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Sponsorship activation through social media

The case of the Norwegian Ski Federation Cross-Country in the context of FIS Nordic World Ski Championship in Falun 2015

Master thesis in Sport Sciences

Department of Cultural and Social Studies
Norwegian School of Sport Sciences, 2016

Abstract

Social media opens new opportunities for sponsors to activate their sponsorship and reach out to their target market. This study used a netnographic case study approach to study the Norwegian Ski Federation Cross-Country's sponsors' and ambushers' activity on Twitter and Facebook during the FIS Nordic World Ski Championship in Falun 2015. In addition, the role of the NSFCC and their athletes. Lastly, how consumers perceived their activity. The research methods used were content analysis and a student survey (n = 292). The content analysis consisted of 1155 tweets, 114 retweets, and 487 posts from sponsors, ambushers, athletes, NSFCC, and consumers. The results showed that sponsors had different activation strategies, but the tactics promotion and athlete encouragement stood out. The ambushers differed from the sponsors in terms of how they tried to reach the target market and create an association to the NSFCC. The posts with strong associations to past heavily debated situations generated the most brand awareness. Posts and tweets that contained the sponsorship property cues gave the strongest associations to be from a sponsor of the NSFCC. This study provide insight for practitioners on how consumers respond on different activation strategies on social media and suggestion for future research.

Acknowledgements

Now, a journey that started in Ottawa back in 2014 has come to an end and what a journey it has been. I made friends from around the world and some great memories. Working on this master thesis has been inspiring, frustrating, and challenging. I have learnt much about the field of sponsorship, research in both theory and practice, and myself. Considering everything this last year has contained, to finalize this thesis gave a sense of achievement. I would like to thank several people that have helped me during this past two years.

I have to thank my two supervisors, Per Øystein Hansen and Benoit Séguin. Per Øystein Hansen for providing me insight on ways to write and structure the thesis, and to challenge me. My co-supervisor, Benoit Séguin, for sharing his knowledge and experience within the field of sports marketing and sponsorship research. Then, I would like to thank my Canadian friend, Bryson Hayes, for very helpful proof reading and in general improving my English. In addition, my fellow master students at the masters' office. All the challenging debates, moral inspiration, and social initiatives really help me complete this past year in the way I did. I do not know what I would have done without you. Next, I have to thank my family and friends for moral support and always being there for me. I would also like to thank the marketing staff at the NSFCC for providing me insight about their sponsorship programme. Lastly, thanks to all the respondents that completed the survey.

Oslo, May 30th 2016

Anders Lien

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1.0 Introduction

Kids who want to use the same soccer shoes as Messi or Ronaldo, or adults wearing the same clothing brand as their favorite clubs, are examples of what companies want to achieve through sponsorships. In everyday life, it is almost impossible to go a single day without seeing a logo of a company on a t-shirt or another item. Companies seek attention from the market, hoping to increase brand equity and revenue. Sponsorship is one way for companies to try to achieve these objectives (Fortunato, 2013).

Sponsorships also create an opportunity for companies to reach out to specific groups of people, whether it is people interested in cross-country skiing or soccer (Meenaghan, 2001b). As opposed to advertisement marketing, sponsorship can more effectively engage with their target audience. Even so, sponsorship programs need to be unique in order to cut through the marketing clutter (O'Reilly & Séguin, 2009). According to Meenaghan (2013) and Hoffman and Fodor (2010) the potential of enhanced brand awareness and developing associations has increased with the use of social media.

The purpose of this study was to examine how the activation strategies of NSFCC's official sponsors on social media were perceived. NSF are an umbrella organizations for six ski disciplines (i.e. cross-country, alpine skiing, ski jumping, Nordic combined, telemark, and freestyle; Norwegian Ski Federation, n.d). This study focused on their department of cross-country skiing and their sponsors exclusively. The department of cross-country of the NSF will be referred to as NSFCC. Within cross-country skiing, the FIS Nordic World Ski Championship was the largest and most prestigious event besides the Olympic Winter Games. The FIS Nordic World Ski Championship consist of three ski disciplines (i.e. cross-country, ski jumping, and Nordic combined). Once again, this study focused exclusively on the cross-country part of the event and will be referred to as the WSC. The focus of this study was on the Facebook and Twitter activities of sponsors one month prior to and during the WSC. The popular sponsee, the athlete Petter Northug, might not be the one sponsors should focus on to generate the most user engagement. The main research question is as followed:

1.1 Research question

How were the activation strategies of NSFCC's official sponsors on social media perceived?

Furthermore, in order to give a better understanding of the approach taken to answer the research question, as well as its link with theory, four sub-questions were generated. First, the way sponsors presented themselves on social media was the core of this study. Common strategies and patterns between and within each sponsorship tier were looked for. Their different strategies may explain the differences in return of investments.

What were the characteristics of the official sponsors' activation strategies on social media?

Second, one of the biggest opportunities social media can bring is the chance to increase brand awareness. The ability to engage the consumers around its brand or activation activities were of great importance. Through social media, increased brand awareness may be achieved in several ways. For example, by making costumers tweet about their brand (i.e. buzz), comment on a post (i.e. sentiment), or hit like on a post (i.e. engagement; Meenaghan, McLoughlin, & McCormack, 2013). The influence of the athletes' and the NSFCC's activity on social media were also examined.

Which characteristics of sponsorship activation strategies were effective to increase brand awareness through social media?

Third, one common objective for many sponsors and ambushers was to improve brand associations by making a strong association between themselves and the NSFCC. There are different kinds of cues that could make consumers associate firms as sponsors of the NSFCC (Chadwick & Burton, 2011; Humphreys, Cornwell, McAlister, Kelly, Quinn, & Murray, 2010). Findings indicate if cues that were sponsor property rights were more effective than other cues (e.g. contextual cues or hashtags). In addition, if customer characteristics had an impact on their perception and interpretation of the different cues.

Were any cues in the tweets and posts on social media more effective than others to make an association as a NSFCC sponsor?

Lastly, ambush marketing are a growing threat to the concept of sponsorship (Mazodier, Quester, & Chandon, 2012; Payne, 1998, Piatkowska, Zysko, & Gocłowska, 2015). In

order to judge the impact level among consumers of the ambushers, their use of social network sites to achieve increased brand awareness and create new brand associations were examined.

What were the differences between official sponsors' and ambushers' strategies on social media?

Further, the methods used in this study are explained briefly. A netnographic case study was the research method of use for this study. The data collection was divided into two phases. The first phase consisted of a content analysis of the Facebook and Twitter accounts of sponsors, ambushers, NSFCC-athletes, and the NSFCC. The second phase was a survey conducted among students. This study will shed light on the current practice of sponsors' activation activities on social media and its effects. In addition, if ambush marketing is an issue for attractive NSOs and their sponsors. This master thesis is structured as followed.

To begin, previous research in the field is presented, as well as the gaps in past research that this study aimed to fill. Next, an explanation of the context is provided followed by a presentation of the theory used to explain and discuss the research findings. Then, the approach used to gather and analyse the data is presented and explained. The results of the study are then presented, the findings highlighted and their implications to the research questions are discussed with relevant theory. Lastly, the conclusion provides a summary of the findings with the theoretical and practical implications of the study. To conclude, directions for future studies and limitations of this study are given.

1.2 Previous research

To begin, the research on social media in the field of sport management is new and started with the first publication in 2008. Until June 2014, the literature has focused on six areas within social media. According to Abeza, O'Reilly, Séguin, and Nzindukiyimana (2015), those are: a) the nature of social media, b) defining constructs, c) how social media has been used as a marketing and communication tool, d) legal and ethical considerations, e) industry applications, and f) social media's impact on marketing and journalism practice. Most of the research has focused on Twitter (41.7

%), Facebook (12.5 %) and Blogs (10.4 %) (Abeza et al., 2015). Sports are able to attract awareness and create a huge activity on social media from the public. For example, major events like the FIFA Women's World Cup final and the UEFA Champions League final had the most tweets per second in 2011 (Highfield, Harrington, & Bruns, 2013).

As a way to connect with their fans, it has become a common practice for sports clubs and teams to have their own Twitter account where they tweet about matches, trainings, and other interesting news about their team (Witkemper, Lim & Waldburger, 2012). Social media has the distinct ability to allow conversation between the sponsor and the consumer, which makes it appropriate for creating long term relationships with the customers, rather than a quick increase in sales. (Hoffman & Fodor, 2010). Twitter makes it possible for people to instantly express their feelings and thoughts around the action at a sports event, or their reaction on sports news (Hutchins, 2011; Sanderson & Kassing, 2011; Smith & Smith, 2012), all while interacting with other sport fans (Armstrong, Delia, & Giardina, 2014; Highfield et al., 2013). Blaszk, Burch, Frederick, Clavio, and Walsh (2012) found that the ones that used Major League Baseball's official hashtag #WorldSeries were mainly fans (87 %) that expressed fanship (53,7 %) or interacted with others (22,3 %). To facilitate fans discussion on social media, Major sports events have their own official hashtag like #WorldSeries2011 and #Masters2012. In addition, hashtags created by fans or fan communities became popular when people tweet about the event. Those hashtags could be related to a team name, team nickname, or team slogans (Smith & Smith, 2012). Despite the great opportunity for a two-way communication that Twitter provided, organizations tend to use Twitter as a tool for one-way communication (Waters & Jamal, 2011). In the NSO's communication with their fans, the athletes are an important contributor.

Through social media, fans are able to easily interact with athletes (Hutchins, 2011; Kassing & Sanderson, 2010; Smith & Smith, 2012). Athletes using Twitter for example had the potential to reach a great amount of fans. In 2012, twenty-two top athletes had reached over two million followers on Twitter. The athlete with the most followers was the soccer player Kaka with eight million followers (Gaines, 2012 January 18th). There are many reasons why professional athletes have a large Twitter following. Such as

giving the fans a little inside perspective and sharing their thoughts about their competitions (Kassing & Sanderson, 2010). In addition, fans got the story directly from the athletes, not filtered by media (Hutchins, 2011; Sanderson & Kassing, 2011). Previous research has shown that the athletes' tweets contained mainly attempts to engage fans in a two-way communication and sharing of personal stories. Only 5-10 % of the tweets were characterized as promotion of sponsors (Hambrick, Simmons, Greenhalgh, & Greenwell, 2010; Hull, 2014). Abeza, O'Reilly, Séguin, and Jones (2015 September 10th) studied the top 50 athletes in the world on Twitter and found that 42 used their account for product endorsement. Among those athletes, on average 34 % of the tweets contained product endorsement, but the degree of product endorsement varied extensively between the athletes. Over 50 % of the athletes' endorsement tweets contained a hashtag. The athletes used mainly text or a written statement about the product (Abeza et al., 2015 September 10th).

Sport clubs and NSOs could also use social media to promote their sponsors and increase their value as a sponsorship object. Parganas and Anagnostopoulos (2015) studied the marketing strategy of the soccer club, Liverpool FC. It was important for the sponsors to be included in Liverpool's marketing strategy, since fans were more loyal to firms that sponsored their favorite club and Liverpool had a global reach. However, they had to balance commercial-related activities and activities that increased fandom (e.g. team-related content: Parganas & Anagnostopoulos, 2015). Both sports clubs and sponsors can achieve this by facilitate and lead discussions in a natural and desired way (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011).

With social media, the opportunities to create communication about the brand or a product are endless. For example, Kumar and Mirchandani (2012) helped the Indian ice cream retailer, Hokey Pokey Ice Cream Creation, create a campaign where costumers were encouraged to make a custom ice cream creation and talk about it using social media. They called the campaign "Creations on the Wall" and in order to win prizes customers posted their creations on a wall, which became a part of the menu (Kumar & Mirchandani, 2012). To further increase the buzz, customers got "Brownie Points" each time their friends and followers purchased or discussed their ice cream creation. They could use these points to redeem prizes and discounts at the ice cream bar. Because of this campaign, Hokey Pokey increased sales revenue by 40 %, social media ROI (i.e.

buzz and sentiment) by 83 %, and brand awareness by 49 % (Kumar & Mirchandani, 2012). This shows that marketing through social media holds a lot of possibilities and potential. Even though social media has a great potential in terms of marketing for organizations and sponsors, there is a lack of research on its utilisation.

Tiago and Verissimo (2014) found that marketing managers of large Portuguese firms used digital marketing mainly to build the brand and to increase knowledge. Among the firms included in the survey, 73 % used Facebook while 42 % used Twitter, but the mostly used communication channel was corporate webpages, which were used by 90 % (Tiago & Verissimo, 2014). According to Parganas and Anagnostopoulos (2015), Liverpool FC integrated all media channels in their marketing strategy, since they served different purposes. In addition, an integrative approach was likely to increase the number of followers on each channel. Eagleman (2013) found that Facebook (100 %) and Twitter (98,4 %) were by far the most used social network sites by national governing bodies of sports in USA. In addition, the NGBs used social media to control its image, engage with fans, and increase awareness its brand and the sport (Eagleman, 2013).

One way to increase awareness on Twitter is by having your tweet retweeted by others. Boehmer and Tandoc Jr. (2015) studied which factors had the greatest influence on people retweeting sports-related content on Twitter. They found interest, relevance, informativeness, and originality as the most influential factors for retweeting in general within the context of sports. According to Boehmer and Tandoc Jr (2015), 52.6 % indicated interest as the most influential factor. For example, soccer fans or people interested in cross-country skiing are more likely to retweet about soccer and cross-country skiing than tweets on other subjects. As to relevance, which scored 14.6 %, people were more likely to retweet a tweet about an athlete or a team that they like (Boehmer & Tandoc Jr., 2015). Informativeness and originality scored 8.8 % and 5.8 % respectively. Informativeness referred to tweets based on facts and not personal opinions. Originality referred to tweets with new content and not copied from others (Boehmer & Tandoc Jr., 2015). Facebook also provides the opportunity to increase awareness and especially by increasing the number of followers.

According to Sysomos (2009 November), popular Facebook fan pages does not automatically cause a high frequency of wall posts. The average Facebook fan page had creator-generated wall post every 15.7 days and a Facebook fan page with over one million fans had creator-generated wall post every 16.1 days. However, the significant difference was fan-generated content (e.g. comments and shares) and non-stream creator-generated content (e.g. photo albums, videos, links, and favorite pages). A Facebook fan page with more than one million fans had three times more non-stream creator-generated content than the average Facebook fan page and 70 times more fan-generated content (Sysomos, 2009 November).

The concepts of buzz, sentiment, and engagement measure the activity on social media (Meenaghan et al., 2013). First, “Buzz monitoring refers to number of mentions logged in relation to an entity, i.e., the brand generally, the brand as sponsor or indeed to the sponsored property” (Meenaghan et al., 2013, p. 452). With that in mind, the buzz on social media provides an overview of the content associated with a brand and may lead to increased brand awareness and engagement. Whether it is a comment on Facebook, a tweet with the brand “hashtaged”, or a picture on Instagram or Facebook. However, the buzz analysis does not show the whole picture of the word-of-mouth, since a significant portion happens on private messages on Facebook and offline (Hoffmann & Fodor, 2010). Second, sentiment analysis refers to whether a user express positivity or negativity towards a sponsor’s brand. The sentiment analysis reviews the comments on social media related to different entities (e.g. sponsor, athletes, or the sport in general; Meenaghan et al., 2013). Third, engagement provides a more comprehensive analysis of the connection to the brand like comments, tweets, and private messages that fans address directly to a sponsor or a sports clubs. Engagement also includes less comprehensive measures like number of “Facebook fans”, “likes”, and “Twitter followers” (Meenaghan et al., 2013).

The total amount of buzz also includes tweets with brand-related pictures. According to Jensen, Limbu and Spong (2015) laypersons are more likely to include a sponsor visually in a tweet than actually mention the sponsor. Jensen et al. (2015) studied tweets with pictures of brand logos on the soccer jerseys of the finalists of the UEFA Champions League final in 2015. Their findings showed the increased possibilities for brand reach and user engagement for sponsors with brand logos visible on athlete

clothing. However, the effect of tweets, which included brand logos, on other users were inconclusive (Jensen et al., 2015).

Delia and Armstrong (2015) analyzed buzz and sentiment on Twitter related to the sponsors of the 2013 French Open. They studied if sponsors' functional fit with the event and sponsors' social media presence were factors that affected the amount of buzz and sentiment. All tweets collected included either the hashtag "#FrenchOpen" or the tournaments official hashtag "#rg13" and mentioned one or several of the sponsors. They registered those tweets either as positive or negative. In addition, they accessed the sponsors' Twitter account to measure activity and categorized by functional fit based on brand image. The results showed that functional fit had a weak positive effect on sponsor-related sentiment, and that a sponsor's social media activity had a weak positive effect on event-related buzz (Delia & Armstrong, 2015).

A study done by Abeza, Pegoraro, Naraine, Séguin, and O'Reilly (2014) studied TOP Olympic sponsors' activity on Twitter during the 2014 Sochi Olympic Winter Games. They examined the characteristics of TOP sponsors' social media strategy and the use of social media as an activation platform to communicate. The sponsors used different ways to communicate with the consumers. Some focused on a large number of tweets, others on retweeting, and others again on the use of hashtags. They identified three types of sponsorship tactics including promotion, athlete encouragement, and customer appreciation. They did not find any regular patterns regarding sponsorship activation strategy on Twitter and the same goes for the number of tweets, hashtags, and retweets. However, regarding sponsorship tactics, they identified promotion as the dominant one. In addition, some of the sponsors connected with athletes' tweets by cheering and congratulating them. The last sponsorship tactic identified was showing their appreciation to their customers (Abeza et al., 2014).

Chavanat, Martinent, and Ferrand (2009) studied the relationship between a sponsor and its several sponsees (i.e. an event, a national team, and an athlete on that team). Studies on sponsorship leveraging and activation on social media are very limited. As far as concerned, no study has studied sponsors' and ambushers' activation activities on social media and examined the consumers' response on the activity. In addition, the impact of the sponsees activity (i.e. the NSO and athletes) on the return of investment.

2.0 Context

Before delving into the concept of sponsorship a brief explanation of the NSFCC's standing and its sponsorship programme, the WSC in Falun, and the phenomena social media is necessary. Cross-country skiing is a niche sport, which does not get much recognition worldwide, but is a big part of Norway's identity as a nation. One of the earliest evidences of skis in use in Norway could be traced back to the Stone Age (Bø, 1968; Gotaas, 2010). Since then, cross-country skiing has been a defining part of the Norwegian history and culture (e.g. Birkebeinerrennet and the World Cup Nordic in Holmenkollen, Oslo). Skis were an important tool for transportation for both the military and civilians. Cross-country skiing has always been a popular form of exercise and recreation. Whether it is an easy walk with friends and family or a more serious exercise towards a personal goal. It is safe to say that it is Norway's national sport and the saying that "Norwegians are born with skis on their legs" proves it (Alnæs, 2007).

On the other hand, the Norwegians' success in international competitions over many years might explain some of its popularity. Norway have been a significant contender in the skiing disciplines ever since the first Olympic Winter Games in Chamonix in 1924. They have earned several medals especially in cross-country skiing (IOC, 2016). Of late, Norway have had exceptional success in cross-country skiing. In the FIS Nordic World Ski Championship in Oslo in 2011, Norway earned eight out of twelve gold medals and got in total sixteen medals in cross-country skiing (FIS, 2016). This success continued over the later years in both FIS Nordic World Ski Championships, Olympic Winter Games, and the seasonal World Cup. Especially, the female athletes Marit Bjørgen and Therese Johaug, and the male athlete Petter Northug has been the biggest contributors to this success (Agedal, 2015 March 2nd).

2.1 NSFCC's sponsorship programme

In the mid-nineteenth century, the first known cross-country skiing competitions were organized in Norway. The Norwegian Ski Federation was founded in 1908 and it has grown ever since (Bø, 1968). NSF's main purpose was to organize all skiing competitions, and work for growth from both a grass-root perspective and an elite perspective. They got their revenue from sponsors, FIS, and from the national lottery, in

which the latter is distributed by the Ministry of Culture (Alnæs, 2007). The NSFCC and their athletes were a popular sponsorship object and in 2015 NSFCC's revenue from sponsors was approximately NOK 65 million (approximately 7.6 million USD). According to Sponsor Insight (n.d.b), three of the top five most mentioned Norwegian athletes in the Norwegian newspapers, both paper and online versions, in 2014 were cross-country skiers. Worth noticing, this research did not include mentions on blogs and on social media, but it gave an indication of the most popular Norwegian athletes within Norway.

The sponsorship program of NSFCC consists of four sponsorship tiers. An overview of the three upper tiers are in appendix 1. On top, there is one main sponsor, which in theory should get the most exposure. In addition, the NSFCC has one main sponsor for the youth teams. The next tier is the team sponsors and together with the main sponsor, they get their logo on athletes' clothing. The third tier is what NSFCC called strategic partners. They are sponsors that offer products or services of benefit for the NSFCC (e.g. Bendit offered fruit, smoothies, and beverage belts and BMW transportation of athletes and NSFCC staff). Lastly, every athlete has their own gear supplier that covers skies, ski boots, poles, glasses, and gloves (J.A.M. Gaustad, marketing department NSF, e-mail, September 23rd 2015). However, the athletes' gear suppliers have to be a part of the NSF's Skipool Norway Racing. They pay a membership fee in addition to contracts with athletes. These membership fees vary, but are the same within each category of one discipline (e.g. cross-country skies EUR 7050 and cross-country ski poles EUR 3650: J. Fekene, Manager NSF Skipool, e-mail, March 18th 2016).

In addition, the NSF has a Skipool for their own suppliers, which is divided into four different categories (i.e. clothing, support, ski waxing and tools, and food and accommodation). To be a part of this Skipool Norway, the suppliers has to pay approximately USD 5.000 and deliver products/services valued approximately USD 24.000. The following sponsorship property rights are given to the members of these Skipools: a) Use of the Skipool Norway Racing or Skipool Norway logo, b) Use of the term ("Official supplier to the Norwegian Ski Federation" or similar terms approved by the NSF, c) Use of pictures of racers that the supplier had an individual contract with, d) The supplier's logo and web link on the website of Skipool Norway Racing or Skipool Norway, and e) List of all the members in Skipool Norway Racing or Skipool Norway,

included contact information (J. Fekene, Manager NSF Skipool, e-mail, March 18th 2016).

Eleven female and twelve male athletes represented Norway's cross-country national team during the WSC in Falun (Norwegian Ski Federation, 2015 February 18th). Among those, two female (i.e. Kari Vikhagen Geitnes and Ragnhild Haga) and two male (i.e. Petter Northug and Niklas Dyrhaug) were from private teams, and had to sign a representation agreement with NSFCC (Scheve, 2014 April 25th). Part of this agreement included a clause that the Norwegian Ski Federation holds the commercial rights to all athletes that are representing the national team (Norwegian Ski Federation, 2014). However, the NSFCC did allow athletes to have private sponsors as long as the sponsors were not in the same category as any of NSFCC's sponsors. These private sponsors were allowed to use the athletes in marketing campaigns and other sponsor activation activities. NSFCC demanded that the main sponsor, Aker, be visible or mentioned in every promotional activities of private sponsors. Private sponsors could not have their logo on any clothing worn by athletes (J.A.M. Gaustad, marketing department NSF, e-mail, September 23rd 2015). In addition, the event has its own sponsorship program with international sponsors (i.e. FIS' sponsors), national sponsors, and official suppliers (Falun2015, n.d.). Mainly the international sponsors could increase the clutter and add to the confusion, since they are visible on the television coverage.

2.2 FIS Nordic World Ski Championship 2015

A FIS Nordic World Ski Championship is characterized as a major sporting event (e.g. Grand Slams in tennis, PGA/LPGA in golf and other World Championships), and not as a mega event such as the Olympic Games and the FIFA World Cup. At this event, there were twenty-one competitions and approximately 700 athletes from 55 nations. It consisted of the Nordic disciplines cross-country skiing, ski jumping, and Nordic combined. In cross-country skiing, both men and women competed in six different disciplines each during the WSC. (langrenn.com, 2015 March 1st). In 2015, the FIS Nordic World Ski Championship was held for the fourth time in Falun, Sweden. The Championship took place from February 18th to March 1st. The organizing committee expected the event to have approximately 500 million television viewers worldwide,

200.000 visitors and 1.200 from the press (Falun2015, n.d.). Table 2.1 shows the number of Norwegian television viewers and the market share for each competition. Hereby, the FIS Nordic World Ski Championship in Falun 2015 will be referred to as WSC.

