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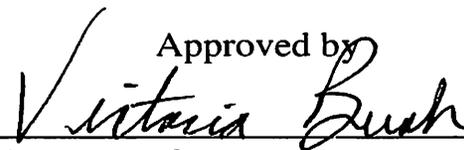
CORPORATE SPORTS SPONSORSHIP: AN ANALYSIS OF FAN/CONSUMER  
ATTITUDE AND PURCHASE BEHAVIOR

By  
Jaime M. Weaver

A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

Oxford  
May 2009

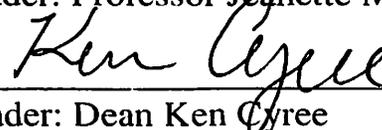
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ABSTRACT  
CORPORATE SPORTS SPONSORSHIP: AN ANALYSIS OF FAN/CONSUMER  
ATTITUDE AND PURCHASE BEHAVIOR

Despite the increasing popularity of sponsorship of sports, there remains a lack of understanding of its effectiveness. The purpose of this study was to examine the growing business practice of corporate sponsorship, and ultimately the effects of sports sponsorship, specifically intercollegiate sports at the University of Mississippi, to determine the effects on consumer attitude and behavior. In depth interviews with key informants in the sponsorship process and fan surveys were conducted to gather information regarding current sponsorships.

Results suggest that sports properties and corporate sponsors agree on objectives of sponsorship; however, consistent effectiveness tracking methods cease to exist. In addition, fans feel favorable towards sponsorship of sports and agree with the practice in both intercollegiate and professional arenas. Fans were able to recall sponsors of specific sports and 49 percent confirmed making a purchase after noticing the sponsorship. However, it is yet to be determined if purchase behavior was a direct result of sponsorship or other marketing efforts.

Results prove that a method to measure sponsorship effectiveness is vital to the continued practice of sponsorship, to benefit both sports properties and corporations.

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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

A major component of the marketing mix in today's culture is the concept of corporate sponsorship. International Event Group (2008) reports that 69 percent of all corporate sponsorship money is allocated to the category of sports. While this accounts for \$11.6 billion, the problem arises as to what exactly sponsorship accomplishes. Is sponsorship's sole priority to generate awareness? Or, is it a tool corporations use to increase sales? This thesis examines the business practice of sports sponsorship and the effects of sponsorship on consumer attitudes and purchase behavior.

### **1.1 Sponsorship Defined:**

For the purpose of this thesis research, sponsorship is defined as:

*“ a business relationship between a provider of funds, resources or services and an individual, event or organization which offers in return some rights and association that may be used for commercial advantage”* (Sleight, 1989, p.4).

Sponsorship is an extension of the promotional mix (Sleight, 1989) and is rooted in exchange theory, which Parkhouse (2001, p. 337) describes as “If you give me something, I'll give you something.”

Sponsorship attempts to build relationships that will endear a business to its target audience (Sleight, 1989) in that sponsorship is an emotional and personal aspect of marketing media. Further, sponsorship is the most integrated part of all marketing because it can be as targeted and as cost-effective as other communication methods when

it is handled in a genuinely strategic manner (Grey & Skildum-Reid, 2001). This integration often impacts the consumer more than other marketing practices (Sleight, 1989).

The practice of sponsorship, however, should still be rooted in corporate marketing policy like other tactics to ensure maximum results. Corporate marketing policy should determine how a company will evaluate sponsorship proposals to ensure they fit the company's requirements, as well as, how projects will be managed and executed. This policy should include the perceived role of sponsorship relative to advertising, public relations, and sales promotion, what sort of budget relationship the company expects between the uses of the media, how the activity will be split between the corporate, divisional, and brand levels; and the criteria for selecting appropriate sponsorship activities.

An effective sponsorship serves the business interest of the sponsoring company, serves the best interest of the partner organization or event, has a positive impact upon the sponsor's direct customers, and must benefit the consumers who buy those products (Brooks, 1994). Benefits may be the assimilation of valuable information about the sponsor's company, brand, or product as well as information about the event. Benefits may also include values such as lowered cost of attendance for events or a unique service provided by the event (Brooks, 1994).

A major challenge of companies in the market for sponsorship is matching an organization or event to the company's objectives. A good sponsorship establishes a natural marriage between the audience's perceptions of the organization and the messages the sponsor is trying to put across to the main audience. By linking a product

or company with a specific organization, companies hope to borrow the image of the partner organization and use it to enhance its own image with the same audience (Sleight, 1989).

Sponsorship is not marketing or advertising in essence; rather sponsorship is a form of communication, and the organization, event, or individual is the medium. Sponsorship is a communication tool that must be able to be used by both marketing and advertising. The unique medium exclusive to sponsorship allows a message to be amplified both visually and verbally to audiences that can be targeted accurately. One of the great advantages sponsorship offers is its ability to act as a theme that can be incorporated into advertising, public relations, and a sales promotion in a way that makes the combined effect far more powerful than any one individual campaign. It is because of the intimate relationships a company forms with customers through events that the number of corporate sponsors is continually increasing. What is it that forms this intimate relationship? Sponsorship allows for the integration of energy, excitement, and emotion of the event with the product or company (Brooks, 1994).

Sponsorship is able to distance itself from the commercial nature of a company's relationship with most of its audiences by approaching audiences in a social and relaxed environment. This trend of lifestyle marketing focuses on the way consumers live and spend their money, not merely on purchase habits (Michman, 2003). Lifestyle marketing has the ability to break through the clutter of modern advertising and establish relationships with consumers on a more personal level. In today's market, it is evident that quality differences are becoming less and less; therefore, companies must establish

differentiated characteristics to gain support from consumers (Schreiber & Lenson, 1994).

### **1.2 Current Issues Facing Sponsorship**

Corporations face many issues when trying to determine if a sponsorship should be added to their marketing mix. One factor that affects sponsorship today is the growing number of sponsors in any given market. The more sponsors of event the more diluted the benefits become (Ruth & Simonin, 2006). It is important for companies to choose organizations and events in which they can have a prominent position where the audiences do not have to sort out the clutter. This involves sponsoring something that will reach the desired market segment and will have the repetition needed to create strong ties (Sleight, 1989).

Making sponsorships active rather than passive is another very important issue facing companies today. Sponsors should look for ways to have their product or company integrated into the action of the program or event rather than just a visible sign that can be overlooked. If the presentation is commercial-like, the consumer will see it as just that, and they will tune out either physically, in a television program, or they will tune out mentally if at a particular event. The presentation should be handled in a natural way. The CEO of Championship Group Inc. Ardy Arani says, "The ability to assimilate and integrate content, regardless of how you're delivering it, is really the key. The more you can push that content out there, and the more exclusive that content is, the more successful your promotion is going to be," (Geist, 2006, p.1).

The framing of sponsorships is a very important factor in sponsorship today. Marketers should take a close look at communicating messages in a broad versus narrow

manner. Broadcasting is the practice of communicating to a mass market with little, if any targeting (Grey & Skildum-Reid, 2001). This method of broadcasting can reach a large number of people; however, trying to fit the needs of the entire audience are impossible, thus resulting in little effect. Narrowcasting on the other hand involves communicating with a specific market and “aligning with them very closely and to the exclusion of other marketplaces” (Grey & Skildum-Reid, 2001, p.29).

The downfall to narrowcasting is the decreased number of people the messages reach. However, the problem is mitigated by the increase in effectiveness that the messages are targeting people who are most likely to be receptive to it. It should be noted that this concept of narrowcasting should not result in companies dropping larger sponsorships. Instead, the activities involved should be more focused (Grey & Skildum-Reid, 2001).

Lastly, sponsors face the issue of effectiveness. The ability to observe tangible results of a sponsorship program has been the most difficult task in the sponsorship industry (Parkhouse, 2001). There are a number of subjective ways to quantify a sponsorship as a success, including the number of new opportunities that can be linked to the sponsorship, or an overall increase in demand. However, it is important for sponsor companies to remember that a sponsorship should also be a success for the sports organization. In order to view a sponsorship as successful, the sponsorship should have also promoted interest in a team or event, or helped contribute to media attention and attendance of an event (Brooks, 1994).

### **1.3 Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine the business practice of sponsorship and its evolution from patronage to the commercialized phenomenon it is today. First, the literature review will reveal the history of sponsorship, as well as the process organizations follow in setting up a sponsorship. Primary research was conducted in the form of two studies focusing on corporate sponsorship of collegiate sports. Study 1 will provide information from business experts involved in corporate sponsorship of Ole Miss sports. Study 2 will focus on the attitudes of fans of Ole Miss sports toward corporate sponsorship and their accompanying purchase behavior. The research questions associated with these studies include:

1. What is the main goal for sponsorship of intercollegiate sports?
2. What are the key issues facing sponsorship of intercollegiate sports?
3. How is effectiveness of sponsorships tracked?
4. What are consumers' attitudes toward sponsors of sports both collegiate and professional?
5. Does sponsorship of a team impact purchase intentions/behavior?

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

This literature review will initially discuss the development of sports sponsorship, followed by an examination of the sponsorship process from a corporate standpoint, including setting objectives, framework for assembly, and evaluation theories.

### **2.1 History of Sponsorship**

Sponsorship is a concept that originated in the Greek and Roman era. The word sponsorship is derived from the Greek word *horigia* meaning guarantor (Dolphin, 2003). The early beginnings of sports marketing date back to ancient Rome when Roman patriarchs sponsored gladiator games for the same reason today's companies do, to win public esteem (Shannon, 1999). Sponsorship of sports has its roots in the ancient practice of patronage, done for both purely altruistic reasons and for more pragmatic image reasons. In 1861, Spiers and Pond, an Australian firm, sponsored the first England Tour of Australia, earning a profit of £11,000. In 1863, British sports outfitter John Wisden provided the first book sponsorship by underwriting the now famous publication *The Wisden Cricketers' Almanac*. More modern sports sponsorship can be traced to the early 1900s when Coca-Cola sponsored its first Olympic games in 1928 (Sleight, 1989). In addition, during the 1950s, President Dwight D. Eisenhower asked Mutual of Omaha and Union Oil to sponsor the first presidential physical fitness program (Shannon, 1999).

