

Effect of self-congruity with sponsorship on brand loyalty[☆]

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Abstract

The purpose of the paper is to extend self-image congruence research into the corporate sponsorship literature in marketing communications. We do this by developing a conceptual model showing how self-congruity with a sponsorship event affects brand loyalty. The model posits that self-congruity with a sponsorship event has a positive influence on brand loyalty, especially under two conditions: (1) when customers are aware of the firm sponsoring the event, and (2) when customers are involved with the event. The model was tested using data collected from five different surveys (total $N=1588$) involving Nextel mobile communications services (brand) in relation to NASCAR Nextel Cup Series (the sponsorship event). The results provide some degree of support for the model.

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1. Introduction

With the diversification of consumer needs, marketers increasingly use sponsorship for their marketing activities. Generally, corporate sponsorship can be defined as a firm's provision of assistance, either financial or in kind, to an activity (e.g., sport, musical event, festival, or arts) for achieving commercial objectives (Meenaghan, 1991). Recently, there has been rapid increase in sponsorship marketing as marketers try to enhance their brand image and increase brand loyalty by sponsoring various cultural and sports events (Cornwell and Maignan, 1998). According to the Performance Research 2001/IEG Study Highlights What Sponsors Want (2001), sponsors indicated that the number one objective for their sponsorships is increasing brand loyalty.

The research reported here deals with self-image congruence and makes a contribution to self-image congruence research in

consumer behavior by extending this concept into the sponsorship arena in marketing communications. *Self-image congruence* refers to the match between consumers' self-concept (actual self, ideal self, etc.) and the user image of a given product, store, sponsorship event, etc. "Self-congruity" is commonly used to mean self-image congruence. We will use "self-congruity" throughout the paper.

Consumers purchase products not only for the utilitarian benefits but also for self-expressive benefits (e.g., Park et al., 1986). The motivation to express their own self is often the driving force that prompts consumers to purchase goods and services (e.g., Sirgy, 1982). Research on self-image congruence has shown that self-congruity with a product or store (match between brand user image and consumer's actual self-image) has a positive influence on a variety of consumer behaviors such as brand attitude, brand preference, purchase motivation, brand satisfaction, and brand loyalty (for literature reviews, see Bauer et al., 2006; Claiborne and Sirgy, 1990; Sirgy, 1982, 1985; Sirgy et al., 2000; Sirgy and Su, 2000). Little has been done so far on how self-congruity with a sponsorship event affects consumer behavior. This paper seeks to establish the conceptual link between self-congruity with a sponsorship event and brand loyalty. Specifically, we make the conceptual argument that

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self-congruity with a sponsorship event contributes significantly to brand loyalty, especially under two conditions: (1) when brand customers are aware that the firm is sponsoring the event, and (2) when brand customers are involved in that event. We then report data collected from five surveys to test these hypotheses.

From a managerial point of view, our research addresses the important question that many marketers raise: Should marketers invest resources in developing marketing communications campaigns designed to increase their customers' involvement with the sponsorship event and heighten their awareness that the firm is sponsoring the event? Our study provides an answer to these managerial questions.

2. Conceptual development, model, and hypotheses

Our conceptual model is graphically shown in Fig. 1. The model posits that self-congruity with sponsorship events contributes to brand loyalty, and this relationship is moderated by two factors: customer awareness (awareness that the firm is sponsoring the event) and customer involvement (involvement in the sponsorship event). In other words, customers of a particular product who can identify with the people attending the sponsorship event are likely to feel more loyal toward the brand, especially when they are emotionally involved with the sponsorship event and aware that the firm is sponsoring the event.

