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Sponsorship of interscholastic athletics: An examination of state high school athletic/activity association sponsors

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SPONSORSHIP OF INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETICS: AN EXAMINATION
OF STATE HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC/ACTIVITY
ASSOCIATION SPONSORS

by

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Bachelor of Science
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2002

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2004

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

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ABSTRACT

Sponsorship of Interscholastic Athletics: An Examination of State High School Athletic/Activity Association Sponsors

by

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Dr. Nancy Lough, Examination Committee Chair
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Sport sponsorship has evolved into a vast business enterprise, encompassing sport at all levels. In 2007 alone, spending on sport sponsorship worldwide was approximately \$28 billion with an estimated amount of over \$14 billion being spent in North America (IEG, 2008). Previous empirical research has been conducted to determine why companies choose to become involved in a sport sponsorship relationship. The existing literature on sport sponsorship objectives includes studies that have focused primarily on professional sport, intercollegiate athletics and international sport and sporting events. Despite the previous research conducted in the area of sport sponsorship, there has been a theoretical void in the literature that investigates sport sponsorship at the interscholastic athletic level. Therefore, there is a need to investigate sponsorship objectives at this level of athletic competition because it has yet to be done, and it will be a valuable contribution to the existing literature on sport sponsorship.

The purpose of this study was to examine the use and value of sponsorship in interscholastic athletics. The specific goals of the study include: I.) To examine the sponsorship objectives of sponsors of State High School Athletic Associations; II.) To

examine the similarities and differences of companies involved in state high school athletic association sponsorships; III.) To determine if differences among corporations (size of company, market share, national, state, or regional company) influence the expectations/objectives of corporate sponsors; and IV.) To develop a framework of sponsorship objectives among sponsors of state high school athletic/activity associations to assist in our understanding of education based sport sponsorship relationships.

The methodology that was used was a mixed-methods approach that combined both quantitative and qualitative data analysis. Specifically a two-part survey was employed for use in this investigation. PART I of the survey entitled “Sport Sponsorship Objectives” consisted of seventeen sponsorship objectives designed to measure the level of importance attributed to each sponsorship objective that was scored on a six-point Likert-response scale. Along with the Likert-response items, PART I of the survey also featured three questions in an open-ended format to provide a qualitative aspect to the study. PART II was designed to develop a profile of the sponsors of state high school athletic/activity associations. Purposeful sampling was used to select subjects (sponsors of state high school athletic/activity associations) for this study. Once the surveys were completed, the data gathered was compiled, analyzed, and reported using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Lastly, in order to address for ethical concerns, data collection approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Nevada Las Vegas (UNLV) Office for the Protection of Research Subjects.

Of the 206 surveys emailed to the marketing director at each company / business involved in sponsoring one or more state high school athletic/activity associations for the 2008-2009 academic year, 102 or 49.5% were returned. Ninety-six were completed and usable for a response rate of forty-seven percent (47%).

In general, results revealed that sponsors of state high school athletic/activity associations engage in this sponsorship relationship because they believe there is real value in the teen market. Furthermore, this type of sponsorship, more so than others, was discovered as a means to provide an opportunity of creating and maintaining long-lasting relationships with the teen market. Also, the expanded state-wide exposure and visibility that a state association sponsorship provides was noted as being a key objective for sponsorship. Contrary to literature on sport sponsorship in general results further indicated that there is a philanthropic nature to state high school athletic/activity association sponsorship. Respondents indicated that public service and providing help to local communities were important objectives when considering a sponsorship relationship. Finally, the majority of sponsors indicated that they had a positive sponsorship relationship with the state associations and that they planned on continuing their sponsorship at the same or higher level. The study concludes with a discussion of the results and includes limitations of the study along with recommendations for future research.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Overview of Interscholastic Athletics

State of Interscholastic Athletics:

Interscholastic athletic participation has been a major part of extracurricular offerings for over 100 years in the United States. In the late 1800's, extracurricular activities, including interscholastic athletics, began to be offered for public school students. These nonacademic offerings went through several phases since they first began. In the very beginning, extracurricular student activities were considered to have little benefit to the overall school program. Because of this view of extracurricular activities, schools neither initiated activities nor encouraged outside groups to develop any student-oriented activities (Gholston, 1985).

In the late 1800's and early 1900's however, a shift in the attitude towards student-organized activities began to occur. It was at this time that educators and school personnel began to acknowledge that these extracurricular activities were educationally beneficial. Many of the extracurricular activities, including athletics would soon be organized and administered by the public schools (Gholston, 1985).

The change in attitude toward extracurricular activities was attributed to a commission that advocated reorganizing secondary schools. The Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education (CRSE) outlined Seven Cardinal Principles for guiding public schools. One of the principles called for the development of a program that would educate students on how to productively use their leisure time

(Gholston, 1985). The general trend at this particular time was that there were many students who were not interested in staying in school through high school. As a result, educators decided to give the children something to look forward to and an activity to help expend some of their energy. Many schools appointed directors of leisure activities who were the predecessors of what would be athletic administrators in today's schools (Gholston, 1985). Another significant occurrence during this phase of "passive acceptance" was the development of statewide athletic/activity organizations that would serve as governing agencies for interscholastic athletic contests (Otte, 1997). During this phase, when school leaders began to accept athletics as an extension of school education and there was more structure and leadership from statewide organizations, the number of interscholastic athletic teams subsequently increased.

The next phase, which began in the early 1920s, was described by Gholston (1985) as the period of "active acceptance and encouragement" because school officials were advocating that students take part in various extracurricular activities such as athletics. The creation of the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) in 1920, which has been the national governing body of education-based interscholastic activities ever since, was another highlight of this period. The fourth and most recent phase was one in which interscholastic athletics and other extracurricular activities blended with the traditional academic offerings and thus have grown into a core part of the total academic curriculum.

Educational Philosophy of Interscholastic Athletics:

Today, interscholastic athletics are prominent in virtually every American community, from small rural towns to metropolitan areas. In each state, interscholastic athletic teams from public and private schools compete in a variety of sports for league, sectional (regional), and state championships. The athletic contests including notable student-athletes and coaches are now publicized through media outlets such as newspapers, television, radio, and internet web-sites that are devoted entirely to interscholastic athletics. Along with developing a prominent place in American society, interscholastic athletics has attained an all-time high for number of student-athletes involved. In a recent study performed by the NFHS, it was discovered that the participation rates among interscholastic athletics had increased for the eighteenth consecutive year (Gillis, 2007). The 2006-07 High School Athletics Participation Survey revealed that there were 7.3 million participants in high school sports, with the girls' participation rate (over 3 million) being the highest it has ever been, while the boys' participation rate (over 4,300,000) was higher than it had been during any other year over the past 27 years (Gillis, 2007).

All of the aforementioned positive aspects of interscholastic athletics along with its' prominent place and popularity in American society are due primarily to what takes place on athletic fields or gymnasiums between student-athletes and athletic coaches. However, the NFHS believes that extracurricular activities such as athletics should first and foremost support academic achievement and be an integral part of the overall educational program rather than placing an emphasis on winning and losing athletic contests. The NFHS defines co-curricular activities as "not a

diversion but rather an extension of a good educational program that teaches lifelong lessons as important as those taught in the classroom” (NFHS, 2007 p.2). To provide support for the educational mission of the NFHS throughout the United States, each state plus the District of Columbia has their own athletic/activity association which serves as a member association of the NFHS. The state athletic/activity associations administer and govern education-based interscholastic activities in their respective state along with promoting and supporting the educational values of extracurricular activities (NFHS, 2006).

Escalating Costs of Interscholastic Athletic Programs:

Although participation rates of interscholastic student athletes are continually increasing, many interscholastic athletic departments in the United States are facing a reduction in athletic budgets. These reductions have been due to minimal government funding and state budget cuts that have had an impact on school districts, high school athletic departments, and state high school athletic/activity associations (McFarland, 2002; Forsyth, 1995). This is due in large part because athletics is considered an extracurricular function of the school system, therefore receiving less attention during budget allocations. Rising costs include such elements as salaries, insurance, special programs, transportation expenses, special education needs, infrastructure, supplies, equipment, etc. (Pennington, 2004).

With interscholastic athletics and activities programs becoming more expensive to maintain, school officials have found that their traditional sources of revenue, such as ticket sales from football and basketball games, team fundraisers, booster clubs, concession sales and participation fees (pay-to-play), have not been

enough to counter the reduction in athletic budgets (McFarland, 2002). With these customary sources of revenue for interscholastic athletics not generating enough income, there has become a need for high school athletic departments and High School State Associations to seek alternative revenue sources.

Revenue Streams:

In order to cope with the difficult task of dealing with the dwindling budgets of school districts and rising costs of operating interscholastic athletic programs, many high school athletic departments and state high school athletic/activity associations have turned to businesses/corporations for sponsorships to offset rising costs. From the middle to late 1980's, when sponsorship of interscholastic athletics began, corporate involvement of interscholastic athletics has increased steadily to the point that it now represents one of the fastest-growing areas in all of corporate marketing (Fisher, 2002). Following the footsteps of professional sport and intercollegiate athletics, interscholastic athletics has incorporated sponsorship so much into the high school sport experience that it has become a permanent fixture of the teenage sporting life (McFarland, 2002).

Interscholastic athletic departments across the country are now selling broadcast opportunities to local radio and television stations; seeking corporations who will agree to contribute financially in return for facility or event naming rights; signing deals with food and beverage companies to distribute their product exclusively in exchange for new electronic scoreboards, uniforms, or equipment; and soliciting advertising revenue from game programs, field and arena signage, locker

rooms, bus and rooftop signage, and halftime promotions (Fischl, 1997; Montano; Morrison, 1998).

Along with individual high school athletic departments seeking sponsors to assist with the operation of athletic programs, sponsors are also being sought for interscholastic sport at the statewide and national levels. Since the initial sponsorship deal in 1988 with the Quaker Oats Company's Gatorade beverage, the NFHS and state high school athletic/activity associations have become involved in numerous sponsorship deals. Some of the more highly publicized NFHS sponsorship deals include the following: developing the first national television package for high-school athletics made possible by sponsors; promotional ventures involving the federation's magazines and drug-awareness programs; paid endorsements by high-school coaches for athletic gear; and most recently creating the first-ever national event hosted by the NFHS in 2006, "T-Mobile Invitational" high school basketball tournament (Walsh, 1990; NFHS, 2006). Sponsorship has become such an integral part of the NFHS and the programs the association offers that a marketing department was developed to design corporate partnerships and sponsorship programs to meet specific marketing goals and objectives of businesses and corporations interested in sponsoring education-based interscholastic activities.

Sport Sponsorship Defined:

Sponsorship has been operationally defined in several different ways in the literature. Meenaghan's (1984) definition is the most widely used: "Sponsorship can be regarded as the provision of assistance either financial or in-kind to an activity by a commercial organization for the purpose of achieving commercial objectives" (p.

9). Another commonly used definition was coined by Sleight (1989) who defined sponsorship as a “business relationship between a provider of funds, resources or services and an individual, event or organization which offers in return some rights and association that may be used for commercial advantage” (p. 19). Much like the definition of sponsorship, sport sponsorship has been defined numerous ways.

However, Sandler and Shani (1993) coined the following widely accepted definition of sport sponsorship:

Sport sponsorship is the provision of resources (i.e., money, people, equipment) by an organization directly to an event or activity in exchange for a direct association to the event or activity. The providing organization can then use this direct association to achieve their corporate, marketing, or media objectives” (p. 9).

Sport sponsorship is one of the fastest growing areas in sport marketing and has become a multi-billion dollar business with the majority of the growth occurring during the end of the 20th century (Meenaghan, 1994; Mills, 1996). It was in the 1990’s when sport sponsorship reached unprecedented levels. Mahony and Howard (2001) reported that more than \$5.1 billion were invested in sport sponsorship in the North American sport industry in 1998 alone. Sport sponsorship has continued to grow significantly in both North America and worldwide. In 2001, it was reported by the International Event Group’s (IEG) Sponsorship Report that corporations around the globe spent more than \$23.6 billion sponsoring sports, arts, entertainment, and cause-related events (IEG, 2001). Global spending on sponsorship increased by 2004 with an estimated \$28 billion reportedly spent. North American sponsor’s expenditures amounted to an estimated \$11 billion (IEG, 2004). Because of this significant growth in sport sponsorship, it has become an effective revenue producer

for sport organizations at all levels including professional, intercollegiate, amateur and interscholastic sport (IEG, 2001).

History and Evolution of Sponsorship:

Sponsorship during the early stages of the 1960s and 1970s, as described by Wilkinson (1993), was not viewed as something that helped companies achieve their marketing or corporate objectives because it was primarily philanthropic in nature. More recently, however, the focus of sponsorship suggests that it is directed primarily on the “bottom line.” Wilkinson (1993) contended that philanthropy is no longer a corporate reason for selecting sponsorship opportunities. Instead, it was discovered that companies expected sponsorship opportunities to offer product/service exclusivity, opportunities to increase brand awareness, and to reinforce company image. These companies were more interested in events that enabled them to target specific market segments in order to ultimately increase sales. Dolphin (2003, p. 176) supported Wilkinson’s (1993) contention by suggesting that, while no “enduring rigorous definition of sponsorship” has been coined, the rationale for sport sponsorship has evolved from its predominantly philanthropic and societal foundations to a strategic corporate marketing tactic.

The strategic marketing tactics that drive corporations to engage in sport sponsorship include the following goals, all of which reflect corporations’ commercial interests rather than a philanthropic approach to sponsorship: increase revenue through brand loyalty, increase brand awareness, gain access to new target markets, enhance brand image, increase public awareness of the company, get a return on investment, and build relationships with consumers and clients (Copeland,

Frisby, & McCarville, 1996; Hartland, Skinner, & Griffiths, 2005; Komoroski & Biemond, 1996; Lough, 1996). Furthermore, Lough and Irwin (2001) discovered that companies do not believe demonstrating corporate philanthropy as a primary reason for engaging in sport sponsorship. Instead, sport sponsors are now more likely to engage in sponsorship deals because it will ultimately lead to increased sales and influence brand market share (Lough & Irwin, 2001).

Objectives of Sponsors:

The need to identify and set various types of objectives that corporations have for their sponsorship programs has been a dominant theme in much of the literature on sport sponsorship. Meenaghan (1984) developed a list of sponsorship objectives, which includes corporate and product-related objectives. These sponsorship objectives include the following: broad corporate objectives that are mainly directed towards public relations; product-related objectives; sales objectives; media coverage; guest hospitality; and personal objectives, which relate to the particular interest of the corporation's chief executive. It was also noted that a single sponsor may fulfill multiple objectives (Meenaghan, 1984). More recently, Shank (2005) identified the following six primary sponsorship objectives: awareness, competition, reaching target markets, relationship building, image building, and sales increases.

In terms of sponsorship specific to a sport setting, several researchers have developed prevalent sponsorship objectives. Thwaites and Carruthers (1998) surveyed companies to assess the most important reasons to enter into a sport sponsorship agreement. The top ten responses were: increase public awareness; alter public perception; enhance company image; increase target market awareness;

enhance staff motivation; increase sales; build business relationships; increase media attention; build guest hospitality; and community involvement. Irwin and Sutton (1994) went on to divide sport sponsorship objectives into four distinct categories: position enhancement; status enhancement; trade networking; and public service. Lough, Irwin, and Short (2000) added social responsibility and corporate philanthropy into the previous research of Thwaites and Carruthers (1998). Additionally, in a more recent study, Lough and Irwin (2001) found results that mirrored the sport sponsorship objectives identified by Thwaites and Carruthers (1998). Specifically, the four main objectives according to the sport sponsors they surveyed included the following: increasing sales/market share; increasing target market awareness; enhancing general company image; and increasing public awareness of the company (Lough & Irwin, 2001).

Why Sponsorship of Interscholastic Sports is Attractive to Sponsors:

With interscholastic athletics gaining more exposure through national tournaments, cable television, and the Internet, high school sport has become very attractive to corporate sponsors. Sponsors view interscholastic athletics as a form of “grassroots sponsorship” because it allows for an opportunity to reach consumers (either as participants or spectators) at the local, community levels. The term “grassroots” is used as a synonym for “community” or “local”. Thus, when defining grassroots sponsorship and/or marketing, it is described as efforts focused on reaching consumers or potential consumers at the local level as opposed to targeting consumers on the national level (Greenwald, 1997). The increased exposure local or community markets that high school sports offers along with an opportunity to infiltrate untapped

markets heightens the marketing value for sponsoring companies and allows for them to gain an advantage on their competition. According to David Carter of the Sports Marketing Group, “Companies desperately want to get into high schools, because they know they are getting a captive audience with disposable income that is about to make decisions of lifelong preference, like Coke versus Pepsi” (Pennington, 2004, p. 25). Along with having the opportunity to access young potential customers for the long-term benefits, interscholastic athletic sponsorship is also appealing to companies/businesses because it is considered as a market where a direct message can be conveyed because is less infiltrated and uncluttered (Hall & Gibson, 2005). Judith Thomas, the former marketing director for the NFHS, supported many sponsors’ views of interscholastic athletic sponsorship by saying “It’s an unlimited, untapped market and it is in places companies often can not easily reach. But on any given Friday night, in all those middle-American flyover states, sitting in high school football stadiums are millions of people” (Pennington, 2004, p. 25).

Philosophical Differences of Interscholastic Sport Sponsorship:

Despite the positive aspects associated with the involvement of sponsors and interscholastic athletics, the relationship remains controversial. Primarily due to the educational values and mission established by the NFHS, education-based interscholastic athletics are widely believed to be one of the last forms of amateur sport in the United States (Cohen, 1988). Enriching each student’s educational experiences, promoting academic achievement, and preparing student-athletes for lifelong success are some of the principle objectives, which characterize interscholastic athletics as amateur sports. With the rapid increase of corporate

involvement in interscholastic athletics, there is a belief among critics that this corporate involvement is not in line with the basic principles of interscholastic athletics. The concern is the shifting of priorities away from the academic and educational mission. Specifically, these critics of corporate involvement suggest that it professionalizes high school sport by placing an emphasis on young athletes to prioritize winning over academic achievement. In essence, this allows sponsors to become involved with interscholastic athletics in a way that is viewed as inconsistent with the core educational values of interscholastic athletics (Pennington, 2004).

Statement of the Problem:

Sport sponsorship has become a multi-billion dollar industry. Thus, sport sponsorship has quickly become increasingly more important in the marketing mix for many non-sport businesses (Cornwell, 1995). With the increasing impact and presence sponsorship has had in the sport industry, there has been a great deal of literature in recent years regarding sport sponsorship. The existing literature on sport sponsorship includes studies that have focused on professional sport, intercollegiate athletics and international sport and sporting events, while interscholastic sport has gone unnoticed.

Interscholastic athletics, which are considered education-based sports, are widely thought of as one of the last forms of amateur sport in the United States. Cohen (1988) suggested that the NFHS core values, stress the importance of interscholastic athletics enhancing each student's educational experience and promoting student academic achievement, are what classify them as true amateur sports. Given the core values associated with interscholastic athletics, the

development of an instrument that analyzes sponsors' objectives of interscholastic athletics, which are believed to be unique to education-based sport, was developed. The instrument featured sponsorship objectives drawn from both current corporate-related/commercial objectives utilized in numerous sport sponsorship studies. These corporate-related/commercial objectives included the following: reaching specific target markets; an opportunity to infiltrate new untapped markets; positioning; enhancing company image; blocking competition; visibility; signage opportunities; and having the title sponsorship (Apostolopoulou & Papadimitriou, 2004; Copeland, Frisby, & McCarville, 1996; Daniels, Baker, Backman, & Backman, 2007; Irwin, 1993; Kuzma, Shanklin, & McCally Jr., 1993; Lough & Irwin 2001; Ludwig & Karabetsos, 1999; Shank, 1993; Shank, 2005; Stotlar, 1993; Stotlar, 1999; Thwaites, 1995). Other, earlier forms of sponsorship objectives believed to be more philanthropic in nature were included on the instrument as well. Examples of these philanthropic objectives include, but are not limited to the following: corporate philanthropy; social responsibility; public service; supporting student-athletes; community involvement and goodwill (Irwin & Sutton, 1994).

Theoretical Framework:

Exchange theory provides a theoretical framework to analyze both the characteristics of companies involved in sponsoring sport organizations as well as the sponsorship objectives of companies involved in sport sponsorship. The underlying principle of exchange theory is that it represents an exchange relationship where at least two parties (the sports organization and the sponsor) exchange resources. While the resources exchanged do not have to be tangible, the resources offered by each

party must be valued by the reciprocating partner. In order for an exchange relationship between two parties to occur successfully and be maintained over time, both sponsors and the sport organizations need to understand their exchange partner's intentions prior to agreeing to a sponsorship relationship (McCarville & Copeland, 1994). In the sport context, corporations or businesses usually provide revenue while sport organizations offer an opportunity for exposure and an association with the sport property.

Exchange theory offers an appropriate theoretical framework for this study because it explains why an exchange is likely to occur between a business/company and a sport organization. Thus, exchange theory provides a foundation for developing a study that investigates the characteristics of companies who sponsor sport organizations. It also provides a basis for examining sponsorship objectives of companies who sponsor sport organizations. To date there has been considerable empirical research that focused on both sport sponsorship and exchange theory including Copeland (1991), Irwin and Sutton (1994), Lough and Irwin (2001), McCarville and Copeland (1994), Lough (1996), Sawyer (1997), and Lough, Irwin, and Short (2000). However, there is a theoretical void of empirical research on sponsorship within interscholastic sport. Because of this, there is a need for a study that provides insight and theoretical analysis on sponsorship at the interscholastic athletic level that will contribute to the sport sponsorship literature. Although this study does not set out to examine exchange theory specifically, the theoretical framework can be considered a guide for examining the relationship between objectives and characteristics of companies sponsoring interscholastic athletic

organizations and programs. The results of this study will provide data that can be used to better understand the objectives and characteristics of companies sponsoring state high school athletic/activity associations.

Purpose of the Study

Given the growing significance of corporate sport sponsorship along with the lack of empirical research on sponsorship within interscholastic sport, the need exists for a study that focuses on the objectives of sport sponsorship sought through relationships with state high school athletic associations. Therefore the purpose of this study was to examine the use and value of sponsorship in interscholastic athletics. The specific goals of the study included: I.) To examine the sponsorship objectives of sponsors of State High School Athletic Associations; II.) To examine the similarities and differences of companies involved in state high school athletic association sponsorships; III.) To determine how the corporate profile influences the objectives of corporate sponsors; and IV.) To develop a framework for sponsorship of state high school athletic/activity associations to assist in our understanding of education based sport sponsorship relationships.

This study will expand on the existing literature on corporate sport sponsorship by providing an understanding of corporate sport sponsorship objectives of state high school athletic/activity association sponsors. The rationale for sponsors that invest in interscholastic sport is likely to vary from the more established sport sponsorship relationships. In order to achieve the purpose of the study, the following research questions are proposed:

RQ #1: What are the most important sponsorship objectives of sponsors of state high school athletic/activity associations?

RQ #2: What are the common characteristics and differences of companies involved in state high school athletic/activity association sponsorships?

RQ #3: How do company characteristics influence the objectives of the sponsorship relationship?

RQ #4: Can a theoretical framework of interscholastic sport sponsorship be developed to assist in our understanding of education based sport sponsorship relationships?

Delimitations:

1. This study was delimited to companies sponsoring state high school athletic/activity associations for the 2008-2009 academic year.
2. Attributes identified in the sport sponsorship literature are reflective and valid measures of objectives and benefits of sport sponsorship.
3. The framework and understanding of sport sponsorship objectives, particularly at the interscholastic athletic level can be enhanced upon completion of this study.
4. Companies selected for this study will be selected on the probability of “purposeful sampling” as defined by McMillan (2004). In this sense, only select companies (sponsors) will be chosen based on which ones will be beneficial and pertinent to this study. The list of sponsors for each state high school athletic/activity association is provided through the NFHS website.

Limitations:

1. Company policies on confidentiality may impact the respondent’s ability to reveal information requested for this study.
2. Participants/companies who do not respond could affect the findings of this study.
3. The exploratory nature of a study such as this due to the lack of prior empirical research that focused on sponsorship of interscholastic athletics does not allow an opportunity to compare findings against.
4. Timeframe for the study allows for only a snapshot of the current situation. As the sport sponsorship literature indicates, the objectives of companies sponsoring sports has changed from being philanthropic in nature to being

driven by the “bottom line” (Wilkinson, 1993). With this in mind, what this study reveals could change over time depending on various factors such as the economy.