Table 2.1: An overview of Norwegian medals, Norwegian television viewers, and market share for each competition.

Date	Discipline (gender)	Norwegian medals	Television viewers	Market share
19. Feb	Sprint (male – female)	Gold, bronze (female). Gold, bronze (male)	1.001.000	85 %
21. Feb	Skiathlon (male – female)	Gold, silver (female).	1.010.000 (female) 1.266.000 (male)	88 % (female) 88 % (male)
22. Feb	Team sprint (male – female)	Gold (female). Gold (male)	1.378.000	89 %
24. Feb	10 km individual start (female)	None	502.000	85 %
25. Feb	15 km individual start (male)	Bronze	789.000	92 %
26. Feb	Relay (female)	Gold	1.065.000	90 %
27. Feb	Relay (male)	Gold	1.025.000	93 %
28. Feb	30 km mass start (female)	Gold, silver	1.206.000	91 %
01. Mar	50 km mass start (male)	Gold	1.537.000	89 %

Note. G. K. Ludvigsen, NRK analysis, e-mail, March 16th 2016; langrenn.com, 2015, March 1.

The event is held every second year thus making it exclusive for athletes, fans and sponsors. In 2015, the WSC was seen as the highpoint of the year with Tour de Ski as the second most important. The season also consisted of World Cup series, Tour de Ski included, which crowned one overall winner in each gender at the end (FIS, 2013). The WSC place second after the Olympic Winter Games as the most popular event, both among athletes and fans. As opposed to the Olympic Winter Games, the sponsors of a national team or athletes did not get any restrictions from the event organizer regarding sponsorship activation.

2.3 About Facebook and Twitter

This study examined the social network sites Facebook and Twitter as sponsorship activation channels. Social media can be defined as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). The concept of social media can be traced back to the late 1950s when the social network site called “Open Diary” was founded by Bruce and Susan Abelson for dairy writers (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). As the internet developed, it opened up the opportunity for other social network sites, as we know today. This digital development has led to a change in how people use communication and news channels (Dimmick, Chan, & Li, 2004). It has also affected how sponsors activate their sponsorship.

Indeed, the increased use of social media by consumers has led sponsors and others within sports to use it as an important activation and communication tool (O’Keefe, Titlebaum, & Hill, 2009; Tiago & Verissimo, 2014; Williams & Chinn, 2010). The fact that Twitter plays a role in the video game EA Sports Madden 13 in an attempt to make the game more realistic shows how integrated Twitter has become within the sport landscape (Blaszka et al., 2012). The advantage of social network sites, like Twitter and Facebook, is that they are free of charge and easy accessible (Boehmer & Tandoc Jr., 2015; Smith & Smith, 2012). Social media is a tool for companies to communicate with their customers and it also gives the customers (i.e. fans) the opportunity to talk to each other (Abeza, O’Reilly, & Reid, 2013; Hipke & Hachtmann, 2014; Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Facebook was founded in 2004 and started as a small network for students at Harvard University (D’Onfro, 2015 June 16; Kietzmann et al., 2011). As of June 2015, Facebook had more than 1.4 billion users worldwide (D’Onfro, 2015 June 16th). In Norway, 3.2 million people or 79.2 % of the population had an active Facebook account. Of those, 83 % used Facebook at least once per day (Ipsos IMM, 2015 January 28th). Facebook is somewhat of a personal user profile filled with content, such as personal information, photos, videos, and written posts (Hughes, Rowe, Batey, & Lee, 2011; Smith, Fisher, & Yongjian, 2012; Witkemper et al., 2012). Users get to connect and engage with others by adding them as friends, indicate if they like their friends’

posts, comment on it, or write on their friends' wall (Smith et al., 2012). Facebook provides the option to make wall post visible to all Facebook-users, Facebook-friends only, or just some specific Facebook-friends (Facebook, n.d.a).

For sport organizations, Facebook is a useful communication tool because of the invention of Facebook fan pages, which were launched in 2007. On a Facebook fan page, companies and organizations can create its own user profile, and all of its posts appears on the news wall to every user that has become a fan by "liking" that page (Sysomos, 2009 November). Creator-generated (e.g. written by the page owner or administrator, such as "wall posts", "videos", "links", etc.) and fan-generated (e.g. wall posts, fan photos, and fan videos) are the two categories of Facebook-content (Sysomos, 2009 November). Worth noting, for sweepstakes on Facebook it is not allowed to have "share the post" or "tag a friend" as a competition criterion (Facebook, 2015 January 8th).

What makes Facebook an appropriate tool for achieving awareness is its abilities for other users to like, share, and comment on a wall post on a Facebook fan page (Facebook, n.d.b). When a user hit like, comments on, or share a post from a Facebook fan page with their Facebook-friends that post appears on the news wall of all of their friends. Then again, their Facebook-friends could hit like, share, or comment on that post. In that way, content could spread quickly and have a broad reach. On the other hand, if those friends have several hundred Facebook-friends themselves their news wall tends to be fairly cluttered and they might not even notice that post (Jensen et al., 2015). However, the ability to share content to one or a few Facebook-friends in a private message secures that the content is perceived, but to a smaller audience (Facebook, n.d.b). Another social media tool used in recent years is Twitter. Twitter offers different characteristics than Facebook, it also offers the potential to increase brand awareness amongst the public.

Founded in 2006, Twitter has also experienced tremendous growth (Kietzmann et al., 2011). As of June 30th 2015, Twitter counted 316 million monthly active users with an average 500 million tweets sent per day worldwide (Twitter, 2015 June 30th). In Norway, approximately one million people have a Twitter account. Of those, 28 % used Twitter at least once per day and an additional 23 % at least once per week (Ipsos IMM,

2015 January 28th). However, Sysomos (2014) found that 75 % of all activity on Twitter comes from only 5 % of all Twitter user accounts. A big portion of the non-active users use Twitter just to get updated on others news (Armstrong et al., 2014).

Sysomos (2014) also found that “93.6 % of users have less than 100 followers, while 92.4 % follow less than 100 people” (p. 2). For users with less than 150 followers they follow more or less the same amount of users as they have followers themselves. The amount of female and male Twitter-users are 53 % and 47 % respectively (Sysomos, 2014). As opposed to Facebook, popularity on Twitter correlated with the number of tweets. Twitter-users with more than 1000 and 1750 followers had on average 6 and 10 tweets per day respectively. When measuring Twitter popularity by country USA came out on top with 62.14 % of its population using Twitter and the United Kingdom placed second with 7.87 % (Sysomos, 2014).

“Twitter allow users to send 140-character text messages – tweets – to groups of followers.” (Madway, 2009 September 14th). The main purpose of Twitter is to send short status updates to followers about ideas, news, and personal opinions about everyday life or special happenings (Clavio & Kian, 2010; Kietzmann et al., 2011; Kwak, Lee, Park, & Moon, 2010; Smith & Smith, 2012). It is also possible for Twitter-users to upload and share photos and/or videos through third-party websites like Twitpic.com and TwitVid.com (Lovejoy, Waters, & Saxton, 2012). According to Kietzman et al., (2011), Twitter “is more about conversation than identity” (p. 244). One can easily hide his/her identity by using a nickname and a random profile picture.

As opposed to Facebook, there are no restrictions as to whom one can follow. A follower, receives all tweets from the user account (Abeza & O’Reilly, 2014; Kwak et al., 2010; Lovejoy et al., 2012; Sanderson & Kassing, 2011). There are mainly two ways to communicate with other users on Twitter. A user can retweet another user’s tweet or include the user address in a tweet (Kwak et al., 2010; Sanderson & Kassing, 2011). A retweet may consist of the original tweet or the original text with added text by the user. Only users’ tweets and retweets appears on his/her news wall. If someone mention another user in a tweet that user would be notified, but the tweet do not appear on his/her news wall. In addition, when someone retweet a tweet it would spread out to the others who followed the one retweeting (Kwak et al., 2010). Although the tweet

would appear on the news wall of their followers, it is not guaranteed that they would be read (Jensen et al., 2015). Another feature on Twitter is the opportunity to like a specific tweet as a way to show appreciation. The tweets liked by a Twitter-user appears on a other site than the wall of that user's profile page. Those tweets are not distributed to the users' followers (Twitter Help Center, 2015).

What makes Twitter special is its option to use hashtags. "A hashtag is a convention among Twitter users to create and follow a thread of discussion by prefixing a word with a '#' character." (Kwak et al., 2010, p. 2). The hashtag feature makes it easier to follow a discussion and search for information (Lovejoy et al., 2012). The reasons for using hashtags are twofold. Firstly, the use of a trending hashtag in a tweet would make it more likely to increase awareness, since it makes the tweet more searchable. Secondly, making people use a certain hashtag associated with a brand in their tweets increases awareness of that specific campaign and the brand (Jensen et al., 2015). Twitter has also opened up the opportunity for sports events to create their own Twitter page for their official hashtag, as NASCAR did with #NASCAR (Lawyer, 2012 June 10th).

Both Twitter and Facebook are useful tools for sponsorship activation, but they serve different purposes. Hughes et al. (2011) suggested that people have different motives for using Facebook and Twitter. Facebook is more of a tool for those who seek social contact and want to avoid loneliness. On the other hand, Twitter is a tool for expressing opinions and engage in public discussions. Therefore, information sought on Facebook is more of a social and personal character, whereas on Twitter the information are more facts based (Hughes et al., 2011). Facebook is an application where sponsors can present a large amount of content, while Twitter is more about live updates and quick information distribution. Hence, Facebook is more appropriate to present an image as a whole than Twitter (Grimmer & Burk, 2015 September 10th). Furthermore, Twitter might not be as time consuming as Facebook and might attract more fans (Witkemper et al., 2012).

3.0 Theory

Within marketing, the ability to get a message through to consumers and increase brand knowledge is of great importance. This is achieved through the use of the marketing communication mix. According to Kotler and Keller (2006), the marketing communication mix consist of six elements:

- a) Advertising – Any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods or services by an identified sponsor, b) Sales promotion – A variety of short-term incentives to encourage trial or purchase of a product or service, c) Events and experiences – Company-sponsored activities and programs designed to create daily or special brand-related interactions, d) Public relations and publicity – A variety of programs designed to promote or protect a company's image or its individual products, e) Direct marketing – Use of mail, telephone, fax, e-mail, or Internet to communicate directly with or solicit response or dialogue from specific consumers or prospects, and f) Personal selling – Face-to-face interaction with one or more prospective purchasers for the purpose of making presentations, answering questions, and procuring orders (p. 536).

According to Meenaghan (1983), sponsorship is an additional element to the marketing communication mix. It is used as an integrated approach, since it comprises of some of the other elements of the marketing communication mix (e.g. advertising and sales promotion; Meenaghan, 1983). Amis, Slack and Berrett (1999) believe that sport sponsorship has the potential to create a competitive advantage for a company, and that it should be treated as an own discipline within the marketing communication mix. In addition, firms should have employees with specific competence within the field of sport sponsorship in order to utilize the potential (Amis et al., 1999).

In its early days, sponsorship consisted for the most part of donations where the one giving did not expect to receive anything of value in return. Sponsorship was considered philanthropic and more of a social responsibility by sponsoring the local sports club. In many ways, the sponsorship of grass root sports is still considered as such (Close, Finney, Lacey, & Sneath, 2006; Meenaghan, 2015; O'Reilly & Horning, 2013; Séguin, Teed, & O'Reilly, 2005). In the last decades, sponsorship has become highly commercialized, where sponsors get commercial rights offered by the sporting event or

sports team (Meenaghan, 2015; Séguin et al., 2005b). In the last few decades, the amount of money invested in sponsorship has increased rapidly (Farrelly, Quester, & Burton, 2006; Meenaghan, 2001a; Meenaghan, 2015). In 2012, firms spent four billion NOK on sponsorship fees in Norway and 2.9 billion of those were within sports (Sponsor Insight, n.d.a).

Sponsorship offers benefits that differentiates it from other communication elements. Mainly, the offering of product category exclusivity and the way it gets in touch with the market segments. A market segment is a homogeneous group with the same needs, desire, or demographic profile (Kotler & Keller, 2006; Mullin, Hardy & Sutton, 2000; Shank, 2009). Sponsorships connect with the interests and emotions of a target market, like fans of a specific sport and/or an audience at a sport event (Cornwell & Maignan, 1998; Ferrand, Torrigiani, & Camps I Povill, 2006). The concept of fan-involvement helps explain why people seem to connect differently to sponsorship compared to advertisement. People who are following a certain sport on a regular basis seem to recognize the sponsors more often, and as such are more likely to switch to the brand of their sports club's sponsors (Meenaghan, 2001b). A case study conducted by Szerovay (2013) revealed that high fan-identification increased the likelihood of sponsorship recognition. In addition, Eagleman and Krohn (2012) found that dedicated participants at road running competitions were more likely to identify and purchase from event sponsors.

Another characteristic that differentiates sponsorship from other types of marketing is the offering of product category exclusivity. This feature is of great importance for companies as it makes it possible for them to differentiate themselves from other competing companies (Séguin, Lyberger, O'Reilly, & McCarthy, 2005). Marketing differentiation relates heavily to the concept of positioning. "Positioning is defined as fixing your sport entity in the minds of consumers in the target market" (Shank, 2009, p. 189). A sponsor's positioning depends on its target market and perception. By sponsoring a sporting event or a sports team, the company may create a brand image that attracts consumers from the desired target market and give the company a competitive advantage compared to others.

3.1 Brand and communication theory

As mentioned, sponsorship has become a platform for sponsors to connect with the passion of consumers, and get them engaged with the brand in an emotionally charged environment (Meenaghan, 2013; O'Reilly & Horning, 2013). Stated by Pope and Voges (2000) "Sport sponsorship is used to support marketing and corporate objectives, such as improving a company or brand image and increasing consumers' intentions to purchase a company's product or service" (p. 96). As indicated in Pope and Voges' (2000) description of sponsorship, a key component in sponsorships is the company's brand. A brand is a name or symbol that distinguishes a product or service offered by a company from the product or service offered by competitors. Brand's assets that add or subtract to its value are referred to as brand equity. (Aaker, 1991). Brand awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality, and brand associations are the categories of brand equity that companies seek to enhance through sponsorships (Aaker, 1991). First, brand awareness refers to the audience's recognition or recall of the brand. Second, brand loyalty is considered to be achieved when consumers consistently chooses the brand over other competing brands. Third, perceived quality refers to consumers' perceived quality of the brand's products or service in general and compared to its alternatives that serves the same purpose. Lastly, the first thing that comes to peoples' minds when they hear or see the brand is referred to as brand associations. These four categories of brand equity are related to each other and would affect each other (Aaker, 1991; O'Reilly & Séguin, 2009).

On the other hand, brand image is how the consumers perceive the brand of a company. Building brand image is often a key objective for sponsors (Cliffe & Motion, 2005; Keller, 1993; Kirmani & Zeithaml, 1993; Meenaghan, 2001a). To achieve that, companies often chooses a sports organization, event, or athlete that shares its same fundamental business values. As such, sponsors often wish to create associations with the values of the sport organization (O'Reilly & Horning, 2013). According to Javalgi, Traylor, Gross, & Lampman (1994), a sponsorship engagement could either enhance a company's brand image or affect its brand image in a negative way. However, the way the sponsors communicate with the consumers would affect consumers' perception.

The model of effective communication is relevant when examining the sponsor's ability to break through the marketing clutter and combat ambush marketing. The Shannon-Weaver model of effective communication postulates that the sender's message need to fit the receiver's needs and perceptions in order to be effective. This will allow the receivers' decoding of the message to correspond with the sender's encoding (as cited in Danaher & Rossiter, 2011, p. 9). Regarding the decoding, cues within the message plays an important role and they could be put into different categories (Humphreys et al., 2010): a) specific cues – brand names or athlete names and b) contextual cues – cues that gives different associations based on context. Examples of contextual cues are a picture of Norwegian fans or the Norwegian flag, which create many different associations. However, when seen during the WSC in Falun it is more likely to be associated with the NSFCC. Here, the time and text are of great importance. This kind of imagery and creative use of terminology could create an allusion among consumers (Chadwick & Burton, 2011). Urich (2015 September 11th) found that advertisement cues related to the event created a stronger association to the FIFA World Cup 2014 in Brazil as opposed to soccer-related cues.

To achieve awareness, the message needs to stand out among many others and be the one the decoder chose to interpret (Crompton, 2004a). Research has shown that cues, like the emotions or a still picture from advertisement, could retrieve memories from that advertisement (Edell & Moore, 1993). In addition, the same study showed that emotional advertisements had a high score on recall, and the same goes for advertisements with claims. It is also worth noting that upbeat, uneasy, and negative feelings have the best effect of such recall (Edell & Moore, 1993). According to Alwitt (2002), consumers are more likely to respond positively to suspenseful commercials, since they evoke certain feelings and emotions. Neder, Stieler, and Germelmann (2015 September 10th) found that consumers had an increase in emotional excitement days close to a sporting event, especially one day prior to the sporting event. They meant that suspenseful advertisement that played on the excitement related to the event would be more effective. (Neder et al., 2015 September 10th). The key for the sponsor in order to achieve effective communication is to make a clear link to the sponsee by the messages in the activation of the sponsorship.

In that case, the functional fit between the sponsor and the sponsee are of great importance. Functional fit is based on how well the sponsors' brand and its products/services relate to the sponsee (Delia & Armstrong, 2015). For example, both Budweiser and Super Bowl has an image of tough and male dominant, and the creation of the name "Budbowl" made the link even clearer (Amis, Pant, & Slack, 1997). Other sponsors are more of a natural fit with the sponsee, such as a sporting goods company (i.e. Adidas) sponsoring a specific sport (i.e. soccer; Meenaghan, 1983). Their sponsorship objectives are more towards creating awareness and consumer value for their products. Many sponsors and/or potential sponsors follow specific guidelines to select the right sponsees that best fits their profiles and marketing strategies (Meenaghan, 2015). For example, Vodafone has the following criteria when evaluating a sponsorship opportunity: potential for leveraging, opportunities for networking, awareness regionally and national exposure (Cliffe & Motion, 2005). The length of the sponsorship is also believed to be of importance for sponsors interested in increasing brand equity. The length of a sponsorship will also have a positive effect on sponsor recall regarding a specific sport event (Cornwell, Roy, & Roy, 2001). However, a sponsor need to activate its sponsorship in order to make consumers aware.

3.2 Activation

In its early beginning sponsorship provided a relatively clutter free environment, where sponsors had exclusive and easy access to consumers. As sponsorship became more popular, it decreased in value due to an increased clutter (Meenaghan, 2015). The challenge for sponsors is to stand out in the marketing clutter, also called noise in the communication literature (Crompton, 2004a). The marketing clutter refers to the numerous marketing messages that consumers are exposed to on a daily basis with the aim of influencing them to buy a product or being attached to a brand (Meenaghan, 2015; O'Reilly & Séguin, 2009).

Consequently, sponsors invest money (over and above the rights fees paid to sponsors) for leveraging and activation initiatives (Cornwell, Weeks, & Roy, 2005; Séguin et al., 2005b; Smith, 2008). Leveraging refers to the marketing initiatives sponsors use to communicate and send messages to an audience, while activation initiatives refers to the activities that make the audience interact and get involved with the sponsor (Weeks,

Cornwell, & Drennan, 2008). Examples of leveraging are signs and other advertisements around the stadium and different company logos on the match program. The main object of leveraging is to increase the awareness of the audience, as well as to create a distinction and recognition of the sponsor's affiliation. Contests and different activities involving players from a professional team are examples of activation initiatives (Dees, 2011).

How much a sponsor could afford or was willing to spend on sponsorship activation varied. The results from a case study by O'Reilly and Horning (2013) showed that there was no definite answer on how to activate a sponsorship. With that in mind, each organization needs to find its own unique strategy that reflects the organizations reality. According to O'Reilly and Horning (2013), sponsors has spent as much as seven times the amount paid in sponsorship fees on activation, including all related expenses. Other studies showed that the activation ratio tended to be between 0.5-2:1 (Farrelly, Quester, & Burton, 1997; O'Keefe et al., 2009). A few years ago, O'Keefe et al. (2009) noticed a decrease in the activation spending among sponsors. The reason being the new and cheap communication channels provided by social media (e.g. Facebook and Twitter). However, the development of new media, with social media in particular, increases the marketing clutter (Meenaghan, 2015).

Sponsors try to be creative in order to stand out of the marketing clutter, and here I will cover some of the newest activation attempts and trends. One of the best industries in the activation of sponsorships is the beverage industry. They have customized local activation programs in addition to the activation for national exposure (O'Keefe et al., 2009). Some sponsors have included social responsibility or cause-related initiatives in their activation program (Fortunato, 2013; Meenaghan, 2015; Uhrich, Koenigstorfer, & Groeppel-Klein, 2014). For example, MasterCard contributed to "Stand Up To Cancer" through its sponsorship with Major League Baseball (Fortunato, 2013). Still, the degree of fit between the cause of the charity and the brand can influence the amount of customer purchase (Pracejus & Olsen, 2004).

One of the newest trends in sponsorship activation is the creation of a total experience to engage the fans (Meenaghan & O'Sullivan, 2013). As such, the new activation programs are thematic and all of the sponsor's activities use the same theme in order to

have the best chance of recognition (Dees, 2011). The theme should be linked to the sponsorship objectives and values, since it would more likely create associations between the brand and the sponsee (O'Reilly & Horning, 2013). As mentioned, sponsors activate as a way to stand out in the marketing clutter. It is also believed that sponsorship activation is a way to combat ambush marketing (O'Reilly and Horning, 2013).

Ambush marketing is a phenomenon mostly found at mega sport events (e.g. the Olympic Games and the FIFA World Cup), but also in popular sport leagues such as the National Football League (NFL). Those aforementioned sport events and leagues have high sponsorship fees (Piatkowska et al., 2015). Therefore ambush marketing may be seen as a more favorable and affordable strategy. The first case of ambush marketing was seen during the Los Angeles Olympic Games in 1984 and has increased ever since (Meenaghan, 2015). Ambush marketing is a way that companies use on purpose to associate themselves with sponsor properties without paying sponsorship fees. A successful ambush may also weaken the audience perceived link between the official sponsor and the event (Crompton, 2004b; O'Sullivan & Murphy, 1998; Payne, 1998, Pitt, Parent, Berthon, & Steyn, 2010; Séguin et al., 2005a).

Chadwick and Burton (2011) suggested three types of ambush marketing: a) direct – where an ambusher deliberate tries to associate itself with the sponsee and makes a clear reference by use of protected sponsorship properties, b) indirect – the attempt to create an allusion by the use of imagery, terminologies, or referring to sponsorship properties' values or theme, and c) unintentional – the creation of a link between an ambusher and sponsee without an attempt from the ambusher. There are several types of tactics of ambush marketing which can be categorized as follows (Crompton, 2004b; Meenaghan, 2015) It should be noted that the last ambush marketing tactic was the most relevant for this research: a) Have advertisement on the broadcast of the event, b) Be sponsor of other entities that are involved with the event (e.g. athletes and teams), c) Have advertisement on locations close to the event, d) Other creative advertisement that creates an association to the event.

A few research studies have examined the impact of ambush marketing. Portlock and Rose (2009) found that consumers in the United Kingdom, with a high interest in the

FIFA World Cup 2006, were more likely to distinguish official sponsors from ambushers. Dedicated fans of events and/or teams may be more familiar with official sponsors, this may not be the case for others. Research done by Shani and Sandler (1998) related to the Olympic Games in Atlanta showed that most consumers did not know about ambush marketing as a practice and did not really care. This lack of knowledge was supported by Séguin et al. (2005a), which also found that ambush marketing increased marketing clutter and that the practice was frowned upon. On the other hand, McKelvey, Sandler, and Snyder (2012) found that participants at the New York Marathon had a negative attitude towards ambushers. They argue that participants recognise the importance of the official sponsors for this type of event as opposed to mega or major events (e.g. the Super Bowl or the FIFA World Cup; McKelvey et al., 2012). As this research studies indicate, ambush marketing is a practice that weakens the effect and value of sponsorships.

