

Sponsorship of the 2024 European Soccer Championship in Germany: Overview, Perspectives, Special Features and Developments

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Abstract

In this paper, the essential sponsorship basics are presented and the communication instrument of sports sponsorship is illustrated. Building on this, both the perspectives of sponsors and sponsees are examined in detail. In addition, the special features of sports event sponsorships are highlighted. Finally, current developments in sports sponsorship in the context of the FIFA Soccer World Cup 2022 in Qatar and the UEFA European Soccer Championship 2024 in Germany are compared and discussed.

Keywords

Sponsorship, Sponsor, Sponsee, Event Sponsorship, Soccer, UEFA European Soccer Championship 2024

1. Introduction

Sponsorship is one of the non-classical forms of marketing communication policy and appeals to people in non-commercial situations. Sponsorship in particular can reach target groups that have a negative attitude towards advertising or cannot be reached using traditional communication instruments. Sponsorship is also generally more readily accepted than traditional advertising, as sponsorship per se is based on a certain promotional intention.

The purpose of the paper is to comprehensively characterize the communication instrument of sports sponsorship and to identify the interests of the parties involved. To this end, the management of sports sponsorship is analyzed specifically with regard to the upcoming European Football Championship 2024.

This paper presents the essential sponsorship basics and focuses on sports sponsorship. It is examined in detail from both the perspectives of the sponsor and the sponsee. The special features of sports event sponsorship are then presented. Building on this, current developments in sports sponsorship in the context of the FIFA Soccer World Cup 2022 in Qatar and the upcoming UEFA European Soccer Championship 2024 in Germany will be discussed.

2. Basics of Sponsorship

Today, sponsorship has found its place in the marketing plans of companies as well as in the specialist literature on corporate communication. Sponsorship has thus become a familiar and everyday phenomenon.

2.1. Definition

One of the most frequently cited definitions of sponsorship goes back to [Bruhn \(2018\)](#). He characterizes and structures sponsorship generally as the analysis, planning, implementation and control of all activities, which involve the provision of money, material resources, services or know-how by companies and institutions to promote individuals and/or organizations in the fields of sport, culture, social affairs, the environment and/or the media that are contractually linked to the performance of the sponsor and the consideration of the sponsee, to achieve marketing and corporate communication goals at the same time.

[Bruhn \(2018\)](#) highlights six constitutive features of sponsorship that are common to all sponsorship activities, regardless of the different approaches:

- Sponsorship is based on the principle of performance and consideration: The sponsor provides its funding in the expectation of receiving a certain consideration from the sponsee. In addition to the financial contribution from the sponsor, the sponsee also wants to use this “barter deal” to enhance its image and use the sponsorship to expand its network.
- Sponsorship expresses the idea of support for the sponsee: Sponsorship is not simply the sale of advertising space for a fee, rather the sponsor identifies with the content of its tasks.
- Sponsorship fulfills communicative functions: These are provided by the sponsee, transported by the media or can also be created by the sponsor itself.
- Sponsorship requires a systematic planning and decision-making process: The measures must be planned, implemented and monitored in detail on the basis of a situation analysis and formulation of objectives.
- A key objective of sponsorship is image transfer: When creating an image, the message and the medium cannot be separated in sponsorship: The object of a sponsorship commitment (e.g. a sporting event) embodies both the message and the medium itself.
- From a corporate perspective, sponsorship is a building block of integrated communication: It should not be used in isolation, but in conjunction with other communication instruments.

2.2. Types of Sponsorship

Overall, the following main types of sponsorship can be distinguished (Nufer & Bühler, 2023):

- sports sponsorship,
- cultural sponsorship (or art sponsorship),
- socio sponsorship (or social sponsorship),
- eco sponsorship,
- science sponsorship, and
- program sponsorship (or media sponsorship, TV presenting).