Significance of the Study

The importance of sponsorship in the marketing mix as a promotional activity that companies utilize to achieve their organizational marketing strategies has been well established with the increasing amount of money spent each year on sponsorship (Marshall & Cook, 1992; Meenaghan, 2001). For example, in 2004 an estimated \$28 billion with \$11 billion being spent in North America alone was spent worldwide on sponsorship. This was an increase from the \$26 billion that was spent in 2003 (IEG, 2004). According to IEG (2004), approximately 69% of that \$11 billion spent on sponsorship was dedicated to sponsor sporting events. Because of the continual increase in the amount of money spent on sport sponsorship, it has now become one of the fastest growing areas in sport marketing (Mills, 1996).

With the emergence and rapid growth of sport sponsorship and the impact on the sport industry, scholars have examined sport sponsorship extensively. In particular, research in the area of sport sponsorship has flourished in the professional, intercollegiate, and Olympic arenas with scholars examining numerous aspects of sport sponsorship at each of these three levels of sport (Apostolopoulou & Papadimitriou, 2004; Copeland, Frisby, & McCarville, 1996; Daniels, Baker, Backman, & Backman, 2007; Irwin, 1993; Kuzma, Shanklin, & McCally Jr., 1993; Lough & Irwin 2001; Ludwig & Karabetsos, 1999; Shank, 1993; Shank, 2005; Stotlar, 1993; Stotlar, 1999; Thwaites, 1995).

Although there has been research conducted in the area of sport sponsorship at the professional, intercollegiate, and Olympic levels, there has been a theoretical void in the literature that investigates sport sponsorship at another level of competition in our sporting society. Sport sponsorship of interscholastic athletics, which in 2006-07 had participation figures of 7.3 million student-athletes, has been an aspect of sport sponsorship that has been overlooked. It also must be noted that sponsorship of interscholastic sport has been considered an area of little significance because high school sport was not considered a major component of the sport industry. Yet, sport sponsorship has now become an indelible aspect of high school student's athletic experience to the point that it is common place throughout high schools across the United States (McFarland, 2002).

Because sponsorship has become increasingly engrained in interscholastic athletics, investigating sponsorship at this level of athletic competition will be a valuable contribution to the existing literature on sport sponsorship. Specifically, this study will identify the objectives and benefits of sponsors of state high school athletic/activity associations. Furthermore, the development of a theoretical framework of sponsorship objectives will attempt to assist in the understanding of education-based sport sponsorship relationships. To date, sponsorship objectives have been increasingly market oriented with return on investment as the most important characteristic in determining sponsor retention. An examination of sponsorship that seeks to align with an educationally based sport property will therefore contribute to the literature in a new and unique way. By identifying the objectives and benefits that these sponsors believe to be important, the opportunity exists to improve the

relationship between the sport sponsors and the athletic associations in ways that could be mutually beneficial.

Research Design

In order to address the focus of the research, a two-part survey was designed. The survey was based on existing surveys that have been utilized to analyze sport sponsorship objectives in professional, Olympic, and/or intercollegiate athletics. However, the survey was modified based on the existing sport sponsorship literature to accurately measure relevant sponsorship objectives at the interscholastic athletic level. In order to ensure validity and reliability, five dissertation committee members including scholars in the discipline of sport marketing, marketing directors at the intercollegiate and interscholastic athletic levels along with interscholastic athletic administrators of various state high school athletic/activity associations, reviewed the modified survey. The first part was designed to develop a profile of the sponsors of state high school athletic/activity associations. The second part of the survey was developed to examine the sponsor's perspectives concerning the objectives sought through the sport sponsorship relationship.

The profile section of the survey consisted of questions pertaining to the characteristics of the sponsors. The characteristics on which each question was formulated stemmed from the review of sport sponsorship literature. Included in this section were questions about: the size of the company; the company's market share; whether it is a national, regional, statewide, or local company; what type of company it is (what industry it is involved with); the company's history of sport sponsorship;

their length of sponsorship agreement with the state high school athletic/activity association; and their level of sponsorship agreement.

The second part of the survey probed the sponsors to assess their perspectives on the objectives of sport sponsorship. These questions were scored on a six-point Likert scale to indicate both the importance of the objectives of sport sponsorship. Six-point Likert scales are said to increase item homogeneity to surveys, which is traditionally estimated as internal consistency reliability (Alliger & Williams, 1992). This section also featured a number of questions in an open-ended format that permitted the respondent an opportunity to expand on their thoughts and add some depth to the survey results.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms were used:

National Federation of High Schools Association (NFHS): Governing body of interscholastic athletics and activity programs in the United States. The NFHS provides leadership for the administration of education-based interscholastic athletics and activities which support academic achievement, good citizenship and equitable opportunities (National Federation of High School Handbook, 2006-07).

Exchange Theory: Represents an exchange relationship where at least two parties exchange resources. While the resources exchanged do not have to be tangible, the resources offered by each party must be valued by the reciprocating partner (McCarville & Copeland, 1994).

Grassroots Sports: Sporting events and programs intended for community members (either as participants or spectators) at the local level (Greenwald, 1997).

Grassroots Sponsorship: Focuses on reaching consumers or potential consumers at the local level as opposed to targeting consumers on the national level. Grassroots sponsorship programs are met at the local level with the direct consumer with the goal of associating with the community, with a medium other than the media (Greenwald, 1997).

Interscholastic Athletics: Sports and games organized and sanctioned by secondary schools (high schools). Interscholastic athletics are governed by the National Federation of High Schools (NFHS).

Philanthropy: The act of donating money, goods, services, time, and/or effort to support a socially beneficial cause with a defined objective and with no financial or material reward to the donor (Greenwald, 1997).

Relationship Marketing: Creating, maintaining, and enhancing strong, value-laden relationships with customers and other stakeholders (Shank, 2007).

Sponsor: An entity that pays a property for the right to promote itself and its products or services in association with the property (IEG, 1999).

Sponsorship: The provision of assistance either financial or in-kind to an activity by a commercial organization for the purpose of achieving commercial objectives (Meenaghan, 1984, p. 9).

Sport Sponsorship: Sport Sponsorship is the provision of resources (i.e. money, people, equipment) by an organization directly to an event or activity in exchange for a direct association to the event or activity. The providing organization can then use this direct association to achieve their corporate, marketing, or media objective (Sandler & Shani, 1993, p. 9).

Sport Sponsorship Proposal Evaluation Model (SPEM): Described as a theoretical screening instrument that includes up-to-date sport sponsorship criteria as indicated by the literature to be desired by corporate sport sponsors that offers a unique sport sponsorship evaluation scoring methodology (Irwin & Assimakopoulos, 1992).

State High School Athletic/Activity Associations: Active members of the National Federation of High Schools Association. Responsible for sponsoring, directing, and developing athletics/activities; conducting post-season tournaments; regulation of athletic officials in their state; and service to the member schools in their state (NFHS, 2006).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sport Sponsorship has evolved into a vast business enterprise, encompassing sport at all levels. In 2007 alone, spending on sport sponsorship worldwide was approximately \$28 billion with an estimated amount of over \$14 billion being spent in North America (IEG, 2008). As interscholastic athletic departments across the nation and state high school athletic/activity associations are continually faced with rising costs, both are relying more heavily on sponsorship as a means of successfully financing their sports programs and organizations (Forsyth, 1995). Because of this, high school athletic departments and state high school athletic/activity associations have turned to sponsorship to help fund interscholastic athletic programs and events. As a result, companies are increasingly becoming involved in the sponsorship of interscholastic athletic programs and organizations.

This review of literature focused on interscholastic athletics, sponsorship, along with the role sponsorship has played in sport and currently has in interscholastic athletics. The following review of literature consists of the specific areas: education-based interscholastic athletics, sponsorship, sport sponsorship, sport sponsorship objectives, and sponsorship of education-based interscholastic athletics.

Interscholastic Athletics

Interscholastic athletics have played an important role and have filled a significant need in American society ever since their emergence during the latter half

of the nineteenth century. Since the very beginning, interscholastic athletics has gone through different stages. The earliest stages of interscholastic athletics in America were very similar to intercollegiate athletics in that they were initially organized and directed by students. High school students at Worcester, Massachusetts High School inaugurated interscholastic athletics by forming a baseball team in 1859. Run much like club sports teams, students recruited members for their teams and organized practices and competitions. Although some New England boarding schools, public schools in Philadelphia and Buffalo, and private academies in Chicago fielded teams during the 1860s, interscholastic athletics would not be officially run by schools for a few more years. School officials did not become involved with the operation of sports at the high school level or encourage their participation because they were not considered to be a beneficial aspect of the overall school program (Gholston, 1985).

The second phase, referred to as an “era of passive acceptance” by Gholston (1985, p. 18) took place in the late 1800’s and early 1900’s. Although athletic pursuits had been in existence for many years due to students organizing and operating them without assistance from school administration, a passive acceptance of extracurricular activities such as athletics would characterize this phase. After years of not acknowledging or supporting extracurricular activities that were considered nonacademic, school officials decided that athletics and other extracurricular pursuits could provide valuable experiences for students. This acceptance of extracurricular activities by school officials came in large part due to a federal commission that studied school reorganization. The Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education (CRSE) developed The Seven Cardinal

Principles that would guide public schools in the twentieth century. One of the principles directed schools to provide a format for preparing students to use their recreational time wisely. This directive led many school districts to appoint a director of leisure activities, who currently would be considered an athletic administrator (Gholston, 1985).

During this “passive acceptance” phase in the progression of interscholastic athletics was the creation of statewide athletic/activity organizations in Wisconsin and Michigan as governing agencies for interscholastic athletic programs and contests (Otte, 1997). Other states such as New York organized high school programs based on existing collegiate models of the time. The New York Public School Athletic League began in 1903 under the support of the Amateur Athletic Union, the National Amateur Athletic Association, and several newspapers. Students competed in track, football, baseball, basketball, soccer, cross-country racing, swimming, ice skating, roller skating, and rifle shooting (Gorn, 1993). With the formal structuring of interscholastic athletics in many areas, the number of high school athletic teams and offerings grew immensely. City and county leagues crowned champions in baseball, football, and basketball, and some states even organized statewide tournaments for major sports (Otte, 1997).

The third phase began in the early 1920s and has continued through the 1960s. Gholston (1985) has described this phase as the period of “active acceptance and encouragement” (p. 19). Schools gradually merged outside clubs and activities into their regular programs and students were strongly encouraged to participate in a wide variety of student activities including athletics (Gholston, 1985). More state

athletic/activity associations were developed to regulate school programs and students were offered incentives or required to join some type of extracurricular activity.

The year 1920 also marked the year that the National Federation of High Schools (NFHS), the national governing body of education-based interscholastic activities, opened its doors. Since its' inception, the NFHS, from its' national headquarters in Indianapolis, Indiana has preserved the educational integrity of athletics. The NFHS strives to serve its members, related professional organizations, and students by providing leadership for the administration of education-based interscholastic activities, which support academic achievement, good citizenship and equitable opportunities (NFHS, 2006).

Along with providing leadership for the administration of education-based interscholastic activities in the United States, the NFHS has provided the following services since the association was developed: promoting the educational values of education-based interscholastic activities; developing and publishing rules of competition for most high school sports and activities in the United States; sponsoring meetings; and providing professional development and educational opportunities for interscholastic athletic administrators and coaches among various other duties to support education-based interscholastic activities in the United States (NFHS, 2006).

Member associations of the NFHS include state athletic/activity associations in every state in the United States plus the District of Columbia along with affiliate memberships from interscholastic state athletic/activity associations in Guam, St. Croix, Saint Thomas-Saint Johns, and various regions of Canada (NFHS, 2006-2007 Handbook). For the purpose of providing a geographic representation in the

governance structures of the NFHS, the NFHS is divided into eight geographic sections according to the states' location in the United States. The eight geographic sections of the NFHS include the following: Northeast; Mideast; South; Central; Midwest; Southwest; West; and Northwest (NFHS, 2006). Similar to the purposes of the first statewide athletic/activity organizations, the various state athletic/activity associations administer and govern education-based interscholastic sport and fine arts programs in their respective states (Otte, 1997). Each state athletic/activity association typically is responsible for, but not limited to the following: sponsoring, directing, and developing athletics/activities; promoting and supporting the educational values of education-based interscholastic activities; conducting post-season tournaments; regulation of athletic officials in their state; and service to the member schools in their state (NFHS, 2006).

The fourth and most current phase of interscholastic athletics has been characterized as a blending of academic and extracurricular areas into a total school program (Gholston, 1985). Many schools now offer academic credit and special incentives for participation in extracurricular activities. This phase has also been characterized by the addition of community interest in interscholastic sports. Parents as well as teachers, administrators, students, and community members have taken great pride in feeling some form of ownership in their school's athletic programs (Gholston, 1985). Much like intercollegiate athletics, many schools developed booster clubs that promote and sponsor school events. Additionally, athletic programs have begun to operate almost year-round with numerous off-season and summer activities such as conditioning, summer leagues, and camps.

Another trend of interscholastic sports during this current phase has been the continued growth in participation amongst today's student-athletes. The most recent study on participation rates of interscholastic athletes revealed that high school athletic participation continues to increase in the United States. According to the 2006-07 High School Athletics Participation Survey conducted by the NFHS, there were 7.3 million participants in high school sports. This was the eighteenth consecutive year that the number of student participants in interscholastic athletics had increased (Gillis, 2007). In addition to the overall numbers, girls' participation exceeded three million for the first time, while the boys' participation total of 4,321,103 was the highest participation in the past twenty-nine years. Through the survey, it was also determined that 54.2 percent of students enrolled in high schools participated in athletics (Gillis, 2007). These current participation figures reflect the popularity of interscholastic sports and support the NFHS 2005-2008 Strategic Plan, which focused on providing stronger leadership and support for high school athletics and fine arts activities (Gillis, 2007).

Educational Philosophy of Interscholastic Athletics:

Interscholastic athletics have experienced significant growth since their origination as student-run activities to something that have become an indelible feature of a student's school experience and reached unprecedented levels of popularity among student-athletes and supporters of interscholastic sports. The growth is evident in seeing how much interscholastic athletics evolved during the aforementioned four phases of interscholastic athletics as described by Gholston (1985). Despite this growth from recreational activities that were originally rejected

by school officials to its' current state of being a prominent aspect of American society, the mission of education-based interscholastic activities as stated by the NFHS has not changed from emphasizing the educational aspects of participating in interscholastic athletics.

The NFHS believes that co-curricular interscholastic athletic and activity programs enrich student's educational experience and promote student academic achievement, along with promoting citizenship and sportsmanship. Co-curricular activities were defined by the NFHS as "not a diversion but rather an extension of a good educational program that teaches lifelong lessons as important as those taught in the classroom (NFHS, 2007 p.2)." The NFHS offered three specific benefits of co-curricular activities.

- 1) Co-curricular activities support the academic mission of the school. The activities are not a diversion but rather an extension of a good educational program.
- 2) Co-curricular activities are inherently educational. Programs provide valuable lessons for practical situations. Examples include teamwork, sportsmanship, winning and losing, and hard work. Through participation, students learn self-discipline, build self-confidence, and develop skills to cope with competitive situations. These are the qualities the public expects schools to teach students, so that they may become responsible adults and productive citizens.
- 3) Co-curricular activities foster success in later life. Participation in high school activities is often a predictor of later success (NFHS, 2007, p. 2).

Escalating Costs of Interscholastic Athletic Programs:

Despite the tremendous growth interscholastic sports have experienced since their inception and its' current popularity as evidenced by participation rates and its prominence in American communities, there is growing pressure in the United States to reduce athletic programs. Extracurricular activities such as athletics and clubs, along with fine arts programs such as speech, debate, music, and theatre offered in our nation's school districts have suffered due to budget reductions and minimal government support. These types of programs and activities are considered costly to school districts that are already strapped by a myriad of financial constraints. The specific financial concerns include, but are not limited to such expenses such as rising personnel costs (faculty and staff salaries), special education needs, insurance, infrastructure, special programs, transportation, supplies, equipment, etc. (Pennington, 2004). Because athletics is classified as an extracurricular function of the school system, if school districts are faced with cutting budgets, extracurricular activities and fine arts programs are typically the first to go in favor of core curriculum subjects like math, reading, or science programs (Forsyth, 1995).

The lack of government funding as well as state budget cuts have not only impacted local school districts, but have also had an impact on high school state athletic/activity associations. According to John Gillis, Assistant to the Director of the NFHS, "each high school state association is continually faced with rising costs, causing further reductions in their local high school district budget" (Forsyth, 1995, p. 1). In the state of Ohio for example, the leadership of the Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA) has recently taken a proactive approach to combat the

reduction of athletic budgets and specifically the rising costs of busing high school athletes to sporting events. In July of 2008, the OHSAA formed a committee to address all travel associated with sectional, district, regional and state tournaments and determine if there are better ways to assist school districts and spectators in cutting back on the money spent travelling to OHSAA tournaments (Matzelle, 2008). The OHSAA committee has since developed some format changes for their tournaments to assist in cutting down on travel and plans on continuing to make more changes to alter travel and assist schools in reducing the expenses (Matzelle, 2008).

Interscholastic sports in the state of Florida are facing budget issues. The state of Ohio is dealing with similar dilemmas. In the summer of 2008, athletic directors from across the state, concerned with the athletic budget deficiencies school districts are facing, urged the Florida High School Athletic Association (FHSAA) to make changes. The requests made by these Florida athletic directors included the following: an eight percent reduction of varsity contests for the 2008-09 school year, eliminating middle school sports, reducing football schedules to nine games for the 2009 season, and/or restricting the maximum distance high schools can travel to an away game (Volin, 2008). Although the FHSAA decided not to approve these proposed changes in favor of letting each school district determine how to cope with the financial problems, interscholastic athletics both in Florida and nation-wide face difficulties in the future due to the rising costs of operating athletic programs. One Florida interscholastic athletic administrator stated the following: “There really have to be some paradigm shifts from the FHSAA, I may participate in a district championship

for cheerleading, but I'm not going to participate at states because I'm not trekking all the way up to Tallahassee. It's too expensive" (Volin, 2008, p. 1).

Traditionally, interscholastic athletic departments and state high school athletic/activity associations have relied on revenue from ticket sales (gate receipts), fundraising, booster clubs, concessions, and participation fees (pay-to-play) to fund their departments and organizations (Forsyth, 1995). However, with the reduction in athletic budgets and increasing costs of operating an interscholastic athletic program or state association, given the expenses associated with travel, purchasing equipment and supplies, renting and maintaining athletic facilities, personnel salaries, and insurance among other expenses, the traditional sources of revenue have not been sufficient in offsetting these expenses. Because of this, a practice now common among interscholastic athletic departments and state high school athletic/activity associations has been turning to the private sector to counter the rising costs of interscholastic athletics.

Revenue Streams:

Given the aforementioned financial problems associated with interscholastic athletics coupled with the continued rising costs of athletics, many interscholastic athletic departments and state high school athletic/activity associations now pursue sponsorship agreements with businesses/corporations for funding resources.

According to the Sports Executive (1986), sponsorships would be the “wave of the future” in dealing with the rising costs of athletic programs for interscholastic athletic departments. This hypothesis is one that would turn out to be valid because from about that point in the middle to late 1980's when sponsorship of interscholastic

athletics begun, it has now developed into a vast business enterprise and an aspect of sport marketing that continues to grow (Fisher, 2002). Both individual interscholastic athletic departments and state high school athletic/activity associations along with the NFHS are involved in sponsorship deals that play a major role in funding these athletic events and programs offered by interscholastic athletic departments and/or organizations.

In its first sponsored promotion, the NFHS mailed posters promoting The Quaker Oats Company's Gatorade beverage to over 17,000 high schools across the United States in 1988 (Hiestand, 1988). Once the sponsorship began at the national level with the NFHS, sponsorship deals with state high school athletic/activity associations would soon follow suit. One of the first and best known interscholastic sport sponsorship deals at the time involved the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF), which in 1989 signed a \$1.9 million contract with Reebok International and Coca-Cola. The agreement was significant because it allowed Reebok to put its name on state playoff events, much like sponsors do at the intercollegiate level with college football bowl games. With that deal in place, interscholastic championships in California carried such names such as the "CIF/Reebok State Track and Field Championships" (Walsh, 1990). The Utah High School Activities Association (UHSAA) followed the CIF's lead by signing their first sponsorship package for \$675,000 with Hardee's, First Security, and the State Dairymen. The sponsorship deal with the UHSAA meant that these sponsors not only received advertising and signage during championship events, like the CIF and college bowl games, but also allowed their logos to appear on banners that were hanging in high school gymnasiums

throughout the state of Utah (Walsh, 1990; Millman, 1991). The Alaska School Activities Association (ASAA) also got involved in the sponsorship game in the late 1980s by signing a deal with Kraft General Foods and Burger King for \$500,000 (Millman, 1991). Realizing how valuable sponsorship deals are in helping fund interscholastic sports, the Albuquerque Public School System (APS) in Albuquerque, New Mexico, developed a promotion and marketing position in 1990 that would focus primarily on creating supplemental funds by establishing sponsorship deals (Forsyth, 1995).

Shortly after this initial “sponsorship boom” began for the NFHS and state high school athletic/activity associations, the NFHS took sponsorship of interscholastic sports to another level. In 1990, the NFHS put together the first national television package for interscholastic sports and announced plans to seek major corporate sponsors (Walsh, 1990). The plan entailed not only advertising for the high school games shown on cable television’s SportsChannel America, but also other promotional ventures involving the federation’s magazines and drug-awareness programs. In addition to the deal for nationally televised games and an increase in local coverage of high school sports, the 1990’s included more growth in the involvement of sponsorship with interscholastic athletics. Some of the trends included greater media and scouting attention for top college prospects, a growth in the number of major invitational basketball tournaments, and paid endorsements by high school coaches for athletic gear, all made possible by sponsorship deals (Walsh, 1990).

In 2002, a sponsorship deal involving an individual school district and a soft drink company took place, which is still recognized as one of the high-water marks

for high school sports sponsorship. Dr. Pepper and Grapevine High School in Dallas, which is considered a national prep football power, partnered up in a ten-year, \$4 million deal. The sponsorship agreement included an opportunity for Dr. Pepper to have their product receive excellent visibility and exclusivity in Grapevine High School and its athletic facilities. Dr. Pepper signage would be displayed throughout the school and athletic facilities along with logos on the roofs of school buildings that are visible to planes taking off and landing at nearby Dallas-Forth International Airport (Fisher, 2002).

More recently, Nike has also become involved as a sponsor for interscholastic athletic competition at the national level. In 2004, Nike teamed with USA Track & Field to create the Nike Team Nationals, which was the first national cross-country championship event for high school teams. Unfortunately, most state high school athletic/activity associations forbid student-athletes from representing their high schools as a team beyond the state championships. However, those competing in the Nike Team Nationals were actually considered high school “club teams” (Pennington, 2004). Despite currently having the label of high school “club teams”, this sponsorship deal has the potential of creating corporate backing for new national championship events for interscholastic student-athletes, especially in sports like track and field, golf, tennis, tennis, swimming, and wrestling (Pennington, 2004).

In addition to the Nike Team Nationals bringing interscholastic athletics together on a national level, the NFHS and T-Mobile USA, Inc., created a unique partnership in 2006 that was considered a landmark event in high school sports. The “T-Mobile Invitational” high school basketball tournament involved a multi-year

agreement between the NFHS and T-Mobile for the first-ever national event hosted by the NFHS (NFHS, 2006). The tournament brings together eight of the top high school teams as determined by USA TODAY's "Super 25" high school basketball rankings. The eight-team tournament is comprised only of schools from NFHS-member associations and features four boys and four girl's teams. The partnership between T-Mobile and the NFHS strives to encourage student participation in interscholastic activities and emphasizes the importance of these programs in preparing students for life (NFHS, 2006).

