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## Professional sponsorships in a Norwegian context:

Exploring the relationships between national sport federations and their sponsors

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## Abstract

The size of sport sponsorships has grown massively in recent years as a result of commercialization of the sport sector. Large national sport federations today get an increasingly significant portion of their income from sponsorships. At the same time, the sponsors have integrated strategic thinking into sponsorships. The relationships between sponsors and sponsees are evolving, and the literature has on several occasions recognized the need for investigating how these relationships operate in this new reality. Few studies have examined large sponsorships from a relational perspective, and none in a Norwegian context. It is therefore important to identify factors that contribute to a successful sponsor-sponsee relationship.

Using a case-study approach, this study examines the dyadic perspective of professional sponsorships. Twelve in-depth interviews are included in this case; four representatives from national sport federations, seven of their sponsors, and a marketing expert.

The findings demonstrate perceptual differences and similarities between sport federations and companies, and highlight the importance of a healthy relationship for sponsorship success. Several factors suggested by previous research are confirmed as important for relationship quality in professional sponsorships. They are cooperation, commitment, mutual understanding, satisfaction, and long-term perspective. At the same time, trust showed to be a less important factor. Further, the ability of partners to connect the sponsorship to several areas within their organization to achieve multiple benefits was also strongly present in the interviews. This is identified as a new relationship quality factor in professional sponsorships, called internal anchoring.

Additionally, the results show that sport federations and sponsors view the ideal relationship as a business-oriented, long-term partnership. However, for this to be a reality, sport federations must raise their competence in areas like marketing, social media, and business networking. The results also show that sponsorships partners ideally will have several additional attributes that contribute to sponsorship success, like shared values and media-friendly athletes. Consequently, theoretical and practical implications are discussed, and ideas for future research are suggested.

Keywords: sponsorship; national sport organizations; sponsor-sponsee relationship; partnerships; relationship quality; qualitative research

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# 1. Introduction

*“Because something is happening that will change the traditional ways of sponsoring. And we are all working to catch up with it”.*

[A faithful sponsor for over 20 years]

This quote relates to the development of professional sponsorships, and at the same time emphasizes the need to know more about the management of modern sponsorships. National sport federations, function today in an environment that is increasingly competitive, complex, and uncertain. This leads to adaptation of business-oriented behaviours (Maier, Meyer, & Steinbereithner, 2016). At the same time, the popularity of sport has grown massively in recent years. Sport has become commercialized, characterized by increasing the flow of money into the sport sector, rising media attention, and a situation where the athletes are treated more or less as celebrities (Byers, Slack, & Parent, 2012).

This development leads to sponsors paying massive rights’ fees to be associated with sport to a point where sport organizations, such as sport federations, could not function at the current capacity without the revenue generated through commercial and business-minded activities (A. Morgan, Adair, Taylor, & Hermens, 2014). To take an extreme example, the Norwegian Skiing Federation funds its’ cross-country team almost entirely (over 90 percent) on sponsorship income (Mangelrød, 2019). Some authors also argue that commercialization leads to market saturation in sport sponsorships (Olkkonen & Tuominen, 2006), where there is a competition between sponsors to utilize the same association rights.

Modern sponsorships are changing from transaction-based exchange of marketing activities, to a business platform where there is a need for strategic collaboration to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes (Chadwick, Chavanat, & Desbordes, 2016). Large-scale sponsorships are today activated to achieve corporate and brand positioning benefits on a national scale, and sponsoring is becoming an essential channel for consumer communication (Naraine & Parent, 2016). Many of the benefits require cooperation over time in order to be achieved. This makes it far more challenging to attach the generation of value in sponsorships to specific actions between partners. Given the price companies pay in sponsorship fees, one would assume that the interfirm

cooperation between sport entities and the sponsors is synergetic. However, that is not always the case. Sponsoring is a risk-laden activity for both sides in form of player transgressions, doping, and cooperation challenges between sponsors and sponsees (Farrelly, 2010; Johnson, 2015; Leopkey & Parent, 2009; Solberg, Hanstad, & Thøring, 2010; Westberg, Stavros, & Wilson, 2011). The worst-case scenario is sponsorship breakdown, where the sponsor is left with high alternative costs and has to look for other options to achieve their goals, while the sport organization loses brand opportunities and income to fund their core activities. Additionally, some researchers have found that the sport industry is suffering from managerial self-satisfaction, where ex-athletes with little business education and marketing experience are working in sponsor management roles (Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 2000; Stotlar, 1999).

To summarize, commercialization of sport, the strategic development of sponsorships, and the mentioned risk-laden issues related to sport sponsorships make it necessary to explore the relationship between sponsees and sponsors. This is what this study intends to do from a relational perspective, catching opinions of both sides of the dyad by interviewing employees from two major sport federations, seven of their sponsors, and a marketing expert.

A healthy sponsee-sponsor relationship is likely to produce a long-lasting sponsorship and reduce the risk of sponsorship termination because it gives the parties time to get familiar with each other's abilities and accumulate benefits through cooperation. When successful, sponsorship creates great value for the sponsoring company, but also the sport entity (Urriolagoitia & Planellas, 2007). Long term associations between sponsees and sponsors can produce mutual sustainable competitive advantages (Amis, Slack, & Berrett, 1999), which is often a goal when organizations enter partnerships. Partners are more likely to combine complementary resources needed to achieve a lasting competitive advantage if they have close cooperation and relation to each other (Urriolagoitia & Planellas, 2007). Modern sponsorships contain a series of interactions (Farrelly & Quester, 2005a), far more than signing the contract that defines the goals of the sponsorship. They involve several interrelationships of both top senior officials and marketing, communication and project managers. The success of modern sponsorships depends on both parties; it is therefore important to examine both sides of the dyad. In the past, only a few studies have done this. The topic of relationships is a sensitive one, and researchers find it challenging to get access to confidential information.



The overall aim of this study is to make a practical and theoretical contribution, which I believe every master thesis should do.

The first aim is related to knowledge about the *relationship* between a sponsor and a sponsee in professional sponsorships because of the limited empirical research available in the field. Much of the existing marketing literature has a transactional view of sponsorships. As argued in chapter 2, many professional sponsorships are today collaborative relationships where the benefits are an outcome of the cooperation between sponsees and sponsors. That is why this thesis is based on a theoretical framework that takes relational principles into consideration, which has been asked for by researchers (Demir & Söderman, 2015; Farrelly, 2010; Henseler, Wilson, & Westberg, 2011). Based on this, the intention is to make a theoretical contribution to existing sponsorship literature by identifying visible relational factors that hopefully will be explored on a bigger scale through quantitative measures.

The second purpose of the study is to gain a broader *understanding* of professional sponsorships in Norway. By asking about the ideal relationship, I attempt to provide science-based practical implications about what both parties can do to create successful cooperation. The time where large sponsorships depend on the personal preferences of top company officials and sponsorship success is based on seeing company logo in the stadium and access to live competitions, is pretty much a thing of the past. The entrance of social media into the marketing and advertising industry provides companies with new marketing tools to connect with consumers. Simultaneously, the commercialization of sport has resulted in a rise in sponsorship fees. Because of these two trends, companies need to a greater extent justify their decisions compared to alternative options when entering sponsorships.

At the same time, sport organizations will find it harder to attract funding for their core activities. Therefore, it is interesting to find out how the parties operate in this new reality. Although one must be careful drawing conclusions based on a small sample, I believe this kind of research could help companies and sport organizations to work closely together, and thus contribute to sponsorship success.

## **1.1 Context**

What is the context of this study? It is sport federations in Norway and the topic of sponsorships. This chapter gives a description about the two topics.

### **1.1.1 Development of sport sponsorships**

The sponsorship phenomenon was previously dominated by a transactional view. Sponsorships were a way of showing corporate social responsibility (CSR), branding the company logo, or simply a personal choice of senior business managers with little expectations of getting something in return (Shank & Lyberger, 2014). In the transactional arrangement, the exchange of money in turn for association rights was the core of sponsor-sponsee relation (Kuzma & Kuzma, 2009), with limited communication and cooperation between the parties (Chadwick, 2007). The traditional way of sport sponsorship was the arrangement with a trade of money for logo visibility in the arena, established as a field within sport management and marketing research (Cornwell & Kwon, 2019; Walliser, 2003). Both the sponsor and the sponsee would behave in an opportunistic matter to achieve short term objectives and jump into a new deal once the obligations were fulfilled (Chadwick & Thwaites, 2005; Cousens, Babiak, & Slack, 2000). In fact, the literature has noted that in the past, sport sponsorships were a product of sport organizations looking for cash with limited knowledge about how to manage them (Farrelly, Quester, & Burton, 2006; Thjømmøe, Olson, & Brønn, 2002).

As mentioned in the introduction, the sport sector has over the last decades undergone a process of commercialization, which has resulted in a flow of money into sport and increased sponsorship fees. Additionally, several other factors that are mentioned below have contributed to increased sponsorship spending (Cornwell, Roy, & Steinard, 2001; Henseler et al., 2011; Kuzma & Kuzma, 2009; Lagae, 2005; Quester & Thompson, 2001). 1. the sponsors are today more concerned with building and communicating their brand. 2. there is market saturation in traditional advertisement platforms such as TV, radio and newspapers, and decreased popularity of such platforms. 3. customers seem to be more acceptive to brand messages through entertainment activities, such as sport competitions. 4. sport sponsorships make it possible for companies to target specific customer groups and create engaging and personalized content. 5. there is a trend where companies communicate their CSR to consumers who have become critical and aware of moral corporate standards.

The factors mentioned above have contributed to companies with experience in sponsoring have become aware that they need to integrate strategic thinking and planning into their sponsorships to maximise what they get out of it (Chadwick et al., 2016; A. Morgan et al., 2014). Part of this development is a trend where sponsorships

are becoming more important when connecting with customers (Harvey, 2001), developing organizational culture (Urriolagoitia & Planellas, 2007), serve as a platform for corporate image and brand management (Farrelly & Quester, 2005a), and stakeholder management (Chadwick et al., 2016). Apart from seeking multiple benefits from the sponsorship, the sponsors also demand higher expertise and cooperative involvement from the sponsored entities (Farrelly, 2010; Farrelly et al., 2006; van Rijn, Kristal, & Henseler, 2019). In this new arrangement, partners have an interactive collaboration that aims to create a “win-win” situation for both the sponsor and the sport property beyond the marketing benefits.

As the sport market has become significantly larger in recent decades, companies today also sponsor entities which previously were not sponsored, or the ones recently formed. Researchers have promoted sponsorships as an effective tool to reach a very specific and often homogenous audience (Irwin, Sutton, & McCarthy, 2008; Lagae, 2005). Others point out that companies sponsor niche sports with objectives like increasing sales/market share and involvement in the community (Daniels, Baker, Backman, & Backman, 2007; Greenhalgh & Greenwell, 2013). Good examples of this are action and extreme sport, or the one that some consider not being a real sport, e-sport. A good example that large companies seek to associate themselves with new sports is Red Bull sponsoring extreme sports, or the support of Coca-Cola and Mercedes to e-sport. In the case of Red-Bull, the company also shows creativity by self-inventing new brands such as Red Bull Flying Bach or transforming former brands like the football teams RB Leipzig and FC Red Bull Salzburg. In the Norwegian context, the largest bank DNB has recently decided to sponsor a national e-sport club (Fykse, 2018). Likewise, an elite ice-hockey club and football club have decided to cooperate to form a network for e-gaming with hopes of future income (Frafjord & Bø, 2019).

### **1.1.2 Sport sponsorships in Norway**

Sport is popular in Norway. We love to watch sport as entertainment, and there is a lot of money involved in live streaming. In a time where television numbers are decreasing, live sport is one of the few growing segments. This makes it a popular platform for attracting spectators, and there is a competition for TV rights between different companies (Riks TV, 2015). Despite the small population, our athletes perform well on the international stage, with winter sport as our home ground. Also, sport and physical activity are being practiced by most of the population and roughly one of three citizens

is a member of a sport team (Breivik & Rafoss, 2012). The sport movement plays a big part in the civil sector in Norway, and federations have many memberships compared to other organizations. For example, the Norwegian Football Association (NFF) counts more than six times as many members than the biggest political party, the Labour Party (Arbeiderpartiet). Even though the sport movement has traditionally been based on volunteerism, sport organizations have in recent years been undergoing a process of professionalization (Goksøyr, 2010; Hanstad, Breivik, Sisjord, & Skaset, 2011; Loland, 2013). Berge (2000) argued that large sport sponsorships were late in Norway and only became frequent after the 1994 Olympic Games (as cited in Thjømmøe et al., 2002). At the same time, past research shows that much of the past sponsorship activity in Norway evolves around personal connections, and is left out from the firms' official communication strategy (Thjømmøe et al., 2002).

The sport federations are responsible for governing a specific sport in Norway and representing the country on the international scene. They are also the ones that manage the commercial rights of the sport. Today, the most popular sport federations operate in a way that is similar to commercial businesses in terms of annual turnover and the number of employees. According to a report, sport federations on average have 17 employees (NIF, 2016), meaning most of them could be considered as medium-sized companies by Norwegian standards (over 20 employees). The same report also records that 46% of the income of sport federations in 2016 came from various marketing activities.

Two sport federations and their sponsors serve as an environment for this research study. The federations are among biggest in Norway in terms of memberships, and have won medals in international competitions. They are popular sports to follow, the national teams and athletes have high viewing numbers, and they are frequently in the media. One federation practices team sport, the other federation is about individual athletes. One of the federations has a long record of sport success and their athletes are considered among the best in the world. Many of their sponsorships have been running for a long time. The second federation had good international results in the past, followed by several years of mediocre performance. However, a new generation of athletes have recently performed well in international competitions, and the federation has recently seen a rise in popularity and signed several big sponsorship deals. The

sponsors in this study belong to different business sectors. Some of them are known only within Norway, while others are known internationally and globally, and have a presence in several countries. A common feature for all companies is that their sponsorships are on high level, from main and general sponsor on level 1, to federation sponsors on level 3 (one federation has 4 sponsorships levels, the other one has 7, with one being the highest). They involve paying a substantial amount of money in sponsorship fees and additional investments of several million Norwegian crowns during the cooperation period.

Sponsoring is usually connected to areas of culture, sport and philanthropic initiatives, with sport being the largest sector. In 2018, global sponsorship spending was expected to be almost 60 billion euro (IEG, 2018). In a Norwegian context, sponsoring is the second biggest channel for advertising, and the total annual investment in 2018 exceeded 8 billion NOK (800 million euro) for sponsoring and event marketing combined, with 70% of spending on sport (Sponsor og eventforeningen, 2019). Additional market research reports about the local sponsorship market are continuously produced by Sponsor Insight to explain current trends, cooperation details, and sponsorship effects (Sponsor Insight, 2017).

There are few research papers on the topic of sponsorship relations in Norway. Available publications focus on the marketing effects of sponsorships (Olson & Mathias Thjømmøe, 2012; Skard & Thorbjørnsen, 2014) or are theses of lower educational degrees (Isacsson & Lilja, 2017; Kristensen, 2014; Nordli, 2018). However, a few papers have relevance for this study. An examination of almost 500 firms found that 85 percent of large companies support social causes (sport included), and of those who do only 54 percent have established goals for the collaboration (Østmo, 2010). This means that almost half of the companies either look at it as gift-giving or do not seek to achieve any benefits. Either way, it is a questionable investment.

Likewise, Thjømmøe et al. (2002) found in their study that companies who set goals for their sponsorships, have advanced goals, but do not follow through with planning and evaluation that is needed. Another finding of the study is a situation which the authors call a “*paradox*”, where the same companies are satisfied with the sponsorship outcomes despite spending little time to evaluate what these outcomes are (Thjømmøe et al., 2002, p. 12). If sponsors set goals but do not follow up with specific

planning, it could mean they do not have knowledge about managing sponsorships, or neglect the importance of it. Besides, it is more challenging for a company to engage in a partnership that produces several outcomes than to contribute financially in order to achieve a marketing effect from logo exposure because it requires specific skills (Ditlev-Simonsen, 2017). Before sport organizations and sponsors can be advised on how to manage their relationships with each other, we must know how these relationships function. Knowledge from this study can be a step in the right direction.

## **1.2 Research questions**

In the introduction, it was mentioned that this study aims to examine sponsorships to improve our understanding of the relationship between sponsees and sponsors. In addition, Henseler et al. (2011) argue that exploring sponsorship relations could directly improve the outcomes of it. They specifically advise researchers to focus on relationship quality and relationship stability.

The chosen research questions for this study are;

*What factors contribute to the relationship quality between sport federations and sponsors?*

*What is the ideal relationship between sport federations and their sponsors?*

I will attempt to answer the questions by focusing on the sponsor-sponsee relation through the concept of relationship quality (RQ). In order to do so, the study tests if factors identified in previous research are also present in the relationship between sport federations and sponsors in Norway.

Relationship quality is specifically useful because it suits the described environment of sponsorships today, as argued in chapter 2.3. Moreover, it makes it possible to explore the relational dynamics in order to further understand this unique partnership, which has so far received limited attention from researchers. The contribution of knowledge provided by this study can be relevant for relationships beyond the field of sport, as the sport sponsorship model is proven to also be applicable in the field of culture (Olson, 2010).

## **2. Theoretical framework**

The purpose of this chapter is to inform the reader about the development of sponsorships as partnerships, and show that such arrangement can be beneficial for both parties. It also introduces the concept of relationship quality. But first, it is necessary to define terms that are used in this study.

### **2.1 Definitions**

#### **2.1.1 Partnership**

This thesis treats the relationship between sponsee and a sponsor as a *partnership*. At the same time, the terms are used as synonyms to avoid monotone writing. To avoid confusion for the reader, it may be useful to define what a partnership is. The purpose is to show that a partnership is more than a relationship, it also consists of other elements that are present in sponsorships.

A partnership is described as an inter-organizational collaboration where information and resources are shared to produce outcomes that each partner would not achieve alone (Waddell & Brown, 1997). In relation to this, Lewis (2001, p. 2) defines a partnership as “*a relationship that consists of shared and/or compatible objectives and an acknowledged distribution of specific roles and responsibilities*”. Thus, one way of understanding relations in sponsorships is by looking at it as a partnership, because sponsors and sponsees collaborate, share information, resources, and assign tasks and responsibilities to accomplish results that benefit both parties.

#### **2.1.2 Sponsorship**

Sponsorship is an interdisciplinary phenomenon (Cornwell & Kwon, 2019), and various definitions of sponsorship have previously been proposed. According to Walliser (2003), no accepted definition of sponsorships has been established because of the different purposes sponsorship has for the sponsor in every situation.

In the context of sport, many definitions treat sponsorships as an exchange of money for rights of association, a payment in order to exploit the commercial opportunities, or an investment in order to achieve economic and brand-related benefits. What they have in common is that they are marketing-oriented, and are based on a transactional exchange

of goods for services between a sponsor and a sponsee. The challenge with this definition is that it limits the sponsorship to a commercial and marketing-oriented transaction, and excludes other areas where it can be beneficial. Secondly, a definition should also include both sides because a sponsorship implies that the parties together carry the risks and harvest the benefits from it. And finally, many definitions ignore the relational dimension of the sponsorships, which this thesis argues is essential for sponsorship success.

After doing an overall investigation of definitions in the context of sport, I decided to combine two sponsorships definitions in order to create one that is suitable for studying the relational aspect of sponsorships. The new definition is inspired by two separate definitions. The first definition comes from Séguin and Bodet (2015, p. 308), who define sponsorship as “*an exchange, a relationship, partnership or an alliance between a sponsor and a sponsee*”. The second definition is proposed by Tripodi (2001, p. 98) who writes “*sponsorship is the provision of assistance by a commercial organisation (sponsee), in cash or kind, to a sport property (sponsee), in exchange for the rights to be associated with the sport property for the purpose of gaining commercial and economic advantage*”.

The result of combining the two definitions above is the following:

*A sponsorship is a partnership between a sponsee and a sponsor, where the sponsee provides the right to be associated with the sport property for the purpose of gaining economic and non-economic advantages for provision of economic and non-economic assistance from the sponsor.*

In our context, a sponsee is a sport federation, and a sponsor is a business company.

The chosen definition of a sponsorship is appropriate because it recognizes the relational element of a sponsorship as a partnership, implicating that the partners need to cooperate if the exchange is to be beneficial for both parties. It also covers the content of a sponsorship by including non-commercial benefits that can be achieved like networking opportunities or employee engagement/satisfaction, which are often ignored by marketing-oriented definitions. Thirdly, it embraces the non-economic assistance that sponsors can offer to a sponsee, like knowledge-exchange or branding of the sport.



Possible benefits of sponsorships of sponsors and sponsees are covered in chapter 2.2.2 and 2.2.3.

## **2.2 Sponsorships as partnerships**

This chapter argues that modern sponsorships today function as partnerships. First, the relationship between the sponsee and the sponsor is described. Thereafter the chapter explores the benefits a partnership provides for the sponsor and the sponsee.

### **2.2.1 Relationship between sponsee and sponsor**

Sponsorships as partnerships rely on the resource-based view of organizations in strategic management, which assumes that partnerships are more successful if they are built on a relationship that creates mutually benefitting resources (Amis, Pant, & Slack, 1997).

In section 2.1.1, sponsorship in the context of this study was defined as a partnership, which implied inter-organizational collaboration where information and resources are shared and to produce outcomes that each partner would not achieve alone (Waddell & Brown, 1997). The reason partnership was integrated in the definition is to include the relational aspect of a sponsorship, but also because national sport federations today are likely to operate in a business-minded matter and rely on the sponsorship income to fund its core activities (Chadwick et al., 2016; Séguin, Teed, & O'Reilly, 2005). Also, research shows that modern sponsorships are increasingly taking the form of long-term partnerships (Bühler, 2006). Ryan and Fahy (2003) note that the sponsor and the sponsee are mutually dependent on each-others actions. The sponsorship between sport federations and their sponsors can therefore also be seen as a business-to-business (B2B) partnership that implies sharing information and resources for mutual benefits. Likewise, Chadwick and Thwaites (2005) argue that in the traditional view on sponsorships, the relational aspect is completely irrelevant. Thus, the main difference between traditional sponsorships and sponsorships as partnerships is, that instead of being based on a transaction of association for cash, it is based on mutual collaboration.

