orderly/useful	<b>0.8487</b>	0.0627	0.0153	-0.0373	-0.0761	0.0278	0.0074	0.8562
Genuine interest	0.0050	0.0078	0.0204	<b>0.8844</b>	0.1047	-0.0059	0.0367	
Care	0.0900	0.0060	0.0030	<b>0.8831</b>	0.0351	0.0343	0.0101	0.8868
Fit well	0.0120	0.2687	0.0410	0.1437	<b>0.6592</b>	0.0203	-0.0350	
Similar image	0.0838	-0.0039	0.0425	-0.0014	<b>0.8586</b>	-0.0138	-0.0835	
Appropriate	0.0419	<b>0.5445</b>	0.0113	0.0234	<b>0.4546</b>	-0.0074	0.0068	
Similar values	0.0613	-0.0024	0.0548	0.1953	<b>0.7389</b>	0.0107	-0.0257	0.8836
Knowledge	-0.0256	0.0124	0.0025	-0.0084	-0.0458	<b>0.9169</b>	0.0209	
Personal	-0.0401	-0.0247	0.0590	-0.0455	0.0504	<b>0.9510</b>	-0.0310	
Important	0.0569	0.0218	-0.0579	0.0743	-0.0194	<b>0.9252</b>	0.0077	0.9232
Profit	0.0529	-0.1586	-0.0316	<b>-0.4103</b>	0.2548	0.0767	<b>0.6036</b>	
Image	0.0012	0.0400	0.0145	0.0918	-0.0916	0.0218	<b>0.9331</b>	
Impression	-0.0498	0.0325	0.0009	0.0151	-0.0368	-0.0247	<b>0.9146</b>	0.7901

Notes: The table reports the results from the principal components analysis, with an oblimin rotation. Factor loadings above 0.4 in bold.

## 5. Analysis and Results

In this section we present the methods used for the data analysis and the results from the survey.

### 5.1. Method of Analysis

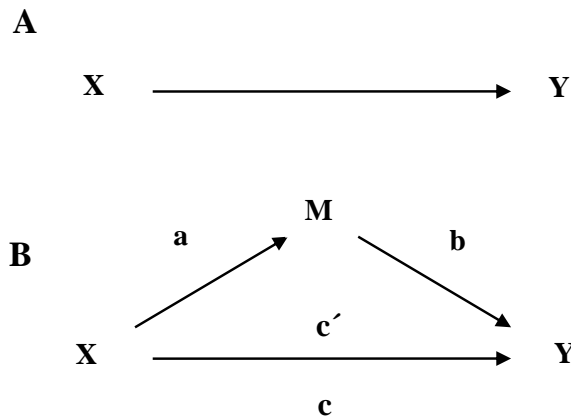
#### **Main Effects**

To test the main effect of reputation and fit (H1 and H2) on consumer outcomes, we used a one-way ANOVA. This is an analysis of variance used to compare mean differences between two or more groups. The experiment includes eight groups that were compared to each other. To find which means that were significantly different from each other, we used a Tukey test. In addition, we used ANCOVA, which controls for covariates, to assess the control variables in the experiment.

#### **Mediated Effects**

Hypotheses H3, H4, and H5 intended to test if motive attribution can act as a mediator between fit and reputation on consumer outcomes. This is in behavioral science called simple mediation, and mediation occurs when a predictor affects a dependent variable through an intervening variable, i.e. the mediator (Preacher and Hayes, 2008).

Preacher and Hayes (2008) explain this by using the model in Figure 5.1. A simple mediation analysis attempts to determine how an independent variable (X) indirectly affects a dependent variable (Y) through a mediator (M) when (X)'s direct effect on (Y) is taken into account. Path a represents the direct effect of (X) on (M), and path b represents the mediator's effect on (Y), eliminating the effect of (X). The total effect of (X) on (Y) is the sum of both the direct and the indirect effect:  $c = c' + ab$ .



**Figure 5.1.** Simple Mediation

*Note:* Panel A shows the direct effect of (X) on (Y). Panel B shows how (X) indirectly affects (Y) through a mediator (M) when (X)'s direct effect on (Y) is taken into account.

*Source:* Preacher and Hayes (2008).

When testing mediating effects, a causal step approach described by Baron and Kenny (1986) is the most common (Preacher and Hayes, 2008). Nevertheless, Hayes (2009) criticizes this method, as it requires that the independent variable (X) account for variability in the dependent variable (Y). The author points at later research that concludes that a significant total effect of (X) on (Y) is not essential for mediation to occur. In addition, the causal step approach is claimed to be low in power as it fails to unite direct and intervening effects. Instead, the Sobel test and Bootstrapping is suggested as alternative methods.

The Sobel test addresses mediation more directly, which makes it more powerful. Bootstrapping is a non-parametric test that, in contrast to the Sobel test, does not require normal distribution. It estimates mediation by repeatedly sampling from the data set and estimating the indirect effect of each re-sampled data set (Preacher and Hayes, 2008). This computer-based sampling makes estimation of sample distribution possible for a large range of statistics with a high degree of accuracy (Efron and Tibshirani, 1994). In this thesis, we will use both methods to test for mediation effects. If the two methods yield different results, we will use the Bootstrap confidence intervals as a basis for the hypotheses testing. This is in line with recommendations from Preacher and Hayes (2008).

## 5.2 Results

### 5.2.1 Manipulation Checks

In order to test if the stimuli were perceived as intended, the mean scores across the good and bad reputation and high and low fit groups were compared. The means between the good and bad reputation groups were significant ( $M_{\text{highrep}} = 4.94$ ,  $M_{\text{lowrep}} = 2.62$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ) and were in line with the expectations based on measures from the reputation indices. The difference between the means in the high and low fit groups was also significant ( $M_{\text{highfit}} = 3.04$ ,  $M_{\text{lowfit}} = 2.78$ ,  $p = 0.02$ .) This is admittedly not a large difference, but the results were significant and verified the pretest results.

