

THE ROLE OF SPORTS SPONSORSHIP IN IMPROVING BRAND EQUITY A STUDY ON THE SAUDI AUDIENCE IN RIYADH

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ABSTRACT

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The study aims at diagnosing the impact of the sports sponsorship on the brand equity in the minds of Saudi sports audience as well as determining the statistical differences in using the sports sponsorship and brand equity according to some organizational and demographical variables. The research population consists of two sub-populations which are the sports journalists and the Saudi sports audience in the city of Riyadh. The purposive sampling method is used and the calculated samples size reaches 40 of Saudi sports journalists and 387 of the sports audience. The study concludes that sport sponsorship has a positive significant effect on brand equity in the minds of the Saudi sports audience. The study finds that there are no statistical differences in using the sports sponsorship while such differences in brand equity are proved according to age. Finally, the study suggests a set of recommendations and implications that enhance the sport sponsorship in the Saudi market.

KEY WORDS: Sponsorship, Sports, Brand Knowledge, Brand Image, Mental Associations, Sports journalists, Sports Audience, Riyadh, KSA.

1.INTRODUCTION

Commercial sponsorship is a multifunctional approach in the communication strategy of the company and the literature show that the beginning of this concept is back to the period between the seventies and eighties of the last century, when companies began adopting trends and ideas that support charitable work and linked it With purely commercial or profitable issues (Ryan&Fahy,2012.p.1135). The lack of clarity in the concept at the beginning period led many companies to consider sponsorship as a kind of investing in the consumer and not the benefits and advantages that can be achieved (Cornwell, Weeks&Roy,2005,p.21). The early of nineties is the conceptual maturity period of sponsorship and we find that there is a clear development in the quality and quantity of studies that have been published, and a specific activity it becomes a determined activity in time and space, and includes many rights and advantages (Meenaghan,2002,p.3). The new mature concept has a greater correlation between the event and the consumer with little

focus on the nature of the work of the sponsor (Ryan&Fahy,2012,p.1140).

Therefore, the modern concept of commercial sponsorship refers to the commercial relationship between the company that grants money, services and resources on one hand, with the person, event or organization on the other hand (Weeks, Cronwell&Drenna,p.640). Under this relationship, there are some rights and bonds used to achieve the commercial advantages of the sponsor company (Slight,1989).Erdogaan and Kitchen (1998) add that sponsorship represents an exercise to promote the interests and brands of the company and linking it with event or organization, or a significant charitable issue in the society (Farrelly,Quesrer&Burton,2006, P.1017). There is a focus on awareness, unique benefits or rare functions that come with sponsorship as an indirect communicative tool (Crimmins&Horn,1996, p. 14), with access ability to various market audiences (Crowley,1991), and the ability to meet institutional goals that often involve a lot of strategic

benefits (Weeks et al.2008). We add that the growth in the sponsorship has acquired a wide area in practical application, so the total expenditures on sponsorship around the world increased from \$37.9 billion in 2007 to \$ 65.8 billion in 2018 (www.statistica,2019), therefore the sponsorship has become one of the most prominent modern communication tools that rely on the indirect feature in advertising the sponsored events, and it is used to attract the audiences and brand awareness (Biscaia, Trail, Ross&Yoshida,2017,p.3).

Sports is considered one of the important social activities that use the sponsorship contracts, so sponsorship seems one of the pillars of supporting, developing and spreading the sport worldwide, therefore sport has the largest share of spending among economic firms that looking to promote their commercial relationship, brand awareness and introduce their products to mass markets (Biscaia, et al, 2017, p.2). The business firms have connecting the sponsorship activities with the fans behavior (Bühler, 2006), as well as the economic benefit generated by this activity (Clark, Cornwell&Pruitt,2009, p.171). The sponsorship contracts have provided the sport teams the necessary funds through the TV and sponsors' rights (Bühler,2006).

The study shows that Real Madrid earns \$3.65 billion in 2016 from sponsorship activities (Ozanian,2016), and the total sports sponsorship reaches \$ 45.3 billion in 2015 or 78.8% of total sponsorship contracts worldwide (www.statistica,2016), so sports teams are looking to exploit the successful brands in the market in sponsorship relationships as well as linking such brands with the team fans (Fortunato,2017).This ensures a strong and long relationship among the sponsorship parties, as well as achieves high levels of effectiveness in planning and implementing the communication and marketing functions (Cruz,2018, p.7).

Studies have also agreed that sports sponsorship has an effective impact in building the brand, promoting awareness, loyalty and the business image, as well as obtaining direct commercial benefits (Fineweek, 2007) and the integrated among sponsorship and marketing communication will maximize such effects (Gwinner&Swanson,2003, p.278). other studies

have linked between sports sponsorship and all the attributes, features, benefits, and price information of the brand (Tomalieh,2016,p.165), so we can say that sponsorship activities have the power to transmit the brand image of the sponsor and encourage the easily purchase by fans (Akwensivie, Narteh&Iden,2014, p.110).

