

**Building an authentic brand through charity sport event sponsorship**

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## **Griffith Business School**

**Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of**

## **Doctor of Philosophy**

**by**

David Fechner

May 2020

**Building an authentic brand through charity sport event sponsorship**

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## **Abstract**

Organisations are required to develop a unique brand as well as meaningful and emotional relationships with their consumers to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage in a crowded marketplace. An increasing number of organisations sponsor charity sport events to assist in achieving these objectives. Charity sport event (CSE) managers and representatives of the sponsor would benefit from the development of an authentic sponsorship program as consumers may form negative attitudes towards corporate partners who partner with an event for overly commercial reasons.

Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is twofold. First, this research examined how CSE managers and sponsors can create sponsorship programs that promote the sponsor's brand in an authentic manner. Secondly, this research investigated how CSE sponsorship programs facilitate the development of meaningful and emotional relationships between CSE participants and sponsors. Three research questions were advanced. The research questions were addressed through an explanatory sequential mixed method research design consisting of three studies. The MS Moonlight Walk is an annual CSE that supports people living with MS and represents the research context of this thesis.

The research adopted organisational identification theory and service-dominant logic (S-D logic) as theoretical frameworks. According to organisational identification theory, consumers identify and form emotional relationships with brands, which they perceive as meaningful and distinct. Consequently, Study 1 and Study 2 were guided by organisational identification theory.

Study 1 examined how sponsoring a CSE can assist the sponsor to develop meaningful and emotional relationships with event participants. Data were collected from MS Moonlight Walk 2018 participants through pre- and post-event questionnaires. The

results indicated that event participants were unable to answer the questions included in the questionnaire prior to and after the event due to a lack of knowledge of the event sponsor, Harbour ISP. The low level of sponsorship awareness could be attributed to the low event-sponsor fit and event participants' limited exposure to Harbour ISP. The findings of Study 1 suggested that sponsoring the MS Moonlight Walk 2018 did not assist Harbour ISP in developing meaningful and emotional relationships with the event participants.

Study 2 investigated how sponsoring a CSE affects participants' emotional response towards an event sponsor. Building on the suggestions that CSE participants may not be aware of their emotions towards event sponsors, electroencephalography (EEG) data from MS Moonlight Walk 2018 participants were obtained. Findings suggested that MS Moonlight Walk participants had a more neutral than positive emotional response towards Harbour ISP after the event. The results of Study 2 are consistent with the findings of Study 1 and indicate that participants did not develop any association with the brand.

Study 3 examined how event participants, event managers, and representatives from event sponsors perceive the sponsor's contribution to the value creation process of a CSE. S-D logic served as the theoretical framework. S-D logic suggests that an event represents a value creation space where different stakeholders collaborate to create meaningful event experiences. This research conceptualised the collaboration of CSE participants, managers, and sponsors as a value creation process. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with MS Moonlight Walk 2018 participants, the event manager, and representatives from Harbour ISP. Five themes described how the three stakeholder groups perceive the sponsor's contribution to the value creation process of the event: providing operational support, raising CSE awareness, cultivating a fundraising network, engaging authentically, and celebrating constituents. Collectively, the findings across all three studies suggested

that Harbour ISP did not form meaningful and emotional relationships with event participants which might be a result of the way the sponsorship was implemented.

This research contributed to S-D logic by applying this theoretical framework in a participatory CSE. Conceptualising the value creation process of a CSE as the exchange of skills and knowledge between the CSE participants, managers, and sponsors provides a better understanding of how practitioners can create authentic CSE sponsorship programs. Building on the findings of the present research, a number of recommendations for CSE managers and sponsors are made. For example, practitioners are encouraged to share the sponsor's motivations to support the particular CSE in the form of a story to promote the corporate partner in an authentic manner. Also, event sponsors can implement strategies which encourage their employees to volunteer to help deliver the CSE effectively. Future research may replicate the current research in a different CSE context and employ different methods to expand the findings obtained from this research.

## **STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY**

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

---

David Fechner

## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to my grandfather

Opa Rodenkirchen

(18.02.1924 -16.07.2002)



## **Acknowledgments**

Over the last three and a half years I have realised that writing a PhD thesis is quite similar to running a marathon. While my name may be on the first page of this document and I may be the one crossing the finish line of a marathon, I would not have been able to accomplish either of these things without the support of a wonderful team.

Thank you to my supervisors Associate Professor Kevin Filo, Associate Professor Sacha Reid, and Dr Robyn Cameron for being my coaches throughout this journey. Like running 42.195km, pursuing a PhD may seem like an overwhelming task at first. Your ability to break down the PhD into a number of small deliverables helped me to realise that the key to success is consistency and concentration on the task at hand. Thank you for always being there to provide guidance and words of encouragement. Kevin, words cannot describe how grateful I am for everything you have done for me since we first met in 2015. Thank you for shifting my worldview from seeing problems to seeing challenges and opportunities. Sacha, thank you for always keeping the big picture in mind and thinking about my life post PhD. Robyn, thank you for looking at my research with a different pair of eyes and connecting me with industry partners. Thank you all for being such inspirational and encouraging supervisors!

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## **Glossary of Abbreviations**

AWM	Approach-withdrawal model
CSE	Charity sport event
CSR	Corporate social responsibility
EEG	Electroencephalography
IEG	International event group
MM	Mixed method
MS	Multiple sclerosis
OI	Organisational identification
OIT	Organisational identification theory
S-D logic	Service-dominant logic
SIT	Social identity theory

## 1 Introduction

Sponsorship plays an important role in many organisations' marketing strategies (Smith, Pitts, Mack, & Smith, 2016). Global sponsorship spending has grown continuously over the last decade and surpassed \$62 billion in 2017 (International Event Group (IEG), 2018). The increased expenditure on sponsorship is partially based upon its ability to facilitate authentic interactions between event sponsors and consumers (Cornwell, 2019). In particular, the sport sector continues to attract relatively large amounts of expenditure, representing more than 70% of the sponsorship market in North America in 2017 (IEG, 2018).

Traditionally, sport event sponsorship was associated with a partnership between global brands and major spectator sport events such as the Olympic Games or FIFA World Cup (Smith et al., 2016). However, sponsoring small-scale events has become a valuable strategy among small and medium sized businesses over the last few decades (Inoue, Havard, & Irwin, 2016; Lachowetz & Gladden, 2003; Plewa & Quester, 2011; Sung & Lee, 2016). Small-scale sport events include local participatory events which attract more participants than spectators, are often held annually, receive a small amount of media attention and generate less revenue in comparison to mega events (Gibson, Kaplanidou, & Kang, 2012; Wilson, 2006). The appeal of sponsoring local participatory events can be attributed to the increased participation rates in these events (Hamilton, 2013). For example, in the United States, more than 17 million people participated in one of 33,000 running events in 2015, an increase of more than 300% compared to 1990 (Running USA, 2016). As a result, the economic value of participatory sport is suggested to be two to four times greater than that of spectator sport (Humphreys & Ruseski, 2009).

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Charity sport events (CSE) represent a type of small-scale sport event that has experienced continuous growth in recent years (Palmer, 2016). A CSE is defined as a sport event which is aligned with a specific charity wherein a portion of the registration fees are donated to the charity, while event participants have the opportunity to fundraise on behalf of the charitable organisation (Filo, Groza, & Fairley, 2012; Inoue, Heffernan, Yamaguchi, & Filo, 2018). Notably, CSEs promote one specific charity which is a distinguishing characteristic in comparison to charity-affiliated events, such as the London Marathon, which align with multiple charities (Inoue et al., 2018).

The increasing popularity of CSEs is associated with the growing charity industry. For example, the number of Australian registered charities has grown by around 4% and reached approximately 56,000 in 2018 (Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission, 2019). As a result, the competition for government funding has increased (Hassay & Pelozza, 2009; Pelozza & Hassay, 2007; Tabaku, 2014). Charitable organisations deliver CSEs to secure donations from individuals and corporate partners to offset the limited financial support available from the government (Higgins & Hodgins, 2008). For instance, Relay for Life Australia raises more than \$13 million each year to support people living with cancer and fund research (Relay for Life Australia, 2018). Collaborating with corporate partners is a key factor in delivering a successful CSE because it reduces the cost and enhances the credibility of the event (Batty, 2014; Parris, Shapiro, Welty Peachey, Bowers, & Bouchet, 2015). For example, FedEx is a sponsor of the annual golf tournament, the St Jude Classic, which raises money for medical research, and encourages its employees to volunteer during the event (Inoue, Havard, & Irwin, 2016).

CSE sponsorship is defined as a meaningful, mutually beneficial, and publicly communicated partnership between a business and a charity within a sport event context

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(Cornwell & Maignan, 1998; International Chamber of Commerce, 2003; Yuksel, McDonald, & Joo, 2016). Despite the importance of CSE sponsorship, the existing body of sport event sponsorship literature has primarily focused on mega spectator sport events (Eagleman & Krohn, 2012; Smith et al., 2016). Meanwhile, scholars have highlighted research opportunities in the CSE sponsorship field (Smith et al., 2016; Sung & Lee, 2016). In line with these opportunities, the current research investigates sponsorship in the context of the MS (multiple sclerosis) Moonlight Walk 2018, a local participatory CSE in Australia.

As the definition above suggests, CSE sponsorship provides benefits to the corporate partner. For example, businesses sponsor CSEs to develop meaningful and emotional relationships with their consumers (Chaudary & Ali, 2016) as these relationships can provide a sustainable advantage in an increasingly competitive marketplace (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). Consumers are committed to organisations that share similar attributes (Dutton et al., 1994). Businesses sponsor CSEs to demonstrate their corporate social responsibility (CSR), which describes the organisation's commitment to be ethical, sustainable, and their intention to address social and environment issues (Sung & Lee, 2016), as 91% of consumers expect companies to be socially responsible (Cone Communications, 2015).

An example of a CSE sponsorship program is the partnership between the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure, a series of 5km runs across America raising funds for, and awareness of, breast cancer and the sport apparel brand New Balance (Susan G. Komen, n.d.). New Balance has been a sponsor of the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure since 1989 and leverages the partnership through different initiatives (PR Newswire, 2013). For example, New Balance created the Pink Laces Club, which provides its members with exclusive products, guidelines for a healthy lifestyle, and a platform to share their fight

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against breast cancer (PR Newswire, 2013). Furthermore, New Balance produces the Lace up for the Cure Collection<sup>®</sup>, which includes shoes, garments and accessories, and donates 5% of the sales obtained from this collection to the charity (Susan G. Komen, 2018).

The combination of a charity and sport component in a CSE context provides unique opportunities and challenges for the corporate partner (Inoue, Havard, & Irwin, 2016). Event participants might attend a CSE because they want to support the charity and/or for recreational reasons (Filo, Funk, & O'Brien, 2008, 2011; Lee, 2009; Lee, 2013; Wood, Snelgrove, & Danylchuk, 2010). Thus, sponsors need to consider the unique needs of the different participant segments when implementing a sponsorship program to achieve their objectives (Inoue et al., 2016). Sponsors need to communicate how their partnership benefits the charity while also promoting their brand in a meaningful way to event attendees who participate for physical activity-driven reasons (Filo, Funk, & O'Brien, 2010; Smith, Pitts, Wang, & Mack, 2015). Furthermore, while promoting the brand is essential for corporate partners to achieve their marketing objectives (Lacey, Close, & Finney, 2010), promoting a partnership with a charitable organisation can also result in an increased level of scepticism towards the sponsor if consumers believe the business is collaborating with the charity due to self-interest rather than the desire to support the organisation (Elving, 2013). For example, Kentucky Fried Chicken has been criticised for its fundraising campaign for breast cancer research through the sale of fried chicken, especially given that a high fat diet, commonly associated with fried foods, is a risk factor for breast cancer (McVeigh, 2012). The examples of the Kentucky Fried Chicken and New Balance sponsorships of charitable initiatives highlight the importance of identifying the appropriate promotion strategies to interact with event participants (Lacey et al., 2010). Gaining a better understanding of how CSE sponsors can promote their brand in an authentic manner can

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facilitate the development of meaningful and emotional relationships with CSE participants. Building consumer-brand relationships can provide businesses with a sustainable competitive advantage in an increasingly crowded marketplace. CSE managers could use the knowledge of designing effective sponsorship programs to secure and retain corporate partners.

Consequently, the purpose of this explanatory sequential mixed-method research is twofold. First, the current research examines how CSE organisers and sponsors can create sponsorship programs which promote the sponsor's brand in an authentic manner. Secondly, the research investigates how CSE sponsorship programs facilitate the development of meaningful and emotional relationships between CSE participants and sponsors. Specifically, the following three research questions are advanced:

Research question 1: How does sponsoring a CSE assist the sponsor in developing meaningful and emotional relationships with its consumers?

Research question 2: How does sponsoring a CSE affect participants' emotional response towards an event sponsor?

Research question 3: How do event participants, event managers, and representatives from event sponsors perceive the sponsor's contribution to the value creation process of a CSEs?

In order to investigate the research questions, the current research adopts organisational identification theory (OIT) and service-dominant (S-D) logic as theoretical frameworks. OIT stems from social identity theory (SIT) and suggests that consumers identify with organisations to extend their self-concept (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). Consumers' identification with a brand is a valuable construct to gain insights on how brands can develop relationships with their consumers (Elbedweihy, Jayawardhena,

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Elsharnouby, & Elsharnouby, 2016). According to OIT, consumers identify with brands which they perceive as meaningful and distinct (Asforth, Harrison & Corley, 2008; Bhattacharya et al., 1995; Dutton et al., 1994; Hatch & Schultz, 2000; Lichtenstein et al., 2004; Mael & Tetrick, 1992; Riketta, 2005). Consequently, applying OIT as a theoretical framework can help to gain a better understanding of how CSE sponsorship programs can facilitate the creation of a unique brand and relationships.

To explore how corporate partners can utilise CSEs as a platform to promote their brand in an authentic manner, the current research draws on S-D logic. S-D logic suggests that an event represents a “value creation space” where different stakeholders collaborate to create meaningful event experiences (Crowther & Donlan, 2011, p. 1448). S-D logic advances that event participants are actively involved in the value creation process of sponsorship activation initiatives (Bal, Quester, & Plewa, 2009). The present research conceptualises the collaboration of CSE participants, managers, and sponsors as a value creation process. S-D logic further suggests that event participants evaluate the sponsors’ value propositions to determine the personal value obtained from engaging with the organisation (Ballantyne & Varey, 2008; Horbel, Popp, Woratschek, & Wilson, 2016). The current research draws on S-D logic to examine how event participants, event managers, and representatives from event sponsors perceive the sponsor’s contribution to the value creation process of CSEs. Collectively, OIT and S-D logic represent valuable frameworks to investigate the research questions. The next section provides the practical and theoretical justification for this work and highlights the expected methodological contributions of the current research.



## **1.1 Justification of the Research**

This section provides an overview of how the present research can assist practitioners in developing and implementing CSE sponsorship programs. In addition, the expected theoretical and methodological contributions of the current research are outlined.

### **1.1.1 Practical justification.**

The interrogation of the research questions has a number of implications for CSE organisers and sponsors. The findings of the present research can help practitioners to develop sponsorship programs which promote the CSR of the corporate partner in an authentic manner. This is of importance for two reasons. First, organisations are provided with a variety of options to highlight their social responsibility (Aguinis & Glavas, 2013). For example, donating a certain amount of money to a designated charity when consumers purchase the brand's products and/or services has emerged as a widely used marketing initiative (Lafferty, Lueth, & McCafferty, 2016; Varadarajan & Menon, 1988). CSE organisers are required to demonstrate that sponsoring a CSE can help businesses to demonstrate their CSR to recruit and retain corporate partners.

Second, CSE sponsors are presented with a variety of different opportunities to promote their brand in the context of a CSE. However, promoting a partnership with a charitable organisation can also result in an increased level of scepticism (Elving, 2013). The findings of the current research provide practitioners with guidelines on how the corporate partner can be promoted whilst minimising the risk of being perceived as driven by self-interest.

Furthermore, the findings of the current research provide guidance on how CSE sponsors may utilise CSEs as a vehicle to develop meaningful and emotional relationships with consumers. Considering the increasingly complex and competitive business

environment, building relationships with consumers can create a competitive advantage and secure sustainable profitability for organisations (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). The next section describes the theoretical rationale of the present research.

### **1.1.2 Expected theoretical contributions.**

A theoretical framework is a set of variables and their “interrelationships that shows how and/or why a phenomenon occurs” (Corley & Gioia, 2011, p. 12). Building on this definition, a theory consists of three essential elements: variables, a description of the relationships between the variables, and an explanation of why these relationships exist (Whetten, 1989). Whetten (1989) suggested a number of ways how research can contribute to a theory. First, researchers can introduce new variables to an existing theoretical framework and investigate how this variable contributes to, or is affected by, already established variables. Second, the examination of the underlying mechanism which may explain why a certain variable is of importance in a theoretical framework also represents a theoretical contribution. This type of investigation may require an interdisciplinary approach, where the researcher draws on fields such as psychology, sociology, and anthropology (Corley & Gioia, 2011; Whetten, 1989). Third, the adaptation of existing theoretical frameworks to a new research context provides an avenue to advance theory. Importantly, the outcome of applying the theoretical framework in a new context should not simply confirm what was previously known about the theory but should also provide unique findings (Whetten, 1989).

Thus, the expected theoretical contribution of the current research is fourfold. First, the current research investigates a sponsorship program in the context of a small-scale event. Small-scale events include minor events, which may attract more participants than spectators, are often held annually, receive a small amount of media attention, and generate

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less revenue in comparison with mega events (Gibson et al., 2012; Wilson, 2006).

Furthermore, while mega events such as the Olympic Games or the FIFA World Cup are often sponsored by global brands including Coca-Cola and McDonalds (Nufer & Bühler, 2010) and attract a large number of international tourists, small-scale events are characterised by local participants, spectators, and sponsors (Smith, Pitts, Mack, & Smith, 2016; Taks, 2013). The local nature of small-scale events can facilitate the development of relationships among different local stakeholder groups such as participants, organisers, volunteers, and sponsors (O'Brien, 2007; Taks, 2013; Taks, Chalip, & Green, 2015) and result in a sense of pride among the community (Veltri, Miller, & Harris, 2009). Also, while hosting the Olympic Games often requires the development of new sporting facilities that are used only for the duration of the event (Hiller, 2006), small-scale events can utilise existing facilities which have a purpose after the event (Higham, 1999).

Overall, small-scale events may provide relatively more positive and sustainable economic, social, and environmental outcomes than mega sport events (Higham, 1999; Taks et al., 2015). However, hosting small-scale events is also associated with unique challenges. For example, event managers may have limited financial and human resources (Pereira, Mascarenhas, Flores, Chalip, & Pires, 2019) because these events are organised by small teams often consisting of volunteers and are sponsored by small and medium sized businesses (Smith et al., 2016). Despite the importance of small-scale events for the local community and its dependency on corporate partners, the existing body of sport event sponsorship literature has primarily focused on mega spectator sport events (Eagleman & Krohn, 2012; Smith et al., 2016). The current research is conducted around the MS Moonlight Walk 2018, an event classified as a small-scale CSE. The MS Moonlight Walk 2018 was organised by MS Queensland, a charitable organisation raising money to support

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people living with MS by providing services such as therapy sessions or phone advice, as well as funding research projects to find a cure for MS (MS Queensland, n.d.). The annual event is held in Brisbane with participants choosing between a 5km and 10km distance (MS Moonlight Walk, n.d.). Approximately 4,000 walkers attend the event each year and all event participants are encouraged to fundraise (MS Queensland, n.d.).

Second, previous research has built on the importance of brand image within a sponsorship context and investigated the impact of CSE sponsorship programs on the sponsor's image (e.g. Filo et al., 2010; Irwin, Lachowetz, Cornwell, & Clark, 2003; Kim & Boo, 2011; Sneath, Finney, & Close, 2005; Sung & Lee, 2016). These studies examined brand image from a broad perspective by using quantitative survey items such as "How favourably does sponsorship of this event cause you to view [the sponsor]?" (Filo et al., 2010, p. 643) or "I have always had a good image of [the sponsor]" (Sung & Lee, 2016, p.65). This form of investigation helps the sponsor to understand whether the sponsorship program has affected the brand image, however it does not provide information on the underlying processes which lead to a change in the brand image (Walliser, 2003).

Researchers have also investigated the CSE sponsors' brand image by investigating event participants' perception of the sponsor's CSR (Close & Lacey, 2013; Lacey et al., 2010).

Lacey et al. (2010) investigated how the perceived sponsor-event fit mediates the contribution of CSR brand associations on the commitment towards the sponsor. While both studies contribute to a better understanding of the importance of CSR brand associations, a research opportunity exists to study how CSE sponsorship can help build a unique brand which facilitates the relationship development process between event participants and sponsors.

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Consequently, the present research adopts OIT as it provides a theoretical framework to examine how CSE sponsorship contributes to event participants' perceived CSR and the distinctiveness of the event sponsor, and consequently, to their level of identification and commitment towards the organisation. A better understanding of how CSE sponsorship affects event participants perceived CSR and organisational identification could help practitioners to evaluate their sponsorship programs more effectively in terms of their ability to facilitate the development of meaningful relationships with event participants.

Third, while previous studies have studied spectator team sport events (e.g. FIFA World Cup 2014; Australian A League, Premier League, German Bundesliga) through the lens of S-D logic (Horbel et al., 2016; McDonald & Karg, 2014; Jalonen, 2015; Stieler & Germelmann 2018), the current research applies this theoretical framework to a participatory event, a CSE. This is of importance as the context is highlighted as a critical factor in examining the value creation process of sport events (Horbel et al., 2016; Woratschek, Horbel, & Popp, 2014). Furthermore, investigating a CSE is of importance due to the increasing number of CSEs being hosted around the world.

Fourth, previous research has primarily focused on the role of participants as co-creators in sport events (Horbel et al., 2016; McDonald & Karg, 2014). In addition to introducing S-D logic to the CSE context, the current research adds to the S-D perspective by focusing on the contribution of the sponsor to the value creation process of sport events. Sponsors can only offer value propositions which are evaluated by event participants to determine how engaging with the sponsor contributes to their event experience (Ballantyne & Varey, 2008; Horbel et al., 2016). An opportunity exists to investigate sponsorship programs from the event participants' point of view to get a better understanding of how the

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sponsor can interact with attendees throughout the event (Gillooly, Crowther, & Medway, 2017). The current research examines how event participants, event managers, and representatives from event sponsors perceive the sponsor's contribution to the value creation process of CSEs and contributes to a more holistic understanding of S-D logic in the sport event domain. The next section outlines the expected methodological contribution of the current research.

### **1.1.3 Expected methodological contribution.**

OIT suggests that consumers who identify with brands have positive emotions towards the organisation (Benkhoff, 1997; Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Ellemers, Kortekaas, & Ouwerkerk, 1999; Pérez & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2015; Riketta, 2005). Scholars have investigated consumers' emotions towards organisations through traditional methods such as interviews and surveys (Thomson, MacInnis, & Whan Park, 2005). However, these methods may have limitations in providing insights of the experienced emotions because participants may not be aware of them and/or report biased answers due to a variety of reasons including social pressure and personal values (Cunningham, Raye, & Johnson, 2004; Hsu, 2017; Morin, 2011). To overcome some of the limitations of traditional methods, scholars have adapted methods from neuroscience to the consumer behaviour discipline to investigate a consumer's response on an unconscious level and by not requiring the participant to articulate their response. For example, scholars have used electroencephalography (EEG) devices, which measure electrical brain activity through electrodes that are attached to the head of the participant, to investigate the response of consumers towards marketing initiatives (Ariely & Berns, 2010; Mileti, Guido, & Prete, 2016). The current research follows Rumpf and Breuer's (2016) suggestion and gathers EEG data in order to gain a better understanding of the CSE participants' emotional

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response towards the event sponsor. Consequently, the findings of the present research can assist practitioners in evaluating the sponsorship's ability to facilitate the development of emotional relationships with CSE participants.

Additionally, the majority of previous studies have collected cross-sectional data after the event to determine the effectiveness of CSE sponsorship programs (e.g. Close & Lacey, 2013; Cornwell & Coote, 2005; Irwin et al., 2003; Parris et al., 2015). However, scholars have indicated limitations of academic studies that draw conclusions based on a single data collection point (Batty, Cuskelly, & Toohey, 2016; Filo et al., 2011). For example, Sneath et al. (2005) mentioned the challenge for sport management academics to ensure that the measured effects are a result of the sponsorship program and not influenced by other factors. Researchers have suggested collecting pre- and post-event data to gain a better understanding of the effectiveness of sponsorship programs (Close & Lacey, 2014; Sneath et al., 2005). The present research follows this suggestion and collects data prior to and after the MS Moonlight Walk 2018. The next section details the design and method of the present research.

### **1.2 Research Design and Method**

The present research is underpinned by a pragmatic paradigm and employs an explanatory sequential mixed method (MM) research design to address the research questions. The current research consists of three studies as conducting multiple studies achieves two key objectives. First, it allows for the collection of different data types through a variety of methods (e.g. online questionnaires, EEG, and semi-structured interviews). Second, the sequential design allows for the collection of data in the second phase, which helps to explain the results of the data obtained during the first phase of this research (Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2016).

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The objective of Study 1 is to investigate how sponsoring a CSE assists the sponsor to develop meaningful and emotional relationships with its consumers. To investigate research question 1, quantitative data are collected from event participants, through online questionnaires, prior to and after the MS Moonlight Walk 2018. Study 2 examines research question 2 which focusses on the emotional response CSE participants have towards an event sponsor. Again, the EEG data are obtained from MS Moonlight Walk 2018 event participants.

Study 3 of the present research explores the sponsor's contribution to the value creation process of CSEs as a means to explain the findings from Study 1 and Study 2. Semi-structured interviews are conducted with MS Moonlight Walk 2018 participants, the event manager, and representatives from Harbour ISP. Figure 1 provides an overview of the inter-relationships of the three studies and summarises the data type, the sample of each study, along with information in relation to which research question and hypotheses were to be addressed by each study. The next section outlines the context of the current research.



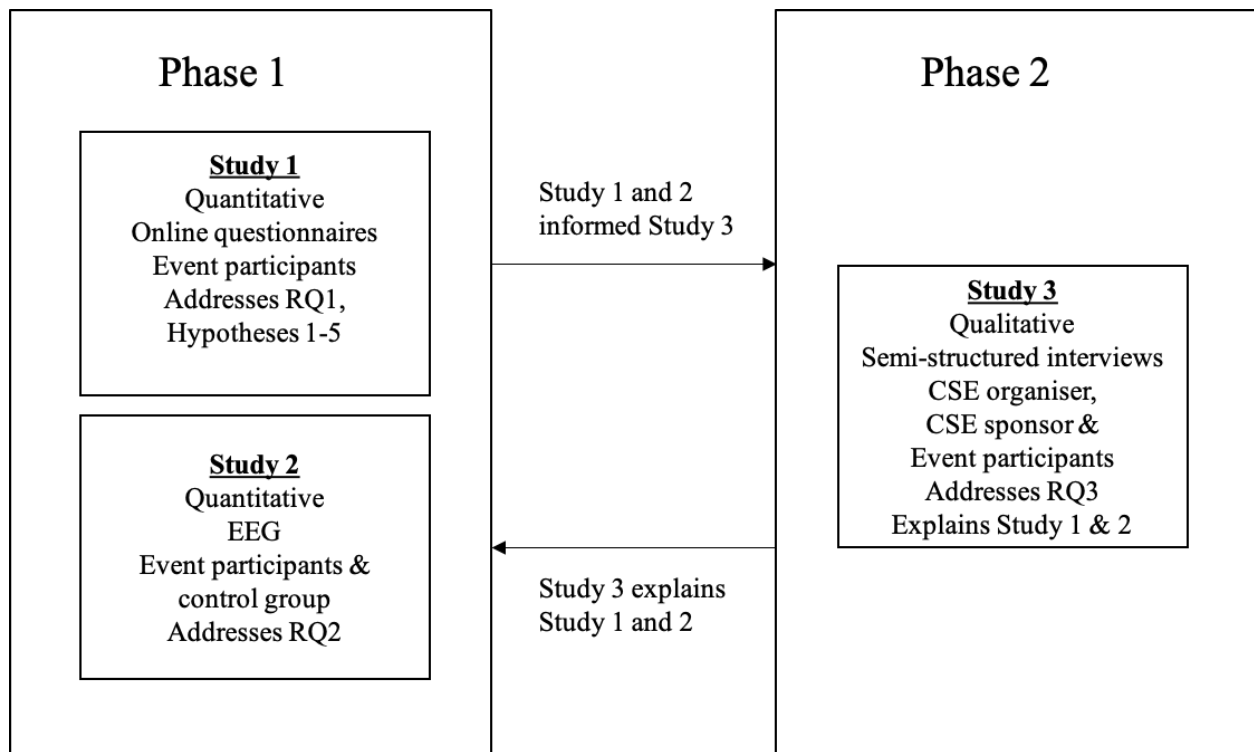


Figure 1. Overview of explanatory sequential mixed method research design.

### 1.3 Research Context

This section provides an overview of how CSEs are positioned within the sport event context and describes different sport event types. Sport events can be categorised based on the involvement of a charity in the event. Sport events without a charity can be divided into spectator and participatory sport events. In a participatory sport event, the event attendee is actively involved in the physical activity (GC50, 2017). In contrast, the attendee has a passive role and watches athletes compete in a spectator sport event setting (Australian Open, n.d.). Buning and Walker (2016) divide participatory sport events without a charity component into traditional and non-traditional events. The authors refer to traditional events as competitive road races whereas non-traditional events include more fun and camaraderie-oriented races (Buning & Walker, 2016). Participatory sport events without a charity component do not offer charities the opportunity to be directly involved in the event.

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As shown in Figure 2, sport events with a charity component are further divided based on the level of involvement of the charity. Participatory sport events with a charity component have similar characteristics to the participatory sport events without a charity component, but charities are directly involved in different ways. For example, the Stillbirth Foundation Australia (2017) purchased specific tickets for RunMelbourne 2017, allowing the holder to receive certain benefits such as starting immediately after the elite athletes. The charity offered these tickets to participants who committed to raise a certain amount funds for the charity. Spectator sport events with a charity component have similar characteristics to spectator sport events without a charity component. However, a designated charity receives monetary as well as non-monetary support from the event. The FedEx St. Jude Classic, a golf tournament associated with the St Jude Children's Research Hospital, is an example of this type of event because a portion of the ticket sales are donated to the St Jude Children's Hospital (FedEx St Jude Classic, 2020).

As described above, a participatory CSE describes a sport event which is aligned with a specific charity, wherein a portion of the registration fees are donated to the charity, while event participants have the opportunity to fundraise on behalf of the charitable organisation (Filo et al., 2012; Inoue et al., 2018). Notably, CSEs promote one specific charity, which is a distinguishing factor in comparison to charity-affiliated events, which align with multiple charities (Inoue et al., 2018) such as RunMelbourne. As mentioned earlier, the present research is conducted around the MS Moonlight Walk 2018, an event classified as a CSE. The MS Moonlight Walk 2018 was organised by MS Queensland, a charitable organisation raising money to support people living with MS by providing services such as therapy sessions or phone advice, as well as funding research projects to find a cure for MS (MS Queensland, n.d.). The MS Moonlight Walk was established in

1998 and plays a vital role in MS Queensland's fundraising strategy. The annual event is held in Brisbane with participants choosing between a 5km and 10km distance (MS Moonlight Walk, n.d.). Approximately 4,000 walkers attend the event each year and all event participants are encouraged to fundraise (MS Moonlight Walk, n.d.). The majority of MS Moonlight Walk participants attend the event due to their connection to MS (D. McCullagh, personal communication, November 11, 2018). In 2018, MS Moonlight Walk entered a sponsorship agreement with Harbour ISP (internet service provider). Considering the charitable nature and scale of this event along with the existing sponsorship, this event was deemed as appropriate for the purpose of this study. The next section presents the delimitations of the current research.

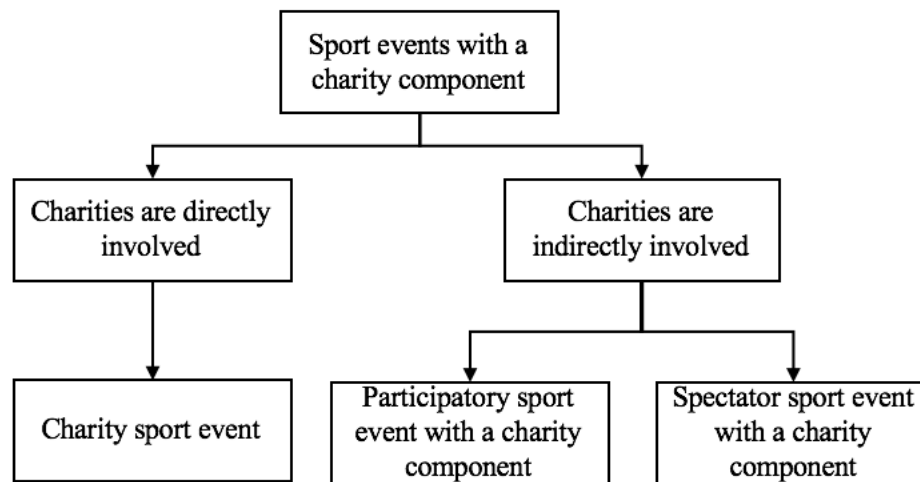


Figure 2. Sport events with a charity component categorisation.

