

THE PERSUASION PROCESS OF SPONSORSHIP AND NONSPONSORSHIP ACTIVATION AND THE DUAL MEDIATION MODEL

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The current study introduces the Dual Mediation Model (DMM) as a user perspective framework to explore the persuasive process of sponsorship and nonsponsorship activation across countries and brands. Data were collected from 1,850 respondents in Australia, the US, Malaysia, and China to examine consumer decision making for Adidas (i.e., sponsor) and Nike (i.e., nonsponsor) in the associations both brands have activated with the 2002–2014 FIFA World Cup (FWC). The majority of the hypotheses were supported, suggesting the DMM's ability to explain the impacts of sponsorship and nonsponsorship activation on cognitive, affective, and conative behavior across countries. Significant differences were also perceived in the attitude–purchase intention relationship between Australia and the other countries for Adidas, and between the US and the other three countries for Nike. Theoretically, the DMM presents researchers with a user perspective framework for the persuasion process in consumer decision making, which has been empirically tested and validated across four countries and two global brands. Managerially, findings reiterate to event organizers and brand managers that sponsorship activation requires activational communication, which should culminate in unique positioning and differentiation for sponsor brands.

Key words: Sponsorship activation; Cognition; Attitude; Purchase intention; Global brands

Introduction

Sponsorship of sport events has observed growth over the last decade (Biscaia, Correia, Rosado, Ross, & Maroco, 2013; Olson, 2010). The International Events Group (IEG) predicted that in 2017

the global sponsorship market would be worth \$62.8 billion, an increase of 4.5% over the previous year. North America was projected to invest \$23.2 billion; Central/South America, 4.5 billion; Europe, \$15.9 billion; and the Asia-Pacific, \$14.8 billion in sponsorship spending (IEG, 2016). For a mega-sport

event such as the FIFA World Cup (FWC), sponsorship was estimated at \$1.6 billion during the 2007–2010 quadrennial, an increase from \$584 million in the 1999–2002 period (Chippis, 2010).

Brands secure sponsorship rights in mega-sport events to target and access receptive audiences (Portlock & Rose, 2009). They use their sponsorship status as leverage to activate marketing strategies such as commercials, advertising onsite product sampling, hospitality, VIP hosting, and creative marketing (O'Reilly & Horning, 2013). This leveraging, referred to as sponsorship activation, reinforces the brand's perceived association with the sponsored event (Carrillat, Colbert, & Feigné, 2014), differentiates the brand through exclusivity in a product category (Dickson, Naylor, & Phelps, 2015) and increases brand awareness, sales, and market share (Papadimitriou, Apostolopoulou, & Dounis, 2008; Unsal, 2013). Sport sponsorship offers a platform for "experiential activation to diffuse the emotion-based promise and benefit of the brand" (Bal, Quester, & Plewa, 2009, p. 372), suggesting that sponsorship can activate deep emotional experiences for consumers.

The benefits of sponsorship have prompted the rise of a counter practice, referred to as ambush marketing (Carrillat et al., 2014; Michaelis, Woisetschlager, & Hartleb, 2008). It occurs when a nonsponsor brand activates strategy that intentionally undermines that of a sponsor brand (Shani & Sandler, 1998; Wolfsteiner, Grohs, & Wagner, 2015). This nonsponsorship activation has a premeditated consequence of misdirecting audiences (Cornwell & Humphreys, 2013) to infer an association with an event (McKelvey, Sandler, & Snyder, 2012). For instance, Nike, a nonsponsor brand of the 2012 London Olympics, successfully activated a connection with the event by fictitiously creating another sport event that took place in various hypothetical cities, all named London (Milman, 2012).

Given the rise of sponsorship and nonsponsorship activation by global brands such as Adidas and Nike, it is opportune to consider a user perspective framework that may be applied globally. Such a framework will explain how consumers across countries respond to leveraging with sponsorship and nonsponsorship activation (Eddy, 2014; Ferrier, Waite, & Harrison, 2013). Presently, where a framework is introduced, this is "tested mostly in

Western countries rather than in Asia" (Liu, Kim, Choi, Kim, & Peng, 2015, p. 308). For instance, Portlock and Rose's (2009) comparative study of Adidas (i.e., sponsor) and Nike (i.e., nonsponsor) focuses only on consumers in the UK. Likewise, R. J. Thomas' (2015) comparative study of Adidas and Nike targets consumers from the UK, Germany, Belgium, Denmark, and the US. Moreover, Dickson et al. (2015) observed that consumer responses to sponsorship activation are not universal and may differ across countries. A framework tested and validated in Western and Eastern countries would help to extend theory in the research area. The current study offers researchers an empirical model for examining the persuasion process of sponsorship and nonsponsorship activation across countries in the context of mega-sport events.

Current studies on how consumers respond to leveraging with sponsorship activation appear to report conflicting findings (e.g., Dickson et al., 2015; MacIntosh et al., 2012). On the one hand, Shani and Sandler (1998) highlighted that for 68.8% of respondents, a brand's sponsorship of the Olympics has no impact on their buying behavior. Further, Dickson et al. (2015) observed that "consumers are ambivalent toward ambush marketing" (p. 281). On the other hand, Stotlar (1993) reported that for 66% of respondents, a brand's sponsorship of the Olympics favorably impacts on their buying behavior. A decade later, Séguin, Lyberger, O'Reilly, and McCarthy (2005) concluded that 38% of respondents are more likely to consider supporting a sponsor brand, and 31% purchasing from a sponsor brand. These findings suggest that the link between consumer evaluation of sponsorship activation and purchase intention remains ambiguous. The current study explores how consumers respond to sponsorship and nonsponsorship activation (Wolfsteiner et al., 2015) to help brands assess the success of their positioning strategy and competitive advantage in individual and global markets (Ferrier et al., 2013).

In addressing these research gaps, the current study identifies two key research objectives. It introduces the Dual Mediation Model (DMM) as a user perspective framework to explore the persuasion process of sponsorship and nonsponsorship activation across countries. It also examines whether there are differences in consumers' affective and

conative behavior between these countries for sponsor and nonsponsor brands. In summary, the current study utilizes the DMM to underpin, test, and validate whether sponsorship activation by Adidas and nonsponsorship activation by Nike of the 2002–2014 FWC persuade consumers' brand cognition, brand attitude, and intention to purchase in Australia, the US, Malaysia, and China.

Literature Review

Sponsorship Activation

Sponsorship activation is defined as the marketing activities that a company conducts to promote its sponsorship (O'Reilly & Horning, 2013). Similarly, sponsorship leveraging is defined as "the act of using collateral marketing communications to exploit the commercial potential of the association between a sponsee and a sponsor" (Weeks, Cornwell, & Drennan, 2008, p. 639). Likewise, Papadimitriou et al. (2008) introduced the notion of exploitation to conceptual definitions of sponsorship activation and leveraging. Implicit in all these definitions is the engagement in marketing strategies that are over and above the rights fee paid to the sponsored property (Nickell, Cornwell, & Johnston, 2011). The current study adopts this perspective when referring to leveraging with sponsorship activation.

