

## CORPORATE REPUTATION AND SPONSOR - SPORT CONGRUENCE: A SURVEY OF AMATEUR FIELD HOCKEY PLAYERS

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### ABSTRACT

Sport codes are consistently competing for corporate sponsorship Rands. Amateur sport is an untapped channel that bypasses most of the media clutter experienced by companies that sponsor professional sporting events, codes or teams. In this study amateur field hockey participants are used as a research platform. Amateur field hockey is lacking in any large corporate sponsorships. This study explored the relationship between the corporate reputation of five selected companies and the perception of how well that reputation matches up to the sport of hockey. The target population was school and university hockey players in the Pretoria area. The survey was completed through the use of a self-administered questionnaire. The results indicate that there was a weak positive relationship between corporate reputation and perceived congruency. This suggests that the greater the impression of corporate reputation is amongst hockey players the greater the perceived sponsor congruence will be. The respondents have a positive attitude towards MTN as a possible sponsor – not surprising given the profile of the respondents.

**Key words:** Sponsorship, sponsor – sport congruence, corporate reputation, field hockey, amateur sport.

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### INTRODUCTION

Amateur sport is just one of the many voices that are clamouring for the support of sport sponsorship within the corporate world (MacDonald, 2001:20).

Amateur sport is competing against the professional sporting world that enjoys a mass consumer appeal and large television audiences. In professional sport, sponsors have to effectively select opportunities that will provide the most tangible benefits for the money spent on acquiring the rights for that specific activity (MacDonald, 2001). The challenge is to find an association or fit with a sporting code that reinforces the desired corporate objectives (Van Heerden, 2005:282). Potential sponsors need to look for a partnership that will provide them with a more direct, one to one contact with consumers (MacDonald, 2001:20). It is these direct one to one relationships that may make amateur sport sponsorships an interesting alternative sponsorship opportunity.

Farrelly, Quester and Burton (2006:1016) contend that the value delivered to both sponsors and the sports entities with which they form relationships needs to be redefined. Cornwell, Humphreys, Maguire, Weeks, & Tellegen (2006:312) state that corporate sponsorship of events contributes significantly to marketing aims, including brand awareness as measured by recall and recognition of sponsor-event pairings. Unfortunately, resultant advantages accrue disproportionately to brands having a natural or congruent fit with the available sponsorship properties.

The ultimate challenge is therefore to find a good fit or match between a sponsor's image, reputation and brand propositions and the value of having a sponsorship relationship with a sporting code.

### **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

This study explored the relationship between corporate reputation and sponsor – sport congruency amongst the participants of amateur field hockey players. Field hockey is a very social sport, which has a large player base countrywide, that ranges from mini hockey at primary school level to master's hockey, which caters for players over the age of 40. The eventual aim is to determine whether differences exist between participation categories and gender in terms of sponsor – sport congruency. A secondary aim is to identify a “best” sponsor fit for field hockey on an amateur level.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Some studies have been conducted on sponsor event fit and congruence (Cornwell & Roy, 2003; Gwinner & Eaton, 1999; Speed & Thompson, 2000). Cornwell and Roy (2003) have found that sponsors who are perceived as highly congruent can lead to more favourable attitudes towards those sponsors. Speed and Thompson (2000) found that consumer's responses are stronger when there is a positive perception of fit between the event and the sponsor. All of these studies

however concentrated on a specific event, and how that event fitted with their current sponsor, rather than a specific sporting code.

### **Corporate reputation**

Past studies have explored corporate image and its relationship to sponsors and events (Caruana, 1997; Herbig & Milewicz, 1993). Corporate image refers to emotional or intangible aspects of organisations while corporate reputation relates more to the functional, tangible attributes or characteristics of an organisation (Dowling, 2003). Corporate reputation is formed by an organisation's various publics, based on acquired information and experience (Caruana, 1997:109).