#### 1.4 Delimitations

The present research has the following delimitations to narrow the scope (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The current research draws on OIT to introduce antecedents of OI in the CSE sponsorship domain. MS Queensland provided the researcher with guidelines regarding the post-event online questionnaire. The researcher and MS Queensland agreed on integrating the questions relevant to the present research into the already existing

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questionnaire which is distributed by MS Queensland to all event participants after the event. The rationale for this decision was to decrease the number of emails sent to MS Moonlight Walk participants and avoid potential confusion caused by distributing two separate questionnaires. The existing questionnaire covers a number of topics including event participants' fundraising experience, relationship to MS, trust in MS Queensland and takes approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. MS Queensland asked the researcher to keep the time required to answer the additional questions to a minimum (e.g. five minutes) to avoid respondent fatigue. As a result, the present research is limited to one antecedent and one outcome of OI. This study focusses on organisational distinctiveness as an antecedent of OI because brands sponsor CSEs to develop a unique brand. However, previous studies have indicated that other variables might also be relevant when investigating OI, including the prestige of the organisation (e.g. Cornwell & Coote, 2005; Mael & Ashforth 1992). Therefore, the findings of the present research may not fully explain how CSE sponsorship contributes to the development of event participant's level of identification with the corporate partner.

Furthermore, the current research focuses on the event participants' commitment to the sponsor as a consequence of their level of identification with the brand. The rationale behind focusing on commitment is the importance of loyal consumers in an increasingly competitive environment (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). However, previous studies have revealed a variety of outcomes in relation to OI, including resilience towards negative information about the brand (Elbedweihy et al., 2016) and intention to purchase the brand's products and services (Wu & Tsai, 2008). Therefore, it is acknowledged that the current research may not fully capture all benefits a business can derive from sponsoring a CSE.

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In addition, the thesis investigates CSE sponsorship from an external perspective by focusing on event participants who represent consumers to the sponsor. Therefore, the present research does not examine the sponsor's employees who might also be affected by the sponsorship (e.g. Inoue et al., 2016; Khan, Stanton, & Rahman, 2013; Rosenberg, 1995; Walraven et al., 2012). The focus on the sponsor's external target market was chosen due to Harbour ISP being a small sized business, with a relatively low number of employees being involved in the event (i.e., in total five team members participated in the event).

### **1.5 Outline of the Thesis**

Chapter 1 introduced sponsoring a CSE as a valuable marketing tool for organisations to derive benefits among its consumers. Drawing on the identified research opportunities, the purpose of the present research is to gain a better understanding of how CSE organisers and sponsors may create sponsorship programs which promote the sponsor's brand in an authentic manner and facilitate the development of meaningful and emotional relationships between CSE participants and sponsors. An explanatory sequential mixed method design, consisting of online questionnaires, EEG experiments, and semi-structured interviews, aims to examine the research questions advanced. The MS Moonlight Walk 2018 is the context of this thesis as this event provides participants the opportunity to take part in a sport event which is organised by a charity and sponsored by an organisation. The delimitations of this thesis derive from the investigated antecedents and potential outcomes of OI.

The remainder of this thesis is structured as follows. Chapter 2 provides a review of literature which informs the development of the research questions. The literature review commences with a discussion around the definition of CSE sponsorship. This is followed by a review of SIT and OIT, along with advancement of research question one and

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hypotheses one to five. Next, an introduction to consumer neuroscience is provided, highlighting the importance of collecting physiological data as a complementary data source to self-reported data to gain a better understanding of consumers' emotional responses towards marketing stimuli such as sponsorship programs. Building on this introduction, the approach withdrawal model is then introduced as a valuable framework to collect and analyse EEG data, and advances research question two. The next section introduces S-D logic and describes the value creation process of CSE sponsorship programs to provide an overview of the literature informing the advancement of research question three. The literature review chapter concludes with a summary of the chapter's key contributions.

Chapter 3 provides an overview of the methodology employed to investigate the thesis research questions. The methods chapter introduces pragmatism as the underlying paradigm of the work and provides information regarding the explanatory, sequential, mixed method design of this study. Furthermore, the rationale of selecting the MS Moonlight Walk 2018 as the research context is provided along with the ethical considerations associated with the present research. Next, the chapter provides an overview of the participants of each study along with a discussion of how the data were collected and analysed.

Chapter 4 presents the results of the research. First, the results from the pre- and post-event questionnaires that was administered to MS Moonlight Walk participants within study 1 are presented. Next, the alpha asymmetry index from study 2 is presented. Building on the sequential explanatory nature of the current research, qualitative findings from Study 3 help to explain the quantitative results derived from Study 1 and Study 2.

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Chapter 5 discusses the findings of the present research. First, the main findings of the present research are discussed and how they relate to the literature review in Chapter 2. Next, the theoretical implications of the current research are outlined along with managerial implications. The final section acknowledges limitations and suggests opportunities for future research based on the findings and limitations of this work.

### **1.6 Chapter Summary**

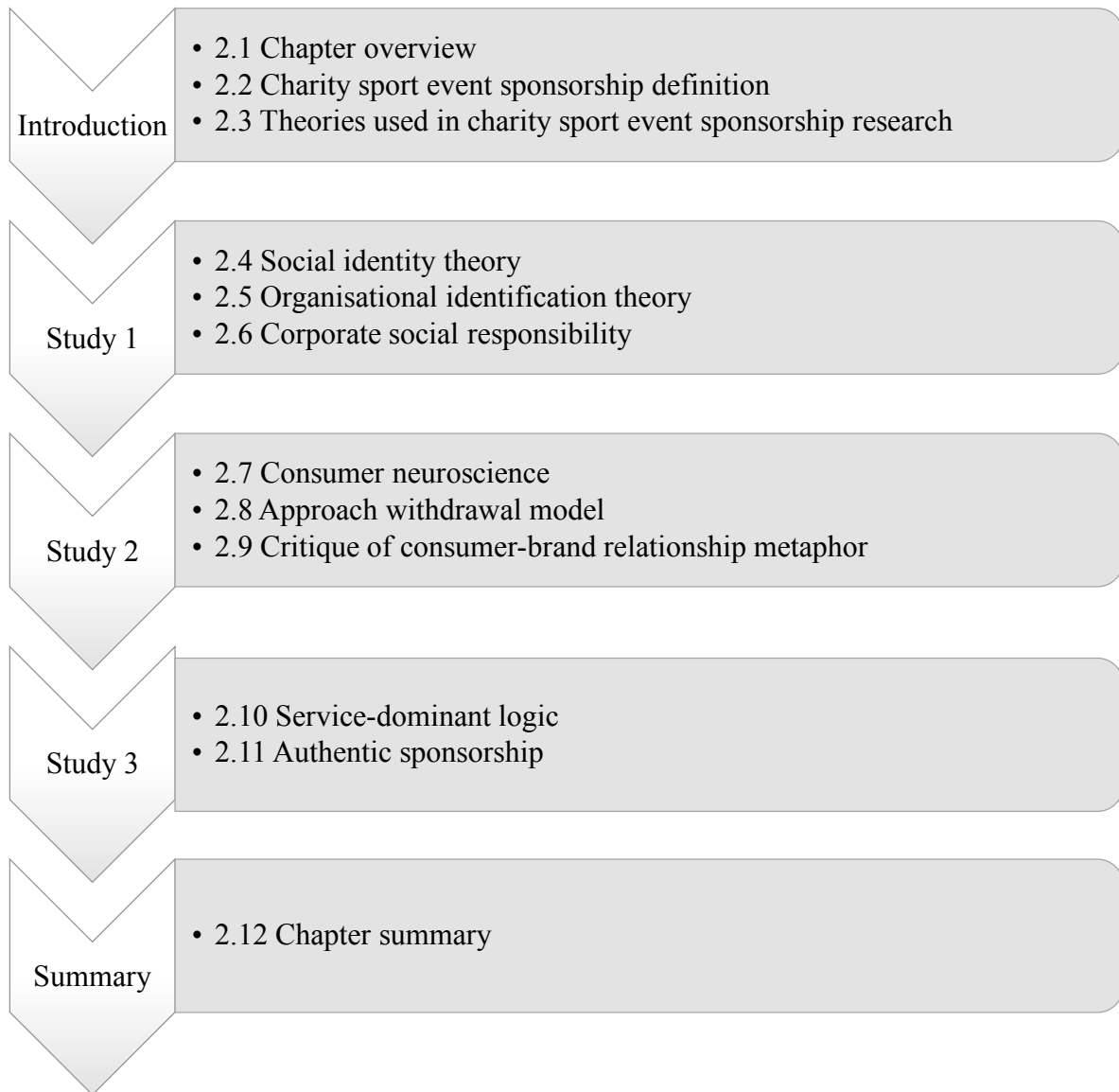
Organisations are required to distinguish themselves from their competitors and create customer loyalty to secure a sustainable competitive advantage in an increasingly crowded marketplace. The current research examines how sponsoring a CSE can assist businesses to achieve these objectives. The present research is guided by OIT and S-D logic as these theoretical frameworks provide appropriate lenses to investigate how sponsors can promote their brand authentically to develop meaningful and emotional relationships with an event sponsor. The current research has numerous practical and theoretical implications. For example, the findings of the present research may help practitioners to develop sponsorship programs which promote the sponsor's brand in an authentic manner whilst minimising the risk of being perceived as driven by self-interest. CSE organisers can use the findings of the current research to negotiate their partnership agreement with current and potential sponsors. Furthermore, the current research introduces S-D logic to the CSE sponsorship field to gain a better understanding of its value creation process.

## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Chapter Overview

As stated in Chapter 1 businesses need to develop an authentic brand and build emotional relationships with their consumers to create a sustainable competitive advantage. This chapter summarises the literature relevant to the development of a brand image and consumer-brand relationships. Figure 3 outlines the structure of this chapter. As shown in Figure 3, the first section advances a definition of CSE sponsorship and outlines how CSE sponsorship is different to traditional sport event sponsorship programs. The following section provides an overview of the theories which researchers have used in the CSE sponsorship field. Building on the purpose of the present research, the next section introduces SIT as it provides the necessary theoretical information on how OIT was developed. This is followed by a review of OIT, which functions as the guiding theoretical framework for Study 1 and Study 2. In this context, CSR is introduced as an important brand attribute that can facilitate the identification process between consumers and brands. This is followed by a section describing the rationale of consumer neuroscience and introduces the approach-withdrawal model (AWM) in order to provide a theoretical foundation for the collection and analysis of EEG data to examine research question 2. The next section introduces S-D logic as a guiding framework to investigate research question 3 and conceptualises authentic sponsorship programs. The chapter concludes with a summary of the literature's key contributions to this work.





*Figure 3.* Literature review structure.

## **2.2 Charity Sport Event Sponsorship Definition**

Participating in a CSE represents a meaningful and emotional experience for attendees because CSE participants may have a direct or indirect personal connection with the cause associated with the event (Cornwell & Coote, 2005; Filo, Funk, & O'Brien, 2014; Filo et al., 2008, 2010; Higgins & Lauzon, 2003; Inoue & Havard, 2014; Parris & Peachey, 2013; Scott & Solomon, 2003). For example, Cornwell and Coote's (2005) findings indicated that one third of the participants in a CSE raising money for breast cancer

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research had survived breast cancer. In addition, 18% of participants reported that a close relative was diagnosed with breast cancer. CSE organisers create opportunities for participants to share their personal experience with other attendees and to celebrate those affected, creating an emotional environment (Higgins & Lauzon, 2003; Parris & Peachey, 2013). For instance, at the start line of the Mother's Day Classic 2015, which was a CSE raising money for breast cancer, the master of ceremonies asked participants who had survived breast cancer to raise their hands to be recognised (Palmer, 2016).

Sponsoring a CSE provides corporate partners with the opportunity to associate themselves with an emotional event experience (Cornwell & Smith, 2001). This association may facilitate the development of emotional relationships between CSE sponsors and participants (Lacey, Sneath, Finney, & Close, 2007). As noted in Chapter 1, for the purpose of the present research CSE sponsorship is defined as a meaningful, mutually beneficial, and publicly communicated partnership between a business and a charity within a sport event context (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009; Cornwell & Maignan, 1998; International Chamber of Commerce, 2003; Yuksel et al., 2016).

This definition highlights the importance of conceptualising CSE sponsorship as a mutually beneficial partnership which can be described as an equal relationship between the sponsor and the charity on a voluntary and strategic basis (Babiak, 2003). Furthermore, the definition highlights sponsorship's ability to provide benefits for the corporate partner (Walraven, Koning, & van Bottenburg, 2012). Also, the definition acknowledges that the CSE sponsorship program needs to be promoted publicly and perceived as meaningful by event participants to achieve its objectives (Cornwell, 1995; Cornwell & Maignan, 1998).

Sponsoring CSEs is distinct from traditional sport event sponsorship programs because it consists of a cause as well as a sport component (Cornwell, Weeks, & Roy,

2005). The combination of a charity and physical component has a variety of implications for sponsorship programs. For example, event participants might attend an event because they want to support the charity and/or for recreational reasons (Filo et al., 2008, 2011; Lee, 2009; Wood et al., 2010). Considering that CSEs attract participants with different motivations, sponsors have the opportunity to engage with a more diverse target market than sport events that are not aligned with a charity. However, sponsors also need to consider the unique needs of the different participant segments when implementing a sponsorship program to achieve their objectives (Inoue et al., 2016). Sponsors need to communicate how their partnership benefits the charity, while also promoting its brand in a meaningful way to event attendees who participate for physical activity-driven reasons (Filo, Funk, & O'Brien, 2010; Smith et al., 2015). For example, New Balance as a sponsor of the Susan G Komen Race for a Cure offers consumers the opportunity to join the Pink Laces Club, which provides its members information about how to live an active and healthy lifestyle as well as celebrating breast cancer survivors (PR Newswire, 2013). The Pink Laces Club enables New Balance to engage with event attendees who participate in the event because they want to support people living with breast cancer and/or want to live a healthy lifestyle. The following section provides an overview of the theories which researchers have used in the CSE sponsorship field.

### **2.3 Theories used in Charity Sport Event Sponsorship Research**

Researchers have adopted a variety of different theoretical frameworks to examine CSE sponsorship empirically and these are presented in Table 1. As shown in Table 1, the most frequently used theories in CSE sponsorship research are balance theory (Heider, 1958) and congruity theory (Osgood & Tannenbaum, 1955), which is an extension of balance theory. These two theories suggest that consumers value cognitive consistency

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

among their thoughts and evaluate the CSE sponsorship based on the perceived fit between the CSE and its corporate partner (Dean, 2002). For example, Dean (2002) adopted balance theory and identified that consumers form positive attitudes towards the sponsor if they perceive the partnership as a good fit because they believe the sponsor supports the CSE due to altruistic reasons. However, consumers develop negative attitudes towards the sponsors if they believe that the CSE and the corporate partner do not fit because they suspect the sponsor to be involved in the event due to commercial reasons. In a similar context, Close and Lacey (2013) found that event participants are more likely to support a CSE sponsor financially if they perceive the CSE and its corporate partner as a good fit.

Collectively, studies employing balance and congruity theory (Close & Lacey, 2013; Dean, 2002; Kim & Boo, 2011; Lacey & Close, 2013; Simmons & Becker-Olsen, 2006) can help practitioners to select an appropriate partner. As the current research does not examine the perceived fit between the MS Moonlight Walk and Harbour ISP these theories were not applied.

Researchers in the CSE sponsorship field have examined how sponsors can build relationships with event participants (Close & Lacey, 2014; Lacey et al., 2010; Lacey et al., 2007; Smith et al., 2016; Sneath et al., 2005). Previous studies revealed that sponsors are required to activate their partnership with a CSE because it can facilitate the development of relationships with event participants (Close & Lacey, 2014; Lacey et al., 2010; Lacey et al., 2007; Smith et al., 2016; Sneath et al., 2005). Sponsorship activation refers to “communications that promote the engagement, involvement, or participation of the sponsorship audience with the sponsor” (Weeks, Cornwell, & Drennan, 2008, p. 639). For example, Close and Lacey (2014) applied affective forecasting theory to examine the role of an event exhibition hosted by the sponsor in creating a successful CSE sponsorship

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program. Affective forecasting theory suggests that consumers anticipate the value obtained from engaging with a CSE sponsor before making the decision to interact with the brand (Close & Lacey, 2014). Findings suggested that event attendees' who intended to visit the exhibition had a similar attitude towards the sponsor and intention to purchase the brand's products in comparison with attendees who actually visited the exhibition.

Table 1

*List of theories applied in CSE sponsorship research*

Author (s) (Year)	Theory
Close and Lacey (2014)	Affective forecasting theory
Chaudary and Muhammad (2016)	Attribution theory
Dean (2002)	Attribution theory, balance theory
Inoue and Havard (2014)	Balance theory, social exchange theory
Close and Lacey (2013)	Congruity theory
Lacey and Close (2013)	Congruity theory
Kim and Boo (2011)	Fit theory
Simmons and Becker-Olsen (2006)	Fit theory
Parris et al. (2015)	Identity theory, social capital theory
Cornwell and Smith (2001)	Image transfer model
Scheinbaum and Lacey (2015)	Image transfer model
Cornwell and Coote (2005)	Organisational identification theory
Filo et al. (2010)	Psychological continuum model
Lacey et al. (2007)	Relationship marketing theory
Inoue et al. (2016)	Social exchange theory
Batty et al. (2016)	Stakeholder theory

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

In summary, the existing body of CSE sponsorship literature is partially characterised by limited theoretical engagement which is consistent with the wider sport and event management field (Cornwell & Maignan, 1998; Filo et al., 2015; Kim & Cuskelly, 2017; Walliser, 2003). For example, Cornwell and Maignan (1998) identified a low level of theory engagement in their sport event sponsorship review and suggested that this might be a result of academics' perception that sponsorship is not a relevant marketing tool. However, since Cornwell and Maignan's (1998) review, sponsorship has evolved as a key area in academic marketing research (Slåtten, Svensson, Connolley, & Bexrud, 2017), which reinforces the importance of applying theories in CSE sponsorship research. The following discussion provides an overview of theories that have been used outside the CSE sponsorship field to gain a better understanding of how brands can develop meaningful relationships with consumers.

Consumer behaviour researchers utilise different theoretical lenses to gain a better understanding of how consumers develop relationships with brands. For example, attachment theory has been used in previous studies to gain a better understanding of the bond between brands and consumers (e.g. Park, MacInnis, Priester, Eisingerich, & Iacobucci, 2010; Thomson et al., 2005). Attachment theory can be traced back to the work of Bowlby (1974) who studied the relationship between infants and their caregivers. Building on attachment theory, brand attachment refers to the emotional bond connecting consumers with brands (Park et al., 2010, Thomson et al., 2005). Park et al. (2010) suggested that relationships with brands provide consumers the opportunity to extend their self-concept by integrating the brand into their own self-concept. The development of a relationship between consumers and brands requires time and shared direct or indirect meaningful experiences (Lambert-Pandraud & Laurent, 2010; Mugge, Schifferstein, &

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

Schoormans, 2005; Thomson et al., 2005). Considering that Harbour ISP sponsored the MS Moonlight Walk for the first time in 2018 and a longitudinal study over multiple years was not conducted, the current research could not be able to account for attachment developing over time. Consequently, attachment theory was deemed inappropriate as a foundation for this work.

A second theory that has been used to study relationships between consumers and brands across different industries is OIT. For example, research has demonstrated that consumers who identify with a brand are committed towards the organisation in the fast-moving consumer goods, automotive, mobile phone (Tuškej & Podnar, 2018), hotels (Rather, Tehseen, & Parrey, 2018), and university sectors (El-Kassar, Makki, & Gonzalez-Perez, 2019). Consequently, organisational identification (OI) has been suggested to play an important role in the relationship building process between consumers and brands. While OIT and attachment theory share similarities regarding the underlying motivations of consumers to develop relationships with brands (e.g. brands represent a source of identification), the identification process may require less time than the attachment process (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). For example, Cornwell and Coote's (2005) findings revealed that the number of years CSE participants attended the event did not significantly contribute to their level of identification with the charity associated with the event. Furthermore, organisational identification has been identified as an antecedent of brand attachment (Stokburger-Sauer, Ratneshwar, & Sen, 2012) and consequently examining how consumers form identification with brands can contribute to a more holistic understanding of the relationship development process. The current research therefore adopts OIT as a theoretical framework in order to gain a better understanding of how sponsoring a CSE can facilitate the development of meaningful and emotional relationships between CSE

participants and sponsors. OIT can be categorised as a form of social identity. The next section provides an overview of SIT before introducing OIT in greater detail.

## **2.4 Social Identity Theory**

Social identity theory can be traced back to the work of Tajfel and Turner in the 1970s and emerged as a theory of intergroup behaviour (Madrigal, 2001; Turner & Giles, 1981). SIT suggests that an individual's self-concept derives from their personal and social identity (Turner & Onorato, 1999). Personal identity describes specific individual characteristics such as the talents or abilities of the individual, which are derived through personal experiences, and differentiate the person from others on an individual level (Madrigal, 2001; Tajfel, 1974; Turner & Onorato, 1999). Social identity describes those aspects of the individual's self-concept that are a result of the meaningful identification with a group, that represents similar values, beliefs, and attributes as the individual's identity (Tajfel, 1982). In the context of this study, CSE participants are described as altruistic (Filo et al., 2008) and may identify with groups that represent values associated with altruism.

Following SIT, individuals seek involvement with groups with the overall objective to maintain or enhance their self-esteem (Crocker & Luhtanen, 1990; Tajfel, 1974; Turner & Giles, 1981). The decision of whether belonging to a particular social group has a positive or negative impact on the individual's self-esteem is evaluated by social comparison (Tajfel, 1974). Positive self-esteem is achieved if an individual's group is perceived as superior compared with the outgroup and the comparison is based on group characteristics which are meaningful to the individual (Oakes & Turner, 1980). If a comparison leads to positive self-esteem, the group member is likely to feel a strong connection to the group and will aim to remain in the group (Ellemers, Wilke, & van



Knippenberg, 1993; Tajfel, 1974). Conversely, if the own group is perceived as inferior and the comparison with the outgroup results in negative self-esteem, Tajfel (1974) suggested that the person is likely to leave the group and seek an involvement with a social group, that is perceived as superior compared to the current group. This behaviour can be observed when the inferiority of the own group is perceived as legitimate and is more common among group members with a low level of group identification and a low status because they tend to focus on their personal identity (Doosje, Ellemers, & Spears, 1995; Ellemers, van Rijswijk, Roefs, & Simons, 1997; Ellemers et al., 1993; Koomen, Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999; Seta & Seta, 1996).

CSE participants with a high level of identification with the event sponsor might be more committed to the organisation in comparison with CSE participants with a low level of identification. Ashforth and Mael (1989) adopted SIT to examine how individuals develop identification with an organisation and developed OIT which is described in the following section.

## **2.5 Organisational Identification Theory**

Organisational identification is a form of social identity and can be defined as “the degree to which a member defines him-or herself by the same attributes that he or she believes define the organisation” (Dutton et al., 1994, p. 239). OI was initially associated with the relationship between employees and their employer (e.g. Mael & Asforth, 1995; DiSanza & Bullis, 1999; Hogg & Terry, 2000). For example, scholars have investigated sport event sponsorship programs through the lens of OIT to examine its ability to function as a relationship building tool among the organisation’s employees (e.g. Grimes & Meenaghan, 1998; Hickman, Lawrance, & Ward, 2005; Khan & Stanton, 2010; Khan et al., 2013; Rosenberg, 1995). Farrelly, Greyser, and Rogan (2012) described how a corporate

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partner of a sport event promoted the sponsorship among its employees through newsletters including sport-metaphors. The objective of these newsletters was to create a brand based on attributes such as teamwork and leadership. Furthermore, researchers have highlighted the importance of providing employees the opportunity to be actively involved in the sponsorship program (Inoue et al., 2016; Khan et al., 2013; Rosenberg, 1995; Walraven et al., 2012). For instance, Khan et al. (2013) recommended that organisations provide their employees with the opportunity to volunteer at the event. Collectively, previous studies have revealed that sponsorship is an effective tool for organisations to enhance the level of organisational identification among their staff (Farrelly et al., 2012; Farrelly & Greyser, 2007; Grimes & Mennaghan, 1998; Hickman, Lawrence, & Ward, 2005).

Researchers have also highlighted the applicability of OIT to examine how external groups such as consumers identify with brands (e.g. Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Pérez & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2015; Ahearne, Bhattacharya, & Gruen, 2005). The increasing importance of OIT in the consumer behaviour literature is associated with brands' growing interest in creating and reinforcing emotional and meaningful relationships with their consumers (Ahearne et al., 2005; Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Tuškej, Golob, & Podnar, 2013). In accordance with SIT, OIT suggests that consumers identify with brands that they perceive to share similar attributes with to form their identity and enhance their self-esteem (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008; Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Bhattacharya, Rao, & Glynn, 1995; Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994; Hatch & Schultz, 2000; Mael & Tetrick, 1992; Riketta, 2005). Building on the important role of OI in the relationship development process, the current research examines how CSE sponsorship programs contribute to event participants level of identification with the event sponsor by advancing hypothesis 1:

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Hypothesis 1 (H1): CSE participants have a stronger identification with a CSE sponsor after the CSE than before the CSE.

Researchers have identified different antecedents of OI including the organisation's prestige (Bhattacharya et al., 1995; Jones & Volpe, 2011; Kuenzel & Vaux Halliday, 2008), distinctiveness (Jones & Volpe, 2011), communication (Kuenzel & Vaux Halliday, 2008) and relationships with its consumers (Marín & de Maya, 2013), as well as salience of the outgroup (Ashforth & Mael, 1989) and consumers' satisfaction with the brand (Kuenzel & Vaux Halliday, 2008). For example, Cornwell and Coote's (2005) findings indicated that CSE participants' level of identification with the charity is affected by the perceived prestige of the organisation. Following the guidelines of the questionnaire length provided MS Queensland, the current research focuses on MS Moonlight Walk 2018 participants' perceived distinctiveness of Harbour ISP as an antecedent of OI in order to gain a better understanding how the sponsorship program assists Harbour ISP to build a unique brand. The next paragraph describes the concept of organisational distinctiveness more in detail.

Organisational distinctiveness is an important antecedent of OI because individuals seek to fulfil their desire to be unique by identifying with brands (Brewer, 1991; Jones & Volpe, 2011). Organisations are required to build a unique image which represents desirable attributes (Lichtenstein, Drumwright, & Braig, 2004). For example, Apple launched an advertisement campaign characterising the brand as a cool, efficient, young man, whilst Microsoft was portrayed as an old, slow, boring man (Phillips-Melancon & Dalakas, 2014). This type of advertisement facilitates the identification process because it differentiates Apple from Microsoft and highlights the desirable attributes of the brand. Building on the importance of organisational distinctiveness, the current research examines

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CSE sponsorship ability to assist the corporate partner to develop a unique brand and proposes hypothesis 2:

Hypothesis 2 (H2): CSE participants perceive the CSE sponsor as more distinct after the event than before the event.

Furthermore, building on OIT the present research investigates hypothesis 3:

Hypothesis 3 (H3): CSE participants perceived distinctiveness of the CSE sponsor contributes to their level of identification with the sponsor.

Previous studies have revealed different outcomes of OI (e.g. Benkhoff, 1997; Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Ellemers et al., 1999; Pérez & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2015; Riketta, 2005). For example, consumers who identify with a brand have strong positive emotions and commitment towards the organisation (Benkhoff, 1997; Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Ellemers et al., 1999; Pérez & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2015; Riketta, 2005). Apple's success as a global brand is partially based upon its ability to create a community of consumers who are strongly identified, emotionally attached, and loyal to the brand (Belk & Tumbat, 2005). Furthermore, consumers who identify with brands intend to purchase and recommend the organisation's products and services (Kuenzel & Vaux Halliday, 2008). The guidelines of the questionnaire length provided by MS Queensland allowed for examining one outcome of OI. Building on the purpose of the present research to examine how CSE sponsorship programs facilitate the development of meaningful and emotional relationships between CSE participants and sponsors, hypothesis 4 is advanced:

Hypothesis 4 (H4): CSE participants' level of identification with the CSE sponsor contributes to their commitment towards the organisation.

Table 2 summarises the implications of OIT for the present research. First, drawing on OIT's notion that individuals use organisations as an identification source, the current

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research aims to examine how CSE sponsorship programs affect event participants' level of identification with an event sponsor. Furthermore, considering that individuals consider the organisational distinctiveness and the brand image to determine their willingness to be involved with the organisation, the current research examines CSE sponsorship's ability to affect the sponsor's brand image and distinctiveness positively. Also, following OIT's notion that OI may result in strong emotions towards the organisation, the present research assesses how CSE sponsorship contributes to the emotional response of event participants towards the event sponsor. Lastly, drawing on OIT's suggestion that strongly identified group members are committed to the organisation, the current research determines how OI affects event participants' commitment towards the sponsor.

Table 2

### *Application of organisational identification theory to the current research*

Concept	Description	Application for the present study
Organisational identification	The degree to which a member defines him-or herself by the same attributes that he or she believes define the organisation.	The degree to which a MS Moonlight Walk 2018 participant defines him-or herself by the same attributes that he or she believes define the Harbour ISP.
Underlying motivation	Individuals seek group memberships to enhance their self-esteem.	MS Moonlight Walk event participants are motivated to belong to Harbour ISP to enhance their self-esteem.
Identification process	Individuals evaluate the organisation's image.	MS Moonlight Walk event participants evaluate Harbour ISP's image.

Concept	Description	Application for the present study
Organisational identification outcome	Group members have a positive emotional response towards the organisation.	MS Moonlight Walk participants who identify with Harbour ISP have a positive emotional response towards the organisation.
	Group members are committed to the organisation.	MS Moonlight Walk participants who identify with Harbour ISP are committed towards the organisation.

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As stated previously, in order to develop identification with a brand, consumers need to associate meaningful attributes with the brand and perceive the organisation as unique. An increasing number of businesses have identified investing in CSR initiatives, such as CSE sponsorship programs, as a valuable tool to enhance their brand image (Plewa & Quester, 2011). The following section reviews the literature related to CSR.

## 2.6 Corporate Social Responsibility

Consumers' concern with societal and environmental challenges has increased in recent years (Elving, 2013; Perera, Auger, & Klein, 2018). A growing number of consumers believe that addressing these challenges is not only the responsibility of governments (Gilg, Barr, & Ford, 2005) but also that of business (Vaaland, Heide, & Grønhaug, 2008). Consequently, businesses invest in CSR initiatives to demonstrate their commitment to address social and environment issues (Lichtenstein et al., 2004; Sung & Lee, 2016) and develop a brand image representing desirable attributes, which ultimately provides a platform for identification (Pérez & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2013). For example, businesses may donate a certain percentage of revenue to a designated charity when consumers purchase the brand's products and/or services (Lafferty et al., 2016; Varadarajan & Menon,

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1988), sponsor local sport clubs (Plewa, Carrillat, Mazodier, & Quester, 2016), implement social initiatives in the context of major sport event sponsorship programs (Uhrich, Koenigstorfer, & Groeppel-Klein, 2014), or sponsor CSEs (Lacey et al., 2010; Lacey et al., 2007).

Researchers have highlighted the positive contribution of CSE sponsor's CSR on event participants' commitment towards the organisation (Lacey et al., 2010; Lacey et al., 2007). However, a research opportunity exists to gain a better understanding of the underlying reasons why sponsorship affects CSE participants' commitment towards the organisation (Mazodier & Merunka, 2012). Scholars outside the CSE sponsorship field have made some suggestions as to how CSR associations may facilitate the relationship building process (e.g. Marin & Ruiz, 2007; Lichtenstein et al., 2004; Perez et al., 2013; Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001). For example, Marin and Ruiz (2007) suggested that CSR associations have a significant impact on OI. The authors speculated that the importance of CSR associations might be related to consumer difficulties in differentiating between brands based on attributes such as service quality or industry leadership in a competitive environment. Investing in CSR initiatives can help brands to create a competitive advantage through differentiation (Carroll & Shabana, 2010; Kurucz, Colbert, & Wheeler, 2008). The current research aims to build on these findings and advances hypothesis 5:

Hypothesis 5 (H5): CSR associations of the sponsor contribute to the perceived distinctiveness of the event sponsor.

Notably, researchers have also suggested that investing in CSR does not necessarily provide benefits to businesses (Aldag, 2013; Bawa & Saha, 2016; Lee, Graves, & Waddock, 2018). For example, Bawa and Saha's (2016) findings revealed that CSR associations are not dominant in the consumer's mind. As a result, the authors reinforced

the critique of Aldag (2013) on CSR's ability to deliver a competitive advantage for organisations. Collectively, the body of existing CSR literature revealed contradictory findings regarding the relationship between CSR and the ability to create a unique brand image and competitive advantage. However, CSE organisers are required to demonstrate the benefits a sponsor can obtain from supporting a CSE to recruit and retain corporate partners. Consequently, it is important to examine CSR associations in the context of CSE sponsorship programs. The next section provides an overview on how adapting methods from neuroscience can help gain a better understanding of CSE participants emotional response towards sponsors.