The emergence and development of sponsorship as an element of corporate communication began with the emergence of sports sponsorship in the 1970s. It was followed by cultural sponsorship in the 1980s and then by social and eco sponsorship. Program sponsorship was added in the 1990s. A more recent type of sponsorship is science sponsorship (which may also be subsumed under cultural sponsorship). The individual types of sponsorship can be characterized as follows (Nufer & Bühler, 2023):

- Sports sponsorship can be broken down by type of sport (e.g. soccer, cycling, motorsport, golf, etc.), organizational unit (association, club, team, individual athlete, event, etc.) and performance level (professional, amateur and recreational sport). As sports sponsorship requires a certain level of media interest, sports with a high media presence are the main beneficiaries.
- A company interested in getting involved in cultural sponsorship has a wide range of different cultural fields and areas of activity to choose from: In recent years, the concept of cultural sponsorship has become established, particularly in the fields of fine arts/museums, music, theater and film, but also for the support of festivals and heritage conservation activities.
- Like eco sponsorship, socio sponsorship aims to demonstrate social and socio-political responsibility on the part of the sponsor. The sponsors are usually organizations (e.g. charitable institutions, self-help groups and welfare organizations and associations) that address and seek to solve social or humanitarian problems on a non-commercial basis.
- Eco sponsorship involves sponsorship projects and organizations that are committed to protecting the environment. A particularly critical aspect of this form of sponsorship is the credibility of the sponsor's commitment.
- In the context of science sponsorship, sponsors support organizations from science and research by providing comprehensive funding for research activities without demanding pre-defined results, as is usual in the context of third-party funded research.
- Program sponsorship is often mentioned in this context as another form of sponsorship. In program sponsorship, a company or brand acts as the presenter of a television program. Immediately before and after the broadcast, as well as during any breaks, a short trailer is shown which refers to the connection between the brand and the program. However, this approach is not spon-

sorship as defined above, as it does not promote sport, culture, social issues, the environment or other objects, but rather a special form of advertising.

3. Sports Sponsorship

Sport is associated with a multitude of emotions for both active athletes and visitors to sporting events. Companies try to use this emotional environment to achieve communication policy objectives in particular by becoming a sponsor.

3.1. Definition

Bühler and Nufer (2010) define professional sports sponsorship as a business-related partnership between a sponsor and a sponsee based on reciprocity. The sponsor provides financial or non-financial resources directly to the sponsee and receives a predefined service in return in order to fulfill certain sponsorship objective.

Sports sponsorship occupies a dominant position compared to all other types of sponsorship. Around two thirds of sponsorship expenditure goes to the sports sector, with sports with a high media presence benefiting the most. This is due to the high level of consumer interest in sport and the broad social acceptance of corresponding sponsorship measures: Sport is associated with virtues such as fairness, team spirit, performance orientation or passion, attractiveness and emotion, which makes it an attractive communication platform. The increasing spread and acceptance of sports sponsorship also follows the general tendency to increasingly use the leisure interests of the population for corporate communication purposes.

3.2. Forms of Sports Sponsorship

The manifestations of sports sponsorship are diverse. How a sponsorship commitment appears to the target group depends on a variety of decisions made by the sponsor. Three decision areas in particular determine the specific form of sponsorship (Drees, 2003):

- the choice of the sponsorship object,
- the specification of the measures, and
- a definition of the scope of the sponsorship commitment.

These dimensions define the extent of a sports sponsorship object:

- type of sport (e.g. soccer, Formula 1, cycling, ski jumping, etc.),
- performance level (elite or competitive sport, popular sport, junior sport), and
- organizational unit (interdisciplinary sports organizations, associations, clubs, teams, individual athletes, events).

In principle, the following core measures can be distinguished, which can be implemented to varying degrees and in specific forms for the different properties:

- marking of equipment (e.g. jersey advertising),
- presence in the run-up to sporting events (e.g. press releases),
- presence in the vicinity of sporting events (e.g. perimeter advertising),
- use of predicates (e.g. “official supplier of...”),
- naming a sponsorship object after the sponsor (e.g. title sponsorship),
- marking of printed matter of the sponsee (e.g. autograph cards),
- use of sports personalities (as testimonials), and
- organization of sporting events (e.g. fun runs).

Forms according to the scope of the sports sponsorship commitment:

- full sponsorship (sole communicative right of use),
- main sponsorship (dominance over co-sponsors), and
- co-sponsorship (no exclusive rights).

3.3. Participants

Sports sponsorship is based on a contractual agreement on a transaction to be carried out (money, goods or services in exchange for communicative rights of use) between at least two parties, the sponsor and the sponsee. However, the implementation of sponsorship agreements typically involves additional parties (Hermanns & Marwitz, 2008; Freyer, 2018): The sponsor’s target groups, the sponsee’s audience, the media, media users and sponsorship service providers (see **Figure 1**).