Researchers have on several occasions argued this point. Farrelly and Quester (2005b) examined the potential of large-scale sponsorships and concluded that they indeed do have the potential to operate as partnerships. The same authors claim that competencies of successful partnerships include relational fit, the ability of partners to form a cooperation and agree on responsibilities in order to achieve the chosen goals

(Farrelly et al., 2006). Further, a case study by Alexander (2009) considered sponsorship as a central part of company's brand strategy, highlighting the benefits of partnerships to meet additional objectives than brand marketing goals.

Moreover, several researchers have noted that sponsorships must be implemented through collaboration in order to generate benefits (Kuzma & Kuzma, 2009; Walliser, 2003). This is why Anastasio (2018) claims that large-scale sponsorships, like a sponsorship between a sport federation and their sponsors, are today developing into partnerships with mutual benefits for both sides. According to Urriolagoitia and Planellas (2007), this process is a result of a competitive and complex business environment. Thus, companies look to create long-term relationships that can produce competitive advantages. Farrelly and Quester (2005a) goes deeper and identifies four reasons have led to relational and strategic development in sponsorships; 1. increasing costs of sponsorship fees, 2. signs of marketing clutter in the sector, 3. legal factors such as exclusivity and avoidance of ambush marketing and 4. concerns of value provision in sponsorships versus other advertisement forms. In the process of dealing with these challenges, sponsorships have evolved to long-lasting partnerships with additional benefits for the sponsors (Farrelly, Greysier, & Rogan, 2012). Other researchers have described partnerships as the last maturity state of sponsorships, where the sponsor takes a strategic approach and participates actively in the cooperation (Johnston, 2010).

But what does the partnership between a sponsor and a sponsee consist of? It consists of resources like employees, materials, networks, knowledge, and money that both partners contribute with. It is affected by past interactions, personal aspects of individuals on both sides, and the currently available resources and needs of the parties (Arino & De La Torre, 1998). The partnership is dynamic and evolves over time (A. Morgan et al., 2014).

In relation to this, it has been noted that successful partnerships are featured by a series of adaptations on both sides (Brennan & Turnbull, 1999). For sport sponsorships, the biggest adaptation is one where sponsors expect the sponsee to act as a partner who is willing to cooperate and invest in the partnership in order to create mutual benefits (Farrelly et al., 2006). Urriolagoitia and Planellas (2007) suggest that sponsor-sponsee partnership consist of several phases (formation, operation, and outcome), highlighting the need for mutual contribution and adapt to changing priorities. This way, the partnership itself becomes an asset with mutual benefits, that both partners would not be

able to achieve by themselves (Clark, Lachowetz, Irwin, & Schimmel, 2003). In contrast, sport partnerships can also suffer from relational aspects like failure to adapt to changing dynamics, commitment imbalance, conflicting perceptions of contribution, and capability gaps (Farrelly, 2010).

This section has reasoned that the dyadic perspective (both sides of the arrangement) is key in partnerships. But what exactly are the possible benefits of such arrangement for both parties? The next sections explore this question.

### **2.2.2 Benefits for the sponsors**

Sponsorships can offer sponsors a wide range of benefits. Sport sponsorships were traditionally viewed as marketing and brand equity tool to communicate with their customers (Walraven, Koning, & van Bottenburg, 2012). When the consumers are exposed to advertisement messages, they can interpret the link between the sponsor and the sponsee as a positive one. Hence, the sponsoring company can create goodwill, increase the awareness, brand image and ultimately improve their profits (Cornwell & Maignan, 1998; Cornwell et al., 2001).

Additionally, a sponsor can create benefits through strategic partnership with the sponsee. This is important because exposure alone has proven to have limited impact on consumers (Meenaghan, 1991). By sharing resources, the partners can create a closed system involving sport events, athletes and media channels, that generates exclusive benefits for the sponsors (Demir & Söderman, 2015). In this closed system, sponsors can for example expose customer groups to their products. It has previously been demonstrated that brands and products can become the focus of group interactions (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Holt, 2005). Also, sponsors can improve their competitive position by utilizing the sponsorship as a platform for generating media attention, engaging and directly interacting with customers and other external stakeholders (Chadwick et al., 2016).

A partnership can also be an investment in internal culture to build employee identification with the company, create a match between internal and external company perception, inspire employee engagement and foster a collaborative culture (Farrelly et al., 2012; Inoue, Havard, & Irwin, 2016). At last, sponsors can also utilize the social capital created in the network of involved sponsors and other stakeholders to create benefits like increased business activity and social relations (Ratten, Ratten, & Cobbs,

2011; Wagner, Persson, & Overbye, 2017). In a Norwegian setting, the fruit distribution company Bama has utilized the network of their sponsorships as platform for business development to provide fruits in schools and for companies using the slogan “5 a day”. Through their concept “Eat Move Sleep”, incorporated into sponsorships with the Norwegian Football, Biathlon and Ski federations (Bama, 2019), the company is able to communicate and engage pretty much the whole population.

### **2.2.3 Benefits for the sponsees**

According to Demir and Söderman (2015), much of research on partnerships in sport focuses on the benefits of the sponsors, and leaves out the advantages of the sponsees. Similarly, Farrelly et al. (2006) criticizes the available field literature on sponsorships for focusing only on advantages of the sponsors, instead of the mutual outcomes that also benefit the sponsees. A question is raised, is sponsorship fee really the only reward for sport federations when they enter new sponsorships?

If we look into sponsorship effects beyond the financial gain, the answer is obviously no. The income aspect is of course important, as Norwegian sport federations get 46% of their income from marketing activities, where sponsorships are a largest part of it (NIF, 2016). A sponsorship fee involves increased ability for the federation to fund their primary goal, which is the activity itself. This can be either grassroots activities, the national teams and the staff involved. By doing so, the federation is actually able to brand their product through national teams and grassroots activities, which is the sport. This brings us to the second point. In addition to provide funding for core activities, the sponsee also benefits from joint initiatives the partners do together, be it marketing campaigns or generation of media attention.

Additionally, stakeholders like the local communities where the core activities are conducted are benefitting to. This can have an effect on the perception of the sport within the population and pave way of seeking funding or support from public and other institutions. The last point is especially relevant in the Norwegian context, as the sport movement annually receives large sums of money from philanthropic foundations (like Sparebankstiftelsen DNB), and the public in order to coordinate the public health policy.

Moreover, the sponsee can also facilitate transfer of knowledge from the sponsors, who may possess relevant skills that the sponsee can access without making large investments (Ryan & Fahy, 2003; Urriolagoitia & Planellas, 2007).

The last area that can benefit the sponsee is managing their network of sponsors and other stakeholders as a facilitator (Rowley, 1997). Although this can be considered as an expense, if done correctly, it can contribute to learning networking skills and creation of power (Ratten et al., 2011), which in return can help securing new sponsorships or maintaining current sponsorship portfolio.

The point of this chapter was to create a framework of sport sponsorships as partnerships from the side of the sponsor and the sponsee, since the study examines the partnership from a dyadic perspective. The next chapter presents the concept of relationship quality, which is later employed to examine the partnership between sport-federations and sponsors.

### **2.3 Relationship quality**

Sport sponsorships are complex, and to study them a multiple perspective is needed (Davies, Daellenbach, & Ashill, 2008). One perspective that is able to capture several aspects of a sponsorship is the concept of relationship quality (RQ).

The marketing researchers and practitioners started paying attention to relationship quality in the early 80's, as it became evident that building relationships with existing customers would be more cost-effective than attracting new ones. The concept is created on principles from social bond theory, which state that quality of relations between firms is reflected in the dyadic relationships between employees on both sides and can be measured in unique, but related factors (Beck & Palmatier, 2012). In general, relationship quality refers to the overall perceived strength of a relationship and how much the involved parties trust each other, are satisfied with the relationship, and are committed to maintain it over a longer term (Smith, 1998). The factors are high-order constructs, and although they are differentiated in the theory, in real life they are visible in relation to each other in every situation between the partners. For example, it is difficult to have a well-functioning cooperation without good communication. The idea is that by knowing more about these factors, we can learn to maintain a healthy relationship with partners and avoid the potential pitfalls of relationship failure.

The importance of relationship quality is visible in the amount of research in other research fields like business relationships and relationship marketing. Business literature seems to agree that RQ is important for success of B2B relationships (Bejou,

Wray, & Ingram, 1996; Gummesson, 2003; Mysen, Svensson, & Högevold, 2012), which is what I argue modern sponsorships are in form of partnerships. Another reason for why this framework is relevant in sponsorship context, is because relationship quality reflects the value creation of the relationship (Wong & Zhou, 2006). Thus, studying quality of the partnership can also provide knowledge on how to increase the total value that is produced in a sponsorship. Past studies on relationship quality have been one-sided and focusing on the perception of the buyer (Lages, Lages, & Lages, 2005). But in B2B relationships, “both parties are active in the interactions and have a perception of the quality of the relationship” (Holmlund & Strandvik, 1999, p. 686). Therefore, both perceptions should be taken into consideration, which is what this study aims to do.

It has been argued that the wide variety of relationship contexts has led to development of different applicable RQ factors because each service and business market operationalizes relationship quality in its own way (Woo & Ennew, 2004). Therefore, we need to look into existing research on sponsorships in order to identify relevant factors that might be applicable in this study. In the next chapter, I will go in detail into existing literature on sponsorship relations in order to identify and describe RQ factors that are relevant for studying the unique partnership between sport federations and sponsors.

### **3. Literature review**

#### **3.1 Relationship quality in sponsorships**

The number of studies that apply relationship quality in the context of sport sponsorships is low. Farrelly and Quester (2005a) examined RQ in Australian football. Their findings suggest that commitment, trust, and satisfaction as visible factors that are related to each other. The authors encourage future studies to focus on the dyadic perspective and address two limitations of their study. It focuses on a small sample size in a very specific sport, and only considers the perspective of the sponsor.

A second study considering relationship quality in sport sponsorships is a doctoral thesis on professional sponsorships in England and Germany by Bühler (2006). Through interviews, the author identified commitment, cooperation, communication, and mutual understanding as RQ factors. In the quantitative phase however, only trust, satisfaction, and cooperation were confirmed as factors that contribute to relationship quality. The thesis then combines the factors identified in the qualitative and quantitative phases into three new elements, labeled “relationship compatibility”, “long-term perspective” and “collaborative behaviour” (Bühler, 2006, p. 281). However, the author does not provide any information on how to measure or identify these elements, and they have not been touched by other researchers since. Instead, the author has in post-doctoral publications applied trust, mutual understanding, long-term perspective, communication, and cooperation as RQ factors in sponsorships (Bühler & Nufer, 2010; Nufer & Bühler, 2011).

Additionally, several other studies that have examined important factors in sport sponsorships. Although they are less relevant because they employ other frameworks than relationship quality, they are worth mentioning in order to help establish potential relational factors that can be relevant for this study.

A study of Westberg et al. (2011) mentions communication, commitment, and trust as relationship quality elements in their study on how player transgressions affect sponsorships, suggesting that these elements affect sponsor response to cancel or continue the sponsorship in cases of negative episodes.

Hessling, Åsberg, and Roxenhall (2018) examined the link between commitment and value creation on sponsors of Swedish ice-hockey clubs, using shared values, trust,

commitment, and long-term perspective as relational aspects. The authors discovered that commitment is an important driver of value creation in the minds of sponsors.

In relation to this, A. Morgan et al. (2014) examined the relationship between a national sport organization and their event sponsors in an Australian context, identifying trust, communication, cooperation commitment, satisfaction, and mutual understanding as factors that contribute to relational value in sponsorships. The study revealed that relational elements have a significant impact on the perception of success, and renewal intentions of the sponsors.

Lastly, Cousens, Babiak, and Bradish (2006) theorized analysis of the sponsorship relation through a framework that proposed cooperation, communication, trust, mutual understanding, and long-term perspective as important relationship factors.

To summarize, the literature has suggested the following factors that are important for the sponsor-sponsee relationship; cooperation, communication, trust, commitment, satisfaction, mutual understanding, and long-term orientation. Consequently, this study will apply these factors to study the partnership between sport federations and sponsors. The following section defines these factors and describes their role in the sponsee-sponsor relationship.

### ***3.2 Relationship quality factors in the sponsor-sponsee partnership***

#### *Cooperation*

Cooperation is an important element in any partnership (Brennan & Turnbull, 1999). In B2B context, cooperation is underpinned by a degree of trust and commitment, and high level of cooperation indicates a high degree of relationship quality (Woo & Ennew, 2004). In relation to this, it has been pointed for a long time that collaboration and shared planning is a sign of successful partnerships (J. Anderson & Narus, 1990).

In a sponsorship context, cooperation can be explained as a collaboration between the partners to plan joint activities and activate the sponsorship opportunities. In other words, sponsees and sponsors must cooperate in order to benefit from the partnership. Bühler (2006) found that cooperation is the major factor for relationship quality between sponsors and sponsees. Additionally, the study discovered that cooperation could also take place outside the activities agreed in the contract, in the form of additional joint initiatives. The author also discovered that the sponsors and



sponsees actually perceive the cooperation as a partnership that is based on creating business opportunities for each other. The importance of cooperation has probably increased in recent years, as sponsorships today are based on mutual collaboration compared to traditional sponsorships. In a Norwegian context, it has previously been documented that the sponsors do not plan or activate their sponsorship (Thjømmø et al., 2002), suggesting that the level of cooperation in the partnership is low.

### *Trust*

Trust has been described as a critical factor in uncertain and risk-laden relationships (Coulter & Coulter, 2002), which in my opinion sponsorships are. Trust is pivotal to achieve desired relationship performance and can be defined as confidence and faith in each other to act reliable and with good intentions. (R. Morgan & Hunt, 1994). It is visible in the relationship when the parties act fairly and open with each other, which is important for the exchange of sensitive information and resources. Such behaviour is also thought to be essential in the daily inter-firm cooperation and communication, because a trustworthy partner is perceived as a credible and can be relied on (Mohr, Fisher, & Nevin, 1996). Farrelly, Quester, and Mavondo (2003) argue that sponsors are more likely to invest additional resources in the cooperation when the relational activities are honest and open-minded. Additionally, a study by A. Morgan et al. (2014) shows that national sport organizations and sponsors agree that trust and commitment are essential for sponsorship success.

### *Commitment*

Commitment has been described as a “*desire to develop a stable relationship*” and “*confidence in the stability of the relationship*” (E. Anderson & Weitz, 1992, p. 19). Thus, commitment seems to be a mentality or an attitude to make a good partnership because it is considered important for the parties.

Farrelly and Quester (2005a, p. 212), defined commitment in sponsorship context as the willingness of the parties to make short-term investments in an effort to realise long-term benefits from the relationship. According to the authors, commitment is visible in sponsorships in the form of economic investments into activation activities. This can be hiring personnel, promotion of brand association through media, direct marketing through sport federation databases, client and stakeholder entertainment, or internal employee activation.

Additionally, commitment also manifests itself in sponsorships as a personal construct (Bühler, 2006), through participating in joint activities, and involved personnel spending time to create a personal relation to each other. Hessling et al. (2018) support this claim, and reveal that commitment is important for value creation and sponsorship stability for sponsors in a Swedish context of ice-hockey. Similarly, staff turnover is shown to have a negative impact on commitment because high inter-organizational understanding and strategic know-how is dependent on personal bonds between the partners (A. Morgan et al., 2014).

Existing research indicates that commitment is a two-sided construct. It is visible through additional investments and the creation of close personal relations between the parties. It can also be argued that importance of commitment in sponsorships has increased, as close relations and cooperation between sponsors and sponsees is one of the main differences between transactional and modern sponsorships.

### *Mutual understanding*

Another central relationship factor occurs when parties have a mutual understanding of each other's motives and objectives. Hutt, Stafford, Walker, and Reingen (2000) found out that mutual understanding is critical for partnership development, suggesting that personnel engage in dialogue about market opportunities, motivations and expectations in order to develop a shared understanding of goals, norms, and responsibilities.

In the context of sponsorships, mutual understanding is referred to partners understanding each other's perspective and sharing the same idea of each other's behaviour in the cooperation (Bühler, 2006, p. 188). In relation to this, Farrelly et al. (2006) note that sponsorships should consist of contributions from both parties and the responsibilities should be specified in the contract. The importance of mutual understanding between the partners is increasing with the development of professional sponsorships as partnerships, because the benefits are produced through cooperation. An examination of the relationships between Australian national sport organizations and their sponsors shows that the sponsors view discussing information and marketing preferences as necessary for creating beneficial activities (A. Morgan et al., 2014). On the other side, lack of mutual agreement on expectations, roles, and objectives in new sponsorships have been connected to challenges later in the relationship that typically result in sponsorship termination (Farrelly, 2010).

### *Satisfaction*

Satisfaction can be defined as an overall evaluation of fulfilment in the partnership and is directly related to relationship quality (Dwyer, Schurr, & Oh, 1987). It has an economic and non-economic side and is a product of the past interactions and outcomes in the relationship. Economic satisfaction is referred to sponsorship outcomes achieved by the sponsors and sport entities. Non-economic satisfaction is attached to sponsors' view on the ability of the sponsee to create rapport and level of professionalism in the cooperation (Farrelly & Quester, 2005a). Explained simply, partners appreciate the benefits of the sponsorship but are also concerned with how they were achieved. In the context of sponsorships, satisfaction is under-researched from the perspective of the sponsee.

There also seems to be unclarity on whether satisfaction is antecedent or an outcome of the partnership. This study takes a standpoint of previous studies that measured satisfaction within the context of sport, where satisfaction is understood as a cyclical process that is both a product of past interactions and a factor in future cooperation between sponsors and federations (Farrelly, Quester, & Clulow, 2008).

### *Communication*

Communication means sharing valuable information in formal and informal ways (E. Anderson & Weitz, 1992), and is generally seen as a cornerstone in successful B2B relationships (Mohr & Nevin, 1990; R. Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Other scholars argue that partnership success depends on partners' ability to communicate expectations, opportunities, and meaningful information to each other (Andreasen, 1996). So, communication seems to help the process where shared information is translated into action, for example from planning to executing sponsorship activities.

In the context of sport, there is limited empirical research on the topic in the available literature. This is strange since other relationship quality factors like trust, commitment, and satisfaction are created as a result of good communication (Mohr et al., 1996). Bühler (2006) failed to prove the impact of communication on relationship quality. However, Chadwick and Thwaites (2005) urge sponsors to integrate communication into the relationships with the sponsee based on their findings that sponsees in some cases of English football simply ignore to sponsor once the contractual obligations are fulfilled. Similarly, Farrelly et al. (2003) found that

communication is closely related to the activation of sponsorships. Personal communication between staff has been identified as important for value generation and partnership stability in sponsorships (A. Morgan et al., 2014).

At last, lack of frequent day-to-day communication has been attributed to sponsorship termination (van Rijn et al., 2019), while Farrelly (2010) discovered that failure of everyday communication is related to commitment asymmetry and sponsor dissatisfaction.

### *Long-term orientation*

If companies perceive what they get out of cooperation to be connected with the joint outcome that is produced in the cooperation over time, then firms are likely to achieve competitive advantages through long-term relationships (Ganesan, 1994). That is certainly true for modern sponsorships. Many sponsors and sponsees today seek benefits that require a substantial amount of investment and cooperation to achieve. For example, it takes years of activation initiatives for a sponsor seeking customer preference and image transfer before the effects become visible (Speed & Thompson, 2000). Having a long-term perspective in sponsorships implies that partners commit to cooperation in the long run (Nufer & Bühler, 2010). The same authors advise the parties to actively build a lasting relationship with each other in order to achieve sponsorship success.

Many companies and sport organizations seem to have understood this, and the literature has documented a shift to long term sponsorships on several occasions (Anastasio, 2018; Bühler, 2006). Similarly, Farrelly and his co-workers documented that the sponsors have changed their view on sponsorships from “*the tactical to strategic, from the transactional to the relationship-oriented, from the short term to the long term*” (2006, p. 1019). The same is demonstrated in practice by the largest bank in Norway, DNB, which states on their webpage that it is important for them to be a good cooperation-partner in their existing sponsorships (and therefore they are currently not seeking new deals).

In relation to this topic, the benefits of long-term sponsorships have been documented in the sponsorship literature. It is suggested that ongoing sponsorship has positive effects on work culture, employee satisfaction, and knowledge development in firms

(Urriolagoitia & Planellas, 2007). An extended study of UEFA Champions League shows that customer recall on sponsor products increases over time (Walraven, Bijmolt, & Koning, 2014), while Olson and Thjømmøe (2011) argue that renewal of a sponsorship strengthens the perceived brand fit between the sponsor and the sport organizations in the minds of consumers. Moreover, it has been demonstrated that long-lasting sponsorships have the potential to develop into unique strategic resources (Jensen, Cobbs, & Turner, 2016). One study went as far as to examine the effect of sponsorship renewal on companies' stock value (Kruger, Goldman, & Ward, 2014).

### **3.3 Identifying research gap**

One of the reasons studies on relationship quality in sport have suggested different RQ factors is that research comes from different contexts and sponsorship levels, where there are various factors present. Another reason could be that they are dynamic and are visible in different periods. Similarly, Farrelly (2010, p. 332) calls future research to focus on *“examination of sponsor-property partnerships that have cultivated strategic collaboration... Obtaining appropriate information for such research may be difficult because of issues of confidentiality, but it nevertheless should be explored”*.

According to Bühler (2006) over 80% of the British and German football clubs and sponsors agree that good relationship quality is important for the success of the sponsorship. At the same time, less than a third of the clubs and sponsors in the study measure the quality of their relationships and more than half neglect any evaluation of them. This is understandable since little research is conducted on the area, which means that the parties only have a limited understanding of relationship quality. And since most do not know about it, it is difficult to create a good evaluation.

From the literature review we can identify some research gaps that this research can help to fill in. Examination on relationship quality has not been conducted in the context of sport federations. Also, past studies have not explored long-lasting sponsorships and there is an opportunity to provide knowledge on how stable relationships function (five of seven sponsorships have been running for over 18 years). Thirdly, this study considers perspectives of both sides, which makes it possible to identify similarities and differences in how sponsees and sponsors perceive the partnership and what factors are

visible in it. This has not been done before under conditions where sport organizations are in the process of professionalization.

At last, there is also a possibility to add the existing research in the field of relationship quality. Bühler (2006, p. 95) emphasizes the same point with the following words; *“sponsorships have been widely ignored in the context of relationship quality research and relationships quality has been widely ignored in the context of sponsorships research”*. Thus again, measuring RQ in sponsorships seems to fall between two fields of research, and there is a possibility to tighten the knowledge gap.