Sponsorship Defined

Sponsorship is a practice engaged in by numerous individuals and organizations for a myriad of reasons that has grown remarkably since the early 1970s. Although there are numerous definitions of sponsorship found in the literature, there are a few preferred definitions used more extensively than others. Meenaghan (1984) became one of the first scholars to coin an operational definition of sponsorship that has been widely used. This definition stated: "Sponsorship can be regarded as the provision of assistance either financial or in-kind to an activity by a commercial organization for the purpose of achieving commercial objectives" (Meenaghan 1984, p. 9). Sleight (1989) then went on to define sponsorship as a "business relationship between a provider of funds, resources or services and an individual, event or organization which offers in return some rights and association that may be used for commercial advantage" (p. 19). Sandler and Shani (1993) took

it one step further when they expanded on the definition of sponsorship to define sport sponsorship as:

The provision of resources (e.g. money, people, equipment) provided by an organization directly to an event or activity in exchange for a direct association to the event or activity. The providing organization can then use this direct association to achieve either their corporate, marketing, or media objectives. (p. 10)

Although the previous two definitions of sponsorship vary slightly, both suggest that an exchange of benefits as well as a relationship among both parties exists that enables each side to meet their objectives.

Cornwell and Maignan (1998) stated that, based on the various definitions of sponsorship in the literature, sponsorship involves the following two main activities: (1) an exchange between a sponsor and a sponsee whereby the latter receives a fee and the former obtains the right to associate itself with the activity sponsored; and (2) the marketing of the association by the sponsor.

According to the aforementioned definitions and descriptions of what sponsorship represents, sponsorship, in essence, relies heavily on exchange theory. Exchange theory is based on the underlying principle that an exchange relationship must exist where at least two parties (the sponsor and the sponsee) exchange resources. The resources exchanged may be financial, physical, or intangible (i.e. status), and they must be of value to the reciprocating partner (McCarville & Copeland, 1994). Both sides of the exchange relationship, the sponsor and the sponsee, must also comprehend their exchange partner's intentions before agreeing to the sponsorship relationship to ensure this exchange relationship to be successful and last over time (McCarville & Copeland, 1994).

The Evolution of Sponsorship:

During the 1950s through the 1970s when modern sponsorship was in its' early stages, it was considered an activity that was primarily philanthropic in nature. Cornwell (1995) described forms of sponsorship during this time as existing to emphasize combining business and citizenship to create enthusiasm in the community. Sponsorship, however, has since changed from being philanthropic in nature to a market-driven or "bottom line" activity.

According to Wilkinson (1993), in the 1960s and 1970s sponsorship was primarily philanthropic in nature and was rarely part of an integrated marketing plan. Marketing directors and/or CEOs of companies who chose to become involved in sponsorship agreements, decided to do so based on their beliefs in the cause of what they were sponsoring, goodwill, their instincts or their personal interests (Copeland, Frisby, & McCarville, 1996). And although some companies still become involved in sponsorship agreements for philanthropic reasons such as supporting a noble cause, providing charity, or getting involved in the community, the focus of sponsorship has changed. The change was a shift that has seen companies no longer believing philanthropy is a primary reason for becoming involved in sponsorship agreements. Research performed by Wilkinson (1993) supported this notion that in more recent times, companies do not engage in sponsorship strictly for philanthropic purposes. Instead, due to a demand for greater accountability of all corporate expenditures, developing objective criteria as a way to evaluate sponsorship agreements has caused companies to shift their focus on sponsorship agreements.

Essentially, companies now involved in sponsorship agreements are looking for products and events that enable them to target specific market segments in order to ultimately increase sales. The specific criteria that companies were looking for as a sponsor were opportunities to offer product/service exclusivity, increase brand awareness, and to reinforce company image (Wilkinson, 1993). With the aforementioned changes that have seen sponsorship evolve from an activity that was primarily philanthropic in nature to one that is now “market-driven”, several researchers interpreted the change by describing fundamental differences between philanthropy and the “bottom line” and how they relate to sponsorship. Gardner and Shuman (1988) noted that

“although sponsorships and philanthropy both benefit contributing companies by enhancing their community reputations, the two have different primary objectives. Sponsorships are undertaken to increase profits, while philanthropic activities are for altruistic motives” (p. 46).

McCarville and Copeland (1994) provided support for this idea by stating “the notion of mutual return distinguishes sponsorship from other forms of corporate support assistance like philanthropy, charity, and patronage, which do not involve the advancement of commercial objectives” (p. 103).

As the literature suggests, sponsorship, including sponsors of sports-related events and products, has evolved over time from something that began as philanthropic in nature and has turned into a powerful advertising vehicle that companies utilize as a strategic corporate marketing tactic (Wilkinson, 1993; Dolphin, 2003). Miloch and Lambrecht (2006) attribute this shift to increased financial pressures combined with a growing number of sponsors that have thus created sport marketers and corporations to become more innovative and creative when designing

and activating sport sponsorships. Because of these financial pressures, there has been an increase in the need to evaluate sport sponsorship agreements from a “bottom line” perspective that emphasizes corporate and product-related objectives (Meenaghan, 1984; Miloch & Lambrecht, 2006). Some of these corporate-related objectives include the following: return on investment; reaching target markets; increasing sales; increasing media attention; building business relationships; and enhancing corporate image (Lough, Irwin, & Short, 2000; Irwin & Sutton, 1994; Meenaghan, 1984; Thwaites & Carruthers, 1998; Shank, 2005).

Furthermore, Lough and Irwin (2001) discovered that companies do not believe demonstrating corporate philanthropy is a primary reason for engaging in sport sponsorship. Instead, sport sponsors are now likely to engage in sponsorship deals because it will ultimately lead to increased sales and influence brand market share (Lough & Irwin, 2001). More recent research by Dolphin (2003, p. 176) supported previous research on philanthropy as it relates to sponsorship by suggesting that, while no “enduring rigorous definition of sponsorship” has been coined, the rationale for sponsorship has evolved from its predominantly philanthropic and societal foundations to a strategic corporate marketing tactic.

Growth in Sponsorship:

Over the past two decades, sponsorship has grown so significantly that it has become a valuable promotional activity used by businesses/corporations to help achieve organizational marketing strategies (Dolphin, 2003). Thus, this growth has subsequently led to sponsorship becoming a valuable component of the marketing communication mix (Thwaites & Carruthers, 1998). It was in the 1990s that corporate

sponsorship spending would reach an all-time high. The all-time highs reached during the 1990s, however, would not taper off. Instead, the amount of money spent on sponsorship would only increase each year in the 1990s and into the twenty-first century in North America and worldwide. IEG's annual tracking of the sponsorship economy supports the notion that sponsorship spending has grown on an annual basis (IEG, 2004; IEG, 2008). According to IEG (2004), in 2004, global spending on sponsorship was estimated at \$28 billion, with \$11 billion spent on sponsorship in North America alone, which showed an increase from 2003 where \$26 billion was spent worldwide on sponsorship. More recent sponsorship literature reflected the same trend with North American companies spending \$14.91 billion on sponsorship deals in 2007, a number that is expected to once again increase to over \$16 billion in 2008 (IEG, 2008).

The significant increase in sponsorship activity over the past two decades in both North America and worldwide, according to the literature (Meenaghan 1991; Howard & Crompton, 1995), has been attributed to the following factors:

- Prohibitive cost of media advertising and public indifference to conventional forms of communication, culminating in decreasing efficiency of media advertising.
- Government restrictions or elimination of tobacco and alcohol advertising have encouraged manufacturers of these products to seek alternative types of media exposure.
- The clutter in the media, most notably new cable channels diluting the viewing market, along with the use of remote controls to change channels

during commercials has put a switch on advertising. The number of television channels, radio stations, and magazines makes it difficult for an advertising message to make an impact to the viewing public. Sponsorship is seen to have potential to be recognized by many people in various media outlets.

- Inefficiencies in traditional mass marketing concepts have led to the acceptance of segmenting the population into target markets. Sponsorship is identified as a method to target these specific segments with a set message.
- The need of larger companies to communicate and entertain distributors and offer trade incentives in the pursuit of alternative methods to sell or push products.
- The ability of corporate sponsorships to deliver real benefits and support marketing objectives (Meenaghan, 1991; Howard & Crompton, 1995).

Sport Sponsorship

Sport sponsorship is an area of sport marketing that has become an integral part of sport at all levels of competition and it has grown significantly. With the growth sport sponsorship has experienced during the past three decades, many people are led to believe that sponsorship of sports-related products and/or events is something that was not a component of sports until the 1970s. However, sport sponsorship, at some level, is a promotional activity that dates back to the earliest forms of sport. The sponsorship of sporting events or activities can be traced as far back to the early days of the Roman Empire when sport, spectacle, and recreation were treated as “opiates for the masses” (Kelly, 1990). The sponsorship that took

place in ancient Rome usually involved wealthy individuals and businesses sponsoring gladiators and chariot racing teams. Additional evidence of sponsorship activity can be found in ancient Greece, where wealthy citizens sponsored athletic events and/or the gladiators in a move to improve social status (Shanklin & Kuzma, 1992).

Sponsorship of sporting events, as it is understood today, involving commercialization for promotional purposes in America dates back to the middle of the nineteenth century. In 1852, to increase ridership, officials from the New England Railroad Company provided transportation to a crew competition between Yale University and Harvard University on Lake Winnepesaukee in New Hampshire (Brooks, 1990). The railroad company actively promoted the event and encouraged travelling fans to use their railway line to support their team. During this time, the transportation industry continued an association with athletics and profited immensely from the promotion of the sports of crew and baseball. In the late 1890s, when the popularity of baseball was growing fast in America, there were many “baseball trains” that linked towns and their baseball teams. In a form of sponsorship, some of the railroad companies sold “package” deals that included transportation and admission to the baseball game (Brooks, 1990).

The end of the nineteenth century also marked another landmark for promotional activity in sport when Coca-Cola advertisements appeared in the official program of the 1896 Summer Olympic Games in Athens, Greece (Cornwell, 1995). Shortly after, the first partnership between a sport and a commercial organization occurred in 1898. An England beverage company, Bovril sponsored England’s

Nottingham Forest Football (American soccer) Club on posters following their FA cup win, which is equivalent to the Super Bowl in the United States, in 1898 (Marshall & Cook, 1992). From that point forward, numerous occurrences between sport and sponsorship have been documented. Coca-Cola became the “Official Olympic Supplier” of beverages at the 1928 Amsterdam Summer Olympics after the beverage company sent 1,000 cases of its product with the American athletes (Marshall & Cook, 1992).

Another example of modern sponsorship, as we know it in the United States, can be traced back to the Green Bay Packers of the National Football League. In 1919, the Green Bay Packers actually got their name from Indian Packing, a local meat-packing company, in exchange for a \$500 payment, which was used to buy uniforms and equipment (Fisher, 2002). In the 1950s, then-President Dwight D. Eisenhower recognized the value of sponsorship and how it could benefit a sports program. Eisenhower requested Mutual of Omaha and Union Oil to sponsor the first presidential physical fitness program (Cornwell, 1995). This and many other sponsorship programs during this period focused on children and “emphasized combining business and citizenship to create enthusiasm in the community” (Cornwell, 1995, p. 14). From the 1950s to the 1970s, sport sponsorship increased at a slow, but steady rate. Cornwell (1995) believes that this slow rate was a result of sponsorship’s inception coming at a time of rapid development in advertising and sales promotion.

Although, all of the aforementioned examples cited represent sport sponsorship and its growth from very early beginnings, the majority of researchers

believe sport sponsorship, as we know it today, came into its own around 1975 (Meengahan, 1991). Sandler and Shani (1993) reported that the largest growth of sport sponsorship occurred between this period in the mid-1970s up until 1984.

Growth of Sport Sponsorship:

From the early days of Roman gladiators being sponsored to where sport sponsorship currently is, the sport sponsorship market place has grown tremendously. Billions of dollars are now invested in sponsorship of sports events and organizations as an advertising tool in the United States and around the world. According to IEG (2007), overall sponsorship spending by North American companies is expected to rise 12.6% in 2008 to \$16.78 billion from \$14.91 billion. The majority of that \$14.91 billion, 69% was spent on sports sponsorship, which is expected to rise 16.7% in 2008 to \$11.6 billion. To put into context how fast sport sponsorship is growing when compared to other industries, no other sponsorship category (music, arts, literary or film) is expected to see double-digit growth in 2008 (IEG, 2007). By 2010 the global value of sponsorship is expected to reach \$50 billion and sport is expected to comprise two-thirds of that total (IEG, 2003).

The various reasons for the explosion in the growth of sport sponsorship have been cited in the sport sponsorship literature. Sponsors wanting to become involved in a sport sponsorship relationship because of the advantages it offers for sponsors is one reason for corporate interest in sport. The two primary advantages a sport sponsorship relationship offers according to Sleight (1989) include: sports offer a high level of visibility and ability to capture a full range of demographic and psychographic segments; sport can be used to target mass markets or specific niches;

and has the capacity to transcend national boundaries and breakdown cultural barriers.

According to Mullin, Hardy, and Sutton (2000), the three primary factors that have led to the growth of sport sponsorship include: (1) the banning of tobacco and liquor advertisements in the early and mid-1970s; (2) the success of sponsorships associated with the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games; and (3) the increased media interest in sport programming.

In the early to mid-1970s the growth of sponsorships coincided with the ban on tobacco and alcoholic drink advertising from television, which was considered a victory for anti-tobacco forces. Because of these government restrictions, tobacco and alcoholic drink manufacturers were then forced to seek alternative types of media exposure to promote their products other than the direct advertising channels (Mullin et al., 2000). The alternative choice that many of these companies chose to use as a means to reach a mass audience was through sport sponsorship. Examples of the tobacco and alcoholic drink manufacturers who quickly became involved in sport sponsorship included: the launching of the Virginia Slims ladies' tennis-circuit; the Winston Cup motor-racing sponsorship in 1971; and the Marlboro Cup horse-race in 1973 (Howard & Crompton, 1995). Tobacco and alcohol companies are still very prevalent in today's current sport sponsorship market. Both Phillip Morris (a tobacco company) and Anheuser Busch (an alcohol brewing company) continue to rank at the top of sponsorship spending. In 2000, each company spent over \$140 billion worldwide on sponsorship while General Motors, Coca-Cola, and PepsiCo spent approximately \$100 billion on sponsorship (Irwin, Sutton, & McCarthy, 2002).

Next, the 1984 Summer Olympic Games, hosted by the city of Los Angeles, served as the catalyst for the significant growth in American sport sponsorship, and are considered the birth of sport sponsorship as we know it (Irwin et al., 2002). These Olympic Games are recognized as such a landmark event in the evolution of corporate sponsorship and promotional licensing through sport because they were the first privately organized Olympics in history (Mullin et al., 2000). Before the 1984 Olympic Games, financing had primarily come from government funding, lotteries, and donations. Due to numerous factors, however, such as the economic conditions within the State of California, the fact that lotteries were illegal, and the inability of organizations to make significant monetary contributions, Peter Ueberroth, president of the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee (LAOCC), sought corporate sponsorship as an alternative funding mechanism. Thus, Ueberroth initiated corporate sponsorship programs for the Olympic Games and in turn would enable the LAOCC to realize a profit of approximately \$215 million. Prior to Olympic sponsorship in 1984, Olympics used to cost the host city hundreds of millions of dollars, which was paid mostly by taxpayer dollars (Irwin et al., 2002).

Ueberroth also limited the number of Olympic sponsors to thirty to avoid clutter and duplication, along with ensuring category exclusivity, which increased the value of a sponsorship in relation to the increased cost of those same sponsorships. By demonstrating that as cost increased there was also a subsequent increase in value, Ueberroth established that sponsorships actually became partnerships because they were mutually beneficial for both the sport (property) and the sponsor (corporations) (Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 2000). This model of developing mutually beneficial

relationships between sponsors and a sport property helped give rise to the term corporate partners, which stated that sponsorships could be partnerships whereby partners who hope to achieve benefits work in harmony to create a desirable result. The success of the LAOCC would result in the creation of worldwide sport sponsorships of The Olympic Program (TOP). TOP was developed to offer a limited number of companies great benefits through product exclusivity and significant media exposure (Mullin, et al., 2000). Also, as a result of the success achieved by both the event (the Olympic Games) and its sponsors, corporate sponsorship of the Olympic Games, and sport in general, has flourished to the point that few sporting events take place today without some type of corporate sponsor (Irwin, Sutton, & McCarthy, 2002).

The third primary factor that has led to the growth of sport sponsorship, as cited by Mullin, Hardy, and Sutton (2000), is the increased media interest in sport programming. From the internet to daily newspapers to what seems like an unlimited number of cable television networks, the opportunity for sponsors to receive great publicity and media exposure via a sports sponsorship relationship is at an all-time high. In fact, sport is said to receive substantially more television exposure than any other potential sponsorship vehicle (Howard & Crompton, 1995). The increased media interest in sport programming has been attributable, primarily to the following reasons:

- The general public's increased leisure time and interest in sport
- Increased commercialization of television through commercials and infomercials

- The fact that it is less costly for television networks to broadcast sporting events than to produce shows or documentaries
- The growth of new media sources, such as subscription services via cable or satellite transmissions and pay-per-view special events, which have increased the demand for live sport programming and provided additional channels of exposure for sport as well as sponsors (Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 2000).

Research by Howard and Crompton (1995) supports the aforementioned research (Sleight, 1989; Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 2000; Irwin, Sutton, & McCarthy, 2002) as to reasons why sport sponsorship has experienced growth at such a great rate. Along with previously cited factors, the following have additionally been cited as being major changes that have contributed to the sustained growth of sport sponsorship in the past two decades:

- The acceptance of sport commercialization by the public
- The commercialization or professionalism of sport at every level has created a need for alternative revenue generation as the cost of staging sport events, teams, and leagues continues to rise
- Increased efforts at target marketing
- The availability of personal selling and relationship-building opportunities
- The financial difficulties encountered by publicly funded sport agencies (Howard & Crompton, 1995).

Sport Sponsorship Objectives

A fundamental issue that scholars researching sport sponsorship as well as sport administrators serving in a practitioner's capacity need to evaluate is that of determining why companies choose to become involved in a sport sponsorship relationship. This is vital to the body of knowledge on sport sponsorship because if the sports organization/agency does not recognize what objectives their sponsors seek in their sponsorship relationship, the sports organization/agency will not be able to help them meet these objectives. When this occurs, a mutually beneficial sponsorship relationship will not exist between both parties. Because of the importance placed in assessing and identifying sport sponsorship objectives, the sport sponsorship literature has seen this specific topic become a dominant theme.

The corporate marketing and communication plan as established by the sponsor is typically the driving force behind any determination of specific sponsorship objectives. Once clearly defined sponsorship objectives are established by the sponsor, they are then in turn used to guide the sponsorship proposal screening (Irwin, Sutton, & McCarthy, 2002). Meenaghan (1991) stated that sponsorship is highly regarded for its perceived ability to accomplish certain objectives relating to overall corporate communications. Kuzma, Shanklin, and McCally (1993) stated that the number one principle in selling sponsorships to companies is exhibiting a close match between corporate objectives and event characteristics. Therefore, corporate objectives should be specific, clearly stated and determined prior to entering any sponsorship agreements (Irwin & Sutton, 1995; Stotlar, 2001).

The review of empirical literature on sport sponsorship and sponsorship objectives in general indicates there is no single specific objective in the decision-making process of a company about whether and what to sponsor. However, numerous themes have been developed as the literature has evolved and matured over the years. One of the first to identify sponsorship objectives was Meenaghan (1984), who created a list of sponsorship objectives by dividing them into two categories: corporate and product-related products. The various objectives included in this specific list included the following: increasing public awareness or altering public perceptions; building brand image; increasing sales; having a hospitality opportunity; increasing media exposure; and satisfying chief decision-makers (Meenaghan, 1984).

Using the framework established by Meenaghan (1984), Irwin and Asimakopoulos (1992) also developed a list of sport sponsorship objectives that was divided into two categories, which they labeled: corporation-related objectives and product- or brand-related objectives. The two categories each included specific sponsorship objectives, which included the following:

Corporate Objectives:

1. Increase public awareness of the company and its services
2. Enhance company image
3. Alter public perception
4. Become involved with the community
5. Build business and trade relations and goodwill
6. Enhance staff and employee relations and motivation

Product- or brand-related Objectives

1. Increase target market awareness
2. Identify and build image with the target market (positioning)
3. Block/preempt the competition
4. Increase sales and market share

From a review of the sport sponsorship literature, an explanation of each of the aforementioned corporation-related objectives and product- or brand-related objectives are described below:

Corporate Objectives:

Increase public awareness of the company and its services. Sport has proven to be highly effective as a communication medium for increasing public awareness.

Various studies on sport sponsorship have supported Irwin and Asimakopoulos (1992) by showing that businesses believe that increasing awareness is an important objective in sport sponsorship relationship (Abratt, Clayton, & Pitts, 1987; Kuzma, Shanklin, & McCally, 1993; Irwin & Sutton, 1994; Thwaites, 1995; Copeland, Frisby, & McCarville, 1996; and Lough & Irwin, 2001). Awareness is often increased when tie-in activities associated with the sponsorship are involved. Actively engaging the consumer with raffles, coupons, sampling, or redemption programs will give the sponsor a better chance of being remembered by the consumer (Howard & Crompton, 1995).

Enhance company image. Each company strives to attain a particular image with customers, stockholders, and the general public. Supporters of sport organizations become familiar with what the sport organization stands for and in turn some

impressions “rub off” on the sponsored products or services the sport organizations are associated with and are transferred in terms of secondary associations (Madrigal, 2001). An example of this is would be sport being associated with healthy lifestyles; the rationale that led Campbell Soup Company to sponsor the physical fitness testing programs in American schools (Irwin, Sutton, & McCarthy, 2002). Although sport sponsorship relationships can offer an opportunity for a sponsor to positively enhance its’ image, it also could have a negative effect on a sponsor as well. This was the case for two very high profile professional athletes in recent years. In 2003, Kobe Bryant of the Los Angeles Lakers was accused of sexual assault and as a result was discontinued as an endorser for McDonald’s. More recently, when Atlanta Falcons quarterback Michael Vick was accused on federal dog-fighting charges, Nike suspended their relationship with Vick and ultimately dropped him as a sponsor when he was indicted of the crimes. When Vick was initially accused of these crimes, Nike spokesperson, Dean Stoyer stated that "Nike is concerned by the serious and highly disturbing allegations made against Michael Vick, and we consider any cruelty to animals inhumane and abhorrent"

(<http://www.cbc.ca/sports/football/story/2007/07/27/nfl-vick-endorsements.html>).

Alter public perception. According to Mullin, Hardy, and Sutton (2000), the opportunity to capitalize on image association or image transfer makes sponsorship attractive to businesses as a marketing communications tool. The choice of a sport or event with particular attributes can help a company achieve a desired image that will reinforce or change consumers’ perceptions of the company and its products.

Choosing the sport or event becomes less formidable when there is an actual or

logical link between the company and the sport or event. The potential for an effective sport sponsorship relationship is at its maximum when there is an association between the target group of the company and the target group of the sport event, or between the product characteristics promoted and the credibility of the sport entity helping to promote the product (Mullin et al., 2000).

Become involved with the community. According to Mullin, Hardy, and Sutton (2000) sponsorship has demonstrated more potential than any other promotional tool in terms of direct impact on the community. When companies are striving to obtain this objective, sponsorship takes the form of public or community relations, and its objective is usually to position the company as a concerned and interested citizen trying to put something back into the community. An example of being involved with the community was the NBA's Cleveland Cavalier's Minority Business Associates program. The two primary goals of this program were to: generate sponsorship and advertise revenue from nontraditional sources, and create an effective way for community leaders to serve as role models for Cleveland school children. Ten African American business owners in Cleveland paid \$6,500 each to join the program and support the Cavs' Stay in School Program by speaking with children along with providing free tickets for them to attend games. In exchange, the business owners received arena signage and public service announcements during Cavs television broadcasts and the pregame coach's show (Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 2000).

Build business and trade relations and goodwill. Sport provides an excellent opportunity for building relationships with businesses, affiliates, and trade customers beyond the daily business operations. The opportunity for sponsors to deliver unique

opportunities such as entertainment, tickets, skybox seating, and hospitality for key clients is unique to sport sponsorship programs and thus have become a top priority of sponsors (Irwin, Sutton, & McCarthy, 2002).