### 5.2.2 Control Variables

Level of involvement with the organization and knowledge about the company were control variables in the study. A requirement for covariance analysis is that the control variables must be correlated to the dependent variables. The correlation matrix showed that neither of the two control variables was significantly correlated (see appendix D). They were therefore excluded from further analysis. ANCOVA was used to test the effect of age and gender on the dependent variables. The results show that none of them were significant (see appendix D for results).

### 5.2.3 Test of Assumptions

The research hypotheses were tested using one-way ANOVA, Sobel test and Bootstrapping. The general assumptions that must be met for these tests are independence of observations, normal distribution, and homogeneity of variance (Pallant, 2007).

#### **Independence of Observations**

Lack of independence in observations indicates that responses are not made independent of each other (Hair et al., 2006). The behavior of a respondent in a group can influence other respondents and therefore violate this assumption. However, the survey used random

assignment and was online so there are small chances that others have influenced the respondents.

### **Normal Distribution**

Skewness and kurtosis values below 1 indicate normal distribution. Descriptive statistics showed that the values for the continuous variables seemed to be normally distributed and this is confirmed by the skewness and kurtosis values that are well below 1. The descriptive statistics for normal distribution can be found in Appendix E.

### **Homogeneity of Variance**

Levene's test checks the homogeneity of variance between groups. A significance level above 0.05 indicates homogeneity of variance (Pallant, 2007). Results showed that variances for groups with respect to both sponsorship attitude and image were not equal ( $p < 0.05$ ). This represents a violation of the assumption of homogeneity of variance; however, the parametric techniques we utilize are quite robust when it comes to deviation from the assumptions as long as there are an equal number of cases in each block. Even though our cell sizes vary from 44 to 57, we consider them close enough to be treated as equal. Levene's test results can be found in Appendix E.

#### **5.2.4 Test of the Main Effect of Fit on Consumer Outcomes**

H1 states that fit will have a direct positive effect on attitude toward the sponsorship and image. The hypothesis was first tested using a one-way ANOVA. Table 5.1 shows that there was a significant effect of fit on sponsorship attitude ( $F_{(17,375)} = 9.63, p = 0.00$ ) and on image ( $F_{(17,375)} = 4.76, p = 0.00$ ). A Tukey post-hoc test revealed that there were no statistically significant differences between the high and low fit groups ( $p = 0.27$  for sponsorship attitude,  $p = 0.18$  for image).

Thus, hypothesis 1 is accepted.



**Table 5.1.** One-way ANOVA: The Main Effects of Fit on Sponsorship Attitude and Image

		Mean Square	F	p-value
Sponsorship Attitude	Between Groups	17.577	9.63	0.000
	Within Groups	1.824		
Image	Between Groups	8.199	4.76	0.000
	Within Groups	1.724		

*Notes:* Descriptives for sponsorship attitude:  $M_{\text{High-fit}} = 4.44 (0.11)$   $M_{\text{Low-fit}} = 4.27 (0.13)$  Diff mean = -0.18. Descriptives for image:  $M_{\text{High-fit}} = 4.20(0.10)$   $M_{\text{Low-fit}} = 4.00 (0.10)$  Diff mean = -0.19.

### 5.2.5 Test of the Main Effect of Reputation on Consumer Outcomes

H2 states that a good reputation will lead to a more positive a) attitude toward the sponsorship b) image, as compared to a bad reputation. Table 5.2 shows the results from the one-way ANOVA. There was a significant effect of reputation on attitude toward the sponsorship ( $F_{(24,368)} = 4.39, p = 0.00$ ) and on image ( $F_{(24,368)} = 8.69, p = 0.00$ ). The Tukey post-hoc test revealed that there was also a significant difference between the high and low reputation groups ( $p = 0.00$  for sponsorship attitude,  $p = 0.00$  for image).

Thus, hypothesis 2 is accepted.

**Table 5.2.** One-way ANOVA: The Main Effects of Reputation on Sponsorship Attitude and Image

		Mean Square	F	p-value
Sponsorship Attitude	Between Groups	9.120	4.39	0.000
	Within Groups	2.076		
Image	Between Groups	11.847	8.69	0.000
	Within Groups	1.363		

*Notes:* Descriptives for sponsorship attitude:  $M_{\text{Good reputation}} = 4.78(0.10)$   $M_{\text{Bad reputation}} = 3.91 (0.12)$  Diff mean = -0.87. Descriptives for image:  $M_{\text{Good reputation}} = 4.66(0.08)$   $M_{\text{Bad reputation}} = 3.51(0.11)$  Diff mean = -1.15.

### 5.2.6 Test of Mediation

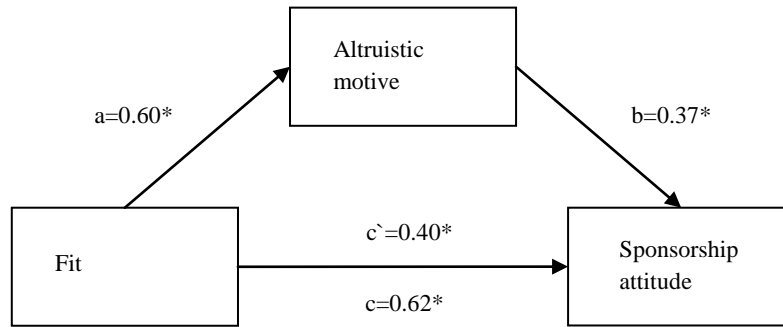
To test H3: The effect of fit on consumer outcomes is mediated by attributed motive, and H4: The effect of reputation on consumer outcomes is mediated by attributed motive, we used simple mediation analysis in the form of Sobel and Bootstrap tests. We tested the effect of the two mediator variables “commercial motive attribution” and “altruistic motive attribution” for the independent variables “fit” and “reputation” on the dependent variables “sponsorship attitude” and “image”. Secondly, we looked more closely to see if there were any significant differences caused by the mediating variable in the high and low conditions of fit and reputation.

The simple mediation (resboot\_mediation) macro for Stata (seen in Table 5.3) indicated that altruistic motive was a significant mediator for the relationships between fit-sponsorship attitude and reputation-sponsorship attitude, as illustrated in Figure 5.2 and 5.3. Altruistic motive was also a significant mediator in both the high and low conditions of fit and reputation. Commercial motive attribution was not significant.