Some researchers have attempted to refine the distinction between leveraging and activation (e.g., Fairley & Tyler, 2011; Weeks et al., 2008). "Standard" marketing activities such as commercials, advertising, and onsite product sampling involve *leveraging* around a sponsorship, whereas "value-added" innovative marketing activities such as hospitality, VIP hosting, and creative marketing involve *activation* around a sponsorship (O'Reilly & Horning, 2013). In recent years, researchers have delved deeper into the concept of sponsorship activation. Weeks et al. (2008) suggested a distinction between "activational" communication and "nonactivational" communication. Marketing activities such as sweepstakes, contests, or websites, which "promote the engagement, involvement, or participation of the sponsorship audience with the sponsor" involve activational communication, whereas marketing activities such as

on-site signage and sponsor name mentions, which are more "passively processed by the sponsorship audience" involve nonactivational communication (Weeks et al., 2008, p. 639).

O'Reilly and Horning (2013) summarized three key reasons for sponsorship activation. It can be innovatively designed to cut through promotional clutter (Cornwell, Weeks, & Roy, 2005), enabling the sponsor brand to connect with a target audience in a meaningful and appropriate manner (Bal et al., 2009; Séguin & O'Reilly, 2008). Sponsorship activation is also viewed as a combative strategy for sponsor brands to counteract ambush marketing (Carrillat et al., 2014; Crompton, 2004; Shani & Sandler, 1998), leveraging "their investment in a credible fashion to continuously remain in the public conscience" (Tripodi & Hirons, 2009, p. 133) and creating positive adjustments between consumers' pre- and postevent attitudinal measures (Quester & Thompson, 2001). Finally, a sponsor brand can successfully position and differentiate itself by being creative in activating its sponsored rights, ensuring that it cannot easily be mimicked by its competitors (Cornwell et al., 2005).

Ambush Marketing

Ambush marketing refers to a brand's efforts to "capitalize on the awareness, attention, goodwill, and other benefits, generated by having an association with an event, without . . . having an official or direct connection to that event" (Chadwick & Burton, 2011, p. 714). In doing so, the brand engages in nonsponsorship activation to "hijack the intrinsic values of an event and take advantage, for the least possible cost, of the interest it solicits in audiences . . . to improve its reputation and transfer the positive aspects of the event to its brand" (Mazodier & Quester, 2010, p. 53).

Chadwick and Burton (2011) identified three ambush marketing approaches, which include direct (*predatory* or *coattail*), associative (*distractive* or *parallel*), and incidental (*saturation*). For instance, Adidas positioned itself as a leading sponsor of the 2002–2014 FIFA World Cup (FWC); Nike did not do so. Instead, Nike employed a *coattail* strategy by sponsoring marque football players such as Wayne Rooney and Cristiano Ronaldo who participated in the 2010 FWC in South Africa. During the

event, Nike engaged in *distractive* strategy by using South Africa's largest digital advertising screen on a 30-story building in Johannesburg to display fan messages over Twitter and feature its football stars (Sweney, 2012). Nike's *predatory* "Write the Future" campaign generated 23.6 million views by the fourth day of the 2010 FWC, directing the spotlight away from Adidas (Russel, 2012). Then Adidas secured global sponsorship rights at the 2012 London Olympics; again Nike did not. Instead, Nike cued its *parallel* "Find your Greatness" campaign launch to coincide with the opening ceremony of the 2012 London Olympics. Hypothetical locations for this *saturation* campaign in 25 countries included East London in South Africa, Little London in Jamaica, and London, Ohio in the US.

Two prevailing perspectives to ambush marketing exist. The long-standing view is that such practice has detrimental impact on the event and its sponsor brands (Kumar & Tripathi, 2016; Meenaghan, 1998). From this perspective, ambush marketing employs immoral, illegal, and parasitic strategies (McKelvey et al., 2012; Portlock & Rose, 2009). This prompted Dickson et al. (2015) to conclude that "most individuals perceive ambush marketing as unethical and a practice that organizations should not utilize" (p. 280). The more contemporary view is that such practice is unconventional, creative (Chionne & Scozzese, 2014), and commonplace in the sport industry (Séguin & O'Reilly, 2008). From this perspective, ambush marketing is still ethical, legal, and an activation of parallel strategies (McKelvey et al., 2012; Portlock & Rose, 2009). Hence, Séguin and O'Reilly (2008) observed that ambush marketing is an "alternative strategy to purchasing the rights to official sponsorship status" (p. 66). Given these diverse perspectives, it is relevant to introduce and explore a user perspective framework that takes into account the contractual rights of sponsor brands against the rights of nonsponsor brands to leverage an event through legitimate and competitive activation strategy (Crow & Hoek, 2003). The current study sets out to test and validate this framework across four countries and two brands.

Conceptual Development

The theory that underpins the current study's conceptual model is the Elaboration Likelihood

Model (ELM) (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981) and its extended DMM (Lutz, MacKenzie, & Belch, 1983). The ELM considers the likelihood of cognitive elaboration required to process a message (Lutz et al., 1983). According to Chen, Kyaw, and Ross (2008), the likelihood of cognitive elaboration is higher when an individual generates more effortful thoughts in response to a direct stimulus such as a motivational speech. However, the likelihood of cognitive elaboration is lower when the individual generates less effortful thoughts in response to indirect heuristics such as the speaker's appearance. These direct and indirect externally generated persuasions instigate attitudinal and then behavioral change (Ajzen, Brown, & Carvajal, 2004).

The DMM is rooted in the ELM tradition but was introduced to assess the likelihood of cognitive elaboration in advertising contexts (Lutz et al., 1983). The DMM has been adapted and some theoretical variations proposed (e.g., Coulter, 2005; Karson & Fisher, 2005; Sharma, 2015). However, the fundamental DMM appears to be the one that best explains communication effectiveness (López & Ruiz, 2011; MacKenzie, Lutz, & Belch, 1986) and continues to be an influential conceptual model for researchers (Chen et al., 2008). Kitchen, Kerr, Schultz, McColl, and Pals (2014) attributed the applicability of the ELM and its extended DMM to three factors. The model is well constructed, clearly delineating the persuasion process of activation strategy. It is also descriptive and encompassing, explaining the efficacy of activation strategy in diverse purchase contexts involving mobile phones (Chen et al., 2008), casual attire (Coulter, 2005), snacks (Sharma, 2015), travel booking websites (López & Ruiz, 2011), and destination websites (Tang, Jang, & Morrison, 2012). Finally, the model has been cited in some 125 articles and chapters to explain the effectiveness of communication strategies activated by brands (e.g., Pasadeos, Phelps, & Edison, 2008; Schumann, Kotowski, Ahn, & Haugtvedt, 2012). For these reasons, the DMM was adopted in the current study to explore how sponsorship and nonsponsorship activation impact on consumer decision making across four countries and two global brands in the context of a mega-sport event. The research model can be seen in Figure 1.

