

# **Understanding the objectives, fit, and leveraging of Touch New Zealand's sponsors.**

Nathan Thompson

A dissertation submitted to Auckland University of Technology in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Sport, Exercise and Health

2023

Faculty of Sport and Recreation

Primary Supervisor: Dr Michael Naylor

Secondary Supervisor: Dr Mel Johnston

### **Abstract**

While there is a growing body of research on sport sponsorship, relatively little attention has been given to National Sport Organisations (NSOs) as a unique organisational type with sponsor relationships. Thus, this study represents a novel and important contribution to the literature. The aim was to explore (a) objectives of NSO sponsors; (b) NSO sponsor perceptions of fit; and (c) sponsor leveraging activity. A qualitative approach was implemented, and the findings are based on semi-structured interviews with eight sponsors associated with Touch New Zealand. The study was divided into two phases. In Phase 1, interviews were conducted with sponsors of Touch New Zealand. A deductive thematic analysis was used to generate insights from the interviews in these specific areas. Phase 2, a content analysis, was carried out to explore sponsor leveraging activities.

The findings revealed that branding was the most prominent and important objective for sponsors highlighting the importance of leveraging their sponsorship investment to enhance brand awareness and identity. Community involvement seemed to be the most important objective for some sponsors. Meanwhile, business to business relationships and new customer acquisition opportunities to generate leads were for others, as well as media exposure.

NSO's seeking to nurture effective sponsorship arrangements must be actively thinking about and improving their own brand, such that it will align with potential sponsors. NSOs should also consider how they can create opportunities for sponsors to realise their business objectives around market share and return on investment (ROI). Future studies should replicate this project in diverse settings and contexts including across different sports, countries, and levels of competition. Further, studies should seek to look more comprehensively at the leveraging efforts across the sponsors of multiple NSOs.

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**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.

**Student's Signature:** Nathan Thompson

**Date:** 30/06/2023

## **Acknowledgements**

Firstly, I would like to thank the following individuals and organisations for their ongoing encouragement and support whilst I completed this qualification.

To my supervisors, Dr Michael Naylor, and Dr Mel Johnston, I would like to express my sincere gratitude for the guidance, support, and encouragement throughout my research. The expertise, insightful feedback, and dedication have been invaluable to me, and I am truly grateful for the mentorship. Thank you, Dr Naylor, for serving as both my mentor and a constant source of support for the duration of the programme. I appreciate the time you spent and the guidance you gave me at each stage of the process, which inspired and encouraged me in completing this project.

A big thank you must be extended to Touch New Zealand and the sponsors who participated in this research project, who shared their knowledge and experiences, and provided me with insightful data – I appreciate you giving me the chance to share and learn from your experiences. Personally, I would like to thank all the participants who took part in this study. Their willingness to share their experiences and insights has contributed significantly to my research, and I am truly grateful for their participation.

I would also like to thank the faculty members of the Sport and Recreation department for their valuable feedback, suggestions, and encouragement throughout my academic journey. Their extensive knowledge and expertise in their respective fields have inspired me to pursue my research with dedication and passion.

I am also grateful to my family and friends for their unwavering support and encouragement throughout my research. Their love, care, and motivation have been instrumental in helping me overcome challenges and persevere towards my goals.

Finally, I want to personally thank everyone who has supported me on this journey and for the countless hours of work I have put in. It has taught me as much about myself as it has about the subject I've studied. Without a doubt, none of this would have been possible without the support.

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents and grandfather, Patience Elkington, Rodney Thompson, and Doug Elkington. It is impossible to put into words my thanks to you all.

Ethics Approval: Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)  
Committee approved on 15 August 2022, AUTEC Reference number 22/211.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1.1 Background to Research

Sports sponsorship has become a significant marketing tool for organisations in New Zealand to increase brand awareness and connect with their target audience. The country's love for sports, coupled with its growing popularity, makes it an attractive market for sports sponsorships. Companies in New Zealand sponsor a wide range of sporting events, from small local tournaments to major international events like the Rugby World Cup. However, the decision to sponsor a sports organisation or event in New Zealand requires careful consideration of various factors such as the target audience, brand fit, and return on investment (ROI).

Sports sponsorship is a widely acknowledged and increasingly prevalent practice on a global scale (Blake et al., 2019). Similar to regular sponsorships, a brand or organisation sponsors a sports team or athlete to support their athletic endeavours. Examples of sports sponsorship in New Zealand include the All-Blacks rugby team, which is sponsored by Altrad which are the official front jersey sponsor, and the New Zealand Silver Ferns netball team, which is sponsored by ANZ (ANZ, 2022; NZ Rugby, 2021). Sports sponsorships vary tremendously and rely on a wide range of different variables, including the duration of the sponsorship as well as the financial investment. In New Zealand, the value of sports sponsorships is worth over US\$145 million, which is equivalent to the per-capita values of several more developed countries (Gough, 2021). Indeed, sponsorship is as an effective marketing tool in terms of reach and diversity (Gough, 2021). The majority of New Zealanders are generally favourable towards organisations who assist New Zealand sport.

As the sponsorship environment shifts, the development of fresh metrics is necessary to measure how effective sponsorships are (Wakefield et al., 2020). Sponsorship success is no longer assured by just acquiring property rights, naming a facility, or emblazoning a brand's emblem on a jersey, but rather by developing attainable sponsorship objectives, fit, and engaging with both previous and prospective consumers (Donlan & Crowther, 2014).

Sport sponsorships are argued to be one of the most economical strategies for businesses to target and influence their desired target market (Gardner & Shuman, 1987; Greenhalgh & Greenwell, 2013). It is increasingly becoming one of the most rapidly

expanding industries of marketing (Gordon & Cheah, 2017). Through previous literature and current examples, it is evident that sponsorship objectives, fit, and leveraging all interrelate together between the sponsor and the sponsored property.

The New Zealand sports sector is experiencing exponential growth, with the All Blacks enjoying some of the most lucrative rugby sponsorship deals in the world (Shaw & Amis, *Image and investment: Sponsorship and women's sport*, 2021). The women's national rugby team (Black Ferns), which had never before received any support of sponsorship, obtained its first sponsorship deal in 2018. Further, the data from several studies have identified a wide range of angles for sport marketing research pertaining to sponsorship, their effectiveness, and how it is assessed (Ballouli et al., 2018; Beech & Chadwick, 2007; Sneath et al., 2005; Lagae, 2003).

Several research studies have been undertaken to investigate the correlations between brand loyalty, sponsor awareness, sponsor attitudes, and sponsor purchase intentions (Copeland et al. 1996; Degaris, 2015). Each of these concepts are interrelated and is important to the effectiveness of sport sponsorship. With the expansion of professional sport in New Zealand, it is critical to understand the sponsorship market beyond the monetary worth of sponsorships that are widely publicised within mainstream media today. Importantly, there is still a gap in the sponsorship research as it relates to National Sport Organisations as a unique organisational type. This study uses the work of Séguin et al. (2005) as a framework to further explore sponsors of NSOs in New Zealand.

## **1.2 Research Context & Contribution**

New Zealand has a rich sporting culture and history, and it plays an important part of the everyday lives of New Zealanders (Walker & Leberman, 2012). Its historical perspective in amateurism, participation, and enjoyment, rather than economic gain, can be used to explain its popularity (Hindson, 2006; Ryan, 2007). To support and deliver sports in New Zealand, there are a number of organisations that operate in three key sectors: 1) the government and public sector, 2) the professional sector and 3) the not-for-profit sector. These agencies are responsible for developing and implementing policies, regulations, and programs that support the growth and the development of sports. Sport New Zealand is the government agency (i.e., crown entity) that is responsible for promoting and supporting sport and physical activity throughout New Zealand (New Zealand Government, 2018). The

organisation works closely with national and regional sports organisations to provide funding, resources, and support to help them achieve their goals (New Zealand Government, 2018).

The not-for-profit sector in New Zealand's sports industry plays a vital role in promoting and developing sports at the grassroots level. These organisations are responsible for sport governance at national level and comprises of national sport organisations (NSOs), regional sport organisations (RSOs) and sports clubs that are dedicated to promoting participation in sports, improving access to sports facilities and equipment, and providing coaching and training programs for athletes of all ages and abilities (Sport New Zealand, 2017). Overall, these organisations provide resources, funding, and support for athletes and teams, and help to create a vibrant and thriving sports community in New Zealand.

One NSO, Touch New Zealand is responsible for promoting and developing the sport of touch rugby at all levels, from grassroots to elite in New Zealand. Touch NZ's mission is to create opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to participate in touch rugby, while promoting sportsmanship, fair play, and respect for all participants (Touch NZ Strategic Plan, 2019). Touch New Zealand offers a range of programs, events, and competitions throughout New Zealand, including coaching courses, referee courses, and national tournaments (Touch NZ Strategic Plan, 2019). Touch New Zealand works with 19 Provincial Associations and 223 community Touch competitions national wide (Touch NZ Strategic Plan, 2019). Through this sport strategy, Touch New Zealand has strengthened New Zealand's cultural, social, and economic fabric and promoted the mental, emotional, and social welfare of its citizens (Touch NZ Strategic Plan, 2019).

The current study offers significant contributions to the existing literature and practise of sport sponsorship in several important ways. First, the research provides valuable insights on what objectives sponsors of NSOs set out to achieve, how they perceive the fit with the NSO and what they do to leverage their sponsorship. These are each foci, that have received little scholarly attention. Second, this study provides a New Zealand contribution to a predominantly North American, Australian, and European body of literature.

### **1.3 Research Aim and Design**

The aim of this study is to examine sponsors of a National Sport Organisation (i.e., Touch New Zealand). This includes their objectives, perception of fit, and leveraging activities around the sponsorship. The study takes the form of a set of interviews of Touch NZ sponsors as well as a content analysis of sponsor leveraging activity.

The research project explores the following research questions:

1. What are the objectives of Touch New Zealand's sponsors?
2. How do sponsors perceive and describe their fit with Touch New Zealand?
3. How is the sponsorship of Touch New Zealand being leveraged?

### **1.4 Dissertation Structure**

The dissertation is presented in five chapters. This chapter has provided a background to the research as well as identified its purpose. Chapter two provides an in-depth analysis of existing literature on sport sponsorship as well as National Sport Organisations in New Zealand. Chapter three is a presentation of the methodology of the research, including the use of semi-structured interviews, subsequent deductive thematic analysis as well as the content analysis. Chapter four is a provision of the results of the study. Chapter five contains a discussion of the findings and fit with related literature. This section also includes managerial implications for sport managers, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

Sport sponsorship is an important marketing strategy, with businesses around the world investing millions of dollars to associate with sports teams, events, and athletes. Sport provides a unique opportunity to connect with a target audience in a positive environment. However, the effectiveness and impact of sport sponsorship depend on the fit between the sponsor and the sponsee, the objectives of the sponsorship, and the leveraging activities employed by the sponsor. In sport contexts, we are still learning about these important aspects of sponsorship, particularly as related to non-profit sport organisations.

In the following review of literature, research on sponsor objectives, fit, and leveraging are outlined. One organisational type, National Sport Organisations (NSOs), are a focus as this is the context for the current research project. In the first section of this chapter, an overview of sport sponsorship including historical perspectives is presented. Next, the emergence of the sport business industry is covered. Following on from there, an overview of sponsorship objectives and goals behind sponsorship initiatives, sponsorship fit and congruence in sponsorship agreements are provided. Next, how organisations leverage their sponsorship activities is overviewed. Then Touch New Zealand is introduced, which is the focal NSO in this study. Finally, a summary of the gaps in the research are identified, an overall aim is presented as well as research questions.

### 2.2 Sport Sponsorship

#### 2.2.1 Sport Sponsorship: An Introduction

Sport sponsorship is a common marketing approach that involves investment or other support in exchange for the right to affiliate. Sponsorship has been defined as “*an investment, in cash or in kind, in an activity, in return for access to the exploitable commercial potential associated with that activity*” (Meenaghan, 1991, p.36). Sponsorship can be used to reach large audiences (Gardner & Shuman, 1987). Leveraging sponsorship can take various forms such as advertisements, product placements, and endorsements (Hsiao, Tang, & Su, 2021). By sponsoring a sports team or event, organisations gain exposure for their brand and products, reach new consumers, stimulating brand awareness, creating brand and product associations, and building customer loyalty in the market (Hsiao, Tang, &

Su, 2021). Sport sponsorship can also provide opportunities for organisations such as product placement, which can further boost brand recognition and sales (Lough & Irwin, 2001). However, it can also be a significant investment, and organisations must carefully consider the potential return on investment before committing to a sponsorship agreement (Lough & Irwin, 2001). Overall, with the right business approach, sport sponsorship can be a valuable marketing tool for businesses.

Sports sponsorship allows businesses to align with positive sport associations such as teamwork, discipline, and fair play (Gardner & Shuman, 1987). This can help strengthen the company's reputation and consumer relationships, as well as enhancing the organisation's reputation and improve its relationship with customers (Hsiao, Tang, & Su, 2021). Sponsorship is common at all levels of sport from a community rugby team to major international events such as the Olympic Games or a World Cup (Schönberner, Woratschek, & Buser, 2022). Organisations choose sponsorship arrangements that best suits their budget, marketing objectives and goals (Schönberner, Woratschek, & Buser, 2022).

Businesses must ensure that their brand is represented in a positive light and that they are aligning themselves with the right sport entities that have a good reputation (Schönberner, Woratschek, & Buser, 2022). Sport sponsorship can be a powerful marketing tool for businesses to promote their brand and connect with consumers. It is important for all parties involved to engage in sport sponsorship with a clear strategy and a thorough understanding of the potential risks and rewards (Hsiao, Tang, & Su, 2021).

Corporate sponsorship of sport is a critical element of the marketing mix (McDaniel & Kinney, 1998). It has grown in popularity during the previous three decades (Meenaghan, 1998). Sport sponsorships are one of the most cost efficient strategies to build positive opinions within a specific target market (Gardner & Shuman, 1987; Greenhalgh & Greenwell 2013). However, they can differ in their duration of contract, form of assistance, size and reach of the intended audience, and financial commitment (McDaniel, 1999).

In sport, sponsorship is an important source of funding at both grassroots and professional levels (Chen & Zhang, 2011). At elite level, sponsorship is one of the most crucial revenue streams next to broadcasting rights, ticketing, and merchandising revenues (Böhler, Heffernan, & Hewson, 2007). The objectives of sport sponsorship can vary, but are

generally to increase brand exposure, improve brand image, build consumer relationships, drive sales, and support the community (Grohs, Wagner, & Vsetecka, 2004). It can be seen as a strategic advertising tool to positively impact a customer's purchasing decision-making process (Crompton, 1996).

Sponsorship is often linked to overall organisational aims and goals (Shaw & Amis, Image and investment: Sponsorship and women's sport, 2001). It is important to distinguish commercial sponsorship from acts of corporate philanthropy. In a sponsorship arrangement, financial or other support is provided to a sports team or event in exchange for promotional benefits or other forms of return on investment. On the other hand, philanthropy involves a business making a charitable donation or contribution without expecting any direct benefit or return (Böhler, Heffernan, & Hewson, 2007). Corporate philanthropy is often present at the grassroots level of sports (Giannoulakis, 2014), where sometimes it is confused with sponsorship. At professional level, sport sponsorship resembles philanthropy less due to a clearer orientation toward generating a return on investment.

Meenaghan (1991), outlined six driving mechanisms behind the growth of sport sponsorship; (1) changing government policies on alcohol and unhealthy foods, (2) increasing costs of advertising, (3) the proven effectiveness of sponsorship, (4) opening new opportunities due to increased physical activity (5), greater media exposure of sponsored events, and (6) inefficiencies of traditional media. According to several scholars, sponsorship has emerged as an alternative marketing strategy for promoting controversial products, such as unhealthy food items and alcohol (Cornwell, 1995; Crompton, 1996; McDaniel S. R., 1999). In addition, the escalating expenses associated with advertising and the increasing saturation of advertisements in various media outlets have made sponsoring sport events a more appealing option for marketers, as noted by Cunningham, Taylor, and Reeder (1992).