**Table 5.3.** Simple Mediation Effects Results

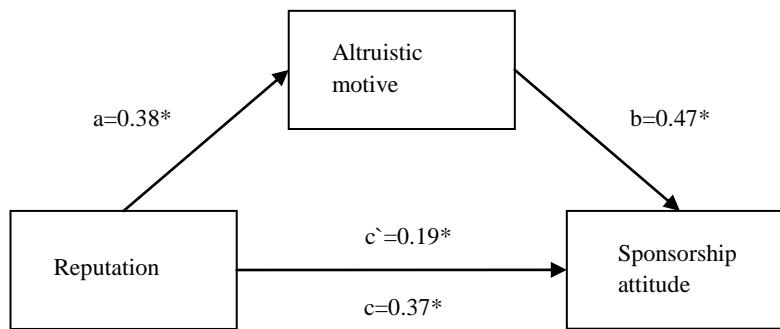
	coeff a	coeff b	coeff c	coeff c'
Fit-sponsorship attitude via altruistic motive	0.60*	0.37*	0.62*	0.40*
High fit-sponsorship attitude via altruistic motive	0.56*	0.39*	0.59*	0.37*
Low fit-sponsorship attitude via altruistic motive	0.65*	0.34*	0.66*	0.43*
Reputation-sponsorship attitude via altruistic motive	0.38*	0.47*	0.37*	0.19*
High rep.-sponsorship attitude via altruistic motive	0.24*	0.54*	0.18*	0.05*
Low rep.-sponsorship attitude via altruistic motive	0.64*	0.32*	0.57*	0.37*
Fit-image via altruistic motive	0.60*	0.12	0.44*	0.37*
Reputation-image via altruistic motive	0.39*	0.04	-0.50*	0.48*
Fit-sponsorship attitude via commercial motive	-0.21*	0.18	0.62*	0.66*
Reputation-sponsorship attitude via commercial motive	-0.10*	0.10	0.37*	0.38*
Fit-image via commercial motive	-0.21*	0.06	0.44*	0.45*
Reputation-image on commercial motive	-0.10*	0.05	0.50*	0.50*

Notes: Coeff = Coefficient, \* indicates  $p < .05$ .



**Figure 5.2.** Simple Mediation – Impact of Fit on Sponsorship Attitude via Altruistic Motive.

*Notes:* Path a is the direct effect of X on Y. Path b is the mediator’s effect on Y eliminating the effect of X. The total effect of X on Y is  $c = c' + ab$ .



**Figure 5.3.** Simple Mediation – Impact of Reputation on Sponsorship Attitude via Altruistic Motive.

*Notes:* Path a is the direct effect of X on Y. Path b is the mediator’s effect on Y eliminating the effect of X. The total effect of X on Y is  $c = c' + ab$ .

However, the bootstrap analysis (as seen in Table 5.4) showed that there was only a significant indirect effect of altruistic motive on fit and reputation for the condition of high fit and good reputation as indicated by the exclusion of zero in the bootstrapped confidence interval

*(Fit-sponsorship attitude via altruistic motive: 0.22, 95% CI = {.11, .35}),*

*High fit-sponsorship attitude via altruistic motive: 0.22, 95 % CI = {.06, .51},*

*Reputation-sponsorship attitude via altruistic motive: 0.18, 95 % CI = {.10, .28},*

*High reputation-sponsorship attitude via altruistic motive: 0.13, 95 % CI = {.03, .40}).*

**Table 5.4.** Results From Sobel Test and Bootstrap Indirect Effects

	Sobel test		Bootstrap test			
	Sobel Z-value	p-value	Data	SE	LL95% CI	UL95% CI
Impact of fit on sponsorship attitude via attributed altruistic motive	5.7050	0.0000	0.2225	0.0612	0.1065	0.3522
Impact of high fit on sponsorship attitude via attributed altruistic motive	4.5550	0.0000	0.2200	0.1093	0.0550	0.5108
Impact of low fit on sponsorship attitude via attributed altruistic motive	3.4970	0.0005	0.2243	0.1608	-0.0227	0.6176
Impact of reputation on sponsorship attitude via attributed altruistic motive	6.4900	0.0000	0.1805	0.0452	0.0988	0.2837
Impact of high reputation on sponsorship attitude via attributed	2.9170	0.0035	0.1300	0.1053	0.0286	0.3991
Impact of low reputation on sponsorship attitude via attributed	3.0670	0.0021	0.2011	0.1714	-0.0877	0.5998
Impact of fit on image via attributed altruistic motive	2.0300	0.0423	0.0716	0.0560	-0.0332	0.1916
Impact of reputation on image via attributed altruistic motive	0.7309	0.4648	0.0137	0.0301	-0.0384	0.0754
Impact of fit on sponsorship attitude via attributed commercial motive	-2.4990	0.0132	-0.0371	0.0236	-0.0865	0.0017
Impact of reputation on sponsorship attitude via commercial motive	-1.3690	0.1710	-0.0104	0.0139	-0.0465	0.0092
Impact of fit on image via attributed commercial motive	-0.9489	0.3427	-0.0117	0.0211	-0.0640	0.0217
Impact of reputation on image via attributed commercial motive	-0.9789	0.3276	-0.0055	0.0102	-0.0339	0.0102

*Notes:* SE = Standard Error, LL = Lower Level, UL = Upper Level, CI = Confidence Interval.

Even though the Sobel test showed that low fit and bad reputation on sponsorship attitude via altruistic motive were significant, the bootstrap showed that for low fit and bad reputation the results include zero in the bootstrapped confidence interval

*(Low fit-sponsorship attitude via altruistic motive: 0.22, 95% CI = {-.02, .62},*

*Low reputation-sponsorship attitude via altruistic motive: 0.20, 95 % CI = {-.09, .60})* and

were therefore not significant. Commercial motive and the impact on image were also found not to be significant.

Thus, hypotheses 3 and 4 are partially accepted.