Enhance staff/employee relations and motivation. Sponsorship can help motivate employees and increase corporate pride (Irwin, Sutton, & McCarthy, 2002). Another desirable sponsorship feature is the ability to use the hospitality accommodations at a sponsored event for employees and staff. An example of enhancing employee relations in the sport environment is Home Depot being involved with the U.S. Olympic Committee's (USOC) Olympic Job Opportunities Program (OJOP), and thus being the world's leading employer of Olympic and Paralympic hopefuls. Since 1992, Home Depot has employed more than 300 athletes through the USOC's OJOP and similar Olympic job programs in Canada and Puerto Rico. Through the program, Home Depot offers its athlete-associates full-time compensation for a flexible 20-hour workweek that accommodates demanding training and competition schedules (Poole, 2004).

Product- or brand-related Objectives:

Increase target market awareness. Selecting a sponsorship agreement that provides exposure to and matches the company's target market is crucial for realizing product brand-related objectives. Thus, the demographics of the participants or spectators, size of the immediate (spectators) and extended (media) audience, and the strength of the audience's association with the sport are important evaluation criteria for companies seeking to increase awareness within a specific market (Irwin, Sutton, & McCarthy, 2002). An example of this in the sporting environment is Coors Brewing

Company, which has used a demographic-lifestyle approach to sponsorship agreements. Using this approach, Coors has turned down sponsorship of both tennis and golf events because fans of these sports generally prefer wine and other alcohol products to beer. Coors has instead decided to become sponsors of auto racing and motocross because of the better demographic fit of the product and the fans of these sports (Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 2000).

Identify and build image within target marketing (positioning). Companies consider sport sponsorship as being a valuable medium for creating or altering the image of the products they offer. For example, Bud Light (an alcoholic beverage) sponsored the Ironman Triathlon in Hawaii, which is a combination of swimming, cycling, and running, as an effective means of promoting a healthy, low-calorie image for the product (Irwin, Sutton, & McCarthy, 2002).

Block/preempt the competition. Blocking competition has been found to be another important reason as to why companies become involved in sport sponsorship. In order to successfully achieve this objective, category exclusivity is vital because it prevents the competition from entering into a particular sport whose exposure is large and whose demographics fit the industry's target market. The credit card category provides an example of this phenomenon. The credit card company Visa has been the official sponsor of the IOC's TOP, which has prevented its' corporate arch-rival, American Express, from achieving any association with the largest multisport event in the world (Irwin, Sutton, & McCarthy, 2002).

Increase sales and market share. Although there are numerous objectives that companies desire to achieve in sponsorship agreements, the eventual objective for

nearly all organizations involved in sponsorship relationships is to increase sales. If this was not the case, businesses would not spend thousands and millions of dollars to lend their names to sporting events or facilities if they did not feel confident about the return on investment. Numerous studies on sport sponsorship have displayed that increasing sales and market share has been repeatedly one of the most important objectives of companies involved on sport sponsorship (Irwin & Sutton, 1994; Copeland, Frisby, & McCarville, 1996; Morris & Irwin, 1996; Ludwig & Karabetsos, 1999; Lough, Irwin, & Short, 2000; and Lough & Irwin, 2001).

Sandler and Shani (1993) also identified sport sponsorship objectives by dividing the objectives into three different categories. Each of the categories are listed and summarized below:

1. Broad corporate objectives (image based). Specific broad corporate objectives included the following: public awareness; corporate image; public perception; community involvement; financial relations; client entertainment; government relations; and employee relations.
2. Marketing objectives (brand promotion, sales increase). The marketing objectives as defined by Sandler and Shani (1993) were comprised of the following objectives: business relations; reaching target markets; brand positioning; increasing sales; and sampling.
3. Media objectives (cost effectiveness, reaching target markets). Lastly, the media objectives consisted of the following objectives: generating visibility; generating publicity; enhancing ad campaigns; avoiding clutter; and target specificity (Sandler & Shani, 1993).

Irwin and Sutton (1994) went on to break down sport sponsorship objectives into four different categories. The first category was position enhancement, which included the following: increasing general public awareness; increasing market share/sales; increasing target market awareness; blocking competition; and displaying community involvement. The second category was status enhancement, which included altering public perception and enhancing corporate image. The third category was trade networking, which included enhancing trade relations and enhancing trade goodwill. The last category of sponsorship objectives was public service, which included corporate philanthropy, social responsibility, and employee relations (Irwin & Sutton, 1994).

Identifying the objectives as to why sponsors of sports organizations and events become involved in these agreements is an important component in understanding sport sponsorship. Various studies have expanded upon the aforementioned studies on sport sponsorship objectives to the point that this phenomenon of evaluating sponsorship objectives has become a major theme in the sport sponsorship literature. Much of the existing empirical literature has focused on sport sponsorship objectives at the professional, intercollegiate, and international (primarily Olympics) level.

Thwaites (1995) researched sponsorship objectives of companies involved in sponsorship of professional soccer. Eighteen different objectives were identified from this study with the two most important objectives, increasing public awareness of the company and receiving more media attention, being centered primarily on corporate objectives. Other important objectives as identified from the sponsors included

community relations, goodwill, trade hospitality, along with developing and maintaining staff pride and motivation (Thwaites, 1995).

In another attempt to understand sport sponsorship objectives, a study was performed by Copeland, Frisby and McCarville (1996) using Canadian corporations involved in national sport sponsorship initiatives. Nearly 70% of all the organizations they surveyed were sponsoring professional sport or elite level "amateur" sports. Much like Thwaites (1995) they also discovered many corporations viewed sponsorship as means of achieving corporate objectives in that no corporations viewed sponsorship as a philanthropic exercise. Instead the focus of sponsorship activities of the corporations that were studied showed that they were driven by the "bottom line (Copeland, Frisby, & McCarville, 1996)."

Findings from Copeland et al.'s (1996) study were supported by Lough, Irwin, and Short (2000), who discovered that sponsorship being strictly philanthropic in nature was no longer as prevalent as it was in the past. In their research, Lough et al. (2000) surveyed 300 companies who are considered active sponsors of sport within the United States and Canada. They found that the most important sponsorship objectives for the sponsors related to increasing sales/market share, increasing target market awareness, and increasing public awareness. The use of sponsorship as a philanthropic tool or as a means of demonstrating a sense of social responsibility, on the other hand, were considered the least important objectives (Lough, et al., 2000).

Another study performed by Lough and Irwin (2001), which compared traditional sport sponsorship to sponsorship of women's sport mirrored previous results (Thwaites, 1995; Copeland, Frisby, & McCarville, 1996; Lough, et al., 2000).

They found that companies sponsoring women's sports viewed sponsorship as a means of strategically enhancing the company's market position. This is evident by the fact that the sponsors surveyed rated the following as the four most important sport sponsorship objectives: increased sales and market share; increasing target market awareness; enhancing the general image of the company; and increasing the public awareness of the company (Lough & Irwin (2001).

Recent research that focused on sponsorship and professional sports examined the perspectives of companies sponsoring a Professional Golf Association (PGA) tournament. Daniels, Baker, Backman, and Backman (2007) discovered that the sponsors of this tournament were more interested in their clients than the general spectators at the event as evidenced by the sponsor's responses. These sponsors stated that the top five reasons for sponsoring this event focused on client entertainment, relationship development with key customers, the opportunity for sales, the ability to expose clients to products and the creation of general product awareness (Daniels et al., 2007).

The role of sponsorship in intercollegiate athletics was investigated by Irwin (1993) in attempt to discover how prevalent sponsorship was within college athletics. Through a survey of 150 NCAA Division I and II universities and colleges it was reported that 90% of the schools surveyed had established some type of corporate sponsorship program (Irwin, 1993). Barr, McDonald, and Sutton (2000) discovered the relationship between sponsors and intercollegiate athletic programs has escalated with companies now signing sponsorship packages involving the entire athletic department. The University of Michigan, for example, signed a seven-year, \$7

million contract with Nike in 2001, which will supply between \$25 to \$28 million into the athletic department in the form of cash, royalties, uniforms, and equipment (Barlow, 2001).

Kuzma, Shanklin, and McCally Jr. (1993) discovered the relative importance of various issues and objectives in determining sponsorship participation by sampling companies from three separate groups. These groups included Fortune 1000 companies; 30 corporate sponsors of the 1990 U.S. Olympic Festival; and 51 corporate sponsors of the 1991 International Special Olympics. These researchers found that the sponsors of the U.S. Olympic festival and the International Special Olympics number one reason for being involved in sponsorship was the demonstration of community responsibility. The other important objectives of these sponsors were to increase company awareness and to improve their corporate image. In another study that centered on identifying the most important objectives rated by sponsors of the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta, Ludwig and Karabetsos (1999) discovered some different objectives. The researchers found that the most important reasons for these sponsors were exclusivity, to increase public awareness of the company, and to increase sales.

More recently Apostolopoulou and Papadimitriou (2004) performed research to assess the motivations of the Grand National sponsors of the Athens 2004 Olympic Games and the objectives they sought to fulfill through their sponsorship. Findings from this research provided general support for past research, but also discovered some new unique themes by discovering that their sponsorship commitment was not entirely business-driven, but rather, the desire to support the national effort and a

sense of obligation. Consistent with previous literature, five of the seven Grand National Olympic sponsors were concerned with enhancing or changing the image of their company. The study also indicated that, for at least three of the sponsors, enhancing the image awareness and recognition of their company was a key objective. The importance of community involvement and social responsibility, for over half of the sponsors in this study were noted as being one of their sponsorship objectives; an aspect of sponsorship where there has only been marginal support for according to past research (Apostolopoulou & Papadimitriou, 2004).

As the literature suggests, there are a variety of reasons as to why corporations choose to become sponsors of sporting events or organizations. Determining the primary objectives, which all of the scholars previously mentioned have successfully done, allows scholars, the sponsor and the sponsored organization to assess whether a sponsorship program has been successful (Irwin & Sutton, 1994).

Sponsorship of Interscholastic Athletics (Grassroots Sponsorship):

Sport sponsorship has grown since the beginning of the “modern era of sport sponsorship” in the mid-1970s as a small component of the sports world into a vast business enterprise that is now over a \$10 billion a year industry (IEG, 2007). With this growth, sport sponsorship has become an indelible aspect at every level of athletics, which most notably has been documented at the professional, intercollegiate, and international (Olympic) sporting levels. Sponsorship, however, has also become a permanent fixture in the interscholastic athletic world as well according numerous accounts that have documented examples and the growth of interscholastic sport sponsorship since it began approximately in the late 1980s

(Walsh, 1990; Millman, 1991; Forsyth, 1995; Fisher, 2002; Pennington, 2004; and NFHS, 2006).

Sponsorship of interscholastic athletic events and organizations, because of the nature and mission of education-based interscholastic athletics, can be classified into a category of sponsorship referred to as “grassroots sponsorship”. Grassroots sports, which according to Greenwald (1997) are sporting events and programs intended for community members (either as participants or spectators) at the local level. Therefore, grassroots sponsorship and/or marketing refers to focusing on reaching consumers or potential consumers at the local level as opposed to targeting consumers on the national level. Grassroots sponsorship programs are met at the local level with the direct consumer with the goal of associating with the community, with a medium other than the media (Greenwald, 1997). Referring to the local or community level, “grassroots”, in the context of sponsorship, is also defined by words such as “touch”, “interaction”, and “use”. These terms, when attributed to grassroots sport sponsorship, refer to the ability of corporations to reach the consumer in an intimate and meaningful (for the consumer) way. Thus, intimacy is achieved through direct interaction at the local level, within consumers’ communities (Greenwald, 1997). Although there have been numerous terms used to explain grassroots when applied to sport organizations and events, the basic premise of grassroots implies the involvement in and participation of local, community members.

A review of the literature suggests that there has been an increasing shift by corporations to become involved in grassroots sport sponsorship programs including sponsorship agreements at the interscholastic athletic level. This growth of businesses

partnering with interscholastic athletics in sponsorship programs is attributed to the increase in exposure of high school sports through media outlets (television, radio), the internet, and highly publicized statewide, regional, and even national tournaments.

Lisa McCrummen, Public Relations Special Events Manager for Starbucks Coffee Co., argued in *“The Bottom Line on Sponsorship”* (1992), that “Companies increasingly are making grassroots events part of their marketing mix” (p. 5).

Likewise, Sleight (1989) expressed that:

We are seeing more and more sponsorships aimed at grass-roots participants, especially the young, as sponsors recognize the marketing opportunities offered by such an audience and the long-term benefits that can accrue from being involved with an activity at both top and grassroots levels (p. 9).

Sleight’s (1989) evidence was supported by David Carter of the Sports Marketing Group who stated the following:

Companies desperately want to get into high schools, because they know they are getting a captive audience with disposable income that is about to make decisions of lifelong preference, like Coke versus Pepsi.....so the commercialism is coming to a school near you: the high school cheerleaders will be brought to you by Gatorade, and the football team will be presented by Outback (Pennington, 2004, p. 25).

Judith Thomas, the former marketing director for the NFHS, reiterated Carter’s take on interscholastic athletic sponsorship by stating: “It’s an unlimited, untapped market and it is in places companies often can not easily reach. But on any given Friday night, in all those middle-American flyover states, sitting in high school football stadiums are millions of people” (Pennington, 2004, p. 25). Pitts and Stotlar (1996) stated that grassroots sponsorship has become so attractive to sponsors because they view as an opportunity to impact the local environment at the grassroots level and thus be more persuasive than traditional advertising methods on the national

level. Hall and Gibson (2005) describe the interscholastic athletic environment as being a less infiltrated, uncluttered market that is conducive for sponsors to communicate a direct message to their target markets. In this local environment, sponsors are more able to reach both the participants and spectators, which include other high school students, school personnel, along with the participants' family and extended family.

Philosophical Differences of Interscholastic Sport Sponsorship:

Although the use of sponsorship to help fund education-based interscholastic athletic organizations and individual high school athletic departments has been beneficial to both sponsors and the interscholastic sports organizations and/or departments, it is not something that has been free from controversy. Education-based interscholastic athletics are widely believed to be one of the last forms of amateur sport in the United States (Cohen, 1988). This distinction is due in large part because of the core values and mission of the NFHS. Some of the specific beliefs and values of the NFHS that characterize interscholastic athletics as truly amateur athletics include the following: interscholastic athletic/activity programs enrich each student's educational experience; participation in education-based activity programs promotes student academic achievement; interscholastic participation develops good citizenship and healthy lifestyles; and education-based interscholastic programs foster success later in life (NFHS, 2007).

Critics of sponsorship of interscholastic athletics believe it violates these core values of education-based interscholastic athletics by shifting the priorities off of the academic and educational mission. These opponents of corporate involvement of

interscholastic athletics suggest that it opens the door for sponsors that are not congruent with the academic mission of interscholastic athletics, professionalizes interscholastic sports, and fosters pressure on young athletes to prioritize winning. (Pennington, 2004). In general, those opposed to allowing commercialism to creep into our nation's schools and athletic facilities simply believe that schools do not exist to teach children to shop and be influenced by sponsors. Instead, schools exist to teach children how to read, write, think, and become adequately prepared for success throughout life. Therefore, the belief by many is that sponsorship signage has no business being in schools and their athletic facilities.

The vast growth of sponsorship and its' penetration into our high schools with the hope of businesses to reach a younger market, has led to sponsorship deals that detractors would label as sponsors that are not appropriate for an educational environment. Many high school athletic programs and state high school athletic/activity associations have sponsorship deals with Coca-Cola, Pepsi Co., McDonalds or other soft-drink companies and fast food businesses (NFHS, 2006). Having these types of companies sponsor education-based interscholastic athletics is controversial to some because of our country's problem with childhood obesity and unhealthy lifestyles. With fast food and soft drink companies being sponsors and thus having their logos all over scoreboards, stadiums, and game programs, and the like, school districts are thought to be contributing to the problem of childhood obesity and the poor diet habits of our nation's youth. Instead of allowing sponsorships such as this to penetrate into our school districts, critics believe that school and athletic

leaders have a responsibility to protect impressionable school-age children (Pennington, 2004).

Another reason detractors have for allowing corporate involvement of interscholastic athletics is that they believe it professionalizes high school sports in a number of ways. Following the footsteps of professional and big-time intercollegiate athletics, sponsorship of interscholastic athletics now not only incorporates some of the sponsorship principles, but very closely mirrors what is occurring at the higher levels of athletic competition. Corporate signage that appears all over high school athletic facilities scoreboards, and uniforms, game-day sponsorship agreements, corporate sponsored national tournaments, television channels dedicated to interscholastic athletic competition, and ticket back advertisement (i.e. coupons/signage printed on the back of the game tickets) are primary examples of the professionalization of interscholastic athletics through the involvement of sponsorship (Walsh, 1990; Millman, 1991; Forsyth, 1995; Fisher, 2002; Pennington, 2004; NFHS, 2007).

This professionalization is such a controversial topic because it once again shifts the priorities of interscholastic athletics from an educational experience to one that emphasizes winning. Specifically, much like professional and big-time intercollegiate athletics, as the number and price of the sponsorships increase, more pressure is placed on the student-athletes and coaches to win along with the school officials to keep winning in order to justify the investments made by the sponsors (Fisher, 2002). This phenomenon has been realized by Richard Lapchick, director of

the DeVos Sport Business Management Program at the University of Central Florida, who stated the following:

The concern has to be, as it has been at the college level for so many years, that an arms race starts" He went on to say that "We have to make sure these athletes are getting what they are there to get. These corporate sponsors would be performing a tremendous public service if they would tie their sponsorship to a demand for higher academic standards for athletic participation (Pennington, 2004, p. 25).

In sum, despite the positive elements that sponsorship offers to enhance the opportunities and resources for interscholastic athletics along with the fact that alcohol and tobacco sponsors manufacturers are not involved in interscholastic sport sponsorship, the issue of commercializing high school sports remains a controversial issue due to the aforementioned ethical concerns associated with sport sponsorship.

Implications for Study

This review of literature highlighted a historical perspective along with the current state of education-based interscholastic athletics. It also focused on the evolution of sponsorship and more specifically sport sponsorship and the primary objectives as to why organizations/businesses choose to become sponsors of sports organizations and/or events. What is clear from this review of literature is that interscholastic athletics in the United States, despite early challenges from school officials, have grown into a prominent aspect of a child's educational experience and the American culture. Another thing clear from this literature review is that sport sponsorship has grown significantly into a multi-billion dollar worldwide industry. In terms of assessing the primary objectives of sport sponsorship, the literature revealed the following: that there is no single specific objective in the decision-making process

of organizations choosing to become involved in sport sponsorship agreements; and there has been a shift in sponsorship objectives that has seen them change from philanthropic objectives (social responsibility, good will, community involvement, etc.) to more market driven, “bottom line” objectives such as increasing sales or market share.

Based on this review of literature, what is now needed is an empirical study that examines the use and value of sponsorship at the interscholastic athletic level. Therefore, this study is concerned with the following: examining the sponsorship objectives of state high school athletic/activity associations to determine if these objectives are similar or different to the traditional sport sponsorship objectives as identified by the literature; examining the characteristics and differences of companies involved in state high school athletic association sponsorship; and developing a theoretical framework of sponsorship objectives among sponsors of state high school athletic/activity associations to assist in our understanding of education based sport sponsorship relationships.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In this chapter, a detailed description of the procedures used to conduct this investigation has been provided. The chapter has been divided into the following sections: (a) research design; (b) instrumentation; (c) subject selection; (d) data collection; and (e) data analysis.

Research Design

The research design for this exploratory study involved survey methods utilizing a modified questionnaire that was distributed via email. According to Ilieva, Baron, and Healey (2002), the email questionnaire is an appropriate method to collect data because it offers numerous advantages. These advantages include the following: (a) low costs; (b) allows for a short response time; (c) the researcher has control of the sample and is not involved in the survey; and (d) it allows the data to be directly loaded in the data analysis software, thus saving time and resources associated with the data entry process (Ilieva, Baron, & Healey, 2002). All statements in the questionnaire are considered important to understand if sponsors of state high school athletic/activity associations utilize sponsorship objectives similar to those found in previous scholarly research in the development of their sponsorship relationships.

Strategies of inquiry or methodologies provide “specific directions for procedures in a research design” (Cresswell, 2003, p. 13). There are three traditional

research paradigms (designs) that researchers employ as an approach for empirical research. The three paradigms include quantitative, qualitative, and a mixed-methods research design. Quantitative research is the systematic scientific investigation of quantitative properties and phenomena and their relationships. The objective of quantitative research is to develop and employ mathematical models, theories and/or hypotheses pertaining to natural phenomena (Cresswell, 2002). The process of measurement is central to quantitative research because it provides the fundamental connection between empirical observation and mathematical expression of quantitative relationships (McMillan, 2004). Conversely, qualitative research aims to discover meaning and understanding of phenomena under study in order to gain an in-depth understanding of human behavior and the reasons that govern human behavior (Cresswell, 2002).

The present study falls in the paradigm of mixed-methods research because it combined the two previous research approaches, quantitative and qualitative research. According to McMillan (2004), a mixed-method study is one in which both qualitative and quantitative approaches to gathering, interpreting, and reporting data are used together in a single study. A mixed-methods approach was chosen for this study because of the advantages this type of research design offers. One advantage of combining qualitative and quantitative methods is that it allows the researcher to incorporate the strengths of each approach (McMillan, 2004). Next, it can provide a more comprehensive picture of the phenomena being studied, emphasizing both outcomes (quantitative) and process (qualitative). Also, when different approaches are used to focus on the same phenomenon and they provide the same result, you

have "corroboration" which means you have superior evidence for the result. Other important reasons for doing mixed research are to complement one set of results with another, to expand a set of results, or to discover something that would have been missed if only a quantitative or a qualitative approach had been used (McMillan, 2004).

Instrumentation

In order to address the research questions and purpose of the study, a two-part survey was developed for use in this investigation. The instrument development was based on the sport sponsorship criteria derived from the review of literature that has been utilized to analyze sport sponsorship objectives in professional, Olympic, and/or intercollegiate athletics. The majority of questionnaires were developed as a modification of a theoretical screening instrument known as the Sport Sponsorship Proposal Model (SSPEM), which was developed by Irwin, Asimakopoulos, and Sutton (1994). The instrument used by Irwin et al., (1994) is actually a modification of the original screening model that was developed by Irwin and Asimakopoulos (1992). The reliability coefficient for this instrument was .95 (Irwin et al., 1994). The SSPEM has been described as a model that includes sport sponsorship criteria desired by corporate sport sponsors. The model offers a unique sport sponsorship evaluation scoring methodology that has been validated through the research literature.

The SSPEM has been used by various scholars since it was first developed in 1992 (Copeland, 1991; Irwin & Sutton, 1994; Irwin, Asimakopoulos & Sutton, 1994; Kim, 2004; Lough, 1995; Sawyer, 1997). However, the instrument for this

investigation was one that had modified the SSPEM based on the most recent sport sponsorship literature and with the intention to accurately measure relevant sponsorship objectives at the interscholastic athletic level. Through an extensive review of literature, the current survey questionnaire was developed to include both traditional sport sponsorship objectives along with objectives that specific and relevant to interscholastic athletics. The traditional sport sponsorship objectives included in the survey included the following: Product-Sport image fit; Demographic fit; Sponsorship exclusivity; Reach specific target markets; Identify and build image with target market (positioning); Enhance company image; Alter public perception; Visibility; Signage opportunities; Block competition; and Increase sales and market share. The other objectives included in the survey, which were specific to interscholastic athletics included: Support high school student-athletes; Interest and concern about interscholastic athletics; Support the state high school athletic/activity association; Giving back to or being involved with the community; and Opportunity to infiltrate new untapped markets.

The modified questionnaire was reviewed by a panel of experts who are directly or indirectly involved in interscholastic sport sponsorship. The panel of experts included five dissertation committee members including scholars in the disciplines of sport management and sport marketing, marketing directors at the intercollegiate and interscholastic athletic levels along with interscholastic athletic administrators of various state high school athletic/activity associations. This panel of experts found the instrument to have expert validity (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1996), and be representative of the interscholastic sport sponsorship process.