## **4. Methodology**

Every research project should describe the applied methodological perspective so that the reader can understand the basic rules and assumptions that are visible in the research (Walliman, 2011). This chapter describes the research methodology of this study. First, I briefly explain where the study is placed within the context of social research field. After that, I provide argumentation for the research design and method that is used, and explain the taken steps in regard to data collection, sample, and analyses. At last, credibility, transferability, and limitations of the study are addressed.

### **4.1 Research philosophy**

Epistemology examines the origins of information. According to Greener and Martelli (2008, p. 45) epistemology is “the nature of knowledge”, and is about what we think to be valid knowledge. It is a superior level that divides various research philosophies into ways of entering knowledge. Research philosophies guide the way we think about the process of developing knowledge. Each philosophy has unique characteristics, strengths, and weaknesses (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Jackson, 2012; Walliman, 2011). One of the established research philosophies within social sciences is interpretivism. Interpretivism argues that it is important to capture the social aspect of the world because it creates a standpoint from which people understand the world (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). It includes social interactions into the process of developing knowledge, including the human researchers’ role in the context that is studied (Walliman, 2011, p. 74). This research project clearly belongs to interpretivism, since the aim is to capture how human beings think, cooperate, and conceptualize their views about sponsorships into a common understanding.

Within interpretivism, this study falls under constructionist orientation. Sponsorships as a phenomenon under research are constructed by human exchanges and to study it, I will capture the personal view of the participants and their subjective understanding of sponsorships. This approach suits well to the social constructivism, which assumes that reality is created through social interactions as humans engage with the world and each other (Neuman, 2014). The social interaction also plays a part in the research process in at least two ways. First, I (the researcher) affect the people interviewed through the personal interplay in which information is produced. Examples of this come from the

transcribed interviews, where follow-up questions during the interviews made in some cases the participants to reflect on some aspects of sponsorships. This is visible with comments like “You know what, I haven’t thought about that before”, or “I think you did very well, it is clear that questions are thoughtfully prepared, and that makes me think about things I don’t think so often about”. Secondly, my own opinions, values, and understanding of the situation lead to deviation in the data analyses and conclusions, just as it would do with another researcher. It is therefore important for me to approach the gathered data with a conscience and an attempt to act as objective as possible.

Easterby-Smith and his co-workers (2012) note that research questions can be answered by the process of deduction or induction, or through a combination of the two approaches. This study uses a combined approach. The limited amount of literature on sport sponsorships made it necessary to take on the inductive approach and propose to view sponsorships from broader theoretical frameworks. Consequently, propositions were tested through a deductive process to see if they fit the context of sport sponsorships. At the same time, the findings were used to propose a modification of the theoretical approach to fit the context of sponsorships.

## **4.2 Research design**

Social research presents a wide range of possible research designs. One must choose the design that will suit the research purpose, the nature of the research, and provide relevant data for the chosen research questions. When considering the available research methods, it is essential to take into consideration practical surroundings, such as the amount of time, resources, and access to technology (Walliman, 2011). The project period of a total one year (one academic year) makes it possible to choose from several methods, even in combination with each other. Since the beginning, I knew my interest was the topic of sponsorships, and literature review gave me possible topics that could be relevant.

Qualitative in-depth interviews and case studies have in the past been used to examine sponsor relations and related issues in several works (Baarlid, 2018; Farrelly, 2010; Farrelly et al., 2006; Johnson, 2015; van Rijn et al., 2019; Wolfe, Meenaghan, & O’Sullivan, 2002). When the research perspective was narrowed to be about



partnerships between sport organizations and sponsors on a professional level, a case study was considered. This was partially based on the fact that only a few sport organizations in Norway operate on a professional level when it comes to marketing and sponsorship activities. Besides, it is hard to get access to the people in key positions, so we had to use available contacts to point out potential organizations. Luckily, my supervisors had some connections in several sport federations. A positive response from one of them served as a starting point. Also, sponsorships are complex processes that involve several people, which is time-consuming. Given the short time period available, a cross-sectional study was chosen since interviewing the personnel on both sides of the sponsorship dyad yields rich amounts of information.

### **4.3 Strengths and weaknesses of case studies**

According to Stake (2005, p. 443) “Case study is not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied”. The topic of this study is sponsorships. According to Neuman (2014, p. 42), case studies examine “internal features as well as the surrounding situation”. The complexity of a sponsorship matches the nature of case-studies, as they are detailed, extensive, and can examine many features of few cases.

Case studies enable us to test out and identify important concepts by moving to the core of the theory they belong to, thus providing conceptual validity (Yin, 2009). They highlight details of social processes where one factor affects the others (Neuman, 2014). Thirdly, such design can capture complex, multiple factors and processes (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012; Neuman, 2014; Yin, 2009). These strengths are relevant because several RQ factors important for the sponsor-sponsee relationship are tested. Besides, when a case study of constructionism epistemology (such as this one) is thoughtfully described, it allows the readers to make their own conclusions (Stake, 2005). At last, case studies include the application of several perspectives (Neuman, 2014). The fact that this thesis gives a rounded view of sponsorships and captures perspectives of both federations, their sponsors and a marketing expert, strengthens the choice of case studies as a preferred research design.

Having mentioned the strengths, it is also important to list the weaknesses of case studies. There are concerns about objectivity and generalizing results of case studies to other methods. One solution to this danger is proposed by Yin (2009), who suggests that

the researcher should create a clear design before data collection, including main questions and propositions, subject of analyses, and procedures for interpreting the collected data. The study partially resolves this weakness by clearly describing the context of the research and the involved parties, applying factors that are previously tested in sponsorship research, and studying two cases. Besides, individual cases studied in collection can lead to a better understanding of other cases and possibly also contribute on a theoretical level (Stake, 2005). This thesis does not seek to produce general conclusions, but rather provide a picture of the specific cases in a specific context. Even though the sample size is relatively small, it is similar to other studies on sponsor relations. Findings of other studies with similar samples have been recognized in the literature. Therefore, I believe the findings of this study can provide practical and theoretical value. Additionally, Neuman (2014) notes that cross sectional case studies do not capture social processes or changes in human perceptions over time, which might be a limitation for the results given that sponsorships are dynamic and that personal relations between the people involved in sponsorships may change over time.

#### **4.4 Data collection**

Before selecting any method of data collection, one should be clear about the overall objectives of the research (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). One of the premises for my thesis, was to get involved in a topic that I was interested in. Once the area of research was narrowed to sponsor relations and contact with potential federations was made, it was evident that qualitative interviews as an exploratory conversation would be a cost-effective approach to collect data. The qualitative design provides an understanding of a social phenomenon that is broad, complex and unknown (Thagaard, 2013). This is the case with sponsorship relations in general and especially in the Norwegian context, where there is little research on the topic.

The goal of qualitative interviews is to harvest the thoughts and interpretations about a phenomenon (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), in this case opinions of the participants about the sponsor-sponsee relationship. Interviews are flexible and allow to access the depth and complexity of a phenomenon since the researcher can ask follow-up questions. Face-to-face interviews allow the researchers to observe the body language, voice tones and face expressions, which can give new meaning to the gathered content (Thagaard, 2013). In-depth interviews were selected as a method for data collection for several

reasons. Interviews are a recommended approach when the aim is to explore an unknown topic and create an understanding of the complexity instead of simple descriptions Neuman (2014). Talking directly with decision-making personnel involved in sponsorships captures their opinion about social and organizational realities of sponsor-sponsee relationship. Decoding the opinions makes it possible to create a dyadic understanding of the same relationship.

Some of the relevant disadvantages of interviews is the amount of time required for preparation, sampling and analysing the data. Interviews are also the biggest subject of conscious and unconscious research bias in terms of personal appearance and personal traits (Neuman, 2014). Another potential pitfall is that the researcher never knows whether the respondent is telling the truth or the whole story, or provides information that he/she thinks the researcher wants to hear. This is especially relevant for case studies where the topic of research is a sensitive one, such as personal relations.

#### **4.4.1 Interview guide**

An interview guide (see Appendix D) consisting of 30 questions was used to direct the conversation, with general questions followed by specific ones. The selected topics were sponsorship motives, goalsetting, cooperation phases, initiative-taking, communication, planning, and evaluation. Questions were created based on the previous research on sponsorship relations and discussed with the supervisors. The general questions consisted of open questions, such as “from your business model, how do you view a sponsorship?”. An indirect approach is recommended because investigating relationship mentality and attitude can help to identify motives, expectations about roles, responsibilities, and results of the cooperation (Hoffmann & Schlosser, 2001), which can be related to relationship quality factors. Semi-structured interviews are considered to be flexible because it allows people to share their experience, and the researcher to dig in depth about a topic (Thagaard, 2013). This gave enormous amounts of data, with detailed descriptions on additionally interesting topics that unfortunately had to be left out from this publication in order to stay within the institutional guidelines for a master thesis. Twelve interviews produced close to 18 hours with conversation, with each interview lasting between 50-120 minutes. During the interviews, my focus was to have a curious mindset and to keep the conversation flowing as much as possible. The questions in the interview guide were studied carefully beforehand, which

meant I could focus on the conversation. A test interview was conducted prior to the first interview and some of the questions were adjusted to be of indirect nature. Looking back on the interviews with informants, I was (in my opinion), too concerned with not asking leading questions. This resulted in phrasing the questions in a non-direct manner, which in some cases led to long questions and some unclarity for the participants.

Since the people interviewed had been working with sponsorships for a number of years (1-16 years), their collective experience and knowledge made it possible to create a dynamic picture of the sponsorship relations from both sides. Interviewing both parties of the relationship is valuable, as a dyadic perspective can detect any perceptual differences between sport properties and sponsors. Many studies on the topic tend to explore the relationship from the view of the sponsor, which can be rational because sponsorships are based on the economic exchange and it is the sponsor who usually decides to enter or end a sponsorship. However, ignoring the sport organizations is dangerous, since they make half of the relationship that is being studied. In order to know how sport organizations adapt to the new reality, they must be included. Moreover, prior research suggests that the sponsors and the sport entity managers do have different views on topics regarding sponsorships (Leopkey & Parent, 2009), which again highlights the importance of assessing both sides of the cooperation.

#### **4.5 Sample**

The difficulty of getting access to companies and the tailored approach required to establish contact, especially to gatekeepers or key decision personnel, has been addressed by several authors (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012; Neuman, 2014; Thagaard, 2013). Time, patience, consistency and integrity in communication have been proposed to be important in such situations. This was taken into consideration when contacting potential participants.

To gain access to federations, a request was sent out to the head of one federation that was identified to be relevant and response-friendly. Once the formal access was given by the general secretary, the head of department was contacted with information about the project. After several follow-ups over a long time period, the individual responded that they had to reject it due to high workload and level of sensitivity. Two other federations were then identified as suitable participants and contacted.

When contact with federations was established (see Appendix A), I deliberately insisted on contacting the sponsors and potential informants myself, despite federations offering their assistance. This was to establish contact with the participants, but also to show commitment to the project, and learn how to communicate with senior key personnel. In addition, since the topic of conversation was sponsor relations between the federations and the sponsors, it was considered to be beneficial not to actively involve the federations when securing interviews. The federations were asked to provide contact information of relevant sponsors, and as far as I know, that was their only administrative involvement in the project.

The list of potential candidates consisted of twelve participants with decision-making power and those involved in sponsorship management. Employers in the marketing departments were targeted for interviews because it is documented that they have the leading responsibility for sponsorship decisions in a Norwegian context (Thjømmøe et al., 2002). Selection criteria for the sponsors was made by the marketing department of each sport federation, and it was asked that they choose participants among the main partners. This was done intentionally, to access sponsors on a professional level and those active in the partnership, compared to minor sponsors where the cooperation might be limited or consist purely of exchange of products and services. Besides, interviewing active sponsors might lead to greater insight about relationship processes, as it has been suggested that sponsors who invest actively in the cooperation are more likely to commit to the relationship and have long-term cooperation with the sport entity (Westberg et al., 2011).

A personal invitation was sent to each participant by email (Appendix A), with information about the project and the potential practical applicability of the results (Appendix B). The response was mostly positive, and follow-up emails were sent to only four participants. Interviews were conducted at the workplace to secure familiar conditions for all except one participant, who conducted the interview outside the office while on a business trip. Once the interview appointment had been arranged, relevant information about the company was collected to establish knowledge about the sponsor. In order to establish trust and brief social interaction, information about topics for discussion was sent out to the participants the day before the interview (Appendix C).

Eleven of the twelve potential candidates were interviewed over a period of two months. One sponsor declined the invitation to participate due to geographical distance. There

were five female and seven male participants. Of four interviews with the sport federations (two each), one was with the general secretary and three with respondents in top positions of marketing departments. The involved federations are one large and one middle-sized in terms of number of administrative personnel. In terms of memberships and activity, both federations are among the biggest in Norway. Their elite athletes regularly produce top results in international competitions.

With the sponsors, companies involved in the study each operate in their own business sectors. Two of them sponsor both federations among other collaborations in their sponsorship portfolio. Seven senior marketing staff of the firms were interviewed. In some cases, early interviews helped to inform and secure the later ones, using the snowball effect. The experience and connections of the two supervisors helped in some cases to secure access to respondents. In order to validate the findings, interview number twelve was secured in the later stage with the marketing expert Vegard Arntsen at Sponsor Insight, the largest firm in the Nordic for analyses-and consultancy in sport. The findings were discussed without any reference to the involved parties. An overview of the sample is presented below.

**Table 1: Profile of participants**

Participant	Industry	Position	Position experience	Duration of sponsorship
Sponsor 1	Food & Retail	Project leader	4 years	1 year
Sponsor 2	Logistics	Marketing Manager	3 years	30 years
Sponsor 3	Food manufacturer	Sponsorship Manager	7 years	20+ years 2 years
Sponsor 4	Sports equipment	Senior sales Manager	1 year	1 year
Sponsor 5	Hospitality	Sponsorship Manager	2 years	20+ years
Sponsor 6	Retails chain	Marketing Manager	2 years	18 years
Sponsor 7	Finance	Sponsorship Manager	6 years	30 years 2 years
Federation 1	Sport/Entertainment	Marketing Manager	3 years	
Federation 1	Sport/Entertainment	General Secretary	16 years	
Federation 2	Sport/Entertainment	Sales Manager	6 years	
Federation 2	Sport/Entertainment	Marketing Manager	5 years	
Marketing Expert	Analysis and consulting	CEO / Founder	13 years	20 years of experience

For informants from sport federations and companies to remain anonymous, a code system is applied to direct citations. A citation with code number S7 (sponsor number 7) does not come from sponsor 7 listed in the sample table, but from one of the other sponsors.

#### **4.6 Analysis and categorization**

Once the information is collected through the chosen method, it has to be coded, analysed, and interpreted in order to answer the chosen research questions. The coding and analysis of the interviews started already during the data collection, but a large amount of data was processed after the interviews were finished and transcribed. Inspired by the interactive data analyses model by Miles and Huberman (1994), the collected data was analysed through the following four steps;

Transcribing: This process happened shortly after the interview was conducted. When transcribing, the author first looked at the notes taken during and straight after the interview before listening to the tape. A software called Soundrecorder was used to play back the tape. During the transcription phase, linguistic characteristics, unnecessary words and other non-significant words, sounds and phrases were removed. Once the tapes were transcribed, the sound files were deleted.

Theoretical coding: Interviews were read several times again, to get a sense of the content. During this stage, comments and marks were made in an open coding process about interesting topics. In the second and third rounds of reading, related content to the mentioned research questions and RQ factors were marked. A software tool MAXQDA was used to interpret the data once the manual method of coding information into different envelopes proved to be unpractical. The statements from informants were then compartmentalized into their own categories by creating codes for each thematic area. The codes were based on the RQ factors that were identified by previous research. These are cooperation, trust, commitment, mutual understanding, satisfaction, communication, and long-term perspective. Additional topics that were not related to the RQ factors were marked by additional codes. These were later interpreted to draw interesting information of practical relevance and see if any new RQ factors were visible in the interviews. Table 2 provides examples from the coding process.

Organizing the data: Statements by the sport federations and the companies in each theme were compared to get an understanding of the provided answers. Statements were organized into two groups, opinions of the sponsors and the sport federations, in order to identify perceptual similarities and differences.

Interpreting and concluding: The statements of each subject group were interpreted based on the understanding of the RQ factors described in chapter 3.2, and conclusions were drawn in regard to the selected research questions. The conclusions were gathered into a separate document and played an important role in the process of answering the research questions, concluding, and coming up with implications.



**Table 2: Theoretical coding of relationship quality factors.**

RQ factors	Example of coded segments
Trust	We perceive [the federation], especially with [the president], as very professional. And they have this humbleness and moral in the spine, they are good and kind people, they want people well. I don't perceive them as being speculative like people in [another not-involved federation], where you don't want to have anything to do with them.
Commitment	We offer our resource personnel, which if they worked as consultants would have been very expensive. They work free of charge in this process to contribute to lift [the activity]. I often experience that we are on the offer-side to help the sport. It is something about being a good cooperation partner.
Satisfaction	We are very happy with what [the federation] has delivered to us. They have delivered way over what we perhaps expected.
Mutual understanding	That the leveraging activity to be commercial does not exclude it to be idealistic, you challenge each other all the time. And yes, there is nothing wrong with doing so because it strengthens the whole relation. That you understand each other.
Communication	We sit down together and have informal meetings where we talk out loud. Tomorrow we will create a plan, at the same time there is high below the roof to talk about what we have done last year and also about new opportunities.
Cooperation	We receive their yearly activity plan, then we make our activity-plan based on this and present it to them. For example we have something called [competition name], where the management of it happens in close cooperation with [the federation]. Because there is some logistics attached to it.
Long term perspective	Some projects, take [Project name] with [Sponsor 1] and [Sponsor 2], get the youth to eat healthy. It is not done in a month you know. It is maybe a 10-year perspective.
Internal anchoring	[the sport] is integrated throughout our annual cycle [strategic document], as a part of our communication strategy, and then we also have an own activity plan for the sponsorship linked to the championship.
Ideal relationship	Everyone should have a clearly defined goal or several defined goals in a cooperation if you are going to invest money in it
Shared value (additional topic)	Also, I would say that value anchoring will become more important in the future. If you have some challenge with your core values, you will fall.
Specific skills (additional factor)	You see that some are ahead, not a horsehead [expression for being a bit better], it is a marathon before other federations. That is the benchmark, many have a lot to improve.

## **4.7 Ethics**

Some of the ethical issues that we need to take into account when conducting research are confidentiality, anonymity and research credibility. Interviews in qualitative research is increasingly considered as a moral enquiry (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). According to Thagaard (2013) the identity of participants should remain a secret unless they consented to be identified. A fundamental ethical principle that is governed by the rules of my institution and the national regulations for research, states that all research involvement must be voluntary and informed consent should be acquired from all participants. Therefore, all informants had to sign an informed consent form which was email to them prior to the interview. The project was submitted and approved by the Norwegian Centre for research data (NSD) before data was collection began (Appendix E). The informed consent form was based on the form containing the necessary requirements published by NSD.

As a researcher, I need to be aware of the sensitivity when discussing topics like personal and inter-organizational relations, business strategy and other themes that the participants may wish to keep away from public disclosure. It is important that the participants are confident that the information will solely be used for the research purpose, and that only I and the research supervisors will have access to data. Therefore, information about anonymity and confidentiality was sent prior to the interviews and again given orally before each conversation to encourage the participants to speak freely without concern about the information or their response being traced back to them.

I could of course not promise entire anonymity, since the federations knew the selection criteria and provided contact information of their main sponsors. Simultaneously, the sponsors knew of potential key representatives that were going to be interviewed in sport federations and the other sponsors. It can also be considered that in studies where participants come from small groups and know each other, participants can potentially identify each other through language or other “between the lines” attributes. This possibility is partially removed since the interviews were conducted in Norwegian and quotes used in the thesis had to be translated into English. This process somewhat removed the language specifications that might be familiar to a specific person. Also, participants were asked if they wanted to make some parts of the interview to be non-quotable. Some informants chose to do this with information that could be confidential or expose company secrets, which was respected. At last, information that could potentially have negative consequences for the participants was

left out. Besides the possibilities mentioned above, I believe the identity of involved participants remains unknown to the outside world.

## **4.8 Credibility of the study**

Credible research consists of a suitable research design where there is a link between theory, method, and findings (Neuman, 2014). Other authors argue that research has high credibility if another researcher finds similar results when studying the same sample by using the same theory and method (Thagaard, 2013). Within the social studies, Yin (2009) suggests reliability, construct validity, and external validity (transferability) as criteria for evaluating the research design of case studies. Several steps that were taken in relation to these criteria are described below.

Reliability is about whether the results of the study can be repeated. Within qualitative research, it is relevant to questions like “can similar conclusions be made by another student in the same case?”. Based on this, it has been my intention to give a detailed description of the steps taken along the way in chapter 4.6.

Validity is concerned with truthfulness. Have we chosen the correct measures to capture the experiences of the participants and do the findings represent how things actually are? This study addresses construct validity by conceptualizing and employing a set of measures previously used in studies of relationships in the context of sport. The relationship quality factors that are utilized as measurement instruments in the interview guide are based on existing knowledge about sponsorship relationships.

### **4.8.1 Triangulation**

The world of social research is not black and white, and we can strengthen the credibility and learn more about a phenomenon by observing it from several positions, through a process called triangulation. Social sciences offer several levels of triangulation when conducting research; data sources, observers, theory, and method (Neuman, 2014; Yin, 2009).

Employing a relationship quality framework that consists of several factors helped to interpret the data from different angles. Examining relationship quality from different angles is beneficial because each factor describes different pieces of a complex relationship. This gives a holistic understanding of the unique relationship between sport federations and sponsors.

Triangulation of data sources helped to give a more accurate picture of sponsorships by

studying two unique cases, because it makes the analyses and the findings more robust (Yin, 2009). Further, having multiple information sources on both sides of the dyad, and a marketing expert strengthens the possibility to create a more accurate picture of sponsorships, and thus address the limitations of small-scale research such as case studies and qualitative interviews.

