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ARTICLE

Feeling That In-Group Feeling at a Sponsored Sporting Event: Links to Memory and Future Attendance

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Sports, the arts, and events are products in their own right, and when sponsored, they become marketing and communication platforms. The current research examines the role of event emotions on sponsor recall and intent to attend the event in the future. An important theoretical argument is that feeling to be part of an in-group, measured as in-group entitativity, moderates the relationship between emotions and outcomes of memory and intentions. To test our theoretical model, we surveyed attendees at a multiday international track and field event. A total of 282 individuals were surveyed, and 232 of these attendees qualified as audience members and were included in the analysis. Moderated regression analyses revealed that excitement, joy, boredom, and overall tone of the group atmosphere impact event outcomes for the sport and the sponsor, and furthermore, that in-group entitativity can function as an important moderator. Contributions to theory and practice are discussed.

Keywords: awareness, emotions, in-group entitativity, marketing, repatronage, sponsorship

Sponsored sports, events, and activities are social experience offerings as products but are also prized as marketing platforms because they deliver emotional engagement (Close, Finney, Lacey, & Sneath, 2006; Hansen, Halling, & Christensen, 2006). Furthermore, passion for sport teams is associated with sponsor benefits such as purchase intention for a sponsor's products (Madrigal, 2000; Smith, Graetz, & Westerbeek, 2008). Studies have also shown that event emotions influence event-related evaluations and attitudes toward sponsors (Chakraborti & Roy, 2013; Lee, Lee, Lee, & Babin, 2008).

Sponsorship studies often fail, however, to consider outcomes for both the sport and the sponsor (with some exceptions; Woisetschläger, Backhaus, & Cornwell, 2017). Furthermore, the influence of emotions on recall for sponsors still remains unresearched despite an established relationship in psychology between emotions and memory, as well as calls for research on memory in marketing (Bagozzi, Gopinath, & Nyer, 1999). Thus, the current research considers event emotions and the role of these emotions on sponsor recall, as well as intent to participate in the sporting event in the future. Importantly, this work differs from past research in also examining the role of in-group entitativity (Gaertner & Schopler, 1998) that arises at an event. In-group feelings are posited as an important moderator of downstream effects of emotions in a social group context such as a sporting event.

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Theoretical Background

In-Event Activities and Emotions

Singular events such as an opera or a basketball game are naturally the centerpiece for event-relevant emotions to arise and to culminate in the closing act or the final score. In multiday events, emotions may ebb and flow according to the many in-event activities both arising and staged. Event hosts and sponsors have been discussed in the sport context (Bal, Quester, & Plewa, 2009) as organizing activities with the objective to engage participants in either sports-related emotions (e.g., player performance); nonsports-related emotions (e.g., on-site marketing activities); interpersonal emotions (e.g., social exchanges with others); as well as emotions related to event-organized activities. Sponsor-managed activities at an event are discussed as sponsorship activation, or activities that encourage interaction and engagement with the brand (Weeks, Cornwell, & Drennan, 2008). In experimental work, event activations have been shown to support sponsor brand attitudes (Carrillat, d'Astous, & Couture, 2015; Weeks et al., 2008), and in managerial work, activation is argued to be associated with gaining competitive advantage (Papadimitriou & Apostolopoulou, 2009). The extent to which an in-event activity elicits an emotional response depends on myriad characteristics

but that they may bring forward emotions, positive or negative, is important strategically and interesting theoretically in terms of their influence on event outcomes.

In addition to activities staged by the event host or sponsor, individuals may seek or serendipitously find opportunities that have the potential to elicit event-relevant emotions. Individuals may, for example, dine at a restaurant where other participants may dine before the event and initiate group-relevant interactions before attending the event. Event attendees may seek to meet actors, players, or others involved in event production and in this way foster the interpersonal emotions discussed by Bal et al. (2009). Thus, for events of some duration (ones that do not culminate in a few hours such as a single game), in-event activities staged or arising, that punctuate multiday events, are expected to be associated with positive and negative emotions.

This brings us to a discussion of particular emotions and their valence. Richins (1997) reviewed emotion measures relevant to consumption experiences. One concluding point of her extensive examination of emotions across six studies was that for any consumption experience, there would be particular emotions that are relevant and ones that are irrelevant. For example, advertising relevant emotion measures such as feeling suspicious, or uninvolved, was not reported relative to consumption experiences in her work. Based on the event context of study here, five emotions—boredom, discontent, excitement, joy, and pride (Richins, 1997)—are identified as relevant. In the following, we will briefly define the emotions used in this study. *Boredom* can be described as feelings of restlessness related to lack of interest or excitement. Boredom has been discussed as related to (decreased) arousal, feelings of constraint, a subjective sense of repetitiveness, and potentially unpleasantness (see Geiwitz, 1966). Perhaps one of the most helpful definitional discussions of boredom comes from research in game play where boredom is described as an emotional state of "negative calm" (Chanel, Rebetez, Bétrancourt, & Pun, 2008). Attending an event, in particular, a sporting competition with many individual and team events, could produce negatively valenced boredom, even for those decidedly interested in the activity. Thus, across a range of interest levels, boredom could be interpreted as a negative emotion (Lee et al., 2008).

Discontent, or the longing for a better situation, results from feeling unfulfilled (Richins, 1997). Importantly, feeling discontent could arise at an event from things going badly or from things going less well than expected. From an expectation disconfirmation theory perspective, discontent could arise from any aspect of a bundled experience to influence overall perceptions of satisfaction (James, 2009).

Excitement is easily argued as relevant to events, in fact to experience excitement is one of the central motivations to attend sport events (Funk, Filo, Beaton, & Pritchard, 2009). Accordingly, it has been used in previous research on event emotions and their impact on behavioral intentions (Lee et al., 2008). The feeling of *joy* arising from success or well-being is also easily associated with events and works in tandem with feelings of excitement but is distinctive from it. Whereas excitement could be described as an escalating emotion, joy is a harmonious emotion. Both excitement and joy are positively valenced.

