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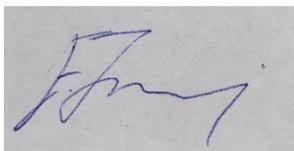
A dissertation submitted to Auckland University of Technology in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Business

Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Date: 30th July 2018

Signed:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'F. J. M.', written on a light-colored rectangular background.

Executive Summary

The study of sponsorship in sport has proven a popular area of academic enquiry over the past two decades, with management and marketing scholars employing a range of research methods to gather data from both a consumer and an organisational perspective. The study of consumer markets helps sporting and sponsor organisations determine the effectiveness of their marketing campaigns and brand presence. Existing literature on sport stadiums/facilities proved to be sparse in the areas of sponsorship and its effects on consumer behaviour. This case study not only showcases the gap in the literature, but also generates some practical evidence-based recommendations for the Eden Park Trust, its senior management team and the stadium's current sponsors.

The study explores the effectiveness of the current exchange relationships that exist between The Eden Park Trust, their local members and the family of sponsors who have invested in New Zealand's largest sports stadium. An interpretivist-inspired qualitative approach was employed to determine the influence of Eden Park's sponsors on the consumer behaviour habits of a small group of loyal and local members. The findings illustrate the interesting comments made by twelve Eden Park longstanding members regarding their attitudes, behaviour and perceptions of the stadium sponsors. Three overlapping themes, incentives, value proposition and sponsorship awareness, emerged from three focus groups sessions conducted at Eden Park.

The overwhelming consensus amongst the focus group participants was that both the Eden Park Trust and their current family of sponsors were missing out on potential business as a direct result of their failure to target the stadium's members. Whilst the individual members often spoke as if they were speaking on behalf of all stadium members, the findings of this small case study cannot lead to the construction of any generalizations. The concerns and criticisms raised, however, do signify the importance of relationship development during the sponsor-sponsee exchange process, suggesting that it offers an effective way of gaining consumer loyalty and turning brand awareness into brand attachment.

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Thank you,

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Sponsorship is an inherent and increasingly visible part of the global sports business industry, built around an exchange of resources and/or services (Clark, Cornwell and Pruitt, 2002; Koo, Quarterman and Flynn, 2006; Rodgers, 2003; Shaw and McDonald, 2006). Research suggests that obtaining sponsorship has proven to be a beneficial business relationship for both parties (Speed and Thompson, 2000). As a result, athletes and teams of all standards are always searching for sponsors looking to increase consumer awareness, attraction, attachment and allegiance towards their brand (Funk and James, 2006). The study of sponsorship in sport has proven a popular area of academic enquiry over the past two decades, with management and marketing scholars employing a range of research methods to gather data from both a consumer and a organisational perspective.

While one does not have to look too hard to see evidence of stadium sponsorship (e.g. naming rights and advertising signage), the researcher was surprised at the difficulty encountered when trying to find any recent academic interest in the subject. To date, it would appear that the focus has largely been on the assessment and evaluation of athlete, team and experiential/event-based sponsorship, as opposed to venue-based marketing activities. There is, for example, a shortage of academic articles published on the relationship between stadium sponsors and stadium consumers, including those loyal members who regularly invest in the acquisition of premium seats or corporate hospitality boxes. With stadium sponsorship is becoming more and more lucrative, and deals becoming longer and longer, the aim of this study is to explore the extent to which a fan's loyalty is transferred onto the sponsor's brand. Focusing on stadium sponsorship, as opposed to athlete, team or event-based marketing, offers an interesting point of difference from the studies that already exist. This chapter introduces the studies aim and objectives. Having done so, it then provides some background information on the focus of the case study; Eden Park, New Zealand's national stadium. Finally, an outline of the dissertations structure is presented.

1.1. Research Question and Objectives

This case study seeks to highlight the effects of stadium sponsorship on the Eden Park stadium members. This study is specifically targeting local stadium members, which is defined as members who live within the suburbs that immediately surround the stadium such

as Mount Eden, Sandringham and Kingsland. Stadium members from outside of Auckland and other parts of New Zealand were not considered. The aim of the study is to focus on stadium members who are most likely to see the Eden Park sponsor advertising on non-event days and those who are effected by events at Eden Park regardless of whether they're attending the event or not. The image below displays the road closures in place during an All Blacks rugby game event which affects the locals surrounding the stadium thus causing these events to become more expensive to run at the Eden Park location.



(Eden Park, 2018).

The goal is to examine the influence of Eden Park stadium sponsorship on the consumer behaviour and purchasing habits of the stadium members. The main research question for this study is;

“How does Eden Park’s sponsorship influence the consumer behaviour of its most loyal and local fanbase?”.

This study seeks to contribute knowledge to the discipline of sport marketing and offering valuable information to the Eden Park Trust commercial team and the sponsors involved.

The key objectives of this study are:

1. To systematically explore the literature and examples of how stadium sponsorship has been used to target consumer behaviour habits amongst loyal and local fans (those with high levels of attachment and allegiance).
2. To critically evaluate existing levels of connection between Eden Park most loyal and local members and Eden Park's current partners, including which of the current partners are perceived to best 'fit' with the stadium's brand and the members existing consumer behaviour habits.
3. To assess and analyze if an increased exposure to the Eden Park's commercial partners is perceived likely to result in a change in the consumer behaviour habits of stadium members (short and long-term).
4. To make strategic recommendations based on the findings of two focus groups, involving some of Eden Parks most loyal and local supporter groups.

1.2. Eden Park: New Zealand's National Stadium

Eden Park is the largest sport stadium in New Zealand located in Auckland between the suburbs of Mount Eden and Kingsland (Eden Park Trust, 2017). Eden Park has become a popular and globally renowned site that sees over half a million local and international fans every year and shows continuous growth in adopting and creating new sporting events every



year. (Eden Park Trust, 2017). The Eden Park Trust (EPT) was established under the Eden Park Trust Act 1955 as a charitable trust and registered under the Charities Act 2005 (Eden Park Trust, 2017). Members of Eden Park are entitled to exclusive partner offers, non-match day room hire discounts, free stadium tours, discounted merchandise and promotional giveaways. They also get private entry, reserved seating in exclusive member only areas, premium food and beverage options in members only lounges, annual carpark options, additional guest passes available for most games (subject to availability), priority purchase for all events not included in your membership and reciprocal arrangements with other sporting venues including Westpac Stadium, Forsyth Barr Stadium, ANZ Stadium and The Gabba. Like many stadia, Eden Park has various membership packages that can be renewed annually for the perks of attending all games that the stadium has a relationship with which includes Auckland Cricket and the New Zealand Rugby Union. These members have been identified as the most loyal and localized fans of the stadium by the Eden Park commercial team.

(Google Images, 2018).

1.3. Dissertation Structure

The dissertation contains five chapters, each of which begins with an introduction and ends with a summary. The aim of this opening chapter is to set the scene and provide the platform for all that follows. Chapter Two, the literature review, offers an evaluation of the existing academic research on consumer behaviour and sport sponsorship, including the surprisingly small amount of existing information on stadium sponsorship. Chapter Three, the method/methodology, explains the researcher's methodology and the processes involved in conducting three focus groups and the data analysis process. Chapter Four discusses the findings to emerge from the focus groups, linking the thoughts of the stadium members back to the academic literature presented in Chapter Two. The final chapter offers a conclusion and a number of recommendations for the Eden Park management team.

1.4. Chapter Summary

This case study hopes to help the Eden Park Trust and its senior management team as well as the stadium's current sponsors. The aim is to determine whether the current exchange relationships between The Eden Park Trust and the sponsors have been beneficial. The

outcomes of this study should contribute to existing knowledge in the sport sponsorship discipline, identifying and exploring the effects of stadium sponsorship on buyer behaviour habits. The focus groups will allow the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of how fans levels of attachment and allegiance to Eden Park are influenced by the stadium's sponsorship activity. Additionally, this study will produce a body of work that could later be replicated at, if not applied to, other sports stadiums and their consumers/members. The following chapter will critically analyze and report the existing literature supporting the foundation of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

Sport sponsorship is widely viewed as an increasingly effective marketing communication tool and channel (Copeland, Frisby and McCarville, 1996; Pappu and Cornwell, 2014; Seguin, Teed and O'Reilly, 2005). Chadwick and Thwaites (2004) revealed that "...worldwide sponsorship expenditure for 2001 was estimated at \$24.6 billion, with an annual expenditure increase of 9.6% for the same year" (p.39). Clearly, these numbers would have increased dramatically over the past two decades and, with the rise of costs in obtaining and sustaining sponsorship deals, it is essential that researchers continually explore the effects of sponsorship in sport, indicating whether the value of sponsorship is worth the rise in sponsorship spending for sporting organisations (Speed and Thompson, 2000).

The significance of sponsorship as a form of marketing communication has grown dramatically from the 1980's making it an important aspect of sport marketing (Irwin, Lachowetz, Comwell and Clark, 2003; Meenaghan, 2001). Olkkonen, Tikkanen and Alajoutsijärvi, 2000) state that "... the phenomenon of sponsorship has broadened substantially and is no longer the relatively limited set of activities it was in late 1960's and

early 1970's" (p.12). According to Pappu and Cornwell (2014) the effectiveness of sponsorship as a marketing communication tool has demonstrated profitable effects that provides support, stability and success for the organisation. However, due to the positive outcomes of gaining sport sponsorship it has in turn become an expensive tool to maintain (Crompton, 2004; Madrigal, 2000). Evidentially, as the sport industry continues to expand their marketing communication strategies the scale of investment into sport sponsorship will continue to increase (Biscaia, Correia, Rosaldo, Ross and Maraco, 2013; Ko, Kim, Claussen and Kim, 2008; Lardinoit and Derbaix, 2001; Shaw and McDonald, 2006).

