Brand image transfer from team to sponsor: how effective is it to sponsor a football team with little success?

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Abstract: We propose to explore the influence of success in sports on the effect of image transfer in sponsorship. We analysed three football teams based on their historical ranking. The image transfer does not occur with the less successful team. We conclude that sports sponsors need to reconsider their strategic options to align them with their company goals and to promote a return on investment. An ideal strategy to enhance the brand image would be to sponsor more successful sports teams because it has been shown that those teams that have more victories get greater exposure and therefore the ROI for sponsors increase.

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1   Background

The continuing and increasing investment in sponsorship demonstrates the confidence that organisations have in adopting this option as a marketing tool. Because of the importance and value of resources designated for sponsorships (IEG, 2013), various theories have been proposed and developed to measure the profitability of sponsorships. One such theory is the theory of image transfer, which has been applied for more than 20 years (Gwinner, 1997). This theory is based on the transfer related to a brand or company from the sponsor to the sponsored party; however, authors agree that more research in this area is still needed, as knowledge about the transfer process is incomplete (Grohs and Reisinger, 2014; Novais and Arcodia, 2013; Pappu and Cornwell, 2014).

In more recent years, research on sponsorship has extended into different areas, there are studies that link the effectiveness of sponsorships to sports performance (Jensen and Cobbs, 2014; Ngan et al., 2011). Even though investing in a team or sports event of international fame could become much more expensive than investing in a lesser known team or event. An example can be seen in the Spanish football league, La Liga, where it is estimated to cost Emirates approximately 30 million US dollars to Sponsor Real Madrid. By contrast, Gioseppo only pays 300 thousand US dollars annually to Elche Club de Fútbol, as revealed by the website www.marketingdeportivomd.com in 2014.

Related to this idea, if team performance is good and obtains victories, it will promote a greater exposure of the sponsor and therefore a greater ROI (Jensen and Cobbs, 2014). This exposure is considered as an important precursor of brand awareness (Levin et al., 2001) and it has been demonstrated that the exposure of a logo is very effective, especially in televised events, where it is capable of producing brand recognition and its effects can be similar to those produced by a 30-second spot. Obviously, this information depends on several factors such as the sponsor's adequacy, the type of exposure or the

initial brand awareness (Olson and Thjømøe, 2009). Thus, the amount and nature of that exposure is a key factor for the evaluation of ROI (Pruitt et al., 2004).

An evaluation of the effectiveness of sponsorship has two purposes: first, to provide a measure of the value of a particular sponsorship (a measure of its effectiveness) and, second, to inform a proposal for the sale and financing of sports events and championships (Novais and Arcodia, 2013). However, few studies have attempted to measure the effectiveness of sponsorship in relation to the size of an event or the effectiveness of sponsorship among sports teams with different performance levels (in terms of sporting success or number of fans). Thus, companies that sponsor events or sports teams have no knowledge about the effectiveness of sponsoring a large or a small event or the effectiveness of sponsoring a successful sports team or a team with very little success.

The aim of this paper is to contribute to the literature by conducting exploratory research on sponsorship in order to determine the effectiveness of the process of image transfer based on sporting performance. The paper does not attempt to show that image transfer occurs through sponsorship; prior studies have achieved that objective. Rather, the paper aims to demonstrate that the effectiveness of sponsorship differs depending on the circumstances and that a previously uninvestigated moderating factor directly affects the effectiveness of sponsorship: the success of the team. We conducted a quantitative study on three Chilean football teams in relation to sporting success, wealth and number of fans. The hypothesis is that image transfer in sponsorship works differently with very successful teams than with less successful teams. The theoretical results will help elucidate the image transfer process. In practice, brand managers may be able to allocate sponsorship spending by taking into account the cost effectiveness expected for such investment.

1.1 Image transfer

Although the mechanism underlying the effect on a sponsor's image in consumers' minds remains somewhat ambiguous, image transfer can be considered one of the key concepts in studies on brand image (Novais and Arcodia, 2013). Therefore, it is essential for companies to know how brand image is transferred to develop strategies for more effective sponsorship. From an academic point of view, Grohs and Reisinger (2005) note that attempts to explain the sponsorship process do not provide a complete picture for every case and that a comprehensive model that may allow for a quantifiable assessment and measurement of the effectiveness of sponsorship and an evaluation of the effectiveness of image transfer is lacking (Park and Choi, 2011).