### **Sponsor – sport congruency**

One of the challenges of sponsorship is to fit the organisation and its corporate reputation to a sport that has an important audience. This fit or match-up is known as congruency (Cornwell & Roy, 2003:377). They mention the importance of processing a link between an organisation and an event/sport brought together via sponsorship. Corporate reputation of an organisation (potential sponsor) is therefore hypothesised as having a relationship with the consumer's perceptions of sponsor – sport congruence. Rifon, Choi, Trimble and Li (2004:30) suggest that a good fit between a company and the cause it sponsors generates consumer attributions of

altruistic sponsor motives and enhances sponsor credibility and attitude toward the sponsor:

*H<sub>1</sub>: The overall impression of a company's corporate reputation is positively associated with perceived sponsor – sport congruency amongst hockey players.*

### **Gender**

The study distinguishes between males and females as separate hockey participants with different ideas, values and perceptions of brands and their reputations. The reason for distinguishing between these gender groups is because different sponsor fits could exist for each. This might allow for potential sponsors to capitalise on different segments and to build their corporate reputation and image where a fit is perceived to serve as a sponsor. This leads to the following hypotheses:

*H<sub>2</sub>: Gender differences exist in the overall impression of a company's corporate reputation.*

*H<sub>3</sub>: Gender differences exist in the perceptions of potential sponsor – sport congruency.*

### **Participation category**

Two different participation categories of hockey were used, namely school hockey players and university hockey players. The study distinguishes between these groups as they may hold differing perceptions of corporate reputation and therefore different

perceptions of sponsor sport congruency. Subsequent hypotheses are:

*H<sub>4</sub>: Differences exist between school hockey respondents and university hockey respondents with regard to their overall impression of a company's corporate reputation.*

*H<sub>5</sub>: Differences in perceptions exist between school hockey respondents and university hockey respondents with regards to potential sponsor – sport congruency.*

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Sampling and data collection**

The target population for this study consisted of male and female field hockey players from the University of Pretoria, Pretoria Boys High and Pretoria High School for Girls. Judgement sampling was used in this study, mainly because the study was exploratory in nature and there is no up to date accurate sample frame of the entire target population of hockey players in the geographic area. A self-completion questionnaire was used to collect data. The pre-testing of the questionnaire was completed through the use of a convenience sample of 20 players actively participating in hockey. This convenience sample was representative of each of the three institutions mentioned above. The final questionnaire was distributed amongst 240 active male and female hockey participants at the three institutions, while they were at their respective hockey practices.

A fieldworker was present to provide any assistance. No incentives were provided to the respondents for the completion of the questionnaire. Only 215 useful questionnaires were retrieved. Table 1 breaks the sample down into four categories and provides the total number of respondents for each category.

Table 1: Break down of sample

Category	Number	Percentage
Male School Player	53	24.6512 %
Female School Player	54	25.1163%
Male University Player	54	25.1163%
Female University Player	54	25.1163%
Total participants	215	100 %

## MEASURES

### Companies selected as research subjects

Five companies (as prospective sponsors) were arbitrarily selected for this study, namely Standard Bank (a national banking institution), Pick ‘n Pay (a national retail supermarket chain), MTN (a telecommunications provider), Toyota (a car manufacturer) and Outsurance (a short term insurance company). These companies were identified in the top brand survey in 2003 (Markinor, 2003:118) and all featured in the top two in their respective industry categories. The companies were then crosschecked against the top advertising brand report conducted by bizcommunity.com (2005). The top 100 brands accounted for over R4 billion of the total spent on advertising in 2004. MTN, Pick ‘n Pay and Outsurance all placed in the top

10, while Standard Bank placed in the top 20, only Toyota placed outside the top 20.

### Measuring corporate reputation

Caruana (1997) developed a five-point Likert scale that measures corporate reputation. Their original scale displayed a coefficient alpha of 0.92. An adaptation of this scale was used to measure the corporate reputation of the five companies chosen for this study. A reliability analysis indicated that no items needed to be removed from the scale. The coefficient alpha for the five companies were: MTN (0.894), Toyota (0.866), Pick ‘n Pay (0.858), Standard Bank (0.853), and Outsurance (0.829). These coefficient alphas comfortably exceeded the cut off point of 0.7 and therefore suggest an acceptable level of internal consistency. Measuring perceived sponsor – sport congruency. For the purpose of measuring this construct, Cornwell and Roy’s (2003) nine-item scale using semantic differentials on a seven-point scale was used. The anchors for the scale items included: ”negative - positive”, “favourable – unfavourable”, “bad - good”, ”consistent – inconsistent”, ”complementary – not complementary”, ”inappropriate – appropriate”, ” illogical - logical”, ”well matched – poorly matched”, ”well suited – poorly suited”. Coefficient alphas regarding the congruency of the five companies were: Outsurance (0.962), Pick ‘n Pay (0.959),

Toyota (0.950), and MTN (0.942), and Standard Bank (0.914). All five of these reliabilities exceeded the cut off mark of 0.7 and indicated an acceptable level of internal consistency.