#### **4.8.2 Transferability**

Transferability refers to the ability to generalize the results of the specific cases to another context, with questions such as “can the results from this study be applied to other sponsorships?” Yin (2009) argues that the purpose of case studies is not statistical generalization but analytical, where “the investigator is striving to generalize a particular set of results to some broader theory” (p. 43). It is therefore important to note that the findings of this study are not applicable to all sponsorships. Especially when we take into consideration the fact that sponsorships are dynamic and occur on different levels in the sport system. They evolve with time and are constructed through a personal interplay between employees on both sides. However, giving thick descriptions of the social reality can help to recognize similar environments when occurring in other contexts (Neuman, 2014, p. 306). Thus, the findings of this study might make a theoretical contribution by exploring the RQ factors that are important in sponsor-ponsee relation and be relevant for future research on sponsorships in similar conditions.

#### **4.8.3 Limitations**

While other methodological weaknesses have already been addressed in this chapter, it is important to mention the research bias. These come mainly from my limited experience with conducting qualitative interviews, and analysing and describing data. During the interviews and data analyses phase, I tried to remain as objective as possible. For example, all respondents answered the questions without any resistance, even though some of the topics could involve confidential details or personal relations. At the same time, there is no doubt that my opinions about the situation, the participants, and expectations about outcomes, and past experiences have affected the collection and interpretation of the research. Even if not consciously, then it happened unconsciously. The same would also probably be the case with another researcher, but perhaps to a lesser or bigger degree.

## 5. Findings and discussion

In this chapter I will present results of the twelve in-depth interviews that were conducted with sport federations, their sponsors and a marketing expert. As mentioned in chapter 4.6, data analyses happened through a four-step process.

The results are presented in two chapters, with respect to the two research questions. Direct quotes of the participants are included in the presentation to demonstrate results and support the findings. Since the federations in this thesis practice both individual and team sport, the word “athlete” is employed as a denominator for the word “athletes, players and sportsman/sportswoman.

### 5.1 *Relationship quality factors visible in the partnership between sport federations and sponsors*

Below is the evidence of the proposed RQ factors found in the interviews. It is important to inform that the participants were asked directly about only two factors, cooperation and communication. This was done in order to give the conversation a natural flow, since it is obvious that some degree of cooperation and communication exists between the partners. The other factors were extracted from the conversation about how parties perceived the relationship.

#### 5.1.1 Cooperation

The interviews show that cooperation is a key factor in the relationship between sponsors and federations. The federations related to the sponsors as “*partners*” and “*cooperation partner*” rather than “*sponsor*”, and described the relationship as professional. One representative noted that the relationship is “*usual business life*”. It was evident in the answers from both sides that the relationship benefits both sides, and that the sport federations work very hard to create opportunities for the sponsors. For the federations, the cooperation is built on commitment and communication, which is visible in the following comment:

*F2-1: The cooperation is about being able to read the partner and have a clear collaboration, whether it is this type of person or another type of person. And then get the both of the two opposites to function in a sponsorship family. Therefore, it is important to find the right communication platform and the right meeting points so that everyone can feel present, looked after and be seen.*

On the sponsor side however, were two different opinions. Half of the sponsors mostly used the term sponsorships, while the other half used terms like “*cooperation*”, “*cooperation partner*” and “*cooperation agreement*”. They described the specific relationships with federations as close, where both parties wish the best for each other. Similar to the findings of Bühler (2006), the findings show that cooperation is a major relationship quality factor. Also similar to the mentioned study, companies indicated in the interviews that the sponsorships provide benefits and business possibilities that can be utilized.

The nature of the cooperation expressed by both federations and most of the sponsors resembles a horizontal B2B partnership, where the parties are equal. Other sponsors however, viewed the cooperation as a vertical relationship, where sponsee acts as a supplier of service that the sponsor buys, with the intention of receiving financial return later. This was visible and implicated in several interviews. The next citation directly reflects the opinion expressed by three sponsors, all have been a sponsor for a long time, about the nature of professional sponsorships.

*S7: The cooperation is such that we pay for services, and of course we expect them [the federation] to solve it for us [to provide benefits].*

The comment implicates that some of the sponsors might still operate with the traditional mindset of sponsorships being a transactional exchange, in this case money for services. This could be a result of a cooperative culture formed a long time ago, that is still present in the relationship today. Also, this attitude may also be reinforced by the sponsorship fee paid by the sponsors and the fact that the parties realize the value of the sponsorship in different phases of the cooperation. This is unfortunate, because if the sponsors view it as an exchange or a service arrangement, they might miss out on the additional benefits that occur from close cooperation with the sponsee.

Returning back to the findings, both sponsors and federations expressed the importance of cooperation. The interviews show that cooperation takes place in planning meetings, joint marketing activities, grassroot projects in the communities and exploring creative possibilities within the sponsorship. The following quotes highlight the mentioned:

F1-1: *With the sponsor portfolio we have now there are pretty professional agents so now there are absolutely both parties that drive the cooperation ahead. It is high under the roof to throw out ideas about things we can do, get it written down, gather up so that we don't throw ourselves on every good idea we come across.*

F2-1: *We have in the last years made a campaign where the sponsors are the messenger. Before Christmas, it was [campaign name] ... The year before we made a Christmas calendar where our partners have two boxes each. So these are the additional projects we do together.*

S2: *We have something called [sport league], where the management happens with close cooperation with [the federation].*

S7: *We are very on the offering side if you are to develop digital platforms... Then we contribute with resource specialists who, if they worked as consultants would have been very expensive. They work for free in such type of collaboration to lift up their platform.*

Also, adaptive behaviour is an important element in successful relationships (Brennan & Turnbull, 1999). This is also true in our case. The participants from both sides reported that the cooperation is flexible and adaptive, which is necessary for the sponsorship to function over time.

F1-1: *For instance with [sponsor], they are extremely good at coming up with activities themselves. But I believe in a cooperation, it is our job to develop and find opportunities in [the sport] and then get the sponsor to decide whether it is right for their plans and strategies.*

F2-2: *We must allow changes, first and foremost with the partner. Thereafter with us, that makes it necessary to adjust content or project. And therefore it has to be an option of changing things underway.*

S2: *The [federation] is very open for new ideas, or new collaborations and new types of communication platforms. There I experience they are very responsive. If we have any ideas, they are always positive to discuss it.*

In contrast, the marketing expert said that the sponsors in general can be more proactive in sponsorships:

ME: *Some federations are proactive in this. But many sponsors of the sport federations think that the federations should do more. They can take more initiative, but it is difficult because they have a hectic everyday-life and a lot to do on several levels. So they are not able to take the initiative for those who are not on it or those who do not pay enough.*

The informants also noted that they sometimes come up with opportunities that exceed the obligations in the contract. The comments show that if the offers are reciprocated, these activities can combine unique resources of each side and create additional opportunities for both parties. One federation noted how they helped the sponsor to kick off the new strategy by having athletes perform a surprise show and announcing the sponsorship during the company gathering. A sponsor said this about a collaboration of creating a mobile application together:

*S7: We had a dialogue with the marketing department in [federation], and we saw a possibility to get a position no one else had. We looked to Sweden, where [the activity] occurred in 2016. Then we found out that we have the possibility to do something together.*

The comments show that cooperation has a central place in the relationship through various activities that create opportunities for both sides. Both sides engage in cooperation in order to activate the sponsorship and offer each other beneficial opportunities.

At the same time, the interviews show a difference between the sponsors in the level of cooperation. It was noted that few of the sponsors could only cooperate to some degree.

*F2-1: Take [company name] as an example, [product name] is an industry with a lot of money, which we want to associate us closely because it is a good brand to pump out in our channels. She who works with sponsoring at [company name], she uses two percent of her time on sponsoring, on all the sponsorships they have...But the company doesn't have time to develop the cooperation. It doesn't have time to discuss cooperation. It has time to say yes or no to suggestion you come with.*

*S5: And we can do better of course. That applies to all agreements. But again, it is about time and resources and what you are able to do.*

As implicated by the comment of the federation, sometimes the sponsor chooses to keep the cooperation at a distance. At the same time, the comment of the sponsor noted that they are aware of the potential projects and opportunities that exist in their sponsorships but explained restricted cooperation with a lack of resources within the company. What is also interesting the two mentioned companies have cooperation on a lower level (level 2 of 4 and level 3 of 7). Thus, there might be a tendency that the main sponsors seek close cooperation in order to activate the sponsorship, while sponsors on



intermediate levels focused less on engaging a cooperation with the federations, despite having many of the same rights as sponsors on level 1 and 2. They participate in some initiatives, but keep the cooperation at arm's length. Also possible, that they do not see the point of having a close cooperation or do not know how to take advantage of all their rights, and thus do not allocate enough resources for it. If so, it partially supports the findings of Thjømmøe et al. (2002) that sponsors might not have enough knowledge and willingness to plan and coordinate their sponsorships.

Moreover, both federations noted directly that they are open to have many sponsorships, as long as the companies fit their criteria. One informant from the federation stated “*there is always something to sell, it is never sold out*”. Both federations noted that there is a lot of bidders out there and no matter how successful and attractive they are for the sponsors, they will never have the same amount of sponsorship offers as the companies have. One federation representative answered the following when asked what the reason for this was;

*F1-1: It has to do with the flow of money, I am totally convinced about it. You sit there, and as good as things are with [the sport] now, some think that there is a queue-system outside the office where you have the sponsors knocking on the door. It is not how it works. Go to the big Norwegian companies, they get inquiry after inquiry, they have huge opportunities ahead of them that they can open the door to and say, let us take a meeting. In a week they can have 30 good meetings. Regardless of how many of us at the office sit down and start calling around, we won't manage to book 30 meetings in a week, even if things are positive.*

Similar to the opinion of the federations, the sponsors pointed out that it is not easy for sport organizations to enter new and large sponsorships, and that they continuously receive many requests for sponsorships. They also expressed that sport sponsorship is only one of several options that they have when deciding where to invest or whom to be associated with.

The findings show that both sides agree there is an asymmetry in the power balance between sport federations and sponsors. This power imbalance stems from the disproportionate supply-demand ratio, where the number of available sponsorships is much higher than the number of sponsors. Thus, the sponsors have many more options to choose from, while sport federations compete to be the chosen part in a sponsorship. But this does not mean that the sponsors should lean back and make the sponsees be the

proactive part that should work hard to deliver value for the sponsor. The sponsors should be equally engaged in a cooperation, because many of the goals the sponsors seek from sponsorships require a long time to achieve. Potential sponsorship outcomes like brand awareness, customer preferences, networking activities or employee engagement can all be reinforced if both parties are engaged in a cooperation with each other.

Based on the findings and the discussion, I conclude that cooperation is an important factor in the relationship between sport federations and sponsors.

### **5.1.2 Trust**

The empirical results of this study show that trust is a minor factor in the current relationships, and trust was implicated by several informants only indirectly. The participants implicated trust with three topics.

One federation implicated trust as the ability to be honest if potential partners have exaggerated expectations for the cooperation that they cannot deliver. The informant attributed this to gender balance:

*F2-1: There is a development there, and I will be cynical and say that this culture [of being honest and open] occurs because we in our sponsor group have included many more females, rather than men in their 40-50's who are concerned with that behaviour [being secretive and opportunistic]. But with us, we have perhaps an overweight of females that are responsible for the sponsorship with our partners. This has contributed to completely another culture, both social culture, but also a professional culture that is very good. That [emphasizes] was important to say!*

Likewise, some sponsors linked honesty to communicating when they experience sloppiness, irregular conditions in activities or when the company is making a decision to continue or terminate the sponsorship. This implicates that trust is an important component when sponsors perceive a degree of risk in their investment. Research has previously identified trust as a critical factor in unreliable and high-risk relationships (Coulter & Coulter, 2002). It can therefore be that trust is less visible when the cooperation is stable and becomes important when the sponsors are considering their investment.

Secondly, some sponsors and federations said they believe that the parties have good intentions for each other, and ambition to create a good cooperation, which is in line with the findings of Farrelly and Quester (2003), where they describe trust as “affective atmosphere” between partners. Following this logic, partners who trust each other to act in good faith and with integrity, have a good chance of creating a close cooperation.

Thirdly, it also seems that time is a determinant of trust, as the sponsors also implicated that they are able to communicate much more honestly and openly with federations where the cooperation had lasted long, compared to the new sponsorships.

Considering the in-field experience of participants and the length of several sponsorships, it is therefore surprising that there is limited evidence of trust in the interviews. The lack of presence of trust in this study is contradicting to the previous findings within the context of sponsorships (Bühler, 2006; Chadwick & Thwaites, 2005), as trust was only mentioned indirectly by the participants and the number of segments visible in the interviews was small compared to other factors. This indicates that trust is not a major contributor to quality in the relationship between sport federations and sponsors.

However, lack of evidence is insufficient to cross out trust as an important element in sponsorships. There certainly are methodological challenges that have to be considered. Evidence of trust as a relational component might be challenging to identify in interviews when the questions are asked in an indirect matter. Secondly, trust is a dynamic element in relationships and ongoing interactions in the cooperation impact how partners behave and relate to each other (Huang & Wilkinson, 2013). Relational behaviour and attitude, like trust, is continuously constructed and reconstructed by the partners on a daily basis (Wicker, 2002). Minor presence of trust in the interviews might therefore be a present state of the cooperation. Similarly to this study, Bühler (2006) found only slight evidence of trust in his qualitative interviews with football clubs and their sponsors, and was only able to detect trust by quantitative measures.

Additionally, considering the high level of trust between the people in Norway (Barstad & Sandvik, 2015), trust might be so embedded into the culture that it is difficult to identify the presence of it. In contrast, other studies have confirmed trust as a relational factor in sponsorships (Bühler, 2006; Chadwick & Thwaites, 2005; Farrelly & Quester, 2005a). Therefore, it may be concluded that trust is not easy to identify, but it is still a relevant factor in the relationship quality in professional sponsorships.

### 5.1.3 Commitment

According to the interviews, commitment is an essential RQ factor in the sponsor-ponsee relation. It is also the segment that generated most subtopics and was directly mentioned in three interviews (one federation and two sponsors). One federation implicated commitment as the ability to “go all in” into the sponsorship, while one sponsor indicated commitment in the following way:

*S2: We have entered an agreement for four years, and over the next four years we are married with [the federation].*

There seem to be matching perceptions between federations and sponsors about the importance of commitment. Both sides pointed out that investing resources into activation was important. One federation said their main sponsors are obliged to contribute with an annual fee to a mutual pot that is used for marketing campaigns and activities for all the sponsors. The federations show commitment by allocating human resources to manage the sponsorships and the related projects. For the sponsors, investing resources would mean hiring dedicated personnel and allocating funds to activate the sponsorship. This also includes earmarking funds for specific grassroots activities. Here is an example of a sponsor practice that stands out from the rest in terms of committing specific resources:

*S1: But this that I mentioned to you at the start, is that we allocate an activation budget to everything we do. There is a sponsor-fee for all the sponsorships, but additionally there is an activation pot that is very important to us. And in there is also funding for a project manager, and we have that for all our big sponsorships because we see that we need people that are hands-on, to follow-up to get the most out of it.*

Also the marketing expert commented on the practice of the same sponsor, saying that there are few examples of this practice out there.

*ME: They have handled it in a good way I think. The time will show if this is a practice to be followed by others or not. But by including a project role into the agreement, they have hired more people according to the number of deals they have. There should be more of this.*

Commitment happens through investing resources into the cooperation (Farrelly & Quester, 2005a). By earmarking resources in the contract or a budget, the parties embed commitment already before the beginning of the relationship, because they ensure that

additional resources will be available once the cooperation starts. It also ensures that there is dedicated personnel in place to manage the partnership underway. This makes it possible for both parties to adjust the cooperation if needed, which is necessary over time. Assigning dedicated personnel is essential, because Norwegian companies report to be concerned with receiving follow-up and information about the sponsorship (Østmo, 2010). In relation to this, the marketing expert said in his experience, many neglect to assign sufficient resources to work on the projects:

*ME: If you get in 30-40 million in sponsorship income, why don't you have 5-6 employees who make sure that the sponsors are happy, that the income never decreases? It is usually someone in one or a half position, who also does everything else. I would never take this kind of risk around it. They should think "this is our income, things will fall without it. We need to make sure we do the best job for them [the sponsors]"*

Importance of commitment is also highlighted when one realizes that investment of additional resources from both sides is absolutely necessary if the sponsorship is to function as a business platform with multiple outcomes for the sponsor, and produce other benefits than sponsorship fee for the sponsee.

Another theme that was mentioned in relation to commitment, is partners taking steps in creating positive personal relations and engaging each other in internal activities. The participants spoke about taking time to have frequent contact in formal and informal settings with each other in order to create a close relationship. This can be done by making extra effort to support projects that are clearly important for the other partner, or take additional steps in order to develop social bonds.

*F1-1: I try to have breakfast meetings 2-3 times in a year. One before the season, one after and one during the season. Additionally, we have the championships, National Championship and World Championship where the biggest sponsors are with us and where we have professional arrangements for business development and relation building.*

*S5: So they asked us to contribute with delivering breakfast [in relation to Olympic Games 2018 being broadcasted in the early morning because of time differences]. And we needed a lot of volunteers, and it was damn many who came from here [the head office], who wanted to show up six in the morning. Got a [brand] jacket with [company name] on. Also we have a family day, where we use some of the athletes as flashcards. But we have a lot left to do, we have a lot of opportunities.*

Another sponsor who went even further and mentioned the athletes, with an example of current practice:

*S1: Again this with getting into a sport, and understand the athletes, understand their needs so that they feel safe when we come in and need something, and we do it at a suitable time and in a way they feel is OK. It is something with them being a face-out in a campaign for us, they need to feel that this is something I can be behind. That it is alright to be an ambassador for. I spend a lot of time getting to know [the sport] as a sport, but also athletes that we use a lot. And it has been important that they understand and familiarize with projects like [project name] and understand what it is about.*

These results support the claim that commitment is also exhibited when the parties form close personal bonds (Bühler, 2006). Although it is not clear who is the most active part, but it is evident is that both parties are committed to develop close relations with each other, which has been identified as vital for value generation and partnership stability (A. Morgan et al., 2014). Going to the extra mile in order to help out your partner can be a way of showing the desire of the other party to success. This can in turn facilitate the development of trust, and positively affect cooperation and open communication in the partnership. Knowing each other can help both sides to understand each other strengths, expectations and motives, and reduce the possibility of cooperative challenges. It is therefore important that companies and sport organizations who seek lasting relationships create and maintain close personal bonds with their partners. Doing so might have a favourable effect when a sponsor is deciding to whether renew the contract or not, because personal connections across partner organizations are linked to long-lasting sponsorships (Hessling et al., 2018).

Several participants also mentioned situations of low order, where lack of commitment was visible. Examples are inadequate follow-up, missing personnel and lack of willingness to communicate with each other. Some participants pointed out that not allocating funds for activating the sponsorship had previously led to sponsorship termination.

*F2-1: But the problem is that they [past sponsor] have so small marketing budget in the first place. For them it is an important deal but for us it becomes a small deal and it is hard to give them so much in return [without extra investment].*

*S6: We had very little marketing equipment that was used to create a connection between [product] and the federation and the athletes. So there was no link there.*

Here, the participants are referring to situations where the sponsors had spent a lot of money on getting themselves into the sponsorship and didn't have enough resources to back up the investment with additional activation. Research has previously highlighted that absence of commitment in terms of lack of investments from one side in the relationship directly contributes to sponsorship breakdown (Farrelly, 2010). This highlights the importance of commitment from both sides of the dyad. Both parties must allocate and be willing to continuously invest in cooperation in order to reach mutual benefits. At the same time, the lack of investments can sour the partnership.

In summary, commitment was deemed by the participants as a critical element in the sponsor-sponsee relationship. Evidence of commitment was visible through organizational investments into the sponsorship and as an effort to create close personal relations between the people working on the sponsorship on both sides. Based on the discussion above, I conclude that commitment is an important factor for the relationship quality between sport federations and their sponsors.

#### **5.1.4 Mutual understanding**

Agreeing on terms that decide how the sponsorship will unfold in daily life seems to be an important parameter for relationship quality in sponsorships. The presence of mutual understanding was directly and implicitly visible in interviews with both the sponsors and the federations. For example, both parties remarked that dialogue is important for creating a mutual understanding of each other's needs and preferences. One sponsor noted the following:

*S1: I think it is important [for the partnership] to have a mutual understanding before you enter an agreement, and what you will get out of it and which objectives you have on each side.*

The most common way of reaching the mutual agreement is a discussion about expectations in the early stages of the sponsorship, followed by a detailed contract or adding a KPI (Key Performance Indicators) attachments. This was especially important for the sponsors.

*S3: What we have done with [the federation] is to set up a list with KPI's. And then we are very clear about what we wish to achieve. And then it is much easier for them to know it.*

S4: *It is very detailed [the contract] and you have sent some drafts back and forth before you agree and sign. So that there are no surprises.*

The opinion of sponsors matches with the opinion of sport federations.

F2-2: *There are printing costs agreed. Point of contact is mentioned. Then there is like “this is contact person in federation, this is contact person for sponsor”, then they draw their own resources from each side.*

One federation mentioned an agreement that was very general and was not extended:

F2-1: *We had a period where the partners that came in last also left first. I believe it is because you haven't done a good job before agreeing on a deal about what it should contain, and what we are to measure on each other on. If it is a success or not. It is very fast to get happy that now there is money coming in, and this will be so good. And then you see that in the daily life that it doesn't work. Also we might not be not good at adjusting along the way, to meet and practically change what is stated there [in the contract] ... So you should spend more time in the phase before the deal is signed. Then it is much easier to, hopefully, reach the goal you are trying to reach, for both parties.*

One sponsor made a remark about a lack of mutual understanding about expectations and motives in a deal that was terminated:

S6: *It was not a lack of follow up from [the federation]. There was a lot of focus on [annual tournament name], and they often contracted us if they needed extra money. For [specific competition] and things that I thought were not really relevant for us.*

The marketing expert was happy to hear that the partners include more details into the contract, because it makes the sponsorships better:

ME: *Detailed contracts make sponsoring more professional. Perhaps more companies can become aware that they can use sponsoring to achieve different things. I think the sponsee also has the interest to do this too, so they should accept it and adjust to it because the demands will only increase... I think it is good for sponsoring in general that the companies not only perceive this as giving support. When you are on a level with such high amounts [of sponsorship fees], you are done with just giving support. This is a marketing activity or a business activity. So it is better to have a concrete agreement, also for the sponsees because then they have to think “we need to do a good job here so that the sponsor will benefit from us”. For some it could be a demanding and painful adjustment, but a positive one.*

What is interesting to note is that despite both sides pointing out that they communicate each other's motives and expectations in the early stages, only few participants



answered that they had shared their own objectives and marketing plans with each other. It was visible that those who had done it, have developed a mutual understanding for each other's goals. One sponsor said that they urge all the sport federations and sponsors to openly share their objectives and results, because it could be a platform to learn from each other. The following statement stands out and also illustrates why sharing objectives is valuable in practice.

