

Martin Bolstad

---

**EXPLORING THE SPONSORSHIP STRATEGIES  
OF THE NORWEGIAN ICE HOCKEY  
FEDERATION**

A qualitative case study

---

Master thesis in Sport Science  
Department of Social and Cultural studies  
Norwegian School of Sport Sciences, 2019



## SUMMARY

The aim of this master thesis has been to explore the sponsorship strategies employed by the Norwegian Ice Hockey Federation. Through in-depth interviews with informants from both the federation and their sponsors, this qualitative case-study looks at the Norwegian sponsorship market and the strategic approaches applied within.

The research questions used in this study are:

1. What are the NIHF's sponsorship strategies and is there a difference between NIHF's strategies and everyday practice?
2. What are the perceptions of the NIHF as a sponsorship object and how do their sponsors' practices compare to NIHF's practices?

The study bases itself on the theoretical framework of Cornwell, Weeks and Roy (2005) on consumer-focused sponsorship-linked marketing and Woratschek, Horbel and Popp's (2014) sport value framework (SVF) as well as other elements pertaining to sponsorship such as branding, sponsorship fit and measurement of sponsorship effect. As an organization the NIHF show strategic approaches to elements such as communication and brand image rooted in their organizational values. Further, they also show strategical efforts to measure the effect of sponsorship, although the practice needs to be updated. However, they do not approach the sponsorship market in a holistic, strategic manner, and the strategies they utilize can be improved in addition to actively seeking to gain sponsor-specific benefits through their sponsorship agreements. Furthermore, there is a misconception between NIHF and their sponsors regarding activation and leveraging of the sponsorship, implying that the strategies for activation and leveraging differ from actual practice.

In terms of the views their sponsors present, the NIHF are perceived as a sponsorship object of high potential. The sponsors included in this study all show higher levels of strategic practices in terms of sponsorship compared to the NIHF. Through increased proactivity and the incorporation of resources from their sponsors, in addition to increased focus on long term planning as an organization in terms of both overarching objectives and sponsorship, the NIHF can improve their sponsorship practices and attractiveness in the sponsorship market.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The journey to the completion of this master thesis would not have been possible without the guidance, encouragement and support from a number of people. The road to completing this master thesis has been long and demanding, but has finally come to a conclusion.

First and foremost, I would like to thank the Norwegian Ice Hockey Federation for granting me the access and opportunity to utilize them in this study. Further, I wish to thank the other informants that have contributed to this project. This study would not have been possible without the sharing of your knowledge and experiences. I would like to thank all of you for being forthcoming, welcoming and for taking the time to conduct the interviews.

Secondly, I would like to thank my advisors Berit Skirstad and Chris Horbel. The guidance you've given during the planning and execution of this master thesis has been invaluable. Coupled with the patience you've shown as I've gone through the process of writing, I sincerely thank you.

To my fellow students, thank you for all the laughs, experiences and good memories throughout the past years.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my friends, family and girlfriend for their continued support and encouragement throughout a challenging year. This thesis wouldn't have reached completion without you.

Oslo, May 2019

Martin Bolstad

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1. INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2. CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND.....</b>	<b>10</b>
2.1 <i>THE NORWEGIAN ICE HOCKEY FEDERATION</i> .....	10
2.2 <i>NIHF SPONSORSHIPS</i> .....	12
2.3 <i>NORWEGIAN TOP HOCKEY</i> .....	13
<b>3. THEORY .....</b>	<b>14</b>
3.1 <i>SPONSORSHIP</i> .....	14
3.1.1 <i>Sponsor perspectives</i> .....	15
3.1.2 <i>Sponsee perspectives</i> .....	16
3.1.3 <i>Measuring sponsorship effect</i> .....	18
3.2 <i>BRANDING</i> .....	19
3.3 <i>CONSUMER-FOCUSED SPONSORSHIP-LINKED MARKETING</i> .....	21
3.4 <i>BALANCE THEORY AND MEANING TRANSFER</i> .....	25
3.5 <i>THE SPORT VALUE FRAMEWORK</i> .....	26
<b>4. PREVIOUS RESEARCH .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>33</b>
5.1 <i>CHOICE OF METHOD</i> .....	33
5.2 <i>INFORMANTS</i> .....	34
5.3 <i>THE QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW PROCESS</i> .....	35
5.4 <i>CODING AND ANALYSIS</i> .....	36
5.5 <i>VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY</i> .....	38
5.6 <i>GENERALIZATION</i> .....	39
5.7 <i>LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY</i> .....	39
5.8 <i>ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS</i> .....	41
<b>6. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION.....</b>	<b>43</b>
6.1 <i>ORGANIZATIONAL OBJECTIVES AND APPROACH</i> .....	43
6.1.1 <i>NIHF</i> .....	43
6.1.2 <i>Sponsors</i> .....	47
6.1.3 <i>Discussion</i> .....	49
6.2 <i>SPONSORSHIP ELEMENTS</i> .....	52
6.2.1 <i>Fit</i> .....	53
6.2.2 <i>Activation and Leveraging</i> .....	56

6.2.3 <i>Communication and Collaboration</i> .....	66
6.2.4 <i>Image and branding</i> .....	68
6.2.5 <i>Networking</i> .....	74
6.2.6 <i>Evaluation and measurement</i> .....	77
6.4 <i>ORGANIZATIONAL PERSPECTIVES</i> .....	81
6.4.1 <i>Personnel</i> .....	81
6.4.2 <i>Facilities and geographical issues</i> .....	82
6.4.3 <i>Entities within NIHF</i> .....	84
<b>7. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS</b> .....	<b>87</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b> .....	<b>89</b>
<b>TABLE OVERVIEW</b> .....	<b>94</b>
<b>ABBREVIATIONS</b> .....	<b>95</b>
<b>APPENDIX A</b> .....	<b>96</b>
<b>APPENDIX B</b> .....	<b>99</b>
<b>APPENDIX C</b> .....	<b>102</b>
<b>APPENDIX D</b> .....	<b>105</b>

# 1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the reader to both ice hockey and sponsorship, before presenting the research questions and the background for choosing the Norwegian Ice Hockey Federation (NIHF) as a case.

The common denominator for both ice hockey and sponsorship is that they have increased in terms of attention and awareness over the years. Ice hockey has grown into one of Norway's largest spectator sports, and has shown a steady increase in spectator numbers (NIHF, n.d b). Sponsorship on the other hand, has increased in both expenditure and practice, from reported numbers of 13.4 billion USD in 1996 (Cornwell & Maignan, 1998) to 37.9 billion USD in 2007 and has continued to grow since (Meenaghan, 2013). The increase in sponsorship has further led to academic interest and issues such as the nature of sponsorship, measurement of sponsorship and the strategic use of sponsorship have been researched (Cornwell & Maignan, 1998; Demir & Söderman, 2015). Increased demands for accountability within sponsorship has also led to increased strategic approaches from sponsors operating in the sponsorship market (Meenaghan, 2013).

Studies of sponsorship have further revealed characteristics of sport organizations as sponsorship objects. For example, sport federations have been found to be lacking commitment to the sponsorship relationship and lacking strategic plans (Farrelly & Quester, 2005; Clausen et al., 2018). Other studies, Bostock, Crowther, Ridley-Duff and Breese (2018), show that national sport federations show an over-dependency on funding.

The factors mentioned sparked the area of interest for this master thesis and a desire to explore the sponsorship environment surrounding ice hockey and NIHF specifically. Ultimately, this led to the following research questions:

1. What are the NIHF's sponsorship strategies and is there a difference between NIHF's strategies and everyday practice?
2. What are the perceptions of the NIHF as a sponsorship object and how do their sponsors' practices compare to NIHF's practices?

The background for the study started with several discussions with one of my advisors, Chris Horbel, early in my master program and the idea of researching the sponsorship strategies of professional ice hockey teams arose. This was due to an interest in the sport itself by the researcher, but also through elements such as increased popularity and media attention. Along the way the focus changed from teams in the Get-league to the NIHF. When I looked closer at the federation, the Norwegian sports market and sponsorship in Norwegian sports, the decision was that it made for a good case study.

Ice hockey is still a growing sport in Norway, reflected through the rise in attendance at games (NIHF, n.d b) and also through new exposure on TV through “Iskrigerne”, a reality TV-show that follows Vålerenga, one of the elite teams in the Get-league.

Unofficial reports (Wikipedia, 2018) suggest that ice-hockey is Norway’s second largest spectator sport, which is echoed by a master’s thesis conducted at the Norwegian School of Sport Sciences (Kurdøl, 2017). Although the sport is increasing in both awareness and interest, it often gets lost in the mix of other sports that are more popular in Norway from a viewing perspective. For example, in October 2017 the TV viewing figures for a male handball game was almost twice that of traditionally one of the most interesting hockey games, Vålerenga against Storhamar in the age group 12+ (TNS Gallup, 2017). Furthermore, the mainstream media often focuses its efforts on football, cross country skiing and other winter sports, which traditionally have a higher standing in Norwegian society.

Furthermore, NIHF’s own website and media tracker, provides an insight into how ice hockey is portrayed in the media. Of the 10 newest articles on display, upon reading the 25<sup>th</sup> of May 2018 in the planning stages of this master thesis, 5 are directly or indirectly portraying the image of ice hockey as negative (NIHF, n.d d). Four of the articles are linked to the bankruptcy of Lørenskog, previously playing in the Get-league, and how newcomer Narvik are faced with economic problems should they accept their spot in the top division due to travel costs. The last article of the five is concerned with the problems of building a new arena for Vålerenga in Oslo, which is currently 141 million Norwegian crowns over budget, two years delayed and designed too small to allow official international games to take place (Sørgjerd, 2018). Other entities within the NIHF such as women’s hockey are barely even mentioned on other Norwegian web-



platforms, where 9 out of the 10 newest articles stem solely from Swedish websites (NIHF, n.d d). This spurred an interest in asking questions of why companies are interested in sponsoring ice hockey and the NIHF, along with how the NIHF operates to become an attractive sponsorship object.

As ice hockey is a sport growing in both popularity and awareness there was an increased curiosity from this researcher as to how the federation adapts and strategizes to set themselves apart in the Norwegian sport context in order to attract and retain sponsors. One of the main economic sources for the NIHF, outside of governmental funding is through sponsorship (NIHF, 2015). As mentioned in the introduction, federations have shown an over-dependency on public funding (Bostock et al., 2018) increasing the need for successful sponsorship programs and other commercial activities. Coupled with more strategic approaches being applied by sponsors, the desire to explore how the NIHF handles an ever increasing professional environment in terms of sponsorship arose and how they approach the sponsorship market.

## 2. CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

This chapter will provide the reader with more information about the NIHF, how they are organized as well as an overview of their current sponsorships. The context is aimed at describing the environment that the organization finds itself in and their organizational characteristics.

### 2.1 *THE NORWEGIAN ICE HOCKEY FEDERATION*

The NIHF is the governing body for all elements pertaining to ice-hockey in Norway and are organized under the Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sports (NIF), the umbrella organization for all sports in Norway (Norges Idrettsforbund, n.d).

As per 2014 there were 102 registered ice-hockey clubs in Norway and a total of 14 231 members, as well as 45 playing fields across the country (NIHF, 2015). Serving as the governing body of ice-hockey in Norway, the NIHF administrate both the top men´s division, the Get-league, and the men´s national team, as well as all other ice-hockey related activities in the country. The men´s elite division and national team are both described as the “showcase” of the sport to the public in their official plans for 2015 to 2019 (NIHF, 2015).

The NIHF´s administration consists of 14 employees, 3 of which are directly connected to the marketing department (NIHF, n.d c). Their main objective for their marketing efforts, as outlined by their official plan for 2015-2019, is for the marketing department to make up for 50% of the organization´s total revenue and a secondary goal of increasing the marketing department´s revenue by 20% annually (NIHF, 2015).

As previously mentioned, the NIHF is organised as a membership based organization under the NIF. The NIHF is organised in 8 regional confederations and one region, Northern Norway. The ice hockey clubs are members within a regional confederation or region and thereby members of the NIHF itself. The strategic plan for 2015-2019 is based on the national and international guidelines for sport, in this case the “Idrettsmeldingen” from the Norwegian government, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF), and serves as a platform and guideline for regional confederations and clubs. The NIHF´s job is to lead,

manage and be a driving force in the development of ice hockey within Norway and internationally (NIHF, 2015).

In the current strategic plan, the vision outlined is “Hockey joy for all of Norway”, describing the long term ambition for Norwegian ice hockey. With the geographical outline of Norway, this means reaching new areas which have no existing familiarity with ice hockey due to a lack of ice rinks while retaining interest in areas that are already developed and well established. Further, the aim is to create opportunities for everyone of any gender, ethnicity, age, disability or sexual orientation to experience a good, challenging and well-facilitated offer in their local environment (NIHF, 2015).

In keeping with their vision, the values outlined in the strategic plan are “Engaged – Generous – Genuine” and are meant to be clear indicators of the values and attitudes that shape the Norwegian ice hockey community (NIHF, 2015). As for the objectives for the marketing and communications department, the strategic plan defines both a main objective and an intermediate objective as well as the strategy for obtaining it. The main objective for the marketing department is as previously mentioned to generate 50% of the total revenue within the federation and the intermediate objective to increase the marketing revenue by 20% annually. To achieve this, the strategy is to intensify and professionalise the marketing efforts in order to generate more revenue from the potential value within the Norwegian ice hockey product (NIHF, 2015).

In communications the main objective is to strengthen the reputation and market value of Norwegian ice hockey. Within this overall objective there are three intermediary objectives. The first is for Norwegian ice hockey to have the best reputation within team sports and at the same level as the best within Norwegian winter sports. In achieving this the strategy is for all levels of Norwegian ice hockey to systematically work to improve their reputation, herein through generating positive mentions in media and social media and solving conflicts within the organization. Second of the intermediary objectives is for the values “Engaged – Generous – Genuine” to characterize communication internally and externally, highlighting the contribution of ice hockey in Norwegian society in a positive manner. The NIHF wishes to achieve this through implementing these values in all levels of ice hockey. Finally, the last communications intermediary objective is to raise the awareness and knowledge of Norwegian ice

hockey and to highlight more players as profiles and role models locally, nationally and internationally (NIHF, 2015).

## **2.2 NIHF SPONSORSHIPS**

The NIHF operates with three different sponsor categories; main sponsor, main partners and partners and suppliers (NIHF, n.d. a). Although the website doesn't list which sponsors and partners belong in which category, the following is a list of all the organizations partnering with NIHF at time of writing 7<sup>th</sup> of May 2019 (NIHF, n.d. e):

**Get** –digital TV and broadband supplier.

**Norsk Tipping** - Norwegian betting and gambling company. The profits of the company are one of the main sources of funding for all of Norwegian sports.

**TV2 Sportskanalen** – Norwegian TV channel that broadcasts the games from the top division of men's ice hockey, the Get-league and are the current rights holders.

**Nordic Choice Hotels** – hotel chain.

**MECA** – car and auto repair chain.

**X-Idé AS** –printing business.

**Vitalkost** – nutrition company.

**NeH** – supplier of profiling and advertising products.

**H.M.K** – bus company.

**Conaxess Trade** – Fast-Moving Consumer Goods distributor.

**Broderi & Lasereksperter AS** – embroidery and laser engraving specialist. Supplier of stickers, printing, arena advertising, signs and floor advertising.

**Avis** – car rental company.

**Blåkläder Workwear** – manufacturer of workwear, gloves and shoes.

**Dressmann** – men's clothes chain.

**2XU** – sportswear distributor and manufacturer.

**CCM** – manufacturer of ice hockey equipment.

**Sportstape** – tape and lace manufacturer specialized in ice hockey.

### ***2.3 NORWEGIAN TOP HOCKEY***

Organized separately from the NIHF, Norwegian Top Hockey (NTH) represent the market and media rights of the top professional league for men's ice hockey, which is administrated by the NIHF. Their main goal is to increase the reputation of ice hockey in Norway and the economic platform of which it operates in a long term perspective (Norsk Topp hockey, 2014).

### 3. THEORY

The purpose of this theoretical chapter is to introduce both theory and existing research on sponsorship, branding, additional aspects related to sponsorship, as well as theoretical framework that will be used in the analysis of data later on. These theoretical aspects form the basis of analysis and were also used in the designing of the interview guides. In choosing the framework used in this thesis, emphasis was placed on relevancy to the study as well as applicability. Both the sport value framework (Woratschek, Horbel & Popp, 2014) and the consumer-focused sponsorship-linked marketing model (Cornwell, Weeks & Roy, 2005) are used frequently in the discussion due to their ability to explain interactions between organizations based on how they create value and the use of sponsorship as an organizational strategy in achieving marketing related objectives. The other elements included in this chapter are specific to sponsorship.

#### 3.1 SPONSORSHIP

To create a clear understanding of sponsorship it is crucial to use a definition that most accurately describes the phenomenon. Cornwell and Maignan (1998) used existing research on sponsorship, defining sponsorship as: “(1) an exchange between a sponsor and a sponsee whereby the latter receives a fee and the former obtains the right to associate itself with the activity sponsored and (2) the marketing of the association by the sponsor” (Cornwell & Maignan, 1998, p 11). Cornwell and Maignan (1998) conclude that both activities are necessary should the sponsorship fee be a meaningful investment.

Using the definition above, the sponsee receives a rights fee from the sponsor who then markets their organization. The latter part is key to the separation of sponsorship from other promotional and communication strategies. The leveraging and activation of the sponsorship often entails advertising, another communications tool. Thus, in order to exploit the commercial value of the sponsorship the sponsor has to invest in advertising, having already made an initial investment in purchasing the rights to associate itself with the sponsee (Cornwell et al., 2005). Another key element to sponsorship is the duality that exists within the relationship. Therefore, this chapter will introduce the

motivational perspective as well as objectives for the sponsee and the sponsor separately, before discussing the duality of the relationship and other elements that pertain to both parties such as measuring effects of sponsorship.

### 3.1.1 SPONSOR PERSPECTIVES

With the aforementioned as a starting point for the understanding of sponsorship, this chapter first discusses the perspective of the sponsor. Cornwell and Maignan (1998) highlight several elements with regards to sponsorship management in their overview of previous research, finding that the most important objectives and motivations for sponsorship are: improving goodwill, enhancing image, increasing awareness, improving profitability, management interest and staff recruitment. This list is ranked from most important to least important. Other objectives could be to alter the public perception of the company, generate media benefits, achieving sales objectives and increasing public awareness of the brand (O'Reilly & Seguin, 2007). Meenaghan (2013) notes that sponsorship motivations have changed from seeking brand exposure and brand awareness to a platform for engaging with consumers' passions and driving brand engagement. This more strategic approach allows the sponsor to interact and engage various stakeholder groups in a focused manner within the sponsorship program. For example, the sponsor can realize strategic objectives with their own staff, trade associates, shareholders and media as well as the mass consumer market.

In continuation with the strategic approach to sponsorship, Demir and Söderman (2015) identify three streams of research and approaches to sponsorship: sponsoring as an investment, sponsoring as a relation and sponsoring as animation. Within these streams they identified different activities and strategies that define each stream. Each stream and activity is presented below to gain a clearer understanding of the different objectives for a company to enter sponsorship.

Firstly, sponsoring as an investment is typically seen in the dyad between sponsor and sponsee. Demir and Söderman (2015) distinguish between philanthropic and commercial sponsoring. While philanthropic sponsorship is motivated through genuine altruism, commercial sponsorship is focused on a value in return such as increased brand recognition and brand value. Philanthropic sponsoring is usually based on a cash or in-kind fee given to an organization to assist them in achieving their goals. Often this

is seen in the light of gaining strategic competitive advantages through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and is becoming more common throughout sports, culture and charities. On the other hand, commercial sponsoring is identified as an alteration of the brand through sponsorship activities. This includes increasing brand awareness, strengthening brand image and building brands. Over time this has evolved into a highly integrated market-oriented activity, with the alteration of the company brand as the main objective. The branding process will be discussed more thoroughly later in the paper.

The second stream of sponsorship is linked to sponsor-sponsee alliances and third-party actors that mediate interactions between the sponsor and the sponsee (Demir & Söderman, 2015). In this particular stream of sponsorship, the sponsor seeks to improve competitive position by sharing resources with the other actors involved in the sponsorship network. Thus, the sponsor could benefit from the network surrounding the sponsee, such as fans, other sponsors, mediators or hub firms acting as dealmakers on behalf of the sponsee.

