

This Event is Me!:
How Consumer Event-Self-Congruity Leverages Sponsorship

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This Event is Me!:
How Consumers' Perceived Fit with Events Leverages Sponsorship

ABSTRACT

Based on a real-world field study of twenty-one sponsored promotional events (sponsored fashion shows) (n=535), we provide a self-congruity theory-based model explaining the role of mall shopper's self-congruity on the effectiveness of experiential mall promotions. We find that self-congruity with the event is a key influencer of promotion effectiveness. Specifically we show that: a) more expertise with the sponsor impacts self-congruity with the sponsor; b) in turn, self-congruity with the promotional event enhances persuasiveness of the event; and c) this event persuasion enhances the consumer's likelihood to shop at the sponsor's store. Further, when entertained shoppers like the promotional events and wish for more of such promotions, they tend to think more positively about the sponsor, view the promotional event as a good way to highlight the sponsor, and desire to shop more at the retail sponsor. These are important findings for advertising research practitioners, as they suggest that event attendees focus on how the sponsoring retailer fits with their image and sense of self.

In hopes of cutting through the clutter of advertising, retail managers may consider event marketing and sponsorship. The sponsorship surge occurred for five consecutive years (2003-2008) at unprecedented rates, suggesting that sponsorship and event marketing transcends a short-term fad. Yet, currently, sponsorship growth is projected to linger at a subtle 2.2 percent growth rate among North American companies (IEG, 2009). As a \$34.4 billion industry worldwide, many advertisers seek an explanation of event sponsorship—specifically, of how shoppers see themselves fitting in with the sponsor and the event, to guide decisions regarding the billions of dollars invested, especially in times of economic scrutiny.

Thus, we examine the role of consumers' perceived event-self congruity on the effectiveness of a department store's sponsorship of mall events. Specifically, our objective is to determine how shopper's event-self-congruity impacts their attitude towards the promotion, event persuasiveness and perceived entertainment, and intent to purchase at the sponsoring store. To do so, we conducted field work at twenty-one retail sponsored mall fashion shows.

Contributions to Advertising Research

We present a theory-based model explaining the role of self-congruity with the event on retail sponsorship effectiveness. Specifically, we suggest that: a) more knowledge about the sponsor impacts self-congruity with the event; b) in turn, self-congruity enhances consumers' perceived entertainment; c) entertained consumers have a better attitude towards the event as a promotional tool; d) a better attitude towards the promotion enhances event persuasiveness; e) this event persuasion enhances shopping likelihood for the retailer; f) further, event-self congruity alone can enhance consumers likelihood to shop at the event sponsor. In essence, when entertained shoppers like events, they tend to think more positively about the sponsor, view the promotional event as a good way to highlight the sponsor, and desire to purchase more.

As a roadmap to this study, we first review extant studies on event marketing and sponsorship. Next, we overview self-congruity theory to ground the conceptual model. We then discuss details about the field work, measurement and findings. A discussion ensues with recommendations for advertising and retail management. Finally, limitations and avenues for future research in experience-based promotions are addressed.

EVENT MARKETING: A REVIEW OF AN EMERGING PROMOTIONAL TOOL

Sponsorship and Event Marketing in the Advertising Literature

The advertising literature has witnessed a steady rise in studies focusing on either event marketing and/or sponsorship. Thus, for an advertising focus, we examined articles published in leading journals on the topic. For the most relevant articles, we reviewed those with sponsorship, sponsor, or event marketing in the title. As a result, sixteen studies comprise the advertising literature, and we provide the title, authors, and key findings in Table 1.

Table 1 here

Sponsoring an Entertaining Experience

Sponsorship, or an investment in an activity in exchange for access to the associated commercial potential associated (Meenaghan, 2001) can build brand knowledge via recall and recognition, enhance brand image, evoke feelings, and create experiences (Keller, 2003). Such experience-based marketing entails elements of escapism, emotions, education, entertainment, exhibitionism, evangelizing, and enjoyment (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). Often linked with sponsorship, event marketing, such as a mall fashion show, can facilitate lively and engaging promotions with shoppers.

Engaging with Event Marketing

Theories of self-congruity may drive customer engagement-- especially if consumers feel

an image-based personal connection with the event. In fact, *Journal of Advertising Research's* (2006) issue on customer engagement highlights the power of event marketing to make a more humanistic bond (versus traditional forms of advertising). One reason engagement works is because sponsored events are a channel to promote brands and to connect with attendees through their passions (such as fashion, sports, the arts) via affect, emotion, and cognition (Close et al., 2006). From affect and emotion perspectives, sponsors seek to engage consumers via their emotionally-charged passions: sports teams, family, causes, and bands. Consumers who feel enthusiastic and active in the event domain (here, fashion or shopping) are most positively impacted by the sponsorship (Close et al., 2006). Specifically, enthusiastic and active consumers: a) care more about sponsors' involvement, b) have a more positive opinion of the sponsors, and c) are more inclined to purchase sponsors' products (versus those who are not active and enthusiastic in the event domain (Close et al., 2006). Further, consumers who are more knowledgeable about the sponsor are more likely to be engaged with the sponsor's brand(s) than are less knowledgeable consumers (Close et al., 2006).

Sponsored Events, Image, and Congruity

As with other communication forms, sponsorship and event marketing can play key roles in building brand image (Koo, Quarterman, and Flynn, 2006; Kressmann, Sirgy, Huber, Huber, and Lee, 2006; McDaniel, 1999). The image of a sporting, social, and cultural event moves to the brand through sponsorship; the congruent fit between the two entities influences the quality of this transfer (Roy and Cornwell, 2004). A sponsor's image can strengthen along with opportunities to have personal experiences with the brand (Brown, Kozinets, and Sherry, 2003).