In the context of sport organisations, Séguin et al. (2005) explored sponsorship incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data collection. By conducting interviews with sponsors and sports organisations, the study effectively captured valuable insights into the viewpoints and experiences of key stakeholders. The inclusion of a survey allowed for broader data collection and statistical analysis, enhancing the study's robustness. The findings highlight the importance of establishing long-term partnerships and developing strong relationships with sponsors (Séguin et al. 2005). The authors emphasised the

importance of developing partnerships and nurturing strong relationships with sponsors (Séguin et al., 2005). This study offers a valuable framework for further research on sport sponsorship in New Zealand which would fill a significant gap as it relates to the alignment of sponsorship objectives with the intentions and goals of NSO sponsors.

### *2.2.2 Understanding Sport Sponsorship*

Sport sponsorship can be understood through the lens of the exchange theory, which posits that relationships are based on the exchange of resources. In the context of sport sponsorship, these resources can include financial support, exposure and visibility for the sponsor's brand, and association with the values and image of the sport organisation (Giannoulakis, 2014).

Further, the exchange theory is the foundation for understanding the relationship between a sport organisation and a sponsor (Giannoulakis, 2014; Olkkonen, 2001). Exchange theory is based on the notion that two or more parties must exchange resources (e.g., labour, product, or cash) and the exchange must be of equal value with reciprocating significance to one another (Crompton, 2004). However, in some sponsorship agreements this relationship can lean towards one of the parties. This can transpire when the sport organisation is more dependent on the sponsor or vice versa (Maxwell & Lough, 2009). This highlighted the notion that most spectators, fans, and the general public see the alignment of sponsors with sporting events and teams to fulfil corporate need, the consequences are typically dyadic and both parties are invested in ensuring the sponsorship is successful (Maxwell & Lough, 2009).

Sponsorship fits into two categories - relationship-based sponsorship and customer-based sponsorship. Customer based typically refers to customer relation outcomes which is business to customer relationships (B2C), whereas relationship-based sponsorship agreements tend to focus more on accessing the other networks within an organisation which are more typically business-to-business (B2B) in nature (Chadwick & Thwaites, 2004). According to Farrelly and Quester (2005), relationship-based sponsorship arrangements feature consistent communication between the organisation and sponsor. Thus, this model of sponsorship is normally used by businesses that function in a business-to-business environment.

Several authors have stated that customer-based sponsorships focus on the customers, and have three outcomes; (i.e., cognitive, affective, and conative) (Degaris, 2015). Cognitive outcomes of a sponsorship refer to the mental process of how an individual thinks, reads, learns, remember, pays attention, and ultimately comprehend information about a particular sponsorship and then turn it into knowledge (Degaris, 2015). Affective outcomes are an individual's mood and emotions towards to the sponsor (Degaris, 2015). Conative outcomes refer to how an individual ultimately acts and behaves towards a sponsor (Degaris, 2015).

It has been noted in a number of studies that objectives for sponsors include creating brand awareness, increasing brand image, and establishing brand proximity which guide sponsor closer to their target market. Increasing sales and revenue streams, increasing market share, showcasing corporate responsibility, acquiring new hospitality opportunities to entertain potential new or current customers, and establishing PR relations with the media in order to break down cultural barriers are other objectives (Chadwick & Thwaites, 2004, Chen & Zhang, 2011; Koo, Quarterman, & Flynn, 2006; Lee, Harris, & Lyberger, 2011; Löffler, & Parrado-Díez, 2002; O'Reilly, Nadeau, Séguin, & Harrison, 2007).

Organisations will most likely partake in sponsorship if they perceive that it will help achieve their organisational objectives and goals as another form of marketing (Breuer & Rumpf, 2011). Sponsorship allows an organisation to pursue multiple objectives, meaning sponsorship as a marketing tool is a very attractive (Breuer & Rumpf, 2011). The findings from Breuer and Rumpf (2011) study found that sponsorships provided access to different market segments which they may not have been privy to through their previous business strategy.

Further, sport sponsorship has some similarity to advertising (Cheong, Pyun, & Leng, 2019; Smolianov & Shilbury, 2005). Sponsorship is a multi-faceted marketing tool that utilises public relations (PR) such as advertising sales and promotions (Degaris, 2015). Sponsorship is generally a subtle function as it does not always prompt direct action from the receiver of the message to buy the product or service (Breuer & Rumpf, 2011; Meenaghan, 2001). Sponsorship is understood to be more credible than advertising and promotional material as sponsors are often well-respected organisations (Degaris, 2015).

Sponsorship offers a valuable opportunity for sponsors to reach new target audiences, including specific market demographics and fan bases, that may be difficult to access through traditional advertising methods (Meenaghan, 1998; Roy & Cornwell, 2004). This is helpful when targeting niche markets or demographics that are difficult to reach through mass media channels. For example, a business that sells sports apparel might sponsor a sports team to reach sports fans and athletes who are more likely to be interested in their products (McGlone & Martin, 2006). Both sponsorship and advertising can be effective strategies for increasing brand awareness and improving brand image, as they allow organisations to reach new audiences, create positive associations with their brand, and engage with their target audience in a more meaningful way (Meenaghan, 1998; Roy & Cornwell, 2004). It can also be used as an effective marketing tool to subconsciously persuade customers in to buy products or services (Meenaghan T, 2001; McAlister et al., 2016).

Although advertising and sponsorship can provide similar outcomes, sponsorship has some advantages. One is the length of time a sponsor can be exposed to members of a target market during sport (Meenaghan, 2001). Further, new technological advances allows spectators to record live sport at home and watch any sport event from a more convenient time (Degaris, 2015). Advertisements are often ignored by those watching recorded sport content, while for those watching live, sponsorship activation is unfettered (Degaris, 2015).

### *2.2.3 The Evolution of Sport Sponsorship*

Sponsorships expenditure has grown rapidly over recent decades particularly in events, arts, and sport. As a result, corporations now have to implement broader and more comprehensive strategies in order to maximise marketing expenditure (Lamont et al., 2011). According to Cody and Jackson (2016), the growth of sport sponsorship is due to six factors; (1) the change in the policies towards tobacco and alcohol advertising, (2) cost increase due to advertisement via media; (3) the proven success that sponsorship has; (4) increased in leisure and social activity of sports; (5) increased coverage of sporting events by media; and (6) the ineffectiveness of traditional media.

Sport sponsorship has developed considerably as a global marketing tool for brands and organisations. Some time ago, Cornwell (1995) stated that sponsorship had progressed from a philanthropic orientation to a more target market-driven environment, and this is

still true today. However, studies by Lough and Irwin (2001), offer a different perspective suggesting that businesses continue to adopt sponsorship strategies for philanthropic and image-building purposes. The growth of sport sponsorship did not really start until the 1980s (Beech & Chadwick, 2007; Ryan & Fahy, 2012). However, sponsorship has been around much longer than that. According to Beech and Chadwick (2007), in the 1960s, many individuals saw sport sponsorship as a brand-new economic opportunity because it offered tremendous media exposure for very little cost.

According to Meenaghan (2001), a more commercialised version of sponsorship has developed over the last three decades that has made the sport business environment more pragmatic, greater in scale, and having global reach. Ryan and Fahy (2012), examined perspectives of commercial sponsorship from the 1970s through to 2010. They argued that in the early 1980s, sport sponsorship was mostly driven by philanthropy, but from the late 1990s a more commercial approach was the norm (Ryan & Fahy, 2012).

Ryan and Fahy (2012), discuss that commercial sponsorship underwent a shift in approach during the 1980s and 1990s, with a move away from philanthropy towards a more market-driven perspective. This new approach was characterised by a focus on investment, with a greater emphasis on building brand awareness, enhancing brand image, and generating return on investment through sponsorship (Ryan & Fahy, 2012). The growing popularity of sponsorship as a marketing tool led to increased professionalism. Sponsors were able to assess the effectiveness of their sponsorship programs using quantitative performance indicators, allowing for more data-driven decision making and evaluation of sponsorship outcomes (Ryan & Fahy, 2012).

Ryan and Fahy (2012), suggest that the shift towards more marketing-oriented objective for sponsorships was driven by changes in both internal and external factors, including limitations on traditional forms of promotion. This shift resulted in a greater alignment between sponsorship and broader marketing objectives. For example, changes in government regulations around cigarette and alcohol advertising forced businesses to explore new forms of communication, leading to increased investment in sponsorship as an alternative marketing strategy (Meenaghan 2001). This approach placed a strong emphasis on sponsorship-linked marketing and leveraging, which became key components of the sponsorship strategy (Cornwell et al. 2005; Ryan & Fahy, 2012). Cornwell and Maignan

(1998), highlighted the significance of consumer perception and how sponsorship can shape their perceptions of an organisation or brand. Additionally, the importance of selecting a sponsor that is a good fit for the organisation became a central theme in this consumer-centric approach (Cornwell et al. 2005; Ryan & Fahy, 2012).

The use of sponsorship as a marketing tool has increased steadily at about 4-5% annually in growth (IEG, 2018). According to IEG (2017), businesses allocate about 19 percent of their overall marketing budgets to sponsorship. The forces that have driven sponsorship growth since the 1990s include; (1) advertising of media cost rising, (2) ability to achieve several marketing objectives, (3) inefficiencies of traditional media, and (4) more media coverage of sponsored events (Meenaghan, 1991). For instance, both television and the internet play an important role as they broadcast live sports and cultural activities, which provides another avenue stream for broadcast sponsorship. IEG (2018), also noted that nowadays, due to the fragmentation of the market and the media, reaching target audiences and creating two-way dialog with the public are the reasons why sponsorship is valued highly by organisations. Despite the significant role that sport sponsorship plays in the global economy and the sports industry, the understanding of its impact and effectiveness in a New Zealand context remains limited, thus highlighting the need for further research in this area.

## **2.3 Sponsorship Objectives**

### *2.3.1 Understanding Sponsorship Objectives*

Sponsorship objectives vary depending on the type of sponsorship (i.e., cultural, sporting, or event sponsorship), the size and values of the sponsoring organisation, and the characteristics of both the sponsor and the sponsored property (Gordon & Cheah, 2017). These factors influence the specific objectives that sponsors seek to achieve. The size of the sponsoring organisation plays an important role in shaping sponsorship objectives (Apostolopoulou & Papadimitriou, 2004). For instance, a larger organisation may have more resources to devote to sponsorship and may prioritize different objectives than a smaller organisation with limited resources (Gordon & Cheah, 2017). Similarly, the characteristics of both the sponsor and the sponsored property influence sponsorship objectives. For example, according to Apostolopoulou and Papadimitriou (2004), understanding an organisation's business objectives is essential for the sponsored entity. Abratt, Clayton, and

Pitt (1987), outlined sport sponsorship objectives as “*corporate marketing, communications, public relations, and/or promotional objectives deemed to be attainable through sport sponsorship*” (p.102). Kuzma et al. (1993), suggested that ensuring a strong alignment between the characteristics of the sponsored event or activity and the organisational objectives should be a key principle when selling a sponsorship deal. However, as noted by Beech & Chadwick (2007), the importance of identifying and specifying organisational objectives and goals of any contractual agreement is a must. Beech & Chadwick (2007), also mentioned that many organisations are disappointed when it comes to the evaluation process, as their sponsorship agreement experienced weak performance results. Several academics have noted that specifying sponsorship goals and objectives are crucial to reaching key performance indicators (KPIs) of the sponsorship (Beech & Chadwick 2007; Greenhalgh & Greenwell 2013)

In the early days, the main objectives of sport sponsorship was to assist in community led projects and the overall aim of this was to give back to the communities who supported the organisation (Walker, 1999). According to Walker (1999), these goals are incompatible with today's cultural perception of sport sponsorship. As the sports industry expanded, the goals of sport sponsorship also became more diverse. Meenaghan (1983), mentioned that corporate sponsorship can serve various types of objectives. The five main corporate objectives for sponsorship suggested by Meenaghan (1983) are; (1) broad corporate objectives being community involvement, increasing the public awareness of the company, and building goodwill among opinion-formers and decision-makers; (2) product-related objectives which are generating brand or product awareness, and product identification with target group; (3) sales objectives which can be short and long term sales growth; (4) achieving media coverage which is building product/company awareness; and (5) personal objectives of delivering personal satisfaction to consumers.

Meenaghan (1983), mentioned that community involvement is one of the most important corporate objectives. Sponsors want to involve themselves in improving the life of the community, either at local or national level. This can be shown by their manner of good citizenship (Meenaghan, 1983). Jobber (2001), highlighted the importance of community engagement in sponsorship, citing a survey conducted in the Republic of Ireland that found community involvement to be the top sport sponsorship objective for the industrial sector.

In Walker's (1999) view, sponsorship offers a valuable opportunity to directly showcase a product or service to the market, while also providing an effective means for an organisation to give back to the local community that supports it. Meenaghan (1983), highlighted the crucial goal of boosting an organisation's public visibility through sponsorship. This has proven to be an effective strategy for increasing public awareness of an organisation. Meenaghan (1991), and Gwinner and Bennett (2008), both supported this by mentioning brand awareness is one of the most critical objectives for sponsorship involvement.

Apostolopoulou and Papadimitriou (2004), found that sponsors of the Athens 2004 Olympic Games had a range of objectives, including boosting sales and market share, enhancing brand image, and increasing brand awareness among consumers. These objectives have also been identified by other researchers in the sport sponsorship domain, including in Cobbs' (2011) study (Copeland, Frisby, & McCarville, 1996; Greenhalgh & Greenwell, 2013; Lough & Irwin, 2001; Meenaghan, 2001). Beech and Chadwick (2007), suggested that sponsorship objectives fall into four main categories: (1) brand image, (2) brand awareness, (3) sales, and (4) internal communication. In some cases where a brand or organisation is already well-established and has high visibility, sponsorship objectives may shift towards enhancing brand image through the creation of positive brand associations with the sponsored event, team, or athlete (Chien, Cornwell, & Stokes, 2005). Increasing sales is a common sponsorship objective that may vary depending on organisational goals and the size of the company. Sponsorship objectives related to sales may involve a range of strategies, such as driving sales of existing products or services, generating interest in new products, or fostering collaboration between commercial partners (Beech & Chadwick, 2007). Consequently, the sponsorship objectives might provide a more "*convivial dimension to communication*" (Beech & Chadwick, 2007, p.87). As a result, there is a stronger and friendlier connection to that target market (Beech & Chadwick, 2007).

Business-to-business (B2B) relationships can also feature within sponsorship objectives and include increasing sales (Beech & Chadwick, 2007) and establishing network connections. This can be an important objective in order to increase their business reach and develop relationships amongst their community (Wagner et al. 2017). Beech and Chadwick (2007), argued that when using sponsorship in general terms, public communities have been seen to be using sport sponsorship as a vehicle to drive community support. This

means sales cannot be considered as the objective or a means to a philanthropic approach. These communities rather pursue media exposure, brand awareness, image, and internal communication (Beech & Chadwick, 2007). This is very similar to private organisations (except the sales objective), to achieve an economic impact in their local communities (Madill & O'Reilly, 2010).

Beech and Chadwick (2007), refer to a fourth 'objective group' that covers the internal consequences that sponsorship agreements may have. This category is internal communication. Fundamentally, it is the feelings and motives employees can get from sponsorship activities, that can create team spirit and develop organisational culture. Beech and Chadwick (2007), argued it all depends on the sport that is being sponsored, as well as the business policy orientation.

To date, there has been little academic research exploring the objectives of sponsors in a New Zealand context and particularly for National Sport Organisations (NSO). This was noted by Séguin et al. (2005) as an important gap in the sponsorship literature. It is not clear yet, whether the sponsorship objectives reported to date in the body of literature are true of NSO sponsors.

## **2.4 Sponsorship Fit**

### *2.4.1 Understanding Sponsorship Fit*

The perceived fit between a sport organisation and the sponsor must be appropriate, as this can affect the image of the sponsor both positively and negatively (McDonald, 1991). A fit may be perceived when the characteristics of a sport organisation have a positive association with their customers which corresponds to the image of the sponsor (Tsordia, Papadimitriou, & Parganas, 2018). Thus, sponsorship fit relates to the extent to which the sponsor is perceived by consumers to be congruent with the sponsorship (Roy & Cornwell, 2003). Sponsorship was defined by Speed and Thompson (2000), as "*the degree to which the pairing of an event and sponsor is perceived as well matched or a good fit, without any restriction on the basis used to establish fit*" (p. 230). Woisetschläger et al. (2009), define sponsorship fit as "*perceived match of attributes between sponsoring firms and sponsored objects*" (p.170). In other words, when the sponsorship fit is good, the relationship feels natural, to be expected, and intuitively right. Furthermore, if the sponsorship fit is low or

weak, the relationship can feel strange or awkward, and most likely will experience undesirable results.