Third, sponsoring as animation is sponsorship activities aimed at affecting consumers' thinking, memory and action (Demir & Söderman, 2015). In achieving this sponsors utilize the tool of activation, mentioned previously, to encourage consumers to interact with the sponsor. This reflects Meenaghan's (2013) findings that sponsorship motivations have changed from a position of brand awareness and exposure to brand engagement. Further, Demir and Söderman (2015) note that consumers relate more strongly to the sponsoring brand when the link between sponsor-sponsee is stronger, supporting the case for "co-branding" between sponsor and sponsee as an effective means of activation and creating an image transfer to consumers.

### 3.1.2. SPONSEE PERSPECTIVES

For simplification in this master thesis the sponsee is regarded as the NIHF and examples will be used within a sporting context to provide more clarity. The first aspect in the perspective of the NIHF is the question of financing their daily operations. Sport organizations rely heavily on revenue and other benefits derived from sponsorships (Farrelly & Quester, 2005). This correlates with the first part of the definition provided by Cornwell and Maignan (1998) where the sponsee charges a fee for the right to be



associated with their organization. Dependency on sponsorship funding is relevant also for the NIHF, as their current goal for the marketing department is to provide 50% of all revenue in 2019 (NIHF, 2015). To attain this goal, they not only need to increase the amount of sponsorship deals but also make sure that the financial commitment by the sponsor is sufficient and valued correctly. Valuing and measuring the impact of sponsorship is a complex issue and will be further discussed in chapter 3.1.3.

Aside from the financial commitment by the sponsor, there are other motivations for a sport organization to have sponsors, one of these being awareness. Having a large corporate sponsor advertising on behalf of your organization creates consumer awareness (Shank & Lyberger, 2015). In doing so, the sponsor can create awareness about the NIHF outside of their current markets, expanding awareness about NIHF to their own target markets. This creates a larger reach for the NIHF, giving them an extra platform to attract consumers to their product while growing their brand awareness.

As a sponsee it also creates a need to partner with the right sponsors. Among the different actors available, the NIHF needs to partner with sponsors that are going to provide value for them as an organization. The partnering of organizations in sponsorship is often referred to as a “sponsorship fit”. Sponsorship partnerships that have a perceived fit with consumers show a higher effect rate (Thjømmøe, 2010). In our context this means that the consumer understands why the organization is sponsoring the NIHF. Often this is seen in through the lens of the sponsor in choosing which organizations to sponsor, but is of equal importance to the sponsee to ensure a successful sponsorship (O’Reilly & Seguin, 2007). Thus, sporting organizations tend to partner with sponsors that share the same target markets or have the same brand values.

By now it is perhaps clear that the sponsor-sponsee relationship is co-dependent on both actors. Sponsorship is reliant on several actors, not merely sponsor and sponsee, to create value. Later on the theoretical chapter will therefore explain concepts such as branding and the co-creation of value to further enhance the understanding of how value is created between different actors within a sponsorship.

### 3.1.3 MEASURING SPONSORSHIP EFFECT

The large increase in global sponsorship spending has increased the demand for effective evaluation of sponsorship results. In 2013 the estimated global spending was 53.3 billion USD, highlighting how the industry has grown since an estimated expenditure of \$13.4 billion in 1996 (Cornwell & Maignan, 1998; Meenaghan, 2013). Meenaghan (2013) points to a “measurement deficit” in sponsorship identified by research, highlighting a lack of or inadequate research budgets to take on the task coupled with a sense of assuming and proclaiming success when it comes to corporate sponsorship. In an attempt to follow the timeline and evolution of sponsorship, we’ll start with the most traditional approaches to measuring sponsorship effect and end with contemporary methods and future approaches.

In their overview article, Cornwell and Maignan (1998) identify three main methods of measurement; exposure-based methods, tracking measures and experiments. In the first method, two different techniques are deployed. One is to monitor quantity and nature of the media coverage obtained for the sponsored event or organization. The other is to estimate direct and indirect audiences. Before, these were considered adequate methods as estimation of exposure generated by a sponsorship. Pham (1991) argues that since media coverage alone is not the objective of sponsorship it should not be used as a tool of measurement, since it does not provide information of brand recall or attitude change.

Secondly, tracking measures are also employed. Tracking techniques are used to assess recall of sponsor advertisements, awareness and attitudes towards sponsors, image effects and brand image. Although most empirical studies use tracking techniques, the investigations show small or ambiguous effects of sponsorship (Cornwell & Maignan, 1998). One of the difficulties in the evaluation of sponsorship is the separation and distinguishing it from other promotional activities. Another argument towards this approach is that it measures an inclination towards a sponsor from a consumer’s standpoint in an event that they are already endorsing through participation and thus doesn’t measure potential attitude changes toward the sponsor. Last of the measurement methods identified by Cornwell and Maignan (1998) is experiments. An example of doing such experiments is through showing sport a game with sponsor signage and examining the effects of sponsorship involvement among the participants.

O'Reilly & Seguin (2007) separate between measuring intangible and tangible benefits. Tangible benefits are quantifiable assets such as signage, number of entries to a website, posters, flyers, tracking number of spectators and keeping track of sponsor identification through broadcasts and media coverage. This is similar to the first method identified by Cornwell and Maignan (1998). Intangible benefits on the other hand represent qualitative assets delivered by the sponsee, such as image transfer and brand loyalty. Using findings from the International Event Group (IEG), O'Reilly and Seguin (2007) state that sponsorship can be measured in three ways; through measuring awareness levels and changed attitudes, by quantifying sponsorship in terms of sales results and by comparing the value of sponsorship-generated media coverage with the cost of equivalent advertising space and time. In the case of both sales and attitude changes both need to have been recorded as a pre-sponsorship benchmark to provide valid results.

Meenaghan (2013) notes that sponsors view sponsorship in a more holistic and strategic way now compared to earlier, utilizing it as a platform for communication and engagement with several stakeholder groups. A more strategic approach to sponsorship dictates that a mere return on investment (ROI) approach is not applicable and that a return on objectives (ROO) approach should also be employed. Measures such as exposure through sponsor signage and publicity should be regarded as inadequate. Meenaghan (2013) further stresses that irrespective of the approach taken to performance measurement, the determination of roles, objectives, budgets, activation programs and Key Performance Indicators (KPI), must be specified at the start of the sponsorship.

### **3.2 *BRANDING***

Another element to sponsorship is the concept of branding. Sponsorship represents the combination of two, or more, brands in a partnership and the concept of branding is key to understanding sponsorship. Thus, branding is a concept that both organizations in the sponsor-sponsee relationship are concerned with.

The general idea of branding is to be able to distinguish your product from competitors in the same market, shaping attitudes within the consumer market to increase sales,

attendance or merchandising. In reaching these objectives an organization must go through the branding process.

In order to reach an organization's branding objectives, brand awareness has to be established. The objective of creating brand awareness is for consumers to recognize and remember the brand name in the desired target market. In the branding process, creating a brand image is impossible if the consumers are not aware of the brand (Shank & Lyberger, 2015). The consumers' set of beliefs about a brand, shaping their attitude towards that brand, is what constitutes a brand image. Often brand image is referred to as the personality of the brand. The contribution that the brand has on the product in the marketplace is what constitutes brand equity. This implies that there is an existing difference of value between a product with a brand attached versus another product with no brand relation. In sports, brand equity is the value the name or logo of a sports organization adds to the consumer when talking about a favourite team (Gladden & Funk, 2001). Consumers who are of the perception that a brand has high brand equity is more likely to think better of that brand. There are four components that make up brand equity; perceived quality, brand awareness, brand associations and brand loyalty.

Last in the branding process is the most crucial, brand loyalty. Brand loyalty entails that consumers develop a consistent preference for one product over another in a specific category, as is with sport fans choosing one team over another. When there is a loyalty to the brand, purchases become a matter of habit rather than of evaluation (Shank & Lyberger, 2015).

The NIHF have several competitors located inside the same office building, for example the Norwegian Football Federation and the Norwegian Ski Federation among the most important ones. Through developing a strong and distinguished brand they can set themselves apart from the other federations, offering something different to the many different potential sponsors within the market. On the other hand, sponsors could view the NIHF as a potential partner if they perceive them to be a strategically compatible in order to reach their own branding objectives.

### *3.3 CONSUMER-FOCUSED SPONSORSHIP-LINKED MARKETING*

Consumer-focused sponsorship tends to focus on improved awareness, attitude, image or behavioural intentions to purchase products or utilize a service. Cornwell et al. (2005) have established a model that shows the processes for achieving those outcomes along with the theoretical perspectives that guide them. This model accounts for individual and group level factors in processing sponsorship messages, mostly uncontrollable market factors that impact the outcome of a sponsorship, controllable management aspects, the mechanics of processing and the consumer-focused outcomes of sponsorship. Some of the theoretical aspects discussed under “Processing Mechanics” have already been discussed earlier, such as sponsorship fit which is worded in the model as matching/congruence and the articulation of this relationship. Other theoretical aspects, such as balance and meaning transfer are presented in chapter 3.4. Thus, a short presentation of the remaining factors is provided to give the reader an understanding of the function of the model and how it affects both NIHF and their sponsors. However, the model is based from a sponsor’s point of view while highlighting the duality of the partnership.

Following the presentation outlined by Cornwell et al. (2005) the model starts with the processing mechanics. The mere-exposure hypothesis dictates that frequent and repeated exposure to a stimulus engenders an affective response. Thus, the person is subject to a formation of preference without awareness of the process itself. In sponsorship, such situations happen with repeated exposure to simple and uncommunicative brand logos. While this has applicability in a sponsorship context, low-level processing and reactivation of previous brand associations are considered to have a broader application, for example in the use of sponsorship for an already established brand, which could then reactivate the memory of the brand by the consumer. Identification is a well-known concept within the sporting context and is also useful in a sponsorship context. People tend to define others and locate themselves within the social environment based on the social classifications they’ve made. Thus, when someone identifies themselves with an organization they become vested in their success (Cornwell et al., 2005).

When discussing sponsorship outcomes, the model differentiates between cognitive, affective and behavioural outcomes. Cognitive outcomes are typically measured as recall and recognition of the sponsoring company. The affective outcomes refer to the changing of attitude towards the sponsor, preference and liking based on exposure to the sponsor. Studies involving behavioural outcomes have attempted to find whether a sponsor's promotional efforts influence decisions to buy the sponsor's products or whether a sponsorship with a high level of perceived fit between the sponsor and sponsee influenced the consumer's choice of service (Cornwell et al., 2005).

Individual and group factors are linked to the information processing of sponsorship in a group or individual capacity. Four key factors are mentioned with regards to individual processing; arousal, prior experience, knowledge and involvement (Cornwell et al., 2005). The first factor states that when a person experiences arousal elicited from a sponsor or an event, the person will increase the processing of the information created by the stimulus and thus process results and store information at a higher rate. On the other hand, research suggests that a high degree of arousal inhibits the person's ability to process peripheral information. For example, a person attending a high-intensity ice hockey game might have trouble to process information outside of the actual game being played in front of them. This in turn could detract the value of sponsorship in certain instances, since the consumer is less likely to be receptive to the communication of the sponsorship. Moving on, the consumer's prior experience with a sponsor or event can trigger cognitive and affective responses in processing a sponsorship message (Cornwell et al., 2005). Some research proposes that prior experience with a brand enables the consumer to create more refined and elaborate cognitive structures due to an increased exposure to messages and experiences provided by the brand. As such, high levels of familiarity enable more efficiency in the processing of sponsorship messages and is also found to have a positive impact on the perceived relation between new and existing brand associations.

When talking about consumer knowledge in a sponsorship context this refers to both the consumer having knowledge of the product category of the sponsoring brand as well as the event or organization being sponsored (Cornwell et al., 2005). In the sponsorship context, more knowledge about the sponsor and the sponsored event or organization

gives the consumer the ability to better judge the sponsorship fit between the two organizations as well as creating more thoughts on the relationship between them in comparison to a consumer with less knowledge of the two. The last individual factor, involvement, refers to felt involvement and enduring involvement with the sponsored event, both variables that influence the information processing and the consumers' perception of the sponsorship fit (Cornwell et al., 2005).

In terms of group factors, Cornwell et al. (2005), outline social alliances as the defining factor. The social alliance is considered as a social category and in the sport context as fans. In such thinking, the social alliance is existing between the fans and the sport organization, excluding the sponsor. However, social alliances can have an effect on the individual responses such as involvement and arousal and has the potential of mitigating group thinking to harness positive effect regarding sponsorship responses. Furthermore, strong alliances enable a translation of fan loyalty to brand loyalty, facilitated through the sponsors being accepted in the identification process by the fans.

The model presented by Cornwell et al. (2005) moves on to what has been described as "mostly uncontrollable" market and situational factors which is represented firstly through brand equity. Brand equity is a subject previously explained, though we will use the description that Cornwell et al. (2005) provide for refreshment, stating that "brand equity refers to how a brand is perceived or positioned in the marketplace (p 34). Cornwell et al. (2005) highlight the fact that high-equity sponsors have an advantage in the sponsorship context than their low-equity counterparts. This is mostly due to the consumer having a more accessible brand association with a high-equity brand than one of low equity. Brand equity has also been examined in regards to the perception of sponsorship fit, showing that high-equity sponsors enjoy a higher perceived level of fit between sponsor and event. This then impacts the attitude a person shapes towards the sponsor and the event. When a person shows a high level of perceived congruency between the sponsor and the event the person exhibits a more positive attitude towards the sponsor than a person with a low level of perceived congruency. Furthermore, the person also shows stronger relationships between event attitude and brand attitude. Thus, strong brands with a high level of brand equity are afforded many advantages in the field of sponsorship.

Keeping with the market and situational factors, clutter and competitor activities exemplify the non-controllable factors in the marketplace. Clutter is the competing communications in the marketplace. Due to the increase in sponsorship the clutter in the marketplace has also increased (Cornwell et al., 2005). Clutter then serves as a disturbance in the communications process between the sponsor and consumer, influencing consumer attitude towards the sponsor. This relates also to for example an environment where an organization or event has several sponsors, influencing communications processing, image and potentially the transfer of image. Competitor activities in the marketing context often refers to the concept of ambush marketing (Cornwell et al., 2005). Ambush marketing occurs when a competing organization tries to associate itself indirectly with an event, reaping the same effect as the official sponsor. Thus, unofficial partners try to convince consumers that they are linked to the event, detracting the sponsorship value from an official sponsor often in the same product category as the ambush marketer.

Finally, the different management factors conclude Cornwell et al.'s (2005) model. They separate between a sponsorship policy and the activation and leveraging of the sponsorship deal. Firstly, Cornwell et al. (2005) highlight the need for proactive sponsorship management through activities that enhance communications and utilizing sponsorship as a resource for competitive advantage. Thus, the sponsorship policy is of great significance. Through an elaborate and precise sponsorship policy, the consumer should be able to connect the organization's various sponsorship activities together. To ensure this, the organization chooses which events to sponsor, target audiences, amount of sponsorship deals and what level of sponsorship is desired for each event, connecting existing sponsorship activities with the next. Choosing which events or organizations to sponsor is a complex affair, combining elements previously discussed in this chapter to find the perfect balance. Furthermore, the level of sponsorship is also dependent on financial factors, enhancing the need for clear budgeting when it comes to sponsorship. To conclude the model, the activation, or leveraging, of the sponsorship is considered vital for a successful sponsorship, as previously outlined by the definition by Cornwell and Maignan (1998). Leveraging the relationship between sponsor and sponsee can take on many different promotional forms to communicate the sponsorship. However,



leveraging of the sponsorship requires the sponsor to spend money beyond the purchasing of the rights to do so.

### ***3.4 BALANCE THEORY AND MEANING TRANSFER***

Heider's (1958) balance theory has often been used to explain attitude changes in sponsorship. The theory argues that individuals strive for consistency and thus try to avoid inconsistent behaviour and attitudes (Cornwell et al., 2005). In a sponsorship context, an imbalance is created when an individual's pre-existing positive attitude towards a charitable or sporting organization is combined with a neutral or negative attitude towards the sponsoring firm. The desired outcome for the sponsoring firm is therefore to positively adjust the individual's attitude towards the firm, seeking harmony and balance in the relationship. On the other hand, the least desired outcome is that the individual will negatively change the attitude towards the charitable or sporting organization due to the pre-existing negative view of the sponsoring firm.

Another approach that is used to explain image effects in sponsorship is the concept of meaning transfer. This model dictates a conventional path of movement of cultural meaning in consumer societies. From something that is dormant in the culturally constituted world, meaning changes from the prevailing culture in the physical and social world to consumer goods and then finally to the life of the consumer. Meaning circulates in society through the shift from the culturally constituted world to consumer goods made possible by advertising and the fashion system. The movement of meaning from consumer goods to individual is accomplished by the individual consumer (McCracken, 1989).

Initially in this process, the advertisers identify the cultural meanings intended for the product. This could be anything from gender, status, time and place or lifestyle meanings. The clue for the advertiser is to identify the pertaining cultural principles to define meaning for the product. Once this has been chosen, the advertiser finds the context, objects and persons that gives meaning in the culturally constituted world to bring the cultural meanings into the advertisement in a tangible form. The elements the advertiser chooses has to be carefully selected, since only some meanings are desirable while also bringing together a similarity between the product and the meaning. If successful, the meaning incorporated to the product through the objects, persons and

context selected, will be obvious to the consumer. The consumer then has to take these meanings and use them in the construction of their own world. Through finding meaning in the products, the consumer uses them to fashion themselves in their understanding of the world and who they are in it. Once the consumer has taken possession of the meanings that have been moved into the product the movement of meaning has been completed (McCracken, 1989).

For example, the NIHF could have an upcoming ice-hockey game for the men's national team. Through initial research, they have identified that the players and their physical abilities, along with the sense of being part of a team, are attractive to the spectators and customers. In their advertisement before the game they highlight these values to the spectators. Thus, if successful, the consumer of the product, being the ice-hockey game, will take these meanings with them in their construction of themselves in the world they live in and incorporate them like-wise. The consumer might feel like they are now attached to the team through cheering for them and being a supporter, a much desired effect for the NIHF. Another effect could be the physical attributes shown by the player, which then has created a desire for the consumer to start playing ice-hockey to attain these physical attributes themselves.

### *3.5 THE SPORT VALUE FRAMEWORK*

The sport value framework (SVF) focuses on the creation of value in a sporting context and is therefore central when discussing the value of sponsorship, how value is created and what constitutes value. Vargo and Lusch (2004) suggested a new approach to general marketing, known as the service-dominant logic (SDL), as a contrast to the traditional approach of goods-dominant logic (GDL) in the marketing literature. This suggests that service provision is fundamental to economic exchange and the creation of value. As such, this bears relevance to the field of sport which has long been grounded in GDL, interpreting sport as something which is produced (Woratschek et al., 2014). Thus, both SDL and GDL are presented below before moving on to value co-creation which is of central importance to this master thesis.

Firstly, a clarification of GDL is needed. In the perspective of GDL, the purpose of economic activity is to make and distribute things that can be sold. To be sold these things must be embedded with utility and value. The consumer is then the recipient of

the value by consuming the product and thereby destroying it (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). From a GDL perspective, value is understood as a “value-in-exchange”, reflected by the price the consumer pays for the product (Woratschek et al., 2014).

On the other hand, service-dominant logic implies that marketing is focused on operant resources in a continuous series of economic and social processes in which the firm is constantly trying to make better value propositions than its competitors. The term operant resource is a resource that produces effect, often intangible and invisible such as a core competence or organization process (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). In SDL, the term service is defined as the application of competencies for the benefit of another party and as the basis of economic exchange, thus making economic exchange a service for service engagement. In addition, value is not solely confined to the producer, but is co-created among the firms, customers and other stakeholders by integrating resources from service providers with their personal skills and competencies and other resources (Woratschek et al., 2004).

To accommodate this new way of thinking, Woratschek et al. (2004) introduced the SVF to provide a more comprehensive view of value creation within sport. The framework consists of 10 foundational premises (FPs) which take into consideration the unique characteristics of the sporting marketplace, such as the mix of volunteers, professionals, cooperation and offers alternative models of value creation to lead to better analyses and practice in the sport management field.