Previous scholars have used various academic theories to explain the effects of brand image transfer, as example, the mere exposure theory (Gail et al., 2007), attribution theory (Rifon et al., 2004), social alliance theory (Madrigal, 2001), social comparison theory (Abrams and Hogg, 2012), psychological conditioning (Tribou, 2011), and image transfer theory (Gwinner, 1997). All these theories would allow researchers to measure the effectiveness of sponsorship in relation to purchase intention toward the sponsor's products.

The concept of brand image transfer describes the associations transferred from a sponsored entity to a brand or company that provides sponsorship (Gwinner, 1997). It further refers to the linkages that consumers hold in their memories regarding a sporting event or sports team that are transferred to the sponsoring brand. Through brand image

transfer, a sponsor aims to evoke positive feelings and attitudes toward the sponsor by linking the sponsor to an event that consumers really enjoy (Grohs and Reisinger, 2005). The connection of a brand with a sponsored event should induce people and the sponsored entity to develop a positive influence toward the brand and the event. Sponsorship has a positive effect on people's perception about a brand when it is associated with an (sponsored) event. Through sponsorship, people perceive a proper connection between an event and a sponsor's brand (Gwinner and Eaton, 1999).

The lack of appropriate techniques to measure the effectiveness of sponsorship is the most debated topic in the literature and the most difficult aspect of studying sponsorship (Meng-Lewis et al., 2013). The main challenge consists in developing standardised assessment procedures of to evaluate the effectiveness of sponsorship. In addition, intangibility may hinder the measurement process, and there is no comprehensive model that could explain the effectiveness of sponsorship in relation to image transfer.

2   Hypothesis development

2.1   Attitudes toward the sponsor

Attitudes toward the sponsor could be defined as consumers' overall evaluation of the entity sponsoring an event (Keller, 2003). Meenaghan (2001) understands the construct of attitudes as a favorable disposition toward the sponsor, being a construct that constitutes one of the most commonly used variables to assess the effectiveness of sponsorship. Levin et al. (2001) adopt this variable to assess the effect of exposure time and the length of time that a specific sponsorship remained in consumers' minds. Roy and Cornwell (2003) use the same measure to assess the effect of brand equity in response to the sponsored event. Likewise, other authors have examined attitudes toward sponsors as a measure of the effectiveness of sponsorship (Alexandris and Tsiotsou, 2012; Kim et al., 2011).

According to Meenaghan (1983), activities or events have individual personality attributes that consumers hold in their minds, and sponsorship associates a particular event or activity with the products or services of a company. When people associate a sponsor with a sponsored event, images of the event are transferred to the sponsor – i.e., people's attitudes toward the sponsored entity are transferred to the sponsor.

This close association is achieved by simultaneously presenting the sponsor and the event, which should result in the transfer of the image of the event to the sponsoring company (Grohs and Reisinger, 2005). Thus, we propose the following hypothesis.

H1   Attitudes toward the team (sponsored entity) exert a positive influence on attitudes toward the sponsor.

2.2   Purchase intention

The theoretical approaches proposed by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) are helpful for predicting human behaviour. According to these authors, people act according to their intentions, which are influenced by their perceived behavioural control, subjective norms and their attitudes toward behaviour. A large number of studies have supported their

results, showing that intentions play an important role in people's predisposition and actual behaviour.

Therefore, people's purchase intention may be an appropriate indicator of the effectiveness of sponsorship, particularly when a sponsor participates in sports events for sports fans. By participating in the event, the sponsor may have an influence on the people who attend that event and thus influence people's intention to purchase a product promoted by that particular sponsor (Dean, 2002). Several studies have shown that consumer behaviour is an important predictor of behavioural intentions (Kim et al., 2011). Moreover, Meenaghan (2001) concludes that positive attitudes toward a sponsor predict consumers' purchase intention and thus consumers' actual purchasing behaviour.