An appropriate fit will enhance the image of the sponsor to customers while a poor fit can dilute the perceived image of the brand (Shaw & Amis, *Image and investment: Sponsorship and women's sport*, 2001). The relationship between a sport entity and an organisation will only be successful when there is a good sponsorship fit (Tsordia, Papadimitriou, & Parganas, 2018). Effectively, an organisation that is perceived as being positively associated with the sponsored entity and the characteristics of either party are consistent with each other is an organisation which exhibits an excellent sponsorship fit (Roy & Cornwell, 2003). Therefore, determining if there is good synergy and fit (congruence, relatedness, or match) between a sponsor and the organisation before agreeing on any sponsorship agreement would appear to be one of the most important determinants (Chadwick & Thwaites, 2004; Jobber, 2001).

Congruence refers to the extent that the sponsor and the sponsored property are perceived as similar, on the basis of a natural sense of connection, compatible, harmonious, functionality, attributes, or other key associations related to each other (Fleck & Quester, 2007; Gwinner & Eaton, 1999; Mazodier & Quester, 2014; Simmons & Becker-Olsen, 2006). Therefore, the fit is a significant determinant in the success of the sponsorship agreement (Roy & Cornwell, 2004). The perceived fit of congruence between both the sponsor, sport entity and the sport event are critical factors in generating desirable responses from their target audiences (Roy & Cornwell, 2004). As argued by Keller (1993), congruence can have a significant effect on brand recall, as well as the ability to manipulate predetermined ideas about the brand or sponsor.

According to congruence theory, consumers determine the amount of congruence that promotes sponsorship identification, brand recall, and strong image transfer. Alternatively, a lower level of congruence might lead to cognitive dissonance, disengagement, and unfavourable feelings or attitudes towards the sponsor (Boeuf et al., 2018; Olson & Thjømmøe, 2011). As argued by Olson and Thjømmøe (2011), image transfer can vary significantly due to different factors of events and products that they are trying to promote. Thjømmøe (2010) also argued that sponsorship can generate sales and brand recognition, but having greater perceived congruence will result in positive brand

associations with the consumer and overall better outcome at the end. Additionally, consumers will maintain preconceptions about the sponsored brand, which means there is an important link to the effects of how sponsorship communication can have on these brands (Milne and McDonald, 1999). Indicating the fit of the relationship is very important to the success for the sponsorship (Milne & McDonald, 1999).

For successful sponsorships, there should be compatibility between the target audience, the sport event or individual being sponsored, and the organisation itself. Matching these factors can be challenging, as values, core beliefs and brand image must all align together (Roy & Cornwell, 2003). Multiple factors can vary; for example, lifestyle choices, consumption patterns, attitudes towards sport, involvement with sport and media exposure can all influence the perception of the sponsorship agreement (McDaniel & Kinney, 1998). The perceived sponsorship fit between the sponsor brand and the sponsored property is deemed appropriate when determined by the consumer. When the consumer perception of the brand is an appropriate fit, the greater chance to enhance customer perceptions of the brand and therefore have a positive brand image transfer (Ryan & Fahy, 2012). The foundations of this are built on the match-up theory, where a good 'fit' plays a critical role in the survival of the sponsorship agreement (Till & Busler, 1998).

The fit between a sponsor and sport entity is a powerful predictor of sponsorship persuasion, which is consistent with schema congruity theory (Mazodier & Quester, 2014). Schema congruity theory suggests that individuals have pre-existing cognitive structures, or "schemas," that influence their perceptions and evaluations of stimuli in their environment (Mazodier & Quester, 2014). When a sponsor and a sport entity have a high degree of fit or congruity, this can activate and reinforce existing schemas, leading to more positive evaluations of the sponsorship (Mazodier & Quester, 2014).

Further, sponsorships can exhibit high levels of fit when they are consistent with the consumer expectations of the brand. For instance, increasing the chances of spectators identifying the sponsors correctly (brand recall) (Johar, Pham, & Wakefield, 2006), encouraging positive brand attitudes with consumers, increasing purchase intentions and increasing brand equity (Mazodier & Quester, 2014). As with sponsor objectives, there is a gap in the literature as to how fit is perceived and affects sponsorship of National Sport Organisations.

## 2.5 Sponsorship Leveraging

A successful sponsorship campaign relies on the marketing and communication initiatives known as sponsorship activations, which are utilised in conjunction with sponsorship leveraging (Weeks et al., 2008). Sponsorship leveraging is described by Cornwell (2020), as the activities used to support and exploit the sponsorship investments to ensure that it meets the desired goals and objectives. Therefore, sponsorship leveraging is the process of maximising the benefits and returns from a sponsorship deal. It involves using the sponsor's support and resources to drive business growth, increase brand awareness, and achieve overall marketing objectives (Lagae, 2003). Weeks et al. (2008), suggest that sponsorship leveraging refers to all sponsorship-linked marketing communications and activities collateral to the sponsorship investment, while on the other hand, activation is referred to as the ability for audiences to engage with or become involved with the sponsor. Sponsorship leveraging is comprised of all other expenditure over and above the sponsorship agreement, whereas sponsorship activation is a subset of this that is often on-site or online, and interactive with consumers (Cornwell, 2020).

Sponsorship leveraging and activation are two distinct, but related phenomenon in the field of sponsorship marketing (McGlone & Martin, 2006). Leveraging refers to the process of maximising the benefits of a sponsorship through the use of marketing and promotional activities (McGlone & Martin, 2006). This can include using the sponsor's logo and branding in advertising campaigns, creating co-branded products, and leveraging social media accounts to increase brand awareness (McGlone & Martin, 2006; Weeks et al., 2008). Activation, on the other hand, refers to the specific activities and events that are designed to engage consumers and build relationships with them (Weeks et al., 2008). This includes hosting experiential events, creating interactive online campaigns, and offering exclusive promotions to consumers (Weeks et al., 2008). On-site sponsorship activation can also be described as a sponsorship-related marketing activity with the goal of introducing the sponsor to the attendees at the event.

While leveraging focuses on maximising the overall impact of a sponsorship, activation is more focused on creating specific touchpoints with consumers that can help to build brand loyalty and drive sales (Cornwell, 2020). Both leveraging, and activation are important components of a successful sponsorship strategy. McGlone and Martin (2006),

suggest that to effectively leverage a sponsorship agreement, it is important to have a clear understanding of the sponsor's goals and how they align with the sport entity. This includes identifying the target audience, developing a messaging strategy, and creating engaging content that resonates with both the sponsor and the audience (McGlone & Martin, 2006). By defining clear goals, maximising exposure, engaging with the audience, creating new content, and measuring the results, businesses can effectively leverage a sponsorship agreement to its fullest potential (McGlone & Martin, 2006). A successful sponsorship agreement will lead to increased brand recognition, customer loyalty, and a stronger brand reputation, ultimately driving business success (Weeks et al., 2008).

According to Cornwell (2020) and Lagae (2003), sponsorship leveraging requires spending in excess of the sponsorship deal to achieve the desired outcomes, and this is done in various ways such as digital advertising, public relations (PR), sales promotion or direct marketing activities and social media campaigns. The success of a sponsorship agreement all depends on its effective use of leveraging and activation, which may be more crucial than just forging a connection between the brand and sporting event (Weeks et al., 2008). Marketing and sport management scholars, including Carrillat and d'Astous (2016) and Cornwell (2019), have emphasized the critical role of sponsorship leveraging in activating a sponsorship. They noted that sponsorship leveraging is what makes the sponsorship come to life. Some examples of sponsorship leveraging, and activations include contests relating to the sport event, event-driven mobile telephone competitions, and brand websites with event-related themes (Cornwell, 2020). Additionally, non-activational communications such as on-site signage and sponsor name exposures, promote the relationship in a largely passive manner (Cornwell, 2020).

Quester and Thompson's (2001), study reported a distinct link between sponsorship leveraging and the results. The authors found that the sponsor with the highest activation expenditure saw a higher boost in brand awareness and brand recall (Lardinois & Quester, 2001). This was further validated by Grohs et al. (2004), who identified a significant link between sponsorship-related marketing efforts and event-sponsor image transfer in the context of an Alpine Ski championship. Furthermore, Biscaia et al. (2017), reported that marketing initiatives related to sponsorship activities can be successful in raising fans' familiarity with the sponsor's goods or services. It seems that when taken as a whole,

leveraging communications typically helps to promote positive sponsorship outcomes (Biscaia et al. 2017).

Ultimately, there is a significant amount of research available on sponsorship leveraging and activation in the context of professional sport teams and individual athletes however, there is comparatively little research focused on NSO's. This is a significant gap in the literature, as NSO's play a critical role in the development and promotion of sports at the grassroots level, and often have significant sponsorship portfolios. Without a deeper understanding of how NSO's leverage their sponsors, it is difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of these partnerships, or make informed decisions about future sponsorship strategies. As such, there is a clear need for more research in this area, in order to better understand the role of sponsorship in supporting the development of sports at the national and international level.

## **2.6 The NSO Sponsor Context in New Zealand**

Sport has been an integral part of New Zealand's culture for centuries and remains a significant aspect of the daily lives of many New Zealanders (Walker & Leberman, 2012). Its historical perspective in amateurism, participation, and enjoyment, rather than economic gain, can be used to explain its popularity (Hindson, 2006; Ryan, 2007). Sport has a *“prominent position in Aotearoa New Zealand – a country that has prided itself on being a great little sporting nation”* (Thomson & Jackson, 2016, p. 81).

To support and deliver sports in New Zealand, there are a number of organisations that operate in three key sectors: 1) the government and public sector, 2) the professional sector and 3) the not-for-profit sector. These agencies are responsible for developing and implementing policies, regulations, and programs that support the growth and the development of sports. Sport New Zealand is the government agency (i.e., crown entity) that is responsible for promoting and supporting sport and physical activity throughout New Zealand (New Zealand Government, 2018). The organisation works closely with national and regional sports organisations to provide funding, resources, and support to help them achieve their goals (New Zealand Government, 2018).

The not-for-profit sector in New Zealand's sports industry plays a vital role in promoting and developing sports at the grassroots level. These organisations are

responsible for sport governance at national level and comprises of national sport organisations (NSOs), regional sport organisations (RSOs) and sports clubs that are dedicated to promoting participation in sports, improving access to sports facilities and equipment, and providing coaching and training programs for athletes of all ages and abilities (Sport New Zealand, 2017). Overall, these organisations provide resources, funding, and support for athletes and teams, and help to create a vibrant and thriving sports community in New Zealand.

NSOs are responsible for the development and overall implementation of policies, regulations, and programs that support the growth and development of their respective sports (Walker & Leberman, 2012). NSOs work closely with Sport NZ, local and regional sports bodies to identify and nurture talent, organise competitions, and provide coaching and training programs (Walker & Leberman, 2012). At an NSO level, the primary source of funding traditionally comes from external investments, with approximately NZD 1.5 million comes from sponsorships (McLean et al., 2015). NSOs must create high performance and community sport plans in order to manage and grow the sport, which includes providing opportunities for participation and improving infrastructure (Walker & Leberman, 2012).

As an NSO, Touch New Zealand is responsible for promoting and developing the sport at all levels, from grassroots to elite in New Zealand. Touch NZ's mission is to create opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to participate in touch rugby, while promoting sportsmanship, fair play, and respect for all participants (Touch NZ Strategic Plan, 2019). Touch New Zealand offers a range of programs, events, and competitions throughout New Zealand, including coaching courses, referee courses, and national tournaments (Touch NZ Strategic Plan, 2019). Touch New Zealand works with 19 Provincial Associations and 223 community Touch competitions national wide (Touch NZ Strategic Plan, 2019). Through this sport strategy, Touch New Zealand has strengthened New Zealand's cultural, social, and economic fabric and promoted the mental, emotional, and social welfare of its citizens (Touch NZ Strategic Plan, 2019). A better understanding of Touch NZ's sponsors will help to identify effective strategies for growing the sport in New Zealand.

## **2.7 Summary of Literature and Research Question**

This literature review has provided an overview of objectives, fit, and leveraging in the wider body of sport sponsorship literature. Despite the significant amount of sport

sponsorship related research, there is an obvious gap relating to National Sport Organisations as a distinct organisational type within the research. Existing research on sponsors of NSOs has been conducted by Séguin et al. (2005) in a Canadian setting, but there is room to extend it to other parts of the world. This is a novel and important project here in a New Zealand context.

With the gap in the literature in mind and the opportunity to explore sponsorship of an NSO in a New Zealand context, the research questions for the current study are:

RQ1: What are the objectives of Touch New Zealand's sponsors?

RQ2: How do sponsors perceive and describe their fit with Touch New Zealand?

RQ3: How is the sponsorship of Touch New Zealand being leveraged?

## **Chapter 3: Methods**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides an outline of the methodology of this research project focused on sponsors of a National Sport Organisation in New Zealand. The research project consisted of two phases: the first phase involved conducting interviews with sponsors, while the second phase involved analysing sponsor leveraging activities through a content analysis. In section 3.2, the aim and research questions guiding this project are restated. Section 3.3 is a description of the overall approach used in the study. Next, Section 3.4 details the data collection methods, including the interview questions used. Finally, Section 3.5 provides a step-by-step description of the data analysis procedure, which involved thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes in the data.

### **3.2 Aim and Research Questions**

The aim of this study was to examine sponsors of a National Sport Organisation (i.e., Touch New Zealand); specifically, their objectives, perception of fit, and leveraging activities around the sponsorship.

The research project explores the following research questions:

1. What are the objectives of Touch New Zealand's sponsors?
2. How do sponsors perceive and describe their fit with Touch New Zealand?
3. How is the sponsorship of Touch New Zealand being leveraged?

### **3.3 Research Approach**

Based on the lack of research on this topic, it was determined that a multi-methods approach was appropriate. As it allows a nuanced approach to gathering a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon, and helps to address potential limitations or biases in the research study (Brewer & Hunter, 2006). This project featured both interviews and a content analysis. The semi-structured interviews allowed the participants to share their experiences, opinions, and perspectives on the subject matter in an open and flexible format (Aurini et al., 2016). The content analysis, on the other hand, involved analysing various forms of media, such as social media posts, press releases, and websites, to gather additional insights into how sponsorship of Touch NZ is leveraged (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). By using a multi-methods approach, the study was able to

generate a diverse and detailed data from multiple sources, which helps to establish validity and reliability (Miles & Huberman, 1994). For instance, data from one phase of the study may provide valuable insights or support to a theme identified in the other data set, but they can also contradict each other, leading to a more complex interpretation of the data (Morse, 2009).

### *3.3.1 Phase 1: In-depth Interviews*

The first phase of the research project was in-depth interviews. The interviews are the main component of the methods in this research project and feature a qualitative research methodology which allows a deeper understanding of the sponsorship landscape in the sport (Brewer & Hunter, 2006). In qualitative research, interviews are commonly used as a means of data collection, as they allow researchers to obtain rich descriptions of a participant's real-life experiences and interpretations of the phenomena (Aurini et al., 2016). For instance, face-to-face interviews are the preferred option in qualitative research as they allow the researcher to interpret social cues such as facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice to guide the interview process. Qualitative research places emphasis on attitudes, beliefs, values, and experiences to understand the data in its naturalistic context (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Researchers using qualitative methods tend to focus on common themes rather than statistical generalisations and numerical similarities (Bryman & Bell, 2015). This approach allows the researcher to explore sponsors and focus on their experiences, perceptions, beliefs, and interpretations to develop a deeper understanding.

In this research, questions were developed to guide the direction of the interview and to ultimately identify common themes and opinions among the participants (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). According to Legard, Keegan, and Ward (2014), in-depth interviews are an appropriate methodology for generating rich narratives. This approach facilitates valuable insights into the complex and dynamic nature of sport sponsorship, allowing for a deeper understanding of the perspectives and experiences of key stakeholders involved in the process (Bryman & Bell, 2015). In-depth interviews provide the interviewee the opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings in an open and unassuming environment, with the interviewer asking open-ended questions and allowing the participant to elaborate on their responses (Bryman 2016). The participants will experience no external influences, so will often feel relaxed and open when responding to questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Using in-

depth interviews in this research project allowed for a detailed exploration of the topic of understanding the objectives, fit, and leveraging of Touch New Zealand's sponsors. This method provided participants with the opportunity to share their experiences and perspectives in their own words, and allowed the researcher to ask follow-up questions to gain a deeper understanding of their responses (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). This approach generated rich data that can be used to inform the development of effective strategies for building and maintaining successful partnerships with sponsors.