The first FP dictates that sport activities are the core of sport management. Due to the kinaesthetic nature of sport, uncertainty of outcome and extreme emotion in sports it is distinguished from other management areas and thus the sport activity is represented at the core of sport management. Seen through the lens of GDL, sport events cannot be understood as a product or service. Rather, the sporting event is a platform for value co-creation where the actors are dependent on the resources in the “service system” to create value. For example, the fans integrate the team’s performance and the team integrate the atmosphere produced by the fans. This leads to the second FP that service is the fundamental basis of exchange in sport and further to the third FP which states that sport goods are vehicles for service provision. This is in correspondence with SDL where goods are vehicles for service provision and merely the manifestation of applied

knowledge. Translated to sport, the sport goods provide consumers with an opportunity for emotion, meaning or image which can be integrated as a resource into the value co-creation process between a spectator and sporting activity as previously mentioned (Woratschek et al., 2014). These 3 FPs form the basic assumptions of the framework and characterise the nature of exchange in sport.

Consequently, FP 4 to 10 form the ecosystem of value co-creation from individual level to the value creation system as a whole. In this master thesis, the framework allows for an analysis of the role and behaviour of sport firms, other stakeholders and customers at the intra-level, the more complex relationships of sport firms and stakeholders at the micro-level and finally at the entire network of actors involved in the value co-creation system at the meso-level.

Value is not embedded in sport goods and products, but is derived from their use. Interactions between the actors in the service system are necessary to access resources between actors and create value through resource integration, which represents the value proposition. The value proposition is only the potential input for the value creation of other actors, as the value is always determined by the beneficiary (Woratschek et al., 2014).

Further, this enhances the meaning of the value network, through which the different actors in the value system can create value propositions. The purpose of sport organizations in this sense lies in linking different actors together through providing a platform and network where other stakeholders interact. One of these actors are the customers, who provide value to the value network through their social groups and their interactions with the sport organization and other stakeholders. Sport customers often occur in groups, as is well documented in social identity theory. Through their participation at sport events they contribute to the atmosphere and the event itself, but also influence the perceived quality and the reputation of the event. As such they are co-creating value by integrating the resources found in their social groups (Woratschek et al., 2014).

The seventh FP dictates that value is always co-created by firms, customers and other stakeholders. An example of this is through an analysis of the Olympic marketing

program, where the co-creation of value comes from all the Olympic stakeholders. They both create value for themselves and the Olympic brand. Furthermore, the other stakeholders such as spectators, professional sport leagues and governments all integrate value while creating value for themselves in the form of for example spectator emotion, publicity for their sport or increased demand for tourism to the location of the event (Woratschek et al., 2014)

At the micro-level, co-created value is always value-in-use and value-in-context (Woratschek et al., 2014). Through the integration of resources with the value proposition of the other actors, each actor determines the value individually through the use of the sport product or service. As is the case for the context of in which the value proposition is situated. For example, the value found in the use of a new bike in the winter compared to the summer, where the customer is more likely to appreciate riding the bike in warm weather conditions to freezing cold.

Concludingly, the last FP states that the role of the firms, customers and the other stakeholders is to include integrate the resources found within their specific networks to co-create value (Woratschek et al., 2014). Thus, networks interact with other networks in the co-creation of value within the system.

## 4. PREVIOUS RESEARCH

As mentioned previously, the sponsorship industry has increased tremendously over the last decades. As a consequence of this trend, research on the field has also increased. Some of this research has been included in the theoretical chapter above, as they are pertinent to the analysis in this master thesis and bear a higher level of relevance. However, other aspects are included in this section on previous research to give a more holistic perspective on the subject. Firstly, some perspectives and previous studies on organizational change of sport organizations due to increased demand for professionalization are provided, followed by other elements researched with regards to sponsorship, co-marketing alliances and branding.

In relation to the perspective of federations, Clausen et al. (2018) conducted a qualitative comparative analysis on international sport federations and commercialization. They found that decreased public and private funding acted as triggers for commercialization and identified four factors for commercialization: increasing competition, trend towards sports spectating, changing technologies and a professionalization of sport management. Their findings revealed that few international federations have a strategic approach and that only 1 in 3 out of the 35 federations included in the study had a published strategic plan, resulting in a goal vagueness. While they highlight that the international federations first and foremost serve their members, the national federations, they conclude that they need to show a higher level of goal orientation to satisfy their business partners. Amis, Slack and Hinings (2004), in their study of 36 Canadian National Sport Organizations (NSO), also found that sport organizations are compelled to professionalize and commercialize in order to adapt to an increasingly competitive environment.

Furthermore, Bostock et al. (2017), found in their case-study on national governing bodies of sport (NGB) in the UK and severe, immediate funding cuts under the “No Compromise” framework, that NGBs have an over-dependency on public funding. In turn, this led to short-term measurements taken to maintain operational capabilities. They conclude that the NGBs involved in the study were not able to prepare and think strategically when faced with funding cuts due to their funding dependency and prohibitive institutional environment.

Shapiro, DeSchraver and Rascher's (2017) study on the "Beckham effect" in the Major League Soccer (MLS) in the United States highlights the effects of star players in professional sport leagues within marketing, novelty and scarcity. Through their study they found that star players provide the league with the ability to attract new fans, improve the perception of the league quality, provide credibility and positively influence brand associations. However, for relevancy to this study, it must be differentiated that the MLS is a single-entity ownership compared to the multiple-ownership of the Norwegian Get-ligaen. Furthermore, the MLS is designed to work in a manner that allows for a single team to spend such amounts of money on a single player as part of a league branding initiative through the Designated Player Rule. Another factor within single-entity ownership of a professional sports league is that the club owners, and owners of the league, can collaborate to enhance the value of the league through different initiatives such as the Designated Player Rule. Other than the marketing impacts star players and big profiles have, it is of importance to that the media and marketing rights for the men's top league, Get-ligaen, is handled by the NTH and not the NIHF.

Moving towards the more sponsorship related research, Farrelly and Quester (2005) conducted a study that investigated large-scale sponsorship relationships as co-marketing alliances. In this study, they look at different factors within sponsor relationships such as strategic compatibility, goal convergence, commitment, trust and economic and noneconomic satisfaction to determine whether they can function as co-marketing alliances. They conclude that sponsorship relationships may function as co-marketing alliances, acting as a platform for both parties to invest and add value to the relationship. However, this is not often the case as there exists certain barriers between the parties. One of these is a discrepancy in the strategic intent of the partnership, another not sufficiently establishing the goal convergence in the early stages of the relationship. Furthermore, a difference in commitment level and economic satisfaction can lead to sponsors no longer involving their sponsorship partner in the decision-making process. They note that sponsorship properties are often the least strategic and most passive partner within the relationship.

Concerned with the exiting and termination of sponsorship deals, Dick and Uhrich (2017), looked at the types of exit and their consequences through their experimental study involving supporters of German football teams in the second division. They present findings that suggest a negative effect on the sponsors brand in a chosen exit, versus less negative effects if the exit is forced. Interestingly for sponsorship is that the termination of a sponsorship agreement is more visible to the public due to the heavy leveraging pursued by the sponsor. If the consequences for the sponsored property are perceived as severe, the negative effect on the sponsor is enhanced.



## 5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter is provided to give the reader a view of the methodological practices that have been used in this research. Yin (2009) describes the research design as “a logical plan for getting from here to there” (p 26), where “here” represents the initial starting point and “there” the conclusions and answers. As such, this chapter will also go from here to there, describing the steps taken along the way to the completion of the study.

Firstly, the reasoning for choosing a case study to answer the research questions will be discussed, followed by a review of the data collection methods and the participants of the study. The analytical process will also be discussed and explained in detail before moving on to discussions of validity, reliability, limitations of the study and the ethical considerations that have taken place.

### 5.1 CHOICE OF METHOD

If a problem is vague or not well defined an exploratory research design is often used (O'Reilly & Seguin, 2007; Shank & Lyberger, 2015). Through exploratory research, the problems can be further clarified and provide hypothetical solutions that can be further researched (O'Reilly & Seguin, 2007). According to Yin (1994), a case study is the preferred strategy when the researcher asks questions of “how” or “why” in researching a contemporary phenomenon in a real-life context. Flick (2009) explains that “case studies can capture the process under study in a very detailed and exact way” (p 134). It is important to emphasise that a case study is not a method, merely a strategic approach to answer the research questions using research methods such as the semi-structured interviews employed in this master thesis (Hodge & Sharp, 2016). This also implies that the study is of a qualitative nature since interviewing is a qualitative method.

Taking these perspectives into consideration, the approach for this research takes on a qualitative and exploratory nature. Since the problem area is vague as well, the natural step was to design an exploratory case study. A common technique when doing exploratory research is in-depth interviews that help gain a clearer understanding of the problem area. One of the biggest advantages with in-depth interviews is the ability to gather detailed information regarding the research questions (Shank & Lyberger, 2015). This study is characterized as a case study due to its in-depth exploration of a particular

organization in a real-life context, making the subject of research a bounded entity operating in situ (Hodge & Sharp, 2016).

## **5.2 INFORMANTS**

The informants chosen in this study are based on a strategic approach due to their positions within the NIHF and their connection to the NIHF as a sponsor. First and foremost, the NIHF were approached with the opportunity to be a part of this study in early October, which they agreed upon. I wanted to start with the perspective of the NIHF to gain more insight into them as an organization and how they work and therefore approached them for interviews early on in the research process. Due to other work requirements on the behalf of the NIHF this took some time to conclude and therefore affected the other interview groups later on. Upon concluding the interviews with the informants from the NIHF, they insisted that they be the link between myself as a researcher and their sponsors and thus would approach their sponsors on my behalf. Unfortunately, this took a bit longer than expected and resulted in fewer informants than planned due to time constraints in regards delivering the master thesis on time. However, the number of informants have served the purpose of answering the research question and as Kvale (2001) says; “interview as many people as necessary to find out what you need to know” (p 58). The interviews with the NIHF’s sponsors took place after they were able to approach them and either book interviews on my behalf or put me in touch with them myself. All the informants are anonymised, but are described in Table 1 below:

**Table 1:** Description of informants

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Education and experience</b>	<b>Interview length</b>
NIHF 1	Bachelor degree in Business and Administration. Previous experience in ice hockey as an athlete.	79 minutes
NIHF 2	Bachelor degree in International Marketing. Master degree from a university abroad. Previous experience in ice hockey as an athlete.	69 minutes
Sponsor 1	Worked within the sponsorship context the past 15 years.	60 minutes
Sponsor 2	Educated from BI Norwegian Business School. 20+ years' experience within sponsorship.	124 minutes
Sponsor 3	Master degree from BI Norwegian Business School. Worked with the NIHF since 2012.	54 minutes

### **5.3 THE QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW PROCESS**

All the interviews conducted were based on a semi-structured design (Shank & Lyberger, 2015), allowing for the interview to take its natural course while covering a list of topics that have been identified beforehand. In these semi-structured, in-depth interviews, the researcher can ask the informant for opinions about events and their own insights into certain areas, proposing a platform for further enquiry (Yin, 2009). This approach is useful in being able to probe further into areas of discussion that were central to the research questions in this paper. Having such a diverse group of informants in the study provides the study with different perspectives on sponsorship and consequently the informants all had views and information that was unique to them and the semi-structured approach to the interview process was therefore deemed useful.

First in the process of conducting the interviews, the interview guide was constructed (see Appendix C & D). During semi-structured interviews, the guide covers a range of topics with suggestions for questions (Kvale, 2001). The main topics included are: the NIHF as an organization, branding, sponsorship elements, communication, objectives and measurement. The interview guide used consists of open-ended questions about a specific topic, as suggested by Smith & Sparkes (2016). Two different interview guides

were designed to accommodate the different groups, but cover the same topics. Since the master thesis is theory driven the interview topics stem from the theory used. One aspect of this is turning implicit knowledge into explicit knowledge (Flick, 2009), allowing that knowledge to be used as a point of discussion in this paper. After a general introductory question to acquire the background of the informant, the interview guide covers the following topics:

To avoid problems such as poor recall (Yin, 2009), all the interviews were subject to recording and transcribed in verbatim to ensure a more accurate rendition of the interviews. This process was assisted through a computer tool, ExpressScribe, that allows the user to slow down the tempo of the audio-file among other things. Furthermore, all the interviews were conducted in Norwegian and the quotes and examples used in this text have been translated. All transcripts were sent to the informants upon completion to ensure that nothing was misunderstood or misquoted.

#### *5.4 CODING AND ANALYSIS*

Most studies rotate between both an inductive and deductive approach (Strauss, 1987), as does this one. The inductive character stems from the new themes discovered during the analysis that were added to the pre-existing themes found from the theoretical framework, the deductive part of the analysis. The inductive themes discovered were personnel requirements and other organizational characteristics within the NIHF. Below is an account of the coding and analysis process from beginning to end.

In the early stages of analysis, a coding of the data was used to structure them and to direct the analysis later on. This is often referred to as open coding. The objective is for the initial data coding to open up inquiries for the next steps of analysis, creating a platform for conceptualization (Strauss, 1987). Braun, Clarke and Weate (2016) suggest familiarizing yourself with the data before beginning the coding process to help form an early sense of the codes that lie within the data. In open coding the data is segmented and concepts are attached to them, representing the different codes (Flick, 2009). In this process, after a thorough rereading of the data material, different phrases and sentences were “tagged” and categorized in the code it represented. The codes were categorized and organized using NVivo, a computer tool that lets the user create different sets of codes which are then easily organized and accessible.

The next step is to categorize the codes around the phenomena discovered in the data that bear relevance to the research questions (Flick, 2009). During this process the themes from the theoretical framework served as a guidance tool for the different themes that were developed, often referred to as selective coding. In a thematic analysis however, the aim is not to produce grounded core category as in grounded theory, but rather to develop thematic domains and categories (Flick, 2009), allowing for a comparison between the different informants. This choice of analysis is due to the flexibility offered by thematic analysis, allowing the researcher to both develop themes during the analysis as well as using the pre-determined themes for guidance. An example of thematic coding used in this master thesis is shown below in Table 2, where sponsorship fit is coded as a theme after the identification of the open codes target groups, footprint, reputable partners, values and natural fit within the data:

**Table 2:** Thematic coding example

<b>Sponsorship fit</b>	<b>NIHF 1</b>	<b>NIHF 2</b>	<b>Sponsor 1</b>	<b>Sponsor 2</b>	<b>Sponsor 3</b>
- Target groups - Values - Supplier representing a natural fit - Footprint - Reputable partners	We need coinciding values on some level or another	You have to be a serious actor that will benefit our sport	Hockey is relatively strong in areas where ** are strong as well	So my sponsorship is in the form that we offered to do them a service and then go in as a sponsor with full rights	So when we've looked at sponsorship objects we've looked at objects that share a footprint with us and can stand for the same values we have

## 5.5 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Validity and reliability are two terms that are interconnected with the judgement of quality in qualitative research.

Validity is concerned with whether the questions we are asking are being answered (Tjora, 2012). Within validity we differentiate between internal and external validity. Internal validity is mostly related to explanatory studies, when the researcher is looking for a causal effect between events (Yin, 2009) and therefore is not as relevant to this study. External validity on the other hand is seen more in exploratory case studies, where the researcher strives to generalize through analytical generalization a set of results to broader theory (Yin, 2009). External validity is then the degree to which the findings in the study are generalizable beyond the single case study, for example to another federation operating within the same context. Validity is strengthened through openness about the research process, the choices made and a high degree of validity is achieved through operating within the boundaries of the subject, rooted within other relevant research (Tjora, 2012). External validity is a test of the quality of the study and subsequently “if two or more cases are shown to support the same theory, replication may be claimed” (Yin, 2009, p 38). However, as this is a single-case study it is not applicable here.

Another test of the quality of a case study is reliability, where the objective is to arrive at the same results and findings of a study following the same procedures as described by the researcher in the study, essentially replicating the same study (Yin, 2009). This requires the researcher to document the research process and the procedures conducted so that it is possible for someone to replicate the process and arrive at the same conclusions. Giving accurate accounts of how the research strategy was chosen, how the informants were approached, how the interviews were planned and conducted, coding and analysing data is therefore of importance in order to achieve a high level of reliability.

Another factor within reliability is the researchers own knowledge and how this is applied within the study (Tjora, 2012). Furthermore, the aim of reliability is to minimize

errors and bias within a study (Yin, 2009). Therefore, it is of importance to document how the researcher affects the research itself, which is done here under chapter 5.7.

## **5.6 GENERALIZATION**

Following on from validity and reliability, generalization makes up the last part of what Kvale (2001) calls the “holy, scientific trinity” (p 158). Generalization is something we do every day as individuals, spontaneously predicting the outcome of an event based on our previous experience (Kvale, 2001). However, an analytic generalization represents to which degree we can predict the outcome of one case based on the findings of a previous study (Kvale, 2001; Yin, 2009).

The ability to generalize from this particular case study is limited due to the context of which it takes place and can thus only be used as such. If it were a multiple-case study conducted within the same context, the findings would be more prone to generalizability within that context and also show a higher degree of external validity (Yin, 2009).

However, this case study involves a single Norwegian sport federation, operating in a Norwegian sports market, creating the context for generalization. In such a case, it would be wrong to claim that the findings can be generalized outside of this context. However, the findings should be relevant to other organizations in the same context, in this case other Norwegian sport federations and organizations. One reasoning for this is the exploratory nature of this study within the context, providing insight to other actors within that context and discovering problem areas that might be relevant to them as well.

## **5.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Although many steps were taken to avoid weaknesses and limitations within the study, there are some and the clarity of these to the reader is of significance. One of the limitations is that all the planning, data collection and analysis is done by a single individual. Having two different individuals transcribe the data can enhance the reliability of the data (Kvale, 2001). Furthermore, this creates an environment more prone to researcher bias, where the researcher’s preconceived perceptions are not challenged. Yin (2009) suggests the use of critical colleagues when discussing your

findings, which has been done throughout this study by discussing different topics and findings with my advisors and fellow students.

Case study investigators are also prone to bias because of their pre-existing knowledge of the field of study and avoiding bias is key to the quality of the study (Yin, 2009). Before the project started, I did a bracketing interview with myself to explore my own biases and assumptions about the project. This allowed me to gain an awareness of how I viewed the organizations involved, the problems they are facing and underlying assumptions I had about sponsorship, thus helping me to avoid letting biases take control in my role as a researcher throughout this project. Also, this is an effort to increase the reliability of the study, as reliability is concerned with minimizing bias and errors within a study (Yin, 2009). Furthermore, being aware of your objective role as researcher during interviews helped in avoiding leading questions. Although leading questions can be used to check the reliability of the interviewee's questions (Kvale, 2001) they were consciously avoided. Tjora (2012) comments that the engagement of the researcher is a resource through the implementation of their own knowledge in the study.

Another limitation is the researcher's lack of experience in conducting interviews and was also one of the findings of the bracketing interview conducted beforehand. As Kvale (2001) states when conducting interviews; "the researcher itself is the research instrument" (p 91). Using that definition, the research instrument in this study is a relatively unexperienced researcher at this level and magnitude. However, as the process went on the experience with doing interviews grew and the quality of data collected throughout is satisfactory.

As mentioned previously, the external validity of the study would have been of a higher level if it was a multiple-case study. However, as Yin (2009) states; "the conduct of a multiple-case study can require extensive resources and time beyond the means of a single student or independent research investigator" (p 53). Concluding this segment, some of the references used in this text are in Norwegian. Thus, if someone wishes to replicate or audit this master thesis it would require either an understanding of the Norwegian language or translation of the texts.



## 5.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to Kvale (2001), ethical decisions don't belong to a single phase of the research process but are decisions that have to be made throughout. The ethical considerations for this research started in the planning phase, such as whether to anonymize the informants and approvals for the study. Further in the study, decisions as to how to describe the informants in the methodological chapter arose and after that how they are to be presented in the results section.

Upon making these decisions, the researcher needs to be clear on their professional integrity towards informants and others affected in the study (Tjora, 2012). In the planning and approval phase, an informed consent was drafted and sent along with other documents to the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) for approval (see Appendix). The informed consent form's purpose is for the subjects to be informed on the overarching goals of the research, why they are invited to participate in the study, the benefits and disadvantages involved and how their information is stored (Kvale, 2001). It also informs the participant of their ability to withdraw from the study at any point and that their participation is voluntary.

