

## On-site Sponsorship Activities: The Meanings and Perceptions for the Three Key Interest Groups / Case: Uplause Crowd Games in Karjala Cup 2010

Marketing Master's thesis Mikko Majakero 2011

Department of Marketing Aalto University School of Economics



# **On-site Sponsorship Activities: The Meanings and Perceptions for the Three Key Interest Groups**

Case: Uplause Crowd Games in Karjala Cup 2010

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Approved by the head of the Department of Marketing \_\_\_\_.\_\_.2011 and awarded the grade

AALTO UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

ABSTRACT

Department of Marketing

Master's Thesis

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## ON-SITE SPONSORSHIP ACTIVITIES: THE MEANINGS AND PERCEPTIONS FOR THE THREE KEY INTEREST GROUPS

Case: Uplause Crowd Games in Karjala Cup 2010

#### **Objective of the Study**

The objective of the study is to gain in-depth understanding of the meanings and perceptions of on-site sponsorship activities for three key interest groups: sponsors, event organizers and the audience. The study aims for establishing the role of on-site sponsorship activities as a unique sponsorship leverage tool for creating interaction between the sponsor and event audience. Another objective is to create a framework to illustrate the effect mechanism of on-site sponsorship activities. The third objective is to use the framework to give advice for Uplause management to improve Uplause Crowd Games as an on-site sponsorship activity.

#### **Research Method**

The research is based on a constructivist paradigm that defines knowledge as a mutually constructed context-related reality. The existing academic sponsorship discussions form the theoretical framework of the study and work as a guideline for the empirical research. The empirical research is executed by semi-structured interviews, which is the most appropriate method considering the paradigm and the specific research setting. The interviewees represent all three interest groups of Karjala Cup 2010, where Uplause Crowd Games were used as an on-site sponsorship activity. The data is then analyzed using a thematic analysis method and a revised framework is built.

#### Findings

The research findings are divided in three parts: 1) on-site activity effect, 2) event organizer's roles, and 3) practical tips for improving Uplause Crowd Games. The most important finding suggests that on-site activities are able to provide additional value for the audience in form of entertainment and, thus, lead to enhanced goodwill towards the sponsor and extended involvement towards the sponsored event.

#### Keywords

Sponsorship, sponsorship leverage, on-site activities, event organizer, interaction, entertainment

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## SPONSOROINTIAKTIVITEETIT TAPAHTUMISSA: MERKITYKSET JA KÄSITYKSET KOLMELLE SIDOSRYHMÄLLE

Case: Uplause Yleisöpelit Karjala-turnauksessa 2010

#### Tutkimuksen tavoitteet

Tutkimuksen tavoitteena on saavuttaa ymmärrystä tapahtumissa toteutettavista sponsorointiaktiviteeteista ja niiden merkityksistä kolmelle sidosryhmälle: sponsoreille, tapahtumajärjestäjille ja yleisölle. Tutkielman tavoitteena on osoittaa tapahtumiin sijoittuvien sponsorointiaktiviteettien rooli sponsorointiviestinnässä ja niiden kyky luoda ainutlaatuista vuorovaikutusta tapahtumayleisön ja tapahtuman sponsoreiden välille. Toisena tavoitteena on luoda viitekehys kuvaamaan tapahtumissa toteutettavien sponsorointiaktiviteettien vaikutusmekanismia ja kolmantena tavoitteena on viitekehystä hyödyntäen tarjota neuvoja Uplause-yleisöpelien kehittämiseksi.

#### Tutkimusmenetelmä

Tutkimus pohjautuu konstruktivistiselle paradigmalle, joka ymmärtää tiedon rakentuvana, kontekstisidonnaisena todellisuutena. vhteisesti Aiempi sponsorointikirjallisuus akateeminen muodostaa tutkielman teoreettisen viitekehyksen, joka toimii ohjenuorana empiiriselle tutkimukselle. Empiirinen tutkimus toteutettiin teemaahaastatteluin, joka on sopivin tutkimusmenetelmä tälle tutkimusasetelmalle. Haastatellut edustivat kaikkia kolmea sidosryhmää, osallistuivat Uplause-yleisöpeleihin Karjala-turnauksessa iotka 2010. Tutkimusaineisto analysoitiin teemoittelumenetelmää käyttäen ja analyysin perusteella laadittiin uudistettu viitekehys.

#### Tutkimustulokset

Tutkimuksen tulokset voidaan jakaa kolmeen osaan: 1) tapahtumasponsoroinnin vaikutukset, 2) tapahtumajärjestäjän roolit, sekä 3) käytännön neuvot Uplauseyleisöpelien kehittämiseksi. Tärkeimmät tutkimustulokset tuovat esiin, että tapahtumissa toteutettavat sponsorointiaktiviteetit voivat luoda merkittävää lisäarvoa tapahtumayleisölle viihteen muodossa. Tämä puolestaan mahdollistaa vuorovaikutussuhteen syntymisen tapahtuman sponsorin ja yleisön välille, joka mahdollistaa vahvistuneen goodwill-arvon ja laajennetun kuluttajakiintymyksen syntymiseen.

#### Avainsanat

Sponsorointi, tapahtuma-aktiviteetit, tapahtumajärjestäjä, vuorovaikutus, viihde

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#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

#### 1.1. Background

Sponsorship has established its position as a part of the marketing mix during the last three decades (e.g. Cornwell & Maignan 1998, Walliser 2003). The fastest growth in sponsorship emerged during the 1990's when sponsorship was one of the fastest growing fields in marketing. The investments in sponsorship increased rapidly from \$2 billion in 1984 to over \$23 billion in 1999 (Sponsorship Research International 2000). Still, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, investments in sponsorship have continued to increase. The International Event Group (IEG 2010) has reported global sponsorship spending to have grown 5.2 percent in 2010 to \$46.3 billion. In North America alone, sponsorship spending was reported to reach \$17.2 billion in 2010.

Even individual sponsorship actions can be significant investments. For example, Coca Cola invested a total of \$650 million in the sponsorship of the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games (Precision Marketing 1996) and \$250 million in the 1998 Soccer World Cup in France (Tilles 1998). Such investments include the sponsorship agreement itself but also a large number of other sponsorship activities called sponsorship leverage. Sponsorship is acknowledged to require leverage by other forms of marketing communication to maximize the benefits of sponsorship (e.g. Crimmins & Horn 1996, Thwaites et al. 1998, Cornwell 2001 et al., Quester & Thompson 2001). Sponsorship relation, much used tools being advertising, sales promotion, and on-site activities (e.g. Crimmins & Horn 1996, Cornwell et al. 2001, Quester & Thompson 2001).

The sponsorship industry has, to some extent, become saturated in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, and so has the academic sponsorship research. However, recent signs of a change in the field of sponsorship have been identified, many of them relating to sponsorship management and new methods of sponsorship leverage. (Choi et al. 2006; O'Keefe et al. 2009) My study is about to meet this change and contribute academic research by focusing on getting in-depth understanding of on-site sponsorship activities. I am interested in understanding the meanings and perceptions as well as purposes and objectives of on-site sponsorship activities for the three key stakeholders in events: sponsors, event organizers and audience.

On-site activities take place in sponsored events, and they can now be seen in practically every event. These activities may range, for example, from big screen video ads at ice hockey games to promo girls at festival sites or free chocolate bars at a charitable event. Many other activity forms taking place outside the sponsored event (e.g. advertising and sales promotion) have been discussed in academic sponsorship discourse (Polonsky & Speed, 2001), but on-site sponsorship activities have been mostly neglected (Choi et al. 2006). However, my aim is to provide information and understanding of the purposes and meanings of on-site activities by focusing on a new type of sponsorship activation, Uplause Crowd Games.

I conducted my study by interviewing individuals from three groups at the 2010 Karjala Cup ice hockey tournament. The three groups are sponsors, event organizers, and the audience. My methodology is based on a constructivist paradigm, which defines knowledge as being created locally through social interaction (Silverman 2006). The phenomenon of on-site activities and especially Uplause Crowd Games is fairly new and, thus, constructing mutual understanding via discussion is the most appropriate approach in regard to the research setting. The analysis of the interviews refines the theoretical framework of the interrelationships between sponsors, event organizers, and the audience, in the context of on-site activities. It offers new insight of

on-site activities' role in events and their position in the field of sponsorship. This is an important contribution for marketers as well as academics interested in sponsorship.

#### 1.2. Research Gap

According to Walliser, (2003) sponsorship research has previously focused too much on awareness and image objectives of consumer goods and service companies. At the same time, other types of institutions, other sponsorship objectives, and sponsorship areas, including onsite activities have been widely neglected (Walliser 2003; Choi et al. 2006). On the other hand, the importance of sponsorship leverage is widely highlighted in academic sponsorship discourse (e.g. Quester & Thompson 2001; Cornwell et al. 2001; Papadimitrou 2009). However, until now, researchers have mainly been satisfied with just stating the role of sponsorship leverage, but the deeper understanding of executing sponsorship leverage, and especially on-site activities, has been missing.

Walliser (2003) also states that "Instead of continuing a possibly never-ending academic debate about concurrent definitions of sponsorship, it may be more useful to focus research on the perception of sponsorship by its different targets." This is exactly the focus of my study. My goal is to gain an understanding of the perceptions of on-site activities. My study differs from previous sponsorship studies by taking into account all three interest groups (sponsors, event organizers, and the audience) at the same time, whereas previous studies have usually concentrated on either the sponsor-audience relationship (e.g. Gwinner 1997; Meenaghan 2001) or the sponsor-organizer relationship (e.g. McCarville & Copeland 1994). O'Keefe (2009) has noted opportunities for new types of sponsorship activation and particularly suggests more research on them. My study fills this specific research gap by providing important knowledge for marketers about the meanings and perceptions of on-site

activities and deeper understanding for academics of the relationship between sponsors, event organizers, and the audience in the case of on-site sponsorship activities.

#### 1.3. Research Questions and Objectives

My research aims to fulfill the academic sponsorship discourse by providing an understanding of a specific niche of on-site sponsorship activities. The central objective is to clarify the role of on-site activities for all three interest groups. Thus, my central research question is: *What is the meaning of on-site sponsorship activities for all three interest groups: sponsors, event organizers and the audience?* This raises a set of sub questions:

- a) What are the purposes, reasons and objectives of on-site activities?
- b) How does the audience benefit of the activities?
- c) What is the role of the event organizer in relationship to sponsors and the audience?
- d) How do entertaining on-site activities help the sponsor to achieve its marketing goals?

As I will present in chapter 5, I utilize qualitative research methods in my study. More specifically, I use semi-structured interviews in gathering data. In general, qualitative research methods, and especially cultural consumer research, are not appropriate for research questions which imply general causalities or predictions. In addition, questions aiming at answers of quantities or frequencies are also inappropriate. Instead, the questions of how and what, which strive for understanding meanings, processes, and features are the most appropriate for this methodology. However formulating research questions is an iterative process and the

questions may get more specific and refined during the interview process. (Moisander and Valtonen 2006)

#### **1.4.** Definitions of Key Concepts

Here I give the key definitions on which I base my study. Many of these concepts have alternative and competing definitions in academic literature, but these are the ones which I use in this study. In this chapter I only give my primary definitions, but in later chapters I discuss alternatives and rationalize my decisions.

*Sponsorship:* "... an investment, in cash or kind, in an activity, in return for access to the exploitable commercial potential associated with that activity." (Meenaghan 1991, p. 36)

*Sponsorship leverage:* Articulation of sponsorship through advertising, promotion or other activities to maximize the effects of sponsorship (Crimmins & Horn 1996)

*On-site sponsorship activity:* The activities in addition to the sponsorship agreement to promote a sponsoring company or brand to the audience inside the sponsored event and enabling brands to interact with consumers (Sneath et al. 2005; Close, Finney, Lacey and Sneath 2006; O'Keefe 2009)

*Uplause Crowd Games:* A specific tool for on-site sponsorship activation. These sponsored games are displayed in big events on a large video screen to encourage audience participation (making noise, or moving as a group)

*Event organizer:* An individual entity organizing an event and owning the right to sell sponsorship agreements to sponsors.

#### **1.5.** Structure of the Thesis

My thesis is structured in seven chapters beginning with an introduction overviewing my study. The theoretical discussion is divided in three parts: sponsorship, sponsorship leverage and theoretical framework. Sponsorship and sponsorship leverage are separated in two chapters, since sponsorship includes the sponsorship agreement between the company and the activity giving the sponsoring company the right to associate with the activity (Meenaghan 1991). Investments in sponsorship leverage are not included in the sponsorship agreement, but are an execution of utilizing the right to associate with the sponsored activity (Crimmins & Horn 1996). Therefore, sponsorship leverage is discussed separately, as on-site activities are a component of leverage. The chapter concentrating on sponsorship reviews sponsorship literature and introduces the characteristics of sponsorship including its definitions, objectives and effects. Chapter Three discusses the definitions and characteristics of sponsorship leverage, and more specifically on-site sponsorship as one of its forms. In chapter Four I construct a framework explaining the role of sponsorship leverage and on-site activities in the field of sponsorship as well as the relationships between the three groups. The framework is based on existing sponsorship research and works as a guideline for my empirical research.

Chapter Five focuses on discussing my paradigmatic approach and rationalizing my empirical research methods. In this chapter I also introduce my analytical approach and discuss methods of assessing validity, reliability and generalization in my work and in qualitative research in general. In the methods chapter I have also included a discussion of my case study of Uplause Crowd Games in Karjala Cup 2010. My analysis takes place in Chapter Six, analyzing and interpreting the interviews. Finally in Chapter Seven I present my conclusions, including managerial and academic contributions.

#### 2. SPONSORSHIP

#### 2.1. Characteristics of Sponsorship

According to existing research, sponsorship differs notably from advertising in consumers' views (eg. Meenaghan 2001). Sponsorship is seen as benefiting the society. It is seen as gentle and indirect and involving a disguised intent to persuade the message receiver (Meenaghan 2001). These characteristics lead to reducing consumers' defense mechanisms, which makes them more responsive. On the contrary, advertisement is seen as selfish and striving for advertiser's benefit, which does not produce any clear advantage for the society. It is seen as determined and forcing and this increases consumers' defense mechanisms. (Meenaghan 2001) In addition, sponsorship is not equivalent to advertising in other ways either, since for example, 30 seconds of sponsorship logo exposure does not correspond to 30 seconds of detailed brand information in advertisement (Cornwell 1995). The differences between advertising and sponsorship are presented in the table below.

| <b>Comparative Factors</b> | Sponsorship            | Advertising             |
|----------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Goodwill                   | Beneficial             | Selfish                 |
| Focus                      | Indirect/Subtle        | Direct/Forceful         |
| Intent to Persuade         | Disguised              | Overt                   |
| Defence Mechanisms         | Low State of Alertness | High State of Alertness |

Figure 1. Sponsorship / advertising -alternative communications compared (Meenaghan 2001)

On the other hand, sponsorship differs from corporate philanthropy as well, despite of the shared characteristic of corporate "giving". As defined by Polonsky and Speed (2001), corporate giving can be seen as a generating competitive resource by associating the company with the recipient. In altruistic giving, the company does not make use of this resource, but in

strategic giving the company uses the association to achieve promotional goals. Corporate philanthropy is traditionally defined as altruistic giving without an expectation of a tied benefit. In its purest form, corporate philanthropy does not have impacts on consumers' behaviors or attitudes. Sponsorship, instead, is first and foremost a commercial activity. Sponsorship aims to utilize the association between the sponsored activity and the sponsoring company to gain favorable image, goodwill and awareness and several other features (Polonsky & Speed 2001). The table below summarizes the similarities and differences between sponsorship and corporate philanthropy.

| Activity            | Corporate                             | Sponsorship  |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
|                     | Philanthropy                          |  |
| Funding             | Fixed                                 | Fixed  |
| Resources           | None                                  | Association  |
| Use of resources    | No commercial use made of association | Association is used in attempt to change customer attitudes, behavioural intentions and behaviours |
| Key market outcomes | None                                  | Attitudes (positioning), behavioural intentions (loyalty and preference) and behaviours (sales)    |
| Sales impact        | None                                  | Indirect sales impact  |
| Revenue flows       | None                                  | Exclusively to the sponsor   |

Figure 2. Differences between sponsorship and corporate philanthropy (modified from Polonsky & Speed 2001)

Because of the fundamental differences between sponsorship and advertising, as well as between sponsorship and philanthropy, sponsorship has to be considered as its own field of marketing. Establishing sponsorship's role in marketing communication was, indeed, the interest of academics during the early stages of sponsorship research (e.g. Meenaghan 1983, 1991) and later there has formed a rather wide academic research stream around sponsorship.