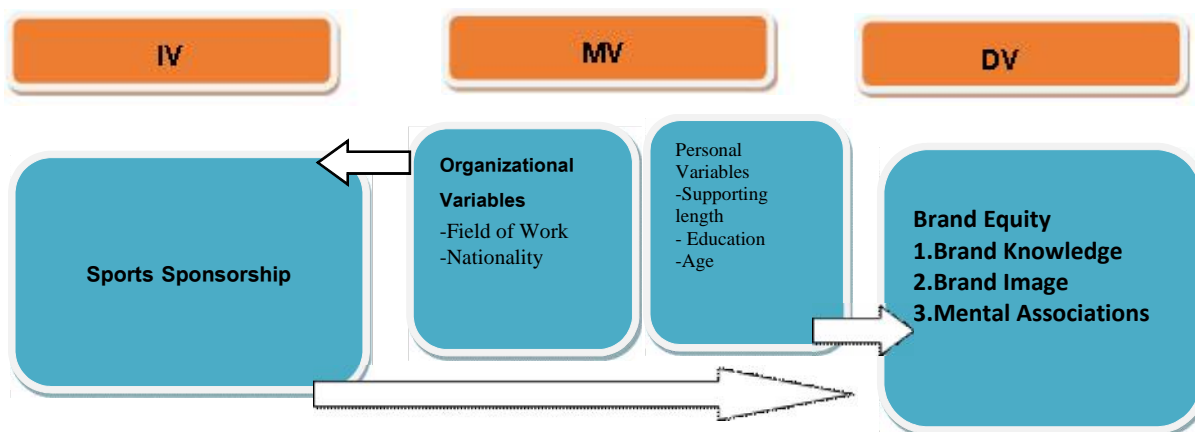
Within this introduction, the current study is aware of the importance of sports sponsorship in its positive image of the sponsor brand among the fans, as it is found that sports sponsorship is an influencer on the image value in fan's minds, so it must be noted that the audience athlete has a different behavior from other customers in terms of loyalty, and they have a psychological connection to the favorite team that imposes a lot of positive occasions and behaviors towards this team. So this seeks to link between the impacts of the sports sponsorship on the brand value of the sponsor in the minds of the Saudi fans.

2.RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- Determining the level of use of sports sponsorship by the Saudi companies.
- Determining the level of brand equity of sponsors in the minds of the Saudi fans.
- Diagnosing the effect of sports sponsorship on forming the brand equity of the sport sponsors in the Kingdom, at the level of statistical significance of 5%.
- Measuring the statistical differences in using the sports sponsorship according to the field and nationality of sponsors at the level of statistical significance of 5%
- Measuring the statistical differences in the brand equity in the sport teams' fans according to time of following, education, and age at the level of statistical significance of 5%.

3.RESEARCH MODEL

The following figure shows the model used in the study, which aims to determine the shape and direction of the relationship between independent and dependent variables:



Based on the above, it has been possible to formulate the study hypotheses as follows:

1. There is a statistically significant effect of the sports sponsorship on the level of the brand equity of sponsors in the Kingdom at the level of statistical significance of 5%.
2. There are statistically significant differences in the level of sports sponsorship activities according to

- the work field and nationality of the sponsor at the level of statistical significance of 5%.
3. There are statistically significant differences in brand equity among the sports audience in the Kingdom according to the length of follow up period, education and age at the level of the statistical significance of 5%.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW AND PREVIOUS STUDIES

4.1 The Sports Sponsorship

Sponsorship defines as the commercial relationship between a party (a company) that grants money, services, or resources on the one hand, and an individual, event, or organization on the other, by which certain contractual rights and obligations are used to achieve a set of commercial benefits (Sleight, 1989). Erdogaan and Kitchen (1998) add that sponsorship is a practice seeks to promote the company's interests and brand and linking it to an event or organization or a significant charitable reason. The researcher Nsour (2020) provides a definition of the sponsorship as a financial, physical payments or logistical obligations that provide to the sponsored team, which is used for an activities or events are not a part of its original function. These definitions conclude that the sports sponsorship represents an interdependence relationship achieved some commercial benefits for the sponsor, and it obligates some financial benefits or service for the sponsored team (Cruz, 2018, p. 7).

Sport is considered one of the most important activities in societies and it is an evidence of the growth and progress of countries, and it is a social phenomenon practiced by most members of society (Keshkar et al., 2019, p. 58). Therefore sponsorship is one of the key pillars supporting the sport and spread worldwide. The sport has the largest share of the total expenditure of sponsors that seek to introduce their brand to the largest number of sports audiences. Therefore, sponsorship research has focused on the social and cultural aspects of sports activity and studying the behavior of fans and the economic benefit achieved (Bühler, 2006).

More specifically, the sponsor businesses are looking for the sports audience as an existing market whose have distinctive characteristics and segments from other consumer markets (Bühler & Nufer, 2010). In this market, the psychological bonds of the fans imposes many positive attitudes and behaviors towards the preferred team (Funk & James, 2001, p. 120). Studies distinguish between a set of elements that cover the actions of the sports audience. There is a cognitive aspect based on the ideas that the individual keep towards the favorite team (Shank & Beasley, 1998, p. 337), while the emotional side is based on feelings only (Tapp & Clowes, 2002, p. 1250). These feelings are the strongest element in making the sports audience more enthusiastic than other segments of consumers, and deepening loyalty to the favorite team (Filis & Macky, 2014), while the other consumers depend on physical elements in the brand favorite such as price and quality (Bühler & Nufer, 2011, p. 28).

For a long time, sports seems a masculine activity (Bahler & Nufar, 2010), but last studies have shown that businesses have used new basics to divide the fans' markets by gender, age, and social class (Tapp & Clowes, 2004, p. 1251), and other basics have been added such as loyalty, customer value and physical needs of the consumer (Adamson, Jones & Tapp, 2006, p. 161). These basics have been used by sports clubs in designing their marketing strategies to ensure effective communication with each segment of fans and this will achieve their psychological needs and increase the level of loyalty. Therefore the psychological motivations may make them more committed to the activities and events of the favorite team such as attending supported activities, wearing team clothing as well as consumer products bearing the team logo and trademark (Meir & Scott, 2007, p. 47).