Official sponsors and event organizers have recognized ambush marketing as a threat to sponsorship (Mazodier et al., 2012; Payne, 1998; Piatkowska et al., 2015). As such, Shani and Sandler (1998) argue that the best way to diminish the impact of ambushers to activate sponsorship rights and create a clear link with the sponsee. The most natural way to make that link is to display the sponsor's property rights (e.g. the use of the event's name, logo, and the use of the word "official sponsor"; Hartland & Skinner, 2005). However, sponsors should strive to create a distinctive image that has a clear link to the sponsee (Amis et al., 1999). It is also important that the sponsee highlight the sponsor's contribution to the event or sports team in order to make the link even stronger (Shani & Sandler, 1998). Lyberger and McCarthy (2001) found that fans' lack of awareness regarding the Super Bowls sponsorship program made them less able to distinguish between official sponsors and ambushers. Fans did also fail to recognise sponsors of different levels as opposed to the Olympic Games who has a clear sponsorship program (Lyberger & McCarthy, 2001).

3.3 Sponsorship ROI

ROI stands for return of investments and is important for firms to consider when they evaluate their sponsorship engagement and strategies. There are several ways to measure ROI of a sponsorship and it often connect closely to the sponsorship objectives (Smith, 2008). One way is to look at the changes in sale over the course of that period. Other factors such as additional marketing initiatives may impact changes in sales as well. Therefore, a more appropriate way to measure the return of investments is to look at changes in brand awareness, brand association and brand image (Smith, 2008). Changes in brand associations can be measured by using a survey to measure the degree of sponsorship recall from sport event or which sport that was associated with the firm (i.e. the first that comes to mind; Pope & Voges, 1999). However, to get the real impact the percentage of competitor recall should be subtracted from the percentage of sponsor recall (Crompton, 2004a).

By studying which values a firm is associated with would reveal any changes in the firms brand image (Smith, 2008). Brand awareness could be measure by studying attendants' recall of brands after an event (Bennett, 1999; Nicholls, Roslow, & Dubliss, 1999). However, according to Crompton (2004a) people are more likely to choose a brand to be the sponsor based on its popularity rather than their remembrance of sponsors' venue signage. Bayne and Cianfrone (2013) found that a small amount of Facebook updates close up to an event significantly increased awareness among the ones liking the event page. However, the effect of awareness on Facebook-friends receiving the update on their news wall were unknown. In addition, sponsors who had focused on internal activation could measure the effect based on employees' motivation and satisfaction (O'Reilly & Séguin, 2009).

4.0 Research method

This study looked at how the sponsors of the NSFCC used Facebook and Twitter as a sponsorship activation channel in the month prior to and during the WSC. Here, the practical approach to study the research question are presented and explained. This include the sample, data collection, and analysis. There are three levels within human science research that formed this research: research methodology, research method, and research techniques and procedures. According to Van Manen (1997) research methodology refers to “the philosophic framework, the fundamental assumptions and characteristics of a human science perspective” (p. 27). Hence, human create knowledge in different ways based on how they see and interpret the world. Then, research method refers to the design of the study based on the research question. The research method of choice was a mixed method netnographic case study, which was the guideline for the collection of data. The research techniques and procedures refers to how the data were collected practically (Van Manen, 1997). The research techniques of choice were mixed method content analysis and a quantitative survey.

4.1 Methodology and research method

The research methodology of choice was the view of a social constructivist. As previously mentioned, context and individual preferences affect people’s interpretation of sponsorship activation activities. Goffman (1974) had the following example “When participant roles in an activity are differentiated – a common circumstance – the view that one person has of what is going on is likely to be quite different from that of another. There is a sense in which what is play for the golfer is work for the caddy” (p. 8). Here, the key idea that is fundamental to my research is that people construct their own meaning of their surroundings (Crotty, 1998). How consumers would interpret a post or a tweet was a result of its many characteristics seen together. In addition, consumers would get different kind of associations from that post or tweet based on their previous experience. Therefore, a mixed methods approach was necessary while collecting data from the posts and tweets by the different groups. The qualitative phase delved deeper into the data to explain the patterns found by the quantitative phase. In addition, the inclusion of a quantitative survey was necessary in order to get other people’s interpretations of sponsors’ and ambushers’ activity on social media.

A case study was defined as the study of a system bounded by time and place and in a single instance (Gerring, 2007; Schostak, 2006), which in turn was an appropriate definition of a sponsorship. Since sponsorships are complex and unique to the situation, a case study approach was taken in order to analyze the activity on social media and how it was perceived (Yin, 2014). In addition, in this study there were no clear boundaries between the phenomenon and context (Gerring, 2007; Yin, 2014). As a result, the study used multiple resources in order to gather the maximum amount of knowledge on the studied topic. It allowed the researcher to validate a single set of data by means of multiple different perspectives (Yin, 2014). The case study had a netnographic approach, since it looked at sponsorship activation on social media.

Netnography is the online version of the more known methodology ethnography (Kozinets, 2002). Ethnographic research is mainly about studying cultures and subcultures (Higginbottom, 2004). In ethnographic research, the researcher observes and interacts with the people of study through fieldwork (Angrosino, 2007; Ellis, 2004; Kozinets, 2002). This approach allows the researcher to have a better understanding of the people's beliefs, motivation and behaviors (Tedlock, 2003). Netnography has been mostly used to study the consumers' habits, decision-making factors, and desires expressed through online forums [e.g. chat rooms, bulletin boards, and multi-user dungeons; Kozinets, 1998; 2002; 2006]. The use of netnography to study consumers' reaction of certain sponsor activation initiatives was more convenient and unobtrusive than conducting face-to-face interviews (Kozinets, 2002). The interactions between NSFCC, sponsors, ambushers, athletes, and fans were in a way an online society of its own. Therefore, a netnographic approach was appropriate in order to get a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

This case study used a mixed method approach with a sequential exploratory strategy, since the quantitative phase was used to examine some of the key findings of the qualitative phase (Creswell, 2009). The first phase used a qualitative research approach, since every Facebook-post or tweet was unique. Qualitative research use people's experience and interpretation to study the question at hand more in-depth in a natural setting (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Therefore, the best way to make a sufficient understanding of the sponsors' activity on social media was to use all its characteristics

as a whole in the interpretation. Statistical patterns and correlations would only show parts of the whole truth or even be misleading. A qualitative approach gave a better indication of how fans and other social media users would interpret the sponsors' activity. In addition, the first phase also used a quantitative approach in order to present some descriptive data about the sponsors' activity on Facebook and Twitter. Like the number of posts, tweets, retweets, likes, and the use of cues that could make an impact on consumers' perception (e.g. pictures of athletes and products, NSF-related hashtags, and statement of sponsorship). The second phase used a quantitative approach by the use of a survey. A quantitative approach measured different people's perception of the sponsors' use of different cues.

4.2 Content analysis

Content analysis are similar to the more known and used research technique, archival research. This content analysis are even more similar to archival research, since the data collected came from recorded or archived sources. Archival data are seen as an amount of information collected and stored systematically by others (Jones, 2010). Blogs, tweets, and personal pages on Facebook were new forms of archives (Grey, 2014). A content analysis with a netnographic approach was conducted in order to get an understanding of the sponsors' and ambushers' activation strategies on social media. Furthermore, how the consumers reacted on those different strategies. In addition, it helped show the online social interaction between the different groups (i.e. sponsors, ambushers, athletes, consumers, and the NSFCC). In terms of, which types of strategies generated engagement and how the consumer engage with the sponsors and ambushers. In addition, in what role the athletes had in promoting and enhancing the sponsors' activation activities. Therefore, the content were analyzed both quantitatively and interpreted in a qualitative way (Gratton & Jones, 2010).

4.2.1 Sample

The data consisted of updates and news from Twitter and Facebook from the period one months prior to and during the WSC. The exact period was from January 18th to March 1st 2015 and represent the peak in popularity of the national team. The sample for this content analysis on social media included the official Twitter and Facebook accounts of

all the sponsors of the NSFCC, all athletes that represented Norway at the WSC in Falun, all identified ambushers, and the NSFCC. The ambushers were included in the study, since previous research has shown that it is a treat the concept of sponsorship (Mazodier, Quester, & Chandon, 2012; Payne, 1998, Piatkowska, Zysko, & Gocłowska, 2015). The athletes and the NSFCC were included, since they have the opportunity to enhance sponsors' activation by including them in their activity on social media. In addition, a review of the athletes' social media accounts may reveal official suppliers.

The main sponsor of the NSFCC was Aker and they were on Twitter, but not on Facebook. Their user profile was found when going through the posts that included the hashtag "@skinorge". The official clothing supplier, BJ (Bjorn Daehlie), were active on Facebook, but not on Twitter. There were in total nine team sponsors (i.e. Norsk Tipping, Ali kaffe, Eiendomsmeidler1 Midt-Norge, Maxbo, BDO, Grilstad, Spar, Weber Norway, and NorEngros). Only two of them were active on Twitter, and those two were Norsk Tipping and Weber Norway. All of them had an active user profile on Facebook. There were thirteen strategical partners and only three of them had an active Twitter user profile, which were Veidekke, Scania, and Adecco Norway. BMW Norway, Vangen & Plotz, and Sponsorlink had a user profile on Twitter, but they were not active during the period of study. On Facebook, all of the strategical partners had a user profile, but BMW Norway, CTC Bilpartner, and Veidekke did not have an active user profile during the period of study. The sponsors' username on both Facebook and Twitter are in appendix 2.

All ambushers and private sponsors identified were included in the content analysis, and their Facebook and Twitter usernames are in appendix 2. In addition, the official Facebook and Twitter accounts of the athletes that represented Norway in the WSC were included in the content analysis. Not all of them were active on Facebook and/or Twitter, and table 4.1 presents an overview of the number of athletes that were active and not active on Twitter and Facebook. Athletes needed to have an open Facebook account in order to be characterized as active on Facebook, which meant that everyone, not only their Facebook-friends, could see their posts. However, those are the ones of interest, since when an athlete was to promote a sponsor or create their own brand a broad reach is desirable. The athletes' Facebook and Twitter usernames are in appendix 2. Lastly, the NSFCC's official Facebook and Twitter account was included in the

content analysis, and their Facebook username were “skilandslaget” and Twitter username were “@skinorge”.

Table 4.1: An overview of national team athletes on Twitter and Facebook

Activity on social media	Female national team athletes	Male national team athletes
On Twitter	4	5
Not active on Twitter	3	5
Not on Twitter	4	2
On Facebook	1	3*
Not active on Facebook	6	8
Not on Facebook	4	1

*One of the athletes had a Facebook fan page where you needed to be a follower in order to see his posts and they would appear on your news wall. Therefore, it was impossible to trace back posts from the period of study unless being a Facebook-friend with that athlete.

4.2.2 Data collection

This content analysis consisted of three parts including the buzz, strategies, and sentiment. First, the WSC- and NSFCC-related tweets were used to examine the buzz from sponsors and possible ambushers. The tweets included the following hashtags “#verdenbesteskijenter” [best ski girls of the world], “#falunVM”, “#heianorge” [GoNorway], “#skivm” [ski-WC], “#falun2015” or the username “@skinorge”. These hashtags and user profiles were chosen, since they were strongly associated with the Norwegian national team and the WSC in Falun. The user profile “@skinorge” was the official user profile for the Norwegian national team. The hashtag “#verdensbesteskijenter” came from the title of a television show about the Norwegian female national cross-country team. The official hashtag of the WSC in Falun was “#falun2015”. The others, “#falunVM”, “#heianorge” and “#skivm” were user-generated hashtags that came up quite often during the other searches. For the hashtag “#heianorge” tweets were only collected from February 18th until March 1st, since that hashtag applied to many sports and was only relevant during the event. Among those, tweets from the sponsors and possible ambushers were collected and analyzed. This first part of the content analysis identified potential ambushers and those were included in

the two remaining part of the content analysis. In addition, the private sponsor of the Norwegian athlete Petter Northug, Coop, was included. They were considered an ambusher, since they were in the same category as the team sponsor, Spar. The sample included also Elkjop, since they had commercials during the WSC that looked like ambush.

Second, based on the findings from the buzz analysis, an in-depth content analysis was conducted in order to analyze the activation strategy of sponsors and identified ambushers. All tweets and posts were collected, but only those in English and Norwegian. Sponsors and ambushers used Facebook fan pages. Posts on a Facebook fan page were always visible for every Facebook user. The data collection consisted of all updates (i.e. tweets, retweets, and posts) from sponsors' official Twitter and Facebook accounts. User engagement (i.e. number of likes, shares, comments, and retweets) on their accounts were also registered. Then, updates and user engagement from the official account of the NSFCC and the athletes was collected. Official suppliers and private sponsor mentioned by athletes were "Rossignol", "Fisher", "Red Bull", "jordbærpikene", "lillsport", "nardobil", "bryggenasiancooking", "Vimenn", and "Ahlgrensbilar". Then, their official accounts on Twitter and Facebook were reviewed and NSF-related tweets and posts were collected. In addition, all updates that related to NSFCC from the official Facebook and Twitter account of all identified ambushers were collected.

I looked at how sponsors and ambushers tried to associate themselves with the NSFCC (i.e. use of hashtags, theme, sweepstakes, give-aways, and use of athletes). A coding scheme with different variables was used to collect data from the different group's official Facebook and Twitter accounts. These coding schemes for Twitter and Facebook are in appendix 3 and 4 respectively. I used field notes to capture specific details about the posts and tweets that were not covered by the variables in the coding scheme. These field notes gave a more detailed impression of the overall strategy of each sponsor. In addition, a deeper understanding of how consumers could interpret each post or tweet. Other related studies on Twitter had used the application NCapture on NVivo to capture the data (e.g. Abeza et al., 2014; Abeza et al., 2015). Due to technical difficulties, data from Twitter and Facebook were therefore registered manually into an excel spreadsheet.

The third stage of the content analysis was to analyze the sentiment regarding the sponsors', athletes', NSFCC's, and identified ambushers' activity on Twitter and Facebook. Collected comments on posts and tweets related to the sponsors or ambushers were analyzed. They were registered either as positive or negative based on their content. On Twitter, sentiment was analyzed by collecting tweets that include the sponsors' and ambushers' brand names both with and without a hashtag. In addition to characterize the tweets based on sentiment, the content was interpreted to see if it could be related to the sponsors' and ambushers' activity on Facebook and Twitter. The sentiment analysis would give an impression of the consumers' thoughts and brand associations of the sponsors and ambushers. The number of brand-related tweets and comments would have an impact on brand awareness as well.

The collection consisted of tweets that could be associated with the NSFCC or the WSC and therefore linked the sponsor or ambusher to NSFCC or the WSC. The following brand names of sponsors were searched for "aker", "bjørndæhlie", "norsktipping", "bdo", "friskibdo" [healthy in BDO], "alikaaffe", "eiendomsmegler1midtnorge", "maxbo", "grilstad", "spar", "weber", "norengros", "bendit", "bmw", "daleofnorway", "vangenplotz", "ctcbilpartner", "garmin", "skydda", "veidekke", "skedsmobudogvare", "sponsorlink", "scania", "isklar", and "adecco". Regarding the main sponsor the search included aker, akeraktive, and akeractive. It also included "friskibdo" [healthy in BDO], since BDO had an internal sponsor activation program. In addition, regarding the strategical partner bendit, their term "benditeffekten" was also included in the search. The following brand names of the identified ambushers were searched for "coop", "elkjøp", "toppidrettsterapi", "nammis", "beitostølenresort", "sony4k", "oracksport", "egmontpublishing", "storgevinsten", "høytlesereavdonald", "clarionadmiral", "clarionbergenairport", "clarionroyalchristiania", "clarion", "evry", "bose", "vaskejentene", "nsb", "oslolufthavn", "comeon", "comeonnorge", "posten", "thon", "thonhotels", "betsson", "netcom", "abbnorge", "santander", and "nordea".

The data collected were grouped into different variables in order to characterize sponsors' and ambushers' activity, and find patterns. Some of the variables used during the data collection is explained here in order to get a clear understanding of their meaning. First, the variable athlete refers to a Norwegian cross-country skier that wore

clothes with sponsor logos and represented the Norwegian national team during the WSC. Those pictures may have an impact in brand awareness. Second, the hashtags registered were those who had some kind of direct or indirect association to NSFCC or the WSC (e.g. #falun2015 or #heianorge [#GoNorway]). These hashtags may reach the target market (i.e. cross-country skiing fans) of the sponsors and ambushers. Third, the tagged user profiles registered were the NSFCC's official user profile or an athlete's official user profile only. Fourth, statement of sponsorship refers to ways sponsors used to clearly state that they were a sponsor of the NSFCC (e.g. "#proudsponsor" or "proud ambassador of NSFCC or an athlete"). Fifth, the comments related to the NSFCC-related posts and tweets from laypersons used in the sentiment analysis were categorized as either positive or negative. As Delia and Armstrong (2015) mentioned in their study, neutral tweets were seen as positive, since all tweets that were not negative were beneficial for the sponsor. Therefore, all neutral tweets and neutral comments collected were registered as positive. The negative tweets and comments were those who were critical or expressed irritation towards national team athletes, the sponsor, NSFCC-staff, NSFCC in general, or the content of the post. In addition, those comments that mentioned other companies from the same category were also seen as negative. Some of the comments and tweets were hard to characterize, since they could be interpreted in different ways (e.g. if they were meant as comical or negative). For example, a user tweeted "Weird that Northug did not try with Coop-boxers underneath the transparent race suit".

All tweets and posts were characterized based on their degree of association to the NSFCC and were put into one of these four categories (i.e. highly, mediocre, low, and nothing). In order to be categorized as highly it included either a statement, (e.g. "official sponsor" or "our ambassador"), or a picture of an athlete where the sponsor's brand logo or product was very noticeable. Tweets and posts that were seen as mediocre included either a picture of NSFCC-staff or athletes where a sponsor's brand logo or product that was hard to notice, or a tag of an athlete's or NSFCC's user profile. The next category, low, included tweets and posts that only mentioned athletes' names or made an indirect association to the NSFCC. For example, a picture of Norwegian fans, content about other teams that competed in the WSC, or other content related to the WSC. When categorized as nothing the tweet or post did not make any association to NSFCC or the WSC at all.

All tweets and posts were characterized as being either one or more of the different types of sponsor strategies. The three sponsor strategies were based on the categories of sponsorship tactics identified by Abeza et al. (2014), which were promotion, customer appreciation, and athlete encouragement. Based on the tweets collected early in the process, the category customer appreciation was changed to fan engagement. None of the tweets or posts collected were seen as customer appreciation. Promotion included tweets or posts where the sponsor's product where visible or a service was mentioned. Tweets and posts that were categorized as athlete encouragement were those who either encouraged athletes or congratulated athletes. Examples of athlete encouragement were wishing athletes good luck or saying that they were proud of cooperating with that athlete. Lastly, fan engagement included tweets and posts that encouraged people to either comment on the post, retweet the tweet, or include a certain hashtag in their tweet. For example, make consumers come with their predictions for the competition, or hold sweepstakes where consumers answered by commenting or by the use of a certain hashtag.

4.2.3 Analysis

The buzz analysis was conducted by the use of an excel spreadsheet. A table of frequencies of the different variables in numbers and percent was made. In addition, a pie chart was made to present an overview of all the sponsors and ambushers using NSFCC- and WSC-related hashtags. To start the analysis of part two and three, the data were transferred from the excel spreadsheet into the software SPSS Statistics. From SPSS, descriptive data were retrieved and would serve as general characteristics of each sponsorship tier and the ambushers. When looking at the characteristics of each sponsorship tier, certain patterns were clear. Therefore, Chi Square Test of independence was used to determine if there was a significant association between sponsorship level and degree of relatedness to NSFCC. This statistical test was appropriate, since the type of data were normative and the assumption of at least 80 % of the cells to have an expected count of five or greater was satisfied (O'Donoghue, 2012). According to Cramer (1999) Cramer's V determine the size of the effect, where 0.5 represents a large effect, 0,3 a medium effect, and 0.1 a small effect (as cited in O'Donoghue, 2012, p. 290).

These descriptive data were also used to look for differences between the sponsors within each sponsorship tier and within the group of ambushers. Then, the field notes were used to get a more comprehensive understanding of the posts and tweets that stood out in terms of engagement. Especially, to see if the text or a picture could have a deeper meaning based on the context that statistical variables would not identify. The content of the comments on posts and tweets from consumers, that included sponsors' and ambushers' brand name, were also analyzed based on the field notes. Then, the content of these posts and tweets were analyzed to understand how the sponsors and ambushers were perceived by consumers could be made. In addition, if the content could be linked to their activity on social media before and during the WSC. The analysis of the athletes' and NSFCC's activity on social media was conducted in the same way as the sponsors with the use of descriptive data and field notes. However, the data collection was too small to look for general patterns. Instead, the activity of each athlete and the NSFCC was interpreted more comprehensively.

4.3 Survey

“A survey design provides a quantitative or numerical description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population” (Creswell, 2009, p. 145). The purpose of this survey was to see which tweets and post that created the highest association to NSFCC. Hence, likely to be from a sponsor of the NSFCC. The posts and tweets presented in the survey included different kinds of cues that could possibly relate to the NSFCC. These posts and tweets were from both sponsors and ambushers. In addition, demographic data like age, interest in sport, and degree of social media usage were of interest. These variables could explain some of the differences between the posts and between the tweets.

The sample for this survey was students only. The reason for choosing students was the ease of access, since they are gathered at universities and colleges (Li, Pitts, & Quarterman, 2008). The respondents were recruited at random at three different universities and colleges in Oslo during four days. Students found at different cafeterias, canteens, and study places around those campuses were asked to participate in the study. The questionnaire was completed on site and collected right afterwards. The

number of responses included in the study were 292. Besides those, one respondent was excluded, since he/she was very fast and the answers on the Likert scales were all the same. I do not have the exact number, but very few student asked did not participate in the survey.

4.3.1 Questionnaire design

The survey had two parts and the respondents filled it out all at once. The first part included questions that served as demographic data (i.e. gender, age, and activity on social media) and as background information (i.e. attitude towards sponsors, sponsor recall, and degree of interest in cross-country skiing). To measure the respondents' attitude towards certain relevant aspects of sponsorship a Likert scale ranged from one (strongly disagree) to seven (strongly agree) was used (Atkinson, 2012; Gratton & Jones, 2010). According to Fallowfield, Hale, and Wilkinson (2005) a Likert scale could be used to measure perception, since it is a part of the affective domain (as cited in O'Donoghue, 2012, p. 5). Therefore, a seven point Likert scale was used to measure the different posts and tweets from sponsors and ambushers. A seven point Likert scale was used to measure respondents' attitude towards sponsors, because that provided the option of a negative attitude towards sponsors and unimportant attitude. A ten point Likert scale was used to measure respondents' interest of cross-country skiing, because it would give a greater variety. In addition, an option of neither nor was not necessary.