In order to store and handle personal information about informants, an approval from NSD is needed before conducting the research. The approval form is found in Appendix A at the conclusion of this master thesis. Information was stored on the researcher's personal computer in a password protected file. As outlined by the informed consent, only the researcher and the advisors involved in the study have access to their personal information. This information is further deleted after the conclusion of this research.

Another decision that had to be made concerned the identity of the informants. Since complete anonymity would remove too many points for analysis (Tjora, 2012), the informants are identifiable through which informant group they belong to; the NIHF and the NIHF's sponsors. However, the decision was made not to publish this paper with the identity of the sponsor's employer, their full name or other elements which could make the informants more easily and directly identifiable, providing an unnecessary attention to the individual. This point was informed to the participants before the interviews took place and was agreed upon by everyone involved. Also, as previously mentioned, the informants were provided the opportunity to review the

transcripts and correct quotes if they felt misinterpreted or to delete some quotes they weren't comfortable with. None of the informants did this although some gave direct feedback during the interviews that they did not want to be quoted at certain moments, which they subsequently were not.

## 6. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The theoretical section of this thesis constitutes the basis of analysis and therefore the results are grouped in the themes that were found both in the theoretical framework and through the analysis. Furthermore, to create an easier understanding of the results, the discussion follows each theme and sub-theme. This is also a step taken to avoid unnecessary repetitions later on and provides a clearer platform for understanding. Except for in chapter 6.1 the findings and discussion includes both groups of informants. In chapter 6.1 the findings are grouped in the perspectives of the NIHF and the sponsors, before conducting a discussion of the findings jointly thereafter. As stated previously, the interviews were conducted in Norwegian and the quotes used are translated by the author of this master thesis.

### *6.1 ORGANIZATIONAL OBJECTIVES AND APPROACH*

The first part of the theoretical framework in 3.1 details sponsorship and its characteristics. Also, section 3.1 highlights the different motivational aspects for pursuing sponsorship discovered through previous research and how they differ from the perspective of either the sponsor or the sponsee. In understanding how the NIHF and their sponsors approach sponsorship the findings are grouped specifically for each party before discussing how their motivations and objectives meet and the implications this has. The reasoning behind this is to create an overview of the strategical perspectives of both types of organization.

#### 6.1.1 NIHF

The clearest indicator for the NIHF's objectives for marketing and sponsorship are printed in their strategical plan for the period 2015-2019. One of the informants from the NIHF explained how the strategic plan is formed and the link to the administration. "We have a strategic plan and then a plan for achieving this, the strategic plan is approved by the board and then the council. But it's the working groups who work on it, with close input from the administration" (NIHF 1).

The stated objective is for the marketing department to provide for 50% of the organizations total revenue through intensifying and professionalizing their marketing efforts and an intermediate objective of a 20% annual growth (NIHF, 2015). NIHF 1 clarified that the marketing income largely stems from sponsorship and also that there

have been some changes to the strategic plan, for example that: “We have a goal of increasing 20% in year one, then it’s 15% and then 10% for the current strategic plan” (NIHF 1). The change was due to the problems created through having a 20% annual increase when profits increased largely in a short time span. The informant also added that their goals were also based on values, when asked about the goals for the marketing department:

That depends which goals you are talking about. Because I’m very conscious that we should have a value-based objective, not just dollars and cents. But, how we want to portray ourselves, what we want to be recognized as, that’s all a part of building a profile, building a reputation and that sort of thing, which is quite important for us... That’s an underestimated part of doing marketing and should be apparent throughout the organization. And really, when you are talking to a federation like you are now, then you should try to have those values throughout the entire organization (NIHF 1).

The NIHF’s objectives for their marketing efforts were also stated in a more practical sense. “Yes, we try to attract new, attractive sponsors. That’s a big part of the goal for the marketing department. Income, attracting income, from marketing efforts. Plain and simple” (NIHF 2).

Farrelly and Quester (2005) indicated that sport organizations are heavily reliant on revenue and other benefits derived from sponsorship. This is echoed by informant NIHF 2:

However, the income from market is a necessity within sports. Because the support you receive, for example to run the sport, isn’t alone enough to run the sport at the level we have today. We are dependent on help from the business world, partnerships and other engagements to grow (NIHF 2).

The funding referred to here is the public funding received through the Norwegian term “tippenøkkelen”, which is the percentage of profits derived from Norsk Tipping donated to sporting purposes, in total 64%. In 2019, the funding for the numerous national sport federations was 263,5 million Norwegian crowns (NOK) (Regjeringen, 2019). In their latest available financial statement, the NIHF received approximately 14 million NOK

in funding through the NIF and IIHF. In comparison, the sponsorship and sales incomes from the same year total approximately 14 million NOK (NIHF, 2017).

This dependency on funding to finance the operation of the organization and to serve the sport is also evident through responses from NIHF 1, stating that:

All the while being a federation like we are, we are not supposed to, it's not a goal for us to make money to own it ourselves or to operate with profits. Our purpose is to organize the activity as well as possible, invest as well as possible in that (NIHF 1).

The informant followed up, stating: "...but in my world, the marketing [department] is there to finance the activity we wish to do and the sport we are operating with" (NIHF 1).

In summary, the NIHF operate with an objective to fund their operations through revenue derived from sponsorships in order to best manage the sport they represent, while acknowledging the role of marketing and sponsorship income:

As a sport federation exists to manage the sport, it's simply a tool in achieving the objectives the sport has. But then I think all sports, independent of discipline, have to get used to the idea of marketing and sponsorship having a bigger impact on the organization than it has historically. The world has become more commercial (NIHF 1).

As far as a strategic approach to attracting sponsors, NIHF 1 underlines that there is not a specific strategic approach when attracting new sponsors:

Well, there are several people working on this. We don't have one single strategy that we use, although we probably could have. I think people have different abilities and work in separate manners. We have some basic tools we use where we go and look at businesses. We pay attention to the strategical plans others conduct, when new products are being launched, we look for company values that coincide with our own values... Sponsoring and marketing are perhaps more value-based than buying commercials somewhere. So we look for actors we think could benefit from that. Then we look at different industries.

Which industries are establishing themselves, where the competition is, is there a re-branding process? So we basically work on finding a way in there. Sometimes we try to find a match without having talked to them, try to find a pitch and then find the right people. And very much, in my world at least, it's about finding the right entry point for the people you talk to. It's about relations, where the heart lies (NIHF 1).

This was verified by NIHF 2, highlighting that it often has a personal touch to it:

What I can say right away is that it's not a process that's set in stone. There's not an approach presently of "this is how we do it". It can be everything from building networks to approaching new leads. You learn from each other also, you're often fighting for the same sponsors with the other sport disciplines. Call them a competitor in the sponsorship market. Then through an analysis you create an overview of who is sponsoring who, and then you have to go after the ones who are available in the market or open for new sponsorships. Often we receive the inquiry, other times we have to approach or get in touch with them (NIHF 2).

Subsequently, the informant followed up this statement:

As I said earlier, obviously we work within the team, we operate as a team unit. But we also work individually, we have our own way of doing this. I can only speak about how I prefer to work. Because when you are speaking to a lead [potential sponsor], you often attain a personal connection, you often have a contact person that you follow. Often it's best like that (NIHF 2).

The findings suggest that the NIHF doesn't necessarily operate with a specific approach for acquiring new sponsorships or how to approach the sponsorship market. Rather, it has an individual or "ad hoc" approach depending on situational factors such as which actors are available in the market, how and through who the contact with the potential sponsor is achieved:

One thing is to start out with a marketing strategy and for the sponsorship strategy to mirror that in a way. But that's not necessarily the case. You might have to start with a sponsorship strategy and then choose your marketing

strategy from there. Because often you have a starting point, then you have to base it on that and sell what you have (NIHF 2).

### 6.1.2 SPONSORS

The different objectives for sponsorship in the perspective of the sponsors were detailed earlier, thus they are only presented in short now. Cornwell & Maignan (1998) found aspects such as enhancing image, creating awareness, management interests and staff recruitment. O'Reilly and Seguin (2007) point out altering the public perception of the company, increasing brand awareness, achieving sales objectives and generating media benefits. Demir and Söderman (2015) identified three streams of approaches to sponsorship: sponsoring as an investment, sponsoring as a relation and sponsoring as animation. Interestingly enough, all three of the different sponsors displayed a strategic approach in reaching their objectives through sponsorship of the NIHF.

For simplicity the sponsors are presented numerically. Sponsor 1 explained how their sponsorship agreement with the NIHF took place through determining their target groups and objectives:

First, we had a process where we looked at our brand, which didn't have a brand platform or anything, quite difficult values to work with and such. But we looked at them, and we knew that the target group was our franchises, creating internal pride. Wasn't about the consumer at all to start with...So they were the first target group when we started the sponsorship, the franchises. Because very many people don't feel like they work for us, they feel they work for the original company except now our company sign is hanging there. So it was to build the internal pride that the sponsorship started (Sponsor 1).

This type of sponsorship is identifiable with Cornwell & Maignan (1998) as well as Meenaghan's (2013) findings of sponsoring for management and staff interests. However, Sponsor 1 also explained that the sponsorship has developed over time, aiming more towards brand awareness and sponsoring as investment (Demir & Söderman, 2015):

The main objective was as mentioned earlier building internal pride within the company. Then we created a survey battery that was sent out, [to] see the

awareness of the sponsorship and such, see if we've grown in terms of pride and loyalty... And then in 2016 we had no money for activating the sponsorship, just had the logo spread out on the walls, ice and helmets and had a flat curve throughout the year, 10% of hockey fans were aware of the sponsorship. But then we started the \*\* initiative, did some sponsorship concerning the World Championships and sponsored them [the NIHF] there. Then when we started telling the story of the sponsorship and after doing that, after Q2 in 2017 the awareness had increased from 10% to 50% among hockey fans (Sponsor 1).

On the other hand, Sponsor 2 showed a tendency towards sponsoring as a relation, especially interested in the other sponsors within the network (Demir & Söderman, 2015). "We are there to be in the sponsor forums with companies who are doing well, spending money and show an interest in sport so that we can join them and make money. That's our sponsorship strategy" (Sponsor 2). Subsequently, the strategic approach applied by Sponsor 2 was expressed in more detail:

We don't market ourselves within the consumer segment. That's not interesting for us. What is interesting for us is to enter into a sponsorship agreement with for example the ice hockey world championships or the NIHF, which is a sport on the rise, where there are other interesting sponsors to work with who we can attain as customers. And then we are allowed to show who we are for all the sponsors involved. These are the companies that are doing well and spending money, heavily involved in the sponsorship market, and we are allowed to show who we are for free towards them. Then they can see that we're [a] good [company], we deliver. Then often we get the chance the next time they are looking for new suppliers (Sponsor 2).

Concluding the different approaches to sponsorship, Sponsor 3 showed a tendency toward sponsoring as an investment, utilizing commercial sponsorship activities in order to create brand awareness (Cornwell & Maignan, 1998; O'Reilly & Seguin, 2007; Demir & Söderman, 2015):

There was the old company name \*\*, which \*\* used to be, that was to be rebranded from \*\* to \*\*. And in a rebranding process sponsorship is an efficient



instrument for gaining awareness quickly. They then looked at different sponsorship objects and what was available... So what they looked at during that time was effectively which were cost effective sponsorship objects, what was available and what could have a national impact fast. And then that choice was the NIHF (Sponsor 3)

The informant then explained that the objectives for the sponsorship have developed over time, due to the level of investment among other things:

It [the objectives] has changed over time in correlation with the investment level. So when we, when you enter into an agreement there are some KPI's [Key Performance Indicators] that you measure towards and in the same way you have a more short-term plan that's put into the yearly activity plan. So it's about everything from, from the upper level, awareness about our brand. We track the consumer behaviour within our target group and attitude change among those who are interested in ice hockey who attend hockey matches and are promoted to our brand. Those are elements we measure by also (Sponsor 3).

Lastly, Sponsor 3 states that "we have a sponsorship strategy that ties closely with our company strategy".

In summary, the three different sponsors all show different approaches to sponsorship strategy. Also they detail how the objectives develop during the sponsorship relation. The different sponsorships have developed from sponsoring to reach objectives with their own staff to sponsoring as investment, from supplier to sponsoring as a relation and from creating brand awareness to brand interaction and affecting consumer behaviour (Cornwell & Maignan, 1998; Meenaghan, 2013; Demir & Söderman, 2015).

### 6.1.3 DISCUSSION

The results section for the NIHF and the sponsors were separated so that the strategical perspectives of both organizations became more transparent. This section will discuss both sets of strategical approach to sponsorship in light of the theoretical framework provided earlier, along with quotes from the informants that highlight key areas. Mostly this concerns the NIHF as their sponsorship strategies are the focal point for this research.

As is highlighted in the results, the NIHF doesn't seem to operate with a specific strategy for attaining sponsors, how they approach the sponsorship market or how they wish to achieve their stated goals and objectives for sponsorship and marketing. However, the NIHF seem to have a clear idea of what types of organizations they wish to partner with, seen as a sponsorship fit (Thjømmøe, 2010), emphasising often that company values that coincide with their own are of importance. Sponsorship fit is discussed later in a separate chapter, 6.2.1. The NIHF also have a strategic approach to elements such as communication, which is essential in sponsorship:

We also have an overarching goal in terms of having a communications plan. This needs to be followed up on. It's there to help us in our marketing activities and with our sponsors, but also in terms of how we as a federation are portrayed in the market. And of course, within this work, achieve a higher market share than we currently do (NIHF 2).

In terms of approaching the sponsorship market in a strategic manner, NIHF 2 explains how this isn't the case at present time when asked specifically how they can improve their sponsorship practices:

I think we need to have a more complete marketing strategy. And then we have to be clear on that point and keep pushing our values, both in our marketing work and sponsor partnerships. And in this instance with attracting new sponsors. Be clear on who we are, what we stand for and what we want to achieve (NIHF2).

By contrast, all the sponsors display strategic approaches that are seen in the theoretical framework. Sponsoring as an investment to create an alteration of the corporate brand through sponsorship activities (Demir & Söderman, 2015) is evident in Sponsor 3. Also, Sponsor 1 displays a very strategic approach through evolving their sponsorship from creating internal pride among their staff and employees to seeking brand awareness and building their brand (Cornwell & Maignan, 1998; Meenaghan, 2013; Demir & Söderman, 2015). Lastly, Sponsor 2 utilizes sponsorship for building relations and improving its competitive position by sharing resources with the other actors in the sponsorship network (Demir & Söderman, 2015). This further correlates with the SVF,

underlining that actors within the value network co-create value through integrating their resources into the network (Woratschek et al., 2014). The lack of a strategic approach by the NIHF is also relayed by their sponsors:

Number one is that you have to create a plan. They have a strategic plan that expires in 2019 which is all nonsense. All the nice stuff they are going to do. They have to define the stories they want to tell. Set some goals for recruiting and put it on the agenda. But it's about, I feel like they are just sitting there and keeping the balls in the air, keeping things afloat (Sponsor 1).

This view is echoed by Sponsor 3. "As far as I understand the NIHF have an expiring strategic plan for 2019, but we're already halfway through 2019 almost, so what they're doing going forward is unknown. To put it carefully, that's relatively descriptive for them" (Sponsor 3). When probed further if this creates a problem for them as a sponsor and whether they actively look at the strategic plans of sponsorship objects, the informant stated:

Well, it's not challenging for us, but it could perhaps be defining for our choices when we are assessing the Norwegian sponsorship market. We look at different objects in relation to our brand strategy which is an ongoing process since we're now a new company. So right now we are a bit unsure what we're doing moving forward, nothing decided yet. But such elements could have an impact on a future decision... Yes, we have to look at the complete picture and see what they are today and what they think they are going to be tomorrow. And the same exercise applies for ourselves. And here we have a clear picture of what we are doing the next years. So that's, it won't be a surprise to anyone who works here what the plan is, at the company level (Sponsor 3).

The study by Clausen et al. (2018) explains how goal vagueness and lack of strategic plans has the potential to lead to discontent among business partners in their study of international sport federations. The strategic plan for the NIHF is the foundation for which the whole organization operates and includes aspects ranging from recreational ice hockey, the elite level, organizational objectives and marketing objectives (NIHF, 2015). Although this study is concerned with the sponsorship strategies, these factors

highlight how the overall strategic plan impacts sponsorship and potential sponsorship deals. Furthermore, the NIHF seem to approach sponsorship in the view of GDL (Woratschek et al., 2014), where the sponsors purchase a product from them and are the recipients of the value the product represents. The value presented to the NIHF comes in terms of financial contributions. There will be examples later of the NIHF and their sponsors co-creating value, but pursuing value co-creation doesn't appear to be a systematic approach by the NIHF in their sponsorship strategies.

The findings suggest that the NIHF's partners operate on a different level of strategic sponsorship, with clear objectives and a plan for utilizing sponsorship in achieving company objectives. As such, the sponsors in this case operate with an overall sponsorship policy (Cornwell et al., 2005) on what they sponsor, their target audiences, the amount of sponsorship deals they conduct and utilize sponsorship in a manner to gain a competitive advantage in the marketplace through building their brand, networking and other commercial activities. Further, this has an impact on brand equity and the company's perceived position in the marketplace (Cornwell et al., 2005). In addition, the sponsors display strategic approaches presented in the theoretical framework such as sponsoring as investment to alter company brands and sponsoring as a relation (Demir & Söderman, 2015). As a consequence, the joint planning of the sponsorship becomes of great importance, to identify the areas of strategic compatibility (Farrelly & Quester, 2005). In adopting a more strategic approach themselves, the NIHF could seek to align themselves more in accordance with their commercial partners in order to co-create value. Such an approach would also enhance their value network and in turn provide them with future opportunities for value co-creation within the value network, enhancing their attractiveness as a sponsorship object in the process.

## ***6.2 SPONSORSHIP ELEMENTS***

This section of the results is concerned with sponsorship specific concepts and the themes that were derived from the data, both deductively and inductively. The sponsorship concepts link to the overall strategic approach taken by both sets of organizations. In discussing them separately here they are allowed to be approached specifically. All the themes below are evident in the theoretical framework presented earlier in chapter 3.

### 6.2.1 FIT

The concept of sponsorship fit is key to understanding the relationship between the sponsor and the sponsee. According to Thjømmøe (2010), partnerships that show a high level of perceived fit between the two partners also have a higher effect rate. Thus, the sponsorship fit is of concern to both parties. Through their responses the NIHF place a lot of weight on values when searching for a sponsorship fit:

Yes, we look at match and drive a hard bargain in terms of the fact that although we are always looking for more resources to finance our operations it has to fit for us as well. It's not as if sponsorship, we call it partnerships, are a one-way street for us to make them look better. They are also there to make our sport look better and take a part in promoting our sport and then we need coinciding values on some level or another. Or at least interests (NIHF 1).

This statement in many ways sums up the sponsorship definition used earlier by Cornwell and Maignan (1998), where the object charges a fee from the sponsor and the sponsor purchases the right to market the relationship. Furthermore, the notion of coinciding values, as seen in the NIHF's strategical approach, is evident in terms of judging whether an organization is a good sponsorship fit as well as the need to partner with serious organizations:

A sponsor needs to be a conscientious actor within their industry, but also in terms of the relationship. You have to be a serious actor that will benefit our sport. In that way we can achieve a problem free situation with regards to identification for instance (NIHF 2).

From the sponsors' point of view, the notion of sponsorship fit correlated with how they viewed their companies. In such instances, target groups and geographical locations proved to be two key factors when opting for a sponsorship object.

We looked at everything from football, cycling, motor sports, but landed on ice hockey. And we landed there because of many reasons, but the target group within Norwegian [ice] hockey, males from 35 to 55, the target group for \*\* was males from 30 to 59. [Ice] hockey is relatively strong in areas where \*\* are strong as well (Sponsor 1).

It was also evident from Sponsor 3 that geographical footprint was key to the initial sponsorship deal, where their aim was increased awareness:

We´ve had a sponsorship strategy which is closely connected with our company strategy... \*\* is a company which is big in urban areas, meaning the big cities like Oslo, Stavanger, Bergen, Trondheim. That´s where most of our customer base is. So when we´ve looked at sponsorship objects we´ve looked at objects that share a footprint with us and can stand for the same values we have (Sponsor 3).

