

Tribal Motivation in Sponsorship : Influence on Sponsor Relationship Development and Corporate Identity

Abstract

Whilst the literature on sponsorship suggests it has evolved from a philanthropic gesture to a strategic tool that managers leverage to provide sustainable competitive advantage, this paper reports on a study which suggests other motivational factors may be on par with or supersede commercial or altruistic considerations. Drawing on self identification, social identity and tribal marketing literature, the paper explores the concept of tribal support as a motivational factor for sponsorship participation and examines the moderating effect this may have on sponsor-object relationship development and on corporate identity development. Findings show strong sub-cultural, tribal connection and variations in self and social identification among sponsors and demonstrate how sponsorship motivation affects sponsor relationship development, sponsor-event fit, brand association and corporate identity development in complex ways.

Keywords: Sponsorship, Tribal Marketing, Social Identity, Self-Identification Theory, sub-cultural association, motorcycling

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INTRODUCTION

The scarcity of research on sponsorship in general (e.g. Cornwell and Maignan, 1998, Teofilou *et al*, 2007) and the nature of the relationship between sponsor and sponsored in particular (e.g. Dolphin, 2003; Farrelly and Quester, 2003) is conspicuous within the marketing literature. Indeed Olkkonen and Tuominen (2006) suggest that '*the main weakness of previous academic research*' (p.66) within the sponsorship field is a lack of underlying theoretical and conceptual foundations on which to base scholarly inquiry. Yet recent thinking proposes that sponsorship has evolved into a '*mainstream component of the marketing mix*' (Polonsky and Speed, 2001:1361) to the extent that it is now considered a strategic tool that managers leverage to provide sustainable competitive advantage (e.g. Fahy *et al*, 2004).

Where there has, in particular, been limited theoretical development is in the link between sponsorship motivation as a moderator of the sponsor relationship and as a contributor to corporate identity development. Drawing on social psychology; in particular, social identity, self identification and tribal marketing literature, (Hogg and Turner, 1985; Hunt *et al*, 1999; Cova and Cova, 2002), this paper identifies the concept of tribal support as a motivational factor for sponsorship participation and explores the relationship between sub-cultural linkages through sponsorship and corporate identity development. Firstly, a synopsis of the salient literature on sponsorship, social and self-identification, tribalism in marketing and stakeholder orientation and sub-cultural dimensions of corporate identity is offered. Thereafter, the contextual relevance to the motor sport context of this study is evaluated and the research methodology is outlined. Findings from in-depth interviews with key sponsorship decision-makers at the BSB Motorcycling Championships in the UK, ranging from managing directors, to brand marketing managers to dedicated sponsorship liaison personnel are reported. The extent of tribal connection and degree of social identification in sponsor motivation is outlined, as is the impact on sponsor-object relationships. Implications of findings for the development of successful sponsor relationships and in turn for corporate identity development are then discussed, notably how sponsoring organisations might consider more subtle and sophisticated sponsorship activities that reinforce image transfer between the event and the brand and an *evolving* corporate identity logic within certain market contexts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sponsorship

On reviewing the literature related to sponsorship, three strands may be identified (Olkkonen and Tuominen, 2006) - firstly, definitional issues pertaining to the processes and outcomes of sponsorship; secondly communication issues including measurements of effect and effectiveness and finally; managerial issues including the drivers of sponsorship activities. For the purposes of this research, the review of the literature will focus on this latter area. A number of '*drivers of sponsorship*' (Dolphin, 2003: 178) may be identified within the literature. These include: exposure seeking (Meenaghan, 1991) ; brand association (Thwaites *et*

al., 1998); attempts to alter public perceptions (Grimes and Meenaghan, 1998); community involvement (Mack, 1999); the creation of goodwill (Meenaghan, 1991); the enhancement of employee motivation (Tripodi, 2001) and corporate philanthropy and altruism (Bennet, 1997). Given the focus of this research, it is particularly important to distinguish between altruistic and other sponsorship drivers. Walliser (2003) distinguishes sponsorship from altruistic activity by focusing on intended exploitation of the association between sponsors and sponsored. Dolphin (2003) suggests that:

‘Patronage is based on charity.... but sponsorship activity typically refers to the financial support given by an external organisation to a leisure or sporting activity-support with a definite commercial objective in mind’ (p.176).

