

**How the Anticipation Can Be As Great As The Experience:
Explaining Event Sponsorship Exhibit Outcomes via Affective Forecasting**

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Abstract

Via field surveys of attendees at a multi-day professional sporting event ($n=1,089$), the authors contribute an interesting finding—that the anticipation of participating in an event sponsor’s exhibit area is just as great as the experience itself when it comes to evaluating the sponsor. The study’s results suggest that the mere presence of event marketing activities (in addition to sponsorship communications) improves sponsorship outcomes. Affective forecasting theory is introduced to the advertising/event marketing literature here, and used to explain the study’s findings and provide implications for advertisers who engage in sponsored event marketing.

Understanding consumer psychology and affect in the context of advertising is a priority for event marketers and sponsors who are looking for the most effective ways to engage consumers and to cut through the clutter of traditional advertising. Even in a struggling economy, advertising managers are shifting promotional budgets away from more costly traditional advertising media buys in favor of sponsoring programming and sponsored event marketing in regional communities where consumers seem to appreciate the sponsored events (IEG 2011). Sponsorship expenditures grew by 5.2% in 2010 to \$46.3 billion worldwide, with approximately two-thirds on sporting events (IEG 2011). For instance, Ford Motor Company, the sponsor of interest here, sponsors NASCAR and major league teams in all of the four major sports leagues, as well as less mainstream sporting events such as Ironman competitions, professional bull riding, and professional cycling events—such as the Tour de Georgia race investigated here.

Especially during recessionary times, why would a struggling automaker shift towards sponsoring sporting events and staffing exhibit areas featuring their latest products? One postulation deals with affect; that attendees appreciate events and exhibit areas that financially support the free event. Events allow sponsors to interact with attendees as a way to enhance the consumption experience (Holbrook 2000). For attendees, events can enhance affect towards a sponsor because the event can add value to their lives by connecting them to other people, their community, and their passions.

Going beyond merely sponsoring an event, sponsors seek to enhance affect towards their brand with exhibit areas imbedded within the event. Sponsors often host exhibits or areas full of free entertainment, interactive new product displays, photo sessions, and promotional gifts as ways to enhance the event experience. Consumers attend such sponsored exhibits, in part, because they anticipate having enjoyable experiences (i.e., forecasting positive affect). For instance, a consumer may foresee a positive experience learning about and seeing the sponsor's newest innovations (e.g., the first domestic hybrid car) and receiving free promotional items, all while interacting with friends and other attendees at a community event. It has not been studied if, and to what extent, merely offering such exhibits/experiences can enhance sponsorship perceptions—even if the attendee has yet to experience the sponsor's exhibit area. It is postulated here, that simply offering the experience is appreciated and enough for an event attendee to enhance their perceptions of the sponsor. This postulation may be explained in part by affective forecasting theory. While the authors test affect, affective forecasting theory is presented as a plausible explanation of the findings.

Naturally, people often plan to do things that are enjoyable. Affective forecasting theories, which can explain the findings here, hold that consumers anticipate how much they will

enjoy something (such as a sponsor's exhibit area) prior to committing to experiencing them (c.f., Gilbert and Ebert 2002; Loewenstein and Schkade 1999; Patrick and MacInnes 2006). In other words, attendees likely would not even plan on visiting the sponsor's exhibit area unless they foresaw a positive experience or deriving any value from going through the sponsor's exhibits. Research in psychology shows that consumers' forecast of how they will feel alters present behaviors and behavioral intentions (Wilson and Gilbert 2003). The authors investigate a situation in which attendees at a professional event forecast having enjoyable experiences at interactive exhibits hosted by the title sponsor—otherwise they would state they have no plans to attend the exhibit area. Such plans to attend and positive forecasts—even without actual experiences, can enhance attendees' affect-based perceptions of the sponsor's brand and their intentions to purchase from the sponsor.

The purpose of this field research, therefore, is to delve into a newer area and look at the role of a title sponsor's exhibits/experiences embedded within the sponsored event. The authors investigate a sponsor's ability to use exhibits to create stronger sponsorship outcomes by enhancing attendees' brand opinion and purchase intentions for the sponsor's brands. Of particular interest is understanding if and why sponsors can build effective sponsorships when attendees have not actually experienced the sponsors' marketing exhibits. The authors explore how plans to visit (versus actual visits to) the title sponsor's marketing exhibits impact sponsorships' effectiveness at week-long cycling event. The authors contribute a model showing that attendees' experiences at sponsors' exhibits at the event favorably influence attendees' desires to purchase the sponsor's brands—regardless of if the attendee has experienced the exhibit area or not. This finding is plausibly explained by attendee's ability to forecast affect.