The notion of footprint was further reiterated when asked about the objectives for the initial sponsorship deal. “Yes, then there are several parameters that need to be checked, for instance footprint. We saw that ice hockey was big in traditional \*\* areas” (Sponsor 3). Sponsor 1 elaborated on their approach in terms of fit and how it relates to a natural or created fit (Thjømmøe, 2010).

In sponsorship, fit is important. Then you have two types of fit, natural, so that the audience understand the link. And that understanding needs to be there for the sponsorship to have effect. Then there´s the created fit, which is a bit trickier. But often it can work better if the story is good. You can´t really understand why company A is sponsoring object B, but if there´s a good story in between the audience understands it and then “that´s cool”. We started with the points I mentioned earlier [internal pride], but what I´ve experienced is that the brand is very diffuse, also internally... You have to come up with something. But when we enter into sponsorship agreements like this we always write that story [in between]. So the sponsor story when we went in with \*\* was: \*\* is on the rise, hockey is on the rise, it´s about passion, which is a keyword in \*\*. And together we will help each other succeed, we can do this. Passion is important... But passion is one of the only things I´ve really been able to use. That´s also why we started the \*\* project (Sponsor 1).

Sponsor 2 was clear on their role as a sponsor, in terms of their role as both supplier and sponsor. “So my sponsorship is in the form that we offered to do them a service, and then go in as a sponsor with full rights” (Sponsor 2). The informant further clarified that

“we are deeply [invested] in ice hockey” (Sponsor 2) and that they saw the sport as a natural fit for their business as suppliers of sport merchandise. A natural sponsorship fit occurs when it is obvious to the consumer why company A is sponsoring organization B (O’Reilly & Seguin, 2007) and is commonplace in the sport sponsorship market.

In keeping with a strategical approach, two of the sponsors highlight key company areas for them such as demographics, target groups and markets as key factors in deciding a sponsorship fit. In many ways this is a created fit (Thjømmøe, 2010) which requires activation of the sponsorship for the consumers to see the link between the two organizations. Activation and leveraging will be explored in 6.2.2.

Congruence between sponsors, or sponsorship fit as is the term used in this paper, has a positive impact on sponsorship stimuli and other sponsorship outcomes such as attitudes towards sponsors and sponsorship recall (Cornwell et al., 2005). As a concern for both parties, a poor level of congruence with sponsors results in less affective and behavioural responses from target audiences, diminishing the value of the sponsorship (Cornwell et al., 2005). Thus, the balance between obtaining organizational objectives such as sponsorship revenue and partnering with the right organizations is critical. High-fit sponsorships have a higher potential commercial value than low-fit sponsorships and therefore high-fit sponsorships represents a more sustainable source of financial income for the NIHF since the sponsor is more likely to succeed in sponsorship and therefore the likelihood of the relationship continuing is higher. Furthermore, a good commercial partner will add value outside of financial commitment to the relationship, such as a platform for creating brand awareness and strengthening brand equity (Cornwell et al., 2005; Shank & Lyberger, 2015).

The findings in this study suggest that the NIHF rely heavily on values when partnering with commercial organizations and that values constitute a large portion of fit between organizations, as suggested by O’Reilly and Seguin (2007) when discussing sponsorship fit. A value-based partnership is not uncommon in sport and provides a solid base for which to further continue the sponsorship relation. As a consequence, the values the NIHF operate with, “Engaged – Generous – Genuine”, become a central theme for how they portray themselves. This is related to image transfer and branding (Cornwell et al., 2005) discussed later in chapter 6.2.4, but highlights a key area for them in choosing

partners. Furthermore, Sponsor 1 also highlighted values such as passion within ice hockey as a key factor when opting for the NIHF as a sponsorship object, suggesting that brand values is something their partners evaluate in their assessment. The informant from the NIHF explained in the previous chapter how their objectives are also value driven, consequently making value-driven partnerships a conscientious effort on their behalf.

### 6.2.2 ACTIVATION AND LEVERAGING

In accordance with the second half of the sponsorship definition used by Cornwell and Maignan (1998), activation represents the extra financial investment that has to be made by the sponsor beyond the rights fee and is one of the elements unique to sponsorship. Activation and leveraging is seen as the key to extracting value from the sponsorship (Shank & Lyberger, 2015) and represent the sponsorship activities such as advertising, promotional elements and any other activity that is aimed at leveraging the sponsorship relationship. The findings below suggest that this is a fact that both the sponsors and the NIHF are aware of. Sponsor 2 highlighted the importance of activation and the value it represents to the sponsors:

That's where there is something to obtain [of value]. In the agreement itself there's nothing. There you put your logo somewhere, nobody is looking at it anyway, on the website. I've learned that when you're doing sponsorship you have to spend as much money on other stuff [as on rights]. That's where the activation is, that's where the profit is, awareness and your new customers or increased revenue by entering into sponsorship (Sponsor 2).

However, even though both the NIHF and the sponsors were in agreement that activation was a key component to extracting value from the sponsorship deal, their views on how it was done in practice differed a great deal, especially in terms of which actor was most involved and where the initiative came from. One of the informants from NIHF explained the process of activation from their point of view, clearly expressing that they experience activation as an activity driven by them:

NIHF 1: Firstly, we have to highlight what the actual window of opportunity is. But often to make it specific, and not to derogate our sponsors, but a lot of sponsors have very little clue. The ones we end up with often have small



marketing departments, even though they are relatively big companies. They have people who buy commercials for them. But with sponsorship they often have little experience. So explaining the window of opportunity and then to specify it into action is often useful.

Researcher: Because you talked a bit about activation here, do most of the suggestions for activation come from you or the sponsors?

NIHF 1: From us.

Furthermore, when asked a direct question regarding obstacles and difficulties with sponsorship practice, the NIHF was of the opinion that activation represented one of the biggest difficulties within the field:

Well, the worst thing is, those who invest in something and don't extract their values. Don't actively work with it. Sucks for us because they don't receive everything they predicted [beforehand] because they're not doing their job. They need to have a greater focus on having an active approach when entering sponsorship. And it makes the re-sale process more difficult for us, because they haven't extracted their values and would be stupid to enter into a new agreement on the same level, unless there's openness and clarity on what we are going to do. Sponsors who come with big and fancy ideas on how to activate their sponsorship and aren't able to, then we're left with them being unhappy with their sponsorship... But often it's because they haven't extracted [their values] or used resources on extracting them, and then we end up in a situation where we've invested a lot in a sponsor and closed the door on others and it's hard to change the situation. I think there's little competency some places, on sponsorship and how to work with it. And there's little resources set aside for it, both financial resources to activate the sponsorship quite specifically, but also a small amount of resources in the everyday workplace to actually prioritize it (NIHF 1)

This view of activation was not shared by the sponsors however. When asked about communication between them and the NIHF on the exchange of ideas for activation and leverage, Sponsor 3 stated:

There's not that much exchange of ideas, more demands and requests from us I feel. That's perhaps a point where the ice hockey family has room for development. Being more proactive and generating concepts and ideas. I feel like it's more of a one-way dialogue when it comes to that (Sponsor 3)

When asked a follow-up question whether they were getting any input or stories to share from the NIHF the informant added:

Well, I've never experienced that. Those stories we have to make ourselves. Everything we do, all our activities are tied to the deal, which are fixed elements, call them sponsor concepts that we've bought. For example, \*\*, is a concept that is within that deal. But when we're doing other types of elements that connect to our ice hockey engagement, for example we did a project \*\*, then everything was initiated from us, from idea to concept to execution. Of course it was done in consultation with them [NIHF], but the whole idea and concept which is what we're discussing now, came exclusively from us. In that area I think they have a big, big potential for development (Sponsor 3)

A similar view was shared by Sponsor 1 when asked about their communications with the NIHF and in terms of activation:

Sponsor 1: \*\* does well on that part. But again, it would have been better if the cooperation... if they had a higher level of ambition and knew where they wanted to take Norwegian ice hockey. And that you to a bigger extent conducted common projects. \*\* should be such a project, \*\* has been to some extent.

Researcher: Are you missing more input on their part?

Sponsor 1: I'm not saying that they should make an activation plan, but I expect that they have an opinion on what Norwegian ice hockey is, where it should be in three years and what stories to put out. So that we as a sponsor can join if it's a match, build it together and then it has more power.

What's noteworthy about this quote is that the sponsor says that there's no need for them to have a specific plan for activation, but rather an overall plan that the sponsors can align themselves with. This in part correlates with the findings above that there is a need for longer-term planning within the NIHF and would improve the environment for value co-creation in terms of sponsorship by allowing the sponsors to integrate their resources in a bigger capacity (Woratschek et al., 2014).

Another keyword that arose from the interviews with the sponsors was proactivity, essentially in regards to activation and leveraging of the sponsorship:

Those who are there [the NIHF] should be more proactive towards their sponsors so they feel they're receiving a bit extra. Because I know from experience, if you get more than you paid for you'll be very happy. With NIHF it's rather the opposite, can't you contribute with some more [they ask]. And you get a bit tired of that (Sponsor 2).

Sponsor 3 also highlighted proactivity within the NIHF as a source of improvement, all the while giving them praise for being available when they need it:

Within the same sport, we sponsor \*\* as well, they are the fifth biggest sponsorship object within Norway based on revenue. And that's ice hockey. With them the perception is that they're a lot fresher and proactive in a sort of activity battery and activation of the sponsorship. So, you don't need to go outside of the sport to see a big window of opportunity. But with that said, the ice hockey family with NIHF and NTH should also get some praise, they're very available when we make requests. They will show up, with short notice, with the biggest national team profile for a commercial with us. I would never have been able to do that with the Norwegian Football Federation (NFF) for instance. That's a very good quality they have in terms of being available I think (Sponsor 3).

Otherwise, it was highlighted that most of the activation is described in the sponsorship agreement. The following statement highlights how measures have been taken to increase the role of NIHF in terms of involvement:

The new contract puts the ball more in their corner, in terms of follow-up and that sort of thing. It's not working at all. It's not like everyone there is stupid, they're under-staffed. I get that, but that's not our problem because we're paying them a sum of money over the course of the year. It's more about us doing two activities a quarter on social media, putting our logo here and there and a planned meeting before the start of \*\* (Sponsor 1).

This statement leads back to keywords like proactivity which were mentioned earlier. Sponsor 2 also shared a similar view, especially with regards to fulfilling the elements within the sponsorship arrangement:

The perception is that there is a lot of standstill and that [sponsors] aren't being delivered what they want. There are sponsors that want to do more but aren't allowed to. Especially certain big companies, they're used to having things delivered. In terms of, they write up a deal and then you have to deliver on that deal. You can't expect a big sponsor like \*\*, they're used to having somebody driving their sponsorship forward, not having to do it themselves. We've paid money and made a deal and expect you to deliver this and that. That's yours to drive forward. You can't wait for us to call and ask when are we getting this. It may not be about people, but availability, where you put yourself and keep an eye on things. You have to realize that you have to look after them. Finding sponsors like \*\* and \*\*, that's not done overnight. Those are long time relationships that are built and get built further, with a good story about how things are and how ice hockey is developing. And of course, man to man. That's the thing with \*\*, does a very good job with keeping the system together. You're dependent on someone working and driving the deal forward, those who are in charge of the deal have to drive it forward. It's not up to the sponsors to drive the sponsorship agreement forward. If you can do that, you'll get a lot out of your sponsors (Sponsor 2).

Consequently, the informant followed up on the initial statement:

It's often put down in the agreement, this is what we are going to accomplish throughout the year. For example with \*\*, they have project \*\* and this and that.

Then you have to be given a date for \*\*, not wait and see. They [NIHF] have to work harder to deliver on things they put into the agreement... They're not delivering in accordance with the terms of the deal. You have to struggle to get what is in the deal you made... Very often everything activation is put into the deal, they're described in the deal. Then you have to deliver on that (Sponsor 2).

This view was not shared by the NIHF. "I perceive that a lot of the sponsors aren't fully utilizing their sponsorships either, the rights they've secured and can activate around more often. But it takes a big effort from them. But they have that opportunity through us" (NIHF 1).

By now it's quite clear that the NIHF and their sponsors differ greatly in how they perceive activation in practice. However, aspects such as financial resources for activation play a critical role and "if the brand cannot afford to spend to communicate its sponsorship, then the brand cannot afford sponsorship at all" (Cornwell et al., 2005, p 36). This statement should heed warning to both the sponsors and the NIHF, as the problems perceived by NIHF concerning limited resources to activate among their sponsors was a major concern. Perhaps a bigger warning should be given to sponsors who sponsor without having the financial resources to activate the sponsorship. The following statement highlights the importance of activating the sponsorship, exemplifying that without activation and financial resources there is little reward in sponsorship:

... in 2016 we had no money for activation, so it was only the logo in the arena, on the helmets and such. There was a flat curve throughout the year. 10% of all hockey fans were aware of the sponsorship. But then we did the \*\* project, did some sponsorship around the World Championships and sponsored them there. So when we began telling the story of the sponsorship, after doing that, in Q2 of 2017 the awareness had risen from 10% to 50% among hockey fans (Sponsor 1).

The informant further followed up this statement to clarify: "But it's not a perfect sponsorship from our perspective either. Small budgets, weak brand platform, so it's hard to build something real" (Sponsor 1).

Through the limitations in terms of informants in this master thesis, the financial resources set aside for sponsorship of all the NIHF's sponsors are not accessible. However, through the interviews conducted with the sponsors included in the study, an unwillingness to spend resources to activate was not apparent except for in the previous statements. Although, if this represents a concern within the NIHF it points to a key area of improvement in terms of finding the right sponsors to partner with and a subject that needs to be addressed during initial meetings. One of the informants from NIHF also explained that they try to find what their sponsors are interested in when sponsoring them in an attempt to find common ground for the activation of the sponsorship:

You make a pitch and try to figure at what do they want. Some companies just want name recognition and exposure and how to best do that. Others don't need to tell the world who they are or what their name is, they need to tell people who they are and the work they do (NIHF 1).

However, as is also evident in the statements provided in the beginning of this chapter, the commitment from the sponsors to actively work with their sponsorship was of concern to the NIHF. This is also an area where there appears to be certain misconception between the NIHF and their sponsors and the findings suggest that the division of labour is among them:

You asked a question, I don't remember how you formulated it. But my answer was that we had to take the initiative on things, nothing was coming the opposite way. But I don't have that much time to spend on this sponsorship that I can follow trends within ice hockey and see what the Swedish national team are doing or what another federation is doing. I'm not in a forum with the IIHF where I'm sure they have some best cases sharing, and it's not my job to do so either (Sponsor 3).

It's evident that the NIHF and their sponsors differ on their views on the practical issues of activation. Farrelly and Quester (2005) found in their study that many sponsor objects lacked commitment, limiting the possibility of sponsorship as a co-marketing alliance, although the reasons for this were somewhat unclear. Farrelly and Quester (2005) suggest that one possibility is the growth of sponsorship as an industry and its

professionalization among sponsors, whereas the properties have remained at a standstill. They further suggest that this could impact on sponsor satisfaction if they feel they're missing out on opportunities. Further, this could lead to the exclusion of the property in key decisions such as renewal of the sponsorship agreement and also to the sponsors acting in an independent manner to meet their objectives.

The fact that the Norwegian sponsorship market hasn't matured in terms of activation was an issue raised by Sponsor 1. "Norway is a very immature market, very many lean back as soon as they've signed the deal. But that's when the work starts". The informant also clearly stated that this applies to both sponsors and properties. The professionalization and change in sponsorship practice was also echoed by another sponsor:

Because you come from, I feel, not from the federation but in general within sponsorship, a regime where you think about exposure and that it has a value and it's going to save the world. But it doesn't. And we often say that we're not very concerned with the logo being on the shirt or this and that, that's not what we're purchasing. We need concepts with more depths that can tell another story and give us a possible footprint, give us stories about what we're doing (Sponsor 3).

The informant further highlighted the gap between organizations in terms of the pace things are done at:

As we talked about initially, we have enormous demands in what we do. We're in the corporate world, get a lot of fresh input at a company level all the time. Then you have a pace and speed that surpasses what the federation is able to be. So I think they could take advantage of looking around and "copy with pride". It's not very hard to look at other leagues where you have good concepts and simply copy them. It shouldn't be very hard. It's about time and the ability to execute (Sponsor 3).

In summary, activation is one of the aspects of sponsorship where there appears to be misconceptions about the use of resources from both sets of actors. On the one hand, the NIHF has an opinion on activation in terms of the generation of ideas and also where the workload is. As stated, they perceive most of the ideas for activation to come from

them, but clearly express that it's the sponsor's responsibility to execute them and extract the value within the sponsorship agreement. In many ways this refers to the view of GDL (Woratschek et al., 2014), where money is paid for a good, in this sense a sponsorship concept such as placement of brand logo or otherwise. The informants all mention that the sponsorship concepts being purchased are included in the agreement signed by both parties. However, as is indicated by the responses from the sponsors, they're missing proactivity on the part of the NIHF in order to create more value from their sponsorship deals and other elements that might not be directly tied to their sponsorship agreement that would benefit both parties. In answering a direct question on whether increased proactivity and follow-up from the NIHF would make them a better partner and more attractive property for others, Sponsor 3 answered: "Yes, that would be an accurate description" (Sponsor 3). Another aspect of this is time and resources, from both parties. As Sponsor 3 stated, the time to follow trends within ice-hockey and sports was limited. This is the domain in which the NIHF operates, representing their field of expertise. By having a more active approach towards their sponsors and share concepts and ideas that are available the NIHF could increase the value of the partnerships they have. An example of this is listed below:

We could discuss how interesting products do we have? That's interesting to discuss. I think we have pretty cool products in fact, also if we look at the pipeline and I think a sponsor could do a lot of very interesting stuff with us if they were proactive and had some to invest in it. Very open to implementing new, cool things. Be it technology, statistics, trackers on the ice (NIHF 1).

Unrelated to this statement and when talking about organization, Sponsor 2 stated: "It's in the pipeline, that's the worst thing there is, things that are in the pipeline. Either do it or don't" (Sponsor 2)

In many ways these two statements highlight some of the differences between the two organizations when it comes to activation and leveraging. The sponsors' approach is a much more decisive and active approach than the one taken by the NIHF. Since this master thesis is concerned with the sponsorship strategies of the NIHF, most of the discussion is directed towards them as an organization. The apparent misconceptions of



initiative and responsibility are therefore seen through the lens of the NIHF and how this affects them as an organization.

Farrelly and Quester (2005) suggest that sponsorship properties should participate in joint activation investments, making allowances in their own budgets, and taking initiatives towards strategic collaboration. Such an approach would certainly push the NIHF's relationship with their partners toward the spectrum of value co-creation and allow for a higher degree of resource integration within the relationship. The NIHF could further include activational activities to their strategical approach, as research shows that leveraging activities that are able to engage consumers generate more positive outcomes (Herrman, Kacha & Derbaix, 2016). This example was also provided by one of the sponsors:

They have to do more stuff like when \*\* showed all their employees, they rented a space and showed all their sponsorships. Then all the federations and others had to be there and show who they were. The NIHF came, with a goal and a goal keeper so everyone could try and shoot. That was very well received, it was very visual in what it was about, which is really a simple thing. Stuff like that needs to be done. It can come as an extra to everything else, then you're being really proactive (Sponsor 2).

The NIHF aren't put off from doing activities that offer something extra as the responses in this chapter show, however it does not seem to be a systematic approach to sponsorship activities but rather something that is done upon request. Further, the following statement highlights how the GDL way of thinking is apparent within the NIHF, viewing their products as goods that can be purchased for money rather than services (Woratschek et al., 2014):

We don't do a lot of extra sales. And it could be discussed that we should do extra sales for the sake of money. But if a sponsor, who has invested time and money in Norwegian ice hockey, calls and says "I want this" I won't tell them it costs 100 000. Then I'll say cool that you want to do something, maybe it can be a positive thing for us also that you're doing this, let's see how we can solve it (NIHF 1).

In turning that tide of answering requests to making inquiries, the NIHF could turn into a much more strategic partner and co-create value with their partners in a much larger degree. Their approach to activation and leveraging is summed up best in the following statement:

I think there's a balance, how much of the work we do for them. We're happy to do what we've agreed upon, but we shouldn't be driving their whole thought process and where they should retrieve their effects. They need to be more active there I think (NIHF 1).