Finally, we note that sports sponsorship takes many forms that include the team's uniforms and accessories, sports facilities, training centers, equipment and gyms (Groot & Ferwerda, 2015, p. 5), and information indicate that 33% of the income of European football clubs refers to sports sponsorship (Bühler & Nufer, 2010). The competition for global sponsorship contracts is limited to three companies, Nike, Adidas, and Puma, and we point out that the highest football sponsorship deals are between Manchester United and Chevrolet with an \$ 80 million annually (Amorim & Almeida, 2015), and the primer league has achieved the highest level of sponsorship returns reaches 1.2 billion euros through 440 sponsorship agreements, then the Bundesliga and Laliga Santander, with 734 and 678 million euros in 2018 respectively (www.Sportskeeda.com), compared to \$ 376 million in Saudi Arabia in 2018 also.

4.2 Impact of Sports Sponsorship on the Fans

The sponsor companies seek to exploit the fans' feelings and their intents towards the favorite sports teams, so there is a big mistake to use this activity to meet the sales goals on the short run, where Chadwick and Thwaites (2005) see that focusing on the strategic dimension will maximize the benefits and advantages in the long run. Many sponsor companies use the physical standards to measure the effect of sponsorship such as sales and return on equities (Christensen, 2006, p. 62), while other studies use the behavioral standards of the fans such as media exposure, awareness and sponsor image, communication, buying intentions, and brand awareness (Gwinner & Swanson, 2003, p. 275). It also shows the importance of sponsorship in influencing brand equity (Ngan, Prendergast & Tsang, 2011, p. 552), as well as enhancing the image and increasing sales of the sponsor company (Pickton & Broderick, 2005).

Brown and Dacin (1997) argue that the brand image is most affected by sports sponsorship activities, so the pressure groups and social responsibility societies play a role in improving the rating and evaluation of sponsor companies in the market and this will be through enhancing friendship and exchange opportunities with stakeholders such as competitors, suppliers, potential customers and suppliers. It also enables sponsor companies to get the advantage of media coverage of the supported event, especially companies that don't have the possibility to use the TV advertising. Studies have agreed that sports sponsorship has a key effect in building the brand image and promoting the brand awareness and loyalty, as well as short-term advantages. The sponsor company seems a platform for brand marketing (Fineweek, 2007), and the benefits of integrations between sports sponsorship and other marketing communications elements will be maximized (Gwinner & Swanson, 2003).

Studies have expanded to say that the brand image represents a set of features, characteristics, benefits, attitudes, price information, technology, and packaging (Keller, 1993, p. 6), where sponsorship has the ability to transfer the sponsor brand image aggressively and it may be the best reason to buy the (Keller, 1993, p. 11). Studies use the evidence from world cup 2010 in south Africa and the sports sponsorship are able to create brand awareness and recall of a group of previously unknown brands such as Prasa, Saryam, Ymyu solar and Seara. This evidence is clearly shown in the time that other famous brands have failed during the event

such as Fly Emirates (Coelho, Amorim & Almeida, 2019, p.5).

The crucial issue in the sports sponsorship that sponsor companies have failed in measuring the effects of such activity, in terms of the knowledge level of the consumer and the emotional reaction in transmitting the image and fame. The American Association of Advertisers says that (30%) of the sponsor companies don't measure the performance of sponsorship (Newton, 2013), and some sponsor companies doesn't believe in the long-term sponsorship results on their brands (Crownwell & Steinard, 2001). While the short-term results of sponsorship still ambiguous (Ryan & Fahy, 2012). Sports sponsorship has an engine role in improving the purchasing power of the sponsor (Biscaia, Trail, Ross & Yoshida, 2017), also, it reflected positively on the financial indicators of the sponsor such as stock prices, equity, and brand equity (Kim, Trail, Woo & Zhang, 2011, p.58). More clearly Sports sponsorship activities have a positive role in building the brand and improving consumer loyalty (Donlan, 2014), as well as the positive emotions and feelings towards the brand of the sponsor (Quesrer & Plewa, 2009, p.368).

Other studies also linked sports sponsorship with customer satisfaction and the company's image (Johansson & Utterström, 2007), and Weissman (2014) says that that sponsorship has a positive impact on the awareness, impression, and loyalty of the sponsor company of the baseball team in Lake district (Walraven, Koning & Bottenburg, 2012, p.20), and these results are consistent with the results of the Biscaia et al. (2017), and it is found that the general impression helps the fans in searching process for the sponsor products and improve their buying intentions (Pijkeren, 2010), and we add that the information stored in the minds of fans will change to buying intents (Dalakas & Levin, 2005, p.93).

Despite the agreeing on the positive impact of sports sponsorship on the buying behavior of the fans, but there are studies that have shown the negative impact on the buying intentions towards the sponsor products (Amoim & Almeida, 2015), and it is found that the negative attitudes of competing teams may complicate the use of sports sponsorship (Davies, Veloutsou & Costa, 2006, p.35), as it is found that joint sponsorship of competing teams is less favored by the fans of both teams and positive results of the sponsor brands are not proved (Klidas, Assen & Oldenhof, 2015). It is also found that extreme in marketing efforts, ambush marketing and using the media to measure the sponsor performance are negative factors in the sponsorship industry (Picton & Brodrick, 2005).

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 The Pilot Study: In order to determine the number of fans of the Saudi professional league, the pilot study is conducted. This study consists of one question and distributed to a sample of 60 persons or 15% of the sample size. The social networking sites "Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat" are used to distribute the question to people who have accounts on such sites. The question is "are you a follower of the Saudi league? The results show that 73% of the respondents are followers and watchers of the Saudi professional league.