H2   Attitudes toward a sponsor positively influence intention to purchase the sponsor's products.

2.3   Congruence

Congruence is a concept that describes the 'adjustment' of the relationship between a sponsor and a sponsored entity as perceived by consumers. Through congruence, the sponsor is related to the event. The effects of congruence on sports sponsorship have been studied recently (Chao, 2011). As Chao states, several authors have studied the influence of congruence on brand recall and brand identification. According to this research, it will be easier for consumers to remember a sponsor when there is a logical relationship between the sponsor and an event. Therefore, congruence is a very important factor that affects consumers' brand memory and knowledge of sponsors (Novais and Arcodia, 2013). This variable involves cognitive factors such as memory and knowledge.

Studies on congruence confirm that congruence positively affects the image transfer from the event to the sponsor (Gwinner, 1997) by improving recall of the sponsor's brand (Johan and Pham, 1999) and improving consumers' attitudes toward the sponsor. Besides, congruent sponsorship creates greater product differentiation on the market and it can potentially increase the efficiency of sales. However, incongruence in sponsorship may diminish the image transfer of values from the event to the sponsor (Meenaghan, 2001). Thus, an evaluation of congruence and the 'adjustment' of the relationship between the sponsor and the event may provide information regarding consumers' perception of sponsored brands and serve as a measurement of the effectiveness of sponsorship.

According to Tribou (2011), incongruence in a sponsorship relationship may involve two scenarios. First, if incongruence is not substantial, then consumers' cognitive effort increases and may even engender the impact of sponsorship. Spectator will attempt to assimilate the reason for such incongruence, and if they succeed in this process, image transfer will persist over a longer period of time. Otherwise, if incongruence is perceived as substantial, the sponsor is at risk of being rejected; therefore, image transfer will not occur, and the company may not obtain a return on the investment.

H3   The 'adjustment' perceived by consumers between the sponsor and the sponsored entity has a positive influence on attitudes toward the sponsor.

2.4   Team performance and image transfer

There is limited research on the effect of sports performance on sponsorship in marketing literature, particularly concerning sports fan behaviour. (Cialdini et al., 1976) related success in sports with sponsorship by goods and services firms. They described the term BIRGing (basking in reflected glory) as the tendency of sporting fans to associate themselves with successful teams in order to also be perceived as a winner. By contrast, the term CORFing (cutting off reflected failure) (Spinda, 2011) refers to the tendency of fan to end relations with losing teams. Both terms derive from social identity theory (Abrams and Hogg, 2012).

Social identity theory proposes that individuals establish self-concepts and definitions through the affiliation or connection with certain social groups to which they belong. Building a sense of unity and belonging to a social group helps individuals to improve their self-esteem. Thus, individuals are identified with the reference group, and they tend to emphasise the positive aspects of the group and minimise the negative aspects (Wann and Branscombe, 1995). A positive result from the difference in opinion then leads to greater self-esteem.

Gwinner and Swanson (2003) examine the moderating effect of identifying perceptions of the sponsor, specifically concerning brand recognition, attitudes toward the sponsor and satisfaction. The authors propose that individuals who are highly involved with the group are able to recognise members and organisations that are in the group, leading to a favorable attitude change toward the sponsor. Their results also show that individuals who are most involved with and who most identified with a team have more positive attitudes toward the team's sponsors, higher awareness of the sponsored brands and higher purchase intention toward the sponsored products. Accordingly, greater performance for a sporting team may lead to greater attitudes toward the team's sponsor.

Furthermore, Pope et al. (2009) suggest that sporting performance affects the corporate image of sponsors and evaluations of the quality of sponsors' products based on the use of the products during the studied event and the stimuli used. The authors expect that poor sporting performance would negatively influence evaluations of the attributes of sponsorship. The results also show that athletic performance conditions evaluations of the quality of brands. However, these authors do not investigate the influence of athletic performance on the process of image transfer – or even on purchase intention and attitudes. Thus, they do not take congruence into account, because they wanted to rule out the possibility that other factors may have confounded the results, and they thought a potential confound might have arisen from the perception of congruence between sponsor and event.