Even though sponsorship has been in academics' interest for decades, researchers still have not reached consensus of an exact definition for sponsorship (Walliser 2003). Most journal articles refer to the following three definitions. The most common definition is Meenaghan's (1991, 36) definition: "... an investment, in cash or kind, in an activity, in return for access to the exploitable commercial potential associated with that activity." Tripodi (2001) gives a more detailed definition for sports sponsorship: "provision of assistance by a commercial organisation (sponsor), in cash or kind, to a sports property (sponsee), in exchange for the rights to be associated with that sports property for the purpose of gaining commercial and economic advantage." On the other hand, Cornwell (1995, 15) defines sponsorship-linked marketing in broader terms: "the orchestration and implementation of marketing activities for the purpose of building and communicating an association to a sponsorship". As seen from the definitions above, a common factor for sponsorship definitions is that sponsorship gives the sponsoring company the possibility to utilize favorable associations related to the sponsored activity and capitalize on them. In my work I lean on Meenaghan's (1991) definition of sponsorship. Meenaghan's definition takes into account agreements between a sponsoring company and any sponsored activity, whereas Tripodi limits sponsorship only to sporting events. My empirical research takes place in the context of ice hockey, but my theoretical approach takes into account all targets of sponsorship. However, as an exception, I exclude broadcast sponsorship from sponsorship, since companies may imply broadcast sponsorship without actually paying a sponsorship fee (Walliser 2003). In my definition, sponsorship has to involve a direct investment in the sponsored activity. On the other hand, Cornwell's (1995) definition of sponsorship is too broad in my opinion, since it includes also sponsorship leverage activities. I consider sponsorship and sponsorship leverage separately,

since sponsorship agreements usually do not include any leverage activities, but the sponsoring company buys the right to execute them as additional investments. Thus, Meenaghan's (1991) definition meets my own approach and is the most appropriate for my thesis.

It is acknowledged that sponsoring sports, events and the arts really is an established communication tool in the marketing-mix and it is considered as a practical method in building brand awareness, brand image and corporate image (e.g. Jaivagi et al. 1994, Quester 1997), as well as influencing consumer response (Meenaghan 2001, Lachowetz et al. 2002). Sponsorship is often a strategic choice for companies. According to the qualitative study by Amis (1999), a connective factor of successful sponsors is that these companies have developed their sponsorship know-how and taken sponsorship as a fixed part of their marketing strategy. On the other hand, the firms that have executed their sponsorship campaigns only as individual activities resulting from available resources or special interests of top management, have at best succeeded only temporarily (Amis 1999). Based on sponsorship articles, Walliser (2003) sums up that sponsorship is a multi-function communication tool, which seems to work best as a part of integrated marketing strategy. Sponsorship can actually be directed at any stakeholder group of the sponsoring company: consumers, members of distribution channel, investors, financial institutes, societies or employees, according to the objectives of the sponsoring firm (Gardner & Schuman 1988). However, I limit my own study to cover primarily sponsorship activities focusing on consumers.

One generally recognized characteristic of sponsorship is that sponsorship needs articulation via other marketing activities to be effective (e.g. Crimmins & Horn, 1996). In other words, sponsorship needs leverage, i.e. it has to be supported with additional investments in advertisement, sales promotion, entertainment for customers, public relations, or any other

communication vehicle. It has been suggested that a sponsoring firm has to use roughly at least as much money on sponsorship leverage as in the sponsorship agreement itself to maximize the effects (Meenaghan 1998b). Sponsorship leverage is an ever increasing topic in sponsorship research and I discuss it in more detail in Chapter Three.

Sponsorship is seen to have such unique features as a marketing tool that it has encouraged academics to aim at explaining its impact process on consumers. Therefore, some scholars have, in particular, aimed at opening the "black box" of sponsorship's impact mechanisms (e.g. Meenaghan 2001; Cornwell et al. 2005). In my work I refer to Meenaghan's (2001) analysis of sponsorship's impact process which, to my knowledge, is the most comprehensive in the academic literature. Meenaghan (2001) defines four principles to clarify the impact of sponsorship: 1) goodwill, 2) image transfer process, 3) fan involvement and 4) consumer response. In the following I discuss all these sectors in detail and utilize this knowledge in creating my framework in Chapter Four.

#### **Sponsorship Creates Goodwill**

Sponsorship communication is received kindly, since it is perceived to benefit the sponsored activity and the message is subtle. According to Meenaghan's (2001) focus-group interviews goodwill towards sponsorship exists at three levels of aggregation: sponsorship at generic level (as an activity), category level (sports, music festivals, etc.), and individual level (e.g., a basketball team or an athlete). The intensity of goodwill is noted to vary by level of aggregation. At generic level sponsorship is seen as benefiting society, i.e., sponsorship is considered as a generally "good idea" but it is not touching or engaging an individual consumer in a deep, meaningful way. At categorical level (i.e. in the case of sports or arts, or other category), goodwill effects are felt more intensely by consumers which means that the

selection of sponsored activity matters, since consumers' attitudes towards different activities vary. For example, sponsorship of social causes encourages generally greater goodwill than sponsorship of mass arts, since consumers' personal orientation towards the category is stronger. However, the goodwill effect of sponsorship is perceived to be greatest at the individual activities level. Consumers are most involved with the sponsored activity at this level, where the real fans exist. For example, a fan of a certain football team can think that sponsoring football is a good thing in general but he/she may feel deep goodwill only towards the sponsors of his/her own favorite football team. (Meenaghan 2001)

A positive emotional orientation towards an activity reflects also to the sponsor, since consumers perceive that sponsor is benefiting the activity. This means that goodwill is gained through the sponsorship activities and consumers are the evaluators. To maximize the benefits, a sponsor has to be portrayed as a "good sponsor," whose relationship with the activity is beneficial for the activity. Goodwill is not something a sponsor can buy, it has to be earned. A sponsor has a commercial agreement with the activity owner, but at the same time a sponsor silently attempts to fulfill the expectations and needs of the consumers. (Meenaghan 2001) The figure below illustrates the goodwill effect between consumers and sponsor as well as the engagement between consumers and activity.

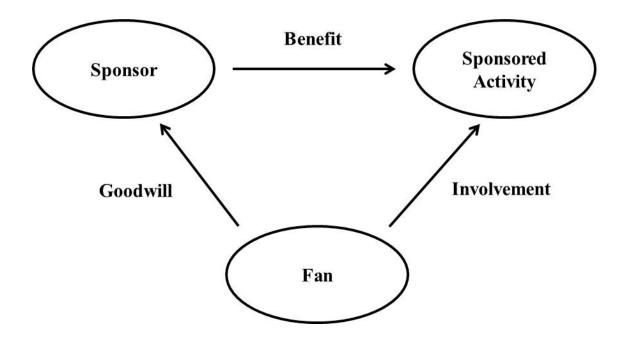


Figure 3. Goodwill effects and consumer involvement (Meenaghan 2001)

#### **Sponsorship Transfers Image**

According to Cornwell et al.'s (2005) research on management practices, brand managers are not eager to present a new brand via sponsorship, but rather use sponsorship as a tool to recall existing brands in customers' minds. Thus, sponsorship can be seen in marketing as a component of memory reactivation. According to Cornwell et al. (2006), sponsorship can be divided into two categories according to how sponsor and sponsored activity are related. Some of the sponsorship relations include self-evident connection between the parties (e.g. running shoes and running event) but in some cases this relationship is not logical (e.g. financial services and music festival). In the latter case, the marketer has a particular responsibility to actively articulate this relationship to enhance the results of sponsorship. (Cornwell et al. 2006) This relationship is generally defined in sponsorship as congruency between sponsoring firm and sponsored activity and it has been acknowledged to have positive effects on the results of sponsorship (e.g. Meenaghan 2001; Cornwell et al. 2005). According to the congruency theory, memory and recall are affected by similarity and cohesion between the factors (Cornwell et al. 2005). For example, a running shoe brand sponsoring a running event is seen as appropriate and easily memorable. Congruency is seen to be especially important in building brand image (Cornwell et al. 2005). Meenaghan (2001) defines congruency in sponsorship in the following way: *"The central factor in determining perceptions of congruence is the extent to which consumers perceive a logical connection between both parties to the relationship (i.e., sponsor and sponsored activity)."* 

Cornwell (2005) illustrates the positive image effects created by congruency between sponsor and sponsored activity according to Heider's (1958) balance theory. For example, consumers may have a positive attitude towards a charity event but negative attitude towards a company. When these two entities are combined through sponsorship relation, imbalance is created. This imbalance may result in changing meanings in consumer's mind. Because of the sponsorship link, a consumer's attitude towards the company may change in a more positive direction due to the favorable support for the charity event. However, in a badly executed sponsorship relationship, this meaning may change in the opposite direction when consumer's attitudes towards the charity event change negatively. Cornwell et al. (2005) base their image transfer theory largely on McCracken's (1989) celebrity endorsement process, according to which a positive attitude towards a celebrity is likely to transfer to the brand involved. In sponsorship theory, celebrity is replaced by sponsored activity or sponsored person. According to studies, this theory applies well in sponsorship. For example, sponsors (Tacobell, Coca-Cola and Gatorade) of X-Games, an event consisting of new extreme sports with a young fanbase, gained remarkable rejuvenation of brand images. (Cornwell et al. 2005)

Meenaghan (2001) finds image transfer in sponsorship at two different levels: 1) image at the sponsorship category level, and 2) image at the sponsored activity level. At the category level, the choice of sponsored category becomes crucial. Different categories, (i.e. sports, arts,

social causes, etc.) transfer different image values to the sponsor. As Meenaghan (2001) illustrates, for example, highbrow arts, such as classical music or ballet transfer sophisticated and elite image values. On the other hand, extreme sports transfer very different image values. At the activity level, Meenaghan's focus group interviews have revealed that each sponsored activity has its own personality and, thus, its image transfers from the activity to the sponsor (or in some cases vice versa). Thus, after choosing the appropriate category, the sponsor has to choose the appropriate activity inside the category. (Meenaghan 2001)

#### The Concept of Fan Involvement

According to the existing sponsorship literature, sponsorship has the biggest influence on the most active followers of the activity, i.e. fans (e.g. Meenaghan 2001; Mcdonald 1991). Fan involvement has been researched a lot in sociologic and sports literature, but it has been broadened in the marketing and sponsorship context as well. Fan involvement means the extent to which fans identify, motivate, commit and engage with an activity. Fan involvement partly explains why sponsorship differs from advertisement so much. (Meenaghan 2001) According to Meenaghan's (1994) focus-group interviews, sponsorship is attached to an emotional tie between the fan and activity. Thus, the sponsor creates fragile, but rewarding relationship to the activity followers and this enables the creation of goodwill and image effects discussed above. Meenaghan's (1994) research suggests also that the most engaged fans of an activity are also the most aware of the sponsor of the activity. In other words, they are most aware of the investments made by the sponsor and how it benefits the activity. Most engaged fans have also formed the clearest image of the activity itself and transfer these image values to the sponsor as well (Meenaghan 2001). For this reason, the most engaged fans' attitudes towards the sponsor are seen to be most positive (Meenaghan 1994; Mcdonald 1991).

#### **Sponsorship Effects Process**

As described above, according to Meenaghan (2001), sponsorship is able to gain favorable consumer response in at least five different forms: 1) awareness, 2) favorable disposition, 3) transfer of image values, 4) intent to purchase, and 5) actual purchase. The two factors affecting the type of realized response are intensity of contingent goodwill and intensity of fan involvement. Contingent goodwill here means that "goodwill is earned by the total behavior of the sponsor toward all aspects of the sponsored activity and this is registered and judged by the fans of that activity" (Meenaghan 2001). Higher levels of goodwill, as well as more intensive fan involvement, are both seen to lead towards more specific goals of sponsorship, finally meaning actual purchase of sponsor's products.

The process that leads to consumer response is seen to be formed by three filters: a generic filter, a category filter and individual activity. These refer to the levels on which sponsorship is perceived to benefit the society. As explained earlier, on a generic level, sponsorship is seen only as a "generally good thing," whereas on a category level the positive attitudes are already felt more intensely. However, the most positive effects leading to actual response are seen to occur on the individual activity level only.

Through the filters described above, sponsor communication is seen to be able to achieve consumer response. The form of actual response is shaped by the intensity of goodwill and the intensity of fan involvement. Meenaghan (2001) has condensed the sponsorship effects process in the figure below. I use this figure as the starting point of forming a framework for my own research.

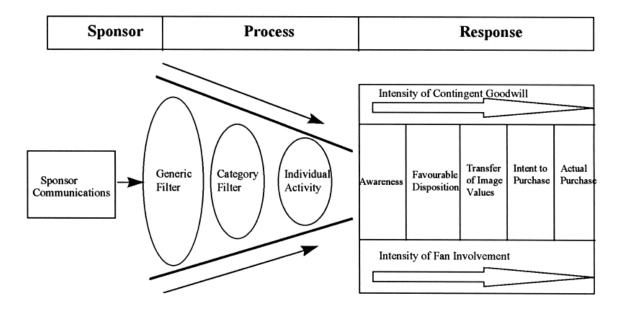


Figure 4. Modeling the sponsorship effects process (Meenaghan 2001)

#### 2.2. Sponsorship Research Review

Early stages of sponsorship research were focused on establishing the role of sponsorship in marketing communication (e.g. Meenaghan 1983, 1991) and on studying how big companies plan, execute and measure event sponsorship (e.g. Abratt, Clayton, Pitt, 1987; Crowley, 1991; Shanklin & Kiania, 1992). In the latter 1990's studies have concentrated more on illustrating the effects of sponsorship on consumer behavior, (Gwinner 1997; Johan & Pham, 1999; McDaniel 1999) and in the early 2000's on the direct impact between sponsorship and stock value (e.g. Cornwell et al. 2001, Pruitt et al. 2004, Clark, John M. et al. 2009, Cornwell et al. 2005).

Cornwell and Maignan (1998), as well as Walliser (2003) divide sponsorship research in five major divisions: 1) nature of sponsorship, 2) managerial aspects of sponsorship, 3) measurement of sponsorship effects, 4) strategic use of sponsorship, and 5) legal and ethical

considerations in sponsorship. My study belongs to the division of the strategic use of sponsorship, since sponsorship leverage is, after all, a strategic choice of a sponsoring company. In my research I base my theories much on Meenaghan's and Cornwell's studies that have concentrated on the strategic use of sponsorship. To give understanding of the research streams of sponsorship, I open up these five divisions in this chapter. The purpose of this chapter is to give the reader insight into sponsorship literature and its evolution to ensure deeper understanding of sponsorship context.

#### **Nature of Sponsorship**

As already mentioned, sponsorship research was launched in the mid-1980s, (Cornwell & Maignan 1998) and the main interest was to establish the role of sponsorship in marketing communications. The very first articles aimed at describing the development of sponsorship in a given industry or country (e.g. Asimakopoulos 1993 and Meerabeau et al. 1991). These studies have been said to have been necessary to establish sponsorship as a research topic but, on the other hand, they have been criticized for showing an increase in sponsorship activity without providing explanations for it. In addition to describing sponsorship development, scholars have been enthusiastic in finding an appropriate definition for sponsorship phenomenon. As I already presented in the earlier chapter, sponsorship has several competing definitions, the early ones being Meenaghan's (1983), Gardner & Schuman's (1988) and Cornwell's (1995) definitions. Despite the differences, sponsorship definitions strongly agree that sponsorship includes an exchange between the sponsoring company and the sponsored activity giving the sponsoring company the right to associate itself with the sponsored activity. The third important part of the research stream is differentiating sponsorship from other promotional communications. For example, differentiating from advertising (e.g. Meenaghan 1983), cause related marketing (Varadarajan & Menon 1988) and event marketing (Cornwell

1995) have been important steps in sponsorship literature. This literature stream has been central especially in the early stage of sponsorship research but afterwards the interest of scholars has been addressed to other topics. (Cornwell & Maignan 1998)

#### **Managerial Aspects of Sponsorship**

Cornwell and Maignan (1998) further divide the studies concentrating on managerial aspects of sponsorship into five sections: 1) objectives and motivations, 2) constituency and audience, 3) organizational structure, 4) personnel requirements, and 5) budgeting. On the other hand, Walliser (2003) divides the research stream according to the managerial process of sponsorship, including objective setting, organizing and executing sponsorship and controlling sponsorship outcomes. In my study I use Walliser's (2003) categorization due to its process-related logic. First of all, sponsorship objects have been of interests to academics. Objective setting has been found out to be dependent on several factors, such as sponsorship area, sponsor industry and company size (Copeland et al. 1996). Sponsorship organization, instead, has been studied mainly to gain understanding of the decision making within the sponsor company. Familiarity and experience with sponsorship have been seen to have an impact upon the level of decision making, and, for example, Quester et al. (1998) found American companies to make sponsorship decisions more routinely by middle management than Australian companies. Controlling sponsorship has also aroused interest and it has been studied from two points of view. First, it has been studied in descriptive manners by tracking the extent and quality of sponsoring companies' controlling efforts (e.g. Thwaites et al. 1998) and, on the other hand, more analytically by suggesting methods and instruments for sponsorship evaluation. (Walliser 2003)

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#### **Measurement of Sponsorship Effects**

In quantitative terms the largest proportion of sponsorship studies have concentrated on the measurement of sponsorship impacts (Walliser 2003). Impacts are usually divided by awareness, image, purchase intentions and other impacts; and based on Walliser's (2003) analysis awareness has been studied most. The approaches in awareness measurement have included the extent the consumers notice sponsors (e.g. Easton & Mackie 1998); factors influencing sponsor recall (e.g. Cornwell et al. 1997); and analyzing recall in consumers' minds (e.g. Johan & Pham 1999). In image research, the focus has not been so much on image effects themselves but rather on image transfer in conjunction with awareness and purchase objectives. Each sponsorship activity is seen to have specific image values (Meenaghan & Shipley 1999) which can be transferred to external or internal audiences (Grimes & Meenaghan 1998). (Walliser 2003)

The most recent studies of measuring sponsorship effects have been concentrated on the impacts of sponsorship on the financial value of sponsoring firm. These studies are mostly done as event studies and they suggest that sponsorship can increase the financial value of the sponsoring company (e.g. Miyazaki & Morgan 2001). For example, Clark et al. (2009) found that title sponsorship announcements in NASCAR show evidence of increases in share prices.

