**Master Thesis – "Exploring the Rational of the Process Behind Corporate Sponsorships"**

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**Abstract**

The purpose of this thesis was to examine and identify the process behind the delegation of corporate sponsorships in a Norwegian context. Corporate sponsorships are presently the third largest corporate communication channel in Norway. However, there is limited research on sponsorship management. The thesis seeks to identify the process and investigate the rationale behind it. To be able to research this, an explorative study was conducted, by means of a grounded theory design.

First, a model of a professionalized sponsorship delegation process was developed based on existing theory. The model suggests that the process consists of five steps: setting sponsorship strategy, setting sponsorship objectives, setting sponsorship criteria, selection of sponsorship partners and evaluating the effectiveness of the sponsorships. Two banks were sampled, and data related to the presented model was derived from in-depth interviews with the bank's sponsorship/market managers. It was identified that the two banks' main concerns are linked to the evaluation, which they do not perform, and relating the sponsorships to CSR.

Secondly, a theoretical framework of CSR was presented and used to further develop the interview guide. Two additional banks were sampled, and data was derived in the same manner as before. The results from these interviews emphasized the importance of the commercial parts of sponsorships.

Finally, the two discussions were compared. The findings show that all respondents to some degree have developed, or are developing, a sponsorship strategy, sponsorship objectives and sponsorship criteria. Furthermore, CSR is not found to be the rationale behind the process. However, the degree of professionalism in the sponsorship delegation in Norway differs. Sponsorship evaluation is distinguished as the most problematic step in the process. Furthermore, respondents that have centralized their sponsorship management, and hence decision-making authority, appear to have a more professionalized process.

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USD – United States dollar

CSR – Corporate social responsibility

ROI – Return on investment

HQ – Head quarters

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This thesis is the result of a long process. After working on our master thesis for almost a year, this is our final product. The work has at times been challenging and time consuming, but the reward of the learning process has made it all worthwhile. However, it would not have been possible for us to write this thesis without the help of several people.

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## Introduction

Research on corporate sponsorship has been conducted since the mid-80s, and it has become a worldwide phenomenon (Cornwell & Maignan, 1998). Nevertheless, the concept of sponsorship has been around since 1600 B.C. (Skinner & Rukavina, 2003). The sponsorships in those times did not occur in the forms we know today; instead wealthy individuals sponsored artists and expected a “return on investment.”

Today we know corporate sponsorships as a commercial activity that pursues marketing communication objectives by exploiting the association between the sponsor and the sponsored (Walliser, 2003). Through a sponsorship, a sponsor seeks to create emotional bonds to its customers as well as its employees. Sponsors are increasingly using their sponsorships as leverage to motivate the right kind of on-brand behavior and to drive employee engagement (Jackson, 2010).

Corporations seek appropriate causes to sponsor in order to impress internal and external stakeholders. Because of this, the use of sponsorships is often referred to as associative marketing (Carrillat, Lafferty, & Harris, 2005; Walshe, 2008), as associations develop between the corporate sponsor and the event, organization or purpose.

The range of sponsored activities has increased over the years. There are however, three main types of sponsorship: (a) sports, (b) culture, and (c) cause related sponsorships. While sports and, to a much lesser extent, culture remain the most important sponsor activities, social and environmental sponsorships have increased in importance (Walliser, 2003).

The sponsorship field is one of the most rapidly growing areas of marketing communication (T. Meenaghan, 1998; Olson, 2010), and in Norway, sponsorship is the third largest communication channel (Thjømøe, 2010). This growth is also reflected in the enormous increase in the expenditures of sponsorship activities, from 100 USD in 2000 to 3.5

billion USD in 2008 (Thjømøe et al., 2002;Hauger, 2008). Furthermore, it seems sponsorships are more relevant than ever in this recent time of recession, as a clearly articulated strategy will be fundamental in achieving a return on investment (ROI) (Jackson, 2010).

As previousøy mentioned, little research on corporate sponsorships was conducted before the 1980s, and the field of corporate sponsorship is therefore relatively new (Cornwell & Maignan, 1998). Nevertheless, corporate sponsorships have had a vast growth the last decades and this growth has been accompanied by a large number of studies, examining the various practical and theoretical aspects of the concept (Walliser, 2003). There is however still a substantial lack of research into important aspects of this communication medium (Skard, 2010), and sponsorship decision-making is one of these (Johnston, 2010).

**Phenomenon**

This study will focus on the sponsorship management, or more precise, sponsorship decision-making process. This is an important area to examine as sponsorships are valued as an essential part of the marketing mix (Walshe, 2008). After conducting several interviews with managers in the event industry in smaller research projects, it has become evident that the knowledge of the process of sponsorship delegation is insufficient. Because of this, the need for identifying this process seems evident.

It appears that the level of decision-making depends on the familiarity and experience a corporation has with sponsorship (Weppler & McCarville, 1995). In Norway the decision-making process within the sponsoring company is researched in a limited scope. Furthermore the research conducted towards this phenomenon addresses the measurements of its effectiveness and not the decision-making process itself.

**Thesis Structure**

The structure of this thesis simulates the progression of the research. Because of this the thesis will be presented as following; firstly, the aim of the study, the research problem statement and three subsidiary research questions are stated; secondly, the methodology is accounted for; thirdly, the theoretical framework, the findings, and the discussion are presented in the sequence they were performed. This will give the reader the most accurate view of how the study took shape, and is appropriate as this is a grounded theory study.

The theoretical framework related to the professionalized sponsorship delegation model and findings and discussions from interviews with Bank 1 and Bank 2 will be presented first. The theoretical framework related to corporate social responsibility (CSR) and findings and discussions from interviews with Bank 3 and Bank 4 will then follow. A brief comparison of the four interviewed banks' sponsorship management will be given. Finally, conclusions, implications, limitations and further research will be presented.

**Research Questions**

The main question of this thesis is: "What distinguishes the process behind the delegation of sponsorships in a Norwegian context, and is this process professionalized?" The following research questions are:

1. What factors should be present in order to characterize a sponsorship process as professionalized?
2. What is the sponsorship process look like in a Norwegian context?
3. Is the sponsorship process in a Norwegian context professionalized?

## Methodology

The following part will describe the design and method used in this study. The data need and sampling will be accounted for, and it will explain how the data analysis was performed. Furthermore it will give the reader an overview of the validity and reliability of the study.

The design of this study will be explorative. This design has been chosen, as the decision-making process of corporate sponsorships has been researched to a limited extent in a Norwegian context. Consequently, there is a lack of knowledge about how the sponsorship selection process appears in Norway. Exploratory designs are useful for exploring relationships when study variables are unknown (Neuman, 2009).

As relatively few attempts have been made to measure the process of sponsorship selection (Aguilar- Manjarrez, Thwaits, & Maule, 1997), there is uncertainty related to the constructs and the expected relationships. Because of this, grounded theory will be the preferred research method. This is appropriate as the research questions are open ended and explorative, and since the study sets out to describe what the process behind sponsorship delegation looks like in a Norwegian context (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) Furthermore, grounded theory suggests that you should keep gathering information/data as long as new information occurs (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Because of this the structure of a grounded theory study differs from other, more traditional studies.

**Data Need**

To be able to investigate if the process of delegating sponsorships in fact is rational, data regarding the decision-making process in a Norwegian context is needed. Furthermore, to investigate if specific aspects of the theoretical model exist, a list of factors influencing the professionalism surrounding the delegation has been constructed, see Appendix A. This list consists of the following overall factors: determining strategy, setting objectives, criteria for selection, evaluating performance, and several alternatives correlating to each factor. The interview guide will therefore contain these main headlines, with subsidiary themes for each headline that are believed to be correlated with the main factor, see Appendix B.

Moreover, to investigate whether the rationale behind the sponsorship delegation is CSR, a second interview guide has been created, see Appendix C. The interview guides will be helpful tools, and will act as checklists when conducting the interviews in order to retrieve as much information as possible. They will also provide the interviews with a sense of structure.

**Sampling**

This study will have a conscious sample and will select its respondents from the list of the 500 largest companies, by turnover, in Norway (Norges Største Bedrifter, 2011). In other words, this list will provide the sampling frame of the study. However, as this study is exploratory, only four companies will be examined. Consequently, four banks have been chosen, as they are known for their sponsorships and do business within the same industry. Furthermore, all the questioned banks operate within the same region of Norway, the southwest. The first bank is a local savings bank, the second is a regional corporate bank, the third is a regional savings bank and the fourth bank is a national corporate bank. The organizations have been anonymized in the study; this has been done in order to retrieve as much information as possible. Furthermore, this was necessary to be able to present the findings without mocking the organizations that have taken time to participate in the study.

**Savings banks and financial institutions.**

A savings bank is a financial institution whose primary purpose is to accept savings deposits and issue loans. It is a self-owned foundation as well as a public institution. Historically, its main purpose was to create savings opportunities for people with limited incomes. Those who founded a savings bank paid themselves, or otherwise obtained the primary capital, accounting for the savings bank's equity in the beginning (Store Norske Leksikon, 2012). The savings bank may also perform other functions, such as offer savings products and insurances. Most banks have two main business areas, the personal market and the corporate market.

The Norwegian financial industry is particularly interesting to investigate when studying sponsorships, as Norwegian savings banks are legally required to use their profits as gifts for charitable purposes or as funding for such gifts (Finansieringsvirksomhetsloven § 2b-27). In most savings banks these gift funds are also accounted for in the banks articles of association. In particular, this is done to promote the development in the geographical areas where the assets were provided as the foundation when the bank was founded.
However, in Norway most commercial banks also have gift funds, though these are often placed under separate foundations. This might be because the Norwegian commercial banks evolved at a later stage, it could also be because several savings banks have converted to become commercial banks (Store Norske Leksikon, 2012).

Because all Norwegian banks have gift funds it will be interesting to see it they are able to separate their sponsorships from their gifts, and how they do this.

**Data Collection**

This study will be based on in-depth interviews in order to collect the data. This method is chosen, as it is necessary to identify how the sponsorship process works, what steps the company regards as important, and most importantly, what factors affect the delegation. It is possible to obtain this information through in-depth interviews at a lower cost than for example focus groups. Interviews are also more efficient in retrieving specific and in-depth information than some other techniques, such as questionnaires. However, the drawback of using interviews of an individual when the organization is the unit of analysis is that it may lead to measurement error. Still, this appears to be the most appropriate way to conduct the study as only key informants, or experts, can provide the information required. In this case, the key informant, or expert, is the individual within the organization responsible for the sponsorship management. In all the organizations these were identified by sending emails to the organizations' communication directors. The communication directors then forwarded the emails to the appropriate individuals within their organization.

The interviews were semi-structured to help ensure the comparability of data (Maxwell, 2005). Interview guides will be used during the interviews to ensure that all informants are asked to talk about the same subjects (Askheim & Grenness, 2008).

The interviews lasted approximately 40 minutes, and were recorded. This was done to ensure that no data from the interview was lost. Furthermore, it helps examine the collected data more thoroughly, with the possibility to go through the conversations several times. Both researchers were present during the interviews.

During the interviews the key informants were first asked to talk freely about the sponsorship delegation and management process of their organization. When they stopped talking, the interview guide was used to ensure that all topics were covered. Prompts were not given before the key informant had given their view of the process. When the key informant was unclear, follow up questions were asked. Afterwards, transcripts of the interviews were written. Both the persons interviewed were asked if they wanted to read through the transcript from their interview to allow them to evaluate the accuracy of the transcript.

**Data Analysis**

This qualitatively data analysis described in this thesis sets out to give a coherent picture of the process behind the delegation of corporate sponsorships in a Norwegian context. The data was analyzed as soon as the transcripts were written.

Grounded theory has been chosen as the method for data analysis, using a Straussian approach. This is considered an appropriate approach, as the research questions are open-ended and explorative, and because the study sets out to describe what the process behind sponsorship delegation looks like in a Norwegian context (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). As a consequence of selecting grounded theory, the data was analyzed in parallel with the data collection. The data will be compared to the theoretical framework, after the analyses are completed (Johannessen, Tufte, & Kristoffersen, 2004).

The data retrieved from the four banks were separately reviewed on three occasions using a different coding each time (Strauss, 1987 as cited in Neuman, 2011). Both researchers coded the data in order to allow for different perspectives, and then the coding was compared after each pass.

Firstly, an open coding was conducted. This pass was executed to define and identify features and values of the process behind the delegation of corporate sponsorships. Based on this, several major themes were located. After both transcripts were coded the located themes were as follows: Agenda, objectives, strategy, evaluation, selection and participants.

Secondly, an axial coding was then performed to organize the codes, and link them. Subcategories were developed within each major theme (or initial code), as this ensured that as much information as possible was captured. Also, after this pass it was decided that “agenda” should be eliminated. This was done because the information within this code related to the other themes and the information was therefore combined with the related themes. A link between the two themes “strategy” and “objectives” was recognized.

Finally, a selective coding pass was carried out. In this pass, the major themes guided the search process. Furthermore, during this pass categories were integrated to build a theoretical framework around the core categories.

Each case was looked upon in terms of the developed codes. This process allowed the information from each interview to be structured and grouped in order to make it more manageable.

**Validity and Reliability**

Evaluating the quality of the constructs and measures in qualitative methods entails a different approach than for quantitative methods. According to Guba and Lincoln (1981), the quality measures relating to quantitative methods, internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity, should in qualitative research be replaced by credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The credibility can, in essence, only be evaluated by having the participants judge the results based on whether they feel the results represent their reality (E. Guba & Lincoln, 1982). In this study evaluating credibility was done by letting the participants evaluate their perceived accuracy of their answers based on the transcripts from the interview.

The transferability is a way of generalizing the findings to larger or alternative contexts. As the purpose of this thesis is merely to examine the cases that will be explored, and contribute to the theory in order to conduct further research, the transferability is less relevant.

Dependability refers to the replication of the study; however, without the assumption that the findings will be identical. As in qualitative methods, each respondent will have a different perception of their reality. Consequently, dependability is more concerned with the stability. As an interview guide has been designed, with carefully selected topics that relate to the overall concept, it is possible to replicate the research of the actual concept, but without the expectation of acquiring identical findings.

Finally, confirmability is concerned with evaluating the correctness of the findings through the confirmation by other researchers. The measures that have been developed have already been drawn from existing research, and thereby been confirmed by others. Once the data has been collected, new findings will have to be crosschecked with existing research to see if others have confirmed these aspects within the given context.

## A Theoretical Model of Professionalized Sponsorship Delegation

### Introduction

In the following, a theoretical model of a professionalized sponsorship delegation process will be presented. This model is based on existing literature, and has been created to illustrate what a professionalized sponsorship delegation process should look like according to the literature. The term "professionalized" is in this case used to indicate that the process is rational, and that the delegation is conducted in a standardized manner. This term has also been chosen as Thjømøe, Olson and Brønn in their 2002 paper conclude that "The findings indicate that large Norwegian firms that choose to sponsor have developed goals (…) On other elements of professional sponsorship management however, there is less evidence that Norwegian firms follow through on their goals with careful planning, coordination and research" (H. M. Thjømøe, E. L. Olson, & P. S. Brønn, 2002a, p. 12). Their use of the term "professional" is somewhat unclear, and it seems there is a need for a more detailed description of professional sponsorship management.

Extensive research within the field of sponsorship decision-making has been reviewed (Aguilar-Manjarrez, Thwaites, & Maule, 1998; Cornwell & Maignan, 1998; Crimmins & Horn, 1996; Jeffries, 2010; Tony Meenaghan, 1991; Olson, 2010; Parker, 1991; Skard, 2010; Thjømøe, et al., 2002a; Walliser, 2003; Weppler & McCarville, 1995). In order to ensure that the measures and constructs were good enough, the theory that the model is based upon has been recorded and evaluated, Table 1.

The actual search was also recorded, and the following databases were used for the literature search: EBSCO Business Source Premier, Emerald, ISI Web of Science, and Google Scholar. Articles with restricted access were found in the databases, but retrieved through the University library service. The search phrases that were used in the databases can be found in Table 2. The search began with broad search terms, and was narrowed in to ensure that as many relevant articles as possible were retrieved. Also, the searches were restricted to articles published from 1970 to 2011. In addition to the literature found in the database searches, the literature reviews provided good references that were retrieved. The findings are presented in Table 1 and Table 2.

## The Professionalized Sponsorship Delegation Model

From the literature it is predicted that a professionalized decision-making process will involve five steps. These are: (1) setting strategies, (2) setting objectives, (3) setting criteria, (4) selecting sponsorship, and (5) evaluating the effectiveness of the sponsorship.

Within each of the five steps, several different alternatives have been identified. The steps do not necessarily follow a strict order, but the natural order is to follow the steps as presented above. In the following each step of the model will be presented.