The second part of the survey consisted of different tweets and posts that were from both sponsors and ambushers. The sponsors were Isklar, Bjorn Daehlie, Norsk Tipping, Aker, Grilstad, Ali kaffe, and Spar. The ambushers included in the survey were Bose, Elkjop, Thon hotels, NSB, and Toppidrettsterapi. Five tweets were included in the survey and they represented different levels of relatedness to the NSFCC. There were seven posts included in the survey and each had different characteristics. These posts had one or several of the cues that could make a link between the firm and the NSFCC (e.g. picture of athlete with and without their products, tagged NSFCC, and statement of sponsorship. BJ used picture of athletes and NSFCC/WSC-related hashtags. Isklar used picture of athlete with product, while Ali kaffe and Grilstad had picture of their products and mentioned athletes' names. Spar used a picture of NSFCC waxing staff, the term "proud sponsor", and tagged NSFCC. The ambushers' posts (i.e. Elkjop and NSB)

consisted of contextual cues. Moving on to the five tweets, Bose used NSFCC- and WSC-related hashtags, Toppidrettsterapi tagged an athlete, and Thon hotels' tweet consisted of contextual cues. Norsk Tipping used the hashtag "proud sponsor" and a WSC-related hashtag. Aker used pictures of athletes and promoted a contest where the prize was an official NSFCC hat. The respondents' answers would give an indication of which posts or tweets that made the strongest link to the NSFCC. The way the posts and tweets were presented in the survey could be representative to how they were presented on a user's news wall on Facebook or Twitter newsfeed. The background information served as a filter when the respondents' perception of the tweets and posts were analyzed. Both a Norwegian and English version of the questionnaire are in appendix 5 and 6 respectively, but since all tweets and posts were in Norwegian, only the Norwegian version was used for the survey.

4.3.2 Analysis

The program SPSS Statistics was used for the statistical analysis of the survey answers. First, the descriptive data of the survey respondents were retrieved (i.e. age, social media usage, and media habits for following the WSC). Then, the respondents' attitude towards sponsors and interest in cross-country skiing were measured by the use of mean score. Respondents' sponsor recall was measured by finding the frequencies of the numbers of sponsors recalled and which brands that were recalled. In addition, a chi square test of independence was used to see if there was a correlation between the fan categories and both the number of sponsors recalled and the number of wrong sponsors recalled. The chi square test of independence was chosen, because it examine the relatedness of two categorical variables (O'Donoghue, 2012). A one-way Anova was used to see if type of fan had an impact on the respondents' attitude towards NSFCC's sponsors and products used by athletes. A one-way Anova was chosen, because it compare three or more numerical variables (i.e. respondents attitude) based on a categorical variable (i.e. fans) and the variable was normally distributed (O'Donoghue, 2012). These descriptive data presents the characteristics of the respondents.

The focus of the analysis was on part two of the questionnaire mainly, which consisted of the different tweets and posts from sponsors and ambushers. The question of interest was if there were any differences between the tweets and between the posts, since they

had different characteristics. The Friedman test was used to find any differences between the five tweets included in the questionnaire. The Friedman test is a non-parametric test used when assumptions for repeated measures Anova test is not satisfied. By this test, three or more samples within a group are compared based on an ordinal dependent variable (i.e tweets; O'Donoghue, 2012). To find any differences between the nine posts included in the questionnaire the same test was used. Both times, Wilcoxon signed ranks test was used as a follow up test between pairs of tweets and posts that indicated a significant difference. Wilcoxon signed ranks test is a non-parametric test and used when assumptions for paired samples t-test are not satisfied. As opposed to the Friedman test, it only compare two samples (O'Donoghue, 2012).

To find out more about the differences between both the tweets and posts, the background information were used as filters. First, the Friedman test was used to see if the scores of the tweets and the posts differed within the groups. Based on those results, a Wilcoxon signed ranks test was used as a follow up test (O'Donoghue, 2012). This test would reveal if there was a significant different between two tweets or posts within one of the groups. The degree of interest was chosen as one of the independent variables, because previous studies has shown that interest and fan-identification had an impact on the ability to identify sponsors (i.e. Meenaghan, 2001b; Portlock & Rose, 2009; Szerovay, 2013).

Second, the number of sponsors recalled indicated the respondents' degree of knowledge about the different sponsors of the NSFCC. Therefore, sponsor recall was also used as a filter to explain the variation between both the tweets and posts. For this test the respondents were categorized based on the number of sponsors recalled (i.e. zero, one, two, three, and four and higher). Differences within each group were looked for by the use of the Friedman test. Wilcoxon signed ranks test was used as a follow up test to see if there was a significant different between two tweets or posts within one group. However, this test will only provide a small indication, since the groups of respondents that recalled two (n=28), three (n=23), and four and more (n=11) sponsors contain very few respondents.

Third, the respondents' degree of engagement with the NSFCC and the WSC were also seen as a possible explanation of the differences between both the tweets and posts.

Therefore, a Mann-Whitney U test was used to look for a difference between those engaged and those not engaged on social media based on the different posts and tweets. The Mann-Whitney U test is a non-parametric test used when assumptions for independent samples t-test are not satisfied. The test was chosen, because it compare to individual samples (O'Donoghue, 2012). A Mann-Whitney U test was also used to look for a difference between those who followed the WSC and those who did not based on the different tweets and posts. For all the statistical tests conducted, α value was set to 0.05, if not mentioned otherwise (O'Donoghue, 2012).

4.4 Strengths and Weaknesses

Here, why the chosen research method and technique was appropriate are explained. In addition, how its weaknesses were dealt with. In this research study, the use of case study as a methodology provides many benefits over methodologies that are more typical. As it allows the researcher to delve deeper into the topic in question. Furthermore, it allows the optimal use of multiple sources in order to facilitate understanding and strengthen validity (Yin, 2014). This methodology gives the researcher the opportunity to investigate a variety of supporting data, as well as provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon (Yin, 2014). As a result, it allows the researcher to reveal a complex set of factors and relationships, an advantage that, for example, survey research alone could not provide (Easton, 2010; Hamel, Dufour, & Fortin, 1993; Woodside & Wilson, 2003).

In this study, the method content analysis was used to gather data about the characteristics of sponsors' and ambushers' activity on Twitter and Facebook. This data alone were not sufficient in order to draw any conclusions of their activities' effectiveness. Therefore, a survey was used as an additional research technique to see the effectiveness of different kinds of social media updates' ability to create an association to the NSFCC. With that in mind, a case study approach would provide the opportunity to study sponsors' and ambushers' social media activation and effectiveness more extensively. Finally, the use of multiple sources would increase the study's internal validity. The external validity will be increased by making the links between the findings and both theory and context (Yin, 2014).

The main weakness in case studies is its low generalization, especially statistically (Easton, 2010; Hamel et al., 1993; Woodside & Wilson, 2003). Case studies concentrate on one or a few cases, and the research findings may not give any practical implication for decision making in other cases, since the context is different (Woodside, 2010). Therefore, the research findings would be discussed and explained based on the given context. In addition, some common patterns that could be transferred to other cases with similar context, as practical advices, were highlighted (Gomm, Hammersley, & Foster, 2000; Stake, 2005). Linked to this research, one of the commonalities for sponsorships was that they target sports fans. Although cross-country skiing fans and handball fans may not have all the same preferences, some of the best sponsorship practice can be applied to both sports and other sports as well. Other possible commonalities are NSO's sponsorship programs and World Championships in sports with the same degree of popularity within a country.

Another weakness is case study's potential problem linked to bias (Hamel et al., 1993; Woodside, 2010). There has been some prejudice from other researchers, especially with a positivist point of view, that researchers using case study have allowed biased views in their study (Yin, 2014). However, a social constructivist would not worry about bias (Crotty, 1998). Even though the methods used in case studies could cause biased views, and researchers may have a conflict of interest, it is my responsibility to report all evidence fairly (Yin, 2014). To avoid criticism linked to my intrinsic motivation causing bias, triangulation was used to provide multiple sources as base for the findings (Gerring, 2007; Stake, 2005). In addition, contrary findings were presented and discussed. In this study, survey research provided a large amount of opinions that would underpin findings from the content analysis. All the steps in the data gathering and analysis were documented by the use of a case study protocol in order to increase the reliability of the research (Yin, 2014).

Here, the validity and reliability of the quantitative phase (i.e. the survey) are addressed. Validity in quantitative studies refers to the relevance and appropriateness of the research method used to the question of study (O'Donoghue, 2012). First, the representativeness of the group of respondents is of great importance regarding external validity (Smith & Albaum, 2010). Worth noticing, in the USA the age group 15-30 counts for the majority of Twitter users in the USA (Sysomos, 2014). The

representativeness of a specific group like students to the Norwegian population was low, but since they were the majority of Twitter users they were a relevant population. Second, there are no definite answer regarding sample size, but it should be large enough to be a likely representation of the population (i.e. Norwegian students; O'Donoghue, 2012). A sample size of 292 was decent and the survey was conducted on three different schools in order to get a sample that represented the variety of Norwegian students. Third, it was important to make the questions for the questionnaire relevant to the research question (O'Donoghue, 2010). In order to strengthen the internal validity a pretest was conducted with two master students. I got feedback from the respondents on the ordering of the questions, the type of questions, the wording, and if the questions were understood in the desirable way (Li et al., 2008). In addition, the answers were analyzed in order to see if the type of questions correlated with the research question (Atkinson, 2012; Gratton & Jones, 2010).

As opposed to validity, reliability refers to the accuracy and consistency of the research tool (i.e. questionnaire) used (O'Donoghue, 2012). When a respondent answers a multiple choice questionnaire there is a chance that he/she will provide an answer that is just partly true (Gray & Guppy, 1999). The questionnaire was relatively short with twenty-one questions and the pretest showed that it would take six to seven minutes to complete the survey. A short questionnaire would decrease the likelihood of getting random answers from the respondents (Li et al., 2008). However, random answers could also be an indication that the respondents did not care about the theme and would not be affected by any sponsorship activation. In the analysis of the data, relevant statistical tests were used (O'Donoghue, 2012).

5.0 Results

Here, the descriptive data and the findings from the content analysis and the survey are presented. First, the results from the buzz analysis. Second, the characteristics of the sponsors' and ambushers' strategies, and related sentiment and engagement on both Twitter and Facebook. It revealed that context and people's associations were an important factor for the degree of engagement among consumers. Third, the activity of athletes and NSFCC on both Twitter and Facebook. Lastly, the descriptive data and findings from the survey. It showed that interest in cross-country skiing and sponsor recall might explain some of the variations in score among the posts and tweets.

5.1 Content analysis

In total, the content analysis consisted of 1155 tweets, 114 retweets, and 487 posts from sponsors, ambushers, athletes, NSFCC, and consumers. The first part of the content analysis was an analysis of the buzz associated with the NSFCC before and during the WSC. The buzz consisted of tweets from sponsors and ambushers that contained a hashtag related to the NSFCC or the WSC. In total, 55 tweets from sponsors and 57 tweets from ambushers were collected. Aker and Norsk Tipping were the only sponsors represented. This buzz analysis identified twenty-seven ambushers, but only five of them tweeted more than two times. This part served to identify ambushers mainly.

5.1.1 Twitter

Further, the findings from the content analysis of the Twitter accounts of sponsors and ambushers are presented. Only the main sponsor, two team sponsors (i.e. Norsk Tipping and Weber), and three strategical partners (i.e. Veidekke, Scania, and Adecco) were active users on Twitter. The sponsors tweeted in total 214 times and retweeted seven times. Then, the ambushers tweeted in total 772 times and retweeted 56 times. According to table 5.1, sponsors had in total 51 NSFCC-related tweets and seven of those were in the period before the WSC. All of the sponsors' retweets were during the WSC. The ambushers tweeted sixteen times and retweeted 22 times before, and tweeted 84 times and retweeted 34 times during the WSC.

Table 5.1: An overview of the characteristics of the activity of the main sponsor, team sponsors, strategical partners, and ambushers on Twitter

Twitter characteristics	Main sponsor (n = 1)	Team sponsor (n = 2)	Strategical partners (n = 3)	Ambushers (n = 27)
Number of related tweets (% of total)	9 (56 %)	40 (31 %)	2 (3 %)	100 (13 %)
Number of retweets related to NSFCC	7	0	0	56
Usage of athletes and NSFCC tags (%)	4 (44 %)	0	0	24 (24 %)
Usage of hashtags related to NSFCC (%)	8 (90 %)	20 (50 %)	1 (50 %)	69 (69 %)
Number of tweets with picture of athlete	2	1	0	5
Statement of sponsorship	1	7	0	0
Strategy* Promotion (% of total posts)	33 %	63 %	50 %	44 %
Athlete encouragement (% of total posts)	44 %	23 %	50 %	44 %
Fan engagement (% of total posts)	22 %	18 %	50 %	14 %

*A number of the tweets could not be placed in either of the three strategy categories. Twelve of the tweets from one of the team sponsors could be characterized as information about race development. Six of the tweets from ambushers were only links to news paper articles about the Norwegian national team and/or news from the WSC.

The main sponsor tweeted sixteen times and nine were seen as related to NSFCC. In addition, they retweeted in total seven times and all were related to NSFCC. Further, 50 % of their tweets were characterized as low relatedness and only 6 % as highly related to NSFCC. Of the two team sponsors, Weber had only two out of forty-eight tweets that were NSFCC-related and those two were characterized as fan engagement. One had mediocre and the other one had low relatedness to NSFCC. The other team sponsor, Norsk Tipping, tweeted 79 times and 38 were NSFCC-related. As opposed to the main sponsor, 76 % of Norsk Tipping's NSFCC-related tweets were characterized as low relatedness, while 21 % were characterized as highly related to the NSFCC. Among the strategical partners, only Scania tweeted NSF-related tweets and there were only two of them. Both of the tweets were characterized as low relatedness to the NSFCC. All of the sponsors' tweets were retweeted very few times. Aker's tweets were retweeted three times, Norsk Tipping seven times, Weber one time, and Scania fourteen times.

Although it was slightly better, the same could be said for likes. Aker got in total eleven likes, Norsk Tipping nineteen, Weber zero, and Scania 28.

The buzz analysis of tweets that included NSFCC- and WSC-related hashtags, and NSFCC's user profile revealed twenty-seven ambushers. The last ambusher, Coop, where included, since they were a private sponsor of an athlete (i.e. Petter Northug). According to the representation agreement, they were not allowed to include Petter Northug in any marketing initiatives during the winter season, since they were in the same category as one of the team sponsors. The content analysis of their Twitter account revealed that there were in total a hundred NSFCC- related tweets from ambushers and only eight of those were in the period prior to the WSC. Ten of the identified ambushers had only one NSFCC- related tweet. Three ambushers had two NSFCC-related tweets and two ambushers had three NSFCC-related tweets each. Worth noting, all of these ambushers' tweets had a low relatedness to the NSFCC except one where all of its three tweets were characterized as mediocre. The nine other ambushers had a number of NSFCC-related tweets ranged from five to thirteen. Among those, only one had a tweet that was highly related to NSFCC. An average of 23 % had mediocre relatedness to the NSFCC. Whilst, an average of 76 % of these tweets and retweets had low relatedness to the NSFCC. Six of the ambushers had retweets related to the NSFCC. Coop and Toppidrettsterapi stood out with seventeen and 27 NSFCC-related retweets respectively.

The ambushers' tweets were retweeted a few times. The number of retweets per post ranged from zero to eleven. Coop and Thon hotels was retweeted twenty times, NSB seventeen times, and Høytlekere av Donald fourteen times. The rest got from zero to six retweets each. The number of likes were also slightly higher among the ambushers and ranged from zero to twenty-seven likes. The ones that stood out was Netcom with twenty likes, Thon hotels with twenty-one, NSB with twenty, and Coop with twenty-seven. Sixteen of the ambushers got between zero and three likes each. The number of retweets and likes did not show a noteworthy difference between the sponsors and ambushers. On the other hand, the usage of NSFCC-related cues differed between the sponsors and ambushers. It differed also between the different sponsorship tiers.

Table 5.1 showed that only the main sponsor (44 %) and the ambushers (24 %) tagged athletes or NSFCC in their tweets. They were also the ones with the highest usage of related hashtags. 90 % of the main sponsor's tweets included such a hashtag and 69 % of the ambushers' tweets. Ambushers were the ones that included a picture of an athlete the most (n=5). Another cue that had the ability of distinguish sponsors from the ambushers were the use of the word sponsor or official sponsor. The main sponsor had only one tweet that used a statement to underline their sponsorship to NSFCC (e.g. "#proudsponsor" or "proud sponsor of NSFCC"). Among the team sponsors and the strategical partners, Norsk Tipping had posts that underlined their sponsorship with NSFCC only. However, seven of their tweets included such a statement. These findings indicate a difference between the sponsors and ambushers in the usage of sponsorship property cues. The majority of tweets among all levels were characterized as promotion and/or athlete encouragement except for the strategical partners. The main sponsor had slightly more tweets characterized as athlete encouragement, while the team sponsors had clearly the most tweets characterized as promotion. The ambushers had equally amount of tweets characterized as promotion and athlete encouragement.

The third stage of the content analysis was the sentiment analysis, which was based on tweets from laypersons. NSFCC-related tweets that included sponsors' and ambushers' brand names were not much used by laypersons. In total, thirteen sponsors, two private sponsors, and four ambushers were mentioned in tweets. Among the sponsors, the strategical partner Isklar, stood out and they were mentioned eleven times. The rest of the sponsors were mentioned from one to three times each. All of those tweets were positive except for Spar, where two out of three were negative. In addition, one that mentioned Norsk Tipping was also negative. However, nine of eleven tweets that mentioned Isklar were negative. All these tweets were related to Isklar's affected product placement during television interviews of Norwegian athletes. The two private sponsors mentioned was Petter Northug's sponsor Red Bull and Jordbærpike that sponsored some of the female athletes. Jordbærpike were only mentioned once and it was positive, while Red Bull on the other hand was mentioned seventeen times and only one was negative. The only negative tweet expressed criticism towards Red Bull's products and that sports in general should not be associated with such products.

Among the four ambushers mentioned, Coop really stood out with 41 tweets and was the only one with negative tweets (n=12). All of those tweets were in some way related to Coop's sponsorship with the athlete Petter Northug. The positive tweets expressed positivity towards Coop's sponsorship with Petter Northug. In addition, criticism towards NSFCC about their negotiations with Petter Northug regard the representation agreement. The negative tweets expressed criticism towards Coop as an ambusher, Petter Northug for choosing the money, and that the competitor Spar had increased awareness. Betsson and NSB were mentioned eight and seven times respectively, while ComeOn was mentioned only once. Both Betsson's and NSB's tweets came because of their initiatives related to the WSC. Half of Betsson's tweets were laypersons that tweeted about their trip to the WSC arranged by Betsson. A majority of NSB's tweets expressed positivity towards NSB's special waxing train. The findings from the sentiment analysis partly show the degree of brand awareness generated by the sponsors and ambushers on Twitter. Interestingly, only the tweets mentioning NSB and Betsson were related to their activity on social media.

5.1.2 Facebook

In this section, the findings from the content analysis of the Facebook accounts of sponsors and ambushers are presented. The main sponsor, Aker, and three of the strategical partners did not have a Facebook fan page or at least not a Norwegian Facebook fan page that had any content related to the NSFCC (i.e. BMW, CTC Bilpartner, and Veidekke). Two team sponsors (i.e. Maxbo and Weber Norway) and four strategical partners (i.e. Vangen & Plotz, Garmin Norway, Skedsmo Bud og Vare AS, and Adecco Norway) did not have any NSFCC-related content on their Norwegian Facebook fan page during the period of study. In total, the sponsors posted 267 times and the ambushers posted 171 times.

Sponsors had in total 51 NSFCC-related posts before and 72 NSFCC-related posts during the WSC. The ambushers had in total six NSFCC-related posts before and 21 NSFCC-related posts during the WSC. According to table 5.2, the ambushers were most active in the usage of hashtags that could be related to NSFCC or the WSC. Among the sponsors, the official clothing supplier were most active in the usage of hashtags and tags. They were also the one with the most NSFCC-related posts (n = 36) among all of

the sponsors and strategical partners. BJ had three posts that included a statement to underline their sponsorship with NSFCC (e.g. “#proudsponsor” or “proud sponsor of NSFCC”). Together all of the team sponsors had four posts with the same statement. The same goes for the strategical partners, which also had four posts of the same kind. Worth noting, the strategical partners used the phrase “proud sponsor” instead of “proud strategical partner”. The sponsorship levels also differed based on types of strategies chosen. The official clothing supplier were mostly about athlete encouragement, which counted for 75 % of its posts. Team sponsors were pretty even between promotion with 43 % and athlete encouragement with 40 %. It was quite the same for ambushers where 48 % of its posts were characterized as promotion and 36 % as athlete encouragement. The strategical partners had most posts characterized as promotion.

Table 5.2: An overview of the characteristics of the activity of the official clothing supplier, team sponsors, strategical partners, and ambushers on Facebook.

Facebook characteristics	Official clothing supplier	Team sponsors (n = 9)	Strategical partners (n = 10)	Ambushers (n = 9)
Number of related post (% of total posts)	36 (100 %)	54 (43 %)	33 (31 %)	27 (16 %)
Number of athletes and NSFCC tags	5	2	0	1
Number of hashtags related to NSFCC	5	2	1	9
Number of posts without picture	6 (17 %)	8 (23 %)	6 (17 %)	15 (43 %)
Number of posts with picture of athlete only	0 (0 %)	15 (56 %)	11 (41 %)	1 (4 %)
Number of posts with picture of product only	8 (15 %)	31 (57 %)	4 (7 %)	11 (20 %)
Number of posts with picture of both athlete and product	22 (63 %)	1 (3 %)	12 (34 %)	0 (0 %)
Statement of sponsorship	3	4	4	0
Strategy Promotion (% of total posts)	36 %	43 %	74 %	48 %
Athlete encouragement (% of total posts)	75 %	40 %	36 %	36 %
Fan engagement (% of total posts)	14 %	23 %	28 %	16 %

According to table 5.2, there was a clear difference based on the use of pictures with both an athlete and a product. The official clothing supplier and the strategical partners stood out, with 63 % and 34 % of their posts containing a picture of both an athlete and a product respectively. On the other hand, team sponsors stood out from the others based on the use of picture that contained only athletes (56 %) and only product (57 %). Ambushers had only one post that contained a picture of an athlete as opposed to on Twitter. However, three other posts were in the grey zone. These findings support the findings from Twitter, which indicated that sponsors differed from the ambusher in terms of the use of sponsor property cues and NSFCC-related hashtags.

Within each sponsorship tier, some of the sponsors stood out. Ali kaffe and Grilstad stood out among the team sponsors based on number of NSFCC-related posts and the use of pictures of products. Grilstad posted 26 NSFCC-related posts and seventeen contained a picture of their product. In addition, nine of those posts contained a picture of an athlete. Ali kaffe posted fifteen NSFCC-related posts where twelve contained a picture of their product, but only two posts contained a picture of an athlete. The rest of the team sponsors posted between one to five NSFCC-related posts. In total, the team sponsors posted 55 NSFCC-related posts, where 32 contained a picture of a product and seventeen a picture of an athlete. Among the strategical partners, Isklar really stood out based on number of NSFCC-related posts ($n = 19$) and the use of pictures of athletes ($n = 16$) and product ($n = 5$). In total, the strategical partners posted 33 NSFCC-related posts where 23 contained a picture of an athlete and sixteen a picture of their product.

All posts on Facebook were divided into different categories of relatedness to the NSFCC based on the different identified cues and how they were perceived. Based on the Chi Square test of independence, there was a significant association between sponsorship level and sponsors' degree of relation to NSFCC ($\chi^2_6 = 42.9$, $p < 0,01$, $V = 0,377$). Sponsors on a higher sponsorship tier achieved higher relatedness to the NSFCC than sponsors on a lower tier and ambushers. Table 5.3 showed that the official clothing supplier and ambushers stood out in terms of their posts' degree of relatedness to NSFCC. The official clothing supplier had a higher count than expected of highly related posts and a lower count than expected of posts that had low relatedness to NSFCC. Ambushers had a lower count than expected of mediocre and highly related

posts and a higher count than expected of posts that had low relatedness to NSFCC. The results from this test support the findings from Twitter, which also showed that sponsors and ambushers differed in relatedness. However, the survey results would give a better indication of the people's perception of the identified cues that the categories of relatedness to the NSFCC was based on.

Table 5.3: The results of the Chi square test of independence. Show the differences between each sponsorship tier and ambushers based on their posts' relatedness to the NSFCC.