#### Strategic Use of Sponsorship

Research into the strategic use of sponsorship can be divided into two categories: strategies of sponsorship and counter-strategies (ambushing). From a strategic point of view, companies that have developed their sponsorship competently and made it an intrinsic part of their overall marketing strategy are the most successful in sponsorship (Amis et al. 1999). In addition sponsors are recommended to aim at differentiating their sponsorship projects to

differentiate themselves from their competitors. (Walliser 2003) On the other hand, counterstrategies, i.e. ambush marketing, have been under research. For example, Meenaghan (1994; 1998a) has identified several types of ambush strategies, such as broadcast sponsorship or sponsorship of subcategories. These aim at gaining the benefits of sponsorship without actually sponsoring the activity itself and, thus, avoid paying the sponsorship fee for the activity. Research has also been interested in how right holders are able to counter ambushing (e.g. Payne 1998).

#### Legal and Ethical Considerations in Sponsorship

Legal and ethical issues have been in the minority in sponsorship research but it is worth mentioning as a research stream. Articles can be divided into the categories of legal questions (e.g. taxation of sponsorship fees), the use of sponsorship for promoting socially undesirable products, and the power of sponsors over the sponsored activity. (Cornwell and Maignan 1998)

Despite of the long tradition of sponsorship research, the field has become silent during the last few years as can be seen from the literature review above. Research seems to have gotten saturated during the early years of 2000s and new top class journal articles have been rare in recent years. Pioneers of sponsorship research, such as Cornwell and Meenaghan have become silent and no new big names have emerged. However, sponsorship discussion still takes place in the journals which are specialized in sponsorship research, the most important being Journal of Sponsorship and International Journal of Sports Marketing & Sponsorship. These journals have brought up the discussion of the importance of creating social interaction between sponsor and audience, and identified a need for innovating new sponsorship

activation tools (e.g. Barez et al. 2007; Jackson 2009). My study fulfills this trend by focusing on a specific field of sponsorship leverage.

#### **3. SPONSORSHIP LEVERAGE**

As described in the previous chapter, sponsorship is an agreement between the sponsoring firm and a sponsored activity, allowing the sponsor to build an association with the sponsored activity. The sponsorship agreement does not typically include other sponsorship communication than the right to build the association. However, to maximize the favorable effects of sponsorship, the sponsor has to communicate the association in other ways (e.g. Cornwell et al. 2001). As further defined below, this communication is called sponsorship leverage. Investments in sponsorship leverage are additional investments to the sponsoring fee and are not included in the sponsorship agreement. Thus, sponsorship and sponsorship leverage have to be considered separately, even though they are tightly linked. In this chapter I discuss sponsorship leverage and concentrate on one of its forms, on-site activities.

#### 3.1. Characteristics of Sponsorship Leverage

It has long been established in academic research that sponsorship achieves better results when used with other communication tools rather than in isolation (Walliser 2003). In other words, this is called sponsorship leverage. As noted earlier, Cornwell (1995, 15) defines sponsorship-linked marketing as: *"the orchestration and implementation of marketing activities for the purpose of building and communicating an association to a sponsorship"*. Cornwell et al. (2005) specify that this orchestration emphasizes that the communication goals

of sponsorship are realized only through good management and efficient leverage on the sponsorship investment. Crimmins and Horn (1996) do not use the term leverage, but they find it essentially important to articulate sponsorship through advertising, promotion or other activities to maximize the effects of sponsorship. Polonsky & Speed (2001) use the term leverage while arguing the rights of the sponsor: "Sponsors have acquired the right to an association with the recipient and, subject only to the terms of the sponsorship agreement, may use this right in pursuit of any objective as well as leverage it through any activity they choose to use." Papadimitrou (2009) adds that to gain returns on investments, sponsorship activation through other elements of the company's communication mix is necessary. Based on the common factors in the discussions above, I define sponsorship leverage parallel to Crimmins and Horn (1996) as follows: Sponsorship leverage is articulation of sponsorship through advertising, promotion or other activities to maximize the effects of sponsorship.

Cornwell et al. (2001) complete the discussion above by stating that a sponsorship agreement allows a sponsor to identify with the sponsored event but it is not the meaningful communication component itself. Rather are the other communication tools which are used in leveraging the sponsorship agreement. Sponsorship literature states that companies actually execute sponsorship leverage (e.g. Crimmins & Horn 1996; Thwaites et al. 1998; Quester & Thompson 2001; Cornwell et al. 2001). Several studies also agree that sponsorship leverage provides the sponsor with better results but, still, scholars are not unanimous about the effects of leverage on more a detailed level. For example, Stipp and Schiavone (1996) and Quester et al. (2001) have found leverage to enhance brand awareness and to create a positive brand image, whereas Cornwell et al. (2001), found leverage to differentiate a brand from competitors and add financial value to the firm. In addition to the different views of effects, the scholars have not been able to identify what ratio between sponsorship fee and leverage investments would be the most profitable, or even what ratio is the most frequently used. Thwaites et al. (1998) provided statistics which showed that 37% of sponsors allocate no money on leverage, 44% invest half of the sponsorship fee in leverage, 12% invested 51 to 100 percent of sponsorship fee in leverage, 5% invested double and only 2% of the firms spent more than double of the sponsorship fee in leveraging activities. However, Meenaghan (1998b) suggests that the industry norm to fully utilize sponsorship is 100% leverage investment compared to the sponsorship fee. In other words, a leverage to sponsorship fee – ratio of 1:1 is recommended by Meenaghan. On the contrary, Cornwell et al. (2001) categorized sponsors in their study according to the leverage to sponsorship fee –ratios of "1:1 or less", "2:1", "3:1", "4:1" and "5:1 or greater". They based their categorization on business press discussions of typical leverage to be 1.5:1. However, at the same time they noted that an IEG Sponsorship Report (1998) suggested that the ideal range varies between 0:1 and 4:1. Despite the inconsistent ratios debated, it is clear that leverage is seen to be important and overrunning the amount of sponsorship investment with investments in leverage is not exceptional.

As described in Chapter 2, sponsors aim to increase brand awareness, create favorable disposition towards the brand, transfer a positive image and boost purchase intentions. To succeed in these goals, brands have to be correctly identified as sponsors of the activity. In other words, sponsors have an opportunity to associate themselves with the activity in consumers' minds. The quality of this opportunity is usually measured in terms of the total amount of exposure generated through media coverage of the event, including the appearance of the brand name or logo on television, the extent of press coverage and the mentioning of the sponsor in broadcasting media. In addition to the naturally occurring media coverage (e.g, TV-time of a logo on player's shirt), the number of times a consumer is exposed to a message can be greatly enhanced through sponsorship leverage. By using sponsorship leverage, the

sponsor decreases the risks included in the naturally occurring media coverage and takes an active role in communicating the sponsorship relation. (Barez et al. 2007)

As noted by Cornwell (2001), a sponsoring company may aim to differentiate from competitors by sponsorship. Amis et al. (1999) also state that sponsorship may lead to differentiation, but propose that to become a potential source of competitive advantage and a distinctive competence, sponsorship "*must meet three conditions: offer something of value to customers; differentiate the sponsor from its competition; and have the ability to extend (via leveraging) to a number of new opportunities.*" This statement, again, highlights the importance of leverage in successful sponsorship. Papadimitrou (2009), in turn, puts it another way by stating that "*a lack of leveraging activities will equate sponsorship to philanthropy that aims at no other return than the benefactor's satisfaction from assisting a beneficiary in need.*" Thus, sponsorship leverage is required to meet the definitions of sponsorship. To add one more aspect for leverage, Farrelly et al. (1997) note that in evaluating sponsorship proposals, the ability to complement a sponsorship agreement with additional communication can be an important and determining factor for sponsoring companies.

Sponsorship leverage occurs in many forms. Crimmins & Horn (1996) list such communication methods as advertising, promotion, public relations, direct marketing, merchandising and packaging as means of leverage. Cornwell et al. (2001) add here client entertainment and Quester & Thompson (2001) complete the list with direct mail, competitions and hospitality. Barez et al. (2007) combine all activities which take place in the sponsored event itself as on-site communications. I define these on-site communications as on-site activities, since they take an active role in the events, as I will describe in the following chapter. Barez et al. (2007) illustrate different kinds of sponsorship leverage methods by the following examples:

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*Guinness* was successful in establishing an emotional bond with the fans in the 1999 Rugby World Cup by providing free tickets to competitions and by contributing to the event experience through the placement of interesting and fun stories in the media. In addition, they increased consumption in the target market by providing rugby related incentives, such as Guinness foam hats and inflatable armchairs as a reward for purchase. Adding broadcast sponsorship to these activities, Guinness achieved 94% awareness as a sponsor of the Rugby World Cup, one of the highest ratings recorded in sports.

*Gatorade* provided one of its biggest retailers with the opportunity to use the official NASCAR Daytona 500 pace car for consumer promotions to gain better placement and additional point-of-purchase display and therefore stimulating product trial. (IEG, 2000)

*Seiko* was able to increase its wristwatches' perceived superiority over competitors from 5 to 20 percent points after advertising their accuracy and reliability by articulating the company's position as the official timer in the 1992 Olympics. (Crimmins and Horn 1996)

As the examples indicate, sponsorship leverage can take very innovative forms. However, traditional mass media seems to be a preferred leverage channel. Polonsky & Speed (2001) argue that advertising and sales promotion are the most commonly used means of sponsorship leverage. They suggest that advertising contributes more to brand awareness, whereas sales promotion is more likely to impact to consumer behavior. Papadimitrou (2009) refers to Arthur et al. (1998) while offering seven key methods for leveraging sponsorship. The methods, in addition to advertising and sales promotion, are public relations, client

entertainment, on-site activities, employee motivation and product sampling. However, sponsorship leverage may take so many forms, some of them so innovative that they are difficult to even categorize, that I find it unnecessary to try to identify them all systematically. In my work, I am satisfied with only roughly classifying leverage activities into advertising, sales promotion, public relations (PR), on-site activities and other activities. My categorization is presented in the figure below, which I will later fulfill with categories of on-site activities.

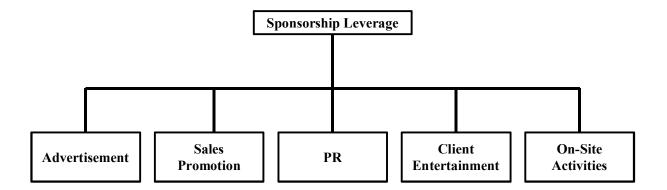


Figure 5. Categories of sponsorship leverage

To conclude, sponsorship leverage is an additional investment for sponsoring company to articulate the existing sponsorship agreement to the target group. Leveraging may aim to build or improve the perceived linkage between the sponsor and sponsored activity, leading to brand awareness, image transfer, purchase intentions or other favorable outcomes. Sponsorship leverage occurs in various different forms and sponsors continuously try to find new, innovative ways of leverage. Grohs et al.'s (2004) empirical study suggests that one important factor in effective (sports) sponsorship is to "make sure that leveraging the sponsorship is possible close to the event". The closest a sponsor can get is, of course, the

sponsored event itself. On-site activities are a form of leverage, which enables customers to interact with the sponsoring company or brand (Barez 2007). On-site activities are discussed more in the following chapter.

#### 3.2. On-Site Sponsorship Activities

Event marketing has long been recognized as an important component in the promotion mix (e.g. Cornwell & Maignan 1998) Events enable companies to have face-to-face contact with their target audience. As Sneath et al. (2005) put it, "a major difference between marketing with an event and many other communication methods is that events offer opportunities for personal interaction with products." Thus, event marketing can be seen as a unique opportunity to integrate a company's other marketing communication activities (e.g. advertising, PR, direct marketing) with a hands-on experience that may be executed at an event (Sneath et al. 2005). In other words, event marketing enables brands to interact with customers. It is well established in academic discourse that event sponsorship leads to favorable perceptions of a sponsoring firm and its brands. Most importantly, event marketing is able to positively change, or at least alter, consumers' perceptions and behavior towards a brand (Sneath et al. 2005). However, there is disagreement between the scholars about the definition of event marketing. As Wohlfeil and Vhelan (2005) describe, the term event marketing has been used extensively to describe event marketing as 1) marketing events as products, 2) marketing at events with sales promotions, or 3) marketing at events through sponsorship agreement. Cornwell & Maignan (1998) found the term event marketing to be used in two meanings: marketing of events and marketing with events. Drengner et al. (2008) make a clear distinction here by defining event marketing as events organized by the companies themselves to "disseminate a company's marketing messages by involving the

target groups in experiential activities". Thus, Drengner et al. (2008) separate event marketing from event sponsorship, since in event sponsorship the event organizer is an independent entity which usually has several sponsors. According to their definition, event marketing is organized by the company itself to meet its target group. I find Dregner et al.'s (2008) specification useful and concentrate on event sponsorship in my study.

Dregner et al. (2008) refer to Mau, Silberer and Weihe (2006) while suggesting that event sponsorship is subject to the restrictions set by event organizer. In addition, Dregner et al. (2008) refer to Lardinoit and Derbaix (2001) while suggesting that in event sponsorship the contact period with the target group is short and spectators do not pay much attention to the sponsor's message. Thus, Dregner et al. (2008) conclude that event sponsorship is not suitable for creating social interaction between the target group and the sponsoring company. I strongly disagree with this conclusion and my work aims to prove this claim wrong. There are already existing academic suggestions that event sponsorship is able to create interaction between companies and an audience. For example, Barez (2007) clarifies that sponsors enhance motivation to process brand information by contributing to the event experience "by interacting with the activity follower, and by providing activity related incentives as a reward for participation in promotions." According to Barez (2007) the most frequently utilized vehicles to enhance motivation, generate brand awareness, promote brand images, and even stimulate product trials are on-site communication and sales promotions at events. As I defined above, I combine all the sponsor's marketing efforts inside the event under the term on-site sponsorship activities.

The most important feature in on-site activities is the possibility of enabling brands to interact with consumers and to stimulate product trials (Sneath et al. 2005). In their study, Sneath et al. (2005) state that experience with sponsor's products during an event may have an even greater influence on an audience's attitude and brand preference than association with other

event-related communications, such as naming rights, signage, etc. Their findings also indicate that personal interaction with sponsor's products during the event appears to enhance the brand's personality, which is a desirable feature in equity building. Close et al. (2006) argue that on-site activities enable spectators to be active members in events by participating in activities and being creative. They suggest that this offers the sponsoring company an opportunity to build social interaction between the participants and the company. This feature has only lately been recognized in academic research and the suitable activity vehicles are just emerging. Barez et al. (2007) give an insightful example of a successful on-site activity in a sports event:

> *America West Airlines* provided water coolers with cold free drinking water at every hole at the PGA Golf Tournament in Phoenix. This was a very welcome service for the fans, given the high temperatures during the event. This on-site sponsorship activity is suggested to be the key factor why America West Airlines achieved higher brand awareness levels than competing sponsors.

As can be concluded from the example, on-site activities tend to occur in very different and innovative forms. Thus, it is even more difficult to categorize different kinds of on-site activity forms than sponsorship leverage forms in general. However, based on the academic discussions presented above, I have built a definition for on-site sponsorship activities as follows: *The activities in excess of the sponsorship agreement to promote sponsoring company or brand to the audience inside the sponsored event and enabling the sponsoring company or brand to interact with consumers.* As was the case with sponsorship leverage activities, there is no reason (or even possibility) for listing all the possible on-site activities but one objective of my empirical study is to identify the main categories. As I brought up while discussing my research gap in Chapter 1.2, academic sponsorship literature has been mostly satisfied with just stating the role of leverage in sponsorship but there are no deeper

investigations of different forms of leverage. This is especially the case with on-site activities and my work aims to fill the gap by defining the concept of on-site activities, identifying its key forms and gaining understanding of its meanings for event stakeholders.