## The Five Steps

### Setting sponsorship strategy.

The first step in the professionalized sponsorship delegation model is setting a sponsorship strategy. A strategy can be defined as a pattern of decisions that determines and reveals a company's objectives, purposes, or goals (Andrews, 1987). It can define what kind of organization the company intends to be, or characterize the range of business activities the company wants to pursue. Strategies may come in many forms and there may be various agendas. They may be directly related to other operations/strategies in the company, or they may be developed for one specific area. Some examples of business areas that may have a strategy related to these activities are CSR, communication, brand building, and exposure. However, it is the sum of a company's strategic decisions that positions the company (Andrews, 1987).

| **Author(s)** | **Year** | **Journal** | **Type of article/research** | **Topic** | **Findings** | **Times cited*** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cornwell & Maignan | 1998 | Journal of Advertising | Literature review | Review of sponsorship research, 80 studies | Sponsorship as a communication tool and promotional activity is here to stay. Sponsorships have become more market-driven than philanthropical. | 229 |
| Walliser | 2003 | International Journal of Advertising | Literature review | Review of sponsorship research, 233 studies | Sponsorship research has increased. Still, some areas are less focused upon. There are cultural differences in the acceptance of sponsorships. | 116 |
| Crimmins & Horn | 1996 | Journal of Advertising Research | Explorative | Consumer impact of sponsorship. | Operational definition and illustration of the consumer impact of sponsorship | 240 |
| Meenaghan | 1991 | European Journal of Marketing | Explorative | Legitimize the use of sponsorship as a medium | Presents perceptions that may lead to sponsorship being considered differently from traditional marketing communication efforts, and presents the need for more research. | 105 |
| Parker | 1991 | European Journal of Marketing | Descriptive | Sponsorship process | Market research helps in all stages of the process. | 65 |
| Thjømøe et al. | 2002 | Journal of Advertising Research | Descriptive | Sets out to describe the sponsorship decision-making process | Finds that Norwegian firms do not have a professional decision-making process, as they only have developed sponsorship goals, but not followed these up with guidelines for implementation. | 26 |

| **Author(s)** | **Year** | **Journal** | **Type of article/research** | **Topic** | **Findings** | **Times cited*** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Weppler & McCarville | 1995 | Festival Management & Event Tourism | Explorative | Process of evaluation of sponsorship applications | Criteria exceed the merits of the proposal. Organizers lack an understanding of the corporate objectives. | 11 |
| Aguilar-Manjarrez, Thwaites & Maule | 1997 | Asia-Australia Marketing Journal | Explorative | Decision-making in selection of sports sponsorships | Sponsors need to know what potential sponsors seek, and prepare their proposals accordingly. | 8 |
| Olson | 2010 | European Journal of Marketing | Descriptive | Develop a model of high-level sponsorship effects | One model can explain fit and variance well in both the context of sports and culture sponsorships. | 6 |
| Skard | 2010 | PhD Thesis | Descriptive | Sponsorship fit | Strategic communication positively influences the perceived fit. When sponsorships are naturally incongruent, only explicit verbal arguments improve conscious evaluations of fit. | |
| Jeffries | 2010 | Journal of Sponsorship | Explorative | Sponsorships' ability of changing attitudes | Evaluation of sponsorships should consider all possible effects, and should be undertaken within the context of the complete framework for a brand. | |

Table 1. Literature review.

*In Google Scholar

| Database | Search Term | Results |
|---|---|---|
| **EBSCO Business Source Premier** | Professional* decision-making process | 1,328 |
| | Professional sponsorship process | 32 |
| | Professional sponsorship delegation | 2 |
| | Sponsorship decision-making | 39 |
| | Professional sponsorship | 1,373 |
| | Professional sponsorship + evaluat* | 28 |
| | Professional sponsorship + objective* | 28 |
| | Professional sponsorship + strateg* | 117 |
| **Emerald** | Professional* decision-making process | 26,245 |
| | Professional sponsorship process | 1,358 |
| | Professional sponsorship delegation | 62 |
| | Sponsorship decision-making | 1,597 |
| | Professional sponsorship | 1,658 |
| | Professional sponsorship + evaluat* | 1,113 |
| | Professional sponsorship + objective* | 1,092 |
| | Professional sponsorship + strateg* | 1,298 |
| **ISI Web of Science** | Professional* decision-making process | 1,938 |
| | Professional sponsorship process | 12 |
| | Professional sponsorship delegation | - |
| | Sponsorship decision-making | 54 |
| | Professional sponsorship | 129 |
| | Professional sponsorship + evaluat* | 18 |
| | Professional sponsorship + objective* | 33 |
| | Professional sponsorship + strateg* | 15 |
| **Google Scholar** | Professional* decision-making process | 29,800 |
| | Professional sponsorship process | 17,300 |
| | Professional sponsorship delegation | 16,900 |
| | Sponsorship decision-making | 20,100 |
| | Professional sponsorship | 55,300 |
| | Professional sponsorship + evaluat* | 3,190 |
| | Professional sponsorship + objective* | 18,000 |
| | Professional sponsorship + strateg* | 18,600 |

Table 2. Literature search (databases, search terms, and results).

Consequently, although a sponsorship strategy is developed with the sponsorship activities in mind, it is important that there is some coherence between this strategy and the strategies of activities that it may have a direct or indirect impact on.


Figure 1. The professionalized sponsorship delegation model.

A corporate strategy should act as guidance for an organization, as it reveals their objectives, purposes and goals, and presents a more detailed way to proceed in order to meet these (Andrews, 1987). Consequently, a sponsorship strategy should guide sponsorship-related decisions, as well as the sponsorship management as a whole.

Having a strategy related to certain objectives can simplify this process. Supporters of the rational reasoning perspective argue that the strategy should be as explicit as possible in order to eliminate emotions and intuitive judgments, which are both more characteristic of the generative reasoning perspective (Anthony, Bennett, Maddox and Wheatley, 1993). The reason why some believe that the rational reasoning is more appropriate when developing strategies is that it entails conducting complete analyses of the problem situation, and thoroughly evaluating the possible alternatives before committing to a well-developed plan.

This procedure requires extensive information in order to allow the decision-maker(s) to conclude with the correct alternative for the company from an internal and external perspective (Andrews, 1987). The rational reasoning perspective is highly influenced by the rational decision-making model developed by Cyert & March (1963). The rational model eliminates the risk of irrational judgments, as it requires all decisions to be based on extensive analyses (Salaman, 2002). Furthermore, it is based on the assumption that the decision-maker has full access to all information required in order to make a fully rational decision. It is therefore believed that this model will generate the best possible decisions, as it eliminates the possibility of individual influence that is not based on rational justifications (Salaman, 2002).

Despite the preference of making fully rational decisions, supporters of this perspective admit that there has to be some tolerance of behavior that is less rational, as it is impossible for the human mind to take into account all information available that is related to a problem (Wit & Meyer, 2010). Additionally some strategies will have to consider the executives' and society's wishes (Andrews, 1987). Consequently, it has been found that bounded rationality, as presented by Simon (1955), is present in the process of strategy generation (Andrews, 1987; De Wit & Meyer, 2010), as well as in the actual decision-making process (Andrews, 1987; Eisenhardt & Zbaracki, 1992). Therefore, the model of bounded rationality developed by Simon (1955) may be considered a more appropriate model than the former. He did not support the notion that the perfectly rational man, also commonly referred to as the economic man, was realistic. Simon (1955) therefore spoke of man as bounded rational, based on their lack of ability to access all information needed to make purely rational decisions, and also because their computational capacities were not strong enough to evaluate all the information. Consequently, the rational reasoning perspective believes that processes and decisions should be as rational as possible, but allow some degree of bounded rationality where it is not possible to access and/or interpret all information needed to make a perfectly rational choice.

Because companies operate in dynamic environments and they constantly have to adapt to their surroundings, strategies are not static in nature. Strategies will have to constantly adapt and develop in accordance with the surroundings; however, how the strategies' change may be characterized along a continuum ranging from revolutionary to evolutionary change (Greiner, 1972). A revolutionary change process will entail rather large alterations to the strategy in order to adapt to the current environment. On the other hand, an evolutionary change process requires smaller changes. This is because, in contrast to the revolutionary change process, a company that has an evolutionary change process will continuously make smaller adaptions to the environment, and the strategy will therefore always be in accordance with the environment. Nevertheless, development through evolution will restrain the company from groundbreaking thoughts and actions. A company with a revolutionary change process will be able to implement groundbreaking strategies, because the company has been in a position where it has become maladapted with the environment, and thereby needs to do something revolutionary to the strategy in order to get back on track with the environment (Greiner, 1972). However, revolution entails large changes to the people involved, and therefore may cause restraint (Hammer, 1990).

As sponsorship activities are a communication tool, it is important that these activities are considered in light of a company's communication mix and strategy as a whole (Parker, 1991). By ensuring that the communication objectives coincide, all the parts of the communication mix will relate to one another, and the risk of tension and mixed messages will be reduced. Therefore, setting a sponsorship strategy will enable the company to make sponsorship-related decisions more easily, and ensure that the strategy and following objectives comply with the communication strategy of the company as a whole.

Once the sponsorship strategy has been decided upon, it has to be implemented so that the sponsorship activities are based upon that strategy. This will enable the company to have coherence in its sponsorship management. A next step is therefore to set objectives for the sponsorship activities that relate to the strategy.

**Setting sponsorship objectives.**

The second step is setting objectives for the sponsorship activities. The objectives of a company may be explained as constituting their strategic intent (Chakravarthy & Lorange, 1991). Consequently, the objectives and the strategies are highly interrelated. Once the objectives have been set, sets of goals consistent with the specific objectives are developed (Chakravarthy & Lorange, 1991).

A company may have an overarching marketing strategy. It will then develop marketing objectives for each of the marketing tools it plans to utilize when sending out the company's message. Sponsorship constitutes one of the elements in the marketing mix, and relates to the marketing tool promotion (Parker, 1991), also called the communication mix (Burton, Quester & Farrelly, 1998). In order to ensure that the various elements within the promotion tool are incorporated and that they together form a consistent composition, each element of the promotion tool has to have clearly set objectives that are adapted to the others (Des Thwaites, 1994). This is in accordance with the research of Burton, Quester and Farrelly (1998), which states that it is essential for executive managers to constantly keep the middle managers up to date on the changes in corporate goals and strategy, as well as brand strategy. Ensuring that the people involved are informed about changes in strategy and/or objectives will enable the people affected to make the necessary adaptations, and thereby avoid the occurrence of business risks related to maladjustments (Burton, Quester & Farrelly, 1998).

In his work, Pope (1998) uses the framework of Sandler and Shani (1993) when categorizing the sponsorship objectives of corporations. He further developes this framework by including the works of other authors, and it results in four broad categories of corporate sponsorship objectives: (1) corporate objectives, (2) marketing objectives, (3) media objectives, and (4) personal objectives.

In addition to the company having set objectives, several authors (Burton, Quester & Farrelly, 1998; Cousens, Babiak & Bradish, 2006; Gronroos, 1994; Voss & Giraud Voss, 1997) have discussed the importance of considering the objectives of the counterpart when going into a partnership, in this case the sponsorship partner. Ensuring that the objectives of each party are compatible with one another allows the partnership to become beneficial for both parties, as they are able to express and confirm their expectations for the future of partnership, and it is based on achieving mutually beneficial outcomes (Cousens, Babiak & Bradish, 2006). Consequently, sponsorship partnerships that focus on each partner having objectives that are somewhat aligned with the other party are more relationship focused, as they work together towards achieving these objectives (Cousens, Babiak & Bradish, 2006).

**Setting sponsorship criteria.**

The third step in the professionalized sponsorship delegation model is setting criteria for the selection of sponsorship partner. Strategists following the rational perspective, developing a set of criteria where they can evaluate each alternative against in order to ensure that their decision actually meets the organizational objectives (Andrews, 1987). Sponsorship criteria may therefore be considered the standards or specifications the decision is based upon. Furthermore, it is essential for the selection criteria to reflect the already established objectives in order for them to make sense, and actually act as guidelines for how to achieve the objectives.

Because the criteria are linked to the company's sponsorship objectives, and subsequently the company's sponsorship strategy, the sponsorship criteria will vary between companies. However, research has identified criteria that are commonly incorporated by companies in their screening process of potential sponsorship partners, such as fit (Amis, Slack & Berrett, 1999; Farrely, Quester & Burton, 1997; Olson, 2010; Olson & Thjømøe, 2011; Skard, 2010; Simmons and Becker-Olsen, 2006), exclusivity (Amis, Slack & Berrett, 1999; Farrely, Quester & Burton, 1997), link with other marking efforts (Amis, Slack & Berrett, 1999; Farrely, Quester & Burton, 1997; Gardner & Shuman, 1987; Keller, 2001), and long-term agreements (Amis, Slack & Berrett, 1999; Farrely, Quester & Burton, 1997).

Some of the criteria that have been identified through existing research are specific to the sponsorship objective, and therefore act as guidelines for how the company can reach its set objectives. However, other criteria are more general and reflect standards the potential sponsorship partners must satisfy to even be considered for a sponsorship agreement, regardless of the set objectives.

**Selection of sponsorship partners.**

The fourth step, in the model, is the selection of a partner. This is the step where the decision is made, and the organization chooses which potential sponsorship partner they want to work with. It is an important step, as poor selection will result in lack of impact, and therefore a waste of valuable funds. Furthermore, rescinding a sponsorship agreement is not always easy. Because of this, every sponsor needs to make the correct choice when going into sponsorship that gives them a unique selling point and strikes the right balance between investment and association. This step is closely related to criteria, as the criteria should be used to select from potential sponsorship partners.

The selection of sponsorship partners is in fact an organizational buying process, which is often referred to as “the decision-making process” (Webster & Wind, 1972). This is important for a company to recognize if they wish to professionalize their sponsorships. The buying process of sponsorships should be considered equal to any other purchase the company makes.

Large companies often receive several sponsorship requests. Because of this the companies often develop sponsorship policies, for example criteria to provide guidance for managers involved in selecting and managing sponsorship relationships. Such guidelines are designed to ensure that sponsorship selection decisions enhance and support the vision, values and goals of the firm (Johnston, 2010).

However, there is still reason to believe that the personal interest of the senior managers influence the decision (Cornwell, 2008; Thjømøe, et al., 2002a), as the decision is influenced by rational factors as well as emotional factors (Arthur, Scott, & Woods, 1997). In Thjømøe, Olson and Brønn's 2002 research, it was found that only the marketing department and top local management had major impact on the sponsorship activity. Furthermore, it seemed that the decision to sponsor at times were based on personal connections between the potential sponsorship partner and the sponsor's management. Because of this, the selection was not based on the corporate/ communication strategy, but on personal relationship criteria.

This is something the company should take into consideration when deciding how the selection should be structured. One way to overcome this problem is to hire external resources to assist in researching and selecting a new sponsorship, when considering whether to continue a sponsorship or when developing and delivering an effective sponsorship leveraging program (Collett, 2009).

Another way to overcome this issue is by being proactive. When a company has made the decision to sponsor, the next big decision will be what or whom to sponsor. They will probably undertake analysis as to what fits with their key marketing and/or sponsorship objectives. Instead of screening the sponsorship request they have received, it might be more beneficial to look for sponsorships that fit. This way it might also be easier to consider how these possibilities match the company's budget and future plans, and the long-term opportunities.

A good indicator for the likelihood of success of the sponsorship, can be found by looking into the past performance of sponsorships (Parker, 1991), thus the company might benefit from investigating the sponsorship's past. This might be done through conversations with customers, talking to former sponsors or by talking to the potential sponsorship partner.

Another aspect that might influence the selection is if the organization is willing to work with a sponsorship broker/ third party. This is a relatively new dilemma, as the outsourcing of goods and services has become more and more common. In today's business environment, companies are driven to conduct a few functions in-house and to obtain the rest from other sources through aggressive outsourcing (Insinga & Werle, 2000). This has also affected the sponsorship business, as some sports teams, events and other sponsor seeking organizations or individuals choose to outsource the sales of their sponsorship rights to third-party firms.

In Norway examples of such firms are SponsorInsight, Confiro and World Event. They call themselves consultants, and act as brokers between the sponsor and the sponsorship partner when making the deal.

**Evaluation of the effectiveness of the sponsorships.**

The fifth and final step is evaluating the sponsorships performance. Corporate sponsorship has offered marketers a viable means to target consumers. Furthermore, the medium has gained a reputation for its ability to influence consumer behavior. Because of this, corporations have increasingly had to devote time and effort to evaluating the returns on their sponsorship investments. Evaluations of the sponsorship should be performed to make sure that the objectives are achieved, and that the sponsorships comply with the strategy. It is important to evaluate sponsorships as no two sponsorships are the same, and sponsorships can work in different and unpredictable ways (Jeffries, 2010).