Thus, pure altruism is an *‘expression of a person’s internal values independent of social or material gain’* (Bennet, 1997:87). However, it is posited here that there may be further motivational factors in addition to commercial or altruistic drivers. Social identity and tribal association theory proposes that people will engage in activities to support a particular social community or ‘tribe’ where that ‘tribe’ is congruent with their own self definition and identity.

Self Identification and Self-Categorization

Drawing on social psychology literature, Hunt *et al.*, (1999) define a sports ‘fan’ as an *‘enthusiastic devotee of some particular sports consumptive object’* (p. 440). Implicit within this definition is that some level of attachment exists between an object and the individual. This level of attachment is effectively determined by a schema containing perceptions, beliefs and expectations associated with the object (e.g. Hunt *et al.*,1999). This may, in some instances, culminate in self identification with the object thus implying such objects are used by individuals to identify their perceived self to their actual self and indeed to others (e.g. Ball and Tasaki, 1992). Related to this, self-categorization theory suggests that individuals classify themselves into a number of social categories in order to facilitate self-definition within their social environment (Haslam and Turner 1992). This *‘oneness or belonging to a group’* (Gwinner, 2003:277) may enhance self-esteem, positive social identity and social prestige (Ellemers *et al.*, 1999) and evoke feelings such as ‘camaraderie’, a sense of ‘community’ and ‘solidarity’ (Zillman *et al.*, 1989). Within sporting contexts, a number of classification studies have been conducted which identify levels of personal identification, relevance and resultant social identification (e.g. Gwinner and Swanson, 2003). For example, Real and Mechikoff (1992) identify a category of sports follower distinct from other sports followers whom they term ‘deep fans’ and who are characterised as having a ‘ritual’ identification with a sports object as a manifestation of their self and social identification. Hunt *et al.* (1999) suggest a classification criteria focusing on motivational distinctions which identify five categories of sports followers (temporary fan, local fan, devoted fan, fanatical fan and dysfunctional fan). As one ascends the typology, the more likely an object is to constitute part of an individual’s self identity and the greater the significance of an individual’s emotional attachment.

Social Identification Theory and Tribal Analogies

Social identification theory suggests that individuals, in enhancing their self-esteem, (Turner and Hogg, 1985; Ashforth and Mael 1989), seek to identify with groups that have attractive or prestigious public images (Dutton *et al.*,1994). Through motives of self-continuity (maintaining a consistent social identity-Tajfel and Turner, 1986) or self-enhancement (gaining

status through group belonging – Ashforth and Mael, 1989), they seek similarity with group behaviour. Perceptions of ‘deep’ level similarity impact on the degree of social identification an individual may have with pertinent groups (Harrison *et al*, 1999) and where this results in an intense ‘*community of emotion or passion*’ (Cova and Cova, 2002:598), tribal analogies have been drawn. Cova and Cova (2002) define a tribe as “*a network of heterogeneous persons linked by a shared passion or emotion*” (p. 602). Tribal members are recognised and recognise themselves as members of a group and will often gather and perform ritual acts in public places known as ‘anchoring events’ (Aubert-Gamet and Cova, 1999). Drawing on parallels with social relationships, Cova (1999) suggests that tribes rely on such anchoring events to sustain their membership, to reaffirm and strengthen the underlying values of the group and to provide a platform to bring together and bond individual members of the tribe. Typical of such events are certain sporting occasions, which may be perceived as tribal anchoring events which provide the opportunity for members of the tribe with sufficient resources to express their emotional attachment through displaying their loyalty and identification to the ‘tribe’ by contributing to the sponsorship of such events.

Stakeholder Orientation and Sub-cultural Dimensions of Corporate Identity

Corporate identity is a complex entity, as noted in previous work on seven dimensions of corporate identity by Melewar and Karaosmanoglu (2006); in the six station model of corporate identity developed by Suvatjis and de Chernatony (2005); in the relationship between personal interpretations of identity and corporate reputation noted by Bromley (2001) and in the explanation of how corporate identity relates to corporate image, as noted below:

‘The total sum of signs that stands for an organization to its various audiences we call the corporate identity, recognizing, of course, the interplay of interpretations that construct the totality’ (Christenson and Askegaard, 2001, p 304, also citing Cheney and Tompkins, 1987).