Pride has been described as "feeling good about oneself" (Russell, 2003, p. 148), but pride can also exist at the group level (Smith, Seger, & Mackie, 2007) and even be about someone else (e.g., being proud of an athlete). Hence, pride is an emotion likely to emerge during multiday sporting events (Chang, Kang, Ko, & Connaughton, 2017; Decrop & Derbaix, 2010).

Group atmosphere: Beyond these particular discrete emotions, we consider an additional group-level emotion, group atmosphere, as an additional measure as it captures the overall feeling generated by others at the event. Research has established that groups can be emotional entities, and collective emotion in groups is distinctive in nature and powerful in shaping group behaviors (Barsade & Gibson, 1998; Bartel & Saavedra, 2000; Kelly & Barsade, 2001). Group emotion is an elusive feeling arising from group dynamics and social interactions, encompassing multilevel affect such as moods, acute emotions, or dispositional affect (Barsade & Gibson, 1998; Druskat & Wolff, 2001). For example, groups can produce emotional forces that are more extreme than emotional tendencies of individuals such as the psychological effects of crowds (McDougall, 1920). In other cases, group emotion can be less intense but a general level of positive or negative mood (Nowlis, 1965; Watson & Clark, 1984), and group atmosphere is discussed here as just such a group-level emotion (Smith et al., 2007). Research shows that group atmosphere is a shared emotion and can influence perception and cognition of individuals in groups (Druskat & Wolff, 2001; Lewin, 1945).

Group atmosphere, hereafter called *atmosphere* for short, and hereafter treated similarly to the other emotions examined, is more precisely a measure of an individual's perception of the pervading group emotion and is captured here as the overall feeling generated by others at the event. A multiday event is made of activities and venues but does not come to life without attendees, and their interactions and atmosphere grow out of such social interactions (Kemper, 1978). Similar to discussions of "servicescape" (Bitner, 1992), a centerpiece of the event is the interactions of employees (in this case, often volunteers) and the consumers (here audience members), as well as between customers. Atmosphere is not an individual's singular emotion but rather an overarching and shared group feeling experienced at the event. We group it with emotions as a concise variable to capture event valence (Uhrich & Benkenstein, 2010).

Event Emotions and Their Influence on Sponsor Memory and Future Attendance

Sponsor awareness (e.g., sponsor recall) following an event has been one measure of success for events (Cornwell, 2008; Quester, 1997). Likewise, another important measure of event success is the intent to attend the event in the future (Lee et al., 2008). While not a direct measure of satisfaction, intent to attend in the future does suggest that the event met participant expectations. Moreover, future attendance is not only a goal of the sport event but also an important sponsorship-related goal, in that repeat attendance has been shown to enhance attitudes toward the sponsor and the likelihood of purchasing the sponsor's products (Lacey, Sneath, Finney, & Close, 2007).

Across studies in psychology (for a review of memory and emotion, see Levine & Pizzaro, 2004), emotions have been shown to enhance memory for information that is thought to be central to an event and to impair memory for peripheral information (Levine & Edelstein, 2009). The relationship between emotion and memory has been studied extensively in the context of eyewitness testimony (e.g., Kaplan, Van Damme, Levine, & Loftus, 2016) with the general conclusion that emotion can both support and impair memory. The propensity of emotion to capture attention, and thus prioritize processing, leads to better encoding and enhanced memory (Dolcos & Denkova, 2014) and can influence decision making (Brosch, Scherer, Grandjean, & Sander, 2013). Both positive

and negative emotional stimuli have the potential to influence memory (Chipchase & Chapman, 2013), but mixed emotions (e.g., bitter–sweet) appear to follow a distinct pattern that may not be as supportive of memory (Aaker, Drolet, & Griffin, 2008). Important, however, is the idea of what information is central, and what information results in enhanced memory, and what is peripheral, and thus potentially forgotten or not encoded, is debated.

There is converging evidence to suggest that emotion enhances memory for information that is relevant to currently active goals (Levine & Edelstein, 2009). Considering that most people at a sports, arts, or entertainment event would have the goal of attending and being an audience member for some if not all activities on offer during the event; it seems that in the most basic sense, event attendance would be goal directed, and therefore, emotions experienced could be memory enhancing. Emotions related to goal-directed interests should also influence the intention to experience the event again (Freitas & Higgins, 2002; Jones, Reynolds, & Arnold, 2006). In support of this notion, there is empirical evidence that positive emotions increase festival loyalty (Lee et al., 2008).

Although it seems straightforward to assume positive effects of positive emotions on future attendance (and negative effects from negative emotions; Lee et al., 2008), the relationship between event emotions and sponsor awareness is more difficult to predict. Although both positive and negative emotions can support memory (Chipchase & Chapman, 2013) and attendance, the outcomes might differ for individuals, and might differ for particular emotions. For example, excitement holds the double-edged sword relative to memory of being potentially supporting but also distracting due to the relation it holds with arousal. Individuals swept up in the excitement of an event may not attend to information about sponsors. Boredom, like excitement is a two-sided variable. Unabated, it could lead to feelings of unhappiness and discontent. Boredom might also serve as a motivating emotion for exploration and learning. In this case, those participants, who become bored, focus their attention on noncompetition information. One consequence of this, for example, would be to read the event booklet, banners, or perimeters, or think about sponsor-related information in other ways. Hence, their sponsor awareness actually might be enhanced as a result of prior boredom. Alternatively, boredom might decrease event participants' overall awareness, including that toward sponsors.

In absence of any clear suggestions from previous research, we argue that at events with positive valence (such as many sporting events), experiencing positively valenced emotions (i.e., joy, excitement, pride, and group atmosphere) contributes to enhanced memory and behavioral intention, whereas experiencing negatively valenced emotions (i.e., boredom and discontent) impairs memory and reduces behavioral intention. Although excitement and boredom could also work in both directions, we expect the net effects to be positive and negative, respectively. Hence, we formulate our hypotheses as follows.

H1: Event emotions, according to their valence, positively (negatively) impact sponsor awareness.

H2: Event emotions, according to their valence, positively (negatively) impact future attendance.