## **2.7 Consumer Neuroscience**

Consumer neuroscience aims to attain a better understanding of consumer behaviour by examining consumers' physiological response towards different marketing stimuli (Agarwal & Dutta, 2015). Consumer behaviour researchers have adopted methods from neuroscience for multiple reasons. One rationale for the use of these methods is based on the finding that people receive approximately one million bits of information per second through their senses, but the brain only has the capacity to process only around 40 bits per second consciously (Pradeep, 2010). Consequently, the majority of information is processed unconsciously (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven, & Tice, 1998; Pradeep, 2010). Applying this finding to the consumer behaviour field suggests that the vast majority of brand information including emotions towards brands are processed unconsciously (Gordon, 2002; Zaltman, 2003). Emotions refer to "a collection of changes in body and brain states triggered by a dedicated brain system that responds to specific contents of one's perceptions, actual or recalled, relative to a particular object or event" (Bechara & Damasio, 2005, p. 339). Considering that OI is associated with strong positive emotions



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towards the organisation (Benkhoff, 1999; Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Ellemers, Kortekaas, Ouwerker, 1999; Riketta, 2005) the examination of CSE participants' emotional responses towards the event sponsor is of importance may be beneficial in the context of the current research.

Scholars have investigated the emotions evoked by organisations through traditional methods such as interviews and surveys (Thomson et al., 2005). Considering the unconscious nature of emotions, traditional methods may have limitations in providing insights towards the experienced emotions because participants may not be aware of them.

For example, Schindler (1992) explained that the Coca-Cola Company reformulated Coca-Cola in 1985 because blind tasting studies revealed that consumers preferred the sweeter taste of Pepsi in comparison with the classic Coca-Cola formula. Consumers chose the new formula as their preferred soft drink in direct comparison with the old Coke and Pepsi in blind tasting studies by more than 50%. However, after launching the new Coke consumers started to protest against the change to the original formula. As a result of the public pressure, the Coca-Cola Company reintroduced the classic Coke and ultimately took New Coke off the market. Researchers describe the inability of the self-reported data obtained from the blind tasting studies to capture the emotional relationship between consumers and Coca-Cola as a reason for the failure of the New Coke formula.

Building on the limitations of self-reported data, McClure et al. (2004) replicated the Coca-Cola and Pepsi blind tasting study while participants brain response was measured using a functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI hereafter) machine. Findings suggested that when participants were not aware of the brand they were consuming, their neural response in the ventromedial prefrontal cortex, a brain region associated with basic appetitive aspects of reward, and self-reported preference were

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consistent. However, when participants knew that they were drinking Coca-Cola, researchers observed a response in the hippocampus and dorsolateral prefrontal cortex in addition to the response in the ventromedial prefrontal cortex. The hippocampus and dorsolateral prefrontal cortex have been associated with modifying behaviour based on emotion. Furthermore, the hippocampus is involved in recalling cultural information which can influence behaviour. Importantly, these brain regions were only recruited when participants knew they were drinking Coca-Cola. The researchers suggested that consumer's decision to consume Coca-Cola is associated with not only a taste preference but also with the cultural meaning of the brand.

An additional limitation of self-reported data is the possibility that consumers report biased answers due to a variety of reasons including social pressure and personal values (Cunningham et al., 2004; Hsu, 2017; Morin, 2011). For example, researchers have noted that consumers expressing intention to purchase products from socially responsible organisations may not predict their actual purchase behaviour (e.g., Auger & Devinney, 2007; Chan, 2001). Perera et al. (2018) suggested that this discrepancy might be due to social desirability biases, which refer to consumers' stated intention to purchase environment friendly products mainly due to their belief that this answer is consistent with social norms. Applying this finding to the current research may suggest that CSE participants may indicate that they are committed to the event sponsor because they perceive this answer is consistent with social norms associated with CSE.

To overcome limitations associated with self-reported data, scholars have adapted methods from neuroscience to the consumer behaviour discipline to investigate a consumer's response on an unconscious level that does not require the participant to articulate their response. For example, researchers have used EEG, which measures

electrical brain activity through electrodes that are attached to the head of the participant, to investigate the response of consumers towards marketing initiatives (Ariely & Berns, 2010; Mileti, Guido, & Prete, 2016). The current research aims to follow Rumpf and Breuer's (2016) suggestion and collect EEG data in order to examine research question 2:

Research question 2: How does sponsoring a CSE affect participants' emotional response towards an event sponsor?

The AWM is a widely used model to investigate consumers' emotional response towards brands (Briesemeister, Tamm, Heine, & Jacobs, 2013; Burshteyn & Buff, 2008). The present research adopts the AWM to examine the effect of CSE sponsorship on the emotional response of event participants towards the sponsor. The next section introduces the AWM as the guiding model to collect and analyse EEG data.

## **2.8 Approach-Withdrawal Model**

The approach-withdrawal model (AWM) is concerned with emotions and behaviour and draws on functional asymmetry research, which suggests that certain cognitive processes are more dominant in the right cerebral hemisphere than in the left, and vice versa (Molfese & Segalowitz, 1988). The AWM suggests that brain activity in the left frontal lobe is associated with positive emotions such as happiness and amusement, whereas activity in the right frontal lobe is associated with the expression of negative emotions like disgust and fear (Davidson & Fox, 1982; Davidson & Fox, 1989; Davidson, Saron, Senulis, Ekman, & Friesen, 1990). In this context, brain activity refers to electrical signals that occur when neurones switch from an inactive to an active state in order to create emotions (Baars & Gage, 2007; Ramsøy, 2014). Following the different emotions associated with the two hemispheres, the model argues that brain activity among the left

frontal lobe is related to an approach system, whereas activity among the right frontal lobe indicates withdrawal behaviour (Davidson et al., 1990).

Researchers have adopted the AWM in the consumer behaviour field to evaluate consumers' response towards products, advertisement, and brand names (e.g. Bosshard, Bourke, Kunaharan, Koller, & Walla, 2016; Ohme, Reykowska, Wiener, & Choromanska, 2009, 2010; Ramsøy, Skov, Christensen, & Stahlhut, 2018; Ravaja, Somervuori, & Salminen, 2013). For example, Ramsøy et al. (2018) identified the AWM as a suitable framework to analyse participants' willingness to pay for a variety of different products. Furthermore, Bosshard et al. (2016) applied the AWM to examine participants' response towards liked and disliked brand logos. The current research adopts the AWM to examine MS Moonlight Walk participants' emotional response towards Harbour ISP.

In addition to providing insights regarding neural processes related to consumer behaviour, findings from the consumer neuroscience field resulted in criticisms towards the use of the consumer-brand relationship metaphor. These criticisms are presented in the following section.

## **2.9 Critique of Consumer-Brand Relationship Metaphor**

Scholars (e.g. Bengtsson, 2003; Moussa, 2015; Patterson & O'Malley, 2006; Yoon, Gutches, Feinberg & Polk, 2006) have challenged the application of the consumer-brand relationship metaphor for a variety of reasons. First, an underlying assumption of the consumer-brand relationship metaphor is that consumers associate personality traits with brands (Aaker, 1997; Fournier, 1998). However, this assumption was questioned by Yoon et al. (2006) who asked participants to evaluate people and brands while a fMRI machine observed the blood-oxygen level in their brains. The findings indicated a greater activity in the medial prefrontal cortex regions, a brain region previously associated with a person's

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self-concept (Volz, Kessler, & von Cramon, 2009), when making judgements about people. In contrast, when participants evaluated brands, there was a greater blood flow in the left inferior prefrontal cortex, a brain region related to object processing (Mitchell, Heatherton, & Macrae, 2002). Building on this finding, Yoon et al. (2006) suggested that people and brands are neurologically processed differently and question the applicability of brand identities.

In a similar study, Chen, Nelson, and Hsu (2015) identified an increase in brain activity in both the medial prefrontal cortex and left inferior prefrontal cortex, during people and brand judgment tasks. However, the authors acknowledged that their findings do not necessarily mean that brands and people are neurologically evaluated equally because the increased activity in the medial prefrontal cortex could also be related to valuation processes as observed in other studies (e.g. Plassmann, O'Doherty, Shiv, & Rangel, 2008; Rangel, Camerer, & Montague, 2008).

Aaker (1997) mentioned the possibility that people, and brand personalities, might be similar, while also highlighting the existence of differences. In the context of the current research, it is acknowledged that brand and people personality traits might be associated with different brain regions. However, the current research follows previous recommendations that a careful adaptation of the consumer-brand relationship metaphor can be helpful to gain valuable insights to evaluate the effectiveness of sport sponsorship programs (Deane, 2003; Lee & Cho, 2009; Musante, Milne, & McDonald, 1999).

A second criticism of the consumer-brand relationship metaphor arises from the notion that consumers associate a brand with strong feelings such as love and passion (Fournier, 1998). In this context, Lindstrom (2011) published an op-ed in *The New York Times* postulating that people love their iPhones. Lindstrom based his statement on a

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personal, not peer reviewed fMRI study, in which participant's insula showed activation when exposed to iPhone images. The insular was previously associated with feelings of love and compassion. Hence, Lindstrom concluded that people have the same feeling towards their iPhones as to their loved ones. However, a literature review conducted by Yarkoni, Poldrack, Nichols, Van Essen, and Wager (2011) indicated that the insula is involved in multiple processes and was active in one third of all reviewed studies. This brain region was associated with processes like memory, language, attention, as well as anger, disgust, and fear (Calder, Lawrence, & Young, 2001; Schienle, Schäfer, Stark, Walter, & Vaitl, 2005). Lindstrom's article received criticism from multiple directions including statements from neuroscientists (e.g. Poldrack, 2011), journal articles (Nemorin, 2017; Plassmann, Venkatraman, Huettel, & Yoon, 2015), a TED talk (Crockett, 2012), as well as discussion in consumer neuroscience texts (e.g. Ramsøy, 2014).

The current research does not attempt to investigate whether CSE sponsorship results in love towards the sponsor, instead it examines MS Moonlight Walk participants' emotional response towards the event sponsor Harbour ISP without investigating what form of feeling this emotion may evoke. The engagement between sponsors and event participants plays an important role in the context of sport event sponsorship (Cornwell, 2019). The next section introduces S-D logic as the overarching framework to examine research question 3:

Research question 3: How do event participants, event managers, and representatives from event sponsors perceive the sponsor's contribution to the value creation process of CSEs?

## 2.10 Service-Dominant Logic

The sport event sponsorship environment has changed over the years due to a marketing paradigm shift from a traditional goods dominant (G-D) logic to a service-dominant logic (S-D logic) perspective (Dees, 2011). The G-D perspective suggests that companies exchange goods (i.e., products and services) with consumers to create value (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Adopting this perspective to the sport event context reflects that sport events are produced by event managers and consumed by event attendees (Woratschek et al., 2014). For example, a sporting competition is a product consisting of players, clubs, a sporting league, and stadium, and is consumed by event spectators (Borland, 2006). However, researchers noticed that G-D logic does not acknowledge the active role of the consumer within the value creation process (Grönroos, 1994; Hunt & Morgan, 1995; Sheth & Parvatiyar, 2000). As a result, S-D logic was introduced and advances that value is created through an exchange of service within a collaborative network consisting of different actors such as companies, consumers, and other stakeholders (Gummesson, 2008; Payne, Storbacka, & Frow, 2008; Vargo & Lusch, 2004b). Consequently, consumers are no longer excluded from the value creation process but are an active co-creator of value (Vargo & Lusch, 2004).

According to S-D logic, events represent a platform for interaction between different actors in order to create meaningful experiences rather than an object produced by event managers and consumed by participants (Crowther & Donlan, 2011; Ramaswamy, 2011; Wood, 2009). Sport events are created through the collaboration of a variety of different actors including event managers, sponsors, participants, food and drink suppliers, police, security companies, and public transport providers (Horbel et al., 2016; Stieler, Weismann, & Germelmann 2014). However, it is suggested that the consideration of all

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possible actors is outside the scope of one research project (Horbel et al., 2016). For the purpose of the current research the value creation process in a CSE setting is conceptualised as an exchange of services in a collaborative network consisting of the MS Moonlight Walk participants, managers, and representatives of Harbour ISP. Value is defined as an improvement of the stakeholders' wellbeing (Vargo, Maglio, & Akaka, 2008).

S-D logic defines service differently in comparison to G-D logic. Traditionally, a service is described as an intangible activity and its consumption occurs at the same time as its production (Grönroos, 2004). Service within S-D logic is conceptualised more broadly and is defined as the “application of operant resources such as skills and knowledge through deeds, processes, and performances for the benefit of another entity or the entity itself” (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, p.2). Building on this understanding of service, all economic activities aim to benefit another actor through service exchange and S-D logic can be applied to all industries (Vargo & Lusch, 2017).

Furthermore, this definition describes operant resources as a foundation of the value creation process. In contrast to operand resources such as natural resources, operant resources are of an intangible nature and have the ability to transform other operant and operand resources. In G-D logic, access to operand resources could provide a competitive advantage. For example, companies may transform wood (operand resources) through the application of technology (operant resource) into furniture at a competitive price. In S-D logic, operant resources provide a competitive advantage. For example, Tesla is developing a competitive advantage because it applies skills and knowledge to use electricity as a fuel source for cars. However, operand resources are still of importance in S-D logic because they function as vehicles of operant resources (Vargo & Lusch, 2016).



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This understanding of service can be adopted to the CSE sponsorship context as follows. CSE managers have a deep understanding of event participants' needs and utilise this knowledge to create an event environment in which attendees feel comfortable interacting with each other as well as with representatives of the sponsor (Lyes, Palakshappa, & Bulmer, 2016). Furthermore, event managers can assist participants in creating effective fundraising campaigns (Filo, Fechner, & Inoue, 2019). Event sponsors can complement the competencies of the CSE organisers by providing monetary support as well as engaging employees to volunteer in the planning and implementation of the event (Basil, Runte, Easwaramoorthy, & Barr, 2009; Inoue et al., 2016; Khan, et al. 2013). Furthermore, event sponsors can contribute to the partnership by drawing on their marketing skills to attract event participants (Lyes et al., 2016). CSE participants are also actively involved in the value creation process by interacting and supporting each other throughout the event (Filo et al., 2008; Higgins & Lauzon, 2003).

S-D logic suggests that organisations do not deliver value but can offer value propositions to consumers (Ballantyne & Varey, 2008). Value propositions can be defined as an organisation's offer to consumers to exchange services, and these propositions need to be communicated authentically (Chandler & Lusch, 2015; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Vargo & Lusch, 2008). For example, in the context of a CSE sponsorship program, event sponsors used an exhibition space to offer information about its products and services (Close & Lacey, 2014). Once the value proposition is made, consumers evaluate the value propositions to determine the perceived value they would obtain from engaging with the business by considering all benefits and costs associated with the value proposition (Chandler & Lusch, 2015; Vargo & Lusch, 2008). Importantly, the perceived value and the decision to interact with the business can vary depending on how relevant the proposition is

perceived by the individual (Chandler & Lusch, 2015; Vargo & Lusch, 2008).

Consequently, corporate partners are required to gain an understanding of their target markets in order to provide a unique value proposition depending on the needs of the specific individual (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004).

Adopting this understanding to the event sponsorship field suggests that event sponsors need to consider event participants when designing sponsorship programs (O'Reilly & Horning, 2013; Pegoraro, O'Reilly, & Levallet, 2009) because participants may have different motivations to take part in the event (Filo et al., 2008, 2011; Jaedeock Lee & Ferreira, 2011; Wood et al., 2010). O'Reilly and Horning (2013) suggested that sponsors need to target event participants' "passion points" (p.432). In a CSE context, participants may be particularly passionate about the cause, the physical challenge, and the social interactions associated with the event (Filo et al., 2014; Filo et al., 2008).

Consequently, sponsors need to promote their partnership with a CSE in a way that provides the opportunity for an authentic interaction with event participants (Lacey et al., 2010), and is based in part on the cause, the physical challenge, as well as the social components of the event.

S-D logic also suggest that the context in which the value proposition is made can affect the perceived value (Chandler & Vargo, 2011; Horbel et al., 2016; Woratschek et al., 2016). For example, Horbel et al. (2016) findings indicated that the context affects the value creation process and examined how different viewing settings (e.g. public screening, bar/pub/restaurant, viewing with others at home and viewing alone at home) influences the experience of watching the FIFA World Cup 2014. The researchers identified that the contribution of different actors towards the perceived value of the spectators varies depending on where the game was viewed. For example, spectators who watched the game

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in a public viewing space derived value primarily from the social aspects associated with the event rather than characteristics related to the game. In contrast, the team performance was more important for people who watched the game either at home or in a bar.

Previous research has predominantly examined spectator team sport events (e.g. FIFA World Cup 2014; Australian A-League, Premier League, German Bundesliga) through the lens of S-D logic (Horbel et al., 2016; McDonald & Karg, 2014; Jalonen, 2015; Stieler & Germelmann 2018; Stieler et al., 2014). However, as described above, spectator sport events differ from small-scale CSEs in a number of ways and a research opportunity exists to adopt S-D logic to the CSE context. More specifically, building on the importance of developing authentic sponsorship and the unique nature of CSEs, the current research examines the contribution of sponsors to the value creation process of CSEs through the lens of S-D logic.

Table 3 provides a summary of how S-D logic has informed the present research. The value creation process is conceptualised as the exchange of skills and knowledge between the CSE participants, managers, and sponsors. This conceptualisation will allow the current research to examine how CSE sponsorship programs can create value for event stakeholders. Building on the suggestion that S-D logic allows the beneficiary to evaluate the value they obtain from engaging in a service exchange, the current research examines how event participants perceive the contribution of sponsors to the value creation process of CSEs. Furthermore, following S-D logic's notion that the external environment affects the value creation process, this thesis examines the partnership between Harbour ISP and the MS Moonlight Walk 2018.

Table 3

*Application of S-D logic to this work*

Concept	S-D logic	Application to this work
Value	An improvement in an actor's wellbeing.	An improvement in MS Moonlight Walk 2018 participants' and Harbour ISP's wellbeing.
Service	The application of operant resources such as skills and knowledge for the benefit of others.	Harbour ISP's application of skills and knowledge for the benefit of MS Moonlight Walk 2018 participants.
Value creation process	Value is co-created by multiple actors, always including the beneficiary through an exchange of services.	Value is co-created by MS Moonlight Walk 2018 participants, event managers, and representatives of Harbour ISP through an exchange of services.
Value proposition	An organisation's offer to consumers to exchange operant resources.	Harbour ISP offer to contribute to MS Moonlight Walk 2018 participants' event experience.
Value perception	Value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary.	MS Moonlight Walk 2018 participants determine the value obtained from engaging with Harbour ISP individually

Concept	S-D logic	Application to this work
Operant resources	Operant resources are the fundamental source of strategic benefit.	Harbour ISP's operant resources are the fundamental source of strategic benefit.
Value in context	Value co-creation is coordinated through actor-generated institutions and institutional arrangements.	The specific context of the MS Moonlight Walk 2018 affects the value creation process.

As mentioned above, the concept of S-D logic suggests that authentic engagements between the event participants and sponsor is an important component within the value creation process. The next section introduces the characteristics of an authentic interaction more in detail.

### 2.11 Authentic Engagement

The marketplace is increasingly commercialised, and consumers are exposed to products which may not hold any meaning and may not deliver what the promotion strategies promise (Boyle, 2004). Consequently, brand authenticity is an important component for brand image and may create a strategic benefit (Ballantyne, Warren, & Nobbs 2006). Gilmore and Pine suggest that authenticity is important as “authenticity has overtaken quality as the prevailing purchasing criterion, just as quality overtook cost, and as cost overtook availability” (2007, p. 5).

In order to conceptualise brand authenticity, Morhart, Malär, Guèvremont, Girardin, & Grohmann (2015) reviewed authenticity from three different philosophical perspectives: the objectivist perspective, a constructivist perspective, and an existentialist perspective. Following an objectivist perspective, authenticity represents a quality criterion that can be

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evaluated using objective information such as age, ingredients, and performance by consumers (e.g., Kiehl's 'since 1851'). According to the constructivist perspective, authenticity is perceived by consumers individually based on their own beliefs and expectations (Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Leigh, Peters, & Shelton, 2006). Consequently, some consumers perceive the VW Beetle as authentic (Brown, Kozinets, & Sherry, 2003), while others describe Disneyland as an authentic brand (MacCannell, 1973). Existential authenticity refers to a brand's ability to serve as a resource for consumers to reveal their true selves or to allow consumers to feel that they are true to themselves by consuming the brand (Morhart et al., 2015). Thus, from an existentialist perspective, brand authenticity emerges from an organisation's ability to serve as an identity-related source (e.g., Harley Davidson's slogan 'American by birth. Rebel by choice'). This perspective highlights the connection between OI and brand authenticity. As stated above, consumers identify with brands that represent similar values and provide a platform for identification (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Consequently, consumers identify with brands they perceive as authentic.

Considering that all three perspectives are interrelated (Leigh et al., 2006), Morhart et al. defined brand authenticity as the degree to which "consumers perceive a brand to be faithful and true toward itself and its consumers, and to support consumers being true to themselves" (2015, p.202). Building on this understanding of brand authenticity, Morhart et al. (2015) conceptualised brand authenticity through four dimensions: continuity, credibility, integrity, and symbolism.

Continuity refers to the brand history based on the founding date. This dimension also considers whether the brand maintains a similar branding over a long period of time (Morhart et al., 2015). For example, Quaker, an oatmeal brand, is perceived as a timelessness brand because it has not dramatically changed its design or product.

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Credibility describes brands' commitment to provide the value they promise through their promotion strategies (Morhart et al., 2015). Authentic brands communicate their value propositions to consumers in an honest and transparent manner (Morhart et al., 2015). For instance, Bunnings promises its consumers to have the lowest price and delivers on this proposition. Integrity refers to the responsibility and moral purity of the brand (Morhart et al., 2015). Integrity is associated with CSR initiatives, because they provide a platform to demonstrate that the organisation has not only an interest in generating profits but also in addressing social and environment issues. For example, environmental organisations such as Greenpeace are perceived as authentic because the organisation represents moral values and demonstrates concern for the protection of the environment. Symbolism describes a brands' ability to function as a source of identification. By identifying with brands, consumers can form their identity as it allows them to define who they are or who they are not (Morhart et al. 2015). For example, people who perceive themselves as rebellious can express themselves through driving a Harley Davidson (Swaminathan, Page, & Gurhan-Canli, 2007).

Researchers have highlighted the opportunity to build an authentic brand through sport event sponsorship because it facilitates authentic engagement between the sponsor and consumers (Cornwell, 2019; O'Reilly, Stroebel, Pfahl, & Kahler, 2018). In the sport event sponsorship context, engagement refers to interactions between sponsor and event participants before, during, and after the event in the online and offline environments (Wakefield, 2012). Consequently, authentic engagement describes genuine, natural, and honest interactions between sponsors and event participants throughout the event experience (Cornwell, 2019; Napoli, Dickinson, Beverland, & Farrelly, 2014). Authentic engagement provides sponsors with an opportunity to demonstrate that their involvement in

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the event is not only of a profit-oriented nature, but also of an altruistic and affective nature (Woisetschläger, Backhaus, & Cornwell 2017). Reinforcing the perception that the sponsor's motives to support the event are partially based upon their social responsibility is of importance because consumers can form negative attitudes towards commercially driven sponsors (Dean, 2002; Woisetschläger et al., 2017).

The importance of engagement between event sponsors and participants was also highlighted in the CSE sponsorship context (Close & Lacey, 2014; Lacey et al., 2010; Pegoraro et al., 2009; Polonsky & Speed, 2001; Simmons & Becker-Olsen, 2006; Smith et al., 2016; Sneath et al., 2005). For example, researchers have highlighted event exhibitions, which provide visitors with the opportunity to learn and experience the sponsor's products, as an engagement platform (Close & Lacey, 2014; Sneath et al., 2005). Sneath et al.'s (2005) findings revealed that participants who engaged with the event sponsor through an exhibition, had a higher intention to purchase the sponsor's products in comparison to participants who did not attend the exhibition. The interaction between event participants and sponsors at the event was also highlighted by Smith et al. (2016) who examined sponsorship of a CSE in terms of its ability to increase brand awareness over a five-year period. Their findings suggested that face-to-face interactions, as well as on-course support in the form of food and water supply had the greatest impact on event participants' ability to recall the sponsor's brand.

Considering the vast array of sponsorship activation initiatives available to event sponsors, research opportunities exist to investigate the characteristics of authentic sponsorship programs (Cornwell, 2019; Lacey et al., 2010). Importantly, the perspectives of different event stakeholders need to be considered (Gillooly et al., 2017) because



authenticity is perceived subjectively (Cornwell, 2019; Ziakas & Boukas, 2014).

Consequently, the current research advances research question 3:

Research question 3: How do event participants, event managers, and representatives from event sponsors perceive the sponsor's contribution to the value creation process of CSEs?

The next section provides a summary of this literature review chapter.

## **2.12 Chapter Summary**

This chapter introduced OIT and S-D logic as guiding theoretical frameworks for the current research. In particular, the importance of the perceived brand image in the identification development process was outlined. The ensuing sections discussed how CSR initiatives may have the ability to influence the sponsor's brand image positively and provide the organisation with a competitive advantage by developing an authentic brand and meaningful relationships with consumers. Considering the importance of emotions in OIT and the challenges associated with measuring emotions, this chapter introduced the AWM as a valuable model to investigate emotions in a CSE sponsorship setting.

Building on the literature reviewed, the purpose of the current research is to examine how CSE organisers and sponsors can create sponsorship programs which promote the sponsor's brand in an authentic manner and facilitate the development of meaningful and emotional relationships between CSE participants and sponsors. In order to achieve these objectives, the present research advances the following research questions and hypotheses:

Research question 1: How does sponsoring a CSE assist the sponsor to develop meaningful and emotional relationships with its consumers?

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H1: CSE participants have a stronger identification with a CSE sponsor after the CSE than before the CSE.

H2: CSE participants perceive the CSE sponsor as more distinct after the event than before the event.

H3: CSE participants perceived distinctiveness of the CSE sponsor contributes to their level of identification with the sponsor.

H4: CSE participants' level of identification with the CSE sponsor contributes to their commitment towards the organisation.

H5: CSR associations of the sponsor contribute to the perceived distinctiveness of the event sponsor.

Research question 2: How does sponsoring a CSE affect participants' emotional response towards an event sponsor?

Research question 3: How do event participants, event managers, and representatives from event sponsors perceive the sponsor's contribution to the value creation process of CSEs?

This thesis employs an explanatory sequential mixed method research design to address the research questions, and this method is detailed in the next chapter.

### **3 Research Methodology**

This chapter outlines the methodology of this thesis and is structured as follows: first, pragmatism as an underlying paradigm for the current research, is introduced by highlighting its ontological, epistemological, and methodological view. Next, the exploratory sequential mixed method research design consisting of three studies is outlined. For each study, information regarding the participants, the data collection, and analysis are provided.

Next the ethical context of the present study outlining how the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research guides this thesis. The following section provides a description of pragmatism as the underlying paradigm of the thesis.

#### **3.1 Research Paradigm**

The researcher's paradigm is of importance because it helps to justify the research and provides the reader with an understanding of the philosophical assumptions underpinning the research (Rehmann & Alharthi, 2016). A research paradigm represents a framework summarising the researcher's understanding of the world and consists of assumptions about ontology, epistemology, and methodology (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Aliyu, Bello, Kasim, & Martin, 2014; Rehmann & Alharthi, 2016). Ontology refers to the researcher's understanding of reality and is concerned with the existence of entities within a society (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Jupp, 2006). The ontological view results in a particular epistemology, which describes the nature of human knowledge and the process of how knowledge can be obtained and validated (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Jupp, 2006; Morgan, Adair, Taylor, & Hermens, 2014). The ontological and epistemological view leads to a methodology that the scholar employs to collect and analyse data (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Traditionally, two paradigms are used in social sciences: positivism and interpretivism.

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Positivists believe in the existence of a single reality that is not influenced by its social context and is based on universal causal laws (Aliyu et al., 2014; Feilzer, 2010; Guba, 1990; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Rehmann & Alharthi, 2016; Robson, 2002; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009; Tracy, 2013). Positivists follow an objectivist epistemology and believe that they are an objective observer and do not impact the phenomena of interest (Rehmann & Alharthi, 2016). Positivists apply quantitative research methods, collect data from large sample sizes, and apply statistical analyses to identify relationships between dependent and independent variables (Aliyu et al. 2014). The identified relationships are used to test and validate existing theories (Guba, 1990; Rehmann & Alharthi, 2016; Robson, 2002). For example, to adopt a positivist approach to the current research would suggest that the investigation of the research questions would require a high number of MS Moonlight Walk 2018 participants to complete quantitative questionnaires. The data obtained would be analysed through statistical tests such as regression analyses and t-tests to validate OIT in the context of CSE sponsorship programs.

However, positivism has been criticised as it provides limited opportunities to explain why certain social phenomena occur (Tracey, 2013). Recognising this as a limitation, collecting quantitative data from event participants may help to examine the effect of OI on brand commitment, but would not provide insights regarding the underlying reasons why the effect may have occurred. Furthermore, researchers have suggested that social phenomena are dependent on their social context as human behaviour is influenced by inter-human relationships (Hussey & Hussey, 1997).

Based on the limitations associated with positivism, researchers have posited interpretivism as an alternate paradigm. Interpretivists believe in multiple realities which are influenced by their social contexts. The epistemological view of interpretivism is subjective

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and it is understood that reality cannot be observed and requires the researcher to immerse themselves in the subject matter. Interpretivists collect data through qualitative methods such as interviews and focus groups to gain a better understanding of the social phenomena in their context (Tracy, 2013). Whilst research conducted through an interpretivist lens can generate rich insights of a social phenomenon in a specific context, the generalisability of its findings to different contexts is limited (Robson, 2002). Furthermore, since the researcher is actively involved, biases inherent to the research may influence the results of qualitative research (Tufford & Newman, 2012).

As a result of the discussion of whether research should be guided by a positivist or interpretivist paradigm, pragmatism emerged (Cherryholmes, 1992; Robson, 2002; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Pragmatism is a deconstructive paradigm as the focus is on identifying the best approach to answer the research questions rather than concepts like truth or reality (Robson, 2002; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). From an ontological perspective, pragmatists believe in the existence of multiple, complex, constructed, and stratified social realities (Feilzer, 2010; Onwuegbuzie, Johnson & Collins, 2009; Robson, 2002; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Therefore, CSE participants, event managers, and representatives of sponsors can have different perceptions of the sponsor's contribution to the value creation process of CSEs.

Pragmatism assumes that knowledge is created through the interaction of people with their environment (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Goldkuhl, 2012; Morgan, 2014). This belief aligns with the suggestion that S-D logic within CSEs represents a value creation space where different stakeholders collaborate to create a meaningful and memorable experience for CSE participants.

Furthermore, the findings of this thesis should be interpreted in the context of the MS Moonlight Walk 2018 and thus generalisability is limited. Pragmatism focuses on the research question rather than a particular methodology, and lends itself to mixed methods research (Howe, 1988). Pragmatism rejects the incompatibility theory of qualitative and quantitative methods and enables scholars to apply both techniques (Feilzer, 2010; Howe, 1988). Pragmatism aligns with the worldview of the author of this work and therefore underpins the research. Drawing on pragmatism's methodological approach, the present research employs an exploratory sequential mixed method research design to address the research questions. The next section provides further discussion of a mixed method research design.

### **3.2 Mixed Methods Research Design**

Mixed methods (MM) research refers to a holistic and in-depth examination of a research question through the collection and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007). MM lends itself towards research questions that would not be sufficiently answered if only qualitative or quantitative data were obtained. For example, qualitative data can be collected to help explain the results of quantitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Consequently, advocates of MM suggest that the combination of both data types within one research project provides an opportunity to examine the research questions from different perspectives and derive more insightful conclusions (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

Researchers have highlighted the need to provide a justification for adopting an MM approach and provided a variety of different rationales for conducting a MM study (Bryman, 2006; Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). For instance, the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods allows a study to

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overcome some of the limitations of each individual data method and consequently achieve more rigorous conclusions (Bryman, 2006; Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2016). While quantitative data can be obtained from a large sample and may result in generalisability, it has limitations in terms of providing a detailed description of the context. Adding qualitative data can help to gain a better understanding of the specific context and can help explain the results derived from the quantitative data (Greene et al., 1989; Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2016).

The rationale for adopting a MM approach for the current research is twofold. First, qualitative data were obtained to provide a contextual understanding of the partnership between the MS Moonlight Walk 2018 and Harbour ISP. This is important because the context of the sport event affects its value creation process (Horbel et al., 2016; Woratschek et al., 2014). Second, interviews were conducted with MS Moonlight Walk participants to get a better understanding of the results of the quantitative pre- and post-event questionnaire and EEG.

Whilst MM provides an opportunity to examine research questions efficiently, Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) described the following challenges inherent within MM research. First, the researcher needs to have a broad skillset in order to collect and analyse qualitative and quantitative data. For instance, the researcher needs to be able to perform and interpret statistical analyses as well as need to be familiar with reliability and validity (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Also, conducting a qualitative study requires the researcher to be able to conduct interviews, as well as being able to code the data and develop themes. Furthermore, the researcher needs to be able to understand the concepts of credibility, trustworthiness, and implement validation strategies (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

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Second, a MM approach may require more time and resources than a purely qualitative or quantitative research design. For example, a MM approach may require the purchase of additional hardware and software, as well as a need to provide incentives for participants who take part in the qualitative and quantitative phases (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Third, considering the different methodological approaches present in a MM study, the lead author is required to demonstrate strong leadership skills to navigate the research team through the methodological and philosophical differences, and highlight the benefits obtained from a MM approach.