5.2 Research Population

5.2.1 The Sports Journalists: It consists of all sports journalists working in the daily newspapers, such as the

arriyadiyah, alriyadh, aljazeera, okaz and watan issued in Riyadh, in addition to the sports journalists in the electronic sites such as Koora and Sabq. There is no valuable information about the total number of Saudi sports journalists in such newspapers.

5.2.2 The Sports Audience: This population consists of all Saudi followers and attendees of the Saudi Professional League for the 2019/2020 season. According to the information issued by the general authority of statistics, the total population of Riyadh in 2017 reaches 4.66 million, and the percentage of Saudis over the age of 19 reaches 39%. Based on the results of the pilot study, the study population of the Saudi followers and attendees audience for 2019 is 1.32 million people $((0.73 * 4.66) * 0.39) = 1.326$ million). The female's percentage of total population in Riyadh reaches 49%. So the total research population is 677 thousands of people $(1.326 * 0.51 = 677$ thousands).

5.3 Research Sample

5.3.1 The Sports Journalists: The research population of journalists is characterized by a high degree of consistency among members, and there is a difficulty in surveying all members of the sports journalists' population under this study. So the purposive sampling method is used. This sampling method is used according to the purpose of the study. The selecting process based on the specific characteristics of the sample members similar to the original population (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). The technical and administrative workers in sports teams apologize for filling in the questionnaire. The researcher has decided to complete the study and get the needed information from other stakeholders in the sport sector. Therefore, the unit of analysis becomes the sports journalists working in the daily newspapers as mentioned. An electronic copy of the questionnaire is designed using Google Drive. The questionnaire is distributed randomly to sports journalists in the daily newspapers and in e-sites, using email, face to face distribution, and WhatsApp messages. The total number of distributed questionnaires is 40 and 30 questionnaires are returned or reaches 75% of the total distributed questionnaires. This percent is acceptable for testing the research hypotheses later.

5.3.2 The Sports Audience: The purposive sampling method is used. The researcher use this sampling method because it is the most suitable to do the research goals. The researcher selected the most important 10 matches of the Saudi professional league for the 2019/2020 season. There are two assistant researchers (from the students of the department) are used to distributing the research questionnaires to the sports audience in the coffee shops, cafe, and the famous galleries in Riyadh, randomly. It is found that the required sample size is 385. An electronic copy of the questionnaire is designed using Google Drive. The questionnaire is distributed randomly to the sports audience face to face in the selected areas. All distributed questionnaires are returned and used to a final analysis. The unit of analysis is the Saudi person who has an

interest in attending and watching the football matches in the Saudi professional league and who are over 19 years old.

5.4 Measurement: The measurement tool is the questionnaire and it is designed to collect the primary data necessary for research goals. The questionnaire is developed by reviewing previous studies and literature. The five points Likert scale is used in the first part related to sponsorship activates, which expresses the degree of computability and the consistency among the statements and the responses, where the value (5) is given for very high response, (4) is high response, (3) is given for neutral response, a low response is given for the value (2), and the value (1) is given for a very low response. In the second part related to the general questions, the respondent is feeling free to select more than one choice at the same time.

5.5 Data Analysis: In order to analyze the research results, the descriptive statistical analysis (arithmetic mean, standard deviation, and relative frequency) is calculated. The degree of response of the variables is evaluated according to the relative mean as follows: more than 4.2 is very high, (2) 4.2 – more than 3.4 is high, (3) 3.4- more than 2.6 is average (moderate), (4) 2.6 – 1.8 is weak and less than 1.8 is very weak. Cronbach's alpha is a measure of internal consistency, that is, how closely related a set of items are as a group. It considers a measure of scale reliability. Cronbach's alpha is not a statistical test, so it is a coefficient of reliability (or internal consistency). The Cronbach alpha coefficients of the research variables are between 0.912 and 0.943. This means that the tow variables have relatively accepted. Internal consistency of the two main variables and all the sub coefficient values are statistically accepted since it is more than the statically permitted rate of 60%.

Table 1: The Cronbach alpha coefficients of the research variables

N	Research Variables	Reliability	Number of Sentences
1	Independent Variable (Sports Sponsorship)	0.912	10-1
2	Dependent Variable (Brand Equity)	0.943	37 - 11
	And the Sub Variables as follow:		
	Brand Knowledge	0.843	17 -11
	Brand Image	0.921	24-18
	Mental Associations	0.931	29 - 25
	Total Reliability	0.954	29-1

5.6 Research Limitations (Boundaries)

- The study has a difficulty in obtaining the required data by the technical and administrative staff of the Saudi professional league. Most of the employees show a low level of response to fill the questionnaire and the researcher changes the unit of analysis to sports Journalists.
- The study includes the 16 football clubs listed in Saudi Professional League for the 2019-2020 season (General Sport Authority, 2020).
- The study has the Saudi citizens who are over 19 years and living in Riyadh.
- The Saudi citizens should be from the followers and watchers of the Saudi professional league.

5.6 Descriptive Analysis of Responses

5.6.1 The Dependent Variable (Brand Equity)

The overall dependent variable "brand equity" consists of 19 statements. The responses vary among such statements according to the subcomponent. The mean value of the overall variable is (3.329) and the standard deviation (1.0377). This means that the level of brand equity of the sponsor companies in fans' minds are moderated. There are 48.3% of the fans have agreed this result, the brand equity components as follow:

5.6.1.1 The Brand Knowledge

The first dependent sub-variable "brand knowledge" consists of 7 statements. There is one statement has a very high level "sponsorship provides information about the brands and products of the sponsor" according to approval by 49.1% of respondents. The other statements have a medium level of responses, and none has a high low or very low responses.