### 6.2.3 COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION

As a natural stepping stone from activation, the communication and collaboration between the NIHF and their sponsors become relevant. As suggested above, proactivity on the NIHF's part could be beneficial to them as an organization and in achieving their sponsorship objectives, as well as co-creating value for their sponsors (Woratschek et al., 2014). This approach to activation ties to communication with their sponsors, where the main focus is on elements regarding the sponsorship agreement:

Before events there's a lot of communication. In between there's not necessarily that much. If someone calls or sends an e-mail of course you follow that up. But it's not like we call them every day. And there are some sponsors we see more often than other and that depends on the engagement they show in return. But we give the opportunity for everyone to join, those in our sponsorship pool, they all receive the same offers (NIHF 2).

The other informant from the NIHF describes the relationships between their partners as good, while offering some thoughts on their communication. "I think we could do a better job on informing them and keeping them updated to a larger extent. But I think, there doesn't exist any bad relations between us and our partners as far as I'm aware" (NIHF 1). Keeping their partners in the loop of what's happening also seems to be a recurrent theme and is discussed later.

Something that became apparent in chapter 6.1 was the individuality in NIHF's approach to sponsorship when it came to attracting and working with sponsors. This is also evident in the communications between them:

There are many types of communications, how we talk to them, updates through email or what's going on right now. That's one thing. Newsletters for example, we don't use them but they could be useful. Then there's relations between those who work here and those who work for the sponsors and the dialogue there which is different. Who has them [the sponsor] and how often [they talk] and how good they are. But active sponsors, people who demand more, are more often in dialogue, often get more out of their sponsorship. We want to have active sponsors who push, who mean something, want something (NIHF 1).

The individual mark when it comes to communication was also apparent with the sponsors. All of the sponsors spoke highly of their contact person. "I have a very good communication with \*\*, that's my closest contact person... So in total, the dialogue and communication with them is good. Always available when I need it" (Sponsor 3). Sponsor 1 stated that "Person X is a good experience; the rest is a bad one" when asked about experiences regarding communication with the NIHF. Sponsor 2 also suggested that they were content with their contact person in the NIHF and thought highly of that person. However, as was pointed out by the NIHF themselves, they could do a better job of keeping their sponsors informed. This was also an issue that was raised by the sponsors and also included into contracts:

What we put into the new deal now is demands of monthly meetings and such. We're dependent on having information about what's happening and not happening, all that stuff, to give us an eventual window of opportunity. Work as close as possible, like with project \*\*, we struggled a lot (Sponsor 1).

These are descriptions of direct relations between persons working in different organizations. Another theme that occurred during all the interviews with the sponsors was the NIHF's communication of their future plans and visions for their organization and essentially Norwegian ice hockey. This subject could perhaps have been addressed during the discussion of strategic approach and was touched on briefly in terms of long-term planning and strategical plans. Nonetheless, it's included in this chapter as a communications process between the NIHF and their sponsors. "Yes, a direction of where they want to go and what they want. We're sitting and waiting really for what they want to do with hockey" (Sponsor 2).

An example of how strategical collaboration isn't the case is highlighted in the following exchange on the topic of involving sponsors to a larger degree:

Researcher: But that's not something you talk about during meetings [with NIHF] and explain that \*\* wants to grow in these departments over the next 5 years? Wouldn't that be natural?

Sponsor 3: Yes, it would be natural to do that. But at the same time we've handled that a bit on our own.

Researcher: And, is that due to a lack of input that you just go at it alone?

Sponsor 3: Yes, it could be.

Through employing a strategic approach to their communications and collaborative efforts with their partners, aspects such as activation and leveraging could be done both more efficiently and effectively. Furthermore, adding the perspective of the sponsor to a larger extent into their own planning process would enhance the NIHF's ability to have a long-term perspective on their sponsorship arrangements. This is echoed in Farrelly and Quester's (2005) findings, suggesting that formal communication is an important step in identifying strategical compatibility and clarification of responsibilities and expectations.

#### 6.2.4 IMAGE AND BRANDING

Elements of image and branding have been put together in this chapter as they are linked when discussing the NIHF's sponsorship strategies. The brand image is often referred to as the personality of the brand and relates to the consumers' perception of that brand (Shank & Lyberger, 2015). Through the strategical aspects discussed earlier the sponsors' branding efforts have already been discussed through their use of sponsorship activities. This chapter is only concerned with the perception of the NIHF's brand, their image and how this is being utilized in a sponsorship context. Thus, the NIHF's brand is discussed in the context of balance theory and image transfer (Cornwell et al., 2005) upon a review of the results from the data.

When asked to describe their own brand, the two informants from the NIHF stated the following:

Relatively strong. Numerically quite strong, there are a lot of spectators who watch hockey. Second largest team sport in Norway. Relatively large amount of media attention, although there could be more. There's been less attention surround the national team the last years. But the national team came first, now we have the Get-league [upper division] which has been built. But that's very much a "now picture" of thing, that could change very quickly. We're a bit too small of a sport in terms of members. Handball has 80 – 100 000 members, we have 7500 licensed players, 8000 [maybe]. We have few [sports] facilities which limits our presence throughout the country. In that sense we're not perhaps as attractive for national actors, because we're represented in clusters and that affects our product (NIHF 1).

The other informant was quick to incorporate the NIHF's values into the brand; "Yes, our values are very important, and that we stand for that. We have a strong brand; we have a lot of pride" (NIHF 2), before elaborating into the visual elements:

Otherwise what I wanted to say about the ice hockey brand also, we have a very strong logo. I can say that straight away. Without knowing too much about the background, there's a lot of nostalgia in that logo. A lot of people associate the NIHF with the logo, and the national team. Has a strong position... Everybody recognizes it, especially within the sport. The polar bear is a powerful predator that most respect. Without us identifying with a polar bear in that sense, but it's actively used in building the brand (NIHF 2).

What's evident through their responses is that the NIHF also put a lot of emphasis on the features that are unique to ice hockey, especially personal characteristics, and how this represents their brand and image: "I think among the team sports, if we compare with that, we're the most accessible and open of all of them. Most fearless, both for criticism and trying new things. That's a bit the DNA of ice hockey also" (NIHF 1).

We're not afraid to give access and show who we really are. Ice hockey is a bit rough and that type of stuff, the impression and reputation from the 80's and 90's is missing teeth and the snus [tobacco product] hanging outside [your lip], hockey haircut, low education and poor language. You would barely think they

used a knife and fork in the old days. But we're not afraid to show that, because we think the culture in the locker rooms and the internal justices have raised very many to become decent people. We're very confident in our athletes. Across both boys and girls who appear as decent people, so when you get to know them [see] that the core values are much stronger than perhaps it seems from the outside. Elements like being more outspoken. But there's an honesty in that, so we used that a lot, it's a value we both appreciate and wish to communicate (NIHF 1).

The uniqueness and special characteristics of the sport was also a central theme with the sponsors, but the big keyword that arose from the interviews was potential. "That's very descriptive for the object I think [their values]. They have an incredible potential" (Sponsor 3). As is the nature of potential, it means that some things have yet to be fulfilled. When asked a direct question regarding the perceptions of Norwegian ice hockey as a whole, the target group the NIHF represents, Sponsor 1 listed several elements that spoke both negatively and positively:

Great windows of opportunity, a huge potential. Has notions of, I'm thinking both federation and the league, notions of unprofessionalism. Poor financials, messy. As a sponsorship professional it hurts to go to an arena and see 70 logos thrown on the ice and boards and hope it all ends well. But, [it] is facing a major transition with new technology. It's a modern sport. Even though you don't like ice hockey, I can take you to Jordal Amfi, completely new arena, and it's super fun, entertaining, filled with action. The world's largest winter sport. Could become a very good TV-product, statistics everywhere. And that's coming now, that's where you're looking forward now. When you're in the arena you're not seeing what you get on the TV, commentators, re-runs, statistics, all that stuff. That's coming in the modern arenas, cubes in the roof and things like that. So it's exciting, that's what's fun about going into something that could be on the way up (Sponsor 1).

The informant further described their perception of Norwegian ice-hockey, yet again mentioning potential. "All of Norwegian ice hockey is a bit of a C-list celebrity. Shows signs of poor financial resources, infrastructure, facilities... Then again they've

achieved a lot despite few resources. A bit messy really, but with a huge potential” (Sponsor 1).

Potential was also a keyword for the federation when asked to describe Norwegian ice hockey. “Forward oriented. Big potential. There is, I think there’s endless potential for a sponsor who really wants to do something big” (NIHF 1). When asked a follow-up question whether the informant believed that their present brand image was due to work on their part they answered the following:

Yes, I would say so. Ice hockey doesn’t have a strong holding point in the Norwegian national identity, like in Sweden, Finland, Canada, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Russia. It’s a process [done] over time for those who’ve been dealing with ice hockey on a club and a federation level over a long period of time. Also I think it has something to do with the distinctiveness of the sport, definitely. So I think a lot of our limitations lie there, that it’s not a part of the national identity. We don’t have the results to show for it, wins and winning is important to Norwegians (NIHF 1).

One of the sponsors offered a different view of the fact that Norwegian ice hockey was not a part of the national identity, and linked this to NIHF’s branding efforts:

I think a lot of people who work in those sort of federations believes that the current state of affairs will last forever. I think there’s an inherent sense of bad self-esteem in federations, they never believe that ice hockey will be a people’s sport. Think that they’re never going to have 20-30% or 40% who say they’re interested in ice hockey. Because that’s the way it’s always been. But then you’re never going to get something done (Sponsor 1).

Furthermore, when asked to specifically describe the NIHF’s brand as an organization the tone was slightly harsher from the sponsors’ objective, highlighting areas such as planning and their media presence as negative aspects:

For me it’s the lack of meaning, direction, future. If the federation is visible in the media it’s a tackle people don’t like, fighting in the league [games] or head injuries. There’s never a happy story about them. But just, if they could use

projects like \*\* and \*\* for that, put ice hockey on the agenda in a nice manner (Sponsor 1).

When asked to describe how they've worked with their brand over time, the informant from the NIHF detailed how they have a careful approach, related to the pitfalls of over-reaching in sports:

We're very laborious. We don't max our potential every day. We're not selling values we don't have. I think some sports are being punished for that now, that they're very in the "hey, look at us", a bit flippantly said perhaps. But they've been punished for it now. Sports is now, at least team sports have in terms of spectators had a downturn, while we have had a rising curve all the way. I think that's our laborious ways that have achieved that. We are probably a lot more "proper" than people perceive ice hockey as. We don't go out and puff our chests very often and show off things and such, so we could perhaps do a better job of telling people the good work we do. Both to the hockey family internally, who are very interested in us and live and breathe ice hockey, and also to external [people] who aren't interested and don't know who we are (NIHF 1).

In terms of image transfer (Cornwell et al., 2005) where the sponsors are actively seeking to benefit from the property's image is perhaps most apparent in ice hockey itself as an image driver, instead of the image and brand of the NIHF. However, as the NIHF are an organization that represents all of ice hockey it directly ties back to them. All the sponsors showed positive attitudes to the sport itself and two of the sponsors were also involved in sponsorship deals with other actors within Norwegian ice hockey. The desired image effects for the sponsors also derive from their strategical approach. The alteration of a corporate brand and networking as a strategy seek to solve different company objectives (Demir & Söderman, 2015), however ice hockey is seen as the primary image driver. The sport itself as a selling point was something the NIHF were very clear on and especially the human characteristics it has:

The only thing I can do is talk about our sport and what it stands for. And Norwegian ice hockey is a sport, ice hockey in general is a sport that's



increasing, in both reputation and in popularity. A popular sport in general (NIHF 2).

And that down to earth, genuine, call it value, genuine is also a part of our values. I think that's a major selling point when we're trying to sell our sport. Because being open, being a little round edged, not taking yourself too seriously but having respect at the same time. Take the time to show up, be present, help a bit, contribute positively, that's important (NIHF 2).

Seen through lens of image transfer and balance theory, a corporate sponsor wishes to alter the perception of their brand through sponsoring and supporting an activity that the consumer already has a positive attitude towards (Cornwell et al., 2005). In seeking harmony with their perception of the activity sponsored and the sponsor, the individual will seek a balance between the two. Thus, if the individual has a positive attitude towards ice hockey the desired outcome is for the sponsor to benefit from this attitude and for the individual's attitude to adjust positively towards them. Through the association with a distinct, popular sport, that has a "personality", the image transfer model by McCracken (1989) outlines that the meaning changes from the event (ice hockey) to the sponsor's products to the consumer, who then defines the meanings in the product in their own construct of the world and takes possession of those meanings. This master thesis is not of the scale that consumer perceptions have been researched, but image transfer remains a factor for the sponsorship practices of both the NIHF and their sponsors.

Image transfer and balance theory carries the same importance for the NIHF. As already detailed by one of the informants when talking of fit; "a sponsor has to be a conscientious actor in their industry, but also in the cooperation [with us]. You have to be a serious actor that benefits the sport we're selling in" (NIHF 2). This relates directly to balance theory and image transfer, since partnering with organizations that have a poor image could alter the perceptions of the NIHF negatively (Cornwell et al., 2005). Instead, partnering with high-equity, strong brands can alter the perceptions positively and the NIHF can benefit from the image their sponsor has in the market place and take advantage of the value it provides.

The NIHF's position as the "administrators of ice hockey" perhaps limits their ability to create a distinct brand for themselves as an organization, as was the view of Sponsor 1 when talking about the NIHF as a brand:

Sponsor 1: ...but it's about, I feel they sit there and keep the balls in the air, keep things afloat.

Researcher: Administrators of the sport basically?

Sponsor 1: Yes, exactly.

Even though the NIHF can be perceived as simply administrators of the sport, their brand represents all of ice hockey, from youth level to national team. Through this position they benefit from the image of the sport and what the sport represents in itself, increasing their attractiveness towards the sponsorship market. As highlighted previously from one of the informants inside the NIHF, they could do a better job of telling the public what they do, what happens within Norwegian ice hockey and present all the good work they do on a daily basis. Through sponsorship activities they could also try to integrate the resources of their partners in realizing the potential within, but also to communicate who they are and what they do supporting the case for value co-creation through a branding initiative from a sponsorship relation. In turn this could represent an upswing for them as a brand, increasing the organizations awareness, brand image and brand equity (Shank & Lyberger, 2015).

#### 6.2.5 NETWORKING

As we've seen in the theoretical framework, sponsoring as a relation (Demir & Söderman, 2015), is a strategic approach used by sponsors to enter the network surrounding the sponsored property. As was already established in chapter 6.1.2, Sponsor 2 operates strictly as a sponsor investing in the value to be extracted from the network surrounding the NIHF, highlighting networking as a factor within sponsorship. Due to sponsors applying such approaches it becomes of importance to investigate how the NIHF uses networking as a tool in their approach to sponsorship. The fact that many of their sponsors were sponsoring as a relation was not new to the NIHF, who described their views on networking:

It's a good group. A group that has gotten to know each other to the extent where they conduct business across the network, which we are open to. And motivate for to a large degree. If they can do that, if they get some use in being in a sponsorship network that's excellent. That's an added value for them. Many are interested in being a sponsor simply to be a part of the sponsorship network (NIHF 2).

Networking in itself was not a recurring theme when talking to the NIHF, but as visible above it represents an element within sponsorship that the NIHF are conscious of. During the negotiations it's common for the property to present what they have to offer, and since sponsoring as a relation is a strategic approach (Demir & Söderman, 2015) it would be natural to include how a sponsoring company can profit from the network surrounding the NIHF. No such elements were specifically mentioned, however when asked whether they use any specific sales arguments the answer was; "Yes, but it's very tailored to each one" (NIHF 1).

The views from the sponsors in terms of networking differed depending on their strategic approach to sponsorship.

The NIHF are good at facilitating for gatherings throughout a calendar year and that's very useful. One thing is you get to know the others in this hockey context. Then you can exchange ideas and experiences based on the sponsorship object. That's perhaps the most useful, because our hockey engagement is a sort of brand sponsorship. We're not in there to solve tactical elements within a network, not the same as with \*\* where we're only in it to do business. So for that reason it's useful and these companies are only complementary in that sense that we're not competitors but partners on a business level. So if I have something I need I can order these services from these smaller companies. But I think the NIHF are good [there], not very many gatherings a year, there's maybe no need for that many either (Sponsor 3).

As mentioned in the introductory part of this chapter, Sponsor 2 exclusively sponsors to be a part of the sponsorship network. Thus, this informant also had the clearest views on how the network operates and functions:

It [the sponsorship pool] was a bit too relaxed to begin with, but we're starting to get some drive in it now. A few people who've taken charge and put it together, this is a bit of complaining, but the NIHF weren't doing it well enough so we took charge ourselves. Often via people who said we've got to make this happen, we'll go on a trip. We couldn't bear waiting for NIHF, so we'll make the trip ourselves (Sponsor 2).

The informant further explained how the sponsorship pool is in many ways self-driven:

Sponsor 2: Now it's starting to work by itself, a group who go on trips together and talk together on the side, outside of the NIHF. We don't think it's fast enough. We want to utilize each other better, cooperate better and some of us have overlapping business interests where we've found it's better to just do it like this and not step on each other.

Researcher: I see, and what other experiences do you have with networking?

Sponsor 2: The NIHF are way too poor. They don't take it seriously, they're old fashioned and they seem poorly organized towards their sponsors.

As networking was a subject that became mostly apparent with Sponsor 2, who actively sponsors as a relation, the interview material is somewhat limited on the subject since this was not a natural theme during the other interviews, although included in the interview guide. This may suggest that it doesn't have such a big role in the everyday activities of both sponsors and the NIHF. Though, as it is a strategic approach that several sponsoring companies utilize, the NIHF should be aware of it as an element in their sponsorship strategy and actively use it as a selling point. Companies seeking sponsor alliances wish to gain a competitive advantage through strategic collaborations and mutual access to resources and learning within a network (Demir & Söderman, 2015). Following the SVF presented by Woratschek et al. (2014), sport firms can create value propositions through facilitating a link between partners in a value network. Through utilizing their sponsorship pool as a platform for value proposition to a larger extent, the NIHF could increase the values being put into the value system they operate in and co-creating value with their different stakeholders that would benefit them as an organization.

## 6.2.6 EVALUATION AND MEASUREMENT

The theoretical framework outlines evaluation and measurement of sponsorship as a key issue in the modern era due to increased expenditures in the field as well as increased demands for documentable results (Cornwell & Maignan, 1998; Meenaghan, 2013). Meenaghan (2013) suggested an approach based on measuring objectives, a ROO, instead of a ROI. There are challenges when separating benefits derived from sponsorship from other promotional activities, suggesting that an ROO approach to measuring sponsorship can prove beneficial. The increase in sponsorship expenditure was noted by the sponsors in accordance with a higher price tag for attaining the rights to sponsor:

Well, in general the sponsorship market has had a major increase, during the last 15 years sponsorship has generally increased as a media channel. I think sponsorship and events, there are Sponsor Insight numbers being referred to, is at present the second largest media channel in Norway, only beaten by digital of course. So the prices for sponsorship have increased, and during the time I've worked for \*\* we've been in two different deals with the NIHF where it's also increased in price. That's also related to how their product has evolved through that period as well (Sponsor 3).

Sponsor Insight is an analysis and consultancy company within sport marketing, sponsorship and events (Sponsor Insight, n.d). The NIHF provide their sponsors with a monthly report, if it's included in their arrangement, from Sponsor Insight that measures brand exposure among other things: "We do monthly measurements with Sponsor Insight and measure from a set of parameters that we've chosen. It could be everything from exposure for our sponsors in each [individual] case" (NIHF 1).

Exposure we measuring in the same way, it's an industrial standard that we utilize. We buy a service where they receive, can receive if it's included in the deal, the information. And then we have other objectives with each individual actor (NIHF 1)

The exposure provided by sponsorship is relayed to the sponsors from the analysis provided by Sponsor Insight: "So each and every one gets feedback individually, how

their brand or logo is doing and the value of exposure that they're receiving from the partnership. As a sort of ROI" (NIHF 2).