## RESULTS

Table 2: Corporate reputation scale.

Scale Items	Standard Bank		Outsurance		Toyota		Pick 'n Pay		MTN	
	mean	SD	mean	SD	mean	SD	mean	SD	mean	SD
_____ produces quality services / products.	3.92	0.69	3.90	0.80	4.34	0.76	4.24	0.77	4.12	0.79
_____ uses high calibre adverts.	3.89	0.87	3.93	1.00	4.14	0.75	3.91	0.90	4.18	0.85
_____ sponsors many activities.	4.06	0.82	3.49	1.02	3.76	0.95	4.11	0.86	4.30	0.75
_____ is a long established company.	4.31	0.67	3.20	1.04	4.36	0.70	4.39	0.74	4.00	0.79
Employment with _____ is highly regarded.	3.62	0.77	3.54	0.84	3.97	0.83	3.76	0.95	3.90	0.82
Employees of _____ are well trained.	3.63	0.80	3.73	0.78	3.89	0.84	3.60	0.96	3.82	0.88
_____ has a variety of well-known products or services.	3.81	0.82	3.85	0.86	4.21	0.78	4.27	0.78	4.22	0.83
_____ has strong management.	3.80	0.72	3.80	0.76	4.05	0.76	4.09	0.79	4.01	0.82
_____ carries out a lot of advertising.	4.27	0.68	4.35	0.66	4.14	0.79	4.13	0.80	4.39	0.73
_____ is a sound company.	3.92	0.83	3.86	0.80	4.14	0.82	4.15	0.84	4.20	0.74
For its size _____ secures good profits.	3.93	0.82	3.96	0.83	4.18	0.74	4.25	0.75	4.28	0.79
Total	3.92	0.49	3.78	0.52	4.10	0.52	4.08	0.53	4.12	0.56

The scale items were measured on a five point Likert scale, where 1 = "strongly disagree" and 5 = "strongly agree". SD = standard deviation

MTN has the highest total reputation mean ( $m = 4.12$ ) ( $SD = 0.56$ ). Outsurance has the lowest total reputation mean ( $m = 3.78$ ) ( $SD = 0.52$ ). This might suggest that the respondents have a higher regard for MTN. Table 3 shows the means and standard deviations for each of the scale items that were used in the measurement of the respondent's perceptions of potential sponsor – sport congruency with regard to field hockey and the five selected companies. With regard to the potential sponsor–sport congruency variable, MTN has the highest total congruency mean ( $m = 5.87$ ) ( $SD =$

## Descriptive statistics

Table 2 shows the means and standard deviations for each of the scale items that were used in the measurement of the overall corporate reputation of the five selected companies.

0.91). Outsurance has the lowest total congruency mean ( $m = 5.21$ ) ( $SD = 1.25$ ). This might suggest that hockey players perceive MTN as having the highest perceived congruency with hockey.

## HYPOTHESIS TESTING

At all of the hypotheses visual inspection of scatterplots and histograms and a series of Kolmogorov–Smirnov tests were used to check whether the assumption of normality was violated.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics for perceived congruency scale.

Scale Items	Standard Bank		Outsurance		Toyota		Pick 'n Pay		MTN	
	mean	SD	mean	SD	mean	SD	mean	SD	mean	SD
Negative / Positive	5.83	1.09	5.36	1.39	5.73	1.24	5.50	1.38	5.99	1.08
Unfavourable / Favourable	5.70	1.07	5.22	1.45	5.63	1.22	5.53	1.33	5.94	1.09
Bad / Good	5.82	1.10	5.33	1.32	5.64	1.22	5.55	1.34	5.87	1.09
Inconsistent / Consistent	5.56	1.17	5.20	1.34	5.52	1.24	5.41	1.29	5.81	1.09
Not complementary / Complementary	5.57	1.15	5.15	1.40	5.45	1.25	5.34	1.35	5.79	1.08
Inappropriate / Appropriate	5.67	1.26	5.22	1.47	5.41	1.31	5.40	1.40	5.81	1.16
Illogical / Logical	5.59	1.12	5.16	1.49	5.39	1.31	5.27	1.42	5.81	1.09
Poorly matched / Well Matched	5.56	1.15	5.15	1.46	5.44	1.28	5.35	1.39	5.94	1.08
Poorly suited / Well Suited	5.67	1.11	5.15	1.48	5.51	1.33	5.52	1.46	5.92	1.16
Total	5.66	0.87	5.21	1.25	5.52	1.07	5.42	1.19	5.87	0.91