The mean of this sub variable is (3.311) with (1.004) as a standard deviation. This means that the level of brand knowledge of sponsor companies in the sports audiences has an acceptable (moderate) level, and this result is approved by 48.2% of the sports audience.

5.6.1.2 The Brand Image

The second dependent sub-variable "brand image" consists of 7 statements. There are two statements have a high level "the brand image of the sponsor is enhanced", and "i have the ability to recall of the sponsor' brand ", and the other statements have a medium level of responses, while none of the statements has a very high, low or very low level of responses. The mean of this sub variable is (3.3) with standard deviation reaches (1.079). This means that the level of brand image of sponsor companies in the sports audiences has an acceptable (moderate) level, and this result is approved by 46.4% of the sports audiences (respondents)

5.6.1.3 The Mental Associations

The third dependent sub-variable "mental associations" consists of 5 statements. There is one statement that has a high level "enhanced the product value of the sponsor company in my mind", while the other statements have a medium level of responses and none of the statements has a very high, low or very low level of responses. The mean of this sub variable is (3.375) with standard deviation reaches (1.028). This means that the level of mental associations of sponsor companies in the sports audiences has an acceptable (moderate) level, and this result is approved by 43.9% of the sports audiences (respondents).

Table2: Frequencies, Means and Standard Deviations of Brand Equity

N	The Statement	Response Degree%					S.D	Mean	Degree
		SA	A	M	DA	SDA			
1	The sponsorship gives me information about the brand and products of the sponsor	9.1	45.5	33.3	3	9.1	1.02373	3.4242	High
2	My interest in the products of the sponsor is increased	10.6	36.4	34.8	13.6	4.5	0.99988	3.3485	Moderate
3	My following up the new products of the sponsor is improved	6.1	34.8	36.4	16.7	6.1	0.99087	3.1818	Moderate
4	I have a good knowledge about the products quality of the sponsor	6.1	47	28.8	13.6	4.5	0.95493	3.3636	Moderate
5	I have a good knowledge about the products' prices of the sponsor	4.5	37.9	31.8	16.7	9.1	1.04536	3.1212	Moderate
6	I have the ability to distinguish the products of the sponsor compared to competitors	9.1	43.9	28.8	10.6	6.7	1.04714	3.3636	Moderate
7	I have the ability to brand recall of the products of the sponsor	7.6	45.5	28.8	13.6	4.5	0.97294	3.3788	Moderate
Overall Brand Knowledge		7.586	41.571	31.814	12.543	6.357	1.00498	3.3117	Moderate
1	The brand identity is clear in my mind	10.6	43.9	30.3	4.5	10.6	1.09374	3.3939	Moderate
2	I have intention to buy the brand of the sponsor	12.1	27.3	31.8	15.2	13.6	1.21183	3.0909	Moderate
3	I have the ability to following up the new products of the sponsor	12.1	28.8	36.4	13.6	9.1	1.11652	3.2121	Moderate
4	The activities of the sponsor are meet to my interests and expectations	7.6	21.2	45.5	15.2	10.6	1.05247	3.0000	Moderate
5	The brand image of the sponsor is enhanced	12.1	40.9	36.4	15	9.1	1.04044	3.4545	High
6	I have the ability to recall the sponsor's brand	15.2	47	25.8	6.1	6.1	1.02247	3.5909	High
7	The brand positioning is suitable.	10.6	36.4	39.4	6.1	7.6	1.01733	3.3636	Moderate
Overall The Brand Image		11.367	35.071	35.086	10.814	9.529	1.07926	3.3008	Moderate
1	The products value of the sponsor is enhanced in my mind	10.6	40.9	37.9	4.5	6.1	0.96368	3.4545	High
2	The positive bonds between brand and image is positively enhanced in my mind	9.1	43.9	31.8	3	12.1	1.10234	3.3485	Moderate
3	The positive bonds between identity and image is positively enhanced in my mind	9.1	40.9	33.3	9.1	7.6	1.03020	3.3485	Moderate
4	The positive image of the brand in my mind is enhanced	9.1	39.4	36.4	6.1	9.1	1.04268	3.3333	Moderate
5	The brand reputation of the brand is positively improved	13.6	30.3	43.9	6.1	6.1	1.00581	3.3939	Moderate
Overall the Mental Associations		10.3	39.08	36.66	5.76	8.2	1.0289	3.3757	Moderate
Overall Brand Equity		9.751	38.574	34.574	9.7057	8.0287	1.0377	3.3294	Moderate

5.6.2 The Independent Variable : Sports Sponsorship

The level of the independent variable “sports sponsorship” consists of 8 statements. The responses vary among such statements between the medium and high levels and none of such statements have very high, low or very low responses. There are three statements have a high level of response, “Developing the team and improve its

competitiveness”, “Improving the team’s reputation abroad” and “Increasing the fans’ attendance at team matches”. The overall mean of the variable is (3.259) and the standard deviation (1.1057). This means that the level of use the sports sponsorship is moderate, and this result is approved by 48.1% of the sports Journalists.