The first section (PART I) of the survey was developed to measure the sponsor's perspectives concerning the objectives sought through the sport sponsorship relationship. The second section (PART II) was designed to provide information for a profile development of each of the sponsors of state high school athletic/activity associations that participate in the study. PART II of the survey was initially meant to be PART I of the survey, but through the recommendation of my dissertation committee chair and my dissertation committee, the order of the two sections was interchanged. The suggestion to switch the two parts were due to the thinking that the companies filling out the survey might be more inclined to not complete the survey if they had to fill out their company's demographic information first and thus would decrease my response rate.

The profile section (PART II) of the questionnaire entitled "Company Profiles" consisted of a number of background questions pertaining to the demographics and characteristics of each of the sponsors. The characteristics on which each question was formulated stemmed from the review of sport sponsorship literature and provided useful descriptive data about each sponsor. Included in the profile section were questions about the following: the size of the company; the company's market share; whether it is a national, regional, statewide, or local company; what type of company it is (what industry it is involved with); the company's history of sport sponsorship; their length of duration of the sponsorship agreement with the state high school athletic/activity association; and their level of sponsorship agreement. Disclosure of the company name or other means of identifying the study participants was protected to prevent any risk to the study

participants. Only the primary investigator and dissertation advisor were aware of the participants' identities. To ensure this, the names of the companies who responded to the questionnaire were not revealed in the results. Instead, the respondents in this study remained completely anonymous.

The first section (PART I) of the questionnaire entitled "Sport Sponsorship Objectives" consisted of seventeen sponsorship objectives designed to measure the level of importance attributed to each sponsorship objective by the sponsors. Essentially, each sponsor was prompted to indicate the relative value of each of the objectives in their sport sponsorship relationship. Each item consisted of a statement of the sponsorship objectives followed by a six-point Likert response scale ranging from "1 (extremely unimportant)" to "6 (extremely important)" to indicate the importance of the objectives of sport sponsorship. A six-point Likert scale was used instead of a four or five-point scale because additional scale points could raise reliability by evoking an extreme response set. According to Alliger and Williams (1992), six-point response sets act like a halo error and increase item homogeneity, which is traditionally estimated as internal consistency reliability. Also, with an even number (six) of ratings in the scale, respondents do not have a midpoint (three), which often indicates neutrality or mixed satisfaction, and thus must commit to either the positive or negative end of the scale by offering an opportunity for an ambivalent answer choice (Alliger & Williams, 1992).

PART I of the survey also featured a qualitative aspect as well to provide a mixed-methods component to the study. Along with the Likert-response items, three questions in an open-ended format were provided. This qualitative element was not

only used to solicit input on general information regarding interscholastic sport sponsorship, but was also used as a secondary component to identify interscholastic sport sponsorship objectives. The gathering of information through the three open-ended survey questions permitted the respondents an opportunity to express their viewpoints and expand on their thoughts and add some depth to the survey results.

Subject Selection

This study was designed to determine the sponsorship objectives of sponsors of state high school athletic/activity associations, along with examining the characteristics and differences of companies involved in state high school athletic/activity association sponsorship. In order to address the issues identified by the purpose of the study, data was collected from companies involved in sponsorship of state high school athletic/activity associations for the 2008-2009 academic year. Each state high school athletic/activity association is a member association of National Federation of High Schools (NFHS), which is the national governing body of education-based interscholastic activities. The NFHS governance structure is divided into eight different sections as a geographic representation according the states' location in the United States. The sections are divided as follows:

Section 1 – Northeast: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

Section 2 – Mideast: Delaware, District of Columbia, Kentucky, Maryland, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia.

Section 3 – South: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

Section 4 – Central: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Wisconsin.

Section 5 – Midwest: Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota.

Section 6 – Southwest: Arkansas, Colorado, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas.

Section 7 – West: Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada, and Utah.

Section 8 – Northwest: Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, Wyoming (NFHS Handbook, 2006-2007).

For the purposes of this study, each geographic section as defined by the NFHS was represented in the study, meaning that sponsors of each state high school athletic/activity association will be attempted to be contacted to complete the survey. Since sponsors from various state high school athletic/activity association across the United States will be surveyed, it is fully acknowledged that there are differences among the various states. The various factors that could be different and thus affect the generalizability of the study include the following: economic factors that could differ between states; the tax and/or tax exempt status that varies among states; the number of sponsors each state high school athletic/activity association has compared to other states; and the support and dedication toward interscholastic sports that could be more prevalent in certain states as compared to others; among other factors. However, by including each NFHS geographic section, with the intention that each state will be represented in this study, the sample population will be very large, and in

turn the conclusions from the study will be more generalizable to the entire population (McMillan, 2004). In terms of this study specifically, based on the nature of the study and the participants, the results will be generalizable to sponsorship objectives of education-based interscholastic athletics throughout the country.

Companies selected for this study were selected on the probability of “convenience sampling” as defined by McMillan (2004). In this sense, companies (sponsors of state high school athletic/activity associations) were selected based on which ones were available and willing to participate in this study. The principle data source for this study was the NFHS website (<http://www.nfhs.org/>), which contains information regarding each state high school athletic/activity association. Each state high school athletic/activity association website includes information regarding professional staff members, contact information, and a list of their association’s sponsors. Data will be collected in the 2008 – 2009 academic school year and thus will involve companies involved in sponsorship of state high school athletic/activity associations for the 2008-2009 academic year.

Data Collection

Upon recommendation from my dissertation committee chair and members of my dissertation committee, accessing the subjects for the present study was most effectively done by first contacting the various state high school athletic/activity associations. Once the current study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), an initial phone call was placed to each state high school athletic/activity association that allowed me to speak with either the state’s executive director,

associate/assistant director and/or the professional staff member responsible for marketing/sponsorship within each respective state association. The primary purpose of the initial phone call was to accomplish the following: introduce myself; describe my research study; learn a bit about the sponsorship agreements in each state; and most importantly request that the professional state high school athletic/activity association staff member help me access the companies that sponsor their association to have them complete the survey. After speaking to one or more professional staff members from almost each state high school athletic/activity association throughout the United States via phone, a follow-up email was sent within two to three weeks of the initial phone call in order to officially conduct the study (process described below).

Next, for the state high school athletic/activity associations that chose to take part in the study, an official introduction letter was sent via email, which was then forwarded onto the sponsors of the participating state associations that outlined the following: a) the purpose of the study (Appendix A), and b) a formal request for their involvement in the study (Appendix B). Along with the introduction letter, a self-administered two-part questionnaire (Appendix C: PART I), (Appendix D: Qualitative Section), (Appendix E: PART II) was provided via e-mail to be completed. A follow-up email (Appendix F) was sent after one week of the initial mailing to those subjects who did not respond to the first email sent. Two weeks after the initial mailing, a final follow-up email (Appendix G) was made to gather information from the remaining companies who did not respond. The survey used in the present study was a web-based survey administered through Zoomerang.com.

Zoomerang.com is an online survey tool that allows researchers to create and send surveys and subsequently analyze results of surveys (<http://www.zoomerang.com/>).

With the advent of the first e-mail surveys in the 1980s and the initial web-based surveys in the 1990s, the utilization of web-based surveys by practitioners and researchers in academia continues to grow at a steady pace. The continued growth in utilization of web-based surveys is due the major strengths of web-based surveys as described by Evans and Mathur (2005). Many of these strengths were precisely why a web-based survey was used in the present study as opposed to using other survey formats such as a traditional mail survey or a telephone survey. These strengths include the following: global reach; flexibility; speed and timeliness; convenience; ease of data entry and analysis; question diversity; low administration cost; and ease of follow-up (Evans & Mathur, 2005).

Global Reach. Although the present study did not involve participants in different countries, having the ability to use the internet proved to be a valued tool to obtain information from respondents living in different parts of the United States.

Flexibility. In using a web-based survey, the researcher can conduct it in several formats such as using e-mail with an embedded survey; visit to a web site by an internet surfer who is then invited to participate in a survey; or e-mail with a link to a survey URL (Evans & Mathur, 2005). For this particular study, an e-mail with a link to a survey URL was used to complete the survey.

Speed and Timeliness. Web-based surveys allow for studies to be administered in a time-efficient manner, minimizing the period it takes to get

a survey into the field and for data collection to be completed (Evans & Mathur, 2005).

Convenience. Web-based surveys are convenient for the subjects (respondents) for a variety of reasons. To begin with, respondents can answer at a convenient time for themselves. They also may take as much time as they need to answer individual questions. Some web-based surveys let respondents start and then return later to the question where they left off earlier (Evans & Mathur, 2005). Instead of being annoyed at an inconvenient time with a telephone survey, a respondent can take a web-based survey whenever he or she feels it is convenient (Evans & Mathur, 2005).

Ease of Data Entry and Analysis. Along with being convenient, web-based surveys, including the current study, are very simple for respondents to complete and the subject's responses can be tabulated and analyzed through the use of Zoomerang.com.

Question Diversity. Online surveys are capable of including dichotomous questions, multiple-choice questions, scales, questions in a multimedia format, both single-response and multiple-response questions, and even open-ended questions (Evans & Mathur, 2005). The present study, for example incorporated Likert-Scale type questions, open-ended questions, and multiple choice questions where respondents were only permitted to select one answer as well as multiple choice questions that allowed respondents to select as many answers as they wanted.

Low Administration Cost. Administering a web-based survey can be very cost efficient because they are automatically placed into a database, and then tabulated and analyzed in a coordinated, integrated manner that greatly reduces costs. Also, because web-based surveys are self-administered and do not require postage or interviewers, costs associated with other survey formats are also kept down (Evans & Mathur, 2005).

Ease of Follow-up. Due to the low expense of sending out e-mails and the simplicity of doing so with web-based surveys, it allows an easy opportunity to send out follow-up reminders to increase the survey response rate. Also, personalized follow-ups can be targeted specifically at those who have not yet replied (Evans & Mathur, 2005).

In order to ensure for ethical concerns, data collection approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Nevada Las Vegas (UNLV) Office for the Protection of Research Subjects. The IRB is a specially constituted, federally mandated review committee that has been formally designated to approve, monitor, and review biomedical and behavioral research involving humans with the aim to protect the rights and welfare of the research subjects (<http://research.unlv.edu/OPRS/irb2.htm>). Next, each subject involved in the study was asked to give their direct consent prior to completing the questionnaires by reading and “signing” a letter of informed consent as designated by the IRB, which was provided in the initial email. Respondents agreed to consent in the study in the initial email, which invited their participation in the study, and then allowed them to “sign” their consent by agreeing to the terms of the study. If the respondents agreed to

participate, they were permitted access to complete the questionnaires, and if they did not, they were not able to access the questionnaires. The letter of informed consent ensured respondents had a clear appreciation and understanding of the facts, implications and future consequences of the research process. Neuman (2003) explained that participants become aware of their rights and what they are getting involved in when they read and sign an informed consent letter.

Data Analysis

When the completed questionnaires were received, they were checked for completeness and recorded. The data received from the questionnaire were compiled, analyzed, and reported using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The profile section (PART II) of the questionnaire entitled “Company Profiles” provided baseline information for each sponsor of state high school athletic/activity associations surveyed. Descriptive statistics such as percentages and frequencies were used to describe the profiles or demographic characteristics of the sponsors.

The first section (PART I) of the questionnaire entitled “Sport Sponsorship Objectives” utilized a six-point Likert-response scale consisting of seventeen items designed to measure the perceived importance of criteria relating to sport sponsorship. The Likert-response scale ranged from “1 (extremely unimportant)” to “6 (extremely important)”. To analyze the relative importance of all the sport sponsorship objectives under investigation, descriptive statistics such as means, percentages, frequencies, and standard deviations were used. Along with using descriptive statistics for PART I of the study, inferential statistics were used to

compare the responses to the items addressing the relative importance of all the sport sponsorship objectives. Specifically, inferential statistics such as an exploratory factor analysis will be employed in PART I of the questionnaire. Factor analysis is a statistical method used to describe variability and is applied to a single set of variables when the researcher is interested in determining if variables in the set form dimensions that are independent of one another (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) is conducted when links between sets of variables are unknown. It is not required for the researcher to have expectations of the factor structure when applying EFA (Thompson, 2004). According to Thompson (2004), there are three main purposes for using factor analysis: 1) factor analysis can be used to evaluate score validity; 2) factor analysis can be used to develop theory regarding the nature of the constructs; and 3) factor analysis can be used to summarize relationships to identify clear factors to be used in subsequent analysis. The steps in EFA include the following: selecting the observed variables; examining the correlation structure of the set of variables; extracting the underlying factors; and interpreting the results (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). This analysis was used to examine the underlying structures in the data set and primarily determine the most salient items of sponsorship objectives as determined by the respondents.

PART I of the questionnaire concluded with an open-ended response format. Specifically, the sponsors surveyed in this questionnaire were asked to respond to three questions regarding sport sponsorship in general and their sponsorship relationship with their respective state high school athletic/activity association. Responses to these open-ended questions provided qualitative data that added depth

to this mixed-methods study and be directly relevant to analyzing the perceived importance of criteria relating to sport sponsorship. Data collected from the open-ended response questions were analyzed by organizing the responses into groups of themes that emerged from the questions.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a summary of the data collected from the survey titled “*Sponsorship of Interscholastic Athletics*”. The survey was sent to companies that were actively involved in sponsoring one or more state high school athletic/activity associations for the 2008-2009 academic year. For the purposes of reporting survey results, this chapter is divided into four sections. The following sections represent the data gathered: (a) survey response rate; (b) company (sponsor) demographic analysis and involvement in sponsorship; (c) analysis of the sponsorship objectives sought by sponsors of state high school athletic/activity associations; and (d) qualitative analysis of the three open-ended questions (questions # 19, 20, and 21).

Survey Response Rate

Of the 206 surveys emailed to the marketing director at each company / business involved in sponsoring one or more state high school athletic/activity associations for the 2008-2009 academic year, 102 or 49.5% were returned. Ninety-six were completed and usable for a response rate of forty-seven percent (47%). The six surveys which were returned but not usable for data analysis were not fully completed and thus were labeled as “Partials” and excluded from the survey results. With any type of study, survey researchers seek high response rates in order to create a stronger claim when generalizing the results from the sample to the population.

Cresswell (2002) stated that many survey studies in leading educational journals report a response rate of 50% or better. However, this rate will vary depending on proper notification, adequate follow-up procedures, respondent interest in the study, the quality of the instrument, and use of incentives (Cresswell, 2002). Baruch (1999) supported Cresswell's (2002) findings by stating that response rates for traditional, paper questionnaires were typically in the 55% range. However, when comparing mail questionnaires to web-based questionnaires a response rate of 43% for the paper questionnaires was reported compared with 33% for the web-based questionnaires (Matz, 1999). Cook, Heath, and Thompson (2000) also examined web-based surveys and found that the average rate was 39.6%. With these averages in mind, the current web-based survey study received a higher response rate (49.5%) than what is typically expected when conducting web-based surveys. Therefore the response rate was deemed acceptable.

As discussed in Chapter Three, an initial phone call was made to each state high school athletic/activity association to speak with either the state's executive director, associate/assistant director and/or the professional staff member responsible for marketing/sponsorship within each respective state association. Along with introductions and a discussion of a few interscholastic athletic sponsorship topics, a request was made to communicate with the state high school athletic/activity association sponsors to determine whether they would be willing to participate in this study. According to McMillan (2004) the method used to select the state high school athletic/activity association sponsors would be classified as "convenience sampling" because they were chosen based on their willingness to participate in the study.

Of the fifty-one state high school athletic/activity associations under the governance of the National Federation of High Schools (NFHS) in the United States, contact was made with one or more individuals at forty (78%) of the associations. Of the forty state high school athletic/activity associations in which participation in this study was requested, thirty-two (80%) agreed to take part in the study. By agreeing to take part in the study, access to the sponsors they conduct business with was granted. One (0.03%) of the associations in the sample, the Kansas State High School Activities Association (KSHSAA), was not involved in any corporate sponsorship. As a result they could not participate in the study. Seven (17.5%) of the forty state high school athletic/activity associations contacted expressed concern with providing sponsorship information and/or access to their sponsorship partners. One (0.03%) association cited no specific reason other than they “could not provide any information at the current time”, while six (15%) other associations explained further that they were renegotiating sponsorship deals/contracts at the present time and felt uncomfortable requesting their corporate partners take part in any type of questionnaire that focused on sponsorship.

Upon completion of the current study, the results revealed that of thirty-two state high school athletic/activity associations that agreed to have their sponsors take part in the study, responses were received from sponsors of twenty-six (76%) different state associations. The results also showed that with the ninety-six total responses that were received from the twenty-six various state associations, a minimum of at least one state from each of the eight sections (Northeast, Mideast,

South, Central, Midwest, Southwest, West, and Northwest) of the NFHS governance structure were represented in the study.

Demographic Analysis

The profile section of the survey entitled “Company Profiles” was the second part (PART II) of the two-part survey, “*Sponsorship of Interscholastic Athletics*”. However, to gain a better understanding of the participants representing each sponsor (subjects) that took part in the study, a demographic analysis of the sponsor’s (business) characteristics will first be explained. This descriptive information allows for examination of interscholastic sport sponsorship from the perspective of the sponsor representatives, which was a central component of the study’s purpose. A quantitative analysis of the “Company Profiles” is provided below.

Question # 22

How many employees does your company have locally?

The size of the companies that provided sponsorship for state high school athletic/activity associations varied considerably from companies with less than 25 employees to companies with 500 or more employees. Table 4-1 shows the frequencies and cumulative frequencies. The highest percentage of respondents (42%) reported that they have less than 25 employees. The next highest percentage of subjects (23%) stated that they had 500 or more employees. However, the cumulative percentages in Table 4-1 indicated that the majority (62%) of the respondents represented companies having less than 100 employees.

Table 4-1
Number of employees of the companies sponsoring a State High School
 Athletic/Activity Association

Number of employees	Freq.	%	Cum %
Less than 25	40	42	42
25 to 49	11	12	54
50 – 99	8	8	62
100 – 499	15	16	78
500 or more	23	23	100.0
Total	97	100.0	

Question # 23

How would you describe your company according to the following?

Companies were asked to indicate if their company fit one or more of the following profiles: Local Company, Statewide Company, Regional Company, or National Company. According to the participant’s responses, there was a fairly equal representation from each of the four aforementioned types of companies involved in sponsoring a state high school athletic/activity association. The data in Table 4-2 shows the frequencies for the geographic area of the companies involved in the sample. The highest percentage of respondents (36%) reported that their companies were classified as Statewide Companies, while both Regional and National Companies accounted for twenty-six percent (26%) each of the respondents.

Table 4-2
Description of company

Description of company	Freq.	%	Cum %
Local Company	15	16	16
Statewide Company	34	36	52
Regional Company	25	26	78
National Company	25	26.	100.0
Total	99	100.0	

Question # 24

In general, what is your company's average length of commitment to sponsored organizations and events?

The data in Table 4-3 indicated that the majority reported commitment length or time involved in sponsoring sport organizations and events was more than five years (48%). The cumulative percentages indicate that the majority of the companies (79%) involved maintained an average length of commitment of three years or more, while very few companies (3%) reported their length of involvement in sponsorship to be one year or less.

Table 4-3
Length of commitment to sponsored organizations and events

Number of years	Freq.	%	Cum %
Less than 1 year	3	3	3
1 to 2 years	17	18	21
3 to 5 years	29	31	52
More than 5 years	45	48	100.0
Total	94	100.0	

Question # 25

What is the average number of sport sponsorship proposals your company receives on a yearly basis?

The data indicated that the majority (57%) of respondents receive fewer than twenty sport sponsorship requests on an annual basis. Over one-third of the respondents (36%) reported that they received ten or less requests annually. The next highest percentage was also closer to the lower end of the scale with twenty-one percent (21%) of the subjects stating they receive between eleven and twenty sport sponsorship proposals annually. Whereas only a small percentage (12%) of the respondents indicated that they receive more than one hundred sport sponsorship proposals annually. Table 4.4 shows the average annual number of sport sponsorship proposals the companies involved in the study receive.

Table 4.4
Average number of sport sponsorship proposals received annually

Number of proposals	Freq.	%	Cum %
0 to 10	34	36	36
11 to 20	20	21	57
21 – 50	15	16	73
51 – 100	15	16	89
Over 100	11	12	100.0
Total	95	100.0	

Question # 26

What level(s) of sport does and/or has your company been involved in sponsorship agreements with?

The various levels of sport that were provided as options for the subjects to select included the following four levels: Professional Sport; Intercollegiate Sport; Interscholastic (High School) Sport; and Youth Sport (little league, instructional leagues, etc.). The results indicated that over half of the companies in the sample become involved and/or have been involved in sponsoring sport at all of the four levels. The data is provided in Table 4.5. As expected, given the nature of the present study, the highest percentage of respondents (97%) reported being sponsors of interscholastic sport. Also, over three-fourths (77%) of the companies in the sample indicated that they were involved in sponsorship of intercollegiate sports. Slightly

fewer respondents (64%) however revealed that they have been and/or were currently sponsoring youth sports. Lastly, the lowest percentage of respondents, which was still over half of the companies sampled (53%) reported that they were/have been in sponsorship agreements with professional sports.

Table 4.5
Level(s) of sports sponsored

Level(s) of Sports Sponsored	Freq.	%
Professional Sports	50	53
Intercollegiate Sports	72	77
Interscholastic Sports (High School Sports)	91	97
Youth Sports (Little league, instructional leagues, etc.)	60	64

Question # 27

How long has your company been sponsoring the State High School Athletic/Activity Association in your respective state?

The majority of the companies (62%) stated that they have been a sponsor for a state association for 5 years or more. Table 4.6 shows the cumulative percentages as well as the specific length of years in which the respondents reported being involved in sponsorship agreements with a single and/or multiple state high school

athletic/activity association(s). The largest percentage of the respondents (36%) indicated that they have been sponsors for five to eight years. The second largest portion (26%) of respondents reported they have been involved for an even longer period (more than eight years). Interestingly, the smallest portion (7%) of respondents reported they had been involved in sponsorship for three to four years. Lastly, the rest of the sponsors (31%) in the sample were fairly new to sponsoring state high school athletic/activity associations, either having just become a sponsor within the past year or having been a sponsor for less than two years (See Table 4.6).

Table 4.6
Length of duration of sponsorship with the State High School Athletic/Activity Association

Length of duration of sponsorship	Freq.	%	Cum %
Just started this year	12	13	13
1 to 2 years	17	18	31
3 – 4 years	7	7	38
5 – 8 years	34	36	74
More than 8 years	24	26	100.0
Total	94	100.0	

Question # 28

At what level is your company planning to sponsor the State High School Athletic/Activity Association in your respective state?

Next, respondents were asked to describe the future planning regarding their sponsorship agreement with their respective state association(s) by indicating one of the following four responses: continue at the same level; continue at a higher level; continue at a lower level; or if they were planning to discontinue their sponsorship relationship. The majority (78%) of the subjects stated that they want their level of sponsorship agreement to continue at the same level (See Table 4.7). Eighteen percent (18%) of the companies also reported that they are planning to continue sponsoring a state high school athletic/activity association, but at a higher level. Very few (3%) companies however would like to continue their sponsorship at a lower level. Only two respondents (2%) out of the ninety-five who answered this specific question reported that they plan on discontinuing their sponsorship agreement.

Question # 29

Please check the primary gender and age demographics your company targeted through the State High School Athletic/Activity Association sponsorship in your respective state.

Information about the target market the companies sought through sponsorship of a state high school athletic/activity association was also solicited. Tables 4-8a and 4-8b show the target market sought according to the respondents by both gender and age. Exactly three-fourths (75%) of the respondents reported their company marketing targets males. The number of respondents that reported targeting males was slightly higher (75%) than the sixty-seven percent of companies that indicated they target females. The majority (70%) of subjects in the sample indicated

Table 4.7
Future planning of the level of sponsorship

Future planning of the Level of sponsorship	Freq.	%	Cum %
Continue at same level	73	78	78
Continue at higher level	17	18	96
Continue at lower level	3	3	3
Discontinue	2	2	100.0
Total	95	100.0	

the age category for their target market was individuals under nineteen. Conversely, the smallest portion (13%) of respondents reported that their company targets individuals aged fifty-five and over. Interestingly, some companies reported they target all of the demographics they had an option of selecting.