The nine scale items were measured using semantic differentials on a seven – point scale, where 1 indicated a low congruence and 7 indicated a high congruence. The table provides the individual means for each scale item. The total of these individual means, for each company are displayed in the bottom row.

Table 4: Results of Spearman's rank order correlation for  $H_1$  (N =215)

Company	$r_s$	p-value	$R^2$	Conclusion
Standard Bank	0.451	$p < 0.0005$	0.2034	Reject null hypothesis
Outsurance	0.578	$p < 0.0005$	0.3340	Reject null hypothesis
Toyota	0.549	$p < 0.0005$	0.3014	Reject null hypothesis
Pick 'n Pay	0.488	$p < 0.0005$	0.2381	Reject null hypothesis
MTN	0.478	$p < 0.0005$	0.2284	Reject null hypothesis

This hypothesis was tested at a 5% level of significance ( $p \leq 0.05$ ).

### Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis focused on whether the overall impression of a company's corporate reputation was positively associated with perceived sponsor–sport congruency amongst hockey players. This hypothesis was relevant for each of the five companies that were measured.

$H_1$  (null): *There is no relationship between the overall impression of a company's corporate reputation and perceived sponsor – sport congruency amongst hockey players.*

$H_1$ : *The overall impression of a company's corporate reputation is positively associated with perceived sponsor – sport congruency amongst hockey players.*

Spearman's rank order correlation was used to test the correlational hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) because the assumption of normality was violated and therefore Pearson's Product moment correlation could not be used. Since this hypothesis applies to all five selected companies individually, due to space constraints, a discussion on each would be too lengthy, for that reason only the company that achieved the highest and lowest correlation coefficient was reported on. One can apply the same logic described in the discussion below to the other three companies.

From Table 4 it can be deduced that Outsurance achieved the highest correlation coefficient. These results indicated that there was a positive correlation between overall reputation and perception of congruency with regard to Outsurance,  $r_s = 0.578$ ,  $p < 0.0005$ . Although this correlation is significant, it is statistically weak. Standard Bank achieved the lowest correlation coefficient. These results indicated that there was a positive correlation between overall reputation and perception of congruency with regard to Standard Bank,  $r_s = 0.451$ ,  $p < 0.0005$ . Although this correlation is significant, it is also statistically weak.

### **Hypothesis 2**

The second hypothesis focused on whether there were significant gender differences in the overall impression of a company's corporate reputation. This hypothesis ( $H_2$ ) was relevant for each of the five companies that were measured and the results are displayed individually in the table.

*H2 (null): No gender differences exist in the overall impression of a company's corporate reputation.*

*H2: Gender differences exist in the overall impression of a company's corporate reputation.*

Since the variable of overall corporate reputation was measured at an interval level of measurement, the appropriate parametric

significance test for comparing differences between specified groups is the paired sample t-test. The assumption of normality was violated therefore the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test was used to test  $H_2$ .

The descriptive statistics that are indicated in Table 5, show very small differences in the mean scores for males and females between the companies. Pick 'n Pay showed the largest difference in gender means with 0.1278, while Toyota showed the lowest difference in gender means with 0.0585. The results of the Mann-Whitney U test indicate that none of the five p-values are less than 0.05, therefore the null hypothesis could not be rejected for any of the five companies.

The findings therefore indicated that there was no significant difference between male and female respondents with regard to the overall corporate reputation of the five companies in the study.

### **Hypothesis 3**

Hypothesis three ( $H_3$ ), dealt with gender differences in the perceptions of potential sponsor-sport congruency. This hypothesis was relevant for each of the five companies that were measured.