A semi-structured format was chosen, as it combines the flexibility of an open-ended conversation with the structure of a pre-determined set of questions, allowing for both standardised data collection and the exploration of emergent themes (Aurini, Heath, & Howells, 2016). With this in mind, the researcher had a general outline of topics to cover, allowing the conversation to flow naturally, and enabling the researcher to follow up on relevant points raised. This encouraged a more nuanced understanding of the objectives, fit, and leveraging of Touch New Zealand's sponsors and richer data collection.

Due to the geographical locations of participants being situated in Auckland, most of the interviews had to be performed through via video chat (e.g., Microsoft Teams teleconference software) or by phone. This was due to the researcher being located in Christchurch for the duration of the study. Krouwel et al. (2019), argued that face-to-face interviews are marginally beneficial than video call interviews for qualitative research. However, the small difference in quality does not outweigh the practicality and cost-effectiveness of video call interviews, especially when travel constraints are present to the researcher.

### 3.3.2 Phase 2: Content Analysis

The second phase of the research project was a content analysis of sponsors leveraging activity including social media posts, images from a major event and website content. This phase was meant to complement the interviews which are the main component of the project. Content analysis is *"a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns"* (Hsieh & Shannon 2005, p.1278). The objective of the content analysis was to identify the different types of messages and strategies used by sponsors to promote their sponsorship of Touch NZ. It therefore provides additional data

to explore Research Question 3. The content analysis allowed additional insights into how sponsors are leveraged by Touch NZ and also to better understand how sponsors are represented, as well as how their messages are conveyed to target audiences (Morse, 2009).

### **3.4 Data Collection**

#### *3.4.1 Recruitment*

Purposive sampling was used in the participant selection process, as it was deemed the most appropriate method for exploring sponsors of an NSO. This approach involves intentionally selecting participants who possess relevant knowledge or experience related to the research question (Palinkas et al. 2015). This sampling technique allows the researcher to gather rich information required from interviewees based on the inclusion criteria (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). According to Dawson (2013), participants selected are *“seen to be relevant or of interest to the research topic”* (p. 70). Given the aim of the research, participants were required to be responsible for managing the sponsorship with Touch NZ, or have related decision-making authority. Touch NZ facilitated the introductions between the researcher and the sponsors' interviewees in order to protect the commercial sensitivity associated with the project. This approach was adopted to ensure that the research process was confidential. Given the scope of this master's dissertation, a sample size of eight participants was deemed appropriate. The eight interviewees represented eight separate sponsors of Touch New Zealand. Touch New Zealand has approximately 20 sponsors, therefore, 40% of sponsors were represented in this project.

#### *3.4.2 Participants*

The research included eight individuals in this study, of which six were males and two were females. Individuals participating in the study were introduced through the organisation. First, the participants were provided with a participant information sheet to help them understand what the study was about and what their involvement would entail. The details of the study, such as the methodology, and expected outcomes were explained to the participants during the recruitment and consent process. Second, the researcher ensured that all participants were provided with informed oral consent before participating in the study, which is a standard ethical practice in research. Individuals held different positions within their respective organisations, ranging from CEO to Marketing Managers

(Table 1).

**Table 1 - Participant Profiles**

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Job Title</b>
P1	Male	CEO
P2	Male	Marketing Manager
P3	Male	Marketing Manager
P4	Male	CEO
P5	Male	Marketing Manager
P6	Female	Manager
P7	Male	CEO
P8	Female	Manager

### 3.4.3 Interviews

The researcher adopted a conversational tone during the interviews, seeking to establish a relaxed and informal atmosphere with participants. However, to facilitate the process, an interview guide consisting of 15 open-ended questions was used to provide some structure and ensure that all relevant topics were covered during the interviews. The interview questions covered a range of topics but focused mostly on questions related to objectives, fit, and leveraging.

All interviews began with 5 to 10 minutes of rapport-building, which is mentioned by Bryman and Bell (2011), as an approach to creating effective and quickly building a relationship with the participants. This method created a positive and open environment that encouraged participants to share their thoughts and insights more freely (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Each interview lasted approximately an hour and was carried out by the primary researcher. The interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed by an external party, this provided the researcher with a full account of each interview and were used to analyse the data (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Prior to the start of the interviews, all participants were asked to give verbal consent to participate in the study. Participants and their organisations were kept anonymous throughout this dissertation in part due to the commercial sensitivity of the study.

### 3.4.4 Content Analysis

The content analysis facilitated additional insights into how sponsors are leveraged (Morse, 2009). In order to generate evidence of sponsor leveraging activities, two initiatives

were undertaken. First, the primary researcher visited the 2023 Touch New Zealand National Championships. On site, the researcher scoured the event site for evidence of sponsor leveraging and a comprehensive effort was put in to photograph this evidence. Second, an internet search was undertaken across websites and social media to locate and screenshot other evidence of sponsor leveraging. In both cases, the full suite of 20 sponsors was included, not just the eight with whom a Phase 1 interview was carried out.

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews in Phase 1, while the supplementary data from the content analysis (Phase 2) was obtained through various online sources such as social media posts, press releases, and websites.

#### *3.5.1 Phase 1*

For Phase 1, thematic analysis, a method to analyse qualitative data which involves identifying and examining patterns or themes within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006), was utilised. The analysis of the Phase 1 data followed a deductive thematic analysis approach, which used pre-existing theories and frameworks to guide the identification of themes and patterns that emerged from the data collected (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The deductive method is a top-down approach, where the researcher starts with a pre-established theory or model and applies it to the data to identify relevant themes and patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this case, the researcher was specifically aiming to generate insights about objectives, fit and leveraging, so this guided the analysis.

A deductive thematic analysis was deemed an appropriate method to use for this study, as it allowed for a flexible and iterative process of identifying and interpreting the patterns and themes within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis can be defined by Guest, MacQueen and Namey (2012), as *“a rigorous, yet inductive, set of procedures designed to identify and examine themes derived from textual data in a way that is transparent and credible”* (p. 15). Following transcription, the researcher independently examined, coded, and analysed the interviews following the methodology proposed by Braun and Clarke (2016), to identify key themes and sub-themes in the data.

The researcher then codes the data using the pre-defined categories in the coding scheme, which involved systematically reviewing the data and assigning codes to relevant

sections of the data. After coding the data, the researcher analyses the data to identify patterns and relationships between the categories. This involves examining the relationships between the different categories and looking for similarities or differences between the themes and sub-themes. Finally, the researcher interprets the findings of the data analysis in relation to the theoretical framework. This involved drawing on conclusions about the research question and making sense of the data. Below is a detailed description of Braun et al.'s (2016) six phases of thematic analysis.

*1- Familiarisation:* The researcher is required to familiarise themselves with the data by reading through the transcript's multiple times, both with and without the audio-recording. During this process, the researcher made notes surrounding what was interesting, as well as highlighting key points and statements, paying close attention to their relevance and significance to the research topic.

*2- Coding:* The researcher should employ coding as a strategy to identify potential themes and subthemes within the data collected. This involved dividing and categorising the data into segments that were related to each other, which helped to develop themes and subthemes that went beyond the surface level of meanings. When analysing the transcribed interview data, the content pertaining to the objectives, fit, and leveraging was highlighted in three distinct colours to allow easy identification to the researcher. For instance, if a participant discussed objectives, fit, and leveraging that text was coloured coded as correlating with the overall aim of the research question, as following the deductive thematic analysis process. The data was coded twice to provide a structured, consistent, and reliable collection of coded themes.

*3 - Theme Development:* The research is required to organise the codes and coded data into meaningful themes. This allowed the researcher to identify and interpret the key patterns and connections within the data, and to develop a rich data analysis that accurately reflect final themes. A colour scheme was employed, and quotations and page numbers were highlighted, so that the researcher could easily identify them within the transcript.

*4 & 5 - Reviewing:* The researcher requires to review and refined the coded data to ensure that it accurately represent the data and does not misrepresent the data through inaccurate coding. This involved checking that the codes were consistent with the data and that the

themes were coherent and intriguing, addressing the research question in a clear and concise manner. After finalising the themes, the researcher produced a brief explanation for each idea that conveyed the core of the subject and the research scope. The researcher met with one other researcher (project supervisor) on multiple occasions to review codes and to analyse the data.

*6 - Write Up:* This final phase of the analysis process, the researcher compiled, developed, and edited the identified themes to create a coherent and comprehensive overall report.

Throughout the data analysis process, the researcher remained vigilant to ensure that no comments or statements were taken out of context. In order to achieve this, the researcher continued to refer back to each transcript and the highlighted key points and statements, ensuring to accurately represent the data analysis. Given the important nature of the research study, the researcher deemed it was critical to give participants a voice, which emphasised the integrity of each interview. Consequently, while summarising the final findings, both direct quotes and paraphrasing were employed.

To enhance the rigor of the research study, the researcher employed recommendations outlined by Lincoln and Guba's (1985) model of trustworthiness, which encompasses four key elements relevant to qualitative research. These elements include establishing the credibility of the research findings, ensuring that the data can be transferable to other settings, maintaining the dependability of the research process, and confirming the objectivity of the research outcomes (Cypress, 2017). Credibility refers to the quality and trustworthiness that accurately represents the lived experiences of the participants, rather than the researcher's interpretation (Cypress, 2017). This involves implementing measures to prevent bias and ensure that the participants' perspectives are accurately reflected in the research findings, without the researcher's influence (Cypress, 2017).

### *3.5.2 Phase 2*

For Phase 2, photographs and screen shots were first combined into a single file and coded by the primary researcher. The images were carefully assessed by other members of the research team and themes ultimately presented as part of the results section. These

themes from Phase 2 were then considered alongside the results of Phase 1 to provide a richer understanding of Research Question 3.

To alleviate personal bias in the study, the researcher reflected on the feelings and thoughts that emerged throughout the interviews (Cypress, 2017) as well as the content analysis. This is due to the fact that study findings are generated subjectively by the researchers own experience, knowledge, and insights (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To mitigate biases, the researcher maintained a self-reflective attitude and avoided leading the participants towards specific answers during the interviews. Instead, the researcher asked open-ended questions to clarify and deepen the participants' explanations of their experiences, allowing them to freely express their perspectives without any influence from the researcher. This approach ensured that the data collected was credible and trustworthy, and to accurately reflect the participants' experiences without undue influence from the researcher (Cypress, 2017). To ensure the reliability and validity of the research results, an audit trail was used to document the data collection, data reduction and analysis, and interpretation process. The audit trail included raw data, notes, materials, dispositions, and facilitated a transparent examination of the research methods. By utilising the self-reflective process, the researcher was able to minimise the effect of any biases, assumptions, beliefs, and presumptions that may have influenced the research findings (Cypress, 2017). The research project used established methods to ensure rigor, which guided the approach used to protect the reliability and validity of the research results.

## Chapter 4: Results

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter is an outline of the results of this study on the objectives, fit, and leveraging of Touch New Zealand's sponsors. Phase 1 involved interviews with sponsors, while Phase 2 involved a content analysis of sponsor leveraging activity. Both a deductive thematic analysis and content analysis generated an array of insights. Related to these three important aspects of sponsorship, themes and sub-themes have been identified. Section 4.2 of this chapter focuses on RQ1 - sponsor objectives. Section 4.3 aligns to RQ2 – perceptions of fit between sponsors and Touch New Zealand. Section 4.4 focuses on RQ3 – the leveraging of Touch New Zealand sponsorship agreements. Finally, Section 4.5 outlines the results of the content analysis, which also relates to RQ3.

### 4.2 Objectives of Touch New Zealand's Sponsors

Three prominent themes were evident related to RQ1 – objectives (Table 2). Themes related to sponsor objectives are presented in priority order starting with branding.

**Table 2 - Category 1) The Objectives**

Theme	Sub-Themes
1) Branding: Increasing Target Market Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Brand visibility and recognition.</li> <li>- Enhancing brand image and reputation.</li> <li>- Creating brand differentiation.</li> <li>- Building brands.</li> <li>- Leveraging Brand Value.</li> <li>- Brand Awareness.</li> </ul>
2) Community Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Building goodwill.</li> <li>- Investing in community.</li> <li>- Building positive associations with the brand in the community.</li> <li>- Supporting the development of talent.</li> </ul>
3) Increase Sales and Market Share/Return on Investment (ROI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lead generation.</li> <li>- Standing out from the competition.</li> <li>- Extending their reach.</li> <li>- Showcasing products or product lines.</li> <li>- Driving product sales and revenue.</li> <li>- Product awareness and preference.</li> </ul>

#### 4.2.1 Branding

The first theme related to objectives that emerged from the interviews data was branding. Participants recounted how they aimed to create visibility and recognition of their brand through their sponsorship of Touch New Zealand. This leads to enhanced brand image and awareness. During the conversation about the relevance of branding as a sponsorship objective for sponsors, one participant expressed their thoughts on the matter.

*“So, we bought the brand and the company. It was part of the rebuild of the brand, we became new owners, recognised, relatively recognised brand, internationally and nationally. That had been badly run for a few years. So, it (our sponsorship of TNZ) was really part of that brand rebuild, and essentially, to sell more product.” – P3*

Branding through sponsorship can be multifaceted, and P5 outlined how their objectives reflect this in terms of the Touch New Zealand relationship.

*“It’s about getting the name out there. People know about the brand. I work on the customer cycle; we’re going to see the brand. Then the next step is to understand the brand. And the next step is to want to try the brand. And then the next step is to be loyal to the brand and the next steps to get referrals for the brand because people want to keep using it.” – P3*

#### 4.2.2 Community Involvement

Interviewees in this study also identified how community involvement was an important objective of their sponsorship of Touch New Zealand. Indeed, several participants identified community involvement as their primary sponsorship objective.

*“So, it’s more about providing help to Touch New Zealand and the committee, so that they can provide what they do to the community that they’re engaged in for at least cost as possible.” - P1.*

Another participant supported this notion of community involvement by highlighting.

*“Ideally, for us, we’re really there for touch but rather focus our aspect on the community. We’re here for the local families and communities involved. I think that’s, kind of where our unique relationship is focused around.” - P6.*

#### 4.2.3 Increase Sales and Market Share/Return on Investment (ROI)

Interviewees also conveyed that increasing sales and market share was an important objective related to their sponsorship of Touch New Zealand. Participants outlined the importance of leveraging their sponsorship investment to increase sales revenue, expand their customer base, and gain a larger share of the market. The participants used sport sponsorship to generate leads, create new customer acquisition opportunities, and increase their brand awareness.

*P2 was very clear that sales generation was a prominent objective. "Our objective selfishly was to sell more (product). The objective was more around increasing sales... I think that it should be our main objective."*

*P3 expressed that they seek several benefits from their sponsorship and use a mix of both hard, measurable factors and softer, subjective factors to assess that. The theme, however, is increasing revenue.*

*"It's often hard objectives. Objectives and subjective to businesses I guess, and I think we will have some obviously around...sales. So yes, there will certainly be times where we are becoming a more KPI driven business."*

#### 4.3 The Fit Between Sponsors and Touch New Zealand

Three prominent themes were evident related to RQ2 – perceptions of fit between sponsors and Touch New Zealand (Table 3). Themes are presented in priority order with 1) *Brand fit* being the most prominent and important.

**Table 3 - Category 2) The Fit**

Theme	Sub-Themes
1) Brand Fit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reach for sponsor's target audience.</li> <li>- Relevance for industry or product category.</li> <li>- Customized activations or experiences.</li> <li>- Showcase products or services.</li> </ul>
2) Relationship Fit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Compatibility on personality and working style.</li> <li>- Complementarity on skills and strengths.</li> <li>- Compatibility on goals and objectives.</li> <li>- Willingness to adapt.</li> <li>- Open to new ideas and approaches.</li> <li>- Transparency and reliability.</li> </ul>
3) Value Fit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Values and image alignment with property.</li> <li>- Opportunity demonstrate commitment to social responsibility or sustainability.</li> </ul>

#### 4.3.1 Brand Fit

A key theme identified from the study on sponsorship fit was *Brand Fit*. The theme consistently emerged across all interviews. Participants emphasised that a strong brand fit between the sponsor and Touch New Zealand enhanced the overall effectiveness of the partnership and builds brand awareness, reputation, and perception. Numerous participants highlighted that they were able to establish a good connection between their brand and Touch New Zealand by ensuring that their brands were consistent with one another. One participant stated that.