These challenges are addressed as follows in the context of the current research. First, the researcher gained experience in collecting and analysing qualitative data during two previous projects. Second, four researchers who are experienced in the EEG method provided guidance in the data collection and analysis of Study 2. In order to overcome the financial challenges, the Griffith Institute for Tourism and Griffith's Department for Tourism, Hotel and Sport Management provided financial support to purchase the required equipment (Emotiv Epoc+ device) and incentivise research participants. Also, the benefits of conducting a MM study and, in particular, collecting EEG data, were discussed openly and transparently between the researcher and the supervisory team.

In terms of designing a mixed method study, Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) differentiated between fixed and emergent MM designs. A fixed MM approach describes studies which had planned to collect qualitative and quantitative data before the research commences. An emergent MM design refers to studies which are based on both data types as a result of acknowledging that collecting only qualitative or quantitative data was insufficient to answer the research questions during the research process. Based on this



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differentiation, the current research can be classified as emergent MM design, as interviews were conducted as a means to explain the results from the quantitative data.

Furthermore, the typology of MM design has shifted from a timing-based typology (e.g. concurrent vs sequentially design) to an intention-based design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Building on Creswell and Plano Clark's (2018) typology, MM can be classified as explanatory sequential, exploratory sequential, and convergent design. The current research can be described as an explanatory sequential design because the purpose of the qualitative data is to provide more meaning to the results of the quantitative data. The present research is of a sequential nature because data were collected in multiple phases. More specifically, quantitative data were collected prior to and after the MS Moonlight Walk 2018 from event participants through online questionnaires. Furthermore, EEG data were obtained from participants after the event. The rationale for collecting data during two phases is based on suggestions to collect pre- and post-event data to gain a better understanding of the effectiveness of sponsorship programs (Close & Lacey, 2014; Sneath et al., 2005). Researchers have previously acknowledged the benefits obtained from a MM approach in the sport management field (Rudd & Johnson, 2010; van der Roest, Spaaij, & van Bottenburg, 2015). As a result, a growing interest around MM approaches has emerged in the sport management domain (Rudd & Johnson, 2010; van der Roest et al., 2015). However, despite increasing interest and previous calls to employ a MM design, Rudd and Johnson (2010) and van der Roest et al. (2015) noticed a limited amount of research being based on qualitative and quantitative data. Furthermore, van der Roest et al. (2015) identified that 34.9% of the MM studies in the sport management field did not provide a strong justification for the application of their research design.

Notably in the CSES field, Parris et al. (2015) and Smith et al. (2016) adopted a mixed method approach. Parris et al. (2015) conducted initial interviews to gain a better understanding of the identities of different CSE stakeholders and then administered a questionnaire to examine how stakeholder identity contributes to the support for the event and sponsor. Smith et al. (2016) combined data obtained through online questionnaires with interviews and observations to examine how sponsors can enhance their level of awareness among CSE participants. The next section describes the research context of the current research.

### **3.3 Research Context**

The CSEs had to meet the following criteria to be suitable for the present research: the event needed to take place between May 2018 and October 2019 in Australia or New Zealand, be sponsored by at least one organisation, and have a minimum of 1000 participants. The timeline was chosen in order to finalise the research project by the due date set by Griffith University. Australia and New Zealand were selected to allow the researcher to travel to the event location to collect EEG data. A minimum of 1000 participants was selected to increase the likelihood that a sufficient amount of data could be collected.

The researcher contacted approximately 50 different CSE organisers across Australia and New Zealand via email between 2017 and 2019. After discussing the research project with eight different CSE organisers in more detail over the phone, all organisers explained that they were unable to facilitate the data collection. In order to identify a suitable CSE a snowball technique was applied. A snowball technique refers to identifying people who would be able to introduce the researcher to CSE managers who organise events which may fit the research criteria (Tracy, 2013). A member of the supervisory team

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provided an introduction to two CSE managers: CSE Anonymous (the event is called CSE Anonymous to keep the identity of the event manager anonymous) and the Ride for Life Challenge. Both CSE managers agreed to participate in the research. However, the manager of CSE Anonymous discontinued the research collaboration one month prior to the event because the event sponsor did not agree to be part of the research. The event sponsor was concerned about collecting EEG data because of the way this type of data is collected. In addition, the event sponsor utilises the event participant database for other research projects and was therefore hesitant towards asking event participants to complete additional questionnaires. The researcher attempted to provide solutions for these concerns but his emails remained unanswered. The Ride for Life's event manager distributed the research material but the collected data were excluded from the current research because the response rate was too low to provide a basis for a quantitative analysis or the collection of additional qualitative data (e.g. 37 participants completed the post-event quantitative questionnaire).

In addition, the researcher was introduced to a MS Queensland staff member. MS Queensland is a charitable organisation which was founded in 1958 and envisions a world free from MS and its devastating impact (MS Queensland, 2018). MS Queensland raises money to support people living with MS by providing services such as therapy sessions or phone advice, as well as funding research projects to find a cure for MS (MS Queensland, n.d.). MS Queensland organises two annual CSEs which fit the criteria of the present research, the MS Moonlight Walk and the MS Brissie to the Bay. The MS Brissie to the Bay is a cycling event attracting over 4000 participants and takes place in June each year. The MS Moonlight Walk was established in 1998 and plays a vital role in MS Queensland's fundraising strategy. In its original form, the event was a 10km walk held in the city centre

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of Brisbane and attracted approximately 1,000 participants (MS Queensland, 2018). In 2011, an additional 5km option was introduced which enabled people living with MS, who were previously not able to participate in the event due to the distance, to attend the event. The introduction of a 5km distance resulted in an increase of event participants and approximately 4,000 walkers attended the event in 2018. Alongside the growing number of event participants, the annual fundraising goal of the event has increased from \$22,000 to over \$600,000 from 1998 to 2018 (MS Queensland, 2018).

The first meeting between the researcher and MS Queensland took place in August 2018. MS Queensland expressed their interest in conducting research around the MS Moonlight Walk in 2018 and 2019. In addition, MS Queensland inquired about the possibility of examining the same research questions in the context of the MS Brissie to the Bay 2019. In the context of the MS Brissie to the Bay, the event managers distributed two post-event questionnaires. The questions, relevant to the present research, were included in the second questionnaire. The response rate was relatively low (9 completed questionnaires) and therefore these data were not considered included in the results. In addition, MS Queensland informed the researcher of their intention to discontinue the partnership in August 2019 because they wanted to shift their research focus. The researcher communicated the benefits of conducting a multiyear study to MS Queensland via email and phone. In one instance, the researcher presented the opportunity of creating a booklet comparing the results of the MS Moonlight Walk 2018 with the findings obtained from the event in 2019 to provide MS Queensland's event managers with materials that could potentially assist them in recruiting and retaining event sponsors. Despite these efforts, MS Queensland did not change their decision and discontinued the partnership. Consequently, the present research focuses on data obtained from the MS Moonlight Walk

2018. Figure 4 provides an overview of CSEs which were considered as potential research partners and the reasons why data were or were not included in the present research.

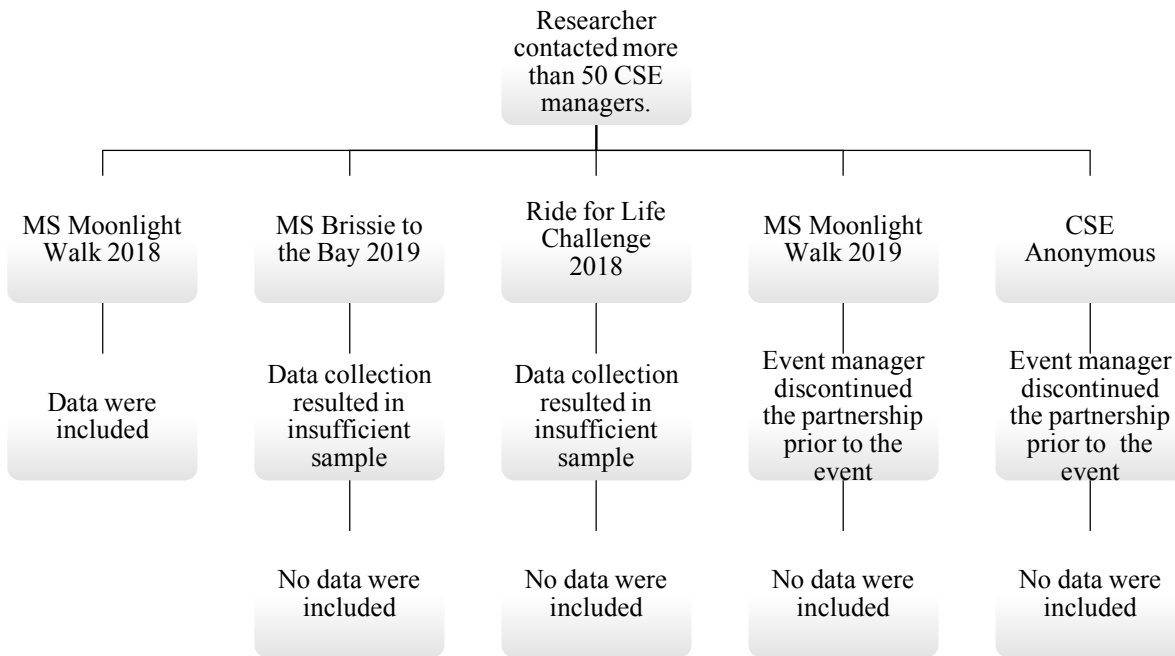


Figure 4. Overview of potential research partner.

As mentioned in the Section 1.3, the MS Moonlight Walk entered a sponsorship agreement with Harbour ISP in 2018. Harbour ISP was founded in 2005 and provides internet services to small businesses and residents across Australia (Harbour ISP, n.d.a). Harbour ISP was founded because the owners had personally experienced limited internet connectivity in rural Australia (Harbour ISP, n.d.b). Harbour ISP is a 100% Australian-owned and has offices in major cities in Australia including Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane as well as in Manila, Philippines (Harbour ISP, n.d.a). Harbour ISP is involved in a number of community events to raise funds and awareness for animal welfare, environmental, and health charities (Harbour ISP, n.d.c). Harbour ISP had no prior experience in sponsoring CSEs. Harbour ISP’s primary marketing objectives for sponsoring the MS Moonlight Walk were to raise brand awareness and increase sales in the Brisbane market (personal

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conversation, Harbour ISP representative, 25 July 2019). Harbour ISP supported the CSE financially and received a welcome post from MS Queensland on its social media channels prior to the event, as well as strategically positioned banners during the event (e.g., the start line). Furthermore, Harbour ISP was publicly acknowledged for their support by a MS Queensland staff member immediately before the start of the event. Harbour ISP was the only financial sponsor of the event. The next section provides an overview of ethical considerations relevant to the present research.

### **3.4 Ethical Considerations**

Ethics is a quality criterion of research and suggests that the risks of being involved in a study needs to be minimised whilst the benefits should be maximised (Gibbs & Flick, 2007; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011; Tracy, 2013). There was also the requirement of the work to consider the ethical context of human research due to the human participation in all three studies (Griffith University, n.d.). Griffith University's ethics arrangements are based on the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (Griffith University, n.d.). The statement defines the following core values for research: respect for human beings, research merit and integrity, justice, and beneficence. The implications of these values to this thesis are outlined in the following paragraph.

Respect for the participants was ensured by summarising interviewees' responses throughout the interview to provide them with the opportunity to change or withdraw their statements (Gibbs & Flick, 2007). Also, participants' confidentiality and privacy were ensured by making the data unidentifiable by using pseudonyms for the interviewees (Daymon & Holloway, 2011; Gibbs & Flick, 2007). Research merit and integrity includes providing each participant with an informed consent sheet (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). This document was written in language that could be easily understood by MS Moonlight

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Walk managers, sponsors, and participants. The document also highlighted the research purpose, procedures, confidentiality requirement and allowed participants the opportunity to withdraw from the research at any time (Daymon & Holloway, 2011; Gibbs & Flick, 2007; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011).

In the context of the present research, justice refers to the fairness of the recruiting process. All MS Moonlight Walk 2018 participants listed in the MS Moonlight Walk database received an invitation email to participate in the research. Considering that the registration process for the event is organised online, it can be assumed that the majority of participants had an equal chance to be involved in the research. Beneficence refers to the researcher's responsibility to inform the participants about risks and benefits associated with the present research. Data were stored in an online research space provided by Griffith University to ensure the security of the data. Ethical approval was granted on 23-March 2018 (GU Ref No: 2018/208). The following sections describe the three studies of the current research in terms of their participants, procedures, materials, and data analysis.

### **3.5 Study 1**

The current research collects data through an online questionnaire in order to address research question 1:

Research question 1: How does sponsoring a CSE assist the sponsor in developing meaningful and emotional relationships with its consumers?

An online questionnaire was selected as the data collection tool because it is faster and more cost effective than other survey methods such as mail, face-to-face, or telephone, and was deemed most appropriate considering the limited time and budget available (Silver, Stevens, Wrenn, & Loudon, 2013). The next sections provide information concerning the participants, procedure, materials and data analysis.

### **3.5.1 Study 1: Participants.**

The pre-event questionnaire recorded a total of 160 valid responses. Eighty-six percent were female, and the remaining participants were male or did not specify their gender. The majority of participants (133) were between 26 and 59 years old. In terms of educational level, 80% completed a TAFE certificate/diploma or at least a bachelor's degree.

The post-event questionnaire recorded 235 valid responses. The majority of participants were female (84%) while the remaining were male. The majority of participants (212) were between 26 and 65 years old. In terms of educational level, 71% completed a TAFE certificate/diploma or at least a bachelor's degree.

### **3.5.2 Study 1: Procedures.**

The pre-event online questionnaire was developed using Qualtrics, hosted by Griffith University and included only questions relevant to this study. The questionnaire was tested in a pilot study to identify potential misunderstanding of the items (Perneger, Courvoisier, Hudelson, & Gayet-Ageron, 2015). Data for the pilot study were collected through a convenience sample of 14, which exceeded the minimum number of 10 individuals as suggested by Burns and Bush (2010). The sample was recruited through word of mouth in Griffith University's Department of Tourism, Sport and Hotel Management and included individuals who have previously participated in a sport event, one MS Moonlight Walk 2018 participant, and sport management academics. Furthermore, MS Moonlight Walk 2018 event managers completed the questionnaire and provided feedback.

Participants of the pilot study indicated that they were unsure whether they completed the correct questionnaire when they were first presented with questions about



Harbour ISP. Therefore, a question regarding participants' previous participation in the MS Moonlight Walk was included at the beginning of the questionnaire. Furthermore, the results of the pilot study revealed that participants may have difficulties in understanding the meaning of corporate giving. Consequently, an explanation of corporate giving was provided in the questionnaire. Corporate giving was defined as Harbour ISP's commitment to giving back to the community by supporting charities (Lichtenstein et al., 2004).

MS Queensland invited MS Moonlight Walk 2018 participants to complete the pre-event online questionnaire via email one month prior to the event. The email stated the research purpose, the voluntary nature of the participation, and the chance to win a \$100 voucher for a national grocery store. Participants had the opportunity to complete the online questionnaire up to one day prior to the event.

The post-event questionnaire was hosted by MS Queensland and included questions related to this study as well as questions relevant to the event managers. MS Moonlight Walk distributed the post-event questionnaire via email to event participants two days after the event and the questionnaire remained open for two weeks. Participants had the chance to enter the draw for a \$100 voucher for a national grocery store.

### **3.5.3 Study 1: Materials.**

The pre-event online questionnaire was organised as follows. First, two screening questions ensured that only people who were over 18 years of age and registered for the MS Moonlight Walk 2018 event completed the questionnaire. Also, participants were asked to indicate how often they have previously participated in the MS Moonlight Walk event. Next, participants were shown the Harbour ISP's brand logo and were asked to indicate their familiarity with this brand on a five-point Likert scale ranging from very familiar to not familiar at all. This question was included as MS Queensland event managers explained

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that event participants may not be familiar with Harbour ISP as the organisation is new to the Brisbane market. This suggestion was supported by the pilot study in which all participants indicated that they were not familiar at all with Harbour ISP.

The next section included questions regarding MS Moonlight Walk 2018 event, participant's perceived social responsibility and distinctiveness of Harbour ISP, as well as their OI and commitment towards the organisation. All items were measured on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. In addition, considering the possibility that event participants may not have enough knowledge about Harbour ISP to indicate their level of agreement with the statement, the following option 'I do not know enough Harbour ISP to answer' was provided (Krosnick & Presser, 2010; Payne, 1950). While including this option can increase the validity of the findings as participants would otherwise be forced to provide an answer which may not reflect their actual opinion on Harbour ISP, Krosnick (2002) also described some shortcomings with the inclusion of 'I don't know' responses in questionnaires. For example, participants who have an opinion on the sponsor may choose to select the 'I don't know response' for a variety reasons including that their personal attitudes do not align with the social norm and potential unwillingness to perform the cognitive task required to answer the question (Krosnick, 2002). Considering the likelihood of participants not being aware of the event sponsor, the I don't know response was included. The following paragraphs describe the scales adopted to measure the variables.

Perceived social responsibility of the event sponsor was examined by adopting a scale proposed by Lichtenstein et al. (2004). The scale has been applied previously in the CSE sponsorship context (e.g. Inoue & Havard, 2014; Lacey et al., 2010; Scheinbaum

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Close & Lacey, 2015). An example of one of the items is “Harbour ISP is committed to using a portion of its profits to help charities”.

Perceived distinctiveness of the organisation was measured by adopting three items from Donovan, Carlson, and Zimmermann (2005). This scale was deemed appropriated as Carlson, Todd, and Cumiskey (2009) utilised these items to examine the contribution of the perceived distinctiveness of a sports team to the level of identification with this team among fans. An example of the measures was “I feel Harbour ISP is unlike any other internet provider”. OI with the event sponsor was measured using Mael and Ashforth's (1992) scale because a meta-analysis of studies addressing OI indicated that this scale was frequently used in the OIT literature (Riketta, 2005). Furthermore, the scale has been applied in a charity and charity sport event context (Bhattacharya et al., 1995; Boenigk & Helmig, 2013; Cornwell & Coote, 2005). In the context of the present research, three measures of the original six item scale were adopted to facilitate the practicality of the questionnaire and meet completion guidelines provided by MS Queensland and to avoid respondent fatigue (Hinkin, 1995; Hofer & Grohs, 2018; Pather & Uys, 2008). The researcher used the same three items which were selected by Hofer and Grohs (2018) to examine organisational identification in a sport sponsorship context. Hofer and Grohs' (2018) findings suggested that the selected three items exceed the commonly used threshold for composite reliability ( $>0.7$ ) and average variance extracted ( $>50\%$ ) (Bagozzi & Yi, 2012) indicating convergent validity of the three items. An example is “I am very interested in what others think about Harbour ISP.”

Furthermore, the current study adopted the items from Yoo, Donthu, and Lee (2000) to examine organisational commitment towards the event sponsors. This scale was identified as suitable because it was used by Lacey et al. (2010) in a CSE sponsorship

setting. An example is “Harbour ISP would be one of my top choices when choosing an internet provider”. Lastly, the questionnaire asked participants to provide demographic information such as their age, gender, income, and education level as well as the last two digits of the mobile phone number and the last two letters of their first name in order to be identified anonymously when completing the post-event questionnaire. Also, participants were asked for their agreement to be contacted by the researcher for further studies. An overview of all items can be found in Appendix A. The next section outlines how the collected data were analysed in order to investigate the research questions.

#### **3.5.4 Study 1: Data analysis.**

Controversy exists in relation to the analysis of Likert scale data within the literature (Sullivan & Artino Jr., 2013). This discussion is rooted in the question as to whether Likert scale data, which represents ordinal data, can be treated as interval data. This is of importance because it influences how Likert scale data may be analysed with paramedic statistical techniques or strictly with non-paramedic tests (Sullivan & Artino Jr., 2013). Ordinal data has ranked responses but the interval between each response may not necessarily be equal (Jamieson, 2004). For example, in the current research, MS Moonlight Walk participants’ identification with Harbour ISP was measured on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The distance between strongly agree to agree might be different than from agree to neutral. Interval data has a numerically defined distance between the intervals. The number of years participating in the event represents interval data. Consequently, ordinal data cannot be treated as interval data and needs to be analysed with non-parametric tests such chi-squared, Mann-Whitney U-test, and ordinal logistic regression as these forms of statistical tests require interval or ordinal levels (Kuzon, Urbanchek, & McCabe, 1996).

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Kuzon et al. (1996) described analysing ordinal data with parametric statistical tests such as t-tests, Pearson's correlation and linear regression analysis, and structural equation modelling as one of the "seven deadly sins of statistical analysis" (p.265). For instance, calculating the mean of ordinal data may not represent the data accurately. If research participants mainly strongly agreed or strongly disagreed with a statement in the current study, the mean would indicate that on average participants neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement (Sullivan & Artino Jr., 2013). Furthermore, interpreting the mean of ordinal data presents challenges (Kuzon et al., 1996). As mentioned above, the variables are measured on a seven-point Likert scale in the present research. If the mean was calculated as 6.5, MS Moonlight Walk participants would on average agree and half with the statement which is a difficult result to interpret (Kuzon et al., 1996). Consequently, the median might be a more useful measure of a central tendency (Kuzon et al., 1996).

Researchers have also suggested that parametric tests are appropriate to analyse ordinal data (Zimmermann, 1987; Norman, 2010). Norman (2010) acknowledged that ordinal data violates assumptions of parametric tests but questions whether this leads to erroneous conclusions. For instance, de Winter and Dodou's (2010) compared the statistical power of a t-test and a Mann-Whitney test when applied to Likert scale data. As mentioned above, a t-test is a parametric test that can be performed to identify whether the mean between two groups is different when continuous data were collected and the data were normally distributed (Kuzon et al., 1996). A Mann-Whitney test is a statistical technique which is appropriate to compare two independent groups when the assumptions of a t-test are violated (Verma, 2016). The results indicated a similar statistical power of both tests when the samples had a normal distribution however, the Mann-Whitney test results in better outcomes when the distribution is skewed or the sample sizes are unequal (Winter &

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Dodou, 2010). In a similar study, Zimmermann (1987) identified that the t-test is more powerful than the Mann-Whitney test unless the samples differ in size and the smaller sample has a smaller variance.

In the CSE sponsorship literature, the majority of researchers have analysed ordinal data with parametric tests (e.g. Cornwell & Coote, 2005; Inoue et al., 2016; Kim & Boo, 2011;). This research followed this approach and treated Likert-scale data as nominal data. However, the researcher acknowledges the importance of interpreting the results of the means critically. For example, reporting the mean may be accompanied by a frequency analysis to identify whether the mean is affected by clusters among the outer ends of the Likert-scale.

Data analysis was conducted using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 23) and AMOS. Two two-sample tests are performed to examine H1 and H2. A two-sample t-test is identified as appropriate test to examine H1 and H2 as only nine event participants completed the pre- and post-event questionnaire and consequently the datasets are treated as two populations (Verma, 2016). A left tailed test is conducted because this text examines whether the mean of the second group (post-event) is significantly higher than the first group (pre-event) (Verma, 2016). Consequently, the null hypothesis and alternative hypothesis are defined as follows:

$H_0$ : There is no significant difference in CSE participants level of identification with a CSE sponsor before and after the event.

$H_A$ : There is a significant difference in CSE participants level of identification with a CSE sponsor before and after the event.

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In order to examine H2, which states that CSE participants perceive the CSE sponsor as more distinct after the event than before the event, the null and alternative hypotheses are defined as follows:

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant difference in CSE participant's' perceived distinctiveness of a CSE sponsor before and after the event.

H<sub>A</sub>: There is a significant difference in CSE participant's' perceived distinctiveness of a CSE sponsor before and after the event.

A series of linear regression analyses is conducted to examine H3-H5. A confirmatory factor analysis examines the validity and reliability of the scale items for perceived CSR, organisational distinctiveness, OI, and organisational commitment (Cornwell & Coote, 2005). Cronbach's alpha is calculated to test the reliability of the constructs. A Cronbach alpha greater than .70 indicates reliable constructs (Bagozzi, & Yi, 2012; Nunnally, 1994).

The following fit indices are used to measure the model validity: chi-square statistic, root mean squared error of approximation (RMSEA), and a comparative fit index (CFI) (Bagozzi & Yi, 2012). The chi-square value indicates the difference between predicted and observed covariance matrix. The model has a good fit if the chi-square value is non-significant (p-value of  $\geq .05$ ) (Hu & Bentler, 1999). RMSEA indicates the distance between the measured data and the line of best fit. The scales of each variable influence the RMSEA value which represents a limitation of this index when variables are measured with different scales such as five and seven-point Likert scales (Kline, 2005). In the present research, all items were measured on a seven-point Likert scale and therefore RMSEA is an appropriate fit index. It is recognised that a value smaller than 0.06 indicates a good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The CFI compares the fit of the proposed model with a model in which

the variables are not correlated. CFI value ranges between 0 and 1, whereas 0 indicates that no difference in the covariance matrices (chi-square value) exists and all variables are not correlated. Consequently, a value greater than 0.95 indicates a good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

After identifying a good model fit, a series of linear regression analysis are undertaken to examine H3 to H5. The analysis is based on the composite scores of perceived CSR, organisational distinctiveness, OI, and organisational commitment. A linear regression analysis is undertaken to examine how an independent variable contributes to a dependent variable (Field, 2013). The linear regression equation is as follows:

$$y_i = b_0 + b_1 X_i + \epsilon_i$$

In this equation,  $y$  represents the dependent variable,  $X$  the independent variable,  $b_0$  and  $b_1$  are regression coefficients, and  $\epsilon_i$  is the error associated with the prediction. Table 4 provides an overview of the independent and dependent variables that were used to test H3 to H5. The next section describes Study 2 of the present research.

Table 4

*Overview of independent and dependent variables to test H3 to H5*

Hypothesis	Independent variable	Dependent variable
H3: CSE participants perceived distinctiveness of the CSE sponsor contributes to their level of identification with the sponsor.	Organisational distinctiveness	Organisational identification
H4: CSE participants' level of identification with the CSE sponsor contributes to their commitment towards the organisation.	Organisational identification	Organisational commitment



Hypothesis	Independent variable	Dependent variable
H5: CSR associations of the sponsor contribute to the perceived distinctiveness of the event sponsor.	CSR associations	Organisational distinctiveness

### 3.6 Study 2

The purpose of collecting EEG data was to provide supplementary information to the online questionnaire to gain a better understanding of how sponsoring the MS Moonlight Walk assists Harbour ISP to develop meaningful and emotional relationships with event participants. More specifically, EEG data were collected to examine research question 2:

Research question 2: How does sponsoring a CSE affect participants' emotional response towards an event sponsor?

Study 2 can be described as a within subject experiment because each MS Moonlight Walk participant was exposed to three different stimuli (positive images, neutral images, and Harbour ISP's brand logo) (Charness, Gneezy, & Kuhn, 2012). A more detailed description of these images is provided below. The following sections also provide an overview of the study participants, procedures, and data analysis.

#### 3.6.1 Study 2: Participants.

MS Moonlight Walk 2018 participants who indicated their willingness to be contacted by the researcher for further studies in the pre- and post-event questionnaire received an invitation to participate in Study 2 via email. In total, 130 participants received the invitation email. The email stated the research purpose, the voluntary nature of the participation, the incentive of a \$30 voucher for a national grocery store as well as the requirement that participants should not be diagnosed with a neurological disease. The

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email was distributed three times, between the 28<sup>th</sup> October 2018 and the 13<sup>th</sup> November 2018. In total, ten MS Moonlight Walk 2018 participants replied to the email and expressed their willingness to participate. However, three participants were living with MS and this is a neurological disease and were hence unable to participate in the study. The final sample consisted of five women and two men. All participants had normal vision or wore glasses to see the screen clearly (Sobotka, Davidson, & Senulis, 1992). Each participant received a \$30 gift voucher for an Australian grocery store and was reimbursed for travel expenses after completing the experiment.

### **3.6.2 Study 2: Procedures.**

Study 2 was conducted in two laboratories to accommodate the geographical locations of the participants. Two participants visited the laboratory based at Griffith University, Gold Coast campus which is administrated by the Griffith Institute for Tourism. The remaining participants attended a session hosted at Griffith University, South Bank Campus in Brisbane. Participants were greeted and asked to take a seat on a comfortable chair when entering the laboratory and were positioned 75cm away from the 13-inch screen monitor (Sobotka et al., 1992). The participants were provided with instructions on the upcoming task and a consent form (Davidson et al., 1990). After answering all of the participant's questions and signing the consent form, the EEG device was placed on the head of the participant. In the current study, the Emotiv EPOC+ wireless EEG headset with 14 channels was used because it has been found applicable for consumer behaviour studies (Khushaba, Greenacre, Kodagoda, Louviere, Burke, & Dissanayake, 2012; Khushaba, Wise, Kodagoda, Louviere, Kahn, & Townsend, 2013) and met budget requirements. Figure 5 shows a picture of the EEG device used in Study 2.



*Figure 5.* Emotiv EPOC+ (Emotiv, n.d.a).

The electrodes were attached in accordance to the International 10-20 system at the positions AF3, AF4, F3, F4, FC5, FC6, F7, F8, T7, T8, P7, P8, O1, O2. Figure 6 shows the placement of the electrodes on the research participant's head. The circle shows a head with two ears and a nose. As shown in Figure 6, F3 is placed on the left frontal side of the head and F4 on the right side.

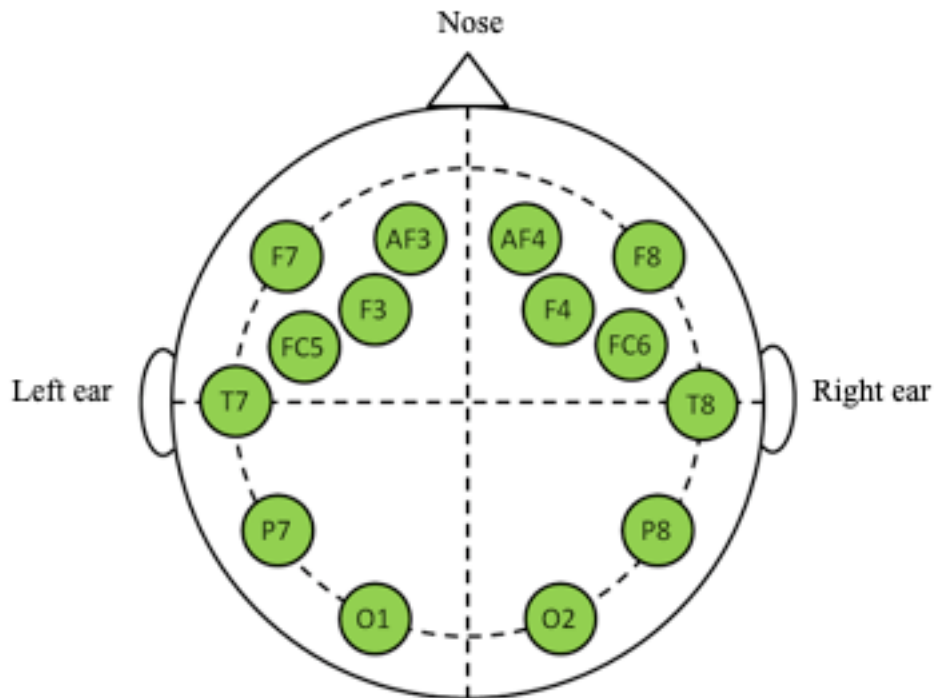


Figure 6. EEG sensor placements (Wijayasekara & Manic, 2013).

In line with Emotiv's (n.d.b) guidelines, all sensors were moisturised with a saline solution before positioning on the participant's head to achieve a sufficient connectivity. Emotiv's computer software licence pro was used to ensure that the sensors were attached to the scalp correctly and received sufficient signal strength (Emotiv, n.d.c). The sampling rate was 128Herz (Hz) (Hz is the unit of frequency describing the number of wave cycles per second) which provides a sufficient number of samples to analyse alpha frequencies (Pham & Tran, 2012).

The light in the room was reduced by closing the curtains to ensure that the participant was focused on the screen and data artefacts were prevented as best as possible (Bosshard et al., 2016). Data artefacts refer to electrical activity which is recorded but occur outside the brain such as ocular activity resulting from eye movement and eye blink or muscle movement (Elbert, Lutzenberger, Rockstroh, & Birbaumer, 1985; Gratton, 1998; Gratton, Coles, & Donchin, 1983; Hagemann, 2004).

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The stimuli were presented in Open Sesame, a free software used in social sciences to build experiments. The program includes a user interface providing researchers with limited programming skills the opportunity to develop an experiment (Mathôt, Schreij, & Theeuwes, 2012). Open Sesame was identified as appropriate software due to budget constraints and the researcher's limited programming skills. Open Sesame was connected with the data recording software Emotiv Pro through a virtual serial port. A virtual serial port facilitated the data exchange between the two software programs installed on the same computer (Elitma Software, n.d.).