However, evaluation is considered the most difficult step by both practitioners and theorists, as the techniques of evaluation are simplex, and it is therefore limited what information may be draw from such studies (O'Reilly, 2008). Because of this several sponsorships are not evaluated at all.

There are different ways to evaluate the effect of sponsorships. One can use benchmarks, and measure before and after an event (Ludwig & Karabetsos, 1999). One can perform quantitative assessment of news clippings, perform exposure and attitude measures, or, if publicly traded, one can track changes in the sponsor's stock price before, during and after the sponsorship relationship (Walliser, 2003). All the methods are flawed, as they are designed to measure other advertising tools. Because of this, they lack the ability to consider the associative effect of a sponsorship (O'Reilly & Madill, 2009).

The most frequently methodology used is based on measuring the quantity of exposure the sponsoring brand achieves through media coverage of the event (Kate, 1996; Rosen,1990; Cortez, 1992, as cited in H. M. Thjømøe, L. E. Olson, & S. P. Brønn, 2002b). Still, the measurement of exposure will not report evidence of how the corporation sponsoring the event is perceived because of its sponsorship, nor will it be able to describe if the target groups brand awareness is increased because of the sponsorship participation (Thjømøe et al., 2002).

More recent research shows that one of the most important methodological steps in the evaluation is operationalizing the measurement for each objective (O'Reilly & Madill, 2009). When the objectives are identified, defined and operationalized it is possible to evaluate which methods one should use for measurements. This reflects back to the second step of the model, setting objectives, as the objectives need to be explicit and clear.

When performing sponsorship evaluation, the company does not have to look at the sponsorship activity in isolation. It might be just as interesting to consider other activities and operations the sponsorship activity may relate to. This is because sponsorships rarely occur in isolation, but instead are usually part of a multi-channel communications plan. Because of this, sponsorship evaluation should be undertaken within the context of the complete communications framework for a brand (Jeffries, 2010). This way the corporation will be able to assess how the sponsorship contribute to in comparison to other marketing tools, and whether that contribution is complementary to other marketing tools, whether it works in synergy, or whether it works independently of other marketing tools.

According to Parker (1991), it is important that the company is aware of its target market when evaluating, as they will be the recipients of the measurement. The target market might be current customers, potential customers, employees, the local community, etc. Furthermore, the ability to communicate with the target market is essential to be able to evaluate the effect of the sponsorship.

**How the Different Steps Relate to Each Other**

The objectives must be clear and understandable to all participants in the process. The strategies must be implemented and the criteria must relate to the objectives. Furthermore, the model suggests that the criteria should affect the selection. The model also implies that the selection needs to be evaluated for the process to be fully professionalized. The professionalized model, developed from theory on decision-making and sponsorship management therefore constitutes a rational decision-making process where each step is interconnected in that the decisions build upon the preceding decisions/steps.

Because the model, developed from theory, has not been tested as a whole it is hoped that other aspects that are part of a professional decision-making process within the delegation of sponsorships will be identified and contribute to the theory on professional decision-making processes within the given context. The model is applicable to the chosen context since it is developed with a basis in existing research within the field of sponsorship management, including findings relating also to Norway.

## Findings From the First and Second Interview

In the following section the findings from the first and second interview will be presented. Both the findings from the primary and secondary data of both organizations will be accounted for. The secondary data will be accounted for first, and the primary data second. The findings from the primary data are grouped into categories that match the five steps of the theoretical model in this presentation to make it easier for the reader to relate the findings to the theory.

### Findings From Bank 1

#### Secondary data.

According to Bank 1's website, the organization wishes to create experiences for customers, employees and the general population through their sponsorships. Furthermore, it is important for Bank 1 to contribute to the region it operates in. The sponsorships set out to reach children and young people and the general population, as well as the elite. However, it is stressed that it is more important for the bank to sponsor teams and organizations above individuals, and that it wishes to reach a broad audience.

#### Primary data: Interview

##### *Strategy*

Bank 1's sponsor strategy has sprung from the corporate strategy. Its main focus is that Bank 1, through its sponsorship agreements, should reach as many recipients as possible. This is also evident as Bank 1 is more interested in making agreements with organizations and teams, as opposed to individuals. However, when the marketing manager is questioned about objectives and criteria these concepts are also answered with regards to the strategy. Because of this, it is unclear how explicit the strategy really is.

The marketing manager explains that the sponsorship strategy is highly dependent upon the different business areas. The bank has two main business areas: the personal market and the corporate market. The two different areas have different strategies, and because of this the sponsorship strategy fluctuates depending on which area the sponsorship is designed to create awareness about.

For Bank 1, it is important to increase the audience awareness of the bank, and to be visible in the local community. The bank wants to boost local participation and commitment with its sponsorship agreements. The bank therefore sponsors both the local soccer team and the students' concert hall.

It is important for Bank 1 to reach its clients, as well as employees through the sponsorships. The organization's corporate sponsorships are used as an internal tool, as the employees are for example given tickets to events.

Cause related sponsorships do not fall under corporate sponsorships by Bank 1, as these are considered to be charitable activities that relate to the gift fund. This leads to all charitable causes being assessed by an independent committee, which delegates gifts for the bank. This committee mainly consists of employees of the municipality and these gift funds are designed to give back to the community.

***Objectives.***

Bank 1's objectives are not fixed, but emerge as deals are being made. Because of this, it is difficult to claim that the objectives are set. Furthermore, the marketing manager at first has difficulties distinguishing the bank's objectives from its strategy. However, it is clarified that it is important for the bank to be visible, as visibility, participation and commitment are their sponsorship pillars. Furthermore, the bank prefers to have sponsorship agreements that easily relate to other marketing activities. Bank 1's objectives are clear, but not static. The main objective is to be involved in activities that most people care about. Nevertheless, the bank wishes to have a width in its sponsorship portfolio. This sometimes makes the bank sponsor groups and activities that typically are less sponsored than other more mainstream activities.

When asked to give examples of the sponsorship objectives, the marketing manager explains how sponsorships can be used as a tool to become visible in a new area. The marketing manager also explains that this often is done by sponsoring the local soccer team, as this gives the bank easy access to display its logo and brand.

***Criteria.***

Bank 1 refers to criteria for selection as guidelines, and not rules. When asked about criteria, Bank 1 seems more interested in economic aspects, as time and budget. The marketing manager explains that the amount of money and extent of time consumption is of great importance. It is however understood from the interview that Bank 1 has additional criteria than money and time. For instance, geography, familiarity with people within the organization and fit pointed out as criteria of high importance.

During the interview criteria and objectives are mixed, as several criteria are mentioned when asked about sponsorship objectives. Furthermore, when asked directly about criteria the market manager is more concerned with stating that the bank does not use screening criteria, as it wishes to be proactive.

***Selection.***

At Bank 1 the people responsible for the delegation of sponsorships depend on the monetary size of the sponsorship, and what type of sponsorship it is. There are at most four people involved in making the decision, and it is the marketing manager that has the overall responsibility for the sponsorship activities. The decision-makers are supposed to use the criteria as guidelines when selecting which cause to sponsor. However, the market manager implies that the human factor is important to the bank. By this, it is understood that the decision-makers in Bank 1 have the opportunity to look away from the criteria if they have a good feeling about a potential sponsor partner.

Bank 1's market manager states that the bank wishes to be proactive in its selection. It is further explained that it believes this is best for all involved parties. However, the bank does not examine the past performance of the sponsorships it enters into sponsorship agreements with.

Furthermore, the selection of Bank 1 is influenced by the fact that the bank is unwilling to work with a third-party. The bank has had negative experiences with this, and finds sponsorship brokers distracting. According to the marketing manager, it is difficult to form a solid relationship with the club, team or organization if you have an independent sales department broking the deal.

***Evaluation.***

When asked about evaluation of the selected sponsorships, the marketing manager of Bank 1 makes it very clear that the bank does not evaluate their sponsorships. It is explained that this is because it lacks the resources to do so. When asked further about why it does not perform evaluations, the market manager implies that the bank is unsure how this should be carried out.

The bank does however get feedback from customers on its sponsorships. Bank 1 collects this feedback, and based on it, it makes up an impression of the effect of the sponsorship. Furthermore, Bank 1 does perform external brand analyses, but does not consider this as evaluation of their sponsorships as it is unable to relate the information directly to their sponsorships.

When asked if the bank evaluates whether it reaches its objectives through the sponsorship agreements, the market manager rejects this. The manager again states: “they are not good enough at evaluation”. However, for Bank 1, having the “right” feeling is an important aspect when the sponsorships are evaluated. Furthermore, the bank sometimes views a sponsorship as strategic positioning. It has remained in sponsorships simply because it believes that competitors may potentially benefit from the agreement.

## Findings from Bank 2

### Secondary data.

According to Bank 2’s website, it currently has over 170 sponsorship agreements, all of which are based upon a commercial cooperation agreement, which aims to give both parties the best possible return.

Bank 2’s sponsorship objective is to promote prosperity and growth in its region. Because of this, it has chosen to focus on sponsorship partners who work for broad and positive services in the local communities.

### Primary data: Interview.

#### *Strategy.*

Bank 2 has recently made a new sponsorship strategy, and is currently working on implementing it. The sponsorship manager and the bank’s marketing manager have developed the new strategy. The bank’s chief executive directors have acted as advisers, and the strategy has been presented in the corporate executive committee.

The bank admits that the new strategy has been developed because it feels compelled to clean up the sponsorship activities. The sponsorship manager explains that the bank has historically had a “hand out” culture when it comes to sponsorships. The main goal of the new strategy is to make the bank’s sponsorships work as marketing tools. The sponsorship manager explains that this will be a great shift for the bank, as sponsorships historically have been delegated based on friendships and relations. With the new strategy, they hope to be able to use the sponsorships the same way as the bank's other marketing tools.

Bank 2 has a gift fund, which has recently been separated from the corporation, and placed under a separate foundation. Because of this, the sponsorship manager states that gifts are completely separate from the banks sponsorships. Furthermore, sponsorships are considered commercial agreements between the bank and their sponsorship partners.

The bank's strategy is implemented through regional management meetings. After this it is up to each local bank manager to act in accordance with it.

***Objectives.***

The sponsorship manager explains that the new strategy recommends that all sponsorship agreements made by the corporation build on their sponsorship objectives. This has not been the case in the past. Furthermore, the sponsorship manager clearly states that sponsorship agreements are presently entered without regards for the banks sponsorship objectives.

Objectives have been set however, and it is important for the bank that the sponsorship agreements are based upon these. The sponsorship manager mentions three areas that the sponsorships are set to affect: (a) the branding, (b) sales, and (c) additional sales. Furthermore, it is of high importance to the bank to be able to use the sponsorship agreements to "tell stories". According to the sponsorship manager, the bank wishes to use the sponsorship agreements to communicate. For example, it hopes to be able to show how fun it is to work in a bank that cares about their employees. This is mainly linked to keeping employees in shape by giving them opportunities to take part in sporting events.

When further questioned about objectives it is determined that the bank sometimes has very specific objectives in mind, e.g. "this deal will give us 20 new business customers". However, when asked if the objective is set before the sponsorship partner is selected, the answer is no. It is also clear that the objectives sometimes are set locally, and not at the head quarters (HQ). It is explained that in these cases HQ takes on the role as a counselor.

When confronted about the explicitness of the objectives, the sponsorship manager admits that the bank still has some work to do in this area.

***Criteria.***

When asked about criteria for delegating sponsorships, the sponsorship manager explains that the bank is very concerned with the activities that are offered in the local community. It is important for the bank that it is "fun to live" in the community. Because of this it only sponsors teams, never individuals. As examples of what sponsor partners the bank seeks, soccer teams, musical bands and scouts are mentioned. Because of this it is understood that geography and reaching as many individuals as possible are important criteria to the bank. It is also understood as receiving tickets et cetera that can be given to the employees is not considered when the deal is made, this is merely as a bonus.

***Selection.***

At Bank 2 the decision of how to delegate the sponsorships is set out to each branch, as the bank is present in many different locations and communities. At each location only the bank manager, and in some cases a marketing coordinator, is involved in the decision-making process. However, at HQ the sponsorship manager is trying to implement plans for the corporation as a whole, with set guidelines each branch should follow. It is stated by the sponsorship manager that this is not the current situation. It is explained that the local bank managers have been given too much authority, and that some of them are very emotionally involved with their sponsorship agreements. Because of this, it is difficult for the bank to end old agreements that don't match the new strategy.

The bank is not proactive when it comes to selecting sponsorship partners, but simply screens sponsorship applications. The sponsorship manager estimates that the bank gets five or six applications each week. The bank managers are supposed to use the sponsorship strategy to screen applicants, and if they wish to deviate from this they need to contact HQ. Yet, according to the sponsorship manager, the bank managers have a great amount of freedom as they have knowledge about the local situation.

It is important for the bank that there is no third party involved. This is because the bank views a direct relationship with the organization as the cornerstone of a good agreement. The sponsorship manager is not aware of any deals that have made where a third party has played a part.

***Evaluation.***

According to the sponsorship manager, Bank 2 is supposed to evaluate applications according to the new strategy. The sponsorship manager states that the bank is not good enough at evaluating sponsorships, and that evaluation is something that takes place in the regions. “Some offices are very good, they sets clear objectives and then evaluate”. The sponsorship manager gives an example of an office that sets a goal of obtaining twenty new business customers through a sponsorship agreement. It is explained that the evaluation mainly consists of discussions within the bank. However, this has not been put into a system. The sponsorship manager admits that the bank has a long way to go before it can claim to evaluate its agreements.

Bank 2 has been in contact with Norsk Gallup, who has used Needscope to determine if Bank 2 sponsorships fit the brand profile. Needscope is a qualitative and quantitative research system for understanding and managing emotion during the marketing process. Needscope utilizes a psychological framework and projective tools, to uncover the emotional component central to successful marketing (Norsk Gallup, 2012). Bank 2 claims that it has a very conscious relationship to sponsorship fit, and that the bank is alone in the finance industry in using this sort of analysis. Furthermore, it is stated that DNB, which the bank considers to be a competitor, has a spread sponsorship positioning. Based on this, it concludes that DNB does not have a conscious relationship between its sponsorships and brand.

## Discussion of the Findings From Bank 1 and Bank 2

In the following, the findings from Bank 1 and Bank 2 will be discussed in light of the theoretical model of the professionalized sponsorship delegation. This is done to indicate what distinguishes the process behind the delegation of sponsorships in the sample, and to explore if this process is in fact professionalized. The theoretical model will serve as an ideal for a perfectly professionalized process.

### Discussion Bank 1

#### Setting sponsorship strategy in Bank 1.

The data retrieved from Bank 1's website and from the interview is consistent. As explained by the marketing manager, the sponsorship strategy and objectives are clear, and there is a clear relationship between the two sources of information. Furthermore, the bank's sponsorship strategy has sprung from its corporate strategy, which is important in order ensure that the bank's sponsorship activities are fit with the other activities in the bank, such as for example the other communication activities. Bank 1's sponsorship strategy is formulated in such a way that all sorts of sponsorships may be justified, as the strategy seems to be to reach the width in the region it operates. In addition to this, the marketing manager seems to be unable to clearly separate the sponsorship strategy from the marketing strategy.

Bank 1's sponsorship strategy fluctuates, however this does not mean that it is not set. Bank 1 simply needs room to be able to connect it to both of its business areas. This fluctuation is in accordance with theory and enables the bank to ensure that there is coherence between its sponsorships strategy and corporate strategy at all times. This fluctuation might also suggest that its sponsorship strategy is formed through an evolutionary change. This is further supported by Bank 1's concern with the local community. As companies that allow for an evolutionary change processes, will continuously make smaller adoptions to fit the environment, and the strategies will therefore always be in accordance with these needs. This is in accordance with Bank 1's sponsorship strategy, as it strives to participate and adapt to the local community.

As Bank 1 is a savings bank, it also has a gift foundation. This is kept separate from its sponsorship activities, as a committee is appointed to take care of these donations. The committee largely consists of various employees of the municipality that Bank 1 operates in, and that are not employed by the bank. Bank 1 also considers all cause related sponsorships to be charity, and because of this the committee assesses all cause related sponsorship requests. This means that Bank 1 only deals with sports and culture sponsorship partners through its commercial sponsorship activities.

**Setting sponsorship objectives in Bank 1.**

When asked about objectives, the marketing manager of Bank 1 refers to objectives as something that emerges through the sponsorship agreements. This is surprising, as objectives are developed as tools to ensure the realization of a strategy. It seems that the marketing manager has problems understanding the concept of objectives. Furthermore, the marketing manager seems to find it difficult to separate the sponsorship objectives from the sponsorship strategy and criteria, as these are confused with one another several times throughout the interview. At times during the interview it seems like the strategy and objectives are the same, as the marketing manager sometimes has difficulties in separating them.