### 5.2.7 Test of the Effect of Socio vs. Sports Sponsorship

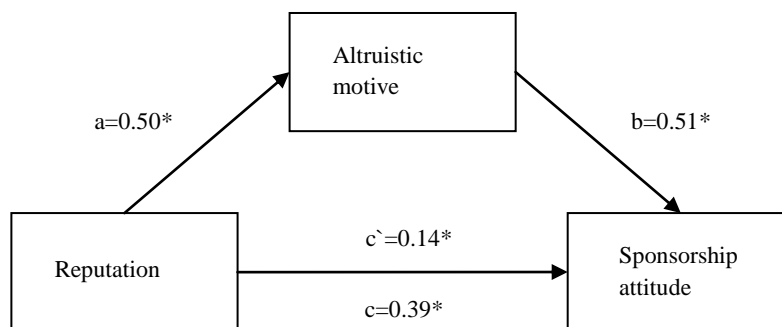
To test H5: The effect of socio sponsorship on consumer outcomes will be more affected by motive attribution than a sport sponsorship, we used a one-way ANOVA, Sobel test, and Bootstrap.

**Table 5.5.** One-way ANOVA: The Effect on Consumer Outcomes Divided by Sports/Charity Organizations

		Mean Square	F	p-value
Sponsorship Attitude	Between Groups	8.231	4.35	0.000
	Within Groups	1.893		
Image	Between Groups	8.443	6.43	0.000
	Within Groups	1.314		

Notes: Descriptives for sponsorship attitude:  $M_{Sports} = 4.18(0.10)$   $M_{Socio} = 4.54(0.12)$  Diff mean = -0.36. Descriptives for image:  $M_{Sports} = 3.58(0.10)$   $M_{Socio} = 4.63(0.08)$  Diff mean = -1.04.

First of all, using a one-way ANOVA (see Table 5.5) the results showed a significant effect of reputation and fit divided by sports and charity organizations on attitude toward the sponsorship ( $F_{(38,354)} = 4.35$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ) and on image ( $F_{(38,354)} = 6.43$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ). The Tukey post-hoc test revealed that there was also a significant difference between sports and socio sponsorship groups ( $p = 0.02$  for sponsorship attitude,  $p = 0.00$  for image).



**Figure 5.4.** Simple Mediation – Impact of Reputation on Sponsorship Attitude via Altruistic Motive for Socio Sponsorships.

Notes: Path a is the direct effect of X on Y. Path b is the mediator's effect on Y eliminating the effect of X. The total effect of X on Y is  $c = c' + ab$ .

Then we did simple mediation analysis as explained previously, but now to see if there were differences in how the mediating variable came into play with regards to socio and sports sponsorships. Figure 5.4 shows the results from simple mediation of impact of reputation on sponsorship attitude via altruistic motive for socio sponsorships. Results from the Bootstrap test (see Table 5.6.) showed that (*Reputation-sponsorship attitude via altruistic motive for socio sponsorship*: 0.25, 95% CI = {.06, .54}). No other mediation results were significant.

Thus, H5 is accepted.

**Table 5.6.** Results From Sobel Test and Bootstrap Indirect Effects for Socio Sponsorships

	Sobel test		Bootstrap test			
	Sobel Z-value	p-value	Data	SE	LL95% CI	UL95% CI
Impact of reputation on sponsorship attitude via attributed altruistic motive for socio sponsorship	5.0740	0.0000	0.2544	0.1228	0.0613	0.5402

Notes: SE = Standard Error, LL = Lower Level, UL = Upper Level, CI = Confidence Interval.

## 6. Discussion

In this chapter we discuss the results from the previous chapter and relate the findings to the sponsorship literature.

### 6.1 Summary and Review of Findings

The main goal of this study was to contribute more insight into the constructs of fit, reputation and attributed motive, which are important for consumer evaluation of a sponsorship. The research questions stated: *What is the importance of fit and reputation in a sponsorship? What is the role of motive attribution in the different contexts of sports and socio sponsorships?* The results from the study provided partial support for the five hypotheses.

**H1: Fit will have a direct positive effect on attitude toward the sponsorship and image.**

As expected, the results showed a significant effect of fit on sponsorship attitude and company image. This is in line with previous research, which states that fit is an important construct when predicting sponsorship outcomes (e.g. Menon and Kahn, 2003; Speed and Thompson, 2000; Roy and Cornwell, 2003). However, there were no significant differences between the manipulated high and low fit groups on sponsorship attitude or company image ( $M_{\text{Highfit}} = 4.44$ ,  $M_{\text{Lowfit}} = 4.27$ ). One explanation might be that the perceived contrast in terms of fit was relatively small in our study ( $M_{\text{Lowfit}} = 2.78$ ,  $M_{\text{Highfit}} = 3.04$ ). This suggests that the respondents were not able to fully distinguish between the two.

Another possible explanation for the lack of distinction between the high and low congruence condition can be found in the article by Roy and Cornwell (2004). They find that sponsors with high brand equity influence consumer's perception of congruence between the sponsor and the object. This is based on the assumption that people have more associations to high equity companies. Thus, consumers will use brand knowledge about the sponsor to assimilate the information about the sponsorship and use this to create congruence. Also, in the study, it was only experts who perceived lower congruence for low equity companies. This suggests that the respondents' perception of congruence

might be independent of the degree of equity, and that the perception of congruence is influenced in a positive direction in both cases.

In addition, several researchers find that sponsorships can enhance image and lead to a clearer positioning (e.g. Simmons and Becker-Olsen, 2006). In our study we used image to create perceived fit, but there are other dimensions like geographic links, overlap of user groups, functional fit, previous sponsorship activity et cetera that also can influence the perception of fit. So, the focus on specific values in our advertisements does not necessarily create fit by itself.

Even though we pre-tested fit to find the best match for banks and sports/charity organizations the difference was not perceived in the main study. In some studies of congruence (e.g. Yoon et al., 2006) they have used extreme matches of companies and sponsor objects to manipulate high and low congruence, like a tobacco producer sponsoring lung cancer. It is probably easier to get significant results by doing this, but it can create problems with regards to external validity.