According to self-congruity theory (Sirgy, 1986), people select to purchase and use goods and services that have a user image consistent with their own self-image. Doing so allows consumers to reinforce their own personal identity, their own view of themselves (i.e., their self-concept). By holding positive attitudes toward and purchasing brands perceived to be similar to their self-concept consumers achieve "self-consistency" (cf. Aaker, 1997; Graeff, 1996; Grubb and Grathwohl, 1967). In other words, people are motivated to hold a set of beliefs about themselves (a self-concept) and act in ways (e.g., purchase and use goods and services) to reinforce their self-concepts. Behaviors and events that result in self-perceptions inconsistent with one's self-concept cause dissonance—a state of mental stress that motivates people to restore consonance. This motivational tendency has been coined as the need for self-

consistency (Epstein, 1980). The *need for self-consistency* is a self-concept motive that motivates people to behave in ways consistent with how they see themselves—consistent with their actual self. People have beliefs about their own identities, values, lifestyles, preferences, and habits. Once their "self-theories" (meta-beliefs) are established, they become highly motivated to protect them. Major threats to their self-theories account for mental breakdown and psychosis (Epstein, 1980). In the same vein, consumers' need for self-consistency motivates purchase behavior and brand loyalty. Consider the example of purchasing clothes. Most people purchase clothing outfits that fit their actual self-image, irrespective of whether these self-images reflect their ideal self. Consumers who view themselves as sloppy looking are likely to buy clothes (and repeatedly do so) that reinforce themselves as sloppy looking, even though they may not like themselves as sloppy looking (Erickson and Sirgy, 1989, 1992).

Much research in consumer behavior has demonstrated that actual self-congruity (match between consumer's actual self-image and the user image associated with a particular good, service, or store) is positively related to consumer behavior constructs such as brand attitude, brand preference, brand choice, purchase motivation, purchase intention, brand purchase, brand satisfaction, and brand loyalty (for literature reviews of this research in relation to different goods, services, and stores see Bauer et al., 2006; Claiborne and Sirgy, 1990; Sirgy, 1982, 1985; Sirgy et al., 2000; Sirgy and Su, 2000).

2.1. The effect of self-congruity with sponsored events on brand loyalty

Self-congruity with a sponsorship event refers to the degree to which consumers think the image of the sponsored event matches with their own self-image. That is, self-congruity with sponsorship reflects the degree of congruity between the consumer's self-image and the image of the event. Self-congruity with a sponsorship event differs from self-congruity with the brand in that the latter reflects the fit between consumer self-image and the firm or brand image.

Brand loyalty is determined by many factors, corporate sponsorship is one of those factors (e.g., Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003; Javalgi et al., 1994; Madrigal, 2001). How does this come about? We propose that the relationship between corporate sponsorship and brand loyalty is mediated by a self-congruity process. That is, customers of a particular brand are likely to develop feelings of brand loyalty when they recognize that the firm is sponsoring an event that they can identify with (i.e., experience self-congruity with that event). Self-congruity with the sponsorship event helps create a favorable attitude toward that event, and these positive feelings spill over to the firm sponsoring the event. Such feelings are more easily transferred to the firm that the consumer recognizes as having transacted with (i.e., being a customer of that firm) than other firms (Gwinner, 1997; Gwinner and Eaton, 1999).

Functional attitude theory (e.g., Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Shavitt, 1990; Shavitt et al., 1992) posits that a distinct function of an attitude is to symbolize and express a person's self-image

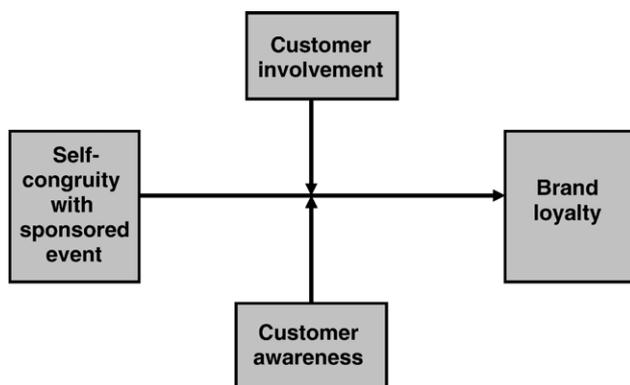


Fig. 1. A model linking self-congruity with sponsorship and brand loyalty.

through identification with salient reference groups. People tend to have favorable attitudes toward issues that are congruent with salient aspects of their own positive identities and also support the institutions that embody those identities. That is, there is transference of affect such that identification with a sports team is positively related to attitudes toward a corporate sponsor of that property. Based on the discussion, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1. A customer's self-congruity with a sponsored event has a positive influence on his or her loyalty to the firm (brand) sponsoring the event (see Fig. 1).