Relation		Official clothing supplier	Team sponsors	Strategical partners	Ambushers	Total
Low	Count	5	16	11	24	56
	Expected count	13,4	20,4	12,2	10	56
	% within sponsorship tier	14 %	29 %	33 %	89 %	37 %
Mediocre	Count	14	22	12	3	51
	Expected count	12,2	18,6	11,1	9,1	51
	% within sponsorship tier	39 %	40 %	36 %	11 %	34 %
High	Count	17	17	10	0	44
	Expected count	10,5	16	9,6	7,9	44
	% within sponsorship tier	47 %	31 %	30 %	0 %	29 %
Total	Count	36	55	33	27	151
	Expected count	36	55	33	27	151
	% within sponsorship tier	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %

5.1.3 Individual strategies and user engagement

In order to draw connections between findings of the sentiment and user engagement analysis mainly and the sponsors' and the ambushers' activity. It was necessary to study each sponsor's and ambusher's activity in dept. The sponsors' activity on Twitter, except from Aker and Norsk Tipping, was too low in order to get an impression of their activation strategy. Based on its tweets Aker's sponsorship activation strategy seemed to be internal, since most of their tweets were about their employees' trip to the WSC in Falun. In addition, the team sponsors, BDO, seemed to focus on internal activation. However, they did not use either Twitter or Facebook, but one of their employees tweeted about a lecture with NSFCC-staff. In addition, an employee of the marketing department of the NSFCC used the hashtag "#friskiBDO" [healthy in BDO], which could imply that BDO used their sponsorship to encourage a healthier life style among their employees. Tweets from the private Twitter account of an employee in NSFCC's marketing department showed that at least Aker, Norsk Tipping, and BDO had some internal activation. The second sponsor who were relatively active on Twitter, were the team sponsor Norsk Tipping. Norsk Tipping focused on fan engagement and in the same way promote their betting service by asking fans who they thought were going to win. They also linked to their homepage and posted tweets where they commented race development to create excitement. To associate themselves even more with the NSFCC, they posted tweets the same days that Norway won medals. In these posts, they congratulated the athlete/s and stated that they were a proud sponsor.

As opposed to Twitter, the sponsors' activity on Facebook was much higher. However, only a few of the sponsors had a sufficient number of posts to get a decent impression of their strategy. Those were the official clothing supplier, four team sponsors (i.e. Eiendomsmegler1 Midt-Norge, Grilstad, Spar, and Ali kaffe), and one strategical partner (i.e. Isklar). The official clothing supplier focused on athlete encouragement and pictures of athletes to promote their products. Eiendomsmegler1 Midt-Norge focused on their cooperation with the athlete Petter Northug and his way back from the drunk and driving incident. Grilstad's strategy was twofold, they tried to make a link between their product and the athletes by posting athletes' sandwich suggestions. They also focused on fan engagement and brand awareness by having a contest where the participants had to answer in the comment field. Those posts contained pictures of athletes and included

signs of various sizes with Grilstad's brand logo. The grocery store, Spar, focused mostly on promoting their own products. However, they had a more undefined strategy with a small contest and some posts, which were characterized as athlete encouragement. Ali kaffe and Isklar were almost in the same category as their products were hot beverage and bottle water respectively. Both focused on pictures including their products (i.e. a red cup of coffee and a bottle of water). Ali kaffe had pictures from around the stadium in Falun with the red cup, while Isklar had pictures where athletes held their product.

Continuing with the ambushers and their strategies on social media. It was difficult to find any correlation in their strategy since some had only one to three posts or tweets. Among the identified ambushers, ten had a relatively clear strategy based on their activity on social media. Coop and Toppidrettsterapi was the only two that focused heavily on retweeting NSFCC-related tweets more than tweeting. Besides that, Coop focused on their cooperation with the athlete Petter Northug and congratulated him on his victories. Toppidrettsterapi focused on both promoting their own service and congratulating athletes on their achievements. Vaskejentene focused also on congratulating athletes. They tweeted only three times, but they used relevant hashtags and tagged both athletes and NSFCC. Their tweets were therefore seen as a clear attempt to associate themselves with NSFCC. Thon hotels had a small campaign where they increased their discount with 5 % for each Norwegian gold medal. They tweeted that offer together with a picture of Norwegian cross-country spectators.

Three of the identified ambushers were in direct competition with the NSFCC-sponsor Norsk Tipping. Those were ComeOn, Betsson, and Storgevinsten. Like Norsk Tipping, ComeOn focused on links to their betting homepage. In addition, they included expert tips from former Norwegian winter sports athletes. Storgevinsten had mostly tweets that linked to a newspaper article about athletes or the WSC in general. They also had some tweets congratulating Petter Northug. Betsson's strategy differed from the others. They arranged a trip to WSC for some of their consumers. They focused on retweeting consumers' pictures of their trip with Betsson instead of tweeting. The other three ambushers made creative campaigns with their products/services in order to make an association to the NSFCC and WSC (Elkjop, Høytlesere av Donald, and NSB). Generating user engagement was one of the main reasons for activation for both sponsors and ambushers.

The number of likes, shares, and comments was used to measure the degree of user engagement. It had an impact on the degree of brand awareness achieved by sponsors and ambushers. In general, the NSFCC-related posts created more user engagement than other posts for the majority of the sponsors. Among the team sponsors, six got more likes on their NSFCC-related posts than their non-related posts. Two got more likes on their non-related Facebook- posts than their NSFCC-related posts. Those two were Norsk Tipping and Grilstad, and they had other non-sport campaigns that created more engagement. Among the team sponsors, Eiendomsmegler1 Midt-Norge and Spar stood out in terms of engagement related to their NSFCC-related posts. The average number of likes on their NSFCC-related posts were much higher than non-related posts. By taking a closer look, Eiendomsmegler1 Midt-Norge and Spar had one post each that counted for the majority of the total likes, 3894 and 6871 likes respectively. Both posts were characterized as athlete encouragement and were highly related to NSFCC. In addition, both posts were posted right after or the day after Norway won a gold medal. Eiendomsmegler1 Midt-Norge's Facebook-post had a picture of an athlete and stated that they were proud of cooperating with that specific athlete (i.e. Petter Northug). Spar's post had a picture of NSFCC's ski waxing staff and stated that they were a proud sponsor of the NSFCC.

Four of the strategical partners got on average more likes on their NSFCC-related posts than their non-related posts. Among those, Skydda and Isklar had a much clearer difference than the two others had. The other two strategical partners (Scania and Dale of Norway) generated more engagement by their non-related posts, while the official clothing supplier had only NSFCC-related posts. Among the ambushers, only Coop stood out with posts that got a high amount of likes. Coop only posted one post, but that received 2486 likes. That post included both a picture and tagged the athlete Petter Northug, and was characterized as athlete encouragement. It was posted right after Petter Northug had won gold on the team sprint with another athlete. NSB got on average 120 likes on their NSFCC-related posts and the other ambushers got on average between 0-44 likes on their NSFCC-related posts.

The sponsors and ambushers that got the most shares as well as the characteristics of the posts that got the most shares are presented. The official clothing supplier generated 71

shares in total. Three of their posts stood out with thirteen to nineteen shares. Those three did not differ from their other posts in terms of likes, comments, or type of strategy. However, the one that generated the most shares was a contest where the prizes were the official hat of the Norwegian national team. The one with second most shares was posted on the day after the last competition, where they congratulated the Norwegian athletes and stated that they were proud to be a part. The last of the three post contained the original pictures of the new racing suit.

The team sponsors that generated the most shares were the same that got the most likes, which were Eiendomsmebler1 Midt-Norge and Spar. They generated 48 and 74 shares each respectively, with Grilstad in third with 26 shares. The two posts from Eiendomsmebler1 Midt-Norge that generated the most shares were the same ones that got the most likes and most comments as well. The same goes for Spar where the post that generated the most shares (n = 31) was the one that got the most likes. They also had two other posts that stood out with sixteen and nineteen shares, but they did not differ from the other posts based on number of likes and comments. Worth noting is that 81 % of the shares that Grilstad got were generated by posts characterized as fan engagement. Scania Group with 475 shares, Skydda Norge with 22 shares, and Dale of Norway with eleven shares were the strategical partners that generated the most shares. The rest generated from zero to three shares each. The posts from Scania Group that generated shares were videos of the Swedish and Norwegian waxing trailer. Skydda's post was a contest. Dale of Norway's three posts were videos and pictures of athletes wearing their product (i.e. the official NSFCC wool sweater for the WSC). Among the ambushers, NSB really stood out with 32 shares and the three others that generated shares only got one or two each. It was a post from NSB with a picture of the waxing cabin that generated the most shares (n = 18).

The last part of the content analysis on Facebook focused on the number of comments and if they were, positive or negative. The official clothing supplier received a total of 140 comments on its NSFCC-related posts and 86 % of them were positive. The majority of negative comments were criticism on the new racing suit for the Norwegian national team. Worth noting, the female athlete Astrid Jacobsen posted a comment defending the design, which got fifteen likes. Team sponsors, received 575 comments related to their posts with 90 % were positive. The team sponsor, Grilstad, got the most

comments with 412 followed by Spar with 79 comments and Eiendomsmegler1 Midt-Norge with 75 comments. Those three were the only ones who received negative comments. Grilstad got only two negative comments, while Spar and Eiendomsmegler1 Midt-Norge got twenty-two and eighteen negative comments respectively. Five of Spar's negative comments mentioned the competitor Coop and expressed their appreciation for Coop's cooperation with Petter Northug.

The strategical partners got in total 95 comments with 95 % of them being positive. Skydda Norge and Isklar received the most comments with 24 each, all of them being positive. However, for Scania Group only three out of fifty-four comments appeared. They might have removed those comments due to its content. The ambushers got only positive comments on NSFCC-related posts. Elkjop (n = 12), Coop (n = 24), and NSB (n = 13) were the ones that got most of the comments. However, for two of the ambushers not all of the comments did show. For Coop and NSB eight and two comments respectively were missing.

Next, a closer look on the characteristics of the posts that got the most comments and the characteristics of the comments are provided. Two of Eiendomsmegler1 Midt-Norge's posts got most of the comments. The first one was posted February 20th and got 60 comments, which was the same that got the high number of likes. In that post the sponsor stated that, they were proud of the cooperation with the athlete Petter Northug and linked to an article about his past life experiences. Most of the comments were about Petter Northug as a person and Eiendomsmegler1 Midt-Norge's cooperation with him. The comments showed different opinions towards Eiendomsmegler1 Midt-Norge's cooperation with Petter Northug. The second post was posted on February 26th and got fourteen comments. That post was a quiz related to the athlete Petter Northug and the prizes were training equipment. These two posts were the same as the ones that got the most likes. The reason Grilstad received so many comments was the result of a contest where one would put an answer in the comment section. They posted the contest seven times prior to the start of the WSC. The third team sponsor Spar had one post receiving the majority of comments with that being the same post receiving the most likes.

The strategical partner Skydda had only one post and that post was a contest where one would answer in the comment section. Nine of Isklar's posts received comments

ranging from one to six. Their comments were characterized as athlete encouragement, mostly congratulating them. For ambushers, Coop had only one post that received all. It also reached a high amount of likes. Its post congratulated the athletes and included a picture of Petter Northug. Both of Elkjop's posts that received comments was a result of the company asking consumers who they thought was going to win that day's race. The comments that NSB received were spread out pretty even over four different posts. All comments were related to the special waxing cabin in one of their trains.

To sum up, the posts that generated the most comments and shares were the ones with extreme amount of likes or were contests. In addition, posts with pictures of new athletes' sportswear and video of the waxing trailer generated also many shares. The posts with extreme amount of likes were linked to athlete encouragements and gave associations with highly engaged episodes.

5.1.4 Athletes and the NSFCC on social media

By their presence on social media, the athletes and the NSFCC had the opportunity to enhance brand awareness and brand associations for their sponsors. Six athletes were active on Twitter and they tweeted a total of 34 times. The female athlete Astrid U. Jacobsen was by far the most active with sixteen tweets and forty-three retweets. She also had her own hashtag, #aujski, where laypersons could ask her questions and also compete for prizes. Only eight laypersons used that hashtag and one ambusher used that hashtag twice when they tweeted about her. Astrid U. Jacobsen mentioned sponsors in 31 % of her tweets and 5 % of her retweets were sponsors. Petter Northug came second with eight tweets and zero retweets. The remaining four athletes tweeted two to three times each. In total, NSFCC-sponsors were mentioned nine times and five of them were hashtags of the brand logo. BJ (n=6) was mentioned the most. One of the athletes also retweeted one of the main sponsor's tweets. The athletes mentioned their private sponsors four times and another one was retweeted once. One of the tweets was a tweet about a visit at a café. The café was considered a private sponsor, since its name was both hashtagged and tagged.

Only three athletes posted global posts (n = 38) on Facebook during the period of the study. Petter Northug was by far the most active with 33 posts, while the two others had

two and three posts each. Petter Northug had a Facebook fan page, which was run by his private staff. He was the only one that mentioned any sponsors. He mentioned one NSFCC-sponsor, Eiendomsmebler1 Midt-Norge, and four private sponsor were mentioned eight times in total. When combining Facebook and Twitter, Petter Northug mentioned sponsors in 20 % of his tweets/posts. None of the private sponsors mentioned were in the same category as any of NSFCC's sponsors. The posts without sponsors generated on average twice as much engagement than the posts with sponsors. The posts celebrating gold medals generated the most likes among all and the best one got 85.425 likes.

The NSFCC were active on both Twitter and Facebook. They had eleven posts, 31 tweets, and three retweets. The number of likes of their posts ranged from 381 to 5884 (mean=2617±2009, median=1992). Comments ranged from five to 418 (mean=80±119, median=30) and shares ranged from zero to 48 (mean=13±18, median=2). Their tweets ranged from zero to 258 (mean=39±54, median=17) and number of retweets ranged from zero to 86 (mean 11±18, median=3). However, a tweet about Petter Northug got over double the likes (n=258) and retweets (n=86) as the next on the list. NSFCC used Facebook and Twitter to communicate information about team selection, results, and congratulation the athletes. Worth noting, besides retweeting one of Aker Active's tweets they did not mention any sponsors. However, one from the marketing department of the NSFCC used his private account to tweet a few times about sponsors' internal activation activities. Considering the large amount of user engagement generated by the athletes and the NSFCC, sponsors would find it attractive to be included in their social media activity.

5.2 Survey

The number of respondents were 292, which consisted of 120 men and 172 women. They were aged 19-45 (mean 23.17±3.8). Regarding their usage of social media, 244 used Facebook actively, one used Twitter, and 35 used both Facebook and Twitter actively. Twelve respondents indicated not using Facebook nor Twitter actively. In total, 58 of the respondents followed either NSFCC or an athlete on either Facebook or Twitter. In general, 200 of the respondents followed the WSC in some way (e.g. TV, newspapers, online stream, or social media). TV (n=167) and online newspapers

(n=121) were the most popular, while social media (n=72) came third among the media channels used to follow the WSC.

Furthermore, the respondents' attitude towards sponsors were measured by the use of a seven point Likert scale. The respondents slightly disagreed when asked if they would prefer products used by athletes (3.15±1.4). The same was found regarding the products/services of sponsors of the NSFCC (3.17±1.4). Respondents' interest in cross-country skiing was also measured using a ten point Likert scale. The respondents' answers were divided into three categories: 1-3 as non-fan, 4-7 as fans, and 8-10 as high-fan. The distribution was as followed: 37 % of the respondents were categorized as non-fans, 45 % as fans, and 18 % as high-fans. There was a significant difference between non-fans and both fans and high-fans regarding the respondents' attitude towards NSFCC's sponsors ($F_{2,289} = 14.1$, $p < 0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.89$) and products ($F_{2,289} = 14.3$, $p < 0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.9$) used by athletes. The results are presented in table 5.4. However, no one of the categorizes had a mean score higher than four, which was set to be the middle of the Likert scale.

Table 5.4: An overview of the differences between the three fan categories based on both attitude towards NSFCC's sponsors and products used by athletes.

Category	Products used by athletes				Attitude towards sponsors			
	Mean ± st.dev.	N	Min	Max	Mean ± st.dev.	N	Min	Max
Non-fans	2.6 ± 1.5	109	1	5	2.6 ± 1.5	109	1	5
Fans	3.4 ± 1.2	131	1	6	3.5 ± 1.3	131	1	6
High-fans	3.7 ± 1.3	52	1	6	3.5 ± 1.2	52	1	6

Further, the respondents' ability of recalling sponsors was examined. When asked to write down as many sponsors of the NSFCC as they could, 58 % did not mention any sponsors, 20 % mentioned one, 10 % mentioned two sponsors, 8 % mentioned three sponsors, and 4 % mentioned four or more sponsors. The most amount of sponsors recalled was six. Those who were categorized as sponsors did not include athletes' individual gear suppliers, which were seen as its own category. Among the respondents 25 % mentioned brands that were gear suppliers of at least one athlete (i.e. Swix, Fischer, Madshus, and Rottfella). Athletes' private suppliers and other firms not

related to the NSFCC were another category. This category was considered wrong sponsors, 23 % mentioned one brand and 4 % mentioned two brands. However, the type of brands mentioned were also examined and are presented in table 5.5.

Table 5.5: *An overview of the brands mentioned.*

Type of sponsor	Brand name	N
Main sponsor	Aker	35
Official clothing supplier	BJ	53
Team sponsors	Norsk Tipping	43
	Spar	29
	Ali Kaffe	5
	Maxbo	3
	Grilstad	2
	Eiendomsmegler1 Midt-Norge	1
	BDO	1
	Weber	1
Strategical partners	Isklar	32
	Bendit	16
	Dale of Norway	2
Main sponsor youth teams	Statoil	6
Official gear suppliers	Swix	68
	Fischer	8
	Madshus	3
	Rottefella	1
Official supplier	Red bull	3
Wrong sponsors	DNB	21
	Coop	13
	Tine	10
	Sparebank1	6

Among all the sponsors, Bjorn Daehlie was mentioned the most followed by Norsk Tipping, and Aker. Other sponsors that stood out were Spar, Isklar, and Bendit. The gear suppliers mentioned the most were Swix. Other firms mentioned a few times were

either in the same category as a NSFCC-sponsor (e.g. Imsdal and Farris), in some other way related to winter sports (e.g. Ulvang, Telenor, Craft, TV2, Kvikk lunsj, and Olympiatopen), or just random firms (e.g. Thon hotels, Kiwi, Obos, and Asko).

According to the Chi Square test of independence, the number of sponsors recalled had a significant association with the three categories of fans ($X^2_6 = 58.6$, $p < 0.001$, $V = 0.317$). Worth noting, non-fans had a high amount of zero sponsors recalled than expected and high-fans had a low amount than expected. In addition, the number of non-fans that recalled at least one sponsor were lower than expected. The number of high-fans that recalled at least one sponsor were higher than expected. There was also a significant association between type of fan and the number of wrong sponsors recalled ($X^2_4 = 11.6$, $p = 0.021$, $V = 0.141$). Non-fans had a higher amount of zero mentions than expected and a lower amount of wrong sponsors mentioned than expected. High-fans had a lower amount of zero recalls than expected and a higher amount of wrong sponsors recalled than expected. These findings indicate that the degree of functional fit had an impact on sponsor recall. In addition, it shows how cluttered and confusing that sponsorship marked seems to be, which address the importance for sponsors to create a strong association to the NSFCC.

5.2.1 The effect of different cues

The main part of the questionnaire examined the degree of association to the NSFCC made by different cues. It was measured by a seven point Likert scale. Posts and tweets with different kinds of cues were presented in a questionnaire one by one. The Friedman test was used to see if there were any differences between the different tweets' and posts' score. The results are presented in table 5.6. The Friedman test showed a significant difference between the different posts ($X^2_6 = 520.8$, $p < 0.001$). The follow up Wilcoxon signed ranks test showed that there was no significant difference between Isklar and BJ ($z = -1.5$, $p=0.139$) and between Elkjop and NSB ($z = -1.9$, $p=0.064$). There was a significant difference between Ali Kaffe and Grilstad ($z = -2.4$, $p=0.015$) and between all the other pairs of posts ($p < 0.001$). According to table 5.6, there was a gap in mean score between the three posts of Spar, Isklar, and BJ and the other posts. It indicate that sponsorship property cues made a stronger association than the other cues. The cue, statement of sponsorship, made the strongest association among those two.

Regarding the tweets, the Friedman test showed that the content in the different tweets had a significant influence on score ($X^2_4 = 314.3$, $p < 0.001$). The follow up Wilcoxon signed ranks tests showed that there was a significant difference between each pair of tweets except Toppidrettsterapi-Bose ($z = -1.1$, $p = 0.258$). There was a significant difference between Aker-Norsk Tipping ($z = -2.7$, $p = 0.005$), Toppidrettsterapi-Thon hotels ($z = -3$, $p = 0.002$), and the other pairs ($p < 0.001$). Table 5.6 shows that there was a gap in mean score between Norsk Tipping and Aker and the other three tweets, which support the findings from the examination of the posts.

Table 5.6: An overview of the descriptive data of the posts and tweets.

Update	Brands (N, relatedness)	Mean \pm std. dev	Min.	Max.	Mean rank
Posts	Spar (287, high)	6.1 \pm 1.5	1	7	5.69
	Isklar (285, high)	5.6 \pm 1.8	1	7	5.01
	BJ (285, high)	5.4 \pm 1.7	1	7	4.76
	Ali Kaffe (283, mediocre)	4.4 \pm 1.8	1	7	3.64
	Grilstad (286, mediocre)	4 \pm 1.8	1	7	3.18
	Elkjop (285, low)	3.6 \pm 1.7	1	7	2.97
	NSB (287, low)	3.4 \pm 1.8	1	7	2.74
Tweets	Norsk Tipping (287, high)	5.9 \pm 1.5	1	7	4.02
	Aker (285, mediocre)	5.6 \pm 1.7	1	7	3.66
	Thon hotels (286, low)	4.2 \pm 1.9	1	7	2.71
	Toppidrettsterapi (283, mediocre)	3.8 \pm 1.8	1	7	2.36
	Bose (279, low)	3.7 \pm 1.9	1	7	2.25

Both degree of interest in cross-country skiing and sponsor recall were factors that might influence the degree of sponsor recognition. The results based on degree of interest are in table 5.7 and sponsor recall in table 5.8. The differences between both the tweets and posts within each group varied. The Friedman test showed that there was a significant difference between the tweets within high-fan ($X^2_4 = 93.7$, $p < 0.001$), fan ($X^2_4 = 139.3$, $p < 0.001$), and non-fan ($X^2_4 = 92.1$, $p < 0.001$). Looking at the tweets, there was a clearer gap between the sponsors and ambushers in the groups of high-fans than the two other groups. The Wilcoxon signed ranks test showed that there were no significant

differences between the three ambushers within the high-fan group. In the fan group there was a significant difference between Thon hotels and both Toppidrettsterapi ($z = -2.4$, $p = 0.017$) and Bose ($z = -3.1$, $p = 0.002$). In addition, Thon hotels differed significantly from both Toppidrettsterapi ($z = -2.1$, $p = 0.035$) and Bose ($z = -2.8$, $p = 0.005$) within the non-fan group. Hence, high-fans were more likely to identify the sponsors than the other two groups and not get confused by the ambushers.

Table 5.7: An overview of the scores (mean \pm standard deviation.) of the different posts and tweets based on the respondents' degree of interest in cross-country skiing.