Sneath et al. (2005) highlight that event sponsorship should be viewed as an important component of an Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) strategy, not just as a standalone tool. This applies to on-site activities as well: they have to be seen as one part of sponsorship-linked marketing, which in turn is part of the communication strategy. According to Choi et al. (2006) the most successful sponsors are the ones who know how to create an emotional and cultural interaction between the sponsor and audience. The intention to interact emotionally and culturally with people has to take place already in a marketing strategy if interaction is wanted to realize systematically. O'Keefe et al. (2009) advice marketing practitioners to aim at creating something unique or different in order to make their company or brand stand out among all other attractions at an event. An appropriate tool for this objective may be on-site activities.

One of the on-site activity forms already acknowledged in academic research is sharing product trials and free gifts (e.g. Choi et al. 2006). Findings in a 2006 study by Choi et al. indicate that people in events were actually expecting and hoping for the sponsors to share free trials. This brings up the questions of what is meaningful for the audience in on-site sponsorship activities, and do the spectators perceive themselves to be benefiting from the sponsors' activities. As part of my empirical study, I aim to gain an understanding of how spectators perceive the benefit of on-site sponsorship activities.

In summary, on-site sponsorship activities are a component of sponsorship leverage that takes place at the sponsored event itself. The special feature and advantage of on-site activities is that they enable building interaction between the event audience and the sponsoring company. Free samples are one of many effective forms of on-site interaction but various other forms, some being very innovative, may occur. One central purpose of my empirical study is to identify the role of newly innovated Uplause Crowd Games as a sponsorship leverage tool and, more specifically, as an on-site sponsorship tool.

Now, after discussing the characteristics of sponsorship, as well as defining sponsorship leverage and on-site activities, I move on to building a theoretical framework to guideline my empirical study.

# 4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In qualitative research, the theory that we start with is, according to Silverman (2006) "an interpretive framework: a set of concepts that offer a way of looking at the research phenomena." This means that the role of theory in research is to define the central concepts that enable an analytical approach and serve as a guideline for the researcher during the research process. As Alasuutari (1996, 376) puts it "A theory [as a frame] - does not present a prediction of the results; it only suggests a particular, explicitly defined framework within which the details of a case and the data can be assessed" Thus, the framework does not limit the study but rather helps it to be focused and cohesive. From constructivist point of view knowledge is created locally through mutual understanding. The meaning of a theoretical framework here is to present a general viewpoint which applies to multiple cases to guide the study but the object of a study itself is a particular case, where phenomena can only be given local explanations (Alasuutari 1996). In this chapter I develop a theoretical framework to guide my study. The framework is based on the existing academic knowledge of sponsorship,

sponsorship leverage and on-site activities. The starting point of my framework is based on Meenaghan's (2001) framework of sponsorship effects process.

As I noted earlier, Meenaghan's (2001) framework of the sponsorship effects process is, to my knowledge, the most comprehensive in academic discourse. Thus, I base my framework development on his work. However, the drawback of his framework is that he does not acknowledge, or at least present, the relationship between sponsorship leverage and consumer response. As I have presented in earlier chapters, sponsorship leverage is widely acknowledged to have a great impact on sponsorship effectiveness. Thus, I find it important to include sponsorship leverage in the effects framework. And considering my study approach, I focus on sponsorship leverage, namely on-site activities. In spite of my rather narrow focus, I find it essential to consider sponsorship leverage in the context of entire sponsorship effects processes. My framework consists of three key components: 1) strategy, 2) process, and 3) response. Here I discuss all components in detail.

### Strategy

As suggested in academic research, sponsorship is an established component of a marketing mix (e.g. Cornwell & Maignan 1998, Walliser 2003) and it should be integrated in a company's marketing strategy (Amis 1999). Sponsorship objectives should already be determined in a marketing strategy and these objectives should be the factors that shape the whole sponsorship process. Thus, I have changed this part of the process to be "strategy", instead of "sponsor," as it was in Meenaghan's original (2001) model. The sponsoring company should define which consumer response elements it wants to improve and what target group it is focusing on. After carefully defining these factors the company may move on to selecting the most appropriate target activity. As discussed in Chapter Two, such factors

as congruency between the sponsoring company and a target activity, possibilities for differentiation, and consumers' attitudes towards the target activity have to be considered when choosing the activity. Much of the successful sponsorship is already determined by the planning process of sponsorship. After choosing the activity, the sponsor has to plan the sponsorship communication on a specific level taking into consideration the strategic objectives of the sponsorship program. After a careful planning process, the company may move on to writing a sponsorship agreement with the sponsored activity. After the agreement the sponsor may begin building the association with the activity in consumers' minds. Here starts the actual effect process of sponsorship. (Amis 1999)

### Process

As discussed in Chapter Two, the intensity of positive attitudes towards sponsorship differs in consumers' minds according to the level on which it is considered. The levels on which consumers are seen to consider sponsorship are the generic level (as an activity), the category level (sports, music festivals, etc.), and the individual level (e.g., a basketball team or an athlete). These levels work as filters in the sponsorship effects process. At the generic level, sponsorship is considered as a generally good thing, which benefits society. At this level the consumers, filter the emotionally touching and engaging meanings in their minds. At the categorical level, the positive attitudes are felt more intensely by consumers but still the meaningful emotional effects are filtered. Finally, at the individual activity level, consumers are most involved with the sponsored activity and the real fans exist. At this level the real positive attitudes towards sponsorship exist and emotionally touching and engaging sponsorship effects are likely to occur. Until this point I have followed the framework of Meenaghan (2001) pretty carefully. However, I have to add the component of sponsorship leverage to the framework. As Meenaghan (2001) himself noted, a sponsor should strive to be

seen as a "good" sponsor, who benefits the activity. By this approach, according to Meenaghan (2001), the sponsor may be able to maximize the goodwill effects of sponsorship. As strongly stated in academic literature, (e.g. Cornwell et al. 2005; Crimmins & Horn 1996; Polonsky & Speed 2001) sponsorship can be leveraged by use of other communications tools to articulate the sponsorship agreement to achieve desired objectives. If a sponsor wants to be seen as a "good" sponsor it should be emphasized by appropriate sponsorship leverage. Thus, I find it necessary to include sponsorship leverage as a component to the sponsorship effects process.

As I defined above in Chapter Three, sponsorship leverage may take various different forms, some of them difficult to even categorize. Thus, I made the decision to present only the key leverage activities that I am able to identify from the academic discourse. The categories are advertising, sales promotion, PR, on-site activities, and other leverage tools. The role of leverage is to articulate chosen favorable aspects of the sponsorship relation in order to increase and maximize the effects. The use of specific leverage tools is a consequence of the strategic objectives set for the sponsorship program. Sponsorship leverage may therefore assist in strengthening or positively altering the perceptions of the sponsor formed in consumer's mind on the individual activity level. Leverage could, for example, articulate through TV-advertisement the linkage between a sponsored team and the sponsoring company, or through public relations articulate the new high-quality equipment of the team which has become possible thanks to the sponsorship agreement. These kinds of leverage activities are likely to positively affect consumers' opinion of the sponsoring company. If a positive effect is created, the consumer may respond in one of the desired manners.

## Response

Meenaghan (2001) has identified five key elements of consumer response in the context of sponsorship. The response categories are 1) awareness, 2) favorable disposition, 3) transfer of image, 4) intent to purchase, and 5) actual purchase. Awareness and transfer of image, specifically, are key components in building brand equity (Keller 1998). These are possible to achieve with moderate intensities of goodwill and fan involvement. Instead, intent to purchase and actual purchase are more specific targets which require for very high intensity of both, goodwill and fan involvement. As described earlier, contingent goodwill is earned from fans as reward for the benefit created for the sponsored activity. Intensity of fan involvement, in turn, means the level of fans' engagement with the sponsored activity. These factors of goodwill and fan involvement may still not be fixed to the level formed by the individual activity as suggested by Meenaghan (2001). Instead, sponsorship leverage may be likely to affect the intensities of these factors. On contingent goodwill, specifically, leverage may have significant impact, since leverage may possibly reduce the contingencies involved in goodwill creation. Meenaghan (2001) identified possible contingencies to be, e.g., sponsorship choice, time of entry, the level of overt sponsor commitment and the nature of caring displayed toward the activity and its fans. If the chosen sponsored activity or the timing has turned out to be wrong, there may still be improvement done by leverage alone. Also, the perceived caring about the activity and its fans can be affected significantly by articulation through sponsorship leverage activities. With successful leverage the sponsor may be able to achieve the desired consumer response, which it set as its objectives during the planning process.

I condense the framework in the figure below. As I described, the starting point of the framework was Meenaghan's (2001) framework of the sponsorship effects process. The central difference between my framework and his is that I have taken sponsorship leverage

into account. I have aimed at illustrating leverage's strengthening effect on consumer response during the process by including sponsorship leverage as a broadening arrow. This presents the leveraging role of the activities. As already justified, I do not find it necessary to try to list all possible sponsorship leverage activities but more appropriate is to acknowledge the central methods of leveraging as presented inside the arrow. The leveraging activities may be used individually or in conjunction with each other. This depends on the objectives set in the marketing strategy.

This framework is the guideline of my empirical study. It defines the concepts on which I focus during my interview planning process. As I discussed in the beginning of this chapter, the purpose of the framework is not to predict the results of the research or set limitations of the discussions but rather to help me to maintain the focus and cohesion of my study. In the next chapter, I discuss and justify my research methods, as well as discuss the assessment of the validity and reliability of my work and, finally, open up the case of Uplause Crowd Games in Karjala Cup.

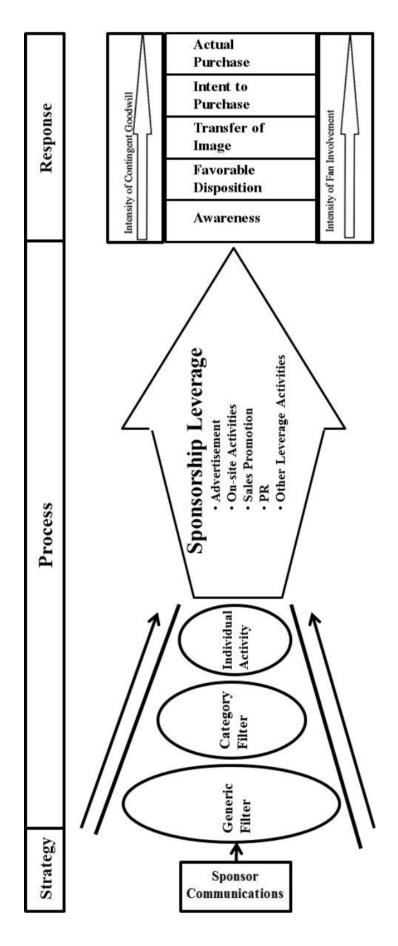


Figure 6. Sponsorship effects process

## 5. METHODOLOGY

### 5.1. Constructivist Approach

The nature of my research problem is learning of a new, specific cultural phenomenon in a sports event. This sets the requirement that knowledge has to be seen as structuring locally and through social interaction (Silverman 2006). According to Silverman (2006), there are three key competing theoretical assumptions (i.e. paradigms) in marketing research. These are 1) positivism, 2) emotionalism and 3) constructionism. The main difference between these assumptions is how they see the world and how they understand knowledge. Because of these fundamental differences, they also see appropriate research methods differently. Positivism looks for clear facts about behavior and attitudes and tries to reach them by using random samples, standardized questions and tabulations. Emotionalism is searches for authentic experience by unstructured, open-ended interviews. Constructionism, instead, looks for mutually constructed context-related reality. Constructionist is able to use any interview method, as long as it is treated as a topic rather than just a set of questions. (Silverman 2006) Considering the fact that my research target (Uplause Crowd Games) is a totally new sponsorship phenomenon, it is clear that understanding is created mutually all the time while discussing with the interviewees. In other words, the reality of understanding is created locally during the research (Guba & Lincoln 1994). This goes hand in hand with the idea of constructionism, and thus, a constructivist approach is the right paradigm for my specific research setting. In the following I will discuss more specifically my research method.

## 5.2. Semi-structured Interview Method

Considering my constructivist approach, I have to choose an appropriate research method for my research question. Since my research question is about gaining an understanding of meanings, it becomes evident that the method has to be qualitative and reality constructing (e.g. Guba & Lincoln 1994, Moisander & Valtonen 2006). According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), constructivist research methods should be hermeneutical and dialectical in nature and enable interaction between investigator and respondent. Thus, I leave quantitative methods and strictly structured qualitative methods out of my consideration.

As noted earlier, Silverman (2006) suggests, that for Constructivist any research method is possible, as long as it is considered as a topic. However, Silverman (2006) emphasizes that research data has to help the researcher in his/her specific research question. For example, ethnography is a research method where researcher closely engages into daily lives of a social setting and gathers data by observation and participation (Moisander & Valtonen 2006). In my research I am focusing on three different groups related to on-site sponsorship activities and searching for the meanings and interrelationships of these groups in regard to the activities. Observing sponsor representatives or event organizers would not be possible in practice and would probably not provide reasonable insight into the meanings anyways. As for the audience, observation could be possible to execute, but it is questionable whether it would provide meaningful information in this case. Audience observation could, however, be interesting as a supportive method to the actual research method. But due to limited resources, I made a decision to exclude ethnographic methods from the scope of my study. But interviews, instead, need deeper consideration.

Interviews are a useful method for accessing individuals' attitudes and values (eg. Silverman 2006, Hirsijärvi & Hurme 2008, Eskola & Suoranta 2005). Flexible or open-ended questions

are likely to get deeper response than closed questions and, thus, enable better in-depth access to respondents' views, understandings, experiences, interpretations and opinions than surveybased methods (Silverman 2006). Hirsijärvi and Hurme (2006, 35) list several research situations in which interviews have clear advantages: person is seen as a meaning constructing, active subject in the interview setting; the issue under question is little known and unfamiliar phenomenon; the researcher wants to clarify answers and deepen the given information; the researcher wants to situate respondent's speech into wider context. All these factors become in question in my research setting and, thus, some of the interview methods would be appropriate for my purposes.

In recent years interview methods have developed from question-answer interviews towards a more and more discursive direction (Eskola & Suoranta 2005). From a Constructivist point of view, interviews are seen as an interaction between interviewer and interviewee (Silverman 2006). Interviews can be divided in different groups based on how fixed the question setting is and how dominant role the interviewer has. Eskola and Suoranta (2005) divide interviews in four categories: 1) structured interviews, 2) semi-structured interviews, 3) theme interviews, and 4) open-ended interviews. Instead, Hirsijärvi and Hurme (2008) divide interviews only in three categories: 1) structured interviews (using formal questionnaires), 2) semi-structured interviews, and 3) unstructured interviews. More detailed, Hirsijärvi and Hurme (2008) place different methods into these categories, e.g. theme interviews into semi-structured and indepth interviews into unstructured interviews. On the contrary, Eskola & Suoranta's (2005) define semi-structured interviews differently to theme interviews, since, according to them, semi-structured interviews place the same questions for every interviewee in the same order, whereas theme interviews have more freedom with regard to questions and order. Hirsijärvi and Hurme (2008), on the other hand, argue that the most important characteristic of semistructured interviews is that some aspects of the interview are determined beforehand but not

all. Thus, they see theme interviews as part of semi-structured interviews. I agree here with Hirsijärvi and Hurme (2008) and define theme interviews as a method of semi-structured interviews.

In addition to the interview methods mentioned above, group interviews are seen as a separate category of interviews (e.g. Silverman 2006). Eskola and Suoranta (2005) refer to Syrjälä & Numminen (1988) while listing four purposes for group interviews: 1) gaining an understanding of people's interrelationships, 2) activity research, 3) gaining understanding and realization, and 4) getting new ideas. For my purposes, group interviews could have provided interesting information, especially about the relationships between the representatives of the three groups. However, Eskola and Suoranta (2005) emphasize that group interviews are challenging for the interviewer, due to the moderator role in the discussions. My personal experience of doing interviews was limited to two personal interviews during my studies, so I find group interviews too challenging at this point. On the other hand, and even more importantly, Eskola and Suoranta mention scheduling problems as another challenge of group discussions. Especially in my research case, getting all the respondents together would have been rather impossible, since especially the sponsor representatives had very limited time available. As Hirsijärvi and Hurme (2008) mention, a researcher also has to base the research method decision on such criteria as efficiency, economy, accuracy, and reliability. Specifically considering efficiency and economy points of views, I had to leave group interviews outside my research and focus on individual interviews.

Based on my investigation of different research methods, I made my decision to adopt personal theme interviews, i.e. semi-structured interviews, as my method. In theme interviews the structure of the discussion is not determined beforehand and the interview style is very conversational (e.g. Hirsijärvi & Hurme 2008; Eskola & Suoranta 2005). The interviewer's role in theme interviews is to ensure that all the themes are discussed, but the order and

emphasis of the themes may change over the interviews (Eskola & Suoranta 2005). In addition, an advantage of theme interviews is that the themes form a framework which will help me in categorizing the data in the analysis phase (Eskola & Suoranta 2005).