Table 4-8a
Target market by gender

Target market by gender	Freq.	%
Male	68	75
Female	61	67

Table 4-8b
Target market by age

Target market by age	Freq.	%
Under 19 years of age	64	70
19 to 25 years of age	40	44
25 to 35 years of age	38	42
35 to 45 years of age	32	35
45 to 55 years of age	18	20
Over 55 years of age	12	13

Question # 30

Please check the primary household level income your company targeted through the sport sponsorship of State High School Athletic/Activity Association in your respective state.

According to the subject's responses, the most highly targeted group (60%) was individuals with household incomes between \$50,000 and \$75,000. Two other household income groups were reported as being sought by more than one-third of the respondents. These two groups included both individuals with a household income between \$25,000 to \$50,000 (38%) and individuals with a household income between \$75,000 and \$100,000 (34%). The data in Table 4-9 shows the target market of the respondents by household income. It must be noted that the household income groups targeted reflect the parental earnings for the target market of teens.

Table 4-9
Target market my household income

Target market by household income	Freq.	%
Under \$25,000	12	15
\$25,000 to under \$50,000	31	38
\$50,000 to under \$75,000	49	60
\$75,000 to under \$100,000	28	34
\$100,000 and over	12	15

Question # 31

Who makes the final decision on sport sponsorship (or sponsorship in general) for your company?

Subjects were given the option to select from the following five answers to this specific question: CEO (Chief Executive Officer); Middle Management (managers, assistant managers, and directors); Marketing/Advertising Manager; an Advertising Agency; and “Other” in which they were prompted to be specific. Forty-three percent (43%) of the respondents, which represented the largest portion, reported that the CEO was the final decision maker on establishing sponsorship agreements for their respective company. The second largest portion of respondents included individuals classified as Middle Management, which represented twenty-two percent (22%) of the decision makers. In contrast, sponsor representatives who reported having a Vice-President and a Marketing/Advertising Manager who made

the final decisions on sponsorship agreements, had very similar responses. The percentages for these categories of decision makers were fourteen percent (14%) and thirteen percent (13%) respectively. No respondents involved in the present study, however, indicated that they chose an Advertising Agency to make the final decision for their company’s sponsorship agreement.

Sixteen (16%) respondents chose “Other” and subsequently provided a specific answer. The answers provided included, but were not limited to the following: Board of Directors; Myself as Manager; and Regional and Sales Managers. The final decision makers on sponsorship agreements for the companies involved in this sample are listed in Table 4-10.

Table 4-10
Final decision makers on sponsorship agreement

Decision makers	Freq.	%	Cum %
CEO	41	43	43
Vice-President(s)	13	14	57
Middle Management (Managers, Asst Managers, Directors)	21	22	79
Marketing/Advertising Manager	12	13	92
Advertising Agency	0	0	92
Other	17	17	109
Total	104	109	

Question # 32

Please indicate the primary industry your company operates in.

There was a relatively similar representation of industry type as evident by not one specific industry being represented by more than fifteen percent (15%). The industry that received the highest percentage of responses was “Insurance/Finance” with twelve percent (12%), followed closely by both “Food” (10%) and “Sporting Goods” (10%). The only other industries that were represented by more than five percent (5%) were “Health Care” (9%) and “Retail Trade” (7%). There were two industries, “Airline” and “Gaming/Gambling,” that did not receive any responses. Twenty-two percent (22%) of the respondents chose to answer “Other” as their industry and thus described their industry. The industries as described by the respondents varied greatly with numerous responses. However, the most frequent responses in the “Other” category were “Media” and “Newspaper”. Table 4-11 shows the breakdown of the primary industries in which the respondents operate. The research findings discussed in the above-mentioned section addressed RQ #3.

Table 4-11
Primary industry of the companies

Primary industry	Freq.	%	Cum %
Insurance/Finance	11	12	12
Food	9	10	22
Sporting Goods	9	10	32
Health Care	8	9	41
Retail Trade	7	7	48
Banking/Credit	5	5	53
Education	5	5	58
Government	5	5	63
Radio	5	5	68
Photography	4	4	72
Television	4	4	76
Communication/Technology	3	3	79
Lodging (Hotel/Motel)	2	2	81
Screenprinting	2	2	83
Armed Forces	1	1	84
Auto Dealer	1	1	85
Beverage	1	1	86
Entertainment	1	1	87
Airline	0	0	87
Gaming/Gambling	0	0	87
Other	21	22	109
Total	104	109	

Sponsorship Objectives

The second part of the two-part survey was titled “Sport Sponsorship Objectives”. While this section actually was PART I of the official survey, analysis occurred after the descriptive information was examined. The following results allowed for an examination of the underlying structures in the data set. As a result, the most salient items related to sponsorship objectives were determined. Examining the sponsorship objectives of sponsors of state high school athletic/activity associations represented a major goal of the study and addressed research question one.

Data Normality:

The data analysis that was used in the present study was an inferential statistical analysis described as Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). Normality is assumed when using these univariate and multivariate procedures (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Assessing normality can be accomplished by analyzing the skewness and kurtosis of all the scale items within the survey. According to Huck (2004), it is assumed that the standard rule of thumb for normal data is that skewness values should fall within or around the range of -1 to 1 and kurtosis values should fall within or around the range of -2 to 1.

Sport Sponsorship Objectives Measurement Scales:

Subjects involved in the study responded to seventeen questions related to sport sponsorship objectives. A six-point Likert-response scale ranging from one

(least important) to six (extremely important) was used to examine the most salient sponsorship objectives as indicated by the respondents and subsequently addressed research question number one (RQ #1).

Table 4-12 provides a summary of descriptive statistics for all seventeen sport sponsorship objectives. The seventeen objectives are listed in rank order according to the mean level of performance, drawn from the six-point Likert-response scale. Overall, the three items that had the highest sponsorship objective ratings were “Giving back to and/or being involved with the community” ($M = 5.43$), “Support high school student-athletes” ($M = 5.40$), and “Demographic Fit” ($M = 5.21$). The three items that had the lowest sponsorship objective ratings were “Block Competition” ($M = 2.85$), “Alter Public Perception” ($M = 3.11$), and “Title Sponsorship” ($M = 3.04$).

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was used to examine the underlying structures in the data set and to determine the most salient sponsorship objectives. Rotation methods were used to improve interpretability of the factor solution. Specifically, a varimax rotation was used if the underlying factors were correlated. The EFA revealed three factors explaining 53.90% of the variance in the sport sponsorship objective items. The first factor was the highest percentage and accounted for 21.06% of the variance. Next, the second factor accounted for 17.91% while the third factor accounted for 14.93% of the variance. The three distinct factors that were extracted from the EFA were based on the correlation coefficients of the variables (See Table 4-13). Table 4-13a provides a summary of all of the factors extractable from the EFA along with their eigenvalues, the percent of variance

attributable to each factor, and the cumulative variance of the factor and the previous factors.

To describe and label the three factors an analysis of the loadings for each item was performed following the factor rotation in order. Eight items loaded onto the first factor, which appeared to describe a “*Sponsorship Status*” dimension. Within the first factor the two sponsorship objectives that were the most salient items were “Visibility” and “Enhance company image”. Fifty-one percent (51%) of respondents reported that “Visibility” was extremely important while thirty-eight percent (38%) indicated that the objective “Enhance company image” was extremely important. For the second factor, there were five items that loaded onto that factor, which refers to a “*Public Service*” aspect of being in this type of sponsorship relationship. “Giving back to and/or being involved with the community” was the objective that scored highest among respondents for the second factor with the vast majority (69%) of participants saying it was extremely important. Ranking right behind it was the item “Support high school student-athletes”, which also was scored as extremely important by the majority (66%) of respondents. Finally, three factors loaded onto the third factor, which referred to a “*Target Market*” dimension sought through the sponsorship of a state high school athletic/activity associations. For the “*Target Market*” factor “Demographic fit” and “Reach specific target markets” were the objectives considered most salient. Over half (55%) of respondents indicated that “Demographic fit” was extremely important while forty-nine (49%) percent reported the objective “Reach specific target markets” was extremely important.

The three aforementioned factors along with each of the items that loaded onto the factors have been displayed in Table 4-14. Reliability analysis using

Cronbach's alpha was performed to measure the reliability of variables loaded into each of the three factors. Cronbach's alpha scores were .83, .79, and .67 for Sponsorship Status (Factor I), Public Service (Factor II), and Target Market (Factor III), respectively, and therefore were satisfactory with internal consistency estimates. Nunnally (1978) has indicated an acceptable reliability coefficient to be .70 or higher. A lower threshold, such as a cut-off of .60, is common in exploratory research and has been used in sport marketing studies (Huck, 2004). The data in this section where factors were formed to determine the most salient sponsorship objectives addressed research question one (RQ #1).

Table 4-12
Sport sponsorship objective scale – descriptive analysis

Sponsorship Objectives	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Giving back to and/or being involved with the community	5.43	1.09
Support high school student-athletes	5.40	1.10
Demographic Fit	5.21	1.06
Reach Specific Target Markets	5.15	1.07
Visibility	5.12	1.19
Support the State High School Athletic/Activity Association	5.00	1.15
Association with interscholastic athletics	4.94	1.16
Interest and concern about high school athletics	4.91	1.17
Signage Opportunities	4.56	1.31
Product-Sport Image Fit	4.52	1.47
Identity and build image with target market (positioning)	4.48	1.48
Opportunity to infiltrate new untapped markets	4.47	1.39
Enhance company image	4.45	1.68
Sponsorship Exclusivity	3.60	1.89
Alter Public Perception	3.11	1.88
Title Sponsorship	3.04	2.04
Block Competition	2.85	1.77

Table 4-13
Sport sponsorship matrix

Factor	Item	Component		
		1	2	3
SS	Enhance Company Image	.663		
SS	Identify and build image with target market (positioning)	.654		
SS	Signage Opportunities	.643		
SS	Visibility	.632		
SS	Block Competition	.622		
SS	Title Sponsorship	.555		
SS	Sponsorship Exclusivity	.524		
SS	Alter Public Perception	.491		
PS	Support high school student-athletes		.676	
PS	Interest and concern about interscholastic athletics		.665	
PS	Association with interscholastic athletics		.637	
PS	Support the State High School Athletic/Activity Association		.543	
PS	Giving back to and/or being Involved with the community		.469	
TM	Reach Specific Target Markets			.811
TM	Demographic Fit			.670
TM	Opportunity to infiltrate new untapped markets			.498

Note. SS = Sponsorship Status; PS = Public Service; and TM = Target Market

Table 4-13a
Total variance explained for sponsorship objectives

Component	Total	Initial Eigenvalues	
		% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4.156	24.450	24.450
2	2.819	16.582	41.032
3	2.188	12.870	53.902
4	1.213	7.136	61.038
5	1.034	6.082	67.119
6	.839	4.937	72.057
7	.786	4.625	76.681
8	.648	3.815	80.496
9	.607	3.573	84.068
10	.546	3.214	87.282
11	.480	2.826	90.108
12	.393	2.309	92.417
13	.337	1.985	94.402
14	.309	1.819	96.220
15	.254	1.492	97.712
16	.208	1.223	98.935
17	.181	1.065	100.000

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

Table 13a (continued)

Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			
Component	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4.156	24.450	24.450
2	2.819	16.582	41.032
3	2.188	12.870	53.902

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

Table 13a (continued)

Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings			
Component	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.580	21.059	21.059
2	3.045	17.911	38.970
3	2.538	14.932	53.902

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

Table 4-14
Factors utilized in interscholastic sport sponsorship selection decisions

Factor	<i>M</i>	Rank
Sponsorship Status:	31.35	1
Enhance Company Image		
Identify and build image with target market (positioning)		
Signage Opportunities		
Visibility		
Block Competition		
Title Sponsorship		
Sponsorship Exclusivity		
Alter Public Perception		
Public Service:	25.67	2
Support high school student-athletes		
Interest and concern about interscholastic athletics		
Association with interscholastic athletics		
Support the State High School Athletic/Activity Association		
Giving back to and/or being involved with the community		
Target Market:	14.81	3
Reach Specific Target Markets		
Demographic Fit		
Opportunity to infiltrate new untapped markets		

Qualitative Analysis

The present study falls under the paradigm of a mixed-methods design because it includes both quantitative data as well as qualitative data (i.e., text or images) (Cresswell, 2008). The “Company Profiles” section or PART II of the survey along with the seventeen Likert-Scale response items that were used to analyze the sponsorship objectives constituted the quantitative aspect of the study. PART II specifically addressed RQ #2, while PART I addressed RQ’s # 1, 3, and 4. The qualitative part of the survey consisted of three open-ended questions (survey items 19, 20, and 21). Each question allowed the respondents to provide an essay type answer (approximately one to three sentences) which also addressed RQ’s #1, 3, and 4. Thus, the results in this section represent the responses that were qualitative in nature. Cresswell (2008) stated that the combination of quantitative and qualitative data provides a better understanding of a research problem than either quantitative or qualitative data alone.

The three open-ended questions were analyzed by utilizing the following six steps to qualitative data analysis: 1) Organize and prepare data for analysis; 2) Read through all the data; 3) Perform a detailed analysis by developing a coding process; 4) Use the coding process to generate a description of the themes that arise for analysis; 5) Advance how the themes will be represented in the qualitative narrative; and 6) Make an interpretation or meaning of the data (Cresswell, 2003, p. 220).

Coding Process

Cresswell (2008) described a coding process as a qualitative research process in which the researcher makes sense out of data, divides it into text or image

segments, labels the segments, examines codes for overlap and redundancy, and collapses these codes into themes. To analyze the qualitative responses, a manual coding process was employed using Microsoft Word and note cards to organize the data. Along with employing a manual coding process, a quantification of the qualitative data was conducted. Quantification has been described as “creating codes and themes qualitatively, and then counting the number of times they occurred in the text of the data”, (Cresswell, 2003, p. 221). The various codes and themes were combined with sample narrative responses to the qualitative questions. Themes used to describe the qualitative data that follows.

Question # 19

What have been the distinct differences of this sport sponsorship relationship when compared to other forms of sponsorship you have been involved with?

Regarding the distinct differences, the following two themes emerged: 1) Exposure to younger generation (target market); and 2) Expanded state-wide exposure and visibility.

Theme # 1: Exposure to Younger Generation (Target Market)

Exposure to the younger generation (high school-aged kids and interscholastic student-athletes), was the first and most prevalent theme that became apparent when analyzing survey item 19. The rich qualitative data from respondents helped to illustrate how distinctive being a state high school athletic/activity association sponsor can be for targeting this younger generation. Statements are provided below reflecting how this sponsorship relationship increased the company’s exposure and visibility to this target market (younger generation).

Respondents described the effect of this sponsorship relationship on their target market with statements supporting the theme that included: “exposure to our target audience – youth (high school athletes)”; “an excellent opportunity to reach the younger generation”; “direct access to a key stakeholder to our target demo”; “high visibility to our target market”; “allows for great visibility and exposure to young athletes”; “allows for an opportunity to get a great deal of exposure to the people we aim to target”; “targets a specific group that has been the main focus of our company since our inception”; “more exposure to specific local customer base”; and “we are a private orthopedic clinic and we want to make sure that all of the area schools are familiar with our services.” Two of the more pronounced and thorough responses establishing this theme included the quotes: “This focuses mainly on youth, whereas the other sports marketing we are involved with deals with adults, where the same logo and message is used but it is marketed differently for teens” and “Sponsoring an organization such as a high school sport association provides an ample opportunity to reach the demographics our company attempts to access.”

In summary, companies involved in sponsorship of a state high school athletic/activity association reported that their sponsorship relationship has provided an opportunity for great exposure and visibility among high school-aged students and interscholastic student-athletes. Therefore, the company representatives reported that this sponsorship has allowed them to reach their target market successfully.

Theme # 2: Expanded State-wide Exposure and Visibility

Another theme that arose also dealt with the increased exposure that this type of sponsorship relationship provides. However, instead of simply targeting a specific

demographic, the next predominant theme centered on how this sponsorship expanded the sponsor's state-wide exposure and visibility. Much like the first theme, numerous subjects in the sample provided significant responses, some of which were more concise, while others were more detailed. The responses that comprise the second theme have been provided below.

According to the participants, sponsorship of a state association presented an opportunity to increase their statewide exposure and visibility more than any other type of sponsorship. One notable response stated: "The visibility of the high school activities association sponsorship reaches across our entire state. In addition, because it is just not sports, but encompasses music, speech, debate and drama, it is a diverse group that does not cater just to athletes." Similarly, another respondent also included the notion of statewide exposure, but expanded by including a philanthropic aspect of how the statewide exposure can have a positive impact on communities by saying: "Statewide exposure in every community across the state allows us to contribute to all communities with a single sponsorship...huge exposure opportunities relating to statewide events that bring communities together in a positive manner."

Other responses that expressed this theme included: "This is an in-state sponsorship that we feel gives us an opportunity to reach various communities within our state"; "Supporting the NCHSAA has broadened our marketing area to include the whole state rather than a few local counties"; "Broad advertising possibilities throughout the state" and "We have received a great deal more exposure at the sporting events and venues than with other sponsorship relationships."

According to the written statements provided by the respondents, sponsorships of state high school athletic/activity associations have served as an excellent means of increasing statewide exposure and visibility.

Question # 20

How important and/or valuable is it for your company to be involved with and support education-based interscholastic athletics, whose primary purpose is to support the educational mission of schools?

In response to survey item twenty, there was a re-occurring statement that constantly appeared throughout the responses. Overwhelmingly, among 54 of the 76 responses (71%) to survey item 20 the terms “very”, “highly” or “extremely important and/or valuable” were included in the respondent’s answers. However, due to the nature of this particular question, a theme for this response was not created. The reason for this was that respondents either simply answered “very”, “highly” or “extremely important and/or valuable” to the question. The remaining respondents answered with those responses as well, but then went on to elaborate in more detail, and thus allowed for the creation of themes. The three themes that emerged from the responses to question nineteen were: 1) *Helping shape future community leaders*; 2) *Matching of missions and values*; and 3) *Product-sport image fit*.

Theme 1: Helping shape future community leaders

The first theme that surfaced upon analyzing the responses to survey item twenty was company representatives felt sponsoring a state high school athletic/activity association was important and/or valuable because it supported and serves as a positive influence on high school-aged individuals and/or student-athletes. Specifically, respondents stated that these individuals would someday become leaders

within their communities and therefore it was important to help and assist in their growth. Some of the more notable responses that contributed to form this theme are provided below.

Respondents commented that helping shape future community leaders was very important and/or valuable to their companies. Responses such as the following reflect this concept clearly: “We can help shape and mold the future of our youth by showcasing opportunities and provide experience that can foster youth to develop new skill”; “Our communities are only as good as the education we provide...they are our future work force”; “We depend on these students becoming our workforce as well as our customers in the future and we care deeply that everyone has the best chance of becoming an engaging member of our statewide community”; and “We want to support students and help them become well-rounded citizens and learn the skills necessary to compete in this global economy.” Within the numerous responses that comprised this theme, there were two responses that most emphatically illustrated the notion of positively shaping future community leaders. The first response was stated as follows:

This relationship is the greatest thing we have ever done. It truly supports the future leaders of our state as they learn valuable lessons not taught in the classroom. We hope and intend to continue this relationship for many years to come because it enhances all communities within our state.

The other more notable response was the following comment:

This partnership has proven, over the years, to be one of continued support, education and development. As a sponsor, we are placed at the very edge of this experience and will forever be a part of that. We won't just be remembered as an insurance company, but will be remembered as a “company” that did something to make a difference. That, in itself, is priceless.

Based on the aforementioned responses regarding the importance and value companies received from state association sponsorships, it was apparent that they were satisfied with their sponsorship agreements. The opportunity to positively impact the lives of young individuals and in turn help them develop into productive citizens and leaders within their communities was unique to sponsorship of a state... association.

Theme # 2: Matching of Missions and Values

Along with respondents expressing that they believe it is very important for their companies to support young individuals and help foster their development, many also indicated that the mission and/or values of their company match that of interscholastic athletics. The NFHS, which is the governing body of each state high school athletic/activity association, states the mission of co-curricular interscholastic athletic and activity programs is one that enriches student's educational experience and promotes student academic achievement, along with promoting the values of citizenship, sportsmanship, hard work, and self-discipline (NFHS, 2007). Numerous study participants indicated the values their company espouses and/or their company's mission were in alignment with the programs/events offered by state high school athletic/activity associations.

Of the more noteworthy responses regarding the match between mission and values, one respondent stated: "It is important to us because part of our mission is to make the places where we live and work better places to be. Education-based interscholastic athletics meets that mission." Other comments included: "It is mission critical for us to be involved with and support interscholastic athletics"; "Our

company values align with the activity association”; “Very important – those student-athletes already have many of the same value sets that we espouse”; and “Matches our core values of education and family.” In short, the matching of missions and values between sponsors and education-based interscholastic athletics was specifically identified as an important and valuable aspect of sponsorship of a state high school athletic/activity association.

Theme #3: Product-Sport Image Fit

Respondents reported that sponsoring a state high school athletic/activity association was very important and valuable because the relationship was a good fit since it involved supporting a community based athletic organization. Exemplary statements supporting theme #3 follow. Due to the responses referring to this sponsorship being a good fit, the third and final theme that emerged was given the exact same label of one of the sport sponsorship objectives that appeared in PART I of the current study. Product-Sport Image Fit characterized this final theme that became apparent in the qualitative analysis and coding process.

The following four comments by respondents illustrated the concept of product-sport image fit: “My business IS high school sports. So...I guess I would have to say that it is extremely important”; “We are an organization that provides educational materials to schools so it is a great fit for us to be involved with our high school activities association”; “We are sports specific so supporting the association is obviously important”; and “We feel the state relationships are very important to our Sports Photography business.” In sum, there were multiple reasons for which company representatives felt being a state high school athletic/activity association

sponsor was important and valuable. One of the primary reasons was that it was a good image and fit for their company to support an interscholastic athletic organization.

Question # 21

Feel free to comment on any sport sponsorship issue in general and/or your sponsorship relationship with the state high school athletic/activity association.

Due to the nature of survey item twenty-one, which provided no limits or restrictions on responses, a broad array of comments were provided. Responses to question twenty-one primarily included statements that repeated some of the previous themes discussed. Along with responses that reinforced preceding themes, a wide assortment of comments were provided that were important to the study's findings, but did not necessarily create themes. These comments were represented in the following list: thoughts on diminishing athletic budgets and the importance of sponsorship agreements for athletic organizations and programs; specific comments about the company's agreement with the state high school athletic/activity association they sponsor; and positive responses about the relationships that were developed with the professional staff members of these associations through their sponsorship agreements. Despite the assortment of comments that were made, two overriding themes did emerge: 1) *Positive sponsorship relationship (with the state high school athletic/activity association)*; and 2) *Continuation of sponsorship relationship*.

Theme #1: Positive Sponsorship Relationship (with the state high school athletic/activity association)

When given the opportunity to freely comment on any issue pertaining to their sponsorship relationship with a state high school athletic/activity association,

company representatives stated repeatedly that their partnership was best described as great, positive, and/or a pleasure to be involved with. Many of the respondent's comments contributed to creating this theme by reflecting on their thoughts with limited or concise statements. A few of the responses that were brief, but clearly stated the sponsor's satisfaction with their sponsorship relationship included: "It has been a pleasure working with the State High School Association"; "It is an outstanding relationship"; and "It has been a wonderful and positive experience." Although the qualitative data that formed this category was brief, it distinctly displayed how companies were very pleased with their sponsorship relationship with a state high school athletic/activity association. Along with the previous statements, more thorough comments that detailed the positive sponsorship relationships are listed below as some were combined with the second theme that emerged.

Theme #2: Continuation of Sponsorship Relationship

The next theme complimented the first theme developed in response to survey item twenty-one. Not surprisingly, many of the companies that indicated a very positive sponsorship relationship with a state high school athletic/activity association also reported they intend to continue their sponsorship relationship. Much like the previous theme, numerous respondents provided fairly short answers that emphasized a desire to continue their sponsorship relationship with the state association. Comments such as "our company plans to continue for years to come"; "we will continue our sponsorship"; and "we hope and intend to continue this relationship for many years to come" are examples of the types of responses that were provided. However, several responses went into more detail and even included elements

specific to the first theme (positive sponsorship relationship). Two of the more notable responses that featured aspects of both themes were the following: “We couldn’t be prouder to be partnered with the association and we look forward to a long-term sponsorship relationship for many years to come”; and “Being a sponsor for the association has been a great relationship and business venture that we anticipate being involved with for years to come.” Perhaps the response that best illustrated the two concepts of a satisfactory sponsorship relationship along with an intention to continue their sponsorship with a state association was this statement:

We feel our relationship with the association is great and intend to continue for years to come. The greatest thing we have ever done. We would be considered a rather ‘small’ entity in our state so we are really pushing our budget to be able to afford the relationship, but the positive image gained is ‘priceless’.