2.2. The moderating role of customer involvement

Madrigal (2001) has argued effectively that an important factor impacting sponsor loyalty is passion. Passion means constant involvement and interest. Sponsors make attempts to connect with that passion—identify emotional linkages and attach themselves to that.

When customers are involved with the sponsored event, they are more likely to spend more time and energy for the event. Customers who are highly involved with the sponsored event are likely to actively watch the event (e.g., a sports game), purchase event related products, and closely follow scores. When customers do not have a positive attitude towards a specific sponsored event they care less about the event and are less likely to be involved in the event.

We believe that when customers are highly involved with the sponsored event, the positive feelings they have towards the event are more likely to transfer to the firm (brand) than when customers are not highly involved. When customers are cognitively and emotionally involved with a sponsored event and identify with it, this self-identification may lead to a strong sense of attachment with the sponsored brands (cf. Arnett et al., 2003; Burke, 1980, 2000; Gwinner and Eaton, 1999; Johar and Sirgy, 1991; Meenaghan, 1991). Based on this discussion, we propose following hypothesis:

H2. The positive influence of a customer's self-congruity with a sponsored event on the loyalty with that sponsored firm (brand) is likely to be greater when the customer is highly involved with the sponsored event than when the customer is less involved.

2.3. The moderating role of customer awareness

We posit that self-congruity with a sponsorship event is likely to have a positive influence on brand loyalty when consumers are well aware of the fact that the firm (brand) is sponsoring the event. When consumers are well aware of the fact that the firm is sponsoring the event they identify with, the consumer's positive feelings about the event will spill over to the firm's or brand's image. For example, a strong feeling of identification with a sports event will evolve into the feelings of identification with the firm or the brand, which in turn positively influences brand loyalty and positive word of mouth (cf. Cardador and Pratt,

2006; Gwinner and Eaton, 1999). Based on this discussion, we propose the following hypothesis:

H3. The positive effect of self-congruity with a sponsored event on customer brand loyalty is likely to be greater when customers are well aware of the firm's sponsoring of the event than when consumers are not well aware of it.

3. Method

3.1. Sampling and data collection

Our three hypotheses were tested using data collected from a series of surveys conducted by a research contracted by Nextel (a major mobile telecommunication company in the U.S.). The sponsorship event was the Nextel/NASCAR Cup Series (car racing sports event). A total of five surveys were conducted within an interval of 3 months. The sampling frame involved Nextel customers. The sample size of each sample was in the range of 244 to 475 with a total of 1588 respondents. Among them, 948 (59.7%) were male and 640 (40.3%) were female. In terms of age, 100 (6.3%) respondents were 18 to 24 years old, 410 (25.8%) respondents were in the 25–34 age group, 675 (42.5%) respondents were in the 35–49 age group, and 403 (25.4%) were in the 50–70 age group. The demographic profile of the sample was compared to the demographic profile of Nextel customer population (using a series of Chi-square tests), and the results show that the demographics of the sample is not significantly different from the demographics of the customer population.

3.2. Construct measures embedded in the survey questionnaire

The measures pertaining to self-congruity, customer involvement, customer awareness, and brand loyalty measures were embedded in the context of a large survey questionnaire containing many other measures (e.g., media habits, demographics, lifestyle, and preference for particular telecommunication goods and services).

Self-congruity with the sports event was measured using the following three items:

1. I feel like I am part of the NASCAR family,
2. I can relate to NASCAR drivers in a way I can't relate to other athletes, and
3. I would not feel at home in a crowd of NASCAR race fans (reverse coded).

Responses to those items were captured on 5-point Likert-type scales. The reliability coefficients (Cronbach Alpha) for the self-congruity measure across five samples were 0.984, 0.986, 0.981, 0.986, and 0.984, respectively. These results show that the self-congruity measure is highly reliable. Therefore, a composite self-congruity score was computed by averaging the scores of these three items.