In-Group Entitativity as a Moderator

Emotions stemming from event activities are experienced, for the most part, in a group context. Competitions and performances speak to audiences with developing or developed group identification; furthermore, organizational structures often support this identification through booster clubs and patron groups. Social identity theory is clear regarding the important role that group memberships play in defining self (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Group memberships are key in the definition of self and of others. Furthermore, self-categorization theory suggests that group membership influences social behavior and is important to the psychology of crowds that form around issues (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). While this work was developed to understand crowd behavior, it speaks to how individuals can acquire the feeling of being a part of a group in an audience setting, and how they shift from feelings of being an individual to feeling part of a group (Stieler & Germelmann, 2016). Attendees at an event are not necessarily from a previously established group where individuals know each other. Nonetheless, they share an interest that brings them together at an event where they may shift into the feeling of membership in a salient group. For example, for a game between rival college teams, supporters for each team might come from current students, alumni, and community members but may align quickly into "us" and "them" at the game.

Coming together as a group based on a shared interest is reflected in ideas such as brand communities (McAlexander, Schouten, & Koenig, 2002) where the shared interest is oriented to a product owned by each member. Still brand communities and their orientation to a product do not align perfectly in terms of theory with loosely collected groups such as those found at an event. How is it that individuals coming together might experience a sense of group without being in a formalized group via membership or ownership?

Carlson, Suter, and Brown (2008) take a somewhat different track in considering brand communities. They argue that a sense of brand community is psychological in nature. This work applied the established "psychological sense of community" concept to the branding context and proved it useful in understanding online communities. Introduced originally by Sarason (1974) to the community psychology literature, psychological sense of community was described as "the perception of similarity with others, an acknowledged interdependence with others, a willingness to maintain this interdependence by giving to or doing for others what one expects from them, the feeling that one is part of a larger dependable and stable structure" (p. 157).

The idea that a sense of community can be psychological, frees one from the typical requirements of group membership, regular social interactions, an established tenure with the group, or product ownership that are often discussed in brand communities. The concept of a psychological sense of community has already been shown to be useful in explaining how participants come to feel a sense of community at a music festival. Jahn, Drengner, Gaus, and Cornwell (2011) and Drengner, Jahn, and Gaus (2012) found that feelings of community measured as a psychological sense of community were more important to future attendance than was overall satisfaction with a music event. This work on psychological communities also responds to arguments that brand communities can be "imagined" (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001), or in the case of events, could be the "feeling" of being part of a group on the spot, so to speak. This feeling of being part of an in-group that might establish quickly is where the concept of in-group entitativity is appropriate.

In-group entitativity is theoretically useful to describe the perception of a group and the sense of one's own membership in it (Gaertner & Schopler, 1998). In-group entitativity as described

by Gaertner and Schopler (1998) is a respecification of Campbell's (1958) conceptualization of the same term, where Campbell was concerned with the viewpoint of others seeing a group as group-like; Gaertner and Schopler are further concerned with the viewpoint of the individual, and this begets individual awareness (and measurement) of one's perception of being part of an in-group. In-group entitativity as a construct is argued here to be more spontaneous in arising than a psychological sense of community but yet to afford a sense of community—if only for a short duration. The construct of in-group entitativity also suggests that there may be individuals who may perceive a group but may not feel a part of it. Thus, at a social event, it can be expected that there will be those who are high or low in terms of in-group entitativity.

Van Kleef (2009, p. 184) argues "emotional expressions affect observers' behavior by triggering inferential process and/or affective reactions within them." When emotions arise at an event, we argue that the ways in which they influence outcomes of the event depend on group membership perceptions. Research has shown that when people judge an entitative group, they elaborate more on the available evidence (McConnell, Sherman, & Hamilton, 1997) and tend to engage in evaluation of the information as they receive it (Srull, Lichtenstein, & Rothbart, 1985; Srull & Wyer, 1989). We conclude that perceiving high in-group entitativity would imply that emotional information is used more strongly as a basis for downstream effects, including memory and willingness to attend again. For example, when an event activity is exciting, an individual might feel comfortable to talk with others about their experience if they hold the perception that an in-group exists and that they are part of it. Their excitement combined with their in-group feeling may make them want to attend the event the next time it is held, even though these particular individuals that they feel a tie to now may not be the particular individuals that attend in the future. They might get to know each other or even make contact with individuals following the event (as has been shown to be the case in brand communities, see McAlexander et al., 2002). In contrast, the individual experiencing excitement but not feeling that they have ties and connections to other attendees, may enjoy the event but not want to attend in the future as this feeling of excitement about activities may not have been shared with others. Similarly, the potentially negative effect of boredom on sponsor awareness could further amplify when in-group entitativity is perceived as low. Conversely, high excitement paired with high in-group entitativity may have a particularly positive effect on sponsor awareness. This argument suggests that in-group entitativity will be important in determining downstream behavior such as sponsor recall and behavioral intentions such as future attendance and that the emotion pathways for each group may differ.

H3: The effects of event emotions will be amplified by in-group entitativity.

Summarizing the previous discussion, we propose that the emotional response to various aspects of a large, multiday event should afford more learning about event sponsors, and if positive, build a greater appreciation for the event and increase the likelihood of future attendance. Furthermore, social events, such as sporting competitions, are group-relevant events associated with emotions. The argument here is that if emotions arise, related behaviors, attitudes, and experiences depend in part on if one feels to be part of an in-group. One's perceived in-group entitativity is thus argued to moderate the influence of event emotions on memory and intentions as outlined in Figure 1.

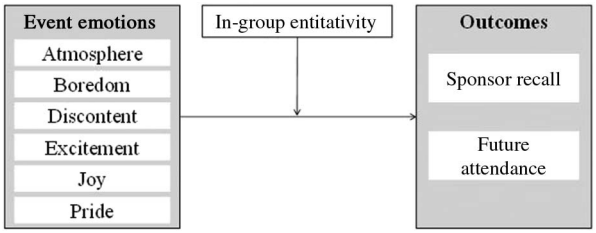

Figure 1 — Conceptual model of the role of event emotions and in-group entitativity on event outcomes.