*"They didn't have an official partner to support the High-Performance Network and the Touch Black's environment. So naturally we could see the brand fit and the alignment we had."* – P2.

This is an example of a strategic partnership that is mutually beneficial for both parties built on brand fit. Another participant highlighted the importance of having a brand fit by describing how they identified a connection between their brand and Touch New Zealand. P3 explained:

*"There was two parts to why we wanted to be a sponsor. The second part is around branding and being associated with Touch New Zealand and all the great work they do. We*

*get some of that rub, and people accept that the brand as a recognised brand against the other bigger international companies.”*

This demonstrates that sponsoring Touch New Zealand offered tangible and branding advantages for the organisation, such as enhanced visibility, heightened brand awareness, and improved reputation. Ultimately, a successful sponsorship agreement depends on finding a strong brand fit that can create a mutually beneficial partnership between both parties.

#### *4.3.2 Relationship Fit*

The next most prominent theme that was highlighted as having a significant impact on sponsorship fit between sponsors and sport entities was the establishment of a strong relationship fit. This theme included notions of building trust, open communication, and a shared commitment to achieving mutually beneficial outcomes. The participants highlighted the importance of a clear understanding on each other's needs, expectations, and goals. This was touched upon by six out of the eight participants.

One participant stated that, *“The working relationship is absolutely fantastic. It's always give and take on both sides of the partnership”* (P5). This outlines the importance of a positive working relationship between sponsor and the sport entity. The importance of relationship fit was emphasized by participants, and it was noted that open communication and transparency are important foundations for building a strong working relationship. Another participant explained it as follows:

*“I think Touch New Zealand actually do a great job, and I think it's where we have built a really strong relationship with, where we can be and being quite open and honest about different opportunities that might be coming up and what Christchurch role might play.”* – P7.

Another participant explained the importance of managing expectations and maintaining a realistic perspective in a sponsorship agreement.

*“We have a really good working relationship with them. So, we appreciate that. There's plenty going on with both organisations, so there's a fine line between wanting to do*

*everything and what you can actually achieve. There needs to be a good balance between the sponsorship and the relationship with the organisation.” – P2.*

As demonstrated with these quotes, the interviewees conveyed that relationships are an important part of the overall fit within a sponsorship arrangement. This is separate and distinct from brand fit and value fit which is covered next.

#### 4.3.3 Value Fit

The next most common theme that was identified related to sponsorship fit were values and how they align. Several participants shared their views on this alignment with Touch New Zealand. Notions of working together effectively towards a shared vision and common purpose were put forth. One participant shared that, *“It’s the encouraging and nurturing values both our organisations have. That’s where we fit in with Touch New Zealand”* (P6).

Further, P6 stated that *“The whole whānau approach of incorporating tikanga and community values all aligns with our business model for accountability of results and working collaboratively with Touch New Zealand.”* The participant continued to explain that the statement was consistent with the values and beliefs of both organisations, meaning that when both parties share similar values and beliefs, it leads to a more successful partnership that is culturally respectful, accountable, and collaborative.

As P7 explained, the importance of the partnership was providing opportunities for young athletes and promoting the sport of Touch in New Zealand.

*“We definitely knew that we wanted (to sponsor) both Touch tournaments. But the youth one is always a really key one for us, because we want to be showcasing the kind of stuff to the community, and also to support up and coming young players in New Zealand. With the aim to give them the best experience at such a great venue.”*

#### 4.4 Sponsors Leveraging Activity

Three prominent themes were evident related to RQ3 - the leveraging of Touch New Zealand sponsorship agreements (Table 4). Themes are presented in priority order with *Brand Exposure* being the most prominent and important.

**Table 4 - Category 3) Leveraging**

Theme	Sub-Themes
1) Brand Exposure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Event Signage and Branding.</li> <li>- Jersey Sponsorship.</li> <li>- Broadcast Advertising.</li> <li>- Social Media Activation.</li> <li>- Product Placement and Sampling.</li> <li>- Customized Branded Content.</li> <li>- Influencer Marketing.</li> <li>- Multilingual Content and Communications.</li> <li>- Community Development Programs.</li> </ul>
2) Product Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Co-Branded Products and Packaging.</li> <li>- Product Placement in Content.</li> <li>- Product Giveaways and Contests.</li> <li>- Product Discounts and Coupons.</li> </ul>
3) Digital Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Online and Mobile Advertising.</li> <li>- Email Campaigns.</li> <li>- Content Marketing and social media.</li> </ul>

#### 4.4.1 Brand Exposure

The most important theme that emerged when sponsors were asked to talk about how they were leveraging their sponsorship of Touch New Zealand was *Brand Exposure*. One participant highlighted that the brand exposure is a critical aspect of sponsorship leveraging activities as it leads to increased brand recognition, which in turn lead to increased revenue opportunities and customer loyalty. P2 experienced an increase in brand recognition and a return on investment (ROI) due to the leveraging activities that Touch New Zealand invested in.

*“We’ve opened up a new window with the partnership and getting some really good traction amongst the touch community. I will definitely pay compliment to Touch New Zealand and their marketing team. If you look at the Touch New Zealand Facebook page or their social media platforms, the number of players wearing (our product), that’s pretty phenomenal. In that regard, it’s definitely a success.” – P2.*

This highlights the importance of exposing P2 brand in a variety of ways as a successful leveraging strategy. Integrating the sponsor's product effectively can maximise the benefits for both parties.

#### 4.4.2 Product Integration

The next most common theme that was identified within interviewee descriptions of leveraging sponsorship activities was the notion of product integration. Six out of the eight participants commented that effective product integration is a crucial leveraging strategy.

One participant explained that *“By providing branded merchandise at Touch New Zealand events, we can leverage the excitement and passion to fans to create a positive brand image transfer to our organisation”* (P4). This quote highlights the potential benefits of integrating products at Touch New Zealand events. Furthermore, another participant also referred to the integration of product displays, highlighting the importance of showcasing the sponsor's product in a way that is visually appealing and relevant to the audience.

*“At the 2023 Open National Touch tournament, we were doing discounted boots. Had our logo on the signage around the finals field, also our business name was mentioned over the loudspeaker throughout the event.”* – P2.

#### 4.4.3 Digital Engagement

Another important theme that emerged from participants' description of their leveraging activities was the importance of digital engagement. Participants highlighted the significance of utilising digital platforms to connect with customers, and ultimately drive revenue growth. Social media, email marketing, and website optimisation can be used to effectively engage with customers and promote products and services. One participant highlighted this:

*“We leverage our partnership through the networks of Touch New Zealand and the use of databases to promote the events here locally, to get more people coming along to the events.”* – P7.

Another participant emphasized that this is significantly important by stating that *“We are doing a better job now of using soft social media database to leverage our relationship with Touch New Zealand for brand growth and exposure”* (P3). This highlights the importance of utilising social media, website optimisation, and databases to leverage their partnership to establish a strong working relationship that leads to increased brand recognition, revenue opportunities, and customer loyalty. One participant expressed their views by highlighting how digital engagement can involve specific players.

*“One really good example is the way that Touch New Zealand highlight the players and the marketing material they do from the tournaments. They will often find players wearing our playing boots. Which they use to promote our brand whether it be at a tournament or on the weekend.” – P3.*

#### **4.5 Content Analysis**

To gain further insights into sponsor leveraging activities, Phase 2 was implemented with focus in two areas. The first involved visiting the 2023 Touch New Zealand National Championships to gather on-site evidence of sponsor leveraging. The researcher took photographs of all leveraging activity that was taking place including signage, banners, tents etc. The second aspect of involved a search across websites and social media platforms to locate additional evidence of sponsor leveraging. The aim was to capture a broad range of sponsor leveraging activities across various contexts and platforms. Examples of activities included a sponsor's logo on Touch New Zealand's merchandise, a sponsor's branded product being used, or endorsement from a professional athlete, as well as a sponsor name being mentioned in social media posts. Phase 2 facilitated a more comprehensive understanding of sponsor leveraging. The result was 39 images comprising a combination of photographs and screen shots from online content (Table 5). The images are presented in Appendix A.

***Table 5 – Images included in Content Analysis***

<b>Figure</b>	<b>Sponsor</b>	<b>Description</b>
Figure 1	Bunnings	Tent at TNZ National Touch Championship.
Figure 2	Bunnings	Sign at TNZ National Touch Championship.
Figure 3	Bunnings	Logo on Touch NZ Website as the major sponsor.
Figure 4	Bunnings	Sign at TNZ National Touch Championship.
Figure 5	Bunnings	Sign and logos at TNZ National Touch Championship.
Figure 6	Bunnings	Flag logo at TNZ National Touch Championship.
Figure 7	Bunnings	Flag logo at TNZ National Touch Championship.
Figure 8	Bunnings	Home Ground Heroes on TNZ social media website (Facebook).
Figure 9	Bunnings	Logo featuring on TNZ social media site (Facebook).

Figure 10	Bunnings	Home Ground Hero winners on TNZ social media website.
Figure 11	Bunnings	Give away prize on TNZ social media website (Facebook).
Figure 12	Bunnings	Give away prize on TNZ social media website (Facebook).
Figure 13	Bunnings	Partnership agreement on TNZ website.
Figure 14	Bunnings	Partnership agreement on TNZ website.
Figure 15	SAS Sports	Partnership agreement on TNZ website.
Figure 16	SAS Sports	Partnership agreement on TNZ website.
Figure 17	SAS Sports	Merchandise on TNZ social media site (Facebook).
Figure 18	SAS Sports	Flag logo at TNZ National Touch Championship.
Figure 19	ASICS	Partnership agreement on TNZ website.
Figure 20	ASICS	Partnership agreement on ASICS website.
Figure 21	ASICS	Merchandise on TNZ social media site (Facebook).
Figure 22	ASICS	Give away prize on TNZ social media website (Facebook).
Figure 23	ASICS	Athlete endorsement of product.
Figure 24	ASICS	Flag logo at TNZ National Touch Championship.
Figure 25	Bartercard	Flag logo at TNZ National Touch Championship.
Figure 26	Bartercard	Give away prize on TNZ social media website (Facebook).
Figure 27	Bartercard	Partnership agreement on TNZ website.
Figure 28	Bartercard	Logo on shirts at Premier Touch League.
Figure 29	Bartercard	Logo on shirts at TNZ National Touch Championship.
Figure 30	Silver Fern	Give away prize on TNZ social media website (Facebook).
Figure 31	Silver Fern	Product advertisement on TNZ social media site (Facebook).
Figure 32	Silver Fern	Product advertisement on TNZ social media site (Facebook).

Figure 33	E Tu Whānau	Partnership details on TNZ website.
Figure 34	E Tu Whānau	Product advertisement at TNZ National Touch Championship.
Figure 35	E Tu Whānau	Product advertisement at TNZ National Touch Championship.
Figure 36	E Tu Whānau	Partnership details on TNZ website.
Figure 37	E Tu Whānau	Logo on Touch NZ website of their brand.
Figure 38	E Tu Whānau	Partnership agreement on TNZ website.
Figure 39	All Sponsors	Promotion all the partners on the Touch NZ website.

Coding of images and subsequent analysis revealed four prominent themes related to RQ3 (Table 6). Themes are presented in priority order with logo placement being the most prominent and important. Next, branded merchandise was another common leveraging activity. Next, social media. The final theme that emerged from this content analysis focused on leveraging activity pertained to product integration, which involved the incorporation of sponsor products into the sponsored event. This integration took various forms, such as the use of sponsor-branded balls during the event.

**Table 6 – Themes from Content Analysis**

Theme	Description
1) Logo placement	- Banners, flags, and other promotional materials.
2) Branded merchandise	- Merchandise such as clothing, accessories, and equipment.
3) Social media	- Posts, and other digital content such as videos and images on Facebook, YouTube, and via Touch NZ website.
4) Product integration	- Sponsor products in use during the event.

The content analysis of the photographs and screenshots from Phase 2 illustrated how prominently logos feature in sponsors' leveraging efforts. Specifically, many banners and flags displayed at the 2023 Touch New Zealand National Championships had the

sponsor's logo prominently featured. For example, Figures 5 and 6 depict a banner permanently displaying Bunnings' logo behind the goal area on the finals field. Figures 28 and 29 show the Bartercard logo prominently displayed on the referee shirts. Many of the sponsors featured on the banners and flags had their logo along with a message that conveyed the values, goals, or unique selling proposition of their organisation. An example of incorporating business slogans or statements along with the sponsor's logo can be seen in Figure 18. The image features the SAS logo along with a message promoting their commitment to supporting their customers by saying "We've got your back". In addition to banners and flags, there were numerous examples of branded merchandise on site at the event.

Social media and other websites were prominent platforms for sponsor leveraging activities. Much of the content on social media and websites featured the sponsor's logo or other branding, emphasizing their partnership together. Social media and content often featured the sponsor's logo, along with their merchandise, as part of giveaways of one form or another. Finally, it was evident from both the on-site reconnaissance and online content analysis that sponsor products were integrated into numerous aspects of the Touch New Zealand community.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter is a discussion of the findings of the research project. The purpose of this dissertation was to investigate NSO sponsors in New Zealand. More specifically, the aim was to explore (a) objectives of those sponsors; (b) perceptions of fit; and (c) leveraging activity. The study was divided into two phases. In Phase 1, interviews were conducted with sponsors of Touch New Zealand. A deductive thematic analysis was undertaken to generate insights from the interviews in these specific areas. Phase 2, a content analysis, was carried out to explore sponsor leveraging activities.

The discussion section is structured around the three research questions and follows a format similar to the results section. Sections 5.2-5.4 cover the three main focal: objectives, fit and leveraging. Next, Section 5.5 is an offering of managerial implications related to this research. Section 5.6 acknowledges the limitations of the study and provides suggestions for future research.

### **5.2 Corporate Objectives of Touch New Zealand's Sponsors**

This section of the discussion focuses on the various sponsorship objectives identified in the study (i.e., RQ1). The findings revealed that sponsors had various objectives when entering into a sport sponsorship partnership with this National Sport Organisation (NSO), which can be grouped into three prominent themes: branding, community involvement, and increase sales and market share/return on investment (ROI).

#### *5.2.1 Branding*

Branding was the most prominent and important objective for sponsors. More specifically, many sponsors aimed to increase brand awareness and enhance their brand image through sport sponsorship. This is consistent with Meenaghan (1991), and Gwinner and Bennett (2008), who both supported this by mentioning brand awareness and image is one of the most critical objectives for sponsorship involvement. Traditionally, branding has been viewed as a primary objective for elite and professional sport organisations, aimed at enhancing their visibility and creating a distinct image in the minds of their target audience. However, what we know now is that sponsors of NSO's are increasingly recognising the importance of branding, and are actively pursuing it as a strategic objective. This is

consistent with the findings of Séguin et al. (2005), who explored sponsors of a Canadian National Sport Organisation (NSO).

Sponsors noted that they were seeking to differentiate from their competitors and increase brand awareness through their sponsorship activities with Touch New Zealand. It was evident that when the sponsors aligned their sponsorship objectives with the overall brand message of Touch New Zealand, it created a more cohesive and powerful brand image that resonates with its audience. As noted, branding are not a new objective for sponsors of sport. For example, Apostolopoulou and Papadimitriou (2004), found that sponsors of the Athens 2004 Olympic Games had a range of objectives, including boosting sales and market share, enhancing brand image, and increasing brand awareness among consumers.

Sponsors noted that the branding impact of partnering with Touch New Zealand had a significant impact on the types of consumers they attract. Furthermore, the sponsors conveyed that branding as a sponsorship objective has a direct impact on return on investment (ROI) which is very important.