Customer involvement with a sporting event included customer experience of attending the sporting event, purchasing

goods at the sporting event, and checking game results. Specifically, customer involvement was measured using the three items:

1. Have you ever attended to NASCAR?
2. Have you ever purchased NASCAR goods?
3. Have you ever checked NASCAR game results?

Responses to these three items were captured using a dichotomous scale: never = 0, more than once = 1. Because these three items capture different aspects of customer involvement, we treated this measure as formative rather than reflective. Hence, we did not make an attempt to test for reliability (internal consistency). Customer involvement scores were computed by summing the three items.

Customer awareness of the firm's sponsoring the event was measured as a single-item measure: "Did you know the company is the official sponsor of NASCAR and a NASCAR racing team?" (no = 0, yes = 1).

Brand loyalty was also measured as the converse of switching intention: "How likely are you to change wireless service providers anytime soon?" The response scale was a 4-point rating scale with the following bi-poles: "definitely will change (1) and "definitely will not change" (4). Note that these measures were embedded in the context of a large survey questionnaire. Hence, we could not afford to use multiple indicators of customer awareness and brand loyalty.

4. Results

We will describe the study results by hypothesis.

4.1. The effect of self-congruity on brand loyalty (H1)

We hypothesized that customers' self-congruity with a sporting event is likely to have a positive influence on customers' brand loyalty. As shown in Table 1, the results indicate that self-congruity has a positive influence on brand loyalty in 3 out of 5 samples used in this study (beta=0.214, $t=3.503$ for sample 1; beta=0.209, $t=3.579$ for sample 2; beta=0.076, $t=1.189$ for sample 3; beta=0.098, $t=1.787$ for sample 4; beta=0.012, $t=0.259$ for sample 5). The five samples were pooled, and the results from the pooled sample also indicate that self-congruity does indeed have a positive influence on brand loyalty (beta=

Table 1
Self-congruity effect on brand loyalty

Survey	The main effect: the self-congruity effect on brand loyalty			
	Beta	<i>t</i> -value	<i>R</i> ²	<i>N</i>
Fifth survey: 4Q2004	0.214	3.503	0.460	257
Fourth survey: 3Q2004	0.209	3.579	0.044	283
Third survey: 2Q2004	0.076	1.189	0.006	244
Second survey: 1Q2004	0.098	1.787	0.100	329
First survey: 4Q2003	0.012	0.259	0.000	475
Pooled data	0.084	3.357	0.007	1588

Table 2
Involvement moderation effect

Survey	Moderator effect: customer involvement							
	Low involvement				High involvement			
	Beta	<i>t</i> -value	<i>R</i> ²	<i>N</i>	Beta	<i>t</i> -value	<i>R</i> ²	<i>N</i>
4Q2004	0.138	1.254	0.019	83	0.239	3.227	0.057	174
3Q2004	0.130	1.145	0.017	78	0.209	3.040	0.044	205
2Q2004	0.049	0.499	0.002	106	0.142	1.674	0.020	138
1Q2004	-0.009	-0.095	0.000	116	0.175	2.584	0.031	213
4Q2003	0.006	0.091	0.000	219	0.003	0.046	0.000	256
Pooled data	0.055	1.337	0.003	602	0.176	5.595	0.030	986

0.084, $t=3.357$). These results provide reasonable support for H1 (see Table 1).

4.2. The moderation effect of customer involvement (H2)

H2 posits that the positive influence of a customer's self-congruity with a sponsored event on brand loyalty is likely to be greater when the consumer is highly involved with the sponsored event. As shown in Table 2, the results indicate that self-congruity did not have a positive influence on brand loyalty when customer's involvement with the sports event was low for all five samples (beta=0.138, $t=1.254$ for sample 1; beta=0.130, $t=1.145$ for sample 2; beta=0.049, $t=0.499$ for sample 3; beta=-0.009, $t=-0.095$ for sample 4; beta=0.006, $t=0.091$ for sample 5). The results from the pooled sample also indicate that self-congruity did not have a positive influence on brand loyalty when customer involvement was low (beta=0.055, $t=1.337$ for pooled sample).