It is important to research the effects of sponsorship awareness and spurs on consumer attitudes/perceptions as they are fundamental components in producing favorable consumer responses (Meenaghan, 2001; Speed and Thompson, 2000). Despite an increase in the body of knowledge regarding consumer attitudes and perceptions in marketing communications (Brown, Pope and Voges, 2003; Ko et al., 2008; Speed and Thompson, 2000), however, sports stadium sponsorship awareness and consumer perception has seldom been researched and examined in academic literature. This literature review will focus on consumer behaviour in connection to sponsorship in sport with the intention of revealing the significance of analyzing stadium sponsorship influences on consumer behaviours. The literature review will be split into sections that address the literature on consumer behaviour, sponsorship awareness, the significance of sponsorship in sport and sport stadiums/facilities.

2.2. Consumer behaviour

Consumer behaviour is significant in all sport sponsorship-related research. Sport consumers are known to publicly showcase their brand and team loyalty, which research would suggest is transferrable to the associated sponsors (Brown, 2000; Carlson, Donovan and Cumiskey, 2009; Hogg and Turner, 1985). Consumer behaviour is defined as a group of individuals or organisations and all activities associated with making purchase decisions, the use and disposal of goods and services and the consumers mental, behavioural and emotional responses that precede or follow these activities (Park and Kim, 2003). In any online social media channel, knowing your target audience is extremely vital, but the most crucial area of success is recognizing the consumer behaviour of your target audience to fulfil the best outcomes possible (Evans, 2012; Ko et al., 2008). In order to produce a strong brand that will get attention from a mass audience, the brand must incorporate a clear identity and compelling personality. This is because clients often attain relationships with sponsors that

are like starting a relationship with people, including their personality traits (Carlson et al., 2009; Olkkonen et al., 2000).

Social identity theory can be used to help explain/understand the aspects of brand personality and how to succeed in this area (Brown, 2000). From a social identity theory standpoint, people may relate brand characteristics with positive aspirational goals with consumers having a desire to increase their own self-esteem (Hogg and Turner, 1985). This prompts individual consumers to select groups that possess attractive characteristics such as being viewed as prestigious and distinctive (Brown, 2000; Hogg and Turner, 1985; Olkkonen et al., 2000). Due to this kind of consumer behaviour a consumer may connect with the team to allocate prestige to their personal self-image this in turn produces a personal relationship with the brand (Carlson et al., 2009; Olkkonen et al., 2000). Consumers generally transfer positive traits back onto themselves when they feel gravitated towards an entity that is prestigious/or distinctive however the question is how these entities gain a level of prestige/distinctiveness among their consumer market (Carlson et al., 2009; Funk and James, 2006; Hogg and Turner, 1985; Rani, 2014).

Biscaia et al (2013) describes the association between consumer buying behaviour and sport sponsorship by revealing that "...recent empirical studies have examined the role of sport fans psychological attachment to their teams on pivotal reactions to the sponsors image, attraction and awareness, and their attitude toward the sponsor and purchase intention" (p.288). Sponsor image can be defined as the summation of beliefs, attitudes and impressions that sport fans sustain towards the sponsor organisation (Filo, Funk and O'Brien, 2010). It is essential that sponsors see the potential to develop their sponsor image by association with a cause as this is also a consequence in regard to its branding (Filo et al., 2010; McDonald, 1991; Pappu and Cornwell, 2014). Sport generates a significant amount of excitement and emotional attachments among its fans, thus showcasing the strengths of influencing buyer behaviours and purchase intentions (Copeland et al., 1996; Papadimitriou, Apostolopoulou and Dounis, 2008; Pappu and Cornwell, 2014).

Purchase intentions have a direct effect on consumer intentions that results whether a consumer purchases a product or decides against purchasing a service or product from a sport sponsor (Carlson et al., 2009; Madrigal, 2000). Consumers are highly likely to trust a company if they believe that the organisation will fulfill their needs and desires, thus the

consumer develops a strong commitment to the company (Park and Kim, 2003; Rani, 2014). Ultimately, a corporate sponsor seeking involvement within the sport industry is aware of the benefits of associating with loyal consumers and transferring consumers would be the catalyst for generating a strong interest in obtaining a lucrative and mutually beneficial sport sponsorship deal (Funk and James, 2006; Ko et al., 2008; Madrigal, 2000). To date, many studies have focused on sponsorship exposure, which generates insight into sponsorship awareness, but avoids the sole focus of awareness and consumer attitude/perception towards a sponsor (Crompton, 2004; Speed and Thompson, 2000). The literature on attitudes and beliefs concludes that sport consumers/fans generally feel skeptical of sponsorship organisations and their intentions (Biscaia et al., 2013; Funk and James, 2006). Sport consumers attempt to decipher whether sponsors choose to involve themselves purely for financial/branding reasons or to assist sports in a positive way (Irwin et al., 2003; Lardinoit and Quester, 2001). However, existing literature states when sport consumers beliefs are positive towards the sponsor organisation, the advantageous outcomes such as transferring their passions from sport to sponsor is highly likely (Biscaia et al., 2013; Funk and James, 2006; Irwin et al., 2003; Madrigal, 2001).

2.3. Sponsorship awareness

Although many sport marketing researchers have focused on different areas of sponsorship, studies that focus solely on stadium sponsorship awareness and the effects on a small, but loyal, target audience remain rare (Meenaghan, 2001; Ko et al., 2008; Speed and Thompson, 2000). To date, the majority of studies that have looked at sponsorship awareness and its effects on consumer behaviour have also measured consumer's perceptions around the sponsorships value (Meenaghan, 2001; Shaw and McDonald, 2006). The existing academic literature provides answers as to whether the marketing and promotional campaigns within sport organisations are generating successful results or if these campaigns are proving to be fruitless (Meenaghan, 2001; Ko et al., 2008). This is significant for sponsors that do not wish to be dropped from supporting sports organisations due to a lack of shared values (Brown et al., 2003; Meenaghan, 2001; Shaw and McDonald, 2006; Speed and Thompson, 2000). Ko et al (2008) suggest that consumer involvement is essential for the generation of positive effects on sponsorship awareness. Ko et al (2008) also state that consumers were more likely to acquire products and services from sponsors that targeted sport consumers/fans who share

a unique identity. Their findings suggest that it is in the best interests of sport marketers and managers to support more research into sponsorship awareness.

Consumers who are acquainted with an organisations product or service may already possess well-formed attitudes towards the company. Thus, the influence of sponsor marketing communications through advertising messages would be minimal in comparison to an unacquainted company/brand (Biscaia et al., 2013; Lardinoit and Quester, 2001; Rani, 2014). Stipp (1998) conducted a study based on sport sponsorship in the Olympics and stated that a significant portion of consumers obtained positive attitudes towards Olympic sponsors. These positive attitudes were attributed to the consumers belief that the Olympic sponsors offer financial support that assists in the athletes training. The information indicates that consumers share a belief that displays the sponsors backing for worthwhile causes, thus clearly affecting the consumer attitude in a positive manner, resulting in the desired outcome and increase of sponsor awareness. Several year later, Meenaghan (2001) shared the same judgements on sponsor awareness, noting that the importance of having an association with a sports event was regarded as a fundamental aspect in the measurement of sponsorship success and effectiveness.

The literature would also suggest that it is important to consider consumer beliefs and attitudes when measuring the effects and benefits of sport sponsorship, especially that designed specifically to enhance marketing communications within the sponsorship organisation (Carlson et al., 2009; Irwin, Lachowetz, Comwell, and Clark, 2003; Lardinoit and Quester, 2001). Studies that have focused on consumer attitudes and beliefs have signified that favorable and positive attitudes were presented by consumers who shared a strong awareness level of the associated sponsors (Lardinoit and Quester, 2001; Roy and Cornwell, 2003). Madrigal (2000), for example, suggests that sponsor organisations that financially support sporting organisations achieves a psychological group affection that is likely to occur at a high level especially if there is members support.

Lardinoit and Quester (2001) also urges corporate sponsors to take interest in gaining sponsorship agreements with sport organisations (due to the proven beneficial aspects of obtaining a sport sponsee and sponsor relationship). According to Irwin et al (2003) and Madrigal (2000), beliefs and attitude are related to one another for the reason that the two are influenced by each other. An example of this influential relationship is when one person

believes that the cause for lower ticket prices is associated with the reduction of operating costs as a direct effect from sponsorship (Ko et al., 2008; Madrigal, 2000; Park and Kim, 2003). At the same time, however, another sport consumer may be skeptical of a corporate sponsorship deal, believing that it is purely a means of generating more revenue (Speed and Thompson, 2000).

This belief links sponsorship (attitude object) with an advantageous evaluation (Lardinoit and Quester, 2001; Madrigal, 2000; Rani, 2014). As stated by Madrigal (2000) "...beliefs play a central role in attitude theory because they provide the groundwork upon which attitudes are constructed". This indicates that when a consumer has a particular attitude towards a product or service they will often attach their beliefs that have been influenced by prior beliefs and experiences (Chiou, 1998; Irwin et al., 2003; Madrigal, 2000; Park and Kim, 2003).

A vital aspect of measuring sponsorship awareness is identifying the marketing communication effects. It is also important to note that evaluating the effects is highly dependent on the consumers level of engagement with the sponsors activity/stimulus (Biscaia et al., 2013; Lardinoit and Derbaix, 2001; Meenaghan, 2001). Biscaia et al (2013) state that consumer involvement is vital to sponsorship awareness as it indicates whether consumers place personal importance over their chosen teams/sports sponsor directory.

Furthermore, companies investing in sponsorship are expecting to see sport consumers transfer the same positive perceptions of the sponsorship brand as they have towards their favorite sport/team (Biscaia et al., 2013; Ko et al., 2008; Lardinoit and Derbaix, 2001). Biscaia et al (2013) maintains importance is placed on a potential or current sponsor in sport since consumers have developed an attachment to that specific team or sport. Measuring sponsorship awareness is not a sufficient condition to predict promotional and marketing success. However, it is still a necessary aspect of measuring sponsorship as it provides assistance in creating success (Speed and Thompson, 2000).

The extent to which a sponsor can generate a positive or negative consumer response is heavily influenced by the level of prior knowledge clearly indicating the significance of researching sponsorship awareness (Irwin et al., 2003; Speed and Thompson, 2000). According to Ko et al (2008), there is a stronger effect on sponsorship awareness if a sponsor has been involved in the sport industry or a sport event. Attributes of measuring sponsorship

awareness in the sport industry are sponsorship stimuli's such as flags, logos, billboards (Irwin et al., 2003; Speed and Thompson, 2000). These sponsorship stimuli are displayed at live sporting functions where there is a higher chance of affecting consumer buying behaviour (Koo, Quarterman and Flynn, 2006; Lardinoit and Derbaix, 2001).