Three tenets central to the DMM, namely, cognitive, affective, and conative behaviors (Madrigal,

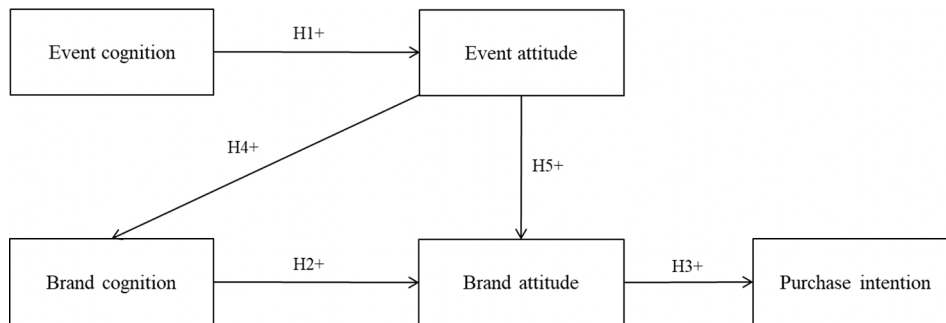


Figure 1. Conceptual model. The positive impact of brand attitude on intention to purchase will differ between countries (H6).

2001), are of interest to the current study. These are considered for their roles in the persuasion process of sponsorship and nonsponsorship activation from the consumer perspective. Cognition refers to beliefs or thoughts that are related to an object (Karson & Fisher, 2005) such as an individual's perception of a sports shoe brand. Affect is a psychological predisposition to act with some degree of favor (disfavor) toward an object (Bagozzi, Dholakia, & Basuroy, 2003) such as an individual's attitude toward a sports shoe brand. Conation reflects readiness to plan and execute the behavior of interest and is the likelihood to act (Ajzen, 1991) such as an individual's intention to purchase a sports shoe brand.

In making sense of the universe, consumers function as naive scientists, employing cognitive and causal analysis to understand and exert control over their lives and the environment (Heider, 1958). As consumers develop commonsense explanations for why events occur, their cognitive processing influences their attitude and behavior (Ajzen et al., 2004; Kelley, 1967). For instance, Song, You, Reisinger, Lee, and Lee (2014) observed that participant cognition of the benefits of Oriental medicine predicts their positive affect toward an Oriental medicine festival. Similarly, visitor perception of an agricultural festival's well-organized program, environment, food, and souvenirs shapes their positive attitude toward the festival (Choo, Ahn, & Petrick, 2016). Priluck and Till (2004) also noted that attendee cognition of an event influences their favorable affect toward the event. Thus:

H1: More favorable event cognition will positively impact on event attitude.

How consumers mentally process and perceive of a brand forms their brand attitude (Karson & Fisher, 2005). If consumers perceive a good fit or congruence between an event and a sponsor brand (Weeks et al., 2008), such as sponsorship of a football tournament by a sports shoe brand, this fit develops their attitude toward the brand (Koo, Quarterman, & Flynn, 2006). To illustrate, Lafferty, Goldsmith, and Newell (2002) suggested that consumer cognition of the credibility of a sports shoe brand sponsor is antecedent to their positive attitude toward the brand. Likewise, attendees at an event who have positive cognition of a sponsor brand are likely to have favorable attitude toward it (Papadimitriou et al., 2008). Thus:

H2: More favorable sponsor brand cognition will positively impact on sponsor brand attitude.

Positive affect toward an object influences higher behavioral intention toward it (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961). Attitude, or in this context the overall affective evaluation of an event by attendees, can form the basis for their behavioral intention (Kemp, Childers, & Williams, 2012). For instance, Choo et al. (2016) as well as Lee and Beeler (2009) highlighted that visitors with positive attitude toward a festival are more likely to revisit the festival. Spectator attitude toward a brand that sponsors elite intercollegiate football programs predicts intention to purchase the brand (Dees, Bennett, & Tsuji, 2007). Nassis, Theodorakis, Afthinos, and Kolybalis (2014) also concluded that attendee attitude toward the sponsor brand of a professional basketball game in Greece influences willingness to purchase the brand. Thus:

H3: More favorable sponsor brand attitude will positively impact on intention to purchase the sponsor brand.

When consumers ascribe meaning to the universe, they access separate entities of brand information from memory and activate a process that links the meaning of one entity to another (McCracken, 1989). This process initiates a successive reaction that creates a complex associative network for the brand (Anderson, 1983). According to the DMM, when this occurs, the likelihood of cognitive elaboration is higher because a consumer generates more effortful thoughts in response to a direct stimulus (Chen et al., 2008) such as the advertised *message* in a brand's activational communication. To illustrate, tourism researchers have examined websites as effective advertising vehicles for promoting travel destinations (e.g., Lopez & Ruiz, 2011; Tang et al., 2012). These studies report that consumers with positive affect toward such websites are more cognitively aware of the travel destinations they promote.

It is observed that "if a brand image and related usage situation can, through sponsorship, be linked to those favorable feelings remembered from a particular event . . . , then stronger associations will be established" (Quester & Farrelly, 1998, p. 543). Nadeau, O'Reilly, and Heslop (2013) suggested that a brand can implement sponsorship activation to forge these stronger associations and gain positive awareness. The authors' survey of Canadian consumers after the 2008 Beijing Olympics highlights that their positive attitude toward the event associatively progresses to their cognitive perception of the brands that have sponsored the event. Thus:

H4: More favorable event attitude will positively impact on sponsor brand cognition.

When consumers perceive an event and its sponsor brand to share a good fit or congruence, their attitude toward the event transfers to their attitude toward the sponsor brand (Weeks et al., 2008). Gwinner (2005) observed that the pairing of consumer liking of a popular event with a sponsor brand leads to a transfer of positive affect toward the brand. These connections are intensified when

the brand activates heuristic cues such as its attractiveness and implied association with the event (Gwinner, 2005). According to the DMM, when this occurs, the likelihood of cognitive elaboration is lower because the consumer generates less effortful thoughts in response to heuristics (Chen et al., 2008) such as the advertised *logos* and *visuals* in a brand's activational communication. To illustrate, Karson and Fisher (2005) explored web user attitude toward a Special Olympics Charity and noted its positive effect on attitude toward the brand sponsor of the charity. Moreover, it is suggested that advertised endorsements by popular celebrities predict favorable attitude toward the endorsed brand (T. Thomas & Johnson, 2017). Similarly, Lafferty et al. (2002) concluded that attitude toward celebrity-endorsed advertisements of a sports shoe instigates positive affect toward the endorsed shoe brand. Thus:

H5: More favorable event attitude will positively impact on sponsor brand attitude.