Scholars have explained how affect impacts consumers' choices (Xu and Schwarz 2009),

judgments (e.g., Shugan 1980), moods (Wilson et al. 2005) and evaluations (Wilson and Gilbert 2003). In experiential consumer behavior, affective forecasting theory helps us understand how predicted evaluative judgments influence purchase intentions and decisions (Patrick, MacInnis, and Park 2007). Yet, scholars have not studied how affective forecasts influence experiences at sponsored events. No one has examined if—and to what extent—attending event marketing activities moderate linkages among attendees' perceptions of the sponsors' brand and purchase intentions. Thus, this research ties together consumer psychology theory and event marketing.

This paper is organized as follows. Next, the authors review literature on event marketing and affect to inform the hypotheses. The authors then overview the field studies at a six-day professional cycling event which drew over 800,000 attendees from 18 countries. The authors then discuss the structural equation modeling multi-group analyses. Because the authors tested affect (versus specifically affective forecasting), the theoretical discussion of Affective Forecasting Theory is then presented as a plausible base to explain the results. The paper closes with: key contributions, implications for advertising theory and practice, and limitations and avenues for future research.

Literature Review

Event marketing is an experiential marketing tool (Schmitt 1999) and an entity may sponsor this experience. Sponsorship is an investment in an activity in exchange for access to the commercial potential associated with that activity (Meenaghan 1991). Through personal interactions, **experiential marketing** allows consumers to emotionally connect with sponsors. Event marketing treats emotionally and rationally driven consumption as a holistic experience (Schmitt 1999). The consumer experience, whether at an event or in another setting, entails elements of escapism, emotions, and enjoyment (Holbrook 2000). Further, through education,

entertainment, exhibitionism, and evangelizing (Holbrook 2000), event marketing can facilitate personal, interactive communications with target audiences—especially if the sponsor stages a branded experience (e.g., exhibit areas) at the event.

Although sponsorship and event marketing are distinct marketing communications vehicles that can occur independently, the synergies between sponsorships and event marketing encourage their joint application along with other communication tools (Walliser 2003). The event creates experiences for consumers and opportunities for brands to leverage sponsorship (O'Reilly et al. 2008). Whereas sponsorship alone has a limited ability to relay specific product information, some events can enhance consumers' knowledge (Wakefield, Becker-Olsen, and Cornwell 2007). Dual engagement of sponsorship and event marketing may increase brands' access to new segments that may not otherwise interact with the sponsor's products, services, and personnel (Wohlfeil and Whelan 2006). An advantage of using both sponsorship and event marketing is the opportunity for brand representatives to meet and personally interact with consumers while gaining wide brand exposure among the larger, diverse audiences often found at high-profile sponsored events (Coppetti et al. 2009). Event sponsorships frequently carry heavy absolute costs; often, sponsors spend more for activation costs than for sponsorship rights. Marketing at sponsored events can build brand awareness and strengthen brand image through the transfer of the event's image to the sponsors (Javalgi et al. 1994).

Given the potential synergies of sponsoring an event, it is important to examine strategies of companies that host consumer-oriented events at sponsored sporting events, cultural events, concerts, fairs, or festival venues. These companies hope that consumers are more receptive to marketing messages in the entertaining and emotionally-charged settings at these events. To have maximum impact on event attendees, firms must stimulate attendees' affect, emotions, and

cognitions. Affect and emotion includes attendees' attitude toward the type of event (e.g., affect for attending sporting events or cultural events). Further, attendees' associate emotions with the event experience; for example, an attendee may sense feelings while experiencing certain activities at the event. Many people are not overwhelmingly passionate about utilitarian products. Therefore, sponsors attempt to engage consumers on things about which they are more passionate (e.g., family, sports teams, and causes). Attendees who are enthusiastic and active in the event domain (e.g., sports, culture) have a more positive opinion of the sponsors, and are more inclined to purchase sponsors' products (Bennett et al. 2009).

If consumers and sponsors are both to make the most of event sponsorships, sponsors must reach consumers at a cognitive level. Event marketing provides sponsors with opportunities to educate consumers about more than just their offerings. For instance, in the context of health care, sponsored events educate exhibit attendees about cancer awareness and wellness, and also promote products that will help consumers lead healthier lifestyles (Sneath et al. 2006). The attendees who are more knowledgeable about the sponsor and the sponsor's products are more likely to be engaged with the sponsor's brand(s) and in the overall experience at the sponsor's exhibits than are less knowledgeable attendees.

Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

Despite the breadth of research touched on above, scholars know little about affect and consumers' product knowledge in the context of event marketing with sponsor's exhibits. Hence, the conceptual framework and resulting hypotheses examine the role of affect on how product knowledge relates to stronger sponsorship outcomes.

Product Knowledge

For brand-building to occur, the consumer must possess product knowledge. Product

knowledge allows the consumer to distinguish sponsors' brands from competing brands (Roy and Cornwell 2004). Consumers interpret product information based on knowledge activated at time of comprehension (Lee and Olshavsky 1994). There is an established research stream on how product knowledge influences consumer behavior (e.g., Alba and Hutchinson 1987; Brucks 1985; Kim, Haley, and Lee 2008). These studies conclude that a consumer's level of product knowledge influences his/her information processing. In turn, product involvement influences information processing. Consumers often evaluate the value of high involvement products (such as an automobile) by concrete attributes that satisfy utilitarian needs (Park and Moon 2003).

Consumer research on classical conditioning indicates that consumers experience a mere exposure effect; that is, as a consumer becomes aware of a product, his/her attitude toward that product becomes more positive (Zajonc and Markus 1982). The magnitude of affect and attitudes are likely to be shaped by the most accessible and diagnostic information available to the consumer at that time (Reed, Wooten, and Bolton 2002). For sponsorships, this effect suggests that consumers will have more pronounced product knowledge effects when sponsors actively engage them through sponsored event exhibits.

High involvement product sponsorship without experiential marketing is comparable to mass-advertising program efforts in the sense that consumers generally remain passive recipients of brand messages. Event marketing may better equip attendees, especially those who stop to visit the sponsor's exhibit area, with relevant information, feelings, and experiences that can increase their knowledge about a sponsor's brands (Pine and Gilmore 1998). Affective forecasting also has much to say about new product evaluation (Patrick, MacInnis, and Park 2007). Bringing this theoretical discussion into the event literature, it is plausible that event attendees anticipate that their participation in a sponsor's event marketing activities will

strengthen their product knowledge. In turn, exhibit participation/interaction with the brand and personnel should also strengthen enhanced opinion of the sponsor's brand and intentions to purchase from the sponsor. Hence, the authors hypothesize that both actual and anticipated event marketing experiences will positively influence the strength of the relationships of consumers' product knowledge on sponsorship outcomes.

Enhancing Brand Opinion

As with other marketing communication activities, sponsored event marketing can play instrumental roles in building and maintaining brand opinion. Just as with the positive shared brand meanings between a celebrity endorser and a sponsor (Erdogan and Drollinger 2008), shared meanings of the sponsor can emerge from event sponsorship. Sponsorship can help link a consumer's sense of self to the sponsor by tying consumers to the sponsor's brand (McDaniel 1999). The affect surrounding a sporting, social, and cultural event moves to the brand through sponsorship (McAlexander, Schouten, and Koenig 2002). The congruent fit between the two entities influences the quality of this transfer (Deitz, Wesson Myers, and Markley 2009; Roy and Cornwell 2004). A brand opinion can strengthen if the brand sponsor creates opportunities for consumers to have personal and interactive experiences with the brand (Brown, Kozinets, and Sherry 2003). Consumers anticipate that the positive information event marketing conveys will enhance their perceptions of sponsors' brands (Koo, Quarterman, and Flynn 2006).

Purchase Intention

Purchase intention is the expectation or likelihood that an individual will buy a product; building a positive brand increases consumers' intent to purchase the brand (Keller 1993). Previous research investigating the effect of sponsorship on purchase intention has been inconsistent. Several studies have found that sponsorship effectiveness positively influences

buying behavior (e.g., Close et al. 2006; Coppetti et al. 2009, Cornwell and Coote 2005). Other studies have shown either weak or no support for increased buying intentions as a result of sponsorship (e.g., Hoek et al. 1997; Javalgi et al. 1994). Thus, it is important to consider moderating factors, such as if an event attendee has attended or plans to attend the sponsor's exhibit. If a sponsor integrates an exhibit, consumers interact with the sponsor's brands; as such, one may hypothesize that both anticipated and actual event marketing experiences strengthen the relationship between consumers' product knowledge and their intent to purchase the sponsor's brands. Finally, scholars find significant links between consumers' assessments of the sponsor's brand and their purchase intentions (Koo, Quarterman, and Flynn 2006; Pope and Voges 2000). One may also posit that attendees' plans to experience the sponsor's exhibit may have a stronger moderating impact on the relationship between product knowledge and purchase intentions, compared to attendees who already experienced the sponsor's exhibit, perhaps because consumers associate anticipated experience with positive affective forecasts.