This statement supports the idea that there is a stronger effect on sponsor awareness when sport fans/consumers are subjected to sponsor stimuli in a live sporting environment. In the sport industry, it is widely known that measuring consumer behaviour is essential to a sport organisations brand success. Although many studies have researched this area, there remains an ever-growing demand for new ideas and new measurement tools that accurately capture how effective sponsorship is in terms of influencing the consumer behaviour of loyal sport fans (Funk and James, 2006; Park and Kim, 2003; Rani, 2014). It is therefore essential to explore the sub-categories of consumer behaviour which focus on the behavioural aspects such as emotional and mental responses and their effects on consumer buying behaviour (Park and Kim, 2003; Rani, 2014).

Meenaghan (2001) reports that marketing communication outlets such as promotional activities and advertising campaigns struggle to influence consumers without facing extreme clutter and advertisement overkill that are intended for their customers. However, sponsor organisations manage to avoid these issues by identifying target markets and distinct audiences using information such as demographics and consumer lifestyles which gives an in-depth insight into consumer behaviours (Ko et al., 2008; Park and Kim, 2003; Roy and Cornwell, 2003).

Associating with a sport event or organisation increases the possibility of higher levels of consumer interest and attention for potential sponsors (Madrigal, 2000; Rani, 2014; Roy and Cornwell, 2003). Linking with sport organisations that are showcased as a good fit for the sponsor is reported as being of significant importance in terms of helping a business accomplish their goals around the transferring of a sport consumer's brand loyalty (Funk and James, 2006; Hogg and Turner, 1985; Lardinoit and Quester, 2001; Roy and Cornwell, 2003). Organisations that decide to partner with sport entities do so in the hope/belief that their loyal sport fans will end up supporting their sponsors through association (Papadimitriou et al., 2008).

Papadimitriou et al (2008) and Seguin et al (2005) believe that the benefit of sponsors in sport is the emotional attachment that fans and consumers have towards their desired and beloved sport/team therefore emphasizing on the idea that sport has the most loyal consumers in the market. This is a major advantage for the sponsors involved. The psychological attachment by sport fans and consumers insinuates that there are strong bonds of loyalty between the organisations consumers consequently proving to be an extremely attractive aspect to a potential sponsee (Cousens, Babiak and Bradish, 2006; Greenhalgh and Greenwell, 2013; Papadimitriou et al., 2008; Sam, Batty and Dean, 2005).

2.4. Significance of sponsorship in sport

Sport sponsorship has gained a lot of popularity over time as it has shown that the image of an organisation can easily be affected and transferred through sponsorship (Seguin et al., 2005). This has reinforced the idea that sport organisations should focus more on strategic management to create beneficial gains and capitalize on areas that are already performing well (Dolphin, 2003; Wolfe et al., 1997). The significance of sponsorship in sport is clearly evident as many scholars now refer to sponsorship as a marketing tool that can penetrate effectively to a target audience whilst also creating awareness and producing higher profit margins (Abiodun, 2011). In addition to Abiodun's (2011) statement, sponsorship has goals of increasing goodwill among non-business advice groups (opinion formers) therefore promoting brand awareness and adding value to organisations (Cousens et al., 2006; Dolphin, 2003). Sponsorship in sport represents the exchange relationship between sport organisations and other corporations (Copeland et al., 1996). It is evident that sponsorship funding in sport has grown continuously over the years thus affecting the rise in costs regarding the renewals of sport sponsorship deals (Cornwell, Pruitt and Van Ness, 2001; Crompton, 2004; Meenaghan, 2001; Speed and Thompson, 2000). Certain sports obtain higher levels of interest and popularity amongst consumers and sponsors. It is necessary for all managers to elucidate the impact of sponsorship in their organisation/sport thus a fair conclusion can be made on its value (Cornwell et al., 2001; Shaw and McDonald, 2006; Speed and Thompson, 2000).

Most of relationships between sport organisations and sponsors are determined by principals of maximizing rewards and minimizing risks (Copeland et al., 1996; Dolphin, 2003). This safeguards the strength of the relationship and the "shared value" often desired by both

parties (Seguin et al., 2005). As noted earlier, sport sponsorship is also an example of sport marketing communication because it is described as a business that provides financial aid, services or resources to an organization in return for a selected arrangement of benefits for the sponsor (Crompton, 2004; Speed and Thompson, 2000).

This leads into the idea that sponsorship is a process of exchange, which is inherent within the notion of exchange theory (McCarville and Copeland, 1994). The identity of other actors may influence the value involved in an exchange process, thus symbolic resources such as goodwill are likely to be highly prized (Copeland, Frisby and McCarville, 1996; McCarville and Copeland, 1994). The exchange relationship highlights the significance of sponsorship in sport as the sponsor organisation desires a platform for higher levels of exposure for marketing purposes. In turn, the sport organisation needs funding to cover their operation expenses (Olkkonen et al., 2000; Seguin et al., 2005).

Sponsorship is often referred to as a strategic vehicle for driving and achieving relationship marketing objectives, marketing objectives, resource objectives and network objectives (Chadwick and Thwaites, 2004; Olkkonen et al., 2000; Papadimitriou et al., 2008). It is evident that creating strong relationships with not only the sport organisation but also its consumers is vital for a sponsor to succeed in the sport industry. Copeland et al (1996) states "... such attachment may render consumers more susceptible to product based messages and other marketing initiatives" (p.33). This reinforces the power of consumers and their ability to determine whether a sponsor is fit for their favorite sport/team. If successful and embraced by the consumers, then success in gaining consumer loyalty will occur.

The link between consumers and loyalty to their favorite team/sport has been identified in previous literature, hence placing a high significance on the role that sponsorship can have consumer reaction and awareness (Irwin et al., 2003; Ko et al., 2008; Lardinoit and Derbaix, 2001; Speed and Thompson, 2000). Ideally, sponsors would relish in the possibility to gain passionate consumers through sporting channels as existing studies suggest that sport consumers are of the most loyal consumers in the market (Brown et al., 2003; Lardinoit and Derbaix, 2001; Meenaghan, 2001).

Clearly, the attachment and involvement within the sport industry naturally triggers consumers to feel they are doing a positive service to their sport/team if they purchase sponsor goods producing an awareness of the sponsors products and services (Biscaia et al.,

2013; Crompton, 2004; Ko et al., 2008; Shaw and McDonald, 2006). Furthermore, an advantage such as emotional attachment could prove to be a lucrative benefit. This indicates that the association between sport organisations and potential sponsors could assist in both promoting their respective products and services as well as increase funding for sport (Papadimitriou et al., 2008; Seguin et al., 2005; Wolfe et al., 1997).

The significance of sponsorship in sport is also identified through network objectives where sponsors use strategy and work to form relationships with other related organisations for instance media corporations (Chadwick and Thwaites, 2004; Dolphin, 2003; Olkkonen et al., 2000). Conversely, Chadwick and Thwaites (2004) and Dolphin (2003) argue that many sponsors are lacking in achieving their network objectives due to corporations not recognizing that these arrangements have proven to be challenging to manage and very complex. Fundamentally, a relationship between sponsorship and sport organisations is a business to business one that is affected by factors such as trust, commitment and satisfaction (Chadwick and Thwaites, 2004; Farrelly and Quester, 2005; Olkkonen et al., 2000). There are many different aspects of the relationship which is why it is very important to maintain a strong, mutually beneficial relationship between sponsor and sport organisation. These aspects often include shared objectives, shared stakeholders (sponsor, sport entity, fans, media, consumers) and shared views of what constitutes sponsorship value (Farrelly and Quester, 2005; Olkkonen et al., 2000).

2.5. Sport Stadiums/Facilities

As captured in the previous three sections, there is a plethora of existing literature that suggests that there are many areas of the sports industry where sponsorship can prove its significance and benefits (Chadwick and Thwaites, 2004; Olkkonen et al., 2000; Seguin et al., 2005). These represent funding, building brand awareness (for both parties), driving excitement around products and services, increasing sales, expanding markets and targeting new audiences (Abiodun, 2011; Dolphin, 2003; Papadimitriou et al., 2008; Sam et al., 2005; Seguin et al., 2005).

The topic of sports facilities and stadium sponsorship, however, has not received that much attention over the past two decades. Those who have explored the subject, did so a long time ago, and focused on areas such as stadium advertising and factors affecting attendance (Hansen and Gauthier, 1989, Stotlar and Johnson, 1989; Turley and Shannon, 2000).

According to Stotlar and Johnson (1989), for example, sport spectators who attend live sport events are highly likely to earn a good income, higher education and frequently attend sport fixtures (elements that are highly attractive to advertisers).

Stotlar and Johnson (1989) also found that majority of spectators recognized the advertisements at the NCAA Division I football and basketball programs with approximately 7 out of 10 correctly identified. Wakefield and Sloan (1995) claimed that professional team administrators have recognized the significance of marketing the stadium experience to gain higher attendance numbers, supporting the notion that sport facilities are an ideal medium for products and services that appeal to the sport spectators (Stotlar and Johnson, 1989; Wakefield and Sloan, 1995).

Hill and Green (2000) examined the determinants of repeat attendance based on loyalty and involvement. It was reported that the spectators experience of the game needs to be understood to determine which characteristics of fanship affects their future attendance (Hansen and Gauthier, 1989; Hill and Green, 2000; Wakefield and Sloan, 1995). Turley and Shannon (2000) reported, however, that there is little evidence which suggests how people respond to advertisements in a sports arena. The conflicting ideas indicate that the advertisers and sport stadiums would benefit if more research was conducted on the effects of stadium advertisements/sponsorship on spectators (Hansen and Gauthier, 1989; Stotlar and Johnson, 1989; Turley and Shannon, 2000).