Research Design

Data Collection

We conducted a survey at a biannual international track and field event held on the West Coast of the United States. At the 6-day event, athletes from 175 countries contested in 44 athletics events. The total attendance over 6 days of competition exceeded 50,000. This type of event was selected with the expectation that there would be considerable variance in the feeling of in-group entitativity.

The gated venue consisted of a track oval with covered stadium seating, as well as several large fields for competitive events and food service. A market street area held sponsor and nonsponsor vendor booths as well as food concessions. Many of the sponsors offered engagement activities based on luck or skill and sold branded merchandise. The event organizers also engaged attendees with giveaways such as country flags. This area was central for information, programs, and as a crossroad to reach other sections of the grounds. Outside the grounds within walking distance were a number of shops as well as several pop-up retail vendors. One of these was a direct competitor to the athletic apparel sponsor of the event, and another was also offering sports-related products.

Data collection was undertaken on the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth day of the 6-day event. The reasoning for beginning data collection on the third day was to allow attendees the opportunity to have some experience with the event before being surveyed. There were, however, individuals who did not attend early event days, attended only 1 day, or arrived late on any given day. Surveys were collected from a central location where students volunteered in data collection after a short training. Event attendees were approached and asked if they were willing to participate in a survey about their event experience. One research leader was present during all data collection times during the 4 days. Interviewers approached potential respondents with a clipboard and wore an identification badge when inviting participation.

Information on refusal rates was collected on the second and last day of the data collection period. Out of a subset of 100 requests, 57 agreed to participate. Of those refusing, the primary reasons were that they had just arrived or that they were on their way to the start of an event. Voluntary return to participate in the survey was high but also difficult to calculate. Thus, the 43% refusal rate from this estimate is overstated.

Measures

Event emotions. As mentioned, a host of emotions, such as shame, envy, love, and guilt, might arise for any individual, but

the goal was to consider emotions that would be related to event activities and experiences. Based on Richins (1997), emotions were measured by asking the extent to which participants agreed or disagreed with the statement "During the events I have been (1) bored, (2) excited, (3), joyful, (4) proud, and (5) unfulfilled." It should be noted that being unfulfilled results in the emotion labeled "discontent" and was utilized in keeping with past work on emotions. Participants utilized a 7-point scale ranging from *totally agree* to *totally disagree*, but we recoded values such that "7" equals high boredom, excitement, and so forth. Using the same scale to capture an overall sense of the emotional tone developed at the event relative to other attendees, we also asked individuals to respond to the statement "Compared to other events, other attendees at this event create a great atmosphere." Although there are many possible approaches to emotion measurement, including observation (for a review, see Wiles & Cornwell, 1991), self-report was deemed most appropriate.

Event goals. So not to exclude any possible study participant, and not to ask what might seem an obvious question, rather than ask directly about an individual's goal for attending, an indirect self-selection question was utilized. Thus, the primary goal of the individual was captured from response to the following question "During this [event] I would be best described as:" with one of the following answer alternatives: athlete/coach, family/close friend of participant, organizer/volunteer, audience member, and corporate sponsor. Volunteers give time in order to see part of the event, and likewise, family and friends of participants are attending to view the event and thus are grouped with those indicating "audience members" as having the goal of watching the event and participating in event-related activities. Athletes and coaches as well as corporate sponsors were excluded from the analysis given that their goal for being at the event was to participate not to attend as an audience member.

In-group entitativity. The in-group entitativity measure was based on Carlson et al.'s (2008) psychological sense of brand community scale. We also considered Lickel et al.'s (2000) examination of a variety of groups that hold some perception of group entitativity. This work suggests that loosely aligned individuals, such as those attending a movie, would not feel a sense of group entitativity. In contrast, the loosely aligned group at a sporting event may come together for a shared interest, as when seeing a movie, but unlike in a movie, participants at a sport event have the opportunity to interact. Thus, as Carlson et al.'s (2008) approach, in measuring the psychological sense of brand community in an online community was adapted in this context to measure perception of connectedness between the self and others. Similar to the work of Drengner et al. (2012), the adapted scale focuses on occasion-relevant entitativity by linking perceived connectedness to the event itself and other attendees. The latter scale has been successfully applied in the sport context (Stieler & Germelmann, 2016). The three items include "Here at the [event], I feel a sense of being connected to other attendees." "I feel strong ties to other attendees at this event." "Attending the [event] gives me a sense of community." Respondents indicated their response to these three statements on a 7-point scale (anchored with the terms *totally agree* and *totally disagree*). A Cronbach's alpha of .88 indicates high reliability of the scale.

Sponsor awareness and future attendance (dependent variables). Sponsorship awareness and future attendance are decidedly different outcome variables, and the approach to measurement is important. There are issues with the use of recognition measures in sponsorship research because prominent- and high-fit brands tend to influence response (Cornwell, Weeks, & Roy, 2005). High-equity brands and those with a strong functional or image-based relationship to an event are often chosen when foils (false but plausible response alternatives) are included in recognition studies (Cornwell & Humphreys, 2013). This results in high false positives and a limited understanding of memory quality. On the other hand, free recall is considered a high hurdle in memory for sponsorship relationships (see Cornwell & Humphreys, 2013). For a track event, many athletic apparel and shoe brands have these sorts of equity and fit relationships; therefore, a recall measure was favored over a recognition measure. In order to capture sponsor awareness, a free-recall measure asked participants "During this event, the sponsoring partner most associated with the event was:" and the participant was required to write in the sponsor name that came to mind. This item was scored correct (1) for any true sponsor of the event and incorrect (0) for any nonsponsor. Many study participants responded with several sponsors, and each was scored in the same way.

Future attendance was captured by asking participants "to what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statement regarding your future behavior?" The statement was "I hope to attend [event name] in the future." The response scale had 7 points and was anchored with *totally agree* and *totally disagree*. (As with the other measures, values were recoded such that "7" corresponds to high behavioral intentions.) This wording was chosen because the event is international and to ask participants if they plan to attend would be difficult to answer. Demographic information requested from participants included age and gender identification; place of residence; participation in special event attractions (e.g., opening ceremony) and the number of times that they had attended this event previously.