Finally, it is likely that consumers who are stimulated by sponsorship activation will demonstrate positive attitude toward a brand that influences their purchase decision (Dees et al., 2007; Nassis et al., 2014). However, this link between brand attitude and purchase intention is observed to vary across countries (e.g., Dickson et al., 2015; Liu et al., 2015; Portlock & Rose, 2009; R. J. Thomas, 2015). Thus:

H6: The positive impact of brand attitude on intention to purchase will differ between countries.

Research Design and Methodology

The current study focused on the FIFA World Cup (FWC), which is the largest and most broadcasted football tournament in the world (Florek, Breitbarth, & Conejo, 2008). For the 2010 FWC in South Africa, the average in-home global audience was 530.9 million, with the average global audience for each match estimated at 188.4 million. This earned FIFA €\$2.4 billion (US\$3.16 billion) in broadcasting rights fees (Associated Press, 2012). To address the research objective, studies were conducted in Australia, USA, Malaysia, and China.

These countries were selected for their high interest in the FWC and these countries had authorized broadcasting rights for the 2010 and 2014 FWCs held in South Africa and Brazil, respectively.

A self-administered 15-min pen-and-paper survey comprised the study's instrument. Two versions of the survey were distributed. The first version focused on Adidas, the sponsor of the FWC between 2002 and 2014. In this version, respondents were asked for their cognition of the FWC and Adidas before viewing a print ad that was manipulated to clearly identify Adidas as *being* the official FWC sponsor. Then respondents were asked for their brand attitude and intention to purchase Adidas products. The second version focused on Nike, the nonsponsor of the FWC. In this version, respondents were asked for their cognition of the FWC and Nike before viewing a print ad that was also manipulated to clearly identify Nike as *not being* the official FWC sponsor. Afterwards, respondents were asked for their brand attitude and intention to purchase Nike products. The survey was administered in English for Australia, the US, and Malaysia, and Mandarin for China. In the China study, back-translation was adopted for content validity (Brislin, 1970; Wang & Waller, 2006).

Data were collected between 2013 and 2014 at major shopping malls, offices, and public libraries in the four countries. To achieve a cross-section of the population, the researcher in each country targeted every fifth shopper, office worker, or student at different times of the day and week. Working within budget constraints, quotas for data collection were set at 250 surveys for Adidas and 250 for Nike per country. As can be seen in Table 1, the completed Adidas and Nike surveys totaled 370 in Australia, 480 in the US, 500 in Malaysia, and 500 in China.

The survey commenced with four screening questions that asked respondents for their engagement with the FWC. Those who scored below 4 on a 7-point Likert-style measure were deemed to have low engagement with the event and were screened out. This ensured that quotas set for each study comprised respondents who were engaged in the event. The survey's 25 items, which represented the five key constructs, were selected and adapted from existing scales that were relevant to the research context and had high reliability. Seven

items representing event cognition and five representing brand cognition were selected from Olson's (2010) and Homer's (1990) scales. Four items relating to event and brand attitude, respectively, were chosen from Bagozzi et al.'s (2003) scale. Finally, five items about purchase intention were drawn from Olson's (2010) and Homer's (1990) scales. All scales utilized a Likert-style measure, anchored with 1 (*strongly disagree*) and 7 (*strongly agree*.) The exceptions were event and brand attitude, which employed a bipolar semantic differential scale.

Results

Sample Profiles

The sample profiles of respondents in each country were examined using descriptive analysis with SPSS 24, as can be seen in Table 1. There were more males, with the highest (72.1%) in the US and lowest (59%) in China. The dominant age group was 20–29 years old, ranging from 63.4% in China to 50.3% in Australia. This suggested a skew toward younger males. The majority was single, with the highest (54.6%) in Australia and lowest (36.2%) in China. Full-time employment was most evident (81%) in China, whereas part-time employment was most observed (45.1%) in Australia. Professionals constituted about one fifth of each sample, with the highest (34.4%) in Malaysia and lowest (14.4%) in China. Finally, the dominant income group was under \$49,999, with the largest group (81.7%) in the US and the smallest group (19.6%) in Malaysia. Findings were representative of the GDP per capita incomes in Australia (US\$45,200), US (US\$53,300), Malaysia (US\$23,300), and China (US\$12,000) (Central Intelligence Agency, 2013).

Adidas

Because the 25 scale items in the Adidas survey were adopted from existing scales, the analysis proceeded with the two-step approach to confirmatory factor analysis with AMOS 24. In the first step, it used one-factor congeneric models and in the second step the full measurement model with the maximum likelihood estimation method to

Table 1
Sample Profiles: Australia, the US, Malaysia, and China

	Australia (<i>N</i> = 370) [Frequency (%)]	US (<i>N</i> = 480) [Frequency (%)]	Malaysia (<i>N</i> = 500) [Frequency (%)]	China (<i>N</i> = 500) [Frequency (%)]
Gender				
Male	229 (61.9)	346 (72.1)	334 (66.8)	295 (59.0)
Female	141 (38.1)	134 (27.9)	166 (33.2)	200 (40.0)
Age				
18–19 years	82 (22.2)	30 (6.3)	15 (3.0)	20 (4.0)
20–29 years	186 (50.3)	260 (54.2)	252 (50.4)	317 (63.4)
30–39 years	68 (18.4)	133 (27.7)	140 (28.0)	132 (26.4)
40–49 years	18 (4.9)	35 (7.3)	55 (11.0)	26 (5.2)
Over 50 years	15 (4.1)	22 (4.6)	38 (7.6)	5 (1.0)
Marital status				
Single	202 (54.6)	261 (54.4)	194 (38.8)	181 (36.2)
In a relationship	103 (27.8)	95 (19.8)	162 (32.4)	114 (22.8)
De facto	9 (2.4)	2 (0.4)	12 (2.4)	17 (3.4)
Married	56 (15.1)	122 (25.4)	132 (26.4)	180 (36.0)
Working status				
Full-time	138 (37.3)	268 (55.8)	394 (78.8)	405 (81.0)
Part-time	167 (45.1)	114 (23.8)	66 (13.2)	45 (9.0)
Not working	9 (2.4)	98 (20.4)	19 (3.8)	0 (0)
Occupation				
Manager	23 (6.2)	41 (8.5)	97 (19.4)	34 (6.8)
Professional	77 (20.8)	96 (20.0)	172 (34.4)	72 (14.4)
Technicians	16 (4.3)	56 (11.7)	25 (5.0)	119 (23.8)
Skilled agriculture	1 (0.3)	5 (1.0)	20 (4.0)	2 (0.4)
Clerical	15 (4.1)	31 (6.5)	33 (6.6)	102 (20.4)
Service and sales	44 (11.9)	67 (14.0)	60 (12.0)	66 (13.2)
Machinery operators	5 (1.4)	8 (1.7)	21 (4.2)	17 (3.4)
Craft	11 (3.0)	10 (2.1)	27 (5.4)	5 (1.0)
Student	169 (45.7)	113 (23.5)	31 (6.2)	78 (15.6)
Retired	1 (0.3)	5 (1.0)	14 (2.8)	1 (0.2)
Income (in local currency)				
Under 44,999	172 (46.5)	392 (81.7)	98 (19.6)	187 (37.4)
45,000–89,999	123 (33.2)	0 (0)	110 (22.0)	131 (26.2)
90,000–149,999	37 (10.0)	79 (16.5)	88 (17.6)	76 (15.2)
150,000–224,999	12 (3.2)	6 (1.3)	62 (12.4)	31 (6.2)
225,000–299,999	12 (3.2)	2 (0.4)	66 (13.2)	29 (5.8)
300,000–449,999	5 (1.4)	1 (0.2)	50 (10.0)	16 (3.2)
500,000–599,999	4 (1.1)	0 (0)	26 (5.2)	3 (0.6)