2.6. Chapter Summary

In conclusion, the topic of sport sponsorship has proven to be a popular area of sport marketing research, with a particular focus on consumer behaviour. The study of consumer markets helps sporting organisations and sponsor organisations determine the effectiveness of their marketing campaigns and brand presence. The literature presented within this chapter identifies that sport consumers are loyal consumers due to their commitment, attachment and allegiance to their favorite sports/teams (Biscaia et al., 2013; Ko et al., 2008; Madrigal, 2000). Their proven loyalty offers a very attractive incentive to a potential sponsor organisation. The literature also supports the overall idea that the relationship between sponsor and sponsee is mutually beneficial especially if all elements of the marketing mix and activities are utilized appropriately (Biscaia et al., 2013; Funk and James, 2006; Koo et al., 2006; Madrigal, 2000; Seguin et al., 2005). It is therefore imperative that scholars see

researching sponsorship awareness as an important research area as this will help discover the influence on consumers and their attitudes/perceptions of sponsor services and products (Biscaia et al., 2013; Dees, Bennett, and Villegas, 2008; Meenaghan, 2001; Speed and Thompson, 2000).

The purpose of this chapter was to review a small sample of the existing literature deemed relevant to the aim of this study. The chapter has explored consumer behaviour, sponsorship awareness and the significance of sport sponsorship from different lenses published over 25 years (1989-present). Existing literature on sport stadiums/facilities proved to be sparse in the areas of sponsorship and its effects on consumer behaviour hence the importance of examining these areas. The findings support the researcher's decision to explore sports stadium sponsorship, an area where there would still appear to be a gap that needs filling. The following chapter presents the research design, methods and methodology utilized to gather data collection.

Chapter 3: Method/Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the research structure for the study. It is separated into two sections, methodology and research design. The methodology section primarily focuses on the research approaches involved in the study, which showcases the researchers own philosophical belief on how knowledge is produced. It also identifies the rationale behind employing a case study approach. The research design section provides a description of how the qualitative data collection procedures were carried out and completed, indicating how participants were targeted and recruited to participate in focus group sessions. This section concludes with an explanation of the data analysis methods and how qualitative analysis techniques such as thematic analysis was utilized to assist in producing results that helps answer the research question.

3.1. Methodology

Myers (2009) believes that the conceptual lens which a person views the world through influences the way he or she obtains knowledge. With that in mind, the knowledge obtained is substantially influenced by our own beliefs. The ontological and epistemological positioning of the researcher determines their conceptual lens which in turn establishes the methods and constructs used to conduct research and produce knowledge (Grant and

Giddings, 2002; Myers, 2009). According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), a paradigm may be regarded as a collection of basic beliefs that highlights the researcher's principles (representing a worldview for its holder). The question that best represents ontology is "what is reality". The ontological aspect represents the idea that assuming the world is "real", what can be known about it is "how things really work" and "how things really are" (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Krauss, 2005; Myers, 2009). The researcher's ontological position for this study is social constructionism, and based on the belief that reality is both formed and informed by their interaction with other people (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Krauss, 2005; Scotland, 2012).

Krauss (2005) states that epistemology is closely related to ontology and methodology. Ontology discusses the philosophy of reality, while epistemology focuses on how we come to know reality. According to Guba and Lincoln (1994) and Krauss (2005) the questions that best represents epistemology are; what is the relationship between the knower and what is known, how do we know what we know and what counts as knowledge? The researcher's epistemological position for this study is interpretivism (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Guba and Lincoln (1994) report that a constructivist's reality must be interpreted with the aim of uncovering the underlying meaning of events and activities. This view represents knowledge that is established through the interpretation of meanings extracted from the study of qualitative data (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Krauss, 2005; Myers, 2009; Scotland, 2012).

The study was completed through the adoption of a case study methodology. According to Zainal (2007), a case study approach enables the researcher to investigate and interpret data within a specific context which generally involves a small number of individuals as the subjects of the research. Zainal (2007) explains that a case study aims to explore a phenomenon within the data that is a point of interest for the researcher. A researcher conducting a case study will ask questions that are designed to open the door for further analysis regarding the phenomenon studied (Scotland, 2012; Zainal, 2007). The main advantages of conducting a case study was heavily related to the fact that qualitative case studies assist in exploring and explaining complex data in a real-life environment, which may not be easily done through experimental and survey research (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Zainal, 2007). The qualitative approach allowed the researcher to focus on an interpretive interaction, rather than assuming real life can be measured by numbers (Grant and Giddings, 2002; Gratton and Jones, 2010).

The researcher adopted a case study approach to gather qualitative data from Eden Park members within three 60-minute focus group sessions. The aim of conducting a case study was to gather detailed contextual analyses of the influence of stadium sponsorship on stadium members and their consumer buying behaviour. Gratton and Jones (2010) alluded to the fact that sport is a social phenomenon, that is immersed with participating consumers that have been subjected to a number of external influences that have affected consumer behaviour, feelings and emotions. Furthermore, Gratton and Jones (2010) identify that sport is an area that is too intricate and multifaceted to be measured solely by quantitative methods. The following section focuses on the research design of this study, clarifying details around the qualitative research methods utilized, participant recruitment and data collection methods.

3.3. Research Design

The study employed a qualitative approach, acknowledging the inclusion of the participant's different beliefs, intentions and meanings as well as the cultural, social, and physical factors that influence causal relationships (Mertens, 2014). Having obtained the necessary ethical approval, the study used a qualitative approach to gather data from Eden Park members within three 60-minute focus group sessions. This approach was utilized because qualitative analysis combines abstract concepts with empirical evidence in the form of words to justify theories and interpretations (Gratton and Jones, 2010; Myers, 2009). Focus groups were viewed as the most appropriate approach to achieve the aim of generating discussions and to explore disparate views. The focus group approach is excellent for exploratory topics, acting as a mechanism for helping the participants produce and share ideas with the possibility of illuminating new topics and drawing out latent issues (Grant and Giddings, 2002).

The researcher's objectives did not align with the use of surveys or multiple in-depth interviews due to the prime focus being placed upon individual thoughts and reactions in the social context of the experience (Grant and Giddings, 2002). Surveys would not have allowed the researcher to get the rich quality data sought, and one-on-one structured or semi-structured interviews would have eliminated the option of allowing the participant to share their thoughts with (in front of) other members of different ages, gender and social background. Focus groups also allowed the researcher to take on a facilitation role, which enabled her to sit back and observe/record multiple participants discussing the research questions with each other. The use of small focus groups allowed for the gathering of common themes and trends within the participant conversations and social interactions. All

three 60-minute focus groups were conducted on the same day due to time constraints and a lack of suitable venue accessibility.

The study targeted the stadium's most loyal and locally-based members (i.e. members living within the surrounding suburbs who had continually renewed their membership over the past decade). The rationale behind this was the lack of existing research on relationship between stadium sponsors and stadium consumers who have memberships with stadiums (as opposed to the tenants/teams who play within the venue). The decision to build the case study around Eden Park stadium was made out of convenience and ease of access (it is not only the largest stadium in the researcher's home city, but also the country). It has recently started to promote itself as being New Zealand's national stadium. The decision to focus on the stadium's members, rather than the general public, was based on the fact that these were the fans who had an attachment and allegiance to the venue, rather than general awareness or attraction (Funk and James, 2006). The aim was to gather the opinions of loyal fans who had invested time and money into the facility, ensuring that participants had some knowledge of the stadium, and experience of events that had been hosted over the past decade. As noted earlier, the participants were selected based on how long they had been an Eden Park member and on their records of attendance.

To assist with the purposive sampling approach adopted, the researcher's first point of call was a meeting with the Stadium's Commercial Manager, who agreed to support the study in return for gaining access to the findings and recommendations upon its completion. The researcher was introduced to the stadium's memberships manager, having established that the members being targeted were more likely to respond to someone with whom they have already developed a relationship. An information sheet was attached to an introductory email invitation sent to everyone on the Eden Park memberships database (Appendix A). The email received thirty responses within the following five days, indicating a genuine interest in participating in the study. The researcher sent a follow up email to those deemed loyal and local enough (Mount Eden, Sandringham and Kingsland) to qualify for this case study, providing more details regarding the times, duration and location of the focus group sessions. The researcher's aim was to target a small number of participants who had routinely renewed their membership over the past decade, which shows loyalty through their willingness to invest in the stadium's membership program.

The participants were asked to either scan a signed copy of the study's consent form at least 48 hours prior to the focus group sessions (Appendix B) or to bring a signed copy with them to their focus group. The focus groups were conducted in a 10-person capacity corporate box inside the stadium. The participants were advised via email of the location and asked to arrive 15 minutes prior to their session times. The decision to use the stadium for the three focus groups ensured that the participants were all familiar and comfortable with their surroundings, as opposed to finding an alternative location (i.e. the university campus). The room chosen was in a different stand to that which houses the Eden Park management and marketing team, ensuring that the participants could enter and exit the venue without being seen by those responsible for the stadium's sponsorship or membership strategy. This was a deliberate move to help protect the identity of the participants, ensuring they felt safe to share their true feelings without fear of consequence (i.e. being identified within the findings). The room was also chosen to ensure that the participants were not able to see any of the sponsor's logos visible inside the stadium. The researcher was not able to prevent them seeing the sponsors who have paid to have outward facing signage.

A number of different days and dates were provided to the participants, with a Thursday lunchtime proving to be the most convenient day/time of the week to fit in with their individual schedules. Each participant was given the option of attending one of three focus groups, all of which took place on the same day. The times offered were 9.30am-10.30am, 11.30am-12.30pm and 1pm-2pm. The possibility of running multiple focus groups across multiple days was dismissed once the researcher had secured enough participants to fill three sessions across one day. Despite several participants opting to pull out at the last minute, plus a couple of unexpected no-shows, the option of trying to find another time and place to run more sessions was dismissed once the researcher had conducted the first three sessions and noted some obvious signs of data saturation emerging from the conversations recorded (Grant and Giddings, 2002; Gratton and Jones, 2010).