Data Analysis

We assess our hypotheses using hierarchical (logistic) regression analysis (Aiken & West, 1991) to test different models. Model 1 considers the direct effects of the six event emotion types on sponsor recall and future attendance, respectively. Model 2 additionally considers interactions with in-group entitativity. Model 3 is a revised model that does not consider nonsignificant interactions. To further assess the robustness of these results, Model 4 additionally considers gender, participation in event attractions, and prior attendance as covariates. Gender was included as a covariate given established differences in emotional response (e.g., Kring & Gordon, 1998) and memory response (Canli, Desmond, Zhao, & Gabrieli, 2002) between men and women for emotional stimuli. We further controlled for attendees' participation in at least one of several event attractions, such as the opening ceremony or the street market. At these occasions, attendees might have had additional exposure to sponsors. In a similar manner, prior attendance at a reoccurring event could result in established memory networks and is therefore also controlled.

To examine the nature of the interactions between event emotions and in-group entitativity, we utilize spotlight analysis using PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2013). A spotlight (or simple slope) analysis allows us to examine the respective emotion slopes at different levels of in-group entitativity (Irwin & McClelland, 2001; Spiller, Fitzsimons, Lynch, & McClelland, 2013). The PROCESS macro for SPSS assists this examination. Specifically, it provides the simple slopes along with significance tests. Moreover, it directly generates data to plot the interactions.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

The objective was to survey people attending the event, not participants or organizers. A total of 282 surveys were collected. Of those surveys, 237 were audience members for the event (not athletes, coaches, or corporate sponsors according to self-report) and were retained in the analysis. The exclusion of five incomplete questionnaires resulted in a final sample of 232 visitors with a mean age of 45.1 ($SD = 16.06$) years. Fifty-five percent of the respondents were female.

The goal of the following analysis is to assess if event emotions improved sponsor awareness and increased future attendance intentions. Before we test the hypotheses with multiple regression analysis, we first consider means and correlations. The descriptive statistics and correlations of the model variables are shown in Table 1. As can be seen from this table, event participation led to intense emotional response in terms of group atmosphere, excitement, joy, and pride. Moreover, the negative emotion of discontent as well as the low-arousal emotion boredom was rather uncommon, although participants showed some variation in this regard (both SDs > 1.45). In terms of correlations, only excitement had a significant bivariate correlation with sponsor recall, whereas atmosphere, boredom, and pride were significantly linked with future attendance.

Sponsor Recall

Because regression parameter estimation will be biased in the event of substantial multicollinearity between the independent variables, we assessed the variation inflation index values. All variation inflation index values are below 2.5. Given the critical variation inflation index, threshold is 10 (the conservative threshold is 5), multicollinearity does not appear to be an issue. A summary of results is displayed in Table 2. As can be seen from this table, event atmosphere (negatively) and excitement (positively) predict the likelihood of correctly recalling a sponsor (Model 1). Moreover, boredom and excitement significantly interact with in-group entitativity (Model 2). In the revised model (Model 3), atmosphere, excitement, and in-group entitativity exert significant direct effects on sponsor recall, and the interactions between in-group entitativity and boredom as well as excitement remain significant. The effects remain after controlling for gender, participation in event attractions, and prior attendance (Model 4).

We examine the nature of the interactions with spotlight analysis using PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2013). This analysis reveals that the effect of boredom on sponsor recall is negative and significant at low levels of in-group entitativity ($b = -0.30$, $p = .048$ at 1 SD below the in-group entitativity mean) and nonsignificant at high levels of in-group entitativity ($b = 0.13$, $p = .462$ at 1 SD above the mean). The effect is depicted in the upper panel of Figure 2. This figure reveals that sponsor recall was highest when in-group entitativity and boredom were both either low or high. When attendees did not perceive in-group entitativity and were bored during the events, they apparently paid less attention to sponsors.

We repeat the spotlight analysis for the interaction between in-group entitativity and excitement. This analysis reveals that the effect of excitement on sponsor recall is nonsignificant at low levels of in-group entitativity ($b = 0.09$, $p = .689$ at 1 SD below the in-group entitativity mean) and positive and significant at high levels of in-group entitativity ($b = 0.65$, $p = .010$ at 1 SD above the mean). The effect is depicted in the lower panel of Figure 2. We can see from this figure that sponsor recall was medium when in-group entitativity was low, regardless the degree of excitement. However, excitement led to high recall when attendees perceived high in-group entitativity.

Future Attendance

A summary of results is displayed in Table 2. As can be seen from this table, event atmosphere (positively) and boredom (negatively) predict future attendance intentions (Model 1). Moreover, atmosphere significantly interacts with in-group entitativity (Model 2). The interactions between in-group entitativity and discontent as well as joy are marginally significant ($p < .10$). In the revised model (Model 3), boredom exerts a significant direct effect on future attendance, the interaction between atmosphere and in-group entitativity remains significant, and the interaction between joy and in-group entitativity becomes significant at $p < .05$. The pattern of results remains when controlling for gender, participation in event attractions, and prior attendance (Model 4).

We examine the nature of the interaction with spotlight analysis using PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2013). This analysis reveals that the effect of atmosphere on future attendance is positive and significant at low levels of in-group entitativity ($b = 0.18$, $p = .045$ at 1 SD below the in-group entitativity mean) and nonsignificant at high levels of in-group entitativity ($b = -0.08$, $p = .497$ at 1 SD above the mean). The effect is depicted in Figure 3. This figure reveals that future attendance was highest when

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

			Correlations							
	Mean	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Sponsor recall	0.47	0.50								
2. Future attendance	6.28	1.24	–.02*							
3. Atmosphere	6.13	1.06	–.12*	.26						
4. Boredom	2.12	1.47	–.03*	–.23	–.41					
5. Discontent	1.89	1.46	–.01*	–.09*	–.17	.47				
6. Excitement	6.06	1.22	.14	.05*	.22	–.18	–.36			
7. Joy	6.02	1.23	.06*	.10*	.19	–.21	–.46	.55		
8. Pride	6.02	1.32	.03*	.14	.17	–.15	–.39	.50	.71	
9. In-group entitativity	5.67	1.13	.01*	.39	.44	–.32	–.20	.18	.37	.36

Note. All correlations are significant at $p < .05$, except where noted: *$p > .05$, nonsignificant.