Sports marketing and sponsorship received a substantial boost of exposure in 1971 after the U.S. legislature passed a ban of cigarette advertising on U.S. television and

radio. Sponsorship of auto racing such as the Winston Cup and numerous car sponsorships as well as the Virginia Slims' Womens tennis tour offered an outlet or cigarette brands to keep their names on the front line of the advertising wars (Shannon, 1999).

Dolphin (2003) states that since the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, sponsorship has gained popularity amongst marketers as an effective brand equity-building strategy. The 1984 summer games are generally credited with starting the trend of sports marketing on a formal basis. This was the first Olympics that depended on private money, primarily from sponsorships and, instead of experiencing major financial loss, the Los Angeles Olympics generated a profit (Shannon, 1999).

There are numerous reasons companies invest in sports sponsorships (Economist, 2008). First, sport sponsorship is often attractive to corporations because sporting events, especially those produced within the same league or association (i.e., NFL, NBA, NCAA), provide a highly involved, passionate, and loyal audience (Dees, Bennett & Villegas, 2008). The sports fan is emotionally involved with the contest or athlete on a highly cognitive level, and this emotional involvement is what sponsors crave as it provides a captive audience. Such an audience is more receptive to advertising messages and the high involvement that sports fans display can result in these messages being internalized (Cordiner, 2002).

Second, sport sponsorship can reach the right people sometimes with remarkable accuracy (Economist, 2008). An audience that is comprised of individuals with similar demographics allows companies to create unique marketing messages to target these

specific audiences that are both time efficient and cost effective (Dees, Bennett & Villegas, 2008).

Third, the initial interest in sports as sponsorship vehicles came from brands realizing that the sports arena offered a less cluttered environment than traditional advertising (Cordiner, 2002). Therefore, companies realized they owned something scarce and continued to use this invaluable asset as a promotional tool. In addition, corporations have realized that less is actually more. With fewer sponsors valuable properties become more exclusive, and the price of being associated with them can be driven up (Economist 2008).

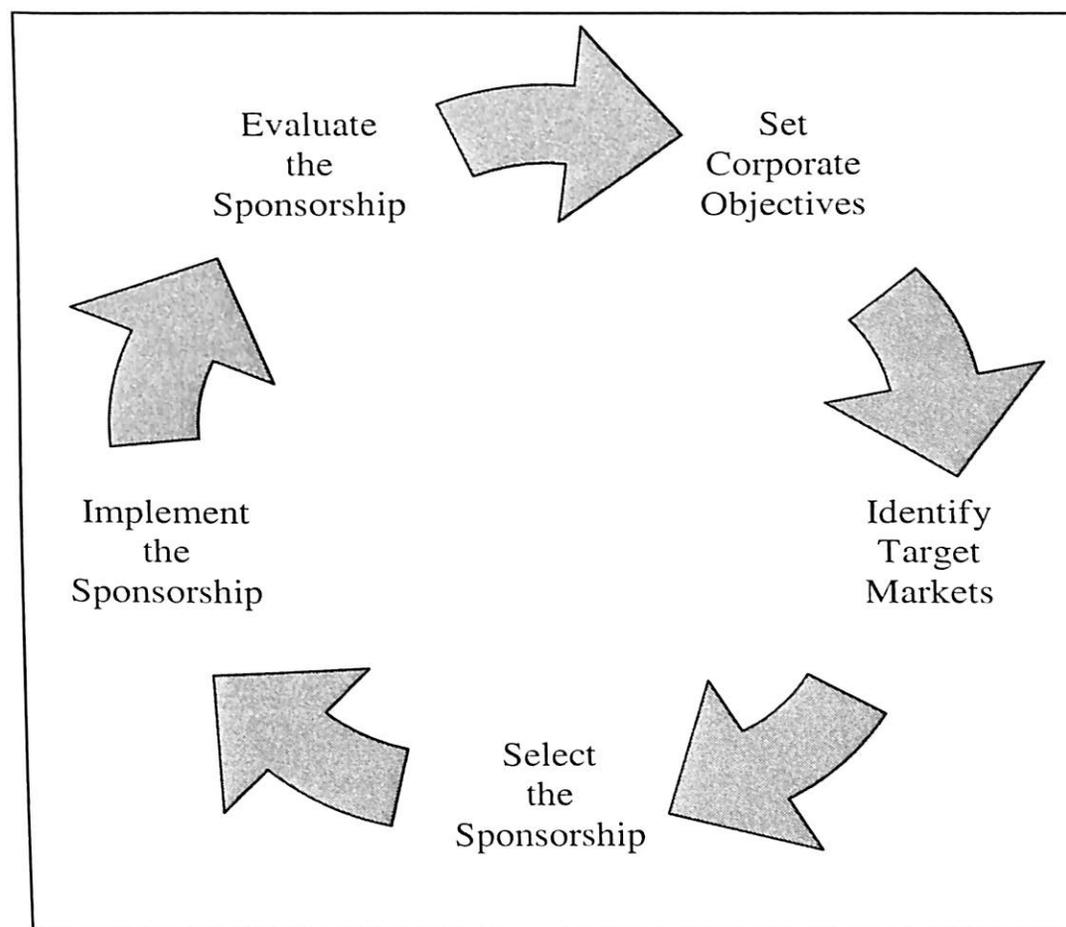
Finally, the number of Americans exposed to sports on a daily basis is a valuable asset to companies looking for sponsorship. Dees, Bennett, and Villegas (2008) state that globally, sponsorship spending surpassed \$30 billion in 2005 and that figure represents a \$4.5 billion increase since 2003. In 2008, corporate sponsorship spending in the United States and Canada was expected to reach \$16.78 billion with \$11.6 billion invested solely in sports. A 1991 poll from a national sample revealed that 73 percent of respondents were either “very interested or fairly interested” in watching sports in person or on television. The poll also showed that an astounding 95 percent of Americans were affected by sports each day, varying in forms of reading, discussing, listening, watching, or participation (Parkhouse, 2001).

## **2.2 Sponsorship Process**

Sponsorships provide distinctive opportunities for companies to use communications to reach their target markets; however, the process for selecting and organizing a sponsorship should be detailed and based on corporate objectives. Figure 2.1

illustrates the sponsorship management process as an ongoing, cyclical model rather than a linear model used in the past (Brooks, 1994)

**Figure 2.1 Sponsorship Management Process**



Source: (Brooks, 1994)

### 2.2.1 Sponsorship Objectives

What exactly does a sponsor expect to gain from sponsorship? Yvonne Lumsden-Dill, Director of Industry Affairs for the Miller Brewing Company, says that “In today’s competitive marketplace, we look for logical opportunities to showcase our products to well-targeted customers” (Graham, 1995, p.205).

Before jumping head first into a sponsorship, it is vital to know what is trying to be accomplished, who the target market includes, and how to quantify success.

Sponsorship is just another marketing activity and like all other marketing activities, it needs to support overall marketing objectives. No single sponsorship can achieve every marketing objective, but a well selected sponsorship can perform a number of them.

(Grey & Skildum-Reid, 2001).

Corporations frequently have a number of objectives that overlap and interact (Mullin, Hardy & Sutton, 2000). Supovitz (2005) suggests using the P-A-P-E-R test for organizations to create a comprehensive list of objectives, in which P-A-P-E-R stands for Promotion-Audience-Partnership-Environment-Revenue. By answering questions involving what the company wants in each of these areas, very valuable outcomes will become clear showing what objectives are more feasible, efficient, and desirable. The entire organization, not just the marketing department, should be mobilized in this task (Supovitz, 2005). To begin, the target unit of the company for sponsorship should be defined. The target may be the entire company, a product, or a single brand. Secondly, the goal of the target unit should be set. Goals in sponsorship range from assumption of social responsibility to the commercial objectives normally proposed for advertising (Brooks, 1994). Goals may be strategic, indirectly affecting sales, or tactical which has a more direct and measurable impact (Brooks, 1994). Table 2.1 lists the most common strategic and tactical goals for businesses entering a sponsorship.

Next, a company should, in broad terms, specify the desired target public. Finally, a company needs to specify the details with exact numbers and timelines (Brooks, 1994).

When listing corporate objectives, it is important not to include any objective that cannot be objectively quantified through one or more mechanism (Grey, 2001).

Unless handled effectively, sponsorships may do little to help the company. Evaluation covers the critical evaluation of each and every sponsorship opportunity. If a company knows what it wants to achieve, it is then possible to measure how effectively the sponsorship has reached these goals (Sleight, 1994).

**Table 2.1 Corporate Sponsorship Goals**

<b>Strategic Goals</b>	<b>Tactical Goals</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Enhancing visibility/awareness</b></li> <li>• <b>Enhancing image/repositioning image</b></li> <li>• <b>Combating negative publicity</b></li> <li>• <b>Developing distribution channels</b></li> <li>• <b>Reaching new market segments</b></li> <li>• <b>Combating competitors</b></li> <li>• <b>Developing a bond between consumer, distributor and/or employees</b></li> <li>• <b>Generating goodwill</b></li> <li>• <b>Bypassing legal constraints</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Stretching the communications budget</b></li> <li>• <b>Promoting repeat purchases</b></li> <li>• <b>Promoting varied usage</b></li> <li>• <b>Promoting multiple product purchase</b></li> <li>• <b>Increasing merchandising activity</b></li> </ul>

Source: (Brooks 1994)

Grey and Skildum-Reid (2001) suggest that corporations put objectives up to the SMART test. Good stated objectives should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Results-oriented, and Time Bound. In addition to meeting the set objectives, sponsorships should also provide some of the following:

- Mechanisms to add value to target markets
- Naming rights to the event or any high-profile sub events
- On-site sales
- Access to existing databases and database generating activities

- Provide opportunity for customer hospitality
- Provide promotional main media time/space (Grey & Skildum-Reid, 2001)

Corporations must be sure to not extend their sponsorship too far, so that there are not too many underlying goals that could in-turn negate the positive effects of the sponsorship. The best approach is to have just one objective such as to increase sales, or target a new demographic segment. Secondary achievements may flow from a goal, but it is essential to try to not accomplish too much with one campaign. Define the top concern and build a program around it (Schreiber & Lenson, 1994).