However, through further questioning it seems clear that Bank 1's main sponsorship objectives are in fact set. The sponsorship objectives are to create visibility, participation and commitment in its local community. These objectives are clearly linked to the sponsorship strategy, which is positive, as clear objectives make it easier for the decision-makers to operationalize the sponsorship strategy. The fact that the marketing manager was unable to state these objectives when first questioned, might be due to the fact that the objectives are incorporated to a point of the obvious.

**Setting sponsorship criteria in Bank 1.**

According to Bank 1, it is concerned with economic aspect in terms of sponsorship delegation, and resources such as time and finance are emphasized. This is interesting, as the monetary aspects of the sponsorship agreements are not given much attention in the theory. The theoretical criteria are set to ensure that the bank can evaluate each alternative against one another to ensure that its decision meets the bank's objectives. Some of the more common examples of criteria are fit, link with other marketing efforts and long-term agreements. Monetary aspects should probably be given more attention, as this criterion is most likely highly weighted by the sponsors when they make their decision. Bank 1 highlights that the monetary amount of the sponsorship agreement, as well as the extent duration of the sponsorship agreement are criteria of high importance when making a decision.

Bank 1 has other criteria as well, and geography is pointed out as an important criterion. This criterion is in accordance with the theoretical model as it reflects the already established objectives, and can therefore act as a guideline for how to achieve the desired objectives. Bank 1 states that it thinks of the set criteria as guidelines, not rules. However, several of the mentioned criteria, such as geography are of particular importance to Bank 1. Therefore, it is possible that the criteria in reality may serve more as a rule than a guideline. The relationship between the bank and the sponsor partners are mentioned several times during the interview; however, this is not highlighted when asked about criteria. This might be a result of this criterion being so incorporated into the process that a conscious evaluation is not made.

**Selection of sponsorship partners in Bank 1.**

The selection of the sponsorship partners of Bank 1 are made at HQ, and often several people are involved in the decision. This is favorable, as it makes it easier to ensure that the sponsorship agreement is in accordance with the overall strategy. Furthermore, it makes is easier to implement the strategy, as a limited number of people are involved in the selection process. Since Bank 1 is a relatively small organization that works in a limited geographical area, the selection process might become more complicated should it choose to expand.

Bank 1 states that it does not use criteria for screening potential sponsorship partners, as it wishes to be proactive. This is in accordance with the theoretical model, as it suggests that it might be more beneficial to look for sponsorship partners that fit than to screen sponsorship requests. However, the theory does propose that it may be proactive by looking into the sponsorships past performance. Bank 1 states that it has never done this; it is more interested in the human factor and "having a good feeling" about a potential sponsorship partner. Furthermore, theory suggests that one can be proactive by using a sponsorship broker. Bank 1 is unwilling to work with a third party due to past experience. For Bank 1 the involvement of a sponsorship broker is a deal breaker, and it will not enter into agreements with potential sponsor partners that are associated with third parties. This stance begs the question of whether Bank 1 in fact is proactive, or simply bases its selection on relations. This finding is not surprising, as Thjømøe, Olson and Brønn (2002) also found that the selection of sponsorships partners often was based on personal relationship criteria in their Norwegian study of sponsorship decision-making.

**Evaluation of the sponsorship effectiveness in Bank 1.**

Bank 1 clearly states that it does not evaluate its sponsorships. This is due to lack of time and money, as well as an expressed insecurity surrounding how such evaluations best are performed. This is a problem for Bank 1, as they because of this are unable to identify the performance of its sponsorship activities.

The fact that Bank 1 does not evaluate its sponsorship agreements makes it difficult for the bank to assess if it has reached its objectives through the sponsorships. When asked if it is important for the bank to have set objectives if it is not possible to measure if the bank is able to reach to reach these, the marketing manager of Bank 1 has problems providing an answer.

On the other hand, Bank 1 does perform external brand analysis. However, it is unable to relate the information retrieved through this analysis directly to its sponsorship activities. Furthermore, it does receive feedback on its sponsorship activities, and this feedback is used to form an impression of their sponsorships performance. According to the theory, it makes sense to consider sponsorship activities and marketing activities together, as they may be highly related to one another. Additionally, attitude measures are considered an acceptable way to measure sponsorship activity; however for Bank 1 to be able to get accurate measures of the sponsorship activities it needs to perform exclusive sponsorship evaluations more systematically than is done presently.

**Bank 1's process of sponsorship delegation.**

Based on the data retrieved in this study, Bank 1's sponsorship delegation process is identified as shown in figure 2. It is determined that Bank 1 goes through four of the five steps the theoretical model suggests: (1) setting strategy, (2) setting objectives, (3) setting criteria, and (4) selection. However, it must be emphasized that the selection is made on a different basis than what the theory suggest. It seems that Bank 1 does not base its selection on the sponsorship strategy, but instead on personal relationship criteria.

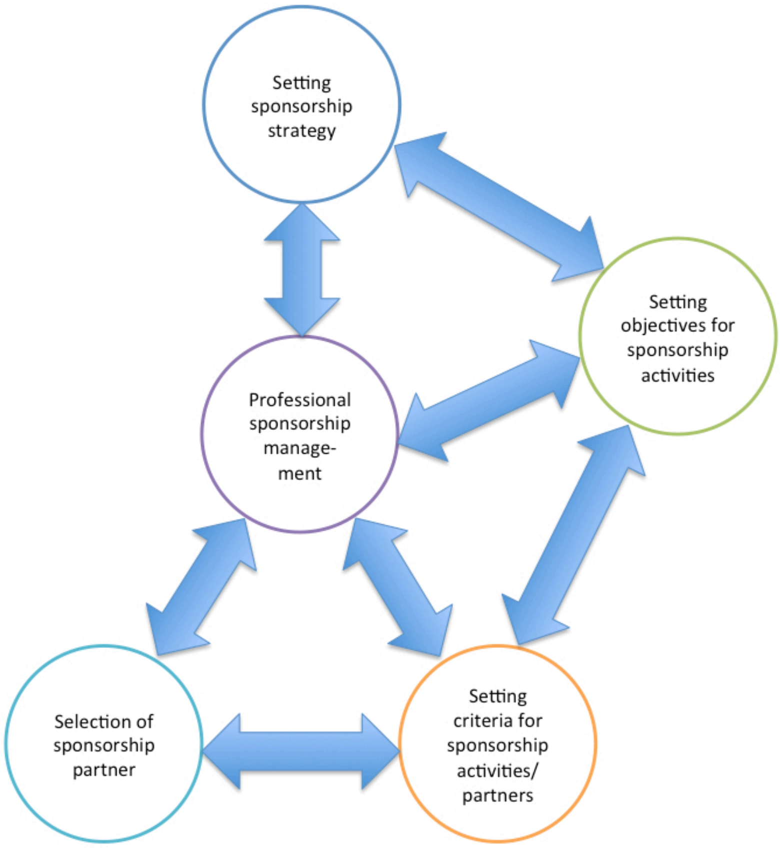


Figure 2. Bank 1's process of sponsorship delegation.

## Discussion Bank 2

### Setting sponsorship strategy in Bank 2.

Bank 2 is currently in the process of developing a new sponsorship strategy. This is a revolutionary change for the bank, as it entails large changes in the current strategy. Bank 2 needs to make this change as its sponsorship strategy has been unclear, and due to this it currently has several sponsorship agreements that are inconsistent with both the sponsor strategy as well as the corporate strategy. The sponsorship manager and the marketing manager have developed the new strategy. Additionally, the bank's chief executive directors have functioned as advisors. No information has been obtained with regards to whether the bank managers, who are the decision-makers in Bank 2 sponsorship delegation process, have been a part of this process. It seems unlikely that they have been involved, as this was not mentioned during the interview when asked about the participants. Bank 2 might have benefited from including this group in the formation of the strategy, as a revolutionary change process may cause resistance in the organization. This might also have given them valuable opinions from the group that is meant to implement the strategy.

Bank 2 emphasizes that the shift from the old to the new sponsorship strategy will be difficult, and many of the old agreements are difficult to end. This is because the bank has made large sponsorship agreements, and it is deeply involved in the sponsorship partners' organizations, but also because there are a lot of feelings involved internally in the bank. Some of the bank managers are very emotionally involved with the sponsorship agreements, and this will most likely act as a barrier for the implementation of the new strategy.

The main goal of the new strategy is to make the organizations sponsorship activities serve as marketing tools. This will be a shift for the organization, as sponsorships historically have been delegated based on friendships and relations. The new sponsorship strategy will be implemented through regional management meetings. After this, each manager will be trusted to act upon the new strategy. This also supports the previous statement that it would be wise to let the bank managers participate in the formation of the new strategy.

Bank 2 has historically been a savings bank, but has recently become a corporate bank. Because of this it is in the process of separating out the gift foundation from the corporation. This will now become a separate foundation, and because of this gifts will become completely separated from the commercial sponsorship agreements.

**Setting sponsorship objectives in Bank 2.**

According to the sponsorship manager, the new sponsorship objectives of Bank 2 have been set and are clear. The sponsorships of Bank 2 are set to affect the branding, the sales and the additional sales of the bank. It is also highly important to the bank that it is able to use the sponsorship agreements to "tell stories". When compared to the theory, the objectives of Bank

2 are far from set and clear. It is difficult to understand how the bank managers are supposed to operationalize the sponsorship strategy by such objectives. Additionally, it seems that the different bank managers are given leeway to make their own objectives. The sponsorship manager explains that some offices are good at setting clear objectives. In the sponsorship manager's example, an office (the bank manager and the regional marketing coordinator) may decide that the sponsorship agreement is meant to bring in a specific number of business customers to the bank.

Bank 2 still has a long way to go to set clear objectives that are interrelated to the sponsorship strategy. When it succeeds in doing this, it will enable the bank mangers to select compatible partners when entering a sponsorship agreement.

**Setting sponsorship criteria in Bank 2.**

Bank 2 mentions geography as the most important criteria when delegating sponsorships, due to its desire to contribute to the local community. Additionally, it seems that reaching the population at large also is an important criterion for Bank 2, as it only sponsors teams, never individuals. It is interesting that Bank has set sponsorship delegation criteria when it has yet to establish sponsorship objectives. According to the theory, specific criteria are set to allow for standards on which to base ones selection; however, it is important that these criteria are based on the company's objectives and thereby also its sponsorship strategy to make sure that the decision made meets the sponsorship objectives. Because of this, it seems somewhat inappropriate for Bank 2 to have set criteria, as it is highly likely that Bank 2 would benefit from first setting clear objectives, and then set criteria based on these objectives.

**Selection of sponsorship partners in Bank 2**

As mentioned earlier, the decision-making process in Bank 2 is set out to each branch of the bank. With the exception of the organizations largest sponsorship agreements, all agreements are made by the local bank manager, in some cases assisted by the local marketing coordinator. The bank's process is not proactive; it simply screens the sponsorship requests that are sent in, with respect to the set criteria. According to the theory, it would be more beneficial for Bank 2 to be proactive, as the selection of sponsorship partners is a purchasing process equal to any other purchase the company makes. Being more proactive would also increase the probability for the bank to follow the sponsorship strategy through the agreements, as it is easier to find partners that fit their sponsorship objectives. Additionally, it becomes easier to evaluate how the partners match their budget and future plans. Research shows that personal interest of the senior managers often influence the decisions made. Consequently, by reducing the decision-making power of the bank managers, one also reduces the probability of the decision being influenced by emotional factors. Both these factors should give added incentive for the bank to become more proactive in its process.

Bank 2 states that it is important for it that there be no third party involved. According to the sponsorship manager this is because it is very important for the bank to have a direct relationship with the sponsored organization. The theory, on the other hand, suggests that using external resources, such as sponsorship brokers, might be a good way to overcome the problems related to selection based on personal criteria.

**Evaluation of sponsorship effectiveness in Bank 2.**

Bank 2 plans to evaluate its sponsorship activities when the new strategy is implemented. However, it is admitted that performing evaluations is presently not good enough. The bank claims that evaluations are performed, and that each region is responsible for performing their own evaluations. However, it is not clear from the retrieved data how these evaluations take place, how often they are performed, or if they may be classified as evaluation at all.

Bank 2 states that it has a very conscious relationship to fit, and claims that it is more aware of its sponsorship positioning than other large Norwegian financial corporations, such as DNB. Norsk Gallup has conducted analyses through Needscope to determine if Bank 2's sponsorships fit its brand profile. According to Bank 2, it is unaccompanied in the financial industry in performing this sort of analysis.

The sponsorship activities of Bank 2 are not measured as proposed in the theoretical model, as the bank's objectives lack clarity. Consequently, it is hard to determine if Bank 2 is able to evaluate the performance of its sponsorship activities from the measures it executes.

### Bank 2's process of sponsorship delegation.

According to the data obtained in this study, Bank 2's sponsorship delegation process includes four of the five steps in the theoretical model. These steps are: (1) setting strategy, (2) setting objectives, (3) setting criteria, and (4) selection. However, the two latter steps are not performed in accordance with the theoretical model. Furthermore, it is difficult to determine whether Bank 2 in fact performs evaluations. Because of this the sponsorship delegation process is recognized as shown in figure three.

## Conclusions for Further Research

Bank 1's sponsorship strategy and objectives are clearly linked to participating in the bank's local community. The criteria that are identified through the interview also relate to CSR, as contributing to the community is of high importance to the bank. The criteria that are given the most attention, apart from monetary aspects, are geography and relations to the organization. These criteria also relate to CSR. This is most likely due to the fact that Bank 1 is a savings bank, with a strong intent to "give back" to its local community.

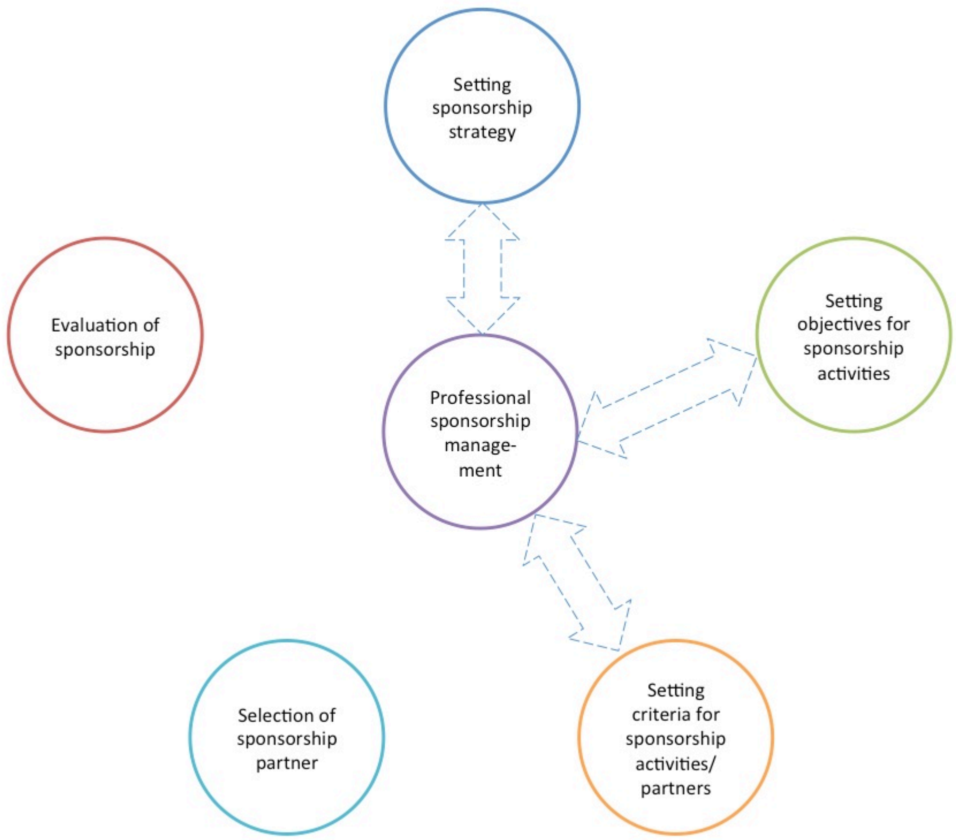


Figure 3. Bank 2's process of sponsorship delegation.

This focus on participating in the local community is also found in the data collected from Bank 2. Bank 2 is concerned with making the local community a good place to live. Furthermore, it is stated that as with Bank 1, that geography and relations to the sponsor partners are important criteria for the bank. Bank 2 has historically been a savings bank, but is presently shifting towards becoming a commercial bank. Nevertheless, it seems that the bank's history as a savings bank affects its process of sponsorship delegation.