*F1-1: With [sponsor], they had a goal of achieving brand awareness over 40 percent. The fact that they tell us that makes us very conscious about not to be sloppy about the logo, there shall not be collar [on the jersey] over the logo when you are in the media, it must be folded correctly. So when they reach 41 percent, then we contribute in a positive way, that's the way we speak in the daily when we work. They tell us "you are contributing, we reached the goal together".*

It is surprising that only few partners share their own objectives and plans with each other. Given the amount of money sponsors pay in order to associate themselves with the sport, one can imagine that it would be important for them to communicate their specific goals. The sponsors should be very concerned about this. If the federations do not know specifically what a sponsor hopes to achieve in a sponsorship, it may restrain possible cooperation activities they engage a sponsor in. Likewise, it can lead to sponsors feeling that there is a mismatch between what the sponsor hopes to be involved in, and what they are actually involved in, as shown in the examples where lack of mutual understanding is evident. In contrast with the second example, if the federation knows the specific objectives and helps the sponsor to complete them, it can be a source of relationship satisfaction that motivates them to help each other succeed.

Further, both sides talked about how the expectations and demands from the sponsors have risen in recent years. This change is connected to the sponsors becoming more professional in their approach to sponsorships, the increased popularity of sport as an entertainment industry, and the trend where companies and athletes use social media to communicate with their followers directly. Sport federations have understood the raise in sponsor expectations and demands, and have employed more people into their marketing departments to coordinate and follow up on sponsorships.

*F1-2: They demand much more from us. The follow up part of the agreement has become much bigger now than what it used to be. As said, [in the past] I signed the agreements*

*and had the follow up alone. But that would not be possible today. It has become too extensive.*

*F2-1: We've had to staff up our resources to be able to respond to the requirements [of the sponsors].*

*S3: It becomes more and more challenging to be a federation because performance demands will only increase with time.*

*ME: The federations who are really good at this have understood it. Five or six of the biggest ones, they have hired a lot lately. And then it is less good for the others.*

The fact that they have adopted to this development, underlines the importance of having a shared perception of how the sponsorship will unfold once the contract is signed and the cooperation begins. Similarly, a study of Farrelly et al. (2006) revealed sponsorships that had adopted to the increased sponsor expectations towards value creation in sponsorships, had developed a mutual understanding about partner responsibilities. In relation to this, a study on Swedish hockey league sponsors argues that mutual understanding of sponsorship rules and objectives is connected to other constructs like trust, commitment and satisfaction, thus making it an essential factor in long-lasting relationships (Hessling et al., 2018).

The interviews also revealed an area where the parties had different opinions when discussing marketing knowledge. Sponsorships with unique collaborative resources can be a source of competitive advantage (Amis et al., 1999). While both sponsors and federations view a sponsorship as a marketing investment that creates value for both sides, they had different opinions about the marketing level in the federations and their ability to cooperate. This is interesting, since sponsorship literature has previously remarked that sponsors consider the marketing capabilities in sport organizations as limited (Farrelly, 2010). Comments from both federations implicated satisfaction with their own marketing department. One federation noted that while other federations tend to recruit past athletes into their marketing departments, they attempt to recruit people with a background in marketing and project management. Several sponsors, on the other hand, replied that they think the level of competence in the federations is low when it comes to social media knowledge, marketing skills and available resources to run joint marketing activities. They believe their own capabilities, as a large company with expertise in many fields, are naturally higher than in federations that work with sport,

and that there is room for knowledge-sharing but it takes time and not everyone receptive to it.

*S2: In the media and marketing field [about marketing agencies] for example the evaluation is very structured. I often get online based questionnaires where you have to answer a bunch of questions about how satisfied I am [with their performance]. But things like that rarely come from [the federation]... They know the sport well and burn for it and work for it wholeheartedly and are really engaged. But they do not have the professionalism that we expect [in terms of marketing skills], because they are not competently strong.*

*S3: We have done different things, where we have had workshops or had people from here for knowledge developing. But it does not always feel in a positive way. You feel like “her comes [company] to train you up. They want to learn, but it a bit difficult when it’s not the same company.*

*S5: They are a bit behind, and a lot has happened on the digital front. And we [the sponsors] demand a lot and want it done yesterday. But we have said that we can contribute, there are a lot of competent people [in sponsor companies] in the roles who have a lot to offer... There is low competence about social media, at least in things they do themselves. And we are slowly starting, but I think there is a lot more to get there for the federation in terms of listening and learning.*

*S6: What strikes me is that the competence level is weaker in [federation].*

*Interviewer: Than in other federations?*

*S6: Than in [marketing agency]. They also try to sell things, but I feel like they have higher competence behind their sales... But with the marketing days it is extremely passive of the [federation] to be honest. It’s like, apply if you want to take some pictures [with the athletes]. It’s not like “here we have some ideas about how we can connect the dots”.*

Also the marketing expert commented on the topic, as Sponsor Insight provides advice for sport organizations on different levels.

*ME: You are competing for the marketing budget of a company, and you don’t speak the same language as they do in the other marketing channels. When you don’t know what CPT is, which is cost-per-thousand, when you don’t know the same terms as a marketing or a sponsoring manager operates with every day, you have a handicap because you don’t understand what you compete with. You need to argue why it is better to be a sponsor for a federation compared to marketing agencies, TV, media and other alternatives. I think their competence is simply too low.*

When asked about the reason sport federations have low marketing knowledge, three reasons were given. Sport federations are not able to attract the best talent because they

are not able to compete with wages in the business sector. They have a tradition of attracting past athletes with limited marketing education, who are less demanding, and want to work within the sport. And lastly, sport in Norway is built of volunteerism, and many board members in federations want to create as much activity as possible and spend less on other things.

The different opinions show that while federations mostly compared their own resources and competencies with other federations, the sponsors compare the cooperation with federations against other options in the marketing field. The findings show that while the federations expressed approval with their own marketing skills, several competent and experienced sponsors experience that the marketing knowledge in federations is low. This can possibly lead to dissatisfaction with the relationship performance, because capability gaps in marketing skills can restrain the cooperation, and lead to a reduction of relationship potential by the sponsors (Farrelly, 2010).

Based on the arguments presented in this section, it is possible to conclude that mutual understanding is a relevant RQ factor in the relationship between sport federations and their sponsors. The findings show that mutual understanding between the parties exists in areas like the importance of dialogue, understanding each other's needs and preferences, increased sponsors demands, and partially about sharing goals and marketing plans. Also, the interviews show that there is a lack of mutual understanding about marketing knowledge of sport federations. Therefore, more research is needed on the topic in order to create a better understanding of the importance of mutual understanding in sponsorships.

### **5.1.5 Satisfaction**

The number of segments shows that satisfaction is a relevant component in the sponsorship relationship. The federations mostly expressed satisfaction when describing the specific relationships with their sponsors, using words like “*good*” and “*close*”. Some participants implicated satisfaction by giving examples of how successful projects or campaigns have provided value for the federation and the sponsors. Similarly, the sponsors talked about the relationship with the federations in a positive way, using terms as “*good*” “*successful*” and “*close cooperation*”. Both federations and the sponsors implicated satisfaction when describing successful sponsorships by the length

of the partnership and how loyal the sponsors have been to the cooperation. It is interesting that both sides spoke positively about each other, implicating that they are generally satisfied with the relationship they have with each other.

Apart from that, the majority of comments about satisfaction comes from the sponsors. They expressed satisfaction with economic and non-economic conditions. The sponsors mostly showed satisfaction when the overall performance matched their expectations towards the sponsorship:

*S4: The job [the federation] is doing is very good, if you want anything specific on that. Very good at following us up and creating the platforms we need to meet. I think they are very skilled, very good.*

*S5: We are very happy with what [the federation] has delivered to us. They have delivered way over what we have expected.*

*S7: Historically [the federation] has been good at using the funds for development, and coaching expertise, and camps with youth athletes so that you get a national team that is always performing.*

Satisfaction was also indicated in the relationship between the parties. Sponsors were satisfied with the close relationship between the parties and the way parties communicate and cooperate with each other.

*S1: They [the federation] stands out extremely in terms of wanting to spend time to get familiar. And that I think has been very important, I think it has been the key to success here.*

*S2: For us it has been working extremely well, at least the last years I have been here, we've had an open and good relationship. You wish the other well, so if you miss sometimes, you have some slack.*

*S6: They are skilled people and cool people [about the federation].*

An interesting remark was also made by a couple of sponsors about taking initiative. While some sponsors noted that they are happy that the federation matches the level of proactiveness the company shows, other participants were satisfied that the federations are the ones taking the initiative to drive the sponsorship so that they can “*hang on to what they federation is doing*”. This could be a result of learning from past experiences,

where some sponsorships were short-lived, as mentioned by one federation. It has previously been argued that an increasingly number of sponsors seek cooperative sponsorships (Crompton, 2004), and proactive behaviour could therefore be important for sponsorship continuation.

Considering the presented findings, it is surprising that it was mainly sponsors, and only to a small degree sport federations, who expressed satisfaction in the relationship using the same interview guide. Perhaps the difference comes from the nature of the relationship. The sport federations realize the main value in terms of sponsorship fee at the beginning of the contract, while the sponsors pay a sponsorship fee to enter a relationship that provides them benefits much later, and largely depends on further investments and close cooperation between parties. The sponsors bear a much higher financial risk of the investments, and thus continuously assess whether the sponsorship is performing as they hope. It could be that the sponsorships examined in this study are performing well, and the sponsors are therefore satisfied with their assessment of how things are going, and express it. This could explain why it was mainly the sponsors who expressed satisfaction with the economic and relational aspects of the relationship.

At the same time, this doesn't mean that the sport federations are not satisfied with the partnership. It might be that they experience happiness when they enter new cooperations or renew existing sponsorships, and it is less visible in the daily the cooperation. Thus, satisfaction might be a cyclical process for the sport federations. Also, the long-lasting partnership can be interpreted as a sign of satisfaction for sport federations and sponsors, since they spoke of loyalty and length of sponsorship as a sign of success. This underlines the argument of Farrelly et al., (2008) that satisfaction is antecedent or an outcome of the cooperation, because satisfaction is present in the relationship and at the same time an outcome of it.

The findings of this study confirm to some degree results from past studies, (Bühler, 2006; Farrelly et al., 2008), that satisfaction is important in the sponsee-sponsor relationship. Despite the evidence of satisfaction are limited and very much one-sided, they are at the same time vital because they show that companies experience the satisfaction not only from an economic performance of the sponsorships, but also from a personal connection with the sponsee. This is in line with past research where non-economic satisfaction was found to be equally important for agreement renewal as

economic satisfaction (Farrelly & Quester, 2005a). At the same time, the findings underline the importance of a good relationship between the partners in sponsorships.

Based on the above, I conclude that satisfaction is a relevant factor for the relationship quality between sport organizations and their sponsors. It is especially important for sponsors to experience satisfaction.

### **5.1.6 Communication**

The results show that communication is relevant for relationship quality in sponsorships. All participants except one talked extensively about various ways of contact, and implicated how important it is in order to have a successful relationship. This factor is also connected to mutual understanding, since the parties have to talk together in order to understand each other's capabilities, needs and preferences.

Frequency in the dialogue was named as key in order to have good communication. Both federations and the sponsors reported that they continuously exchange information through channels like emails, phone calls, formal/informal meetings and workshops. There is also a clear pattern in the role that each channel serves. Short messages and exchange of information happen through emails and messages. While discussions and planning happen through formal meetings. These are either annual, for instance fixed meeting points two-four times a year or agreed meetings for planning and collaboration. Informal meetings function as an arena for mutual social activities, discussing potential possibilities and development of personal relationships. Below are few examples of answers given by the participants:

*F1-1: Dialogue is alfa omega in order to succeed, so there can be a lot of emails, phone conversations and SMS's and meetings. We don't have a meeting just to meet each other, but we see that with the big sponsorships it is all right to meet face to face sometimes without having too much on the agenda. We have many mutual interests to develop and discuss.*

*F1-2: It varies a lot [the communication]. For example, with [sponsor] agreement, [project officer] is there to work one day a week. This way we get a lot [of things] cleared up.*

*S4: Meetings, phone, mail. Most likely phone, we have an ongoing dialogue about things.*

Both sides noted that the amount and frequency of dialogue depends on the size of sponsorship, and whether they have projects that both sponsor and the sponsor is involved in. One sponsor also noted that the amount of communication is smaller in collaborations where there is a geographical distance between entities, and in such cases most of the dialogue happens through phones and emails. It was also mentioned several times by different informants that frequent conversations lead to the parties developing an impression of the overall sponsorship satisfaction:

*F2-1: It is the daily dialogue with the partner on the individual meeting points and the biggest sponsor forums that makes you know more or less where you have all the partners. I know now, and it is half a year into [sponsor] agreement what probably will happen when the agreement runs out. I have a feeling on it.*

It is also worth remarking that the parties experience communication as positive, as this is visible in most interviews. Three respondents mentioned it explicitly:

*F1-2: I think we have... yes open and honest, good communication.*

*F2-2: We talk with the sponsors daily. If there is anything, we will hear it. It doesn't take three months.*

*S5: Then we call pretty quickly [when asked about communicating challenges]. And it is very friendly tone.*

What was also visible in the given responses, is that the dialogue has a collaborative nature. Many informants indirectly noted that the threshold of getting in contact with the other side is low, which makes the communication open and a two-way street. That happens particularly in cases where there is a challenge to be solved.

*F2-2: But if problems occur, then it is to sit down and explain the situation. It is important to not come across as difficult, and to get a no just to get a no. It is important to lift up [acknowledge] the problems, why is this challenging for us, and then you find a golden middleway [Norwegian expression for finding a compromise], or you find out if we can challenge each other and get new eyes on the case.*

*S7: Like I said before we have close dialogue with them. [sponsor manager] talks with project officers from there [the federations], I talk with the marketing manager and sales manager, etc. We have joint meeting points all of us, where there are a bigger group that sits in either workshops or evaluation meeting and planning meetings. And there is*



*clarity, both ways, on what we are to achieve, and eventually on why things haven't been achieved.*

Good communication routines make it possible to quickly address challenges and opportunities through daily interactions and plan future activities in the scheduled meetings. The regularity and productivity of social exchange occurrences are closely linked to the longevity of business relationships (Olkkonen, Tikkanen, & Alajoutsijärvi, 2000). Establishing ad-hoc communication routines can therefore be important for the cooperation, because it lowers the boundary for communicating relevant information to each other.

The interviews also revealed that close personal relations are often a result of frequent communication.

*F1-1: You communicate so much that you end up with a tone as friends.*

*S1: Get to know the culture from within. That is something we have spent time on, and it has been very fun that [the federation] wanted to join us on that. That they have spent time, because it does take time. But I also think the cooperation becomes much, much better.*

*S2: I sometimes send [sales manager] SMS if I am watching a competition in the evening. It is very informal. And then there are cases that are very formal.*

Good personal relations between the involved staff can have a positive effect on the relationship because it shows appreciation for each other beyond the formal reasons that form sponsorships. It might also make it possible to communicate honestly and act in good faith, which is essential for developing a stable relationship. Informal initiatives are important in partnership because they help the parties to get familiar with each other social norms and understand personal language codes (Lages et al., 2005). In that sense, informal social initiatives can be a good way to create personal bonds in the relationship.

The empirical results of this study correspond with previous research that emphasizes the significance of frequent dialogue for partnership stability (A. Morgan et al., 2014) and sponsorship activation Farrelly et al., (2003). The interviews show that good communication facilitates development of mutual understanding, personal commitment

and gives an impression of overall relationship satisfaction. It happens through frequent dialogue on ad-hoc basis, and through scheduled meetings that are written in the contract between the parties. Communicating through a spectrum of channels can be a way to show that the parties view the relationship as important, and want to help each other to succeed. This behaviour gives the communication a collaborative nature which in turn has a positive effect on the relationship, as expressed by several informants on both sides.

In view of the qualitative results and the discussion above, it is possible to conclude that communication is a relevant factor in the relationship between sport federations and their sponsors. Communication facilitates other relationship quality factors such as commitment, mutual understanding and satisfaction.

### **5.1.7 Long-term perspective**

The number of generated segments shows that having a long-term perspective on the sponsorship and its' outcomes is a relevant element for relationship quality. The participants mentioned directly or indirectly the importance of having a long-term perspective in order for the cooperation to be successful. This factor seems to be connected with satisfaction, as the participants related to a successful relationship in terms of how long the sponsorship has existed. It is clear that both sides therefore aim to cooperate with each other for several contract periods.

*S1: The agreements we have are time-based, often with an option about extensions and we like to think very long-term in what we do.*

When asked about different phases in the sponsorship:

*S3: It is hard [to divide in phases] because we are so long-term oriented, so the years go by and the cooperation only keeps improving compared to earlier years.*

*F1-2: Most cooperations we've had have been pretty long-term. This is our goal. Because of different reasons it can happen that it becomes short-sighted. But the goal for us is to deliver according to the agreement and slightly better. So that they wish to continue with us.*

*F2-1: We think that some of our success is also because we have partners that have been with us for a long time. And have been loyal to us, both when things are good and when they are less good. And then it is important to treat them with respect. And always, as*

*long as they are not very specific cases, we want to continue with the same partner we had today.*

*F2-2: There is a fierce culture and pride and expectation that we will continue the partnership. And then it is about finding new content or deliver the content they expect, so that they are happy and we are happy.*

Further, many sponsors spoke about having faith in the cooperation, and knowing that it could take years before the effects of sponsorship activities become visible.

*S4: It takes time before you see that [the amount of income] begins to get so high in comparison to what we entered with [sponsor fee]. So it takes probably five years before you can say that we start earning money from the agreement.*

*S5: During the first agreement term we expect to see which way it goes, at least you see whether it will work or not. So I say that we need to be patient. And sponsoring is attitude change, it takes time to change the attitude of people. Look at [sponsor 2 and sponsor 7] who have been doing this for 30 years. It takes time.*

*S6: It takes time to build a connection so that the customer and the target group understands the link and is able to see the contribution of the sponsor, and that you are a sponsor. It is long-term brand-building and an activity that you have to choose KPI's for. It is really not so much about sales, it is about brand strength, values and attitude.*

*S7: Now we are in the first agreement term with several sponsorships, [the federation] among others, and of course we have some expectations about some goals we should reach when we start talking with them about the second term.*

Similarly, both federations noted that sponsors should have long-term goals when entering sponsorships.

*F2-2: What is important is that the sponsorship is long-term, that you don't enter, start something and then leave. That you have a clear purpose, about long-term goals and that the sponsor understands that this is not a short-sighted gain. And that they have ambitions to activate the sponsorship. They need to set aside perhaps 30-50% of the annual fee every year.*

Long term orientation was also implicated when the participants from both sides talked about the time it takes and taking conscious decisions to create a close relationship. Taking time to get familiar and form a close relationship can help both sides to understand further each other strengths, expectations and motives for the cooperation, which can reduce the possibility of cooperative challenges. It is therefore important for

companies and sport organizations that seek lasting relationships to create close and stable personal bonds with their partners. Doing so might have a favourable effect when a sponsor is about to decide to renew the contract, because connections across partner organizations have been linked to long-lasting sponsorships (Hessling et al., 2018).

The comments show that both sides have a long-term orientation towards sponsorships. It is interesting that some informants connect sponsorship success to the length of the contract. Part of this is because it takes time before the effects of the cooperation are visible. This implicates that the goals partners set for the sponsorships are complex, long-term oriented, and that it takes time to achieve them. Long-term association is needed to develop strong brand association, and a unique marketing advantage through sponsorships (Cornwell et al., 2001). It could also mean that the benefits of sponsorships are long-lasting and are being reinforced over the years. If so, this coincides with the findings of McDonald and Karg (2015), who found that lasting sponsorships are more likely to give consumer effects beyond plain brand awareness, even after the sponsorships have ended. The same is possibly true for activities that aim to achieve other outcomes than marketing related benefits. For example, the development of work culture, employee satisfaction and exchange of knowledge requires time and several initiatives (Farrelly et al., 2012; Urriolagoitia & Planellas, 2007).

Returning back to the interviews, several comments were made about renegotiating agreements. One federation noted that they do not walk out of renewal discussions just because they could get more money from another company. Likewise, the sponsors stated that they are prepared to renew the sponsorship. However for them, the overall cooperation has to be viewed as beneficial to be extended, and they are willing to consider other options if the sponsorship fee increases too much. The following statement gives a good overall opinion of the sponsors:

*What decides whether a cooperation is prolonged or terminated?*

*S7: If we are able to calculate back the investment. Like I said before, we measure many different parameters. And we know extremely well what we spend on each agreement both in terms of fees but also activation funds. We need to highlight that there is a positive development. And we are also very concerned that if we are to pay more, then we should also get more. It cannot be that there is automatically a price increase without us*

*getting more, that is not how the world works. We can live with KPI growth, but if you are to pay more for something then you should also experience to get more back.*

Even though the partners wish to have a long relationship with each other, the sponsors also make clear that they will only do so if they continue to see the value in it. A raise in sponsorship fee, which is likely to happen continuously as partners renegotiate the contract, must therefore be backed up with valid arguments.

Professional sport organizations have historically struggled to produce financial returns because the income uncertainty in sport is high (Kuper & Szymanski, 2009). For the sport federations, long term sponsorships will provide them with stable income and reduce uncertainty related to income dependent on field performance of the national teams. It has been argued that the length of business relationship in stable economic conditions affects the success of it (Palmatier, Dant, Grewal, & Evans, 2006). Stable economic environment can therefore give financial security for core activities of sport federations, and fund development of internal knowledge such as marketing capabilities, or other skills that can be valuable in sponsorships. This is important because an increasingly large portion on revenue for national sport organizations comes from commercial and marketing efforts (Chadwick et al., 2016; NIF, 2016; Séguin et al., 2005).