### *5.2.2 Community Involvement*

The study's results provided insights about the importance of community involvement as a critical theme of sponsorship objectives. A considerable number of sponsors stated that they were endeavouring to advance corporate social responsibility (CSR) and contribute to community development programs via their sponsorship of Touch New Zealand. A community-focused sponsorship objective is consistent with Meenaghan (1983), who noted that community involvement is another important sponsorship objectives. Sponsors seek to engage in activities that enhance the well-being of the community, whether at a local or national level. The findings of this study are also in line with Jobber's (2001) research, which emphasises the importance of community engagement in sponsorship. The author conducted a survey in the Republic of Ireland that found community involvement to be the top sport sponsorship objective for the industrial sector.

Digging deeper, the sponsors mentioned that sponsoring Touch New Zealand created a more engaging and meaningful connection with their consumers and clients in the community, resulting in increased support and loyalty towards the brand. Sponsors felt a genuine commitment to making a positive impact and contributing to the local community

through the sponsorship with Touch New Zealand. Both Misener and Doherty (2014) and Séguin et al. (2005), have discussed the importance of community involvement as a means of enhancing brand equity and loyalty. The authors findings suggest that community involvement through CSR-related sponsorship adds social value to the sponsorship relationship, thereby strengthening brand credibility and fostering goodwill with the target audience.

In this research project it was evident that sponsors of Touch New Zealand aimed to support the sport while also prioritising the community aspect. More specifically, the sponsors aimed to make a positive impact on the local community by supporting families and communities involved with Touch New Zealand. This highlights the sponsors' commitment to being socially responsible and their willingness to invest in sport initiatives that benefited the touch community, beyond merely pursuing profit as an objective. This is consistent with Séguin et al. (2005), a study in which the importance of adopting a holistic approach to sport sponsorship was highlighted – including social objectives. Therefore, the current research supports our developing understanding of the complex drivers and objectives of sports sponsorship.

### *5.2.3 Increase Sales and Market Share/Return on Investment (ROI)*

Sponsors also conveyed that increasing sales and market share was a prominent objective related to their sponsorship of Touch New Zealand. Sponsors outlined the importance of leveraging their sponsorship investment to increase sales revenue, expand their customer base, and gain a larger share of the market. This is consistent with Séguin et al. (2005), who reported this in his research of an NSO in a Canadian setting. What we now know is that increasing sales and market share are also objectives of NSO sponsors in a New Zealand context. These results here provide further evidence that the objectives of NSOs extend beyond branding and community involvement alone.

Sponsors reported using the Touch New Zealand relationship to generate leads, create new customer acquisition opportunities, and increase their brand awareness, ultimately leading to revenue growth and market share expansion and that these were objectives from the outset. Beech and Chadwick (2007) noted that sponsorship objectives related to sales may involve a variety of tactics, such as driving sales of existing products or services, generating interest in new products, or fostering collaboration between

commercial partners. These findings are in line with the sponsors objectives articulated in this research. The findings from the study highlight the multifaceted nature of sales and marketing objectives in sports sponsorship, and the importance of adopting a strategic and holistic approach to achieving these objectives.

### **5.3 The Fit Between Sponsors and Touch New Zealand**

Understanding perceptions of the fit between sponsors and Touch New Zealand was the second major foci area of this research project. The findings of this study indicate that sponsor fit is salient and top of mind for sponsors and that perceptions of fit can broadly categorised into three prominent themes: brand fit, relationship fit, and value fit.

#### *5.3.1 Brand Fit*

When asked to describe the fit between themselves and Touch New Zealand, sponsors highlighted brand fit was the most prominent and crucial dimension. The results from the study emphasised that a strong brand fit between the sponsor and Touch New Zealand enhanced the overall effectiveness of the partnership and helped to build brand awareness, reputation, and perception. Many sponsors revealed that they were able to establish a good connection between their brand and Touch New Zealand by ensuring that their brands were consistent with one another. This observation is consistent with Shaw and Amis (2001), who argued that having an appropriate fit between the sponsor and the sport entity can enhance the sponsor's image. Similarly, Woisetschlager et al. (2009), suggest that success of a sponsorship agreement is based on the consumers' perception of the fit between the sponsor and the sport entity.

The current research findings suggest that the importance of brand fit in sports sponsorship is not limited to elite and professional sport organisations. The results highlight the strategic importance of brand fit at NSO level. We now have evidence that NSO's are aware of and actively consider how their brand fits with the NSO. This is consistent with the findings of Séguin et al. (2005), that sponsors seek to partner with sport entities that are aligned with their brand message, image, and values, which can enhance the authenticity and credibility of the sponsorship agreement. This alignment leads to greater customer engagement, loyalty, and positive perception among target audience. This perception of brand fit seems to be separate and distinct from perceptions of relationship fit and value fit which are covered next.

### *5.3.2 Relationship Fit*

The next most prominent theme that was highlighted as having a significant impact on sponsorship fit between sponsors and sport entities was the establishment of a strong relationship fit. This theme was characterized by concepts such as trust-building, open communication, and a shared commitment to achieving mutually beneficial outcomes. Building on the work of Séguin et al. (2005), this study reveals that sponsors believe that relationships are an important part of the overall fit within a sponsorship arrangement. These findings on relationship fit makes a valuable contribution to the existing literature on sports sponsorship by shedding light on the importance of relationship fit within a New Zealand context. This research indicates that the relevance of relationship fit in sports sponsorship extends beyond elite and professional sport entities, representing a novel finding in the domain of NSOs. The research findings reveal that adopting a long-term perspective in sponsorship relationships, cultivating a strong and compatible partnership is crucial for achieving mutual benefits. The findings here provide a fresh insight into the dynamics of sports sponsorship in New Zealand NSOs and emphasise the need for a more nuanced approach than generically considering the notion of fit in sponsorship relationships.

### *5.3.3 Value Fit*

Further evidence of nuance related to sponsor-NSO fit relates to the way in which values are perceived to fit. Several sponsors expressed the importance of alignment in this area, emphasising the need for a shared vision, common purpose, or put another way, fit on what is valued by both partners. This finding is consistent with Séguin et al. (2005), who suggested the need for value congruence and effective alignment for driving successful partnerships. What we now know is that the concept of sponsorship fit is a multifaceted and complex phenomenon in an NSO context in New Zealand. Specifically, the study found that the alignment of values between sponsors and Touch NZ represents an important factor in driving successful sponsorship relationships. These findings have significant implications for the existing literature on sponsorship fit, as they suggest that the factors contributing to successful sponsorships extend beyond those commonly associated with elite and professional sports.

## 5.4 Sponsor Leveraging

When exploring the data related to how sponsors were leveraging their sponsorship of Touch New Zealand (i.e., RQ3) several themes were evident not least that the practice is important and prioritised. This aspect of the project featured data generated in two phases. Phase 1 involved conducting interviews with sponsors to gain insight into their leveraging activity and Phase 2 consisted of a content analysis of materials from sponsorship activities such as signage, banners, tents, and photographs. The content analysis included a review of sponsors' websites and social media platforms to identify evidence of brand leveraging efforts. Data from the two phases is complementary, allowing for a comprehensive examination of how sponsors leverage their partnerships.

### 5.4.1 Brand Exposure

The most important theme that emerged when sponsors were asked to talk about how they were leveraging their sponsorship investment of Touch New Zealand was *Brand Exposure*. Sponsors identified this as a key theme of their sponsorship leveraging activity, highlighting the importance of increasing their brand visibility and recognition through their association with Touch New Zealand. This is consistent with Lagae (2003) and Séguin et al. (2005), where it was suggested that sponsor leveraging activities drive business growth, increased brand awareness, and establish brand recognition. Therefore, what we now know is that brand exposure is also an important leveraging activity for sponsors of non-profit sporting organisations like NSOs in New Zealand.

### 5.4.2 Product Integration

The next most common theme that was identified within interviewee descriptions of leveraging sponsorship activities was the notion of product integration. Six out of the eight sponsors commented on the importance of effective product integration as a crucial leveraging strategy. When asked, sponsors reported their practice of maximising the returns on their sponsorship investment of Touch New Zealand. Furthermore, they mentioned that product integration strategies are important as crucial levers. As sponsors viewed these integrative measures as key mechanisms to derive value from their sponsorship investments.

Sponsors prioritised bringing their products into close contact with audiences through product placements, sampling, and co-branding initiatives at Touch New Zealand

events to optimise value extraction from their investments. Scholars such as Séguin et al. (2005), have reported that product integration can translate into tangible sponsorship outcomes for sponsors through increased brand recognition, message penetration and increased sales. However, prior research has focused primarily on elite and professional sports. The current study indicates that product integration is also a critical sponsor leveraging approach of sponsors of an NSO in a New Zealand context. This adds a new perspective to the body of literature by demonstrating the generalisability of this leveraging activity.

#### *5.4.3 Digital Engagement*

The final prominent theme that emerged from sponsors pertaining to their leveraging activities is the realm of digital engagement. Sponsors highlighted the significance of utilising digital platforms to connect with customers, and ultimately drive revenue growth. This is consistent with Séguin et al. (2005), who mentioned that sponsors can derive benefits from digital strategies such as increased brand visibility, brand message penetration, consumer engagement and purchase intentions. Digital engagement has long been recognised as a key leveraging activity in elite and professional sports.

Relatively little research to date has examined digital leveraging within an NSO sponsorship context. The research findings here suggest that digital engagement is a crucial component of sponsor leveraging activities for sponsors of this organisational type as well. The study's results indicate that digital platforms such as social media, email marketing, and website optimization are effective means of engaging with customers and promoting products and services, regardless of the level or type of sports organisation. These insights highlight the need for sports organisations to be ready to offer and ultimately support the digital leveraging strategies of their sponsors.

#### **5.5 Managerial Implication**

The findings of this study offer several managerial implications. Sponsors seem to place great emphasis on branding when it comes to their relationship with an NSO. This was true across the focal areas in this research project: objectives, fit and leveraging. Therefore, NSO's seeking to nurture effective sponsorship arrangements must be actively thinking about and improving their own brand, such that it will align with potential sponsors.

With these new insights about sponsor objectives, perceptions of fit and leveraging strategies, NSO managers can now tailor their sponsorship arrangements to align. For example, NSOs should create opportunities for sponsors to connect with their communities as they wish to do so. Similarly, NSOs must consider how they can create opportunities for sponsors to realise their business objectives around market share and ROI. It is essential to think about this proactively and communicate with sponsors about this.

The implications of the findings around values fit are twofold. First, it is important for NSOs to carefully consider the values of potential sponsors when seeking to partner. With this knowledge, areas of alignment can be highlighted when pitching the relationship. Second, the findings highlight the importance of effective communication and collaboration between sponsors and NSOs, particularly in the context of shared values and goals. For instance, by prioritising value fit and effective communication, NSOs are able to cultivate strong partnerships that drive mutual benefits for both the sponsor and the sport entity.

The insights generated here have significant implications for NSO sponsors seeking to employ a range of strategies to maximise the benefits of their sponsorship investments, including product integration and digital engagement. These leveraging strategies can enhance brand recognition, promote their products, and engage with consumers in the digital realm. It seems there is increasing variety and sophistication as to how sponsors of NSO are leveraging their relationship, so NSO managers should be ready to support these.

## **5.6 Limitations and Future Research**

As with any research project, it is important to acknowledge limitations and put forth ideas for future research. This study's research context was only one NSO, which raises questions about the transferability of the findings to other NSOs in New Zealand or elsewhere. The characteristics of Touch New Zealand's sponsorship arrangements, including the specific nature of their sponsors objectives, fit, and leveraging activities may differ from those of other NSOs. Future studies should therefore replicate this project in diverse settings and contexts including across different sports, countries, and levels of competition. Further, alternative research methods could seek to build on the content analysis which is more objective than the self-reported data from interviews primarily used in this study. In the area of leveraging, future studies should seek to look more comprehensively at the leveraging efforts across the sponsors of multiple NSOs. Future studies could also consider

adopting a longitudinal design to examine changes in sponsor perceptions and objectives over a period, rather than at a specific point of time.

There was a degree of commercial sensitivity associated with the topic, which likely affected the way sponsors provided data. Given the competitive nature of the sport sponsorship industry, sponsors may have been reluctant to disclose sensitive information or provide a complete picture of their sponsorship arrangements. Indeed, in order to gain access to Touch New Zealand sponsors to be interviewed in Phase 1 a balance between seeking useful data with not getting into areas that sponsors wouldn't necessarily be happy to talk about. Likewise, a further limitation of this study relates to the potential for selection bias, given that only a subset of sponsors were willing to participate in the study. As a result, the generalizability of the findings was limited, and it is uncertain to what extent the perspectives and experiences of the eight sponsors who participated in the study are representative of the twenty sponsors associated with Touch New Zealand.

Finally, the content analysis conducted in Phase 2 of the study was limited by the relatively short duration of the analysis and the scope of the data examined. As the analysis focused on a specific period of time and only a limited amount of content was analysed, it is possible that the findings may not be entirely representative of the broader trends and patterns of the leveraging activity of a NSO's sponsors. Future research could employ a more comprehensive and longitudinal approach to the content analysis, examining a larger and more diverse range of sponsorship materials over an extended period of time.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Content Analysis of Touch New Zealand Sponsor Leveraging Activities



Figure 1 Bunnings tent at the 2023 Bunnings National Touch Championship was hosted at Ongley Park in Palmerston North on 2-5th March 2023.



Figure 2 Bunnings sign at the 2023 Bunnings National Touch Championship was hosted at Ongley Park in Palmerston North on 2-5th March 2023.



Figure 3) Bunnings logo as the major sponsor of the Premier Touch League competition advertised on the Touch NZ Website

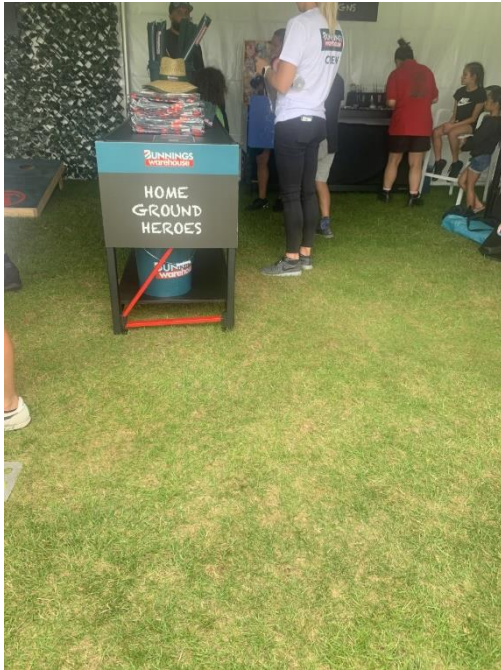


Figure 4: Bunnings sign at the 2023 Bunnings National Touch Championship was hosted at Ongley Park in Palmerston North on 2-5th March 2023.



Figure 5: Bunnings sign and logos on finals field at the 2023 Bunnings National Touch Championship was hosted at Ongley Park in Palmerston North on 2-5th March 2023.



Figure 6: Bunnings flag logo on finals field at the 2023 Bunnings National Touch Championship was hosted at Ongley Park in Palmerston North on 2-5th March 2023.



Figure 7: Bunnings flag logo on finals field at the 2023 Bunnings National Touch Championship was hosted at Ongley Park in Palmerston North on 2-5th March 2023.