While Christenson and Askegaard (2001) may reflect a strong semiotic orientation in their examination of corporate identity, they nonetheless capture its holistic nature. More recent studies have examined the close affinity between concepts of corporate identity and corporate branding (Knox and Bickerton, 2003; Kay, 2006) and some commentators (Balmer and Geysler, 2006) have recently argued for a greater integration between multiple concepts such as corporate marketing, corporate identity and corporate branding.

Sponsorship is a decision that is part of the corporate marketing effort and encompasses certain aspects of corporate identity. It is not within the scope of this study to comprehensively review elements of corporate identity; but to focus on the way sponsorship relates to the stakeholder orientation within corporate marketing (Balmer and Geysler, 2006), and to highlight within the research undertaken, the sub-cultural dimensions associated with corporate identity (Melewar and Karaosmanoglu (2006). Balmer and Geysler, (2006, p 733), note a key orientation in corporate marketing towards stakeholders and a key application in addressing present and future stakeholder and societal needs. The stakeholder input into corporate identity is also captured well by Suvatjis and de Chernatony (2005) and by Christensen and Askegaard (2001) when they suggest that we need to ‘*conceive of organizational identity as symbolic representations of organizations that appeal to many different audiences across formal boundaries*’.. (p 304)

The importance of sub-cultures to corporate identity has been noted by multiple authors, in marketing, it has featured in work by Deal and Kennedy, (1982), Balmer and Wilson, (1998); further refined by Melewar and Karaosmanoglu,(2006). Corporate identity is informed by corporate culture, which is an amalgam of sub-cultures (Knox and Bickerton, 2003), some of these may be historical, as in perceived closeness to the founder, or may be defined through varying professional affiliations between engineers and accountant, while others may link to specific interest groups (Deal and Kennedy, 1982). Reinforcing the idea of multiple identities that might be evident within an overall corporate identity (Pratt and Foreman, 2000, Balmer and Greyser, 2006), sub-cultural influences can become more complex is when they cross organizational boundaries. Christensen and Askegaard (2006), citing Gray, (1986), specifically note that corporate identity is “*an interpretation composed of perceptions and impressions of members among both members and non-members of the organization*” (2006, p 298). Sponsorship motivations and decision-making reflect the existence of sub-cultures, since such decision-making is non-linear, and in circumstances where there are strong lateral links between the sponsor and external stakeholder group (sponsored), sub-cultural motivations may vary. In the motorcycling context, important stakeholder groups might be ‘aficionados’ of motorcycling (and motorsports) and may be strongly reflective of an industry identity, noted as important by Melewar and Karaosmanoglu (2006).

SUB-CULTURAL AND TRIBAL ASSOCIATIONS IN THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

Previous research has recognised motorcyclists as having a ‘*shared cultural understanding*’ and a ‘*dominant community ideology*’ implying tribal connotations and culminating in congregations at ‘*contemporary motorcyclist enclaves*’ (Haigh and Crowther, 2005:559-60) such as race events. One such event is the British Super bike (BSB) Championship. The BSB Championship is the leading UK domestic production motorcycle series, it attracts participants from leading motorcycle manufacturers around the world. Recent years have seen an exponential growth in it’s popularity. As a result, the BSB Championship is an increasingly attractive proposition to potential sponsors as it enjoys increasing levels of exposure, is relatively low in ‘*sponsorship clutter*’ (Fahy *et al.*, 2004) and is still comparatively affordable compared to other motor sports events. The sport has witnessed increasing on-track attendance and media coverage; associated with this has been a marked increase in sponsor support from larger, often global organisations dominated by marketing professionals. The psychological mindset of such personnel may be to view sponsorship purely as a commercial investment (Walliser, 2003) from which multiple commercial returns are sought (Abratt *et al.*, 1987). Yet, the level of cultural connection and involvement of some manufacturers with the sport suggests sponsorship action in BSB championships may incorporate social identification with a prestigious group (Dutton *et al.*, 1994); a capacity to self-categorize as a fan of the sport (Ellemers *et al.*, 1999; Hunt *et al.*, 1999) and potentially a tribal connection may exist (Cova and Cova, 2002). If social identification or tribal connection is a driver of the sponsorship decision in this context, we need to ask in what way is this manifested, how does it affect the sponsor-object relationship or relate to corporate identity development of the sponsor.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The primary research undertaken had two main objectives: a) to clarify the degree to which social identification and the concept of tribal support is a motivational factor for sponsorship participation and b) to explore the moderating effect this may have on sponsor-sponsored