Table 3: Frequencies, Means and Standard Deviations of Sports Sponsorship

N	The Statement	Response Degree%					S.D	Mean	Degree
		SA	A	M	DA	SDA			
1	Developing the team and improve its competitiveness	10.6	48.5	28.8	3	9.1	1.04134	3.4848	High
2	Improving the team's image at the local level	10.6	43.9	22.7	13.6	9.1	1.12774	3.3333	Moderate
3	Improving the team's reputation abroad	12.1	43.9	28.8	4.5	10.6	1.11024	3.4242	High
4	Increasing the fans' attendance at team matches	18.2	45.5	22.7	1.5	12.1	1.17838	3.5606	High
5	The sponsoring company benefits more than the team itself	9.1	36.4	34.8	7.6	12.1	1.12038	3.2273	Moderate
6	Attract the best coaches for the team	3	31.8	34.8	18.2	12.1	1.05876	2.9545	Moderate
7	Attracting investment in issues serving the team	9.1	30.3	37.9	10.6	12.1	1.12162	3.1364	Moderate
8	Attract famous players to play in the team	6.1	25.8	37.9	18.2	12.1	1.08744	2.9545	Moderate
Overall Sports Sponsorship		9.85	38.263	31.05	9.65	11.163	1.105738	3.25945	Moderate

6. TESTING THE RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

6.1 There is a Statistically Significant Effect of the Sports Sponsorship on the Brand Equity of the Sponsor in Saudi Arabia at the Statistical Significance Level 5% and sub-three hypotheses as follow:

6.1.1. There is a Statistically Significant Effect of Using the Sports Sponsorship on the Brand Knowledge at the Statistical Significance Level 5%.

To test the first sub-hypothesis, the dependent and independent variables are the sports sponsorship and brand knowledge. The linear equation is used ($Y = A + f^1 X_1$). Y refers to the dependent variable that expresses the brand knowledge, while X_1 indicates the independent variable or the sports sponsorship. A and B are the models' estimates and the table 4 show the results of analysis using the enter method.

Table 4: First Sub Hypothesis Using Enter Method

Variable	B	t	Sig.	Statistical Indicators
Intercept	1.643	5.585	0.00	F=34.204 Sig. = 0.00 r=0.59 R ² = 0.338
Sports Sponsorship	0.513	5.848	0.00	

6.1.2. There is a Statistically Significant Effect of Using the Sports Sponsorship on the Brand Image at the Statistical Significance Level 5%.

To test the second sub-hypothesis, the dependent and independent variables are the sports sponsorship and brand image. The linear equation is used ($Y = A + f^1 X_1$). Where Y refers to the dependent variable that expresses the brand image, while X_1 indicates the independent variable that express the sports sponsorship. A and B are the models' estimates and the table 5 show the results of analysis using the enter method.

The basic analysis shows that sports sponsorship has statistical significant influencing on the brand image of the sponsor according to the tabulated and calculated levels of

The statistical analysis shows that sports sponsorship has statistical significant influencing on the brand knowledge of the sponsor according to the tabulated and calculated levels of statistical significance (0.00 and 0.05). The estimate B shows that sports sponsorship has a positive statistical impact on enhancing the brand knowledge of the sponsor by 0.513 units, and it is found that there is a positive correlation between the sports sponsorship and the brand knowledge reaches 59%. Therefore, 33.8% of the variations or changes in the brand awareness refers to sports sponsorship activities. To test the first sub-hypothesis, the ANOVA (F) results show that the calculated value of the significance level is 0.00 which is less than the test level of 5%, and the first sub hypothesis is accepted. So there is a statistically significant effect of sports sponsorship activities on the level of brand knowledge of the sponsor

statistical significance (0.00 and 0.05). The estimate B shows that sports sponsorship has a positive statistical impact on improving the brand image of the sponsor by 0.727 units, and it is found that there is a positive correlation between the sports sponsorship and the brand images reaches 67.8%. Therefore, 45.1% of the variations in the brand image refers to sports sponsorship activities. To test the second sub-hypothesis, the ANOVA (F) results show that the calculated value of the significance level is 0.00 which is less than the test level of 5%, and the second sub hypothesis is accepted. So there is a statistically significant effect of sports sponsorship activities on the brand image of the sponsor

Table 5: Second Sub Hypothesis Using Enter Method

Variable	B	t	Sig.	Statistical Results
Intercept	0.938	2.837	0.006	F= 54.388 Sig. = 0.00 r=0.678 R ² = 0.451
Sports Sponsorship	0.727	7.375	0.00	

6.1.3 There is a Statistically Significant Effect of Using the Sports Sponsorship on the Mental Associations at the Statistical Significance Level 5%.

To test the second sub-hypothesis, the dependent and independent variables are the sports sponsorship and brand associations. The linear equation is used ($Y = A + f^1 X_1$). Y refers to the dependent variable that expresses the mental associations, while X_1 indicates the independent variable that express the sports sponsorship. A and B are the models' estimates and the table 6 show the results of analysis using the enter method.