refine the factor structures and assess their validity and reliability (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1999; Steenkamp & van Trijp, 1991). Model adequacy was evaluated using the fit indices ($\chi^2/df \leq 3.0$, $p \geq 0.05$; RMSEA ≤ 0.08 ; GFI ≥ 0.90 ; CFI ≥ 0.90 ; NFI ≥ 0.90), and the standardized factor loadings for all constructs were consulted to ensure increased reliability and decreased measurement error (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010).

In the two-step approach to confirmatory factor analysis, each of the four country samples for Adidas was randomly split. The first portions of each country sample (Australia: 37; US: 91; Malaysia: 100; and China: 100) were pooled together ($N = 328$).

First, the five constructs in the pooled sample were subjected to confirmatory factor analysis using one-factor congeneric models. The modification indices for each model was consulted for multicollinearity or low standardized parameter estimates (≤ 0.50) (Steenkamp & van Trijp, 1991). In total, 10 scale items, which included four from event cognition, two from brand cognition, one each from event attitude and brand attitude, and two from purchase intention were deleted. Next, the full measurement model with all five constructs in the pooled sample was run with confirmatory factor analysis. As can be seen in Figure 2, the magnitude, direction, and statistical significance of each construct's standardized

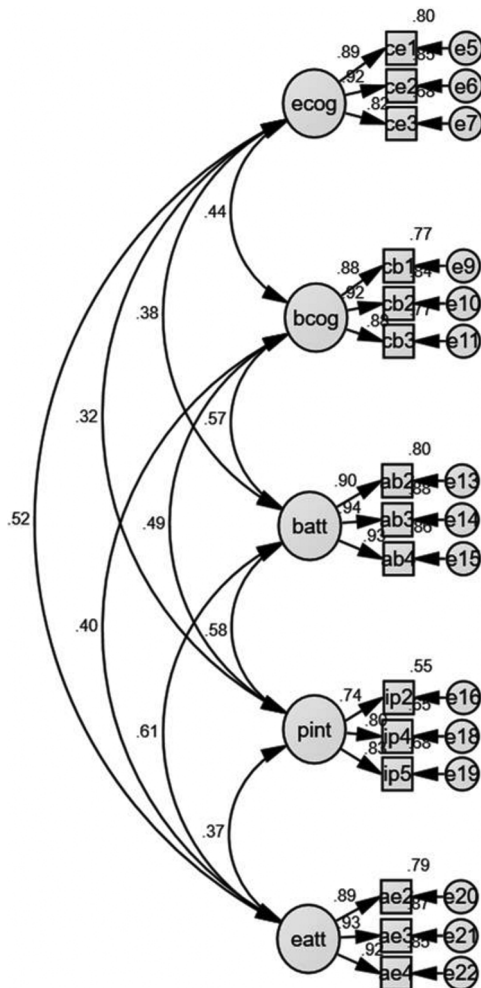


Figure 2. Measurement model: Adidas. Weight model: all parameters constrained [$\chi^2(80) = 130.107$, $p = 0.000$; MSEA = 0.044; CFI = 0.988; NFI = 0.969; GFI = 952].

parameter estimate was positive (0.74–0.94) and the goodness-of-fit indices addressed the critical criteria ($p \geq 0.01$; RMSEA ≤ 0.04 ; CFI ≥ 0.99 ; NFI ≥ 0.97 ; GFI ≥ 0.95). This implied that the 15 scale items, which represented the five constructs, were acceptable.

Construct reliability was calculated with standardized parameter estimates derived from the full measurement model. As can be seen in Table 2, reliability for each construct was high (0.83–0.94) and exceeded the critical threshold (≥ 0.60), implying the constructs had stable dimensions (Hair et al., 2010). The average variance extracted score for each construct was also high (0.63–0.85) and exceeded the critical threshold (≥ 0.50), suggesting the indicator variables were able to explain each relevant construct (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

As the magnitude, direction, and statistical significance of each construct’s standardized parameter estimate was positive (0.74–0.94) (Steenkamp & van Trijp, 1991) and the average variance extracted scores was high (0.63–0.85) (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), this indicated convergent validity. As can be seen in Table 2, correlations between all constructs were low (0.29–0.58) and below the critical threshold (≤ 0.80) (Bagozzi & Heatherton, 1994) and the average variance extracted scores for all constructs (0.63–0.85) exceeded squared correlations between any two constructs in the pooled sample (0.08–0.34), demonstrating discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). This signaled that it was appropriate to proceed with testing the hypotheses in the research model.

In hypothesis testing for Adidas in the four countries, the second portion of each country sample

Table 2
Mean, Reliability, Average Variance Extracted, Correlations: Adidas—Australia, the US, Malaysia, and China (Pooled Sample)

	Items	M	SD	CR	AVE	Correlations			
						EC	BC	EA	BA
Event cognition (EC)	3	5.25	1.12	0.91	0.78				
Brand cognition (BC)	3	5.37	1.08	0.92	0.79	0.42 (0.18)			
Event attitude (EA)	3	5.29	1.24	0.94	0.83	0.49 (0.24)	0.38 (0.14)		
Brand attitude (BA)	3	5.17	1.24	0.94	0.85	0.36 (0.13)	0.54 (0.29)	0.58 (0.34)	
Purchase intention (PI)	3	4.60	1.26	0.83	0.63	0.29 (0.08)	0.43 (0.18)	0.33 (0.11)	0.52 (0.27)

Note. M, mean; SD, standard deviation; CR, construct reliability; AVE, average variance extracted. Values in parentheses are squared correlations.

was utilized (Australia: 150; US: 150; Malaysia: 150; and China: 150). The structural models for the four countries were subjected to structural equation modeling using multigroup analysis with AMOS 24. The country samples were tested for factor invariance by constraining the indicator variables for the five constructs (Wang & Waller, 2006). The goodness-of-fit indices for the constrained models addressed the critical criteria ($\chi^2/df \leq 3.0$; RMSEA ≤ 0.08 ; GFI ≥ 0.90 ; CFI ≥ 0.90 ; NFI ≥ 0.90), suggesting the factors were invariant across the four country samples.