In light of the findings and the discussion above, I therefore conclude that having a long-term perspective towards sponsorships is a relevant factor for the relationship quality between sport federations and their sponsors.

### **5.1.8 Internal anchoring**

The interviews were again reviewed to see if any other topics stood out significantly. Also, the interesting segments with no assigned category marked in the first read-through were placed in categories to see if any new RQ factors could be identified. This process resulted in one more factor, called internal anchoring, as several segments of the topic were visible in all interviews. Internal anchoring in sponsorship context can be defined as *the ability to apply a sponsorship in different areas inside an organization in order to achieve multiple benefits.*

Internal anchoring is important because it influences the degree of involvement through the amount of collaboration and resources that the parties invest into a sponsorship. All

though this could be related to commitment or long-term perspective, the amount of evidence about such a specific theme in the interviews shows that it might be equally important for other types of sponsorships. Thus, it seemed more appropriate to establish it as a new RQ factor.

A topic that was frequently mentioned by the sponsors, is having a clear strategy within the company when making decisions about which sponsorships to enter, or which activities to initiate. Many of the sponsors reported that they set objectives according to the internal budgets and needs of the company. Several participants noted that they already had an idea of what they wanted to achieve before entering the sponsorship.

*S1: Based on the [internal] survey that was done and the strategy that was created we have defined what we are going to sponsor. Basically, we have thought a lot about activation potential before we enter an agreement. We had looked into the whole wheel [internal strategy plan].*

*S5: We have set a strategy and we know where we want to go.*

The marketing expert said that internal anchoring is becoming more important in large sponsorships. He gave an example where a company entered a sponsorship with a sport that was reported as desired in an internal employee assessment. By connecting the sponsorship to different aspects of company activities, the sponsor was able to raise employee engagement and satisfaction. Additionally, they also improved customer perception, which was necessary as the company operates in a sector that can be perceived as controversial.

The most advanced companies had divided their objectives into categories like branding, marketing, internal employees and culture, customer relations, B2B and stakeholder relations, sales and CSR. One participant representing a company with long traditions with sponsoring said the following about having various objectives:

*S3: There are five effect areas that we wish to take out... The sponsorships don't cost much more if you take out the effect in different areas [compared to one].*

When sponsors divide their objectives across several categories, they make it possible to involve several company departments into the cooperation. The departments can over time draw in their internal resources into the partnership, which is essential for any

organization looking to benefit from sponsorships. The mentioned example of best practice could without a doubt be beneficial for other sponsors.

Further, several sponsors said they had revised their marketing strategy recently, and thus adjusted their sponsorship goals according to the needs of the company. Two informants said that they entered large sponsorships recently in order to fulfil those goals, and added that they considered how well the partnership would fit into their strategy before signing the agreement. This was confirmed by the representative of the sport federation:

*F1-2: They [the sponsors] were creating new strategy when we started the dialogue. And with time they saw that we could fit into that strategy. And if you came to [the sponsor] and were not a part of the sports named in the strategy, I think then you need to fight pretty hard to get in [to a sponsorship].*

The federations also spoke about the internal needs they might have. This could be for example to brand the sport in specific communities or generate more funding for the national teams. At the same time, the finding suggests that the federations experience market clutter, where many sponsors want to use their marketing rights. One participant expressed it directly:

*F2-1: The rights have always been there, and when more and more [sponsors] want to utilize their rights, for us it is cost-benefit. Then it goes like “what partner contributes the most or is most important for us to keep?”. And then you have to consider if you should have fewer partners who pay more or how the model should be in the future.*

One participant also came with an example of how a sponsorship anchored to grassroots projects helped the federation to sustain a sponsorship during the times when the sport results were weak.

*F1-1: I see now that in 5-6 our biggest sponsorships there are big and heavy projects where there are project leaders. We've had projects all the way... so we have always worked specifically with them. And that has probably been our strength when the national team was not performing.*

Empirical findings indicate that both sport federations and most sponsors have a vision and strategic approach towards sponsorships in terms of how it fits into their organizations. The results show that the ability to connect the sponsorship into its own

organization is more important for the sponsors. As reported by several companies, they already assessed the potential sponsorship benefits based on their internal needs, and therefore were able to communicate their expectations before entering a sponsorship. This allows the federations to be aware of areas the sponsors would like the sponsorship to contribute in, which could help in the process of securing the sponsorship, and foster mutual understanding once the cooperation has started.

For the federations, internal anchoring in practice means linking the sponsorships to existing or future activities. This has several implications. It can provide stable income in times when the sport results are absent, since sport results affect sponsors' decision of renewal. Secondly, it might help the federations solve the challenge of marketing clutter, which was implicated in the comments from one federation. Both lack of sport results and insufficient exclusivity areas were identified to contribute to sponsorship termination (van Rijn et al., 2019). This can be done by connecting sponsorships with other areas of the sport than the national teams, such as grassroot projects, summer activity-schools, youth coaches-training, and annual workshops and activities. By basing the sponsorship on criteria other than marketing objectives (like brand awareness and consumer preference), it gives the cooperation several pillars to stand on. This can be beneficial at times when a sponsor is considering renewing the sponsorship, or in cases where the sponsoring company changes their marketing goals. For the sponsee, including other activities into the sponsorship will also be helpful in the sponsor's perception of value creation, as it has been pointed out that attachment of sponsorship value to specific actions is a common challenge and reason for termination (Farrelly, 2010; van Rijn et al., 2019).

Turning back to the findings of this study, several sponsors noted that once they made a strategic decision about entering a sponsorship, it was important that the sponsorship was a part of the internal marketing or strategic plan for the company. This way it would be easier to receive support for additional investments and opportunities along the way.

*S7: We have a close dialogue with those responsible for the overall marketing plan here. And we have different focus areas in different periods. In World Championship for instance we are communicating [product X]. In another period it is [product Y] or [product Z] that are important for us.*



S5: *We have a new marketing agency that will assist us. But that is the goal, to use the sponsorships in the communication, and use our channels where it works.*

S6: *It was just that we had specific dedicated resources [personnel] that only worked with it. We got to spend a lot of time on it.*

F2-2: *But they still must set aside money to lift up the level of sponsorship. Take it into communication, that is something a sponsor must define themselves. It is important that they understand it.*

A couple of remarks were also made from previous experiences where the sponsorships were terminated because the sponsorship was not connected to any specific department in the company;

- the sponsorship was not integrated into marketing or strategic plans
- no allocated budget to activate and create the link between the brands
- little cooperation between the partners over time, leading to a distanced relationship

One sponsor noted the following about a sponsorship which was terminated:

S6: *It had been like a desert island. Like an activity in a marketing plan but had never much to say in the daily life. In brand building it had been absent. We were not able to stitch it together with the brand, brand building or activity plan or campaign plans. And then I would see no staff to handle it, there was no one dedicated to it apart from [annual sport tournament name]. There was no one focusing on it with marketing gear in the stores, or even just to stitch it together.*

One federation talked about past sponsorship where the partner was primarily concerned with getting free tickets and seeing their logo in arenas:

F2-1: *It was not anchored in their own organization. It was only something a sponsor or marketing manager was responsible for. And then it is much easier [for a sponsor] to just put a cross over it, "because it didn't give us anything".*

Further, internal anchoring was also visible in answers from more than half of the participants when asked about whether top management is involved or is informed about the cooperation.

*F1-1: I am very lucky that my boss is very interested in this area, naturally because it is here that the income is but also because he himself has been in the same boat and had responsibility for it in his job. So he is very hands-on.*

*S5: He [the CEO] has very good control over it, I feel like he cares about the deals, and that is good.*

Having an informed and involved top manager/ general secretary was deemed positive by the informants as this confirmed the importance of the sponsorship to the organization. Thus, it should be equally important for both sides to involve executive management if possible and keep them informed. In relation to this, a recent study on Dutch football shows that opinions and management decisions of executive managers might lead to sponsors seeking sponsorships with other sport entities (van Rijn et al., 2019).

At last, it was implicated by a few sponsors that including several company departments in planning and evaluation of sponsorships would strengthen the degree of organizational anchoring and could strengthen the number of connections between the partner organizations. This can be a positive action, because the cooperation will receive attention from several key personnel, compared to cases where partnerships are handled only by one department (Ganesan, 1994).

The need to connect the sponsorship with the other organizational activities has previously been commented in the literature (Cousens et al., 2006). The empirical evidence in this study suggests that a well-anchored sponsorship makes it possible for the sponsors to gain benefits in other areas than advertising. It also shows that sport sponsorships have potential to be a central tool or a platform for organizational activities with benefits like organizational creativity, managerial insights, team building, employee motivation, recruitment, building B2B and stakeholder relations, sales and CSR initiatives. The findings from this study confirm the results of Østmo (2010), who found that 74% of large Norwegian firms report to anchor their sponsorship and CSR initiatives into the company strategy. A sponsorship with a sport federation seems to be specifically appropriate to create several benefits for the sponsor, because a sport federation is able to access several areas of a specific sport that could be relevant for the objectives of the sponsors (elite athletes, championships, coaching, training, children, grassroot, etc). Similarly, a study on Canadian sport federations shows that in fact,

many sponsors chose to sponsor a sport federation over other, more attractive sport entities because the federations have the capacity to facilitate several initiatives and directly reach several target groups (Séguin et al., 2005).

The ability to incorporate the sponsorship into the organization has only to a small degree been researched in the context of sport sponsorships. Bühler (2006) found internal justification to be a trend in English and German football sponsorships. Similarly, Farrelly et al. (2006) discovered that ability of partners to attach the cooperation to several organizational areas within the sport property and the sponsoring company contributes to successful sponsorships. Additionally, Urriolagoitia and Planellas (2007) implicate in their study on sponsorship between a large financial corporation and a sailing team that internal anchoring influenced perceived overall performance for both parties, and helped to secure renewal of the sponsorships.

Even though there is a lack of attention towards the topic in the literature, the importance of anchoring of sponsorships into organizational activities on both sides is likely to increase because the sport sponsorship market and the number of large sponsorships is rising (Jensen & Cornwell, 2017).

Based on this, I conclude that internal anchoring is a relevant factor for the quality of the relationship between sport federations and sponsors. At the same time, further research is needed in order to validate the results, and examine the importance of internal anchoring in the sponsor-sponsee relationship.

#### **5.1.9 Summary of the findings**

Table 3 summarizes this chapter, and highlights perceptual similarities and differences between of sport federations and sponsees in relation to identified relationship quality factors.

**Table 3: Perceptual similarities and differences between sponsors and sport federations.**

<b>RQ factors</b>	<b>Perceptual similarities</b>	<b>Perceptual differences</b> <b>sponsors</b> <b>federations</b>	
Cooperation	Core of the relationship Power asymmetry Equal partnership (partially)	Some view it as a vertical service arrangement Some prefer distanced cooperation	Equal partnership
Trust	Minor factor for both Communicate honestly Good intentions	Important when risk is present in the relationship Communicating irregularities	Managing exaggerated sponsor expectations
Commitment	Invest resources into activation Want to create a close personal relationship		
Mutual understanding	Early dialogue about expectations and needs Create KPI's Increased sponsor demands	Federations have insufficient marketing capabilities Knowledge-sharing	Satisfied with their own marketing capabilities
Satisfaction	Close relationship Long-lasting partnerships	Important factor Satisfied with federations Federations take initiative	Minor factor
Communication	Frequent communication Collaborative dialogue Positive communication Important for personal relations		
Long-term perspective	Strategic approach to sponsorships Want to continue the partnership Long-term sponsor objectives	Loyal, but consider cost and benefit when renewing	
Internal anchoring	Integrate sponsorship into organization Create specific sponsorship strategy Involved top management	Important factor Connect to several areas Involve different departments in evaluation	Connect sponsorships to grassroots activities

## **5.2 An ideal relationship between sport federations and sponsors**

During the interviews, the participants were asked to describe an ideal relationship, and give advice to other sport organizations and companies involved in sponsoring. The answers were divided into factors important for the relationship quality in order to generate further implications. Also, several additional topics that describe qualities and capabilities of an ideal partnership were visible. These are not directly connected to relationship quality concept but are relevant for the sponsor-sponsee partnership. These factors could affect sponsorship success, therefore it seemed appropriate to include them into the study.

### **5.2.1 Cooperation**

The four representatives from sport federations described the ideal relationship as a business-oriented cooperation. Similar to the perception of the current situation, it was clear that they viewed it as a partnership, where the federation and the sponsors are equal partners that co-create value both sides benefit from. The participants also said to be aware that some sponsors are happy to exchange money for a logo, with little necessary cooperation. Two participants joked that it would actually be an ideal arrangement but admitted that this type of so-called “sweet-heart” deals where sponsorship decisions are based on preferences of top management is a dying trend when it comes to large sponsorships.

For the federations, an ideal cooperation is when a sponsor seeks multiple objectives and wants to get involved in the grassroots projects, and not only in marketing activities involving elite athletes. When asked to give an example of projects, both federations mentioned promotion of healthier diet and increase activity for children and youth. Follow up questions show that they believe that a cooperation where partners work together on several levels/projects is more likely to produce value for both parties, and thus the sponsorship is more likely to last.

*F2-1: It is not enough that you get a logo on the jersey and they you are done with it. I think way to many partners demand way too little from us, because we should not be “nice to have”, we must be “need to have”. You must have a sponsorship with [the federation] because it gives so many things. Then you can ask, maybe we should not be fat and happy, we should challenge the partner on being clear and demand more from us. And of course, the reality is that we might not be able to deliver on that level, but I wish*

*the partners were clearer on expectations towards [the federation] than what many are today.*

The other federation talked about importance of continuous cooperation.

*F1-1: You need to have the capacity to implement the chosen activities, and also have good relations. I don't necessary mean that we have to be friends and high-five each other, but to have good professional relation where we continuously can learn from each other, challenge, inspire and engage each other.*

*F1-2: It is to be conscious about your identity and what you want out of the cooperation. Also, you need to be professional when following-up. I think that gives the best result.*

The sponsors view the ideal relationship in a similar way the federations do. For them, an ideal cooperation is business oriented. Firstly, many sponsors spoke of an ideal sponsee as an active part who takes initiative and has a continuous follow-up throughout the cooperation period.

*S4: It should be obvious that they should be the driving force, but of course that it is an interplay for the benefit of both. But it should be important for them and in their interest to follow up closely.*

Another representative with long experience of working with several sport federations mentioned a situation in the past where some federations are really attentive and want to deliver results only in the beginning of the relationship.

*S7: What can be a pitfall for some federations is that after a while, one takes the cooperation for granted. I am very concerned with the federations showing curiosity, are attentive, are on the giving and offering side all the way. The most dangerous is to take a cooperation-partner that contributes with a lot of money for granted.*

Secondly, most companies viewed the cooperation as one where the federations would create and facilitate business opportunities. But they are also clear that they must be ready to act on it.

*S4: Yes, it is up to each company. They [the federation] can facilitate, they can show that we have this many meetings, this many business lunches and we are going on these trips. But it is up to each company to create the sales. I know [sponsor manager] doesn't sell [a product] as good as I do. Or he cannot sell [a product] as good as [a sponsor] can. But he can facilitate it and it has to be up to each individual company to do the job. That is*

*very important. Otherwise I will feel sorry for him because it would be a very difficult job.*

Comparing the opinions of sport federations and sponsors, there are a few nuances in the answers. For both sides, an ideal relationship is a business orientated cooperation. Specific for the federations is to view it as an equal partnership, similar to their current view of the cooperation. The interesting finding is that also the sponsors see an ideal relationship as an equal cooperation, where the sponsors facilitates the cooperation. This deviates from how some sponsors view the current situation, which can be described as a vertical buyer-supplier relationship. Hence, there is an opportunity for the partners to bridge the gap, because a sponsorship based on an equal cooperation can create mutual additional benefits through combination of unique resources from both sides.

Apart from that, parties have matching perceptions about importance of continuous cooperation in an ideal situation. The comments confirms that cooperation is a central factor in the sponsee-sponsor relationship. A professional sponsorship on high level should not be based on sporadic initiatives from time to time. Instead, the parties should engage in several activities that both sides can contribute to, and have additional initiatives on top of that. It is likely that this is already happening today, at least to a certain degree, since both parties view it as a part of an ideal relationship. For the sport federations, this is an opportunity to integrate on-going grassroots activities into their sponsorships and they should actively present such opportunities to the sponsors.

### **5.2.2 Trust**

Several sponsors implicated that trust is important in an ideal relationship, in a way that they can rely on the people they cooperate with to behave in open and honest manner. Few sponsors stated that sharing share internal information that is relevant for the sponsorship, would make it more productive than keeping internal information confidential. This could be employee feedback or marketing scores. One sponsor with long traditions with sponsoring said it clearly:

*S2: For me it is the matter of openness and trust. That you can rely on the person sitting on the other side of the table and being able to put the cards on the table in a way.*

The call of some sponsors for sharing confidential information implicate that they might not always do so in the current cooperation. Either because their relationship with the

sponsee not as close as it could be, or because they do see the point of it. In such cases, there is an opportunity for some of the partners to strengthen the relationship. This could for example be achieved through planning and evaluating sessions where the partners discuss potential activities that would serve the internal needs sponsors and sport federations. These sessions could also help to understand each other's current preferences and register changes in partner preferences over time

Evidence of trust in an ideal relationship strengthens the argument made earlier in chapter 5.1.2, that trust is probably relevant for the relationship quality between sport federations and sponsors, but not easy to identify because trust is present by default in the Norwegian population (Barstad & Sandvik, 2015).

### **5.2.3 Commitment**

Employees of the federations spoke of commitment in a sense that sponsors should be able to invest in activation activities. Both federations expressed the importance of having professional sponsors. Follow up questions revealed that this meant the sponsors should allocate resources and have competence to activate the sponsorship.

*F2-2: [Sponsor X] and [Sponsor Y] are new. But again, [Sponsor X] it almost seems like they have been here for long, because they are so professional. They are so engaged in how they work with sponsoring. They are like "oh yes, federation is our object, but [International sport event] is another object, so let's get rolling". And have a lot of resources around it.*

The federations also mentioned that an ideal sponsor wants to support a social cause. This could be advocating a healthy lifestyle or activate of the population, especially children and youth.

Moreover, few sponsors said companies should allocate personnel to continuously work on the sponsorship when asked to give advise to other companies about sponsoring. This would help to activate the sponsorship and utilize opportunities along the way. In relation to this, one sponsor commented on what the federations should do:

*S6: I think they need to choose sponsors that are capable of being a proper sponsor. Because this creates long-term oriented and good cooperation. I think they should have a criterion for minimum involvement...and that they help to create it. That you have*



*sponsors who are dedicated, have enough personnel to work with it and leverage it. And [the federation] should provide specific advise, for example from other sponsorships.*

The comments from the federations about the need to have a social cause and get involved in grassroots activities can be understood as a wish for sponsors to get more involved in such activities. This brings us to the second point. Their opinion could be that only few companies have extra resources and capacity in form of personnel to get involved in grassroots activities. The fact that also few sponsors emphasized importance of allocating personnel strengthens this argument. Thus, many sponsors might not utilize the full potential of their sponsorships. This could be an area for improvement for companies involved in sponsoring.

#### **5.2.4 Mutual understanding**

The federations emphasized the need for both parties to clarify expectations with each other before signing the contract. Also, they noted the need to share internal goals for the sponsorship from the beginning, because it makes the cooperation much easier if the parties share what activities they prefer to focus on first. This includes sharing strategic plans with each other in terms of what they aim to achieve through a sponsorship, potential challenges they might experience, and collaborative opportunities.

Establishing a mutual understanding for each other organizations and activities was also mentioned.

*F1-1: I think some are already good at it. But some of the sponsors could understand and familiarize with our business activities even more, and what they are actually contributing to. I think that one should know the sport you are sponsoring, just like we need to know the sponsor... And then I think that they can benefit even more with us.*

*F2-1: Clear goals, from both. Be clear about the limitations, that a federation has. If sponsors are to engage and do something direct with sport, it not possible to snap your fingers and then everybody in the federation pulls in the same direction. There is a lot of boards meetings and decisions, things take a very long time. And have respect for it, we can't just turn around and then it is fixed.*

Further, one federation said that ideally, the sponsors would understand that their elite athletes are not actors and that they cannot only focus activating the sponsorship through marketing of the national teams. Both federations implicated mutual understanding in form of having a good balance of grassroots projects and marketing campaigns with elite athletes. In relation to this, they spoke how important it is that

companies take social responsibility, for example by supporting community projects over a longer period of time. Two participants also mentioned that a sponsor ideally would include this into communication with their customers, who are becoming conscious consumers.

A theme mentioned by all the sponsors about an ideal cooperation is the sport federation being able to get to know the company needs and their way of business to understand how they can be of assistance. The following comments highlight this point:

*S5: Being able to sit down and ask the sponsor “what are your needs, what do you need, what needs to be there in order for you to be even more happy and wanting to continue [the sponsorship] even longer?”*

*S3: Can take an example with [Music festival]. What they want in beforehand [of signing a contract] is to really understand our challenges and what is it that we want, what we struggle with and what do we want to accomplish. First once they know that, they can know what they can contribute with. That is the ideal. That I have never experienced anyone else been interested in like that, at all. Really, in a way to being able to view yourself as an instrument to help and contribute.*

The sponsors also stressed the need to get to know each other. If the parties spend time and resources on planning and doing formal and informal activities, they would get familiar with the needs of the other side and would know what one has to deliver to create an optimal sponsorship. The following statements show why having a mutual understanding is important:

*S3: To just give away money, that surely is fine but if you have a genuine interest in those you are going to work with, then you will receive a lot more value. To get to know the sponsor object or the ones you are going to sponsor and to understand them. Then it is much easier to see what you can contribute with .... It is a give and take relationship. Both need to get to know each other, that is most important.*

In relation to this, one sponsor suggested to establish on-going communication between decisionmakers on executive level and being able to consult each other on sponsorship strategy. If those two things were present, the informant believes it would be easier for both parties to allocate resources to utilize the full potential of the sponsorship and create a long-lasting relationship. This argument was supported by the marketing expert, who remarked that Sponsor Insight recently made a national report where they found that among marketing activities in companies, sponsorship decisions are the ones that

go all the way up to the CEO or head of department. For him, having good relations with executive personnel could be an advantage because sponsoring is about feelings and joy. With the CEO being a company's face out to the world their support is beneficial because, in addition to image transfer between the sponsor and the sponsee, they will be personally associated with the sponsorship.