Sponsor-event congruity may be natural or contrived by synergistic marketing communications. Natural congruity is the extent to which attendees view the event as congruent

with the sponsor's image, independent of marketers' efforts to create congruity between the organizations (Simmons and Becker-Olsen, 2006). As sponsors do not have to promote and advertise messages in hopes of creating congruity (or explaining any tangential elements of congruity), natural congruity is more cost-effective for sponsors (Simmons and Becker-Olsen, 2006). Here, the sponsor did not make an overt effort to "create" congruity with the event or explain (e.g., via supplementary advertising) how the department store and fashion relate. In this case, there is an implied fit (i.e., between a department store and a fashion event). Thus, in the model, the importance of self-congruity with the event is examined. In essence, self-congruity theory is thought to explain an important facet of advertising and sponsorship.

The Context: Event Marketing as a Mall Promotion Activity

Advertisers and retailers alike have a keen interest in event marketing; the combination of increased entertainment-seeking, competition from e-tailers, and decreased mall visits has led to a spike of mall-based promotional events (LeHew and Fairhurst, 2000; Parsons, 2003; Shim and Eastlick, 1998). In this era of failing malls and department store slumps, retailers seek help from event marketing to enhance image and patronage. Alongside practitioners, academics highlight a need to understand how promotional events and sponsorships operate in a retail setting (LeHew and Fairhurst, 2000; Parsons, 2003; Wakefield and Baker, 1998). Yet, existing literature lacks examinations of such promotional events in a real-world mall setting, and there are few scholarly endeavors employing live field studies.

For retail advertisers, fashion shows are a relatively common category of promotional event to connect with consumers, build or maintain image, and eventually increase traffic and sales. Fashion shows are an important type of event, as in dress, clothing tastes, and public appearances are encoded in theories explaining image-related topics such as self-worth,

individuality, appearance, social relationships, gender roles, and sexuality (Haytko and Thompson, 1997). While fashion shows are promotional events that pre-date malls, the role of image and the value of such events remain somewhat mysterious. The mall fashion show is the modern manifestation of the integration of fashion, shopper experiences, sponsorship, and promotional event marketing. Each mall show generates ample attention and interest as a form of free entertainment, merchandise previews, and a way to highlight image, style, and fashion. The shows provide the sponsoring brand a chance to model various looks or images that they hope will resonate with the mall patron's self or desired image. Event marketers and advertisers seek such knowledge on the role of consumers' self-image with their brands. Simultaneously, in the advertising world, much attention has been paid to self-image and marketing images in the fashion context. Thus, sponsored shows are an optimal context to study self-congruity. Namely, when a shopper has multiple alternatives available, promotional activities have a significant impact on mall traffic; in essence, promotional activity (e.g., mall fashion shows) helps differentiate otherwise similar malls (Parsons, 2003).

THEORIES OF SELF-CONGRUITY TO ENHANCE PROMOTIONAL EVENTS

Self-Congruity Theoretical Background

As defined by self-congruity theory, self-image congruity (e.g., with an event or sponsor) states that due to their needs for self-consistency and self-esteem, consumers are motivated to compare themselves to products and determine their consistency with their image of the products (Sirgy et al., 1997). Chebat, Sirgy, and St-James (2006) find that self-congruity theory explains how the image of stores within a mall is often positively influenced by the mall image (if upscale). Termed "self-congruity bias," shoppers often see themselves as more upscale than reality (Chebat et al., 2006). Irrespective of socio-economic status, shoppers perceive higher self-

congruity with upscale malls; this self-congruity bias makes shoppers evaluate upscale malls and the stores inside more positively than regular malls (Chebat et al., 2006).

Other studies find that self-image congruity (with an advertiser, store, or brand) is a predictor of product preference, store loyalty, consumer satisfaction, brand preference and brand loyalty (Sirgy, 1982; Kressman et al., 2006). In a services context, Yim, Chan and Hung (2007) show that self-congruity between a consumer's self-image and his service image relates to a higher repurchase likelihood and a lowered propensity to switch providers. However, the theory has yet to be examined in an event marketing context, so we extend these studies to determine any link from self-image to persuasiveness of a sponsored event.

Thus, to extend past work employing this theory, in the present field studies, we examine the role of self-congruity with a promotional mall event. We predict that greater self-image fit with the event influences enhanced persuasiveness of the sponsored event, and subsequent shopping likelihood towards the sponsor.

CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT

Based on the literature and congruity-theory, we present a conceptual model (Figure 1), to examine event self-congruity as it relates to several other advertising and promotion-related constructs. We provide support for the set of hypotheses in the areas of: self-congruity (with the event), knowledge about the sponsor, event entertainment, attitude towards the promotion, event persuasiveness, and shopping likelihood for the sponsor's merchandise.