The measurement of other objectives as mentioned in the quote from NIHF 1 was not elaborated on, but the impression during the interviews was that they experienced a great deal of individuality with each sponsor. The use of awareness and exposure methods is not an uncommon approach in measuring sport sponsorship (Meenaghan, 2013) although it is not suggested as a sufficient means of measurement. The NIHF also reported that they did measurements directed towards their target groups and towards interest levels:

But we measure it [exposure] to compare ourselves to TV and what you could have gone and bought exposure for. We measure reputation. We have interest polls, where we measure how much of Norway's population say they are a bit interested, very interested, not interested in ice hockey for example (NIHF 1).

The sponsors also utilized Sponsor Insight as a tool for measurement, while pointing to difficulties mentioned by Meenaghan (2013) such as differentiating sponsorship from other promotional activities:

We get everything from that [Sponsor Insight]. Then of course we have measurements that our analysis team do, we have a brand tracker out at all times. There are many nuances that affect this. Affect a lot more than sponsorship alone. Advertising in that period, what's our message? ... But in terms of measuring our hockey involvement, it has to be viewed over a period of time (Sponsor 3).

Yes, in a sense it is a challenge. Because there are so many boxes that you have to tick. It takes a bit of a long-term view to see the results. And it demands a high level of involvement of us as a sponsor on the activation part of it, definitely. So when we talk about becoming a loved brand, it takes time to move the target market, the change there. It's a mix of many elements, sponsorship is one of them (Sponsor 3).

Another sponsor was of the opinion that pure exposure alone was not of that much value to them:

Right, the interest is at about 11-12% on average I think, interested in ice hockey. We tracked all ratios, then we get the measurements from Sponsor Insight, they don't mean anything. We saw that the awareness was standing still, we had the same exposure in 2016 as in 2017, but it was the other stuff we did that made people realize that was going on. And then it has a backtracking effect, when people are aware \*\* is a sponsor they notice the logo (Sponsor 1).

Flippant to say, but the \*\* case shows that exposure doesn't move the brand. When \*\* is told that the exposure is worth 19 million NOK, you don't see that money anywhere, it's not visible on any tracking. And then you've done tests and stuff, with eye-trackers and sensors, then 80% [of the exposure] disappears, people aren't looking at it, don't care (Sponsor 1).

The statements above correlate with Meenaghan's (2013) findings, that measurements of exposure through sponsor signage and publicity should be regarded as inadequate means of measurement. One of the problems related to measuring exposure through sponsorship is that the sponsorship exposure does not compare to the same as an advertisement, since an advertisement is a targeted communication directed at the consumer, while sponsorship exposure is a more complex process that combines the understanding of two brands (Smith & Stewart, 2015). If the exposure measured is of little value to the sponsors it should also have little value to the NIHF, thus rendering the service they are purchasing and offering to their sponsors less applicable. The following statement was used earlier in addressing the evolving and professionalization of the field of sponsorship, but highlights the same in terms of measuring the effects of sponsorship: "Because you come from, I feel, not from the federation but in general within sponsorship, a regime where you think about exposure and that it has a value and it's going to save the world. But it doesn't" (Sponsor 3).

Noted by Meenaghan (2013) is the holistic and strategic manner that sponsors are approaching sponsorship with now compared to earlier, suggesting perhaps that sponsorship objects are catching up in the development of their practices. The suggested

ROO approach to measurement was addressed by one of the sponsors, as well as the change in the sponsorship environment and the demanding of rapports that show effect:

It's about setting clear objectives from the start. And then you again, think of the marketing department, internal pride has nothing to do with the marketing department. It's become more and more important within sponsorship. Thinking about health, when \*\* partnered with the ski federation. So it's about defining, quantitatively and qualitatively, the objectives you have with a sponsorship, and then measuring that. There's a lot you could measure, which you then put aside, because this is what we're going to achieve. The logo displays and all that, that's an add-on. What we were going to achieve was this and this and this (Sponsor 1).

And now the sponsors are demanding rapports, what does this provide us? And then the sponsorship objects aren't able to answer that, they've never been challenged with that before. So it's in a transitional period now. I've worked with the federation a long time, there's a will there to professionalize themselves. And then again, it's so easy also. You've been doing a terrible job for 20 years, doesn't take that much to improve it either (Sponsor 1).

Furthermore, the responsibility of measuring the effects of sponsorship weren't discovered to any large degree, but was briefly discussed. The informant mentions the federation taking ownership of their own target group which correlates with the findings presented previously with what the NIHF track and measure:

I think the object is responsible for, because you don't sponsor the federation, you go in and sponsor the fans. Those are the ones you want. So the federation's duties are to take ownership of their target group. Who they are, where they are, how much they make... While it's the sponsor's duty to, they are the ones putting the money into it and have to be clear on what they want to gain and how to measure that (Sponsor 1).

The fact that neither of the sponsors show a tendency to value the exposure based methods provided by the NIHF suggests that this is an area they need to further investigate whether is providing any real value to them as an organization and their



sponsors. However, as the informants noted, the NIHF measure specific things based on each individual sponsor and the objectives for each individual agreement. Since this area unfortunately was not discovered in this master thesis, it's hard to determine whether the methods of measurement applied by the NIHF are sufficient cannot be reached, other than that their reliance on exposure-based methods should be revised. Sponsor 2 didn't mention any measurement specifically, likely due to their position as supplier and that the effects of sponsorship are shown through sales rapports.

## **6.4 ORGANIZATIONAL PERSPECTIVES**

As there are several organizational perspectives that affect the NIHF as a sponsorship object they are discussed in this chapter to provide an extra context to the discussion. Elements such as personnel, facilities and geographic footprint and the different entities within NIHF are included in this overview.

### **6.4.1 PERSONNEL**

Cornwell and Maignan (1998) note personnel requirements as of great importance when it comes to sponsorship, albeit in the perspective of the sponsoring company. The same applies for the sponsored property however. To successfully operate a sponsorship program, the organization needs to be staffed accordingly with enough resources to handle their clients, in this case the sponsors, while maintaining a strategic overview and future strategic planning. The NIHF's personnel have already been mentioned on several occasions during the results and discussion, the perception being that perhaps they are under-staffed from a sponsor perspective.

The NIHF explained the outline of their marketing department and the resources allocated within in the following statement:

I myself spend a bit of time within the field and we have an employee who works with marketing and communications. And then we have someone who is part-time, or works on commission, but who has a fixed office space here, not prohibited from working on other projects within Norwegian ice hockey or other sports, but with close connections to us and has a fixed office space and several hours a week here. That's the marketing department (NIHF 1).

The informant further followed up this explanation: “Yeah, say that combined there’s two full-time employees who work with it [marketing]” (NIHF 1).

The fact that their administration is relatively small was also evident to the NIHF. “Yes, we could have had a larger administration that took care of the marketing efforts for them [the sponsor]. And some thing we do also, in practice and execution” (NIHF 1). Although the NIHF have a small administration, this is not a surprise to those sponsoring them. They already knew this coming into the sponsorship and thus shouldn’t represent an issue. That being said, with a larger amount of personnel resources set aside for sponsorship the NIHF could elaborate on their efforts towards their sponsors and perhaps build different aspects of their sponsorship approach in cooperation with their different partners. Through co-creating more value in the existing sponsorship deals, the financial resources set aside to increase the sponsor specific work could see itself paid off by the time the sponsorship deals are being re-negotiated.

#### 6.4.2 FACILITIES AND GEOGRAPHICAL ISSUES

Mentioned several times already is the geographical reach of ice hockey in Norway. This has been an ongoing issue in Norwegian ice hockey for a long time. Increasing the amount of ice rinks is also included in the NIHF’s strategical plan for 2015-2019 (NIHF, 2015). The issue was also raised by the NIHF during interviews, explaining the difficulty of creating ice hockey environments where there are no playing facilities:

It’s a bit Catch 22, in large parts of our country there’s no ice rink, so there’s no environment. But you also need ice rinks to have an environment and create interest, so there’s a lot [of people] who don’t have a relationship to this in that regard. That’s a bit the world we live in (NIHF 1).

Then again you have the challenge regarding facilities, which there’s a lot of discussion about. So that goes back to us again and in that regard we’re dependent on money. And that’s where marketing income enters, in order for us to build [facilities]. But it’s a cooperation between both federation, municipalities and other factors (NIHF 2).

From the sponsors’ perspective the geographical footprint of ice hockey relates closely to the potential they see in NIHF as a sponsorship object. Therefore, it’s of no big

surprise that they also had their views on this, for example in the form of using events to start political discussions to create attention:

But when you have something like that event, you're gathering "Hockey Norway", then you should use it. Do you want attention? Then you have to take the president, put him in front, start a debate on the problems surrounding ice rinks or playing facilities. Pack it with politics and the stories you wish to communicate (Sponsor 1).

It's an enormously important element for them [NIHF] and would enrich them as a sponsorship object if they are able to get more people interested in ice hockey. It's as simple as starting at the bottom. I think the amateur initiative that we entered at the last deal agreement was very good. There we've had an increase [in participants] every year except for one. So these are types of things a federation has to work on. But I think and hope perhaps that they're a bit more offensive in terms of increasing their sport geographically. And, that they're able to move hockey from being a Oslo-East and inland phenomenon to getting it up the coast, get it up to the north of Norway and increase the recruitment (Sponsor 3).

This view was also shared by the NIHF and was mentioned when asked a direct question about how they could increase their sponsorship revenue and market share:

... We need to become more present throughout the country. More people who cheer for us, more people who are active with us, a larger base in that way. Then we need better and more commercial arenas, we're about to achieve that on the top level, but we need better arenas for the recreational sports, to increase that, our breadth, our [membership] mass, so that more, let's just say there a big black whole where nobody has heard of ice hockey. Or who have heard about it but don't have a relationship with it. Then we need to enter the biggest cities, we're missing Bergen and Trondheim who are big actors, with good recruiting, more ice rinks and with a top product. Which would make us a lot more nationwide. Then we have the north, where a lot of people live, where ice hockey is entering. But we need to become more nationwide. Offer better products. That's both in

terms of arenas and facilities, but also in engaging those areas in another way (NIHF 1).

The issue of the geographical spread of ice hockey is directly linked to adding new target markets both for the NIHF and the sponsors. Farrelly and Quester (2005) mention acquiring new target markets as a joint operation between sponsor and property, providing for a long-term outlook in the partnership. In achieving this the two parties exhibit a strategic compatibility and an acceptance and understanding of their different roles within the relationship. In light of this, spreading hockey across the country and increasing awareness represents an issue that could be a joint objective for NIHF and their partners. Although this seems logical, it would require detailed plans for activation, communication and resource provision, as well as motivation from both parties to work strategically towards.

#### 6.4.3 ENTITIES WITHIN NIHF

One of the subjects that was explored during the interviews with the NIHF was the different entities that operate within their domain and the attractiveness they have as sponsorship objects. Speaking generally about the attractiveness of the different entities, the informant highlighted the men's national team as the most important one and also where most of the income is derived from:

The Get-league has become a much stronger product, we're retrieving more income from there. You've introduced it yourself, building other parts of the organization. Meaning, women's ice hockey, Paralympic ice hockey which is also a part of us. It's of course important to have more than one leg to stand on, but I think a significant part of us, our income, is attached to the men's national team and their achievements (NIHF 1).

The informant further elaborated on women's hockey and how there is a potential for it to evolve as a specific object for sponsorship:

Now it's a trend these days also, we've signed some sponsorship deals now that tie to women and the commitment we have there. But I'm not currently experiencing that someone goes on their own and says "we think women's hockey is interesting". We should contribute more there. It's a hard sell. It could

be because girls' and women's ice hockey is quite premature. There are few who play, but more now than there was before (NIHF 1).

So we have to start there, how to create exposure around these girls. Turn them into profiles, clubs that are well driven, competitions, leagues that interest and so forth. So, the road is longer. But absolutely, a different approach to how we can sell the girls. I think we have to build them up, but at the same time I think we could sell a few value-based sponsorships (NIHF 1).

One of the sponsors highlighted that it was not of immediate interest to sponsor other entities within NIHF such as women's hockey unless a case was presented to them. However, the informant gave examples directly related to co-creating value through a joint effort to grow ice hockey:

I would say that leads us back to different sponsorship concepts that NIHF and NTH have to present a case on. And then we can see that this fits nicely with our big storyline of our hockey involvement. It's not like that small segment within the ice hockey family is super interesting, better than something else. I would turn the page instead and think a bit about how we can implement, or how we can contribute to Norwegian ice hockey and especially these recreational initiatives through activating our products and services (Sponsor 3).

The NIHF also presented their view on which triggers were relevant when discussing the attractiveness of sponsorship properties:

I think it's about profiles as well. Those are two things that are sales triggers, performance-wise. When we win in Norway there's a lot of people watching us, not just ice hockey, but everything... And then there's having profiles within the sport, who stand for something, are fun to follow and drive interests. Those are the biggest drivers of interest we think (NIHF 1).

The impact of having star players and profiles in the sport could prove to have effects of increased perception of quality and improving brand associations (Shapiro et al., 2017). In terms of sponsorship properties located within the NIHF, the Get-league and men's

national team represent the most attractive properties. However, the potential exists to grow other entities within the organization into attractive sponsorship objects.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this master thesis has been to explore the NIHF's sponsorship strategies, how they operate on a daily basis and how their partners perceive them as a sponsorship property. Ultimately the purpose has been to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the NIHF's sponsorship strategies and is there a difference between NIHF's strategies and everyday practice?

Shown in the results and discussion, the NIHF operate with certain strategic aspects towards sponsorship. Among these are the concepts of fit, brand image and measuring of sponsorship results and effect. In terms of sponsorship fit they operate with a value-driven focus on who they partner with as an organization, using their own organizational values as a platform for commercial partnerships. These values are further incorporated in their brand image and branding efforts, where they also operate with a strategic communications plan. The NIHF further show a strategic approach to measuring sponsorship effect, although this approach and its effects should be revised in cooperation with their commercial partners due to the heavy focus on the measuring of exposure which is seen as less valuable. However, there is a misconception between NIHF and their sponsors regarding activation and leveraging of the sponsorship, implying that the strategies for activation and leveraging differ from actual practice. In being a more proactive and strategic partner the NIHF should seek to integrate the resources of their sponsors in the activation process and clearly communicate their objectives so that strategic collaboration is enabled to a bigger extent. Furthermore, the NIHF's overall strategic approach to the sponsorship market is characterized through an "ad hoc" or individual approach, dependent on situational factors and therefore doesn't constitute a holistic approach to strategic sponsorship.

2. What are the perceptions of the NIHF as a sponsorship object and how do their sponsors' practices compare to NIHF's practices?

In the view of their own sponsors, the NIHF are perceived as a sponsorship property with a lot of potential, one of the keywords used to describe them. As previously mentioned, potential implies that there is room for growth. In a sponsorship context, the

sponsors view NIHF as a property that can grow in terms of adopting an overall more strategic approach. Included in this was the need for more proactivity towards them as sponsors in order integrate resources and facilitate the co-creation of value to a larger degree. Furthermore, the sponsors exhibited a more complete strategic approach to sponsorship in terms of setting objectives and actively incorporating sponsor-specific elements in achieving their objectives.

In conclusion, the NIHF could improve their overall strategic planning as an organization which incorporates sponsorship. The sponsors included in this study showed an interest in ice hockey as a whole, implying that their strategic interests coincide with that of the NIHF. Therefore, actively integrating their commercial partners and their resources in the strategical planning could prove beneficial for NIHF as an organization in terms of growing as a sponsorship object. Further, setting other objectives for sponsorship than monetary value would prove beneficial to adopting a more holistic approach to sponsorship and in attaining other benefits related to sponsorship. This approach could perhaps help in terms of personnel requirements and the use of resources involved with sponsorship for both the NIHF and their sponsors.

This master thesis is conducted on a relatively small level and is only concerned with a few actors in the Norwegian sponsorship market. A more comprehensive study involving more actors within the same context could further enhance the understanding of the Norwegian sponsorship market and provide the case for analytical generalization. Further, this study implies that the Norwegian sport sponsorship market is one that is still growing in terms of professionalization and applying strategic approaches to sponsorship. Future studies should be focused descriptively on how sport organizations seek to strategically adjust to a more professionalized sponsorship market.

This study also has practical implications for actors operating within the Norwegian sponsorship market. The clarification of strategical compatibility, responsibilities in terms of activation and measurement should be communicated early on in the joint planning. Specifically for sport organizations or sponsorship objects, proactivity on their part is a factor that greatly enhances the value of them as a sponsorship object, in accordance with clear objectives for what the sponsorship agreement should achieve.



## REFERENCES

- Amis, J., Slack, T., & Hinings, C. R. (2004). Strategic change and the role of interests, power, and organizational capacity. *Journal of Sport Management*, 18(2), 158-198.
- Bostock, J., Crowther, P., Ridley-Duff, R., & Breese, R. (2018). No plan B: the achilles heel of high performance sport management. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 18(1), 25-46.
- Braun, V., Clarke, V., & Weate, P. (2016). Using thematic analysis in sport and exercise research. In: *Routledge handbook of qualitative research in sport and exercise* (p. 213-227). Routledge
- Clausen, J., Bayle, E., Giaque, D., Ruoranen, K., Lang, G., Schlesinger, T., ... & Nagel, S. (2018). International sport federations' commercialisation: a qualitative comparative analysis. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 18(3), 373-392.
- Cornwell, T. B., & Maignan, I. (1998). An International Review of Sponsorship Research. *Journal of Advertising*, 27(1), 1-21.
- Cornwell, T. B., Weeks, C. S., & Roy, D. P. (2005). Sponsorship-linked marketing: Opening the black box. *Journal of Advertising*, 34(2), 21-42.
- Demir, R., & Söderman, S. (2015). Strategic sponsoring in professional sport: a review and conceptualization. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 15(3), 271-300.
- Dick, C., & Uhrich, S. (2017). Ending a sponsorship relationship: Consumers' responses toward a forced versus a chosen exit. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 17(2), 152-170
- Farrelly, F., & Quester, P. (2005). Investigating large-scale sponsorship relationships as co-marketing alliances. *Business Horizons*, 48(1), 55-62.
- Flick, U. (2009). *An introduction to qualitative research* (4th ed.). Sage Publications Limited.

Herrmann, J. L., Kacha, M., & Derbaix, C. (2016). "I support your team, support me in turn!": The driving role of consumers' affiliation with the sponsored entity in explaining behavioral effects of sport sponsorship leveraging activities. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(2), 604-612.

Hodge, K., & Sharp, L. A. (2016). Case Studies: What are They? *Routledge Handbook of Qualitative Research in Sport and Exercise*, 62-74. Routledge.

Kurdøl, S. N. (2017). *Tilskuerøkning i Get-ligaen: en kvalitativ studie av ulike Get-liga klubbers arbeid med å tiltrekke seg publikum* (Master's thesis). Oslo: Norwegian University of Sport Sciences

Kvale, S. (2001). *Det kvalitative forskningsintervju [An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing]*. Ad Notam Gyldendal, Oslo, Norway.

McCracken, G. (1989). Who is the celebrity endorser? Cultural foundations of the endorsement process. *Journal of consumer research*, 16(3), 310-321.

Meenaghan, T. (2013). Measuring sponsorship performance: challenge and direction. *Psychology & Marketing*, 30(5), 385-393.

Mooradian, T., Matzler, K., & Ring, L. (2013). *Strategic marketing: Pearson new international edition*. Pearson Education, Inc.