### 2.2.2 Sponsorship Relations

Using sponsorship as a communication medium entails a strong sponsor-recipient relationship. This relationship may be quite complicated since it is built on opportunity for both parties to satisfy very different requirements. The recipient wishes to:

1. Use the relationship to fund an individual, event, or project.
2. Utilize the communications and management expertise many sponsors provide to add value to the event.
3. Balance the sponsor's requirements compared with his/her contribution to other sources of funding available.

In the same instance, the sponsor wishes to:

1. Use the relationship for commercial communications reasons.
2. Be able to analyze the sponsorship against corporate requirements
3. Allow the sponsorship to compete with other available communications media for its place in the package (Sleight, 1989).

Athletic organizations seek sponsors to subsidize their costs including facility rental, maintenance, administration, and athlete labor contracts. Promoters need to cover the advance promotional and athletes' fees. Yet sponsors need events just as much as events need sponsors. Both large and small companies need to reinforce their message with target consumer groups. No successful company can be lax in its efforts to communicate with its target market in order to maintain and increase its corporation's share of that market (Schaaf, 1995).

From the sponsor's point of view, sponsorship must provide benefits well beyond the costs that will be incurred to fulfill them. Therefore, both parties are investing in each other and both should expect returns that far outperform a simple cash-for-product transaction. To make sense from the sponsor's perspective, a sports event must offer the company more business opportunity than could be purchased for the same dollar through other means (Supovitz, 2005).

There has to be consistency in a sponsorship package that positively affects both the sponsor and the recipient. First, there has to be consistency between the audience for a sport and the target group of the company is trying to reach. This consistency should also involve the messages the event try to promote and the message the company is trying to promote (Sleight, 1989). Athletic programs and sponsor companies should ask themselves if the sponsorship promotes interest in the program or team, does it increase media attention, attendance and public awareness, and will the sponsorship help meet the overall objectives of the athletic organization? (Schaaf, 1995)

The relationship between athletic organizations and sponsors goes well beyond the financial obligations. It is suggested that sponsorship is moving increasingly from a

donor recipient position towards an active partnership in which value creation is based on the combined resources and shared knowledge between the two organizations (Lund, 2006). Sellers of sponsorship have a difficult task to excite and maintain the involvement of sponsors. Sellers must be willing to give the sponsors a participatory role in the organization's events (Schaaf, 1995). In addition, it is imperative that athletic programs anticipate requests for added value and be open to considering a sponsor's new ideas. Different levels of sponsorship dictate different levels of service, but relationships with all sponsors can be enhanced by events that allow all sponsors to network, giving them the opportunity to explore how their companies can work together on joint promotions to drive their businesses and leverage your event (MacKay, 2004).

Due to this newly formed bond between organizers and sponsors, the definition of sponsorship has changed much over the years. Sponsorships are being called 'commercial agreements' to emphasize the specific deal that is done rather than just the simple communication use of the past. Additionally, more mention is made with 'mutual benefit' instead of just a 'positive association' (Stewart, 2008).

### **2.3 Assembling a Sponsorship**

International Event Group reports in their annual Sponsorship Report that 69 percent of all sponsorship dollars are directed towards sporting activities, ranging from the provision of uniforms to the funding of stadiums (IEG, 2008). The most attractive sports for sponsorships are motor racing and football accounting for 45 percent of all sponsorships (Carrigan & Carrigan, 1997). These figures represent only the price associated with the purchase of rights fees necessary to become an official sponsor or secure an event, and do not include the almost equal amount spent on leveraging or

developing the sponsorship investment (IEG, 2008). There are a number of steps corporations perform before actually implementing a sponsorship agreement.

### 2.3.1 Athletic Platforms

Companies get into sports marketing because they can creatively integrate their messages into consumer activity. They want to participate in events and with programs that involve and target consumers and professionals without obligating them to their business objectives (Schaaf, 1995). Therefore, after establishing sports sponsorship as a marketing tool, companies must perform an athlete platform analysis. Companies look for which component or combination of components of the athletic platform-- the athlete, the team, the event or the sport- lends itself best to accomplishing corporate objectives (Brooks, 1994).

Irwin, Sutton, and McCarty (2002) explain that the platform for sports sponsorship extends beyond the event to include governing bodies, teams, athletes, media channels, facilities, and specific sports.

Governing bodies range from the International Olympic Committee to local recreational leagues that have secured sponsorship from corporate partners. The downfall of sponsoring governing bodies is the requirements enacted to associate a company with the member teams of the governing body. Team sponsorship involves a company sponsoring a certain team in a particular league, and acquiring the rights to use the team in promotional efforts. Currently, the largest franchise in the National Football League, the Dallas Cowboys, have a large number of corporate sponsors such as MillerCoors, Ford Motor, Verizon Wireless, PepsiCo, and Bank of America (Forbes, 2008).

A sponsor may choose to develop a sponsorship based on support of an individual athlete. Most arrangements involve some type of endorsement of the sponsor's product by the sponsored athlete. Athletes in individual sports tend to attract more sponsor interest often because they are able to generate a greater number of visible, well focused sponsor impressions on television. Tiger Woods, for example, is sponsored individually by a number of corporations including Nike, Gatorade, EA Sports, and Tag Heuer (Walberg, 2009). While the greatest advantage of sponsoring an individual athlete lies in the amount of exposure available and the opportunity to be associated with a certifiable winner, there are greater risks. Companies must beware of how the personal lives of athletes will affect the company's image. Scandals, crime, as well as, failure to succeed affect the appeal of a sponsor (Schaaf, 1995).

Further, a sponsor may choose to develop a media channel sponsorship. Often called broadcast sponsors, these represent companies purchasing advertising space during sport-related media transmission. These sponsors have no affiliation or entitlement to the sponsored or mediated entity other than the delivery of commercial ad space.

The notion of embedding a corporations name into a sport's facility has grown increasingly in the last decade. Facility sponsorship allows a company's name to be associated with the team through the actual venue. FedEx has a broad sports-marketing portfolio through which the company secured the naming rights to the FedEx Forum, home of the NBA's Memphis Grizzlies (FedEx, 2009).

Finally, event sponsorship encompasses what most people believe to be actual sponsorship. A company is involved with a particular event and gains access to the public through the execution of the event. College bowl games have seen an increase in

sponsorship of individual events, such as Allstate Insurance sponsoring the Allstate Sugar Bowl each year in New Orleans, Louisiana (Allstate, 2009). Because of the various platforms available for sponsors to choose from, many opportunities for integration within platforms are available (Irwin, Sutton & McCarty, 2002).

### 2.3.2 Levels of Sponsorship

After determining which athletic platform a company wants to use, the next step of the sponsorship process is determining the level of sponsorship a company would like to carry out. Generally, there are four levels of sponsorship: exclusive sponsors, primary sponsors, subsidiary sponsors, and official suppliers.

An exclusive sponsor is the only sponsor associated with the athletic platform component. There are many advantages to being an exclusive sponsor, such as, ability to negotiate its name with the event title, or team name, the sponsor has the whole platform for promotional purposes which maximizes communication. In addition, prestige associated with being an exclusive sponsor may add value to the company or its products. The main disadvantage is an exclusive sponsor is the only source of funding; therefore, if unexpected costs occur the exclusive sponsor needs to increase the financial commitment (Brooks, 1994).

A primary sponsor involves a major financial commitment but shares the athletic platform with one or more companies that are providing financial commitments. A primary sponsor can generally negotiate its name within the event title, and its name is usually mentioned within newspaper write-ups or TV-news items. This gives the primary sponsor the image of exclusivity (Irwin, Sutton & McCarty, 2002).

A subsidiary sponsor is a second level of sponsorship involving several companies that are divided into product categories. Each company has exclusivity of sponsorship within a product category and the product or service is frequently essential to the event (Brooks, 1994). In recent years, research has found that by incorporating multiple sponsors, the relatedness between sponsors' product categories and the event bolsters identification accuracy. However, attitudes toward an event are less favorable when one partner is a controversial brand ( e.g., tobacco) (Ruth & Simonin, 2006).

The final form of sponsorship is an official supplier. This is a special type of subsidiary sponsorship, in that official suppliers frequently have exclusivity in their product category. However, official suppliers differ from subsidiary sponsors in that their products are not crucial to the competition (Brooks, 1994). Terms used previously, such as title sponsor or official supplier do not have a standard meaning throughout the entire industry. Therefore, it is imperative that all rights be clarified before a sponsorship begins (Schreiber & Lenson, 1994).

Sponsorship is just a catalyst for a marketing plan built around it. Success in implementation comes when a company goes beyond that initial agreement and extends the program in the right way (Schreiber & Lenson, 1994). Therefore, all sponsorships should strive to be comprehensive. Combining promotional inventory like media time, arena access, print advertisements, and tickets bind the sponsor and the team to each other. The more comprehensive the sponsorship is the more leverage a sponsor has to tie-in the sports property with his trade retailers and consumers (Schaaf, 1995).

### 2.3.3 Pricing a Sponsorship

Before a sponsorship can become a business transaction, athletic organizations will have to customize the package for the sponsor which includes a detailed description of what the sponsor will receive. This package (Brooks, 1994) covers items including but not limited to elements listed in Table 2.2.

**Table 2.2 Elements of Sponsorship Packages**

<b>Attribute</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Public Relations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Will media releases include sponsor's name</li> <li>- Will athletes mention sponsors in interviews</li> </ul>
<b>Signage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How many signs are available to sponsors</li> <li>- What location/size</li> </ul>
<b>Athlete Use</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Availability of athletes to make personal appearance on behalf of sponsors</li> <li>- Attendance at pre and post-event activities</li> </ul>
<b>Direct Mail Lists</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The availability of personal information about ticket holders and athletes</li> </ul>
<b>Liability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Will company or athletic organization be responsible for injuries to spectators, participants or officials</li> </ul>
<b>Sales Opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Can point of sale, product sampling, or cross promotion opportunities be used</li> </ul>
<b>Audience Delivery</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How targeted, pure and large is the audience</li> </ul>

Source: (Brooks, 1994)

Once everything is laid out for the sponsor to see, it is time for athletic organizations to price the sponsorship. Sponsor benefits may be divided into two basic varieties, those that will generate expense against the athletic organization and offering value to the

sponsor that can be provided without the organization encountering any out-of pocket expense (Supovitz, 2005).