Hypotheses and Model

Thus, based on the literature and conceptual framework, the first set of hypotheses (H1a, H2a, and H3a) confirms the anticipated direct linkages among product knowledge, enhanced brand opinion of the sponsor, and purchase intentions.

H1a: *Attendees' product knowledge will enhance their opinions of the sponsor.*

H2a: *Attendee's product knowledge will strengthen their purchase intentions of the sponsor's brands.*

H3a: *Attendee's enhanced brand opinions of the sponsor will strengthen their purchase intentions of the sponsor's brands.*

The authors also test a complementary set of hypotheses (H1b, H2b, and H3b) that are affect-based postulations. Specifically, these hypotheses examine how attendees' plans to

experience sponsored exhibits at the event strengthens its impact as a moderator on the posited direct relationships among product knowledge, enhanced brand opinion, and purchase intentions, compared to attendees who already experienced sponsored exhibits.

H1b: *Attendees' plans to experience the sponsor's exhibit will positively moderate the relationship between product knowledge and enhanced opinions of the sponsor, compared to attendees who already experienced the sponsor's exhibit.*

H2b: *Attendees' plans to experience the sponsor's exhibit will positively moderate the relationship between product knowledge and purchase intentions, compared to attendees who already experienced the sponsor's exhibit.*

H3b: *Attendees' plans to experience the sponsor's exhibit will positively moderate the relationship between enhanced brand opinion of the sponsor and purchase intentions, compared to attendees who already experienced the sponsor's exhibit.*

Figure 1 displays the hypothesized model.

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Methods

Context and Background

The Event. The authors designed, collected, and analyzed on-site survey data from spectators at eleven cities at the fourth annual Tour de Georgia (TDG) cycling race to test the proposed model. In addition, the authors donated their services to help measure the event and its role on the economic impact to the state (\$26.2 million). TDG was a six-day sporting and community event composed of a 642-mile cycling race and a series of festivals and healthy-living expos in eleven cities in Georgia and Tennessee. Other main attractions included entertainment and hosted exhibits. Thus, while the race and opportunities to interact with professional cyclists drew cycling enthusiasts, other experiences with the Health Expo, sponsor exhibits, music, food and beverage vendors, drew the local community as a free, family-friendly

week of events. Further, the event had a philanthropic component, as it benefited the Georgia Cancer Coalition, which ties in with the sport's most marketed athlete, past TDG winner, and cancer awareness advocate Lance Armstrong.

The Title Sponsor. Ford Motor Company served as the title sponsor for the event. Ford articulated its link to the event with advertising and public relations. For instance, the sponsorship announcement press release notes,

The Georgia Ford Dealers are excited to play a leadership role in this emerging property, and to support the event's core objectives by promoting cycling, good health and the Georgia Cancer Coalition. When we say Ford is built for the road ahead, we can clearly exemplify that brand message with a world-class cycling event like the Ford Tour de Georgia through the Ford dealers and in the communities where we live and work (John Shoemaker, Atlanta District Ford Dealers Advertising Association).

In addition to exemplifying their brand message, Ford chose to be the title sponsor of this event to help bring awareness and enhance purchase intentions at the 121 dealers in the state.

Sponsorship Activation. Sponsorship activation took place at the event and through advertising and public relations, as this event was congruent with the launch of Ford's new hybrid car campaign. At the event, in the race's fourth year, over 800,000 international spectators attended and witnessed the sponsor's involvement firsthand. First, there was a pre-event publicity tour. At the event, Ford displayed its brand name and logo on banners, signage, volunteer apparel, and on large-screen televisions that projected the race to the crowd. The sponsor showcased both featured models (Fusion, Escape and F150) and one hundred official vehicles. For instance, these cars served as pace cars, shuttles, and for volunteers or VIPs.

Most importantly, Ford established interactive exhibits at each host city, featuring new models, music, and entertainment. The sponsor allowed consumers to see forthcoming designs, sit in these new vehicles, obtain information from sales personnel, and receive promotional

materials. To add to the experience, consumers could obtain photographs featuring attendees, friends, and new Ford vehicles. Ford printed the photos on a \$1,000 rebate voucher for the vehicle. Ford packaged the rebate to look like a backstage V.I.P. pass, to spark word-of-mouth promotion during the event and provide a photograph souvenir of the experience at the race.