Updates	Brands	High-fan	Fan	Non-fan
Posts	Spar	6.4 \pm 1.3	6.1 \pm 1.5	6.1 \pm 1.5
	Isklar	6.1 \pm 1.6	5.7 \pm 1.7	5.2 \pm 2
	BJ	6.4 \pm 1.2	5.4 \pm 1.8	5 \pm 1.8
	Ali Kaffe	4.1 \pm 1.8	4.5 \pm 1.9	4.3 \pm 1.8
	Grilstad	3.7 \pm 2	4.1 \pm 1.7	4 \pm 1.9
	Elkjop	3 \pm 1.7	3.7 \pm 1.6	3.9 \pm 1.7
	NSB	3.3 \pm 1.9	3.5 \pm 1.7	3.6 \pm 1.9
Tweets	Norsk Tipping	6.1 \pm 1.7	5.8 \pm 1.5	6 \pm 1.5
	Aker	6.1 \pm 1.4	5.7 \pm 1.6	5.2 \pm 1.9
	Thon hotels	3.6 \pm 1.8	4.4 \pm 1.8	4.6 \pm 1.9
	Toppidrettsterapi	3.5 \pm 1.8	3.8 \pm 1.8	4 \pm 1.8
	Bose	3.2 \pm 1.9	3.6 \pm 1.8	3.9 \pm 1.8

Looking at the posts, there was a noticeable gap between the three posts of Spar, Isklar, and BJ and the rest of the posts. In addition, Ali kaffe and Grilstad had a higher mean score than the two ambushers. The Friedman test showed a significant difference between the posts within high-fan ($X^2_6 = 146.9$, $p < 0.001$), fan ($X^2_6 = 237.9$, $p < 0.001$), and non-fan ($X^2_6 = 154.7$, $p < 0.001$). Worth noting, the differences between the posts were smaller within the fan group than the high-fan groups and even smaller in the non-fan group. The Wilcoxon signed ranks test showed that there was no significant difference between Grilstad and Elkjop ($z = -1.1$, $p = 0.253$) in the non-fan group. On the other hand, there was a significant difference in the fan group ($z = -2.4$, $p = 0.018$) and the high-fan group ($z = -2.3$, $p = 0.022$). This indicates that only the sponsorship

property cues created a distinction between the sponsor and ambushers, especially in the minds of non-fans.

Table 5.8: An overview of the scores (mean \pm standard deviation.) of the different posts and tweets based on the respondents' degree of sponsor recall.

Updates	Brands	Zero	One	Two	Three	Four and more
Posts	Spar	6.1 \pm 1.5	6.3 \pm 1.4	6.3 \pm 1.6	5.8 \pm 1.7	6.3 \pm 1.4
	Isklar	5.4 \pm 1.8	5.6 \pm 1.8	5.8 \pm 2	6.2 \pm 1.6	6.6 \pm 0.9
	BJ	5.1 \pm 1.8	5.6 \pm 1.7	5.5 \pm 1.9	6.2 \pm 1	6.8 \pm 0.4
	Ali Kaffe	4.4 \pm 1.9	4.3 \pm 1.7	4 \pm 1.9	4.7 \pm 1.7	4.3 \pm 2.1
	Grilstad	4.2 \pm 1.8	3.8 \pm 1.8	3.5 \pm 1.8	4 \pm 1.8	3.9 \pm 2.3
	Elkjop	4 \pm 1.7	3.5 \pm 1.6	3.1 \pm 1.5	3.1 \pm 1.7	2.5 \pm 1.1
	NSB	3.7 \pm 1.8	3.3 \pm 2	3 \pm 1.7	3.5 \pm 1.9	2.9 \pm 1.6
Tweets	Norsk Tipping	5.9 \pm 1.5	5.8 \pm 1.7	6.1 \pm 1.6	6.1 \pm 1.3	6 \pm 1.6
	Aker	5.3 \pm 1.8	5.8 \pm 1.5	6.3 \pm 1	5.5 \pm 2.1	6.9 \pm 0.3
	Thon hotels	4.6 \pm 1.9	4 \pm 1.8	3.8 \pm 1.7	4 \pm 1.9	3 \pm 1.5
	Toppidrettsterapi	4.1 \pm 1.8	3.5 \pm 1.6	3.6 \pm 1.9	3.7 \pm 1.9	2.6 \pm 1.2
	Bose	4 \pm 1.8	3.5 \pm 2	3 \pm 1.8	3.2 \pm 1.7	2 \pm 1.1

A clear tendency was that the sponsors got higher mean scores from high-fans and fans than non-fans, except for Ali Kaffe and Grilstad. The ambushers got higher mean scores from non-fans than fans and high-fans. The same tendency as for the degree of interest was seen for the degree of sponsor recall. However, the differences between the sponsors and ambushers were not that clear. The Friedman test showed a significant difference between the tweets within the groups of zero ($X^2_4 = 123.5$, $p < 0.001$), one ($X^2_4 = 81.2$, $p < 0.001$), two ($X^2_4 = 60.5$, $p < 0.001$), three ($X^2_4 = 34.3$, $p < 0.001$), and four and more ($X^2_4 = 38.3$, $p < 0.001$) sponsors recalled. Although, there was a noticeable gap between the tweets of the sponsors and ambushers. That gap got bigger the more sponsors the group had recalled. The Wilcoxon signed ranks test confirmed that there was a significant difference between the sponsors and the ambushers in all five groups.

There was also a significant difference between the posts within the groups of zero ($X^2_6 = 244.4$, $p < 0.001$), one ($X^2_6 = 122.9$, $p < 0.001$), two ($X^2_6 = 69.2$, $p < 0.001$), three ($X^2_6 = 69$, $p < 0.001$), and four and more ($X^2_6 = 39.8$, $p < 0.001$) sponsors recalled. The Wilcoxon

signed ranks test confirmed that there was a significant difference between the top group (i.e. Spar, Isklar, and BJ) and the middle group (i.e. Ali kaffe and Grilstad). There was also a significant difference between all the sponsors and the two ambushers. Except, the group with zero sponsor recall had no significant difference between Grilstad and Elkjop ($z = -1.2, p = 0.217$). Again, it show that the sponsors have to rely on the sponsorship property cues in order to differ from the ambushers.

Table 5.9: An overview of the differences between those who followed the NSFCC or an athlete on Facebook or Twitter and those who did not based on the different tweets and posts.

Updates	Brands	Followed NSFCC or athlete	Mean \pm std. dev.	N
Tweets	Bose	Yes	3.4 \pm 1.9	55
		No	3.7 \pm 1.8	223
	Norsk Tipping	Yes	5.9 \pm 1.6	57
		No	5.9 \pm 1.5	229
	Toppidrettsterapi	Yes	3.9 \pm 1.8	57
		No	3.8 \pm 1.8	226
	Thon hotels	Yes	3.9 \pm 1.7	58
		No	4.3 \pm 1.9	227
	Aker	Yes	5.9 \pm 1.6	57
		No	5.5 \pm 1.8	227
Posts	Isklar	Yes	6.1 \pm 1.3	58
		No	5.5 \pm 1.9	226
	BJ	Yes	5.2 \pm 1.8	58
		No	6.3 \pm 1.1	226
	NSB	Yes	3.6 \pm 1.8	58
		No	3.4 \pm 1.8	228
	Elkjop	Yes	3.5 \pm 1.6	57
		No	3.6 \pm 1.7	227
	Grilstad	Yes	3.9 \pm 1.9	58
		No	4 \pm 1.8	227
	Ali kaffe	Yes	4.6 \pm 1.9	57
		No	4.3 \pm 1.8	225
	Spar	Yes	6.2 \pm 1.5	58
		No	6.1 \pm 1.5	286

Furthermore, additional tests were conducted in order to see if engagement with the NSFCC had an impact on sponsor recognition. The Mann-Whitney U test was used to see if there were any differences in the mean scores of the tweets and posts between the respondents that followed NSFCC or an athlete on social media and those who did not. The results are presented in table 5.9. No significant difference was found for each tweet and post, except for the posts of Isklar ($z = -2.4, p < 0.018$) and BJ ($z = -4, p <$

0.001). The same test was used to see if there was any difference between those who followed the WSC and those who did not in the mean scores of the tweets and posts. The results are presented in table 5.10. A significant difference was found for the tweets of Thon hotels ($z = -2$, $p = 0.043$), Aker ($z = -2.3$, $p = 0.023$), and Bose ($z = -2.8$, $p = 0.005$). There was a significant difference for the posts of BJ ($z = -2.7$, $p = 0.008$) and Isklar ($z = -3.8$, $p < 0.001$). The results from these two tests did not reveal any noteworthy patterns among the sponsors and the ambushers.

Table 5.10: An overview of the difference between those who followed the WSC and those who did not based on the different tweets and posts.

Updates	Brands	Followed WSC	Mean \pm std. dev.	N
Tweets	Bose	Yes	3.5 \pm 1.9	189
		No	4.1 \pm 1.7	90
	Norsk Tipping	Yes	5.9 \pm 1.6	196
		No	5.8 \pm 1.5	91
	Toppidrettsterapi	Yes	3.7 \pm 1.8	195
		No	4 \pm 1.8	88
	Thon hotels	Yes	4.1 \pm 1.9	196
		No	4.6 \pm 1.9	90
	Aker	Yes	5.6 \pm 1.6	195
		No	5.2 \pm 1.9	90
Posts	Isklar	Yes	5.8 \pm 1.7	195
		No	5.1 \pm 1.9	90
	BJ	Yes	5.5 \pm 1.8	194
		No	5.1 \pm 1.7	91
	NSB	Yes	3.4 \pm 1.8	197
		No	3.5 \pm 1.8	90
	Elkjop	Yes	3.5 \pm 1.7	196
		No	3.9 \pm 1.6	89
	Grilstad	Yes	3.9 \pm 1.8	197
		No	4.2 \pm 1.8	89
	Ali kaffe	Yes	4.4 \pm 1.8	193
		No	4.3 \pm 1.8	90
	Spar	Yes	6.2 \pm 1.5	197
		No	6 \pm 1.6	90

6.0 Discussion

Here, the findings will be discussed with the use of previous research and theory in the field. The discussion follows the same order as the sub-questions and starts with the characteristics of the sponsors' activation strategy. Next, the effect of the different ways used to achieve increased brand awareness (i.e. brand-related buzz, use of hashtags, user engagement, and connecting with the athletes and the NSFCC). Then, the effect of different cues are discussed based on the respondents' degree of interest in cross-country skiing and knowledge about the sponsors. Lastly, the differences between the sponsors and the ambushers in terms of strategies used to increase brand awareness and change brand associations are discussed.

First, Facebook were of much more use by the sponsors than Twitter. According to Tiago and Verissimo (2014), Facebook (73 %) and Twitter (42 %) were the social network sites used the most by Portuguese firms. Eagleman (2013), which studied national governing bodies of sports in the USA, found the same. One reason could be that Facebook has existed longer than Twitter (D'Onfro, 2015 June 16; Kietzmann et al., 2011). Therefore, people might be more familiar with Facebook. In addition, Facebook made it easier to present a whole image (Grimmer & Burk, 2015 September 10th). Eagleman (2013) found that NGB's of sports in the USA used social media to control image, engage fans, and increase awareness for the sport. However, none of the sponsors seemed to focus on changing their brand image by getting closer connected to the values of the NSFCC. One possible exception is Grilstad, who focused on how their products could be an healthy alternative and provide a proper nutrition for athletes.

The sponsors' activation strategies varied a lot in terms of number of updates, number of retweets, use of hashtags, and the use of athletes. Abeza et al. (2014) found the same among the TOP sponsors of the Sochi Winter Olympic Games. A relatively recognizable pattern was the sponsors' promotion of products. Promotion was together with athlete encouragement the sponsorship tactics choice for all three sponsorship tiers. These findings support the ones of Abeza et al. (2014), which also found that promotion was the dominant strategy among the TOP sponsors of the Sochi Winter Olympic Games. Of note, none of the sponsors used social responsibility or cause-related initiatives in their activities, despite being one of the trends in sponsorship activation

(Fortunato, 2013; Meenaghan, 2015; Uhrich et al., 2014). Anyhow, it was necessary to delve deeper into the strategy of the most active sponsors and ambushers in order to get a full understanding. Hence, it was necessary to look deeper into the sponsors' individual strategy in order to find if there was a possible connection to the brand-related buzz on Twitter.

The findings show that a few of the sponsors used social media as an activation channel. One reason might be that some of the sponsors focused on internal activation. Such a sponsorship activation strategy does not require any activity on social media. Aker was the only one to use social media to talk about their internal activation, which was making their employees travel to the WSC. It was not possible to determine if sponsors focused on internal activation. In this study, six of the sponsors seemed to have a clear strategy behind all of their social media activity. Grilstad and Skydda seemed to engage in a two-way communication with the consumers. According to Waters and Jamal (2011), organizations tend to use Twitter as a one-way communication tool. Twitter is more about conversation between users (Kietzman et al., 2011). A two-way communication approach would more likely engage consumers and potential consumers (Abeza et. al., 2013; Faulds, 2009; Hipke & Hachtmann, 2014). Kumar and Mirchandani (2012) showed that a campaign involving the consumers had the ability to increase brand awareness, brand-related buzz, and sentiment significantly.

6.1 Brand awareness

Increased brand awareness might be achieved by activating through social media. According to Hughes et al. (2011), Twitter were a medium where users express their opinions and engage in discussions. Making consumers talk about one's brand or its activation activities can be a way for the sponsors to increase brand awareness. This is referred to as brand-related buzz (Meenaghan et al., 2013). Delia and Armstrong (2015) found that sponsor's social media activity had a weak positive effect on event-related buzz. In this study, none of the sponsors seemed to generate any brand-related buzz on Twitter by their social media activities. Activities that did not involve social media mainly had the ability to create brand-related buzz on Twitter. According to the findings, Isklar got the most brand-related buzz by far among the sponsors. Their brand-related buzz came because of Isklar's activation activities on other media channels that

engaged the consumers. Betsson and NSB generated positive brand-related buzz, because of their activities related to the WSC. Their activities engaged the consumers and especially Betsson got their consumers to tweet about their experience.

Among the sponsors, only Isklar generated more brand-related buzz than Betsson and NSB. Further, the buzz was negative. Worth noting, Coop and Red Bull got the most brand-related buzz, both private sponsors of Petter Northug. According to the findings, those two seemed to have created a strong association between their brand and Petter Northug. In fact, they were both mentioned when respondents tweeted about Petter Northug. For example, a user tweeted: “Noen må gi Northug en Redbull! Trenger vinger nå. [Someone must give Northug a Redbull! Needs wings now.]” Another user tweeted: “Sjukaste eg har sett. I morgon blir det Coop-brød! #nrkvm [The sickest I have seen. Tomorrow I will have Coop bread! #nrkvm]” In contradiction with Isklar, which seems to have created negative associations for their cooperation with the NSFCC as shown by this tweet: “Isklar der, Martin Johnsrud. Spyr av den offensive reklameringsen. #nrkvm [Isklar there, Martin Johnsrud. The offensive advertising makes me vomit. #nrkvm]” According to Meenaghan (2013), firms that has received criticism for their products or services used sponsorships to change their brand associations. Red bull were one of those firms. The brand-related buzz analysis revealed only one user tweet that criticized Red bull for being a bad match with cross-country skiing. However, one should consider that the brand-related buzz collected were just a part of the total word-of-mouth. The word-of-mouth happened also offline and in private messages on Facebook (Hoffman & Fodor, 2010).

The main sponsor, the official clothing supplier, and the team sponsors were able to place their brand logo on athlete clothing. Therefore, they were likely to achieve more awareness than the strategical partners were. According to the survey results, the main sponsor, the official clothing supplier, and two of the team sponsors (i.e. Norsk Tipping and Spar) stood out in terms of sponsor recall. Two of the strategical partners (i.e. Isklar and Bendit) were recalled more often than the other team sponsors and strategical partners. There was no difference between the other team sponsors and the strategical partners in terms of recall. According to Jensen et al. (2015), pictures that included brand logos might be a way to increase brand awareness, but the effect of pictures on brand recall was inconclusive. The number of sponsor recalls seem to be a result of all

activation activities of the sponsors and not only the activities on social media. In addition, the length of the sponsorship would also have an impact on recall (Cornwell et al., 2001). Actually, having to compete with an ambusher might increase the sponsor's brand awareness. As one user said in a comment on Facebook: "Hvor mye oppmerksomhet har ikke spar fått etter at Northug signerte med coop. Ante ikke at de var sponsor før bråket. [How much awareness has spar got because of Northug signed with coop. Did not know they were a sponsor before the trouble]". However, this indicates that having the brand logo on athlete clothing might not be that effective as other sponsor activities. Another way to increase brand awareness was by the use of hashtags.

6.1.1 The use of hashtags

The use of hashtags made sponsors and ambushers reach specific target groups (Smith & Smith, 2012), which in this case was Norwegian cross-country fans mainly. As stated by Jensen et al. (2015), the purpose of hashtags was either to increase awareness for certain tweets or for a specific campaign. According to the buzz analysis, the sponsors (n=55) and ambushers (n=57) were pretty even in terms of number of tweets that included a NSFCC- or WSC-related hashtag. The review of the social media accounts of both sponsors and ambushers revealed their overall usage of hashtags. On Twitter, the main sponsor and the ambushers had the most tweets that included NSFCC/WSC-related hashtags. On Facebook, the ambushers were clearly the one that used those hashtags most frequently. However, each ambusher's activity on Twitter were higher than on Facebook. One explanation might be that the Twitter feature, hashtag, made Twitter more appropriate to reach new target markets (e.g. cross-country fans). Blaszk a et al. (2012) found that the majority of the users of the Major League Baseball's official hashtag were fans.

The use of hashtags could possibly have an impact on awareness, since it makes the content more searchable (Lovejoy et al., 2012). However, the number of social media consumers that actually searched for tweets with those hashtags were unknown. On the other hand, if a hashtag was popular enough it would appear on a user's homepage on the Trending topic area (Abeza et al., 2014). In order to be a trending hashtag it needed to be associated with something of interest by many users. According to Blaszk a et al.

(2012), the official event hashtag was mostly used to express fanship and interact with others. The amount of informational tweets and promotional tweets sent by the MLB were few (Blascka et al., 2012). The sponsors' tweets would just be a few of many other tweets. Therefore, while the potential for increased brand awareness may be limited, the inclusion of hashtags is likely to increase awareness.

The type of hashtags used for the buzz analysis were mainly WSC-related. The NSFCC did not have an official hashtag that users could search for to get news about the cross-country team. Such a hashtag would probably generate more views and be better for sponsors and ambushers to use. As stated by Smith and Smith (2012), many major events have created their own official hashtag in order to concentrate the buzz about their event. Two hashtags used by the NSFCC may serve as their official hashtag, which was “#skinorge” [Norway cross-country] and “#verdensbesteskijenter” [The world's best women in cross-country]. The latter originated from a television show about the Norwegian female athletes. Hence, that hashtag had the potential to be a trending hashtag that the consumers would associate with the NSFCC. Athletes with their ability to attract and engage fans might increase that hashtag's popularity (Hutchins, 2011; Kassing & Sanderson, 2010; Sanderson & Kassing, 2011). The popularity of the athlete might have an impact as well. One athlete used a unique hashtag to facilitate the conversation with fans, but it was unsuccessful. She used it mostly to create a two-way communication with her fans.

The hashtags used for contests were the second type used to generate awareness (Jensen et al., 2015). Consumers had to include that hashtag in their tweet in order to submit their answer. In this study, neither sponsors nor ambushers used a specific hashtag to increase awareness for their campaign, since neither had a campaign where the use of such a hashtag was useful. Such hashtags might have a broader reach, since those tweets appear on the news wall of the participants' Twitter followers. Such a hashtag includes either the brand name or the name of the campaign. When sponsoring the Super Bowl Budweiser created the term “BudBowl” (Amis et al., 1997), and such a hashtag might make the link between a sponsor and the NSFCC clearer. The sponsor might go even further by creating a Twitter page for that hashtag (Lawyer, 2012 June 10th).

Hashtags might generate awareness and engagement from new target markets. Other types of engagement might increase awareness among a more general group of users (e.g. likes, retweets, and shares). By using those features the posts and tweets spread out to the users' Facebook-friends and Twitter-followers (Facebook, n.d.b; Kwak et al., 2010). The degree of engagement on Twitter was measured by the number of likes and retweets. The number of likes, comments, and shares measured the degree of engagement on Facebook. When looking at the degree of engagement on both Twitter and Facebook. The engagement on Facebook was much higher than on Twitter, which was natural considering that Norway had three times more Facebook-users than Twitter-users. In addition, 83 % of the Facebook-users were daily on Facebook, while only 28 % of Twitter-users logged on daily (Ipsos IMM, 2015 January 28th). The findings of Armstrong et al. (2014) could explain this low engagement. They stated that a big portion of the Twitter-users just used Twitter to get news updates, while Facebook were more about engaging with others (Hughes et al., 2011). The results indicated that both Facebook-users and Twitter-users were more likely to use the like feature when engaging with the sponsors and ambushers. On Twitter, the users' followers did not directly see the users' liked tweets as they did on Facebook (Twitter Help Center, 2015). Therefore, Facebook seemed to be more appropriate to increase brand awareness.

Focusing on Twitter, neither any of the sponsors nor ambushers seemed to have distinguished themselves in terms of number of likes and retweets. Especially, the number of tweets retweeted were low among all of them. According to Boehmer and Tandoc Jr. (2015), tweets categorized as interest, relevance, informative, and original were more likely to be retweeted. With that in mind, the fit between the content of the post/tweet and the consumers' preferences was of importance. Several of the tweets from athletes and the NSFCC got more retweets than the sponsors and ambushers did. That being said, none of the sponsors nor ambushers had tweets that consisted of exclusive content that might generate interest (e.g. athlete stories or sweepstakes with exclusive prizes).

On Facebook, the number of likes, shares, and comments indicate the degree of brand awareness. First, the focus is on likes and shares. On average, the number of likes were much higher than the number of shares. The difference between likes and shares was that a shared post also appeared on the wall of the user who shared the post. In addition,

add his/her own comment. Liked posts only appeared on the news wall of the user's Facebook-friends. In terms of awareness, that difference might not have a significant impact. Have in mind, having participants share the post as a competition criterion was not allowed (Facebook, 2015 January 8th). Even though, neither the sponsors nor the ambushers had any sweepstakes where the participants had to hit like. When looking at each sponsor and ambusher separately, they varied a lot in terms of number of likes and shares. According to Sysomos (2009 November), popular Facebook fan pages did not differ from other fan pages in terms of number of posts. However, popular fan pages had significantly more non-stream creator-generated content (e.g. photo albums, videos, and links), but the real difference was in fan-generated content (e.g. comments and shares). Therefore, the type of activation activities of each sponsor and ambushers and the content of each post would seem to determine the popularity of a Facebook fan page.

6.1.2 NSFCC-related posts' impact on user engagement

Most of the sponsors got on average more likes on their NSF-related posts than the non-related posts. A recognizable pattern was that the sponsors who got more likes on their non-related posts differed significantly from the other sponsors in terms of likes on their non-related posts. Some of them had other campaigns in the same period that generated more engagement (e.g. Grilstad), while others seemed to reach out to a larger audience (e.g. Norsk Tipping and Scania Group). Six of the sponsors seemed to have a strategy behind their activities. However, no one seemed to have put a lot of effort into their strategy. Especially compared to the TOP Olympic sponsors studied by Abeza et al. (2014). For example, Norsk Tipping posted only post with live race updates to create excitement and promote their service, but also congratulating athletes with their achievements. Grilstad posted athletes' sandwich suggestion and one contest where participants had to predict which Norwegian athlete would place highest on the men's sprint. Even though sponsorship has become more commercial (Meenaghan, 2015; Séguin et al., 2005b) and sponsors like Vodafone have specific criteria for choosing a sponsee (Cliffe & Motion, 2005). Some sponsorships might still be philanthropic even on a national level and type of sport chosen based on interest. Considering that major events like the FIFA Women's World Cup final and the UEFA Champions League final generated the most tweets per second for one year (Highfield et al., 2013). Even so,

some of the sponsors saw might not the WSC as big enough that such an effort would pay off. Still, social media are a relatively new activation channel for sponsors and this is just the beginning.

Two of the sponsors that did seem to have a strategy behind their activation activities were Isklar and Ali Kaffe. It seemed natural to compare Ali Kaffe and Isklar as they have similar products. In addition, they had very similar activation strategy. Both strategies were simple, getting a fair amount of likes compared to the other sponsors and strategic partners. However, they did not receive many comments or shares although. Isklar did receive on average over four times as much likes as Ali Kaffe. On the other side, Isklar also got the most brand-related buzz on Twitter and those tweets were mostly negative. The laypersons criticized Isklar for their unnatural product placement and referred mostly to athlete interviews.