The experiment started with a trial to identify any remaining questions the participants may have. The trial had the same setup as the main session and was organised as follows. First, the screen showed a black fixation cross on a white background for two seconds to draw the participant's attention towards the middle of the screen. Next, an image was shown for three seconds. After seeing the image, participants were asked to rate the image based on its valence (Davidson et al., 1990). Valence refers to how positive or negative the participants perceives the image. Positive images represent things that make the participant happy, satisfied, competent, proud, contented, or delighted. Negative images are likely to make the participant unhappy, upset, irritated, angry, sad, or depressed. Valence was measured on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from very negative to very positive.

Figure 7 summarises the experimental design.



Figure 7. Stimuli presentation.

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The participant saw a total of three images during the trial. After answering all questions, the researcher left the room and participants were advised to meet the researcher outside the room after completing the experiment. In order to start the session, the participant was required to press the ENTER button on the keyboard. The instructions on the screen asked the participant to sit quietly and watch the blank screen for four minutes (Hagemann, 2004).

The baseline EEG was measured with open eyes because participants would need their eyes open for the remaining session (Davidson et al., 1990). The baseline EEG refers to data obtained when the research participant is in a resting state and does not engage in any task and is not exposed to any stimuli. Collecting the baseline EEG of each participant is important to identify significant changes in the participants' EEG when they are exposed to the stimuli. After four minutes, instructions appeared on the screen. The instructions explained that the research participant will have a break and the opportunity to drink water after the first fifty images were shown. Also, the research participant was asked to start the main session by pressing the 'Get Started' button. The participants were presented with 40 neutral, 40 positive images taken from the Open Affective Standardized Image Set (OASIS) (Kurdi, Lozano, & Banaji, 2017), as well as the Harbour ISP's brand logo 20 times during the main session. The OASIS is a free database and includes positive, neutral, and negative images. The images were rated by 822 participants and are highly reliable and consistent across gender groups (Kurdi et al., 2017). As shown in Table 5, research participants were divided into six groups and each group saw the images in a different sequence to avoid order effects (Lefkoff-Hagius & Mason, 1993). Order effects describe differences in participants' responses based on the order of the presented stimuli. For example, research

participants who see a positive image prior to Harbour ISP’s logo might respond differently to the logo than a participant who sees a neutral image before the brand logo.

Table 5

*Stimuli presentation order for seven participants*

Participant	First image	Second image	Third image
1 <sup>st</sup> Participant and 7 <sup>th</sup> Participant	Harbour ISP logo	Positive	Neutral
2 <sup>nd</sup> Participant	Harbour ISP logo	Neutral	Positive
3 <sup>rd</sup> Participant	Neutral	Harbour ISP logo	Positive
4 <sup>th</sup> Participant	Neutral	Positive	Harbour ISP logo
5 <sup>th</sup> Participant	Positive	Harbour ISP logo	Neutral
6 <sup>th</sup> Participant	Positive	Neutral	Harbour ISP logo

As shown in Figure 8, markers were inserted before and after each image in order to segment the data into positive images, neutral images, and Harbour ISP brand logo (Anderson, Potter, Matzen, Shepherd, Preston, & Silva, 2011). A more detailed description of this segmentation process is provided in the following section. The entire EEG session took approximately 45 minutes to complete. The EEG session was followed by an interview about participant’s MS Moonlight Walk 2018 experience, which is described more in detail in Study 3.

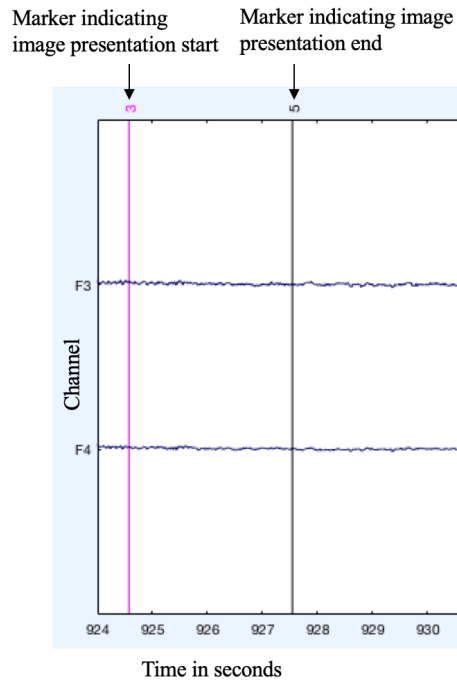


Figure 8. Time domain EEG data with markers.

### 3.6.3 Study 2: Data analysis.

The data were analysed in four steps. First, the data were pre-processed in order to identify and remove data artefacts (Jahangir, Iqbal, ur Rehman, Shah, Naqvi, & Siddiqui 2017). After removing data artefacts, the time domain EEG data was transformed into alpha power spectra. A power spectra provides an overview of the frequencies (e.g. alpha frequency) which exist in the time domain EEG data. Based on the identified alpha frequencies an alpha asymmetry index for each participant was calculated. A repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to assess whether participants respond emotionally different to the three stimuli types. A second repeated measures ANOVA was performed to identify any significant differences among participants' perceived valence of the images. A more detailed description of the individual steps is provided throughout the next sections.



**3.6.3.1 Data pre-processing.**

The data pre-processing was guided by previous studies which collected EEG data with an Emotiv EPOC device (e.g. Anderson et al., 2011; Jahangir et al., 2017; Kushaba et al., 2013). The pre-processing of the data was divided into eight steps: add channel locations and event information, data filtering, channel rejection, epoching, epoch rejection, independent component analysis, and reject components. These steps are described more in detail in the following paragraphs.

The data were analysed with EEGLAB, a software commonly used for analysing EEG data (e.g. Anderson et al., 2011; Ohme et al, 2009, 2010). EEGLAB offers an interactive graphic user interface and a guide as to how to pre-process EEG data (Swartz Center for Computational Neuroscience, n.d.). The interface along with the guidelines enabled the researcher, who has limited programming skills, the opportunity to process the collected EEG data. The file obtained from the data recording software Emotiv Pro was uploaded to EEGLAB. The channel location information (e.g. F3/F4) were added manually according to the International 10-20 system. Also, the markers that were inserted during the recording, before and after each image, were uploaded to EEGLAB. Adding the markers is important because the researcher segments (epochs) the data based on these markers as described above.

Next, the EEG data were filtered to exclude frequencies irrelevant to the study purpose (Jahangir et al. 2017). This work analysed alpha waves, which have a frequency between 7.5 and 12.5Hz, as alpha waves have been used traditionally in frontal asymmetry studies (Davidson et al., 1990). A high pass filter of 0.5Hz and a low pass filter of 30Hz was applied. The application of these filters excludes all frequencies below 0.5Hz and higher than 30Hz. In the following step, EEGLAB's algorithm to identify bad channels was

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applied to identify whether the relevant channels for this study (F3 and F4) had sufficient signal during the entire data recording period. While the researcher ensured the sensors had a strong connection before leaving the room, it is possible that the signal may decrease during the session. For example, the research participant may touch the EEG device, which impacts the signal, making it necessary to examine whether the sensors (F3 and F4) had a sufficient signal during the entire data collection period.

Next, an independent component analysis (ICA) was conducted to identify and remove data related to eye blinks (Akhtar, Mitsuhashi & James, 2012; Anderson et al., 2011; Kushaba et al. 2013, Jahangir et al., 2017). ICA refers to a statistical technique that identifies and separates independent components of the signal (Jahangir et al., 2017). Figure 9 provides an example how ICA assists in separating different signals present in one data set. Two professors speak to a group of students and their words are being recorded with two microphones. Instead of being quiet and listening to the professors, the students talk with each other. The microphones record this background noise. Consequently, the signal of each microphone consists of the sounds made by each lecturer as well as the students. Applying an ICA to this data set allows to separate the voices of the lecturers from the students.

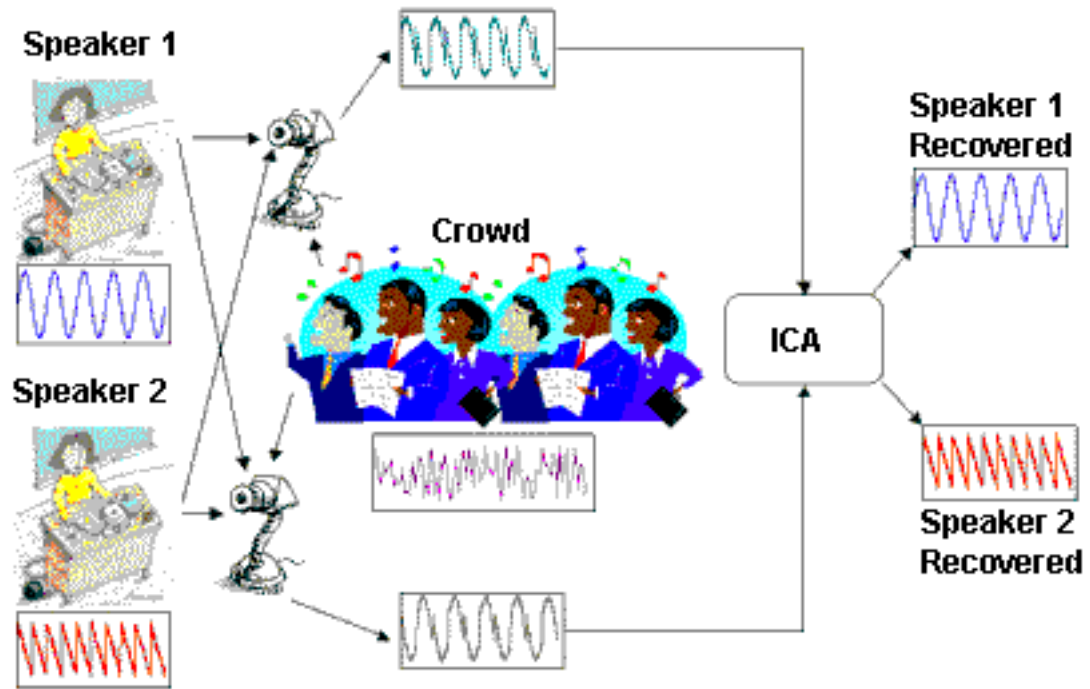
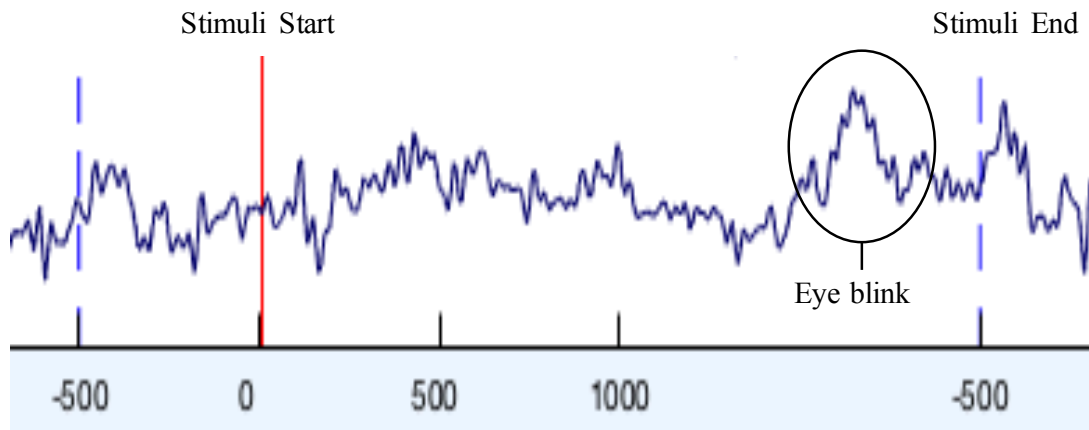


Figure 9. Signal separation (Nisbet, Miner, & Yale, 2018; Statsoft, n.d.).

In the present study, the ICA algorithm included in the EEGLAB software was used to separate brain activity data from eye blinks (Akhtar et al., 2012). After performing the ICA, the components were inspected manually to identify data recorded through eye blinks (Akhtar et al., 2012). Figure 10 demonstrates how ICA helps to remove data artefacts.

1. Channel F3 before eye blink removal



2. Channel F3 after eye blink removal

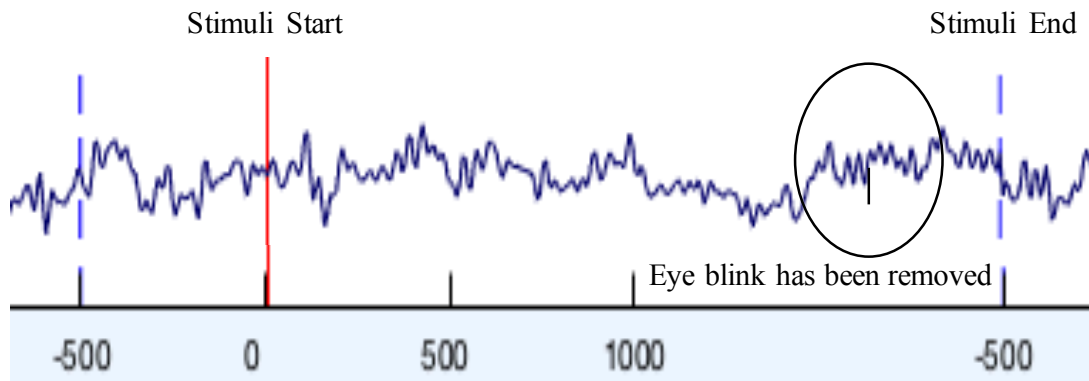


Figure 10. Eye blink removal.

After removing these components, the data were epoched. Epoching describes a process which extracts specific data segments from the EEG recording. In this study, EEG data were recorded throughout the entire session including the time when participants rated the image on a Likert scale. Figure 11 shows EEG data recorded during the presentation of two images indicated by the numbers one and three. The area between the two images indicated by the number two shows the EEG data obtained during the time when the participant rated the image based on its valence. To address research question 2, the

researcher extracted EEG data whilst participants were viewing the positive and neutral images along with the Harbour ISP brand logo.

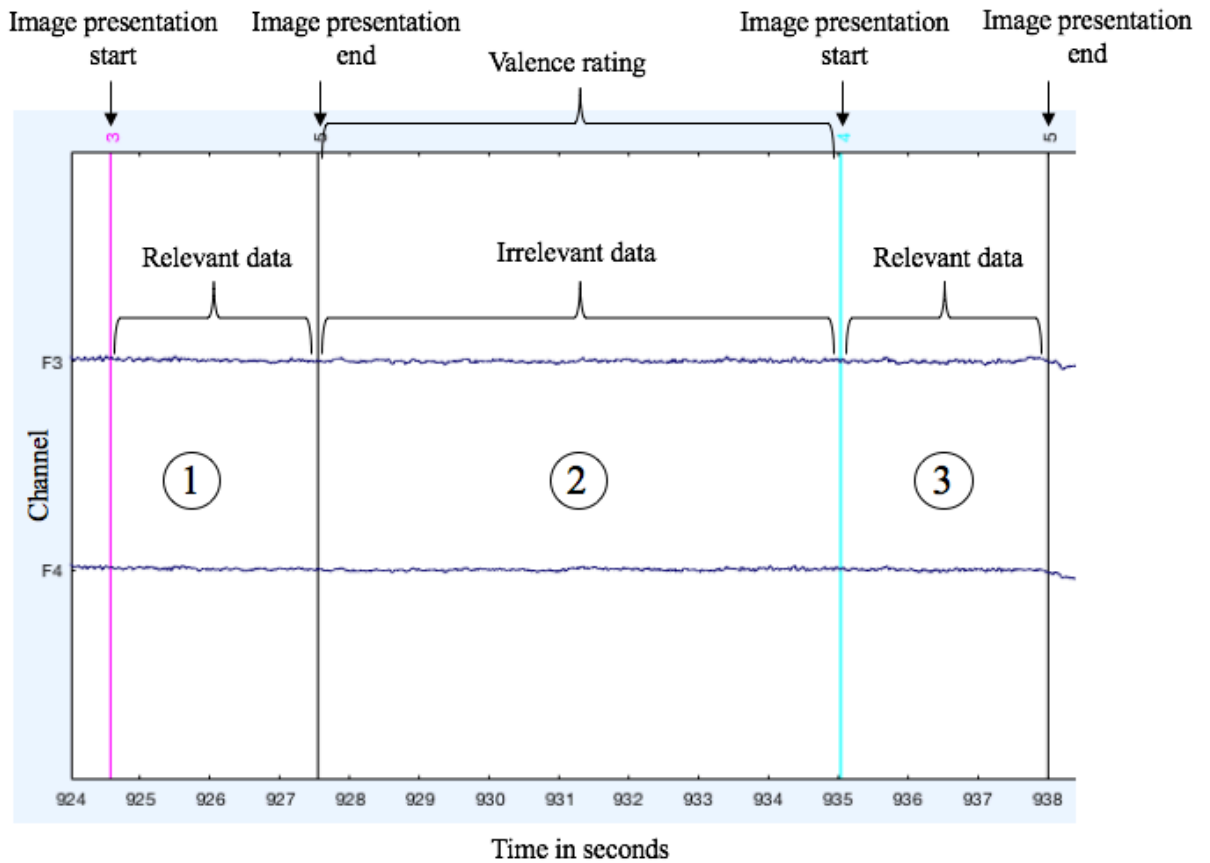


Figure 11. Time domain signal before epoching the data.

The marker before each image was used to create epochs with the duration of -0.5s to 2s. As shown in Figure 12, after the epoching process was completed, the data set included only data recorded during the stimuli presentation. The epoch starts 0.5s before the research participant sees the image because this time frame functions as baseline. The average of this baseline period was subtracted from the epoch (linear baseline correction).

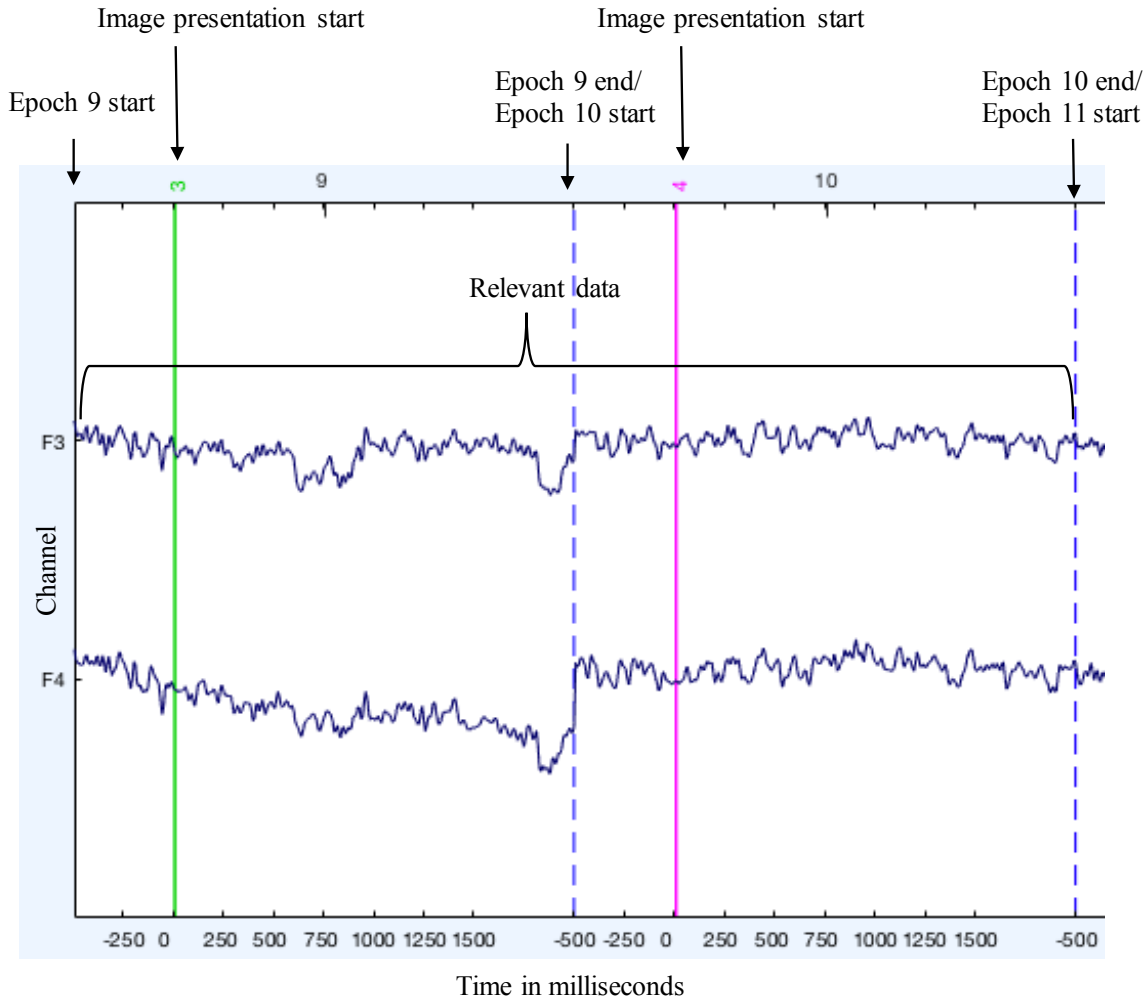


Figure 12. Time domain signal after epoching the data.

The dataset consisted of 100 epochs (one epoch per image: 40 neutral images, 40 positive images, 20 brand image). Next the epochs were inspected to identify additional data artefacts. In the next step, a Fast Fourier Transformation (FFT) was performed in order to convert the time domain signal into power spectra (see Figure 11) (e.g. Davidson et al., 1990; Gable & Harmon-Jones, 2008; Mechin, Gable & Hicks, 2016). A FFT deconstructs the time domain epoched EEG data in waves with different frequencies and amplitudes. For example, Figure 13 shows that the time domain signal consists of a single wavelength with a frequency of 4Hz (the signal has 4 wave cycles per second) and an amplitude of 100. In

the context of the present study, a FFT was applied to identify alpha waves.

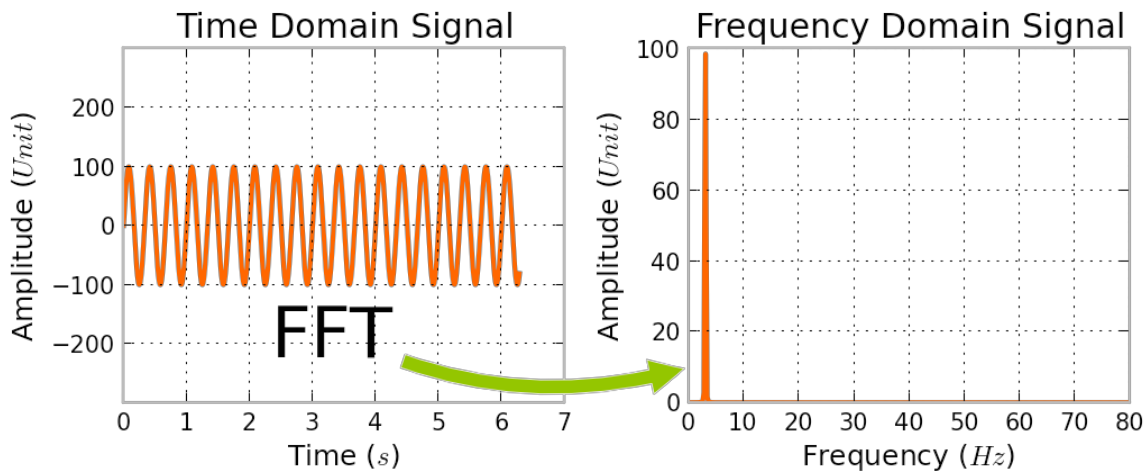


Figure 13. Fast Fourier Transformation.

The data were extracted using a Hanning window, as FFT is based on the assumption that the signal occurs periodically (Emotiv, n.d.c). A Hanning window ensures that the analysed signal consists of a continuous waveform by zeroing the amplitude at the beginning and end of the epoch (Allen, Coan, & Nazarian, 2004). Consecutive epochs were overlapped by 50 percent in order to minimise data loss (Gable & Harmon-Jones, 2008). After transforming the time-domain signal into alpha power spectra, all neutral, positive and Harbour ISP's logo epochs were averaged. Averaging the epochs reduces the effect that data artefacts have on the data. The average alpha powers were used to calculate an alpha asymmetry index as described in the following section (Gable & Harmon-Jones, 2008). After creating power spectra, the data pre-processing was completed. Figure 14 summarises the data pre-processing steps. The next section outlines how the EEG data were analysed to examine research question 2.

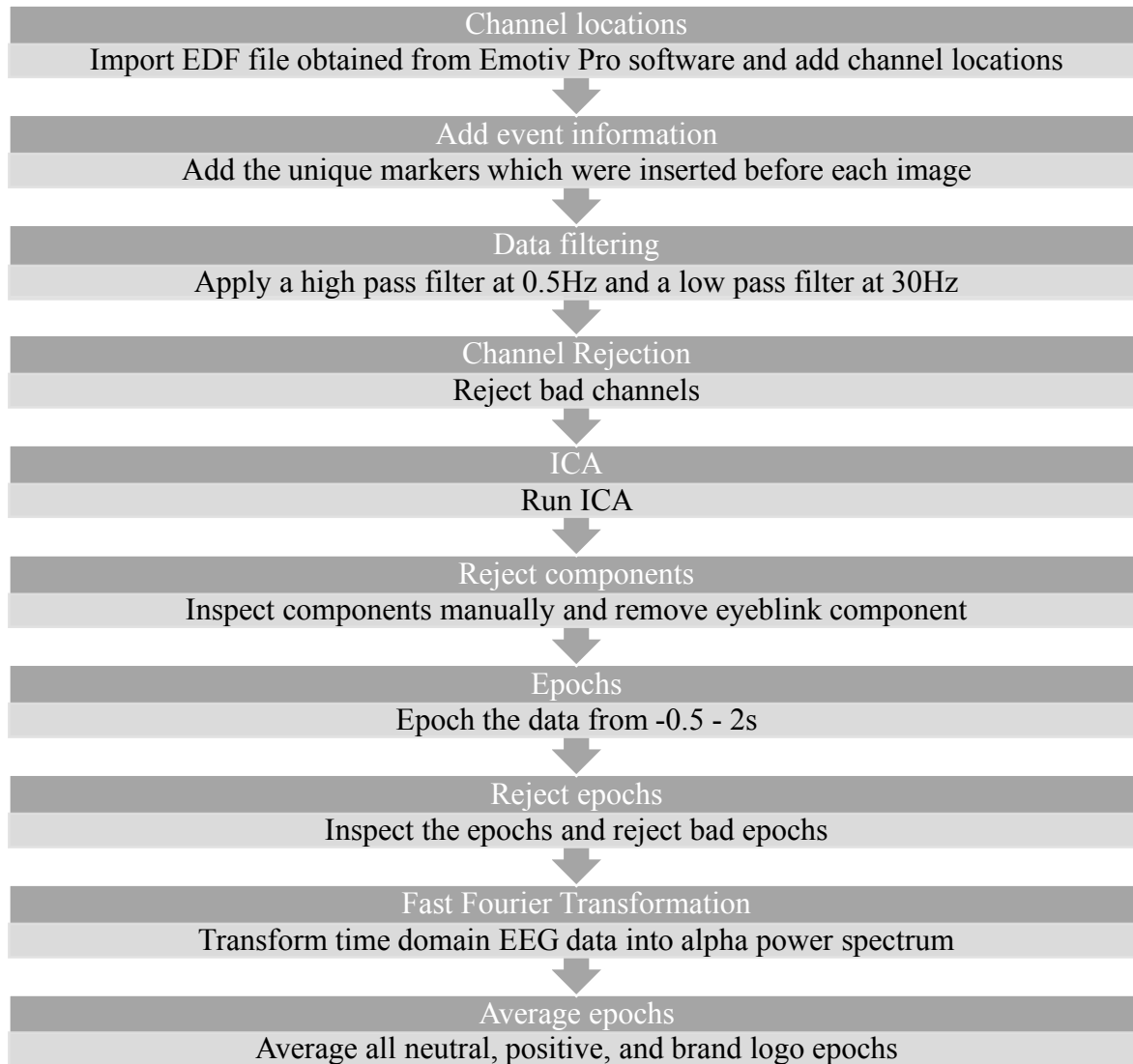


Figure 14. EEG data pre-processing steps summary.

### 3.6.3.2 *Alpha asymmetry index calculation.*

As described in Section 2.8., the current research was guided by the AWM model so that brain activity among the left and right frontal lobe were compared in order to examine the emotional response of event participants towards Harbour ISP. In order to compare the brain activity among both lobes, asymmetry indexes for alpha power spectra among frontal homologous sites F3 and F4 was calculated. Power values are reported to be positively skewed (mean is to the right of the median) and therefore the data were log transformed to



reduce the skew. This is then followed by development of asymmetry indexes by calculating  $\ln(R) - \ln(L) = \ln\left(\frac{R}{L}\right)$ . In this equation, (R) represents the power spectrum of the right (e.g. F3) and (L) of the left frontal lobe (e.g. F4). Importantly, asymmetry scores for the alpha power is negatively related to the activity (Davidson et al., 1990). In other words, a lower index value for alpha indicates a greater activity in the left frontal brain area which is associated with a positive emotional response (Fischer, Peres, & Fiorani, 2018). In order to examine research question 2, a repeated measures analysis of variance was conducted using the asymmetry scores of the positive images, neutral images, and the Harbour ISP's brand logo (Verma, 2016). A repeated measures ANOVA is an appropriate statistical technique to compare the means of three stimuli types when one group of research participants was exposed to all three stimuli types (Field, 2013; Verma, 2016). This was the case in the present research as all participants saw positive and neutral images as well as the Harbour ISP's brand logo. The null hypothesis was defined as having no difference among the means of the three (positive, neutral, Harbour ISP logo) asymmetry scores. The alternative hypothesis was defined as having at least two asymmetry score means significantly different.

A repeated measures ANOVA was also conducted to examine whether participants perceived the valence of the three image categories differently. The null hypothesis was defined as having no difference among the means of the three (positive, neutral, and the Harbour ISP logo) valence scores. The alternative hypothesis was defined as at least two valence score means being significantly different.

Conducting a repeated measures ANOVA requires testing the assumption of sphericity (Field, 2013). Considering that all research participants were exposed to the three stimuli categories, the collected data from the different conditions are related. The

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assumption of sphericity states that the difference between the three stimuli types is approximately equal (Field, 2013). In the current research, the assumption of sphericity would be met if:

$$\text{Variance}_{\text{Positive-Neutral}} \approx \text{Variance}_{\text{Positive-Harbour ISP}} \approx \text{Variance}_{\text{Neutral-Harbour ISP}}$$

Sphericity is assessed by Mauchly's test, which examines the hypothesis that the variance of the differences between the stimuli categories is equal. The assumption of sphericity is not met if the Mauchly's probability value is less than .05. If the data violates the condition of sphericity, the degrees of freedom need to be adjusted. The degrees of freedom are adjusted by either by the application of the Greenhouse-Geiser estimate or the Huyn-Feldt estimate. Researchers recommend that to interpret the Greenhouse Geiser estimate, the estimate of sphericity should be less than .75 and the Huyn-Feldt estimate when it is larger.

The repeated measures ANOVA identified whether any of the stimuli types (positive images, neutral images, and the Harbour ISP's brand logo) is significantly different compared to the other image categories. In order to examine which group is significantly different, a post-hoc Bonferroni test was performed as this type of test is most robust if the assumption of sphericity is violated (Field, 2013). In summary, a repeated measures ANOVA along with a Bonferroni test examined whether the MS Moonlight Walk participants' response towards Harbour ISP's brand logo was positive (e.g. not significantly different than their response to positive images) or neutral (e.g. not significantly different than their response to neutral images). The combination of these statistical tests was appropriate to investigate research question 2:

Research question 2: How does sponsoring a CSE affect participants' emotional response towards an event sponsor?

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The next section outlines Study 3 of the current research which addresses research question 3.

Research question 3: How do event participants, event managers, and representatives from event sponsors perceive the sponsor's contribution to the value creation process of CSEs?

Study 3 was conducted to explain the results of Study 1 and Study 2 of the present research.

### **3.7 Study 3**

The following section provides an overview of the qualitative component of the explanatory sequential mixed method research design. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with MS Moonlight Walk 2018 participants, the event manager, and representatives from Harbour ISP to examine research question 3:

Research question 3: How do event participants, event managers, and representatives from event sponsors perceive the sponsor's contribution to the value creation process of CSEs?

A semi-structured interview aims to generate rich qualitative data from a specific lived experience from an individual's perspective (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011; Kvale, 2007; Tracy, 2013). This interview method aligns with the researcher's underlying pragmatic epistemology that knowledge is derived from lived experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Goldkuhl, 2012; Morgan, 2014). Semi-structured interviews are an appropriate research method when the interviewer has prior knowledge of a subject area and wishes to understand individuals' experiences and the underlying mechanisms that may explain an observed phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). This was the case in the current research, as the interviewer had previously conducted research in the CSE field and

had organised and participated in CSEs. Furthermore, the semi-structured interviews were conducted to explain the findings of Study 1 and Study 2.

Semi-structured interviews are commonly used when the researcher does not have a second opportunity to conduct an interview with the same person (Bernard, 2011), which was the case in the current research. This type of interview is based on a specific guide including topics that need to be addressed during the conversation, as this ensures reliable and comparable results across the sample (Bernard, 2011). Aligned with the exploratory nature of the present research, semi-structured interviews were identified as an appropriate data collection tool as this form of interview allows a level of flexibility to react to unexpected responses, which can lead to results that were not considered when designing the interview guide (Bernard, 2011; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011; Webb & Mohr, 1998). Furthermore, semi-structured interviews are an appropriate method to explore CSE participants' event experience (Filo et al., 2019; Filo et al., 2008; Higgins & Hodgins, 2008). The following section provides further information regarding the interviewees and the interview guide.