As shown in figures 2 and 3, none of the banks follow all the steps of the theoretical model. However, some of the steps are recognized, for example the step of setting a sponsorship strategy is implemented in both banks. Nevertheless, the evaluation step is almost nonexistent according to the findings. Moreover, the findings show that some steps are performed in a different manner than in the theoretical model. One example of this is Bank 2's criteria that are clearly related to the strategy, but hardly relate to the objectives.

These findings lead to the fourth and final research question in this thesis: (4) Is the logic behind the banks' sponsorship delegation in a large extent is based on conducting CSR? Because of this there is a need to further explore the concept of CSR. The following data collection of this study will be conducted with the intention of further investigating this last research question, in addition to the three first ones.

## Corporate Social Responsibility

### Introduction

This part of the thesis will present a different motive than professionalism that may possibly serve as the triggering factor for the rational of the sponsorship delegation. The following will therefore present CSR as a possible motive.

### Corporate Social Responsibility

The field of CSR research developed rapidly over the last half of the $20^{th}$ century. Considered to be a rather theoretical concept in the 1950s with a low degree of real-life application, CSR developed into becoming a serious strategically used tool, utilized by an increasing numbers of corporations toward the end of the century (Carroll, 1999).

There are numerous definitions of CSR (Carroll, 1999; Dahlsrud, 2008), and they have been developed over the years. In 1960, Davis presented his definition of CSR: "business-men's decisions and actions taken for reasons at least partially beyond the firm's direct economic or technical interest" (p. 70). This definition is rather general compared to the one presented by Carroll (1979): "The social responsibility of business encompasses the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary expectations that society has of organizations at a given point in time" (p. 500). This definition presented by Carroll (1979) contains more aspects, and has been cited and elaborated upon by authors within the field.

In the following, different aspects of CSR will be presented and discussed. This is done in order to grasp what aspects should be present to determine whether decisions made within a corporation can be considered to be rational from the perspective of CSR.

**Voluntarism and social norms.**

The key aspect of CSR is that corporations are not obligated by law to conduct these activities. Eilbirt and Parket (1973) consider an important aspect of CSR to be "(…) the voluntary assumption of the obligation to help solve neighborhood problems" (p. 7). Other authors within the field, including Carroll (1979) and Jones (1980), agree that CSR has to be voluntarily adopted. CSR may therefore be expected, but not enforced by law. According to Carroll (1979), the expectations that firms should engage in CSR activities are driven by social norms.

**Social responsibility.**

As the name implies, social responsibility is a main component of the concept. According to Backmann (1975), CSR is comprised of various programs intended to improve the quality of life of the community in which the corporation operates. Sethi (1975) further states that corporations are socially responsible when they act in accordance to "(…) the prevailing social norms, values, and expectations of performance" (p. 62). Corporations that are socially responsible implement activities that benefit other stakeholders than the shareholders alone (Jones, 1980) by helping society (Carroll, 1979) and the neighborhood in which the corporation operates (Eilbirt and Parket, 1973).

**Opportunities.**

Despite the fact that CSR is based on giving back to the community in which the corporation operates, CSR activities can potentially benefit the corporation as well. According to Davis (1960), corporations that are socially responsible may benefit economically in the long run due to their consciousness of the community. Other authors support this notion as well (Drucker, 1984; Lee, 2008; Siegel & Vitaliano, 2007). However, the opportunities for CSR do not necessarily have to be economic in the monetary sense.

Holmes (1976) presented various outcomes that managers expected from CSR activities, including improved corporate reputation and goodwill, increased job satisfaction among employees, increased chances for the corporation to survive, maintaining or gaining more customers, and so on. Consequently, the investment in CSR activities may be considered a strategic tool for creating opportunities that the corporation would be unable to otherwise obtain, or would have to use other measures to obtain them. As Drucker (1984) stated, CSR allows corporations "(…) to turn a social problem into economic opportunity and economic benefit" (p. 62).

Much research has been conducted on how corporate sponsorships and other CSR activities affect corporations in terms of their marketing objectives (Chen 2001; Lichtenstein, Drumwright & Braig, 2004; Sen & Bhattacharya 2001; Simmons & Becker-Olsen, 2006; Siegel & Vitaliano 2007). A lot of the research has been conflicting, as some find that CSR has a positive effect on marketing objectives (Lichtenstein, Drumwright & Braig, 2004; Simmons & Becker-Olsen, 2006; Siegel & Vitaliano, 2007), whereas others found that a majority of customers reacted negatively to firms that were negatively portrayed in terms of CSR, but only customers with a special interest in the cause related to a corporation's positive CSR activities would react positively (Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001). Chen (2001) on the other hand concluded that the outcomes of CSR activities for the firm were hard to ascertain. An interesting finding from the research conducted by Siegel and Vitaliano (2007) that may be relevant to the current study is that corporations selling financial services, which are credence goods, are 23% more likely to choose to engage in CSR activities than corporations selling search goods.

## Findings From the Third and Fourth Interview

In the following section, the findings from the third and fourth interview, as well as the secondary data obtained from these organizations will be presented. The data will be presented in the same manner as the earlier findings.

### Findings From Bank 3

#### Secondary Data.

Through the bank's websites it was possible to identify certain aspects of the professional sponsorship delegation model. Firstly, the sponsorship activities are considered a commercial tool to enhance the core values of the bank. Secondly, the strategy is based on delegating sponsorships to a broad category of recipients in different age groups as well as skill levels, ranging from novices to professionals. Thirdly, the three main objectives related to the bank's sponsorship activities are: (1) brand building, (2) customer care, and (3) teambuilding among employees. Finally, it is important for the bank to have long-term commitments with the potential sponsorship partners, as it believes this enables it to receive the highest possible ROI, both in terms of money and time.

#### Primary data: Interview.

##### *Strategy.*

In the interview it was explicitly stated on several occasions that the sponsorship activities are of a commercial nature rather than a mere delegation of funds. The bank therefore expects something in return for these investments. The sponsorship strategy has been developed in an evolutionary manner, in accordance with the development of the bank's overall strategy. These two strategies have therefore evolved simultaneously, and in the same direction.

The sponsorship strategy has been developed at HQ, and acts as guidance for the sponsorship activities. By following the set strategy, the sponsorship manager believes that the bank is able to enter into sponsorship agreements in a professional manner. This strategy is not explicitly stated in the interview; however, aspects that are identified as being a part of the sponsorship strategy during the interview are visibility, being a local team player, and having long-term commitments.

It is further explained that it is the sponsorship manager's responsibility to communicate the strategy to the people involved in making sponsorship-related decisions and conducting sponsorship management. The bank organizes seminars for these people with various speakers who have extensive knowledge within the field of sponsorship management.

***Objectives.***

The sponsorship manager replied affirmatively to whether the bank had overarching objectives for the sponsorship activities. However, when asked more in-depth about these objectives, more general examples of objectives related to specific sponsorship agreements were presented. Also, when the sponsorship manager referred to fundamental objectives for the bank's sponsorship activities, aspects such as fit between the values of the bank and potential sponsorship partner and a responsible economy were mentioned. These are more appropriately considered criteria the bank has to its potential sponsorship partners.

Although the sponsorship manager did not explicitly express a list of main objectives for the bank's sponsorship activities, it was possible to identify some of the objectives that several of the sponsorship agreements seemed to have in common, such as increasing awareness and visibility, increasing the bank's network, entering into agreements with a broad group of recipients, having agreements at a local level, and having agreements that benefit the bank's employees in addition to its customers. However, the specific objectives for each agreement may deviate somewhat, as the sponsorship manager expressed that the objectives evolve throughout the cooperation between the bank and the potential sponsorship partner.

***Criteria.***

With regards to whether Bank 3 has set criteria for potential sponsorship partners in order to meet the bank's set object, the sponsorship manager refuted this. Instead of having set criteria, it is referred to the banks sponsorship strategy, which acts as a guideline.

Despite the fact that the sponsorship manager believes that the bank does not operate with criteria, several criteria have been identified throughout the interview. The sponsorship manager classifies the identified criteria under the terms "fundamental objectives" and "sponsorship strategy." Some of the criteria identified are long-term agreements, dedicated people in the sponsored group or organization that work actively for the bank's interests, exclusivity, the bank must receive an additional value from the agreement and that employees should benefit from it as well, and the potential partner must have a solid economy and values that are in accordance with the bank's values. Although there has to be a certain degree of fit between the bank's and the potential sponsorship partner's values, the sponsorship manager emphasizes that it is the total package that counts. Therefore, one aspect in isolation does not make or break the agreement.

***Selection.***

In the search for potential sponsorship partners, the sponsorship manager states that Bank 3 is not very proactive. Generally, the bank does not actively seek out potential partners; rather the bank is contacted by potential sponsorship partners. It then goes on to evaluate whether it would like to cooperate with these.

The bank does not use external consultants for finding potential sponsorship partners. However, the bank does not dismiss potential sponsorship partners if they utilize a sponsorship broker. What should be noted here is that the sponsorship manager has stated that the bank has to have a person within the partnership organization that is dedicated to working for the bank's interests.

Generally, the selection of sponsorship partners itself happens in the region of where the partnership will be carried out, as each region has different needs. At a local level it is the local bank managers in collaboration with the local marked consultants that decide on the smaller sponsorship agreements. Larger and more complex agreements, on the other hand, generally involve the sponsorship manager and the marketing manager at HQ. However, if the agreements involve long-term commitments and large amounts of money, a company executive or the board of executives are involved as well. Also, the sponsorship manager states that the bank sometimes commits to sponsorship partners' established template-agreements, and that the bank therefore does not necessarily determine the terms to the agreement.

***Evaluation.***

Despite the fact that the sponsorship manager admits that evaluating sponsorship activities is difficult and costly, the bank does measure the effect of the sponsorship activities every once in a while. How often these measurements are carried out is not explicitly stated; however, it was done once a year for the first few years with the largest sponsorship agreement. After receiving supporting evidence that the sponsorship activity had a positive effect each time, the bank decided to conduct these measures less frequently. Conversely, these measurements are not entirely eliminated.

In the evaluation of the sponsorship activities there are different aspects that are measured. The sponsorship manager mentions customer attention as an example of such an aspect. Although the bank has its sponsorship budget and a gift fund, which is completely separated from the sponsorship activities, the effect of these two combined is sometimes measured. In order to measure and evaluate the effect of the sponsorship activities, the bank utilizes both quantitative and qualitative measurements.

#### *CSR.*

In order to promote the companies CSR-policies, the bank has developed a vision for what it wishes to contribute to the regions it is present in, and a corresponding strategy for how to achieve this. The bank's gift fund is a part of promoting this vision. The sponsorship manager states that having a local focus is important to the bank, and that it wishes to be a local team player.

Although the funds awarded from the gift fund are not to be used for marketing activities, as stated in Norwegian laws, the sponsorship manager says that there is a commercial aspect related to these activities as well. Although the delegation of gifts from this fund are not to be considered strategic in a marketing sense, the bank does wish to receive recognition, increase its visibility and enhance awareness through these activities. And although the sponsorship manager emphasizes that the gift fund is completely separated from the sponsorship activities, it is also revealed that the two activities are sometimes combined when the bank conducts measurements among customers, as the customers are not able to distinguish between the two activities.

## Findings From Bank 4

### Secondary data.

Information about Bank 4's sponsorship activities has been retrieved from its website. Here the types of activities the bank sponsors are described, and these are: (1) sports, (2) culture, (3) non-profit organizations, and (4) other activities beneficial for society. The website further states that the overall objectives related to the bank's sponsorship activities is to create desirable associations and increased recognition of the bank's brand, as well as creating good relationships with both customers and employees. Also, the activities are meant to act as a motivational factor for the bank's employees, according to the website.

Bank 4 has a strong focus on its sponsoring of non-profits on the website. It is also stated here that many of the bank's employees participate in volunteer work in the sponsored non-profit organizations.

**Primary data: Interview.**

***Strategy.***

Bank 4 has developed a sponsorship strategy that is intended as guidance for all of its sponsorship activities, both in terms of existing and potential activities. According to the executive vice president of external relations, the strategy is based on the overall business strategy of the bank. Therefore, if the bank's business strategy changes, the sponsorship strategy will make the necessary adaptations in order to reflect the new business strategy. The executive vice president of external relations therefore states that the sponsorship strategy is dynamic, and it is constantly exposed to development and ongoing evolution.

The bank's strategy has incorporated active use the three different types of sponsorship activities to obtain different strategic goals, as shown in figure 4. For example, sports sponsorships are used to increase the bank's brand- building and for creating connections.

The strategy is based on using the sponsorship activities as a marketing communication tool, and it is therefore considered a part of the marketing mix as a whole. The bank's strategy is explicit, and there is a prerequisite that the potential sponsorship activities relate to the other marketing activities in order to become a part of the bank's sponsorship portfolio.


Figure 4. Bank 4’s strategic division of sponsorship activities.

***Objectives.***

The bank has clear overarching objectives for its sponsorship activities. These objectives are closely integrated into the sponsorship strategy in order to ensure that they are always the basis for any potential sponsorship agreement. The executive vice president of external relations mentions the following four main objectives for the bank’s sponsorship activities: (1) clearly communicate who the bank is, (2) change the recipients’ [of the message] associations to the bank, (3) build arenas for building relationships, and (4) alter their positioning.

In addition to having the four main objectives mentioned above, it was possible to identify several other objectives the bank has for its sponsorship activities. Firstly, the executive vice president of external relations emphasized that it is crucial that there is consistency, both in relation to the other marketing communication tools and within the sponsorship portfolio as a whole. Secondly, in terms of sponsoring sports, it is important for the bank that it sponsors popular sports with a broad group of recipients having a varied age range and level of professionalism. The bank's reasoning behind supporting the width of a sports is that it enables the bank to reach more market segments. Thirdly, the bank intends to be a contributor to society. Finally, the bank intends for the employees to benefit from the agreement in some way. This is something the bank uses actively in its recruitment of new employees.

Although the bank has some overarching objectives, there may be different underlying objectives for each agreement, depending on what the purpose of each partnership is. The underlying objective may not immediately be established, but rather develop throughout the collaboration. All the agreements that are established at present have clearly stated objectives by the time the agreement is concluded upon. However, the objectives may change during the sponsorship partnership, and new elements may be included as well.

All new sponsorship agreements have clearly stated objectives. Nevertheless, the executive vice president of external relations admits that some of the older agreements could be more specific in terms of the set objectives. This is something the bank is constantly working on. As the executive vice president of external relations says, as the business strategy evolves, the bank has to ensure that all the sponsorship activities are able to adapt as well. And it is because the business strategy has changed that some of the older agreements are somewhat outdated, and therefore do not reflect the current business and sponsorship strategy.

***Criteria.***

In terms of whether the bank has set criteria for potential sponsorship partners, the executive vice president of external relations immediately states that the potential partnerships have to relate to the sponsorship strategy and the main objectives for the bank's sponsorship activities. In addition to this fundamental criterion, several others are mentioned, such as how the bank envisions that the partnership will evolve, the chemistry between the parties, and the consistency in their values. The executive vice president of external relations admits that the people involved in making decisions are merely human, and make assessments that are influenced by the human factor, such as that some people have a better chemistry with certain people. Therefore, good chemistry between the parties may have a positive effect on whether the parties inter into a sponsorship agreement together. Bank 4 also favors partnerships that are of a long-term nature. The essential aspects when considering different potential partnerships is that the parties are able to establish a high degree of trust, there must be a good dialogue, the parties have to acquire knowledge from each other, and they have to be able to establish common objectives for the cooperation. The executive vice president of external relations states that the relationship between the parties is essential, and there has to be a fruitful dynamic in order to ensure that the agreement can be carried out. In order for this to be possible it is essential that the potential sponsorship partner, as well as the bank, allocate sufficient resources to the partnership, not merely in terms of money, but rather in the form of human capital.

One objective for the bank is that there is consistency between each sponsorship activity and the remaining sponsorship portfolio and marketing tools, a criterion for potential sponsorship activities is that they fit well into these as well. Furthermore, the bank has a requirement of full exclusivity in all the agreements it is present in, in order to avoid meeting its competitors in the same arenas. Although the bank wishes long-term agreements, it has certain clauses for leaving the partnership, such as if there should be any form for criminal activity in the organization it sponsors, or among the individuals who receive support. In this way the bank preserves its right to withdraw from the collaboration in the event where it might be associated with something undesirable.

***Selection.***

Through the interview it is revealed that the bank is both contacted by potential sponsorship partners and it seeks them out itself. However, although potential sponsorship partners contact the bank, it is rare that the bank enters into cooperation with these. According to the executive vice president of external relations, the reason for why the bank relies on being proactive in the search and selection of sponsorship partners is because this ensures that partners are screened in terms of how well they match the bank's sponsorship strategy.