To leverage coverage of the event, media catered to audiences from television, and radio coverage. The event also had ample online coverage—on its official website and various blogs and cycling websites. Ford also launched a web-based affinity program that gave exhibit visitors purchase incentives and featured showroom promotions with goals of enhancing purchase intentions and ultimately generate consumer traffic to the local dealerships.

Fieldwork

Recruitment and Sampling. As noted, the on-site survey took place over a six-day period at the fourth annual Tour de Georgia (TDG) cycling race. One of the authors and 42 upper-level business majors recruited survey participants on-site. Weeks prior to the event, a event marketing professional trained in field research held training sessions required for participation in this option for extra credit. The researchers conducted survey research at each of the six host cities. To meet the sampling criteria, a participant had to be at the event and at least 18 years old. Participants received official tour lapel pins and souvenir pens as incentives.

Overall, 1,089 participants completed the survey. The estimated non-response rate was 5%. The demographic profile revealed distinct differences among the respondents of the sample. The sample consists of slightly more men (56.1%) than women (43.9%). The data reveal a relatively even distribution of participants in their twenties, thirties, forties, and fifties, with a median age of 42. Also, analysis shows a dispersion of household incomes with 38.4% earning less than \$50,000, 42.2% between \$50,000-\$100,000, and 19.4% greater than \$100,000. More

than four-fifths (86%) plan to purchase a new vehicle the next time they buy a vehicle. Finally, 29.4% of respondents plan to buy a new vehicle within the next 12 months.

Measurement. First, to assess the moderating influence of anticipated versus actual event marketing experiences, the researchers asked participants “have you experienced the Ford automotive exhibits?” Those who said “no” were then asked “do you plan to experience the Ford automotive exhibits?” Of the 1,089 respondents who had either experienced or planned to experience the Ford automotive exhibits, 39.5% ($n=430$) stated that they had already experienced Ford’s exhibit. The remaining 60.5% of the respondents ($n=659$) had not yet experienced Ford’s exhibits, but had plans to do so.

The authors used Likert-type scales (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree) to assess respondents’ product knowledge, opinion of the sponsor’s brand, and purchase intentions. Employing tested measures, the authors adopted the product knowledge scale from Bloch, Sherrell, and Ridgway (1989). The scale contains the following four items: “I feel very knowledgeable about vehicles”; “If a friend asked me about vehicles, I could give advice about different brands”; “If I had to purchase a vehicle today, I would need to gather very little information to make a wise decision”; and “I feel very confident in my ability to tell the difference in quality among vehicle brands.” Moreover, the four-item product knowledge scale displayed composite reliability (.77).

In addition to employing scales from the literature, the authors also were interested in measuring any change associated with the event as it relates with both the attendee’s opinion of the sponsoring brand measured and any heightened intentions to purchase the sponsor’s products. Because scales measuring such event-activated opinion or intention change are not in the literature, the authors measured any change in opinion of the brand with their level of

agreement. After opening with “the following statements are about Ford’s sponsorship of the Tour de Georgia”, informants indicated their agreement level of “my opinion of Ford has changed for the better” and “I am more likely to buy a Ford” (as a result of attending the event). *Evidence suggests that single-item measures of relatively simple and straightforward constructs are sufficient for field research (Bergkvist and Rossiter 2007)*. Thus, the authors decided that these two straightforward questions would help keep the survey at a length that would not compromise response rate. The correlations, means, and standard deviations for the constructs of the model for the overall sample and subsamples are shown in Table 1.

--Insert Table 1 about here--

Measurement, Reliability, and Validity. The researchers assessed the measurement properties to check reliability and validity based on pooled data of the two attendee (respondent) groups. First, the researchers created a covariance matrix and ran a confirmatory factor analysis using LISREL 8.80. This analysis yielded the following results: $\chi^2_{(8)}=23.87$, Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)=.99, Comparative Fit Index (CFI)=.99, Incremental Fit Index (IFI)=.99, and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)=.043. Aside from the chi-square statistic ($p=.00$) result common to large sample sizes, each of the remaining absolute and incremental fit measures yielded good levels of fit (Hair et al. 2006).