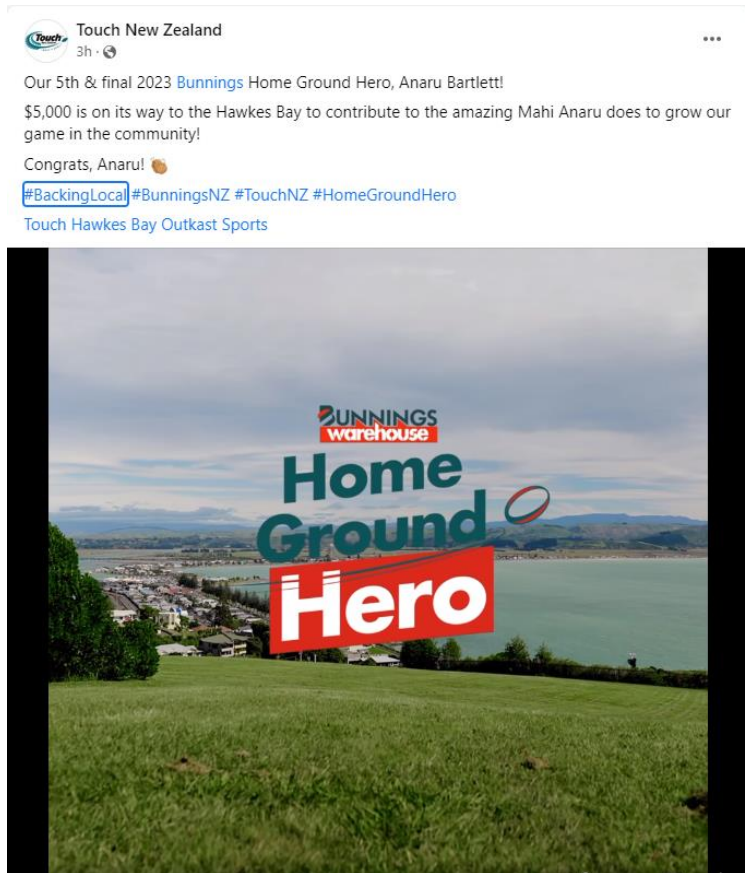


Figure 8: Bunnings Home Ground Heroes on Touch NZ social media website (Facebook)



Figure 9: Bunnings featuring on Touch NZ social media site (Facebook) of the two Touch National tournaments 2023.

**Touch New Zealand**  
March 28 at 4:53 PM · 🌐

We are stoked to announce our 2023 Bunnings Home Ground Heroes!

This year's intake were nominated for making an incredible contribution to their respective Touch communities, & will each receive \$5000 to continue the great Mahi they do!

Alongside our Principal Partner [Bunnings Warehouse New Zealand](#), we're proud to congratulate our winners and celebrate them by sharing their stories with you over the next few weeks!... See more



Figure 10: Bunnings featuring on Touch NZ social media site (Facebook) of the 2023 Home Ground Hero winners.

**Touch New Zealand**  
December 21, 2022 · 🌐

It's the final day of our 7 Days of Giveaways! Our friends at [Bunnings Warehouse New Zealand](#) are keen to make sure you have the best Kiwi summer with this prize!

To get in on the win - make sure you're following both [Bunnings Warehouse New Zealand](#) & [Touch NZ](#) on Instagram + tag a mate in the comment section. It's that simple! Sharing to your story helps, too! 🍀

You can enter as many times as you like, we'll send the prize direct to your door! Winner drawn tonight @ 5pm. ... See more



Figure 11: Bunnings featuring on Touch NZ social media site (Facebook) of a giveaway gift.

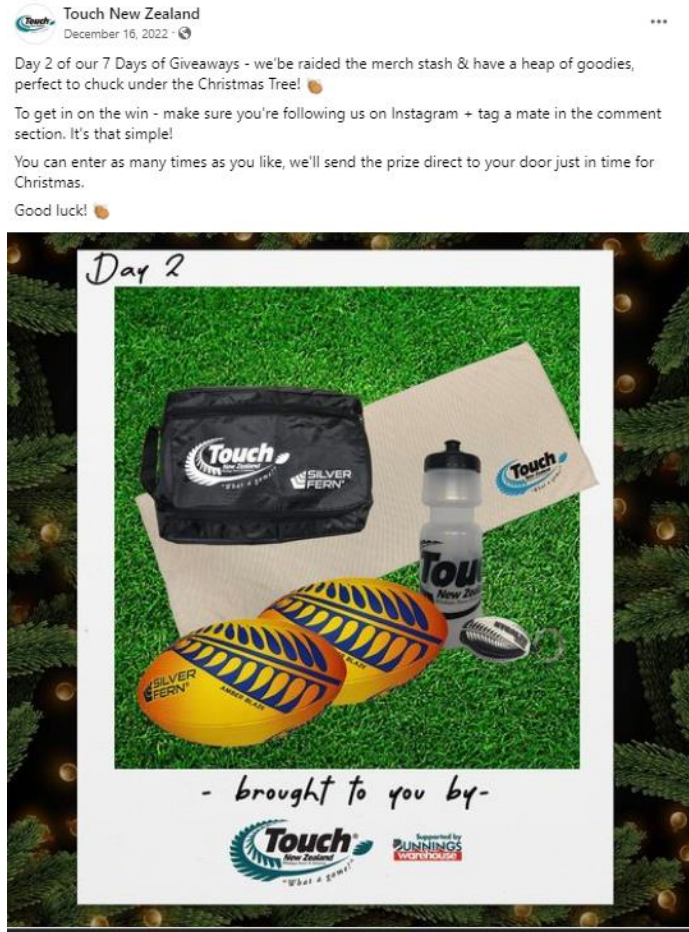


Figure 12: Bunnings featuring on Touch NZ social media site (Facebook) of a giveaway package over Christmas 2022.

## Touch New Zealand teams up with Bunnings Warehouse



Touch New Zealand is extremely excited to announce that we have teamed up with Bunnings Warehouse, who will be the Principal Partner of Touch New Zealand.

Bunnings Warehouse is the leading retailer of home improvement and outdoor living products in New Zealand. With 55 stores nationwide, Bunnings' capability and enthusiasm to support our sport across the country is vast.

We believe this partnership is a perfect fit for both organisations, with many shared values such as inclusiveness, diversity and community. Together, we are committed to providing hands-on support at the very heart of our sport - the grassroots level.

The three-year partnership will tap off this season with Bunnings Warehouse providing Player of the Day Certificates with a \$10 redeemable café voucher, which will be distributed to over 60,000 children nationwide.

The partnership will alleviate some of the pressures of running a touch module such as supplying balls, cones and marquees, while enabling our people to continue to provide and foster the game we all love.

Chief Executive Joe Sprangers says "This partnership will be instrumental in driving positive growth in the sport of Touch, particularly at the grassroots level. It will also inject some of the zing & fun at Touch New Zealand national events that will really enhance the experience for players and supporters as well."


Toby Lawrance, Bunnings NZ General Manager says, "Touch NZ and Bunnings share very similar values, including inclusivity, care, integrity, teamwork and respect, so it was a natural fit to partner with an organisation making a meaningful contribution to the community."

"Many Bunnings team members already take part in the game of touch and it is clear there is a lot of passion for the sport. We are really looking forward to working with Touch NZ to support their initiatives and great work in the community."

In the coming weeks we will be thrilled to highlight some of the awesome ways Bunnings Warehouse will be getting involved, as well as educate all Touchies on how we can support and grow the partnership to really make a difference to our sport.



Figure 13: Bunnings featuring on Touch NZ web site of partnership agreement deal between the two organisations.



1/12/21

**Bunnings Warehouse and Touch New Zealand team up for a further three years.**

Touch New Zealand is proud to announce an extension of their relationship with Principal Partner, Bunnings Warehouse, for a further three years.

The partnership, which started in 2018, now enters its fourth season. During this time, the sport has experienced an increase in membership, growing support from the community and a positive boost to the overall experience of the game.

Commenting on the renewed partnership, Joe Sprangers, Touch NZ Chief Executive said "Working with Bunnings Warehouse has allowed us to bolster our core offerings to our Touch membership and we are delighted to be able to continue our relationship with them. Bunnings and Touch NZ share a joint vision of growing an inclusive, fun sport for all whanau. Through the partnership we have a unique opportunity to connect and engage the community right down to a grassroots level and we look forward to continue building on our relationship for the seasons to come."

From the beginning of this partnership, Bunnings' priority has always been on providing meaningful support to the Touch community at a grassroots level. Over the past three years, Bunnings has contributed to over 1000 new coaches attending coaching courses and 300 coaches attending practical development courses, introduced initiatives like the Bunnings Player of the Day certificates and awards, donated equipment for Module packs, as well as Bunnings Coaching Tool Kits. In 2020, Bunnings provided a further 224 coaching kits to directly support the coaching of tamariki and rangatahi.

Thousands of Touch fans and players have also enjoyed the Bunnings chill-out activation zones on game days. Players can cool off in the misting tent, tackle the Bunnings games to win prizes, and kickback between games with teammates. These activities have quickly become a well-known and eagerly anticipated highlight at Touch NZ events and will be back throughout the tournament season.

Ben Camire, Director, Bunnings New Zealand, says, "We're delighted to be renewing our partnership with Touch NZ and continuing to work together to grow the game and strengthen our connection to the Touch community. From the very beginning our focus has been on bringing our shared values of teamwork and meaningful community connection to life and I am really proud of how we have been able to come together and grow the game from a grassroots level over the last three years.

Our team is excited for the season ahead and look forward to supporting their local touch modules and tournaments over the next few months".

Bunnings and Touch NZ are looking forward to the season officially tapping off and celebrating the launch of another exciting summer of Touch.

[Touch NZ Tournament Schedule:](#)

Te Waipounamu Tournament, Christchurch, 12 - 13 December 2021

Bunnings Warehouse Touch Youth National Championships, Christchurch, 11 - 13 February 2022

Figure 14: Bunnings featuring on Touch NZ web site of partnership agreement 2021.

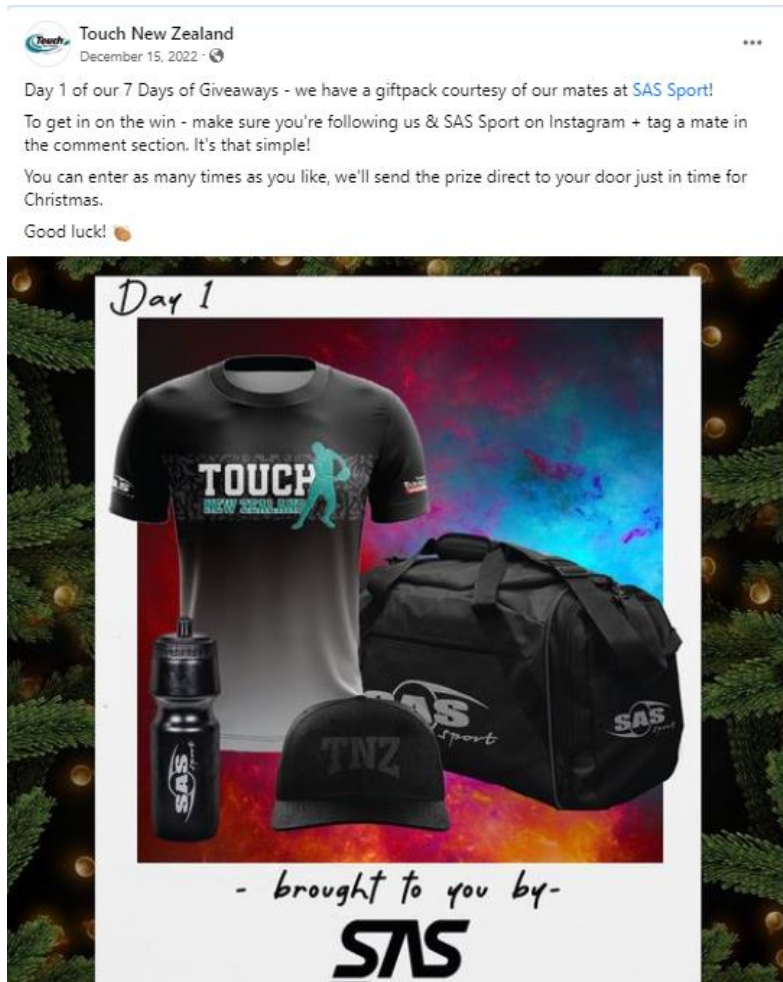


Figure 15: SAS Sports featuring on Touch NZ social media site (Facebook) of a giveaway package over Christmas 2022.

## Touch NZ & SAS extend Partnership



Touch New Zealand is pleased to announce that SAS Sport will be our official apparel provider, extending our current partnership through to 2028.

Our original partnership commenced November 2009 – 13 years to date, and over that time we have both grown significantly - the partnership has developed to support that growth.

"SAS understands the needs of Touch NZ, has diversified to be able to provide a wider range of services, and has been a valued partner of Touch NZ since the regeneration of the organisation in 2009 through to our needs of the present day," says Touch NZ CE Joe Sprangers.



Managing Director of SAS Sport Tim Connolly is excited to extend the relationship -

"SAS Sport is immensely proud of our enduring partnership with Touch NZ and that the relationship is moving forward,

Whether it's the Touch Blacks, PTL, working with provincial associations or touch clubs throughout NZ - we're excited to provide world class product, service and quality. We've got your back!"

For more info: [comms@touch.co.nz](mailto:comms@touch.co.nz)

Figure 16: SAS Sports featuring on Touch NZ website of their Official Apparel Partnership.



Figure 17: SAS Sports featuring on Touch NZ social media site (Facebook) of their merchandise range at the 2022 Bunnings NZSS National Touch Championship in Rotorua



Figure 18: SAS Sports featuring logo flag at the 2023 Bunnings National Touch Championship was hosted at Ongley Park in Palmerston North on 2-5th March 2023.

SPORTS, GEAR &amp; TECHNOLOGY

## ASICS NZ TO TEAM UP WITH TOUCH NZ

BY ASICS | DEC. 01, 2019

### A MUCH LOVED SPORT FOR HIGH-PERFORMANCE TEAMS AND COMMUNITY GETS A HUGE BOOST THROUGH ASICS PARTNERSHIP

A new partnership between Touch NZ and ASICS will provide our national sides with boots specifically designed to protect them on the field and keep them performing on the world stage. The two year agreement supports Touch NZ's three high performance teams, the Touch Blacks: Mens, Womens and Mixed - as well as aiming to educate the sizable touch community on the technology to look for in touch boots.

ASICS New Zealand Marketing Manager, Jason Niles, says that being able to supply Touch NZ with boots is a fantastic opportunity that the team is proud of. "We're really looking forward to helping the Touch Blacks as they continue their campaigns and also supporting the touch community as one of New Zealand's much loved sports. With our boots designed to cushion and protect on hard ground surfaces we hope this will help keep the Touch Blacks performing at the highest level and achieve their lofty goals" says Niles.

Touch NZ Communications Manager, Tamara Keefe, says that the partnership is really exciting and it will be fantastic to see all the players in ASICS shoes given how respected the ASICS brand is. Touch rugby is a sport which has one of the biggest participation numbers in New Zealand says Keefe. "It's a game that you can play with people of all ages. It's pretty cool to see a granddad out there with his grandchild. It's one of those games which can bring a lot of people together and is enjoyed year-round to promote a healthy lifestyle."

Figure 19: ASICS featuring on Touch NZ website of their Official Partnership 2019.

## It All Starts With Touch

Our story in footy begins with the way we've built our boots. Designed for firmer summer ground and featuring HGT10mm technology for quick take-offs and sudden changes in direction, our touch boots will help you play safely at your best.

We're proud to partner with Touch New Zealand to support players at every level through the uplifting power of sport and movement.

[Shop Now](#)

## Touch NZ

Proud to be in partnership with Touch New Zealand to help positively influence social and community development in Aotearoa.



Figure 20: Touch NZ featuring on the ASICS website of their partnership.

En route to Palmy for #BunningsTouchNats? Then head along to the Touch NZ shop to check out the new @asicsnz touch boots which have just landed. We also have a cheeky discount, exclusive to our event this weekend.