relationship expectations within the British Super Bike Championship. The phenomenological nature of the study (i.e. the focus on social and self identification of respondents) suggested a qualitative approach to be appropriate as it accommodates ‘deep’ and ‘rich’ insights (Geertz, 1973), involves observation and recording of complex human behaviour and social systems (e.g. Feyerabend, 1981; Popper, 1965) and is useful for examining developing social processes. In-depth interviews (of between 45 and 60 minutes) were undertaken, which permitted probing (Spiggle, 1994), with a focus on contextual understanding (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) and a purposive sampling approach (Saunders et al, 2007) was followed. A total of nine respondents were selected – encompassing perspectives from sponsors with different roles in the BSB Championship; sufficient to capture the data necessary to achieve the objectives of the research (McCracken, 1998). A discussion guide was developed, used as a starting point from which respondents could elaborate on their own experience and motivations for sponsorship. Interviews were taped and transcribed, with initial open and axial coding (Saunders, 2007; Goulding, 2001) to facilitate subsequent content analysis (Spiggle, 1994). A reiterative approach was adopted (Remenyi *et al.*, 1998) thus enabling the findings of one interview to inform the next as new insights and evidence emerged.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Findings are reported in three areas: a) the extent of tribal connection among sponsors and variations in social identification; b) how variation in sponsor motivation influences relationships with sponsor-objects and c) how this may reflect sub-cultural elements in corporate identity development

Variation in social identification and extent of tribal connection among sponsors

A proportion of sponsors have a prior interest in motorcycle racing. Similarly, most racing teams are established by ex-racers and/or enthusiasts. Consequently, the extent of emotional attachment and associated ‘*sharing of passion*’ for the sport varied among sponsors. (as expected from Real and Mechikoff, (1992). Where sponsors had particular corporate communication objectives for sponsorship, it was recognised that there was some ‘disconnection’ with the tribe, (Cova and Cova, 2002), as noted in the following comment :

‘It’s not something I consider important – the two parties are totally different... There can’t be more than twenty days a year when we’re together....’ (R1).

This indicates a distinct self-categorization away from the sponsored (rider) group (Turner, 1987). Similarly, sponsors cited purely commercial reasons for sponsorship activities; one showed a level of disconnection with the sponsor- object by using an agent to act for them:

“The decisions are primarily on a commercial basis, almost exclusively... My time is valuable and I don’t want to be spending my time [arranging] race sponsorship. It’s not an important part of what we do... I can make a lot of money doing other things” [R5].

Despite the focus on commercial bottom line objectives, there were, nonetheless, among other respondents, clear implicit indications of tribal connectivity and support with the term ‘*esprit de corps*’ and family relational metaphors being used to emphasise the nature of the relationship.(in line with Aubert-Gamet and Cova, 1992). For example, one sponsor states:

‘It’s the emotional involvement....I haven’t got emotional relationships with brothers or sisters but imagine that it’s like they are sons or brothers....it’s completely different to a commercial relationship!’ (R4).

Thus, the corporate bottom line is a motivation that is secondary to a tribal self-extension, with a strong bond of identification (Bhattacharya et al, 2005). Sponsors who were ex-racers themselves recognised the inherent dangers of the sport; this manifested itself in mutual understanding and empathy, with clear self-identification (Brewer et al, 1996). The extent of emotional attachment could impinge on rational sponsorship decision making, shown below:

‘In motorcycle sport.....it ends up becoming personal. Everyone sets out their stall as to what the company can afford ... but you’ll always get a case... especially with sponsors that have been coming to every meeting for years... that they get so personally and emotionally involved that you end up..... if the bike gets crashed...sponsors will always pull something out of the hat ... its from rider to rider and not just sponsor to rider’ (R4).

A clear sub-cultural belonging is expressed here, (Gwinner, 2003). The reference to those coming to every meeting is also reflective of a self-continuity approach to social identification. (as noted in Turner, 1987). The bond with the sponsored ‘riders’ is more binding than their commitment to specific corporate identity objectives.

Motivation and sponsor-object relationship development

Formality –Informality of Relationship

One key finding was the degree of informality that was noted in the sponsor relationships, principally noted in terms of communications. Respondents describe their communications as close, informal and regular, even friendly, citing openness and honesty as very important and a conduit to building trust and commitment.