Findings

Model Estimation and Fit

The researchers then estimated the pooled structural model. Given that the structural model fit the data satisfactorily ($\chi^2_{(8)}=23.87$, GFI=.99, CFI=.99, IFI=.99, and RMSEA=.043), the researchers then examined the standardized coefficients for the direct relationships. Each path is highly significant ($p<.001$): (H1a) product knowledge→ brand opinion ($t=8.76$), (H2a) product

knowledge→ purchase intentions ($t=4.97$), and ($H3a$) brand opinion→ purchase intentions ($t=19.74$).

To investigate the two sets of hypotheses, the researchers conducted a multi-group analysis to assess event marketing's anticipated versus experienced moderating effects on the structural model. Following Joreskog and Sorbom (2006), structural parameters were set as equal across groups. This generates an estimated covariance matrix for each group and an overall chi-square value for the sets of sub-models as part of a single structural system. Parameter equality constraints were then removed to estimate paths freely and independently; this produces a second chi-square value with fewer degrees of freedom. We assessed whether statistical differences exist between the two chi-square values to test hypothesized moderator effects. For the attendee groups, the change in chi-square is significant. Therefore, one may reject the null that structural parameters are identical across attendee groups (parameter invariance). After rejecting the parameter invariance test, a series of tests determine what is responsible for unequal covariance structures (see Table 2).

--Insert Table 2 about here--

Results of Hypotheses Testing

The results support two-thirds of the study's hypotheses. This study's results demonstrate the central role that product knowledge plays on influencing two key outcome variables of sponsorship. Attendees' product knowledge is positively linked to their enhanced brand opinion of the sponsor ($H1a$) as well as to their purchase intentions to buy the sponsor's products ($H2a$). The results also provide strong evidence regarding the importance of enhanced brand opinions on purchase intentions ($H3a$). The analyses provide no evidence that plans to experience the sponsor's exhibits positively moderate the relationship between consumers' product knowledge

and the consumers' opinion of the sponsor's brand, compared to attendees who had experienced the sponsors' exhibits (*H1b*). The analyses also find non-significant evidence for *H2b*, on posited moderating relationship between product knowledge and purchase intentions; there is no difference in chi-square between attendees who anticipated but had not yet experienced the sponsors' exhibits at the race (Group 1) versus those who had already experienced the sponsors' exhibits at the race (Group 2). Yet the results reveal evidence of a significant difference in chi-square at the $p < .05$ level for planning to experience the sponsor's exhibits versus those attendees who already had experienced the sponsors' exhibits for *H3b*. Here, the multi-group comparison shows attendees' plans to experience the sponsor's exhibit positively moderates the relationship between the sponsor's enhanced brand opinion and purchase intentions of the sponsor's brands.

Discussion

This study examines the direct and moderating effects of event marketing on sponsorship effectiveness at a professional cycling event. The study focuses on explaining the relationships among consumers' product knowledge, enhanced brand opinion towards the sponsor, anticipated versus actual experience with the sponsor's exhibits, and purchase intention towards the sponsor. As previously described, the Ford exhibit was designed to attract attendees through a variety of hedonic, experiential promotion tactics.

Overall, the results support the value of integrating sponsorship and event marketing at sponsored events. The posited direct relationships among product knowledge, enhanced brand opinion, and purchase intention (*H1a*, *H2a*, and *H3a*) are confirmed. Among the anticipated moderating hypotheses (*H1b*, *H2b*, and *H3b*), the analyses find significant differences only for *H3b* on the relationship between enhanced brand opinion and purchase intentions between the group that planned to experience the exhibits (Group 1) and the group that had already

experienced the exhibits (Group 2). Contrary to the researchers' expectations, the analyses found no evidence for a moderating effect on product knowledge's respective relationships with enhanced brand opinions and purchase intentions. Instead, the results show that attendees who anticipated participating in the event marketing experience had very similar attitudes about the sponsor as those attendees who had already experienced the sponsor's exhibit area.

The aggregate results indicate that attendees' anticipated experiences with sponsored event marketing positively moderates the link between attendees' perception of the sponsors' brand and attendees' intent to purchase the sponsors' products. This finding extends previous sponsorship research (e.g., Grohs, Wagner, and Vsetecka 2004; Gwinner 1997); participants' opinion of the sponsor's brand after they experience the interactive exhibits contributes to positive attitudes toward the sponsor. The findings also suggest that the mere presence of event marketing activities in addition to sponsorship communications improves sponsorship outcomes. However, the modest differences between consumer groups suggest that the post-event marketing experience may be a function of pre-event marketing sponsor perception. Consumers holding a favorable pre-event perception of the sponsor may form more favorable attitudes toward the sponsor when anticipating their experiences with the sponsors' event marketing activities.