Figure 1 here

Event-self-congruity. Self-congruity with the promotional event is a measure of the degree to which mall shoppers feel they are congruous with the promotional event (here, the

fashion show). Chandon, Wansink and Laurent (2000) present a benefit-congruency framework for the effectiveness of an experiential sales promotion. They report three key hedonic motivational dimensions: value expression, entertainment, and exploration. Each dimension is thought to be indicators of self-congruity with the fashion show, as they are motivational antecedents to choosing to stop and view the show. In addition to this basic antecedent to positive outcomes of the show, we contend that if viewers experience self-congruity with the promotional event, they will find the event more entertaining. In essence, as they watch and participate in the show, they perceive that their self-image matches that of the other attendees of the show. Yim et al. (2007) suggest that an increase in a customer's self-image congruity with the focal service will lead to higher customer satisfaction and commitment to that service. We posit that in a similar fashion, an increase in event self-congruity will lead to an increase in overall event entertainment. Likewise, as attendees experience more entertainment, we also hypothesize that they will find the event to be more persuasive in nature. This matching increases the persuasiveness of the event, and will, in turn, enhance shopping likelihood. Further, as attendees voluntarily stop in the mall atrium to watch the free show, they may already be perhaps motivated to be consistent with the event as they stand and view it. Therefore, we posit the following hypotheses with regard to event self-congruity.

H1a. As event-self-congruity *increases*, event entertainment also *increases*.

H1b. As event-self-congruity *increases*, event persuasiveness also *increases*.

H1c. As event-self-congruity *increases*, shopping likelihood also *increases*.

Knowledge about the sponsor. Knowledge entails an examination of the attendee's experience, expertise, and use associated with a product, service, or brand (Bloch, Sherrell, and Ridgway, 1989). Brand knowledge is not limited to the brand's products or services, but instead

encompasses a broader awareness of the brand (Keller, 2003). In sponsorship terms, brand knowledge relates to the abstract and intangible brand associations held in the minds of consumers about the sponsor and allows the consumer to distinguish sponsors' brands from competing brands (Roy and Cornwell, 2004). Consumers who are knowledgeable about the sponsor have experienced the store and associated service and merchandise. The more knowledgeable consumers are therefore more familiar and comfortable with the store and its merchandise, and the use of the merchandise (Bloch, Sherrell, and Ridgeway, 1989). Consumer responses to brand-building marketing activities depend on the strength of brand knowledge in the attendees' minds; namely, a sponsor's familiarity impacts what consumers think about the brand when they link the brand to sponsored events (Meenaghan, 2001). Knowledgeable consumers are more engaged with the brand and its community activities (Algesheimer, Dholakia, and Herrmann, 2005). Thus, we examine knowledge about the sponsor as a basis for the formation of event-self-congruity. Given this positive relationship between knowledge about the sponsor and event-self-congruity, we posit that:

H2. As knowledge about the sponsor *increases*, event-self-congruity also *increases*.

Event entertainment. Through entertainment, and even escapism, event marketing can facilitate personal and interactive communications with target audiences. Fashion shows in shopping malls are considered entertainment-based promotions which appeal to hedonic motives. Given that the show itself is promoting luxurious fashion clothing, it is an event which would trigger hedonic motives and would be viewed by consumers who are in a hedonic mindset. Thus, if they have a high level of event entertainment, they should have an increase in their attitude towards the promotional event.

H3. As event entertainment *increases*, attitude towards the promotion also *increases*.

Attitude towards the promotion. The elaboration likelihood model of persuasion (ELM) (Petty and Cacioppo, 1983) provides support for the increase in persuasion for a hedonic promotional event such as the fashion show. In essence, viewers of the fashion show have already chosen to sit or stand at the show and pay attention to the sponsored promotional event. This attention links to more processing of the promotion (Thorson, 1990), and thus eventually to more positive thoughts and persuasion in regard to the event. Recently, in online shopping environments, perceived congruity enhances consumer attitude towards the website (Wang, Beatty, and Mothersbaugh, 2009).

In addition to the ELM as support for the persuasiveness of the event when the attitude towards the event is already positive, there is also further support for this idea in the sexual appeals advertising literature (Reichert, Heckler and Jackson 2001). Physical attractiveness is a main type of information relevant to promotions. Reichert et al. (2001) show that sexual appeals, when properly executed, are associated with enhanced attitude towards the promotion. We predict a similar finding in the context of event marketing.

H4. As attitude towards the promotion *increases*, event persuasiveness also *increases*.

Persuasiveness and shopping likelihood. Sponsorship and event marketing are promotional tools that are experiential in nature. By staging the context, initiatives may indirectly enhance shoppers' likelihood of purchasing (Brown and Dacin, 1997). Promotions that offer shoppers direct experience result in increased persuasion, which in turn results in enhanced purchase intent (Faber and Stafford, 2004). One explanation may be that in experiential forms of promotions, the sponsored event may appeal to emotion with sensory depth, breadth, and richness (Faber and Stafford, 2004). Thus, the persuasive nature of events may elicit shoppers' willingness to shop.

H5. As event persuasiveness *increases*, likelihood of shopping at the sponsor's store also *increases*.

Methods

Context, sample and field research procedures. In a weekend long field study, several consumer perception variables were measured at twenty-one promotional fashion shows, sponsored by Macy's. To help show the consumers' experience, photos of the event are provided (Exhibit 1). As seen in the first photos, the stage prominently displayed the sponsor's logo, while the models wore their featured merchandise, and the second photos show the survey field work.

Exhibit 1 here

These events took place in the central, mall-owned area of one of the largest malls in the world—the Fashion Show Mall. At almost 2,000,000 square feet, it hosts 200 stores, seven anchors, a stage, and a fashion runway that emerges from the floor (see Exhibit 1). To leverage the indoor promotion, the mall features a 480 foot long outdoor structure with a movie screen that promotes the sponsor and shows clips of the fashion shows. While many malls seek to enhance the mall's relationship with the local population via engaging in local community activities (Chebat et al., 2006), the context here has a blend of shoppers from various parts of the country and world—enabling a more diverse environment to study self-congruity with this type of promotional event.