Twelve members participated in the three focus groups, all of whom were asked to discuss the study's three main research questions. Refreshments were offered throughout the sessions to create a relaxed environment and for the participants to treat this as an open discussion rather than an interview scenario. The participants granted the researcher permission to record the group's conversations through a recording device downloaded as a smartphone app with a high level of storage. Two smartphones were used to record the focus groups

discussions to ensure a backup copy was created if a recording error/failure occurred. The participants were briefed on how the study would be conducted and what the researcher's role will be. Each participant had a copy of the questions to refer to throughout the session if required. These questions were:

1. Which of the Eden Park's current partners (principal partner, icon partners, partners) do you believe "fits" the stadium best?
2. Are you able to explain the difference between the four different partnership portfolios?
3. How would you describe your current connection, both personal and professional, with the product/services offered by the partners of Eden Park?
4. How likely are you to change your current buying behaviour habits based on the advertising encountered during visits to – or as you pass by -Eden Park?
5. Do you think Eden Parks current approach is likely to generate increased profits for their partners?
6. How likely are you or your fellow members to recommend Eden Park's partners to others within your personal and professional networks?

Question 1 and 2 was designed with the intent to analyze how much knowledge the stadium members have on the Eden Park partners and what their beliefs are on the partner that fits the stadium best. Existing studies by Koo et al (2006) have stated the importance of analyzing the sponsor fit on organisations hence the desire to identify this aspect with the Eden Park stadium members. Question 3 and 4 focused on the connection and relation to the stadium members consumer behavior towards the commercial partners. These questions would help identify if there is an attachment or allegiance to the stadium. Question 5 and 6 were created to help generate discussions regarding the members opinions and beliefs on the current operations of the Eden Park stadium and if this was likely to affect their decision to recommend the stadium partners to their personal and professional networks. These questions would in turn help put forward recommendations to the Eden Park commercial team based off the findings of the research involving their most loyal and localized members.

Each participant was given a number (e.g. Participant 1, Participant 2 etc.) after the completion of each session, ensuring the researcher abided by the plan presented within the study's ethical approval application. The participants were also given an option to receive a copy of the transcriptions to assure the members that they were not identifiable and that no

information had been tampered with or taken out of context. The recordings made during the focus group sessions were transcribed verbatim within twelve days. The researcher read the completed transcripts whilst listening to the audio recording at the same time to ensure accuracy.

Thematic analysis is a common and well recognized qualitative data analysis procedure and was used to extract and collate themes from the qualitative data gathered within the three focus group sessions as it (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Myers, 2009). Braun and Clarke (2006) state that thematic analysis is an approach that is straight forward and easy to manage therefore it is ideally suited to researchers who are in the beginning stages of learning qualitative analysis techniques. This study undertook a latent approach to thematic analysis, allowing the researcher to investigate underlying assumptions (Braun and Clarke, 2006). A latent approach is strongly associated with a constructionist paradigm.

6.4 Chapter Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to provide an overview of the study's structure, identifying the methodology and methods adopted within the case study design. In summary, this case study applied an interpretivist qualitative method approach to examine the influence of Eden Park's stadium sponsor's on the consumer behaviour habits of a small group of loyal and local members. The data collection and analysis stages produced rich, insightful and valuable results obtained through both the notes made within the room and the audio recordings. This data was then transcribed and coded by applying thematic analysis. The findings are presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 4 Findings and Discussion

4.1. Introduction

This chapter analyzes the findings gathered from three focus group sessions. The findings showcase the interesting comments made by the Eden Park members regarding their attitudes, behaviour and perceptions of the stadium sponsor's. It was evident that the participants had strong feelings and opinions on whether the stadium sponsors deserve their loyalty, which is essentially linked to the teams and sports played at the stadium. The findings have been categorized into three sub-sections, based on the three themes developed from the

thematic analyses. The findings also report and discuss the data relating to the three themes, linking back to the existing literature where appropriate. The three themes are: awareness, value proposition and incentives.

4.2. Sponsorship Awareness

The importance of sponsorship awareness was clearly identified in the early stages of all three focus group sessions. Sponsorship awareness is defined as the recognition of sponsors through stimuli's such as flags, logos and billboards (Irwin et al., 2003; Speed and Thompson, 2000). This theme essentially highlights the members awareness of sponsors efforts to be recognized, however, an important issue was on the difference and effects of having team sponsor's and stadium sponsor's override each other in specific sports fixtures held at the Eden Park stadium and how this affects consumer/member loyalty, attitude, beliefs and buying behaviour.

Existing academic literature has stated that sponsorship awareness often has positive effects on consumers and their sponsor recall (Koo et al., 2006). However, the findings from the Eden Park stadium members has contrasting results to existing academic literature, regarding whether sponsorship awareness is significant enough to influence consumer behaviour. Respondent C2 states:

“You will see something just catches you out at the corner of your eye, it flashes. But most of the time I take no notice of it.”

The participant confirmed their non-interested viewpoint of whether visual stimuli create an effect where their consumer behaviour is affected. Essentially, the participants typically have their eyes and minds focused on what is occurring on the field of play, whether it be rugby, football or cricket. This means that visual stimuli's may be recognized for a short time by the members, however, it is quickly forgotten about. This raises the question as to how influential visual stimuli are for the purpose of raising brand awareness? (Lardinoit and Quester, 2001; Madrigal, 2000).

The members were all asked to express their opinions on whether they feel the sponsors of Eden Park stadium are suited to the stadium and which sponsors best “fit” Eden Park stadium. This generated a lengthy discussion on the definition of “fit” and how this is interpreted by the members. According to Cornwell et al (2001), sport consumers are more likely to attach their investment and passion towards a sponsor if they feel it “fits” with their favorite team

or sport. Koo et al (2006) elaborated that if a consumer sponsor recall to a sponsor advertisement is positive then that highly suggests other consumers with the same reaction believe that sponsor is viewed as best fit to their team or sport. This statement was supported by Respondent A1 expressing that sponsors they could recognize in other sports or events were seen as best fit:

“They sponsor all sorts of other venues in Auckland like the netball, they’ve spread their wings. So that to me would be the best fit”

Determining whether the participants have a high level of sponsor awareness has been showcased through their recognition. This also suggests the importance behind a sponsor’s prominence and longevity in the sport industry. Respondent B1 added that the longevity of a sponsor and its reputation also affects sponsor awareness and sponsor fit claiming:

“ASB is the one I think of first. Because they’re prominent. They’re the ones with the ASB stand. They’ve been a major sponsor the longest. With all due respect to AA and the others, I only think of them when I happen to see their signs when I am here”

The strongest debate on sponsor awareness showcased the knowledge on the contrasting team and stadium sponsors. Respondent B3 stated his perception of the battle between team and stadium sponsors stating:

“From a sponsorship point of view, they’re being smashed by the team sponsors.”

Respondent B1 added that recognizing the team versus stadium sponsorship debacle was evident when it affected their game experience specifically on the refreshments offered to members. This kind of confusion was apparent among many participants throughout the focus group sessions. This suggests that the confusion also does not help stadium sponsors to create an impact on the members in hopes of gaining more consumers:

“The Eden Park stadium sponsor for beer is, DB I think, but the All Blacks are sponsored by Lion, and when they have a match here they have to take all the DB product down and stick all their own product there, or vice versa, and that’s how much notice I’ve taken of it”

The members repeatedly mentioned their desires for a heightened game experience. An interesting statement made by Respondent E1 highlighted an awareness of how each sponsor

is categorized by consumers and what the members respond best to is the “tactical” sponsors rather than “strategic”:

“It's tactical rather than strategic. With the pies and the beers and things. Whereas insurance and banks and things are strategic”.

Respondent D3 spoke on the ability for “strategic” sponsors to gain a larger consumer and member interest and how this could occur:

“And if Eden Park stadium advertise a sponsor, they should let us know about all these services and if you need a personal bank card please contact this number. There's lots of things for advertising that you could do to promote your services to a target market. The market is here.”

The participants believe they are aware of how the stadium classifies their sponsors. By claiming which sponsors fall into the tactical and strategic categories insinuates that the participants believe their knowledge is correct. Also, the participants portrayed their answers as if they were speaking on behalf of all stadium members. This type of behaviour represents the social identity theory which is defined as ...” a person’s knowledge that he or she belongs to a social category or group” (Stets and Burke, 2000, p.225). This suggests that the participants believe they share the same or similar attitudes, beliefs and values based on the intergroup categorization (Madrigal, 2000; Stets and Burke, 2000). This would explain the participants generalized answers to the research questions. The social comparison process has its consequences such as the selective application of attitudes and beliefs that will result in self enhancing outcomes for the self (Abrams and Hogg, 1990; Stets and Burke, 2000). It is clear the participants have a belief that their answers are reflective of how all the members feel. The participants have placed themselves in a social category that has separated them from the public thus the participants believe that they are at a disadvantage as a general opinion.

4.3. Value Proposition

The second theme is value proposition. Value proposition is defined as a feature intended to make an organisation/company or product attractive to its target consumers (Hyun Soon et al., 2014). It is a theme that can either pull in more members or push existing members to leave (Crompton, 2004). The emergence of this theme highlights the ways in which value proposition affects the members overall behaviour towards the stadium sponsors and the stadium itself. This had a direct effect on the stadium members attitudes, beliefs and their

buyer behaviour decisions. The idea of improving stadium membership value and on-site experience through sponsor-related value propositions was raised by many of the participants. The majority of the members shared the same opinion, regarding value proposition and how this can be improved through areas such as food and drinks on game day. It is highly likely that consumers will develop a relationship with sponsors if they believe the organisation will fulfil their needs and desires which in turn produces a strong commitments and relationships with the sponsor organisations (Madrigal, 2000; Park and Kim, 2003; Rani, 2014). Respondent B1 expressed:

“I'm more interested in coming to the park, being able to buy a beer without having to wait a half an hour or 45 minutes.”

It may seem simple; however, the members were quick to link the improvements to how sponsors could associate their brands in this area. Biscaia et al (2013) also supports this notion by reporting on the importance that is placed on potential or current sponsors in sport due consumers already possessing loyalty and attachment. It is evident that the participants are hoping to see sponsors involvement in enhancing their game day experience. This was again supported by a statement made by Respondent B1:

“As long as it was made quite clear what was happening. Say that, AA was trying to become a much bigger sponsor and they're going to make the beer prices \$2 dollars a bottle cheaper. The change and the improvement must be tied to that sponsor”.