Although the subjects were free to comment on any aspect of their sponsorship relationship, the responses provided to question twenty-one made it apparent that many of the company representatives were pleased with and felt they have a positive sponsorship relationship with their state high school athletic/activity association. The results also showed that many respondents expressed an intention to continue their sponsorship relationship in the future. Key findings such as this will be discussed in the following chapter.

In summary, Chapter Four included the data analysis and results from this study. Demographics and sponsorship objectives of companies involved in sponsorship relationships with a state high school athletic/activity association were analyzed. The reporting of results on company demographics and their involvement in sponsorship, along with sponsorship objectives included a quantitative analysis of

closed survey questions, and six-point Likert response items. The results for the demographic characteristics were provided through descriptive statistics (percentages and frequencies). Descriptive statistics such as means, percentages, frequencies, and standard deviations were used to report the sponsorship objectives along with exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Along with the quantitative analysis of results, a qualitative analysis of three open-ended survey questions was also presented. This was done by using a coding process and developing the various themes discussed in the chapter.

More specifically, the results on company demographics addressed research question two, which sought to determine the common characteristics and differences of companies involved in state high school athletic/activity association sponsorships. Research question one focused on the most important sponsorship objectives according to sponsors of state high school athletic/activity associations. Results from both sections of the survey were utilized to address research questions three and four of the study. Each research question will be addressed and discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

The next chapter provides a discussion on the results that were presented in Chapter Four. In essence, Chapter Five will make sense of what this study discovered by presenting the most salient results in a more clear and concise form. It will also assist readers in having a better understanding of the topic of interscholastic sport sponsorship and how this study contributes to the existing literature on sport sponsorship.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Introduction

Chapter five has been divided into five sections. The sections include: (a) summary of the study and methods used; (b) discussion of the research findings; (c) limitations of the present study; (d) recommendations for future research; and (e) conclusion.

Summary of the Study and Methods Used

The purpose of the study was to examine the use and value of sponsorship in interscholastic athletics. The specific goals of the study were as follows: a) To examine the sponsorship objectives of sponsors of state high school athletic/associations; b) To examine the similarities and differences of companies involved in state high school athletic/activity association sponsorships; c) To determine how the corporate profile influences the objectives of corporate sponsors; and d) To develop a framework for sponsorship of state high school athletic/activity associations to assist in our understanding of education based sport sponsorship relationships. In order to achieve the study's purpose four research questions were formulated. The four research questions were: 1) What are the most important sponsorship objectives of sponsors of state high school athletic/activity associations? 2) What are the common characteristics and differences of companies involved in state high school athletic/activity association sponsorships? 3) How do company characteristics influence the objectives of the sponsorship relationship? And 4) Can a

theoretical framework of interscholastic sport sponsorship be developed to assist in our understanding of education based sport sponsorship relationships?

To address the focus of the research study, a two-part survey was designed. The survey used, titled "*Sponsorship of Interscholastic Athletics*" was a modification of the Sport Sponsorship Evaluation Model by Irwin and Asimakopoulos (1992). Along with utilizing the survey to examine the sponsor's objectives, three questions in an open-ended format were provided to further identify interscholastic sport sponsorship objectives. Lastly, demographic information was also collected to develop a profile of each of the sponsors of state high school athletic/activity associations that participated in the study.

"*Sponsorship of Interscholastic Athletics*" surveys were emailed to 206 marketing directors at company / businesses involved in sponsoring one or more state high school athletic/activity associations for the 2008-2009 academic year. Of the 206 surveys distributed, 102 or 49.5% were returned of which ninety-six (47%) were completed and usable. According to Cresswell (2002) many survey studies in leading educational journals report a response rate of 50% or better. This rate will vary however depending on proper notification, adequate follow-up procedures, respondent interest in the study, the quality of the instrument, and use of incentives (Cresswell, 2002). For web-based surveys, such as the present study Cook, Heath, and Thompson (2000) reported that the average response rate was 39.6%. When compared to the aforementioned averages, the current web-based study received a higher response rate (49.5%) than what is typically expected when conducting web-based surveys. Therefore the response rate was deemed acceptable.

Data was evaluated using descriptive statistics such as percentages and frequencies for PART II of the questionnaire to describe the profiles or demographic characteristics of the sponsors. PART I of the study utilized a six-point Likert-type response scale consisting of seventeen items designed to measure the perceived importance of criteria relating to sport sponsorship. To analyze the relative importance of all the sport sponsorship objectives under investigation, descriptive statistics such as means, percentages, frequencies, and standard deviations were used. Along with using descriptive statistics for PART I of the study, inferential statistics were used to compare the responses to the items addressing the relative importance of all the sport sponsorship objectives. Specifically, inferential statistics such as an exploratory factor analysis were employed in PART I of the questionnaire.

Discussion of the Research Findings

RQ #1: What are the most important sponsorship objectives of sponsors of state high school athletic/activity associations?

Research question one (RQ #1) sought to discover the most important sponsorship objectives of sponsors of state high school athletic/activity associations. To determine this, respondents completed PART I, “Sport Sponsorship Objectives” of the survey, which consisted of quantitative and qualitative questions.

Target Market (TM):

The results showed respondents perceive reaching their target market as a primary goal of their state high school athletic/activity association sponsorship. The sponsorship objectives, “Reach specific target markets”, and “Opportunity to infiltrate new untapped markets” were two items respondents rated highly regarding

their sponsorship with state associations. “Demographic fit” also emerged as a key objective. The data in Table 5.1 shows the level of importance respondents placed in the above-mentioned sport sponsorship objectives. Based on “Demographic fit”, “Reach target markets” and “Opportunity to infiltrate new untapped markets”, the results can be interpreted to suggest that sponsorship of interscholastic athletics assists companies in achieving three of their most highly sought marketing goals. In essence, the sponsors acknowledged that there was a demographic fit between their products/services and the participants and spectators of interscholastic athletics. This finding supports Irwin, Sutton, and McCarthy (2002) who determined that companies select a sponsorship agreement that provides exposure to and matches the company’s target market because it is crucial for realizing product brand-related objectives.

The quantitative results that addressed RQ #1 were supported by the qualitative results as themes emerged that reinforced the importance sponsors placed in the three most highly rated sport sponsorship objectives. Responses to survey item 19 resulted in the theme “*Exposure to Younger Generation (Target Market)*” and complimented the data obtained through the quantitative portion of the survey addressing RQ #1. Comments such as “an excellent opportunity to reach the younger generation”; “direct access to a key stakeholder to our target demo”; “allows for great visibility and exposure to young athletes”; “allows for an opportunity to get a great deal of exposure to the people we aim to target”; and “targets a specific group that has been the main focus of our company since our inception” appeared when respondents were probed to explain the distinct differences that being a sponsor of a state association offers when compared to other forms of sponsorship.

Table 5-1
Importance and means of sport sponsorship objectives

Sponsorship Objective	% of respondents who rated objective as extremely or very important	<i>M</i>
Reach specific target markets	78%	5.15
Opportunity to infiltrate new untapped markets	55%	4.47
Demographic fit	73%	5.21

These findings are consistent with previous research suggesting companies tend to consider the demographics of the sport, the profile of the spectators and the media audience's, along with the strength of the audience's association with the sport as important evaluation variables (Meenaghan,1993). The findings were also consistent with Shank's (2007) description of the teen market's appeal. This market has been estimated to be worth \$95 billion annually and growing. As a result, sport sponsors have initiated strategic marketing initiatives to reach this valuable market of teens (Shank, 2007). Additionally, spending on sport sponsorship has continued to grow with North American companies spending more money each year on sponsorship deals (IEG, 2008). Due to the rapid growth of sport sponsorship and sponsors viewing interscholastic athletics as a means to access their target market, the significance of state high school athletic/activity association sponsorship has developed. With participation rates among interscholastic athletics at historic levels

for girls and the highest level in the past 27 years for boys (Gillis, 2007), state associations provide a tremendous opportunity for companies interested in reaching the teen market. The findings provide evidence that there is value associated with being a state association sponsor. Due to the value of this sponsorship for companies, it is subsequently seen as an opportune way of achieving their marketing goals as well.

When analyzing the results of the three most highly rated sport sponsorship objectives, along with the qualitative results, a few conclusions can be drawn. First, a key objective for the sponsors was to reach their target market of teens. Also, the sponsorship relationship with state associations provides direct access to this specific, valuable market of teens. This can be attributed to the signage and publicity in schools, gymnasiums, and fields that provides exposure and visibility in each state championship event. Also, many companies sponsor state associations because the specific target market of teens is considered impressionable and easily accessible (Hall & Gibson, 2005). In fact, the teen market is considered unlimited and untapped. Because of this distinction of the teen market, it is also one that companies greatly want to access so they can secure teens as customers for life (Pennington, 2005). Marketing efforts such as this have been referred to as relationship marketing. Shank (2007) described relationship marketing as creating, maintaining, and enhancing strong, value-laden relationships with customers and other stakeholders. One of the most important goals identified by sponsors was being able to access and build relationships with the teen audience when they are impressionable and may potentially become lifelong supporters of their brand (product/service). This was

clearly reported as a significant reason why companies recognize a state high school athletic/activity association sponsorship as being so valuable.

Expanded State-wide Exposure and Visibility:

The ability to engage in relationship marketing has been acknowledged for the increased exposure the state association sponsorship provides. In fact, “*Expanded state-wide exposure and visibility*” was a theme that emerged from the qualitative questions and further addressed RQ #1. Based on the respondent’s answers, the state association sponsorship provided an opportunity to increase statewide exposure and visibility more than any other type of sponsorship. The following response is just one of many that captured the theme of expanding exposure and visibility: “Statewide exposure in every community across the state allows us to contribute to all communities with a single sponsorship...huge exposure opportunities relating to statewide events that bring communities together in a positive manner.” The emergence of this theme suggests that state association sponsorships are a very unique and superior way for sponsors to reach their target market.

Relationship Marketing:

In addition, many of the same factors that permit the teen market to be reached such as exposure, visibility, and easy accessibility are also viewed by sponsors as an avenue to access new untapped markets. By making a first and hopefully lasting impression on young student-athletes or spectators viewing an interscholastic athletic contest, the opportunity to develop a lasting relationship through marketing efforts is precisely what sponsors want to achieve. It is also something sponsors believe can realistically be achieved as evidenced by the

overwhelming majority of sponsors reporting they want their level of sponsorship to continue at the same or a higher level (in response to RQ #2). Given the importance placed in the sponsorship objectives as indicated in Table 5-1, this study has demonstrated that interscholastic athletics sponsorship provides access to build a relationship with the untapped market of teens.

Relationship marketing was apparent because sponsors recognize the long-term benefits of influencing young individuals who could potentially be life-long customers. This was consistent with the findings of Hall and Gibson (2005) who described the interscholastic athletic environment as being a less infiltrated, uncluttered market that is conducive for sponsors to communicate a direct message to their target markets. By sponsoring interscholastic athletics, sponsors are able to reach and more importantly establish long lasting relationships with participants and spectators, which include other high school students, school personnel, along with participants' family and extended family.

Philanthropic Sponsorship Objectives:

A major goal of the study was to determine the most important sponsorship objectives of state associations. The findings were similar to recent sport sponsorship literature in relation to which sponsorship objectives were viewed as important to companies. The objectives "Reach specific target markets" and "Opportunity to infiltrate new untapped markets" reflect more corporate-related (bottom-line) objectives that have been identified as primary objectives for sponsors in professional and intercollegiate athletics (Copeland, Frisby, & McCarville, 1996; Irwin, 1993; Lough & Irwin, 2001; Kuzma, Shanklin, & McCally Jr., 1993; Shank, 2005; Stotlar,

1993; Stotlar, 1999; Thwaites, 1995). Despite results that were consistent with more commercial sport sponsorship objectives, this study also yielded results consistent with sport sponsorship objectives of the early days of modern sport sponsorship (1960s through 1980s) where sponsorship was primarily viewed as philanthropic (Wilkinson, 1993). The philanthropic objectives that were reported as being important along with the themes that emerged that reflect philanthropic motives include the following: “Support high school student-athletes”; “Interest and concern about interscholastic athletics”; “Support the state high school athletic/activity association”; “Giving back to and/or being involved with the community”; and “Association with interscholastic athletics” and *“Helping shape future community leaders.”*

Public Service (PS):

Of the five sport sponsorship objectives that reflect philanthropic motives, each one was considered to be extremely important to the sponsors. Consequently the *“Public Service”* factor was formed when EFA was performed. The five sport sponsorship objectives that respondents indicated were extremely important to their sponsorship goals were as follows: “Support high school student-athletes”; “Interest and concern about interscholastic athletics”; “Support the state high school athletic/activity association”; “Giving back to and/or being involved with the community”; and “Association with interscholastic athletics”. Of these five objectives “Giving back to and/or being involved with the community” was the objective most respondents rated as of greatest importance. The data in Table 5.2 shows the level of importance respondents placed in the above-mentioned sport sponsorship objectives.

Table 5-2
Importance and means of sport sponsorship objectives

Sponsorship Objective	% of respondents who rated objective as extremely or very important	<i>M</i>
Support high school student-athletes	88%	5.40
Interest and concern about interscholastic athletics	78%	4.91
Support the State High School Athletic/Activity Association	72%	5.00
Giving back to and/or being involved with the community	86%	5.43
Association with interscholastic athletics	71%	4.94

Companies' reporting that the various philanthropic objectives were extremely important to their sponsorship was in line with what scholars have stated about goodwill and being involved in the community on behalf of companies. Mullin, Hardy, and Sutton (2000) noted that sponsorship can demonstrate more potential than any other promotional tool in terms of direct impact on a community. Thus when companies are striving to obtain this objective, sponsorship takes the form of public or community relations, and the objective is usually to position the company as a concerned and interested citizen trying to put something back into the community (Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 2000). Based on the study findings, it was clear that state

association sponsors are trying to achieve this goal of providing assistance to the community. Specifically, sponsors want to help young men and women involved in interscholastic athletics and in turn positively impact local communities. In fact, many sponsors indicated that one of their primary goals was to assist in the positive development of these young individuals so they could one day be community leaders. This particular finding, in response to RQ #1, provided evidence to suggest that the marketing objectives of interscholastic sport sponsors resemble a more philanthropic approach to sponsorship.

Helping Shape Future Community Leaders:

The notion of corporate philanthropy or public service also arose in the qualitative responses as well and further helped address RQ #1. A theme that was formulated in response to survey item twenty was labeled as “*Helping shape future community leaders.*” Respondents viewed a state high school athletic/activity association sponsorship as important because of the opportunity it provided to influence student-athletes. In fact, involvement with interscholastic athletics was acknowledged as a way to assist in positively shaping young individuals, who will eventually become community leaders. “We depend on these students becoming our workforce as well as our customers in the future and we care deeply that everyone has the best chance of becoming an engaging member of our statewide community”; and “We want to support students and help them become well-rounded citizens and learn the skills necessary to compete in this global economy” were just two exemplary statements expressing corporate philanthropy. Further, evidence from this study

supports the philanthropic nature of state association sponsorship as more than a marketing tactic used to achieve corporate objectives.

Given that the present study centered on sponsorship of interscholastic sport organizations, an area that has not been examined in detail, the assumption was that the results could contradict recent sport sponsorship literature. Cohen (1988) stated that education-based interscholastic athletics are widely believed to be one of the last forms of amateur sport in the United States. Perhaps it is this distinction of high school athletes being true amateurs, along with the core values and mission of the NFHS that caused sponsors of state associations to become involved for reasons that were more philanthropic. By supporting interscholastic athletics sponsors believe they positively impact the lives of young individuals and in turn help them develop into productive citizens and leaders within their communities. This key finding contradicts Wilkinson (1993) who contended that philanthropy is no longer a corporate reason for selecting sponsorship opportunities. Furthermore, this study was not in agreement with more recent literature by Dolphin (2003) who stated that sponsorship has evolved from its predominantly philanthropic and societal foundations to a strategic corporate marketing tactic. Yet, the present study has demonstrated that sponsorship objectives more common during the early stages of sport marketing (1960s through 1980s) remain relevant and valuable in the context of true amateur sport. Despite the belief that sponsorship primarily philanthropic in nature would not help companies achieve their marketing or corporate objectives (Wilkinson, 1993), this study has proven otherwise. Therefore, this study has captured interscholastic sport in the early stages of sport sponsorship. Perhaps, however as sponsorship of interscholastic

athletics evolves a “trickle down” effect will occur in this area. In particular, interscholastic sport sponsorship could change to become more similar to the bottom line driven sponsorship objectives common in other realms of sport.

Sponsorship Status:

The sponsorship status attained through state high school athletic/activity association sponsorship also emerged as a significant factor and subsequently addressed RQ #1. In fact, “*Sponsorship Status*” was one of the three factors that developed through the use of exploratory factor analysis (EFA). “Enhance company image” and “Identify and build image with target market (positioning)” were two sponsorship objectives included in this factor that the respondents expressed as being objectives of particular importance. For both factors, respondents reported that they were extremely important sponsorship objectives.

Both items that comprise the “*Sponsorship Status*” factor relate to the aforementioned philanthropic objectives as well as the corporate-related objectives respectively. A company wanting to enhance its’ image through an interscholastic athletics sponsorship correlates well with the philanthropic objectives previously discussed. The direct correlation between the objectives is if certain philanthropic objectives are met, the company’s image could be positively enhanced. Furthermore, if a company’s image is enhanced due its’ public service efforts, the company will be in a better position to reach its’ target market. The goal of companies seeking to enhance their image as a marketing objective is consistent with previous sport sponsorship findings. Madrigal (2001) found that supporters of sport organizations become familiar with what the sport organization stands for and in turn some

impressions “rub off” on the sponsored products or services the sport organizations are associated with and are transferred in terms of secondary associations. Thus, the formulation of “*Sponsorship status*” as a factor renders evidence that sponsors want to provide goodwill and service to their communities, but in turn they want their company’s image to be enhanced because of their philanthropic efforts.

Identifying the most relevant finding among those discussed in response to RQ # 1 is difficult to determine because a significant amount of valuable information was discovered to address this research question. However, this study has identified and established the most consistent sponsorship objectives of sponsors of state high school athletic/activity associations.

RQ # 2: What are the common characteristics and differences of companies involved in state high school athletic/activity association sponsorships?

Research question two (RQ #2) sought to discover the similarities and differences of companies involved in state high school athletic/activity association sponsorships. In order to determine this, respondents completed PART II of the survey, “Company Profiles” that made it possible to synthesize a profile of the respondents.

Involvement in Sponsorship at Different Levels of Sport:

Of significance, it was revealed that sponsors of state high school athletic/activity associations were heavily involved in sport sponsorship at all (professional, intercollegiate, interscholastic, and youth) levels of sport. As shown in Table 4.5 (chapter four), more than half of the respondents become involved in and/or have been involved in sponsoring sport at all of the four aforementioned levels. The two levels in which companies were involved at the highest rate were interscholastic

athletics (97%) and intercollegiate sport (77%). The above-mentioned findings along with support from PART I and the qualitative results show that companies view sponsoring an interscholastic sport organization as an opportunity to reach their target market by supporting sport at all levels, but particularly intercollegiate and interscholastic sport. For both levels (intercollegiate and interscholastic) of sport, the participants and spectators are similar in that they are young individuals who sponsors see as accessible and impressionable. Although there are differences among the two levels, both have the mission of athletics as being extracurricular activities that are education-based and an extension of the classroom (Gholston, 1985).

With results that indicate the majority of subjects are sponsors of sport primarily at the interscholastic and intercollegiate levels, it would lead one to suggest that the companies have specific products or services that match the audience of a state high school athletic/activity association. Because of the fit between participants and spectators of interscholastic athletics and the products/services, an organic relationship has occurred between many of these sponsors and the associations. The notion of fit between a sponsor and a sports organization is in accordance with Irwin, Sutton, and McCarthy (2002) who found that the demographics of the participants or spectators, size of the immediate (spectators) and extended (media) audience, and the strength of the audience's association with the sport are important evaluation criteria that companies seek to match and increase awareness of within a specific market. With this in mind, the sponsorship involvement results provide evidence that sponsors seek out state associations due to the fit between the audience of interscholastic athletics and the products/services that they provide.

Household Income Targeted:

In addition to the aforementioned results in response to RQ #2, the results of the demographic information revealed that sponsors targeted household level incomes that would be described as “middle class” to “upper class”. Specifically, the majority (60%) of respondents reported that they target household incomes between \$50,000 and \$75,000. Two other household income groups were reported as being targeted by more than one-third of the respondents. The two groups included both individuals with a household income between \$25,000 and \$50,000 (38%) and individuals with a household income between \$75,000 and \$100,000 (34%). The targeted household income results are interesting because according to the respondents, the goal is to reach their target market, which has been described as the younger generation (high school-aged individuals). It is highly unlikely, however that individuals in high school have an income between \$50,000 and \$75,000 and in turn contrasts what the respondents are saying. Thus, the results of the household income in which the sponsors target imply that the respondents are also targeting the parents of the young individuals in their sponsorship. It also could mean that sponsors are specifically targeting teens with the hope they one day reach the income level targeted.

Sponsorship Agreement Decision Makers:

In further examining RQ #2 it was discovered that in regards to who makes the final decision on sport sponsorship or sponsorship agreements, the highest percentage (43%) of respondents reported that the CEO was the final decision maker. The current results support Blais (2000), who found that the majority of decisions regarding sponsorship agreements were made at the highest levels with an

organization. Since the study revealed that many of the companies are also involved in sport sponsorship agreements at a variety of levels, learning that the CEO was the final decision maker on sport sponsorship agreements corresponded well with the other research findings. In fact, the results were consistent with what was found in previous sport sponsorship studies at other levels of sport (Copeland, 1991; Greenwald; 1997; Kim, 2004). Therefore, this finding demonstrates that interscholastic sport sponsorship agreements are negotiated and approved by companies very much the same way they are done at other levels of sport.

Length of Commitment to Sport Organizations and Events:

In response to the sponsor's length of commitment to sport organizations and events, the vast majority of the companies (79%) reported an average length of commitment of three years or more. In fact, the greatest percentage (48%) of respondents reported that their average length of commitment was more than five years, while very few companies (3%) reported their length of involvement in sponsorship to be one year or less. This result in response to RQ #2 was relevant because it means that the majority of companies are loyal to their sponsored organizations. So instead of having to constantly renegotiate and/or recruit new sponsors on an annual basis, state associations can be encouraged that when they reach an agreement with a sponsor, it is likely that the sponsor will remain committed for a number of years.

Continuation of Sponsorship Relationship:

The next result of relevance in response to RQ #2 is that almost all the respondents (96%) indicated they either want their level of sponsorship to continue at

the same or a higher level. The demographic quantitative results were supported by the qualitative results of this study as the themes “*Positive Sponsorship Relationship (with the state high school athletic/activity association)*” and “*Continuation of Sponsorship Relationship*” were developed. So not only did the respondents overwhelmingly indicate they planned to continue their sponsorship with a state high school athletic/activity association with their quantitative responses, many elaborated by providing comments to compliment PART I of the survey. Statements such as “It has been a wonderful and positive experience”; “We couldn’t be prouder to be partnered with the association and we look forward to a long-term sponsorship relationship for many years to come”; and “Being a sponsor for the association has been a great relationship and business venture that we anticipate being involved with for years to come” are the type of responses that helped create the two themes.

In examining sponsorship of state high school athletic/activity associations, the above-mentioned finding is perhaps the most intriguing and pragmatic for both sponsors/potential sponsors and state associations. Despite the difficult economic times companies are facing, respondents saying their level of sponsorship will continue at the same or higher level suggest that the vast majority of sponsors are extremely satisfied with what a state high school athletic/activity association sponsorship offers. The various reasons for which sponsors are pleased to be involved with interscholastic athletics is the public service it provides to local communities, the corporate-related objectives, or the ability to enhance its’ company’s image.