On most weekends (Friday-Sunday), the Fashion Show Mall features seven twenty-minute fashion shows per day; thus, we collected data after twenty-one shows. The over 200 mall retailers have the opportunity to sponsor a weekend of shows. Multiple sponsors do not appear in one given show weekend so as to not potentially dilute the sponsorship. The department store Macy's sponsored in the twenty-one shows we studied. Each show featured the same lighting, music, models, and merchandise. The Macy's logo was featured on a projection screen behind the models (see Exhibit 1). The shows sponsored by Macy's department store were chosen for a number of reasons. First, Macy's is an established department store that has

more recognition than smaller boutique retailers. Macy's is known for their use of event marketing—as they are traditionally recognized for the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York. Further, Macy's put on twenty-one shows, which provided an opportunity to gather data at various times of day, so the results are not skewed to either daytime or evening shoppers.

The field study sample for the on-site field surveys consists of adults who had just viewed a fashion show. Immediately following each show, the authors, along with a team of fifteen upper-classmen marketing students, invited viewers to complete the survey on-site after each of twenty-one shows. Field workers were each trained with the survey, field procedures, and passed human subjects training prior to data collection. Mall management provided the researchers with a kiosk near the catwalk (Exhibit 1) and nametag/lanyards for the research team.

For incentives, we provided coupon booklets for food, entertainment, and merchandise at mall vendors. These coupon books are very desirable to mall shoppers and tourists who are looking not only to save money, but for ideas for where to eat, shop, or be entertained. We used this incentive good for the entire mall, versus an incentive associated with the sponsor, as we did not want the incentive to positively bias the sponsor. There was a coupon for the sponsor in the book; however, potential participants were not made aware of this and they did not receive the book until they returned their completed survey and clipboard to us. A second (albeit, non-intentional) incentive were the Fashion Show Mall pens that we intended to be of use to fill out the survey; however, the informants most often asked to keep them.

Accounting for each of the twenty-one shows we studied, 583 attendees completed the survey. However, not all of the surveys returned were complete, and we attribute this to using a double-sided survey that perhaps some informants did not recognize (or choose to complete). Thus, after omitting incompletes, the adjusted sample size is 532. Nonresponse rate was

approximately 13 percent with the most common reasons for non-response, upon our inquiring, being that respondents did not get to see the entire show, they had already completed the study, or that they were in a hurry. To examine any bias that may result in differences between hurried shoppers and leisurely shoppers, we included the “time available while shopping” construct from Beatty and Ferrell (1988). However, no significant differences appear to be due to shoppers’ time availability while shopping.

Sample characteristics and demographics. While some members of the sample attended the mall primarily to see the fashion show, others came across it while shopping. When asked if the fashion show is a primary reason for their trip to the mall, the mean response is 3.1 (1=strongly disagree/7 = strongly agree). We find no significant differences between those who cited the event as the primary reason for attending the mall and those who did not.

Geographically, we employ a diverse sample that is similar to the demographic of the popular tourist region. Of note is the international diversity of the sample; one hundred sixty-one informants traveled from another country. Sixty-five percent are local residents. The majority (68%) are women with the modal ages of twenty-six and twenty-nine years. With sixty-six percent of informants reporting income, the average annual household income is \$124,000, which though high, matches target market for this more upscale mall. The most common occupations represented are accountants, retirees, sales professionals, and real estate agents.

Measures. Measures were pre-tested on a sample of 49 college students, after showing a video recorded version of the fashion show. Scales were adapted from the existing literature. Specifically, we employed the following scales: The self-event congruency scale is an adapted version of the self congruency scale by Sirgy, Grewal, Mangleburg, and Park (1997). Chandon, Wansink, and Laurent (2000) provided the event entertainment measures, as well as the attitude

toward the promotion measures. We adapted the brand knowledge scale from Bloch, Sherrell, and Ridgway's (1989), for the sponsoring brand, thus referring to it here as Sponsor Knowledge. The event persuasiveness measures come from Reichert, Heckler and Jackson (2001). Ultimately, we adapt the purchase likelihood scale (of a sponsor's products) from Speed and Thompson (2000) to measure shopping likelihood. Each of the aforementioned scales are 7-point Likert-type scales (1=strongly disagree/7=strongly agree).

To determine reliability, we report results of Cronbach's alpha tests and show an acceptable degree of internal consistency in the scales. In each case, the scales exceed the .70 standard, as the alphas range from .83 to .90. Further, the item-total correlation of each item exceeds the .30 standard. We indicate unidimensionality of the measures, as the variance extracted ranges from .67 to .86 (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). The items, alphas, and variance extracted are in Table 2.

Table 2 here

Model analysis, reliability and validity. We performed a confirmatory factor analysis on the covariance matrix using AMOS 16. The overall model fit is ($\chi^2_{(112 \text{ df})} = 654.17$), $p = .00$. Yet, as the chi-square test is sensitive to large sample size, the model fit is demonstrated via the normed fit index (NFI) = .88; confirmatory fit index (CFI) = .90; incremental fit index (IFI) = .90, and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .09, which indicate acceptable fit.

The exogenous construct measures have respectable reliability and validity properties (see Table 2). We assessed internal reliability through composite reliabilities, which each exceed Nunnally and Bernstein's (1994) .70 threshold. We used multiple ways to determine discriminant validity; these include assessment of the confidence intervals of the phi estimates, chi-squared difference tests, and analysis of the shared variance among all possible pairs of constructs.