Furthermore, the results indicate that self-congruity had a positive influence on brand loyalty when customer's involvement was high in four samples (beta=0.239, $t=3.227$ for sample 1; beta=0.209, $t=3.040$ for sample 2; beta=0.142, $t=1.674$ for sample 3; beta=0.175, $t=2.584$ for sample 4; beta=0.003, $t=0.046$ for sample 5). The results from the pooled sample also indicate that self-congruity did have a positive influence on brand loyalty when customer involvement was high (beta=0.176, $t=5.595$ for pooled sample). The results of the beta coefficient difference test also indicate the beta coefficients in high and low involvement groups are significantly different ($t=2.337$; $p<0.05$).

Using the pooled sample, we further conducted an ANOVA to plot the interaction between self-congruity and involvement by categorizing both self-congruity and involvement into two groups (using a median split). The plot is shown in Fig. 2. As shown in the figure, the interaction was significant [$F(1, 1576)=3.82$, $p<0.05$] and is in the right direction. Collectively, these results provide support for H2 (see Table 2 and Fig. 2).

4.3. The moderation effect of customer awareness (H3)

H3 posits that the positive effect of a sponsored event on brand loyalty is likely to be greater when customers are well aware of the firm's sponsoring of the event than when consumers are not. As shown in Table 3, the results indicate that

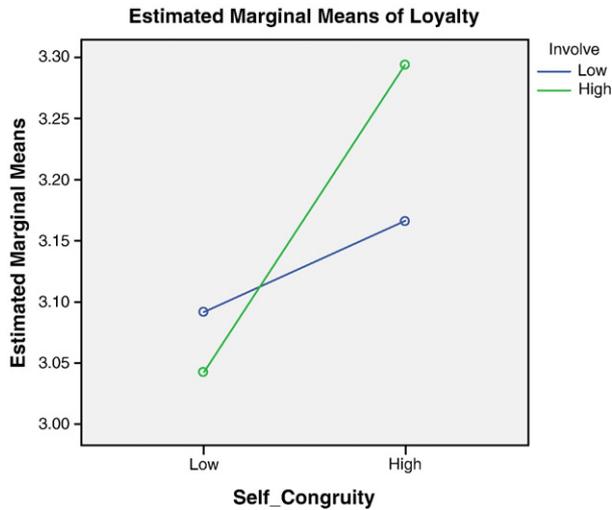


Fig. 2. The moderation of involvement on the self-congruity effect.

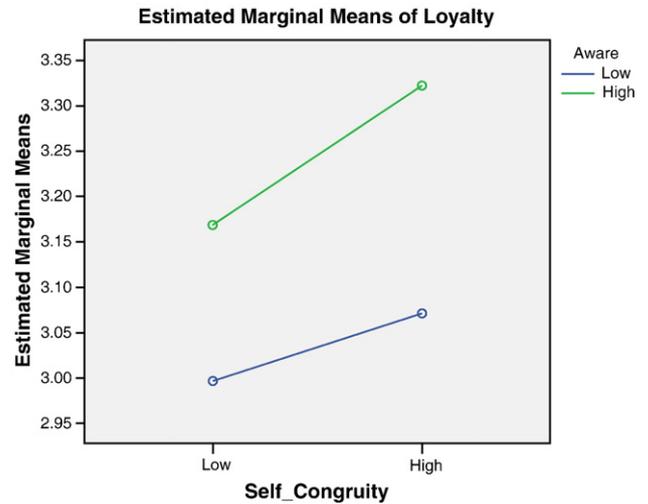


Fig. 3. The moderation of awareness on the self-congruity effect.

when customers did not have knowledge of the firm’s sponsoring of the event, self-congruity did not have a positive influence on brand loyalty for all five samples (beta=0.025, $t=0.215$ for sample 1; beta=0.136, $t=1.349$ for sample 2; beta=0.158, $t=1.506$ for sample 3; beta=0.089, $t=1.044$ for sample 4; beta=-0.011, $t=-0.028$ for sample 5). The results from the pooled sample also indicate that self-congruity had a marginally significant influence on brand loyalty when customer awareness was low (beta=0.069, $t=1.842$ for pooled sample).