The participants expressed that the sponsors must produce interactive experiences that would help change their perceptions of the stadium sponsors. Existing literature suggests that excitement and emotional attachments influences consumers into changing their buying behaviours (Copeland et al., 1996; Papadimitriou et al., 2008). The participants are seeking enhanced game day experiences and this is an area that the sponsors can target to help increase the value of membership. Respondent C1 also identified this issue and addressed it:

“To me, it's what you experience of the sponsor rather than, "Oh, there's the sign on the wall.”

The relationship between sponsors and consumers can be very positive or very detrimental based on how well the sponsors use their efforts to gain positive reactions from their sports consumers (Madrigal, 2000; Irwin et al., 2003). An example of this would be when one consumers believes that the cause of expensive sport tickets is associated with the reduction of operating costs as a direct effect from the sport organisations sponsors and their lack of

assistance (Ko et al., 2008; Madrigal, 2000; Park and Kim, 2003; Rani, 2014). The statements on Eden Park stadium linking with their stadium sponsors continued to expose the participant's candid feelings and socially constructed ideas on how this could further improve their attitudes towards not only the sponsors, but also their own membership with Eden Park stadium. Respondent C3 clarified her thoughts about the relationship between sponsor and consumers by stating:

“I think, probably, the next step for partners or sponsors, is to actually understand consumers and what they want to experience when they come to a stadium and how a partner can help the Eden Park or another stadium deliver that experience”

Existing literature has not focused on the relationship between sport sponsors and consumers, however, the participants are seeking for this type of relationship to develop. However, certain participant's perceptions suggest that Eden Park is lacking a connection with its own sponsors. Respondent A2 reiterated on the connection and relationship between sponsors and members explaining:

“You've got a database of customers. It's very hard to get it. And the more you have, the higher value you are. And I don't see the connection between the sponsor of Eden Park using that data.”

The participant continued to explain how this would help attach value to his sponsorship by declaring:

“If we got more offers from sponsors which valued you as a member, you can then go, “How come you got your car cheaper or you got a free service on your car?” That's because I'm a member of Eden Park. That's where I see the value of sponsorship in stadium coming in for us.”

The participants were quick to express their desire for gaining more value for their memberships and suggested the sponsors could help create value proposition. One of the key aspects to successful sponsorship is multiple stakeholders which are sport entities, media outlets and consumers (Farrelly and Quester, 2005; Olkkonen et al., 2000). In this case the participants insinuate that the sponsors have more value from this relationship than their current stakeholders (i.e. the consumers). Respondent A3 shared the same viewpoint on how this would affect her overall feelings towards sponsors and attach value to her membership with Eden Park. These statements overlap with the theme of incentives and clearly identify a means of enhancing the value of stadium membership:

“If there's some benefit that they can give to members that adds value to our membership then I'm interested in that.”

The participants stated their confusion as to whose responsibility it is to enhance sponsorship presence within the stadium and its members. However, Respondent C3 believed that Eden Park was responsible for all activities and relationships related to the members. Sport organisations and sponsors are responsible for managing the relationship effectively otherwise this can negatively affect the consumers (Chadwick and Thwaites, 2004p; Olkkonen et al., 2000; Seguin et al., 2005). The participant believed that Eden Park needs to showcase their appreciation for the members and not the sponsors themselves. The participant explained how this could be done by producing events that will add value to their memberships:

“I feel that it's Eden Park's responsibility to bring it to us. We're their clients, their customers. We're not ASB's customers. We're Eden Park's customers. They should be bringing it to us and say, "Hey. ASB are putting on a breakfast. All you guys in the north stand, come and-- it's on us.”

Irwin et al (2003) and Speed and Thompson (2000) both identified the level of prior knowledge is heavily related to the extent a sponsor can generate a positive or negative consumer response. Alluding to the fact that without sponsorship efforts to generate a consumer response there will be very little effort by consumers to change their attitudes, beliefs or behaviours towards them (Biscaia et al., 2013; Ko et al., 2008; Shaw and McDonald, 2006). The literature and findings support the idea that this would assist changing the members current behaviour, attitudes and beliefs towards the sponsors. However, Respondent C3 added that it is the stadiums duty to introduce the sponsors to their members and consumers because it is their property and their database:

“You remember the payback when you get a discount. These partners, one, I don't know about them. Two, they don't do anything for me. All I do is come to Eden Park Pay my fees. Enjoy the game.”

Conversely, other participants shared a different point of view which reflected a detached and distant relationship with Eden Park expressing their concerns on whether the membership holds enough value to renew for the following year. This is concerning for the Eden Park stadium as the participants shared that the price of memberships is not reflective of the all the benefits they could potentially receive. Respondent E1 admitted:

“Very often, at the beginning of the year, you think, is it worth the money to do so?”

Respondent A3 shared her opinion on the idea that sponsorship is purely set up for the benefit of the sponsors themselves and not to produce value for memberships:

“It's ASB staff and probably marketing staff who are actually getting the benefit, rather than getting business in return”

The participant's opinion supports the findings of by Abidoun (2011), Crompton (2004) and Speed and Thompson (2000), all of whom discussed that the significance of sponsorship is related to the possibility of using sponsorship as a marketing tool and for networking purposes. The idea that sponsors and their staff usually gain more from their relationship with Eden Park was shared by several participants. Obviously, this affected their attitudes towards the topic of stadium sponsors and how they felt this caused disadvantages for them and their memberships. Furthermore, this links with the members recurring statements on how sponsors staff are benefiting from the relationship with Eden Park stadium as opposed to the stadium members.

Respondent B2 explained that her love of sport was greater than her loyalty to the stadium, let alone the sponsors of the stadium:

“But I guess, yeah, I belong to Eden Park, not for Eden Park. I like to come and watch rugby and cricket. So, if this stadiums at the waterfront, I'd belong there.”

Whilst this statement suggests that this individual member does not have a personal relationship with Eden Park staff, other members choose to use the occasion as an opportunity to share their admiration for certain staff members. Although it may be difficult for Eden Park staff to develop a relationship with all its members, they may want to look at ways to establish a higher sense of value attached to their memberships.

As discussed within Chapter Two, the existing academic literature on sport sponsorship explains the reasons behind its significance and the potential benefits attached to obtaining a sport sponsorship deal. These include building and enhancing brand awareness, heightening excitement around products and services, increasing sales, expanding market and appealing to a new audience (Abiodun, 2011; Dolphin, 2003; Papadimitriou et al., 2008; Sam et al., 2005; Seguin et al., 2005). The participants's collective perception that the Stadium's sponsors were not utilizing the membership database was evident in a number of the

conversations observed. There was universal agreement that the sponsors were not fully embracing the benefits of gaining a sport sponsorship relationship, with many adopting a surprised, occasionally negative, tone of voice when sharing their personal viewpoint. Although, it could realistically be plausible that the sponsors are in fact already using the database, none of participants had been targeted, leading them to believe that no one else had either. Again, the tone of voice adopted by the participants suggests that they truly believed the stadium sponsors have access to the members database, but are choosing not to use it. Regardless of whether the members' perception is accurate or not, this is an area where the Eden Park commercial team may wish to revisit in order to satisfy their current members.

4.4. Incentives

An incentive is defined as a factor, whether in payment or concession, to stimulate a higher output or investment (Wang, Ghose and Ipeirotis, 2012). The lack of incentives from the Eden Park sponsors was discussed and debated in all three focus groups. Participants shared similar opinions on how sponsorship incentives and more effective utilizations of the stadium's membership database would increase their awareness and overall interest towards a sponsor. The participant's belief that there is a disconnect between the sponsors and the stadium members identifies a gap in the relationship exchange between the sponsors and the stadium. Removing or reducing this gap could potentially enhance sponsor reputation and increase consumer loyalty. This was supported by a statement made by Respondent A2:

“Why isn't ASB going to members saying; “You're a member of Eden Park, and because of that - we're a sponsor, we're going to give you a better rate.” Now I don't know why they don't do it because A, they're sponsoring; B, you've got a database full of dedicated customers.”

This was further emphasized by Respondent A3:

“They're not making the association and the link with, “Hey, we're Eden Park members,” to their customers. Unless you're here and seeing it, you wouldn't know they are sponsors.”

Whereas, Respondent B1 suggested:

“Well, maybe you could have a promotion along the lines of, “Are you considering signing up, insuring your car? Or we'll give you a ten percent discount on your premiums.”

There is an obvious interest in what the sponsors have to offer yet the participants believe the opportunity is not being presented. Changing the members buying behaviour and influencing their attitudes, beliefs and perceptions is difficult when the participants already have this mindset. Achieving a change in the consumer behaviour to benefit sponsors is an area that is lacking significantly due to the inability to create activities and incentives that ultimately drives consumer behaviour. This statement was supported by Respondent B2 by adding:

“The sponsorship here doesn't necessarily drive behaviour which is really what they want to do”

Madrigal (2001) believes that when consumers maintain an attitude towards an object they often attach their personal beliefs which may have been influenced by prior beliefs. The attitudes become severe and more polarized when there is a high similarity between current and prior beliefs (Lardinoit and Quester, 2001; Madrigal, 2001). It is vital that Eden Park works with its sponsors and future sponsors to ensure their members are satisfied with their memberships. The participants have showcased their attitudes, beliefs and perceptions that will carry over to the new sponsorship deals as they will attach their prior beliefs to their current ones therefore creating severe attitudes that will be difficult to change. In this case, the members will not feel a high sense of value is attached to their membership. Respondent B2 also shared on her attitude towards the lack of incentive and connection with the sponsors expressing:

“Don't expect me to sit in the stand, look at your sign, and go, "Oh, that's cool." And then, "Okay. I'm going to go home and change my bank because I've just looked at a sign." The connection is the offer. Hey, if you're a member, this is exclusive to you, which, then makes me feel good for belonging to Eden Park because I get special deals.”