‘...The whole relationship building process is communication... The better you communicate, the more you get to know them, and so the more you trust them. And if you talk to people you can sort out problems and get what you want which has to make you more loyal...’ (R4)

The quality of the communications is considered very important, central, and allows the accomplishment of, for example, cooperation, reassurance, resolution of conflict. communications are seen as an input and an outcome in relationships:

‘The quality of the communications is the most important thing. If you can have quality communications and keep it informal it actually saves a lot of work.’ (R5)

‘Good communications are both vital and central to a good relationship. Everything depends on them. Also, a good relationship facilitates better communications too...’ (R7)

Where the degree of formality –informality was particularly evident was in the instances of functional conflict that emerged in the sponsor relationship. Perceptions of this varied across respondents - some held different views on what constituted ‘interference’, as noted below:

‘I don’t think it is our right or duty or anything to start interfering with what the race team wants to do so the function conflict will be quite limited.’ (R1)

event), their perception of the sponsor-object was sometimes low- the sponsored were often perceived as lacking the interpersonal skills and/or motivation required to support the aspirations of sponsors. One respondent comments:

“You ultimately feel taken for granted....just money bags...I gave and they took...and yet the team [the sponsored object] said they were doing what they were expected to do...to ride....without tenting and trees [corporate hospitality]’ (R8).

This highlights a lack of congruence between the logic of what the sponsorship is expected to achieve (a visible corporate identity in sense of Aaker, (2004) and the internal subculture of the sponsored team. The bond of identification (Bhattacharya et al, 2005) is low and it demonstrates some of the impact of the power balance in relationships (Greyser, 1997). This power balance was elaborated further by another respondent:

“The classic thing, particularly in sport, is that people who are looking for sponsorship are obsessed with the sport..... and have no grasp at all of what we want out of it.... I think X have a very clear understanding of what we want and are mindful that in order to get renewed sponsorship they have to deliver that as far as they can “ (R2)

This may reflect some of Balmer and Greyser’s (2006) argument that corporate marketing relationships are ‘expectational’. (as distinct from manipulative, service and transactional, noted by Greyser, 1997). Clearly, some trust has been established here, a level of social identification is present (albeit that specific self-enhancement for sponsor is sought) between the two parties, and some corporate marketing goals are jointly understood. In contrast, certain sponsors articulated less explicit marketing goals and did not see participation in the corporate hospitality process to be a priority. As one sponsor states:

‘I don’t think that my loyalty to my riders is different because of their ability to promote themselves. They aren’t asked to promote me anyway so marketing isn’t an issue...I’d rather they focus on riding’ (R7).

The use of the first person in this commentary shows clear and strong evidence of ‘deep’ similarity and a close identification with riders. (in line with Harrison et al, 1999). Thus, in the cases noted here, sponsor motivation derived from sub-cultural identification or tribal connection (Cova, 1999) has a direct impact on sponsor expectations of the sponsor-object.

CONCLUSION AND MARKETING IMPLICATIONS

Sponsorship motivation has historically been perceived as either ‘a philanthropic gesture’ (Hoek and Gendall, 2003:1) or a strategic marketing tool (e.g. Fahy *et al.*, 2004). However, in this study, motivations of sponsors showed greater variation than previously noted (Polonsky and Speed, 2001; Dolphin, 2003) and a greater complexity in how sponsorship related to corporate identity development (involving a range of dimensions, as noted by Melewar and Karaosmanoglu, 2006). This extends previous work on sponsorship (Farrelly and Quester, 2003), in two areas: firstly, in this research, the tribal connection or disconnection; the degree of social identification among certain sponsors were illustrations that motivations for sports sponsorship are varied and complex; and that varied motivations of sponsors influence the expectations and nature of the sponsor-object relationship. Marketing implications are threefold: b) sponsor-event fit and the leveraging of brand association through image transfer

b) how tribal motivations match an ‘interpretation’ logic in corporate branding and c) how tribal sponsorship motivations tap into sub-cultural dimensions of corporate identity.

Tribal Motivation and Sponsor-Event Fit - Leveraging Brand Association

This study has generated some important insights into the sponsor-event fit, regarded as important in past sponsorship studies (notably, D’Astous and Bitz, 1995 and Otker and Hayes, 1987, Speed and Thompson, 2000), who have suggested that a strong synergy between sponsor and event leads to more positive outcomes. However, past studies have identified less the nature of that fit and much of this is down to limited conceptualization of brand image transfer, as noted by Smith (2004). If, as Kay (2006) and Aaker, (2004) argue, brand equity is built over time; if, as Smith (2004) suggests, there are external antecedents (such as domain of sponsorship) and internal antecedents (such as brand knowledge) to brand image transfer; then the achievement of sponsor-event fit is quite complex.