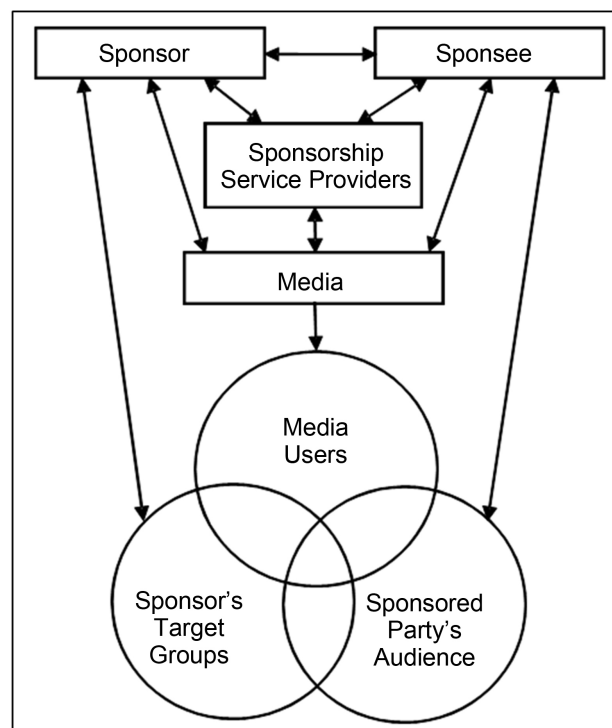


Figure 1. Network of relationships and communication relationships in sports sponsorship (adapted from Hermanns and Marwitz, 2008).

Classic sports sponsors are profit companies. While at the beginning of the development of sports sponsorship it was rather large companies, today it can be said that sports sponsorship has found its place in the marketing communication of companies regardless of their size.

The sponsor's target groups are the defined target groups of the company that are to be addressed with the help of marketing communication. The sports sponsorship ring is used for this approach in order to achieve the desired effects.

Sponsees can be sports organizations, associations, clubs, teams and individual athletes. For the sponsee, sports sponsorship is primarily a financing and procurement instrument. Sponsorship serves the sponsee as an additional source of income to cover increasing expenses and provides it with services that it needs for its tasks and which the sponsor provides in the form of services and material resources.

The sponsor's audience (e.g. the spectators at a soccer match) is directly reached by the sponsor's communication measures (e.g. jersey advertising).

The media deal with sport in their editorial sections. The sponsor's communicative measures therefore also reach media users. As a transmission medium to the television audience, TV as a buyer of broadcasting rights (e.g. the Olympic Games or soccer World Cups or European Championships) makes sponsorship even more interesting both for itself and for the sponsors (or to put it another way: without the use of mass media, many sponsorships would not be entered into in the first place).

Sports sponsorship service providers include consultants and agencies. Sponsorship consultants provide advice to sponsors and sponsees or act as a broker between these two parties. Sponsorship agencies are commercial service organizations that work primarily for sponsors, but can also work for sponsees.

4. Perspective of the Sponsor

First, the sponsor's perspective on sports sponsorship will be examined in more detail. To this end, the objectives, strategies and the planning process are analyzed from the sponsor's perspective.

4.1. Objectives

When formulating the objectives of sponsorship, a distinction must be made between economic and psychological objectives (Nufer, 2018).

Economic objectives include monetary economic variables, such as profit, turnover or market share. The advantage of economic objectives is that they can be clearly measured and quantified using monetary parameters. However, the exclusive specification of objectives that can be assigned to this category is not sufficient due to the lack of impulses for action. In many cases, overall economic objectives can only be achieved in the long term by setting psychological targets.

The range of psychological and communication objectives that can be achieved through sponsorship is broad:

- awareness goals (increasing or stabilizing company or brand awareness),
- image goals (development or change of certain image dimensions),
- maintaining contact with invited guests (hospitality),
- demonstration of product and company performance,
- creating goodwill and demonstrating social responsibility, and
- promoting motivation among our own employees.