There are certain steps that have to be followed before any type of agreement is concluded upon. Firstly, the bank goes through dialogues with the potential sponsorship partners. How extensive these discussions are depends on the length and size of the agreement, as well as the complexity of the aspects present in the potential partnership. According to the executive vice president of external relations, the bank has at times gone through negotiations that have lasted more than a year before a partnership has been agreed upon. The reason why Bank 4 believes that these extensive discussions are necessary is to bring clarity to whether the parties can collaborate. The negotiations enable them to challenge one another in terms of how each party can benefit from the agreement, and it gives them time to discuss and evaluate whether it is possible for each party to reach its objectives related to the partnership.

Although the bank is a national bank that is represented all over Norway, it is not the local representatives who conclude on whether to enter into local sponsorship agreements. Rather, all potential sponsorship agreements have to go through HQ. At HQ it is the marked and communication division that provide advice and ensure that all the potential sponsorship partnerships that are being considered are in accordance with the sponsorship strategy. Because Bank 4 believes it has been able to acquire the necessary level of competence needed within sponsorship management in-house, the bank does not use external consultants in any part of its sponsorship management. Also, if the bank is in discussions with potential sponsorship partners that use a third party, it does not wish to enter into agreements with them, as it considers such third parties to merely increase the costs of the partnership.

***Evaluation.***

In terms of evaluating the effectiveness of the sponsorships, the executive vice president of external relations states that the bank is consistent in conducting various measures of its sponsorship activities. Firstly, the bank always measures whether the different sponsorship activities meet the set objectives by conducting follow-up studies among the target segment or sponsorship partner, depending on the sponsorship agreements' objectives. Secondly, the bank conducts measurements of how the sponsorship activities as a whole are perceived within the Norwegian population. In addition to only looking at the sponsorship activities, the bank also measures how it is perceived in the Norwegian population as "contributing to society." This enables the bank to evaluate how these two aspects differ from one another. This is important for Bank 4, as one of its objectives it to be a contributor to society. Finally, the bank also evaluates the sponsorship activities when conducting measures on the marketing activities as a whole.

The evaluations are based on both qualitative and quantitative measures, depending on the objective of the evaluation. Also, the measurements are conducted both internally, by the bank's own analysis division, and by hiring external analysis bureaus.

Aspects that can be identified throughout the interview is that Bank 4 is good at following up its sponsorship partners in terms of ensuring that they make a good match for the bank, that they work towards common objectives, and that they are able to reach each parties objectives. Also, the bank is dedicated to constantly developing the partnerships in terms of including new elements and enhancing the potential returns for each party.

***CSR.***

Bank 4 has integrated its sponsorship activities not only into its marketing communication but also to its contribution to society, and thereby CSR. According to the executive vice president of external relations, the bank selects good causes and contributes to certain causes with no other goal than simple kindness. Some of these activities are sponsorship activities, while the bank's largest owner funds others, which is a foundation. The bank's name is clearly emphasized in the foundation's name. Consequently, when the foundation receives coverage, the bank's name is used, and the coverage directly reflects upon the bank. In the interview it is admitted that the press may be present when certain good causes receive donations, which in turn results in the bank receiving some recognition for these activities, regardless of whether these activities are sponsorship activities initiated by the bank or donations made by the foundation. However, the executive vice president of external relations maintains that receiving press coverage and recognition for these activities is not the motivating factor.

The bank has two main objectives related to its sponsoring of humanitarian activities. Firstly, the bank wishes to increase both the voluntarism among employees and their pride in the bank. The bank has programs that allow employees to take time off from work in order to pledge that time to work for a charitable cause and/or organization. Secondly, by actively supporting non-profit organizations the bank is able to acquire external knowledge about various causes that are not necessarily present in the bank because it is not directly related to its core business. However, it may be areas that still affect the bank, such as environmental and social challenges, or various conflicts in different countries. Although such events may not directly affect Bank 4's core business in Norway, the bank acknowledges that it has a diverse customer base, and several customer groups may operate in areas where these problems are present.

A final aspect in terms of how the bank is able to integrate CSR in its sponsorship activities is that it further develops some of its established sponsorship agreements to include elements that emphasize CSR. These activities reflect the bank's objective of being a contributor to society.

## Discussion of the Findings From Bank 3 and Bank 4

In the following, the findings from Bank 3 and Bank 4 will be discussed against the theoretical model of the professionalized sponsorship delegation, as well the CSR theory. This is done to distinguish what rationale drives the process of sponsorship delegation in the two organizations.

### Discussion Bank 3

#### Setting sponsorship strategy in Bank 3.

Bank 3's sponsorship strategy clarifies the scope and nature of the bank's sponsorship activities. The bank's purpose behind its sponsorship strategy is in accordance with Andrews' (1987) theory on developing corporate strategies, as the strategy, according to Bank 3, is meant to act as a guideline for the people deciding upon and activating agreements.

Bank 3 has decided to continuously make changes to its sponsorship strategy in order to adapt to the bank's overall business strategy. This ensures that there is coherence between the sponsorship strategy and the business strategy, and therefore limits maladjustments of operations within the bank.

Another consequence of the continuous change process is that the sponsorship strategy can be characterized as being developed through an ongoing evolutionary change process. This entails that the people who are exposed to the strategy do not have to adapt to extensive alterations in the sponsorship strategy, and it may therefore minimize the resistance to the changes. However, the bank should be aware of the potential danger of becoming too locked into existing thought patterns, as it may not be able to implement innovative measures when the situation calls for this.

The bank has developed its sponsorship strategy with the intention of professionalizing sponsorship activities and management. This is because the sponsorship strategy is meant to guide sponsorship-related decision, and therefore ensure that these decisions are consistent regardless of whom the actual decision-maker is, or decision-makers are. By developing and implementing the sponsorship strategy, the bank may therefore limit the emotions and intuitive judgments that might appear, because the decision-makers are bound to follow the explicitly stated guidelines that the sponsorship strategy presents. However, in order to coordinate sponsorship activities through the use of the sponsorship strategy, it is entirely necessary for the sponsorship strategy to be explicit, accurately communicated to and understood by all participants exposed to it. Currently, the sponsorship strategy is communicated to the people involved through seminars and by the sponsorship manager.

**Setting sponsorship objectives in Bank 3.**

As the bank's objectives constitute its strategic intent, it is essential for these objectives to be explicitly stated and presented to all people participating in the sponsorship-related decisions and management. Although it was stated that Bank 3 has clearly set sponsorship objectives, these were not sufficiently presented in the interview. Rather, it seems that there is some confusion and uncertainty related to the correct terminology, as objectives seemed to be mixed with criteria. Therefore, it is likely that there is no clear distinction between the two concepts as communicated in the sponsorship management. What is more, the bank has stated explicit objectives on its website, but it was neither referred to the website nor the objectives listed here during the interview.

The sponsorship manger is responsible for communicating the strategy as a whole to the people involved in making sponsorship-related decisions, and this is also the person who got the terminology mixed up during the interview. Consequently, miscommunication and confusion related to the sponsorship management may ensue, as the message may not be received and interpreted in a consistent manner. As a result, the sponsorship management may not be conducted in a correct and up-to-date manner by the bank as a whole. It is therefore essential that the bank ensures that there is not gap in the understanding and interpretation of the sponsorship guidelines, including strategy, objectives and criteria, between the bank, the sponsorship manager, and the other people involved in making sponsorship-related decisions.

Although the bank has explicitly stated its overarching objectives on its website, and these are somewhat unclear during the interview, it is revealed that the more specific objectives vary for each sponsorship agreement. The reason given for this is that the more specific objectives evolve throughout the cooperation between the bank and the potential sponsorship agreement. Although it is not explicitly stated in so many words, this may be consistent with the theory that states that through the cooperation objectives for each party can be developed that are somewhat aligned, and that both parties can collaborate in meeting these objectives.

**Setting sponsorship criteria in Bank 3.**

Bank 3 refutes that it has developed sponsorship criteria that potential sponsorship partners are evaluated against. If this is correct this is a serious problem in terms of being able to follow the sponsorship strategy, as it is the criteria that ensure that the organizational objectives are met. These objectives in turn, are communicated through a sponsorship strategy. Although it might seem that Bank 3 is not able to implement and follow the sponsorship strategy, it seems more likely that the bank does in fact not lack sponsorship criteria. Instead, there is likely some confusion in terms of the terminology the bank uses. This is because several sponsorship criteria are presented during the interview, but under terms such as “fundamental objectives” and “sponsorship strategy.” Because the current research was only conducted within HQ, and not among more people within the sponsorship management, it is not possible to conclude whether the inconsistent use of terminology affects the sponsorship management, or if there exists a consistent understanding within the bank.

Unless all the people within the bank making sponsorship-related decisions understand the sponsorship criteria, the standards and specifications that the decisions are based upon will differ depending on subjective interpretations. This in turn will reduce the level of professionalism in the sponsorship management, as the sponsorship strategy will no longer act as guidance because the interpretation of how it is to be implemented is based on personal judgments.

In the case of an internal agreement related to the use of terminology and what is included within each concept, it is still important that the bank considers the potential sponsorship partners. It is essential that the bank is able to appropriately communicate what it expects from the partnership, and that this is interpreted and understood correctly by the counterpart during negotiations. If this is not done in an appropriate manner, it may result in an agreement based on miscommunication and misunderstandings. This in turn may require extensive resources in order to ensure that both parties have understood and agree to the terms.

Based on the sponsorship criteria that were identified through the interview, there were both criteria related to how the sponsorship objective could be met, and also criteria related to the specific characteristic of the potential sponsorship partner. None of these criteria were characterized directly as criteria, instead different terms were used. However, when probed about specific criteria that had been mentioned it was admitted that it was a criterion, but that one criterion in isolation was not important enough to determine whether an agreement was entered into or eliminated. As was mentioned earlier, it is the totality that counts. Based on this, it is possible that the bank has not explicitly stated certain sponsorship criteria but that it has some, such as fit and exclusivity, which are so incorporated into the sponsorship management that they are not defined as sponsorship criteria. Although this might be the case, it is essential that the bank is consistent in what the sponsorship criteria are, as the people who are involved in sponsorship management may differ, and aspects that are highly integrated into the corporation but not explicitly stated may be hard for new people to grasp. This in turn will call for personal judgment in cases of uncertainty, which again will increase the risk of moving away from the set sponsorship strategy.

**Selection of sponsorship partners in Bank 3.**

Bank 3 states that it is seldom proactive in its search for potential sponsorship partners. Instead, various groups and organizations contact the bank, and an evaluation of these is conducted. However, according to theory the sponsorship process should be considered in terms of the buying process. As the bank uses its sponsorship activities as marketing communication one can consider a sponsorship agreement to be a marketing-related purchase. By not being proactive in the search of potential sponsorship partners, it is random who constitutes the basis for evaluation and selection. Therefore, if the bank is more proactive in its search for potential sponsorship partners, it would be possible to have specific purposes with the collaboration in mind even before discussions and negotiations with the counterparty begin. Consequently, this in itself would act as a screening mechanism for the bank and more extensive evaluations would be limited to the potential sponsorship partners that the bank has already labeled as interesting.

The bank does not hire external consultants to help it with sponsorship management at any level. However, if the potential sponsorship partner utilizes a sponsorship broker, this does not have an impact on whether the bank goes into collaboration or not. What is essential for Bank 3, whether a third party is present or not, is that the bank has a contact person within the sponsorship partner that it can rely on. The theory states the importance of avoiding entering into a sponsorship agreement based on personal connections, as this will be at the expense of the business and sponsorship strategy. However, since Bank 3 does not enter into sponsorship agreements based on the personal connections in themselves, but rather having a person who is actively working towards the bank's strategy and goals, this is more correctly considered as being relationship focused. By focusing on the relationship when selecting sponsorship partners, the parties may agree to mutually beneficial objectives. Also, as the bank mixes concepts, by having a clearly identified contact person within the sponsorship partner it is possible to be in contact on a continuous basis. This in turn can enable the parties to clarify potential misunderstandings that may arise.

Based on the bank's method of selection, with the decisions for local sponsorship agreements made at the bank's local offices, and larger and more complex agreements being handled by HQ, the bank believes it takes the local communities' needs into consideration. This is a justified assumption when one considers that it is the local banks that know the regional community. As previously mentioned, the personnel involved in making sponsorship-related decisions and who are responsible for sponsorship management, receive information about the sponsorship strategy from the sponsorship manager. However, neither the sponsorship manager nor other people at HQ are directly involved in the local sponsorship management. Consequently, it is essential that the local bank managers and marketing managers follow the guidelines developed at HQ. As has previously been mentioned, the bank wishes to professionalize its sponsorship management through its sponsorship strategy. Consequently, there should be some sort of control mechanism in place for HQ so that it might conduct evaluations and check-ups for the potential agreements that the local bank managers are considering committing to. A system of this nature is not currently in place. The reasoning behind the need for such a control mechanism is not only based on the risk of opportunistic behavior from the local bank managers, but also to avoid miscommunication, such as lack of consistency in the terminology used. It will also ensure that there is consistency in the sponsorship portfolio as a whole, despite the differing needs between the various regions.

A point that should be considered is choosing sponsorship partners that have a template of the terms to the agreement, and the bank allowing this to be the basis for the agreement with no alterations to these terms. The sponsorship process should be equated with other purchase processes the bank goes through. Although one may have template contracts in these cases as well, it is important for the customer, in this case the bank, to go through the terms of the agreement and make alterations that meet the needs for that specific purchase. If the bank makes no alterations to the agreement it is in essence the sponsorship partner that has decided what the bank wishes to receive from the collaboration. Although the sponsorship strategy might have guided the bank to the selection of sponsorship partner, the actual terms of the agreement are not customized in accordance with the strategy. Consequently, it is essential that the bank is proactive in the discussion of defining and establishing the terms to its sponsorship agreements.

**Evaluation of sponsorship effectiveness in Bank 3.**

Bank 3 replies affirmatively to whether the bank measures the effect of its sponsorship activities. However, although such evaluations are conducted, it proved hard to retrieve information concerning how these evaluations are conducted, how often they are performed, and what the underlying purpose of these evaluations and measures are. The bank may not be able to answer these questions due to a lack of an explicit plan. However, with support in the theory, the bank states that the evaluation of the sponsorship activities is difficult. Nevertheless, due to the vague statements with regards to how evaluations are conducted, it is difficult to determine how the bank decides upon what should be measured, what the appropriate evaluation technique is, and who are asked to participate in the evaluations.

It is revealed that the sponsorship activities are not always measured in isolation, but rather in combination with the activities related to the gift fund. According to the theory it makes sense to consider these two activities together, as they may be highly related to one another and are considered by the recipients of the message to be the same type of activities. By considering the sponsorship activities and gift fund activities together, the bank is able to evaluate how these activities complement each other in the bank's communication mix. However, in order for Bank 3 to be able to conduct complete and accurate evaluations, it is essential that it is conscious in the design of the measurements so that the sponsorship activities are clearly distinguished from the gift fund activities. This is because although the two activities are related and can be measured simultaneously, the activities are not identical, and it is not possible to determine how the two activities are related to one another if they are classified and measured together. Consequently, although sponsorship activities and gift fund activities can benefit from being evaluated in relation to one another, it must be possible to distinguish between them in order to determine how the activities relate to one another and how each set of activities relates to the communication mix as a whole.

**CSR as a rational for sponsorship activities in Bank 3.**

Bank 3 is very clear about its sponsorship activities being completely separate from the activities funded through the gift fund. The sponsorship activities are solely a marketing tool, while the gift fund is an aspect of the bank's vision for how it wishes to contribute to the regions it operates in. Although both activities are voluntarily adopted, as is a necessity for them to be characterized as CSR, the sponsorship activities are based on a commercial motive rather than CSR. Consequently, the sponsorship activities are based on a transaction where it is clearly stated what the bank will receive in return for the money contributed, rather than a donation where no return is expected.

The bank's CSR-policy is promoted through the bank's vision for the region in which it operates. Although these activities are initially meant to provide funds for giving back to the community, the bank admits that it is desirable to get marketing exposure for these activities as well. Having these motives for the CSR-activities is in accordance with the theory on CSR, which states that it is possible for corporations to benefit economically in the long run through CSR-activities. As Bank 3 wishes to get media exposure, it is plausible that it is hoped the bank will increase its corporate reputation and goodwill through these activities.

Although Bank 3 states that the sponsorship activities and the activities that are funded through the gift fund are completely separated, it is revealed that it is difficult for customers and people outside the bank to distinguish between the two. It is clearly stated that the sponsorship activities are not motivated by CSR, while the gift fund activities are. However, since the recipients of the messages from the sponsorship activities and gift fund activities are not able to distinguish between them there must be some commonality between the different activities. Consequently, if the bank truly wants it sponsorship activities to be completely separated from the gift fund activities, it has to be consistent in distinguishing between these two types of activities, and not relating them to one another. In contrast, as these activities are hard to distinguish from one another, the bank can identify how they relate to each other in order to evaluate how these two activities best may complement each other. By doing this the sponsorship activities may also be able to benefit from the long term economic benefits that potentially come from focusing on CSR.