H4   The process of image transfer between three sports teams with different levels of performance will not differ according to the structural coefficients.

3   Method

3.1   Research setting

The analysis of Novais and Arcodia (2013) suggests that research on sports sponsorship generally follows the same trend. Most studies focus on large multidisciplinary events

that attract considerable media attention. The authors note that it is essential to study brand image transfer in other types of events (e.g., small single-discipline events) to provide a better understanding of the image transfer process and to evaluate whether image transfer occurs in the same way with smaller sporting event as with a larger sporting event.

In this research, the studied teams include three football teams from the Chilean National Professional Football Association (ANFP): *Colo-Colo*, *Unión Española* and *Ñublense*. We selected the teams based on their historical ranking and social impact. First, we ordered the teams and calculated the number of championships they had won (national, international and other less important cups). We classified the teams as winning teams, which had won more than 10 championships (three teams); competitive teams, which had won four to ten championships (seven teams), and survivor teams, which had won one to three championships (eight teams). Three teams significantly diverged from the mean (8.22): *Colo-Colo*, which had more than 17 championships (17, 22, and 44), *Unión Española*, which had ten championships, and *Ñublense*, which had only one championship.

Then, we performed a second classification based on the number of supporters or fans who attend their clubs' matches. From 1990 to 2013, *Colo-Colo* ranks first with more than seven million, *Unión Española* falls below the mean, and *Ñublense* ranks last with less than half a million fans attending its matches.

Finally, we assessed the impact of each of the football teams on social networks (Twitter and Facebook are the most visited social networks in Chile). The results showed that three teams had the highest number of supporters (over 3.5 million on Twitter), with *Colo-Colo* among them; that seven teams had an average number of supporters (1.3 million), with *Unión Española* among them; and that *Ñublense* ranked last, with less than 0.4 million fans. These three indicators justify the selection of these teams in terms of sporting performance and social impact, as the results are consistent for both indices.

3.2 Data and sample

The sample included 490 fans from *Colo-Colo*, 292 fans from *Unión Española* and 200 fans from *Ñublense*. The fans completed surveys during the opening championship season 'Campeonato Petrobras Apertura 2013', which began in the last week of October 2013 and concluded in December of the same year.During the months of data collection, each of the team's position on the tournament ladder varied. *Unión Española* held tenth place at the start of the research and finished in third position. *Colo-Colo* held and maintained a position within the top ten owing to a poor season. *Ñublense* initially ranked 14th, behind the other teams involved in the study, but later improved its ranking. We consider the temporal situation in the classification; however, we conclude that the temporal situation did not influence perceptions of sponsorship, as research shows that effects related to sponsorship persist over the long term (Cornwell et al., 1997, 2000).

Surveys were distributed, along with pencils, around the stadium before the match to ensure that the outcome of the match did not influence the participants' responses. Interviewers recruited participants at different entrances to the stadium to capture the heterogeneity of the population, taking into account the percentage of members, attendance at matches, areas and characteristics. Other authors have used the same data collection methodology for research on stadium events (Grohs and Reisinger, 2014) and sports equipment (Alonso Dos Santos, 2012). The data collected for each of the teams

showed that 75% of the participants were men and that 40% were between 31 and 40 years old. In terms of wage income, the sample was well distributed with five ranges of 20% each one, with the lowest level of wage corresponding to a lower percentage. Regarding education level, 70% of the participants for the three teams reported holding higher than a high-school certificate or being at a pre-college level. Finally, 50% of the sample surveyed claimed to be single.

3.3   *Measurement scales*

We adopted and applied the following measurement scales. First, we adopted Speed and Thompson's (2000) scale to measure attitudes toward the teams. We translated and adapted the scale by Dees et al. (2008) to measure attitudes toward sponsors. This scale is based on the scale by Quester and Thompson (2001). To measure consumers' purchase intention of sponsored products, we used scales proposed by Smith et al. (2008), which are based on previous research by Speed and Thompson (2000). We adapted two scales from Speed and Thompson (2000) to create a single item in order to measure congruence. Roy (2011) subsequently used this instrument.