Essentially, the key point that was reiterated by the members is that an interactive experience is more likely to create an interest towards sponsors rather than relying on visual stimuli such as billboards and signage. This contradicts existing literature by Irwin et al (2003) and Speed and Thompson (2000) who reported that visual stimuli generate a higher chance of influencing consumer behaviour. Although, it is important to note that the participants are stadium members who have held their membership for many years. The participants may not take notice of visual stimuli due to the longevity of their memberships that has caused them to become more critical of their stadium experiences. This means the participants are

concerned with enhancing experiences that directly affect their memberships. It is for this reason that visual stimuli may affect general consumers more than the members. Respondent B3 claimed:

“If I get a bit of experience from your sponsorship money, then I'll support your brand. But you really got to give me an opportunity to support. I'm not probably going to go test drive a Kia for the hell of it”

It is evident that the participants have a positive attitude towards sponsors that have created a memorable experience. This was further supported by Respondent A1 referring to a stadium sponsor adding:

“Barfoot and Thompson, I think is interesting too because they do that piece on the ground and it's not just a sponsorship thing it's actually an interactive activity. I think that's where it probably cuts through more to me as a consumer”

Abiodun (2011) claims that sponsorship is marketing tool that is used to apply their material to their target audiences in an effective manner. This is further reiterated by Copeland et al (1996) explaining that an effective form of marketing and business between sport organisations and sponsors is when both understand the nature of the connection being a “exchange relationship”. The social exchange theory is defined as “...voluntary actions of individuals that are motivated by the returns they are expected to bring and typically do in fact bring from others” (Cook, Chesire, Rice and Nakagawa, 2013, p.55). Seguin et al (2005) states that the key desire for both sporting organisation and sponsor is “shared value” and this is the result of the social exchange theory. Social exchange theory supports the participant’s statements regarding their attitudes, beliefs and perceptions that seem to be motivated by receiving returns/incentives. Without this return, the participants expressed their disappointment and shared there is no desire to change their current attitudes, beliefs and perceptions on the stadium sponsors.

The belief that Eden Park members have disposable income was referred to throughout the focus groups, with many the participants identifying themselves as the target audience for the sponsors. Respondent B3 explained:

“I don't know what I pay, I think four and a half, five thousand dollars this year for tickets. I've got money, but they're not approaching me. They're enticing us. Maybe we're not a big enough audience to target. Kia have just launched the Stinger,

right, which is a stonking great, 500 horsepower car. Now, if you go and have a look at the carpark on a Saturday night, there are RSs out there. There are AMG's. There are Falcon performance vehicles. All these members are driving 400 or 500 horsepower cars. Your target audience is sitting there”

This display of knowledge towards a sponsor indicates that some members are interested in their products/services and that sponsors could be missing out on gaining extra exposure through these channels. It seems that in this case, the exchange between Eden Park members and the sponsors is minimal. The argument is that sponsors provide funding for the events to occur and to help with maintaining the ground to create an atmosphere for the members and the public. The participants acknowledged the primary need for sponsorship is to maintain grounds and assist the stadium financially. However, the participants still believed that there is a need for a stronger relationship between stadium members and sponsors.

The lack of incentives provided to the members has generated a collection of strong opinions and attitudes towards the current stadium sponsors therefore resulting in little to no image transfer. The lack of connection between the members and the sponsor showcases that either the sponsors are comfortable with their arrangement of sponsoring a sporting stadium or there is not enough knowledge on the benefits of incentivizing the members of the Eden Park stadium. Papadimitriou et al (2008) explains that sponsors often associate and cement deals with sporting organisations due to the possibility of producing an image transfer. Image transfer is when loyal sport fans obtain a summation of impressions, attitudes and beliefs towards the sponsors based on their association with the sport code or team (Filo et al., 2010; Papadimitriou et al., 2008). However, literature does not specify on the factors that cause image transfer by the loyal sport fans yet the findings from this study exhibit the lack of image transfer with the Eden Park stadium consumers and the stadium sponsors. A higher level of interest towards this area would potentially assist the sponsors in developing their image as association with a cause has been proven to be a direct consequence regarding a sponsor's branding (Filo et al., 2010; McDonald, 1991; Pappu and Cornwell, 2014).

The participants knew that sponsorship is referred to as a strategic vehicle for propelling and attaining relationship marketing objectives hence the confusion on the lack of disconnect that has occurred with the sponsors of Eden Park stadium and their members (Chadwick and Thwaites, 2004; Olkkonen et al., 2000; Papadimitriou et al., 2008). According to Chadwick and Thwaites (2004) part of the strategic aims of sport sponsorship is to enhance their

network objectives where sponsors work to form connections with other related organisations which was highlighted by the participants believing that the sponsors use their corporate boxes they obtain through the sponsorship deal in order to hold networking functions for their other brand and company objectives. It supports the idea that the companies are highly focused on other areas as opposed to targeting an audience through the Eden Park databases.

4.5. Chapter Summary

The three overlapping themes of incentives, value proposition and sponsorship awareness emerged from the three focus groups involving members of the Eden Park stadium. The participants reported more negativity in their attitudes, beliefs and perceptions across all three themes. Overall, the members from all three focus groups shared similar attitudes, behaviours and perceptions towards the Eden Park stadium sponsors. The most common concept portrayed by the members was the belief that the stadium sponsors do not utilize the database to the best of their abilities. This meant that the participants felt very little effort has been made to develop a sponsor-consumer relationship. The transfer of loyalty has not occurred due to the participant's current stance on the Eden Park stadiums sponsors.

It was evident that the participants were underwhelmed by their current memberships whilst openly stating their doubts on renewing their memberships next year. The responses displayed that the Eden Park stadium sponsors have been lacking consumer interaction. The perception is that sponsors are missing out on a targeting an audience with disposable income. There may be an agreement between the sponsors and Eden Park on whether the database is an available resource. In this case, a recommendation would be for Eden Park to communicate this to their members to help ease the negative assumptions towards the stadium sponsors. To sum up, this chapter has covered the findings and discussions based on the responses of the Eden Park members. The findings have displayed the attitudes, behaviours and perceptions of the stadium sponsors. The key points and future study recommendations will be included in the following, final chapter.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1. Introduction

A plethora of existing academic literature has focused on the relationship between sponsors and sport organisations. Where this study differs from what already exists on the subject is its focus on gathering rich insights from a small sample of sports event consumers and the subsequent discussion around how this relationship can affect or form an exchange-based relationship with the sponsors of a national stadium. The aim of this chapter is to bring the case study to a suitable conclusion, summarizing the findings and finally offering some suggestions for both Eden Park and future researchers of sports stadium sponsorship. The limitations of this case study are also discussed.

5.2. Concluding thoughts

The theme of incentives proved to be the most influential factor affecting member's consumer behaviour towards stadium sponsors. The participants expressed their collective disappointment on the lack of exclusive offers and incentives offered to them adding that the amount of money they spend on memberships should be an indication of incentivizing their memberships. Incentivizing the memberships was confirmed as a way of encouraging their consumer habits to change towards the sponsors in a positive direction. The participants stated that this would influence their buying behaviours towards a sponsor service or product. The theme of value proposition was directly influenced by the theme of incentives. The ability to increase the memberships value by increasing the number of exclusive offers was an important factor that impacts participant's attitudes, behaviours and perceptions. The final theme of sponsorship awareness indicated that participants had very little interest in the visual stimuli presented by sponsors on billboards, posters, and game day merchandise. Existing studies by Koo et al (2006) and Biscaia et al (2013) support the notion that sponsorship awareness has positive effects on sport consumer behaviour however this study has presented

findings that suggests sponsorship awareness has no effects on the stadium member's consumer behaviour.

The sport sponsorship literature certainly supports the notion that sport fans develop a psychological attachment to sport organisations and suggests that there will be strong links of loyalty and interest in any associations that offer products or services proving to be an attractive aspect to sponsors (Cousens et al., 2006; Greenhalgh and Greenwell, 2013; Sam et al., 2005). An important aspect of the exchange is that the strength of the relationships established and evident (i.e. advertised) within the public domain. The literature reviewed in Chapter Two also suggests that a business to business relationship between sponsor and sports organisation is influenced by numerous factors including commitment, satisfaction and trust (Chadwick and Thwaites, 2004; Farrelly and Quester, 2005; Olkkonen et al., 2000; Seguin et al., 2005). The findings documented in the previous chapter suggest that such factors can also be applied to the consumer-sponsor relationship at Auckland's Eden Park Stadium. The comments of the Eden Park members would certainly support those who encourage sponsors to infiltrate the databases of the sports organisations they support financially, offering incentives and initiatives that spark an interest. A result of such action could be an increase in positive attitudes and perceptions and a change in the buying behaviour and purchase intention of the captive audience targeted.

According to the sports fans who participated in this study, their consumer satisfaction and brand loyalty can be influenced and affected by incentives given (or, in this case, not given). The findings reveal the perception of there being a gap in which Eden Park's sponsors are not utilizing the stadium's membership database, offering a value proposition to those who fit the characteristics of their target audience. It is evident that the relationship between stadium members and the family of sponsors attached to the venue was worth researching and requires further exploration. The finding of this case study raises a number of questions, the answers to which should benefit the stadium and sponsor, helping both parties understand the ways in which they can develop their presence and relationship with their networks databases. The first question relates to whether the sponsors are offered, or indeed request, access to the stadium's database (i.e. are the perceptions of the members accurate?). The next question raised by the conversations witnessed within the focus groups relate to the effectiveness of past and present sponsor-spectator engagement activities, assuming that these have indeed occurred during their time as members (i.e. have the sponsors targeted

members in the past and, if not, why not?). Finally, the comments and conclusions have left the researcher keen to find out if the small sample encounter at the focus group, many of whom spoke as though they were speaking on behalf of all members, plan to renew their memberships at the end of the year (i.e. if they are so unhappy with the current situation, will they continue investing in the stadium?). The recommendations found later in this chapter provide some suggestions as to how these questions could be answered.