This study, in highlighting tribal identification motives within sports sponsorship, has demonstrated the way socially-based motives may generate a strong sponsor-event fit but may equally encourage behaviours such as increased mutuality and reciprocity in decision-making. Both of these elements (strong sponsor-event fit and mutual decision-making) are conducive to commitment and long-term successful sponsor relationships.

Tribal Motivation - matching an ‘Interpretation’ logic in corporate branding

Kay (2006) suggests that corporate brands acquire power in different ways; contrasting ‘product’ logic (product identification), with the logic of ‘consistency’ (consistency of brand positioning). While sponsorship decisions have, latterly, been subject to a clear strategic ‘logic’, (Fahy *et al*, 2004), this logic has, arguably, been largely implemented as part of marketing communications approaches, or, on the basis of ‘controlled corporate communication’ (Melewar and Karosmanoglu, 2006). Moingeon and Ramanantsoa, (1997) see value in less controlled corporate communication, which may suggest positive values to external stakeholders. Within key stakeholder groups there may be members dynamically constructing the corporate brand identity; there may also be strong emotional responses from stakeholders (Topalian, 2003), seen as important to corporate image by Balmer and Greyser, (2006) and to sponsorship commitment by Lings and Owen (2007).

Sponsorship, in contexts such as motorcycling, may need to embrace sub-cultural linkages, which Melewar and Karaosmanoglu, (2006) see as fundamental to corporate identity. In such an approach, sponsorship is less about product identification or reinforcement of brand consistency; but encompasses a logic that is about encouraging corporate brand ‘Interpretation’ with key internal-external member groups, which may even stretch to brand negotiation (as noted by Gregory, 2007). Within these market contexts, sponsorship decisions may contribute more to the continuous evolving definition of the corporate brand, through brand perceptions that are *actively generated* across internal-external sub-cultural boundaries.

Tribal Motivation - tapping into sub-cultural elements of corporate identity development

Findings in this study have shown that some decision-makers engaged in sponsorship in the motorcycling sector are socially identifying with a prestigious group (in line with Hogg and Turner, 1988; Dutton *et al*, 1994) through strong tribal association (Cova and Cova, 2002).

While the sponsor-object relationship ostensibly focuses on marketing objectives; in this context, an equally important ‘sought’ outcome for some sponsors is the social association with the riders and the BSB Championship. In this sense, there is some divergence in the sponsor relationship focus and in corporate identity development – one outcome is reinforcement of company visual identity and corporate brand identification (noted by Kay, 2006) within the motorcycling industry and its publics. An alternative outcome is an enduring establishment of corporate credibility through a social association and sub-cultural connection with a key stakeholder group (Deal and Kennedy, 1982; Christensen and Askegaard, 2001) – in this case, the motorcycling teams, riders and ‘aficionados’ of motorcycling. The maintenance of this social (tribal) credibility was clearly an underlying motivation for some respondents.

Organizations need to consider more subtle and sophisticated sponsorship activities such as identifying, supporting and even ‘*infiltrating*’ (Cova and Cova, 2002) pertinent tribes to the extent that ‘*the company is not simply an economic actor adapting to the market, but a social actor relating to the societal context*’ (Badot *et al.*, 1993:51). Sub-cultural connections arising among organizational members and their own social association or identification with key stakeholder groups exist in certain market contexts – these connections may, in some market contexts be determinant of *enduring* sponsorship. From this study, it was evident that sponsorship motivation that derives from sub-cultural connections can a) act as a cementing force in establishing mutuality and commitment over time in sponsor relationships; b) they may reinforce bonding, image transfer and indeed negotiation of the sponsor brand (in line with the work of Gregory, 2007); and c) they can act effectively as a fusion of corporate identity - both within and external to the company.