4.2. Strategies

Sports sponsors face the challenge of strategically aligning their sponsorship commitment over the long term in order to achieve communicative objectives (Bruhn, 2018). A sponsor's sports sponsorship strategy should be based on a written and binding sponsorship philosophy, which forms the frame of reference for defining the content of the strategy. The following building blocks concretize a sponsorship philosophy:

- determining the level of sports promotion,
- conditions for media presence in sports reporting,
- position of the company compared to other sponsors,
- conditions for the use of advertising media, and
- general conditions (e.g. duration of contracts, geographical catchment areas, internal responsibilities).

The following strategic orientations can be differentiated as part of a sports sponsorship strategy:

- Awareness strategy: Aims to increase brand awareness and acceptance by consumers and retailers.
- Target group development and customer retention strategy: Focuses on specifically addressing individual target groups that could not previously be reached to a sufficient extent and on retaining existing customers.
- Profiling strategy: Aims to transfer certain sport-specific image dimensions.

Strategy development can be interpreted as a step-by-step process. This takes place on two levels with the rough selection of sports and the fine selection of sponsorship forms.

In the rough selection phase of sports, criteria must be defined on the basis of which the suitability of different sports for the company's communicative task can be checked. According to the affinity concept, the following connecting lines are particularly conceivable:

- Product affinity: The sport is related to the sponsor's product or service.
- Target group affinity: The sport attracts the interest of a specific target group that is also attractive to the sponsor.
- Image affinity: The image of the sport is similar to the image of the company, the umbrella or individual brand(s) or a similarity can be associated.
- Other possible links could be a common location reference between sponsor and sponsee or similarly perceived "externalities". Scoring models are suitable for decision-making.

The subsequent phase of the detailed selection of sponsorship forms comprises the analysis of various sponsorship alternatives (individuals, teams, organizations or events) within the scope of the defined sports. Criteria must be formulated for the specific selection that enables a comparison of the alternative offers. The following decision criteria are suitable for this—in addition to the costs associated with the respective alternatives:

- Individuals/teams: e.g. previous achievements and successes; awareness, sympathy and acceptance in the target group; media presence at sporting events; possibility of integration in other communication measures.
- Sports organizations/associations: e.g. management qualification in the organization; PR work by the organization.
- Sports events: E.g. media presence; participation of certain personalities; possibility of awarding awards, licenses and titles; use of advertising opportunities before, during and after the event.
- Another decision criterion is the activities of competitors. The objective should be to choose a type of sport and form of organization that enables the company to differentiate itself from the competition and build up its own image dimensions through sports sponsorship.

4.3. Planning Process

Figure 2 provides an overview of the process of planning, integrating, implementing and monitoring sponsorship. This process model is ideally divided into several phases in which specific information is used to make partial decisions about sports sponsorship.

This process model is a theoretically ideal sequence of phases. In the reality of sponsorship practice, however, a stringent, successive process is often replaced by a simultaneous process with numerous feedback loops. Nevertheless, it makes sense to use these separate phases as a guide in order to optimize the individual sub-decisions. The rather intuitive and spontaneous approach often observed in the past when companies plan, integrate, implement and monitor sponsorship activities is now increasingly being replaced by a planned, systematic approach (Bruhn, 2018).

5. Perspective of the Sponsee

In this section, there is a fundamental change in the view of the actors involved: Whereas previously the perspective of sponsors was considered, the sponsees now take center stage.

5.1. Objectives

For sponsors, sponsorship is an instrument for financing sport (Walzel & Schubert, 2018; Horch, Schubert, & Walzel, 2014). The general aim of the sponsor is therefore to acquire financial resources, material resources or services in order to maintain or improve the sporting performance of the sponsee