### **3.7.1 Study 3: Participants.**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in two phases. First, interviews with 17 MS Moonlight Walk 2018 event participants were conducted. In the second phase, one event manager, and two sponsorship managers from Harbour ISP were interviewed. The interviews with the event manager, representatives of Harbour ISP as well as six event participants were conducted over the phone to account for geographic distance and/or limited mobility of the interviewees. The remaining 11 interviews with the event participants were completed in person. The following paragraph provides demographic information of the event participants who were interviewed.

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Twelve participants were female and the majority of participants (13) were between 40 and 61 years old. Forty-seven percent had completed at least a bachelor's degree.

Participants were asked to provide their primary motivation for participation in the event, and all but one cited a personal connection with MS. The primary motivation cited by the remaining respondent was the physical challenge inherent in the event. Eleven interviewees completed the 10km walk. Table 6 summarises the demographic information along with participants' self-reported primary motivation to participate in the event, years of participation in the event, and fundraising totals.

Table 6

*MS Moonlight Walk participants' demographics and fundraising amounts*

Pseudonym	Course	Age	Number of years participated	Fundraising amount	Reason for participation	Highest education level
Andrew	10km	50	5	N/A	Cause-related	High school
Denise	5km	60	2	\$600	Cause-related	High school
Dianne	5km	26	2	\$700	Cause-related	High school
Eliza	10km		2	\$2000	Cause-related	TAFE certificate/diploma
Harry	10km	51	1	\$0	Cause-related	Bachelor

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Pseudonym	Course	Age	Number of years participated	Fundraising amount	Reason for participation	Highest education level
Ingo	5km	51	1	\$50	Cause-related	High school
Isabelle	5km	46	1	\$4000	Cause-related	Tertiary
Lauren	10km	40	4	\$3000	Cause-related	TAFE certificate/diploma
Leslie	10km	20	3	\$100	Cause-related	High school
Mark	5km	62	2	\$600	Cause-related	Tertiary
Meggin	10km	61	1	\$250	Physical challenge	TAFE certificate/diploma
Michelle	5km	58	5	\$7000	Cause-related	Graduate Diploma
Nancy	10km	40	1	N/A	Cause-related	PhD
Shane	10km	61	1	\$300	Cause-related	Bachelor
Sophie	10km	57	1	\$600	Cause-related	Master

Pseudonym	Course	Age	Number of years participated	Fundraising amount	Reason for participation	Highest education level
Sue	10km	63	2	\$500	Cause-related	Master
Yvette	10km	47	1	N/A	Cause-related	TAFE certificate/diploma

As mentioned above, the researcher also interviewed one MS Queensland event manager and two representatives from Harbour ISP. The staff member from MS Queensland had been working for the organisation for a number of years at the time of the interview. The event manager oversees the sponsorship programs associated with the MS Moonlight Walk and was subsequently identified as an appropriate interviewee. Both representatives of Harbour ISP were involved in brand promotion initiatives. Harbour ISP had had not previously sponsored a CSE prior to their partnership with the MS Moonlight Walk in 2018. The next section outlines the procedures for Study 3.

### 3.7.2 Study 3: Procedures.

As described above, MS Queensland distributed a questionnaire prior to and after the MS Moonlight Walk in which participants could provide their permission to be contacted by the Griffith University's research team to schedule a follow-up interview. In total, 130 participants agreed to be contacted and received an invitation email to be interviewed. The email included the research purpose, along with information on the participatory nature of the research as well as assurances of the confidentiality and anonymity of the collected data (Daymon & Holloway, 2011; Schonfeld & Mazzola, 2012; Supphellen, 2000). After conducting 17 interviews and distributing the invitation email

three times, no additional MS Moonlight Walk 2018 participants agreed to be interviewed. In addition to the event participants, one MS Moonlight Walk event manager agreed to be interviewed and introduced the researcher to two representatives of Harbour ISP, who also provided their permission to be interviewed.

Interviewees received no monetary incentives for their participation. The researcher summarised the interviewees' answers after each question to verify and validate the results (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016; Doyle, 2007). The next section provides an overview of the interview guides used in the present research.

### **3.7.3 Study 3: Interview guides.**

This section provides an overview of the interview guides used for the interviews with MS Moonlight Walk participants, the manager and sponsor interviewees. The interview guides for all three stakeholder groups were guided by S-D logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2016) and the authentic brand engagement literature (Cornwell, 2019; Morhart et al., 2015). The interviews with event participants started with demographic questions (e.g., age, education level, number of years participating in MS Moonlight Walk, course completed, fundraising amount). Also, event participants were asked to describe what they enjoyed the most about the event to reduce their nervousness (Tracy, 2013) and to conceptualise their event experience (Ziakas & Boukas, 2014). In addition, the researcher shared his own experiences with the MS Moonlight Walk 2018 describing that he volunteered at the event as a marshal to increase the level of trust and empathy (Tracy, 2013).

Next, event participants were asked to elaborate on how they believed Harbour ISP can add value to the MS Moonlight Walk based upon S-D logic principles that the sponsor is involved in the value creation process of CSEs (Chandler & Lusch, 2015; Vargo &



Lusch, 2008). Following the principle of S-D logic that sponsors offer value propositions (Bal et al., 2009; Dees, 2011) along with the subjective nature of authenticity (Cornwell, 2019; Ziakas & Boukas, 2014), interviewees were asked to explain how they believed Harbour ISP can help create a meaningful MS Moonlight Walk experience. Finally, building on the importance of examining sponsorship throughout the entire event (Lacey et al., 2010) and the suggestion that authentic event experiences can be created by the interaction between the sponsor and event participants (Cornwell, 2019; Ziakas & Boukas, 2014), interviewees were asked to describe how they wished to engage with Harbour ISP prior to, during, and after the event. The interview guide can be found in Appendix B.

The MS Moonlight Walk event manager and representatives of Harbour ISP were asked to provide some background information regarding their partnership. For example, both stakeholder groups elaborated on their underlying motivations to collaborate and which values they believe they share. Next, S-D logic suggests that events are created through the collaboration of different stakeholder groups (Horbel et al., 2016; Stieler et al., 2014), therefore, interviewees were asked to describe Harbour ISP's main contribution to the CSE. Also, building on the importance of brand engagement within a sport event sponsorship context (Cornwell, 2019), interviewees were asked to articulate how Harbour ISP engaged with event participants throughout the MS Moonlight Walk. Lastly, both stakeholder groups shared their thoughts on what changes are necessary in order to create a more successful sponsorship program in the following year.

#### **3.7.4 Study 3: Data analysis.**

After all interviews were completed the audio files were sent to a third-party company (i.e., rev.com) for transcription purposes. In this context, researchers have described the advantages and challenges associated with personally transcribing the

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interviews (Daymon & Holloway, 2011; Wellard & McKenna, 2001). While the researcher can increase his/her familiarity with the data when transcribing the interviews, the transcription process requires a significant amount of time (Daymon & Holloway, 2011; Wellard & McKenna, 2001). Instead of spending this time transcribing the interviews, scholars suggest hiring a professional to undertake the transcription process allows the researcher greater time to analyse the data (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). Considering the time restrictions associated with the current research, the advantages of a professional transcriber outweighed the benefits of self-transcription. Consequently, the data were transcribed by a third-party company. The transcription of the interviews resulted in 43,076 words of data.

Once the transcripts were received the documents were analysed manually. It needs to be acknowledged that some researchers suggest using computer-aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) such as NVIVO, as these programs may assist in organising data so that codes can be identified more effectively than by manually coding (Daymon & Holloway, 2011; Lewins & Silver, 2007; Saldana, 2009). However, the researcher follows the argument that CAQDAS are time consuming and may result in a distanced relationship between the researcher and the data (e.g. John & Johnson, 2000; Russel & Gregory, 1993; Zamawe, 2015).

The researcher read through the transcripts while listening to the audio files to ensure accuracy. Next, Braun and Clarke's (2006) six steps for thematic analysis was applied: (1) getting familiar with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) summarising initial codes to themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report.

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The researcher read each transcript multiple times to obtain familiarity with the data. This process revealed initial codes representing interviewee perceptions of how the sponsor can add value to the CSE. A code describes “words or short phrases that capture a summative, salient, essence-capturing and/or evocative attribute for [...] language-based or visual” (Saldana, 2009, p. 3) and links collected data to the phenomena (Tracy, 2013). A codebook, a structured overview of identified codes, definitions, and examples, was developed to assist in the data analysis (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011; Ryan & Bernard, 2000; Saldana, 2009; Tracy, 2013). Example codes included; product information, motivations to support the CSE, money, and awareness.

During the next stage of data analysis, the codes were summarised to themes with the overarching goal to discover explanations (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014; Saldana, 2009). Themes are derived from grouping particular initial codes with shared relevant similarities (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Six themes were identified: raising awareness, fundraising, sharing brand information, event day presence, and on-course support.

In the fourth step, the researcher presented the themes along with representative quotes to his supervisory team for validation purposes. Based on the supervisory team’s feedback, the theme names were revised to the following: providing operational support, raising CSE awareness, cultivating a fundraising network, engaging authentically, and celebrating constituents. These changes were made as the revised themes more accurately reflect the corresponding quotes. After the revisions were made, the researcher and supervisory team agreed on the themes, demonstrating intercoder agreement (Carey, Morgan, & Oxtoby, 1996). Lastly, the writing up of the results section was undertaken. The following section presents a summary of the methodology chapter of this work.

### **3.8 Chapter Summary**

This chapter introduced pragmatism as the underlying paradigm of the research and described the works explanatory sequential design. The chapter provided an explanation of how the data were collected through online questionnaires, EEG, and interviews from MS Moonlight Walk 2018 participants, the event manager, and representatives of Harbour ISP. Two sample t-tests and linear regression analysis were introduced as statistical techniques to test H1-H5. Furthermore, this chapter provided an overview how the EEG data were collected and analysed to examine research question 2. Lastly, semi-structured interviews were presented as the most appropriate method to investigate research question 3. The semi-structured interviews were analysed through a six-step process (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The following chapter provides an overview of the research results.

## 4 Results

The purpose of this research is twofold. First, the present research examines how CSE managers and sponsors can create sponsorship programs that promote the sponsor's brand in an authentic manner. Secondly, the current research investigated how CSE sponsorship programs facilitate the development of meaningful and emotional relationships between CSE participants and sponsors. To examine this purpose, three research questions were advanced.

Research question 1: How does sponsoring a CSE assist the sponsor in developing meaningful and emotional relationships with its consumers?

Research question 2: How does sponsoring a CSE affect participants' emotional response towards an event sponsor?

Research question 3: How do event participants, event managers, and representatives from event sponsors perceive the sponsor's contribution to the value creation process of CSEs?

The research questions were examined through an explanatory sequential mixed method research design consisting of three studies. This chapter presents the findings of each study and is organised as follows. First, the results of Study 1 are presented by providing the findings derived from testing hypotheses 1 to 5. Next, the findings of Study 2 are described by presenting the results of the repeated ANOVA, which compared event participants' alpha asymmetry index across the three stimuli categories. Lastly, the results of Study 3 are discussed based on an exploration of interviewees responses, presented as dominant themes and relevant quotations to provide enlightenment in relation to research question 3.

#### 4.1 Study 1

Study 1 utilised quantitative data obtained from pre- and post-event questionnaires completed by MS Moonlight Walk 2018 participants to address research question 1. This section presents the results of the pre-event questionnaire followed by the findings of the post-event questionnaire along with a comparison of both questionnaires to examine hypotheses 1 to 5. As previously mentioned, the pre-event questionnaire resulted in 160 completed responses and included a question regarding event participants' awareness of Harbour ISP. Prior to the event, 97% of all research participants indicated that they were not familiar at all with Harbour ISP. Consequently, 93% of respondents selected 'I do not know enough about Harbour ISP to answer' when asked questions regarding Harbour ISP's corporate social responsibility and distinctiveness as well as their level of identification with Harbour ISP and commitment towards the brand. When examining the reasons for 'I do not know responses' the researcher has to identify whether this response is related to the question or other factors such as participant's sociodemographic or involvement in the research (Durand & Lambert, 1988). In the present research, all participants who selected the 'I do not know' response also indicated that they are not familiar at all with Harbour ISP. Consequently, it appears that participants chose this response because they had no knowledge of Harbour ISP and were unable to provide an answer. As a result, the 'I do not know' responses represent invalid data and had to be removed from the dataset (Durand & Lambert, 1988; Haener & Adamowicz, 1998)

In addition, 4% of respondents selected neither/agree nor disagree when presented with the questions. However, all of these research participants indicated that they are not familiar at all with Harbour ISP, which makes it more likely that these participants selected this answer due to their inability to choose an answer rather than having knowledge of the

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brand and consciously deciding that they neither agree nor disagree with the statement. In summary, 97% of the dataset was removed due to invalid responses.

As mentioned above, the post-event questionnaire resulted in 235 completed responses and included a question regarding event participants' awareness of Harbour ISP. After the event 93% of all research participants indicated that they are not familiar at all with Harbour ISP. Consequently, 89% of respondents selected 'I do not know enough about Harbour ISP to answer' when asked questions regarding Harbour ISP's corporate social responsibility and distinctiveness as well as their level of identification with Harbour ISP and commitment towards the brand. In addition, 8% of respondents who selected neither/agree nor disagree indicated that they are not familiar at all with Harbour ISP. This results in a total of 97% invalid responses and 3% (7) valid responses.

The sample sizes of the pre- and post-event questionnaires were not sufficient to perform a confirmation factor analysis to test H1 to H5 (Mundfrom, Shaw, & Ke, 2005). MS Moonlight Walk event participants' inability to answer the questionnaire prior to and after the event due to lack of knowledge of the brand suggests that sponsoring the MS Moonlight Walk did not assist Harbour ISP in developing meaningful and emotional relationships with event participants.

As noted in the Section 3.3, the researcher attempted to collect data from a number of CSEs to examine H1 to H5 between 2017 and 2019. Initially, the event managers of five different CSEs agreed to take part in the research. However, two CSE managers discontinued the collaboration prior to the commencement of data collection. In addition, data were excluded from two additional events due to a lack of completion responses from event participants. Consequently, only the data collected from the MS Moonlight Walk

2018 were available to test hypotheses 1 – 5. The next section provides the findings of Study 2.

## 4.2 Study 2

Study 2 collected EEG data from MS Moonlight Walk 2018 participants to examine research question 2. This section is organised as follows. First, the results of the alpha asymmetry index are provided. This is followed by an overview how participants rated the perceived valence of the three image categories.

The pre-processing process described in the Section 3.6.3.1 revealed that one research participant needed to be excluded from the alpha asymmetry index calculation due to poor signal strength during the data recording period. The following findings were therefore based on a sample size of six. A repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of the image category on the research participants' emotional responses indicated by the alpha asymmetry index. The assumption of sphericity was violated ( $p = .335$ ). The Greenhouse Geiser estimate was .712 and was interpreted. As shown in Table 7, the results indicate that the alpha asymmetry index did not differ significantly between image categories [ $F(1.424, 7.121) = .317, p = .081$ ].



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Table 7

*Alpha asymmetry index tests of within-subjects effects*

Source		Type III sum			Sig.
		of squares	df	Mean square F	
Image	Greenhouse-	3.507	1.424	2.463	.668
	Geisser				
Error (Image)	Greenhouse-	55.396	7.121	7.780	
	Geisser				

While the findings are not significant, Figure 15 shows a trend suggesting that research participants’ emotional response towards Harbour ISP (M=1.62, SD=2.51) was on average more similar than their response towards the neutral (M=1.29, SD=4.39) than the positive images (M=0.56, SD=2.96).

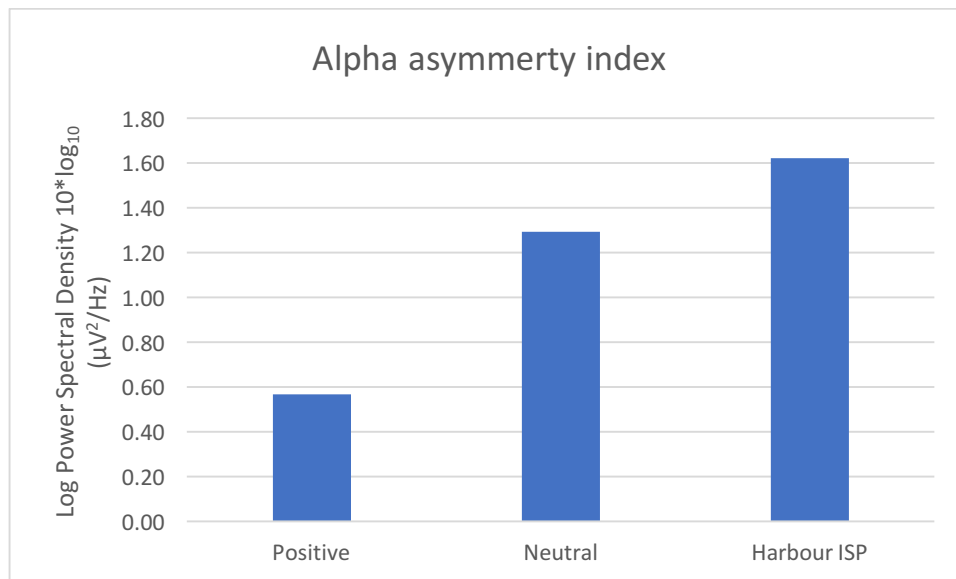


Figure 15. Alpha asymmetry index results.

Next, a repeated measures ANOVA was performed to compare the effect of the image category on the research participants’ perceived valence. Research participants rated

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positive images as most positive (M=5.11, SD=.895), followed by neutral images (M=3.14, SD=.968) and the Harbour ISP brand logo (M=3.11, SD=1.067). The assumption of sphericity was not violated ( $p < 0.05$ ) and the results suggest that the valence differed significantly between the different images [ $F(2, 280) = 208.458, p < 0.001$ ] as shown in Table 8.

Table 8

*Valence tests of within-subjects effects*

(I) Image	(J) Image	Mean difference (I-J)	Std. error	Sig. <sup>b</sup>	95% Confidence interval for difference <sup>b</sup>	
					Lower bound	Upper bound
Positive	Neutral	1.972*	.109	.000	1.708	2.235
	Harbour	2.007*	.102	.000	1.760	2.254
	ISP					
Neutral	Positive	-1.972*	.109	.000	-2.235	-1.708
	Harbour	.035	.125	1.000	-.269	.340
	ISP					
Harbour	Positive	-2.007*	.102	.000	-2.254	-1.760
	ISP					
ISP	Neutral	-.035	.125	1.000	-.340	.269

Based on estimated marginal means

\*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

b. Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni.

As shown in Table 9, post hoc tests using the Bonferroni correction revealed that there was a significant difference in valence between positive and neutral images ( $p < 0.05$ ), and between positive images and Harbour ISP's brand logo ( $p < 0.05$ ), but no significant differences between neutral images and Harbour ISP's brand logo ( $p = 1.000$ ).

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The perceived valence of positive images differed from neutral images on average by 1.972 and from Harbour ISP brand logo by 2.007.

Comparing the results of the EEG data and the self-reported data suggests that MS Moonlight Walk participants perceived Harbour ISP's brand logo as more neutral than positive. The next section describes the results of Study 3.

Table 9

*Valence pairwise comparisons*

		Type III sum				
Source		of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Image	Sphericity	372.099	2	186.050	208.458	.000
	Assumed					
Error (Image)	Sphericity	249.901	280	.893		
	Assumed					

### 4.3 Study 3

Study 3 utilised qualitative data collected from MS Moonlight Walk 2018 participants, the event manager, and representatives from Harbour ISP to address research question 3. Five themes describing how the three stakeholder groups perceive the sponsor's contribution to the value creation process of the CSE were identified: providing operational support, raising CSE awareness, cultivating a fundraising network, engaging authentically, and celebrating constituents. Each theme is described below and structured as follows. First an operational definition is provided. Next representative quotes from interviewees are presented, with pseudonyms used to ensure interviewee anonymity. After presenting the results, a discussion of the main findings and their contribution to theory and practice follows.

### **4.3.1 Providing operational support.**

MS Moonlight Walk participants described their expectations for the sponsor to assist with the delivery of the event. The theme providing operational support is defined as all material and human resources provided by the sponsor which help to deliver the event effectively. For example, Andrew believed “the role of the sponsors [is] to help what the actual organisation can't produce...such as the sound systems”. Furthermore, interviewees reflected on receiving nutrition such as food and drinks during the walk, which were provided by event sponsors, as helpful. Lauren perceived the “different drink and snack stations” as being very positive. Yvette provided some further insights as to why it is so valuable to receive on-course nutrition:

Well, I thought it was excellent how there was water suppliers, because as someone who is suffering from something similar to MS, I can't go very far without water... It was good for me to not have that stress of where I was going to get water, so I thought that the refreshments along the way were a huge help.

Andrew shared a similar experience:

We had the extra water going around actually came out and gave you actually a bit of boost and same with the bananas. They actually came out quite handy. Otherwise you get a bit of a stitch in the last half kilometre, bit of a strain.

In addition to providing material resources, event participants believe that sponsors can help deliver the event by providing human resources. For instance, Nancy suggested that Harbour ISP could send “a few people in corporate uniforms that can go, and walk around, and talk to people, and continue to sort of, I suppose increase the vibe and the buzz

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around that event”. Furthermore, Dianne remembered that “there was a lot of rubbish left on the walk” and suggested that Harbour ISP could help to “tidy up after the event”. In addition to contributing to the atmosphere, interviewees mentioned that sponsors can help ensure that event participants follow the correct course. For example, Meggin described her experience with the course directions as follows:

It was not clear where the split was [between the 5km and 10km course]...when we came to ask, ‘Oh, we're supposed to go on the 10k. Where do we go?’ They said, "Oh, well, don't worry. You've only walked five.’...that's not good, because all our people who sponsored us had sponsored us for 10km... I haven't told anybody...that's embarrassing to go back to the people who gave you money to support you to walk 10 kilometres and you've only walked five.

Building on the importance of having a sufficient number of marshals on course, Marcus believes event sponsors could be “involved in marshalling everyone together and getting them through that 5km or 10km course”. Helen shared a similar sentiment and suggested that Harbour ISP could “have a team of marshals to help with the event.”

The quotes above indicate that event participants believed the sponsor could assist in delivery of the event.

### **4.3.2 Raising CSE awareness.**

MS Moonlight Walk participants and Harbour ISP’s sponsorship managers explained that the sponsor can help promote the CSE. Raising CSE awareness can be defined as all initiatives undertaken by the sponsor to raise awareness for the CSE and the cause associated with the event. This belief is partially based upon interviewees’ perception

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that the broader community may have a limited understanding of MS. For example, Denise believes that:

People today still don't know what MS is, how it affects people. They need to know more about the disease ... they have to realise that MS doesn't discriminate. Race, age, sex it doesn't care, it will just take over your life and that's it.

Building on the perception that the broader community may have a limited understanding of MS, event participants described how Harbour ISP can help raise awareness for the CSE. For example, Denise outlined that Harbour ISP can help “building energy and awareness and publicity and showing that they're willing to associate themselves with us forever, not just for one year would be great.” Deb agreed and stated that in an ideal world “corporate sponsors would get the event out there more.” This perception is consistent with Helen’s point of view that the sponsors “do the advertising I guess, and they were able to get some of their advertising out to the wider people”. Kylee shared some further insights on how the sponsor could help raise awareness by suggesting that “[Harbour ISP] can reach out and use their marketing ... If you've got these names promoting [the CSE] then it helps spread the word.”

Furthermore, Yvette provided some suggestions for how Harbour ISP could help educate people during the event day: “it would be interesting to have some sort of interactive display or a big screen ... that you can get information and it shows people living with MS”. In the context of raising awareness, Denise highlighted the importance of Harbour ISP to engage with event participants to gain the required knowledge to promote the CSE effectively:

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[Harbour ISP] needs to sit down with us and talk to us about our experiences. Knowledge is power, the more [Harbour ISP's] knows the more drive it would give them to use their resources to spread the word.

Representatives of Harbour ISP shared the perception that the sponsor's role is to help raise CSE awareness. Natalie described "being able to spread the word a little bit further" as second most important contribution of Harbour ISP. This perception was shared by Amanda who stated that:

We're...creating awareness in general...we'll be involved in the walk. That alone, you're talking about the event, brings a level of awareness to people about the MS issues that we have. Just how difficult it is for people living with MS and how people contributing can help medical research. It's something for people to be aware of... the more people that are aware and consider in helping and contributing I think is going to make all the difference to [anyone living with MS].

Based on the perceived importance of raising CSE awareness, Natalie explained Harbour ISP's effort to promote the MS Moonlight Walk as follows:

We promoted the Moonlight Walk event on our social pages. We also did paid sponsorship towards it to get that awareness message out and hopefully get a few new people in breach of Brisbane to participate in the event. We did some internal communications and some collateral t-shirt printing.

Collectively, the quotes indicate that MS Moonlight Walk participants and representatives of Harbour ISP believe the event sponsor can help raise CSE awareness.

### **4.3.3 Cultivating a fundraising network.**

MS Moonlight Walk event participants explained that the sponsor can assist in raising funds for the event. The theme cultivating a fundraising network can be defined as all initiatives undertaken by the sponsor to raise funds for the event and support event participants in their fundraising efforts. This expectation is related to event participants' perception that their own fundraising efforts are limited by their inability to reach a diverse group of people. For example, Ingo described his fundraising experience as follows:

It's hard to raise money when you're only pretty much raising it just with those who ... have contact with MS being for example someone who suffers from it ... family members, or sometimes it's people who are working within the industry, so it's hard to convince anyone outside of that to hand over their hard-earned money.

Extending this, Michelle described how Harbour ISP could help reach a wider audience:

Well I think with a corporation, there'd be more people involved, so therefore more funds could be raised, as opposed to a little Michelle with just her little community trying to raise money with just one person, whereas if you have a corporation ... there'd be lots of Michelle's trying to raise money, as opposed to just one person.

In addition, Denise believes that Harbour ISP can cultivate a fundraising network “especially [by] asking other corporations to come on board too, you know not just one, there's many we could have”. Event participants also reflected on their own fundraising experiences to outline how sponsors could support their fundraising effort. Michelle shared her fundraising experience as follows:



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I've spent a lot of money out of my own pocket to do my fundraising. I mean, I try to get as much donated, like when you have the Bunnings sausage sizzle, you have to supply all your own bread and sausages and onions and sauces, and a lot of that ... I try to get as much of that donated as I can, but sometimes you can't get it all donated. So I take a lot out of my own pocket to supply that... So, you know, if corporate sponsors could come on board and supply some of that, that would be just awesome.

Sophie added how Harbour ISP can help event participants to stay motivated during the fundraising experience, "I suppose things like the free cap if they would supply that to encourage people ... For me personally going in the event, getting something for free to inspire me to raise more money." In addition to staying motivated through material incentives, Eliza described how Harbour ISP could encourage participants to fundraise by having a conversation with them because "it gives the participants an opportunity to go 'Someone actually cares whether or not I fundraise' ... and encouraging me to do it."

The quotes indicate that event participants believe that Harbour ISP can help raise funds for the CSE by reaching a wider audience and providing incentives for event participants who raise a certain amount of money. MS Moonlight Walk's and Harbour ISP's managers did not describe cultivating a fundraising network as role of a CSE sponsor.

### **4.3.4 Engaging authentically.**

MS Moonlight Walk participants articulated an interest in understanding the motivation behind the sponsor's involvement with the CSE. The theme engaging authentically is defined as the communication and implementation of all initiatives undertaken by the sponsor which facilitate genuine, natural, and honest interactions with

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event participants throughout the event. An interest in learning more about the sponsor was described by Mark who “would like to meet some of [Harbour ISP’s] people that run the show and find out what their involvement with MS Queensland is, and how they came to be involved with it”. Ingo agreed and mentioned that he appreciates information about Harbour ISP in terms of “who we are, this is what we do, these are the charities we support”. This is consistent with Michelle who mentioned that she would like to get a better understanding of “how [Harbour ISP] became involved and why they became involved”. Dianne agreed with this statement and summarised the importance of learning about Harbour ISP’s involvement in the event as follows:

It'd be nice to kind of learn what ISP stands for and how they impact the community and getting amongst that and seeing what else they're involved in... it enables everyone to ... kind of understand who's participating with who and the values of the company, I suppose, and their underlying messages in the community.

The interest in learning more about Harbour ISP’s involvement in the event might be partially based upon on the low perceived fit between the brand and the CSE because for Andrew “it's an unusual connection, I think. You've got an internet provider doing an outdoor event, I don't know how really it works”. Eliza provided some suggestions on how Harbour ISP could promote its partnership with the MS Moonlight Walk in an authentic manner:

The only way that I could think that they could probably get people to engage would be to actually be present...not just financially sponsor, or be a name on a banner, but to be physically present as well or to have...something that identifies the people that come from that company

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to say, 'We're from here, and we're actively supporting'. Not just here take our money MS Queensland and we'll sponsor your event financially.

Leslie provided insight on how receiving information about Harbour ISP's involvement in the event is valuable to her in terms of her purchase decision making process, "how they help would definitely make them feel more valuable to me if I could pin down exactly, right that's what they're doing that's supporting this...I can imagine that I'd feel more positively towards them". Leslie believes "it might be a good idea to include more about what they do". Ingo agreed and further outlined "I just feel like if they're supporting something that supports me then I would be interested in what services they can offer me, because then you want to support them in return." Nancy also described how learning about Harbour ISP's involvement in the event would influence her purchase decision making process:

It's nice to be able to hear why they help out, and why they want to do that, so that we as consumers can then go back and say, 'Hey, those guys are the ones that we should pick, because they really think about the issues that we care about'.

Event participants agreed on the importance of meeting representatives of Harbour ISP and receiving authentic information about the partnership between the sponsor and the MS Moonlight Walk because it may impact their purchase behaviour. In this context, Oliver from MS Queensland reflected on Harbour ISP's effort to engage with event participants as follows:

I would probably just be encouraging them from their side to perhaps just be putting a little bit more focus on leveraging the sponsorship so

that they can get the most out of it. Quite often it is ... we do try to leave that to them and leave them to their own devices to leverage it, but I would just be offering a bit more encouragement to them to do that earlier on in the pace so that they get the most out of that.

The next theme describes interviewees' perception that the event sponsor can help celebrate people who are affected by the cause associated with the event.

#### **4.3.5 Celebrating constituents.**

Event participants described the main purpose of the event as celebrating people who live with MS and suggested that sponsors can contribute to this celebration. The theme celebrating constituents is defined as initiatives undertaken by the sponsor to acknowledge people who are affected by the cause associated with the event. The perception that the event is about celebrating people who live with MS was described by Sophie as follows:

The part I like about it is that ... it's difficult to explain, I don't know how to put it into words, but for three hundred and sixty-four days of the year when you have MS you feel that there's nobody out there recognising you or caring about you. But for that one night of the year, it sounds very selfish, but you're the centre of attention and there's always love in the air for you and other people with MS.

Building on the importance of being celebrated, Denise provided the following suggestions on how Harbour ISP could help acknowledge people living with MS:

If the people that have actually got MS wear a T-shirt with [Harbour ISP's] logo and then Harbour ISP can say to everyone ... Now please look around you, these people that are wearing our T-shirt are people suffering today with MS... And see what they're doing, some are

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walking, some are in wheelchairs [because this would enable everyone to see] we're just normal people that want to make the best of what we've got for as long as we can.

Kaylee described a positive feeling she experienced from knowing that businesses support the CSE as follows: “rather than just always supporting other illnesses, other charities, it was nice to think that there's some corporate sponsors behind something like MS.”

Considering that the event's purpose is to celebrate people living with MS, interviewees suggested that sponsors should remain in the background during the event day. For example, Mark mentioned that “the sponsors are needed, but still the day is about MS. And I don't want them to detract from that”. This was supported by Harry who mentioned “it is a very emotional event and I do not think that too many people are there to listen to advertising”. In particular, just before the event was set to start, interviewees described their reluctance towards engaging with event sponsors as evidenced by Yvette's statement “when you first get there you just want to get checked off, get your cap, get your stuff, and get ready, and then at the end it would be nice [to interact with the sponsors]”. Meggin shared a similar sentiment and remembered the speeches acknowledging the sponsors including Harbour ISP at the starting line as negative because “I think everyone just wanted to get going and you could not hear”.

Study 3 revealed that interviewees believe the sponsor's contribution to the value creation process of CSEs is to provide resources which assist the delivery of the event. Furthermore, building on the limited awareness of MS in the wider community interviewees agreed that the sponsor can help educate the public. In addition, research participants expressed an interest in learning more why the event sponsor supports this

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particular CSE. Also, instead of using the CSE as a platform to aggressively promote its products and services, interviewees described ways how the corporate partner can help celebrate constituents. The next section provides a discussion of the findings as well as an overview of the theoretical and managerial implications of the present research.

### **4.4 Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented the results of the current research. Study 1 examined research question one which was defined as follows:

Research question 1: How does sponsoring a CSE assist the sponsor in developing meaningful and emotional relationships with its consumers?