Future research might examine these issues further by longitudinal research over a three to five year period or; alternatively, a cross-sectional study that would examine event sponsorship in domains other than motorcycling and look at the moderating effect of motivation (tribal, strategic) on actual behaviour (mutuality of decision-making, trust etc) on perceived sponsor-event fit, on perceived sponsor relationship success (duration, significance, benefits etc) and on perceived corporate identity development

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Table 1 : Mutuality in sponsor-relationships

R2	All decisions are based on trust. Reduces time wastage on checking and auditing
R5	Trust speeds up decision making
R6	Without trust you waste time which you should be spending on what you are paid to do
R7	Most decisions [and generation of trust] are made at the start of the relationship.
R8	The degree [of decision-making certainty] varies with the trust and importance of the relationship

Table 2: Profile and Sponsorship Motivation of Respondents

Respondent And Position	Context of Sponsorship Involvement	Organisational Profile	Primary Sponsorship Objective	Evaluation of Sponsorship
R1 Managing Director	Five years Known for Superbike sponsorship- close relationships with sponsees	SME design and construction of swimming pools within the UK and Europe	Through corporate hospitality, to gain closer relationships by taking business relationships 'out of standard work-related environments into something enjoyable to both parties'.	Assesses whether relationships between co. and target companies are maintained/ improved. Expect returns on investment between 0 - 18 months On-track success not an objective, but an advantage. Annual verbal agreements
R2 Head of Customer Strategy	Five years Interested in long term relationships Seeks the 'right' sponsorship	Multi-national commercial vehicle manufacturer	Aim to generate the 'right' sponsorship. To utilise hospitality facilities, provided by the sponsee, to speak to fleet customers, in an out-of-work environment	Benefits expected are 'slow burn' – about building relationships with their stakeholders. On track success important but not necessary to achieve goals. Contracts negotiated annually and increasingly formal and written
R3 International Racing Director	Thirteen years Close involvement in motorsport- Seek to contract factory teams sponsorship	Multi-national tyre manufacturer	Raising brand profile and product development. Partner with Superbike series organizers. Seeks to view to increase top-team competitors using tyres and gain global exposure.	Belief - benefits are secured over many seasons. Offers substantial cost saving – Relationships are formalised through written contracts. Maintain a four-five year, annually assessed, sponsorship plan
R4 Rider Representative	Eleven years Former rider Respondent is prominent in British Superbike	Business is sponsorship, rider, team management Representative for no. of top Superbike riders	Primarily to achieve on-track success – aid in form of rider management, financial support, loans of recoverable assets - race machinery. Equally notes associated emotional pleasure	Setting benchmarks in the form of predictions. Contracts are verbal and informal as will only support those he trusts and has a current relationship with.
R5 National Marketing Manager	Thirteen years Sponsored Superbike in early days. Sees presence as important to brand building	SME manufacturer of motorcycle security and touring products for domestic and export markets	Hospitality activities- corporate reputation building - to create awareness of the products they distribute to the end-customers. To build intermediary confidence	Sees benefits, (smooth working relationships with intermediaries) increase - each year of BSB sponsorship adds value to last. Sponsorship agreements are seasonal but relationships fostered last longer. Agreements supported by written contracts
R6 Motorsports Manager	Seven years Targets young riders Works with Honda racing. Ambitious - and hope to find next British Champion	Global energy drink manufacturer	Raising brand awareness, used when brand launched in UK initially and continued Media value of brand association. Aim - nurturing young talent – link to brand values of innovation Long-term goal = mutual bonding Access to corporate hospital.	Benefits expected over long-term. Commitment stronger with riders rather than team- aids progression of promising riders (selective). Rider success and on track victory basis for sponsorship evaluation. Have 3-year written contract with Honda, and intend to continue the relationship if satisfied
R7 Team Manager	Six years Former rider. Trained coach in motorcycling racing. Supports three riders	Set up and runs a three class team - link to Honda	Objectives are primarily personal and philanthropical. Access to corporate hospitality packages – riders expected to entertain sponsors who support his racing activities	Immediate benefits expected = sponsor satisfaction. Long-term = networking and return in form of goodwill. Sponsorship agreements verbal and seasonal – but relationship is continual.
R8 Marketing Director	Six years Formerly close involvement with team	Holding company	Strong philanthropical goals. Association of brand with motorcycle race team gives exposure - branding benefits by association - image of fast moving cutting edge company. Access to corporate entertainment.	Assesses feedback on hospitality events - Commitment dependent on return. Benefits over long-term, intention to 'stay for the duration'. Sponsorships supported by legally binding contracts.