*H3 (null): No gender differences exist in the perceptions of potential sponsor – sport congruency.*

Table 5: Results of Mann–Whitney U test for H<sub>2</sub>

Company	Gender	Mean	SD	p – Value	Conclusion
Standard Bank	Male (N=107)	3.8904	0.55139	0.764	Null hypothesis cannot be rejected
	Female (N = 108)	3.9562	0.43260		Null hypothesis cannot be rejected
Outsurance	Male (N=107)	3.7205	0.55463	0.096	Null hypothesis cannot be rejected
	Female (N = 108)	3.8460	0.49050		Null hypothesis cannot be rejected
Toyota	Male (N=107)	4.1385	0.52258	0.496	Null hypothesis cannot be rejected
	Female (N = 108)	4.0800	0.52477		Null hypothesis cannot be rejected
Pick 'n Pay	Male (N=107)	4.0161	0.55940	0.099	Null hypothesis cannot be rejected
	Female (N = 108)	4.1439	0.51202		Null hypothesis cannot be rejected
MTN	Male (N=107)	4.1164	0.60493	0.974	Null hypothesis cannot be rejected
	Female (N = 108)	4.1423	0.51953		Null hypothesis cannot be rejected

This hypothesis was tested at a 5% level of significance ( $p \leq 0.05$ ).

Table 6: Results of Mann – Whitney U test for H<sub>3</sub>.

Company	Gender	Mean	SD	p-value	Conclusion
Standard Bank	Male (N=107)	5.6521	0.76343	0.429	Null hypothesis cannot be rejected
	Female (N = 108)	5.6759	0.98531		
Outsurance	Male (N=107)	5.2025	1.17210	0.603	Null hypothesis cannot be rejected
	Female (N = 108)	5.2315	1.33395		
Toyota	Male (N=107)	5.5348	1.02691	0.930	Null hypothesis cannot be rejected
	Female (N = 108)	5.5168	1.12456		
Pick 'n Pay	Male (N=107)	5.3583	1.15473	0.218	Null hypothesis cannot be rejected
	Female (N = 108)	5.5000	1.23975		
MTN	Male (N=107)	5.8276	0.89804	0.302	Null hypothesis cannot be rejected
	Female (N = 108)	5.9253	0.93313		

This hypothesis was tested at a 5% level of significance ( $p \leq 0.05$ ).

Table 7: Results of Mann – Whitney U test for H<sub>4</sub>.

Company	Institution	Mean	SD	p-value	Conclusion
Standard Bank	School (N = 107)	3.9558	0.46863	0.345	Null hypothesis cannot be rejected
	University (N = 108)	3.8914	0.52045		
Outsurance	School (N = 107)	3.8879	0.52411	0.001	Null hypothesis can be rejected
	University (N = 108)	3.6801	0.50935		
Toyota	School (N = 107)	4.0637	0.49937	0.286	Null hypothesis cannot be rejected
	University (N = 108)	4.1540	0.54453		
Pick 'n Pay	School (N = 107)	4.0935	0.56642	0.398	Null hypothesis cannot be rejected
	University (N = 108)	4.0673	0.51206		
MTN	School (N = 107)	4.1818	0.53869	0.175	Null hypothesis cannot be rejected
	University (N = 108)	4.0774	0.58294		

This hypothesis was tested at a 5% level of significance ( $p \leq 0.05$ ).



Since the variable of perceptions in potential sponsor–sport congruency was measured at an interval level, the appropriate parametric significance test for comparing differences between specified groups is the paired sample t-test. It was however found that the assumption of normality was violated. For that reason the non-parametric Mann–Whitney U test was used to test  $H_3$ .

The descriptive statistics in Table 6 show very small differences in the mean scores for males and females between the companies. Pick ‘n Pay showed the largest difference in gender means with 0.117, while Toyota showed the lowest difference in gender means with 0.018. Although the results of the Mann–Whitney U test indicate highs and lows, these results did not display a significant difference. Therefore since none of these values are less than 0.05, the null hypothesis could not be rejected for any of the five companies. The findings therefore indicated that there was no significant difference between male and female respondents with regard to the perceptions of potential sponsor–sport congruence of the five companies in the study. This suggests that male and female respondents see no difference in the congruency of these five companies as potential sponsors for amateur field hockey.