The matching opinions between federations and sponsors about the need to get to know the other part underlines the importance of a strong relationship. The comments indicate the both parties could improve their understanding of the organizational structure (federations) and their way of doing business (sponsors). The implication for the federations is to spend more time to understand the needs of the sponsors and challenges connected to their specific businesses. At the same time, the companies should fully understand how a sport federation functions, and be patient about implementing changes and improvements. The federations also indicated that they experience some sponsors being focused on the national team, or that the total demand for involving the national athletes is too high compared to what they can provide. Thus, they should focus on reaching a mutual understanding that there is more to a sponsorship than the elite athletes and marketing activities, and that benefits can also be achieved through getting involved in community projects. In relation to this, managing expectations of the sponsor in the beginning of a sponsorship can be helpful.

### **5.2.5 Long-term perspective**

This topic was barely mentioned in relation to an ideal relationship. Both federations noted that sport sponsorship is not only for advertising and driving sales. It is for brand building, demonstrating values and attitudes towards the customers, and these things take time to develop. Similarly, one sponsor said that it would be best if companies understand that sponsoring is about feelings, and such things is not achieved in one day. The comments underline that many sponsorship outcomes require cooperation over time, preferably several renewal rounds in order to yield benefits for the parties. It also shows that the sponsors believe long term-based sponsorships have the potential to become sustainable competitive advantages, because benefits like customer attitude, recall or employee engagement are resources that cannot be purchased. Thus, value generated from successful long-term partnerships will almost certainly exceed the value creation of any single transaction or short-lived initiative.

### 5.2.6 Internal anchoring

Both sides noted the importance of sponsors having a specific strategy plan for the cooperation and connecting the sponsorship to company activities:

*F1-2: An ideal partner is an engaged partner and knows what he wants with the cooperation. And has anchored it in the company, then you often get the best results.*

*S5: It is very important to have a clear goal, why do we enter this sponsorship? Do we enter because it is important internally, or otherwise? Because we want to earn money or because we need a good reputation. It has to be superimportant, I think it is the most important to be clear about it. And then you agree on the mutual goals we can work together on. And have a clear strategy on what you want.*

*S7: Everyone should have a defined, or several defined goals in a cooperation if you are going to invest money into it. And specifically, how does it fit with what you are doing already.*

The fact that many sponsors mentioned the need to anchor the sponsorship within their organization, indicates that most of the sponsors in this study are already doing it. This is in contrast with past studies showing that Norwegian companies are reluctant to planning and coordinating sponsorship activities (Thjømmøe et al., 2002). Companies involved in this study have long experience with sponsoring and are among the biggest sponsors in the country, and it could be that their sponsorship competence is above the average in the industry.

### 5.2.7 Additional topics

#### *Shared values*

Employees from both federations mentioned that in an ideal situation, sport organizations will consciously act on a principle of scouting and entering partnerships with companies that have matching values and good reputation.

*F1-1: Values of the federation function as a guide to enter a sponsorship with. The image should match, set of values should match.*

*F2-1: Your values should match with values of the potential sponsor. We've had several here that we have said no to, who don't fit in. Red Bull among others.*

Similarly, the sponsors talked about matching values. Several sponsors said that the federations and the sport they represent should have similar culture and core values with

the sponsoring company. The sponsors also considered it important that sport federations avoid public scandals or negative associations, and are able to handle controversies in a proper way. Follow up questions show that this includes having a high moral code against doping and good internal culture within the federation:

*S2: We haven't had those issues with [sport], and it was one of the arguments that were on the notepad when we considered [sport] against other sponsorships, [another sport] for example. We could never go into [another sport] with [company name]. There is a form for bad culture in the federation that we do not wish to be associated with.*

Opinions of both sides about an ideal relationship show that both parties are concerned with the values of the other side when considering which sponsorships to enter. This means that they evaluate how the core values of partner will affect the relationship. Both sides should therefore actively communicate their organizational values when searching for new partners, because shared values is closely connected to the ability of developing trust and commitment in sponsorships (Hessling et al., 2018). Matching values can also be positive for the publicly-perceived brand fit, which has shown to positively influence image transfer between the brands (Olson & Thjømmøe, 2011). Given the image transfer risk between companies and sport organizations (McCracken, 1988), the sport federations should also ensure that they have specific plans to handle instances that can result in negative media attention, such as player transgressions or doping cases. It is important for the sponsors that federations are able to handle controversies, and it should also be in important for them.

### *Specific skills*

Several sponsors stated that ideally sport federations would have specific skills that would assist the sponsor to translate potential opportunities into specific activities.

*S5: Logo is fine, but it is just the first step in a sponsorship in you want to change customer attitude for example. We would also want to invest in the relationship so that we can use it in other activities. But that requires specific knowledge about business networks, marketing, about social media and current trends. Ideally, they [the federation] would help us with that.*

*S3: I think fewer and fewer will be happy with just seeing their logo [in the future].*

Further, the importance of creating a relevant link between two brands was also mentioned by few sponsors as an ideal situation. One sponsor said that the sponsee would ideally have the skills and ability to help the sponsor create a relevant link between the brands, to make “*pieces fall into place by themselves*” in terms of building associations in the minds of customers.

Several sponsors also noted directly and indirectly that ideally, the federations would have knowledge to create activities that brings income to the company. One sponsor talked about an ideal sponsorship as an investment with a financial return.

*S2: The perfect situation would of course be if the sponsorship can give income to the sponsor. So that you can use the sponsorship to do business, so that both the sponsor and sponsee is businesswise closely attached. That I think is the best recipe for success because you have so many activation opportunities and the engagement to get involved internally gets a lot bigger. You will have attention from sales in a completely different way than if you only offer a relation-building arena and not a business-creating arena.*

Similarly, some informants said they do a consideration of cost-and-effect of sponsorship activities, and compare them to other marketing activities outside the sponsorship. Few sponsors commented that ideally, sport federations would influence the local community to drive sales of sponsor products and manage a network of companies that the sponsors can benefit from in terms of B2B activities. The advantages of B2B network in sponsorships has previously been addressed in Danish handball (Wagner et al., 2017).

The findings show that the sponsors wish that federations were more competent with specific skills to create marketing content, communicate brand fit, and run activities to drive sales. It seems some sponsors assume that if the federations had these specific skills, they would then be able to support the sponsor to achieve their current goals or their dream goals. And when the expectations of some sponsors are not met, it reinforces their view of the relationship as an asymmetric partnership. This can explain why some sponsors view it as a vertical buyer-supplier relationship.

The comments in this chapter could also be related to the findings in chapter 5.2.1, that discussed an ideal relationship for both sides an equal partnership. It is possible that the sponsors would see the current relationship as an equal partnership if the federations had the competencies that sponsors stated. That would also explain why

there is a difference between how sponsors view the current relationship and how they view an ideal relationship. In order to bridge the gap, the sport federations probably need to evaluate and actively seek to improve their compatibilities in areas like marketing intelligence, social media, and implementation of activities.

Additionally, as mentioned in chapter 5.2.1, the federations too wish to have professional sponsors that have the knowledge to activate the sponsorship. Thus, the parties want the same thing. A dialogue should therefore be the first step to finding a solution. Given that core activity of sport organization is sport, it is likely that their knowledge evolves around the specific sport that is being practised. At the same time, this can be an opportunity for partners to engage in knowledge-sharing activities in order to create projects that can serve the needs for sponsors and sponsees.

The option of knowledge-sharing activities was also discussed with the marketing expert. In his opinion, this is an underestimated area, and many sponsorships could perform better if the partners take time to share knowledge with each other:

*ME: Of course, many employees of the sponsor would think it is really cool to sit down together and help the federations with their skills. Imagine a federation saying “take with you a couple of skilled people from the different departments and let us find some cool ideas”. Do not send the sponsor manager or marketing manager, take instead the ones that think creatively and are used to discuss ideas with marketing agencies. Can you imagine how powerful this would be and what effect it would provide?*

In the Norwegian context, there are several practical examples of creative joint-projects. The national ski jumping team has recently secured legal assistance in various life situations for their ski jumpers through one of their sponsors (Skiforbundet, 2019). Similarly, the industry conglomerate Aker has previously initiated a project in cooperation with their sponsee in order to activate the employees and lower the sickness absence, saving 50 million NOK in one year (Haugen, 2011).

### *Media friendly athletes*

Both sides pointed at the importance of having popular and media friendly athletes, and the ability to avoid negative media attention;

*F2-2. And then you have Svindal and Jansrud for example. Very accessible and friendly all the time. So you have sponsors that work with them and with us. Then they say [the sponsors] “we prefer working with them, and we can work six weeks in a year with you”. That’s the world we live in.*

*F1-2: You look at Svindal and Jansrud as an example, when they appear the way they do and win gold and silver in WC, it contributes to the sport selling itself by their help. But the other one, Henrik, argues with everyone in the federation and is left outside. You can say that some are above it all because they perform so good. But again, do you see Henrik being used anywhere? You never see campaigns in Norway with him. That is noise. The sponsors use Kjetil Jansrud. You look at cross-country, they use Marit Bjørgen and Therese Johaug. There is a reason for that, it's not only because they are good, but also because they have values that stand for something.*

*S4: There is a close competition for the sponsorship funds. There is no doubt that it is important to have profiles. Like the alpine team, they have found their thing. I believe they have the best national team, they have everything. They have the best athletes, but additionally they have the right types. They are as down to earth like they should be, they are as cool as they should be, they are so serious as they should be and as playful as they should be.*

Follow up questions revealed that there are three factors that sponsors look for. Top results, being appealing to the public by having commercial value and representing good values, and behaving in a humble way. Additionally, the sponsors mentioned that in ideal condition the sport federation has the ability to secure media attention and publicity, because it is an important element of motivation for entering sponsorships.

The interviews also show that the sponsors prefer media friendly athletes, and the sponsors are aware of it. This means that the athletes are not only expected to perform in their sport, they are also expected to be able to produce engagement in the media. However, few national sport organizations are able to give advice on how their athletes can create a positive image (Geurin & Clavio, 2015). The comments from the sponsors highlights the need for sport federations to include the athletes in their media strategy, and provide them with media training. Several approaches to this have already been proposed (Geurin, 2016; Thompson, Martin, Gee, & Eagleman, 2014). The sponsors could potentially get involved with this, as some companies might have departments that provide communication services for their executive management.



## 6. Conclusions

In the introduction, it was mentioned that the aim of this study is to examine sponsorships in a way that improves our understanding of the relationship between sponsees and sponsors, gain a broader understanding of professional sponsorships in Norway, and provide science-based practical implications about what both parties can do to create a successful partnership. This study completes these tasks by inspecting the relationship between sport federations and companies in Norway. The empirical results add to the understanding of sponsor-sponsee partnership in a sponsorship market that is growing bigger every year. Much of the existing research is based on data from only one side of the partnership, and therefore fails to address the dyadic nature of the complex sponsor-sponsee relationship. In contrast, this study offers a dyadic, qualitative examination, and thus offers new insight on a research topic that lacks attention.

In this chapter I will answer the chosen research questions, provide theoretical and practical implications, and address the limitations of this study.

### 6.1 *Answering the research questions*

Previous research has proposed a number of relationship quality factors: cooperation, trust, commitment, mutual understanding, satisfaction, communication, and long-term perspective. Twelve interviews with sport federations, their sponsoring companies, and a marketing expert were conducted and analysed to see how these factors are visible in the relationships between sport federations and their sponsors.

To answer the first research question, *what factors contribute to the relationship quality between sport federations and sponsors?* Cooperation, commitment, mutual understanding, satisfaction, communication and long-term perspective was found to contribute to the relationship quality between sport federation and their sponsors. Additionally, a factor called internal anchoring was discovered to have a large contribution to the quality of the studied partnerships. Internal anchoring was especially important for the sponsors, as discussed in chapter 5.1.8 and 5.2.6. I believe that the discovery of internal anchoring as a RQ factor is relevant for studying professional sponsorships in other contexts.

Interestingly, trust is proposed as an essential factor in the literature but was

found to have a minimal effect on relationship quality in the studied context. This could be due to the social norms of high trust levels between people in Norway, as discussed in chapter 5.1.2.

Perceptual differences and similarities were also discovered between sport federations and sponsoring companies. While both sides expressed satisfaction with length of partnerships and close relations between the parties, it was discovered that satisfaction with the sponsorship performance was additionally important for the sponsors (chapter 5.1.5).

The results also show that cooperation, commitment, mutual understanding, communication, and long-term perspective are important for both sides. Regarding cooperation (chapter 5.1.1), both parties agree that there is power asymmetry in the relationship, caused by disproportional number of available sponsor objects and a limited number of sponsors. Similarly, the sport federations and some of the sponsors view the relationship as an equal partnership, while other sponsors view it as a vertical buyer-supplier arrangement where they pay for the service provided by the federations.

In relation to mutual understanding, it was revealed that there are perceptual differences in the marketing capabilities of the sport federations, as explained in chapter 5.1.4. The sport federations are convinced of their marketing skills, while the sponsors believe they are inadequate.

The second research question is: *What is the ideal relationship between sport federations and their sponsors?* An ideal relationship is an equal business-oriented partnership, where the partners cooperate closely together in order to create benefits for each other. The cooperation contains activities that include the elite athletes and grassroot activities. The partners allocate funds for different activities and specifically assign competent personnel to manage the partnership. The partners take time to understand each other's needs and way of business. They frequently exchange information, including relevant confidential information, strategy plans, and internal goals. An ideal relationship is long-term, and the sponsors are able to integrate the sponsorship into several aspects of their businesses to achieve multiple benefits. Sport federations have media friendly athletes, and are competent in areas like marketing, social media, and business networking in order to create benefits for their sponsors. Additionally, it was discovered that the sport federations and companies look for

partners that have similar values when entering sponsorships.

The findings regarding both research questions show that the studied sponsorships are functioning well. At the same time, some sponsors wish for more support from sport federations in key areas of sponsorships. In order for the partnership to function as an equal partnership, the sport federations need to improve their capabilities in areas like marketing, social media and business opportunities.

## **6.2 Research contribution and implications**

This study is probably the first study to provide knowledge about relational aspects of professional sponsorships in Norway from a dyadic perspective. The results of the study have several theoretical and practical implications that are mentioned in this chapter.

### **6.2.1 Theoretical implications**

Only few studies have previously examined factors contributing to the quality of sponsor-sponsee relationship from both sides (Bühler, 2006; Chadwick & Thwaites, 2005; Farrelly & Quester, 2003; A. Morgan et al., 2014). This research provides knowledge about the quality of the relationship between national sport federations and sponsors.

The proposal of new a RQ factor, called internal anchoring, makes a theoretical contribution that can be relevant for studying RQ in strategic partnerships, such as professional sponsorship arrangements. Also, this study validated several RQ factors that have been suggested in existing literature. The proposition by Bühler (2006) of cooperation as a central relationship quality factor is validated, as a collaborative process when the partners activate the sponsorship. Similarly, this study validates commitment, mutual understanding, communication, and long-term perspective as important for relationship quality. Also, the findings show that commitment manifests itself as an economic and a relational construct, in terms of financial investments in order to activate and manage the sponsorship, and through willingness to create a close personal relationship with the other party.

Additionally, failure of establishing trust as a positive RQ component shows that trust might be absent in the sponsor-sponsee relationship in some contexts, or that it is only visible in the relationship at certain times. This can be when the relationship is uncertain or under high risk, for example in the beginning or the end of the contract

period, or in situations that bring negative media attention. These implications are useful for future studies that examine the relational aspect in sponsorships.

### **6.2.2 Practical implications**

Some of the findings could also be applicable for sport organizations and sponsoring companies. It has been demonstrated that a good relationship between the sponsor and the sponsee has an impact on the success of the sponsorship. Sponsorship managers can therefore be advised to include relationship quality concept into sponsorship management, or when seeking new deals.

This is especially applicable for sport organizations. Only very few sport organizations are so attractive that they get contacted by potential sponsors, and most of them compete with other sponsees for sponsorship deals. The argument is that sport organizations are more likely to attract and keep their sponsors if they can highlight their ability to create a good relationship, and have necessary capacity and knowledge to create activation opportunities for the sponsoring company. Satisfaction was proven to be an important RQ factor for the sponsors. Consequently, the sport federations should aim to actively manage their relationship by seeking to identify and meet the expectations and needs of the sponsor. Doing so can foster sponsor satisfaction in the relationship, which is important if the sponsorship is to last a long time.

Often, the sponsoring companies consider the marketing potential of a sport, the popularity of the sport, and how successful is the national team when making sponsorship decisions. However, that is only one part of a sponsorship. In order to get several benefits, a close relationship with the sponsee is needed. For the sponsoring companies, they can be advised to consider the sponsees' capacity to create and manage a close relationship. And once the deal is signed, they should actively engage in the relationship with the sponsee, and invest resources in grassroots activities. As shown by several comments, a good relationship with the sponsee can sometimes provide benefits that exceed the expectations of the sponsor. Also, if the parties are able to create a close relationship, then the sponsors can then market the relationship itself and their support to the grassroots. This can provide a new dimension for brand building and customer communication. For example, as a part of internal communication and branding, which can engage and satisfy employees. This is important because employees have an effect on brand perception by customers and other stakeholders (Farrelly et al., 2012).

The interviews also show that the demands of the sponsors have increased. To meet this, the sponsees should start investing resources and allocate personnel to work on the partnership.

A good practice of this can be to include funds for project manager into the sponsorship contract. This earmarks the funds, and ensures that the project manager works with the sponsorship for the whole period. This can be beneficial if the sport organization comes under difficult economic conditions.

In order to secure resources for activation activities, sport organizations could also create an annual activation pot that the largest sponsors are obliged to contribute to. This pot can be used for joint marketing campaigns during the year, create additional benefits for the sponsors, and to manage the relationship with the sponsors. This is a second example of good practice that can be applicable to any sponsorship.

At the same time, the sponsors also indicate that sport federations could improve their competence in areas like marketing, activation and business networking. The sponsees should therefore engage the sponsors when assessment qualities for new improvement areas and recruitment. This could be deemed as positive by sponsors because it shows that the federation is strategically oriented to meet their needs.

Also, an implication from comments by the sponsors and the marketing expert is that sport organizations should not only be good at selling sponsorships, but also learn to create specific ideas to activate the sponsorship. For example, they should consider developing an ongoing resource database with specific information about past successful activities to accumulate knowledge within the organization in case of high staff turnover.

Regarding the need to improve marketing capabilities in sport federations, one solution could be to engage a partnership or a barter agreement with a marketing firm to assist with planning of marketing campaigns, communicating values of sport to customers of the sponsoring company and creation of social media content. A more reasonable solution could be seeking advise from Sponsor Insight, who offer services that are affordable for small and medium sport organizations. By doing so, sport federations could start sealing the marketing capabilities gap reported by the sponsors.

A second immediate recommendation would be to ask their sponsors for help and together engage in knowledge exchange activities, for example by participating in the marketing campaigns with the sponsors. This is a good way for marketing employers the federations to develop their marketing and CRM (customer relationship

management) skills. Successful partnerships are characterized by the ability to combine resources and create relationship platforms that facilitate knowledge-exchange (Reid, Bussiere, & Greenaway, 2001). Such solution could be cost effective and potentially strengthen the cooperation between the parties. Time must be set off for this specific activity only, and should not be conducted in relation to other activities, because general workshops with several activity topics tend to focus on activation opportunities and evaluation, and often ignore knowledge-sharing processes (Westberg, Stavros, & Wilson, 2008).

And finally, sport federations should consider facilitating B2B network of sponsors on national level or local level, and promote business activities between the companies. This would further satisfy the sponsors, as several companies expressed that producing income is a part of a current and an ideal sponsorship.

### **6.3 *Limitations and future research***

As with all research, the results of this study face a number of limitations. The studied partnerships are considered as large in the Norwegian context but are relatively small compared to other markets. The empirical data collected from professional sponsorships in national sport federations in Norway may have limited generalisability compared to other contexts of sport and sponsorships. Nonetheless, it is highly likely that the bigger the amount of money that is being invested into sponsorships in any context, the more important will the relationship between sponsors and sponsees become. The goal of case studies is not to provide conclusions applicable to other populations, but expand and generalize theories (Yin, 2009). Therefore, theoretical and methodological approach can be applied to study similar cases of sport sponsorships. At the same time, the way sport sponsorships function could be relevant to the field of culture (Olson, 2010). Thus, the same approach could also be applicable for research in professional sponsorships in culture.

Also, the issues of confidentiality were evident in this study. Although the involved actors gave access to personnel that hold key positions and are involved in sponsorship relations, the possibility to access to certain marketing and strategic documents were not explored with the sponsors, and only in limited degree with the sport federations. The findings are based on the data provided during the interviews, which is by its nature are subjective and have its limitations.

A third limitation of this study is the short time period in which data was collected. The cross-sectional design only reveals a current state of the sponsorship phenomenon, but is not able to describe or explain it fully. The sponsor-sponsee relationship is dynamic, it evolves over time and is affected by external factors. Thus, it might be possible that some relationship quality factors are more essential in certain periods, as suggested in this paper. Using other research designs, to study the same phenomenon in course of one or several years would be very beneficial, as it can provide a complete picture of the sponsor-sponsee relationship as it undergoes different phases, and map out the relations between different RQ factors. This study initially tried to identify the possible life-cycle stages in sponsorships, and specific questions were asked during the interviews. However, it was difficult to identify stages and their order because the participants were mostly able to give information about the current state of sponsorship affairs. Perhaps this is an appropriate task for experienced researchers.

Although this study is based on two cases and a relatively small sample size, it could inspire future research to theoretically evaluate the relationship quality factors in sponsorships, that could be applicable to larger sample in order to provide statistical generalization. Should any future research be inspired to examine measure RQ through quantitative measures in the context of sport, it is advised to consider measurement scales used by Bühler (2006) to operationalise RQ factors. Given the increased dependency of sport federations on commercial income and number of companies seeking multiple benefits from sponsorships, the importance of knowledge on relationships between sponsors and sponsees is likely to be even more essential for sponsorship success in future.

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## **Table overview**

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Table 3: Perceptual similarities and differences between sponsors and sport federations  
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# Appendices

## Appendix A – Example of request email to participants

Samarbeidsprosjekt med NIH og deres sponsorer?