Trendel and Warlop (2005) point out that most studies ask consumers to consciously assess fit in a sponsorship. When asked directly people have a tendency to report their conscious attitudes toward something according to social norms. However, in real life people seldom consciously evaluate fit. In their study Trendel and Warlop (2005), found that even for sponsorships with low congruence, people were not negative when non-conscious attitudes were measured. This could indicate that fit might not be as important for determining the outcome of a sponsorship as other constructs.

**H2: A good reputation will lead to a more positive a) attitude toward the sponsorship, and b) image, as compared to a bad reputation.**

The results showed a significant effect of reputation on sponsorship attitude and image. There were also significant effects between the good and bad reputation groups for both sponsorship attitude ( $M_{\text{Highrep}} = 4.78$ ,  $M_{\text{Lowrep}} = 3.91$ ) and image ( $M_{\text{Highrep}} = 4.66$ ,  $M_{\text{Lowrep}} = 3.51$ ). The good reputation company (Skandiabanken) received scores above the bad reputation company (Terra), which indicates that the outcomes of sponsorships are more positive for companies with a good reputation. As previously discussed, this is in line with other sponsorship research that states the importance of reputation on consumer outcomes.



### **H3: The effect of fit on consumer outcomes is mediated by attributed motive**

Results confirmed altruistic motive attribution as a significant mediator between fit and sponsorship attitude. When distinguishing between high and low fit, the results were significant only for high fit and not significant for low fit. This finding is in accordance with Rifon et al. (2004), who state in their study that congruence creates more positive consumer perceptions of sponsor altruism. In other words, we found no evidence that incongruence gives a signal of a more philanthropic motive (as suggested by Speed and Thompson, 2000; d'Astous and Bitz, 1995).

### **H4: The effect of reputation on consumer outcomes is mediated by attributed motive**

As expected we found that the relationship between a good reputation and a positive attitude toward the sponsorship was mediated by altruistic motive attribution. This is in line with other sponsorship literature where several researchers support the idea that attributed motive depends on reputation. "Consumers seem to be more aware of what companies with good reputations are doing, and are also more likely to make favorable attributions regarding CSR initiatives and thus have more positive attitudes toward such companies" (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2004, p. 17).

We expected that a company with a bad reputation and low fit would trigger skepticism and attribution of a commercial motive. According to Rifon et al. (2004), 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 a negative effect, but no significant indirect effect was found in the analysis. The fact that we found no effects on perceived altruistic motive for low fit and low reputation, or any effects on commercial motive attribution, could indicate that people are positive towards the idea that companies spend money on sponsoring organizations, regardless of whether fit and reputation of the company is perceived as bad. Rifon et al. (2004) speculate that increased elaboration results in more skepticism about motive. In general, people might not think so much about ulterior motives when evaluating sponsorships. Instead, they may recognize it as a main-stream activity and they evaluate it according to other things than motive. It could also be that the motive variable is more complex than expressed by the items in the study, so that the effects were not captured properly.

**H5: The effect of socio sponsorships on consumer outcomes will be more affected by motive attribution than sports sponsorships.**

We found a direct effect of fit on sponsorship attitude and image. However, we did not find that this relationship differed for the high and low conditions or for the sports and social relationship conditions. We also found a direct effect of reputation on consumer outcomes. There was also a distinction between good and bad reputation, but neither here did we find that the relationship differed for the sports and social condition.

Sports sponsorship is often perceived as a commercial activity, but can also be perceived as altruistic (Walliser, 2003). However, when compared to socio sponsorship we found that altruistic motive only mediates the relationship between reputation and sponsorship attitude for socio sponsorship, but not for sport sponsorship. This is in line with Rifon et al. (2004), who state that perceived altruistic motive seems to be more important when it comes to social sponsorships compared to sports sponsorship.

Since altruistic motive is not significant for sports sponsorship we could speculate that people view sports sponsorship as more commercial. According to Rifon et al. (2004) an exploitative motive can lead to more negative attitudes toward the sponsorship. This is not the case as commercial motive is not a significant mediator for sports sponsorship. However, as explained by Becker-Olsen et al. (2006), this could indicate that skepticism toward a firm's motivation is not only driven by the firm being profit motivated, but can be caused by other influences.

## 6.2 Theoretical Implications

The sponsorship literature focuses a lot on fit, reputation of the company, and some on attribution of motive. Despite a large number of studies, researchers do not agree on the importance of the different constructs, and what effect they have.

Our study contributes to the sponsorship literature in several ways. First of all, it provides more insight into how to manipulate perceived fit in a sponsorship setting. In general, the sponsorship literature claims that it is important to choose an object with high fit (e.g. Rifon et al., 2004; Simmons and Becker-Olsen, 2006; Grohs et al., 2004). However, there are several examples of successful sponsorships that do not possess a natural congruent

link (Simmons and Becker-Olsen, 2006). This suggests that the role of perceived fit might be less prominent than the sponsorship literature indicate. Our study supports this as respondents had difficulty in perceiving differences between high and low congruence, despite significant differences between fit in the pretest. Of course, an alternative explanation could be that the stimuli were not sufficiently different in terms of fit.

Secondly, the thesis supports the proposition by Bae and Cameron (2006) that reputation of the company does play a role in how consumers evaluate the sponsorship.

Thirdly, sponsorship research suggests that consumers perceive high fit sponsors as more sincere, i.e. more altruistic than low fit sponsors (Olson, 2010; Rifon et al., 2004). Our study supports these findings as it underlines the importance of motive attribution in sponsorship. In H1, the respondents did not distinguish between high and low fit. But in H3 when we divided the high and low group, the high congruence condition was mediated by altruistic motive. In addition, our findings are in line with previous results (e.g Yoon et al., 2006) that state that a good reputation is important for altruistic motive attribution. Thus, the findings of altruistic motive attribution as a mediator contributes to our understanding of how the constructs of reputation and fit work in a sponsorship setting.

Some studies have looked at the role of motive attribution. However, we found no empirical studies that compare the role of motive attribution in sports and socio sponsorships. Interestingly we found that attributed motive did not mediate the relationship between fit and consumer outcomes when we looked at sports and social causes separately. Since the direct effects of fit showed the same results when we tested for sports and socio sponsorships separately as when they were together, this again indicate that perceived fit might not play such an important role in sponsorship as previously thought.