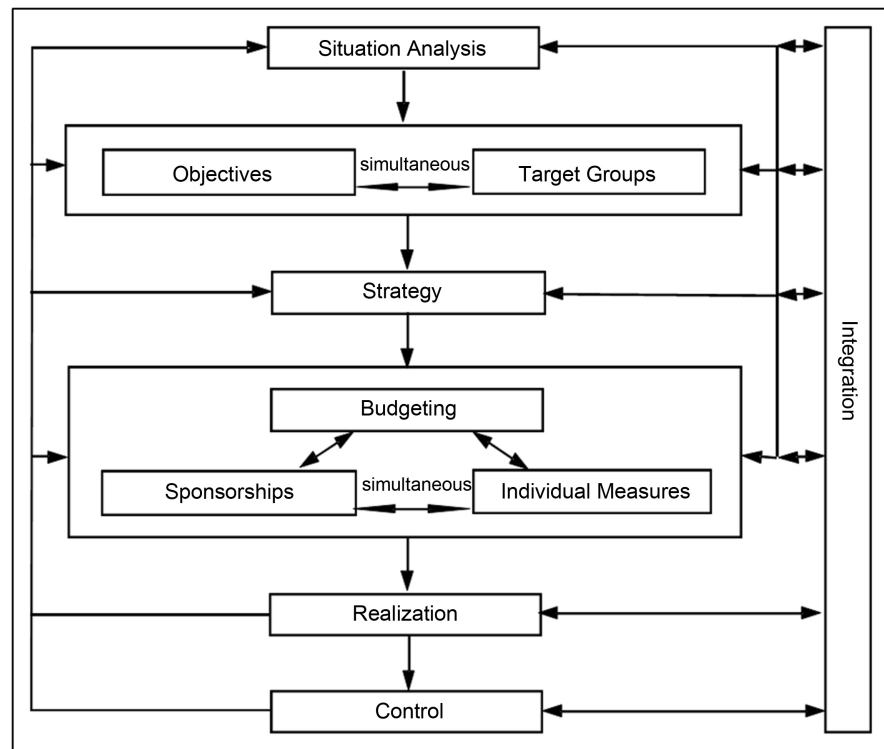


Figure 2. Process of planning, integration, realization and control in sponsorship (adapted from Nufer, 2018).

(Nufer & Bühler, 2013).

Sponsorship rights form the core of the sponsorship business. The consideration to be expected by the sponsor depends on their scope and market validity. The classic categories in this context are advertising rights, equipment and service rights, participation rights (including hospitality), sales and management rights, identification rights and rights to use promotional prizes. In the recent past, innovative exploitation of rights has also been realized, e.g. the granting of naming rights for stadiums. The websites and social media channels of sponsors offer new, additional opportunities.

For the marketing of the sponsorship rights and the associated communication effects, the sponsee receives adequate compensation in the form of monetary funds, goods and services. For traditional sponsorships (such as jersey sponsorship), the price expectations can be estimated on the basis of the expected media performance using the price per thousand contacts. However, this value must be corrected for the competitive factor (if the demand for a particular sponsored item is high, the value increases and vice versa). In this context, there is usually a correlation between the sporting performance and the consideration to be paid.

In order to fully exploit the revenue potential of sponsorship, sponsors usually offer several companies the opportunity to become involved as sponsors at the same time. The common procedure for this is a hierarchical, pyramidal spon-

sorship structure, which is subdivided into different levels. From top to bottom, the number of companies per level increases and the scope of sponsorship rights decreases in parallel (as does their price). Two developments can currently be observed in sports sponsorship: Firstly, the term “sponsor” is increasingly being replaced by the term “partner”, and secondly, sponsors are being differentiated very intensively in some cases (e.g. main sponsor, supplier, premium partner, classic partner, etc.), which makes it possible to better exploit the sponsorship potential of the sponsee and to better express the values of different sponsors.

5.2. Principles

In order to ensure the necessary continuity in sports sponsorship, it is advisable to establish sports sponsorship principles that create an orientation framework for the sponsorship work. These principles can include statements on the following aspects of sports sponsorship (Hermanns, 2008):

- role of sponsorship in financing and procurement (e.g. dominant/accidental),
- code of conduct for cooperation with the sponsor,
- communicative limitations, and
- industry or product exclusion (e.g. for tobacco and/or alcohol products).

The sponsorship principles therefore include clarifying whether there are certain forms of sponsorship or companies that should be declared inappropriate because negative reactions from various stakeholders are to be expected. These may be companies that have acquired a bad reputation due to scandals, breaches of environmental protection regulations and consumer interests, and are now trying to improve this reputation through a sponsorship commitment in sport. A choice of sponsor that is perceived as problematic can lead to negative reactions from fans and parts of the population in the form of spectator protests, negative comments on social media channels and even calls for a boycott. The Soccer World Cup 2022 in Qatar serves as a current example of this: Both FIFA and its sponsors came under massive public pressure in the run-up to the tournament due to human rights violations in Qatar.

5.3. Relationship Marketing

The decision of a sponsor for a specific sponsee is generally made on the basis of decision-relevant information. The sponsee is therefore called upon to provide relevant information about itself and its environment (e.g. general information about the sport, image of the sport, image of the club, team, etc., spectator information, media coverage information, own communication potential).