On average, each sponsor did not create a large amount of engagement. However, two specific posts really stood out in terms of the number of likes. Those two posts also received a high amount of shares compared to the other posts, but the difference was much less than with likes. Spar and EiendomsMegler1 Midt-Norge posted those two posts right after and the day after a Norwegian gold medal respectively. They both referred to that achievement, and congratulated the athletes and the NSFCC staff. In general, posts that congratulated athletes seemed to have generated more engagement than other type of posts. The review of posts and tweets by athletes and the NSFCC found the same pattern. This could relate to Neder et al. (2015 September 10th), which argued that suspenseful advertisement that played on the excitement related to the event would be more effective. Both posts could be associated to heavily debated episodes related to the NSFCC (i.e. the ski waxing scandal in the Olympic Games in Sochi 2014 and a national team athlete that had a drunk and driving accident). Here, the context of the situation determine which associations the consumers got while they interpreted the post (Humphreys et al., 2010).

The story related to these two posts could evoke certain feelings and emotions among the consumers. This was confirmed by the content of the comments related to these posts. A line could be drawn to Alwitt (2002), which found that consumers were likely to respond with a positive attitude towards suspenseful commercials, because they

evoked certain feelings and emotions. Together the picture, text, and timing gave the consumers those associations, which triggered the consumers' engagement. Especially, the text of Eiendomsmebler1 Midt-Norge's post that focused on the inspiration the athlete had given others on his way back from the accident. In addition, the timing of the post made the association and engagement even stronger, which was the day after the athlete won the first competition of the WSC. Neder et al. (2015 September 10th) found that consumers had increased emotional excitement the days close up to a sporting event, especially the day prior to the event. Considering that, the timing of Eiendomsmebler1 Midt-Norge's post had an impact on the degree of engagement.

The ambusher Coop had also one post that really stood out and created more likes than most of the sponsors and other ambushers. It did not reach the same degree of engagement as the two posts from Spar and Eiendomsmebler1 Midt-Norge. Coop also posted the post right after a Norwegian gold medal and congratulated the athletes on their achievement. Although it did involve the same athlete as the post of Eiendomsmebler1 Midt-Norge and could therefore give the consumers the same associations. The timing changed the context and the text did not give the same associations as well. These three posts generated all a relatively high amount of shares and comments as well, but also other types of posts seemed to generate a decent amount of shares and comments.

In general, the number of shares were low among all sponsors and ambush marketers. On average, the number of comments were higher than the number of shares. The number of likes were much higher than both the number of comments and shares. None of the posts had the ability to generate a high amount of shares. The posts that generated more shares than others were contests, presentation of new athlete sportswear, and posts that evoke strong feelings among the consumers (i.e. posts of Spar and Eiendomsmebler1 Midt-Norge). By looking at the comments on posts on Facebook, the sponsor get an indication on the consumers' reaction on the sponsor's activation activities. Getting comments on a post might also increase the awareness of that post, since it appear on the news wall of the Facebook-friends of that user. However, whether the comment was positive or negative might not have that much of an impact, since the actual comment did not show automatically. Therefore, the comments serve mainly as direct feedback to the sponsor (e.g. BJ's launch of new race suit) and as a way to increase awareness.

The type of posts that generated comments were the ones with contests (e.g. Skydda and Grilstad) and those who had pictures of new athlete sportswear. Besides these posts, the ones that generated the most comments were the ones that also generated the most likes and shares (e.g. Spar and Eiendomsmebler1 Midt-Norge). These two did also receive the most negative comments, which also indicates that the associations given by those posts evoke strong feelings and engagement among the consumers. Then again, those negative comments had a minimal negative effect. In addition to the brand awareness created by the sponsors itself, the athletes and NSFCC could also help their sponsors increase brand awareness.

6.1.3 The role of athletes and the NSFCC

Findings show that only two athletes used social media actively to engage with their fans (i.e. Astrid U. Jacobsen on Twitter and Petter Northug on Facebook and Twitter). Of note, those two did promote both NSFCC's sponsors and private sponsors (i.e. Astrid U. Jacobsen 31 % and Petter Northug 20 %). Their frequency of sponsor mentions were notably higher than the findings of Hambrick et al. (2010) and Hull (2014), which found that 5-10 % of athletes' tweets contained promotion. Abeza et al., (2015 September 10th) found that 42 of the top 50 athletes in the world on Twitter used their account for product endorsement. An average of 34 % of their tweets contained product endorsement, but the degree varied a lot between the athletes. In addition, brand hashtags and statement about the product were most of use (Abeza et al., 2015 September 10th). Petter Northug and Astrid U. Jacobsen used for the most part brand-hashtags and retweets to promote the sponsors. The sponsors mentioned were mainly private sponsors and sponsors with a high degree of functional fit (i.e. BJ and Bendit). These findings indicate that there are no definite answer on how to promote sponsors.

According to Lyberger and McCarthy (2001), those who lacked in awareness of the sponsor's sponsorship program were less likely to distinguish sponsor and ambushers. On social media, both the athletes and the NSFCC could highlight their sponsors by either sharing/retweeting the sponsor or mention the sponsor in a tweet/post. In that way, the sponsors might get awareness among a specific target market, namely cross-country skiing fans. However, the athletes needed to find a balance between promotion

and other types of tweets/posts (e.g. inside stories) to generate and maintain interest among the fans (Parganas & Anagnostopoulos, 2015). In this study, posts and tweets that included sponsors generated less engagement than other posts and tweets. Worth noting, the posts and tweets that generated the most engagement were those where the athletes celebrated victory. After all, the degree of engagement (e.g. likes, shares, and comments) generated by those two athletes indicate that they were attractive sponsor objects.

The athletes could engage with and put focus on the sponsors in other ways as well. Actually, Astrid U. Jacobsen posted a comment defending the race suit of BJ, but she did not post anything on her official Twitter account or Facebook page. On the other side, the sponsors could also try to connect with the athletes. Abeza et al., (2014) found that the TOP sponsors that cheered and congratulated athletes managed to connect with the athletes. In that way, they reach a new target market. In this study, a large portion of the sponsors used athlete encouragement, but they did not actively try to make a two-way communication with some of the athletes. In addition to the athletes, the NSFCC could also highlight the sponsor on their social network sites.

NSFCC generated a relatively high amount of engagement on social media and especially on Facebook. On average, they generated more engagement than each of the sponsors did. The fact that they did not include any sponsors in their tweets and posts made the sponsors miss out of a great opportunity to increase awareness. They just retweeted one of the main sponsors' tweets. According to Parganas and Anagnostopoulos (2015), it was important for the sponsors of Liverpool FC to be included in their marketing activities, since fans were more loyal to brands used by their favorite club. In addition, they would reach out to new markets. In this study, respondents showed a slightly negative attitude towards sponsors of the NSFCC even those categorized as high-fans. They did not prefer products (e.g. skis, gloves, and clothing) of brands used by the athletes over other brands. This stand in contrast to the finding of Meenaghan (2001b). McKelvey et al. (2012) stated that participants of the New York Marathon recognized the importance of sponsors for such recreational event. Anyhow, there are a fine balance between the inclusion of sponsors and other types of posts and tweets (Parganas & Anagnostopoulos, 2015). Tweets and posts that include

sponsors might generate less engagement than other types of update. Nonetheless, the degree of engagement would depend on the context, timing, and content.

6.2 The effect of different cues

One of the common sponsorship objectives is the creation of new brand associations (O'Reilly & Horning, 2013). Mainly, the sponsor wants to be associated with the NSFCC and their values. In this study, the focus was on which sponsors and ambushers made the strongest association to the NSFCC and then seen as a sponsor. The two specific cues that were assumed to make the strongest association to the NSFCC were pictures of athletes and the term "official sponsor or supplier of the NSFCC". Those two were the only cues that were sponsor properties. Other specific cues were tagging an athlete or the NSFCC and a NSFCC- or WSC-related hashtag. In addition, several contextual cues were included, which might allude the consumers (Chadwick & Burton, 2011; Humphreys et al., 2010).

Based on the results, there was a clear tendency that the posts and tweets that consisted of sponsor property cues scored higher than the others did. Ali kaffe and Grilstad, which used cues that gave more of an indirect association, scored only a little higher than the ambushers which used contextual cues. These results correlated with the findings of Uhrich (2105 September 11th), which found that event-related cues made stronger associations to the FIFA World Cup 2014 in Brazil than soccer-related cues did. Those event-related cues were among others the brand logo of FIFA, a picture of the trophy, and the mascot. Among the ambushers that used contextual cues, Thon hotels came closest to Ali kaffe and Grilstad. The results indicate that the sponsor property cues were likely to be cues that a sponsor of the NSFCC would use.

However, the sponsors' brand logos represented in the tweets and posts might have affected the score. Assuming that those respondents, who knew who the sponsors were, might give the sponsors a significantly higher score than the ambushers. The sponsors, that got a significant higher score than the rest, were those who got mentioned the most when the respondents tried to recall sponsors of the NSFCC. Therefore, only the answers of those who did not mention any sponsors became the focus. The difference between different groups of sponsors and ambushers was still significant, but the

noticeable gaps had become smaller. There was no significant difference between the sponsor Grilstad and the ambusher Elkjop, which meant that there was no noticeable gap between the two ambushers and the sponsor duo (i.e. Grilstad and Ali kaffe). These two sponsors did not use any of the sponsor property cues. In addition, the differences between each of the sponsors, with the highest scores, had increased. Actually, the ones who got the highest score among both the tweets and posts were those who stated that they were a proud sponsor. It was the same when looking at the group of non-fans only. The groups with a high number of sponsor recall ranked pictures of athlete the same or a higher than sponsor statement.

One of the main target markets of the sponsors were the fans. Therefore, the groups of respondents that were fans or high-fans were looked at more specifically. In the group of high-fans, there was a clear gap in mean score between the sponsors and ambushers among both the tweets and posts. The gap was smaller in the group of fans and in the group of non-fans those gaps were hardly there. In fact, there was no significant difference between the posts of Ali kaffe, Grilstad, and the ambusher Elkjop in the group of non-fans. In addition, there was a significant association between type of fans and the number of sponsors recalled. The amount of non-fans that did not recall any sponsors were higher than the expected count and the amount of non-fans that did recall at least one sponsor were lower than the expected count. High-fans had a lower amount than the expected count that did not recall any sponsors and a higher amount than expected that did recall at least one sponsor. These findings correlated with findings from previous studies. Portlock and Rose (2009) found that those highly interested in the sport were more likely to distinguish between the sponsors and ambushers. Meenaghan, (2001b) and Szerovay (2013) found that those who identified themselves as high-fans were more likely to identify sponsors. Eagleman and Krohn (2012) found that dedicated runners were more likely to notice and identify event sponsors.

McKelvey et al. (2012) argued that participants of recreational events like New York Marathon were more likely to identify event sponsors and condemn ambushers. Those types of events relied more heavily on sponsors. Anyhow, ambush marketing as a practice is a threat to the sustainability of events and NSOs. Only among the high-fans did the sponsors Grilstad and Ali kaffe distinguish sufficiently from the ambushers. In general, those two were closer to the ambushers than to the three other sponsors. The

type of content in the posts of those two might had an impact on the score. On the other side, the respondents recalled Ali kaffe and Grilstad just a few times, which indicates that their overall strategy had not succeeded in terms of brand awareness.

Two other characteristics could explain the variance of score for the tweets and posts. They were if the respondents did follow an athlete or the NSFCC on social media and if they paid attention to the WSC by the use of different media channels. These two characteristics gave an indication of the respondents' engagement with the NSFCC and cross-country skiing. Respondents engaged gave a higher mean score to the sponsors and a lower mean score to the ambushers. Those differences were not that clear between engagement and non-engagement as opposed to fan groups and degree of sponsor recall. However, BJ got a higher mean score from those who did not follow an athlete or the NSFCC on social media than from the ones who did. Anyhow, these findings correlated with those from Meenaghan, (2001b) and Szerovay (2013), which found that those who followed the sport on a regular basis were more likely to identify the sponsors.

On the other side, the amount of time used to follow athletes on social media or the WSC on the television would give a better indication of the degree of engagement and interest. Nonetheless, by following an athlete or the NSFCC on social media, the respondents showed more commitment and engagement with the NSFCC. Those who followed the WSC consisted of both respondents that followed the WSC only and those following cross-country skiing on a regular basis. The fact that 69 % of the respondents followed the WSC showed that the interest of cross-country skiing among Norwegians were large. However, only 20 % followed an athlete or the NSFCC on social media. Nevertheless, the results indicate that those who were more engaged and had a higher interest in cross-country skiing were more likely to distinguish between sponsors and ambushers. Even so, the sponsorship market seemed cluttered. According to the survey results, some of the respondents mentioned wrong firms when asked to recall sponsors of the NSFCC. Some of the firms mentioned were not even ambushers.

The results showed a significant association between type of fans and the number of wrong sponsors recalled. Actually, the number of high-fans that mentioned one wrong sponsor were higher than the expected count. The number of non-fans that mentioned a wrong sponsor were lower than the expected count. The fact that approximately 40 % of

high-fans mentioned a wrong sponsor just showed how cluttered and confusing the Norwegian sponsorship market was. Three firms stood out from the category of wrong sponsors recalled (i.e. DNB, Tine, and Sparebank1). At the time the survey was conducted Sparebank1 had become NSFCC's new main sponsor. On the other hand, DNB and Tine did not have any direct connection to the NSFCC. However, through some of their sponsorships they could get confused with the NSFCC. DNB was the main sponsor of the Norwegian Biathlon Association and other NSOs of winter sports. Tine was one of the sponsors of the Norwegian Olympic Committee [Olympiatoppen], which could use NSFCC's athletes in their promotion. The fact that the ambusher, Coop, was mentioned a decent amount indicate that ambush marketing might have an effect.

6.3 Differences between sponsor and ambushers

Here, the differences between the sponsors and the ambushers are highlighted and discussed, in terms of strategies used to increase brand awareness and change brand associations. Among the ambushers identified, 79 % tweeted one or two times only. According to Chadwick and Burton (2011), some of the ambush marketing were unintentional. That was probably the case for some of those who tweeted one or two times only. On the other side, those who tweeted more than two times were probably more deliberate. Most of them seemed to have a clear strategy behind their activities. These strategies differed from the strategies used by the sponsors. Both in terms of how to make associations to the NSFCC, and how to reach out to the target market and increase brand awareness.

First, the sponsors and ambushers differed in their use of related hashtags, pictures of athletes, and statement of sponsorship on both Twitter and Facebook. The sponsors had more posts and tweets that were closer related to the NSFCC than the ones of the ambushers. The sponsors relied on specific cues (i.e. pictures of athletes and statement of sponsorship), which according to the survey results seemed to make a strong connection between the sponsor and the NSFCC. On the other hand, the ambushers relied on the use of related hashtags (i.e. NSFCC and WSC), contextual cues and retweeting. Their perceived ambush marketing strategy were more indirect. By the use of contextual cues, they tried by make an allusion among the consumers (Chadwick &

Burton, 2011). According to the survey results, those kinds of cues did not make as strong associations to the NSFCC as the sponsorship property cues did. In addition to the use of contextual cues, the ambushers had other ways as well to make associations to the NSFCC. By retweeting, the ambusher directly connects their brand with the content of the original tweet. The ambushers relied more on retweeting NSFCC- and WSC-related retweets than the sponsors did. The effect of such retweets were unknown.

Second, the sponsors and the ambushers had different approaches on how to reach the target market. The ambushers used related hashtags as a way to connected with the target market and increase awareness. Then, the sponsors had an advantage, since they could reach about the same target market with help from the athletes and the NSFCC. However, most of the sponsors did not get that advantage, since the athletes' and the NSFCC's promotion of sponsors were low. Therefore, their opportunities to get awareness beyond their existing followers were by the use of related hashtags and generated brand-related buzz. As mentioned, the effect of such hashtags on awareness were unknown. On the other side, brand-related buzz would increase awareness. In addition, the sponsors and ambushers could to a certain degree by their activities control the content. Those activities could be on social media only, but also other activation activities. The ambushers differed in type of brand-related buzz generated. The ambushers used other creative activities that involved the consumers to make the link to the NSFCC and they succeeded according to the brand-related buzz analysis. The number of tweets that mentioned the activities were not a lot, but they were all positive. The majority of the sponsors' brand-related buzz came because of the ways they tried to associate themselves with the athletes through different media channels (i.e. Isklar). It was mostly negative.

7.0 Conclusion

This study examined how activation strategies of NSFCC's sponsors on social media were perceived. A content analysis of Twitter and Facebook accounts (i.e. sponsors, ambushers, athletes, and the NSFCC) and of brand-related tweets from consumers was conducted. I also conducted a student survey in order to examine the degree of association to the NSFCC made by different tweets and posts from the sponsors and ambushers. To answer the main research question, the sponsors used different activation strategies, which seemed to have varied effect on consumers' engagement and perception of them. Then, the four sub-questions provide a more comprehensive and nuanced answer to the main research question. First, the content analysis of the sponsors' Twitter and Facebook accounts revealed the characteristics of their activation strategies. The findings showed that the sponsors' activation strategies on social media seemed to have different characteristics. I found no identifiable patterns in the number of tweets/posts, retweets, hashtags, tags, and sponsorship property cues. Promotion and/or athlete encouragement characterized most of the activities on social media. The majority of posts and tweets seemed to be one-way communication with the consumers. Some of the sponsors seemed to have a clear strategy behind their social media activity, but none seemed to have a campaign with the aim to engage the consumers.

Second, social media provide several ways sponsors could achieve increased brand awareness. The content analysis of the Twitter and Facebook accounts of sponsors, athletes, and the NSFCC including user engagement examined the achieved brand awareness. Brand-related tweets from costumers were also included in the examination. The findings showed that none of the sponsors seemed to generate any brand-related buzz by their activities on social media. The brand-related buzz were related to other activation activities of the sponsors. The ambusher Coop and the official supplier Red Bull generated the most brand-related buzz. Those two seemed to have created a strong association between their brand and Petter Northug.

Another way to achieve increased brand awareness was by generate user engagement. In general, NSF-related posts generated more user engagement than non-related posts that were not part of another campaign. The most effective way to achieve increased brand awareness was by the like function on Facebook. The consumers were more

likely to hit like on posts than comment on or share the post. In addition, the degree of engagement on Facebook were much higher than on Twitter. The posts that generated by far the most likes gave strong associations to past highly debated episodes, which clearly triggered strong emotions among the consumers. The posts' content, timing, and the context gave those associations. The athletes and the NSFCC could provide the sponsors with increased brand awareness among their followers, which were mainly cross-country skiing fans. Only a few of the athletes were active on social media and they use mostly hashtags to mention the sponsors. Astrid U. Jacobsen and Petter Northug stood out as most active on social media. They promoted mostly private sponsors and sponsors with a high degree of functional fit. The NSFCC did not help their sponsors to achieve increased brand awareness among their followers.

Third, based on the findings in the content analysis a student survey was conducted to see the degree of association to the NSFCC made by different cues. The findings showed that the type of content of the posts and tweets did have an impact on whether or not the respondents saw the posts/tweets as likely to come from a sponsor. The two sponsor property cues made the strongest relation to the NSFCC and statement of sponsorship were most effective. Those with a high interest in cross-country skiing were most likely to distinguish between sponsors and ambushers. Engagement had the same tendency, but it was not that clear.

Lastly, the content analysis of the Twitter and Facebook accounts of sponsors, ambushers, athletes, and the NSFCC revealed the differences between official sponsors' and ambushers' strategies on social media. In addition, the student survey and content analysis of brand-related buzz indicated the effect of the different strategies on brand associations and brand awareness. The findings showed that the sponsors and ambushers differed in the way they tried to reach the target market and create an association to the NSFCC. The ambushers seemed to rely on the use of NSFCC/WSC-related hashtags to reach the target market. Sponsors had the advantage of the connection to the athletes and the NSFCC, which was not fully utilized. To make an association to the NSFCC, the sponsors used mainly sponsorship property cues, while the ambushers relied on contextual cues and retweeting NSFCC-related tweets. Two of the ambushers generated brand-related buzz by creative activities that involved consumers.

7.1 Practical Implications

As this study explored NSO sponsors' activation activities on social media, it provide sponsors of NSOs and NSOs with insight on the effect of different sponsor strategies on social media. First, the sponsorship property cues (picture of athletes and statement of sponsorship) managed to distinguish the sponsors from the ambushers. Second, either a long-term engagement (e.g. Coop and Red Bull) or creative short-term activities that engaged the consumers (e.g. NSB and Betsson) seemed to create brand-related buzz. None of the sponsors' social media activity generated any notably brand-related buzz. Therefore, a more comprehensive activation campaign are need. Third, Facebook were more appropriate than Twitter to achieve increased brand awareness through user engagement and especially the like function.

7.2 Theoretical implications

The findings of this study showed that sponsors used social media as an activation channel, even on a national level. This trend was in line with the findings of previous research (O'Keefe et al., 2009; Tiago & Verissimo, 2014; Williams & Chinn, 2010). This study could work as a guideline for future studies of sponsorship activation through social media. This study together with the findings of Abeza et al. (2014) identified four sponsorship activation tactics. Those were promotion, athlete encouragement, fan engagement, and costumer appreciation. Lastly, this study contribute to the scholarship of sponsorship activation on social media in the context of NSO sponsors mainly.

7.3 Future Research

This study looked at the activity on Facebook and Twitter. Witkemper et al. (2012) suggested that studies should include multiple social network sites in order to get a fully understanding of the activity. For example, some of the athletes synchronized their Instagram account with their Twitter-account. Other studies should include other social network sites (e.g. Instagram and Youtube). In addition, new social network sites like Snapchat are new to the sport organizations and provide other communication opportunities than Facebook and Twitter. How the sponsors and sport organizations use

Snapchat and the return of investment generated are of interest. In addition, in what ways Snapchat differs from other social network sites and if it has the ability to complement the them.

Even though cross-country skiing was one of the most popular sports in Norway, the degree of sponsor activation activities on social media were relatively low. Future studies should look at how the sponsors of national teams of sports with an international reach (e.g. soccer) activate and the degree of engagement created. To get a better overview of the sponsors' activation strategy, studies should have an extended data collection period. This study focused on the period prior to and during the WSC, since it were the perceived peak in interest of the NSFCC. Future studies should extend the period of data collection to at least one year. Considering social media are an appropriate tool to create a long-term relationship with the consumers (Hoffman & Fodor, 2010). In addition, an interview with the sponsor's key marketing staff would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the sponsors' strategies and objectives. Then, the study should measure the sponsors' different strategies by the changes in brand awareness (e.g. number of followers and degree of buzz and engagement). Especially, the changes in number of followers based on the type of activation activities on social media are of interest. There are programs (e.g. NodeXL) that could retrieve demographic data and network connections of the followers of the sponsors' Twitter account or Facebook fan page (MarcSmith, 2016 February 3rd). Changes in demographic data of the followers before and after a sponsorship or a specific activation campaign might be a good indicator of the return of investment.

In this study, which cues that could make the strongest associations to the NSFCC were studied. Some sponsors also aim to be associated with the values of a NSO. Future studies should focus on other research technics (e.g. focus groups or interviews). These research technics would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how consumers perceive the sponsors and their activation activities on social media. Respondents could be selected from the social media followers of either the NSO or the sponsors of study.

7.4 Limitations

The collecting of data for this study started seven months after the WSC was over, which led to a couple of holes in the data collection. First, no programs were able to retrieve the changes in number of followers on Twitter and on a Facebook fan page post-event, at least that were within the budget. The change in number of followers would give an indication of the effect the sponsors' and ambushers' social media activities had on brand awareness. In addition, the number of followers might have an impact on the degree of engagement. For example, the strategical partner Scania Group had a much higher number of likes and shares on their NSF-related post than the other sponsors had. However, their non-related posts had an even higher number of likes and shares. They had a high number of followers as well. Second, the sentiment analysis revealed that some of the comments on some posts were missing. To avoid these two holes the data should have been collected during the WSC. Further, the results do not show the whole degree of user engagement with the sponsors. Facebook also offers the possibility for consumers to send private messages to organizations with a Facebook fan page. The owner of the page can measure the number and content of private messages only and not a third party like researchers. However, that data are of interest by the sponsors only and especially if they encourage that kind of engagement (e.g. around sweepstakes and promotions).