Explaining the Results via Affective Forecasting Theory

The study examines affect; then Affective Forecasting Theory is applicable as a way to understand the model presented here. Affective Forecasting Theory posits that, prior to doing something, such as going to a sponsor's exhibit area while at an event, consumers estimate how much they will enjoy the experience, or derive positive feelings from the interactive exhibits embedded within the event. According to the theory, attendees envision themselves having a

pleasant experience at the exhibit—receiving free promotional materials, getting a copy of their photo made with a race car, meeting the promotional models, and/or learning about forthcoming automobiles and getting to sit in them before the mass market learns of the cars. In turn, the anticipation of such pleasant feelings could alter event attendees' behavioral intentions. Research in psychology suggests that people's *predictions* about an experience often differ from their feelings during and after the actual event (Gilbert et al. 1998; Loewenstein and Schkade 1999). Some attendees of a sporting event have only *plans* to experience sponsored exhibits; (i.e., they have not visited the exhibits and might not actually visit depending on the circumstances). These attendees could envision having a good time at these event marketing exhibits. Such anticipation can help provide the basis for attendees' future memories of the sporting event.

However, many people cannot accurately anticipate how they will feel about future experiences (MacInnis, Patrick, and Park 2005). In other words, consumers are generally terrible at predicting how they will feel after future events. More specifically, consumers often cannot predict how much pleasure (or displeasure) events in the future will bring. Consumers tend to overestimate the intensity and duration of future emotional reactions (Wilson and Gilbert 2005). Scholars use the term *impact bias* to describe consumers' tendency to overestimate the impact of emotion (Van Dijk 2009). Impact bias may exist even if the consumer has knowledge of what the future event will entail (Wilson and Gilbert 2005). A cause of the impact bias is focalism—the tendency to overestimate how much he or she will think about the event in the future and to underestimate how other events will influence thoughts or feelings (Wilson and Gilbert 2003). Another reason that consumers are generally inaccurate at predicting how they will feel after future events is presentism. Presentism is a consumer's powerful tendency to overestimate the impact that their future event experience will resemble their imagined experience of the event

(Pychyl 2009). There is an atemporality to consumer thoughts, which leads to a bias towards emotional presentism (Pychyl 2009).

When attendees anticipate how the various event marketing exhibits will make them feel, they often focus too much attention on just one facet of well-being—for instance getting their photo made with the promotional model in the newest hybrid car. Yet such strong affective responses to an event experience inhibit the ability to process cues that are incongruent with that feeling (Wilson and Gilbert 2003). For instance, the positive affective forecasts of receiving a souvenir photo damper any negative cues such as having to wait in line. As another example, an attendee may foresee positive feelings about being among the first to experience a new type of automobile and getting a free photograph for a lasting memory of their experience. In turn, attendees may attribute their anticipated positive feelings to the sponsor, which could backfire if the excitement is not actualized.

Contributions, Implications, and Future Research

Contributions to Affective Forecasting Theory

Building on affective forecasting theory, evidence suggests that event attendees expect that the sponsors' event marketing activities will provide them with utility (i.e., value). Event attendees may obtain different types of utility: predicted, experienced, or remembered. Scholars associate each type with hedonic experiences. Predicted utility is a measure of personal beliefs about how much one will enjoy an event in the future (Kahneman and Snell 1992). Experienced utility is a satisfaction measure during or right after an event. Last, remembered utility is how a person recalls the experience well after the event (Kahneman and Snell 1992).

Illustrating the role of affective forecasting on sponsored events, the findings produce

modest differences between attendees who had experienced the sponsor's event marketing activities and event attendees who had not yet experienced the activities but planned to do so. The results show the importance of predicted utility; attendees expect that the event marketing activities and promotions will provide them with utility—even if they had not yet attained the utility.

Following affective forecasting theory, an explanation for the study's mixed empirical moderating results is impact bias. That is, event attendees are likely to focus on one facet-of their well-being. Likewise, they may be less able to process other potential factors that are incongruent with their affective forecast. They may not care to think about the lines, crowding, feeling rushed, or being either under- or overwhelmed with information beforehand as it conflicts with the happier affective forecasts associated with deriving utility from experiencing the exhibits.