Vitaly Berg <vitaly.berg90@gmail.com> 8. jan. 2019, 13:00

til [redacted]

Hei [redacted]

Mitt navn er Vitaly Berg. Jegg er student på Norges Idrettshøgskole og er i gang med å mitt masterprosjekt innen sport management. Jeg tar kontakt med deg for å forhøre om dere har lyst til å delta på et forskningsprosjekt på NIH, der formålet er å styrke kunnskap og kompetanse som kommer begge institusjoner til gode.

Et område som vi ønsker å undersøke er hvordan en stor idrettsorganisasjon, som [redacted], håndterer forholdet til sine samarbeidspartnere. Idretten får i dag mye oppmerksomhet i mediene, og sponsormarkedet har økt betraktelig de siste årene. Samtidig stiller sponsorer større krav til samarbeidet enn tidligere, som for forbund kan være utfordrende å imøtekomme.

Mer spesifikt er målet å få kunnskap om hvordan samarbeidsforholdet håndteres av partene, hvilke utfordringer som finnes og hva er det som avgjør om sponsoratet termineres eller forlenges.

Dette er et spennende tema å undersøke fordi det finnes begrenset dokumentert kunnskap om emnet, og fordi det er interessant å undersøke det både fra forskerens og fra idrettsmiljøet sin side. Målet med oppgaven er å legge ned tid og innsats slik at kunnskapen blir relevant, og anvendbar for idrettsorganisasjoner og bedrifter som har sponssing som en del av sitt samfunnsengasjement og mediekanal.

Deltakelse innebærer at det gjennomføres 1-3 intervjuer med deres ansatte som jobber ut mot sponsorer og som tar beslutninger som påvirker samarbeidet. I tillegg velger tar vi kontakt med 3-5 sponsorer som dere velger, de får tilbud om intervju og mulighet til å komme med refleksjoner rundt samarbeidet.

Nyttig opplysning: etter en titt på nettsiden så ser at jeg to av [redacted] sponsorer er [redacted]. De er allerede med i prosjektet gjennom deres samarbeid med [redacted].

...

--  
Best,  
Vitaly Berg

Samarbeid med [redacted] - masteroppgave ved NIH

Vitaly Berg <vitaly.berg90@gmail.com> tor. 3. jan., 12:53

til [redacted]

Hei [redacted]

Mitt navn er Vitaly Berg og jeg er masterstudent på Norges Idrettshøgskole (NIH) innen kultur og samfunn.

Vi er i gang med et masterprosjekt der [redacted] er involvert. Oppgaven tar for seg hvordan en stor idrettsorganisasjon håndterer forholdet til sine samarbeidspartnere. Etter samtale med [redacted] foreslår [redacted] som en aktuell aktør som kan være nyttig å undersøke. I forbindelse med dette ønsker jeg å intervju deg om samarbeidet dere har med [redacted].

Her er sakens bakgrunn. Norsk idrett og utøvere, og spesielt i friidrett, får i dag mye oppmerksomhet i mediene, og sponsormarkedet har økt betraktelig de siste årene. Samtidig ser næringslivet annerledes på sponssing enn tidligere. Sponsorlitteraturen viser at det stilles større krav til samarbeidet enn før, noe som kan være vanskelig for idrettsorganisasjoner å imøtekomme.

Med dette som forutsetning ønsker jeg å undersøke samarbeidsforholdet i et sponsorat, og vurdere det på bakgrunn av eksisterende forskning på PR og markedsføring.

Målet med oppgaven er å legge ned en innsats slik at kunnskapen blir relevant nok til å kunne benyttes av idrettsorganisasjoner og bedrifter der sponssing er en del av mediekanal og samfunnsansvar. Har du lyst å bli med på dette? Det innebærer et intervju med varighet på ca en time.

...

[redacted] til meg

Hei,

Ja, dette kan jeg bistå på.  
Hører fra deg når du ønsker å gjennomføre intervjuet 😊

Med vennlig hilsen/best regards

## **Appendix B: Project information, informed consent and anonymity**

### Forespørsel om deltakelse i forskningsprosjekt *”Sponsorship relationships in a Norwegian context.”?*

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt hvor formålet er å undersøke sponsorsamarbeidet mellom forbund og næringslivet. I dette skrivet gir vi deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.

#### **Formål**

Studien skal undersøke ulike faser av samarbeidet mellom et idrettsforbund og næringslivet. I dag får idretten og utøvere mye oppmerksomhet i mediene, og sponsormarkedet har økt betraktelig de siste årene. Samtidig ser bedrifter annerledes på sponning enn før, og vi vet at det stilles større krav til samarbeidet enn tidligere. Disse kravene være vanskelig å imøtekomme. Så langt vi er kjent med har det ikke blitt gjort studier eller undersøkelser i Norge som undersøker samarbeidet mellom idretten og næringslivet.

På bakgrunn av dette ønsker vi å undersøke forholdene i sponsorsamarbeid i norsk perspektiv. Forhåpentligvis kan både idrettsorganisasjoner og bedrifter som bruker sponning som mediekanal få nytte av kunnskapen som framkommer i studien. Prosjektet er en masteroppgave ved Norges Idrettshøgskole (NIH).

For å besvare problemstillingen er følgende forskningsspørsmål valgt ut.

1. Hvordan håndterer forbundet og sponsorene samarbeidsforholdet i de ulike fasene av et sponsorat?
2. Hvilke spesifikke utfordringer finnes i de ulike fasene av samarbeidet?
3. Hvilke strategier brukes i avslutningsfasen i forholdet, til å enten å forlenge eller terminere sponsoratet?

#### **Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?**

Det er Vitaly Berg (masterstudenten) som er ansvarlig for prosjektet. Oppgaven er under veiledning av førsteamanuensis Berit Skirstad ved NIH og førsteamanuensis Chris Horbel ved Syddansk Universitet (SDU).

#### **Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?**

Forskningsprosjektet er en case-studie, der objektene er valget selektivt. Hos [federation name] er ansatte som jobber med sponsoravtaler og samarbeidsprosjektet valgt som intervjuobjekter. Hos [federation] sponsorer er tilsvarende ansatte invitert til å delta. Det skal gjennomføres totalt mellom 10-15 intervjuer.

[Federation] har godkjent prosjektet på ledersnivå, og sponsorenes kontaktinformasjon er innhentet enten fra deres ansatte, eller via bedriftenes kommunikasjonsavdeling.

### **Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?**

Deltakelse i studien innebærer at det gjennomføres semi-strukturerte intervjuer for å innhente informasjon. Spørsmålene vil omhandle sponsorsamarbeidet mellom [federation] og selskapene. Hvordan samarbeidsforholdet behandles i ulike faser, hvilke utfordringer finnes i ulike faser og hvordan samarbeidet fungerer ved forlengelse eller terminering.

Intervjuene gjennomføres ansikt til ansikt, og det vil bli tatt opp lydopptak og notater underveis. Det vil ta ca en time å gjennomføre intervjuet.

### **Det er frivillig å delta**

Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke samtykke tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle opplysninger om deg vil da bli anonymisert. Det vil ikke ha noen konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg.

### **Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger**

Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene vi har fortalt om i dette skrivet. Vi behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket til NSD (Norsk senter for forskningsdata).

Det er kun masterstudenten (Vitaly Berg) og veilederne (Berit Skirstad og Chris Horbel) som vil ha tilgang til deltakernes personopplysninger. Lydopptakene fra intervjuene vil bli transkribert i etterkant og deretter slettet. Lydfilene vil bli bevart i et låst skap på NIH, på en minnepinne med passordbeskyttelse. Deltakere i studien vil ikke bli referert til med navn, kun med tilhørighet (ansatt i forbundet eller sponsorbedrift). Alt innsamlet datamateriale vil bli slettet etter studiens slutt, som er planlagt innen 30 mai 2019.

Det vil bli publisert opplysninger knyttet til organisasjonstilhørighet (sponsor eller forbund), hvilken industri selskapet tilhører og hvor lenge samarbeidet har eksistert.

### **Dine rettigheter**

Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:

- innsyn i hvilke personopplysninger som er registrert om deg
- å få rettet personopplysninger om deg
- få slettet personopplysninger om deg
- få utlevert en kopi av dine personopplysninger (dataportabilitet)
- å sende klage til personvernombudet eller Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger

### **Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?**

Vi behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke.

På oppdrag fra Norges Idrettshøgskole har NSD vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

### **Hvor kan jeg finne ut mer?**

Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:

Masterstudent Vitaly Berg,

på 45067550 eller [vitaly.berg90@gmail.com](mailto:vitaly.berg90@gmail.com)

Førsteamanuensis Berit Skirstad,

på 23 26 24 28 eller [berit.skirstad@nih.no](mailto:berit.skirstad@nih.no)

NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS,

på epost ([personverntjenester@nsd.no](mailto:personverntjenester@nsd.no)) eller telefon: 55 58 21 17.

Med vennlig hilsen,

Vitaly Berg

---

## Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet «*Sponsorship relationships in a Norwegian context*», og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål.

Jeg samtykker til å delta i intervju.

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet, ca. Juni 2019.

---

(Signert av deltaker, dato)



## **Appendix C – Information about topics for discussion**

Dette gir en oversikt over tre forskningsspørsmål som er valgt for prosjektet, og underliggende tema som vil bli tatt opp i løpet av samtalen for å besvare de valgte spørsmålene.

### **1. Hvordan håndterer forbundet og sponsorene samarbeidsforholdet i de ulike fasene av et sponsorat?**

- Motiver og forventninger til samarbeidet og den andre parten
- Målsetting/strategier for samarbeidet
- Hvordan kan samarbeidet deles opp i ulike faser, hva består de av/ hva er viktig
- Forpliktelser. Hvem er pådriver i ulike faser av samarbeidet?

### **2. Hvilke spesifikke utfordringer finnes i de ulike fasene av samarbeidet?**

- Kommunikasjonsformer og rolleavklaring mellom partene
- Planlegging av fellesaktiviteter
- Hvordan blir interne endringer hos dere kommunisert til andreparten.
- Verdiskapning. Hvilke tiltak gjøres for å dra nytte av økt popularitet/suksess?
- Læring og tilpasning. Foregår det utveksling av ny informasjon/kunnskap mellom organisasjoner?

### **3. Hvilke strategier brukes i avslutningsfasen i forholdet, til å enten å forlenge eller avslutte sponsoratet?**

- Evaluering av spesifikke kampanjer og hele samarbeidet, hvilke kriterier brukes?
- Hvordan ser siste del av sponsoratet ut?
- Hvem tar initiativ til dialog?
- Framgangsmåter for å diskutere forlengelse / terminering.
- Verdiskapning. Hvordan kan dere/andreparten bli bedre på å skape verdi for hverandre?
- Hvordan ser et ideelt samarbeid ut?
- Hvilke kriterier har en ideell part?

Noen av temaene kan kreve forarbeid. Vi ber at deltakeren gjør dette, for å sikre at funnene får praktisk relevans.

## Appendix D - Interview guide

### Intervjuguide

Først:

Signer skjema om informert samtykke. Forklar at vi prater sammen, og at personen svarer fritt.

I løpet av samtalen går vi inn på motiver og forventninger, målsetting, ulike faser i et samarbeid, om forpliktelser til hverandre, hvor man snakker sammen, hvordan samarbeidet foregår, hvordan dere evaluerer et sponsorat og hvilke strategier som brukes til å enten avslutte eller forlenge avtalen.

Hvis det kommer opp spørsmål som man er usikker på om man kan gi informasjon om, eller ikke vet nok om så er det helt okei å ikke svare. Hvis det er noen ting som personen ikke har vært med på, så er det helt okei, du kan svare det du tror kommer til å skje

Tenkepauser er bra, any time. Noen spørsmål før vi starter?

Noen av spørsmålene er generelle, noen er veldig spesifikke og handler om [federation]. Vi er interessert i forholdet mellom to samarbeidspartnere, ikke nødvendigvis tallene eller fakta. Som nevnte er formålet både kunnskap, men også at kunnskapen skal kunne brukes i et samarbeid.

(naturlig overgang) For veldig mye har skjedd i løpet av de siste årene... Idretten har blitt mer populær, inntektene og sponsoratene har økt, samme med medieomtale. Dette fører til endringer i måten samarbeider på. For din egen del, hvilke

#### Innledende spørsmål

1. Rolle i organisasjonen
2. Hvor lenge har du vært ansatt i rollen?
3. Hvor lenge dere samarbeidet?
4. Hvor mange samarbeidspartnere har dere totalt?
  - a. Har dette økt/minket?

### **Motiver og forventninger**

5. Fra deres forretningsmodell, hvordan ser dere på et sponsorat?
6. Hvilke forventninger har dere til samarbeidet?
  - a. Når forventer dere å se resultater / effekt?
7. Hvilke forventninger har dere til andre parten? Eksempel?
8. Blir dette kommunisert? Skriftlig / muntlig
9. Hvordan ser dere på sponning av forbund kontra enkeltutøvere?

### **Målsetting**

10. Utarbeides det en plan eller strategi for samarbeidet?
  - a. Er den felles, eller intern?
  - b. Når blir det utarbeidet? Skriftlig / muntlig?
  - c. Er de en del av en større plan? Eks markedsplan / strategisk plan.
  - d. Målsetting, hvem er pådriver for dette?
  - e. Blir planen fulgt opp/sjekket og justert med jevne mellomrom? Av hvem?
11. Hvordan setter dere mål i samarbeidet? (klare mål)
  - a. Hva er de basert på?
  - b. Kan du gi et eksempel?
  - c. Føler du at deres motiver/forventninger samstemmer med målene som er satt?

### **Faser i samarbeidet, «ta deg tid til å tenke»**

12. Hvordan kan samarbeidet deles opp i ulike faser?
  - a. Hva består de av? **Kanskje fra start til slutt**
  - b. Hvordan går samarbeidet gjennom ulike faser? (naturlig, eller noen kriterier må være på plass)
  - c. Hvilke elementer er viktigst i de ulike fasene? (forventninger og kontrakt i starten, dialog..., vekt på rapport på slutten)
  - d. Har du selv deltatt i alle faser av et samarbeid?

### **Faser / forpliktelser**

13. Hvem er pådriver for samarbeidet i de ulike fasene? Hvem tar initiativ
14. Hvilken rolle spiller motparten i de aktivitetsfasene? (pådriver / fasilitator)
  - a. Er de avklart på forhånd? Hvem gjør hva?
15. Hvem bidrar med ressurser til aktiviteter (folk, materiell, markedsføring)

- a. Hva forventer dere at andre parten skal bidra med?
16. Hvordan deles kostnadene?
- a. Er dette noe man avklarer på forhånd?

### **Kommunikasjon**

17. Hvordan kommuniserer dere med hverandre?
- a. Er det forskjell på mengde og form i de ulike fasene?
18. Hvordan foregår internkommunikasjon i organisasjonen? Eks toppledelsen?
- a. Hvordan responderer ledelsen på økte behov/ressurser?
19. Hvordan blir interne endringer hos dere kommunisert til andreparten? (syn på samarbeidet, endringer hos ansatte, mål for samarbeidet).
- a. Er parten tilpasningsdyktig og tar hensyn til endringer hos dere?
20. Hvis det oppstår utfordringer i samarbeidet, hvordan går dere fram for å løse de?
- a. Føler du at de fanges opp og blir løst?

Er den formell/uformell, ansikt til ansikt, skjer via epost, telefon, møter. Kanskje den variere ut ifra hvordan forholdet utvikles.

### **Samarbeid. hvis du tar et øyeblikk og tenker på..**

21. Hvordan blir sponsoraktiviteter planlagt?
- a. Gjøres dette sammen? Eks.
  - b. Hvem er pådriver? Hvorfor har det blitt sånn?
  - c. Blir dette innlemmet egen markedsføring? (påvirker) Eks?
  - d. Hvilke utfordringer oppstår ifm med felles aktiviteter?
22. Foregår det felles læring (utveksling av informasjon / kunnskap) mellom organisasjoner?
- a. Hvordan skjer dette?
  - b. Hvem er pådriver? Hvorfor har det blitt sånn?
23. Hvordan ser ut godt fungerende samarbeid ut? Hva med et ideelt samarbeid?

### **Evaluering / Ideelt samarbeid**

24. Hvordan evalueres kampanjer?
25. Hvordan evalueres hele samarbeidet?
- a. Hvilke kriterier brukes?
  - b. Hvem deltar? Deles informasjonen?
  - c. Har dette blitt gjort i dette samarbeidet?
26. Hvordan ser siste del av sponsoratet ut?

- a. Hva skal til for at sponsoratet blir forlenget eller terminert?
  - b. Hvem tar initiativ til dialog om forlengelse / terminering?
  - c. Har du vært med på dette?
  - d. Hvilke framgangsmåter brukes for å diskutere forlengelse / terminering? Er det forskjell på de?
  - e. Hva ser dere i en samarbeidspartner? Ideelle kriterier
27. Generelt, hvordan kan andreparten bli bedre på å skape verdig for hverandre?
- a. Dagens samarbeid og ideelt samarbeid. Kan man sammenligne de to?
  - b. Er de langt unna hverandre slik ting er nå?
  - c. Hvordan påvirker sportslige resultater viljen til å sponse?
  - d. Hva med andre saker som skaper omtale? Eks dårlig oppførsel eller kontroverser. Hvordan håndteres de?
28. Generelt sett, er det noe andre utfordringer / viktige elementer som oppstår det som regel i et samarbeid som vi ikke har snakket om?
29. Påstand: idretten har økt sin popularitet. Har dere ført til endringer i måten dere samarbeider på?

Nå er vi ferdige med intervjuet. Vi har snakket om motiver og forventninger, målsetting, ulike faser i et samarbeid, om forpliktelser til hverandre, hvor man snakker sammen, hvordan samarbeidet foregår, hvordan dere evaluerer et sponsorat og hvilke strategier som brukes til å enten avslutte eller forlenge avtalen. Føler du at det viktigste har kommet fram i løpet av den tiden vi har snakket sammen?

Andre ting som du føler er viktig å få med? Andre spørsmål eller henvendelser?

Publisert info er tilhørighet (sponsor / forbund). Vil deltakeren godkjenne sitatbruk i oppgaven?

Vil deltakeren ha et utdrag av informasjon som benyttes i oppgaven? Eller dokument av hele intervjuet?

## Appendix E – NSD form

NSD Personvern

07.12.2018 09:30

### Tilbakemelding på meldeskjema med referansekode 923647:

#### FORENKLET VURDERING MED VILKÅR

Etter gjennomgang av opplysningene i meldeskjemaet med vedlegg, vurderer vi at prosjektet har lav personvernulempe fordi det ikke behandler særlige kategorier eller personopplysninger om straffedommer og lovovertridelser, eller inkluderer sårbare grupper. Prosjektet har rimelig varighet og er basert på samtykke. Vi gir derfor prosjektet en forenklet vurdering med vilkår.

Du har et selvstendig ansvar for å følge vilkårene og sette deg inn i veiledningen i denne vurderingen. Dersom du følger vilkårene og prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med det som er dokumentert i meldeskjemaet vil behandlingen av personopplysninger være i samsvar med personvernlovgivningen.

#### VILKÅR

Vår vurdering forutsetter:

1. At du gjennomfører prosjektet i tråd med kravene til informert samtykke
2. At du ikke innhenter særlige kategorier eller personopplysninger om straffedommer og lovovertridelser
3. At du følger behandlingsansvarlig institusjon (institusjonen du studerer/forsker ved) sine retningslinjer for datasikkerhet
4. At du laster opp revidert(e) informasjonsskriv på utvalgssiden(e) i meldeskjemaet og trykker «bekreft innsending», slik at du og behandlingsansvarlig institusjon får korrekt dokumentasjon. NSD foretar ikke en ny vurdering av det reviderte informasjonsskrivet.

#### 1. KRAV TIL INFORMERT SAMTYKKE

De registrerte skal få skriftlig og/eller muntlig informasjon om prosjektet og samtykke til deltakelse. Du må påse at informasjonen minst omfatter:

- Prosjektets formål og hva opplysningene skal brukes til
- Hvilken institusjon som er behandlingsansvarlig
- Hvilke opplysninger som innhentes og hvordan opplysningene innhentes
- At det er frivillig å delta og at man kan trekke seg så lenge studien pågår uten at man må oppgi grunn
- Når prosjektet skal avsluttes og hva som skal skje med personopplysningene da: sletting, anonymisering eller videre lagring
- At du/dere behandler opplysninger om den registrerte basert på deres samtykke
- Retten til å be om innsyn, retting, sletting, begrensning og dataportabilitet (kopi)
- Retten til å klage til Datatilsynet
- Kontaktopplysninger til prosjektleder (evt. student og veileder)
- Kontaktopplysninger til institusjonens personvernombud

På nettsidene våre finner du mer informasjon og en veiledende mal for informasjonsskriv:

[nsd.uib.no/personvernombud/hjelp/informasjon\\_samtykke/informere\\_om.html](https://nsd.uib.no/personvernombud/hjelp/informasjon_samtykke/informere_om.html)

Det er ditt ansvar at informasjonen du gir i informasjonsskrivet samstemmer med dokumentasjonen i meldeskjemaet.

## 2. TYPE OPPLYSNINGER OG VARIGHET

Prosjektet vil behandle alminnelige kategorier av personopplysninger frem til 03.06.2019.

## 3. 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).

Dersom du benytter en databehandler i prosjektet må behandlingen oppfylle kravene til bruk av databehandler, jf. art 28 og 29.

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

## NSD SIN VURDERING

NSDs vurdering av lovlig grunnlag, personvernprinsipper og de registrertes rettigheter følger under, men forutsetter at vilkårene nevnt over følges.

## LOVLIG GRUNNLAG

Prosjektet vil innhente samtykke fra de registrerte til behandlingen av personopplysninger. Forutsatt at vilkår 1 og 4 følges er det NSD sin vurdering 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

Forutsatt at vilkår 1 til 4 følges vurderer NSD 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) og dataportabilitet (art. 20).



Forutsatt at informasjonen oppfyller kravene i vilkår 1 vurderer NSD 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.

#### MELD ENDRINGER

Dersom den planlagte 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.

#### OPPFØLGING AV PROSJEKTET

NSD vil følge ved planlagt avslutning for å avklare om behandlingen av personopplysningene er avsluttet.

Lykke til med prosjektet!