Sponsors can be acquired by the sponsee itself or by a marketing agency. The choice of sponsor must be based on the set principles, objectives and sponsorship potential in terms of reach and image on the one hand and the sponsorship revenue to be generated on the other. The better the fit between sponsor and sponsee, the more stable and long-term the sponsorship partnership can develop.

It has long since ceased to be enough to simply settle the sponsorship business legally and consider it done. Nowadays, in terms of a long-term sports sponsorship partnership and the retention of sponsors, it is much more about the realization of relationship marketing for the benefit of both parties. Sponsors want to be kept up to date on the development of the sponsee, have contact opportunities at sporting levels and participate passively in sporting events. Classic relationship management measures—from invitations to important sporting events and personal contact opportunities with athletes to sponsor newsletters—contribute to a fruitful sponsorship relationship (Bühler & Nufer, 2010).

In the meantime, there are numerous examples that show that a long-term positive sports sponsorship relationship can lead to further cooperation for the benefit of both parties. In this context, the development of joint business areas (e.g. medical care and rehabilitation, travel for club members and fans, gastronomy and catering) and the establishment of strategic partnerships (examples of this are FC Bayern Munich's partnerships with adidas, Audi and Allianz) should be emphasized.

6. Special Features of Sports Event Sponsorship

Major sporting events have become synonymous with excitement, entertainment and top sporting performance. Sports events are not only well known among the sports-interested population and exert a huge fascination. The reach of such sporting events is already in the tens of thousands of spectators locally and can reach an international audience in the billions via media multipliers such as TV, radio, print or the Internet. In connection with sponsored sporting events, communicative competitive advantages can be achieved—completely independent of the outcome of the sporting competition—which can differentiate the advertising measures of the competition.

6.1. Characterization

Sports sponsors are increasingly realizing that traditional sports sponsorship (of individuals or teams) can be very risky, as the reputation of the sponsor can also be affected if the image of the sponsee is tarnished (i.e. by scandals or series of defeats). For this reason, international companies in particular are increasingly acting as sponsors of attractive major events that have an enormous appeal to the public and where they do not have to fear this risk. This is referred to as sports event sponsorship. Sports event sponsorship is therefore a special case of sports sponsorship (Nufer & Bühler, 2015).

From a legal point of view, there are no significant structural differences between the Olympic Games and the local club championship of a bowling club: An association (usually in the legal form of a club) organizes a sporting competition in which its members can participate according to rules laid down by the club (Pechtl, 2007).

From a marketing perspective, however, there are serious differences between a major international sporting event and a local club championship: Sporting events such as world or European championships in well-known sports or the Olympic Games offer enormous marketing potential due to their high level of attention as a crowd puller. This marketing potential (goodwill, intangible commercial value) refers to the long-term profits that companies achieve when they use the sporting event in their marketing strategy. Although these profits are difficult or almost impossible to quantify, many companies believe that marketing investments in sports events yield a higher return than marketing investments in alternative strategies. Consequently, many companies want to participate in the marketing potential of major sporting events.

Despite the great interest shown by spectators, organizers of sporting events are often only able to cover part of the costs incurred from ticket sales or the sale of broadcasting rights to the event. In addition, event organizers strive to generate the financial resources they need to achieve their association's goals and maintain their organization. One way of solving this financial problem is the granting of brand licenses and sponsorship. However, sponsors and licensees expect a privileged "exploitation" of the marketing potential of the event in return for their financial commitment. In the case of licensees, this right is generally limited to the exclusive use of event-related trademarks in their area of business. Event sponsors, on the other hand, receive additional benefits in return: These are typically advertising space at the event and permission to use predicates such as official sponsor in their own advertising. They also include publicizing the sponsorship in the media and support for the sponsor's hospitality measures. With regard to the scope of sponsorship rights, there are often qualitative gradations (e.g. top, main, secondary, co-sponsor). The higher the sponsorship amount, the greater the scope of sponsorship rights granted.

As the sponsor, the organizer is called upon to create the conditions for the emergence of marketing potential and to promote this potential through suitable measures (e.g. through the creation and protection of trademarks for the marking of merchandising goods). In addition, the organizer must guarantee sponsors and licensees exclusivity in the use of the marketing potential (i.e. the organizer must develop and implement measures to give sponsors and licensees preferential exploitation of the marketing potential of the event) (Heermann, 2006; Pechtl, 2007).