To avoid identification with a specific sponsor, the items referred to generic sponsors. The measurement of all variables used Likert scales (1 to 7 points) with strongly agree and strongly disagree as anchors. The detailed analysis can be found in Table 1.

Table 1   Item description, mean and standard deviation scores (in parentheses)

Item	Item name	Mean Ñublense	Mean Colo	Mean Unión
The sports team is very important to me	Attteam1	4.29 (.915)	4.22 (.964)	4.53 (.863)
I think about the team all the time	Attteam2	3.93 (1.04)	3.93 (1.06)	4.24 (.943)
I see the team's matches whenever I can	Attteam3	4.42 (.865)	4.30 (.956)	4.65 (.755)
In general terms, I like the sponsors of my team	Attspon1	3.30 (.855)	3.18 (.996)	3.48 (.843)
In general terms, I consider that the products/services of the sponsors have good quality	Attspon2	3.31 (1.07)	3.61 (.917)	3.44 (.956)
The products/services of the sponsor are better than other brands	Attspon3	3.41 (1.05)	3.52 (.949)	3.62 (.914)
The sponsors of my team have prestigious brands	Attspon4	3.23 (.668)	3.33 (.989)	3.08 (.956)
I use products/services provided by sponsors of the team	Behint1	3,10 (.792)	3.37 (.981)	3.33 (1.09)
I would try a new product or service from a sponsor if I see it advertised at the event	Behint2	3.32 (.975)	3.70 (1.04)	3.72 (1.11)
I prefer the products/services of my team sponsor rather than from a non-sponsor	Behint3	3.32 (.975)	3.35 (1.13)	3.35 (1.23)
The image of the sports team is consistent with its sponsors	Congru	3.35 (1.07)	3.13 (1.02)	3.30 (1.17)

3.4 Technical analysis of the data

We adopted partial least squares method (PLS) in a structural equation model (SEM) for data analysis, using SmartPLS 2.0.M3 (Ringle et al., 2005) to assess both the measurement model and the structural model.

Several reasons support the use of the PLS SEM technique in this research. Compared with SEM techniques based on the covariance (TBC), PLS works better with small data samples, such as that in the present study (Hulland, 1999). To use the TBC model, prior research recommends using a sample of between 200 and 800 cases. Despite its relatively small size, the sample in the present study exceeds the minimum sample size required to ensure an adequate level of precision and statistical power (Barclay et al., 1995). In addition, PLS is appropriate for this research because it can handle constructs with only a few indicators, as few as two or even one (Hair et al., 2014).

TBC techniques mainly provide accurate parameter estimation, whereas PLS provides prediction. That is, PLS is mainly useful for predictive causal analysis. In addition, TBC techniques usually require a multivariate normal distribution and independent observations (parametric). Our sample does not meet the assumption of normality (uni- or multivariate), so the application of PLS method is more appropriate.

3.5 Multigroup analysis

The need to consider the effect of differences between sample members led us to conduct a multigroup PLS analysis, even though methodological work devoted to such analysis is limited (Hair et al., 2014). Thus, concrete guidelines for when to use each approach are lacking.

A literature review reveals two main approaches: parametric and nonparametric. Since we have a sample with a non-normal distribution, nonparametric methods are most suitable. Methods based on permutations (Chin and Dibbern, 2010) and Henseler's methods (Sarstedt et al., 2011a) are the most popular approaches for multigroup analysis.

The above methods are suitable for comparing the two groups, but a problem arises in comparisons of three or more groups. An option in this case is to realise all pairs of combinations; however, a problem is that the comparison can increase the likelihood of type I errors – commonly referred to as 'false positives' – whereby the rejection of a correct null hypothesis occurs. There are some solutions to this problem, such as the application of the Bonferroni correction. Furthermore, Sarstedt et al. (2011a) propose the application of the OTG (omnibus test of group differences) method based on a randomised ANOVA method, which avoids reliance on a traditional ANOVA method.