The sponsors' activity on social media showed some of the sponsors' activation strategy, but not the whole picture. Interviews of key marketing staff of the sponsors and the NSFCC might provide information about NSFCC's strategy to promote their sponsors and the sponsors' activation strategies. In addition, what the sponsors tried to achieve by those activation activities. However, that kind of information are usually business secrets. In addition, interviews were not a priority due to limited time. Another limitation was that the sample of the survey only consisted of Norwegian students. Therefore, the results from the survey were only representative to that group of people. In the end, the results of the content analysis would give indications only, since the degree of activity on Facebook and Twitter were relatively low. However, this study included all groups that played a role in the sponsors' activation activities on social media. Therefore, it provided an understanding of how they interacted and influenced each other.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Overview of sponsors of NSFCC's sponsorship program including industry categories

Sponsorship tier	Brand name	Industry category	
Main sponsor	Aker	Holding company	
Official clothing supplier	Bjorn Daehlie	Sportswear	
Main sponsor junior team	Statoil	Oil and gas	
Team sponsors	Norsk Tipping	National lottery	
	Ali kaffe	Coffee	
	Grilstad	Meat manufacturer	
	Maxbo	Building materials store	
	Spar	Grocery store	
	Weber	Charcoal, gas, and electric grills	
	Norengros	Office supplies	
	BDO	Public accounting, tax, and advisory firms	
	Eiendomsmegler1 Midt-Norge	Real estate brokage	
	Strategical partners	Bendit	Fruit and smoothies
		BMW Norway	Vehicles and motorcycles
Dale of Norway		Wool sweaters, cardigans, and jackets	
Vangen & Plotz		Website and app developer	
CTC Bilpartner		Car leasing	
Garmin Norway		Technology	
Skydda Norway		Personal protective equipment	
Veidekke		Construction, property development	
Skedsmo Bud & Vare		Delivery service	
Sponsorlink		Event company	
Scania Group		Automotive	
Isklar	Bottle water		
Adecco Norway	Staffing firm		

Appendix 2: Overview of Facebook and Twitter usernames

	Names	Facebook username	Twitter username
NSO	NSFCC	Skilandslaget	@skinorge
Sponsors	Aker		@AkerActive
	Bjorn Daehlie	Bjorn Daehlie	
	Norsk Tipping	Norsk Tipping	@NorskTippingAS
	Ali kaffe	ALI kaffe kurerer gruff	
	Grilstad	Grilstad	
	Maxbo	MAXBO	
	Spar	SPAR Norge	
	Weber	Weber Norge	@SG_Weber_NO
	Norengros	Norengros AS	
	BDO	BDO Norge	
	Eiendomsmegler1 Midt-Norge	Eiendomsmegler 1 Midt-Norge	
	Bendit	EAT MOVE SLEEP	
	BMW Norway	BMW Norge	@BMWNorge
	Dale of Norway	Dale of Norway	@AdeccoNorge
	Vangen & Plotz	Vangen & Plotz	@vangenplotz
	CTC Bilpartner	CTC Bilpartner As	
	Garmin Norway	GarminNordicNorway	
	Skydda Norway	Skydda Norge	
	Veidekke	Veidekke Industri AS	@Veidekke_ASA
	Skedsmo Bud & Vare As	Skedsmo Bud og Vare As	
	Sponsorlink	SponsorLink	@SponsorlinkAS
	Scania Group	Scania Group	@ScaniaGroup
	Isklar	Isklar	
	Adecco Norway	Adecco Norge	@AdeccoNorge
Official supplier	Red Bull Norway		@redbullNOR
	Rossignol	Rossignol Norge	@rossignol_1907
	Fischer	Fischer.norge	@fischer_norge
	Jordbærpikene	Jordbærpikene	
	Lillsport	Lill-sport	
Private sponsors	Bryggen Asian Cooking	Bryggen Asian Cooking	@BryggenAsianC
	Nardo bil	Nardo Bil AS	
	Vi Menn	Vi Menn	
	Ahlgrens bilar	Ahlgrens biler	
Ambushers	Coop	Coop – litt ditt	@CoopNorway
	Elkjøp [Elkjop]	Elkjøp	@elkjop_no
	Toppidrettsterapi		@t_idrettsterapi
	Beitostølen Resort	Beitostølen Resort	@beitostolen
	Nammis	Nammis.no	@nammismat
	IT-Komiteen		@ITKomiteen
	Sony Norge		@SonyNorge
	Oracksport	Oracksport AS	@oracksport

	Egmont Publishing	Egmont Publishing NO	@egmontpno
	Storgevinsten.com	Storgevinsten	@storgevinsten
	Høytlesere av Donald [Donald Duck storytellers]		@andeby
	Clarion Admiral	Clarion Hotel Admiral	@ClarionAdmiral
	Clarion Bergen Airport	Clarion Hotel Bergen Airport	@ClarionBergen
	Clarion Royal Christiania	Clarion Hotel Royal Christiania	@CLRChristiania
	Evry Norway	EVRY Norge	@Evry_no
	Bose Norway	BoseNorge	@bosenorge
	Vaskejentene	Vaskejentene	@vaskejentene
	NSB	NSB	@nsb_no
	Oslo Lufthavn [Oslo Airport]	Oslo Lufthavn Gardermoen	@OSL
	ComeOn Norway		@ComeOnNorge
	Posten Norge AS [Posten Norway AS]	Posten	@postennorge
	Thon hotels	Thon Hotels	@ThonHotels
	Betsson Norway		@BetssonNO
	Netcom Norway		@NetcomNorge
	ABB Norway	ABB Norge	@ABBNorge
	Santander Norway	Santander Consumer Bank Norge	@SantanderNorge
	Nordea Bank Norway	Nordea Norge	@NordeaNorge
Female athletes	Maiken Caspersen Falla		@Fallerifallera
	Marit Bjørgen		@maritbjoergen
	Astrid Uhrenholdt Jacobsen		@astridjacobsen
	Kristin Størmer Steira		@stormersteira
	Therese Johaug	Therese Johaug	
Male athletes	Eirik Brandsdal		@ebrand86
	Niklas Dyrhaug		@DyrhaugNiklas
	Anders Gløersen		@AndersGloersen
	Chris Jespersen		@JespersenChris
	Finn Hågen Krogh		@HaagenKrogh
	Petter Northug	PetterNorthugjrOfficial	@PetterNorthug1
	Tomas Northug	Tomas Northug	@tNorthug
	Sjur Røthe		@sjurrothe
	Didrik Tønseth		@toenseth

Appendix 3: Coding scheme Twitter

Sponsors and ambushers	Athletes	NSFCC
Pictures of athlete	Content: Pictures, links, and theme.	Content: Pictures, links, and theme.
Strategy: Promotion, athlete encouragement, and fan engagement.	Sponsors hashtagged (n and which)	Sponsors hashtagged (n and which)
Association to NSFCC: Highly, mediocre, low, or nothing.	Sponsors tagged (n and which)	Sponsors tagged (n and which)
User profiles tagged (n and which)	Sponsors retweeted (n and which)	Sponsors retweeted (n and which)
Picture of sponsor's product	Sponsors mentioned (n)	Sponsors mentioned (n)
Date	Date	Date
Likes (n)	Likes (n)	Likes (n)
Retweets (n)	Retweets (n)	Retweets (n)
Hashtags (n and which)	Hashtags (n and which)	Hashtags (n and which)
Statement of sponsorship (n)	Additional comments	Additional comments
Additional comments		

Appendix 4: Coding scheme Facebook

Sponsors and ambushers	Athletes	NSFCC
Strategy: Promotion, athlete encouragement, and fan engagement.	Content: Pictures, links, and theme.	Content: Pictures, links, and theme.
Creator/user-generated	Creator/user-generated	Creator/user-generated
Association to NSFCC: Highly, mediocre, low, or nothing.	Sponsors mentioned (n and which)	Sponsors mentioned (n and which)
Pictures of athlete	Shared sponsor post	Shared sponsor post
User profiles tagged (n and which)	Sponsors tagged (n and which)	Sponsors tagged (n and which)
Hashtags (n and which)	Sponsors hashtagged (n and which)	Sponsors hashtagged (n and which)
Date	Date	Date
Likes (n)	Likes (n)	Likes (n)
Shares (n)	Shares (n)	Shares (n)
Picture of sponsor's product	Posts mention sponsors only:	Posts mention sponsors only:
Comments (n)	Comments (n)	Comments (n)
Positive comments (n)	Positive comments (n)	Positive comments (n)
Negative comments (n)	Negative comments (n)	Negative comments (n)
Statement of sponsorship (n)	Additional comments	Additional comments
Additional comments		

Appendix 5: Questionnaire (Norwegian version)

Hvordan blir sponsorer og ikke-sponsorers aktivitet på sosiale medier oppfattet?

1. Kjønn: Mann ___ Kvinne ___
2. Alder ____
3. Er du aktiv på Facebook eller Twitter (Aktiv: Pålogget minst to ganger i uken)
Begge ___ Facebook ___ Twitter ___ Ingen ___
4. Følger du Norges Skiforbund (@skinorge) eller noen av skilandslagets utøvere på Facebook eller Twitter?
Ja ___ Nei ___
5. Fra en skala 1 til 10. Hvor interessert er du i langrenn?

Ikke i det hele tatt Veldig interessert
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Vet ikke

6. Hvordan fulgte du med på Ski-VM i Falun 2015? (Velg en eller flere).
TV ___ Sosiale medier ___ Aviser (papir) ___
Radio ___ Online stream ___ Avis (online) ___
Online chat (f. eks. CampFalun av TV2) ___
Fulgte ikke med ___

7. Nevn en eller flere av sponsorene til Norges Skiforbund:

8. Jeg foretrekker å bruke produkter som utøvere på skilandslaget bruker.
Helt uenig Verken eller Helt enig
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

9. Jeg er mer tilbøyelig til å kjøpe produkter/tjenester fra firmaer som sponsor skilandslaget.
Helt uenig Verken eller Helt enig
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

10. På de neste sidene vil du finne forskjellige tweets og Facebook poster fra en måned før og under Ski-VM i Falun 2015. Hvor sannsynlig er det at disse tweets og postene er fra en sponsor av Norges Skiforbund?

NB! Tweets og posts er på neste side

	Ikke i det hele tatt							Absolutt
Bose)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Isklar)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Bjørn Dæhlie)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Norsk Tipping)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Elkjøp)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Aker)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Thon hotels)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
NSB)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Grilstad)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Toppidrettsterapi)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Ali kaffe)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Spar)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Bose:

 **Bose Norge** @bosenorge · 1. mar.
Vi ønsker skigutta lykke til med dagens 50 km, og satser på en glitrende VM-avslutning! #VM #HeiaNorge

Isklar:

 **Isklar**
28. februar · Redigert · 

Då var han på plass i Falun! Martin Sundby klar for 50 km



 Liker  Kommenter  Del



Bjørn Dæhlie:

 **Bjørn Dæhlie**
21. februar · 

Gratulerer med gull og sølv Norge! Fantastisk prestasjon av Therese og Astrid idag. Regram fra @skilandslaget #bjorndæhlie #bjorndæhlie #bjorn_dæhlie #langrenn #falun2015




Norsk Tipping:

 **Norsk Tipping AS** @NorskTippingAS · 28. feb. 



Vi gratulerer Therese Johaug med gull, Marit Bjørgen med sølv og Charlotte Kalla med bronse! #Falun2015 #ntskivm #norsktipping #stoltsponsor

Elkjøp:

 **Elkjøp**
23. februar · 

I morgen er det duket for kamp mellom damene i Falun! Vi gleder oss til 10 km fri individuell start. Hvem er din favoritt?



 Liker  Kommenter  Del

Aker:

 **Aker Active** @AkerActive · 19. feb.

Would you like to win the Team hat that our Cross-Country team use in #Falun2015? Read more on akeractive.com

[Vis oversettelse](#)



00.01 · 19. feb. 2015 · [Detaljer](#)

Thon hotels:



5% AVSLAG PER NORSKE GULLMEDALJE
4 gull = 20% rabatt

Foto: VisitOSLO/Markaz Imbhar

NSB:

NSB
29. februar · 🌐

#Smøretøget har passert Hønefoss og lærevillige entusiaster følger nøye med. Er det Norges nye smøreteam vi ser?



Grilstad:

Grilstad
4. februar · 🌐

Smøretips som er gull verdt fra sprintutøver Ola Vigen Hattestad. Gullsaiami på byggbrød med bris og honning. Hva er ditt smøretips?



Toppidrettsterapi:



toppidrettsterapi @t_idrettsterapi · 21. feb.

en av verdens beste skijenter @astridjacobsen - hva en prestasjon, hva en tøff jente! #storpersonlighet #vmsølv #falun2015

Ali kaffe:

Ali kaffe kurerer gruff
28. februar · 🌐

Fantastisk å være på stadion idag! Gratulerer til Therese og Marit!



Spar:

SPAR Norge
28. februar · 🌐

Bak hvert gull står det et fantastisk team! SPAR er stolt sponsor av Skilandslaget, og gullgutta i smøretreieren! 😊



Liker · Kommenter · Del

Appendix 6: Questionnaire (English version)

How are sponsors' and non-sponsors' activity on social media perceived?

1. Gender: Male ___ Female ___

2. Age ____

3. Are you active on Facebook or Twitter? (Active: Logged in at least twice a week)

Both ___ Facebook ___ Twitter ___ None ___

4. Do you follow the official account of NSF or a NSF-athlete on Facebook or Twitter?

Yes ___ No ___

5. From a scale 1 to 10. How interested are you in Cross-Country skiing?

Not at all Very interested
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Do not know

6. How did you follow the FIS World Ski Championship 2015 in Falun? (Select one or more).

TV ___ Social media ___ Radio ___ Newspapers (paper) ___ Online newspapers ___

Online stream ___ Online chat rooms (e.g. CampFalun by TV2) ___

Did not follow at all ___

7. Name one or more of the sponsors of the Norwegian Ski Federation.

8. I favour products used by athletes of the NSF.

Strongly disagree Neither nor Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

9. How likely are you to buy products/services from companies that are sponsoring the NSF?

Strongly disagree Neither nor Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

10. On the following pages, you will find various tweets and Facebook-posts from the period one month prior and during the FIS World Ski Championship in Falun 2015. How likely are these posts and tweets to be from a NSF-sponsor?

	Not at all					Absolutely	
Bose)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Isklar)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Bjørn Dæhlie)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Norsk Tipping)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Elkjøp)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Aker)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Thon hotels)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
NSB)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Grilstad)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Toppidrettsterapi)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Ali kaffe)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Spar)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Bose:



Bose Norge @bosenorge · 1. mar.

Vi ønsker skigutta lykke til med dagens 50 km, og satser på en glitrende VM-avslutning! #VM #HeiaNorge

Isklar:



28. februar · Redigert ·

Då var han på plass i Falun! Martin Sundby klar for 50 km



Liker · Kommenter · Del

Bjørn Dæhlie:



21. februar ·

Gratulerer med gull og sølv Norge! Fantastisk prestasjon av Therese og Astrid idag. Regram fra @skilandslaget #bjorndaehlie #bjorndaehlie #bjorn_daehlie #langrenn #falun2015



Norsk Tipping:



Norsk Tipping AS @NorskTippingAS · 28. feb.

Vi gratulerer Therese Johaug med gull, Marit Bjørgen med sølv og Charlotte Kalla med bronse! #Falun2015 #ntskivm #norsktipping #stoltsponsor

Elkjøp:



23. februar ·

I morgen er det duket for kamp mellom damene i Falun! Vi gleder oss til 10 km fri individuell start. Hvem er din favoritt?



Liker · Kommenter · Del

Aker:



Aker Active @AkerActive · 19. feb.

Would you like to win the Team hat that our Cross-Country team use in #Falun2015? Read more on akeractive.com

Vis oversettelse



00.01 - 19. feb. 2015 · Detaljer

Thon hotels:



NSB:



Grilstad:



Toppidrettsterapi:



toppidrettsterapi @t_idrettsterapi · 21. feb.

en av verdens beste skijenter @astridjacobsen - hva en prestasjon, hva en tøff jente! #storpersonlighet #vmsølv #falun2015

Ali kaffe:



Spar:



Appendix 7: NSD approval



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N-5007 Bergen
Norway
Tel: +47-55 58 21 17
Fax: +47-55 58 96 50
nsd@nsd.uib.no
www.nsd.uib.no
Org.nr. 985 321 884

Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS

NORWEGIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA SERVICES

Per Øystein Hansen
Seksjon for kultur og samfunn Norges idrettshøgskole
Postboks 4014 Ullevål stadion
0806 OSLO

Vår dato: 27.08.2015

Vår ref: 44227 / 3 / LT

Deres dato:

Deres ref:

TILBAKEMELDING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 17.08.2015.
Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

44227	<i>Oppfattet sponsoraktivering og ikke-sponsoraktivering i sosiale medier under Ski-VM i Falun 2015</i>
<i>Behandlingsansvarlig</i>	<i>Norges idrettshøgskole, ved institusjonens øverste leder</i>
<i>Daglig ansvarlig</i>	<i>Per Øystein Hansen</i>
<i>Student</i>	<i>Anders Lien</i>

Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger er meldepliktig i henhold til personopplysningsloven § 31. Behandlingen tilfredsstiller kravene i personopplysningsloven.

Personvernombudets vurdering forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet, korrespondanse med ombudet, ombudets kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven og helseregisterloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan settes i gang.

Det gjøres oppmerksom på at det skal gis ny melding dersom behandlingen endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for personvernombudets vurdering. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema, <http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/meldeplikt/skjema.html>. Det skal også gis melding etter tre år dersom prosjektet fortsatt pågår. Meldinger skal skje skriftlig til ombudet.

Personvernombudet har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet i en offentlig database, <http://pvo.nsd.no/prosjekt>.

Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 30.05.2016, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vennlig hilsen

Katrine Utaaker Segadal

Lis Tenold

Kontaktperson: Lis Tenold tlf: 55 58 33 77

Dokumentet er elektronisk produsert og godkjent ved NSDs rutiner for elektronisk godkjenning.

Avdelingskontorer / District Offices:

OSLO: NSD, Universitetet i Oslo, Postboks 1055 Blindern, 0316 Oslo. Tel: +47-22 85 52 11. nsd@uio.no
TRONDHEIM: NSD, Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet, 7491 Trondheim. Tel: +47-73 59 19 07. kyrre.svarva@svt.ntnu.no
TROMSØ: NSD, SVF, Universitetet i Tromsø, 9037 Tromsø. Tel: +47-77 64 43 36. nsdmaa@sv.uit.no

Appendix 8: Summary in Norwegian

Sponsing har i gått i retning av kommersialisering de siste tiårene (Meenaghan, 2015; Séguin et al., 2005b). I tillegg til å betale for sponsorrettighetene bruker sponsorer penger og ressurser på å aktivere sponsoratet. Inntoget til sosiale medier og befolkningen sin økte bruk av har gjort det til en mulig aktiveringskanal for sponsorer. De egenskapen sosiale medier innehar gir sponsorer nye måter å nå ut til sine målgrupper. I tillegg er det kostnadsfritt å bruke sosiale medier, som gjør de enda mer hensiktsmessig å bruke. I denne studien så jeg på hvordan aktiveringsstrategiene til sponsorene til Norges Skiforbund avdeling langrenn i sosiale medier under FIS Nordic World Ski Championship i Falun 2015 ble oppfattet. For å svare på hovedproblemstillingen ble fire underproblemstillinger utarbeidet, som er følgende: a) hva karakteriserer aktiveringsstrategiene til offisielle sponsor i sosiale medier, b) hvilke karakteristika av aktiveringsstrategier i sosiale medier var mest effektive for å øke oppmerksomheten rundt merkevaren, c) var det noen karakteristika (cues) til tweets og poster som skilte seg ut i form av å skape en assosiasjon som sponsor til Norges Skiforbund og d) hva var forskjellene mellom strategiene til offisielle sponsorer og snikmarkedsførere (ambushers) i sosiale medier.

Denne studien brukte en netnografisk case studie, som tilnærming for å studere hovedproblemstillingen. Studien fokuserte kun på aktivitet på Facebook og Twitter i perioden en måned før og under mesterskapet. Hovedfokuset lå på sponsorenes og snikmarkedsførernes aktivitet i sosiale medier. I tillegg ble rollen til utøverne og NSF studert. De to datainnsamlingsmetodene, som ble brukt, var dokumentanalyse og spørreundersøkelse (n = 292). De offisielle kontoene til sponsorene, identifiserte snikmarkedsførere, utøvere og NSF ble studert. Hvordan forbrukerne responderte på sponsorene og snikmarkedsførerne sin aktivitet ble studert ved å samle inn tweets, som inneholdt deres merkevarenavn. I tillegg ble antall likes, delinger og kommentarer på Facebook, samt likes og retweets på Twitter registrert. I alt bestod dokumentanalysen av 1155 tweets, 114 retweets og 487 poster fra sponsorer, snikmarkedsførere, utøvere, NSF og forbrukere. Spørreundersøkelsen ble gjennomført for å få indikasjoner på hva som kjennetegnet tweets og poster, som skapte størst assosiasjon til en sponsor til NSF. Den undersøkte også om det var karakteristika hos deltakerne, som skilte seg ut, i forhold til å kunne skille offisielle sponsorer fra snikmarkedsførere.

For å svare på den første underproblemstillingen viste resultatene at sponsorene hadde forskjellige type aktiveringsstrategier og det var ingen tydelige mønstre verken generelt eller på hvert sponsornivå. Det eneste som utmerket seg var at taktikkene promotering (promotion) og å vise støtte til utøverne (athlete encouragement) var mest brukt. I tillegg fokuserte de fleste sponsorene på en enveiskommunikasjon med forbrukerne. Med tanke på den andre underproblemstillingen er det flere måter å oppnå oppmerksomhet gjennom sosiale medier. Funnene indikerte at Facebook var mer hensiktsmessig enn Twitter. I tillegg var like-funksjonen mye mer brukt enn både deling av poster og å kommentere på poster. De postene som genererte flest likes gav assosiasjoner til tidligere hendelser innenfor langrenn, som fikk voldsom oppmerksomhet blant befolkningen og medier.

Resultatet fra spørreundersøkelsen skulle i hovedsak svare på den tredje underproblemstillingen. Det viste at tweets og poster som inneholdt sponsorendeler skapte en sterkere assosiasjon blant deltakerne om at de var en NSF sine sponsorer. Noe som hadde en innvirkning på forskjellene mellom sponsorene og snikmarkedsførerne. Undersøkelsen viste også at sannsynligheten å klare å skille mellom sponsorer og snikmarkedsførere var høyere blant de med stor interesse for langrenn enn de med liten interesse. I forhold til underproblemstilling fire differensierte snikmarkedsførerne seg fra sponsorene i forhold til, hvordan nå ut til målgruppene og skape en assosiasjon som sponsor til NSF. Sponsorene hadde fordelen av å benytte seg av eiendelene de som sponsor hadde rettigheten til. Snikmarkedsførerne derimot la ut tweets og poster, som hadde kontekstuell innhold, samt retweetet de NSF-relaterte tweets. Dette for å skape assosiasjoner om at de var en av sponsorene til NSF. For å nå ut til målgruppen hadde sponsorene fordelen av å kunne ha en tettere interaksjon med utøverne og NSF på sosiale medier. Den muligheten ble ikke utnyttet godt og særlig av utøverne og NSF. Snikmarkedsførerne brukte istedenfor relevante hashtags, som #falum2015 eller #skivm, for å nå ut til målgruppen. Denne studien gir praktikere innsikt i forbrukere sin respons på forskjellige aktiveringsstrategier i sosiale medier, samt forslag til for videre studier.