Development costs, or expenses incurred in selling a sponsorship include sales commissions, sales expenses, and the cost of market research. These costs do not provide any value to the sponsor, but they do benefit the organizers during the process of securing business partners and are part of the “cost of goods sold” when pricing packages. The other varied expenses that are encountered by sports programs but ultimately accrue to the benefit of the sponsor are known as fulfillment costs. These represent the actual out-of pocket expenses to provide benefits to which the sponsor is entitled. These include complimentary tickets, signage and displays, program advertising, outside advertising, VIP receptions, sponsor gifts, sampling, giveaways, and discounts or coupons (Supovitz, 2005).

Brooks (1994) discusses three distinct strategies for pricing sponsorships: The cost-plus strategy calculates the actual expenses involved in offering the sponsorship package, with an inclusion for profit for the athletic program. In the cost-plus method, expenses include all items such as signage, tickets, parking, souvenirs as well as a predetermined percentage for profit for the program. The second method Brooks (1994) describes is the competitive-market strategy. This method is based on what managers think the market will bear given the competitive environment. Parkhouse (2001) adds, that this type of pricing involves careful research on available sponsorship package opportunities.

Lastly, the most widely used pricing strategy is the relative-value method. Brooks (1994) reported that this strategy is based on the market value for each component of the

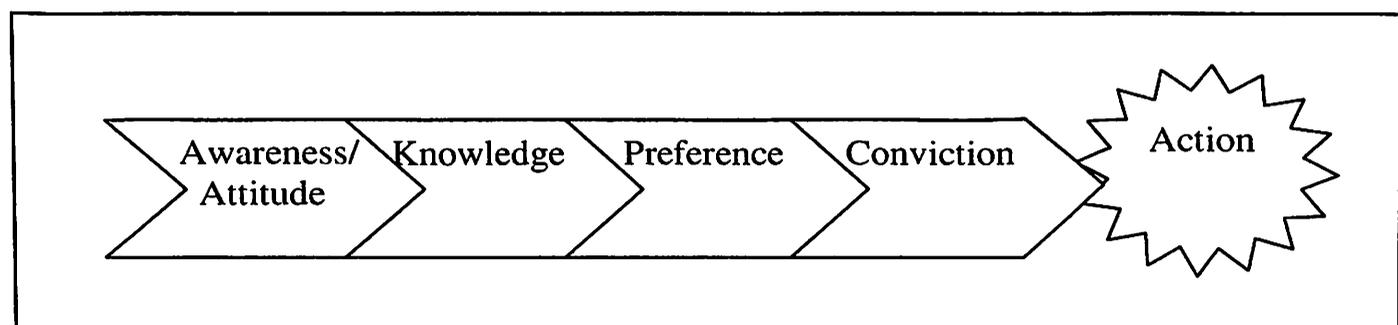
sponsorship. Parkhouse (2001) describes this method as a sponsorship package offered for a sponsor fee that is less than the cost for each benefit sold separately; therefore, allowing sponsors to see that the actual value of exposure is much greater than the value they are paying. The ability to define, package, and price opportunities combining the above items is the promotional turnkey that drives the dynamic industry of sponsorship (Sleight, 1989).

## **2.4 Defining Markets**

Market segmentation is defined as the process of dividing a large heterogeneous market into more homogenous groups of people who have similar wants, needs, or demographic profiles to whom a product may be targeted (Sleight, 1989).

In sponsorship, it is important to understand target markets by not just who they are, but what they want, and what motivates them. If a company can understand their target markets, the role of the sponsorship will become very clear and in turn the markets will tell companies how to sell to them. One goal of sponsorship is to move the audience down the relationship continuum, Figure 2.2, from merely understanding the brand, to using it, and to becoming loyal users who become advocates for the company (Grey & Skildum-Reid, 2001).

**Figure 2.2 Advertising Relationship Continuum**



Source: (Grey & Skildum-Reid, 2001)

There is no single profile of the sports consumer. They vary by sport, place of residence, and life situation. Basic market segmentation gives us three common bases that are used (Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 2000). The first is the consumer's state of being or demographics. This encompasses geography, income, age, gender, race/ethnicity, and sexual orientation. Another segment is based on the consumer's state of mind. This assumes that consumers may be divided by personality traits, lifestyle characteristics like attitudes, opinions and attitudes, and by preferences or perceptions (Brooks, 1994). The most noteworthy approach to this type of segmentation is the Values and Life Style (VALS) typology. Product usage is another type of segmentation. In this, marketers try to separate consumers into heavy, medium, and light users of a product. In sports, four more specific categories were added by Mullin, Hardy, and Sutton (2000). A description of the seven levels of product usage are given in Table 2.3

**Table 2.3 Product Usage Categories**

<b>Consumer Usage</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Heavy User</b>	<b>Season ticket holders, Club members and/or contract time holders</b>
<b>Medium User</b>	<b>Mini Season Plan Users, Heavy single-game/event ticket purchasers</b>
<b>Light User</b>	<b>Infrequent single-game/event ticket purchasers</b>
<b>Deflector</b>	<b>Individuals who have used sport in the last 12 months but who have not made a repeat purchase since that time</b>
<b>Media Consumer</b>	<b>Individuals who do not go to the stadium but rather follow the team or sport via the media</b>
<b>Unaware Consumer</b>	<b>Individuals who are unaware of the sport and its benefits</b>
<b>Uninterested Consumer</b>	<b>Individuals who are aware of the sport but choose not to use it</b>

Source: (Mullin, Hardy & Sutton, 2000)

In the sports market, segmentation can also be based on the involvement in an actual sporting event. There are three different involvement categories corporations can

examine. Behavioral involvement categorizes consumers as being physically involved in a sport through practice, competition, or watching/listening. Cognitive involvement implies the gaining of information and knowledge about a sport through various outlets including fans at a Booster Club meeting, watching a coach's press conference, tuning into game programs and reading magazines and newspapers. Media outlets are keys to cognitive involvement of consumers. Lastly, affective involvement concerns the attitudes, and emotions that a consumer has toward an activity (Mullin, Hardy & Sutton, 2000).

## **2.5 Communication Strategy for Sponsorship**

In sports promotions, sponsors want to put their name on as much as possible. Sponsorship cannot be effective alone, it must be used with all the tools at the marketer's disposal if it is to be truly effective; therefore, sponsors focus on creating a cohesive communications strategy that includes advertising, point of sale activities, public relations, merchandising, and hospitality (Irwin, Sutton & McCarty, 2002). Pracejus (2004) discusses a number of mechanism in which sponsorship communications function to influence consumers.

The first mechanism of communication sponsorships can accomplish is simple awareness, in which consumers are simply exposed to a company, brand, or product. The more frequently a sponsor's name is seen by a fan in the context of sports, the more positive are the feelings the consumer has toward the sponsor. The mechanism of affect transfer involves the positive feelings consumers feel toward a sports organization or event transferring to the company or brand through association. Pracejus (2004) theorizes that the more a person likes an event, the more positive they will feel about the sponsor.

Pracejus( 2004) describes the aim of sponsorships as the transfer of personality, aura, and competence to the brand. This concept is described as image transfer. Image transfer, although similar to affect transfer, differs in that image transfer refers to the abstract association, that a sponsor is like an event. The idea is that the personality of an event can affect the image of a sponsor.

Affiliation describes a company's involvement in an event which communicates the message 'this company is for people like me.' Sponsorship has a unique opportunity to expand on this perception, connecting more and more to consumers on a social and cognitive level. Another mechanism communication affects is that of implied size. The message of this mechanism is 'this company is big.' The idea behind this is that consumers believe that if a company is sponsoring an event, then the company must be successful, stable, and offer good products. This mechanism may not affect multibillion global corporations, but may help smaller scale companies improve their position in the minds of consumers (Pracejus, 2004).

Implied endorsement is a mechanism that requires fans to infer that the event or organization is somehow endorsing the brand and its quality. The mechanism of direct relevance describes that a consumer might logically conclude that the official status of a sponsor implies some quality measurement rather than financial contribution.

Lastly, reciprocity is the mechanism which rationalizes the statement that the sponsor supports events a consumer cares about; therefore, patronization of their company is a must. This mechanism is supported when a consumer makes a conscious decision to support a company that supports events they find important (Pracejus, 2004).

It is important for sponsors to know exactly what methods they have available to maximize their sponsorship communication. Irwin, Sutton, and McCarty (2000), lists a number of common rights sponsors have available through their sponsorship:

- The right to use a logo, name, trademark, or graphic representation signifying the purchaser's connection with the product or event
- The right to an exclusive association within a product or service category
- The right of entitlement to an event or facility
- The right to use designations or phrases in connection with the product, event, or facility
- The right of service or the right to use the purchaser's product or service in conjunction with the event or facility
- The right to conduct certain promotional activities, such as contests, advertising campaigns, and sales-driven activities in conjunction with the sponsorship agreement.

The most common promotional activity sponsors can use for making their name visible is signage. This includes printed messages or logos identifying a sponsor through materials, such as banners, street-pole attachments, billboards, scoreboards, electronic message boards, posters, and dasher boards. It also includes impressions such as in-ice or on-field messages, rotational courtside messages, on-field logos, and virtual signage. In recent years it has also expanded to include logo placement opportunities, such as racing cars, boats, professional golf caps and shirts, and tennis player's headbands and rackets (Irwin, Sutton & McCarthy, 2002 ).

Whenever possible, a consistent theme of the promotional campaign should try to capitalize on a unique aspect of the product or the marketplace. This theme will not only be visible through advertisements but also with the design of the visual presentation of the sponsorship which includes the set for press conferences, the use of corporate colors and logos on all written material, the uniforms worn by organizers, as well as give-aways. If the message is clear and the design is appealing, it better serves the sponsorship (Irwin, Sutton & McCarthy, 2002).