#### **Hypothesis 4**

The fourth hypothesis ( $H_4$ ) focused on whether there were significant differences, between high school hockey players and university hockey players, in the overall impression of a company’s corporate reputation. This hypothesis was relevant for each of the five companies that were measured.

*$H_{4 (null)}$ : No differences exist between school hockey respondents and club hockey respondents with regard to their overall impression of a company’s corporate reputation*

*$H_4$ : Differences exist between school hockey respondents and club hockey respondents with regard to their overall impression of a company’s corporate reputation.*

Since the variable of overall corporate reputation was measured at an interval level of measurement, the appropriate parametric significance test for comparing differences between specified groups is the paired sample t-test. There are specific assumptions that need to be considered, these assumptions are the same as those discussed under hypothesis two. Tests revealed that the assumption of normality was violated. For that reason the non-parametric Mann–Whitney U test was used to test  $H_4$ .

The descriptive statistics that are indicated in Table 7 illustrate very small differences in the mean scores for school players and university players between the companies. Outsurance showed the largest difference in means with 0.207 while Pick 'n Pay showed the lowest difference in means with 0.026. The results of the Mann–Whitney U test indicated that the p-values for four companies are larger than 0.05 and the null hypothesis can therefore not be rejected. Outsurance has a p-value of 0.001 since this value is smaller than 0.05 the null hypothesis can be rejected for this company.

The findings therefore indicated that four out of five companies have no significant statistical difference between school and university players with regard to their overall corporate reputation. This suggests that school and university players see no difference in the corporate reputation of Standard Bank, Pick 'n Pay, Toyota and MTN. The results for Outsurance however indicated that there is a significant statistical difference between school players and university players.

### **Hypothesis 5**

Hypothesis five, dealt with whether there are significant differences in the perceptions of potential sponsor – sport congruency, between high school hockey players and university hockey players. This hypothesis

was relevant for each of the five companies that were measured.

*H<sub>5</sub> (null): There is no relationship between the overall impression of a company's corporate reputation and perceived sponsor – sport congruency amongst hockey players.*

*H<sub>5</sub>: Differences in perceptions exist between school hockey respondents and club hockey respondents with regards to potential sponsor – sport congruency.*

Since the variable of perceptions in potential sponsor–sport congruency was measured at an interval level of measurement the appropriate parametric significance test for comparing differences between specified groups is the paired sample t-test. There are specific assumptions that need to be considered, these assumptions are the same as those discussed under hypothesis two. It was revealed that the assumption of normality was violated. For that reason the non-parametric Mann–Whitney U test was used to test H<sub>5</sub>.

From Table 8 it can be concluded that there are very small differences in the mean scores for school players and university players. Outsurance showed the largest difference in means with 0.490 while Standard Bank showed the lowest difference in means with 0.056. The results of the Mann–Whitney test indicate that all five companies have a p-value of larger than 0.05 and the null can therefore not be rejected.

Table 8: Results of Mann – Whitney U test for hypothesis five.

Company	Institution	Mean	SD	p-value	Conclusion
Standard Bank	School (N = 107)	5.6926	0.88107	0.561	Null hypothesis cannot be rejected
	University (N = 108)	5.6358	0.88196		
Outsurance	School (N = 107)	5.4631	1.13512	0.007**	Null hypothesis cannot be rejected
	University (N = 108)	4.9733	1.32054		
Toyota	School (N = 107)	5.6231	1.02152	0.207	Null hypothesis cannot be rejected
	University (N = 108)	5.4290	1.12108		
Pick 'n Pay	School (N = 107)	5.5753	1.12173	0.094**	Null hypothesis cannot be rejected
	University (N = 108)	5.2850	1.25664		
MTN	School (N = 107)	5.8474	0.82027	0.260	Null hypothesis cannot be rejected
	University (N = 108)	5.9057	1.00309		

This hypothesis was tested at a 5% level of significance ( $p \leq 0.05$ ); \*\* The p-value for Outsurance and Pick 'n Pay falls within the 10% level of significance.

Outsurance and Pick 'n Pay however have p-values between 0.05 and 0.1, which fall within a 10% level of significance. The findings therefore indicate that there is no significant statistical difference between school and university players with regard to their perceptions of potential sponsor–sport congruency. This suggests that school and university players see no difference in the in the congruency of the five companies.