📍 Located in Tent City

🕒 11am - 2pm daily

#BunningsTouchNats #TouchNZ

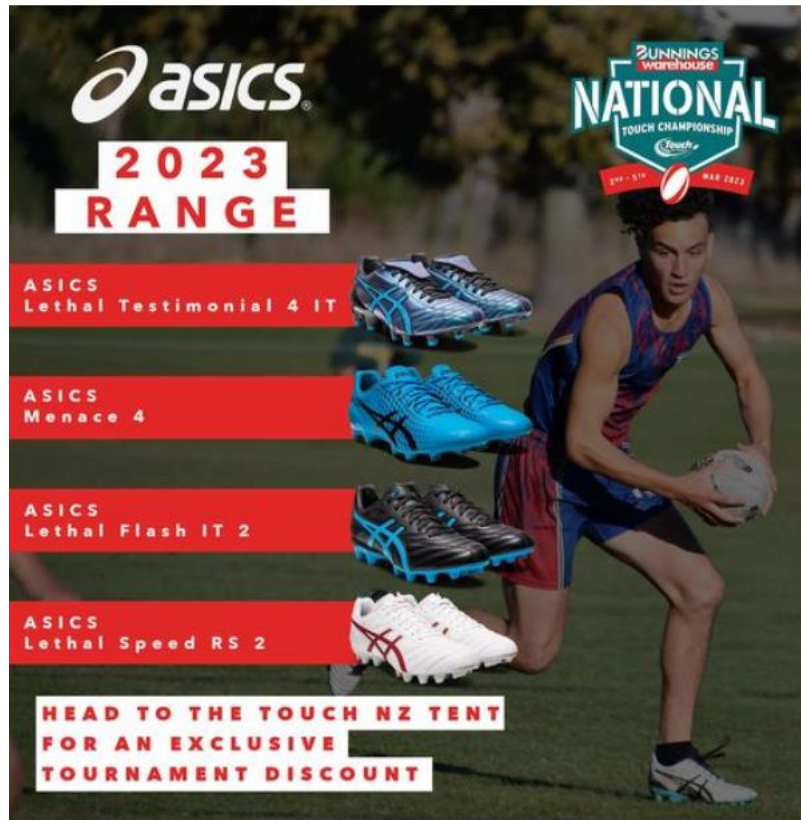


Figure 21: ASICS featuring on Touch NZ social media site (Facebook) promoting their 2023 boot range at the 2023 Bunnings National Touch Championship was hosted at Ongley Park in Palmerston North on 2-5th March 2023

Touch New Zealand  
December 19, 2022 · 🌐

Happy Monday! For Day 5 of our 7 Days of Giveaways, we're starting the new week with a bang! Our friends at ASICS New Zealand are keen to make sure you start the new year with some new boots!

To get in on the win - make sure you're following both [ASICS New Zealand](#) & us on Instagram + tag a mate in the comment section. It's that simple! Sharing to your story helps, too! 🍀

You can enter as many times as you like, we'll send the prize direct to your door! Winner drawn tonight @ 5pm.

Good luck! 🍀



Figure 22: ASICS featuring on Touch NZ social media site (Facebook) promoting their 2022 boot range as a giveaway to the touch NZ community.



Figure 23: ASICS featuring on Touch NZ social media site (Facebook) promoting their new Menace 4 boot with a professional sports athlete Shaun Johnson endorses the product.



Figure 24: ASICS flag logo featuring on final field at the 2023 Bunnings National Touch Championship was hosted at Ongley Park in Palmerston North on 2-5th March 2023.



Figure 25: Bartercard flag logo featuring on final field at the 2023 Bunnings National Touch Championship was hosted at Ongley Park in Palmerston North on 2-5th March 2023.

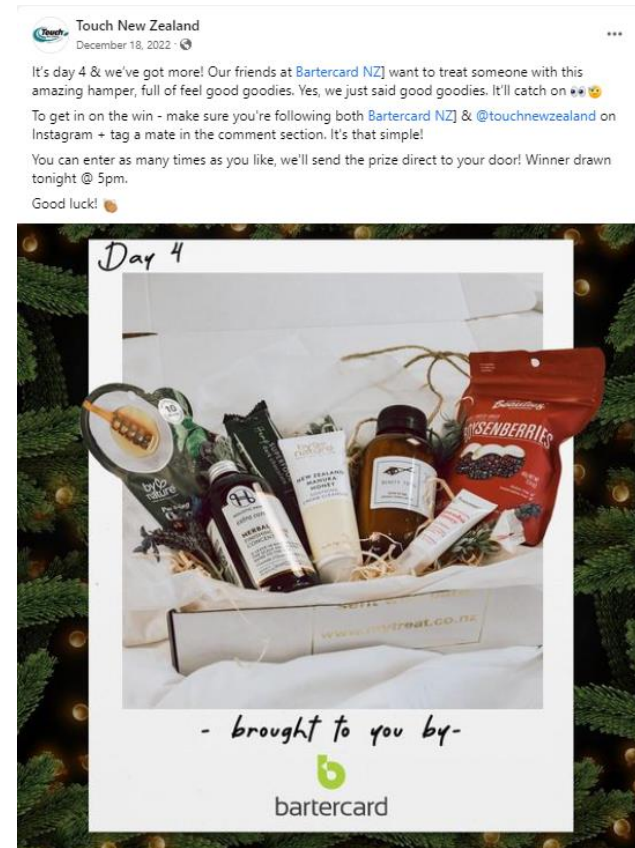


Figure 26: Bartercard featuring on Touch NZ social media site (Facebook) promoting brand through a giveaway with Touch NZ.



Figure 27: Bartercard featuring on Touch NZ social media site (Facebook) of their Official Referee Partnership agreement 2021.



Figure 28: Bartercard featuring on Touch NZ social media site (Facebook) of one of their new touch referee uniforms for the 2022 Bunnings Premier Touch League.



Figure 29: Bartercard featuring on Touch NZ social media site (Facebook) of brand logo on the shirts of the referees at the 2023 Bunnings National Touch Championship was hosted at Ongley Park in Palmerston North on 2-5th March 2023.

**Touch New Zealand**  
December 17, 2022 · 🌐

Day 3 of our 7 Days of Giveaways - How good would this look in your backyard! Our friends at [Silver Fern Sport](#) have hooked it up & we're keen to get this under your tree for the touchie that also loves a bit of Netball, too 🍷

To get in on the win - make sure you're following both [Silver Fern Sport](#) & [@touchnewzealand](#) on Instagram + tag a mate in the comment section. It's that simple!

You can enter as many times as you like, we'll send the prize direct to your door. Winner drawn tonight @ 5pm!

Good luck! 🍷



Figure 30: Silver Fern featuring on Touch NZ social media site (Facebook) supporting a giveaway through Touch NZ.



Figure 31: Silver Fern featuring on Touch NZ social media site (Facebook), as the Open Mens Touch Blacks captain holds one of Silver Fern products (i.e., Ball).



Figure 32: Silver Fern featuring on Touch NZ social media site (Facebook) of their ball product for the upcoming 2022 touch session.

# AWHI

## Creating positive and supportive environments

Originally designed as Touch New Zealand's Positive Support Sideline programme, AWHI has become much more in recent times with its principles of Attitude, Whanau, Harmony and Integrity reflecting the true nature, attitudes and behaviours of our Touch whanau and communities.

AWHI is widely recognised and used by our Referees and Coaching sectors as well as many of our Provincial and Module based players and supporters.

Underpinning this Kaupapa is the AWHI Promise with its simple values that go to the heart of what we as a sport strive for, positive and supportive environments that are respectful and inclusive for all.

At all Touch New Zealand tournaments, the AWHI Promise has become a fundamental part of the registration process for all Coaches, Managers and Administrators. Recently, even players are now completing the AWHI Promise, reflecting the increasing desire of athletes to compete at the highest level in fair, positive and supportive environments.



Attitude – Whanau – Harmony – Integrity

[Online AWHI Promise](#)

Figure 33: AWHI featuring on Touch NZ web site of what they do and outlines what their position is with Touch NZ.



Figure 34: AWHI featuring on Touch NZ water bottles at the 2023 Bunnings National Touch Championship was hosted at Ongley Park in Palmerston North on 2-5th March 2023.

**AWHI on-field support:**

The AWHI Programme is promoted with through the AWHI team members who interact with everyone present at tournaments and events, as well as with small supporting resources such as AWHI message cards.



The AWHI team members present a positive on-field nature to the programme and take the opportunity to hand out AWHI Promises where negative behavior may be an issue, as well as rewarding positive behavior and supporters with AWHI Giveaway prizes courtesy of our supporting partner Bunnings.



The provision of AWHI tees to recognized promoters within the Touch fraternity, as well as the already mentioned various giveaways to the general public, are an acknowledgement to positive support and behaviors

Figure 35: AWHI featuring on Touch NZ website by informing the touch community what the AWHI brand looks like at the 2023 Bunnings National Touch Championship was hosted at Ongley Park in Palmerston North on 2-5th March 2023.

**AWHI in summary:**

Touch NZ feels that AWHI is a positive step towards addressing one of the few negative aspects of sport. We have been mindful of the complexities and unique aspects of Touch and we have aspired to respect all players and their respective cultures and backgrounds.

Most of all, we have endeavoured to build a constructive and supportive message, with a look and feel that our Provinces and Touch Community can be proud of.

It has impressed many Community leaders and Community groups which is reflected with the partnership of the AWHI programme and E Tu Whanau, the movement for positive change for everyone.

Overall, the AWHI Sideline Support Programme has been widely accepted by the Touch public, supporters, Provinces, Coaches, Players and Administration staff to the point that AWHI is now positioned more than just a Sideline Support Programme, but as a key towards **Creating Positive and Supportive Environments**.

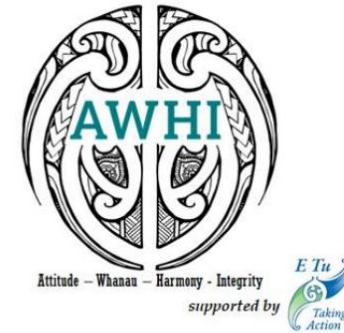


Figure 36: AWHI featuring on Touch NZ website of their brand and a summary of their working partnership with Touch NZ.



Figure 37: AWHI featuring on Touch NZ website of their brand in the 2021 annual report.

## Touch NZ creates whānau-first kaupapa

March 26, 2018

A common sense way of managing conflict during Touch Rugby games has drawn high praise from players, supporters and officials who experienced kōrero AWHI in practice at the 2018 E Tū Whānau National Touch championships held in Auckland's Pulman Park in March.



Inspired by values fundamental to the E Tū Whānau movement, Touch NZ Community Project Manager Moni Collins, developed the AWHI Side-line Behaviour Promise, a code of positive behaviour that Touch NZ expected everyone to adhere to throughout the tournament.

The result was a peaceful, fun-filled tournament and lots of kōrero about living with aroha and practicing tikanga – that which is tika, that which is right – in all aspects of life.

Figure 38: AWHI featuring on Touch NZ website of their partnership with Touch NZ 2018.

# Sponsors



We are excited to be teaming up with Bunnings, the Principal Partner of Touch NZ. We have a shared commitment to inclusivity, diversity, fun, teamwork and community. Together, we're committed to providing hands-on support at the grassroots level of Touch.



Touch is one of New Zealand's most popular team sports, a game that friends, family, women and men (girls and boys) can play together. This is an opportunity for Bunnings teams to join in and support Touch teams in communities throughout New Zealand.



Figure 39: Overall feature of promoting all the partners on the Touch NZ website.

## Appendix B: Interview Script

### Interview Questions

- 1) How long has your organisation been a sponsor of Touch New Zealand for?
- 2) Why has your organisation chosen to use sport sponsorship?
- 3) What choice criteria were used in selecting this sponsorship?
- 4) Who is the primary target market you are trying to reach through this sponsorship?
- 5) What are your objectives of the sponsorship?
- 6) Are you achieving your objectives?
- 7) How often are the objectives reviewed/re-evaluated?
- 8) What benefits are offered to your consumers through your partnership with Touch New Zealand?
- 9) How do you evaluate the success of your sponsorships?
- 10) What measures do you use to measure sponsorship effectiveness?
- 11) What does your organisation hope to achieve from a sponsorship investment?
- 12) How do you see your organisational fit with Touch New Zealand?
- 13) How does your organisation select a specific sport sponsorship?
- 14) What activation or leveraging has Touch New Zealand do you do?
- 15) What else could Touch New Zealand do to help?

## Appendix C: Participant Information Sheet

### Participant Information Sheet

**Project Working Title:** Understanding the objectives, fit, and leveraging of Touch New Zealand's sponsors.

#### An Invitation

I am currently in my second semester of full-time study progressing towards a Master of Sport, Exercise and Health, major in Sport Leadership & Management at AUT University. Part of the requirement of the degree is to complete a dissertation, which has a research component to it. Your participation in the research would be much appreciated and your knowledge and expertise in the sport industry will add value to the research project and its findings.

#### What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of this research study is to provide an insight into understanding the objectives, fit, and leveraging of sponsors in New Zealand NSOs.

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

You were identified as a sponsor of Touch NZ. You indicated your willingness to participate by contacting the researcher.

#### How do I agree to participate in this research?

You will be asked to verbally consent at the start of an interview that we schedule.

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?

Your interview should last no more than 45 minutes and I will ask you a series of questions about sponsor objectives, fit and leverage. Once the interview is over your involvement in the research project is complete. Once the interview has been conducted, I will transcribe the interview and the findings will be discussed as part of the dissertation.

#### How will my privacy be protected?

Your privacy will be protected by not reporting or publishing insights or data that would link you or your organisation.

#### What are the discomforts and risks?

There are not discomforts or risks. You are not obligated to disclose any information that you don't wish too.

#### What are the benefits?

By participating in this research, you are helping to develop a better understanding of the sponsorship of NZ's National Sport Organisations. Both NSOs and sponsors will benefit from the insights generated here about objectives, fit, and leveraging.

**What are the costs of participating in this research?**

There are no costs associated to participating in this research.

**What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?**

You have 2 weeks to consider this application.

**Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?**

Yes. All participants in the research are entitled to receive a copy of the transcribed interview and a summary of the research findings. Additionally, should you choose, it would be a pleasure to provide you with the final dissertation.

**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, Michael Naylor, [mnaylor@autuni.ac.nz](mailto:mnaylor@autuni.ac.nz)

**Whom do I contact for further information about this research?**

You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

**Researcher Contact Details:**

Nathan Thompson; [nathan961@hotmail.com](mailto:nathan961@hotmail.com), 027 320 2393.

**Project Supervisor Contact Details:**

Michael Naylor, [michael.naylor@aut.ac.nz](mailto:michael.naylor@aut.ac.nz), 09 921 9999 ext 6627.

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 20/10/22**

**Appendix D: Oral Consent Form**

**Oral Consent Script**

*Project title: **Understanding the objectives, fit, and leveraging of Touch New Zealand’s sponsors.***

*Project Supervisor: **Michael Naylor***

*Researcher: **Nathan Thompson***

*The participant joins the videoconference*

Do you agree to my recording your consent to participate?

*If they agree, then the record function will be activated and they will be asked the following:*

- Have you read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated dd mm yyyy?
- Do you have any questions about the research?
- Do you understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that the in interview will also be audio-recorded and transcribed?
- Do you understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (your choice) and that you may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.?
- Do you understand that if you 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.
- Do you agree to take part in this research?
- Do you wish to receive a summary of the research findings? (please tick one): Yes   
No
- Do you want me to send you a copy of the audio recording for this consent? Yes   
No
- Please confirm you name and contact details

Participant’s name: .....

Participant’s Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....

.....

.....

.....

*I will now turn off the recording of the Consent and then will start a separate recording for the interview.*

***Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on type the date on which the final approval was granted AUTEK Reference number type the AUTEK reference number***

*Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form*

## Appendix E: Ethics Approval

20 October 2022  
 Michael Naylor  
 Faculty of Health and Environmental Sciences

Dear Michael

Re Ethics Application: **22/211 Understanding the objectives, fit, and leveraging of Touch New Zealand's sponsors.**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 20 October 2025.

### Non-Standard Conditions of Approval

1. An assurance that data will be stored with the applicant and not the student.
2. Inclusion in the Information Sheet of the secretariat contact details in the "concerns" sections.

Non-standard conditions must be completed before commencing your study. Non-standard conditions do not need to be submitted to or reviewed by AUTEC before commencing your study.

### Standard Conditions of Approval

1. The research is to be undertaken in accordance with the [Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research](#) and as approved by AUTEC in this application.
2. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date, using the EA2 form.
3. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project, using the EA3 form.
4. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented. Amendments can be requested using the EA2 form.
5. Any serious or unexpected adverse events must be reported to AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
6. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
7. It is your responsibility to ensure that the spelling and grammar of documents being provided to participants or external organisations is of a high standard and that all the dates on the documents are updated.
8. AUTEC grants ethical approval only. You are responsible for obtaining management approval for access for your research from any institution or organisation at which your research is being conducted and you need to meet all ethical, legal, public health, and locality obligations or requirements for the jurisdictions in which the research is being undertaken.

Please quote the application number and title on all future correspondence related to this project.

For any enquiries please contact [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz). The forms mentioned above are available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics>

(This is a computer-generated letter for which no signature is required)

The AUTEC Secretariat  
**Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee**

Cc: Nathan961@hotmail.com; [melody.johnston@aut.ac.nz](mailto:melody.johnston@aut.ac.nz)