6.2. Sponsorship Structures

Various sponsors appear at and around sporting events:

If we first look at the "association pyramid", the organizing association itself (e.g. FIFA, IOC) is at the top. Downstream of the association are the members participating in the sporting event. In the case of international federations, these are the national sports federations. These also have their own (national) members. For major sporting events, there is also a middle level in the association

pyramid. For example, in the case of the Olympic Games, this is the Organizing Committee (OC), which is set up by the relevant National Olympic Committee under the supervision of the IOC and is responsible for the actual organization of the event. All levels of the association pyramid act as sponsors or licensors in connection with the sporting event and actively acquire sponsors and licensees for themselves. As a rule, independent sponsorship and licensing programs can be found at the various levels of the association pyramid, most of which also have different emphases: While the organizing association needs the sponsorship services and licensing income to finance the implementation, at the level of the participating members the sponsorship services serve as support for the selection and sending of their athletes to the event.

In addition to sponsorship as part of the association pyramid, there are other sponsor groups in the event environment: Many participating individual athletes or teams operate their own sponsorship programs. These are initially official suppliers who provide the necessary sports equipment, for example. In addition, athletes or teams often act as advertising media for companies in order to increase their income. Another group of sponsors can be found in the media sector: companies that sponsor television programs. Finally, owners or operators of stadiums in which sporting events are held can be sponsored or advertising licenses can be sold in relation to sports venues (usually naming rights, e.g. “Allianz Arena” in Munich).

It is clear that sporting events are covered by a network of different sponsors and licensees, all of whom have a more or less close relationship with the sporting event. The event organizer has an interest in avoiding or resolving conflicting sponsorship and licensing relationships with other players involved.

There is now a great deal of dependence on sponsorship money, especially for major international high-performance sporting events such as the Summer and Winter Olympics. Today, international tournaments such as soccer World Cups or European Championships are also largely dependent on financially strong sponsors. The proportion of income from advertising and television money even amounted to around two thirds at previous soccer World Cups. On the corporate side, the decision to sponsor a sporting event depends almost exclusively on the indirect audience, with television playing the absolute key role (Bruhn, 2018).

7. Current Developments

In the following, the sponsorship structures of the FIFA Soccer World Cup 2022 in Qatar and the UEFA European Soccer Championship 2024 in Germany are compared and current sponsorship developments in their context are presented.

7.1. FIFA Soccer World Cup 2022 in Qatar

The world soccer association FIFA introduced a new, three-tier sponsorship structure in 2018: At the top level, FIFA partners have the most extensive adver-

tising rights. At the second level are the sponsors of the World Cup (see **Table 1**). In addition, there are regional sponsors who acquire advertising rights exclusively within a continent. Both official FIFA partners and official World Cup sponsors advertised globally as part of the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar (de Graaf, 2022; Stock, 2022).

FIFA's standard package for its sponsors included the following advertising rights (FIFA, 2022):

- Use of the official brands.
- Presence inside and outside the stadium, in all official FIFA publications and on the official website.
- Recognition of the sponsorship commitment through an extensive marketing program.
- Protection against free riders (ambush marketing).
- Hospitality program.
- Direct advertising, PR activities and preferential access to television advertising as part of the FIFA World Cup.
- The individual use of the official World Cup emblem and permission to create composite emblems (composite logos).

Ambush marketing is the approach taken by companies to give the direct and indirect audience of a (sporting) event the impression of a connection to the

Table 1. Sponsorship structures of the FIFA Soccer World Cup 2022 in Qatar and the UEFA European Soccer Championship 2024 in Germany in comparison.

Sponsors of the FIFA Soccer World Cup 2022 in Qatar:	Sponsors of the UEFA European Soccer Championship 2024 in Germany:
<p><i>FIFA Partners:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adidas • Coca-Cola • Hyundai/Kia • Qatar Airways • Qatar Energy • Visa • Wanda Group 	<p><i>Global sponsors:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adidas • Alipay+ • Atos • betano • Booking.com • Coca-Cola Zero • Engelbert Strauss • Hisense • Lidl • Visit Qatar • Vivo
<p><i>World Cup sponsors:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budweiser • BYJU's • Crypto • Hisense • McDonald's • Mengniu • Vivo 	<p><i>Local sponsors:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bitburger • Deutsche Bahn • Deutsche Telekom • Ergo • Wiesenhof

event through their own marketing and, in particular, communication measures, even though the companies in question have no legalized or merely underprivileged marketing rights to this event sponsored by third parties. In this way, ambushers want to advertise and sell products in the perception of the recipients in the same way as official sponsors through an association with the event (Nufer, 2018).