The literature on consumer behaviour identified what drives consumerism and how behavioural aspects that include emotional and mental responses affect purchase intentions and buying behaviours (Funk and James, 2006; Rani, 2014). Existing literature explained how the level of engagement and consumer relationships was highly responsible for transferring loyalty onto a sponsor (Brown, 2000; Carlson et al., 2009). This was supported by the participants statements. Although the subject of experiential marketing was not discussed within the literature review, or by the focus group participants, the overlapping themes of awareness, value proposition and incentives can all be related to the perceived lack of sponsor activations that specifically target Eden Park's most loyal and local clientele. Whilst the researcher is unable to offer any generalizations beyond this applied case study (due to the small size of the sample), the findings certainly have the potential to help the stadium and its family of sponsors enhance the existing exchange relationships that with those who make regular visits to the venue. Unsurprisingly, the consensus amongst the cohort of members was that they would react positively to any special exclusive offers and incentives which specifically targeted them, as opposed to everyone who entered the stadium. It is therefore important that the stadium's membership manager understands the gap that these participants believe exists between the expectations of the stadium and its sponsors and the perceptions of loyal stadium members. The members revealed a willingness to change their consumer behaviour, attitudes, and beliefs if the relationship between consumers and sponsors focused on building a mutually beneficial exchange relationship.

5.3. Study Limitations

The aim of this case study was to explore the influence of stadium sponsorship on the consumer behaviour of a small selection of loyal and local members. Whilst the study achieved the objective of showcasing interesting results gathered from the members of the Eden Park stadium, the researcher must also acknowledge that the study would have

inevitably captured the opinions of more members had she been able to run more focus groups over an extended period. It is important to note that this study was designed to specifically target stadium members and not members of the teams or tenants of Eden Park stadium (Auckland Cricket, Auckland Rugby and the Blues). As discussed in Chapter Three, this proved harder than expected due to a lack of room availability and accessibility. The initial aim was to spread three focus groups over three days in hopes of gaining larger participant turnouts. However, the focus groups were being held on the Eden Park stadium premises which meant that the rooms were booked out for the Eden Parks business purposes. Similarly, whilst the literature review helped pinpoint areas of sport sponsorship, the lack of literature focusing on stadium sponsorship, and how stadium sponsors can impact upon the consumer behaviour habits of event attendees, led to the researcher having to rely on sources published well over a decade ago. Attempts to find more recent material proved much harder than expected.

Furthermore, although the results have identified that there is a higher chance of influencing consumer behaviour when an exchange relationship is utilized between the consumer and sponsors of the stadium, the researcher is mindful of the fact that this may only be the case for those involved in the focus group. A much larger sample size, and a different research methodology, would be required should Eden Park and/or their sponsors want more detailed findings. Whilst there was an obvious dissatisfaction about the value of their membership throughout all three focus groups, the researcher is conscious of the fact that her invitation to contribute to this study may have attracted a group of members keen to share their frustrations, dissatisfaction and/or a group of members looking to profit from the incentives they suggest are needed. Interestingly, as noted in the previous chapter, the participants tended to highlight their concerns through generalizing statements that they believed were the thoughts of other members.

5.4. Recommendations

It is recommended that Eden Park stadium either accommodate and fight for its consumers to gain incentives from the exchange relationships established with its various business partners or, if this already occurs, that they better communicate this fact to their members. Ideally, the consumers encountered in this study certainly seek more incentivized membership opportunities/rewards to enhance their overall attitudes, beliefs and perceptions

of both the stadium and its sponsors. Such a move could well increase positive purchase intentions and buying behaviour towards the Eden Park stadium sponsors services and products that they offer. Before acting upon the suggestions of this study, however, the researcher recommends that Eden Park's commercial team consider formulating more member surveys to gather what is needed to improve in terms of service.

Another recommendation would be for Eden Park's members to help the stadium and its sponsors facilitate the exchange relationship sought by the participants of this study. This could be done by asking a select group of loyal and local members to offer their suggestions regarding the type of exclusive deals sponsors should offer their fellow stadium members. The Eden Park commercial manager may wish to consider entering negotiations with sponsors armed with the wishes of their members firmly in mind. This would also help enhance the value of memberships which could potentially lead to a larger membership database for the stadium. Ultimately, it is essential for Eden Park to communicate with their members on a regular basis, allowing them to offer their thoughts on who the stadium should and shouldn't be looking to establish relationships with. The members also need to be made aware of the processes involved in gaining incentives from sponsors. Lastly, more members only events, such as sponsored dinners, may help them answer the questions raised by this study and display their appreciation for their long-standing relationship with the stadium.

In terms of future research opportunities, the researcher recommends the conducting more focus groups, and some follow up interviews with stadium members to gather a larger data set. Adding follow up interviews was not possible on this occasion due to time constraints, but these sessions would assist in generating an in-depth understanding of the subject matter. A recommendation for future research would be to replicate this study with the change of focus to members of the stadiums tenants such as members of Auckland Cricket, Auckland Rugby or the Blues. It would be interesting to see how their opinions and consumer behavior differs to that of the stadium members. Another recommendation for future study would be to include speaking to past and present stadium sponsors. This would be a beneficial way of understanding what the sponsors requirements are in terms of gaining sponsorship agreements and how they attempt to influence consumer behaviour.

In sum, the findings of this case study cannot lead to the construction of any generalizations and only signify the importance of relationship development as this is the most effective way

to gain consumer loyalty. The results suggest that Eden park's sponsors could potentially gain a better return on their investment if they targeted the stadiums members at home through email or at special members only events (i.e. on non-match days). The findings from this study suggest that loyal stadium members are not easily won over and less interested in promotions targeting all stadium goers at sports events. If sponsors were to create a strong presence in the process of increasing membership value through incentivizing the membership, then this would affect stadium member's attitudes, beliefs and perceptions towards those sponsors.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Participant Information Sheet

Date Information Sheet Produced: 13, February 2018

Project Title

The influence of stadium sponsorship on consumer behaviour. A case study on the members of The Eden Park Trust.

An Invitation: My name is Fiolla Jashari and I am a Masters student in the Business Faculty at Auckland University of Technology. I would like to invite you to share your opinions on the sponsors of the Eden Park stadium, and gather some valuable insight into your thoughts regarding the success/ or failings over the stadium sponsorship influence on your consumer behaviour and how that potentially affects your buying behaviour. Furthermore, I would like to present you with the following scenario for you to consider and comment upon within a 60minute informal conversation in a focus group session with other Eden Park members, to be held in the Eden Park meeting room at the main reception of the stadium during the month of April 2018.

What is the purpose of this research?

The aim of this research is to investigate how stadium sponsorship influences the consumer behaviour of Eden Park's most loyal and localized fan base, including members of EPT, members of Eden Park stadium and members of the newly established Eden Park supporters club (The Hood). The study will aim to answer the following research question;

“How does stadium sponsorship influence the consumer behaviour of loyal and local fans?”

Regarding consumer behaviour, the research will mainly focus on the choice process that generates purchase decisions culminating in actual buying behaviour. This will provide useful data for EPT Board and Management team and their partners/sponsors, determining whether the relationships between The Eden Park Trust and the sponsors have been beneficial. This data may highlight areas in which the marketing department can improve on if the results indicate a low consumer interest.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You have been identified as someone that I need to talk to, based on your loyalty and passion for the Eden Park stadium. I am only looking to talk to 10-15 people with a proven history of loyalty and a relatively long relationship with the stadium.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

Should you agree to participate, based on the information contained in the invitational email (and this information sheet), you will be emailed a consent form 24 hours prior to our first meeting. This will need to be completed prior to the conversations being recorded and used within this study. Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You are able to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

What will happen in this research?

Our focus group session offers you a chance to confidentially reflect upon the successes and failings of the stadium sponsors ability to influence your consumer habits, and to share your personal thought on the following scenario. The focus group session will last no longer than 1 hour, and be audio-recorded. Within a week of our meeting, I will provide you with a copy of the transcript to ensure that nothing was missed and it is an accurate representation of our conversation. Once I have spoken to all participants, I will provide a

summary document that will be emailed out to you and the other participants (with all names removed). The questions you will be asked to consider and comment upon are:

How many of Eden Park's current partners can you name (off the top of your head), and are you able to explain the difference between the four different partnership portfolios?

Which of the Eden Park's current partners (principal partner, icon partners, partners) do you believe "fits" the stadium best, and how would you describe your current connection, both personal and professional, with the product/services offered by that partner?

How likely are you to change your current buying behaviour habits based on the advertising encountered during visits to – or as you pass by -Eden Park, and to you think Eden Parks current approach is likely to generate increased profits for their partners? (i.e. how likely are you or your fellow members to recommend Eden Park's partners to others within your personal and professional networks?)

What are the discomforts and risks?

None

What are the benefits?

You get to help advance academic and industry understanding and appreciation of the sports sponsorship industry.

How will my privacy be protected?

The only way that I can guarantee confidentiality is to ask all participants to keep the conversations we have, and your involvement in this research, private and confidential. By signing the consent form, you are agreeing to not publicly discuss or promote your involvement in this project until the completion of the study. This should reduce the risk of your opinion influencing that of another participant (or vice versa). It will also increase the likelihood that people will speak openly and candidly, without fear of being identified.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

You will be asked to give me one hour of your time for the focus group session, which I would like to hold at the Eden Park stadium meeting rooms (front reception area).

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

I am required to get this study completed by July 2018, so would like a response to the initial invitation, sent out in March, within 3 weeks and to have the focus group session completed by the end of April.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

If you wish, you will be sent a copy of the findings and a summary of any academic presentations/publications that arise from this study.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Dr. Richard Wright, richard.wright@aut.ac.nz, 09 921 9999 ext. 7312. Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEK, Kate O'Connor, ethics@aut.ac.nz, 921 9999 ext. 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Dr. Richard Wright, richard.wright@aut.ac.nz, 09 921 9999 ext. 7312. 021 40 40 94

Study Researcher: Fiolla Jashari, fjashari0395@gmail.com

*Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on February 13th, 2018
AUTEK Reference number 17/113*

**Appendix B
Consent Form**

Project title:

The influence of stadium sponsorship on consumer behaviour. A case study on the members of The Eden Park Trust.

Project Supervisor: Dr Richard Wright

Research Team: Fiolla Jashari

- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 24th, April 2018
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.

- I understand that if I withdraw from the study then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- I agree to take part in this research.
- I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes No

Participants signature :

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Participants Name :

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Participants Contact Details (if necessary) :

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.....
.....

Date :

***Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on February 13th, 2018
AUTEK Reference number 17/113***

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form