The basic analysis shows that sports sponsorship has statistical significant influencing on the mental associations of the sponsor according to the tabulated and calculated levels

of statistical significance (0.00 and 0.05). The estimate B shows that sports sponsorship has a positive statistical impact on the mental associations of the sponsor by 0.512 units, and it is found that there is a positive correlation between the sports sponsorship and the mental associations reaches 45.8%. Therefore, 19.7% of the variations in the mental associations refers to sports sponsorship activities. To test the third sub-hypothesis, the ANOVA (F) results show that the calculated value of the significance level is 0.00 which is less than the test level of 5%, and the third sub hypothesis is accepted. So there is a statistically significant effect of sports sponsorship activities on the mental associations of the sponsor

Table 6: Third Sub Hypothesis Using Enter Method

Variable	B	t	Sig.	Statistical Results
Intercept	1.713	4.113	0.00	F= 16.957 Sig. = 0.00 r=0.458 R ² = 0.197
Sports Sponsorship	0.512	4.118	0.00	

To test the first main hypothesis, which says that there is a statistically significant effect of the sports sponsorship on the brand equity at the level of statistical significance of 5%. The last linear model is used. Y refers to the dependent variable (the brand equity), while X1 represents the independent variables (the sports sponsorship). A and B are the models' estimates. The table 7 represents the results of estimation. It is found that the sports sponsorship activities used by the sponsors in the city of Riyadh have a statistically positive effect on brand equity, where the impact factor reaches 0.584. This means that each riyal spent on sports

sponsorship activities will enhance the brand equity to the sports athletes in Riyadh by 0.584 riyals. It is found that the correlation coefficient between the two reaches 65.6%, and sports sponsorship explains 43% of the variations in the brand equity of the sports audience in the city of Riyadh. To test the first main hypothesis, it is found that the calculated level of significance (0.00) is less than the level of significance (0.05), and we accept the text of the hypothesis which says that there is a statistically significant effect of the sports sponsorship activities on the brand equity of the sports audience in the city of Riyadh.

Table 7: The First Main Hypothesis Using Enter Method

Variable	B	t	Sig.	Statistical Results	
Intercept	1.431	5.078	0.00	F= 48.241	Sig. = 0.00
Sports Sponsorship	0.584	6.946	0.00	r=0.656	R ² = 0.43

6.2 There are Statistically Significant Differences in Using the Sports Sponsorship Activities According to The Organizational Factors: Field of Work and the Nationality at the level of statistical significance of 5%.

To test the hypothesis of statistical differences and analysis of variance ANOVA (F) is used for variables that have more than two choices of answers: field of work, while the t-

test is used for variables that have only two choices which is the nationality. The statistical rule says that if the significance level of the variable less than the overall significance level of the test 5 %, we can accept the effect of the organizational factors on the level of sports sponsorship. It is found that there are no statistical differences in the level of using the sports sponsorship according to field of work and nationality.

Table 8: The Second Main Hypothesis

DV	IV	F(t)	Sig.	The Decision
Sports Sponsorship	Field of Work	0.998	0.456	No Statistical Differences
	Nationality	0.076	0.784	No Statistical Differences

6.3 There are Statistically Significant Differences in the Brand Equity of the Sport Audience according to Demographical Factors (Length of Follow Up Period, Education and Age) at the Statistical Significance Level 0.05.

6.3.1 There are Statistically Significant Differences in the Brand Knowledge of the Sport Audience according to Demographical Factors (Length of Follow Up Period, Education and Age) at the Statistical Significance Level 0.05.

To test the hypothesis of statistical differences and analysis of variance ANOVA (F) is used for variables that have more than two choices of answer which are length of follow up period, education and age. The statistical rule says that if the significance level of the variable less than the overall significance level of the test 5 %, we can accept the effect of the demographical variable on brand knowledge. The table 9 shows that there are statistical differences in brand knowledge according to the age of sports audience. By using the Scheffee test, it is found that these differences in brand knowledge tend to age group between 42- 46 years. This group is mature and aware of the brand compared to the other categories. The positive correlation between the age level and brand knowledge and this means that increasing the age of sport audience will enhance the brand knowledge of the sponsor company.

6.3.2 There are Statistically Significant Differences in the Brand Image of the Sport Audience according to Demographical Factors (Length of Follow Up Period, Education and Age) at the Statistical Significance Level 0.05.

The statistical rule says that if the significance level of the variable less than the overall significance level of the test 5 %, we can accept the effect of the demographical variable on brand image. The table 9 shows that there are statistical differences in brand image according to the age of sports audience. It is found that these differences in brand image tend to age group between 30-34 years. This group is mostly in the middle ages of marriage, so they are able to build and create a positive image of the sponsors' brands.

6.3.3 There are Statistically Significant Differences in the Mental Associations of the Sport Audience according to Demographical Factors (Length of Follow Up Period, Education and Age) at the Statistical Significance Level 0.05.

The table 9 shows that there are statistical differences in mental associations according to the age of sports audience. By using the Scheffee test, it is found that such differences in brand associations tend to age group between 22-26 years. This group is the center of the youth stage and it describes the impulsive and enthusiastic behaviors towards the favorite team. This group often links between the intentions towards a particular team with mental associations of the sponsored brand.

Table 9: The Third Main Hypothesis

Independent Variable	Demographic Variable	F	Sig.	The Statistical Decision
Brand Knowledge	Length of Follow up Period	0.296	0.953	There are no statistically significant differences.
	Education	0.998	0.416	There are no statistically significant differences.
	Age	2.111	0.09	There are statistically significant differences.
Brand Image	Length of Follow up Period	0.968	0.463	There are no statistically significant differences.
	Education	1.01	0.41	There are no statistically significant differences.
	Age	2.19	0.081	There are statistically significant differences.
Mental Associations	Length of Follow up Period	1.258	0.287	There are no statistically significant differences.
	Education	1.282	0.287	There are no statistically significant differences.
	Age	2.505	0.051	There are statistically significant differences.