In addition to the promotional activities directed towards consumers, sponsors must also use the hospitality opportunities provided by the sponsorship to capitalize the communication efforts. In this area, sponsor companies have the opportunity to entertain various groups of important people (Sleight, 1989).

Added value in sponsorship is the concept that other issues and events, such as publicity, around the associated event, will increase the actual impact of a commercial association or sponsorship. Added attention and exposure heightens public awareness and appreciation that the events were able to take place, and firms seek to capitalize on this potential added value (Schaaf, 1995).

## **2.6 Evaluating Sponsorships**

Sponsorship is a highly effective tool for building long-lasting durable relationships with customers, and it can also offer many ways to create a return on investment in addition to ways to leverage a program into immediate profits. In any type of marketing, it is vitally important to be able to analyze and demonstrate the success of the program in quantitative terms. Without this type of information it is impossible to determine the success of the efforts or make structured and informed planning decisions

about what to do next (Schreiber & Lenson, 1994).

It is a common argument though that sponsorship research will not work because it is impossible to separate the effects of the sponsorship from the effects of advertising or sales promotion (Sleight, 1989). However, the sponsorship industry has advanced a great deal since the time when this mentality went unchallenged. As all aspects of the industry have grown more sophisticated, and as the dollar value and prominence of partnerships has grown substantially, the need for accountability has become vitally important (IEG, 2008). This demand for fiscal accountability has been the driving force behind research efforts, in an attempt to insist that corporate decision makers be held accountable for the budget allocations and related spending (Mullin, Hardy & Sutton, 2000).

The problem companies see today is that much of what passes for sponsorship measurement misses the mark. The general mentality has been to transfer advertising metrics and processes to sponsorship without considering either the differences that the sponsorship environment requires or the flaws in advertising measurements. Another problem is the challenge of measuring something for which there is no standard measurement. There is simply no escaping the fact that to measure anything of value and tie expenditures to business objectives, sponsors must customize the way they evaluate their own situation (IEG, 2008)

Most commonly, outputs such as impressions or media exposure are used to evaluate the effectiveness of sponsorship (IEG, 2008), but Sleight (1989) suggests practicing caution when using these techniques to measure value. The central strategy of many sponsorships is to gain publicity. It may seem sufficient to simply measure the

column inches or minutes on television and radio airtime to come up with a measure of success, but it is difficult to tell by measuring media mention how many people in the target audience saw and registered the sponsorship or know their views (Sleight, 1989). These measures fail to capture whether sponsorship impacted both attitudes that lead to purchase and other desired actions, as well as the actions themselves. Reporting that 200,000 people attended an event reveals the popularity of the event but not how your brand fared. It is important for companies to define objectives at the beginning of a sponsorship in turn, providing which indicators to track, as well as which need to be benchmarked before the project gets underway. Companies that clarify objectives upfront determine what it takes to accomplish the objectives as well as the risks the project involves. This type of evaluation facilitates decision-making that accounts for the typically overlooked issues of implementation and execution. Further, companies should make objectives specific, a vague desire to improve a company's standing, or to reposition a brand, is not strong enough to constitute either a screening criterion or an effectiveness measure. In addition to defining objectives, benchmarking is the most accurate way of measuring what a company had or would have had without the sponsorship (IEG, 2008).

In addition to behavior numbers, companies need to incorporate the relationship analysis to accurately reflect the contact value between brands and the target audience. People are not passionate about most products, but as Jeff Shifrin (2008, p.1) says, "Most of us who played sports growing up dreamed of one day being good enough to turn pro. Even after reality set in, our passion for sports remained undiminished and exists to this day". Highly identified sports fans view their team's success and failure as personal

success and failure. They derive significant ego enhancement from their affiliation, and sponsors that are able to successfully tap into this gain more favorable purchasing intentions (Shifrin, 2008).

Too much emphasis is given to short-term numbers and too little to the development of emotional connections between brands and consumers, and the value of influencing long-term consumer behavior. After all, the dynamic between many brands and most consumers is a relationship, not a formula. The real value of sponsorship is its ability to facilitate and deepen relationships; to have conversations and add value to customer's lives. Sponsorship works to connect brands to customers and customers to each other and their passions. IEG (2008) views sales as the least important element in sponsorship evaluation. Companies should measure it, but not focus all attention on it. More focus should be allocated to future purchase intent and brand loyalty issues (IEG, 2008). Lastly, for a successful sponsorship, companies need to understand their customers not as demographics but as people with interests, passions, and emotional connections. This intimate knowledge is not found in demographic studies or syndicated research; therefore, companies should commission primary research to discover the emotional identities and attitudes of customers (IEG, 2008).

An attitude can be defined as an individuals' overall evaluation of an object (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). In sponsorship of sports, one theory of how attitudes are formed is suggested by Shrum (2004). The balance theory model displays a relationship between the three elements involved in a sports sponsorship; the endorser, the object and the consumer. The theory illustrates the desire of individuals to have relations between

the three elements to be harmonious and that people adjust their attitudes to achieve consistency.

Specifically under this theory, sponsors hope that consumers will hold a positive association toward the sport and the consumer will form a positive attitude toward a company and or product. Once the link between the company and sport has been established, a positive feeling toward the sport has resulted in a similar feeling toward the company, which may suggest the sponsor's products are superior to competitors (Shrum, 2004).

Meenaghan (2001) describes the positive attitudes towards a sponsor as being an antecedent of consumer purchase intentions and actual purchase behavior. One study observed that consumer attitudes of sponsors are centered on either a firm's goodwill intentions or the belief that companies offer sponsorships simply as a means for generating more revenue (Madrigal, 2001). It has been suggested that consumers are aware of how marketers try to persuade and that consumers assess marketer intentions in promotional settings, resulting in formulated attitudes (Madrigal, 2001). Forehand (2000), found that consumers who believe the marketer is sales-focused (e.g., a coupon is given to stimulate purchase) report lower brand attitudes and purchase intentions for promoted products after the promotion. In contrast, consumers who believe the marketer is reward-focused (e.g., a coupon is given to distribute a reward) show no such post-promotional negative effect on attitudes. This theory may be transferred to the practice of sponsorship and in turn affect the future purchase intentions of consumers of sport (Forehand, 2000).

In summary, the practice of sponsorship has evolved greatly from its inception to million dollar partnerships. The management process driven by corporate objectives is a vital part to the execution of sponsorships. Therefore, for corporations to be best prepared to enter into sponsorship agreements, it is vital to commit to primary research to understand how customers connect to events and corporations alike. Based on the information discussed previously, a study of Ole Miss sports sponsorship practices and consumer attitude of Ole Miss sports fans was conducted to gather further evidence on the effect of sponsorship.

## **CHAPTER 3: STUDY 1: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS**

Study one consisted of in-depth interviews with key informants involved in the corporate sponsorship process. An examination of the current issues affecting both sports organization and corporate sponsors was conducted.

### **3.1 Results: Sponsorship Provider**

An interview with the Director of Collegiate Sports Properties for Telesouth Communications, the outsourced marketing partner for Ole Miss Athletics was conducted to determine the current situation at Ole Miss. In a discussion about corporate sponsorship of collegiate sports, the director provided an inside look at the sports organization side of negotiations and execution. Interview questions and accompanying answers follow.

Q1: What is the most difficult task facing corporate sponsorship of intercollegiate sports today?

The director reports that finding new sponsors is the most difficult task for sports properties, in that it is the new business that drives the industry. The signing of new sponsors when funding is low requires much negotiation and shopping around. Therefore, it is vital to provide potential sponsors with the necessary information that they will need to justify their marketing expenditure. The information may include information such as the number of fans at each event, the demographics of the fans, the average number of media exposures as well as what different levels of sponsorships will

include. "Providing sponsors with information about the market they will reach and formulating a marketing plan to get the most for their money is crucial to making lasting deals."

Q2: What factors affect sponsorship deals?

In terms of actually signing sponsors, there are a number of factors that affect deals. Considering America's current economic downturn, sponsors are becoming harder to sign; however, companies with multi-year deals are benefiting from greater exposure for steady prices. In addition, companies that are already sponsors are more willing to continue because a certain amount is already budgeted into their accounts.

Also, when formulating a sponsorship plan, it is imperative to match a sponsor with a team or event that will be most beneficial to both parties. It is not uncommon for sponsors to have planned exactly what they want to do for their sponsorship. At times this works but at other times Telesouth may be tasked with discussing other options with sponsors for best gaining corporate objectives.

Q3: Does a team's record affect sponsorships?

Winning is very important to the practice of sponsorship. Companies want to be associated with teams and individuals who exude success; therefore, sponsors are more willing to pay money to have their name out in the open when people are more likely to be attending events or tuning into games. Winning games at a collegiate level means more interest in the school and program; therefore, leading to more local and national exposure. This is a major driving point for sponsors and in winning times, sponsors are more likely to approach schools in hopes of a sponsorship rather than in losing times when programs are charged with seeking out sponsors.

Q4: Is there a difference between sponsorship of collegiate and professional sports?

College sports are somewhat “recession-proof” in that there will always be a following of some sort. Students, alumni, and die-hard fans will follow a team win or lose; therefore, providing continual opportunities for sponsor companies to reach their desired target market. This differs greatly from the professional sports arena in which winning means everything. However, professional sports in most cases receive more sponsorships than collegiate teams. In fact, the location of a college may in fact affect sponsorship. If a collegiate team calls home to a place in which a second university or professional sports team is located, sponsorships may be rare. Sponsors are going to support teams in which their expenses will have the greatest chance of being justified. The lack of sponsorship is not for lack of support or fondness of a university, but because it is a more viable option to sponsor organizations with a larger market base.

Q5: Do you track the effectiveness of client sponsorships? If so, how?

Telesouth does not provide their clients with information on how well their sponsorship is doing. There is not a single process to measure who the sponsorship is reaching and what actions are being taken due to sponsorships.

### **3.2 Results: Current Corporate Sponsors**

Study 1 also consisted of in depth interviews with current sponsors of Ole Miss sports. Several questions were posed to the current sponsors (S1 and S2) about their sponsorships.