Further, in comparing average variance extracted (AVE) to the .50 threshold (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988); ours exceed this (ranging from .67 to .86). All factor loadings are significant ($p < .001$), demonstrating convergent validity (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988). In Table 3, we show the construct correlations, means, and standard deviations.

Table 3 here

Results

Analyses: Event-self-congruity. Structural model results suggest that the model fits the data in an acceptable way (see Table 4). We find support for all of our hypotheses at $p < .01$. As expected, event self-congruity has a positive effect on event entertainment ($\beta = .68$, $CR = 10.9$), event persuasiveness ($\beta = .48$, $CR = 7.34$) and shopping likelihood ($\beta = .76$, $CR = 8.13$), supporting *H1a*, *H1b*, and *H1c*. As predicted, knowledge about the sponsor has a positive effect on event self-congruity, in support of *H2* ($\gamma = .79$, $CR = 11.13$). Event entertainment predicts attitude towards the promotion in a positive and significant way, in support of *H3* ($\beta = .85$, $CR = 17.77$). In addition, *H4* is supported, thus showing that attitude towards the promotion is predictive of event persuasiveness ($\beta = .43$, $CR = 7.50$). Finally, as predicted in *H5*, event persuasiveness is predictive of shopping likelihood ($\beta = .26$, $CR = 3.75$).

Further, based on the promotion literature, we also consider the moderating effects of time available while shopping (Beatty and Ferrell, 1988), gender, and primary reason for attending the mall, however these constructs do not reveal any significant interactions. We also conducted a mediation analysis to consider any indirect paths. Our findings suggest that our proposed model is most appropriate.

Discussion

Overview of key findings. Although a considerable amount of research has built a foundation for understanding self-congruity, to our knowledge, this is the first self-congruity study combining event marketing, sponsorship, and mall promotions in a real-world context.

When entertained shoppers enjoy the fashion show events and wish for more of such promotions, they tend to think more positively about the sponsor, view the promotional event as a good way to highlight the sponsor, and desire to shop more at the sponsor's store. We also find that greater expertise with the sponsor impacts self-congruity with the sponsor. Further, self-congruity enhances mall shoppers' perceived persuasiveness of the event. In turn, persuasion also increases shopping likelihood for the retailer—again, especially when the shopper perceives a personal fit with the event.

Interestingly, event-self-congruity significantly impacts the promotional effectiveness. That is, how much the shopper can identify with, have commonalities with, feel similar images with, or like the typical attendees they saw at the fashion show, impacts persuasion levels or shopping likelihood. Further, synergies with the typical customer at the sponsoring department store play a role in shopping likelihood. These results may be explained by the emerging nature of experiential marketing and promotional events, which may grant companies an opportunity to interact with and engage attendees. This finding extends Sirgy et al. (2000), who found that shoppers' perceptions of other shoppers relate to a store's image. More broadly, shopper's perceptions of an event enhance the perceived effectiveness of that event as a promotional tool by leveraging affect, emotion, and cognition.

Practical and managerial implications. Considered holistically, in addition to contributing to self-congruity literature, this framework may help scholars and practitioners to rethink the conditions and mechanisms that activate event sponsorship in malls. Advertisers and

mall managers seek innovative and effective mall promotions and lucrative investments. With respect to self-congruity, again, we find that a mall shopper's self-congruity with the event is a key influencer of mall promotion effectiveness (as measured by heightened event persuasiveness and shopping likelihood). This is an important finding for mall management, as it suggests that the viewers of the event focus on the experiences and emotions surrounding the event itself. Those experiences are more impactful on shopping likelihood than a sense of self-congruity with the sponsor and their featured clothing and accessories.

The results of this study have several important practical advertising implications. First and foremost, findings show that consumers will tend to feel more self-congruity with an event if they have a greater amount of knowledge about the sponsor of that event. There are many possible ways that sponsors can increase attendees' knowledge of their sponsorship, for example, by placing their name in several visible areas during the fashion show (as Macy's did, shown in Exhibit 1). In addition to simply showing the name of the sponsoring retailer, in the case of the fashion show in a mall, the mall itself can use the sponsoring retailer as a major part of the show advertisement. Therefore, the positive impact of sponsor knowledge on event-self-congruity means that consumers can relate more to the other attendees and they have a better sense of fitting into their environment. Again, this knowledge can be augmented most effectively through mall and in-store promotions of the event.

Another important practical implication of a fashion show-type promotional event is that self-congruity with the event will lead to more entertainment, persuasiveness, and shopping likelihood for the products advertised in the event. Whereas there may be a misconception that attendees have to "see themselves" in the show itself, in reality, the present research shows that they would rather do so in the other attendees of the show. Thus, advertising for events such as a

fashion show in a mall can be targeted at large groups of individuals, perhaps through corporations or carefully placed promotions. These targeted messages can attract people of similar backgrounds to the shows, which in turn increases self-congruity with the event. As an implication for retailers who invest in sponsoring promotional events, the sponsorship investment will likely not be as lucrative if the mall shopper who attends the event does not see him/herself as fitting with the event. Thus, event marketers and retailers should first understand their shopper segments and provide a fitting event for their consumers. However, managers should keep in mind the self-congruity bias, that is shoppers often see themselves as more upscale than reality (Chebat et al., 2006).