Table 2 Regression Analysis Results

	Sponsor Recall								Future Attendance							
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	b	*SE*	*b*	*SE*	*b*	*SE*	*b*	*SE*	*b*	*SE*	*b*	*SE*	*b*	*SE*	*b*	*SE*
Independent variable																
Intercept	0.17	1.311	0.04	1.651	–0.10	1.628	–0.46	1.723	**4.79**	0.724	**6.13**	0.769	**6.14**	0.767	**6.15**	0.813
Atmosphere	**–0.38**	0.150	**–0.49**	0.194	**–0.49**	0.178	**–0.48**	0.178	**0.23**	0.082	0.01	0.089	0.02	0.088	0.03	0.088
Boredom	–0.14	0.115	–0.08	0.128	–0.08	0.125	–0.08	0.126	**–0.16**	0.065	**–0.15**	0.065	**–0.14**	0.064	**–0.15**	0.064
Discontent	0.11	0.123	0.11	0.135	0.11	0.129	0.11	0.130	0.06	0.068	0.10	0.069	0.09	0.057	0.09	0.068
Excitement	**0.39**	0.165	**0.51**	0.211	**0.49**	0.203	**0.47**	0.204	–0.05	0.079	0.02	0.082	–0.00	0.076	0.01	0.076
Joy	0.04	0.173	0.05	0.195	0.04	0.187	0.04	0.188	–0.04	0.097	–0.06	0.099	–0.07	0.096	–0.07	0.096
Pride	–0.08	0.150	–0.09	0.172	–0.05	0.161	–0.04	0.162	0.15*	0.085	0.08	0.089	0.10	0.083	0.08	0.068
In-group entitativity			–2.69*	1.575	**–3.37**	1.272	**–3.39**	1.282			0.44	0.716	–0.03	0.588	0.00	0.588
Atmosphere × In-group entitativity			–0.06	0.148							**–0.14**	0.068	**–0.11**	0.058	**–0.11**	0.056
Boredom × In-group entitativity			**0.28**	0.133	**0.30**	0.111	**0.30**	0.112			–0.06	0.061				
Discontent × In-group entitativity			–0.04	0.120							0.10*	0.059	0.09	0.057	0.08	0.057
Excitement × In-group entitativity			**0.55**	0.237	**0.45**	0.179	**0.46**	0.180			–0.05	0.076				
Joy × In-group entitativity			–0.03	0.206							0.17*	0.094	**0.14**	0.070	**0.14**	0.070
Pride × In-group entitativity			–0.12	0.152							–0.00	0.076				
Control variable																
Gender							0.30	0.284							–0.20	0.152
Event attraction participation							0.04	0.419							0.19	0.219
Prior event attendance							–0.10	0.236							0.15	0.126
Nagelkerke R^2/adjacent R^2	.071		.144		.139		.145		.083		.167		.173		.176	

Note. Unstandardized path coefficients (*b*) are reported. Significant effects ($p < .05$) are bolded.
*$p < .10$.

in-group entitativity was high, regardless the perceived atmosphere. When attendees did not perceive in-group entitativity, perceiving a superior atmosphere was associated with increased intentions to attend in the future.

A different pattern is observed with respect to joy. The spotlight analysis reveals that the effect of joy on future attendance is nonsignificant at both low levels of in-group entitativity ($b = –0.16$, $p = .107$ at 1 *SD* below the in-group entitativity mean) and high levels of in-group entitativity ($b = –0.03$, $p = .813$ at 1 *SD* above the mean). However, at very low levels of in-group entitativity, the effect becomes negative and significant ($b = –0.30$, $p = .032$ at the 10th percentile of in-group entitativity). The effect is depicted in Figure 3. This figure reveals that future attendance was highest when in-group entitativity was high, regardless the perceived joy. When attendees did not perceive in-group entitativity, increasing joy was associated with minimally decreased intentions to attend in the future. Perhaps suggesting that when joy is experienced but one does not have a group with which to share this emotion, the positive emotion comes with other feelings, perhaps loneliness.

Discussion

Taken together, the results indicate that emotions felt during competitions at a larger sports event impact sponsor-related outcomes such as sponsor recall as well as event-related outcomes such as future attendance. This finding is new to sponsorship research.

In terms of recall, of the six variables, considered only excitement, boredom, and group atmosphere affected recall, whereas the feelings of joy, discontent, and pride did not exert any effects. Excitement contributed to memory, whereas atmosphere reduced memory for sponsors. This finding suggests that high arousal (which is reflected by excitement) at sports events is not necessarily detrimental for sponsor recall. The seemingly counterintuitive finding that positive group atmosphere, developed by other participants, detracts from sponsor awareness may stem from a wider exploration of the environment where nonsponsor brands were encountered. For example, near the event, direct competitors to the event sponsor set up lively pop-up stores with displays and merchandise near restaurants frequented by attendees, and exposure to these off-grounds activities may have resulted in an enjoyable atmosphere but may have reduced *correct* sponsor recall. This is in keeping with research that finds ambush marketing (where competitor brands receive exposure at the same time as true sponsors) able to influence correct recall for sponsors (Humphreys et al., 2010).

Interestingly, the effects of boredom and excitement on sponsor recall depend on in-group entitativity. When in-group entitativity was perceived as high, increasing excitement improved recall. When in-group entitativity was perceived to be low, increasing excitement had no effect, and boredom had a negative effect on sponsor recall. This finding indicates that the consequences of emotional response depend on the extent to which event attendees perceive themselves as part of an event community. Taken together, Hypotheses 1 and 3 receive partial support.