**Bank 3's process of sponsorship delegation.**

According to the data retrieved in this study, Bank 3's process of sponsorship delegation is identified, as shown in figure 5. All the steps from the theoretical model are present in Bank 3's process of sponsorship delegation. However, the steps interact with one another differently in Bank 3's case than they do in the theoretical model. Furthermore, some of the steps that are identified are not performed in the manner suggested by the theory.

## Discussion Bank 4

### Setting sponsorship strategy in Bank 4.

Bank 4's sponsorship strategy is in accordance with the strategy theory by Andrews (1987) presented previously, as the strategy is meant to guide the decisions and actions of the people within the bank in a certain direction. Furthermore, the strategy clearly reveals how the sponsorship activities are related to other business activities, which in Bank 4's case is its marketing mix and marketing communication. Consequently, the bank ensures that there is coherence between its sponsorship strategy and its marketing strategy in order for them to form a consistent whole. Additionally, the sponsorship strategy is based on the bank's overall business strategy, which again assures that there is consistency not only within the marketing activities, but also between the sponsorship activities and the bank's business operations as a whole. As a result of the sponsorship strategy's foundation, it is possible to identify that Bank 4 has assured that there is consistency between the sponsorship activities and the bank's other activities that are both directly and indirectly related to these.

The sponsorship strategy has not been developed with the sole purpose of guiding the choice of specific sponsorship agreements. Rather, the purpose of the sponsorship strategy is to guide the sponsorship management as a whole, existing agreements as well as the potentially new ones.

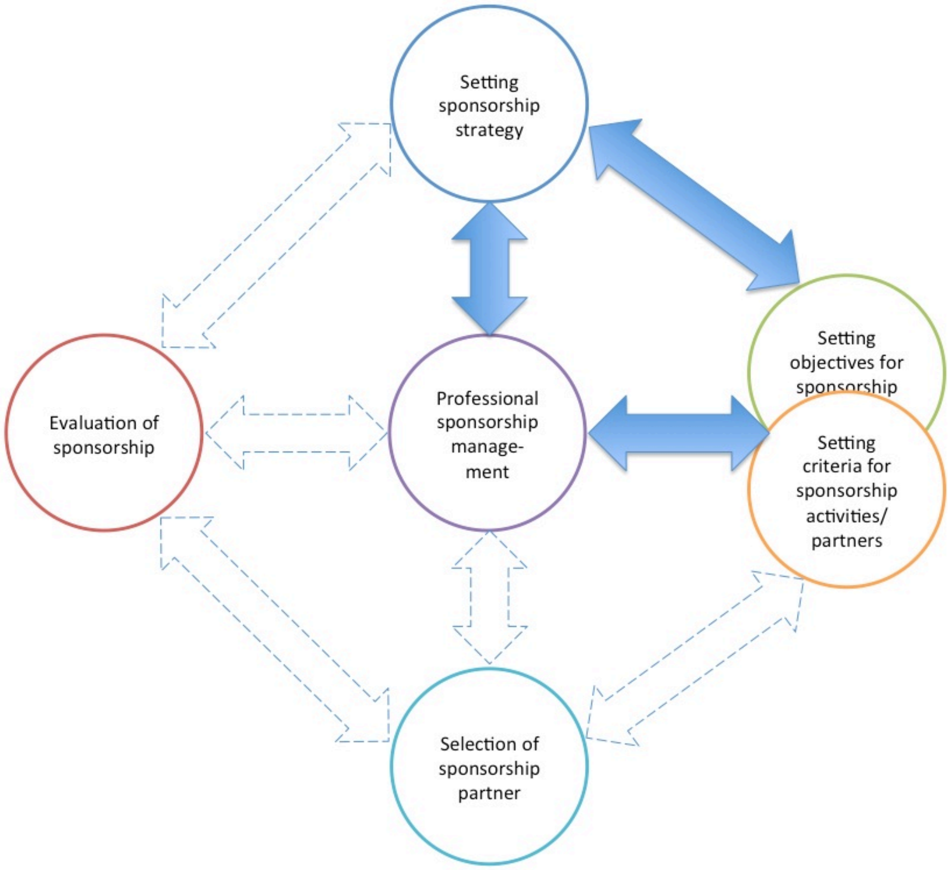


Figure 5: Bank 3's process of sponsorship delegation.

In order for the sponsorship strategy to act as guidance for the people involved in sponsorship management it is necessary for the strategy to be explicitly stated and understandable to the people it is intended for. The sponsorship strategy of Bank 4 meets this criterion. Furthermore, it is not enough for a potential agreement to be in accordance with the sponsorship strategy alone; the potential sponsorship activity has to relate to the bank's other marketing activities. This is because the bank requires there to be consistency between the sponsorship activities and the marketing activities, as sponsorship is used as a marketing tool by the bank. The sponsorship activities and management as a whole can therefore not be considered to be isolated activities within the bank. Rather, they belong to a larger whole. By ensuring that the sponsorship activities are carried out in a manner that is consistent with the related strategies, sponsorship-related decisions can be conducted more easily. Additionally, the decisions will comply with the related objectives of the marketing mix and the business operations as a whole.

Because the strategy is based on the bank's overall business strategy, it will be necessary to make certain adaptations along the way. Bank 4 solves this problem through an evolutionary change process. Therefore, the bank makes smaller changes to the sponsorship strategy on a continuous basis as changes are made to the overall business strategy. This requires a lower degree of restructuring for the people exposed to the changes, as the changes in strategy are relatively small compared to the more revolutionary change processes. Consequently, Bank 4's evolutionary change process may experience less resistance among the people involved; however, at the same time it may be harder for Bank 4 to identify innovative ideas and solutions when the environment calls for it, as the evolutionary change process is more rigid and based on previous patterns and thoughts.

Bank 4 has been able to reduce the degree of emotions and intuitive judgments by introducing and developing the sponsorship strategy, which essentially guides all sponsorship management. However, the bank does leave some room for human assessment. This is in accordance with Simon's (1955) claim that man can only acquire and process a limited proportion of all the information available, and decisions therefore will be bounded rational. So although the bank's follows a rational reasoning perspective with thorough evaluations of alternatives and development of complete plans, it is aware that it is not possible to eliminate the presence of human factors entirely. The sponsorship strategy will therefore act as an obstacle to the personal factors that have the potential of interfering with the sponsorship management, but it cannot eliminate these completely.

**Setting sponsorship objectives in Bank 4.**

Bank 4 has been able to develop clear overarching objectives that communicate the bank's strategic intent. These objectives are explicitly stated on both the website and during the interview, which suggests that they are known to people involved in sponsorship management.

The main sponsorship objectives are integrated into the sponsorship strategy, with the purpose of basing sponsorship agreements on these same objectives. As the bank's business strategy evolves, the bank's sponsorship strategy will evolve, and each sponsorship agreement will adapt in the process. This is consistent with the theory, which states that such adaptations are necessary in order to avoid maladjustments and the emergence of business risks. Although it is admitted in the interview that some of the older sponsorship agreements within the bank have objectives that are not completely in accordance with the current business and sponsorship strategy, the bank is aware of this issue, and is constantly working on aligning all agreements with the two strategies. In order to eliminate the mentioned risks associated with not having consistency between objectives and the current strategies, it is necessary for the bank to update all its sponsorship strategies. Furthermore, as the bank's sponsorship strategy goes through an evolutionary change process, it is essential that it have a system that enables it to quickly make necessary adjustments to its sponsorship agreements when required.

Although the overarching sponsorship objectives are set and carefully incorporated into the sponsorship strategy, the objectives more specific to each agreement may differ. These specific objectives are not predetermined, but come as a result of long-term discussions and negotiations. Building a relationship through extensive collaboration is important for the bank, as it allows each party to see how they best can come up with mutually beneficial terms to the sponsorship agreements. This is in accordance with the theory, which clearly states that by keeping focus on the relationship, the parties can work together in order to reach objectives that are somewhat aligned.

It is also important for the bank to have long-term, trust-based relationships with its sponsorship partners. This enables the parties to add new elements to the agreements, based on new objectives. Consequently, the sponsorship agreements, including the more specific objectives, are not static, but rather dynamic and changing in accordance with what the parties believe to be mutually beneficial for their partnership.

**Setting sponsorship criteria in Bank 4.**

Bank 4 has explicitly stated a fundamental sponsorship criterion for potential sponsorship agreements, namely that it has to relate to the sponsorship strategy and the main sponsorship objectives. By being so explicit, the bank limits the degree of personal judgments by the people involved in sponsorship management, as all potential sponsorship partners will have to meet the set guidelines communicated through the sponsorship strategy. By carefully incorporating the sponsorship objectives in the sponsorship strategy, and making these the fundamental criteria for potential sponsorship partners and agreements, it enables the bank's sponsorship managers to be consistent as long as these three aspects have been appropriately communicated to the people involved in making the sponsorship-related decisions.

As the purpose of sponsorship criteria is for the sponsorship decisions to meet the sponsorship objectives, it is not sufficient to merely state that a criterion for potential sponsorship partners and agreements meet sponsorship objectives, as this is the whole point with all the criteria as a whole. However, the bank also explicitly stated several other sponsorship criteria. The criteria Bank 4 has for its potential sponsorship partners and agreements are in accordance with several of the criteria identified in the theory, including fit between the parties' values and objectives, that the bank has industry exclusivity in the potential sponsorship partner, that there is a link between the sponsorship agreement and the sponsorship portfolio as a whole and the bank's other marketing activities, and that the potential sponsorship partnerships are of a long-term nature.

Bank 4 has developed criteria that are related to specific objectives it wishes to reach through its sponsorship activities, as well as criteria that are specific for each sponsorship partner. The bank heavily emphasizes the relationship between itself and the potential partners, and a lot of the criteria are therefore based on this. This also relates to the theory on sponsorship objectives that states that by focusing on the relationship, the parties can develop and work towards mutually beneficial objectives.

By explicitly stating criteria relating both to the actual sponsorship agreement and also sponsorship partner, the bank may, as previously mentioned, be able to limit the degree of personal judgments. However, as has also been mentioned, the bank is aware that there is a human factor involved that can never be completely eliminated. It is therefore necessary to be aware of the human factor before entering into a partnership. A potential sponsorship partner could satisfy all set criteria; however, if the people involved are not able to communicate and cooperate it does not matter how compatible the partnership looks in theory.

Although the criteria are developed in order to enable the bank to implement its sponsorship strategy and reach sponsorship objectives in a professional manner, it is necessary to leave some room for the human factor. Consequently, although the bank admits that there is some room for human assessment in terms of the selection of sponsorship partner based on how they cooperate with one another; this does not immediately reject a professional sponsorship process. By allowing human assessments the decision will have some degree of bounded rationality but as long as the other criteria are satisfied as well this is of less importance.

**Selection of sponsorship partners in Bank 4.**

Bank 4 does not use the expertise of external consultants, and does not wish to enter into sponsorship agreements with partners who use a third party. The bank's reason for this is that it has been able to acquire the necessary expertise to conduct sponsorship management at all levels using in-house resources. Although the theory suggests that the use of external consultants can limit the interference of personal judgments and personal relationships within the potential sponsorship partner, Bank 4 has solved these issues in other ways.

Firstly, the bank follows the theory in terms of being proactive in its search for potential sponsorship partners, as it seldom enters into agreements with sponsorship partners unless it is someone the bank has found on its own initiative. This allows the bank to screen potential sponsorship partners according to the sponsorship strategy and objectives, which in turn assures the bank that the potential sponsorship partners that form the basis for selection have already been evaluated against the set criteria that are necessary for reaching its objectives. Consequently, the three preceding steps, strategy, objectives and criteria, have enabled the bank to go through a continuous screening process that results in a short-list for the actual selection where each potential partner has already been evaluated.

Secondly, since all sponsorship agreements have to be approved by HQ, whether it is of a local, regional or national nature, the opportunity of deviating too much from the set strategy, objectives and criteria is limited. This in turn leads to less room for personal judgments and subjective interpretations, and a more rational approach is adopted. As a result, by requiring that all potential sponsorship agreements go through HQ, Bank 4 has been able to implement a control mechanism that ensures that all sponsorship agreements are in accordance with the set guidelines.

Finally, Bank 4 requires extensive discussions with its potential sponsorship partners in order to ensure that the parties have a sound basis for the partnership. If the discussions are fruitful, this suggests that there are mutual benefits related to the partnership.

**Evaluation of sponsorship effectiveness in Bank 4.**

Bank 4 is consistent in conducting evaluations of its sponsorship activities on a continuous basis, and possesses the expertise for conducting such evaluations in-house. However, the bank also chooses to outsource some of the evaluations to external analysis bureaus. In accordance with the theory, the bank conducts evaluations in order to measure whether the bank meets its set objectives. Both the evaluation technique used and the characteristics of the participants depend on the objective of the evaluation. As stated in the theory, once the objectives are clearly identified, it is possible to select the appropriate method for going forward with for the evaluation. Consequently, no explicit step-by-step plan has been formulated; rather, the design of each evaluation is adapted to the nature of the activity or activities that are to be measured and evaluated.

As previously mentioned, Bank 4 is consistent in evaluating whether its sponsorship activities reach the set objectives. However, as the theory states, each individual sponsorship activity does not have to be considered in isolation. Although Bank 4 considers the performance of each sponsorship activity independently, the sponsorship activities are also considered together as a sponsorship portfolio, and measured as a whole. Furthermore, the sponsorship activities are measured together with other activities the bank contributes to, to see how they all work towards the bank's objective of "contributing to society." Finally, the sponsorship activities are evaluated together with other marketing tools in order to conduct comprehensive analyses of the bank's marketing activities. Bank 4 is able to access a lot of information about its sponsorship activities by going through all the steps from evaluating a sponsorship activity alone, to including its sponsorship portfolio, to evaluating how the sponsorship portfolio affects other objectives and activities within the bank. Consequently, Bank 4 has a complex and comprehensive sponsorship portfolio with an extensive amount of information, which in turn may be utilized as an aid in the bank's sponsorship management.

Not only does Bank 4 conduct evaluations of the effects of its sponsorship activities, it is also careful to follow up its sponsorship partners. The bank believes this is essential in ensuring that the partners are still considered a good match, and that both parties are able to reach their goals. These evaluations are conducted through interaction with the other party, and through such interaction it is possible to create the foundation for further development of the sponsorship agreement. It may therefore be possible that the partners through close interaction and cooperation are able to progress through a learning cycle that lets them learn more about one another, the needs of each party, and how the partnership can evolve in order to become increasingly beneficial to both parties and the therefore the partnership as a whole.

**CSR as a rational for sponsorship activities in Bank 4.**

Bank 4 considers it sponsorship activities to be both a marketing communication tool and a part of the bank's CSR-activities. The sponsorship activities are voluntarily adopted, and are a means of contributing to society. Although Bank 4 has no ulterior motive for using its sponsorship activities for promoting CSR, it is admitted that the bank does at times receive media coverage for the activities. Although this is not necessarily planned, it may indicate a resulting benefit from its consciousness to society.

Bank 4's largest owner is a foundation that is named after the bank, and that donates large amounts of money to various charities and projects. Therefore, the bank receives a lot of the credit from these CSR-activities as well. By naming the foundation after the bank, the foundation and its activities may be considered a strategic tool for promoting the bank's CSR-policy. Consequently, despite it not being the bank that awards these funds directly, the funds create both opportunities and benefits that the bank might not otherwise have had.

As revealed in the interview, when Bank 4 uses its sponsorship activities in CSR, it is not motivated by economic opportunities in the monetary sense. Rather, one of the important stakeholder groups with regards to these activities is the bank's employees, and increasing their job satisfaction, their involvement through voluntary work, and creating a sense of pride in their employees. Another way the bank uses its CSR-activities as a strategic tool is by using its sponsorship agreements actively in bringing knowledge from the sponsorship partners into the bank.

Although Bank 4 has been able to combine both marketing communication and CSR in its sponsorship activities, it is not possible to determine whether the bank's decision-making process related to the selection of its sponsorship activities is rational from the a CSR standpoint. This is because the interview further revealed that it is through the cooperation with the sponsorship partner that new elements relating to CSR are added to the sponsorship agreement, and that all aspects are therefore not decided at the conclusion of the agreement. Therefore, although Bank 4 is successful in using its sponsorship activities to promote CSR, these elements of the sponsorship agreements are developed through the cooperation, negotiation and interaction with the sponsorship partner.

**Bank 4's process of sponsorship delegation.**

Based on the data accounted for in this study, Bank 4's process of sponsorship delegation is identified, as show in figure 6. As the figure shows, all the steps of the theoretical model of a professionalized sponsorship delegation process are accounted for in Bank 4's sponsorship management.