The same results also have very significant implications for state associations. With results showing the majority of sponsors are pleased with their state high school

athletic/activity association sponsorship relationship, association administrators can look forward to their current sponsors, and even possibly attaining more sponsors. As costs continue to increase to administer and run sports programs/events in each state, having the assurance that sponsors want to continue their sponsorship deals at the same or even higher levels is a tremendous financial benefit. The money that sponsors provide to help offset the rising costs of conducting sports programs/events is evident at all levels of sport. Shank (2007) provided the following examples at different levels of athletics: Whether it was companies spending \$751 million to sponsor the 2002 Winter Olympics; the NBA agreeing to a multiyear partnership with America's Dairy Farmers; or George Mason High School signing a \$50,000 deal to name its new football stadium Moore Cadillac Stadium, examples are apparent at different levels of sport (Shank, 2007). Therefore, as seen at different levels of sport, sponsorship can provide a significant contribution to the revenue of a sports organization and in turn could offset the rising administrative costs and difficult economic times athletic organizations and schools are currently facing.

The essential research findings discussed in the above-mentioned section all address RQ #2, which examined the similarities and differences of companies involved in state high school athletic/activity association sponsorships. Although there is not one clear attribute that defines a state association sponsor, the discussion provides key details on what type of companies are involved in this type of sponsorship.

RQ #3: How do company characteristics influence the objectives of the sponsorship relationship?

The third research question (RQ #3) sought to determine if company characteristics influence the expectations/objectives of the sponsorship relationship.

Size of Companies:

Given that there was relatively similar representation of industry type as reported by respondents, it was difficult to draw significant conclusions that were related to the type of industry a company was in and how it influenced its' sponsorship objectives. In fact, not one specific industry was represented by more than fifteen percent (15%). Table 4-11 in chapter four provides the breakdown of the primary industries according to respondents. However, the most relevant finding that was discovered to address this research question was that the majority (42%) of sponsors of state associations are considered smaller companies (employees of 25 or less). This result could suggest that smaller companies are more likely to be community-oriented and willing to become involved in supporting interscholastic athletics. It also supports previous results discussed when addressing RQ #2, where the notion of an organic relationship was occurring between sponsors and the associations because of the fit between the participants and spectators of interscholastic athletics and the products/services.

Matching of Missions and Values:

Another interesting finding specific to RQ #3 was discovered in the data analysis of survey item 20, which was an open-ended question. Many companies indicated that the mission and/or values of their company match that of interscholastic athletics. Statements such as "student-athletes already have many of the same value

sets that we espouse” and “It is important to us because part of our mission is to make the places where we live and work better places to be. Education-based interscholastic athletics meets that mission” are prime examples of the response that created the theme “*Matching of missions and values*”. This finding further supports the notion of corporate philanthropy previously discussed in response to RQ #1 because of the importance state association sponsors place in values such as citizenship, self-discipline, and student achievement. In short, this theme along with the average size of sponsor paints the picture of a state high school athletic/activity association sponsor as a company that is community-oriented with a strong belief in values and ethics.

Product-Sport Image Fit:

Additionally, survey item 20 also revealed another theme, “*Product-sport image fit*”, which also addressed RQ #3. This theme was formed because sponsors offer very specific products/services that are a great fit with a community based athletic organization. Two specific statements that helped create this theme were: “We are an organization that provides educational materials to schools so it is a great fit for us to be involved with our high school activities association”; and “We feel the state relationships are very important to our Sports Photography business.” This finding relates closely to findings discussed in response to RQ #1. Specifically, the concept of an organic relationship developing between sponsors and a sports organization resembles the “*Product-sport image fit*” theme and can lead one to draw numerous conclusions. However, a relevant conclusion that can be drawn is that sponsors offering specific products/services that fit well with an interscholastic sports

organization want the business of high school athletes and their parents immediately. This is interesting because it counters the previously discussed concept of relationship marketing, which focuses on long-term goals of sponsors. Therefore this finding suggests that in the big picture, sponsors want lifelong customers, but certain companies specifically want the business of the teen target market immediately more so than other sponsors. The types of companies that fit this description are more likely to offer products/services that are in demand by the teen market at the current time such as sporting goods, educational materials, and photography.

RQ #4: Can a theoretical framework of interscholastic sport sponsorship be developed to assist in our understanding of education based sport sponsorship relationships?

The final research question (RQ #4) was addressed through the development of a framework for sponsorship of state high school athletic/activity associations to assist in the understanding of education based sport sponsorship relationships. A theoretical framework is a collection of interrelated concepts, much like a theory but not necessarily as well defined. It is a tool that guides research, determining what things will be measured, and what statistical relationships will be examined (McMillan, 2004). Based on the study findings, a theoretical framework has been created that reflects the most relevant results of the present study (Appendix H).

The interesting information that this exploratory study revealed was that sponsors of state high school athletic/activity associations placed importance on sponsorship objectives that completely contrast each other. Respondents said that both public service (philanthropic) objectives as well as commercial objectives were extremely important goals of their sponsorship relationships. On one hand, it shows

that sponsors do view interscholastic athletics as an extension of the classroom and see student-athletes as the last form of true amateur athletes. Thus they want to provide assistance to interscholastic athletic organizations as a way of supporting the state and local communities. Subsequently the support will help young men and women learn and grow to one day be community leaders in their state. Conversely, despite the philanthropic orientation of companies involved in interscholastic athletic programs, they also indicated having the same intentions that sponsors do at the professional and intercollegiate levels. Reaching specific target markets and having the opportunity to infiltrate new untapped markets were both noted as being important objectives by the respondents.

The mixed responses would lead one to draw the conclusion that the distinction of interscholastic athletics as the last true form of amateur sport has resulted in sponsors wanting to become involved for philanthropic purposes. Along with that, the fact that interscholastic sport sponsorship only began in the late 1980s would lead one to believe that interscholastic sport sponsorship would resemble the earlier, more philanthropic forms of sport sponsorship (Walsh, 1990; Millman, 1991; Forsyth, 1995; Fisher, 2002; Pennington, 2004; and NFHS, 2006). However, despite interscholastic sport sponsors being more philanthropic than traditional sport sponsors, the “trickle down” effect has seemed to occur in the area of sport sponsorship. With respondents reporting that they place importance in certain bottom-line driven objectives, state association sponsors, much like the ones of professional and intercollegiate athletic programs also want to achieve their corporate objectives.

Taking into account everything the study revealed, a theoretical framework for understanding education based sport sponsorship relationships has been developed to guide future research and in turn addressed RQ #4. It must be noted that this theoretical framework is just that, a framework and not a model that serves as the exclusive interscholastic sport sponsorship evaluation tool. The theoretical framework however can assist in the development of a survey instrument designed specifically for evaluating interscholastic sport sponsorship by incorporating the essential concepts discovered from this study.

Based on what was reported, the framework mirrors earlier forms of sponsorship evaluation when philanthropic objectives were more of the focus of sponsors. The theoretical framework will feature more sport sponsorship objectives that are representative of interscholastic sport sponsorship. In particular, public service related sponsorship objectives should appear because this notion of supporting local communities was an overriding theme through the data analysis. Along with the public service aspect, incorporating objectives that are representative of concepts associated with relationship marketing would further increase the understanding of this topic. In particular, items that focus on accessing and building relationships with the teen market specifically would be more representative of the interscholastic sport sponsorship process.

Limitations of the Present Study

As is the case in any type of research project, there are limitations of the present study that must be acknowledged and addressed. Specifically, the following

four limitations must be mentioned: exploratory nature of study; possible biased data; generalizeability of the data; non-normal data; and the timeframe of the present study.

First, given the fact that there is a lack of prior empirical literature focusing on the topic of interscholastic sport sponsorship, this study was truly exploratory in nature. Because of this, a few issues emerged in the development of the survey instrument and in the research findings. In developing the survey “*Sponsorship of Interscholastic Athletics*”, the researcher and a panel of experts had to determine if an existing instrument was appropriate to modify for evaluation of interscholastic sport sponsorship objectives. The panel of experts was comprised of five dissertation committee members including scholars in the discipline of sport management, along with intercollegiate and interscholastic sport marketing directors and interscholastic athletic administrators of various state high school athletic/activity associations. Although this panel found the instrument to have validity and be representative enough to be utilized for the interscholastic sport sponsorship study, it was still considered to be exploratory. Such was the case because it was modeled after the Sport Sponsorship Proposal Model (SSPEM), which has been used to examine sponsorship at other levels of sport. Thus, modifying the SSPEM to evaluate interscholastic sport sponsorship was a limitation that must be acknowledged.

A second limitation of the study is the possibility of biased data. Since the method used to select the participants was classified as “convenience sampling” because they were chosen based on their willingness to participate in the study, there is the possibility that the data is biased (McMillan, 2004). By having respondents who are willing to take part in a survey with no incentive, the possibility is there that they

could have personal motives in completing the survey and in turn cause the results to be biased.

Next, the researcher faced an initial obstacle in simply recruiting subjects to participate in this type of study, which in turn could affect the generalizability of the results. Despite this, the study was as comprehensive as it could be given the limitations that the researcher was faced with. In requesting that sponsors of state high school athletic/activity associations take part in a study that revealed information about their company, their sponsorship policies and/or objectives, and their relationship with a state association, many individuals were uneasy about being a participant. In some cases, when the research study was described to an executive director, associate/assistant director and/or the professional staff member responsible for marketing/sponsorship within each respective state association, that professional staff member would not provide contact information for the state association's sponsors. This was the case because many of these state associations that chose to not participate in the study explained further that they were renegotiating sponsorship deals/contracts at the present time. Due to the nature of sport marketing studies, previous researchers have also experienced some unwillingness by respondents for the same reasons (Copeland, 1991; Kim, 2004; and Sawyer, 1997). Therefore, many state associations felt uncomfortable requesting their corporate partners take part in any type of questionnaire that focused on sponsorship. In other cases, when the various state associations agreed to request their sponsors take part in the present study, it was the companies who did not want to complete the survey. This is most

likely due to company policies on confidentiality regarding the information that was requested for the study.

Another limitation of the study was discovered after performing the statistical data analysis. Through the use of exploratory factor analysis (EFA), the results revealed that there were five sponsorship variables that were classified as non-normal data. For increased reliability of results, the ideal situation would have been for all the survey variables to be considered normal data. However, since this was not the case, square root or logarithmic transformation was performed on the five suggested variables. Despite performing this data transformation, the non-normality was not improved and in fact, the skewness became even more severe. Because the non-normal data could not be improved, the EFA was performed without transformations. The findings were reported fully acknowledging that there was non-normal data. After consultation with dissertation committee members and statisticians at the University of Nevada Las Vegas (UNLV), the determination was made that five non-normal variables were not uncommon when performing exploratory research (Dr. G. Merchand, personal communication, June 5, 2009).

Finally, the timeframe for the present study only allowed for a snapshot of the current situation. As the sport sponsorship literature indicates, the objectives of companies sponsoring sport has changed from being philanthropic in nature to being driven by the “bottom line” (Dolphin, 2003; Lough & Irwin, 2001; Miloch & Lambrecht, 2006; and Wilkinson, 1993). With this in mind, what this study revealed could change over time depending on various factors such as the influence of the

“trickle down effect” in sport sponsorship, the rising costs of conducting and administering interscholastic athletic programs and events, and the economy.

Recommendations for Future Research

The present study serves as the first empirical research in the sport sponsorship literature designed to examine in depth the status of interscholastic sport sponsorship. With sponsorship now being an indelible aspect of interscholastic athletics there was a need for a contribution to the sport sponsorship literature that focused on interscholastic sport sponsorship relationships. Now, with the results of the current study the opportunity exists for additional empirical research that focuses on interscholastic sport sponsorship. The following section addresses recommendations for future research based on the findings from this study.

The exploratory nature of the present study provides empirical data on the status of interscholastic sport sponsorship. However, this is still an area of research that scholars do not have a plethora of information about. With that in mind, a similar type of study should be conducted to further explore this topic. Since this study was a national study that had some limitations, perhaps a regionally or state-based study on interscholastic sport sponsorship would be the next logical step for a researcher to consider in this area of research. In doing this, the results of the national study could be compared and contrasted with a regional/state-wide study and in turn provide a more comprehensive perspective of interscholastic sport sponsorship. Also to improve a similar study, the researcher should consider developing a survey instrument designed specifically for evaluating interscholastic sport sponsorship. The

results from this study could serve as a baseline for developing a more focused instrument.

Another recommendation for future research pertains to examining interscholastic sport sponsorship from a different perspective. The present study examined and provided the insights of sponsors of state high school athletic/activity associations. An interesting follow-up to this study would be design a study that would analyze the attitudes and perspectives of athletic administrators at state high school athletic/activity associations regarding sponsorship. With these types of results, scholars would be able to compare and contrast the insights from both sides of the sponsorship exchange process, the sponsor and the sport organization.

Conclusion

This chapter provided concluding comments on the present study as they relate to three specific areas. First, the research findings were discussed as they relate to previous sport sponsorship literature, and the importance of these findings to interscholastic athletic sponsors. Second, the limitations of the study were acknowledged and addressed. Finally, recommendations for future research were offered to further extend and improve the empirical literature in the area of interscholastic sport sponsorship. In sum, this study provided valuable data regarding interscholastic sport sponsorship. However, with sport sponsorship being one of the fastest growing areas in sport marketing and now being a permanent aspect of interscholastic athletics, it is an area of research that needs to be examined more extensively.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Dear state high school athletic/activity association sponsor:

My name is Justin Wartella and I am a Ph.D. Candidate in Athletic Administration for the Department of Sports Education Leadership at the University of Nevada Las Vegas. Under the supervision of Dr. Nancy Lough, who will be the principal investigator, I am completing a my doctoral dissertation in which I am attempting to determine the characteristics of sponsors of state high school athletic/activity associations along with determining the sponsor's objectives. You have been chosen to participate in this study because your company's sport sponsorship relationship has been determined as being representative of companies involved in sponsorship of state high school athletic/activity associations.

The purpose of this letter is to request your assistance in my study on sport sponsorship, which focuses on sponsors of state high school athletic/activity associations. I am conducting this study to collect insights concerning sport sponsorship within interscholastic athletics. The results of this survey will greatly contribute to my dissertation.

This survey will be distributed to various sponsors who are representative of companies responsible for companies maintaining a sponsorship relationship with state high school athletic/activity association in each state throughout the United States. The 10-15 minutes you take to complete the online survey is integral to the success of this study.

The information you provide will be held in complete confidence. No individual or company will be identifiable in any future publication or presentation.

Your cooperation will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Justin Wartella
Ph.D. Candidate Department of Sports Education Leadership
The University of Nevada Las Vegas

Appendix B

Subject: Interscholastic Sport Sponsorship Survey

My name is Justin Wartella. I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Sports Education Leadership at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV). I am performing a study to determine the characteristics of sponsors of state high school athletic/activity associations along with determining the sponsor's objectives. Your participation in the survey is voluntary, completely anonymous and will take 10 to 15 minutes of your time. Your generous contribution of time could help to further the empirical knowledge on sport sponsorship, particularly at the interscholastic athletic level. If you have any questions regarding the survey or its use, please contact my committee chair, Dr. Nancy Lough at 702-895-5392 or at 702-895- 2871.

Thank you for your time! [Click here to take the survey:](#)

Sincerely,

Justin Wartella
Ph.D. Candidate Department of Sports Education Leadership
The University of Nevada Las Vegas

Appendix C

PART I. SPORT SPONSORSHIP OBJECTIVES

When evaluating sport sponsorship opportunities, a number of criteria may be of importance to your company. In terms of your company's sport sponsorship goals and objectives, indicate the importance of the following criteria by circling one of the following numbers on the 6-point scale ranging from 1 (not important at all) to 6 (extremely important).

Important	Least Important			Extremely		
Support high school student-athletes	1	2	3	4	5	6
Interest and concern about interscholastic athletics	1	2	3	4	5	6
Support the State High School Athletic/Activity Association	1	2	3	4	5	6
Giving back to or being involved with the community	1	2	3	4	5	6
Association with high school athletics	1	2	3	4	5	6
Product-Sport image fit	1	2	3	4	5	6
Demographic fit	1	2	3	4	5	6
Sponsorship exclusivity	1	2	3	4	5	6
Reach specific target markets	1	2	3	4	5	6
Opportunity to infiltrate new untapped markets	1	2	3	4	5	6
Identify and build image with target market (positioning)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Enhance company image	1	2	3	4	5	6
Alter public perception	1	2	3	4	5	6
Visibility	1	2	3	4	5	6
Signage opportunities	1	2	3	4	5	6
Block competition	1	2	3	4	5	6
Increase Sales and market share	1	2	3	4	5	6

Appendix D

What have been the distinct differences of this sport sponsorship relationship when compared to other forms of sponsorship you have been involved with?

How important and/or valuable is it for your company to be involved with and support education based interscholastic athletics, whose primary purpose is to support the educational mission of schools?

Feel free to comment on any sport sponsorship issue in general and/or your sponsorship relationship with the state high school athletic/activity association.

Appendix E

PART II. COMPANY DEMOGRAPHICS

The following questions are intended to provide background information which will be used in the analysis of later sections in the questionnaire. Please respond to each question to the best of your knowledge.

How many employees does your company have locally?

- Less than 25 25 to 49 50 to 99
 100 to 499 500 or more

How would you describe your company according to the following?

- Local Company
 Statewide Company
 Regional Company
 National Company

In general, how many sponsorship requests/proposals does your company receive annually?

- 0 – 10 11 – 20 21 – 50
 51 – 100 Over 100

In general, what is your company's average length of commitment to sponsored organizations and events? (Please check one box only)

- Less than 1 year 1 – 2 years
 3 – 5 years More than 5 years

What is the average number of sport sponsorship proposals your company receives on a yearly basis?

- 0 – 10 11 – 20 21 – 50
 51 – 100 Over 100

What level(s) of athletics does and/or has your company been involved in sponsorship agreements with? (Check all that apply).

- Professional Sports
- Intercollegiate Sports
- Interscholastic (High School) Sports
- Youth Sports (little league, instructional leagues, etc.)

How long has your company been sponsoring the State High School Athletic/Activity Association in your respective state?

- Just began this year 1 – 2 years 3 – 4 years
- 5 – 8 years More than 8 years

At what level is your company planning to sponsor State High School Athletic/Activity Association in your respective state?

- Continue at the same level
- Continue at higher level
- Continue at lower level
- Discontinue

Please check the primary demographics your company targeted through the sport sponsorship of State High School Athletic/Activity Association in your respective state (check all that apply).

- Gender:** Male Female
- Age:** Under 19 19 – 25 25 – 35
- 35 – 45 45 – 55 Over 55

Household Income:

- \$ Under 25,000
- \$25,000 to under \$50,000
- \$50,000 to under \$75,000
- \$75,000 to under \$100,000
- \$100,000 and over

Who makes the final decision on sport sponsorship (or sponsorship in general) for your company?

- CEO
- Vice-President(s)
- Middle Management (Managers, Assistant Managers, Directors)
- Marketing/Advertising Manager
- Advertising Agency
- Other: _____

Please check the primary industry your company operates in (Check one).

- Airline
- Auto Dealer
- Banking/Credit
- Beverage
- Cable
- Communication/Technology
- Entertainment
- Food
- Gaming/Gambling
- Government
- Health Care
- Insurance/Finance
- Print Media
- Retail trade
- Sporting Goods
- Other: _____

Appendix F

Dear state high school athletic/activity association sponsor:

Approximately one week ago, I wrote you requesting your assistance to participate in a voluntary national study I am undertaking, under the supervision of Dr. Nancy Lough, who will be the principal investigator, on sport sponsorship within interscholastic athletics, primarily on the sponsors of state high school athletic/activity associations for my doctoral degree at the University of Nevada Las Vegas. As of today, your completed survey has not been received. You were chosen to participate in this study because your company's sport sponsorship relationship has been determined as being representative of companies involved in sponsorship of state high school athletic/activity associations.

I am writing you again because of the significance each survey has to the success of this study. In order for the results of this study to be truly representative of corporate sponsors, your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated. Once again, this survey is completely voluntary and should take only approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

Also, the information you provide will be held in complete confidence. No individual or company will be identifiable in any future publication or presentation.

If there are any questions or concerns regarding the survey, you may contact the principal investigator, **Dr. Nancy Lough at 702-895-5392.**

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Justin Wartella
Ph.D. Candidate Department of Sports Education Leadership
The University of Nevada Las Vegas
702-895-2871

Appendix G

Dear state high school athletic/activity association sponsor:

About two weeks ago I wrote you requesting your assistance to participate in a voluntary national study I am undertaking, under the supervision of Dr. Nancy Lough, who will be the principal investigator, on sport sponsorship within interscholastic athletics, primarily on the sponsors of state high school athletic/activity associations for doctoral degree at the University of Nevada Las Vegas. As of today, your completed survey has not been received. You were chosen to participate in this study because your company's sport sponsorship relationship has been determined as being representative of companies involved in sponsorship of state high school athletic/activity associations.

The intention of this study is to provide information that will be beneficial to interscholastic sports organizations as well as sponsors of interscholastic sports organizations. The study is national in scope and also will include the responses of sponsors, which would most likely be of interest to you.

I am writing you again because of the significance each survey has to the success of this study. In order for the results of this study to be truly representative of corporate sponsors, your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated. Once again, this survey is completely voluntary and should take only approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

Also, the information you provide will be held in complete confidence. No individual or company will be identifiable in any future publication or presentation.

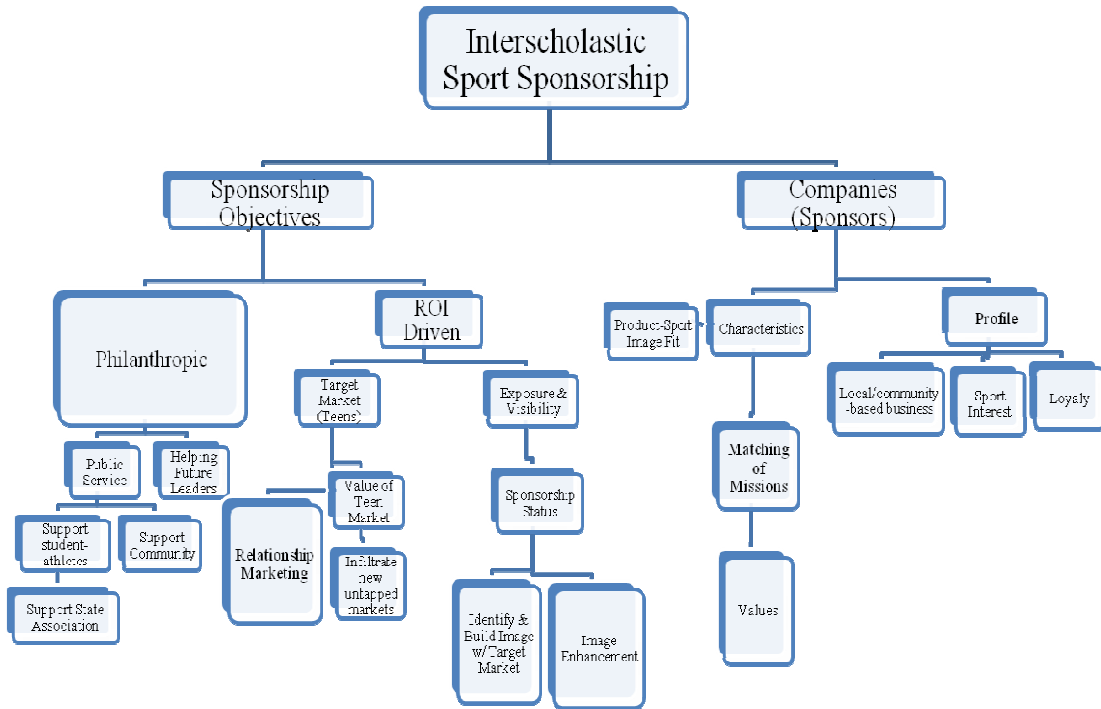
If there are any questions or concerns regarding the survey, you may contact the principal investigator, **Dr. Nancy Lough at 702-895-5392.**

Thank you very much for your time and assistance.

Sincerely,

Justin Wartella
Ph.D. Candidate Department of Sports Education Leadership
The University of Nevada Las Vegas

Appendix H



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