#### 5.3. Executing Interviews

In qualitative research the amount of data may differ significantly in different studies. In some cases the data might be thousands of pages of transcribed interviews, but in some cases only dozens of pages. The reason for the variance in the amount of data is that qualitative research does not strive for statistical generalizations, but aims to describe an event or experience. Qualitative research aims to gain understanding of some specific activity or to give a theoretical interpretation of a phenomenon. The starting point for determining the amount of data does not itself predefine the success of research, but the purpose of the data is to help the researcher to develop a theoretical understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. The purpose is also not to describe the data, but to build theoretically sustainable viewpoints. Thus, it is important that the number of interviewees and the amount of data serves the researcher in the best possible way. (Eskola & Suoranta 2005)

However, Eskola and Suoranta (2005) suggest a method of saturation to limit the number of interviewees. The basic idea is that there is a point at which there is enough data, when new interviews do not produce any new information relevant to the research question. This, of course, varies in regard to the research question, but should be rather a good guideline for assessing the right number of interviews. (Eskola & Suoranta 2005) In my research, I base the amount of interviews on this rule of thumb. During the interview process, I will assess if the interviews still provide new information and quit interviews after the information has started

to become saturated. Still, I want to have at least two interviews from every group: sponsors, event organizers and audience. Due to the limited number of members in event organizers and sponsors, I will take more interviews from the audience than other two groups.

In the 2010 Karjala Cup six official sponsors of the event used Uplause Crowd Games as onsite sponsorship activity tool. These sponsors form one target group of my research. Another group comprises the event organizers, i.e. the employees of the Finnish Ice Hockey Federation. The third group is the audience of over 30 000 people. My initial plan was to interview 2-3 persons from Finnish Ice Hockey Federation, 2-6 sponsor representatives and 3-6 audience representatives. The timing of the interviews was predetermined to approximately 6 months after the event. The purpose behind this was to get a deeper view of what the interviewees' actually remember of the event and its' sponsorship activities and ensure that they have had enough time to process the experience and construct deeper meanings of the experience in their minds. This is especially interesting in the case of audience, but also other groups. In the table below I represent the actual interviewees and dates.

| Date      | Group           | Industry | Title                        | Age / Sex   | Duration |
|-----------|-----------------|----------|------------------------------|-------------|----------|
| 11.5.2011 | Event Organizer |          | Marketing Coordinator        | 32 / female | 34 min   |
| 12.5.2011 | Sponsor         | Lottery  | Marketing Manager            | 41 / male   | 43 min   |
| 16.5.2011 | Audience        |          |                              | 40 / male   | 45 min   |
| 17.5.2011 | Audience        |          |                              | 15 / male   | 28 min   |
| 18.5.2011 | Audience        |          |                              | 32 / male   | 35 min   |
| 20.5.2011 | Sponsor         | Telecom  | Marketing Manager            | 43 / female | 34 min   |
| 21.5.2011 | Audience        |          |                              | 43 / male   | 24 min   |
| 27.5.2011 | Audience        |          |                              | 46 / male   | 32 min   |
| 30.5.2011 | Sponsor         | Brewery  | Brand Manager                | 35 / male   | 37 min   |
| 31.5.2011 | Event Organizer |          | Sales and Marketing Director | 40 / male   | 48 min   |

# Figure 7. Interviews

As presented in the above table, I was able to get 3 sponsor interviews, 2 event organizer interviews and 5 spectator interviews. The interviews for event organizers and sponsors took

place at the interviewees' offices in meeting rooms. Those were optimal places for the interviews, since there were no distractions and the company meeting room environment is appropriate for interviews. Spectator interviews, in turn, took place in cafes in Helsinki. The interviews were scheduled on afternoons and quiet places for the interviews were chosen. In cafes there was ambient noise around, but it did not interrupt any interview. In fact, the café environment was very suitable for the interviews due to relaxed atmosphere. I recorded all the interviews and there were no problems with the quality of sound.

I created transcripts shortly after the completion of the interviews to keep up with my tight interview schedule. As I will describe later, I had chosen to use thematic method for my data analysis. This approach does not set strict standards for the accuracy of transcriptions but still I created transcripts verbatim. However, since my analysis method was not based on a linguistic approach, there was no need to transcribe all utterances precisely. However, I transcribed laughs and significant pauses, since they communicate significant expressions. One challenge to meet in the transcription process was that the interviews took place in Finnish, whereas my thesis language is English. To maintain all the meanings of interviews I transcribed the interviews first completely in Finnish and did my analysis process in Finnish as well. Only after analyzing the data I translated the chosen citations into English. Here I tried to be especially careful not to lose or alter the meanings of the quotes. Despite the challenge I consider the process to be successful. In my analysis section I, naturally, open up the analysis and use quotes only as illustrations. Thus, the change of language is not too significant of an issue.

### 5.4. Evaluation

Moisander & Valtonen (2006) discuss the most used criteria of academic research, 1) validity, 2) reliability and 3) generalization in the context of cultural marketing and consumer research. These evaluation methods have a long tradition in quantitative research, especially among natural sciences. They are important features in the positivist paradigm. However, cultural marketing and consumer research is based on constructivism, which understands the world differently than positivism. From a Constructivist point of view, reality is constructed through social interaction and is context-related. Research is always seen to be subjective, since knowledge as a whole is subjective. Thus, cultural marketing and consumer research, and qualitative research in general, cannot be evaluated by using the same traditions as in quantitative research methods. But still, validity, reliability and generalization cannot be ignored in qualitative research. (Moisander & Valtonen 2006).

Moisander & Valtonen (2006) make it clear that cultural marketing and consumer research base on constructivism and the evaluation of research quality has to base on this paradigm too. They refer to Holt (1991), Schwandt (1996) and Smith & Deemer (2003) by saying that "there are no absolute or objective (evaluation) criteria for cultural research". They suggest that evaluation methods have to always be suitable for the specific research context. In the following I discuss the concepts of validity, reliability and generalization in my own research context.

# Validity, Reliability and Generalization

According to Moisander & Valtonen (2006), academics are continuously debating the concepts of validity, reliability and generalization in social research. This is due to the fact that there is no single, generally agreed-upon definition for each concept. My work is based

on the definitions given by Moisander and Valtonen (2006): 1) validity: "An account is valid or true if it represents accurately those features of the phenomena, that it is intended to describe, explain or theorize" (adopted from Hammersley 1987), 2) reliability: "the degree to which the findings of a study are independent of accidental circumstances of their production" (adopted from Kirk & Miller 1986), and 3) generalization: "the extension of research findings and conclusions from a study conducted on a sample population to the population at large".

In addition to the conceptual concerns, Cho and Trent (2006) note that debate over the assessment of qualitative research has recently increased because of the federal attempts to discredit qualitative research by calling for more accuracy, objectivity and replicability. This comes much to the question of validity, which can be said to measure how true the claims made in the study are or how accurate the interpretations are (Moisander & Valtonen 2006). The Constructivist paradigm, however, is based on the view that research is creation of context-related reality and researchers cannot be separated from their values (Silverman 2006). Thus, objectivity may not even be seen as a desired feature in cultural research. Despite the subjectivity, qualitative research can and must be valid. Validity can be generated by such techniques as using systematic data analysis methods and accounting for the impact of the context and the researcher on the setting. These kinds of methods enable qualitative studies to produce intellectually rigorous, creative and critical accounts of social reality. But still, it is not in the best interests of qualitative researchers to claim objectivity or access to greater truth, because subjectivity and locally constructed truths are the cornerstones of the paradigm. (Moisander & Valtonen 2006)

Winter (2000) suggests that there is actually a trade-off between validity and precision. He gives an example of measuring a several hours lasting activity in milliseconds. This is maybe precise but does not generate greater validity. According to him, this also applies to qualitative research. For example, the duration of pauses or exact measures of vocal

intonations in conversations may obscure the more general purposes of the research and analysis (Winters 2000). Thus, in my transcriptions my goal is not to write the conversations precisely, but detailed enough to meet the needs of good analysis.

As defined above, reliability is about whether some research can be repeated by another researcher with the same results. This is a necessary but not sufficient condition for validity. However, in the constructivist paradigm it is admitted that cultural studies will not get the same results when replicated by different people or in a different time and place. Despite this challenge, reliability is still important feature to achieve in qualitative research. In qualitative methods, reliability comes from a transparent research process. When the researcher gives detailed descriptions of the utilized methods, analytical procedures, interpretation development and conclusion process, the researcher enables other members of the academic community to assess the reliability of the work. (Moisander & Valtonen 2006)

The primary aim of qualitative research is not to try to extend the research findings from a conducted study to the whole population (e.g. Alasuutari 1995). In qualitative research sample populations are typically small and unlikely to be statistically representative of any larger populations. This is still not seen as a problem in cultural research, since researchers are interested in understanding and interpreting phenomena, not explaining causalities. (Moisander & Valtonen 2006) In my research, my aim is to gain an understanding of on-site sponsorship activities. It is not a question about whether on-site sponsorship activities can be extended to other events but rather a question of what the meanings of on-site activities for the related interest groups are. Thus, generalization is not really an issue in my study. However, in my study a more relevant issue is related to transferability. According to Moisander and Valtonen (2006), transferability is about whether the readers can transfer the results of a study to other contexts and situations with which they are familiar. In my study, transferability is about whether or not reader is able to transfer the resulting understanding of

on-site sponsorship activities to another event where on-site sponsorship activities are executed. Moisander & Valtonen (2006) refer to Geertz (1973) by noting that transferability can be improved by a highly detailed thick description of the research situation and methods. They continue by referring to Dyer and Wilkins (1989) who have suggested that such description allows readers to "see the phenomena in their own experience and research", and thus readers are able to evaluate if the results are transferable to their own situations.

As stated above, qualitative research is able to produce rigorous information about social realities. It is also acknowledged that researchers have an important political role and a responsibility in society since they are often considered as authorities and their research reports as truthful information. This leads to the suggestion that researchers and their studies actually continuously construct the reality. This highlights the moral responsibility of the researchers but also gives responsibility to the message receivers. In qualitative research, validity, reliability, and appropriate generalization are something that the audience can decide upon. The reader of a research report has the freedom to choose whether or not to accept the information. (Moisander & Valtonen 2006)

In my research I base my validity and reliability on appropriately accurate transcriptions of interviews, systematic analysis of data and transparent reporting of the research process. I aim to give a thick description of the events on which my case study is based. With these practices, I aim to provide the reader with adequate information to assess the validity, reliability and transferability of my work.

# 5.5. Case Description

In this chapter I discuss the case in which my empirical study takes place. There are two aspects in the case in question: Uplause Crowd Games as on-site activation and the Karjala Cup as the event. Below I discuss both aspects in detail. The information about Uplause is based on internal documents of the company, as well as its Internet sites and brochures. The information about the Karjala Cup is mainly based on the Internet site of the Finnish Ice Hockey Federation.

# **Uplause Crowd Games**

The on-site activities under my study are Uplause Crowd Games. Uplause Ltd. was established in 2009 and its business is based on a new kind of a sponsorship tool, which combines crowd entertainment and sponsorship communication. The audience at a big event can participate in creating the event's atmosphere by taking part in interactive games on the big video screen. The crowd plays games by making noise or moving their body. The game is based on recognizing voice and movement. Uplause Crowd Games had their premiere in 2009 Karjala Cup and it was a direct success. Uplause Ltd. ordered research from an individual research company, Information Factory Ltd., on spectators' opinions of the activity in 2009 Karjala Cup and the results were encouraging. 80% of the spectators considered Uplause Crowd Games to positively increase event atmosphere, 85% of the audience thought that people participated actively in the game and 80% wanted to experience it again. Also all six sponsors who used Uplause as an on-site activity were satisfied. According to the questionnaire for the sponsors, 100% of the sponsors considered Uplause Crowd Games to be the most effective on-site activity. The successful premiere and good feedback encouraged Uplause to continue their work and to date Uplause Crowd Games have taken place in dozens

of events and over 2 million spectators have participated in them. (Uplause internal documents)

The central idea behind Uplause Crowd Games is the understanding that people love participation. The company has identified an ever increasing trend of participatory applications in all media. In big events, especially sporting events, the audience has always, to some extent, participated in atmosphere creation by cheering, applauding, and making other noises. The mission of Uplause is to give an initiative for the audience to cheer and make noise and thus positively increase the event atmosphere. In addition to the entertainment, Uplause Crowd Games also offer a new type of sponsorship activity. Crowd Games enable social interaction between the sponsoring company and the audience, since sponsors are fully integrated in the Crowd Games. Thus, Uplause fulfills the need, noted in academic sponsorship literature, of creating new ways of building social interaction between a sponsor and an audience. (Uplause promotion material)

Crowd Games used in sports are most often customized particularly to the activity in question. At the 2010 Karjala Cup there were two types of Crowd Games: 1) cheering missions, and 2) ice hockey missions. Cheering missions included basic home chants, i.e. cheering for the home team in rhythm. Three out of eight games were cheering missions. Another three games were ice hockey themed games: Slap Shot, Body Check, and Zamboni Racing. As an example, in Slap Shot, the crowd had to make noise to gain power for the slap. The more noise the audience made, the faster was the shot. Another one of the games was Audience Wave, in which the audience had to get a wave moving and the laps were counted. Finally, the eighth game was fully customized for the sponsoring brewery. The mission included a pint which the audience had to fill up by making noise. The more noise they made, the more full the pint got. The purpose of Uplause is to continuously produce new exciting games to maintain them fresh, fun and interesting. (Internal documents of Uplause)

### Karjala Cup 2010

Uplause Crowd Games have been used at the Karjala Cup in 2009 and 2010 and the Finnish Ice Hockey Federation has already signed a new contract with Uplause for the next tournament. Karjala Cup is part of the European Hockey Tour, an unofficial European Championship in which Finnish, Swedish, Czech and Russian national hockey teams take part. Karjala Cup is an annual event; it takes place in November on Father's Day weekend. Probably due to the timing, it has become a popular event among families. Traditionally, one of the games is played abroad, due to scheduling challenges. Other games are played in Finland at Hartwall Arena. The capacity of Hartwall Arena is 13 000 spectators, and the tournament was fully booked in 2010. The schedule, results and numbers of spectators are presented in the table below.

| Date       | Time  | Arena                 | Home           | Away           | Result | Spectators |
|------------|-------|-----------------------|----------------|----------------|--------|------------|
| 11.11.2010 | 18:10 | Ceske Budejovice, CZE | Czech Republic | Sweden         | 3 - 4  | 6 421      |
| 11.11.2010 | 18:30 | Hartwall              | Russia         | Finland        | 1 - 0  | 12 385     |
| 13.11.2010 | 13:00 | Hartwall              | Sweden         | Russia         | 3 - 2  | 6 374      |
| 13.11.2010 | 16:30 | Hartwall              | Finland        | Czech Republic | 5 - 0  | 12 847     |
| 14.11.2010 | 12:00 | Hartwall              | Czech Republic | Russia         | 1 - 3  | 4 572      |
| 14.11.2010 | 17:30 | Hartwall              | Finland        | Sweden         | 4 - 1  | 13 006     |

Figure 8. Schedule, results and spectators of 2010 Karjala Cup (www.finhockey.fi)

### 5.6. Analysis Procedure

The analysis process is based on specific analytical and interpretive frameworks, and it can be said that during the process the data is looked through a "lens". Moisander and Valtonen (2006, 103) define an analysis process to be "*a set of assumptions, ideas and principles that define a particular, theoretically informed perspective and a set of appropriate practices for the process of interpretation, thus opening the data to particular interpretations*". In social

sciences many different analysis methods are used, e.g. rhetoric strategies, categorization and stereotyping as suggested by Moisander and Valtonen, (2006) and grounded theory, narrative analysis and thematic method as mentioned by Floersch et al. (2010). In this chapter I focus on discussing the characteristics of the thematic analysis method and justify its appropriateness for my study in particular.

Thematic analysis is a common analysis technique in qualitative research. It aims to identify, report and analyze data for the meanings produced by people, situations and events (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun and Clark, 2006; Patton, 2002) According to Braun and Clark (2006, 82) "A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set." Braun and Clark (2006) also mention that due to its great flexibility thematic analysis has been applied to the social sciences. According to Boyatzis (1998), thematic analysis has five key functions: 1) a way of seeing, 2) a way of making sense of seemingly unrelated information, 3) a way of analyzing qualitative information, 4) a way of systematically observing culture, situation, interaction, person, group or organization, 5) a way of converting qualitative data into quantitative data. However, Patton (2002), for example, argues that the significance of the thematic method is not related to its frequencies of themes but to its substantive significance. Substantive significance here means the consistency of themes across and within study participants (Floersch et al. 2010). As I have pointed out earlier, my study is based on the constructivist paradigm, and it aims to acquire a deep understanding the phenomenon of onsite activities. Thus, I exclude quantification of the themes in my analysis and concentrate on other key features of the method. This is supported by Floersch et al., (2010) who suggest that the scientific significance of the thematic analysis method is not due to quantitative statistical tests, but instead result from 1) skillful identification of new themes and confirmation of existing themes presented in literature, and 2) confidence in the systematic nature of coding practices.