Implications to Sponsors and Event Marketers

These findings contribute to the dialogue on sponsorship effectiveness and consumer theory by considering event attendees, the role of affect, and contribution of event marketing to sponsors. The current study provides an empirical analysis of the complementary, and, at times, synergistic, nature of sponsorship and event marketing. Further, this marks the first study, to our knowledge, to investigate the influence of ancillary event marketing (e.g., exhibits within the sponsored event) on sponsorship of a larger event.

The sponsor stands to benefit when targeted consumers interact with the sponsor's brands and representatives through event marketing. Many of the largest and best-known companies, not only Ford, but Anheuser-Busch, AT&T, General Motors, Coca-Cola, PepsiCo, and Nike

annually invest hundreds of millions of dollars into sponsoring a wide gamut of sporting, social, and cultural events. Understanding consumers' experiences about visiting sponsor exhibits while at events is important for both scholarship and practice. To improve the consumer experience at sponsored events, as well as sponsorship performance, organizations should activate sponsorship with other marketing communication tools to enhance affect before, during, and after the event. Thus, hosting exhibits at an event alone is not enough to activate fully an event sponsorship.

Sponsor exhibits provide channels for active information exchange. Therefore, companies considering sponsorship and event marketing activities can use exhibits and model demonstrations as an opportunity to give some experience to event attendees who have not owned or used the sponsor's products. Moreover, depending on the nature of the backdrop of the event marketing activity, the authors suggest that attendees who choose to visit a sponsor's exhibits may be more interested in increasing their base of product knowledge as opposed to using the exhibits as entertainment.

Limitations and Future Research Opportunities

This study focused on consumers' *plans to experience* event-marketing activities. Future researchers are encouraged to further distinguish among attendees who "experienced but did not plan to" and "experienced and did plan to". This added category would provide greater insights to the role of affect on sponsor's event marketing activities. Another opportunity to extend this work would be to measure consumers' general attitudes toward the title sponsor and their perceived fit between the brand and the event. The issue of congruent fit plays a role in the effectiveness of sponsorships and event marketing (Roy and Cornwell 2004). If the connection between an event sponsor and the event (automobiles and cycling) is not completely obvious to all attendees, event sponsors should clarify the connections between their products and the event

(Cornwell et al. 2006). For instance, Waffle House, a sponsor of the TDG, provided waffle vouchers to the cyclists and sports enthusiasts as a way to “load” carbohydrates before their workouts. By priming consumers with such a cue, attendees are better able to make a positive link between the sponsor and the event (Cornwell et al. 2006).

In future studies, scholars should capture both pre-event and post-event behavioral intentions for all consumers in the sample. This would allow researchers to further refine their understanding of the effects of event marketing. A further limitation (and respective opportunity for scholars) is that this research focuses on one sponsor in a high-involvement product category (automobiles). Future research could examine the role of affect in contexts with multiple sponsors spanning high/medium and/or low involvement products or see if the findings are any different when the title sponsor is a service provider versus a product manufacturer.

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Table 1
Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations

Constructs	Mean	SD	(1)	(2)	(3)
Overall Sample (n=1,089)					
(1) Product Knowledge	3.52	0.96	1.0		
(2) Enhanced Brand Opinion	3.55	1.23	.26	1.0	
(3) Purchase Intentions	3.24	1.32	.28	.53	1.0
Group 1 (n=659)					
(1) Product Knowledge	3.49	0.95	1.0		
(2) Enhanced Brand Opinion	3.49	1.22	.31	1.0	
(3) Purchase Intentions	3.17	1.32	.33	.57	1.0
Group 2 (n=430)					
(1) Product Knowledge	3.57	0.98	1.0		
(2) Enhanced Brand Opinion	3.63	1.24	.28	1.0	
(3) Purchase Intentions	3.36	1.32	.23	.56	1.0

(Group1): Attendees who planned to experience the sponsor's exhibits

(Group 2): Attendees who experienced the sponsor's exhibits

Table 2
Multigroup Chi-square Difference Test Results

Equality constraint $\chi^2_{(20)} = 53.42$	$\chi^2_{(21)}$	$\Delta\chi^2$
<i>H1b</i> : Product Knowledge → Enhanced Brand Opinion	53.46	.04
<i>H2b</i> : Product Knowledge → Purchase Intentions	53.48	.06
<i>H3b</i> : Enhanced Brand Opinion → Purchase Intentions	58.87	5.45*

1 df comparison: * ($p < .05$)

Figure 1
Hypothesized Event Marketing Experience Model