When it comes to reputation, altruistic motive was a significant mediator for the company with a good reputation, but only in the case of socio sponsorship. Rifon et al. (2004) speculated in their study that attributions of sponsor motive might not play as important a role in sports as in socio sponsorship and our study has shown empirically that this could be a fact. However, our study also negates the assumption that sponsoring a social cause is futile if the company has a bad reputation initially. Even though the respondents did not attribute any altruistic motives to the company with a bad reputation, there were no

significant results showing that it was mediated by commercial motive either. Thus, a company with a bad reputation can sponsor a sports organization or a charitable organization without fearing negative consequences. They may not get the desired result from the sponsorship, but it will not make their reputation or image worse either.

### 6.3 Managerial Implications

More knowledge about sponsorship, and what sort of organizations companies should choose to sponsor, is valuable for managers. Sponsorship can be a powerful contribution to the companies' marketing mix, and research can guide managers to spend sponsorship money more efficiently. This thesis can aid managers' decision making by suggesting whether companies should choose to sponsor a sports organization or a charitable organization. More specifically, it points to what companies have to think about when it comes to fit, reputation and motive behind the sponsorship.

This study suggests that companies that consider a sponsorship might not have to take into account the importance of fit to such an extent as previously recommended by research. They should evaluate if the sponsorship object is suitable in terms of fit, but creating perceived fit should not be the main focus when communicating the sponsorship. Instead, other mechanisms like elaboration could be important to take into account.

In addition, this thesis also indicates that managers must take their own reputation into consideration when they choose who they want to sponsor. In general, companies with a good reputation get a larger increase in desired consumer outcomes than companies with a bad reputation. Thus, a company with a bad reputation should to a larger extent consider the potential pitfalls a sponsorship could have for them, and if it is worth spending money on it.

Lastly, this thesis also gives managers advice on whether they should sponsor a sports organization or a social organization. If the goal of the sponsorship is to enhance the view of the company as an altruistic company, then it should select to sponsor a charitable cause. But, as just mentioned, the company must consider its own reputation, as a bad reputation can lead the consumers not to attribute an altruistic motive to the sponsorship activity. If the company goal is to enhance consumers' attitudes, then a sports sponsorship

is a safe way to go as this had a positive effect on consumer outcomes regardless of motive. Sponsoring in itself seems to generate a positive attitude regardless of low congruence and bad reputation. In other words, like stated by Meenaghan (2001), “consumers’ attitudes toward sponsorships are in general favorable, and this is driven by a common belief that sponsorships contribute positively to society.”

## 7. Limitations and Future Research

This research has several limitations. In the following discussion we will highlight different forms of validity, and as response we give some recommendations for future research.

When conducting an experiment, there is a high probability that the external validity is sacrificed in order to secure internal validity (Speed and Thompson, 2000). External validity concerns whether results found in the study can be transferred to other contexts. As most of the respondents were NHH students in their 20's, the sample was biased, which could mean that the results do not apply to the population in general. There are also problems related to the measurement of the dependent variables. Even though the advertising stimuli was perceived as realistic by the respondents, and addressed real companies and organizations, they had to make up their mind about their attitudes and opinions in a very short time. Attitudes typically develop over time (Olson 2010), which makes it difficult to measure this in an experimental setting. The same is probably true for the image variable. It is not certain that the respondents would have the same opinions of the sponsorship if they had seen the advertisement over time and in other settings. In addition, we only had one product category, two organization categories and one mediating variable, which constitute a threat of mono-operation bias.

There are also limitations to the online survey sampling procedure. The number of responses in each cell was unequal. If those who did not complete the survey are different from those who completed the survey in a systematic way, this might impact generalizability. Further, we did not have the chance to be present when the respondents answered the questionnaire. Consequently, we could therefore not answer potential questions during the completion, and the lack of control of the experimental setting increases the chance that the respondents were interrupted. This could for example make it more difficult to perceive the differences between the stimuli.

To cope with the challenges of external validity, future research can test the constructs outside an experimental setting. In addition, it should include multiple dimensions of the constructs, like for example additional dimensions of fit. It should also include more product categories and organizations to provide greater generalizability.

Internal validity refers to the potential flaws in the research design. The respondents perceived only slight differences in the fit stimuli, which could make it difficult to draw reliable causal conclusions. Other studies have found limited effects of creating fit based on image dimensions (Olson and Thjømmøe, 2011), and the results might have been stronger if we manipulated perceived fit based on user group or product. Nevertheless, as the study tested banks' sponsorship of organizations, we thought this was the best solution. Additionally, we could have used in-depth interviews to map common associations about the companies and the organizations to get a more comprehensive base for developing the desired stimuli, but we thought this would be beyond the scope of this thesis.

According to Supphellen (2000), one questionnaire drawback is that the respondents have no opportunity to give verbal responses, which makes it difficult to capture the comprehensiveness of attitudes. To get a richer understanding of how the respondents perceived the sponsorship, we could have included open-ended questions in the questionnaire. Nevertheless, for the scope of this thesis, we considered the focus group evaluation of the questionnaire for the main study as sufficient for this objective. Thus future research should focus more on capturing respondents' attitude in a more realistic setting.

Statistical conclusion validity is about whether conclusions we make about relationships in our data are reasonable (Trochim, 2007). The random assignment of the survey did not give the same number of respondents in each block, which might be a threat to the homogeneity of variance and lead to erroneous conclusions.