As stated in earlier chapters, my study is about understanding sponsorship leverage and one of its forms, on-site activities. The existing literature gives a basic framework of the importance and mechanisms of sponsorship leverage in general but more detailed understanding of specific leverage tools is missing. Thus, my analysis aims to confirm the existing theoretical themes of leverage and to identify new themes of on-site activities and the interrelationships between the three groups in the context of on-site activities. As presented above, the thematic method is able to make sense of seemingly unrelated information and to systematically consider interactions. These features play an important role in my study, since the interviewees represent three different groups with different interests. Thus, and considering the existing theoretical knowledge of sponsorship leverage and its tools, I find the thematic analysis method appropriate for my specific research setting.

The first step in my analysis process was to read through all the transcriptions to gain an overall view of the contents. After this I started to identify themes by coding the interviews. To meet the conditions of systematic coding practices, I made myself a coding manual which includes a name for each theme, a definition of the theme, a description of how to decide when a theme occurs, qualifications, elaborations and exclusions, and positive and negative examples. One helpful factor in finding themes was that I had developed four sub-questions derived from my main research question to outline my interviews and help in finding themes from the discussions. The sub-questions are: 1) What are the purposes, reasons and objectives of on-site activities, 2) How does the audience benefit from the activities, 3) What is the role of the event organizer in relationship to sponsors and the audience, and 4) How do entertaining on-site activities help the sponsor to achieve its marketing goals? Two other themes which occurred during the interview process were 5) event as an experience, and 6)

Uplause Crowd Games as on-site sponsorship activities. In Chapter Six I present my analysis based on these six themes.

After coding the interviews into themes, I started to analyze the content of the themes and make my interpretations. Inside the themes I was able to find certain patterned meanings of the phenomenon. These patterns were recognized not only by sorting units of texts under themes and sub-themes to find meanings, but also by comparing the discovered content with existing theories; what has been identified and discussed and what has been suggested for future research topics. From the identified patterns I aimed to interpret the deeper meanings of the theme. As Peshkin (1993) suggested, interpretation is explaining and creating theoretical generalizations, developing new concepts, elaborating existing concepts, providing insights to change behavior, refine knowledge and identify problems as well as developing theory. In my interpretation process I aim to meet all these conditions which I open up in the following chapter.

# 6. ANALYSIS

In this chapter I present my analysis and interpretations of the interviews. As described earlier, the themes which occurred during the analysis process were: 1) the event as an experience, 2) the Uplause Crowd Games as on-site activities, 3) the purpose of on-site activities, 4) the audience's benefit of on-site activities, 5) the event organizer's role in on-site activities, and 6) the on-site activities as entertainment. These six themes lead to the interpretation of the role of on-site activities in sponsorship leverage and, in broader terms, in the sponsorship field in general. Furthermore, in every theme I identified meaningful information with regard to the Uplause Crowd Games. Based on the analysis, I also found an important addition to the

framework on which I built my empirical research. The quotes presented below are not to present the analysis itself but to illustrate and explain the grounds of the analysis.

#### 6.1. Event as an Experience

First of all, I asked the audience respondents to describe the event experience as a whole. As described earlier, there were 6 months between the event and interviews so I expected to get a view of the deeper understanding of what is considered meaningful in the event experience. The first thing to appear was that watching a game live is first and foremost a social experience. People get there together with family or friends, and it seems that one of the most important things is to see that others in the group enjoyed the game also, as illustrated by the following quotes.

"I'm in a fairly new relationship, and it was my girlfriend's second time watching a hockey match. And this was a national team, game so it was even more special to her. So it was her excitement that stuck in my mind most." Spectator

"On top of my mind is that my whole family was like 'Yeah, this was a great thing.' It was actually the first hockey game we have attended as a family. It was a positive experience and I'm sure we will go again someday." Spectator

"That day was also my youngest son's birthday, so beforehand, I asked the organizer if they could mention it somehow and I gave them our seat numbers. Then during the break we saw ourselves on the screen with birthday wishes. That was cool! (laughing)." Spectator

In addition to the social experience, the interviewees mention the importance of the game, the quality of the game, and winning as affecting the event experience.

"I'm an enthusiastic sports fan and I always live with the game, cheering the home team's goals by getting up and jumping. And, of course, winning is important and I hope for it every time." Spectator

"If I go to see a game, I naturally want my favorite team to win. But even if it wins, it has to come with a good game, a quality game. And if we lose, it doesn't matter if we have played good hockey. I don't bother to go to see bad hockey, unless the atmosphere in the arena is otherwise extremely good."

However, none of the respondents remembered the final scores of the games they attended. In addition, they were not even completely sure whether Finland won or lost the game. This indicates that things other than winning might be the deeper meanings involved in the event experience. The last quote actually gives a hint that good atmosphere may substitute for game success in the perceived experience. This is consistent to the finding of Choi et al. (2006) which suggests that "spectators at a sporting event do not necessarily visit there for sporting reasons". For some people a good atmosphere and special highlights might even play a more important role at events than winning:

"Before the game Raimo Helminen's shirt got raised to the arena roof. It was a historical and ceremonious moment. It was great to see it!" Spectator

"We had good seats just behind the team Finland bench and I got photos of the players and coaches with my cellphone. I put some of them on Facebook." Spectator

"The noise and shouting and all that... It crowns the experience, it kind of makes the arena feel like it's even more full. That kind of competitive shouting makes it." Spectator "It was a totally new experience in a sense that we understood how much noise a crowd can make... and the feeling, it was an eyes opening experience. I would recommend that to everyone who hasn't been before. Especially families." Spectator

Thus, it might be that event organizers and sponsors should focus even more on creating meaningful happenings at their events, since those seem to stay in consumers' minds. Those happenings or activities should take into account the social meaning of the events and tend to emphasize that experience. As the two previous quotes indicate, the perceived atmosphere is heavily related to the crowd noise. The primary objective of Uplause Crowd Games is to contribute to the event by encouraging people in the audience to make noise, clap their hands and move their bodies. In the following section, I discuss the perceptions of Uplause Crowd Games as on-site sponsorship activities.

# 6.2. Uplause Crowd Games as On-Site Sponsorship Activities

As described in Chapter Five, Uplause Crowd Games aim at activating the audience in two ways: to increase the atmosphere of the events and to help sponsors achieve their marketing goals. At the Karjala Cup, Uplause Crowd Games have a big role during the breaks in action. It became evident from the interviews that all the interviewees remember well that there existed cheering missions on the video screen during the game breaks. Thus, the question here is not about whether people in the audience have noticed Uplause Crowd Games, but rather what meanings they have in the event experience. In addition, I also aim to understand how sponsors and event organizers perceive Uplause Crowd Games. Uplause Crowd Games are a new phenomenon and, thus, the primary interest is on understanding what they actually are perceived to be. As the following quotations imply, it is seen rather difficult to give a precise definition for them:

"They [Uplause Crowd Games] are lots of things... (pause) They are initiators and kind of atmosphere creators. And on the other hand, they enable the sponsors to get visibility on the screen in a new way." Event organizer

"On the Jumbotron, there were all these kinds of cheering competitions and noise meters. They are fun and people tend to participate in them quite easily. And those bring noise to the arena. It would be a much more silent and spiritless atmosphere without these. It's good that these exist." Spectator

"They create good feeling in the arena. They get people to cheer and react. And it's a brand new way to get visibility." Sponsor

From the event experience point of view, Crowd Games seem to take the most important role in giving the audience an initiative to participate in cheering. Cheering itself then is found to increase the atmosphere and good feeling. Uplause Crowd Games are seen to encourage people to open their mouth and shout. Some interviewees also suggested that after getting an initiative from Crowd Games, it is easier to cheer spontaneously as well.

> "the arena is so big that it does not get loud very easily spontaneously. Someone, or in this case something, has to take the initiative. Then others will follow.." Spectator

> "the Finns tend to be very quiet people. It's a good thing that these exist, especially if the hockey game itself doesn't excite the people enough. It's good if something else does." Spectator

"I consider them as a great initiative for cheering. When the people notice that the persons around them are making noise, it's much easier for them too. And after getting this courage, it is easier to cheer spontaneously too." Sponsor

From a marketing point of view, the most important feature of Uplause Crowd Games is seen to be the interaction between audience and sponsoring company. This is a direct response to the demand for marketers, placed by Close et al. (2006), to create interaction between audience and sponsor. Another important feature from a sponsors' point of view seems to be that Uplause Crowd Games are a new, different kind of on-site activity. This, in turn, is a response to the challenge defined by O'Keefe et al. (2009), suggesting that sponsors have to be able to differentiate with on-site activities.

> "It's interactive, people take part in the game by making noise or clapping their hands. That's the thing that makes them different. And they are an easy way to keep your activities fresh while they can be modified easily." Sponsor

> "I got immediately interested of Uplause games, since they are a new thing that hasn't been seen before. I thought that, "hey, this might work". Of course, there are always uncertainties with new things and how they work. But it was great to see with my own eyes that this really works." Sponsor

From the spectators, I was interested in hearing, not so much what sponsors they remember from the games, but rather how they perceive the fact that Uplause Crowd Games include sponsors' marketing communication. The respondents, still after half a year, remembered that sponsors took place in the Crowd Games, but none of the respondents considered them as a negative thing. Rather, sponsors were seen to be a natural part of the event and, thus, part of the Crowd Games as well. As described above, the most important feature in an event experience seems to be that people see their fellow spectators enjoying the event. Thus, I suggested earlier that sponsorship activities should take into account the social meanings of events for the audience. According to the interviews and illustrated by the following quotes, Uplause Crowd Games may include features which utilize and emphasize the social aspect of events.

"We yelled with the whole family to make a goal in the slap shot game!" Spectator

"My youngest son actually waited for them (Crowd Games) and wanted to play more. (laughing) Particularly kids seem to get excited by these. And when kids are excited, the parents will be too and want to take part as well." Spectator

The incentive that encourages people to participate in the Crowd Games might, then, to be the social effect: If everyone around me is yelling, then why wouldn't I. To get more insight into what could probably increase the incentive to participate, I placed the interviewees a question of what they would think if there was a possibility to compete against other audiences or if there were some real prizes combined with the crowd games. All the interviewee's agreed that these would be a good addition to the experience and would encourage taking part in the games even more. Here two examples of the responses:

"Well, why not.. For example in the end of a hockey match there could be an announcement that, 'ok, today you were great supporters, and as a reward there are free t-shirts available in the corridor' or something like that. That could actually be quite effective." Sponsor

"Well, that would serve everyone if there was some bait for the audience. There would be lots of cheering and an even better atmosphere. And it would be good advertisement for the sponsors too." Spectator

Thus, it could be interesting to share sponsors' free product trials as prizes of Crowd Games. This could broaden the experience of the sponsorship activity and thus gain better impact. This view actually raises a broader idea of combining Uplause Crowd games with various other sponsorship activities which I discuss more in section 7.3.2. Here I continue with gaining more understanding of on-site activities.

# 6.3. Purpose of On-site Sponsorship Activities

At the Karjala Cup sponsors have executed on-site sponsorship in several different forms. According to the interviews, in addition to Uplause Crowd Games, there have also been traditional video ads on the big video screen, free gift products, promo tents, competitions, brochures which can be folded up as fans, raffled cameras and many other activities. On-site sponsorship activities seem to have different kinds of goals according to the sponsoring company's business. From the interviews I was able to identify several kinds of purposes for executing on-site activities. These include the basic goals set for sponsorship in general, such as building awareness and improving brand image. In addition, specific purposes for on-site activities seem to be encouraging consumers for product trials and purchases as well as differentiating one company from other sponsors. These goals go hand in hand with the sponsorship goals identified by Meenaghan (2001) in Figure 4. The following quotes give a view of the various goals of on-site activities at the Karjala Cup.

> "We aim at achieving visibility. We hope that the consumers remember us afterwards and that eventually this would lead to purchasing some of our products. We shared free accessories for making noise and we wish that people took them home and remember us afterwards" Sponsor

"One of our sponsors raffled an expensive digital camera per game for one lucky person in the audience. They combined it to an announcement during the break and the winner got a huge "I'm a Winner" –sign with the camera and was shown on the big video screen." Event organizer

"Some of our sponsors have a promo tent where they sell their products and aim at finding new customer contacts." Event organizer

"We want to differentiate from other sponsors. We want to be the one who brings something new to the events and supports Finnish fan culture by providing events with some new activities encouraging crowds to take more active role as supporters. This is our way to differentiate." Sponsor

It became evident that the nature of business and the specific goals set by the sponsoring company affect the decision about which form on-site activities take. But it seems that sponsors are always able to find a suitable on-site activity to meet their own purposes. This of course, not only requires resources but also, more importantly, innovativeness. The sponsors seem to be always looking for some new activities, the next quote illustrating one example.

> "We launched a celebrity bet in football games. The idea is that a local star has to bet the result of the game beforehand and it is then followed on the video screen during the game how the bet is doing. This is a perfect for us, since it is 100% related to our betting business." Sponsor

The quote also indicates that linkage between sponsorship activities and the sponsoring company is seen as a positive feature. This is parallel to the fact that it has long been recognized in academic sponsorship discourse that sponsor-event congruence is seen as an important feature while maximizing sponsorship effects (e.g. Meenaghan 2001). Sponsorship leverage is considered a practical tool to articulate and enhance sponsor-event congruence.

This seems to be the fact in the case of on-site sponsorship activities as well. The following citations reflect this conclusion:

"...it is mostly about the fact that the sponsoring firm and ice hockey get more tightly tied together... and these activities support advertisements on the ice or outside the arena." Event organizer

"The sponsor and sponsored event always have to have some kind of linkage. If there is no natural linkage, you have to somehow create it by additional investments." Sponsor

"Good activities are those which are related to ice hockey. For example, we shared free ice hockey pucks with our logo on them. They were tied to the event. Also some t-shirts with an ice hockey theme could work." Sponsor

However, as Close et al. (2006) suggest, "If the sponsor carefully plans and implements the promotional activity, consumers may view the sponsor's message as part of the event rather than as a marketing-oriented communication." This may open a possibility to build linkage between event and sponsor, especially in the case when no natural linkage occurs. This means, that the sponsor has to create such entertaining and meaningful on-site activities that they become a real part of the event. After achieving this, the sponsor actually has a true linkage to the event, since it has become a part of it. I find that Uplause Crowd Games has the potential to create, or at least improve, the linkage between event and sponsor. This could come in question especially when several on-site activities were tied together with Uplause Crowd Games. Again, I will discuss this in detail in section 7.3.2.

One important feature which came up during the discussions was a strong opinion that sponsors should focus on a few big events rather than several smaller events. This finding is consistent with the academic literature suggesting companies becoming more and more focused on a few key sponsorship targets (e.g. Hutchinson & Bouchet 2010). While focusing on a few events, sponsors are likely to increase the amount of different activities in those events to gain better impact.

> "We have ended up with the result that if we are sponsoring an event we have to do it big. Small actions just don't make the impact. We have to make clear choices of what we sponsor and how we execute it... ...of course we try to figure out some good activities which would create multiple stimuli during the event and, thus, enhance the brand image." Sponsor

> "In my opinion, sponsors have to do it big if they want to be recognized." Spectator

However, it is worth noticing that while the number of different kinds of on-site activities is increasing, the importance of their quality is becoming emphasized. It is not seen to benefit anyone if the sponsors are competing in sharing meaningless flyers or playing cheap video ads on the screen.

"If you don't come up with a good and exciting activity it's maybe better to have nothing. There are lots of different kinds of activities already, so by just sharing some coupons the result is that you notice that you have only done lots of worthless work." Sponsor

"It is good that there are many different kinds of activities, they kind of support each other. But it's important that they are well planned, because often sharing flyers is more rubbishing than anything else. I don't mean that there is no place for flyers but they have to be planned as well and include a catch." Event organizer "Those activities are OK and some free stuff is always welcome... as long as it's not just some total rubbish." Spectator

The last comment indicates that the audience possibly perceives to be gaining some value or benefit from the on-site activities. In the following section I analyze the audience's perceptions of the benefits in detail.

### 6.4. Audience's Benefit of On-site Sponsorship Activities

According to the interviews, it seems evident that people in the audience seem to benefit from on-site activities. The benefit seems to occur in two forms. First, and more importantly, people tend to appreciate the sponsors' efforts of filling the empty moments in the events with entertaining activities.