Data were obtained from MS Moonlight Walk participants before and after the event through online questionnaires to examine research question 1. Data analysis revealed that MS Moonlight Walk participants were unable to provide valid responses to the pre-and post-event questionnaires due to their lack of knowledge of Harbour ISP. Therefore, the findings suggest that sponsoring a CSE did not assist the sponsor in developing meaningful and emotional relationships with its consumers.

Study 2 investigated research question 2:

Research question 2: How does sponsoring a CSE affect participants' emotional response towards an event sponsor?

The researcher collected EEG data along with self-reported data from MS Moonlight Walk participants. The findings suggest that event participants perceive Harbour ISP as more neutral than positive.

Lastly, this chapter described the findings from Study 3 which examined research question 3:

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Research question 3: How do event participants, event managers, and representatives from event sponsors perceive the sponsor's contribution to the value creation process of CSEs?

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with MS Moonlight Walk participants, the event manager, and representatives of Harbour ISP. Interviewees described five contributions of the sponsor to the value creation process of a CSE: providing operational support, raising CSE awareness, cultivating a fundraising network, engaging authentically, and celebrating constituents. The next section provides a discussion of the findings as well as an overview of the theoretical and managerial implications of the present research. In addition, the limitations of the current research are described, and future research opportunities are suggested.

## 5 Discussion

This chapter provides a discussion of the findings and contributions of this thesis and is organised as follows. First, the main findings derived from Study 1, 2, and 3 are described individually, followed by a synthesis of the results. Next, the findings of the current research are discussed in the context of the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. Third, this chapter describes how the current research contributes to the existing body of CSE sponsorship literature, OIT and S-D logic. Fourth, implications for CSE managers and sponsors derived from the current research are presented. Fifth, limitations related to research context, sample, and materials are described. Building on the findings and limitations of the present research, future research opportunities are outlined. Lastly, a conclusion is presented.

### 5.1 Main Findings

The purpose of the current research was twofold. First, to examine how CSE managers and sponsors can create sponsorship programs which promote the sponsor's brand in an authentic manner. Second, the research investigated how CSE sponsorship programs facilitate the development of meaningful and emotional relationships between CSE participants and sponsors. To achieve these objectives, three research questions were addressed. The findings in relation to each research question are presented and discussed within the following sections.

Research question 1 examined how sponsoring a CSE may assist the sponsor to develop meaningful and emotional relationships with its consumers. Research question 1 was addressed through six hypotheses, which were formulated based upon applying OIT to the CSE sponsorship context. Data were collected from MS Moonlight Walk participants through pre- and post-event questionnaires. The results indicated that event participants



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were unable to answer the questions included in the questionnaire prior to and after the event due to a complete lack of knowledge of the event sponsor Harbour ISP. MS Moonlight Walk participants' lack of knowledge of the sponsor after the event suggests that sponsoring the CSE did not assist Harbour ISP to develop meaningful and emotional relationships with event participants.

Research question 2 investigated how sponsoring a CSE can impact on participants' emotional responses towards an event sponsor. Building on the suggestion that CSE participants may not be aware of their emotions towards event sponsors, EEG data from MS Moonlight Walk 2018 participants were obtained to investigate research question 2. While the findings were not statistically significant, participants had a tendency towards a neutral emotional response towards Harbour ISP after the event. A neutral emotional response towards Harbour ISP is consistent with the findings obtained from Study 1 indicating that event participants had little or no knowledge of the brand.

Research question 3 examined how event participants, event managers, and representatives from event sponsors perceive the sponsor's contribution to the value creation process of CSEs. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with MS Moonlight Walk 2018 participants, the event manager, and representatives from Harbour ISP. The findings suggested that interviewees believed the sponsor contributed to the value creation process of CSEs by raising CSE awareness, cultivating a fundraising network, communicating authenticity, celebrating constituents, and by providing operational support.

Collectively, the findings across all three studies suggested that Harbour ISP did not form meaningful and emotional relationships with event participants. Whilst not examined in this research, the limited success of the sponsorship program might be attributed to the perception representatives of Harbour ISP expressed regarding the contribution of the

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corporate partner to the CSE. Whilst speculative, Harbour ISP’s limited understanding of what MS Moonlight Walk event participants expect from a CSE sponsor might be a product of their inexperience in the sponsorship field. Table 10 provides an overview of the research question, method, sample, and findings of Study 1, 2, and 3. The finding that suggested event participants were not aware of Harbour ISP is positioned within the existing sponsorship awareness literature in the following section.

Table 10

*Overview of the research question, method, sample, and findings of Study 1-3*

	Study 1	Study 2	Study 3
Research question	Research Question 1: How does sponsoring a CSE assist the sponsor in developing meaningful and emotional relationships with its consumers?	Research question 2: How does sponsoring a CSE affect participants’ emotional response towards an event sponsor?	Research question 3: How do event participants, event managers, and representatives from event sponsors perceive the sponsor’s contribution to the value creation process of CSEs?
Research method	Pre- and post-event online questionnaires	EEG	Semi-structured interviews
Research sample	MS Moonlight Walk participants	MS Moonlight Walk participants	MS Moonlight Walk participants, one event

	Study 1	Study 2	Study 3
Findings	Sponsoring the MS Moonlight Walk 2018 did not assist Harbour ISP in developing meaningful and emotional relationships with its consumers.	Sponsoring the MS Moonlight Walk 2018 did not affect event participants' emotional response towards Harbour ISP positively.	manager, and representatives of Harbour ISP  Interviewees believe the sponsor's contribution to the value creation process of CSEs are as follows:  providing operational support, raising CSE awareness, cultivating a fundraising network, engaging authentically, and celebrating constituents.

## 5.2 Sponsorship Brand Awareness

Results from Study 1 and 2 indicate that MS Moonlight Walk participants were not aware of Harbour ISP and did not form an emotional relationship with the brand. This finding supported the traditional buying funnel framework which suggests that creating brand awareness represents the first stage in building relationships with consumers (Kotler, Rackham, & Krishnaswamy, 2006). This is also consistent with findings from the sponsorship literature indicating that sponsorship awareness is essential for creating benefits for the corporate partner (Walraven, Bijmolt, & Koning, 2014). Factors influencing sponsorship awareness can be organised into three categories: event-sponsor fit and perception of the sponsor, characteristics of the sponsorship program, and event participants' individual characteristics (Walraven et al., 2014).

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First, consumers identify with sponsors that they perceive as having a stronger fit with the event than corporate partners with a low degree of perceived fit (Johar, Pham, & Wakefield 2006). Furthermore, established brands are better recognised than unknown brands (Johar et al. 2006). In the present research, Harbour ISP represents an unknown brand that had not entered the local market prior to sponsoring the event. Furthermore, sponsor-event fit was perceived to be relatively low and was reinforced throughout the interviews. The low event-sponsor fit, and event participants limited exposure to Harbour ISP prior to the event may be an explanation for the low level of sponsorship awareness.

Second, exposure to, and engagement with, the sponsor may affect participants' level of awareness (Johar et al. 2006; Smith et al., 2016). As mentioned in the Section 3.3, Harbour ISP's engagement with event participants was very limited which may explain the low level of brand awareness. Furthermore, Harbour ISP sponsored the event for the first time in 2018 and this may have also impacted on event participant's ability to recall the sponsor and provide valid responses to the questionnaires (Smith et al., 2016).

Third, individual characteristics, such as involvement in the event, affect sponsorship awareness. Findings from Piątkowska and Gocłowska (2016) indicate that the degree to which sport event spectators are involved in the event influences their ability to recognise an event sponsor. However, research conducted by MS Moonlight Walk event managers (D. McCullagh, personal communication, November 11, 2018) along with the results of Study 3 indicate that event participants are highly involved in the event and attend the CSE primarily due to its charitable nature. Consequently, it is more likely that event participants were unaware of Harbour ISP due to the limited exposure and engagement with the brand rather than participants' level of involvement with the event. The results of the present research support the suggestion of the traditional buying funnel

(Kotler et al., 2006) that brand awareness is an essential element in creating emotional and meaningful relationships with consumers. The next section discusses the findings related to research question 2.

### **5.3 Consumers' Emotional Response to Brands**

Research question 2 examined MS Moonlight Walk participants' emotional response towards Harbour ISP. The research revealed no significant differences in participants' alpha asymmetry index among the three image categories (positive images, neutral images, Harbour ISP's brand logo). The finding that research participants had a similar response to Harbour ISP's brand logo and neutral images is consistent with the results from Study 1 and indicate that participants do not have any associations with the brand. It is recognised in the literature that consumers' familiarity with a brand influences their physiological response (Nazari, Doborjeh, Oghaz, Fadardi, & Yazdi, 2014; Schaefer, Berens, Heinze, & Rotte, 2006) and may help to explain why participants had a neutral response towards Harbour ISP.

However, it would be expected that participants respond more favourably to positive images than to neutral images because the images were derived from the OASIS. The non-significance might be related to the relatively small sample size of Study 2. EEG studies in the consumer neuroscience field are commonly numbered between 20-30 participants (Plassmann et al., 2015), whereas this work relied on the responses of only six participants. The results obtained from a repeated measures ANOVA was affected by the sample size and the insufficient number of research participants may have resulted in a low statistical power, thus, not revealing any significant differences in participant responses (Guo, Logan, Glueck, & Muller, 2013).

The self-reported data obtained from MS Moonlight Walk participants resulted in significant differences between the positive and neutral image. This finding is consistent with the findings of the OASIS database founders (Kurdi et al. 2017). The following section presents a discussion of the findings related to research question 3.

#### **5.4 Creating Authentic CSE Sponsorship Programs**

As mentioned in the Section 3.3, MS Moonlight Walk and Harbour ISP's sponsorship agreement included a welcome post from the CSE via social media prior to the event, as well as strategically positioned banners during the event (e.g., the start line). Furthermore, Harbour ISP was publicly acknowledged for their support by the MS Queensland Fundraising Director immediately before the start of the event. This type of sponsorship agreement is consistent with the traditional conceptualisation of sponsorship as a form of advertising (Cornwell, 2019). Research has suggested that using sponsorship as a promotional tool by placing the corporate partner's logo around the event site does not fully exploit sponsorship potential (Cornwell, 2019, Jalonen, 2015). The research findings presented in this work support this suggestion as the sponsorship program implemented by MS Moonlight Walk and Harbour ISP did not assist the corporate partner to form any meaningful or emotional relationships with the event participants. Furthermore, interviewees mentioned that they would not appreciate CSE sponsors exploiting the event as an advertising platform.

Building on S-D logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2016), O'Reilly et al. (2018) advocated for a higher degree of engagement between event participants and sponsors to achieve a positive outcome for the corporate partner. Cornwell (2019) has a similar perception of the implementation of sponsorship programs and suggests that the understanding of sponsorship needs to shift from an advertising initiative towards an

engagement platform. Importantly, Cornwell (2019) indicated that the perceived authenticity of these interactions is a critical component of sponsorship. The findings of Study 3 are consistent with these recommendations and describe the perceptions event stakeholders have for the sponsor's contribution to the value creation process of a CSE. The following sections provide a discussion of the identified contributions of the event sponsor.

#### **5.4.1 Providing operational support.**

The majority of event managers rely on the support of volunteers to deliver the event (Elstad, 2003). A key challenge for event managers is to recruit a sufficient number of volunteers (Elstad, 2003; Kim & Cuskelly, 2017). Event sponsors can provide assistance in recruiting volunteers by encouraging their employees to support the event (Lyes et al., 2016). Previous research has demonstrated that volunteering at an event can have a positive impact on employees' response towards their employer (e.g. Grimes & Meenaghan, 1998; Hickman et al., 2005; Khan & Stanton, 2010; Khan et al., 2013; Rosenberg, 1995). Study 3 of the present research contributes to the body of literature which examines the benefits an event sponsor can obtain by integrating its employees as volunteers in the sponsorship program. MS Moonlight Walk participants outlined their expectations for the event sponsor to support the event with volunteers rather than only a financial contribution. The present research was not undertaken with an expectation to examine how providing volunteer management may affect event participants' responses towards the sponsor. However, as mentioned in the Section 2.5, OIT suggests that consumers identify with brands that they perceive to share similar attributes that form their identity (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Corporate partners that encourage their employees to support the CSE might be perceived as an organisation which is genuinely interested in addressing social issues by the event participants. Consequently, it can be speculated that providing volunteers is a critical

component of an authentic sponsorship program, which may help to facilitate the development of event participants' identification with the sponsor.

Furthermore, event participants described receiving on-course nutrition as valuable contribution by the corporate partner to the CSE. This perception aligns with Smith et al.'s (2016) finding that on-course nutrition is an effective leverage initiative that may increase sponsor awareness. Building on the body of authentic sponsorship, the findings of Study 3 tends to support the effectiveness of on-course nutrition as a potential leverage initiative. Event participants tend to use the physical activity component of CSEs as an important aspect in their appeals to family and friends to help raise funds for the event (Filo et al., 2019). Interviewees in the present research highlighted that completing the course is a critical component of their fundraising experience as to not finish the event may be perceived as breaking a promise made to their donors. Furthermore, being perceived as an athlete and a fundraiser might be an important part of CSE participants' identity (Wood et al., 2010). MS Moonlight Walk participants described that the food and drinks received on the course helped them to finish the event. Consequently, providing on-course nutrition might be an important component of an authentic sponsorship program as it enables event participants to express their identity (Morhart et al., 2015).

#### **5.4.2 Raising CSE awareness.**

The findings of Study 3 indicated that interviewees believe that raising CSE awareness is a key contribution of the sponsor to the event. This is consistent with findings from King (2004) and Lyes et al. (2016) which indicated that event sponsors can raise awareness for the cause associated with the event through different campaigns including magazine and TV advertisements. The current research revealed that MS Moonlight Walk participants not only expect the sponsor to raise CSE awareness but also to express their



willingness to be actively involved in creating campaigns by sharing their personal experiences with MS. This is consistent with S-D logic's suggestion that event experiences are created through the collaboration of different stakeholders (Crowther & Donlan, 2011). Furthermore, event participants' interest in being actively involved in the creation of awareness campaigns is a manifestation of their desire to support the charitable organisation associated with the event (Filo et al., 2008). The collaboration of event participants and sponsors to create CSE awareness campaigns represents an opportunity to build an authentic brand for the sponsor. As stated above, consumers perceive brands as authentic that are genuinely interested in addressing social issues (Morhart et al., 2015). Investing time and resources to learn from event participants to develop CSE awareness campaigns may demonstrate that the sponsor's involvement in the event includes altruistic objectives.

#### **5.4.3 Cultivating a fundraising network.**

A CSE's primary objective is to raise funds for the cause associated with the event (Meyer & Umstattd Meyer, 2017). A large number of CSE participants are actively involved in the fundraising process (Rundio, Heere, & Newland, 2014), and this is a challenging aspect of their event experience (Filo et al., 2019). Filo et al. (2019) provided recommendations for how CSE managers may assist participants in navigating these challenges. The results of Study 3 contribute to the discussion of how CSE participants can overcome challenges associated with the fundraising component of CSEs. The findings indicate that event participants believe that the CSE sponsor can provide fundraising support. Supporting event participants in their fundraising campaigns may provide CSE sponsors with an opportunity to build an authentic brand. Consumers perceive brands as authentic that allow them to express their identity (Morhart et al. 2015). CSE participants

identify themselves as fundraisers (Wood et al., 2010) and may perceive brands that support their fundraising efforts as authentic.

Furthermore, cultivating a fundraising network provides CSE sponsors with an opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to their promoted value proposition, an essential element in creating authentic brands (Morhart et al. 2015). Organisations sponsor CSEs to demonstrate their CSR (Plewa & Quester, 2011), however, consumers have often have difficulty identifying whether organisations are investing in CSR initiatives to achieve business objectives or whether these partners are genuinely interested in addressing social and environmental issues (Schons & Steinmeier, 2016). While CSE sponsorship is associated with a cash or in-kind investment in the event (Meenaghan, 1983), consumers may still question the motives of the corporate partner (Woisetschläger et al., 2017). CSE sponsors actively involved in the fundraising process may facilitate the development of an authentic brand as this demonstrates that the brand is willing to invest additional resources into supporting the CSE without receiving any monetary benefits in return.

Building an authentic brand through cultivating a fundraising network may also promote the development of organisational identification among event participants. Consumers identify with brands which share similar values as themselves (Ashforth et al., 2008) and may identify with a CSE sponsor that values fundraising for the cause associated with the CSE.

#### **5.4.4 Engaging authentically.**

The current research supports S-D logic in that time and place influences the value creation process (Vargo & Lusch, 2016; Woratschek et al., 2014). The current research not only revealed that the broader social environment of a sport event is important for the creation of positive experiences (Horbel et al., 2016) but also that specific points in time

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throughout the event affects participants' willingness to engage with CSE sponsors. More specifically, interviewees were apprehensive towards engaging with event sponsors at the start line because they were focused on preparing themselves for the event and chatting with friends. However, interviewees were interested in receiving on-course support from the sponsor and meeting representatives of the corporate partner at the finish line.

This is consistent with findings from Stanley, Lane, Beedie, Friesen, & Devonport, (2012) who examined runners' activities prior to participating in an event. Stanley et al's (2012) research revealed that runners are involved in activities such as warming up, listening to music as well as interacting with fellow event participants prior to the event. Engaging with event sponsors was not mentioned by research participants in Stanley et al.'s (2012) study.

The identification that event participant's willingness to engage with event sponsors fluctuates throughout their event experience and contributes to the body of literature by examining how and to what degree sponsors should engage with CSE participants. Previous research in the CSE sponsorship context has suggested that a higher degree of engagement results in benefits for the sponsor such as increased brand awareness and intention to purchase the products and services among CSE participants (Close & Lacey, 2014; Smith et al., 2016; Smith et al., 2015; Sneath et al., 2005). This research supports Elving (2013) and Chaudary and Ali's (2016) findings that companies need to be aware of the possibility that over-promoting their partnership with a charity can result in negative perceptions and outcomes.

Instead of focusing on a high quantity of engagement initiatives, the present research suggests that the timing of these interactions is important to event participants. For example, event participants expressed their interest in receiving information about the

sponsor's motivation to be involved in this particular CSE. Sharing this type of information provides CSE sponsors an opportunity to build an authentic brand. Information regarding the sponsor's motivation to support the event can demonstrate the brand's integrity, describing the responsibility and moral purity of an authentic brand (Morhart et al., 2015). Event participants might use this information to determine whether the sponsor and the CSE are a good fit, and this has been identified as an important factor in creating successful CSE sponsorship programs (e.g. Dean, 2002; Kim & Boo, 2011; Lacey & Close, 2013; Simmons & Becker-Olsen, 2006).

#### **5.4.5 Celebrating constituents.**

Numerous CSEs raise funds and awareness for some type of cause such as cancer survivorship (Meyer et al., 2017) and attract a large number of participants who are directly affected by the cause associated with the event (Cornwell & Coote, 2005). CSE managers facilitates the celebration of participants who have survived cancer which is an important element of the event experience (Filo, Spence, & Sparvero, 2013; Palmer, 2016; Won, 2009) because the majority of people who have survived cancer develop a cancer survivor identity (Park, Zlateva, & Blank, 2009). For example, participants in the **LIVESTRONG** Challenge can attach to their outfit a sign indicating that they are cancer survivors as part of their event participation (Filo et al., 2013).

The current research contributes to the body of literature examining CSEs as a platform to celebrate a charity's constituents. Interviewees suggested that the sponsor can be involved in this celebration. The sponsor's involvement in the celebration can assist in the development of an authentic brand as it facilitates the development and expression of event participants' identity (Morhart et al. 2015). Importantly, the present research was conducted around an event aligned with MS. There is no cure for MS (MS Queensland,

n.d.) and people who are diagnosed with MS tend to develop a disability identity which includes MS (Barker, das Nair, Lincoln, & Hunt, 2014). Developing a disability identity can reduce the likelihood of MS patients experiencing mood disorders such as depression and anxiety (Bogart, 2015). Therefore, CSE sponsors that design participant celebrations that consider and recognise constituents' identities are more likely to be perceived as authentic because these activities would enable CSE participants to express their identity (Morhart et al., 2015). Importantly, CSE managers and sponsors need to provide CSE participants with the choice of being acknowledged or remaining anonymous because people develop different forms of disability identities and some people may not want to be recognised as living with a disability (Bogart, 2015). The next section describes how the present research contributes to S-D logic.

### **5.5 Theoretical Contributions**

As described in the Chapter 1, the expected theoretical contribution of the present research was multifaceted. Study 1 and 2 were guided by OIT and aimed to contribute to this theoretical framework. Study 1 introduced perceived CSR of a CSE sponsor as a new variable to OIT. Furthermore, as expressed in Hypothesis 5, Study 1 examined the contribution of perceived CSR to the perceived distinctiveness of the event sponsor. In addition, Study 2 drew on neuroscience and collected EEG data to provide additional insights as to the emotional nature of organisational identification. These three approaches reflect a theoretical contribution according to Whetter's (1989) criteria described in Chapter 1 of this thesis. However, event participants' inability to answer the questionnaires in Study 1 and the low sample size in Study 2 limited the expected theoretical contributions of the current research. Consequently, Study 1 and Study 2 did not contribute as substantially to

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OIT as expected. However, Study 3 was underpinned by S-D logic and its contribution to this theoretical framework are described in the following paragraphs.

The current research contributes to the S-D logic literature in a number of ways. First, while previous research has examined spectator team sport events (e.g. FIFA World Cup 2014; Australian A-League, Premier League, German Bundesliga) through the lens of S-D logic (Horbel et al., 2016; McDonald & Karg, 2014; Jalonen, 2015; Stieler & Germelmann, 2018), the current research demonstrated the applicability of this theoretical framework to a participatory sport event: a CSE. This is of importance because context is highlighted as a critical factor when examining the value creation process of sport events (Horbel et al., 2016; Woratschek et al., 2014). The findings of the current research share similarities and distinctions to the existing findings in research investigating spectator sport events. First, the value creation process of both types of events is based upon the reciprocal relationships among different stakeholders, and this aligns with a fundamental premise of S-D logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2016). For example, the theme engaging authentically shares similarities with the practice of informing and discussing, which describes the transfer of information between different stakeholders in a team sport environment (Stieler & Germelmann, 2018). Also, the themes raising CSE awareness, cultivating a fundraising network, engaging authentically, and celebrating constituents describe event participants and sponsors as co-creators of the event experience, which is consistent with findings from research in the spectator sport environment (Horbel et al., 2016; Stieler & Germelmann, 2018) and aligns with propositions within S-D logic, that participants are always co-creators (Payne et al., 2008).

In addition to these similarities, the present research has revealed unique findings related to CSEs. Considering that fundraising is a distinguishing factor from traditional

sport events (Cornwell et al., 2005), event participants' perception that the sponsor can help to cultivate a fundraising network is unique to CSE sponsorship programs. Similarly, CSE participants perceive raising CSE awareness as an important element of their event experience (Meyer & Umstattd Meyer, 2017). Raising awareness for a specific cause is a distinguishing factor of CSEs in comparison to events that are not affiliated with a charitable organisation (Inoue et al., 2018). Event participants desire to support the corporate partner in raising CSE awareness appear to be a distinct characteristic in the relationship between CSE participants and sponsors.

In addition to introducing S-D logic into the CSE context, the present research adds to the S-D perspective by focusing on the role of the sponsor in the value creation process of sport events. Previous research has predominantly examined the role of participants as co-creators (Horbel et al., 2016; McDonald & Karg, 2014). However, the current research builds on the conceptual work of Jalonen (2015), which suggests that sponsors need to provide meaningful value propositions to participants, by examining CSE sponsorship from the participants' perspective. The themes identified: providing operational support, raising CSE awareness, cultivating a fundraising network, engaging authentically, and celebrating constituents represent value propositions which are perceived as desirable by CSE participants. Thus, this research contributes to a more holistic understanding of the value creation process of CSEs.

## **5.6 Methodological Contributions**

The present research responded to calls to adopt a broader methodological approach within the sport management field (Rudd & Johnson, 2010; van der Roest et al., 2015). The methodological contribution of the current research is twofold. The first contribution is related to the collection of pre- and post-event data to isolate the sponsorship effect from

other marketing initiatives undertaken by the organisation. Second, the current research introduced EEG as a valuable complementary method to more traditional data collection mechanisms such as questionnaires and interviews. These methodological contributions are described in more detail throughout the following sections.

### **5.6.1 Benefits and challenges of pre- and post-event data.**

The first contribution is associated with the pre- and post-event data used to test hypotheses 1-2. Isolating the effect that sponsorship has on event participants' response towards the corporate partner of the event is a key challenge for practitioners and researchers (Jensen & White, 2018; Meenaghan, 2013; Meenaghan & O'Sullivan, 2013). Despite the importance of isolating sponsorship from other marketing initiatives, the majority of CSE sponsorship research collected cross-sectional data during or after the event (e.g. Close & Lacey, 2013; Cornwell & Coote, 2005; Irwin et al., 2003; Parris et al., 2015). Cross-sectional data is unable to identify whether event participants' response to the sponsor is the result of the partnership between the brand and the event (Sneath et al., 2005). For example, Lacey et al.'s (2010) findings indicate that event attendees' perception of a sponsor's CSR contributes to their intention to purchase the brand's products. However, Lacey et al. (2010) collected data during the event and consequently their study does not reveal whether CSE sponsorship affects event attendees' perception of the sponsor's brand or their intention to purchase the organisation's products.

To overcome this limitation of cross-sectional data, scholars adopted scales asking the research participants to evaluate the sponsor purely based on the partnership with the event. For example, Filo et al. (2010) collected data after the event and examined event participants' intention to purchase the sponsor's products with measures such as 'How likely does sponsorship of this event influence you to use or purchase a sponsoring



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company's products?'. While this type of measure attempts to isolate the effect that sponsorship has on event participants' intention to purchase the sponsor's products, it is based on the assumption that event participants are able to clearly identify and state how the sponsorship has affected their purchase intention. As mentioned in the Section 2.7, consumers' response towards brands is often the result of a variety of factors and the majority of brand information is processed unconsciously (Gordon, 2002; Zaltman, 2003). Consequently, event participants may not be able to delineate how the sponsorship is likely to affect their purchase intention.

A second approach to isolate the sponsorship effect is through experimental research design (e.g. Chaudary & Ali, 2016; Dean, 2002; Simmons & Becker-Olsen, 2006). In this type of research, participants are exposed to fictional sponsorship programs through texts and/or images. Two different experimental approaches have been adopted in CSE sponsorship research. Dean (2002) examined research participants' attitudes towards the event sponsor before and after reading about their fictional sponsorship. A different approach was taken by Chaudary and Ali (2016) who divided the research participants into several groups and exposed each group to different fictional marketing messages (e.g. McDonalds donates 1% of its sale to a charitable organisation, McDonald's sponsors a CSE). The authors compared research participants' level of identification with McDonalds across the different groups to examine the effectiveness of CSE sponsorship (Chaudary & Ali, 2016).

Experimental research using fictional sponsorship programs provides an opportunity to isolate the sponsorship effect by reducing bias associated with event participants' previous exposure to the brand (Grewal, Hardesty, & Iyer, 2004). However, the fictional nature of the sponsorship represents a limitation as research participants are

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exposed to the sponsorship for only a short period of time (e.g. reading a press release).

This factor is believed to limit the ability of this type of research to examine the effectiveness of sponsorship programs (Olson, 2010). Sneath et al. (2005) recommended collecting data from event participants prior to and after an event to overcome this limitation. The present research responded to this call and obtained data from MS Moonlight Walk participants through online questionnaires before and after the event. The findings derived from Study 1 might measure the success of the sponsorship program more effectively than studies based on data collected either during or after the event. In addition, the data may represent the effect of CSE sponsorship more accurately than data obtained from fictional sponsorship programs. However, the present research also revealed challenges associated with the collection of pre- and post-event data.

For example, the number of event participants who completed the pre- and post-event questionnaire was relatively low ( $n=7$ ). In the present research, all event participants who completed the pre-event questionnaire were entered the draw for a \$100 voucher for a national grocery store. The same incentive was provided for the post-event questionnaire. Considering that the incentives were independent from each other they did not directly encourage participants to complete both questionnaires. Researchers can include incentives to encourage participants to complete both questionnaires. For instance, each participant who completes both questionnaires receives an additional chance to win a \$100 voucher for a national grocery store or the event sponsor and/or research team donates a certain amount (e.g. \$1) to the CSE for each completed pre-and post-event questionnaire.

The present research also identified a second challenge associated with collecting pre- and post-event data which was related to the distribution of the questionnaires. MS Queensland was reluctant to promote the pre-event online questionnaire multiple times

because event participants would already receive a high volume of emails in the months leading up to the event (e.g. fundraising encouragement, event day information etc.).

Instead of distributing the research material via email, the pre-event questionnaire could be embedded at the end of the online registration process to address this challenge.

### **5.6.2 Benefits and challenges of EEG data.**

The second methodological contribution of the present research related to Study 3, which collected EEG data from event participants. CSE researchers have used purchase intention most frequently in evaluations of the effectiveness of the sponsorship (e.g. Close et al., 2006; Close & Lacey, 2013; Cornwell & Coote, 2005; Irwin et al., 2003; Parris et al., 2015; Sneath et al., 2005), which is consistent with the wider sponsorship literature (O'Reilly, Lyberger, McCarthy, Séguin, & Nadeau, 2008). The justification for using purchase intention to evaluate the effectiveness of sponsorship is based upon the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1977) and theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1985). These theories postulate that intentions are the key factor determining future consumer behaviour. However, researchers have challenged this perspective. For example, Ouellette and Wood (1998) suggested that purchase intention is limited in its ability to predict future consumer behaviour as consumers are not only influenced by their intentions to buy certain products and services but also by past behaviour patterns (i.e., habits) and they may act differently than their stated preference. The criticism of using purchase intention as a predictor of purchase behaviour is supported by a study conducted by Zaharia, Biscaia, Gray, and Stotlar (2016) who found that there was no significant relationship between Chelsea FC's sport fans intention to purchase products of the jersey sponsor Samsung and their actual purchase behaviour. While traditional methods relying on self-reported data, are an important element in social sciences, new approaches complementing these methods to

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study human behaviour are required (Auger & Devinney, 2007). The current research responded to this call by introducing EEG data to the CSE sponsorship context.

As stated above, organisational identification is associated with positive emotions towards the brand (Perez et al., 2013) and research methods relying on self-reported data have limitations in examining emotions (Ramsøy, 2014). The present research collected EEG data as a complement to self-reported data obtained from online questionnaires. The combination of these two data collection techniques allowed for a better understanding of MS Moonlight Walk participants' level of identification with Harbour ISP. While using EEG data to examine the effectiveness of sponsorship programs may overcome some of the limitations associated with self-reported data, the present research also revealed two challenges related to the adaptation of a neuroscience method to the CSE field.

The first challenge is associated with the skill set required to collect and analyse EEG data. Traditionally, sport and event management researchers use methods such as questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, and observations (Kim & Cuskelly, 2017; Rudd & Johnson, 2010) and are not trained in computer programming and neuroscience. However, sufficient knowledge of computer programming is essential to analyse EEG data effectively. In the present research, each participant was analysed individually using the user-interface guide provided by EEGLAB due to the researcher's limited computer programming skills. This approach was appropriate in the current context as the sample size was relatively small. However, if the sample size is larger (e.g. 20-30 participants), which is desired, it is essential to analyse the data with EEGLAB using codes to ensure an efficient process. Sponsorship researchers who do not have knowledge in computer programming need to collaborate with scholars, such as neuroscientists, who are able to write code. A successful collaboration between these two different fields requires navigating existing

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preconceptions (Levallois, Clithero, Wouters, Smidts, & Huettel, 2012). For example, neuroscientists believe that the models used in social sciences have limitations in predicting behaviour because they are based on the assumption that humans make rational decisions (Levallois et al., 2012).

Despite the differences among the two disciplines, Levallois et al. (2012) observed an increasing number of collaborations between neuroscientists and social scientists. This is supported by the growing number of consumer neuroscience studies being published in neuroscience journals (Levallois et al., 2012) indicating an interest from neuroscientists in marketing (Plassmann et al., 2015). To further promote the exchange between these two disciplines, universities could integrate consumer neuroscience courses in their business degrees. This would provide sponsorship researchers with a better understanding of how neuroscience techniques can be used to investigate the effectiveness of sponsorships.

The second challenge identified is related to consumer neuroscience ethics. The growing interest in consumer neuroscience has revealed a number of ethical questions related to the field (Murphy & Reine, 2008). While marketers argue that consumer neuroscience research assists companies in developing and promoting products which meet the needs of consumers (Ariely & Berns, 2010), not all consumers are in favour of these research methods because they may provide businesses an opportunity to exploit consumers and limit their autonomy (Bakardjieva & Kimmel, 2017). Scepticism towards consumer neuroscience methods was also evident in the present research. While it would be speculative to suggest that the low number of EEG participants willing to participate in the research was related to participants' scepticism towards this method, the author identified the EEG method as a barrier to the recruitment of an industry partner. One CSE manager explained that there were not interested in a collaboration as the event sponsor was not comfortable

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with the collection of EEG data. This demonstrates that professionals in the consumer neuroscience field may need to highlight the benefits and non-invasive nature of these methods (Bakardjieva & Kimmel, 2017) to participants and potential industry partners.