This thesis wanted to look at the role of motive attribution in a sponsorship setting. Findings in the study suggest altruistic motive as a mediating variable. However, the role of motive attribution is quite complex and our study only considered altruistic and commercial attribution. A suggestion for future research is to investigate other dimensions of sponsor motive attribution. In addition, future studies should also include other mediating variables.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A. Pretest of Congruence

**Table A.1.** Mean Scores on the Image Dimensions (Non-Selected)

Sports/charity organizations	Mean (St. Dev.)	
	Involving	Strategic
Skiing	<b>4.49</b> (0.50)	<b>5.02</b> (0.43)
Climbing	<b>4.01</b> (0.45)	<b>4.15</b> (0.13)
Sailing	<b>3.99</b> (0.35)	<b>4.64</b> (0.49)
Wrestling	<b>3.35</b> (0.25)	<b>4.08</b> (0.30)
Chess	<b>3.92</b> (0.76)	<b>5.43</b> (0.22)
Polo	<b>3.10</b> (0.37)	<b>3.82</b> (0.07)
Golf	<b>3.47</b> (0.42)	<b>4.64</b> (0.28)
Cycling	<b>3.94</b> (0.37)	<b>5.03</b> (0.40)
Track and Field	<b>4.56</b> (0.30)	<b>5.13</b> (0.34)
Unicef	<b>6.08</b> (0.65)	<b>5.04</b> (0.28)
The Norwegian Sea Rescue	<b>5.73</b> (0.41)	<b>5.13</b> (0.18)
Save the Children	<b>5.96</b> (0.58)	<b>4.88</b> (0.39)
The City Church Mission	<b>5.76</b> (0.25)	<b>4.33</b> (0.41)
Bellona	<b>4.50</b> (0.74)	<b>4.17</b> (0.57)
The Cancer Foundation	<b>5.95</b> (0.37)	<b>5.08</b> (0.39)
Norwegian Refugee Council	<b>5.39</b> (0.63)	<b>4.34</b> (0.32)
Blue Cross	<b>5.52</b> (0.27)	<b>4.38</b> (0.34)
The Salvation Army	<b>5.84</b> (0.26)	<b>4.80</b> (0.43)

*Notes:* The table reports the mean scores and standard deviations (in parentheses) on the image dimensions for the companies, sports, and charity organizations not selected for the main study. n = 30 for all scores.

## Appendix B. Stimuli



Med fokus på strategi samarbeider vi med Norges Fotballforbund. Ved å være målrettet og ryddig kan man oppnå gode resultater både på og utenfor banen.

**Skandiabanken er stolt sponsor av Norges Fotballforbund**

**skandia : banken**




Med fokus på strategi samarbeider vi med Norges Basketballforbund. Ved å være målrettet og ryddig kan man oppnå gode resultater både på og utenfor banen.

**Skandiabanken er stolt sponsor av Norges Basketballforbund**

**skandia : banken**






For å være en involverende aktør  
jobber vi for at verdiene redelighet og empati  
skal reflekteres i vårt arbeid. Vi ønsker å være til hjelp for  
våre kunder og samfunnet rundt oss.

**Skandiabanken er stolt sponsor av  
Amnesty International**

**skandia : banken**



For å være en involverende aktør  
jobber vi for at verdiene redelighet og empati  
skal reflekteres i vårt arbeid. Vi ønsker å være til hjelp for  
våre kunder og samfunnet rundt oss.

**Skandiabanken er stolt  
sponsor av Dyrebeskyttelsen**

**skandia : banken**





Med fokus på strategi samarbeider vi med Norges Fotballforbund. Ved å være målrettet og ryddig kan man oppnå gode resultater både på og utenfor banen.


**Terra er stolt sponsor av  
Norges Fotballforbund**



Med fokus på strategi samarbeider vi med Norges Basketballforbund. Ved å være målrettet og ryddig kan man oppnå gode resultater både på og utenfor banen.

**Terra er stolt sponsor av  
Norges Basketballforbund**






For å være en involverende aktør  
jobber vi for at verdiene redelighet og empati  
skal reflekteres i vårt arbeid. Vi ønsker å være til hjelp for  
våre kunder og samfunnet rundt oss.

**Terra er stolt sponsor av  
Amnesty International**



(TERRA)



For å være en involverende aktør  
jobber vi for at verdiene redelighet og empati  
skal reflekteres i vårt arbeid. Vi ønsker å være til hjelp for  
våre kunder og samfunnet rundt oss.

**Terra er stolt  
sponsor av Dyrebeskyttelsen**



(TERRA)



## Appendix C. The Questionnaire

Example of one of the eight questionnaires.



Denne spørreundersøkelsen er en del av en masteroppgave ved NHH. Svarene dine gir oss verdifull informasjon til bruk i oppgaven. Vi ønsker at du svarer på noen enkle spørsmål vedrørende dine holdninger og meninger knyttet til en bedrifts sponsorat av en veldedig organisasjon. Vi vil først vise deg en reklame for bedriften. Les informasjonen nøye før du svarer på spørsmålene. Det vil ta ca. 5 minutter å svare på undersøkelsen. Takk for at du tar deg tid til å delta!



For å være en involverende aktør jobber vi for at verdiene redelighet og empati skal reflekteres i vårt arbeid. Vi ønsker å være til hjelp for våre kunder og samfunnet rundt oss.

**Terra er stolt sponsor av Amnesty International**

The Terra logo consists of the word 'TERRA' in a green, sans-serif font, enclosed in a white rectangular box with rounded corners.The Amnesty International logo features a stylized torch icon above the words 'AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL' in a black, sans-serif font.



Her vil vi gjerne at du svarer på hvorvidt du er enig eller uenig i følgende påstander:

	1 Helt uenig	2	3	4	5	6	7 Helt enig
Terra har et godt rykte	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jeg har inntrykk av at Terra sine produkter og tjenester er av høy kvalitet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jeg har inntrykk av at Terra har god ledelse	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jeg stoler på Terra	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

>>



Vi ønsker å vite hva du synes om forholdet mellom Terra og Amnesty International. Vennligst marker i hvilken grad du er enig eller uenig i følgende påstander:

	1 Helt uenig	2	3	4	5	6	7 Helt enig
Terra og Amnesty International passer godt sammen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Terra og Amnesty International har lignende image	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jeg synes det er passende at Terra sponser Amnesty International	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Terra og Amnesty International står for mange av de samme verdiene	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Her ønsker vi at du forteller hvilken generell holdning du har til Terra. Vennligst marker alternativet som passer best. På en skala fra 1 til 7, min holdning til Terra er:

Svært dårlig	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Svært bra
Svært negativ	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Svært positiv
Vanskelig å like	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Lett å like

>>



Nå vil vi finne ut hva du mener om identiteten til Terra. Hvor godt beskriver ordene nedenfor selskapet?