In the case of mall events, the sponsoring retailer should heavily promote their fashion show event before it occurs, through marketing communications throughout their store and using their mailing list. For example, they can offer discounts to fashion show attendees by passing out coupon books during and after the show. In addition to these promotional techniques, the sponsoring retailer can also increase attendee knowledge of their store by including a short advertisement of their store prior to the actual fashion show event. This should facilitate the establishment of a link in the consumer's mind of the show with the sponsor, while increasing consumer knowledge of the sponsor.

There are further practical implications for this study which center on *event entertainment* as an important construct in relation to fashion shows and other promotional events. Specifically, the findings of this paper show a large increase in attitude towards promotions, to the extent of the ($\beta = .85$), when event entertainment increases. The implication of this is that increases in event entertainment can lead to the immediate benefit of more positive attitudes towards events. Increased event entertainment can result not only from increased self-congruity with events

(Figure 1), but also by offering consumers extra incentives to watch the event. These incentives could be food coupons or free products and services which the consumer could take advantage of after watching the show. These types of promotions should lead to increases in consumer knowledge for the sponsoring brand as well as increased event entertainment, both of which will eventually produce more event persuasiveness and more shopping likelihood. Further, a shopper's perception that a promotional event is entertaining is a key determinant to leverage event sponsorship. A mall shopper's perception that they are at an entertaining event influences more positive attitudes that transfer to the sponsored event. It is important to host an event that adds entertainment value, as well as showcasing the merchandise to the shoppers in a more emotionally-uplifting way.

Contribution to theory. Expanding self-congruity theory, results show that a viewer's perceived fit with their self-image and that of the retailer enhances shopping likelihood for the sponsor's merchandise. In line with self-congruity theory, higher-fit perceptions contribute to higher purchase intentions (Roth and Romeo, 2000). If shoppers feel that the sponsoring brand has an image that is congruent with their image and the fashion show event image, then they are more likely intend to shop at the sponsor's store.

Further contributions lie in the experiential marketing realm. Shoppers are attracted to events and entertainment that fits their lifestyles. While a sponsored fashion show is a manifestation of event marketing, retailing, and promotions, entertainment-based events are an engaging form of mall promotions. As the same entertainment/fashion show is never available on a given day, each event adds an element of excitement above the usual quality that the shopping experience would have provided (Wakefield and Baker, 1998).

The contributions help scholars and advertisers to rethink the conditions and mechanisms that activate event sponsorship as a form of experiential marketing. Our contributions are important to the scholars who study and those who manage the 40,000 plus sponsored events in the U.S. each year. While we focus on retail events, the foundation and some key linkages should be adaptable to other contexts (e.g., sporting events, holiday events, cultural events, business to business events, educational events, health expos, and grassroots community events). Any generalizability lies within the theoretical underpinnings that a consumer's sense of fit with an event enhances the consumption experience and in turn leads to more positive managerial outcomes for advertisers.

Limitations and avenues for future research. Sales figures from the sponsor could further enhance the validity of our model, and we recognize this as a limitation. While the specific traffic and sales figures are proprietary, we do have some further evidence that the sponsorships and events were effective in increasing store traffic and sales; the sponsor reported a spike both in store traffic and sales following the fashion shows. A second limitation is self-report data. However, the real-world context and application alongside a series of actual events should provide a contribution that can be built upon with supplementary methods, such as experiments, or qualitative studies to delve deeper into one particular linkage uncovered in these studies.

This theoretical model that other scholars may wish to examine in other event contexts such as in the context of sports, community, music, the arts, or non-profit. Further, we encourage scholars to consider other constructs. For instance, passionate and active shoppers may perceive the event as more successful. This has been shown in context of sporting events—attendees who feel passion in the broad domain of the event are more likely to hold favorable attitudes toward the event (Close et al., 2006). Further, qualitative research suggests that there is an association

between active participation in an event and affect towards the sponsored event (Meenaghan, 2001). Thus, scholars can investigate the role of active participation in the event versus a more passive viewership. Overall, there remains a plethora of questions to examine in the context of event marketing, promotions, and retailing—and this conceptual base serves as a springboard.

We also encourage scholars to further develop our findings on the role of self-congruity in the mall promotions arena to develop the literatures in entertainment marketing/experiential marketing, and international retailing. Specifically, we offer the following research questions for scholars and practitioners interested in the areas to explore:

-From a shoppers' perspective, what roles should mall management or retailers have in entertaining shoppers (versus the traditional role of providing goods)?

-How does the role of self-congruity differ between attendees from the U.S. and other individualistic cultures (anti-“mass fashion”) and more assimilative cultures impact retailing decisions?

-To what extent is the relationship between event-self congruity and knowledge about sponsors reciprocal?

While our study stems from self-congruity theories, it also may provide a context for examining theories of taste. Mass-marketed fashion goes against what social theorists may classify as high taste. In addition to image, such mall events feature sponsored fashion templates that may be indicative of a shared image, culture and/or dress. Mall fashion shows belong to a class of emerging types of event marketing and mall promotions. More research should be conducted to explore this potentially lucrative form of event marketing, especially in the context of studying shopping and fashion consumption as indicators of conformity/autonomy, self-worth, and entertainment.