The sponsors of the World Cup paid a total of 1.53 billion dollars to FIFA for their advertising rights in 2022 alone. How much each individual World Cup sponsor spent is a secret of the contractual partners. The world soccer association only earned more money from the sale of television broadcasting rights (2.64 billion dollars). In total, FIFA generated revenues of around 4.66 billion dollars from the World Cup in Qatar (Stock, 2022).

7.2. UEFA European Soccer Championship 2024 in Germany

Similar to FIFA, the European soccer association UEFA also relies on a two-tier sponsorship structure (see **Table 1**) consisting of global sponsors on the one hand and local partners on the other (UEFA, 2023).

In addition, the German soccer association DFB as the host of the 2024 European Soccer Championship currently has the following sponsorship partners (DFB, 2023):

- adidas,
- Volkswagen,
- Würth,
- bwin,
- Coca-Cola,
- Commerzbank,
- EA Sports,
- Continental,
- Lufthansa,
- Deutsche Telekom,
- Engelbert Strauss,
- Ergo, Flyeralarm,
- Google Pixel,
- Hörmann,
- interwetten,
- mandana,
- o.b.,
- Panini,
- Rimowa,
- TCL, and
- Vorwerk.

Adidas has been a partner of UEFA for several decades. The cooperation ranges from the top level of club soccer to European Championships, from youth compe-

titions to grassroots initiatives. In the run-up to EURO 2024, adidas announced an intensification of its partnership with UEFA. The extension includes the sponsorship of UEFA EURO 2024 in Germany as well as an official partnership with UEFA Women's Soccer from 2021 to 2025, covering all competitions. With the new contracts, adidas will become a partner of UEFA EURO 2024, the UEFA Nations League, the European Qualifiers, the UEFA Champions League and the UEFA Women's competitions. In addition, adidas will provide the official match ball for the UEFA Women's Champions League, the UEFA Women's Futsal EURO, the UEFA Women's U19 Championship and the UEFA Women's U17 Championship (Daiker, 2021).

At the end of November 2022, coinciding with the start of the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, the previous DFB partner REWE caused a stir: Following FIFA's ban on the "One Love" captain's armband and other statements by FIFA President Gianni Infantino, REWE clearly distanced itself from FIFA's stance and waived its advertising rights under the contract with the DFB—especially in the context of the World Cup (REWE, 2022). Lionel Souque, CEO of REWE Group, specifically stated: "For us, soccer is about fair play, tolerance and cohesion—we also uphold these values. We stand up for diversity—and soccer is also diversity. We live this attitude and we defend it—even against possible resistance. FIFA's scandalous attitude is absolutely unacceptable to me as the CEO of a diverse company and as a soccer fan" (REWE, 2022). This news reverberated like a drumbeat through the media, making REWE the talk of the town. Only insiders knew that REWE had already informed the DFB in October 2022 that it would not be continuing its long-standing partnership, meaning that the sponsorship would have expired just a few weeks later anyway.

8. Conclusion and Outlook

In recent decades, sports sponsorship has become more important than almost any other communication instrument and is now an indispensable part of the communication mix. This development is primarily due to the specific advantages of sponsorship over other communication instruments in a communication market flooded with stimuli and "advertising-weary" consumers (Nufer & Bühler, 2013).

Dynamic developments influence the future activities of sponsors, sponsees and the media. In the context of increasing digitalization, E-Sports is of particular importance here (Daumann, 2019; Daumann & Römmelt, 2015). Against this backdrop, sports sponsorship is even expected to grow further. Sports events in particular offer companies new ways to showcase their brands and products in a communicative way. Agencies are constantly striving to develop new forms of implementation. In addition to the official sponsorship of attractive sporting events, ambush marketing has therefore increasingly been observed in practice in recent years as an alternative way of using major sporting events for advertising communication.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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