"I see the event as a comprehensive entertainment experience, something for everyone. Of course, ice hockey is the most important thing but some experiences are for everyone so that you can afterwards think what all fun things there were and then you want to go again." Spectator

"These are good additions to the event. If you want to get the whole family there together, there has to be something for everyone. Just these kinds of competitions and others... they are good." Spectator

Second, the audience members perceives themselves as benefiting from on-site sponsorship activities, especially in case of free products. It seems that people get happy while getting something for free, and they suggest that they would remember the sponsors better after getting something for free. In my study, the objective is not to measure if the consumers really

remember those companies better, but I am rather interested in understanding the meaning of free products for the audience. The following quotes open up the attitudes towards free gifts:

"I ordered a magazine and got skin care products as freebies. Those were more valuable than the magazine itself. That stuck in my mind... I remember sponsors better when I get happy" Spectator

"Freebies are very welcome as long as they are something sensible or useful. For example, some snacks or promo gifts are nice. You sure remember it afterwards while shopping." Spectator

"The customers who have our loyalty card get a free Finnish flag. We also share free accessories for making noise and supporting the home team." Sponsor

I interpret from the interviews that the central meaning of free gifts from the audience's point of view is the feeling of being remembered by the sponsor and positively surprised. The most important thing is not the monetary worth of the gift, but it has to be somehow useful or meaningful. As I already mentioned, Uplause could take a role in combining Crowd Games with free gifts as prizes. This could possibly create the feeling that the audience has earned the gift and, thus, give the gifts even new meanings. While thinking about combining Uplause Crowd Games with other on-site activities, the question of the event organizer's role becomes highlighted. The event organizer is an individual entity that has made sponsorship agreements with the event sponsors and at the same time is responsible for organizing a favorable event experience for the spectators. Thus, it might be that event organizers have expectations or limitations for on-site activities, or a role in executing and controlling the activities. I discuss the role of event organizer in the following section.

#### 6.5. Event Organizer's Role in On-Site Sponsorship Activities

According to my interviews, event organizers seem to have several roles in regard to on-site activities. First of all, they are a partner of the sponsored company through a sponsorship agreement. In addition, I have identified them to get the roles of 1) connector, 2) provider/filter, and 3) executor during the event sponsorship process. I define these roles in the following. I must mention that, to my knowledge, these kinds of roles of event organizer have not been identified in the academic sponsorship discussions earlier.

#### **Event Organizer as a Connector**

In the case of the Karjala Cup, the Finnish Ice Hockey Federation has taken the role of connector between sponsors. They regularly execute sponsor workshops where sponsor representatives can meet and get to know each other. This has created discussion between sponsors and opened doors for cooperation between event sponsors.

"Luckily sponsors finally cooperate nowadays to some extent. It enables new, bigger, and better activities if sponsors can combine resources and do them together. And it might be that the event organizer or the team is actually able to earn more funds for themselves then too." Sponsor

"The Finnish Ice Hockey Federation has been good at this. Our company has already done quite a lot of cooperating with some other sponsors after meeting in workshops. It's a good forum." Sponsor

It seems that networking and cooperation between sponsors may be a win-win situation for everyone. The sponsors are able to combine resources and create new, meaningful activities for the event. The event organizer and audience, therefore, would have a better event experience. To my knowledge, cooperation between event sponsors in regard to achieving better results has not been previously identified in sponsorship literature. Here, I find a new interesting topic for future research and discuss this more in Chapter 7.2.

#### **Event Organizer as Provider/Filter**

According to the interviews, event organizers do not seem to have any specific wishes or desires toward the sponsors. The sponsors get, to some extent, free reign when planning onsite activities while the event organizer provides the facilities. However, event organizers seem to have adopted the role of a filter between sponsors and audience, meaning that they hold the right to refuse an on-site activity if it is seen as inappropriate to the event. These kinds of situations are still rare and most restrictions of on-site activities are set by the physical limits of the event site.

> "We don't really place any wishes, we just offer the opportunity to execute on-site activities. On-site activities are welcome but we have not really ordered anything from our sponsors. – Of course we expect our sponsor to have the idea and we offer the setting to execute it." Event organizer

> "Well, let's say that if we have some ideas of activities, they hardly ever get questioned by the event organizer. They trust our proficiency. Especially if the activity has worked somewhere else before, why wouldn't it work here too." Sponsor

> "Event organizers have not requested any specific activities from us. It has been our management's decision that we want to do something new. But the organizers

have been very positive towards our ideas and done their best in finding ways to execute the activities." Sponsor

As described above, event organizers still maintain a position as a filter in regard to inappropriate sponsorship activities.

"It's about balancing between the audience and sponsors. We have tried to clearly articulate the setting in which on-site activities are possible in our events and so far no impossibilities have occurred and we haven't been forced to say no. Of course, the fact is that never everyone is happy, especially in the case of the audience. Someone always thinks that there are too many of those [sponsorship activities], while others may think that there could be more." Event organizer

"When it is well executed, a broad definition I admit... I mean, they are OK as long as they are well planned and don't look or sound cheap. We want to maintain hockey as the primary thing but, of course, there can be other entertainment too. But if it does not fit the event at all, then we have to say no." Event organizer

The role as a provider or filter comes into question when the on-site activities are under planning. However, the event organizer does not seem to be involved in the planning process, let alone in setting objectives.

> "Well, they [sponsors] don't usually come to tell us what objectives they have for the activities. They usually consider alternatives by themselves and then tell us what they want to execute." Event organizer

However, I find that it could be beneficial if the event organizer was involved already in the planning process. This is especially true if multi-function activities, which combine several activities, are planned. This is due to the fact that the event organizer takes a major role in executing the activities in the event as described in the following.

#### **Event Organizer as Executor**

On-site sponsorship activities often require the event organizer to participate the execution. This especially comes into question when the sponsors want announcements or live film on the video screen. It was said that basic on-site activities, such as promo tents, are organized by sponsors only, but all more demanding activities usually involve event organizer. In actuality, the event organizer may become the main executor of the activity, especially when there are multiple features included. These notions are implied by the discussions with event organizers and sponsors. Here are two views of the event organizer's role as an executor:

"It requires that all the systems are worked by the event organizer. All the components have to work together. Meaning how the video screen is directed, where the mascot goes and when, what the announcer says, etc. These multi-function activities make it a bit tricky for us, but after having a little bit of practice, everything goes well." Event organizer

"Of course, someone has to execute the activities and to take care that all works. Event organizers are taking care of the infrastructure on the site anyways, so there is little place for sponsors to do anything for the execution. Event organizers help us to realize our plans." Sponsor

Even if executing on-site activities might mean lots of work for the event organizer, the fact seems to be that they are the only party that is able to take care of the execution. In

addition, it is good for the event quality that the event organizer itself is executing the onsite activities. In this sense, it is also to the event organizer's advantage, since then they must be informed of the activities already in the planning phase. This enables the event organizer to suggest changes or limitations for the presented activities. This is important for the quality of the activities and the event experience as a whole. As indicated earlier, it seems that on-site sponsorship activities may actually have a role as entertainment in events, which I discuss below.

#### 6.6. On-site Sponsorship Activities as Entertainment

On-site sponsorship activities are often considered to be part of the event and part of entertainment in the event. As discussed above, the content provided by sponsors can be considered as entertainment when it is well planned, well executed and provides the audience with meaningful benefit. The form of benefit might be anything from competitions to free product trials or to building atmosphere as in the case of Uplause Crowd Games. It might be that people have started to get used to the sponsored activities and they start to be considered as a part of the events, as indicated by the following citations:

"I kind of waited for some kinds of competitions during the breaks. Like the ones where some people from the audience get on the ice to compete on the fastest slap shot. Those are usually supported by some sponsor." Spectator

"The fact is that these activities are more and more entertainment all the time. Of course, different people like different things, but still I assume that we will move to the more entertaining direction when talking about sponsorship activities. Especially young people have already become used to them and accept them as entertainment more openly." Event organizer

As already discussed above, especially Uplause Crowd Games were seen as having a positive impact on the event atmosphere. Crowd Games give the people an initiative to start cheering and encouragement for spontaneous cheering as well. Here two more citations to illustrate the perception of Uplause Crowd Games as entertainment:

> "those [Uplause Crowd Games] create atmosphere in the arena. And there really was a great feeling". Spectator

> "without these Crowd Games the arena would be much more quiet and that would decrease the atmosphere." Spectator

It also came up during the interviews that people could even appreciate more information about the activities. If activities are good and considered as entertainment, people might actually make the effort to get to experience the activities. This was indicated by following:

> "I could have tried the table hockey if I had known there was one. I didn't even come to think that there might be some activities like that. I just thought that I came to a hockey match and that's it. I didn't see any information about those activities or at least I didn't notice it." Spectator

> "Those would get more interested participants if people were better informed about them." Spectator

This leads to the suggestion that entertaining sponsorship activities should be listed as official entertainment in the event and they should be articulated to the audience. For example, a table hockey competition could be mentioned in the event booklet or slap shot competition on the ice during the break could be put in the event schedule. In addition, Uplause Crowd Games

could be mentioned here as well. The Crowd Games could include activation messages encouraging people to get to take part in other activities as well. I will discuss this more in section 7.3.2.

# 7. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

As stated by Brinberg and McGrath (1985): "A contribution can be made in three areas: method, context, or theory". In my work I make a theoretical contribution for academics and a context-related contribution for managers. In this chapter I present my key findings and a revised framework and then later discuss the contributions of my study.

#### 7.1. Revised Framework

As described in Chapter 3.2 there has not been academic classification of the categories of onsite activities. As also noted, there is no need or possibility for exact classification since the activities may occur in very innovative forms. However, based on the interviews, I was able to identify some well-established on-site activities to illustrate the variety of the tools. In the figure below I present the identified categories as part of sponsorship leverage. Moreover, the figure below illustrates the role of Uplause Crowd Games as an on-site activity tool, which was clearly established during the interviews.

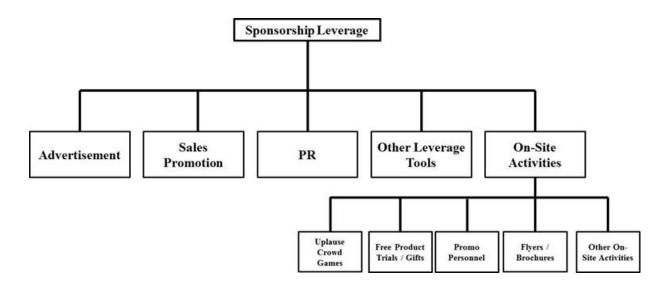


Figure 9. Components of on-site activities

On-site sponsorship activities always take place at the individual activity level (e.g. ice hockey match). At this level the consumers are the most involved to the activity and sponsorship is seen to be most effective (Meenaghan 2001). During my analysis process it became evident that at this individual activity level the event organizer, who also holds the rights to the sponsored activity, may take rather active roles in regard to sponsorship activities at the event. The three roles of event organizer are: 1) connector, 2) provider/filter, and 3) executor. As a connector, the event organizer provides its sponsors with opportunities to network and cooperate. This may result in new kinds of sponsorship activities which may not have been possible to execute by an individual sponsor. On the other hand, the event organizer also provides the sponsors with the venue itself and makes it possible to reach the consumers in the event. However, the event organizer also has a responsibility to maintain the quality of the event and it may not want just any sponsorship activities at the event. Thus, the event organizer may take the role of filter between the sponsor and consumers if it deems it to be necessary. More often, however, the filter role may occur due to the physical or other limitations (such as space and time) of the venue. Third, the event organizer has an important

role in executing the on-site activities. The event organizer takes care of the schedule of the event and fits the sponsorship activities in the event. If the sponsorship activity includes use of the video screen, announcer, mascot or any other this kind of element, the event organizer has to plan the execution. Thus, the sponsor has to be aware of the resources and capabilities of the event organizer to execute all sponsorship activities with good quality. This identification of the event organizer's roles leads to the conclusion that Meenaghan's (2001) sponsorship effects process model's central drawback is that it only includes two parties: sponsor and consumer. I find it very important to add the third party, event organizer, into the process due to the three central roles explained above.

Earlier, in Figure 3, I presented Meenaghan's (2001) understanding of the goodwill effects and consumer involvement in sponsorship. In Meenaghan's (2001) model, the sponsor is seen to benefit the sponsored activity by providing resources and, thus, the most involved fans personally perceive indirect benefit from the sponsor-sponsored activity relationship. They perceive the benefit because they have the knowledge and understanding of how the provided resources have been utilized by the activity with which they are emotionally involved. Because of the perceived indirect benefit, the fans may be thankful for the sponsors and goodwill towards the sponsor may occur. In this traditional sponsorship model consumers perceive indirect benefit only. In my analysis I found clear evidence that in the case of on-site sponsorship activities the audience is able to perceive direct benefit from the sponsor as well. The direct benefit may occur in forms of free product trials or gifts, or more importantly, in forms of entertainment and experiences. This means that the perceived benefit of sponsorship does not only become concrete for the most involved fans only but also for other spectators as well. These other spectators might be attending the activity for the first time, and they may have no previous information about the sponsored activity, let alone the relationship between the sponsor and the sponsored activity. Thus, on-site sponsorship activities may appeal to these spectators as well, since they perceive the direct benefit rather than the indirect benefit. And for the most involved fans the on-site activities are able to even further establish the linkage between the sponsor and sponsored activity. The most involved fans already perceive the indirect benefit of the sponsorship relationship, but now, in addition to that, they are also likely to perceive direct benefit from the sponsor. By creating direct benefit for the audience, on-site sponsorship activities are able to extend the involvement from the most involved fans to other spectators. This is likely to benefit the sponsor in form of enhanced goodwill, since goodwill is now felt among a larger consumer group and the perceived benefit is stronger and more direct. This on-site activity effect and its ability to create enhanced goodwill towards the sponsor is one of the central findings of my study and it is illustrated in the figure below.

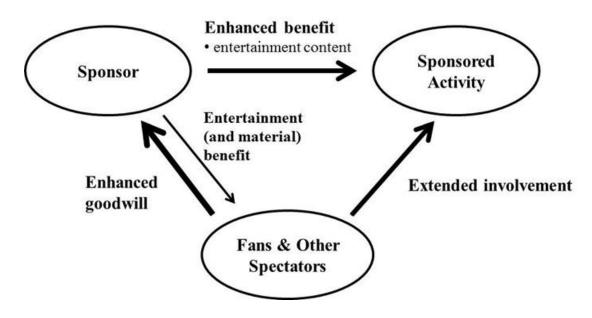


Figure 10. On-site activity effect

As explained above, on-site sponsorship activities may have positive impacts on the intensities of goodwill and consumer involvement. As defined by Meenaghan (2001) these are the two key factors leading to consumer response. Consumer response is expected to get the

more specific form according to the intensity of goodwill and consumer involvement. Thus, on-site activities can be seen as an efficient tool to reach such consumer response goals as strengthening purchase intentions or actual purchases.

The analysis of the interviews gave significant additions to the framework presented in Chapter Four. As I already noted in Chapter Four, the purpose of the framework was to serve as a guideline for my empirical research and some modifications were expected. However, the analysis gave even more new theoretical content than I expected in the first point. To summarize the key additions I present the revised framework as a whole in Figure 11 Note that on-site activity effect is now inserted in the arrow that illustrates sponsorship leverage, since the figure is for the context of on-site activities.

As the Figure 11 illustrates, the sponsorship effects process should start from the sponsor's strategy. The strategy should determine the specific consumer response goals which the sponsor aims to achieve by sponsorship communications. In consumers' minds sponsorship is perceived differently at three levels: generic, category, and individual activity levels. Consumers are most emotionally involved with the sponsored activity at individual activity level and, thus, it is expected that sponsorship is best able to reach specific consumer response at this level only. My revised framework is built upon the context of on-site sponsorship activities. In this context the event organizer takes three roles in the process and is able to have an impact on the execution of on-site activities. First, the event organizer is a connector between the sponsors, giving them an opportunity for cooperation and networking. This may have an impact upon what kinds of on-site activities are executed, since the sponsors may share ideas and experiences of possible on-site activities or even combine resources to build new innovative activities.

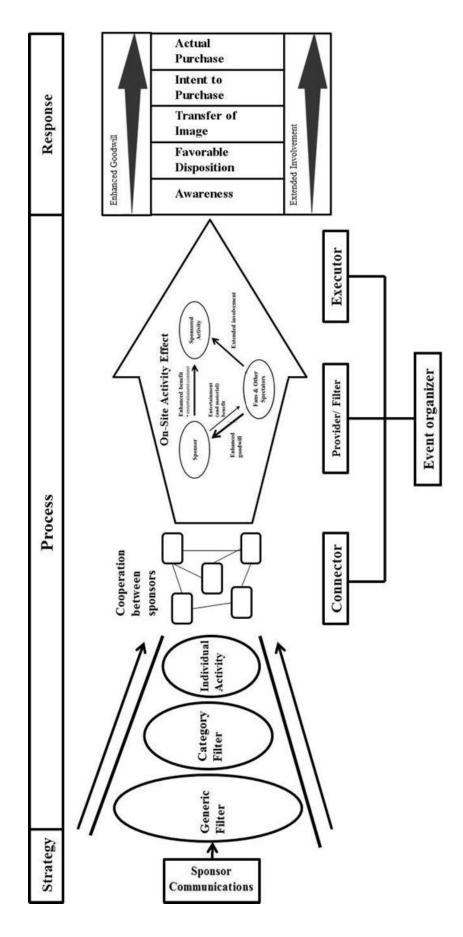


Figure 11. Sponsorship effects process in context of on-site activities

Second, the event organizer provides the time and place for the sponsors' activities but, on the other hand, filters the unwanted or impossible activities. Third, the event organizer works as an executor, taking care of the schedule building and resource controlling. The executed onsite activity itself benefits the event by providing entertainment content but also directly benefits the audience by providing entertainment and material benefit. The direct benefit extends the consumer involvement from the most involved fans to other spectators and, thus, the created goodwill effect towards the sponsor is enhanced. Enhanced goodwill and extended consumer involvement, in turn, strive for more specific consumer response, such as strengthened purchase intentions or actual purchases.