In the OTG method, the null hypothesis is considered for a given parameter, and it is the same in all groups. Therefore, two possible results can arise from this hypothesis. If the variance obtained from the OTG method is not significant, the null hypothesis is not rejected, with the assumption that no significant differences exists between any of the groups under comparison. Conversely, if the variance obtained from the OTG method is significant, the null hypothesis is rejected, implying that there are differences between the groups. However, this method is not able to specify what differences exist between these groups. Therefore, in this case, an analysis of group pairs is required to determine which groups are different from each other. After such an analysis, one can proceed to a multigroup analysis using Henseler's method (Sarstedt et al., 2011a). This method calculates the probability that the estimated parameter for one of the groups that is greater

than the estimated parameter for the other group. In the present study, both multigroup analyses used the results from estimating model parameters in a bootstrap analysis with 5,000 permutations. We used ceded spreadsheets for the calculations.

4   Results

As Straub (1989) and Chin (2010) suggest, it is advisable to test a measurement model by analysing the reliability of scales and their individual items or the internal consistency and convergent and discriminant validity of the adopted instruments.

To assess the reliability of the individual scale items, we examined the loads or simple correlations of the indicators on their respective dimensions. The standardised load must exceed 0.707 (Barclay et al., 1995). This minimum level of simple correlations indicates that over 50% of the variance of the observed parameter is shared with the variable (Bollen, 1989). Table 2 shows that certain values that fall below the minimum required; however, Chin (1998) suggests that lower values are acceptable for exploratory research. All loads are nevertheless significant and close to the expected value.

Table 2   Evaluation of the measurement model: CR, composite realibility, AVE, extracted variance

Model	Construct	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AVE	Factorial loads
Colo Colo	Attteam	0.894	0.933	0.824	.889*** – .925***
	Attspon	0.814	0.877	0.640	.755*** – .821***
	Behint	0.756	0.862	0.676	.784*** – .876***
Unión	Attteam	0.813	0.866	0.686	.677*** – .907***
	Attspon	0.800	0.867	0.621	.692*** – .838***
	Behint	0.802	0.871	0.629	.745*** –.807***
Ñublense	Attteam	0.886	0.927	0.810	.929*** – .890***
	Attspon	0.814	0.874	0.636	.791*** –.839***
	Behint	0.826	0.899	0.757	.598*** – .978***

Notes: ***$p < 0.001$, **$p < 0.05$, *$p > 0.05$.

To measure the reliability of the scales, we used composite reliability. Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) suggests 0.7 as the minimum level for acceptable reliability. All values show values above the recommended level for Cronbach's alpha.

The PLS procedure, with respect to convergent validity, allows us to assess the extent to which the items for a dimension actually explain the underlying idea of that dimension. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), the value of the average variance extracted (AVE) should exceed 0.5. All indicators exceed the minimum threshold.

Two methods exist for assessing discriminate validity with PLS:

a   examining whether the mean variance shared between a construct and its measures is greater than the variance shared between the construct and the other constructs of the model (Barclay et al., 1995)

b   assessing whether the correlations between constructs are lower than the square root of AVE (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

The results from both methods demonstrate that the scales do have discriminant validity. A third method, proposed by Henseleret al. (2015), sets the value of the heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) between two constructs as 0.9 (Henseler et al., 2015). This approach has shown a better performance in Monte Carlo simulations to evaluate the discriminant validity. Values showed set the minimum confidence intervals below 0.9.

4.1 Evaluation of the structural model

To evaluate structural models, a number of authors recommend starting by assessing the multiple correlation coefficients squared (R^2) (Barroso Castro et al., 2007). Falk and Miller (1992) note that the recommended value should be greater than 0.1. The ratings shown in Table 3 exceed the recommended minimum values for exploratory studies. Finally, the value of the standardised root mean square residual (SRMR) (Henseler et al., 2014) allows obtaining the contrast of the difference between the observed correlation and predicted correlation as the model adjustment measure. A value below 0.08 is considered to be acceptable. Our models have a value of 0.04–0.06, therefore considering a proper adjustment of the proposed model.