Q1: What do you look for in selecting a sponsorship?

S1: When searching for a sponsorship opportunity, I look for where the most people will see the company's name.

S2: I try to select sponsorships opportunities to reach the largest amount of people in my target market.

Q2: What are your main marketing objectives for sponsorships?

S1: To increase exposure of my company.

S2: To raise awareness of my company and show its support for Ole Miss

Q3: What is your sponsorship involvement level?

S1: I use two sponsorship levels to promote my company, I sponsor both collegiate and local high school sports.

S2: We focus our sponsorships solely on college sports.

Q4: What is the usual length of your sponsorship?

S1: I will sponsor certain sports for the length of their season, as well as, single events at the request of Telesouth.

S2: We have a yearlong sponsorship with Ole Miss sports, in that we are a sponsor of the Ole Miss sports website.

Q5: How do your customers react to sponsorship?

S1: Customers are excited to see the company's name in the sports arena. Most thank me for my support of the school and the team.

S2: We have customers tell us when and where they saw our sponsorship, and we ask them to provide feedback which in most cases is positive.

Q6: In which ways do you track the effectiveness of your sponsorship?

S1: I do not track the effectiveness of my sponsorships. I hope that they are working and making fans aware of what my company has to offer.

S2: We do not extensively track effectiveness. We do ask customers to fill out questionnaires about the company and provide a question asking about knowledge of our sponsorship. However, these surveys may only be given out once a year.

### **3.3 Study 1 Insights**

These in depth interviews reveal some intriguing insights into the process of corporate sponsorship of intercollegiate sports. First, although measuring success is reported as a critical issue by sponsorship providers, the current sponsors revealed that they do not measure effectiveness. Tangible measurements are crucial to justifying marketing objectives. Second, the current sponsors of college sports focus on increasing awareness; however, fiscal returns on awareness may not counter the amount paid for sponsorship positions.

Study one clarifies the current issues facing sponsorship discussed earlier, and raises the question, are fans noticing sponsors of sports teams and event? Further, what effect do sponsorships have on the attitude of fans towards their company? Are fans taking action based on sponsorships that positively affect corporations? The results of study one influences the much needed study of sponsorship and fan attitude and purchase intention, which is provided in study two.

## **CHAPTER 4: STUDY 2: SURVEY OF SPORTS FANS**

The second study performed as part of primary research for this thesis involved an examination of the attitudes and purchase intentions of consumers involved with and associated with sports. Understanding consumer attitudes toward marketing activities is an important factor for managers considering a variety of communications strategies (Supovitz, 2005). With sponsorship of sports, many questions arise regarding the appropriateness of the activity. Are sponsorships of sports really welcomed by fans or are they considered a nuisance? Do fans feel that sports are tainted by corporate involvement? These questions along with other are discussed and researched in the following chapter.

### **4.1 Methodology**

This study was directed toward consumers of Ole Miss sports, limited to current Ole Miss Students, Ole Miss Alumni, and Ole Miss fans. Subjects were provided a link to an on-line questionnaire through the social networking site Facebook. The survey consisted of five major sections: (a) attitudes towards sponsorship of Ole Miss sports, (b) attitudes toward sponsorship of intercollegiate sports, (c) attitudes toward sponsorship of professional sports, (d) attendance and participation at Ole Miss sporting events, and (e) post-event sponsorship evaluation/action. The instrument is in Appendix 1.

Respondents were asked to rank how they felt about corporate sponsorship on a 7 point Likert Scale (Speed & Thompson, 2000). Responses ranged from 1 (Strongly Agree

with the statement) to 7 (Strongly disagree with the statement). Identical questions were asked about sponsorship of collegiate and professional sports to determine differences in attitudes.

The section focusing on attitudes toward Ole Miss sports sponsorship was comprised of questions regarding favorability of sponsorship and perceptual differences between sponsor products and non sponsor products. This section used identical responses based on the 7 point Likert scale (Speed & Thompson, 2000).

The last section on attendance at Ole Miss sporting events was comprised of questions regarding sports preference, typical attendance as well as an open-ended question that provided the opportunity for unaided recall of sponsors from the top three men's and women's sports. Questionnaires were administered using Qualtrics software and an embedded link in messages sent on the social networking site Facebook.

## **4.2 Results**

Surveys were provided to 583 people. One hundred thirty-eight surveys were completed providing a response rate of 23.7 percent. The sample consisted of Ole Miss students, alumni, and fans with 91 percent of respondents being between the ages of 19-25. The gender balance was 60 percent female, 40 percent male.

Table 4.1 shows attendance figures of respondents for top sponsored sports. The top three sponsored men's sports at Ole Miss as reported by Director of Telesouth Communications are Football, Baseball, and Basketball. Each of these sports were attended by at least 85 percent of respondents. Top sponsored women's sports, Basketball, Soccer, and Volleyball had significantly lower attendance rates among respondents each sport being attended by less than 40 percent of all respondents.

**Table 4.1 Attendance at One or More Sponsored Sport Events**

<b>Men's Sports</b>	<b>% Attended</b>	<b>Women's Sports</b>	<b>% Attended</b>
Football	99%	Basketball	37%
Baseball	90%	Soccer	31%
Basketball	85%	Volleyball	30%

Most respondents agree with the practice of sponsoring college sports and over half believe that this practice leads to the consumer benefit of lower ticket costs to the event. However, it is evident from this sample, that association with an Ole Miss sports organization, team or event does not improve the perceived quality of the sponsors company, brand or products in contrast to the more general findings of Pracejus ( 2004).

Table 4.2 provides the percentage of respondents that “Strongly Agree,” or “Agree” with sponsorship practices and mean responses

**Table 4.2 Practice of Sponsorship: Intercollegiate vs. Professional Sports**

	Percentage who “Strongly Agree or Agree” Intercollegiate Sports	Mean	Percentage who “Strongly Agree or Agree” Professional Sports	Mean
Corporations should sponsor sports	72%	2.15	75%	2.04
Corporate sponsorship helps keep ticket cost down	55%	2.64	51%	2.70
Companies that sponsor sports offer better products	23%	3.62	18%	3.65

Further, identical questions were asked about sponsorship practices in the professional sports arena and yielded similar results with 68 percent of respondents “Agreeing” or “Strongly Agreeing” with sponsorship of professional sports. In addition, 51 percent agreed that corporate sponsorship helps lower ticket costs, but only 18% agreed that sponsor companies offer better products than competitors. In addition to questions regarding general sponsorship practices, specific industries were included into the surveys to determine if there was a difference in perception between collegiate and professional sports. Two controversial industries, alcohol and tobacco, have a dominate place in professional sports, but their presence in college sports varies by institution. The recent study showed that 38 percent of respondents agreed that alcohol companies should not sponsor college sports while only 23 percent agreed that alcohol companies should not sponsor professional sports. Further, a greater number of respondents, 46 percent for professional sports and 61 percent for college sports, agreed that tobacco companies should not sponsor sports.

**Table 4.3 Controversial Sponsorships**

	Mean	Professional Sports	Mean	College Sports
<b>Alcohol companies should not sponsor sports</b>	<b>4.43</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>3.58</b>	<b>38%</b>
<b>Tobacco companies should not sponsor sports</b>	<b>3.27</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>2.62</b>	<b>61%</b>

Table 4.4 displays the attitude toward sponsors from Ole Miss fans. More than half of respondents either “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” with sponsorships. However, the positive attitude associated with sponsorship does not appear to result in purchase.

**Table 4.4 Favorability of Team Specific Sponsors**

	Mean	% "Agree or Strongly Agree"
I feel more favorable towards a company because it sponsors Ole Miss Sports	2.35	58
My perception of a company would be improved because of a sponsorship of Ole Miss Sports	2.38	60
When making a purchase, I am more likely to consider an Ole Miss sponsor's product	2.92	46
When making a purchase, I am more likely to buy the product of an Ole Miss sponsor over its competitors	2.68	49

Looking at attendance of the top three sponsored men's and women's sports, research shows that Ole Miss men's sports are better attended than women's, suggesting that sponsoring men's sports reaches the most people.

Table 4.5 shows yearly attendance of respondents at the top three sponsored men's and women's sports at Ole Miss. Again, more of the respondents attended men's sporting events compared to women's. More than 60 percent of all respondents have not attended a single game of any top 3 women's sports.

**Table 4.5 Yearly Attendance of Ole Miss Sports**

Yearly Attendance Ole Miss Sports	6 or More Games	2-5 Games	1 Game	No Games	Mean
<b>Men's Sports</b>					
Baseball	48%	34%	6%	12%	2.43
Basketball	43%	30%	13.5%	13.5%	2.73
Football	81%	16%	1%	1%	1.84
<b>Women's Sports</b>					
Basketball	13%	14%	13%	60%	4.15
Soccer	1%	12%	16%	71%	4.55
Volleyball	4%	9.5%	12.5%	74%	4.54

In addition, results of this survey show that attendance levels may be directly related to the number of sponsors recalled by consumers. Table 4.6 provides the total number of sponsors mentioned by participants using unaided recall of specific men's and women's sports.

**Table 4.6 Number of Sponsors Recalled**

<b>Men's Sports</b>	<b>Number of Sponsors</b>	<b>Number of Sponsors</b>	<b>Women's Sports</b>
<b>Baseball</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>Basketball</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Football</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>Soccer</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Basketball</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>Volleyball</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>98</b>		<b>33</b>

Tables 4.7 and 4.8 display the specific sponsors mentioned from the unaided recall question. There seems to be a direct relationship between sport attendance and recall of corporate sponsors from consumers.

For Baseball, The Library, Coca Cola, Cellular South and FedEx were the most recalled sponsors. Football sponsors most frequently recalled were BancorpSouth, FedEx, Cellular South, and Coca Cola. For men's basketball, top sponsors recalled were BancorpSouth, The Library, FedEx, and Coca Cola. For women's basketball, Papa John's and Nike were recalled most. The soccer sponsor most frequently recalled was Nike. Again, Nike was most frequently recalled in volleyball along with Gatorade and Papa John's.