Figure 6: Bank 4's process of sponsorship delegation.

## Comparison

When considering the first step in the professional sponsorship delegation model, setting a sponsorship strategy, it has been identified that Bank 1, Bank 3 and Bank 4 have developed sponsorship strategies in an evolutionary manner, which have been implemented into the sponsorship management for each bank. Bank 2, on the other hand, is currently trying to formulate and implement a completely new sponsorship strategy because this has so far been lacking. However, the bank has acknowledged the need for an overall sponsorship strategy that provides guidelines to the bank's overall sponsorship activities. Since the sponsorship strategy is being developed at HQ, with plans of implementing it in all the local branches of the bank, the strategy development may at this stage be considered a revolutionary one.

In terms of the second step in the model, setting sponsorship objectives, it is revealed that Bank 1, Bank 3 and Bank 4 have set objectives for their sponsorship activities. However, through the interview it is identified that both Bank 1 and Bank 3 are inconsistent in the terminology they apply. This is especially clear with respect to the distinction between objectives and criteria. Although Bank 2 believes it has clearly defined criteria this has been found to be only to be partially correct, as the set objectives are not possible to operationalize and the local bank managers have the opportunity to formulate their own objectives without necessarily going through HQ. One objective that was identified among Bank 1, Bank 3 and Bank 4, and which had not been emphasized in the theory, was establishing long-term agreements, and having the possibility of further developing these.

All four banks have set criteria for their sponsorship activities and partners. These were unclear for Bank 2, and although Bank 3 denied having such criteria, they were identified on several occasions during the interview but often referred to as objectives. An interesting criterion that was identified here was the monetary aspect of the potential sponsorship activity, as the amount of money that went into the sponsorship agreement had an impact on how complex the process surrounding that sponsorship was.

Whereas Bank 1 and Bank 4 base their selection on the preceding steps in the professionalized sponsorship delegation model, Bank 2 and Bank 3 are not able to do the same. Bank 2 does not base it selection on any of the preceding steps, while Bank 3 only partially appears to do so. One possible explanation for why Bank 1 and Bank 4 are able to incorporate the decisions and information from the preceding steps into the actual selection of sponsorship partners is because these banks require all potential sponsorship agreements to go through HQ, whereas Bank 2 and Bank 3 let their local bank managers and marketing coordinators decide upon sponsorship agreements without necessarily involving HQ. By requiring all potential sponsorship agreements to go through HQ there is an increased level of control over the sponsorship management, as all sponsorship agreements meet the same criteria. Another effect of running all potential sponsorship agreements through HQ is that potential emotional bonds the local representatives might have to their local community do not affect the sponsorship selection. A couple of aspects relating to the selection of sponsorship partner that were revealed were that, in general, the banks respond negatively to third-party involvement, and it was important that the relationship between the sponsorship partner and the bank has a long-term potential.

The step where the banks differed the most from one another was in terms of their evaluation of the sponsorships. Bank 1 does not perform evaluations; Bank 2 has limited evaluation and the methods used are diffuse; Bank 3 performs evaluations, however it is unclear how consistent the evaluations are and how the bank decides upon what aspects to evaluate; Bank 4 evaluates whether it meets its sponsorship objectives and how the sponsorship activities complement its overall marketing activities and CSR. It was further identified that Bank 4 evaluates the actual relationship it has to its sponsorship partner in order to determine whether both parties are reaching their objectives, and that the sponsorship agreement therefore is fruitful to both parties.

During the interviews with Bank 1 and Bank 2 CSR was identified as a possible justification in terms of the sponsorship decision-making. However, when research on CSR was included in the interviews with Bank 3 and Bank 4, it showed that the sponsorship delegation process was not rational with basis in CSR.

## Conclusion

To conclude this thesis, it is referred back to the four research questions that have been addressed throughout the thesis. These questions are: (1) What factors should be present in order to characterize a sponsorship process as professionalized? (2) What does the sponsorship process look like in a Norwegian context? (3) Is the sponsorship process in a Norwegian context professionalized? (4) Is the logic behind the banks' sponsorship delegation in a large extent is based on conducting CSR?

The first question was explored and answered through an extensive literature review. The five main factors, or steps, that were identified are setting the sponsorship strategy, setting objectives for the sponsorship activities, setting criteria for sponsorship activities/partners, selection of sponsorship partner, and finally evaluating the sponsorship (for an illustration it is referred back to figure 1).

Through the in-depth interviews conducted it was possible to identify how sponsorship management in Norway corresponded to the professionalized model that was developed, and thereby answer the second and third research questions. It was discovered that all the participating banks had to some degree developed, or were developing, a sponsorship strategy, sponsorship objectives and sponsorship criteria. On the other hand, the degree of professionalism in the sponsorship delegation process in Norway differed. Nonetheless, an interesting finding was that the participants that had centralized their sponsorship management, and hence the decision-making authority, appeared to have more of the factors of the professionalized delegation model incorporated into their sponsorship management.

The fourth research question, which was a result of findings from the first two interviews, addressed whether the sponsorship delegation might be rational with a basis in CSR. However, when this was explored in the last two interviews no supporting evidence of this was found.

## Implications

The findings of this study have revealed several interesting implications for sponsorship studies, as well as organizational studies in general. Both theoretical implications and managerial implications have been identified, the most important are presented below.

### Theoretical Implications

Firstly, it has been found that when dealing with sponsorship strategy, an evolutionary change of the strategy may be more beneficial than a revolutionary change. This is basically due to the fact that several people are often involved in the decision-making in a sponsorship delegation process. Furthermore, it appears as if the involvement of HQ has a positive effect on the professionalism of the sponsorship delegation process. The involvement of HQ has been given very limited attention in earlier studies of sponsorship.

Secondly, it seems that the sponsor's relationship to the sponsorship partner is of higher significance than first believed. The findings show that being able to have a good relationship with the sponsorship partner serves as an essential objective when entering the agreement. Furthermore, the relationship is used to further develop the collaboration, and to create benefits for both parties. If third parties are involved on the other hand, this is considered a barrier for the relationship. Because of this, another theoretical implication is also identified; sponsors seem to steer clear of sponsorship partners that utilize sponsorship brokers.

Finally, another interesting aspect of the relationship between the two parties is that the collaboration itself is evaluated. According to existing theory, one should evaluate to see if the sponsorship activity fulfills the sponsorship strategy and objectives. However, the findings from this study indicate that it might be just as interesting to evaluate the relationship between the parties.

**Managerial Implications**

Firstly, the findings from this study indicate that the decision-makers in the sponsorship delegation process should be included in the development of the sponsorship strategy. If they are not included it is difficult to implement the strategy to the point of satisfaction. Furthermore, if they are not included the organization should limit the number of decision-makers.

Secondly, it seems that the distinction between objectives and criteria is unclear. It might be beneficial for the sponsors to have more precise definitions of these concepts. It is difficult to make middle management and/or decision-makers understand these concepts if the management itself is somewhat unclear. The sponsorship objectives should be operationalized through the sponsorship activities. Furthermore, the criteria should arise naturally from the objectives, to make it easier to decide if a sponsorship agreement should be entered into. Thirdly, the HQ should be highly involved when dealing with the sponsorship delegation process. As the findings of this study show that the involvement of HQ decreases the risk of emotional bonds between the two organizations.

Finally, the findings from this study indicate that the sponsor might benefit from associating its sponsorship activity with its CSR activities, if such activities have been implemented.

## Limitations and Further Research

### Limitations

This study is explorative; it set out to distinguish the main features of the process of sponsorship delegation in a Norwegian context. This is measured by looking at Norwegian banks. The unit of analysis is the organization; however it is the individual (the sponsor/ market manager) within the organization that is measured. This is a limitation to the study, especially when collecting data from organizations where several people are involved in the measured process. If more time and funds were available tit would have been desirable to measure the organization instead of the individual.

Another limitation to this study is the fact that the data was collected from one business sector, in one region in Norway. All organizations were banks, and all of them functioned in the southwest of Norway (Bank 4 is the only national bank that is measured in the study). Furthermore, this region is a very wealthy region, due to the oil and gas industry. The findings might have been different had the data had been collected in a different region and/or from a different business sector.

This sequence of the interviews is also considered a limitation to the study. The interviews have been performed based on the size of the organization. In other words, the smallest organization was interviewed first and the largest last. If the largest organization had been interviewed first, the theoretical model would have been confirmed and the study would probably have taken another form. However, by interviewing the smallest organization first, the study gives an accurate view of how organizations of different size relate to their sponsorship agreements.

Finally, it is important for the reader to be aware of the fact that the interviews preformed to collect the data were executed in Norwegian, and later translated to English. Because of this, some data might have been lost in the translation.

## Further Research

It is important to revisit the limitations in order to form suggestions for further research. With this in mind, it is suggested that it would be beneficial to measure the decision-makers in the organizations to see if their perception of the process of sponsorship delegation corresponds to the perception of the sponsorship/marketing manager.

Furthermore, as the collaboration of the sponsor and the sponsorship partner have been emphasized in this study, it would be interesting to test how these partnerships influence the sponsorship delegation process.

Finally, performing a descriptive study with a larger sample, to estimate how professionalized the process of sponsorship delegation is in a Norwegian context is highly recommended.

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## Appendix A

Setting goals:
- Enhance corporate image
- Increase brand awareness
- CSR
- Improving goodwill
- Improving profitability
- Management interest
- Staff recruitment

Setting strategy:

Directly related to other operations/strategies in the company
- Marketing
- CSR
- Communication
- Brand building
- Exposure

Criteria for selection:
- Fit
- Link with other marking efforts
- History of the activity in terms of sponsorship success
- Synergy between sponsorship and actual recipient
- Conflicting interest with other sponsors

Evaluating performance:
- Measuring the effect of the sponsorship
- History of the company's sponsorship efforts

## Appendix B

**Interview Guide**

**Overall question:**
In general, how is your sponsorship process structured?
- Get as much information as possible without asking and probing the respondent

**Participants in the decision:**
1. How many participate in the process?
2. What department of the company do they belong to?
3. What type of education do they have?
4. Do you use external consultants during the sponsorship selection process? (Ex. marketing agencies)

**Setting goals:**
1. Do you have set goals for your sponsorship activities?
2. How are these decided upon?
3. Who are involved in the process?
4. What are your goals and what to you seek to achieve?

Probing:
- Enhance corporate image
- Increase brand awareness
- CSR
- Improving goodwill
- Improving profitability
- Management interest
- Staff recruitment

**Setting strategy:**
1. Do you have an overall sponsorship strategy?
2. If so, how has it emerged?
3. Who has been involved in developing it?
4. Are your sponsorship activities directly related to other operations/strategies in the company?

Probing:
- Marketing
- CSR
- Communication
- Brand building
- Exposure

**Obtaining potential sponsorship activities:**
1. How do you find potential causes for the company to sponsor?

Probing:
- The causes apply
- The company actively seeks out causes they wish to sponsor

- Through employees and/or management
- It is a coincidence how they find one another

**Criteria for selection:**

1. Do you have certain criteria that you selections of sponsorship purposes are based on?
2. If yes, what are these?

Probes:

- There is a fit between the company and sponsored
- Possibility to link with other marketing efforts in the company
- History of the activity in terms of sponsorship success
- Synergy between sponsorship and actual recipient
- Conflicting interest with other sponsors
- Attributes of the sponsored activity:
    - Defined size of the sponsored (size of organization/team/cause etc.)
    - Defined size of the audience of the sponsored activity
    - Defined what geographic level the activity occurs (local, regional national, international)
    - Defined the nature of activity of the sponsored (charity, education, sports, culture etc.)

2. How have the criteria been set?
3. Who is involved in the process of setting criteria?
4. Are these criteria set, known to all people in the decision-making process and always followed?
5. If no, who has the authority to make decisions without following the criteria?

**Evaluating performance:**

1. Do you measure the effect of the sponsorship investment?
2. If so, how? (Quantitative/qualitative measures)
3. Whether they measure or not, what factors do you consider to act as indicators of the success of a sponsorship investment?
4. How do these indicators determine whether you have met your goals?
5. What value do you see in it for the company? Is there any additional value that you initial goals?

**History of the company's sponsorship efforts**

1. How has your sponsorship process been the way you described it today?
2. How has the process developed to the way it is today?
3. Can you point out some noticeable changes that you believe have had an impact on the development of the process?

## Appendix C

**Interview Guide**
**Overall question:**
1. In general, how is your sponsorship process structured?
   - Get as much information as possible without asking and probing the respondent
2. Sponsorship activities are initially of a voluntary nature, but which have become more common over the last decades in Norway. How has this influenced your perception of that these activities are of a voluntary art in your industry?
3. What stakeholder groups do you believe consider sponsorship activities to be a necessity? In what way do you feel that this puts pressure on you to carry out the activities? (Social norms, expectations, values)
   - If sponsorship activities to a larger degree have become a necessity for businesses: Why do you as a company feel that sponsorship activities have become more of a necessity than a voluntary activity?
     - o Competitive advantage
     - o Economical advantage
     - o Marketing/Exposure/Reputation/Recognition
4. When you delegate sponsorships, which stakeholder group do you initially consider?
   - Customers?
   - Employees
   - Recipient
   - The community as a whole
   - Yourselves

     How important do you feel your sponsorship activities are from your:
     1. Customers' point of view?
     2. Employees' point of view?
     3. Partners' point of view?
     4. Investors' point of view?

**Participants in the decision:**
1. How many participate in the process?
2. What department of the company do they belong to?
3. What type of education do they have?
4. Do you use external consultants during the sponsorship selection process? (Ex. marketing agencies)

**Setting goals:**
1. Do you have set goals for your sponsorship activities?
2. How are these decided upon?
3. Who are involved in the process?
4. What are your goals and what to you seek to achieve?

Probing:
   - Enhance corporate image
   - Increase brand awareness
   - CSR
   - Improving goodwill
   - Improving profitability
   - Management interest
   - Staff recruitment

**Setting strategy:**
1. Do you have an overall sponsorship strategy?
2. If so, how has it emerged?
3. Who has been involved in developing it?
4. Are your sponsorship activities directly related to other operations/strategies in the company?
Probing:
- Marketing
- CSR
- Communication
- Brand building
- Exposure

**Obtaining potential sponsorship activities:**
1. How do you find potential causes for the company to sponsor?
Probing:
- Through third-party consultants
- The causes apply
- The company actively seeks out causes they wish to sponsor
- Through employees and/or management
- It is a coincidence how they find one another

**Criteria for selection:**
1. Do you have certain criteria that you selections of sponsorship purposes are based on?
2. If yes, what are these?
Probes:
- There is a fit between the company and sponsored
- Possibility to link with other marketing efforts in the company
- History of the activity in terms of sponsorship success
- Synergy between sponsorship and actual recipient
- Conflicting interest with other sponsors
- Attributes of the sponsored activity:
    - Defined size of the sponsored (size of organization/team/cause etc.)
    - Defined size of the audience of the sponsored activity
    - Defined what geographic level the activity occurs (local, regional national, international)
    - Defined the nature of activity of the sponsored (charity, education, sports, culture etc.)

3. How have the criteria been set?
4. Who is involved in the process of setting criteria?
5. Are these criteria set, known to all people in the decision-making process and always followed?
6. If no, who has the authority to make decisions without following the criteria?

**Evaluating performance:**
1. Do you measure the effect of the sponsorship investment?
2. If so, how? (Quantitative/qualitative measures)
3. If measure: Have you ever been able to measure a direct economic return from your sponsorship activities?
- Follow-up question: Would this be desirable if possible, or are there other factors that would be more desirable for you to measure?
    - Customer satisfaction
    - Employee satisfaction
    - Goodwill
    - Reputation
    - Etc.

4. Whether they measure or not, what factors do you consider to act as indicators of the success of a sponsorship investment?
5. How do these indicators determine whether you have met your goals?
6. What value do you see in it for the company? Is there any additional value than you initial goals?
7. Do you believe that you receive something from your sponsorship activities that you would not receive through other activities, or that would be difficult to obtain? Can you ellabroate on what this is?
8. Have you experienced that your sponsorship activities have resulted in positive effects from interest groups that have not been directly affected by the actual sponsorship activity?
- In terms of your sponsorship activities, how important are other stakeholder groups that your company does not necessarily have direct business encounters with?

**Comparison:**
1. How do you feel that your sponsorship activities distinguish themselves from the activities of the other banks in the industry?
2. Could you mention some companies you believe have a very good sponsorship management, and what factors make them good?
3. Could you mention some companies you believe have a poorer sponsorship management, and what factors make you consider them poorer? (Not necessary for them to name specific companies if they do not want to, but rather provide information about what is considered poor sponsorship management).