Figure 1 Structural model
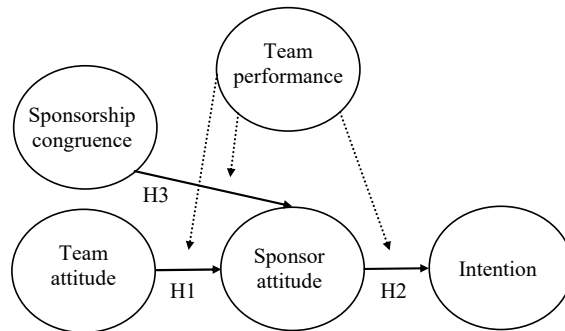
4.2 Hypothesis test

We used a bootstrap analysis technique with 500 subsamples to estimate the significance of the structural coefficients (Chin, 1998). Table 3 presents the results. According to Chin (1998), standardised path coefficients are statistically significant if they reach at least a value of 0.2, but to be economically significant, they should reach at least a value of 0.3. Overall, the evaluation indicates satisfactory explanatory power for the structural models for *Colo-Colo* and *Unión Española*. However, for *Ñublense*, the relationship proposed in H1 is not significant (Attitudes toward the team - Attitude toward the sponsor).

Table 3   Evaluation of structural model

Team		Relationship-construct	Path	R^2	Q^2	GOF
Colo		Attteam-Attspon	0.276***			0.388
		Attspon-Behint	0.636***			
		Cong- Attspon	0.441***			
	Construct	Attspon		0.234	0.142	
		Behint		0.405	0.205	
Unión		Attteam-Attspon	0.260***			0.263
		Attspon-Behint	0.371***			
		Cong- Attspon	0.404***			
	Construct	Attspon		0.186	0.102	
		Behint		0.238	0.085	
Ñuble		Attteam-Attspon	0.049*			0.311
		Attspon-Behint	0.489***			
		Cong-Attspon	0.396***			
	Construct	Attspon		0.157	0.088	
		Behint		0.239	0.164	

Notes: ***p < 0.001, **p < 0.05, *p > 0.05

4.3   Multigroup analysis

To test hypothesis 4 (H4), we conducted a multigroup comparison among three sports teams. First, the OTG method yielded a p value equal to 0.00 and Fr of 3967. According (Sarstedt et al., 2011b), these results suggest that at least one of the tested coefficients is significantly different between the three teams. Subsequently, the multigroup comparison using Henseler's (2007) approach between pairs of coefficients confirmed that the coefficients for the variables attitudes toward the team and attitudes toward the sponsor differ between the sports teams. That is, image transfer did not occur with *Ñublense* but did occur with the other teams.

5   Conclusions

5.1   Theoretical contribution

Previous research shows that the extent to which image is transferred from the sponsored party to the sponsor depends on the perceived 'adjustment' (Gwinner and Eaton, 1999). However, no studies have assessed the influence of success in sports on the effectiveness of sponsorship (Novais and Arcodia, 2013). Companies do not currently have information to assess the effectiveness of sponsorship based on sporting performance; therefore, the present study has both academic and practical relevance.

We present a model of image transfer based on three football teams. To select the teams, we considered their success in sports or sporting performance in various championships. In addition, we classified the teams by their media coverage. We also

considered each team's number of fans or supporters, stadium attendance and social impact on social networks. The criteria for the chosen three teams provided balanced results: *Colo-Colo* represents the most successful teams, with greater social impact and a larger number of fans. *Unión Española* represents a second group of teams, with average success in sports and social media impact. Finally, *Ñublense* represents teams with less success in sports, a lower impact on social networks and a smaller number of fans.