Table 4.7 Ole Miss Men's Sports Sponsorship Recall List

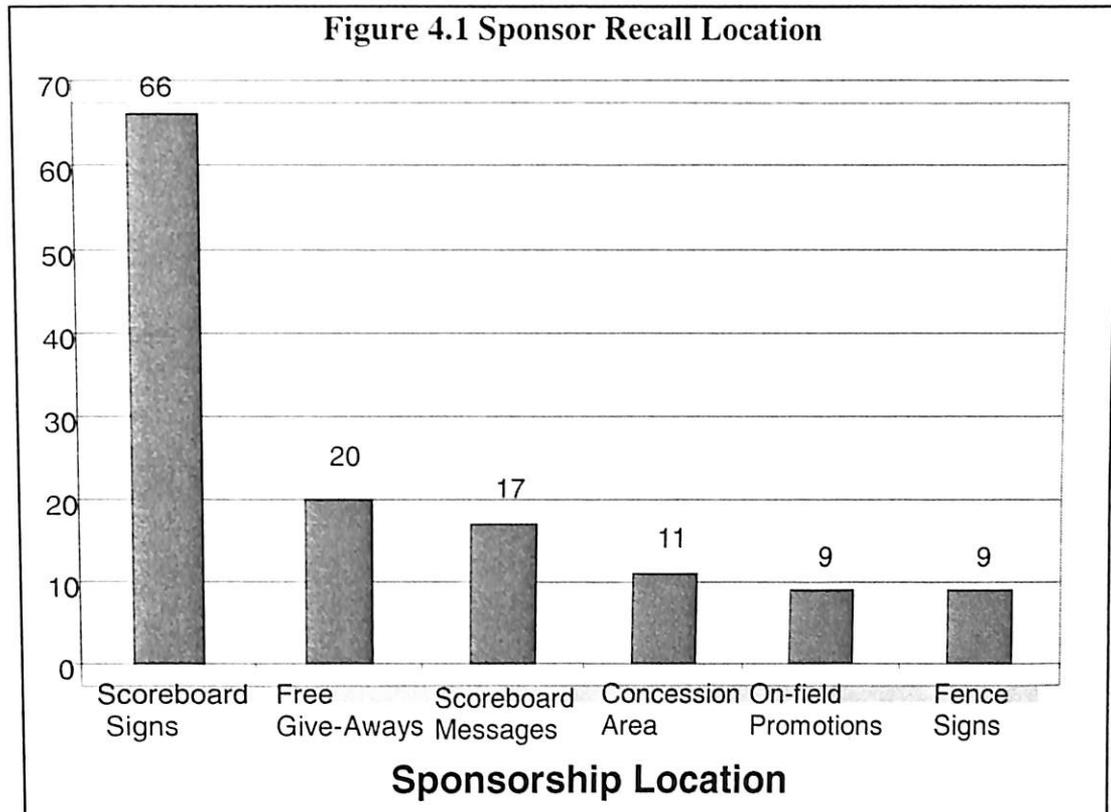
		Sponsor Recall and Frequency of Mention			
Baseball		Football		Basketball	
The Library	8	BancorpSouth	22	BancorpSouth	11
Coca Cola	6	Fed Ex	16	The Library	7
Cellular South	5	Cellular South	12	Fed Ex	6
Fed Ex	4	Coca Cola	12	Coca Cola	6
BancorpSouth	4	AT&T	13	Ashley Furniture	6
Nike	3	Nike	9	Papa Johns	5
Regions Bank	3	Papa Johns	6	Abner's	4
Neilson's	3	MS National Guard	6	Nike	4
Rebel Rags	3	Regions Bank	5	Stanford	4
AT&T	2	Abner's	4	AT&T	3
Easton	2	Bank Plus	4	Renasant Bank	2
Stanford	2	Ashley Furniture	4	Sonic	2
Sonic	2	State Farm	3	Cellular South	2
Oxford T-shirt Company	2	Gatorade	3	State Farm	1
Ashley Furniture	2	Stanford	3	Oxford Furniture	1
Bofields	1	The Hamlet	2	Chaney's	1
Dominos	1	Trustmark	2	KFC	1
Bank Plus	1	Rebel Rags	2	Regions Bank	1
Trustmark	1	Bellsouth	1	Raycom	1
Vision Clinic	1	Riddle	1	Army ROTC	1
Abner's	1	Allstate	1	Rebel Rags	1
Tyson	1	Golden Flake	1	Oxford T-shirt Company	1
CSS	1	Goldstrike Casino	1	Konico Minolta	1
Army ROTC	1	The Library	1		
Under Armour	1	Dixie Net	1		
Rib Cage	1	Whirlpool	1		
Old Venice	1	Corky's	1		
Papa Johns	1	Yates Construction	1		
The Beer Barn	1	The city of Madison	1		
Landry's Menswear	1	The State of Mississippi	1		
Oxford Furniture	1	Sandestin Resort	1		
Long John Silver	1				
Oxford ENT	1				
Golf Carts of Mississippi	1				
Kissinger Realty	1				
Mayo Eye Clinic	1				
The Hamlet	1				
Cox Communications	1				

Table 4.8 Ole Miss Women's Sports Sponsorship Recall List

		Sponsor Recall and Frequency of Mention			
Basketball		Soccer		Volleyball	
<u>Papa Johns</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>Nike</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>Nike</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>Nike</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>Kroger</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>Gatorade</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>Rebel Rags</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>Dominos</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>Papa Johns</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>AT&amp;T</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>Coca Cola</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>Kroger</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>BizHub</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>Fed Ex</u>	<u>1</u>		
<u>Cellular South</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>Downtown Grill</u>	<u>1</u>		
<u>The Library</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>Army National Guard</u>	<u>1</u>		
<u>Oxford Floral</u>	<u>1</u>				
<u>Stanford</u>	<u>1</u>				
<u>Coca Cola</u>	<u>1</u>				
<u>Gatorade</u>	<u>1</u>				
<u>Fed Ex</u>	<u>1</u>				
<u>Ashley Furniture</u>	<u>1</u>				
<u>Renasant Bank</u>	<u>1</u>				
<u>University Florist</u>	<u>1</u>				
<u>Downtown Grill</u>	<u>1</u>				
<u>3 Guys Pizza</u>	<u>1</u>				
<u>Oxford T-shirt Co.</u>	<u>1</u>				
<u>Oxford Furniture</u>	<u>1</u>				
<u>Konico Minolta</u>	<u>1</u>				
<u>BancorpSouth</u>	<u>1</u>				

Next, respondents were asked to recall the location where they most noticed a sponsor company at various sporting events. Findings are presented in Figure 4.1.

Scoreboard signs proved to be the most prominent location for sponsor identification and recall. Following display on the scoreboard, free give-aways were mentioned in having sponsors noticed by consumers.



The last section of research involved post-sponsorship/ post-event evaluations on consumer behavior. Table 4.9 provides the percentage of respondents who have taken action post event.

**Table 4.9 Post-Sponsorship Consumer Action**

<b>I have...</b>	<b>%</b>	
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Visited a company's store after noticing its sponsorship</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>Visited a company's website after noticing its sponsorship</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>Purchased a company's product or service after noticing its sponsorship</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>Provided feedback to a company about their sponsorship</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>Recommended a company to a friend after noticing its sponsorship</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>65</b>

From this study, it can be inferred that while sponsorships may resound positively among consumers, there is not a direct link between sponsorship of a team or event and purchase and/or purchase intentions.

#### 4.2.1 Discussion

This research provided valuable insight into the minds of consumers and their attitude towards sponsors of sport. A vast majority of all respondents agreed on some level with the sponsorship of sports on a collegiate and professional level, but research shows that 63 percent of respondents believe that there is a difference between the sponsorship of college and professional sports. The scope of this research did not provide reasoning for this belief nor which venue is better in the minds of the consumer.

Interestingly, there seems to be a direct relationship between preference of sport and recall of corporate sponsors. The ability for consumers to recall more sponsors for their favorite sport seems to suggest that the more involved a consumer is with a particular sport's team or event the greater chance a company will be noticed and remembered as a sponsor.

This research shows that respondents could effectively recall and identify sponsors of Ole Miss sports. However, this study reveals that awareness may not evolve into action. Less than half of all respondents have taken action based on sponsorship of Ole Miss sports. The most alarming statistic is that only 13 percent of respondents provided feedback to a company about their sponsorship. Forty-nine percent of respondents reportedly purchased a company's product or service after noticing its sponsorship; however, it is difficult to confirm that the sponsorship was the sole reason behind a purchase.

If corporations are entering sponsorships for awareness and positive association, then research shows that it seems to be an effective method. However, if corporations are

seeking to drive sales through sponsorship they should evaluate if the large sums of money spent on sponsorships are being used to reach such tactical objectives.

## **CHAPTER 5: IMPLICATIONS:**

Findings of this study imply that both sponsors and athletic programs need to not only track the effectiveness of sponsorships, but also help design sponsorships that create results. An evaluation method for sponsorship activities should be created and implemented so to ensure sponsorship is reaching corporate objectives, as well as, being used to maximize the value of the sponsorship. It can be suggested that sponsoring companies take on the task of studying the behavior of consumers, by accurately isolating behavior changes caused by sponsorships. IEG (2008) suggests methods such as:

1. Analyzing customer databases to identify increases in sales during the campaign as compared to the previous weeks.
2. Comparing sales for the period surrounding the sponsorship to the same period in prior years
3. Measuring sales in the event market against similar markets with no sponsorship
4. Comparing sales shifts at participating retailers or on-premise accounts vs. those not participating
5. Comparing usage levels among fans of the sponsored property to non-fans in same demographic
6. Tying a sales offer directly to the sponsored property, e.g., ticket discount with proof of purchase, and then track redemption rates.

These methods imply that sponsorship activities need to be strategically designed and implemented to go beyond signage and awareness objectives. One goal of sponsorship is to reach target customers and create a connection to their company, brand or product. To achieve this objective, sponsors should work on integrating their sponsorship with the sports property so that the sponsorship is a part of the team or event, not merely an advertiser.