	1 Svært lite beskrivende	2	3	4	5	6	7 Svært beskrivende
Empatisk	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Redelig	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hjelpsom	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nyttig	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

>>



Vi vil også vite hva du mener om sponsorsamarbeidet mellom Terra og Amnesty International. På en skala fra 1 til 7, min holdning til sponsorsamarbeidet er:

Negativ	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Positiv
Ugunstig	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Gunstig
Dårlig	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Bra

>>



Vi ønsker å kartlegge din oppfatning av *hvorfor Terra* har valgt å sponse Amnesty International. Vennligst marker i hvilken grad du er enig eller uenig i påstandene under:

	1 Helt uenig	2	3	4	5	6	7 Helt enig
Terra sponser Amnesty International fordi de har genuin interesse for å støtte saken	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Terra sponser Amnesty International fordi de bryr seg om de vanskeligstiltes situasjon og fremtid	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Terra sponser Amnesty International først og fremst fordi de bryr seg om økonomisk fortjeneste	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Terra sponser Amnesty International fordi det kan skape et mer positivt image for selskapet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Terra sponser Amnesty International fordi de håper at folk skal få et bedre inntrykk av selskapet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

>>



Vi ønsker å finne ut hvilket forhold du har til organisasjonen Amnesty International. Hvor enig eller uenig er du i følgende påstander:

	1 Helt uenig	2	3	4	5	6	7 Helt enig
Jeg er mer enn gjennomsnittlig godt kjent med Amnesty International	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jeg har et sterkt personlig forhold til Amnesty International	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Amnesty International er viktig for meg	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Vi ønsker å finne ut hvor godt du kjenner til Terra. På en skala fra 1 til 7, min kjennskap til Terra er:

Lite kjent |        | Svært kjent



Hva er din alder?

- Under 20
- 20 - 30
- 30 - 50
- Over 50





Er du mann eller kvinne?

- Mann
- Kvinne



Vi gjør oppmerksom på at sponsorsamarbeidet som er omtalt i denne undersøkelsen ikke er reelt. Takk for at du tok deg tid til å gjennomføre undersøkelsen!





## Appendix D. Control Variables

**Table D.1.** Correlation Matrix for the Control Variables Involvement and Knowledge

<b>Variables</b>	Image	Sponsorship attitude	Involvement	Knowledge
Image	1.0000			
Sponsorship attitude	0.2256	1.0000		
Involvement	0.0310	0.0030	1.0000	
Knowledge	0.2529	-0.1200	0.0888	1.0000

*Note:* The variables do not correlate.

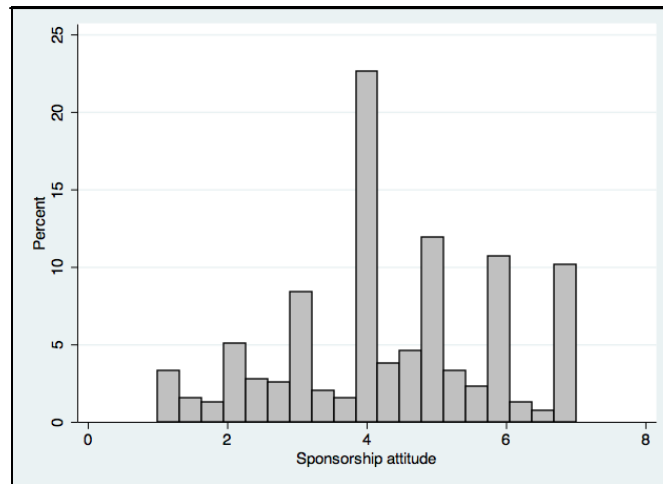
**Table D.2.** ANCOVA Test of the Control Variables Gender and Age

	MS	F	p-value
<b>Gender</b>			
Sponsorship attitude	7.634	3.06	0.0810
Image	3.979	1.99	0.1592
<b>Age</b>			
Sponsorship attitude	6.811	2.69	0.0523
Image	4.247	2.14	0.0951

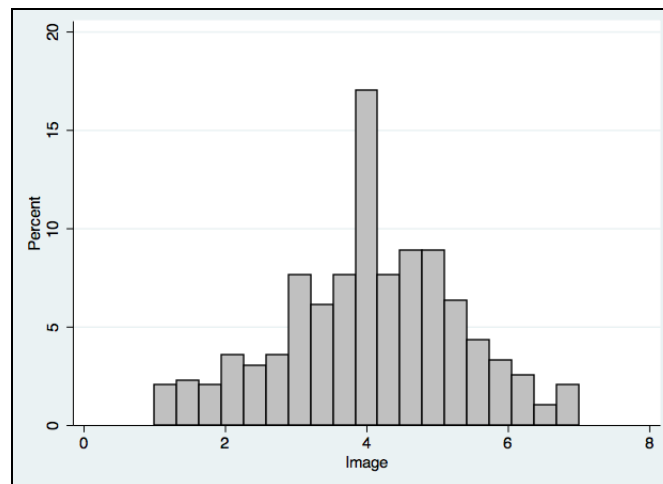
*Note:* Not significant ( $p > .05$ ).

## Appendix E. Test of Assumptions

### Test of Normality



**Figure E.1.** Normal Distribution of Sponsorship Attitude



**Figure E.2.** Normal Distribution of Image

**Table E.1.** Skewness and Kurtosis Values for Sponsorship Attitude and Image

	Skewness	Kurtosis
Sponsorship attitude	0.02554	0.0006
Company image	0.0829	0.0960

*Notes:* Skewness and kurtosis values under 1 indicate normal distribution of the dependent variables.

**Table E.2.** Test of Homogeneity of Variance

	F	p-value
Sponsorship attitude	6.07	0.0000
Company image	29.76	0.0000

*Notes:* Results with  $p < .05$  represents a violation of the assumption of homogeneity of variance.