In terms of education strategies, Bakardjieva and Kimmel's (2017) findings suggest that providing information in text form is not an effective method to enhance research participants' attitudes towards consumer neuroscience research. Consequently, the authors concluded that scholars need to consider different approaches to share information related to research methods such as EEG (Bakardjieva & Kimmel, 2017). Building on this recommendation, scholars can include short videos, which explain the benefits of the consumer neuroscience discipline for society, along with a written text in their research proposals. Videos represent a valuable tool to share information (Clark, Strudler, & Grove; 2015; Wang & Hartley, 2003, Zhang, Zhou, & Nunamaker, 2006) and may help researchers to reduce the scepticism towards consumer neuroscience methods among research participants and industry partners. The next section describes the managerial implications of the current research.

### **5.7 Managerial Implications**

Building on the findings of the present research the following recommendations for CSE managers and sponsors are made: the use of storytelling to promote the sponsor in an authentic manner, engaging with CSE participants via a mobile application, encouraging employees to volunteer at the event, and collaborating with event management students. These recommendations are presented throughout the following sections.

#### **5.7.1 Storytelling.**

CSE managers and sponsors are encouraged to collaborate to develop meaningful leverage initiatives which create value for participants. For example, in addition to sharing

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information about the products and services provided by the corporate partner as suggested by Close and Lacey (2014), sponsors also need to provide event participants with information regarding their motivations to support a particular event. Sharing this type of background information can create an authentic brand and may also be especially important for event sponsors who are perceived to have a low degree of fit with the event as participants might question the intention of the brand (Dean, 2002).

Building on the findings from research highlighting the effectiveness of storytelling in the not-for-profit (Merchant, Ford, & Sargeant, 2010) and for-profit sector (Beverland, 2009; Woodside, Sood, & Miller, 2008), sponsorship managers are encouraged to share this background information in the form of a story and narrative. Storytelling is a very effective sponsorship activation and can be utilised by any sponsor regardless of its size (Thieringer, 2018). The story should explain how the sponsor first became aware of the CSE, as well as how the cause aligned with the CSE is directly relevant to the sponsor. Next, the story should describe how the sponsor is seeking to make a difference in the lives of the constituents of the CSE. This could potentially be accomplished through describing how one specific CSE participant has benefitted from the sponsor's involvement in the event. Sharing this information in the form of a story can create an authentic brand partnership (Beverland, 2009). CSE managers can include the story behind the partnership on their event website, along with the sponsor's logo and a link to their official website.

Considering the limited cost associated with uploading the story to the event's webpage, this initiative is accessible to the majority of CSE managers. In addition, short-form videos that detail the partnership and its origins can be produced and disseminated on both the event and sponsor's social media channels. Short-form videos in the digital space have been advanced as critical tools for showcasing personal and meaningful stories (Hess, 2014). The

next section outlines how investing in social media influencers can help raise CSE awareness, cultivate a fundraising network, and provide a sufficient number of volunteers.

### **5.7.2 Social media influencer marketing.**

Building on the finding that event sponsors are expected to raise CSE awareness, cultivate a fundraising network, and provide a sufficient number of volunteers, event sponsors are encouraged to invest in social media influencer marketing. Social media influencers are online personalities with a wide reach and an impact on their followers' behaviour (Lou & Yuan, 2019) and can be valuable to charitable organisations (Allen, 2019; Heald, 2018). For example, the Youtuber PewDiePie celebrated meeting his one millionth subscriber by initiating a fundraising campaign for Charity: Water, raising nearly US\$450 000 (Kjellberg, n.d.).

CSE sponsors can engage with social media influencers to achieve a number of objectives. First, due to their high number of followers, influencers can raise CSE awareness by reaching a wider and different audience than the charity and the corporate partner (Allen, 2019). Second, social media influencers have a significant impact on their followers' behaviour as consumers perceive influencers as trustworthy and their branded content as more authentic than traditional advertisement campaigns (Talavera, 2015). Therefore, social media influencers can help cultivate a fundraising network and recruit volunteers by encouraging their followers to participate and fundraise as well as volunteer at the event.

Importantly, CSE sponsors and managers need to collaborate in order to identify suitable influencers to ensure the influencer's and CSE's brands represent similar attributes (Allen, 2019). Furthermore, practitioners need to identify social media influencers with a suitable number of followers and level of engagement with their audience. For example,



micro-influencers have less than 100 000 followers (Vodák, Novysedlák, Čakanová, & Pekár, 2019), engage and build personal relationships with their audience and tend to charge a small amount for their posts (Gan, Wang, Liu, Song, Yao, & Nie, 2019).

After identifying appropriate influencers, CSE sponsors and managers are encouraged to follow their social media channels, comment, share, and like their posts to signal their interest in a collaboration (Allen, 2019). This can be followed by an email introducing the CSE and its cause. Importantly, CSE sponsors and managers need to clearly communicate their objectives for partnering with the influencer (Allen, 2019). Potential objectives could relate to the number of event participants, volunteers, donations, and social media followers. Furthermore, the contribution of all involved partners to the collaboration needs to be defined. For example, CSE managers can provide influencers with the opportunity to meet beneficiaries of the organisation. Social media influencers can share their experience with the beneficiaries and promote the CSE on their social media platforms. The CSE sponsor might be responsible for covering the costs associated with partnering with the influencer. The following section outlines how the CSE sponsor can assist event managers with their volunteer management.

### **5.7.3 Volunteer recruiting.**

Following on from event participants' expectation that the sponsor may help to provide a pool of volunteers, sponsors can encourage their employees to volunteer. Importantly, sponsors may encourage participation by demonstrating how volunteering at the event would make a difference in the lives of people who will benefit from the CSE (Deloitte, 2017). Event sponsors could also highlight the importance of employees supporting the event in a number of ways. Enabling employees to engage with the beneficiaries of the sponsorship is one way to increase employees' interest in the

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sponsorship (Burmaster, 2019). For example, the research company Nielsen sponsored the Olympic Games 2012 and Olympians visited the company's offices to share insights about their life's as professional athletes with Nielsen's employees.

In a CSE sponsorship context, constituents of the CSE could be invited to visit the sponsor's office to share how the CSE has impacted on their life. Considering that the corporate partner's office might be geographically difficult to access for beneficiaries of the CSE, the sponsor may choose to organise interactions through social media platforms. Social media channels such as Twitter and Facebook allow for interactions between multiple people in real time and are effective platforms for asking and answering questions (Morris, Teevan, & Panovich, 2010).

Furthermore, sponsors can use the concept of social proof to increase the number of volunteers. Social proof describes a psychological phenomenon where a person's behaviour is affected by the actions of others (Cialdini, 1993). CSE sponsors can communicate the number of employees who have previously volunteered to demonstrate that supporting the event is the right decision from a societal perspective. Importantly, a larger number of previous volunteers is more likely to achieve a mirroring effect on others (Milgram, Bickman, & Berkowitz, 1969). Therefore, CSE sponsors may use the total number of employees who have volunteered in previous years and not the number of employees who agreed to volunteer in the current year. This could be achieved by displaying the names of all volunteers in prominent areas among the office such as the kitchen and lunchroom. The effect of social proof is reinforced if case studies are added to statistics (Ross & Mahmoud, 2018). CSE sponsors could record short interviews with employees who have previously volunteered to showcase the benefits associated with supporting the event.

In addition to establishing the decision to volunteer as socially desirable, CSE sponsors can support their employees to encourage their social network to join them at the CSE as volunteers (Swain, 2013). Socialising is a primary motivation for event volunteers (Dunn, Chambers, & Hyde, 2016) and creating an environment which promotes personal interactions may attract volunteers. The event sponsors could provide a volunteer tent at the finish line to facilitate social interactions among volunteers. Creating an interactive post-event space may help employees to promote volunteering at a CSE as an opportunity to socialise with their friends and family.

#### **5.7.4 Collaborating with event management students.**

Study 3 revealed that CSE managers and sponsors may not have the required skills to implement a sponsorship program promoting the corporate partner in an authentic manner. CSE managers could integrate event management students in the sponsorship development process. Event management students learn how to develop and implement sponsorship programs during their degree (Lee, Lee, & Kim, 2008) and are looking for meaningful internship opportunities (Cannon & Arnold, 1998). CSE managers can promote the charitable nature of the event in the recruitment process as working for a charity is perceived as meaningful work (Renard, & Snelgar, 2016). CSE managers need to define clear tasks and requirements for the student in order to utilise the student's skills most effectively (Narayanan, Olk, & Fukami, 2010). Importantly, the student should be supported by a mentor and encouraged to work independently (Narayanan et al., 2010). Overall, integrating a student in the organisation may require time and resources from CSE managers (Tovey, 2001), but may help to deliver more effective sponsorship programs.

### **5.7.5 Providing fundraising support.**

Study 3 suggests that event participants believe that the CSE sponsor can assist them in their fundraising initiatives. Filo et al.'s (2019) findings indicated that CSE participants associated asking for donations with discomfort and sell raffle tickets to overcome this feeling of discomfort. CSE sponsors could provide event participants with raffle prizes. Prizes should exclude alcoholic beverages and could include vouchers for personal training sessions, massages, sport garments such as shoes and shirts, as well as sport watches (Good Sports Australia, n.d.). Also, event sponsors could rent a cinema and show a movie related to the cause associated with the CSE. Movie tickets could be given to CSE participants to be used in their raffles. For example, Harbour ISP could rent a cinema in Brisbane and show the movie 100 Metros. 100 Metros is based on a true story and documents how a Spanish man who was diagnosed with MS participates in a long-distance triathlon. The allocation of the prizes could be based upon a competition. For example, CSE participants could be invited to share their motivation to attend the CSE with event sponsors on Instagram to enter the competition. Instagram represents a widely-used platform for consumers who have an interest in sports (Creative Review, 2018). Furthermore, Instagram allows users to share videos and images, allowing participants to explain their motivation in creative ways (Creative Review, 2018). CSE participants could use a particular hashtag when sharing their posts so sponsors can monitor the competition (Melumad, Inman, & Pham, 2019).

Furthermore, event sponsors could provide fundraising support and assist CSE participants in overcoming the feeling of discomfort by promoting their fundraising campaigns. Sponsors could integrate the promotion of individual CSE participants into their social media marketing strategy to reach a wider audience (Rees, 2019). For example,

event sponsors could share the story and fundraising campaign of individual CSE participants every Monday during the two months leading up to the event on Facebook. Facebook is an appropriate social media platform because CSE sponsors can share participants' fundraising campaigns using images and videos to capture the emotional nature of their fundraising experience to attract attention from the viewer (Rees, 2019). Furthermore, CSE sponsors can include a link to the participant's fundraising page on their Facebook posts (Rees, 2019). The next section describes the limitations of the present research.

### **5.8 Limitations**

The present research has limitations which need to be recognised. This section describes six limitations related to the research context, design, sample, and materials. First, the research was conducted in collaboration with one specific CSE, the MS Moonlight Walk 2018. The focus on one specific research context is a limitation. In addition to this, Harbour ISP's level of engagement with event participants was relatively low. Previous research from the CSE sponsorship field (e.g. Smith et al., 2016), S-D logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004), and the findings from Study 3 in this work, indicate that how the sponsor interacts with event participants affects sponsorship success.

Second, the voluntary nature of the present research presents a limitation. All research participants who completed the questionnaires, took part in the interviews, and attended the EEG session gave of their time and energy to take part in these studies. Research participants' willingness to give their time voluntarily could reflect a strong identification with the charity and a positive attitude towards the CSE. The degree of identification with the charity and attitude towards the event may also be associated with a

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more positive response to the sponsor (Cornwell & Coote, 2005; Kim & Boo, 2011), and therefore the applicability of the findings to all event participants could be questioned.

Third, the collection of qualitative data through interviews represents a limitation. Interviews were conducted after the event to enable research participants to reflect on their event experience. However, interviewees may not be able to recall their event experience in detail which may result in biased answers (Dex, 1995).

The fourth limitation stems from the small sample size of Study 2. Typically, studies in the consumer neuroscience field include between 20-30 participants (Plassmann et al., 2015). While the researcher attempted to recruit a sufficient number of participants by contacting MS Moonlight Walk participants, who had previously opted into further data collection, on multiple occasions and offered incentives as well as travel reimbursements, only a relatively small number ( $n=7$ ) of participants attended the EEG session. The small sample size therefore limits the reliability of the findings associated with Study 2 (Button et al., 2013).

Next, the recruitment of participants for Study 2 may have introduced bias into the research. Event participants who live with MS were excluded from Study 2 due to their potential for neurological conditions (Bosshard et al., 2016). However, Cornwell and Coote's (2005) findings indicate that event participants' direct experience with the cause associated with the event (e.g. event participants who live with MS) can impact on their response towards sponsors. Consequently, the findings of the current research will not represent the emotional response of event participants who live with MS. Conducting Study 2 in an event context that is not associated with a neurological disease may provide insights on how event participants' emotional response towards the sponsor is impacted by their

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experience with the cause associated with the event. As described in Chapter 3, attempts by the researcher to collect data across a variety of different CSEs were unsuccessful.

Lastly, the stimuli used in the EEG session presents a limitation. As mentioned in the Section 1.3, Harbour ISP sponsored the MS Moonlight Walk for the first time in 2018. Thus, the researcher was not able to use previous images of the sponsorship (e.g. social media posts promoting the partnership, Harbour ISP's employees attending the MS Moonlight Walk) in Study 2. Instead Harbour ISP's brand logo was used as single stimuli. Seeing Harbour ISP's brand logo repeatedly may have impacted research participants' EEG data because the perceived novelty of a stimulus affects the neurological response (Reimann, Castaño, Zaichkowsky, & Bechara, 2012). The researcher showed the brand stimuli fifty percent less frequently than the positive and neutral images to limit the effect the use of a single stimuli has on the data. However, all three stimuli types should be shown an equal number of times (Bosshard et al., 2016; Gable & Harmon-Jones, 2008). The next section provides an overview of future research opportunities.

### **5.9 Future Research**

Building on the findings as well as the limitations described above, the following opportunities for future research are advanced, including replicating the research in a different CSE context and expanding the research design.

#### **5.9.1 Study replication.**

It is recommended that future research could replicate this research in a different CSE context. The application of S-D logic indicates that the context influences the value creation process (Woratschek et al., 2014) and a CSE with different characteristics may provide different findings than those obtained in this research. Building on the factors impacting sponsorship awareness described above (Walraven et al., 2014), scholars could

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examine a CSE with the following characteristics to gain a better understanding how CSE sponsorship programs facilitate the development of meaningful and emotional relationships between CSE participants and sponsors.

First, event participants need to be aware of the event sponsor and have a sufficient knowledge of the brand in order to complete the questionnaires. Considering that it is challenging for researchers to know whether event participants have a sufficient level of knowledge of the event sponsor before conducting the research, researchers are encouraged to ask CSE managers and representatives of the sponsor about their intentions to leverage the sponsorship. Knowing how the sponsor will engage with event participants provides researchers with a better understanding of whether the CSE sponsorship represents a suitable research context.

Second, the partnership between the CSE and the corporate partner should exist for a number of years. As mentioned in the Section 3.5.2, the researcher exposed event participants repetitively to the Harbour ISP's brand logo in Study 2, which was perceived to be a limitation. Examining an existing sponsorship would provide researchers with the opportunity to use a number of different images which showcase the brand as a CSE sponsor. Third, researchers could consider a CSE which does not attract a large number of participants who live with a neurological disease such as MS. Selecting this type of CSE as the research context may help to overcome the challenge of recruiting participants as was experienced in this work.

### **5.9.2 Research design expansion.**

Building on the limitations of conducting interviews with event participants at a single point in time, CSE participants could document their event experience in a journal to reveal additional insights that may not be identified through interviews (Swenson, 2004;



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Verbrugge, 1980). Research participants can be provided with an electronic journal template to document their experience after they have completed online registration. The template may include guidelines and questions to increase the likelihood that research participants will document their experiences (Hayman, Jackson, & Wilkes, 2012). Questions can ask participants to document their fundraising and training experience as well as engagement with the sponsor. While interviews require research participants to recall their engagement with sponsors and the feelings associated with the experience, journaling can provide a more accurate representation as research participants can take notes immediately after their experience (Hackett, Schwarzenbach, & Jürgens, 2016). Therefore, journaling can provide CSE organisers and sponsors with a better understanding of how CSE participants perceive interactions with corporate partners.

Furthermore, researchers could use the findings of the interviews as a foundation to develop a quantitative scale to measure the sponsor's contribution to the value creation process of CSEs. Examining the sponsor's contributions quantitatively would help to identify whether the themes in the current research are generalisable to the broader CSE sponsorship field.

Also, using a quantitative scale may help to gain insights on variables which may impact the perception of a sponsor, such as event and sponsor size, the number of sponsors, the sponsorship duration, and the fit between the event and sponsor. Furthermore, researchers could use the scale to examine how different sponsorship leverage initiatives (e.g. providing operational support, raising CSE awareness) affect the perceived authenticity of the sponsor. This could be achieved by adopting the brand authenticity scales developed by Morhart et al (2015) or Napoli et al. (2014).

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Researchers may also build on technological advancements such as virtual reality to examine the effectiveness of different sponsorship engagement initiatives. The combination of virtual reality and controlled experimental research may provide an opportunity to combine the benefits from conducting research in the field and in a controlled laboratory. While being exposed to different sponsorship engagement initiatives, researchers could collect physiological data such as EEG and electrodermal activity data. After completing the virtual reality experience, participants could complete a questionnaire assessing their perception, attitudes, and purchase intention towards the different sponsors. The collection of physiological data and complementary self-report data could help to identify the effectiveness of different sponsorship engagement initiatives.

As mentioned in Section 1.4, the current research was limited to one antecedent and one outcome of organisational identification. Future research could introduce additional variables to gain a better understanding how CSE sponsorship facilitates the development of organisational identification and examine additional outcomes. Scholars could examine the contribution of organisational identification on event participants' purchase behaviour of the sponsor's products. Research could monitor CSE participants purchase behaviour using an app. Consumers use apps such as Mint.com or Personal Finance to track their financial expenditure (Böhmer, Hecht, Schöning, Krüger, & Bauer, 2011). Scholars could encourage CSE participants to use an app to identify how frequently they purchase products or services of the event sponsors. Incentives for participants who monitor their expenditure could include the chance to win a registration to the next CSE or a donation made by the sponsor to the charity associated with the event. Gaining access to participants' financial expenditure would enable the researcher to examine how organisational identification contributes to purchase behaviour. The following section summarises the present research.

## 6 Conclusion

This chapter is organised in two sections. First, the researcher reflects critically on the research project and presents lessons he learned from this experience. Second, an overall summary of the present research is provided.

### 6.1 Critical Reflection

Conducting this research project was a great learning experience for me. In particular, three lessons were learnt, which may help me to navigate some of the challenges associated with delivering research more effectively in the future, including, the importance of communicating the benefits of academic research, that personal relationships are invaluable, that a verbal agreement is not necessarily binding, and a researcher's paradigm creates challenges and opportunities. All four lessons are described in the following sections.

#### 6.1.1 The importance of communicating the benefits of academic research.

As mentioned in the Section 3.3, I contacted approximately fifty CSE managers across Australia and New Zealand via email to secure industry partners for this research. The email followed the guidelines for effective business partnership requests, including explaining the motivation for the partnership and by describing the benefits for the business partner (Hirst, 2013). I explained that the underlying motivation for the collaboration was to help reduce suffering globally by motivating every runner around the world to raise funds and awareness for a charity at least once in their life. In addition, the email stated the research findings could help CSE managers to secure and retain event sponsors and that the project was fully funded by Griffith University.

Eight CSE managers agreed to a phone conversation during which they expressed their interest in the research project. However, all eight CSE managers sent a follow-up

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email explaining their interest in receiving the findings but indicated they were unable to take part in the research due to a lack of available resources. I had difficulty understanding that resources were a constraint as I had emphasised, as suggested by Hirst (2013), that the required contribution by CSE managers was very limited. More specifically, I asked CSE managers for only three contributions. First, to provide input on the predefined research questions to ensure their relevance to the organisations. Second, to offer feedback to the predefined questionnaires to ensure research participants would understand the questions. Third, to distribute invitations to event participants to take part in the online questionnaires. I suggested that the invitations could be embedded in a previously scheduled newsletter to avoid the need to send additional emails. I also explained that no other invitation emails would be required because event participants have the opportunity to express their interest in follow-up studies at the end of the online questionnaires. In addition, I emphasised that Griffith University would cover all incentives for research participants, and I would be responsible for analysing the data.

I was also surprised by the low number of responses ( $n=8$ ) I received to my email, because I received positive feedback from practitioners and academics regarding the significance of my suggested research project. I discussed my difficulties in securing an industry partner with my supervisory team and other senior academics at numerous conferences. All shared similar experiences with challenges associated with engaging with industry partners and highlighted the importance of clearly articulating the value industry partners would obtain from participating in research projects. While my value proposition in the email might have been a well-defined purpose statement in the sense of a PhD thesis, it may not have effectively communicated the value of the research projects to CSE managers.

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Building on the effectiveness of videos in communicating messages (Clark et al., 2015; Wang & Hartley, 2003, Zhang et al., 2006), I could have created a video explaining the research and the associated benefits for industry partners. In addition, I could have provided an example of how academic research can help charitable organisations to achieve their objectives. For example, the university researchers Shang and Croson (2009) conducted a field experiment which revealed how a small local radio station could potentially increase their donations by 12%. Including an example as well as sharing this example via text and video could have potentially communicated the value of the present research more effectively to CSE managers. The following section describes how conducting the present research has taught me the importance of personal relationships.

### **6.1.2 Personal relationships are invaluable.**

I learned about the importance of personal relationships within the business environment. I was introduced personally to all three CSE managers who agreed to take part in this research. Notably, when I approached one of the CSE managers without an introduction, the email remained unanswered. This highlights the importance of personal relationships with industry professionals for academics wishing to conduct industry research (Schartinger, Schibany, & Gassler, 2001). I could have leveraged my existing professional network more effectively. For example, I could have reached out to my University of Sydney's Master of Marketing alumni group. This group consists of marketing professionals working in Australia and may have provided an opportunity to identify professionals who have a direct or indirect connection to a CSE (Ashline, 2017). Furthermore, I could have attended networking events organised by the Fundraising Institute Australia, the professional body of fundraising in Australia. These events attract fundraising professionals and may have provided an opportunity for me to meet CSE

managers. In addition to securing an industry partner, I also experienced challenges with building long lasting relationships with CSE managers who initially agreed to take part in the present research. This challenge is described more in detail in the following section.

### **6.1.3 A verbal agreement is not necessarily binding.**

The difficulties I experienced with industry partners withdrawing after their initial agreement might be related to my upbringing. I was born and raised in Germany and developed a value system which includes commitment, honesty, and trust as core values (Stiftung für Zukunftsfragen, n.d.). Honesty and commitment as core values influenced my interactions with industry partners. All meetings were conducted in an open form and the CSE managers were invited to share their thoughts throughout the research process to achieve the most meaningful outcome for all involved partners (Colquhoun, Geary, & Goodman, 2013). For example, while presenting a research proposal in the first meeting with the CSE managers, I clearly articulated that the research questions can be adjusted according to the interests of the CSE managers. Furthermore, I openly communicated the results in a meeting and clarified that the partnership between Harbour ISP and MS Moonlight Walk in 2018 did not assist Harbour ISP in developing emotional relationships with event participants. At the same meeting, I suggested recommendations on how the findings from Study 3 may inform the sponsorship program in 2019.

I had the impression that MS Queensland's event managers were committed to the research project and shared a similar vision how the results may have helped MS Queensland to attract and retain corporate partners. For instance, I frequently discussed with MS Queensland sponsorship manager the opportunity to use the results to develop a case study which demonstrates the importance of event sponsors engaging with event participants in an authentic manner. More specifically, the case study would compare the

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findings from the MS Moonlight Walk 2018 and 2019 to showcase that by engaging with event participants, it is critical for the sponsor to build an authentic brand and emotional relationships with event participants.

As mentioned above, my value system has been built around trust. I attempted to form a relationship built on trust with the MS Queensland event managers as it shifts the focus from controlling to a more problem solving and exploration of opportunities focus (Shapiro, Sheppard, & Cheraskin, 1992). It is suggested that shared values represent the foundation for trust (Shapiro et al., 1992), thus I volunteered at the MS Moonlight Walk 2018, participated in the MS Brissie to the Bay 2019, and shared my personal connection with MS (my aunt lives with MS since 2005) to demonstrate my commitment towards the organisation and its cause.

I had the impression that MS Queensland was committed to the project and perceived the verbal agreement as fixed and binding. Consequently, I did not ask representatives of the organisation to sign a contract. Reflecting on this experience, the assumption that a verbal agreement is binding, and all parties involved commit to the agreement might have been naïve to a certain degree. However, I was surprised by MS Queensland's decision to discontinue the collaboration with me because the event managers did not communicate any problems or doubts prior to their decision to end the partnership. This was not consistent with my values of honesty and commitment which require a discussion of problems at the time they occur. However, it is possible that the event managers had signalled their dissatisfaction with the research process prior to their decision to end the collaboration. As mentioned above, I grew up in Germany where it is common to provide and receive direct feedback. Consequently, my limited ability to interpret indirect feedback may have resulted in a miscommunication with the event managers.

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A contract signed by the myself, representatives of the CSE, and the sponsor may have helped to navigate these cultural differences. The contract should include a clear definition of the research objectives, research materials, the required budget, timeline, and the contribution of each party (Steinbock, Krattiger, Mahoney, Nelsen, Thomson, Bennett, & Satyanarayana, 2007). The following section describes how my philosophical standpoint has guided the research.

### **6.1.4 A researcher's paradigm creates challenges and opportunities.**

As described above, I experienced difficulties in securing a CSE as an industry partner to conduct this research. During this time, I discussed the possibility to collect data via an online panel with my supervisory team and fellow PhD candidates. An online panel refers to research participants who are recruited by survey companies (e.g. Qualtrics, Survey Monkey), meet the selection criteria provided by the researcher (e.g. the research participant is required to have participated in a CSE which was sponsored by at least one organisation within the last 12 months), and receive a monetary incentive for their time (Lowry, D'Arcy, Hammer, & Moody, 2016). Collecting data from an online panel is an effective form of gaining access to research participants (Lowry et al., 2016) and has been applied successfully in the CSE context (Filo, Fechner, & Inoue, 2019a). I considered collecting data via an online panel by adopting questions used by Filo et al. (2010) such as 'How likely does sponsorship of this event influence you to use or purchase a sponsoring company's products?'.

An online panel was not used for data collection purposes due to the following reasons. First, using an online panel does not account for the specific research context because research participants would have attended different CSEs (Lowry et a., 2016). This is not consistent with my paradigm which states that the research context influences the



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knowledge creation process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Goldkuhl, 2012; Morgan, 2014).

More specifically, the collaborations between researchers and charitable organisations can create knowledge to address social issues (Stanton, 2008). Also, securing data via an online panel would not have allowed for the collection of pre- and post-event data. As described above, obtaining data prior to and after the event represents an important methodological contribution to the sponsorship literature.

Overall, accessing online panel data would have potentially resulted in valid responses in Study 1, which would have resulted in a theoretical contribution of the current research to OIT. However, I felt committed to my philosophical perception that the consideration of the research context is of importance to the knowledge creation process. Furthermore, I hoped examining specific partnerships between CSE's and sponsors, would result in case studies that could be used by CSE managers to attract and retain corporate partners. I envisioned that a greater interest from business in CSE sponsorship would result in higher fundraising amounts that would enable charities to address societal issues around the world.

Instead of using an online panel, upon reflection and further discussions with academics, who have previously conducted research in collaboration with industry partners, the following approach may have allowed this research to secure a higher number of industry partners. I approached CSE managers because they have access to the event participants' database and are therefore more able to facilitate the distribution of the research material. Instead of only approaching CSE managers, I could have identified CSE sponsors and offered these organisations the opportunity to collaborate. Sponsorship evaluation remains a key challenge for practitioners (Jensen & White, 2018) and therefore

CSE sponsors might have been interested in a research collaboration. The following section provides a summary of the current research.

## **6.2 Research Summary**

The purpose of the current research was twofold. First, the present research examined how CSE managers and sponsors can create sponsorship programs that promote the sponsor's brand in an authentic manner. Secondly, the current research investigated how CSE sponsorship programs facilitate the development of meaningful and emotional relationships between CSE participants and sponsors. To examine this purpose, three research questions were advanced. The research questions were examined through an explanatory sequential mixed method research design consisting of three studies. The MS Moonlight Walk, an annual CSE raising money to support people living with MS, represented the research context.

Study 1 examined how sponsoring a CSE can assist the sponsor to develop meaningful and emotional relationships with its consumers. Data was collected from MS Moonlight Walk participants through pre- and post-event questionnaires. The results indicated that event participants were unable to answer the questions included in the questionnaire prior to and after the event due to no knowledge of the event sponsor, Harbour ISP. This suggested that sponsoring the MS Moonlight Walk did not assist Harbour ISP to develop meaningful and emotional relationships with the event participants. The low level of sponsorship awareness might be the result of the low event-sponsor fit and event participants' limited exposure to Harbour ISP.

Study 2 investigated how sponsoring a CSE affects participants' emotional response towards an event sponsor. Building on the suggestion that CSE participants may not be aware of their emotions towards event sponsors, EEG data from the MS Moonlight Walk

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2018 participants was obtained. The findings suggested that MS Moonlight Walk participants had a neutral emotional response towards Harbour ISP after the event, which was consistent with the result of Study 1, indicating that participants do not recognise any association with the brand.

Study 3 examined the perceptions of event participants, event managers, and representatives from the event sponsors towards the sponsor's contribution to the value creation process of a CSEs. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with MS Moonlight Walk 2018 participants, the event manager, and representatives from Harbour ISP. Five themes describing how the three stakeholder groups perceive the sponsor's contribution to the value creation process of CSEs were identified, including providing operational support, raising CSE awareness, cultivating a fundraising network, engaging authentically, and celebrating constituents. Collectively, the findings across all three studies suggested that Harbour ISP did not form a meaningful and emotional relationship with the event participants which may have been the result of the MS Moonlight Walk and Harbour ISP not implementing an authentic sponsorship program.

The present research contributes to S-D logic by adopting this theoretical framework in a participatory CSE. Conceptualising the value creation process of a CSE as the exchange of skills and knowledge between the CSE participants, managers, and sponsors provided a better understanding of how practitioners can create authentic CSE sponsorship programs. Future research may replicate this research in a different CSE context and employ varying methods to expand the findings obtained from this work.

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**Appendices**

**Appendix A: Online Questionnaire Measure Items**

Table 11

*Perceived CSR, organisational distinctiveness, organisational identification, organisational commitment measure items*

Measures	Source
<b>Perceived CSR measures</b>	Lichtenstein et al. (2004)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Harbour ISP is committed to using a portion of its profits to help nonprofits</li> <li>2. Harbour ISP gives back to the communities in which it does business.</li> <li>3. Local nonprofits benefit from Harbour ISP's contribution.</li> <li>4. Harbour ISP integrates charitable contributions into its business activities</li> <li>5. Harbour ISP is involved in corporate giving.</li> </ol>	
<b>Perceived distinctiveness measures</b>	Donavan et al. (2005)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I feel Harbour ISP is unlike any other internet provider</li> <li>2. Harbour ISP is a rare entity</li> <li>3. Harbour ISP stands out from its competitors</li> </ol>	
<b>Organisational identification measures</b>	Mael and Ashforth (1992)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. When someone criticises Harbour ISP, it feels like a personal insult</li> <li>2. I am very interested in what others think about Harbour ISP</li> <li>3. When I talk about Harbour ISP, I usually say 'we' rather than 'they'</li> </ol>	
<b>Organisational commitment measures</b>	Yoo et al. (2000)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I consider myself to be committed to Harbour ISP as my internet provider.</li> <li>2. Harbour ISP would be one of my top choices when choosing an internet provider.</li> <li>3. I wouldn't seek a competitor if Harbour ISP was available.</li> </ol>	

Appendices

**Appendix B: Interview Guide**

MS Moonlight Walk 2018 event participants – interview guide

Biographical:

Name:

In What Year Were You Born:

Gender:

Education Level:

Less than High School      High School      Professional/TAFE Certificate

Bachelor's Degree      Postgraduate

How many times have you participated in the MS Moonlight Walk including the 2018 event?

What is your primary motivation for participating in the MS Moonlight Walk?

Approximately how much have you fundraised in total for MS QLD by participating in MS Moonlight Walk/s?

## Appendices

### Interview questions

1. What was your favourite part of this year's MS Moonlight Walk?
2. What do you see is the most valuable contribution of a sponsor in a charity sport event?
3. How do you believe event sponsors help to create meaningful experiences for charity sport event participants?
4. Could you please describe your favourite interaction that you have ever had with an event sponsor prior to, during or after an event?
5. Did you know that Harbour ISP was a sponsor of this year's MS Moonlight Walk?

If yes:

- a. How did you hear about the partnership between Harbour ISP and the MS Moonlight Walk?
  - b. How did you engage with Harbour ISP throughout this year's MS Moonlight Walk?
  - c. How, if at all, did you benefit from Harbour ISP being a sponsor of the MS Moonlight Walk?
6. Do you have any recommendations for how Harbour ISP could enhance your future MS Moonlight Walk experience?
  7. How would you like to engage with Harbour ISP in the future?