The presented framework is built in the context of on-site activities. However, the event organizer may have some roles in sponsorship leverage activities in general. Especially there may appear cooperation between the sponsors in the case of other sponsorship leverage activities as well. In the following I present the contributions of my study more specifically and give suggestions for future research.

## 7.2. Academic Contribution

The academic contributions of my study can be divided into three parts: 1) the roles of event organizer in regard to sponsorship leverage, 2) categorization of on-site sponsorship activities and establishing their role as sponsorship leverage tools, and 3) on-site activity effect on goodwill and consumer involvement. In this section, I discuss all these three areas in detail.

#### **Roles of Event Organizer**

The three identified roles of the event organizer in regard to sponsorship activities are, to my knowledge, new information for academic literature. Traditionally academic sponsorship literature has considered sponsorship relationships between only two parties at a time; relationship between sponsor and sponsored activity, or relationship between sponsor and consumers. In my work I took into account all three parties simultaneously, which revealed the event organizer's interesting position between the sponsors and consumers. Specifically, the role of event organizer as a connector, i.e. encouraging sponsors to network and cooperate, is an interesting finding. By providing the sponsors with the possibility of cooperation, the event organizer creates an environment where new types of sponsorship leverage activities may emerge. In cooperation with other sponsors the sponsors may be able to combine resources and create a significant, meaningful addition to the event which would not have been possible for an individual sponsor. Networking between the sponsors is, in and of itself, an interesting academic issue, since it opens up several interesting research questions. First, academics might be interested in how typical the connector role is for event organizers and how often this kind of networking between sponsors occurs. On the other hand, academic interest may turn to the nature of networking and its results. For example, future research could investigate whether networking between sponsors has other, more business-related goals, rather than just combining sponsorship resources. It might be possible to find evidence that some companies may actually use sponsorship more as a tool to find business customers from other sponsors, than from the audience.

#### **Categorization of On-Site Sponsorship Activities**

From the existing sponsorship literature I was not able to find an unambiguous definition for on-site activities. However, sponsorship literature included several descriptions of on-site activities as a phenomenon. From these descriptions I was able to build a definition, with which I expect to clarify the concept for future researchers. In the earlier chapter I also presented a rough categorization of on-site sponsorship activities. As I articulated, the purpose is not to give a detailed categorization but rather to illustrate the variety of on-site activity tools. However, this categorization is created according to the interviews and it aims to present well-established on-site activities. The categorization of other activities is definitely needed due to the very innovative forms of some on-site activities. Despite the fact that it is never possible to unambiguously categorize all activities, some researchers could find it interesting to give a more detailed and sophisticated categorization for the tools. This would be welcome to further establish the role of on-site sponsorship activities in academic literature as a part of sponsorship leverage.

One achievement of my study was to find clear support that Uplause Crowd Games really are perceived to be an on-site sponsorship activation tool. It was verified in the discussions with all three interest groups that Uplause Crowd Games clearly have a commercial approach and they were considered as on-site sponsorship activities.

#### **On-Site Activity Effect**

The most important academic finding in my study was that on-site sponsorship activities are likely to benefit the audience directly and, thus, are likely to create enhanced goodwill towards the sponsor and extended involvement towards the sponsored activity. This finding indicates that on-site sponsorship activities are a useful tool for achieving specific consumer response goals, such as strengthening purchase intentions and actual purchases. The importance of the finding is related to the created interaction between the sponsoring company and consumers. By creating meaningful on-site activities, which become an entertaining experience for consumers, the sponsor is able to reach the consumers in a way that is not possible via traditional media. This phenomenon definitely should arouse the interest of academics for future research. I would suggest that future research investigates, in quantitative terms, whether on-site activities are able to significantly enhance goodwill and extend consumer involvement and, thus, result in strengthened purchase intentions and actual purchases. In addition, researchers could focus on gaining further understanding of the perceived personal benefits in forms of entertainment and material provided by on-site sponsorship activities.

To summarize, I suggest that future research focuses on better understanding the interrelationships between sponsors, event organizers and the audience, and especially the roles of event organizers between the sponsors and audience. Moreover, I suggest that researchers focus on the cooperation and networking between sponsors. It is likely that there is significant potential for creating new kinds of meaningful sponsorship activities collectively. Furthermore, there may emerge evidence of other sponsors communication). In addition, I suggest future researchers to adopt my definition of on-site activities and to further continue gaining better understanding of them. Especially the direct benefit to the audience in forms of entertainment and material benefit requires more investigation to better identify the possibly enhancing goodwill and extended consumer involvement. Moreover, the suggested research topics could be extended to the context of sponsorship leverage in general, not only to on-site sponsorship activities.

#### 7.3. Managerial Contribution

#### 7.3.1. Contributions for Marketing Practitioners

As long acknowledged in academic discussions, sponsorship is an established component of the marketing mix. Sponsorship has several unique features which differentiate it from other marketing tools and, thus, marketers should take it into account in their strategic planning. Most importantly, marketers should gain an understanding of the effects mechanisms which make sponsorship unique. As described in my work, sponsorship is able to generate goodwill towards the sponsoring company or brand and this may ultimately lead to consumer response. Consumer response, in turn, may occur in different forms from increasing awareness to actual purchase, according to the intensity of goodwill and fan involvement. Probably the question in marketer's mind here is, how? How to alter consumers' attitudes and, thus, goodwill towards the company, let alone how to make fans more involved with the activity?

The key point here is to include sponsorship as a tool in marketing strategies and to build sponsorship programs to meet the overall objectives. By doing this it should be clear what the primary objectives for the sponsorship programs are. The execution of sponsorship activities may vary significantly if the objective is to increase brand awareness compared to if the objective is to increase purchase intentions. But to find out how sponsorship programs should actually be executed, the marketers should understand the framework of sponsorship effects process. As described in Chapter Four, consumers perceive sponsorship differently at different levels. Only at the individual activity level is sponsorship likely to benefit consumers in a deep, meaningful way and, thus, goodwill may occur. On generic and categorical levels attitudes towards sponsorship are positive but it is not likely to garner consumer response. Understanding the levels at which sponsorship is perceived becomes essential, especially in the process of choosing the sponsorship target. To meet their objectives, a marketer has to carefully consider sponsorship at every level starting from the generic level: whether to do sponsoring or to allocate the resources in other marketing communications which would better meet the objectives. If the company chooses to use sponsorship the next step is to find the most appropriate category. The category can be anything from sports to music festivals or from arts to charitable events. However, the choice here is crucial considering the objectives, since the chosen category has to meet the interests of the target group. After choosing the category, the specific activity comes into question. The variety of activities is enormous so the choice may not be an easy task. However, the choice should reflect the target consumers' interests to best meet the objectives.

The choices at different levels, however, create contingency for the sponsorship success. The choices may be improper, or the timing may be inappropriate. Nevertheless, marketers have a very powerful tool for decreasing the contingencies: sponsorship leverage. As defined in Chapter Three, sponsorship leverage is articulation through other marketing communications to maximize the effects of sponsorship. Sponsorship leverage may occur in many forms, and it can be very innovative. The most frequently occurring leverage tools include advertising, sales promotion, PR and on-site activities but many other forms can be found. The choice of methods has to, again, be derived from the sponsorship objectives. In some cases one specific leverage method is appropriate, but typically firms execute multiple leverage activities simultaneously to meet their objectives.

One of the forms of sponsorship leverage is on-site activities that take place at the sponsored event. The most important contribution of my work for marketing practitioners is, indeed, related to on-site activities. According to my research, on-site activities may provide the audience with significant additional benefit and thus enhance the goodwill effects. On-site sponsorship activities are perceived to benefit the audience in two different forms: creating entertainment and providing material benefit. Entertainment can be created through innovative addition to the event experience. It can be competitions, performances, crowd games or anything which adds entertainment value to the event. On the other hand, material benefit typically consists of free product trials or gifts. To summarize, the perceived benefit created by additional entertainment at the event is likely to enhance the goodwill effect among consumers and, thus, a more specific consumer response may occur.

Another significant feature of on-site activities is their ability to create interaction between consumers and sponsor. Interaction is seen as a particularly positive feature in marketing and it might be rather difficult to achieve, since it requires the marketer and consumer to be close to each other. At the event this condition applies and interaction is possible. Interaction may occur through personal contact, product illustrations or engaging entertainment. The essential feature here is that the consumer is activated to respond immediately to the sponsor's activity. In the best case, consumers respond via product purchase or giving their contact details, but favorable response might be also clapping hands or cheering.

To summarize the contributions of my study to marketing practitioners I recommend searching for new types of sponsorship leverage and, in particular, on-site activities. These may be powerful tools in articulating your sponsorship relation and the link between your company and the sponsored activity. Sponsorship cannot be just passive advertising, since the audience is demanding nowadays. By producing a meaningful, entertaining addition to the sponsored event, the happy audience will thank you with response.

#### 7.3.2. Contributions for Uplause Management

It is said by Close et al. (2006) that "The skillful sponsor inserts its message into the medium while engaging the consumer during and after the event. If the sponsor carefully plans and implements the promotional activity, consumers may view the sponsor's message as part of the event rather than as a marketing-oriented communication." According to my study, this statement is exactly realized by Uplause Crowd Games. The most important contribution of my study for Uplause management is that they have to systematically aim to establish their product's position as a meaningful entertainment component of the events. In this chapter I offer a five step procedure to improve Uplause Crowd Games as on-site activities and to further establish their role as entertainment in events.

- **a.** Find out what the sponsor is aiming for. Offer features which fit the sponsor's targets. For example, a sponsor building awareness could be most interested in basic home team cheering missions. On the other hand, a sponsor aiming for encouraging an audience to sample a product would most likely be into a 'mission' including competitive aspect with prizes.
- **b.** Articulate Uplause Crowd Games' social aspect in events. The term social here refers to the most important social interaction in the events: people go there to spend time with their family and friends. The most meaningful feature in the experience is to see friends and family enjoying the event. If one person in the family enjoys and participates in the Crowd Games, it is likely that the rest of the family will enjoy them as well and probably participate too. Due to their social aspect, Crowd Games will be discussed during and after the event no matter if they are liked or not. This social feature is worth articulating to sponsors. It defines the

social meaning of events and decreases the assumed importance of winning as the most important feature.

- c. Aim to combine other on-site activities under Uplause Crowd Games. There is a trend of sponsors decreasing the amount of sponsored events and focusing on a few key events. This means that the number of various on-site activities is increasing. This challenges the sponsors to create meaningful, high quality activities for the events. Uplause Crowd Games have the ability to increase the status of on-site activities from advertisement to entertainment by combining several on-site activities together. Free product trials or gifts can be shared as prizes for success in games; the prizes can be shared by a sponsor's promo girls at the sponsor's promo tent. Do not aim for activating people after the event, aim for activating people during the event. The activation messages after the missions should encourage audience to take part in other on-site activities and, thus, expose consumers to multiple contacts with the sponsor.
- d. Articulate Uplause Crowd Games' potential in creating, or at least improving, event-sponsor linkage. By making on-site activities a part of the event and its' entertainment, Uplause Crowd Games are able to build the desired event-sponsor linkage. This may be important especially in the case of sponsors which have no natural linkage between the sponsored event. Event-sponsor congruence is seen to improve sponsorship impacts significantly. The sponsor having linkage to the event is easier to remember, and it is most likely to achieve the desired image features from the event.

e. Provide the audience with information about the on-site activities. When activities are good, and considered as entertainment by the audience, they should be articulated to the people beforehand. People will appreciate the information and will actually make the effort to participate the activities. In addition, when openly articulated, sponsorship activities will even further establish their position as true entertainment

By these steps, Uplause Crowd Games are able to produce additional value to all three groups: sponsors, event organizers and audience. Actually, Uplause should aim to broaden the field of consumer activation even further. As O'Keefe et al. (2009) suggests, sponsorship efforts should find opportunities in effective sponsorship leverage activities online as well. As Uplause has already planned, it will expand its consumer activities in mobile and internet applications in near future. Based on my study, I strongly recommend this step. However, to produce meaningful additional value, these new types of activities should still link to other leverage activities and aim for combining them under one phenomenon: Uplause Crowd Activation. This step, according to my interpretation, is crucial for Uplause's long-term success. Below I explain more detailed my future strategic suggestions for Uplause management.

#### **Uplause Crowd Activation**

Based on my analysis and interpretation, Uplause has the potential to develop its offering towards comprehensive sponsorship leverage phenomenon; Uplause Crowd Activation. In my study I discovered that Uplause Crowd Games are rather difficult to precisely define, regardless of whether the respondent in question represents sponsors, event organizers or audience. More than games, Uplause's product was seen as an initiative for cheering and atmosphere creation. Thus, the term "game" might be even confusing in communicating and articulating the phenomenon for stakeholders. Thus, my strong recommendation is that Uplause should change its communication from Uplause Crowd Games to the actual phenomenon: Uplause Crowd Activation. Uplause Crowd Games are, of course, the product of the company but the phenomenon it creates is rather Uplause Crowd Activation.

This recommendation is also supported by the company's desire to expand to new forums, such as mobile and on-line. After these steps are taken, the product offering cannot be communicated with Uplause Crowd Games only but it requires a broader term combining the whole offering. The term Uplause Crowd Activation fits the extended offering as well and appropriately describes the phenomenon. In the picture below I illustrate the possible future role of Uplause Crowd Activation in the context of sponsorship leverage.

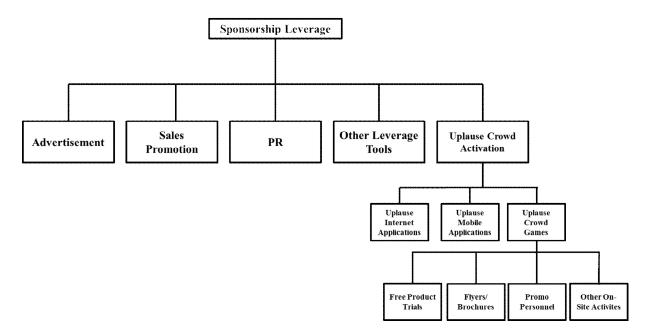


Figure 12. Illustration of the future role of Uplause Crowd Activation

#### 7.4. Conclusions

Sponsorship has established its role as a marketing communication tool during the last three decades and it has also established its position among academics. A strongly agreed upon characteristic of sponsorship is that it requires leverage to maximize its effects upon consumer response. Sponsorship leverage is an articulation of a sponsorship relationship for the consumers via other marketing communications methods. One form of sponsorship leverage is on-site sponsorship activities which take place at the sponsored event itself. According to my empirical study, on-site sponsorship activities have a unique ability to create interaction between the sponsor and event audience. The interaction can be formed by creating meaningful, entertaining sponsorship content for the event. In result, the consumers perceive direct personal benefit from the sponsor, which is likely to lead to enhanced goodwill towards the sponsor and to extended involvement to the sponsored event. In addition, the empirical study revealed three roles of event organizer: 1) connector, 2) provider / filter, and 3) executor. These roles indicate that event organizers are in an important link between the sponsors and the audience. These identified roles have to be understood by the marketing practitioners developing on-site sponsorship activities in events.

The key findings presented above form the academic contributions of the study. The future research recommendations are to concentrate more on the interrelationships between the three groups (sponsors, event organizers and the audience), and especially on networking between event sponsors. In addition, quantitative studies on further validating the effects of on-site activities are recommended. Finally, the study has managerial contributions for marketing practitioners executing sponsorship activities and, more specifically, for Uplause management to improve Uplause Crowd Games as on-site sponsorship activities.

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#### Interviews

- 11.5.2011 Event Organizer, Marketing Coordinator
- 12.5.2011 Sponsor, Lottery, Marketing Manager
- 16.5.2011 Spectator
- 17.5.2011 Spectator
- 18.5.2011 Spectator
- 20.5.2011 Sponsor, Telecom, Marketing Manager
- 21.5.2011 Spectator
- 27.5.2011 Spectator
- 30.5.2011 Sponsor, Brewery, Brand Manager
- 31.5.2011 Event Organizer, Sales and Marketing Director

# **ATTACHMENT 1**

## Semi-structured Interview, Body

Describe your personal event experience in 2010 Karjala Cup.

What kinds of on-site sponsorship activities do you remember from 2010 Karjala Cup?

Describe on-site activities. What are they, what are their objectives, what do they mean for the key interest groups, etc.?

What is the role of event organizer in the event, in your opinion?

What do you remember of Uplause Crowd Games in the event?

Describe Uplause Crowd Games. What are they, what are their objectives, what do they mean for the key interest groups, etc.?