With respect to future attendance, the results indicate that emotions felt during competitions at a larger sports event can exert an impact as well. Yet, of the six emotions, considered only

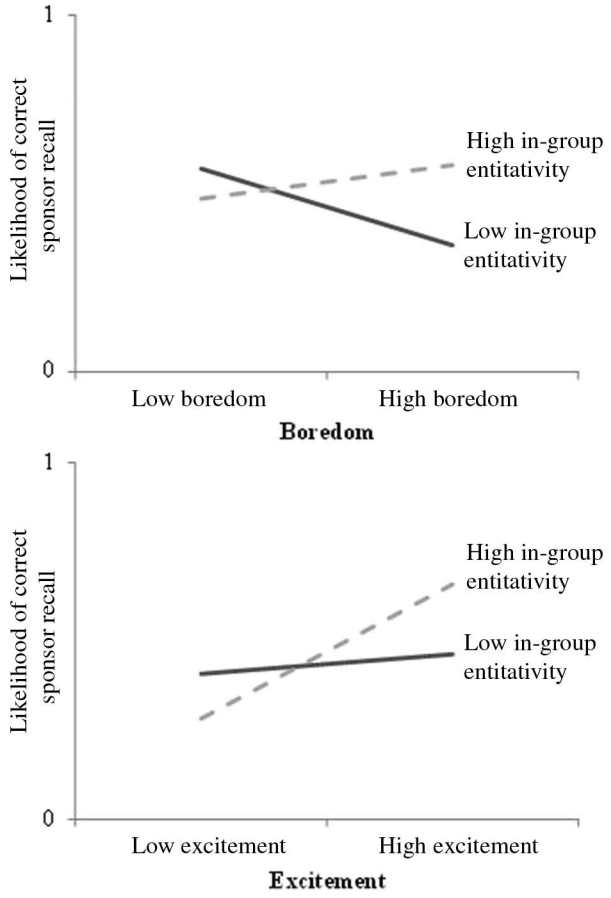

Figure 2 — Sponsor recall by perceived boredom, excitement, and in-group entitativity.

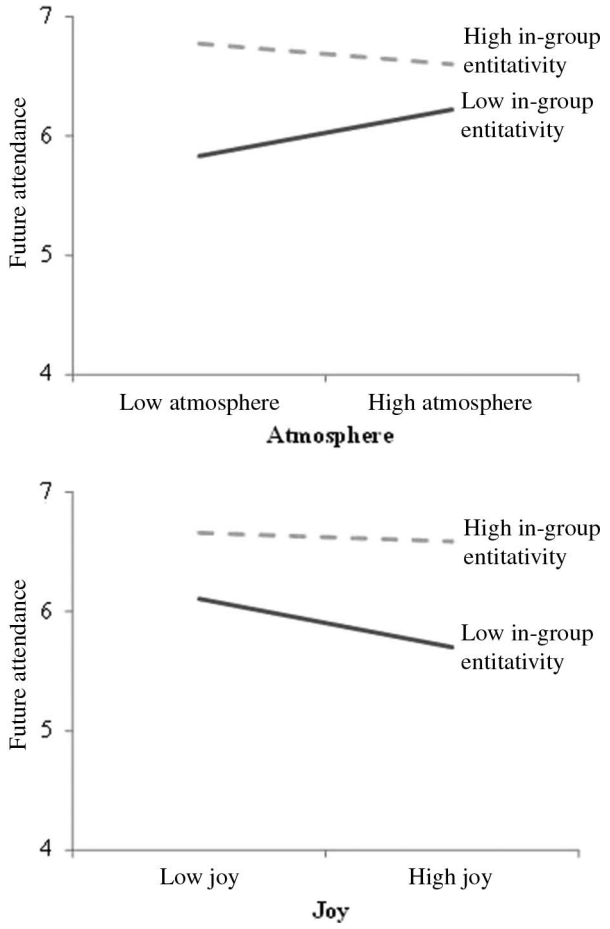

Figure 3 — Future attendance by event atmosphere, joy, and in-group entitativity.

atmosphere, boredom, and joy affected future attendance. The feelings of discontent, excitement, and pride had no additional effects (although pride had a positive and significant bivariate correlation with future attendance). Notably, the effects of atmosphere and, to a lesser extent, joy depend on in-group entitativity. When in-group entitativity was perceived as high, increasing atmosphere or joy did not lead to an increase in future attendance intentions, as these intentions were already high under conditions of high in-group entitativity. However, when in-group entitativity was perceived to be low, increasing group atmosphere had a positive effect on future attendance. Surprisingly, increasing joy was associated with decreased future attendance intentions. One possible reason is that when joy was experienced, one's need to share joy with others was constrained at the event. In their entirety, Hypotheses 2 and 3 receive partial support.

The results highlight the importance of attendee's emotional experience during events. Although not all event emotions had downstream consequences with respect to sponsor awareness and future attendance, several significant effects were observed. Particularly interesting is the dialectical role of group atmosphere. Although a positive atmosphere increases event attendees' wish to return to the event in the future—particularly among those who perceived less in-group entitativity, it was negatively related to sponsor recall.

Importantly from theoretical and practical perspectives in-group entitativity is a meaningful explanatory variable for this social experience. As has been found in music events and festivals (Drengner et al., 2012; Jahn et al., 2011), in-group entitativity can arise without individuals holding any previous formal membership related to the event. Moreover, the current work finds that in-group entitativity moderated the direct effects of boredom and excitement on sponsor awareness, and atmosphere and joy on future attendance.

The pattern of results suggests that groups, low and high in in-group entitativity, learn about sponsors in different ways and are influenced to attend in the future through different experiences, but further explanation lies in understanding the emotions associated with the two groups. As expected in Hypothesis 3, the in-group entitativity moderates the relationship between emotions and outcome variables, and these paths to sponsor awareness and future attendance were via excitement, boredom, atmosphere, and joy. The interaction of in-group entitativity and emotion is new to research that investigates sport events. This results in the revised model shown in Figure 4.