As can be seen in Table 3, the hypothesized relationships in the research model were significant ($p \leq 0.05$) for each of the four Adidas country samples, supporting H1–H5. Further, the predictability of the model in explaining purchase intention for Adidas was high for Australia ($R^2 = 0.59$); US ($R^2 = 0.50$); Malaysia ($R^2 = 0.60$); and China ($R^2 = 0.41$).

From the multigroup analysis, critical ratios for differences were consulted to determine whether the hypothesized brand attitude–intention relationship (H3) was significantly different between the four Adidas country samples. Australia had significant differences in its H3 parameter with the US, Malaysia, and China, partially supporting H6.

Nike

The Nike sample was also examined with the two-step approach to confirmatory factor analysis using AMOS 24. Each of the four country samples for Nike was randomly split. The first portions of each country sample (Australia: 33; US: 89; Malaysia: 100; and China: 100) were pooled together ($N = 322$). Initially, the five constructs in the pooled

sample were subjected to confirmatory factor analysis using one-factor congeneric models with AMOS 24 and the modification indices were examined. As a result, 10 scale items were identified to have multicollinearity or low standardized parameter estimates (≤ 0.50). These items, which included four from event cognition, two from brand cognition, one each from event attitude and brand attitude, and two from purchase intention, were the same items in the Adidas sample that also were eliminated. Then the full measurement model with all five constructs in the pooled sample was run with confirmatory factor analysis. The magnitude, direction, and statistical significance of each construct's standardized parameter estimate was positive (0.82–0.95) and the goodness-of-fit indices addressed the critical criteria ($p \geq 0.01$; RMSEA ≤ 0.04 ; CFI ≥ 0.99 ; NFI ≥ 0.97 ; GFI ≥ 0.96), as can be seen in Figure 3. This suggested that the 15 scale items, which represented the five constructs, were acceptable.

Standardized parameter estimates reported in the full measurement model were used to estimate construct reliability. The reliability for each construct was high (0.87–0.96) and above the critical threshold (≥ 0.60), demonstrating stable factor structures, as can be seen in Table 4. Also, the average variance extracted score for each construct was high (0.70–0.88) and above the critical threshold (≥ 0.50), indicating ability of the indicator variables to account for each relevant construct.

The magnitude, direction, and statistical significance of each construct's standardized parameter estimate was positive (0.82–0.95) and the average variance extracted scores was high (0.70–0.88), suggesting convergent validity. Low correlations between all constructs (0.22–0.60) and average

Table 3
Multigroup Analysis: Adidas—Australia, the US, Malaysia, and China

	Australia	US	Malaysia	China
H1: Event cognition→Event attitude	0.67 (0.001)	0.55 (0.001)	0.82 (0.001)	0.64 (0.001)
H2: Brand cognition→Brand attitude	0.67 (0.001)	0.71 (0.001)	0.25 (0.01)	0.21 (0.01)
H3: Brand attitude→Purchase intention	0.77 (0.001)	0.70 (0.001)	0.78 (0.001)	0.64 (0.001)
H4: Event attitude→Brand cognition	0.59 (0.001)	0.40 (0.001)	0.64 (0.001)	0.65 (0.001)
H5: Event attitude→Brand attitude	0.23 (0.001)	0.26 (0.001)	0.59 (0.001)	0.62 (0.001)

Note. Values are standardized regression weights with p values in parentheses. Chi-square = 468.30, $df = 217$; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.04; comparative fit indices (CFI) = 0.96; normative fit indices (NFI) = 0.93; goodness-of-fit indices (GFI) = 0.89.

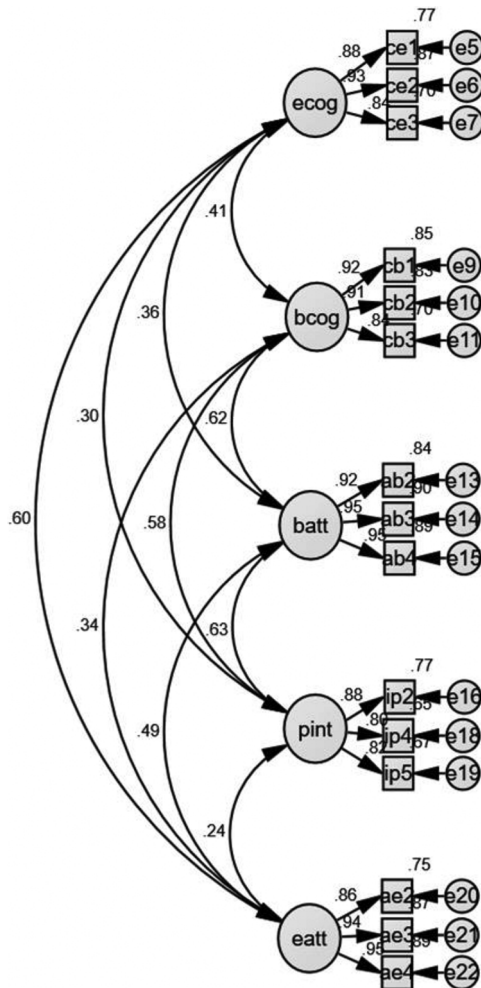


Figure 3. Measurement model: Nike. Weight model: all parameters constrained [$\chi^2(80) = 114.646, p = 0.007$; MSEA = 0.037; CFI = 0.992; NFI = 0.974; GFI = 0.955].

variance extracted scores for all constructs (0.70–0.88) that exceeded squared correlations between any two constructs in the pooled sample (0.05–0.36) implied discriminant validity, as can be seen in Table 4. This suggested that it was meaningful to proceed with the hypothesis testing stage.

Testing the hypotheses for Nike in the four countries employed the second portion of each country sample (Australia: 150; US: 150; Malaysia: 150; and China: 150). The structural models for the four countries were subjected to structural equation modeling using multigroup analysis with AMOS 24. Indicator variables representing the five constructs were constrained to assess factor invariance for the country samples. The constrained models met the goodness-of-fit critical criteria ($\chi^2/df \leq 3.0$; RMSEA ≤ 0.08 ; GFI ≥ 0.90 ; CFI ≥ 0.90 ; NFI ≥ 0.90), suggesting invariant factors across the four country samples.