## CONCLUSION

This study tested the difference in overall corporate reputation of five selected companies namely Standard Bank, Outsurance, Toyota, Pick 'n Pay and MTN. This study also explored the perceptions of congruency between the companies and hockey, as well as the relationship between overall corporate reputation and the perceptions of congruency. Male and female hockey players were compared as respondent

groups as well as school and university hockey players. The findings of this article support the alternate hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) and indicate that there is a positive relationship between corporate reputation and sponsor-sport congruence for all five of the selected companies. Outsurance achieved the most significant positive correlation followed by Toyota, Pick 'n Pay and MTN. Standard Bank achieved the least significant correlation. Although all these correlations are significant, they are statistically weak. The results also supported the null hypothesis for both  $H_2$  and  $H_3$ . The findings indicate that there are no significant gender differences in overall impression of corporate reputation nor are there significant gender differences in the perceptions of sponsor-sport congruency. It was found that both the overall impression of corporate reputation and the perceptions of sponsor-sport congruence amongst school and university players show a statistically

difference with regard to Outsurance only. However the results for the other four companies indicate no statistically significant differences between school and university players. This can be possibly be explained by the fact that both school and university respondents have direct contact with Standard Bank, Toyota, Pick 'n Pay and MTN while not many school respondents would have had direct contact with Outsurance, as it is a short term insurance company that deals predominantly with adults. It was also reported that there is little significant difference in the impression of corporate reputation and perceived congruence amongst the four groups of hockey players.

### **MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The sponsoring of amateur sport provides marketers with the opportunity to fill use new marketing channels that are far less cluttered and it provides a platform to potentially develop direct one to one relationships with consumers directly involved in the sport. H<sub>1</sub> focused on the relationship between corporate reputation and potential sponsor-sport congruency in an effort to explore the development of a direct one-to-one relationship with participants involved in the sport. This could be useful in hockey's effort to find a potential sponsor.

Speed and Thompson (2000) state that sponsorship is an area within marketing

where the consumers ability to see an association between marketing assets enhances the effectiveness of that asset. On this note, if a company has a strong reputation amongst a group of sports participants then this study has shown that there will be a positive relationship with the perceived congruence between that company and the participant's sporting discipline. Companies interested in sponsoring an amateur sport should therefore take a proactive approach to measuring their corporate reputation perception amongst the intended market of sport participants. This could be made easier if companies focus their sponsorship budgets on sporting codes that have functional similarities (Gwinner & Eaton, 1999). The findings of this study suggest that if the congruence between the sport and the company is made stronger then the resulting reputation transfer could be amplified. As such, a sport looking to attract new sponsorship deals could provide evidence showing how an effort to increase potential sponsor-sport congruence, on the part of the sport, could lead to an increase in overall corporate reputation of the company that is interested in sponsorship. When it comes to sponsoring the sport of hockey, hypotheses H<sub>2</sub>, H<sub>3</sub>, H<sub>4</sub> and H<sub>5</sub> focused on finding differences within the four participation categories within hockey that were used in this study in an effort to find companies or

industries that were better suited to sponsoring either male, female, school or university hockey. Although there are no differences in overall corporate reputation and perceived sponsor–sport congruence between males and females as well as between schools players and university players there are however positive implications for the amateur sport. Hockey, as a sport on a whole, can be approached for sponsorship. There will be no need to implement separate sponsoring strategies to different market segments within the hockey population saving on resources like, cost, time and manpower. A sponsorship agreement with hockey will provide a direct channel to all participants and spectators free of the mass clutter that hampers professional sport sponsorship. This study, using the 215 hockey respondents, suggests that MTN could be approached to enter into a sponsorship agreement with hockey. MTN scored highest on the total means for both corporate reputation and perceived congruency.

## LIMITATIONS

Firstly the companies that were selected for the study were all large well-known companies that spent hefty budgets on advertising and sponsorship annually in an effort to send out consistent messages to mass audiences. This could be in part a possible explanation to the similarity in results between the four participation categories. These companies are also already heavily

involved in a variety of sponsorship agreements. Secondly the sample group was very small when compared to the total population of hockey players. Also the sample only included scholars from two schools and participants from only one university. Perhaps future research could include more schools, other tertiary institutions and clubs. This would mean a larger sample group and therefore an increase in the accuracy of the results.

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