The results also indicate that when customers had knowledge on the firm’s sponsoring of the event self-congruity did have a positive influence on brand loyalty for 2 out of 5 samples (beta=0.190, $t=2.599$ for sample 1; beta=0.162, $t=2.222$ for sample 2; beta=0.003, $t=0.035$ for sample 3; beta=0.108, $t=1.492$ for sample 4; beta=0.027, $t=0.354$ for sample 5). The results from the pooled sample also indicate that self-congruity had a significant influence on brand loyalty when customer awareness was high (beta=0.095, $t=2.842$ for pooled sample).

Using the pooled sample, we further conducted an ANOVA to test plot the interaction between self-congruity and awareness by categorizing both self-congruity and awareness into two groups (using a median split). The plot is shown in Fig. 3. As shown in the figure, the interaction although nonsignificant [$F(1, 1584)=0.81, p>0.05$] is visually evident and is in the right

direction. Loyalty scores are highest in the high self-congruity and high awareness condition and the slope of the high awareness condition across the high and low self-congruity condition is steeper than the slope of the low awareness condition. Collectively, these results provide *partial* support for H3 (see Table 3 and Fig. 3).

Still using the pooled sample, we conducted a 3-way ANOVA analysis to test the combined moderation effects of both involvement and awareness. The 3-way interaction effect approached significance [$F(1, 1572)=1.11, p=0.2$]. As expected, brand loyalty scored highest (Mean=3.34) in the high self-congruity condition given high involvement and high awareness more so than any other condition. Also as expected, the low self-congruity condition given low involvement and low awareness generated the lowest brand loyalty mean score (Mean=3.01). Again, although these results are not statistically significant, the overall pattern of the data seems to provide some support of the combined moderation effects of involvement and awareness.

5. Discussion

The results of this study indicate that self-congruity with sponsored sports events has a positive influence on brand loyalty moderated by customer awareness of the firm sponsoring the event and customer involvement with the sponsored event.

Should marketers invest resources in developing marketing communications campaigns designed to increase their customers’ involvement with the sponsorship event and heighten their awareness that the firm is sponsoring the event? The findings of this study suggest the answer should be a resounding yes. Our model suggests that the marketing communications campaign should aim to enhance self-congruity with the sponsored event. That is, images of people attending the sponsorship event should be consistent with customers’ self-concept. Customers can be exposed to promotional messages in which the attendees of the sponsorship event are depicted as highly akin to customers. Of course, research should be conducted first to identify the personal characteristics of those that regularly attend the target

Table 3
Awareness moderation effect

Survey	Moderator effect: customer awareness							
	Low awareness				High awareness			
	Beta	t-value	R ²	N	Beta	t-value	R ²	N
4Q2004	0.025	0.215	0.001	74	0.190	2.599	0.036	183
3Q2004	0.136	1.349	0.018	99	0.162	2.222	0.026	184
2Q2004	0.158	1.506	0.025	91	0.003	0.035	0.000	153
1Q2004	0.089	1.044	0.008	138	0.108	1.492	0.012	191
4Q2003	-0.028	-0.489	0.001	302	0.027	0.354	0.001	173
Pooled data	0.069	1.842	0.005	704	0.095	2.840	0.009	884

sponsorship event. Once these personal characteristics are identified, the firm's marketing manager should select to use images that customers can identify with. In other words, the firm's customers have to see the ad and feel that the kind of people that attend the sponsorship event are very much similar to them (i.e., they can identify with them—experience self-congruity). Once customers experience self-congruity, further promotional messages should make those customers aware that the firm is sponsoring the event and make every attempt possible to get their customers more involved with the event. Awareness can be easily generated through advertising, but getting customers more emotionally involved with the sponsorship event can be challenging. Running games and contests for their customers at the location of the event is perhaps an example of a method to increase customer involvement with the event.

The study has the following limitations. This study has focused on congruity with the sponsored sports event and customer self-image. One can argue that congruity with brand image also plays a role in this. Thus, one can postulate three types of congruity experiences that may impact brand loyalty: the congruity between sponsored event image and the customer's self-image (we can call this "sponsored event self-congruity"), the congruity between the sponsored event image and the brand user image (we can call this "sponsored event brand congruity"), and the congruity between the brand image and the customer's self-image (we can call this "brand self-congruity"). Future research should be conducted to test the theoretical proposition that these three types of congruity experiences play an important role in brand loyalty. The managerial implications of this proposition is to select sponsored events that match the customer's self-image followed by promotion that reinforce the sponsored event self-congruity, sponsored event brand congruity, and brand self-congruity. Doing so should heighten brand loyalty.