The hypothesized relationships were significant ($p \leq 0.01$) for each of the four Nike country samples, as can be seen in Table 5, supporting H1, but not H2 and H3, as the latter two relationships were not expected to be significant for the nonsponsor brand. However, as expected, there were no significant relationships between event attitude and brand cognition as well as event attitude and brand attitude in the US, partially supporting H4 and H5. The predictability of the model in explaining purchase intention for Nike varied from low to high for Australia ($R^2 = 0.13$), US ($R^2 = 0.60$), Malaysia ($R^2 = 0.25$), and China ($R^2 = 0.28$).

Finally, critical ratios for differences derived from the multigroup analysis assessed whether the

Table 4
Mean, Reliability, Average Variance Extracted, Correlations: Nike—Australia, USA, Malaysia, and China (Pooled Sample)

	Items	M	SD	CR	AVE	Correlations			
						EC	BC	EA	BA
Event cognition (EC)	3	5.32	1.20	0.91	0.78				
Brand cognition (BC)	3	5.25	1.22	0.92	0.80	0.39 (0.15)			
Event attitude (EA)	3	5.29	1.30	0.94	0.84	0.57 (0.32)	0.33 (0.11)		
Brand attitude (BA)	3	4.81	1.47	0.96	0.88	0.34 (0.12)	0.60 (0.36)	0.47 (0.22)	
Purchase intention (PI)	3	4.47	1.45	0.87	0.70	0.29 (0.08)	0.53 (0.28)	0.22 (0.05)	0.58 (0.34)

Note. M, mean; SD, standard deviation; CR, construct reliability; AVE, average variance extracted. Values in parentheses are squared correlations.

Table 5

Multigroup Analysis: Nike—Australia, the US, Malaysia, and China

	Australia	US	Malaysia	China
H1: Event cognition→Event attitude	0.44 (0.001)	0.62 (0.001)	0.56 (0.001)	0.59 (0.001)
H2: Brand cognition→Brand attitude	0.39 (0.001)	0.71 (0.001)	0.19 (0.01)	0.25 (0.001)
H3: Brand attitude→Purchase intention	0.36 (0.001)	0.77 (0.001)	0.50 (0.001)	0.53 (0.001)
H4: Event attitude→Brand cognition	0.67 (0.001)	0.18 (ns)	0.34 (0.001)	0.34 (0.001)
H5: Event attitude→Brand attitude	0.39 (0.001)	0.02 (ns)	0.57 (0.001)	0.63 (0.001)

Note. Values are standardized regression weights with p values in parentheses. Chi-square = 483.61, df = 217; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.05; comparative fit indices (CFI) = 0.95; normative fit indices (NFI) = 0.91; goodness-of-fit indices (GFI) = 0.88. ns, not significant at p = 0.01.

hypothesized brand attitude–intention relationship (H3) was significantly different between the four Nike country samples. The US had significant differences in its H3 parameter with Malaysia, Australia, and China, partially supporting H6.

Discussion

The current study's first research objective was to introduce the DMM as a user perspective framework to explore the persuasion process of sponsorship and nonsponsorship activation for the 2002–2014 FIFA World Cup (FWC) in Australia, the US, Malaysia, and China. The second research objective was to examine whether differences exist in the brand attitude–purchase intention relationship between these countries for Adidas (i.e., sponsor) and Nike (i.e., nonsponsor).

For the Adidas country samples, event cognition impacted positively on event attitude, supporting H1 across all four countries. This reiterates the consumer psychology literature that consumer's cognitive processing of an object shapes their affect toward it (e.g., Choo et al., 2016; Heider, 1958; Kelly, 1967; Song et al., 2014). As expected, cognition of the FWC influences positive attitude toward the FWC in these countries.

In all four countries, there was a positive relationship between sponsor brand cognition and sponsor brand attitude for Adidas. This supports H2 and corroborates consumer psychology studies for the brand cognition–attitude relationship (e.g., Karson & Fisher, 2005; Koo et al., 2006; Lafferty et al., 2002; Papadimitriou et al., 2008). Clearly, cognition of Adidas influences positive attitude toward Adidas in these countries. Further, sponsor brand attitude impacted positively on purchase

intention, supporting H3 across all four countries. This is acknowledged in the consumer psychology literature that consumer affect toward an object shapes their conative behavior toward the object (e.g., Choo et al., 2016; Dees et al., 2007; Kemp et al., 2012; Lavidge & Steiner, 1961; Lee & Beeler, 2009; Nassis et al., 2014). Therefore, it can be highlighted that attitude toward Adidas influences purchase intention toward the brand in these countries.

Event attitude impacted positively on sponsor brand cognition in all four countries for Adidas. This supports H4 and validates the sport sponsorship literature that consumers link the meaning of one entity to another, creating a complex network that associates event affect with sponsor brand cognition (e.g., Anderson, 1983; Lopez & Ruiz, 2011; McCracken, 1989; Nadeau et al., 2013; Quester & Farrelly, 1998; Tang et al., 2012). Evidently, sponsorship activation stimulates an effortful association between attitude toward the FWC and cognition of Adidas in these countries. Moreover, there was a positive relationship between event attitude and sponsor brand attitude, supporting H5 across all four countries. This corroborates sport sponsorship studies that when a good fit is perceived between the event and its sponsor brand, event attitude effortlessly transfers to sponsor brand attitude (e.g., Gwinner, 2005; Lafferty et al., 2002; T. Thomas & Johnson, 2017; Weeks et al., 2008). It is surmised that consumers who perceive congruence between the FWC and Adidas are prepared to transfer their attitude of the event toward its sponsor brand in these countries.

In the brand attitude–purchase intention relationship for Adidas, Australia had significant differences with the US, Malaysia, and China, partially supporting H6. It would appear that Australian

consumers with favorable attitude toward Adidas are most likely to purchase the brand among the four countries.

For the Nike country samples, event cognition impacted positively on event attitude across all four countries, supporting H1. As expected, cognition of the FWC influences positive attitude toward the event in these countries. However, in all four countries there were positive relationships between brand cognition and brand attitude as well as brand attitude and purchase intention toward Nike. Although these findings were not expected for H2 and H3, given the activational stimuli in the research design, which highlighted the non-sponsorship role that Nike adopted with the FWC, the significant relationships are plausible. Nike is a successful global brand and has been effective (Inter-Pacific Research Sdn. Bhd., 2017) in globally leveraging its sponsorship and non-sponsorship activation of teams, players, and events (Chadwick & Burton, 2011). This activation has influenced positive cognition, attitude, and purchase intention toward Nike across all four countries.

In the US, and as expected, event attitude produced no significant impact on brand cognition at the p value of 0.01, partially supporting H4 for Nike. American consumers appear to be more cognizant of non-sponsorship activation and are exerting greater effort in not forming an association between attitude toward the FWC and cognition of Nike. Similarly, event attitude produced no significant impact on brand attitude in the US at the p value of 0.01, partially supporting H5. This reiterates that American consumers who are cognizant of Nike's non-sponsorship activation are not prepared to effortlessly transfer their favorable attitude toward the event to the non-sponsor brand. On the other hand, the relationships identified in H4 and H5 were significant in the Australia, Malaysia, and China country samples, which did not support H4 and H5. Consumers in these countries are either less discerning about Nike's non-sponsorship activation of the FWC or more swayed by Nike's sponsorship activation of football teams, players, and events (Warner, 2018).