Table 1

SELECT RELEVANT FINDINGS IN THE ADVERTISING LITERATURE

<p>1. Chadwick & Thwaites (2005) Managing Sport Sponsorship Programs: Lessons from a Critical Assessment of English Soccer, <i>Journal of Advertising Research</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data from almost 50 firms shows an overall problem as how to effectively manage sport sponsorship. • Some managers see sponsorship as merely a marketing communications tactic • Managers may under-leverage their sponsorships with advertising • Constraints to sponsorship success are constrained by lack of cooperation and communication
<p>2. Close, Lacey, Finney, & Sneath (2006) Engaging the Consumer through Event Marketing: Linking Attendees with the Sponsor, Community, & Brand, <i>Journal of Advertising Research</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendee’s knowledge of the sponsor’s area, enthusiasm and activeness in the domain of the sponsored event positively influences desire that a sponsor be involved in their community • The more community-minded attendee has a positive opinion change about the sponsor • This positive brand opinion change contributes to higher purchase intentions for the sponsor • Event marketing, in conjunction with consumers who are enthusiastic, active, and knowledgeable in the areas of the sponsor and event, serves as a lever to engage the consumer
<p>3. Cornwell (2008), State of the Art and Science in Sponsorship-Linked Marketing, <i>Journal of Advertising</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sponsorship should be a key aspect of the new “indirect marketing mix” • Sponsorship has a hand in the main changes surrounding advertising
<p>4. Cornwell, Humphreys, Maguire, Weeks, & Tellegen (2006) Sponsorship-Linked Marketing: The Role of Articulation in Memory, <i>Journal of Consumer Research</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Event sponsorship enhances brand awareness as measured by recall and recognition • Events and sponsors with natural fit have an advantage • Articulation of why the event and sponsor fit can enhance a less congruent pairing
<p>5. Cornwell, Pruitt, & Van Ness (2001) An Exploratory Analysis of the Value of Winning in Motorsports: Sponsorship-Linked Marketing and Shareholder Wealth, <i>Journal of Advertising Research</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Value of victory” is key to the market’s overall assessment of the net value of the sponsorships • Brand awareness and image development explain less obvious event-sponsor pairings
<p>6. Cornwell, Weeks & Roy (2005) Sponsorship-Linked Marketing: Opening the Black Box, <i>Journal of Advertising</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finds brand equity enhances sponsorship effectiveness • Clutter and competitor activities decrease sponsorship effectiveness
<p>7. Crimmins & Horn (1996) Sponsorship: From Management Ego Trip to Marketing Success, <i>Journal of Advertising Research</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening the event-sponsor link is achieved most by: packaging, pr, promotion, advertising, direct marketing, merchandising, and corporate communications • Collateral communications explain the event-sponsor link • Message articulation enhances the event-sponsor link enhances memory for the sponsorship relationship

<p>8. Gwinner & Eaton (1999) Building Brand Image through Event Sponsorship: The Role Of Image Transfer, <i>Journal of Advertising</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The event image transfers to the sponsor • Relationship strength of relationship impacts the image transfers strength and direction • Need for research into consumers perceptions • Impact of schema theory
<p>9. Harvey, Gray & Despain (2006) Measuring the Effectiveness of True Sponsorship, <i>Journal of Advertising Research</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average lift in purchase intentions is 30% • This lift is consistent with all 28 cases of research
<p>10. Javalgi, Traylor, Gross & Lampman (1994) Awareness of Sponsorship & Corporate Image: An Empirical Investigation, <i>Journal of Advertising</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no halo effect from sponsorship
<p>11. Johar, Pham, & Wakefield (2006) How Event Sponsors Are Really Identified: A (Baseball) Field Analysis, <i>Journal of Advertising Research</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumers rely on the plausibility of a sponsor actually sponsoring an event • Fieldwork at baseball games is consistent with prior lab-based studies on the importance of plausible fit
<p>12. Johar & Pham (1999) Relatedness, Prominence, and Constructive Sponsor Identification, <i>Journal of Marketing Research</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The presence of competitors deflates consumers' memory about sponsors • Simulated sponsorship press releases can enhance perception of the sponsor
<p>13. Rifon, Choi, Trimble, & Li (2004) Congruence Effects in Sponsorship: The Mediating Role of Sponsor Credibility and Consumer Attribution of Sponsor Motive, <i>Journal of Advertising</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sponsor must be credible to be effective • Consumers must feel that the sponsor is genuinely interested and concerned in the area of the event, and that the sponsorship is not just a corporate investment
<p>14. Ruth & Simonin (2003) Brought To You By Brand A and Brand B: Investigating Multiple Sponsors' Influence on Consumers' Attitudes Toward Sponsored Events," <i>Journal of Advertising</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prior attitudes toward sponsors, the presence or absence of a controversial product, and product complementarity impact sponsorship outcomes • Controversial sponsors impact consumer attitudes toward an event • The sponsors' nationality does not always impact perception
<p>15. Simmons & Becker-Olsen (2006) Achieving Marketing Objectives through Social Sponsorships," <i>Journal of Marketing</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the social sponsorship domain, shows difference between native fit and created fit • Created fit, with proper communications, results in positive outcomes close to those with native fit • A lack of congruence reduces the favorability of attitudes towards the sponsorship <p>A lack of congruence reduces the value of the brand as a signal, as consumers are less sure of what the brand represents</p>
<p>16. Sneath, Finney & Close (2005) An IMC Approach to Event Marketing: The Effects of Sponsorship & Experience on Customer Attitudes <i>Journal of Advertising Research</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data suggested a relationship between sponsorship and increased sales • Sponsorship most effective for objectives to enhance corporate identity, awareness, equity and image • 40% of respondents were more likely to purchase a brand as a result of experience at the event • Event marketing is an important tool in an IMC strategy, not a stand alone activity