Future studies should also examine the role of ideal self-congruity, social self-congruity, and ideal social self-congruity. The present study focused on actual self-congruity and the role of the need of self-consistency in establishing relationship between customer's self-concept and the sponsored event image. That is, the focus was on the *actual self*, not the ideal self, the social self, and the ideal social self. Self-congruity involving the ideal self involves a different self-concept motive, namely the self-esteem motive (Sirgy, 1986). Consumers are motivated to purchase and re-purchase brands with a user image that is consistent with their ideal self. Doing so enhances their self-esteem. For example, a consumer perceives the people who drive a Mazda sports car to be young, wild, and attractive (brand user image). They may have an actual self-image of not being young, wild, and attractive, but they like to become young, wild, and attractive. Buying and driving a Mazda sports car may help attain that ideal self, and doing so boosts the person's sense of self-esteem. Similarly, consumers are motivated to remain loyal to brands with user images consistent with their social self (the image they think they present to others). The self-concept need related to social self-congruity is social consistency. In other words, people are motivated to engage in behaviors that satisfy the need for social consistency (Sirgy, 1986). For example, a

consumer may feel motivated to watch detective movies and television shows because he believes that he is seen by significant others as being the kind of person who enjoys detective-type stories. Engaging in further behaviors that reinforce his social image of being that kind of person satisfies the need for social consistency. Lastly, there is the need for social approval that is related to the ideal social self. People are motivated to engage in behaviors that allow them to gain approval and avoid disapproval from others, especially significant others (Sirgy, 1986). Thus, they purchase and use goods and services that have brand user images consistent with their ideal social self. Doing so helps satisfy the need for social approval. Thus, future research should extend the model described in this paper by focusing on the role of other types of self-concepts besides the actual self: ideal self, social self, and ideal social self. One can hypothesize that brand loyalty is likely to be greatest when the image of sponsored event (stereotypic image of those that regularly attend the sponsored event) is consistent with the brand user image and the customer's actual, ideal, social, and ideal social self.

The conceptual model of this study was tested using a sports sponsorship event by a well-known firm (NEXTEL). What would be the effect of sports sponsorship event on brand loyalty when the sponsorship is with a lesser-known firm? In other words, how does firm sponsor familiarity moderate the relationships in the model? One can argue that the effect of self-congruity with the sponsorship on brand loyalty is likely to be greater with lesser-known firms than with well-known firms. Perhaps this may be due to the possibility that there is more room for improvement in brand loyalty in the case of less-known brands. In contrast, one can counter argue that the effect of self-congruity with the sponsorship on brand loyalty is likely to be greater with a well-known brand. This may be due to the image spillover from the sports event unto the brand image (Javalgi et al., 1994). Future studies should test these alternative hypotheses.

Methodologically, this study used a single-item measure for brand loyalty and customer awareness. Future studies should incorporate multiple indicator measures (and perhaps more demonstrably valid) to capture these constructs. Also, the model of this study was tested in a single sponsorship event context (NASCAR). In general, the degree of spillover from a sponsorship event on brand image is influenced by many factors including the degree of congruity between the sponsorship event image and brand image, frequency of sponsored events, and extent of sponsorship efforts (Gwinner 1997; Gwinner and Eaton 1999). Future studies should test the model in the contexts of various sponsorship events.

Furthermore, this study examined the effects of self-congruity with sporting events on brand loyalty. Given the cross-sectional nature of the data, this study fails to measure customer brand loyalty before the firm's sponsoring of the sports event. Future longitudinal study should examine the changes of brand loyalty before and after the sports sponsorship.

Despite these limitations, the findings of the present study do shed some light on the role of self-congruity with sponsored events in relation to brand loyalty. We hope that the present study generates a stream of research on sponsorship event congruity.

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