Norges Idrettsforbund. (n.d). *English*. Retrieved on the 25th of May 2019 from <https://www.idrettsforbundet.no/english/>

Norges Ishockeyforbund. (n.d b). *Tilskuertall i eliteserien*. Retrieved on the 20<sup>th</sup> of May 2019 from <https://www.hockey.no/contentassets/e14872e9dbd34fce9dad1ddde9584e3f/tilskuertall-for-eliteserien-1993-2016.pdf>

Norges Ishockeyforbund. (n.d a). *Sponsorstruktur*. Retrieved on the 12<sup>th</sup> of February 2019 from <https://www.hockey.no/marked/sponsorstruktur/>

- Norges Ishockeyforbund. (n.d c). *Norges Ishockeyforbund*. Retrieved on the 25<sup>th</sup> of May 2019 from  
<https://www.hockey.no/forbundet/om-nihf/>
- Norges Ishockeyforbund. (n.d d). *Hockey i media*. Retrieved on the 25<sup>th</sup> of May 2019 from  
<https://www.hockey.no/presse/hockey-i-media/>
- Norges Ishockeyforbund. (n.d e). *Samarbeidspartnere*. Retrieved on the 12<sup>th</sup> of February 2019 from  
<https://www.hockey.no/marked/samarbeidspartnere/>
- Norges Ishockeyforbund. (2015). *Strategiplan for norsk ishockey 2015-2019*. Retrieved on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May 2019 from  
[https://www.hockey.no/contentassets/53eb4a8244cc431985f11b70d445e586/strategiplan\\_nihf\\_2015-19.pdf](https://www.hockey.no/contentassets/53eb4a8244cc431985f11b70d445e586/strategiplan_nihf_2015-19.pdf)
- Norges Ishockeyforbund. (2017). *Årsregnskap*. Retrieved on the 14<sup>th</sup> of May from  
<https://www.hockey.no/globalassets/tinget/dokumenter/arregnskap-2017.pdf>
- Norsk Topp hockey. (2014). *Om oss*. Retrieved on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May 2019 from  
<http://nth.strikingly.com/#om-oss>
- O'Reilly, N., & Séguin, B. (2007). *Sport marketing: A Canadian perspective*. Nelson Education.
- Pham, M. T. (1991). The evaluation of sponsorship effectiveness: a model and some methodological considerations. *Gestion*, 2000(4), 47-65.
- Regjeringen. (2019). *Hovedfordelingen 2019*. Retrieved on the 14<sup>th</sup> of May 2019 from  
[https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/bea6418f69404de4ba0baa79192fbcbb/prm-34-19\\_spillemidler---vedlegg.pdf](https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/bea6418f69404de4ba0baa79192fbcbb/prm-34-19_spillemidler---vedlegg.pdf)
- Shank, M. D., & Lyberger, M. R. (2015). *Sports marketing: A strategic perspective*. Routledge.

- Shapiro, S. L., DeSchraver, T. D., & Rascher, D. A. (2017). The Beckham effect: examining the longitudinal impact of a star performer on league marketing, novelty, and scarcity. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 17(5), 610-634.
- Smith, A.C.T., & Stewart, B. (2015). *Introduction to sport marketing*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Routledge.
- Smith, B., & Sparkes, A. C. (2016). Qualitative interviewing in the sport and exercise sciences. In: *Routledge handbook of qualitative research in sport and exercise*, 103-123.
- Sponsor Insight (n.d). *Om Sponsor Insight*. Retrieved on the 30<sup>th</sup> of May 2019 from <https://www.sponsorinsight.no/omoss/>
- Strauss, A. L. (1987). *Qualitative analysis for social scientists*. Cambridge University press.
- Sørgjerd, C. (2018). Januar 2018: Jordal Amfi holder budsjett. Mai 2018: Sprekker med 141 millioner. *Aftenposten*. Retrieved on the 25<sup>th</sup> of February 2019 from <https://www.aftenposten.no/osloby/i/OnJWQb/Januar-2018-Jordal-Amfi-holder-budsjett-Mai-2018-Sprekker-med-141-millioner>
- Thjømmøe, H. M. (2010). Sponsing – forretning eller lek med penger?. *Magma* 13(1), 63-66.
- Tjora, A. (2012). *Kvalitative forskningsmetoder i praksis*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag AS
- TNS Gallup. (2017). *De mest sette TV-programmene per kanal i uke 40*. Retrieved on the 25<sup>th</sup> of February 2019 from <https://www.tns-gallup.no/globalassets/medier/tv/nyhetsbrev2017/nyhetsbrevuke40.pdf>
- Winer, R.S., Dhar, R. (2011). *Marketing Management* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Pearson Education, Inc.
- Woratschek, H., Horbel, C., & Popp, B. (2014). The sport value framework—a new

fundamental logic for analyses in sport management. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 14(1), 6-24.

Yin, R. K. (1994). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods*. Sage publications.

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: design and methods*. (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Sage publications.

## TABLE OVERVIEW

**Table 1:** Description of informants

**Table 2:** Thematic coding example

## ABBREVIATIONS

FP	FOUNDATIONAL PREMISE
GDL	GOODS DOMINANT LOGIC
IIHF	INTERNATIONAL ICE HOCKEY FEDERATION
IOC	INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE
KPI	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR
MLS	MAJOR LEAGUE SOCCER
NGB	NATIONAL GOVERNING BODY OF SPORT
NFF	NORWEGIAN FOOTBALL FEDERATION
NIF	NORWEGIAN OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC COMMITTEE AND CONFEDERATION OF SPORTS
NIHF	NORWEGIAN ICE HOCKEY FEDERATION
NOK	NORWEGIAN CROWNS
NSD	NORWEGIAN CENTRE FOR DATA RESEARCH
NTH	NORWEGIAN TOP HOCKEY
ROI	RETURN ON INVESTMENT
ROO	RETURN ON OBJECTIVES
SDL	SERVICE DOMINANT LOGIC
SVF	SPORT VALUE FRAMEWORK
USD	UNITED STATES DOLLARS

## APPENDIX A

# NSD NORSK SENTER FOR FORSKNINGSDATA

### **NSD sin vurdering**

### **Prosjekttittel**

Sponsorstrategier i Norges Ishockeyforbund

### **Referansenummer**

774396

### **Registrert**

27.11.2018 av Martin Bolstad - martinbo@student.nih.no

### **Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon**

Norges idrettshøgskole / Seksjon for kultur og samfunn

### **Prosjektansvarlig (vitenskapelig ansatt/veileder eller stipendiat)**

Berit Skirstad, berit.skirstad@nih.no, tlf: 23262428

### **Type prosjekt**

Studentprosjekt, masterstudium

### **Kontaktinformasjon, student**

Martin Bolstad, martinbolstad1@hotmail.com, tlf: 48155156

### **Prosjektperiode**

03.12.2018 - 31.05.2019

### **Status**



17.01.2019 - Vurdert

## **Vurdering (1)**

### **17.01.2019 - Vurdert**

Det er vår vurdering at behandlingen av personopplysninger i prosjektet vil være i samsvar med personvernlovgivningen så fremt den gjennomføres i tråd med det som er dokumentert i meldeskjemaet med vedlegg den 17.01.2019, samt i meldingsdialogen mellom innmelder og NSD. Behandlingen kan starte.

**MELD ENDRINGER** Dersom behandlingen av personopplysninger endrer seg, kan det være nødvendig å melde dette til NSD ved å oppdatere meldeskjemaet. På våre nettsider informerer vi om hvilke endringer som må meldes. Vent på svar før endringer gjennomføres.

**TYPE OPPLYSNINGER OG VARIGHET** Prosjektet vil behandle alminnelige kategorier av personopplysninger frem til 31.05.2019.

**LOVLIG GRUNNLAG** Prosjektet vil innhente samtykke fra de registrerte til behandlingen av personopplysninger. Vår vurdering er at prosjektet legger opp til et samtykke i samsvar med kravene i art. 4 og 7, ved at det er en frivillig, spesifikk, informert og utvetydig bekreftelse som kan dokumenteres, og som den registrerte kan trekke tilbake. Lovlig grunnlag for behandlingen vil dermed være den registrertes samtykke, jf. personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 bokstav a.

**PERSONVERNPRINSIPPER** NSD vurderer at den planlagte behandlingen av personopplysninger vil følge prinsippene i personvernforordningen om:

- lovlighet, rettferdighet og åpenhet (art. 5.1 a), ved at de registrerte får tilfredsstillende informasjon om og samtykker til behandlingen - formålsbegrensning (art. 5.1 b), ved at personopplysninger samles inn for spesifikke, uttrykkelig angitte og berettigede formål, og ikke behandles til nye, uforenlige formål - dataminimering (art. 5.1 c), ved at det kun behandles opplysninger som er adekvate, relevante og nødvendige for formålet med prosjektet - lagringsbegrensning (art. 5.1 e), ved at personopplysningene ikke lagres lengre enn nødvendig for å oppfylle formålet

**DE REGISTRERTES RETTIGHETER** Så lenge de registrerte kan identifiseres i

datamaterialet vil de ha følgende rettigheter: åpenhet (art. 12), informasjon (art. 13), innsyn (art. 15), retting (art. 16), sletting (art. 17), begrensning (art. 18), underretning (art. 19), dataportabilitet (art. 20).

NSD vurderer at informasjonen om behandlingen som de registrerte vil motta oppfyller lovens krav til form og innhold, jf. art. 12.1 og art. 13.

Vi minner om at hvis en registrert tar kontakt om sine rettigheter, har behandlingsansvarlig institusjon plikt til å svare innen en måned.

**FØLG DIN INSTITUSJONS RETNINGSLINJER** NSD legger til grunn at behandlingen oppfyller kravene i personvernforordningen om riktighet (art. 5.1 d), integritet og konfidensialitet (art. 5.1. f) og sikkerhet (art. 32).

For å forsikre dere om at kravene oppfylles, må dere følge interne retningslinjer og/eller rådføre dere med behandlingsansvarlig institusjon.

**OPPFØLGING AV PROSJEKTET** NSD vil følge opp ved planlagt avslutning for å avklare om behandlingen av personopplysningene er avsluttet. Lykke til med prosjektet!

Kontaktperson hos NSD: Eva J B Payne Tlf. Personverntjenester: 55 58 21 17 (tast 1)

## APPENDIX B

### **Do you want to participate in the research project**

#### ***“Exploring the Norwegian Ice Hockey Federation’s sponsorship strategies?”***

This is a request to you on the participation in a research project where the purpose is to explore the sponsorship strategies of the Norwegian Ice Hockey Federation. In this leaflet information is provided on the goals for the project and what participation will entail for you.

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of the project is to examine the strategies the Norwegian Ice Hockey Federation have towards their sponsors and how this corresponds with their marketing strategy. The project will also include views of the sponsors, to provide a more holistic view of the NIHF’s sponsorship activities. The research questions are as follows:

1. How does the Norwegian Ice Hockey Federation’s sponsorship strategy correlate with their marketing strategy, and is there a difference between the strategy and how it’s executed in practice?
2. What perception do the Norwegian Ice Hockey Federation’s sponsors have of them as a sponsorship object and do they share the same goals for the sponsorship?
3. In what way does the brand of the Norwegian Ice Hockey Federation impact the planning and result of sponsorship?

These research questions will be examined through the use of semi-structured interviews with people from the Norwegian Ice Hockey Federation and their sponsors.

The research project is a master thesis to be delivered to the Norwegian School of Sport Sciences.

#### **Who is responsible for the research project?**

The Norwegian School of Sport Sciences is responsible for the project.

#### **Why am I being asked to participate?**

You have received the offer to participate in this study through your position and affiliation with the Norwegian Ice Hockey Federation.

#### **What does it entail for you to participate?**

If you chose to participate in the study it entails that you take part in an interview lasting approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes. The questions are concerned with the organization you work for, sponsorship and Norwegian ice hockey. Your answers will be recorded.

### **Participation is voluntary**

It's voluntary to participate in the research project. If you choose to participate, you may at any time retract your consent without giving a reason as to why. All information stored on you will be anonymised. It will have no negative consequences for you should you choose not to participate or withdraw at a later time.

### **Your privacy – how we store and use your information**

We will only use information about you for the purpose explained in this leaflet. We process the information confidentially and in compliance with privacy regulations.

- Only student and responsible advisors will have access to your information
- All data material will be stored in password protected files

You could be identified through your position in the company you work for. The project will not be published for the main public.

### **What happens to your information once we finish the research project?**

The project is due to end 31.05.2019. The information you provide will be deleted after the project is terminated.

### **Your rights**

As long as you're identifiable in the data material, you have the right to:

- access to which personal information is registered regarding yourself
- to have personal information about you corrected
- to have personal information about you deleted
- be delivered a copy of your personal information (data portability), and
- send a complaint to the privacy protection department or data protection department about the processing of your personal information

### **What gives us the right to process personal information about you?**

We process personal information about you based on your consent.

By inquiry from the Norwegian School of Sports Sciences, NSD – Norwegian Center for Data Research AS, has considered the processing of personal information in this project to be in compliance with privacy regulations.

### **Where can I find more information?**

If you have questions regarding the study, or wish to use your rights, contact:

- The Norwegian School of Sport Sciences by Berit Skirstad ([berit.skirstad@nih.no](mailto:berit.skirstad@nih.no)) or Martin Bolstad ([martinbolstad1@hotmail.com](mailto:martinbolstad1@hotmail.com)) / +47 48155156).
- NSD – Norwegian Center for Data Research AS by email ([personvernombudet@nsd.no](mailto:personvernombudet@nsd.no)) or phone: 55 58 21 17

Best regards,

Berit Skirstad

Project Manager  
(Advisor)

Martin Bolstad

Master student

---

### **Declaration of Consent**

I have received and understood information regarding the project “Exploring the Norwegian Ice Hockey Federation’s sponsorship strategies” and given the opportunity to ask questions. I consent to:

- Participating in an interview
- Information about me being published that can lead to identification. In this sense only for use in master thesis delivered to the Norwegian School of Sport Sciences.

I consent to my information being processed until termination of project, approximately 31.05.2019.

---

(Signed by participant, date)

## APPENDIX C

### Interview guide NIHF

#### General

1. What education do you possess and how long have you worked for the NIHF? What are your work assignments in the organization? Previous jobs, other experiences etc.

#### NIHF

2. Could you in short explain the structure of the NIHF?

3. How many employees are in the marketing department? Do you have assignments that fall outside the spectrum of marketing?

4. Who sets the objectives for marketing?

5. Could you explain the objectives for marketing?

a) Are there any specific objectives in regards to sponsorship/sponsorship income?

b) How are these objectives conceived?

c) How much of marketing does sponsorship entail?

6. Do you measure whether objectives are being met?

a) How?

b) What do you measure?

c) Who is measuring?

#### Sponsorship

7. How do you work to attract new sponsors?

a) How do you map potential sponsors?

b) What are you looking for in a sponsor?

8. How would you describe the competitive environment in the sponsorship market?

a) Who are potential competitors?

b) Do you possess any advantages over the other competitors?

c) Which challenges do you have in relation to competitors?

9. Which sales arguments do you have for potential sponsor?
- a) The brand “Norwegian ice hockey?”
10. Which advantages do you offer potential sponsors?
- a) VIP?
  - b) Opportunities for networking?
  - c) Activation of sponsorship?
  - d) Exposure?
  - e) Other?
11. How do you create an offer for a sponsor?
- a) Do these offers have a general sense or are they specially tailored the sponsor?
  - b) How do you investigate a potential sponsors needs in sponsorship?
12. How are contract negotiations with sponsors done?
13. How long does it usually take to negotiate a contract?
- a) How many meetings?
  - b) Who is the contact person or negotiator for the potential sponsor?
14. Which of the entities within NIHF are the sponsors most interested in?
- a) How much importance do star players have for the attractiveness towards sponsors?
15. What type of points are included in the contracts you have with your sponsors?
- a) Are there differences in length, sponsor category and such?
16. How do you typically cooperate with a sponsor?
- a) How do you set objectives together?
  - b) Who is the driving force in this cooperation?
17. How does communication between you and your sponsors take place?
- a) How often is the communication, what is being reported?

18. How do you measure the effects of a sponsorship?
- a) Are there different reports based on sponsorship category?
  - b) Could you estimate how much time and resources are spent following up sponsors?
19. How would you yourself describe the relationship between you and your sponsors?
20. How would you describe a good sponsorship relationship?
21. Do you have any strategies for handling crisis situations?
- a) Are there specific strategies towards sponsors?
  - b) For example in cases of doping, match fixing or other?
  - c) Last year with a lot of suspensions and bad tackles?
22. Could you describe the process of terminating a sponsorship agreement?
- a) Are there warnings given early on?
  - b) How do you react with the news that a sponsor wishes to pull out of an arrangement?

**The brand “Norwegian ice hockey”**

23. How would you describe the brand “Norwegian ice hockey”?
24. Has this brand occurred as a product from your side or through tradition and culture?
25. How do you work with your brand?
26. Could you describe the process of selling your brand towards other actors in the market? For example sponsors, media and others.

**Concluding questions**

27. What do you perceive as ways of increasing sponsor and market income for the NIHF?
28. How are you doing in terms of the objectives set for marketing and sponsorship?
- a) Why?
  - b) What challenges have you met?
  - c) What can be improved?
29. Do you have anything else to add?



## APPENDIX D

### Interview guide sponsors

#### General questions

1. Could you tell me about your education, how you ended up in this organization and what your tasks are?

#### General questions about the company

2. Could you in short detail the company you work for?

a) What are your organizational objectives?

b) Could you describe the vision and values of the company you work for?

3. What's your business model?

4. What market do you operate in?

a) Who is your target group/customer base?

#### Sponsorship

5. What role does sponsorship have in your marketing strategy?

a) Why do you utilize sponsorship?

6. How long have you been doing sponsorship?

7. What advantages do you achieve with sponsorship compared to other marketing communications?

8. What challenges and uncertainties do you perceive in relation to sponsorship?

9. What criteria do you use when deciding to sponsor someone/something?

10. Which factors do you emphasize when choosing a sponsorship object?

#### NIHF

11. Which associations do you have with NIHF and Norwegian ice hockey?

12. How did the connection between you and the NIHF arise?

a) How did this develop into a sponsorship agreement?

13. How do you perceive the link between you and the NIHF?

a) Do you share common values?

b) Do they represent something you wish to associate yourselves with?

14. Is there anything that separates NIHF from other federations or sport organizations from a sponsorship perspective?

### **Objectives, measurement and communication**

15. What are your main objectives through sponsorship of the NIHF?

16. Could you explain how you work to achieve your objectives for the sponsorship?

a) How do you measure this?

b) How often do you evaluate the sponsorship?

c) In what ways do NIHF assist this process?

d) What are the connections between measurement and objectives?

17. Do the objectives you have with the NIHF differ from the ones you have with other organizations you sponsor?

a) Why?

b) How do you define objectives based on the organization in question?

18. How do you communicate with the NIHF through the course of the sponsorship?

19. Is there a system for reporting on predefined objectives between the organizations?

a) Who is responsible for the rapport?

b) What is being reported?

c) Are you satisfied with this communication?

20. Do you have good/bad experiences in terms of communication between you and NIHF?

### **Activation**

21. What measures have you taken to increase the value of the sponsorship?

a) Why/ why not?

b) What did you do?

22. How do the NIHF assist you in utilizing the sponsorship in the best manner possible?
- a) How would you like them to assist?
  - b) Which challenges do you perceive with the assistance of the NIHF in order to utilize your sponsorship?
23. Do you have any examples of how you utilize the sponsorship between you and the NIHF?
- a) Ongoing or older campaigns?
24. Are there plans for campaigns you wish to conduct with the NIHF in the future?
- a) Who made these?
  - b) What do you hope to achieve?
25. Do you think there are measures that could be taken to extract more value from your sponsorship?

**The brand “Norwegian ice hockey”**

26. How would you describe the brand “Norwegian ice hockey”?
27. What about this brand entices you to sponsor the NIHF?
28. Could the brand be utilized better?
- a) How?
29. Would you describe “Norwegian ice hockey” as a strong brand?

**Contracts**

30. How long is your contract with the NIHF and when was it signed?
31. Have you talked about a potential extension?
32. Could you describe some of the elements included in the contract?
- a) Objectives, potential clauses etc.
33. Which of the offers presented by the NIHF are most important to you?
- a) Exposure?
  - b) Networking?

- c) VIP?
- d) Association?

34. Which of these offers/advantages differentiate themselves from other sponsorship arrangements you have?

### **Media**

35. How important is media presence in sponsorship?

36. Do you have deals concerned with media in your contracts?

37. How do you perceive NIHF in the media?

- a) How does this affect you as sponsors?
- b) Is there something you wish they could do differently?

38. What do you think of hockey in the media in general?

### **Concluding questions**

39. How would you describe a successful sponsorship?

- a) What does it demand from you?
- b) What does it demand from the NIHF?
- c) To what extent does your sponsorship of the NIHF fulfill these criteria?

40. Do you feel the sponsorship of NIHF in total is successful?

- a) Could you be specific as to why?

41. What do you feel could be improved from both actors?

42. How do you rank the sponsorship of NIHF against other organizations you sponsor?

- a) What makes them better/worse?

43. Is there anything you would like to add?