Sports organizations, in this case Ole Miss, should attempt to design and implement evaluation methods of their own which may be beneficial when looking for sponsors. Supovitz ( 2005) states, that while sponsors may vary in their motivations for sponsorship, they all share confidence in the strength of sponsorship as a promotion tool. The ability for Ole Miss to clearly describe to potential sponsors the effectiveness of past sponsorships, the greater the chance corporation will want to invest.

Further, to increase sponsorship funding, Ole Miss may want to offer a smaller amount of sponsorship options for a greater price. In a study done by *Financial Times* (2002), the amount of clutter in the sport sponsorship market raises doubts about its value. Information on the World Cup states that over 60 different brands were named sponsors of the event, making each sponsor seem like a meaningless advertiser (*Financial Times*, 2002). With a less cluttered sponsorship market, consumers may see sponsors in light of the value provided to them through execution of events and patronage of their team.

### **5.1 Future Research**

The purpose of this thesis was to investigate and provide a better understanding

of corporate sponsorship of sports and the effects on consumer attitude and future purchase behavior.

In the realm of sports sponsorship, a number of questions arose through the execution of this thesis which could be the subjects for future research. First, a study of awareness and recall of sponsor corporations as well as purchase behavior of consumers could be compared during winning and losing seasons of a sports team. For example, Cornwall, Pruitt, and Van Ness (2001) found increased stock prices of sponsors during winning times. After wins of the Indianapolis 500, abnormal returns were registered by sponsoring companies. However, this looked at sponsorship of an individual driver, not a team platform. Further study on team wins and losses compared with behavior would provide relevant information to companies about how affect and image transfer truly affects the status of their company in the minds of consumers.

Second, research comparing the location and frequency of sponsor's signage in a particular sports venue could be related to the attitude and recall rate of consumers. A look at whether corporate signage or interaction with fans provides best attitudes would be beneficial for companies who are looking to use sponsorship as a marketing tool, as well as those wishing to increase brand loyalty.

Further, a study comparing the attitudes of corporate sponsorship of arts and corporate sponsorship of sports could be completed. A Performance Research (1997) study indicates that over one-half of people interested in the Arts say they would "Almost always" or "Frequently" buy a sponsor's products compared to only one third of NFL fans and less than one-fifth of Olympic Game audiences choosing to buy sponsor

products. A study to discover why art sponsorships are held in higher trust than sports could provide valuable information corporations and sports organizations alike.

## **5.2 Limitations**

As with any research, a number of limitations must be considered. This research's narrow focus on a single university's sports sponsorship program ignores sponsorship opportunities at both larger and smaller universities. Further, similar research question for specific sporting event such as the BCS National Championship game, Final Four or College World Series, might produce different results.

This was a web based survey, with participants completing the questionnaire through a link on a social networking website. The fact that a computer and internet as well as membership to the social site were necessary, it may have contributed to the age distribution of the sample. The convenience sample for this survey consisted of primarily young adults under the age of 25; therefore, the results should only be used with caution due to limited generalization.

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## Appendix 1

Default Question Block

How do you feel about the sponsorship of Ole Miss Sports

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel more favorable towards a company because of its sponsorship of Ole Miss Sports	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My perception of a company would be improved because of a sponsorship of Ole Miss Sports	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
When making a purchase, I am more likely to consider a company's 's product because it sponsors Ole Miss	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
When making a purchase, I am more likely to buy the products of an Ole Miss sponsor over its competitors.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Most other Ole Miss fans whose opinion I value would probably think my decision to buy products or services from a company that sponsors Ole Miss to be

Neither

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Admirable	<input type="radio"/>						
Smart	<input type="radio"/>						
Sensible	<input type="radio"/>						

How do you feel about the prospect of intercollegiate sports?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Corporations should sponsor college sports	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

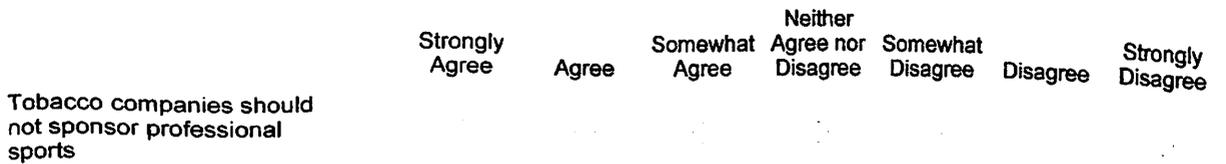
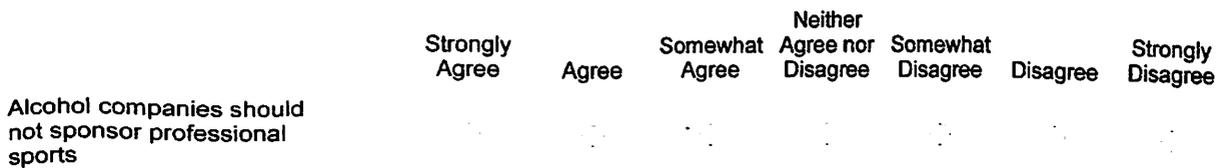
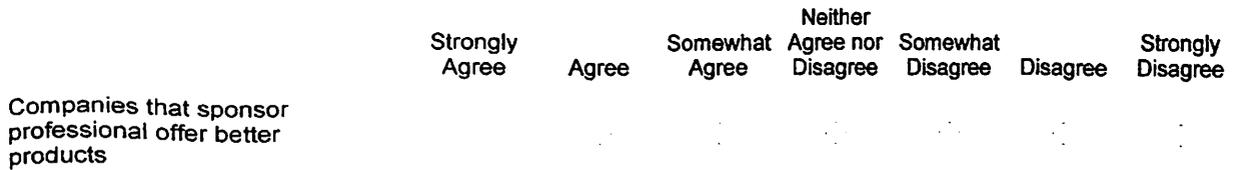
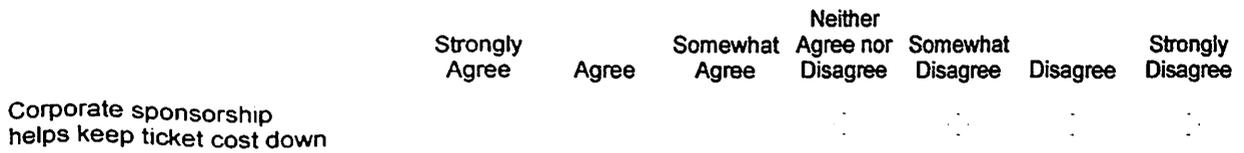
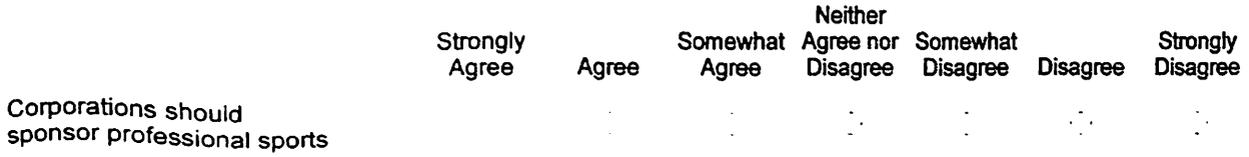
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Corporate sponsorship helps keep ticket cost down.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Companies that sponsor sports offer better products	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Alcohol companies should not sponsor college sports	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Tobacco companies should not sponsor college sports	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How do you feel about the following statements related to professional sports?



There is a difference between sponsorship of college sports and professional sports.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Somewhat Agree    Neither Agree nor Disagree    Somewhat Disagree    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

Please list up to three baseball teams that you can recall

Yes  No

I have attended Baseball

Please list up to three basketball teams that you can recall

Yes  No

I have attended Basketball

Please list up to three football teams that you can recall

Yes  No

I have attended Football

Please list up to three other college sports that you can recall

Please indicate how many games you have attended:

	More than 10 games	6-10 games	1-5 games	Only one game	No Games
Ole Miss Baseball	<input type="radio"/>				
Ole Miss Basketball	<input type="radio"/>				
Ole Miss Football	<input type="radio"/>				

Please indicate how many games you have attended:

- Baseball
- Basketball
- Football

In regard to Ole Miss women's basketball, please indicate:

I have attended Basketball  Yes  No

Please list any sports you have attended Ole Miss Women's Basketball that you can recall

In regard to Ole Miss women's soccer, please indicate:

I have attended Soccer  Yes  No

Please list any sports you have attended Ole Miss Soccer that you can recall

In regard to Ole Miss women's volleyball, please indicate:

I have attended Volleyball  Yes  No

Please select the number of Ole Miss sporting events you attended:

Each week during the season:

	More than 10 games	6-10 games	1-5 games	Only one game	No games
Ole Miss Basketball	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Ole Miss Soccer	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Ole Miss Volleyball	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Please indicate which sport(s) you attended:

- Basketball
- Soccer
- Volleyball

Which of the following Ole Miss sporting events have you attended? Please check all that apply.

- Ole Miss Golf (Men's)
- Ole Miss Golf (Women's)
- Ole Miss Rifle
- Ole Miss Softball
- Ole Miss Tennis (Men's)
- Ole Miss Tennis (Women's)
- Ole Miss Track and Field/ Cross Country
- Post-Season Events (e.g. Cotton Bowl)

Where do you notice most sports ads at Ole Miss Sporting events?

- Fence Signs
- Scoreboard Signs
- Scoreboard Messages
- PA Announcements
- On-Field Promotions
- Concession Areas
- Free Give-Aways
- Other

Please indicate if you:

Yes

No

I have visited a company's store after noticing its sponsorship

Yes

No

I have visited a company's website after noticing its sponsorship

Yes

No

I have purchased a company's product or service after noticing its sponsorship

Yes

No

I have provided feedback to a company about their sponsorship

Yes

No

I have recommended a company to a friend after noticing its sponsorship

I am

Male

Female

I am

Under 18

19-25

26-50

50+

I am

an Ole Miss Student

an Ole Miss Alum

an Ole Miss Fan

None of the above

I am

an Ole Miss Athlete

a member of a recreational sports team

None of the above

What varsity sports team are you a member