7.DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results show that the level of sports sponsorship in the Saudi market has an average (moderate) degree, and the available information show that the total sponsorship revenues for professional football clubs reaches one SAR billion (\$ 376 million) in 2018 through 57 sponsorship contracts (Watan Newspaper, July 16, 2019), or 0.58% of the total sports sponsorship revenue in the world for the same year (\$ 65.8 billion). Despite the low contribution of the Saudi private sector in sponsoring the sports events in the Kingdom, but it clearly contributed to the development of sports competitions and had an important role in improving the Saudi league ranking at the Asian level. This conclusion has approved by 59.1% of the sports journalists. The telecommunications companies in the Kingdom still the engine of the sports sponsorship contracts by 18.9% of total contracts, while the airlines came second with 18%, then the tourism companies by 11.7%. The results also show that foreign companies have the highest share of sponsorship contracts by 63.6% and this confirms what we mentioned above that the contribution of the Saudi private sector in supporting the sports sponsorship activities still low. We add that 19.5% of the sponsor companies in Saudi Arabia prefer the financial support, then 19.1% of sponsor companies tend to prepare the team for external completions, while the promotional and advertising campaigns the team has 12.1%. In general, it is found that 50% of sports sponsorship activities are seasonal activities and rely on the external participation of the team, so the two-thirds of the sponsors are from foreign companies and are looking to improve their reputation in foreign markets, more than the local market, and this conclusion is approved by 56% of the sports journalists.

On the other hand, it is found that the brand equity of the sponsors has the average level in the minds of the Saudi fans. In detail, the level of brand knowledge of the sponsor has the average degree in the minds' of flowers the Saudi professional league, and the results show that the information of sponsors that broadcasts during the events is the main source of the brand knowledge according to 50% of the sports audience. So the brand knowledge causes the same level of the brand image in the minds of the sports audiences. The correlation between brand knowledge and brand image enhance the brand recall according to 62% of the sports audience. As a result, the mental associations have the same level of importance in the minds of the sports audience, and such a result is consistent with other results mentioned above (brand knowledge and image). This conclusion is approved by more than half of the respondents, and they have agreed that sports sponsorship activities enhancing the brand equity of the sponsors in the sports audiences (followers and attendees).

Despite the average level of sports sponsorship and brand equity in Saudi Arabia, it is found that there is an moderate positive impact of sports sponsorship activities on enhancing the brand knowledge of the sponsors' companies, and the information broadcast during the event has an effective impact in enhancing the components of knowledge among the sports audiences (Fineweek,2007). The fans of the 2010 World Cup can recall the brands that were unknown before the championship (Pijkeren,2010), so the effect on the brand knowledge of the sponsor is proved according to Weissman (2014). The current study also found that sports sponsorship activities have a positive impact on the brand image of the sponsor as well as other studies such as tomalieh (2016) and the study of Biscaia et al., (2017). The study of Pickron and Broderick (2005) shows that the brand image is the most affected by sports sponsorship activities, while it is found that mental association is the most affected by these activities in this study.

The current study has proved that sports sponsorship has a positive impact on the brand equity in the minds of the sports audience in the city of Riyadh, thus sponsor companies have succeed to reach the strategic dimension of the sponsorship activities and the effect on the brand equity is proved (Ngan, Prendergast & Tsang, 2011) as well as the positive construction of that brand (Fineweek,2007). Such results are consistent with the study of crownwell and steinard (2001) shows that sponsors usually focus on the long-term goals, especially improving the brand equity and reputation. Finally, the current research concludes that there are no statistical differences in the level of using the sports sponsorship activities among Saudi companies and no significant differences among telecommunication companies , airlines companies, tourism companies, hospitals, insurance companies and banks ... etc. The current study also concludes that there is no significant differences between the foreign and local companies in the sport sponsorship, while the significant statistical differences in the level of brand equity according to the age of people. So it is found that the age group 42-46 is the most brand knowledgeable of the sponsor, the age group 30-34 is the most aware of the brand image, while the age group 22-26 is the most mentally associated with the brands of the sponsors.

Finally, the current study recommends that the importance of regulations and legislation governing sports sponsorship mechanisms in the Kingdom, and to motivate the private sector to adopt sponsorship activities, the linkages with the laws of income tax, zakat, and government exemptions are key engines. The private sports agencies can accelerate the investment in sports activities and the searching for new resources of finance will cut the financial dependency on the

local government, develop the sports activities and enhance the participation abroad. The General Authority for Entertainment is also part of developing the sport sponsorship, so it can arrange the events that bond between the sports activities and welfare industry in the stadiums and sports facilities. The household sector is market targeted by most of international events worldwide.

8. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The Sponsor Saudi companies looking to exploit the feelings of the sports audience and their liking to the favorite sports teams. Such companies have focused on the long-term advantages of the sports sponsorship and have enhanced the brand equity in the minds of the Saudi sports audience. The results have agreed that sports sponsorship has an effective effect on building the brand and enhancing the knowledge, image, and mental associations among the followers and attendees. Sports sponsorship can change the brand image of the sponsor in the minds of such sport audience, which help to brand recall the unknown brands in the market. The current study can't approve the relationship between brand equity and short-term selling goals. Sponsor Saudi companies use a set of communication tools that combine traditional and new methods to support the sports sponsorship programs in the Saudi market. The new communication tools have 61.5%, and 28.5% reflects the traditional tools. Social media is the most used tool by sponsor companies to show their sponsorship to the sports audience. TV coverage and sports programs have an equal percentage of use, then the web site of the sponsor company, while radio and outdoor advertising have the lowest share in use despite their low-cost. The moderate positive impact of the sports sponsorship on the brand equity is mainly due to the misuse of marketing communication tools by the sponsor companies. The precisely determined of the characteristics of the sports audience ensures the successes of communication tools used by the sponsors to reach the correct information at the right time and place, and this will enhance the brand equity of the sponsor companies as well as the sales goals in the short-term.

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