In the brand attitude–purchase intention relationship for Nike, the US had significant differences with Australia, Malaysia, and China, partially supporting H6. Although American consumers seem to

be more cognizant of Nike's non-sponsorship activation and its unofficial association with the FWC, Nike is still an American brand. Ultimately, American consumers with an overall favorable attitude toward Nike would be most likely to purchase the brand's products among the four countries.

Theoretically, the current study introduces the DMM as a user perspective framework for examining the persuasion process of sponsorship and non-sponsorship activation in mega-sport events across countries and brands. Until now, where a framework exists, this has mostly been examined in Western countries (Liu et al., 2015). The proposed framework from this study offers a model that explains how sponsorship and non-sponsorship activation persuades cognitive, affective, and conative behavior in four Western and Eastern countries and across two global brands. The framework also provides opportunity to extend learning about the impacts of sponsorship and non-sponsorship activation in diverse sport contexts, countries, and brands.

Managerially, the current study's user perspective framework provides brand managers and event organizers with valuable insights into consumer decision making. Contrary to previous findings that global audiences are generally ambivalent toward sponsor and non-sponsor brands (e.g., Dickson et al., 2015), there is evidence that consumers in Western and Eastern countries give credence to sponsorship activation and appear willing to purchase the sponsor brand. However, as intention to purchase does not always translate into actual behavior (Ajzen et al., 2004), sponsorship activation needs to be dynamic and activational rather than passive and nonactivational (Weeks et al., 2008). In fact, repeated exposure to activational stimuli can enhance liking for the brand name and its product offerings (Potwarka, Mccarville, Tew, & Kaczynski, 2010).

Activational communication involves initiating social media to instigate consumers in participation with a sponsor brand to consolidate the brand's legitimate association with an event (Pasanen & Konu, 2016). Since the 1990s, Adidas has run outreach programs focused on community involvement, employee engagement, and corporate giving, supporting communities at the local and global level (Adidas, 2018). However, there appears to

be a lethargy in its current media campaigns and sales (Roberts & Kasudia, 2015). It is critical for Adidas to introduce innovative programs involving football clinics and trials, educational scholarships, and community health workshops and for the brand to reactivate interactive digital and traditional media to promote such programs. These reenergized efforts pave the way for Adidas to reconnect with its target audience and reiterate its competitive positioning, namely, its enduring tradition for supporting football.

The observation that leveraging with sponsorship activation requires activational communication with an ultimate goal of reinforcing unique positioning and differentiation (Ferrier et al., 2013) extends to all sponsor brands. For instance, Slazenger has been the official supplier of tennis balls at Wimbledon since 1902, demonstrating a long-standing partnership in sporting history (Wimbeldon, 2018). Slazenger's activational communication continues to reiterate the brand's reputation in the tennis field and its "dedication to cutting edge product design, commitment to youth development and endorsements" (Wimbeldon, 2018). Also, sponsor brands that complement one another, such as a premium sports shoe brand and a premium sports watch brand, would do well to engage in collaborative sponsorship activation. This collaboration has the advantage of pooled resources and opportunity to activate new platforms that collectively leveraging sponsorship budgets, management skills, and innovative expertise to ensure the vitality and longevity of events and sponsor brands (Luonila, 2016).

In the US, consumers appear to give more credence to sponsorship activation and ascribe credit to the leveraging efforts of sponsor brands. Here Nike has not been successful in creating an associative link with the FWC. The finding may be explained by the US's rigorous stance on establishing and enforcing copyright laws. This gives sponsor brands some assurance that in the US their sponsorship status and rights are protected by governing bodies and event organizers and acknowledged by consumers. These are positive implications for the US because it gives the country more credibility in bidding for, securing, and hosting mega-sport events.

However, it should be noted that any sponsorship activation may be overshadowed by the non-sponsorship activation of prestigious global brands.

Although Nike was not a 2002–2014 FWC sponsor, consumers in all four countries still demonstrate favorable attitude and purchase intention toward the brand. This is because Nike has made successful inroads in its media campaigns in Malaysia and China where it is acknowledged as the most popular sportswear brand (Inter-Pacific Research Sdn. Bhd., 2017; Warner, 2018). Also, in the US, where Nike is the local brand, it has the home ground advantage over Adidas (Roberts & Kasudia, 2015). This signals to global brands that they can dictate and activate their own marketing initiatives, without having to make considerable investments in sponsoring mega-sport events. Well-chosen and creative sponsorship activation of football teams, players, and events can provide an individualized and cost-effective platform for global brands to reiterate their positioning and differentiate themselves.

Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations are identified in the current study. First, the data collection targeted metropolitan Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia), Perth (Australia), New York (US), Beijing and Macau (China). This may have impacted on the generalizability of the findings to regional areas in the said four countries. Second, to keep within budget allocations, each data collection quota was restricted to 250 respondents. However, as the data were collected in four countries to verify applicability of the DMM in sport sponsorship activation, the study addressed this objective. Third, the study's samples comprised more male respondents, possibly due to its research focus on the FWC. Although the FWC was selected for its global audience and status, it would be feasible to consider mega-sport events such as Wimbledon that involves all genders. This will validate generalizability of the DMM in varied sponsorship activation contexts.

Moving forward, it must be acknowledged that consumer perceptions of sponsorship and non-sponsorship leveraging adopts two perspectives. On the one hand, there is an emerging trend of consumers who champion brands for their innovative marketing that avoids spending considerable sponsorship dollars to associate themselves with events (Unsal, 2013). Dickson et al. (2015) observed that this practice is "socially acceptable to UK consumers as long as non-sponsors adhere to legal limitations"

(p. 284). On the other hand, there are calls for brands to demonstrate social responsibility and accountability as corporate citizens of the world (Scheinbaum & Lacey, 2015). From this perspective, brand sponsorship of an event plays a critical role in staging the event and benefitting the host community. In future research, it is imperative to consider how consumers balance legislation and accountability in their support of brands.

In summary, the current study introduced the DMM to explore the persuasion process of sponsorship and nonsponsorship activation for the FWC 2002–2014 in Australia, the US, Malaysia, and China by Adidas and Nike. Theoretically, the user perspective framework offers researchers a tested and validated model that explains the role sponsorship and nonsponsorship activation plays on consumer cognition, affect, and conation across countries and brands. Managerially, it reiterates to event organizers and brand managers that sponsorship activation requires activational communication that should culminate in unique positioning and differentiation for sponsor brands.

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