Table 2
Scale Items and Confirmatory Factor Analysis

	Lambda Loadings ¹	Coefficient Alpha	Variance Extracted
Event-Self Congruity		.83	.75
I am very much like the typical attendee of this fashion show.	.62		
I feel my personal profile is similar to the typical attendee of this fashion show.	.40		
I can identify with the typical attendee of this fashion show.	.67		
Event Entertainment		.90	.84
These events are fun.	.85		
These events are enjoyable.	.89		
These events are entertaining.	.85		
Knowledge about Sponsor		.85	.86
I have experienced Macy's store and merchandise.	.73		
I regularly use Macy's merchandise.	.88		
I have expertise with, or know a lot about Macy's merchandise.	.82		
Attitude towards the Promotion		.83	.86
I like this type of promotion (fashion show events) a lot.	.85		
With this type of promotion, I feel like buying the product.	.83		
Event Persuasiveness		.84	.76
How much did the fashion show cause you to want to shop more at Macy's?	.79		
Did the fashion show cause you to think more positively about Macy's?	.87		
Was the fashion show a good way to highlight Macy's?	.76		
Shopping Likelihood		.75	.67
I would shop at Macy's if it happens to be easily available.	.63		
Due to this event, I'm more likely to <i>consider</i> shopping at Macy's.	.69		
I would like to shop or keep shopping at Macy's.	.82		

¹Standardized solutions

Table 3
Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations

Constructs	Mean	SD	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
(1) Knowledge about sponsor	4.99	1.65	1.00					
(2) Event entertainment	5.65	1.46	.46	1.00				
(3) Event self-congruity	4.65	1.63	.44	.46	1.00			
(4) Attitude toward the promotion	5.31	1.49	.41	.73	.45	1.00		
(5) Event persuasiveness	5.09	1.50	.44	.60	.52	.62	1.00	
(6) Shopping likelihood	4.99	1.45	.67	.58	.49	.57	.69	1.00

*Items measured on a seven point Likert scale, anchored by 1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree.

Table 4
Hypotheses and Structural Path Estimates

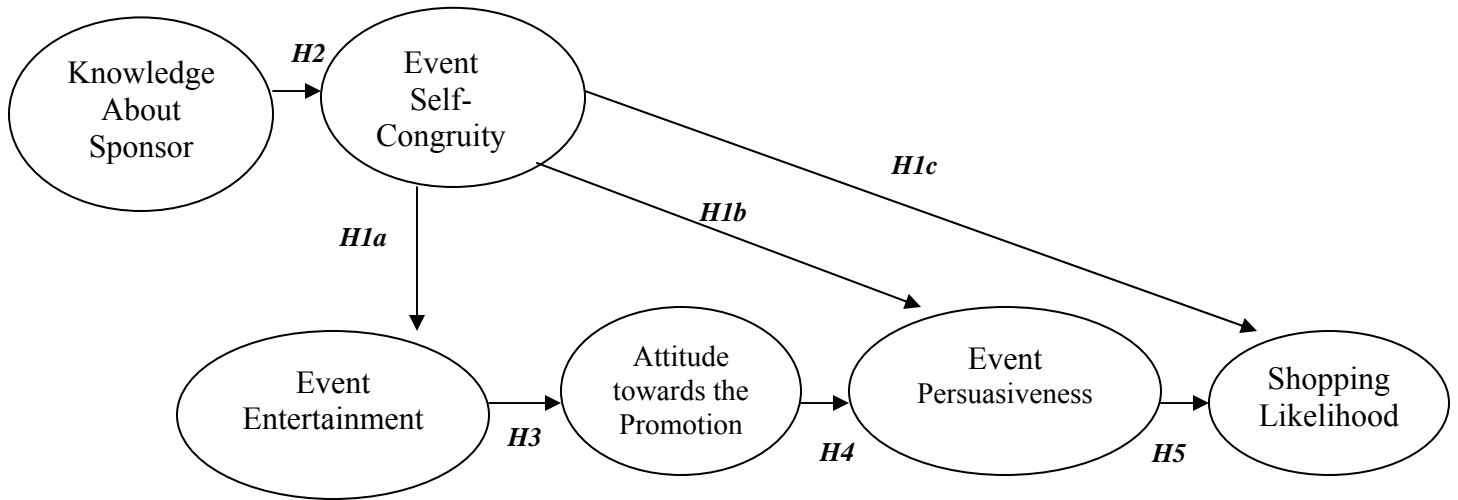
Hypothesis	Structural path	Standardized estimate
<i>H1a</i> : +	Event-Self Congruity → Event Entertainment	.68
<i>H1b</i> : +	Event-Self Congruity → Event Persuasiveness	.48
<i>H1c</i> : +	Event-Self Congruity → Shopping Likelihood	.76
<i>H2</i> : +	Knowledge about Sponsor → Event-Self-Congruity	.79
<i>H3</i> : +	Event Entertainment → Attitude Towards the Promotion	.85
<i>H4</i> : +	Attitude towards the Promotion → Event Persuasiveness	.43
<i>H5</i> : +	Event Persuasiveness → Shopping Likelihood	.26
Goodness-of-Fit Statistics		
	Chi-square (d.f.)	654.17 (112)
	IFI	.90
	TLI	.86
	CFI	.90
	RMSEA	.09

*All estimates are significant at $p < .01$.

Exhibit1
Field Work Photos of the Promotional Event



Figure 1
Conceptual Model: Self-Congruity with the Promotional Event



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