Regarding the first three hypotheses, only H1 for *Ñublense* was not significant. Image transfer from this football team toward the sponsoring brand did not occur. The most important conclusion from this result is that attitudes toward the team (*Ñublense*) do not influence attitudes toward the sponsor. Sponsorship does affect the image of the sponsor in the case of the most successful teams with greater social impact. However, image transfer does not occur with less successful football team. Several explanations may be offered for this finding. Sloan (1989) used the concept of BIRGing, understanding it as a cognitive process whereby one person feels the success of others as his/her own. The concept is associated with the theory of social identity (Abrams and Hogg, 2012). It is the individual's knowledge concerning the feeling of belonging to certain social groups that, in turn, carries emotional significance and value as he/she becomes part of the group. *Colo-Colo* and *Unión Española* are successful teams. The feeling of belonging is positive to the extent that individuals need to succeed. However, for sports teams with poor sporting performance, the BIRGing concept is not applicable. Fans may rarely identify themselves with the team. Spinda (2011) suggests that fans can choose from several teams, with more successful providing a greater chance of BIRGing. Thus, if a person predicts that his/her favorite team is going to lose, he/she is less likely to identify him/herself with the team for fear of failure. This implies that a person is more likely to engage in BIRGing if his/her public image is seriously threatened.

Several studies have confirmed that identification with a team or event positively influences attitudes toward associated sponsors (Grohs and Reisinger, 2014). However, according to the theory of social identity, individuals are less likely to identify with losing teams. Thus, they will not externalise their attitudes toward such teams' sponsors. For example, *Ñublense* fans did not identify themselves with the team for fear of being identified as losers by using or wearing brands of *Ñublense*'s sponsors. Hence, the association between the sponsored team and the sponsoring company did not occur.

Furthermore, identification with sponsors tends to be biased in favor of brands that are prominent in the market (Pham and Johar, 2001). Brands with higher value support teams with a larger number of fans owing to the cost of sponsorship. Nevertheless, in the present study, we developed the questionnaire by considering all brands. Further research may reveal the effectiveness of sponsorship in terms of brand value.

Finally, it is important to know the reasons underlying stadium attendance and support a particular team, as these variables may affect attitudes toward sponsors and sponsored entities. Based on the motivations for attending sporting events (Alonso Dos Santos and Montoro Rios, 2014; Izzo et al., 2011) argue that socialisation and involvement with a sport might explain the lack of image transfer with less successful teams.

5.2 *Practical implications*

Companies should establish clear and defined sponsorship objectives in order measure them later. In Chile and Spain, for example, companies have tax benefits for sports

sponsorship. If the goal is to improve the brand value of the sponsor, then sponsored teams should be selected by taking into account their social impact and sporting success. COPELEC, the sponsor of Ñublense, has a monopolistic business presence in the region where the team plays. In this case, if the goal is to reduce taxes, the strategy of sponsorship is effective. However, if the goal is to increase or enhance attitudes toward the brand, then such a strategy is not effective.

Second, the results support the hypothesis regarding congruence across the three models. Before deciding whether to sponsor a sports event or a team, a sponsoring company should take into account the target consumers, the market and the attributes associated with the sport, team or event. We suggest that sponsoring companies choose sponsored entities that are in line with the type of business that they operate and the region where they are located by considering the intrinsic value of each institution. In this sense, integrated marketing communications can help establish or strengthen the link or association between the event and the sponsor (Grohs and Reisinger, 2014).

6   Limitations and future research

Although a model including image transfer and congruence is a valid model to measure the effectiveness of sponsorship (Novais and Arcodia, 2013; Grohs and Reisinger, 2005), a sponsor should not necessarily take into account the functional 'adjustment' between the sponsor and the sponsored entity. A sponsor may choose a sport whose image does not initially match the image perceived by consumers and, in fact, effectively manage to associate the brand with the sport at the expense of using more effort and resources, such as in the cases of McDonald's in the Olympics or Carlsberg in the UEFA Champions League.

Involvement with both the sport and the team and identification must be included as variables in further research in order to clarify the reasons why attitude transfer does not occur with less successful teams. Such research could help determine how these variables affect both the congruence and the process of image transfer.

It would be interesting for future research to examine why people choose to belong to one team or another depending on the teams' success in sports. Previous research on motivation (Alonso Dos Santos and Montoro Rios, 2014) suggests that the connection with the environment and socialisation are important aspects affecting attendance of football matches.

Overall, this study significantly contributes to the evaluation of sponsors in order to analyse potential sponsorships, giving information to practitioners to help them to decide the amount of resources they allocate for the sponsorship of high performance teams. However, confirmatory studies should be conducted in other cultures, sports and specially in other regions to confirm these results and make them generalisable.

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