Practical Implications

First, event managers should be interested to learn how event emotions influence outcomes for the event and for event sponsors. High sense of belonging to a group, in this case, an audience for track and field, comes naturally with a high intent to attend future events. For those with low feelings of belonging to a group, providing a stimulating atmosphere supports future attendance,

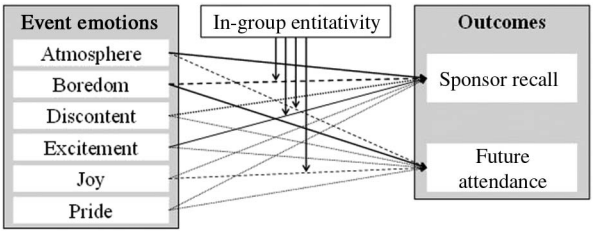

Figure 4 — Revised model of the role of event emotions and in-group entitativity on event outcomes.

however, experiencing a joyful feeling and not having someone with which to share it may reduce the intent to experience a similar event in the future. Clearly, fostering group feelings is a goal worthy of further examination and creative strategic thinking. One way to increase in-group entitativity would be to stimulate collaborative actions among audience members (Stieler & Germelmann, 2016). As examples of collaborative actions, Stieler and Germelmann (2016) mention manifestation in the crowd context through singing, chanting, roaring, clapping, and standing jointly. These actions might be stimulated by the service provider's staff (e.g., moderator) or experienced consumers with high identification and can be facilitated by accessories provided at the venue (e.g., giving away clap banners).

Importantly, findings here suggest that emotions are related to the social fabric of an event for sponsors as well. Having an "in-group" feeling generally supports sponsor recall. Event managers might want to foster the development of entitativity. Recalling that this feeling of belonging to a group can arise at the event and does not imply that preexisting group membership is needed; simple approaches to meeting others may support in-group feelings and associated values.

Second, sponsors should be particularly interested in the findings regarding the role of group atmosphere. The feeling that others at the event create a great atmosphere could only be imagined as the kind of event every sponsor would seek, and likely it is. The findings here capture the feeling of the overall event and all associated actors, which included many vendors and potential ambushers. Atmosphere is, however, a complex phenomenon that, while representing a feeling held by a group, is not per se an emotion. Like an emotion, it may ebb and flow over time, but a mapping of determinants would be difficult. A cautionary implication is that sponsorship recall, at least at the event (long-term recall may differ), is influenced by recent experiences and exposures. One could approach this finding by seeking to limit event clutter introduced by the presence of other brands, but it might also be approached by providing more extensive engagement of sponsors and attendees in events surrounding the central sporting event.

Third, sponsors should also be interested in the important role of group feelings. Fostering feelings of belonging at the event are helpful to sponsors in the face of varied emotions such as boredom and excitement. Feelings of belonging might work to keep audiences near the event and the action but might also support discussions where a sponsor might be included or even the sponsor's roles as event supporter. Additional detail regarding how group feelings influence behaviors and cognitions is needed.

Although pride and discontent were not found to be influential on sponsor and event outcomes in this study, they should not be dismissed as relevant emotions to consider at events. Both emotions were clearly developed during the competitive events, as indicated by their high mean scores. They may have had less impact in the overall analysis because it was early in the multiday event and because other emotions were more recent. Furthermore, findings here regarding negative emotions may not be generalizable because this particular event was well received by audience members.

Conclusion, Limitations, and Future Research

The current research examined the role of event emotions on sponsor recall and intent to participate in the event in the future, as well as the moderating role of in-group entitativity. The findings extend thinking regarding the important designating value of in-group entitativity as in a group or not and awareness of this fact. We argue that this furthers an understanding of in-group entitativity as a fluid construct. Evidence is provided that it can arise in a brief period and can influence relationships between other variables. This is in contrast to other discussions of brand community that are dependent on higher levels of formalization and longer durations. Furthermore, this research finds that in-group entitativity moderates the effect of emotions on outcomes such as memory and future behavior.

Emotions stemming from the competitions during a multiday sports event are agued to be relevant in the examination of social settings and consumer behavior. In this study, measures of key human emotions, as utilized in marketing (Richins, 1997), were augmented by our measure of atmosphere. While group atmosphere as a measure of the pervading group emotion, captured as the overall feeling generated by others at the event, is not an emotion in the narrow sense, it is a construct worthy of study in the sport context.

Although this research examines arising in-group entitativity, it does not examine how this feeling may dissipate. After the event, does the feeling of being a part of a group disappear or is it instrumental in recall for that period and for experiences during that time? To what extent does the quality of future event experience depend on past experience? The work of Lacey et al. (2007) suggests that the carryover effects of past attendance hold implications for sponsor attitudes and product purchase behavior. Future research should include in-group entitativity as a variable possibly important to future attendance outcomes.

Future research may want to consider the roles that experience and related knowledge regarding the sport play in supporting memory for sponsors. While someone with event-relevant knowledge may be more discerning regarding sponsoring in a cluttered environment, someone new to the sport with the same exposure may be confused. Alternatively, individuals with context knowledge may be more confused given all their past exposures, whereas those with little context knowledge may invest more effort in learning about a new context and therefore learn with a fresh perspective, the sponsors for the event. Similarly, the role of boredom in sport contexts deserves future researcher attention. When does boredom motivate exploration and attention to the environment and when does it result in disinterest?

A further avenue for future research is the inclusion of mediators. For example, it might be that attendees who feel connected with fellow attendees have reduced perceptions of crowding. Given that crowding frequently is accompanied by detrimental consequences (Pons, Laroche, & Mourali, 2006), reduced crowding perceptions that might come with in-group entitativity may be valuable to event organizers. Similarly, event

atmosphere while a group phenomenon may be affected by individual characteristics such as introversion or gregariousness.

Naturally, the generalizability of the findings in this context of study could be supported by future studies of sponsored events in the arts, entertainment, or charity contexts. It seems that the passion surrounding charities may work similarly to that found in sport. Also of interest to future studies should be the emotion enhancing potential of music for nonmusic events and the importance, for multiday events, of varied and sequenced emotions. Emotions experienced at sporting events are found, for example, in discussions of the passion of sports, are integral to understanding event and sponsor success. This research underscores that examining emotions at events is not straightforward in that each emotion can result in varied outcomes with many interactions but is decidedly worthy of future research.

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